

Title of meeting:	Employment Committee
Date of meeting:	28 February 2017
Subject:	Employee Assistance Programme (EAP)
Report by:	Jon Bell - Director of HR, Legal and Performance
Wards affected:	N/A
Key decision:	No
Full Council decision:	No

1. Purpose of report

The purpose of this report is to respond to members' request for further information about the Employee Assistance Programme (EAP) including;

- a. Details on the contract itself and options available
- b. Details of current low usage of EAP and potential reasons for the low take-up
- c. Details of what is being done to increase awareness of EAP

2. Recommendations

Members are recommended to note the information regarding the Employee Assistance Programme and approve the continuation of this service to staff

3. Background

- 3.1 Employee Assistance Programmes are widely used by employers to provide their staff with access to confidential information, support and counselling to assist with personal or work-related issues. Support is traditionally offered around the clock by telephone, with a comprehensive service providing face-to face counselling where necessary. Some schemes will also provide online support. Evidence suggests that around 47% of employees in the UK have access to an EAP, and, where an employer does provide an EAP, around 10% of employees typically access it each year.
- 3.2 As well as helping to support staff, employers also receive management information through EAPs, which, although anonymous can help them to identify and tackle potential workplace issues. As long as an EAP satisfies HM Revenue and Customs' definition of welfare counselling, it is regarded as a business expense rather than a benefit in kind.

- 3.3 The Council has provided its staff with access to EAP for some years. Prior to 2010 this was with Oakdale Counselling. In 2010 this changed to Right Core Care, and from January 2016, following a re-tendering exercise, the contract was awarded to Right Management.
- 3.4 When the contract was re-tendered, suppliers were invited to tender for a flexible range of services on the basis of either 'pay-as-you-go' or with standard charges based on headcount (or combinations of the two). Suppliers were invited to submit as part of their bid a list of additional services that are included in their pricing options including; 24 hour case management, red flag support and telephone access, on-site presentations to HR and leadership teams, intervention stress sessions and training solutions.
- 3.5 The winning bidder was selected on the basis of a fixed price per employee for the core offer - advice line, management support and website - plus additional services on a pay-as-you-go basis, e.g. telephone or face-to-face counselling. Within the contract there is an option to request volume variations, i.e. to add additional headcount. This has enabled CCG and Gosport staff to be added to the contract (with additional costs met by those organisations).
- 3.6 The new contract commenced on 01 January 2016, to operate for four years giving an end date of 31 December 2019. The estimated value of the contract was £31,680 per annum (including traded services). This was approximately 10% less than the all-inclusive offer. In 2016, the first year of the contract the Council spent £19,556 (non-schools), mainly as a result of lower-than-expected usage.
- 3.7 Local Authority schools provide their EAP through the Authority's EAP contract, and Academies can choose whether to buy into this contract as a traded service.
- 4 The Authority required an offer that gave staff access to support and wellbeing advice which includes counselling, a 24 hours, 365 days a year telephone advice line, counselling and web-based information, support and advice. The details of the services listed below form the Authority's Statement of Requirements.
- 4.1 **Telephone Advice Line:**
- Immediate confidential support and advice via telephone 24 hour, 7 days a week, 365 days a year
 - Advice line available via one Freephone telephone number
 - Unlimited access to support and advice for employees on a range of issues, including debt management, careers guidance and mediation
 - Support and advice for managers on management issues
 - The Supplier should meet the needs of clients with hearing difficulties and for those whose first language is not English
 - The Supplier will refer employees for counselling from the advice line where appropriate

4.2 **Counselling:**

- Confidential counselling service that offers support on a range of personal and work related matters, provided either face-to-face or via telephone
- Support to be provided on the basis of four sessions of counselling per annum, lasting 50 minutes each, available for each employee referred within each contract year
- Counselling sessions must take place at a suitable location near to the home or work location of the employee
- The location must be a professional environment which is confidential and free from disruption
- A maximum of two additional counselling sessions may be approved if the counsellor demonstrates that this would have a positive impact for the employee
- The counsellor should identify other voluntary organisations who may be able to support the employee where more than four sessions of counselling is required
- The Supplier should identify ways of reducing non-attendance, e.g. appointment reminders

4.3 **Website:**

- A website which offers advice, support and wellbeing initiatives that is hosted by the Supplier
- Free downloads from websites for various topics including wellbeing

4.4 The total telephone advice line usage from 01 January 2016 to 31 December 2016 was 96.

Service Type	Jan 16 - Mar 16	Apr 16 - Jun 16	Jul 16 - Sep 16	Oct 16 - Dec 16
Counselling	25	24	16	20
Legal & Information	0	4	3	3
Management Support	0	0	0	1
Total	25	28	19	24

Referrals - 45 of the 96 employees were onward referred for structured session based counselling.

4.5 The online EAP offers user-friendly guidance notes and factsheets, self-help guides, podcasts and links. These are readily available to support employees with many issues such as money management and debt, change, work life balance and stress and pressure. In total Right Management are offering **126** downloadable factsheets plus **33** downloadable factsheets for managers.

The EAP online service was visited on 268 occasions from 01 January 2016 to 31 December 2016, as shown below:

Visits to site	Number of downloads	Number of Guide viewings
268	355	487
Guide name	Number of times Guide accessed during current reporting period	
Manager Support	94	

Mental Wellbeing	69
Weight Management	32
Change	29
EAP Promotion Library	27
Relationships	26
Money and debt	23
Children	18
Dealing with different personalities	18
Loss and Bereavement	18
Your home	18
Caring	17
Women's health	17
Critical or Adverse Incidents	14
Sleep	14
Physical Activity	10
Work-Life Balance	9
Consumer issues	7
Nutrition	7
Cardiovascular Risk	5
Alcohol	4
Developing your skills	4
Smoking	4
Stress & Pressure	3

- 4.6 In total 96 individuals used the telephone advice line and the EAP online service was visited on 268 occasions from 01 January 2016 to 31 December 2016. This level of usage represents 9.44% of the non-schools workforce.
- 4.7 The Health and Wellbeing Survey, conducted in 2016 and previous reported to members, asked participants if they had accessed the EAP. 8.9% of respondents stated that they had. They were asked to rate the usefulness of the service on a scale from 1 to 5, and the results were:

1 (not useful)	26.7%
2	6.7%
3	26.7%
4	20%
5 (very useful)	20%

However, it must be borne in mind that response rates to the survey overall were very low. Generally those staff who had experienced short term rather than long term absences found the service more useful.

- 4.8 Right Management do also invite service users to provide feedback on the service, but to date response rates have been extremely low. Right Management have been requested to seek ways to improve this.
- 4.9 The following activities are in place or have been considered in order to increase awareness and usage of the scheme's offer.

- The rebranding of marketing materials with a new visual image and now includes the Portsmouth City Council branding so the staff can identify this support with their employer. All materials will include the free helpline number and website address and the login Password.
- The EAP pages on the staff intranet are being repositioned to ensure the range of support and information is clearer.
- A further email to third-tier managers reminding them that there are a number of downloadable factsheets aimed at assisting with their management of staff.
- Drop in and briefing sessions to staff from the provider have been considered. However, the provider has advised that these tend to be less successful as employees do not wish to be seen talking about confidential issues within the workplace. Also, this approach would need to include all reasonable sized units, not just the Civic Offices, to have best impact. This is outside of the contract and would incur an additional cost.

5. Reasons for recommendations

Although usage of the EAP service has been low, it is an important part of the council's employment package for staff, and provides a means for staff and managers to access a range of support and advice. Increased marketing activity is being undertaken to increase awareness of the service.

6. Equality impact assessment (EIA)

There are no equality impacts flowing from the recommendation to continue providing the existing service.

7. Legal implications

There are no immediate legal implications arising from this report.

8. Finance comments

As an EAP is about promoting and supporting the wellbeing of employees, there is no significant cashable saving resulting from promoting greater awareness of the programme. However it is recognised that there will be intangible benefits to how employees attend and engage and act within the workplace.

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Signed by:

Appendices: None

Background list of documents: Section 100D of the Local Government Act 1972

The following documents disclose facts or matters, which have been relied upon to a material extent by the author in preparing this report:

Title of document	Location

The recommendation(s) set out above were approved/ approved as amended/ deferred/ rejected by on

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Signed by: