

Briefing paper – Enfield Council’s approach to supporting people with disabilities and mental health issues

Enfield Council is committed to promoting equality and diversity in the workplace. Our aim is to value to differences our diverse workforce bring to the organisation and eliminate unlawful discrimination. People with a disability are supported throughout the life cycle of their employment. This starts with the Council’s recruitment site when applying for a role with the Council and, once appointed throughout their career with the Council.

Listed below is an overview of the various policies, support and initiatives that is available.

Recruitment

The Council’s policy is to appoint solely on the job requirements, relevant experience, qualifications, skills and abilities. All Council staff taking part in the recruitment and selection process are fully trained and are required to follow the Councils Recruitment and Selection Policy and procedure. Both the training and policy and procedure include elements covering awareness and expectations in relation to equality and diversity.

The Council’s recruitment site include statements and information about the Council’s Equality & Diversity policy, a clear statement and guidance for applicants with disabilities, information about the support available and statements and information about the Council’s approach to flexibility.

The Council will offer a guaranteed interview to all applicants with a disability, if they meet all the essential criteria for the job. Candidates with a disability are encouraged to tick a relevant box on the application form to ensure they are shortlisted and invited for an interview. When the candidate is invited to an interview the recruitment team will ask them if they need any adjustments to support them through the interview process and will arrange them where necessary. The intention is to ensure the candidate is given every opportunity to succeed and is not disadvantaged because of their disability.

All external vacancies are advertised on Diversity Jobs website which targets candidates from a range of minority groups including disability.

All job applications include an equality and diversity monitoring section which must be completed. This is used to monitor equalities data and understand the structure of job applicants and our workforce and monitor the effectiveness of our policies.

Successful candidates receive a formal offer of employment and are required to complete pre-employment clearances including an occupational health questionnaire prior to commencing their new role. Candidates who declare a disability that may impact upon their role may be invited to a face to face appointment with the occupational health nurse or doctor to ensure they can safely carry out the duties of the new role and to identify any reasonable adjustments that may need to be put in place. The manager will work with HR to determine whether or not the adjustments are feasible. Where adjustments are not considered feasible the decision not to proceed must be fair and proportionate and based on clear objective criteria in conjunction with advice from HR.

Working for the Council

On starting work or a new job role within the Council, the manager will be responsible, in consultation with the employee, for ensuring such reasonable adjustments are made as are required to enable the employee to work safely and effectively. The intention is to support staff into meaningful and sustained employment with the Council.

The Council will not tolerate discrimination. Disciplinary action will be taken against any employee who is found to have committed an act of discrimination, harassment, or victimisation. Serious breaches of this and associated policies will be treated as gross misconduct.

If an employee's disability prevents them from performing their role the Council will consider alternative suitable roles via our redeployment support service.

The Council has continued to support Shaw Trust¹ work placements and employment opportunities for a number of years and recently assimilated two long-term placements into a Council run 'protected placement scheme' within one of the newly created hubs.

Policies

The Council has a number of policies to support both employees and managers including:

- Disability Policy
- Equality in Employment Policy
- Dignity at Work Principles
- Principles of Managing Absence & Attendance
- Reasonable Adjustments – guidance notes

These policies are intended to provide clear guidance about the Council's expectations in relation to managing employees with disabilities and clearly state the roles and responsibilities of managers and employees.

An Equality Impact Assessment is completed for all new HR policies and for all restructures.

Learning & Development

A wide range of training programmes are available which can be accessed as face to face sessions or on-line modules including:

- Recruitment & Selection
- Managing absence & attendance
- Managing Grievances and Dignity at Work
- Mental Health Awareness – specialised training was piloted during 2016. Staff and managers attended from HR and John Wilkes House. The initial training covered mental health awareness. Further sessions have been commissioned which will focus on how to

¹ Shaw Trust is a registered charity that support adults and children with disabilities.

manage staff with mental health issues and will be rolled out to managers across the Council.

- Equality in the Workplace
- Resilience
- Emotional Intelligence
- Stress Awareness
- Unconscious Bias
- Healthy Mindset
- Deaf Awareness
- Piloting CBT coaching to support staff with long-term absences returning to the workplace

As well as the above courses an element of discrimination awareness and how the issues impact on staff management is included in other programmes where it is relevant and appropriate, e.g. management development programmes.

Other support & Initiatives

- Occupational Health service
- Employee Assistance Programme – 24/7 confidential counselling service available for all staff.
- Information on website – the Council’s intranet, Enfield Eye, contains a wide range of information leaflets covering various health and wellbeing topics. This includes the following:
 - A Guide to Depression
 - A Guide to boosting your resilience
 - A guide to exercise to improve your mood
 - A Guide to Mental Wellbeing
 - A Guide to Mindfulness
 - A Guide to techniques to manage your mental wellbeing
- Work experience placements to support residents gain valuable work skills. Whilst the majority of placements are year 10 school pupils’ placements have been made available for people with a disability or looking to return to work following a prolonged career break due to ill health.
- The Council supports the Staff with Disabilities Action Group that meets quarterly. A representative from HR attends all meetings.
- Career Returners programme. A pilot programme is due to start in May 2017 offering 6 months’ paid work experience to qualified professionals looking to return to their career. The reason for the career break can include caring responsibilities or ill-health.

Accreditations & Successes

The following accreditations provide evidence to support the success of the initiatives and policies outlined in this paper:

- **Healthy Workplace Accreditation**
The Healthy Workplace Charter is an assessment that recognises and rewards employers for investing in workplace health and wellbeing. Enfield Council was the first local authority to achieve the highest standard, 'Excellence' in March 2015. As part of the accreditation a working group was formed made up of officers across the Council including Public Health, HR, Health & Safety, Catering and Sports Development. Since gaining the accreditation the Group continues to meet to identify, support and promote various initiatives. The key focus for 2017/18 is:
 1. Improving mental wellbeing
 2. Reducing sugar consumption
 3. Encouraging physical activity to reduce issues related to MSK
- Accredited Disability Confident Employer – run by the DWP and designed to raise awareness with employers and promote support within the workplace.
- Enfield has achieved the 'Excellent' standard of the Equalities Framework for Local Government.
- As at 31 March 2015 the workforce data recorded 4% of staff with a declared disability. As at 30 September 2016 the workforce data was 4.1% for staff with a declared disability. It should be noted that this slight increase was achieved during a period of significant post reductions. It should also be noted that despite the Council's best efforts to encourage staff to declare any disability there remains a reluctance to do so.

Conclusion

A number of initiatives have been put in place to support people applying for jobs in the Council and staff employed by the Council. A number of these initiatives are in addition to the Council's statutory responsibilities. We continue to monitor all equality data and review the effectiveness of Council policies and employment practices and to identify further improvements and new initiatives.

Is there anything else members would like us to consider?

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