

### Mental Health Challenge Briefing

**Background Information:** The Mental Health Challenge is asking local authorities to take a proactive approach to this crucial issue. Local authorities are being asked to promote mental health across all of their business.

#### **The Mental Health Challenge requirements:**

As part of the Challenge Local Authorities are asked to note the key demographics relating to mental health, and the cost of mental health as outlined in the Telford & Wrekin Mental Health Strategy.

The Council is also requested to make the following commitments:

- As a local authority we have a crucial role to play in improving the mental health of everyone in our community and tackling some of the widest and most entrenched inequalities in health.
- Mental health should be a priority across all the local authority's areas of responsibility, including housing, community safety and planning.
- All councillors, whether members of the Executive or Scrutiny and in our community and casework roles, can play a positive role in championing mental health on an individual and strategic basis.

The Council is therefore asked to make the following resolution:

- To sign the Local Authorities' Mental Health Challenge run by Centre for Mental Health, Mental Health Foundation, Mental Health Providers Forum, Mind, Rethink Mental Illness, Royal College of Psychiatrists and YoungMinds.
- We commit to appoint an elected member as 'mental health champion' across the council. *Councillor Arnold England has agreed to undertake this role, as supported by Liz Noakes, Director of Public Health.*
- We will seek to identify a member of staff within the council to act as 'lead officer' for mental health. *Steph Wain, Commissioner for Mental Health, as agreed to undertake this role, as supported by Liz Noakes, Director of Public Health.*

#### **The Council is also asked to do the following as part of the Challenge:**

- Support positive mental health in our community, including in local schools, neighbourhoods and workplaces.
- Work to reduce inequalities in mental health in our community.

- Work with local partners to offer effective support for people with mental health needs.
- Tackle discrimination on the grounds of mental health in our community.
- Proactively listen to people of all ages and backgrounds about what they need for better mental health.
- Sign up to the Time to Change pledge

### **The role of the member champion**

The role of champion will be defined locally but key activities might include:

- Advocating for mental health issues in council meetings and policy development
- Reaching out to the local community (eg via schools, businesses, faith groups) to raise awareness and challenge stigma
- Listening to people with personal experience of mental ill health to get their perspectives on local needs and priorities
- Fostering local partnerships between agencies to support people with mental health problems more effectively
- Encouraging the council to support the mental health of its own workforce and those of its contractors.

The member champion will have access to the following benefits to help them in these roles:

- Advice and support from the mental health challenge national partners
- Access to resources on the challenge web site members' area
- A monthly update on relevant news, events and key policy developments
- An annual meeting with other member champions

As local leaders for better mental health, we expect all member champions to:

- Provide a vocal presence for mental health within their council where this is necessary, and identify a priority a year to focus on.
- Seek the views of people with lived experiences of mental ill health when identifying priorities and concerns
- Work respectfully, sensitively and empathically with people with mental health problems at all times
- Respond to occasional requests from the challenge coordinator for updates on activities undertaken in the role of member champion.

There is an acknowledgment that member champions are elected members of councils who have a number of competing priorities and limited time to put into the role of member champion.

The national partners reserve the right to raise concerns where member champions whose conduct falls below the expectations set out above. Where steps are not taken to address concerns expressed by the national partners, councils may be removed from the challenge membership.

### **The role of the Lead officer:**

The role of lead officer can be taken by any staff member in the council. Their role may include, but not be limited by:

- Providing information to the member champion to support their work
- Advising the member champion on current issues and priorities
- Supporting implementation of strategies initiated by the member champion
- Raising awareness within the council's staff about mental health issues
- Seeking external support for activities led by the council to promote mental health and wellbeing
- Liaising with the mental health challenge national partners to secure information and advice. The lead officer will also have access to the benefits described above for member champions.

### **Support from national organisations**

A range of resources will be available to the Lead Officer and Member via the national organisations setting the challenge.