



REPORT TO: CORPORATE COMMITTEE ON 15 MARCH 2022

SUBJECT: MENTAL HEALTH AND WELLBEING SURVEY 2021

BY: DEPUTE CHIEF EXECUTIVE (EDUCATION, COMMUNITIES AND ORGANISATIONAL DEVELOPMENT)

1. REASON FOR REPORT

- 1.1 To inform Committee of the results from the Mental Health and Wellbeing Survey 2021 and for committee to approve the actions arising from the report.
- 1.2 This report is submitted to Committee in terms of Section III B (24)(c) and (25) of the Council's Scheme of Administration relating to formulating, supervising the implementation of and review as necessary the policy and practices of the council for all employees in relation to the recruitment, training and development, health, safety and welfare and practices of the Council.

2. RECOMMENDATION

- 2.1 It is recommended that the Committee:
- (i) consider and note the results of the 2021 mental health and wellbeing opinion survey; and
 - (ii) approve the actions arising from the results

3. BACKGROUND

- 3.1 Since 2006 Moray Council have regularly surveyed the workforce to find out what employees felt about a range of employment related issues. Due to the pandemic in 2020 it was acknowledged that it was essential to measure and understand the impact of the pandemic on the workforce to enable the Council to support staff during the recovery phase. As such the decision was taken at the start of 2021 to complete a mental health and wellbeing survey instead of the usual employee survey. As with the employee survey, actions are identified based on the issues coming out of each survey with planned actions and programmes of work designed to address the issues. These will typically feed into the workforce culture and employee engagement programme and for

this survey into a mental health action plan.

- 3.2 The survey has been designed, administered and analysed in-house.
- 3.3 This is the first mental health and wellbeing survey and it was undertaken from June to July 2021. The survey received 1,251 returns providing an overall response rate of 25%. It is recognised that with the challenges of reduced communications platforms and social distancing in place as a result of the pandemic there was a limitation on the level of promotional communications which could be utilised and it is envisaged that this may have impacted on the number of survey returns.
- 3.4 While results have been analysed to the same level as previous surveys, the results are being cascaded in an employee booklet and detailed departmental results for the Central and Senior Management Teams. The results are available to CMT-SMT and have been shared with service managers for further analysis and discussion. This work is led by the Organisational Development team and any improvement actions are considered on both a corporate level and service level depending on what is deemed appropriate. Actions will feed into service planning processes as well as the Workforce Culture Action Plan including finalising the Mental Health Action Plan which is already being developed as part of this.

4. SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

- 4.1 The information in this report is supplemented by **Appendix A** which provides the survey headlines, summary of findings and next steps arising from the survey and **Appendix B** which details emerging trends.
- 4.2 Overall the survey displays a positive high level view on how well Moray Council have supported the workforce and how well the workforce have managed their mental health and wellbeing during the pandemic.
- 4.3 As with previous whole workforce survey results, it is difficult to identify specific actions that will address areas identified for improvement as large surveys only provide a measure of satisfaction on general themes and are best used as the starting point for more targeted and focused work in specific areas e.g. the work being done in relation to developing a more positive workforce culture. It is however also noted that whilst the overall results provide an indication of the current position and main themes arising, there requires more service specific work to address themes arising in various services due to different ways of working.
- 4.4 The survey is broken down into 7 areas which cover questions on: you and your role; interaction and working environment; working environment; health and safety; you, your life and feelings; support and training and communication.

- 4.5 At the time of the survey in relation to employees' working situation, 43.73% of respondents continued to work as normal in their usual location. 35.97% were working from home instead of the workplace. 13.67% of people were also working from other locations combined with homeworking rather than in their normal locations, along with nurseries and day services and the remaining respondents either on paid leave e.g. maternity, redeployed, on sickness absence or unable to work due to an underlying health condition. 44% of staff assessed they were able to undertake their job from home.
- 4.6 With regard to how the Council interacted with service users, the public and colleagues it was found that this changed significantly with respondents noting increased use of email, telephone use and virtual meetings. 75% of respondents noted a decrease in face to face meetings which was reflective of the health and safety measures in place including social distancing requirements. Staff indicated that overall they had felt safe with the Covid safety measures in place.
- 4.7 Looking to the future there remains an interest to continue to work from home or have a combination of home and workplace working however it was noted that that for frontline services such as Care at Home, Schools etc, this was not an option which would sustain effective service delivery.
- 4.8 Health and safety proved to be a positive feature within the survey with a strong indication that employees felt their health and safety had been well looked after and they had been given the proper equipment to protect their health. 57% of staff responding felt that mental health had been sufficiently supported; that being said, 71% felt they had been able to maintain their health and wellbeing during the previous year.
- 4.9 Anxiety about workload and missing contact with family and colleagues was prevalent across respondents. 43% of respondents had feelings of low mood/depression. Less than a third of respondents had a social network and only 39% had a family network. 18% of respondents felt the need to seek support for a mental health concern from a GP or health professional. 67% noticed an increase in mental health concerns within their service. When asked where most likely to access support 62% of respondents prefer to access support from colleagues and 52% would access support from their manager with more formalised support provisions not scoring so highly. When asked what additional support was required for health and wellbeing the highest scoring area was more interaction with colleagues.
- 4.10 Providing a more positive workplace from the respondents' perspective would be achieved with further training to help understand mental health issues, along with signposting to information, more team meetings and easy access to specialist advice e.g. counsellor. There were a variety of communications channels accessed during the pandemic which was reflective of where and how employees were working. These included all user emails, intranet, line manager, school communications and staff updates.
- 4.11 Encouragingly 51% of respondents felt a year on since the pandemic started employees had coped well with the rapid pace of change.

5. AREAS FOR FOCUS AND DEVELOPMENT

- 5.1 There were less positive responses in relation to themes such as employees noticing an increase in mental health concerns within their service either themselves, with colleagues or with service users and over half of respondents think training to help understand mental health issues would support a more positive workplace for them and their colleagues' mental health. Respondents' future concerns were they are either 'very concerned' or 'quite concerned' about workload pressures and ongoing changes to working practices. The following table shows the top area for focus and development in response to the findings:

Top 5 Areas for Focus and Development	2021 % of respondents agreeing with statements
Employees feel there could be more awareness or support for specific mental health concerns including suicide and the associated impacts.	70.25%
Employees have noticed an increase in mental health within their service either themselves, colleagues or service users.	66.69%
Employees think training to help understand mental health issues would support a more positive workplace for them and their colleagues' mental health.	61.61%
Employees' future concerns, either very concerned or quite concerned about workload pressures.	61.13%
Employees' future concerns, either very concerned or quite concerned about ongoing changes to working practices.	60.05%

6. ACTIONS

- 6.1 While these results provide a picture of responses to the survey questions at a corporate level, as in previous surveys there are distinct variations at departmental / service level and the main themes to note are included in **Appendix A**. These results show that while in general the workforce has managed the impact of Covid well there are areas of concern arising from the departmental analysis that identify specific service themes which require support and intervention in order to make improvements. These are currently being discussed with service management teams for consideration of inclusion in departmental plans and bespoke action plans as part of the development work supported by the OD team through the Culture Working Action plan

- 6.2 While it is clear that the results are generally positive, it is also good to note the responses indicate that progress is being made in some areas previously measured in the employee survey i.e. Health and Safety questions demonstrate a higher positive response than in the last employee survey. It is however also evident that there are areas that require improvement work in embedding the wider aspects of a positive workforce culture within specific teams and services e.g. improving the feelings of trust and support between manager and employee and improving effective communications particularly for those staff groups without access to digital communications
- 6.3 The immediate areas for action are specifically in relation to improving awareness of mental health generally, training staff to have a better understanding of how to support staff and their mental health, reviewing communications particularly across frontline services, finding ways to improve workload management and providing clarity on future work practices.
- 6.4 As part of this, a key priority is the further development and implementation of workload management tools, signposting to training and development activity to support managers with improving their knowledge and confidence in the management of mental health, with specific training being offered via the Flexible Workforce Fund provision as well as the OD service working specifically with frontline services on improving communications.
- 6.5 Work with Heads of Service and third tier managers as part of the workforce planning process will also continue which will allow interpretation of the results within the context of specific services and teams with resultant actions agreed and owned by the managers whilst being supported by the workforce culture team where necessary. These discussions have been delayed due to diversion of HR resources due to the Omicron variant in the latter part of 2021 and early 2022, however the recent developments in relation to restrictions and measures being relaxed in Scotland have begun to release the HR resource to focus on business as usual.
- 6.6 In summary, actions will be:
- Continue to disaggregate the results to an incremental bespoke approach specific to each service
 - Focus engagement and culture activity on improving the awareness, knowledge and management of mental health, communicating change effectively and improving the management of workload and time pressures measured by increasing the number of employees who attend development activity and improved future survey results.
 - Continue with delivery of discussions with management teams on survey results and actions for consideration for inclusion in service plans, measured by development of monitoring arrangements via the workforce planning process.
 - Mental Health Action Plan – finalise to capture outcomes and respond to themes arising from the survey with specific measurable outcomes and timescales set out

- Workload Toolkit - deliver pilot and evaluate to measure effectiveness prior to finalising resource and rolling out across all services with appropriate training and support.
- Behaviour and performance - review and enhance guidance to provide standards of behaviours and performance in relation to new ways of working including virtual meetings etiquette, improving opportunities for interactions with colleagues, roll out across services and measure through evaluation of manager and employee responses to future survey questions and feedback through managers and Trades Union representatives.
- Support, promote and signpost employees to internal providers e.g. EAP to support engagement and use of service to benefit mental health concerns, measured by increased uptake of the support provisions and feedback on positive outcomes e.g. reduction in absence due to mental health reasons.
- Communications - review access to digital communications for front line employees (e.g. Care At Home, Roads Maintenance, Cleaning, Waste and others), upskill employees appropriately, consider alternatives where digital is not reaching groups of staff, measured by number of times digital communications accessed (data from ICT and Communications teams), positive feedback from Trades Union representatives and managers

7. SUMMARY OF IMPLICATIONS

(a) Corporate Plan and 10 Year Plan (Local Outcomes Improvement Plan (LOIP))

The work noted in this report supports the Council in achieving the objectives and priorities in the Corporate Plan and 10 Year Plan, and sets out how the Council will meet the challenges in making best use of its workforce and resources. In particular, the actions will ensure continued progress towards the aims of ensuring an engaged workforce with a positive workforce culture.

(b) Policy and Legal

There are no legal implications arising directly from this report.

The work that is ongoing and planned in relation to employee engagement and workforce culture continues to provide a solid foundation from which to develop further work to address the issues identified in this report.

Ongoing workforce planning and demonstrating best value are also important considerations for the council (ref: Christie Commission 2011 regarding reforms and Stevenson Farmer Review 2017 – mental health standards)

(c) Financial implications

There are no financial implications arising from this report.

(d) Risk Implications

As with previous survey reports, there are risk implications related to decreasing staff morale should no action be taken as a result of the survey findings. These are heightened at this point due to the recovery from the pandemic and the long term impact on mental health still not yet fully manifested.

The risks associated with workforce culture are also around the consequences of leaving the culture issues unaddressed and the complexity and challenge of dealing with behavioural issues.

The developmental nature of the work combined with the long term nature of establishing a cultural shift in behaviours means there are long term maintenance requirements to be accommodated before a permanent step change in culture can be achieved.

(e) Staffing Implications

While there are no direct staffing implications arising from this report it should be noted that the resource for employee engagement and culture work was reduced as part of saving proposals for the 2019-20 budget and given the increased requirement for support this will limit the speed in which progress can be made.

(f) Property

There are no property implications arising from this report

(g) Equalities/Socio Economic Impact

There are no equalities or socio-economic impacts arising from this report.

(h) Climate Change and Biodiversity Impacts

There are no climate change or biodiversity impacts arising from this report.

(i) Consultations

The content of this report has been considered by the corporate management team.

The headline results have been seen by the corporate and senior management teams, the Admin Group and Group Leaders, managers at the Personnel Forum and considered by the Trade Unions.

A full report of the findings was presented to the Culture Working Group in December 2021 and it was agreed that a sub group be formed to review the results from the survey and will feedback to the Culture Working Group and into the Culture Working Group Action Plan.

This report will be provided to the Trade Unions for discussion and consultation at the next scheduled Trade Union / Officer Group and Local Negotiating Committee for Teachers meetings.

A copy of this report will also be provided to the managers at the Personnel Forum and feedback will be sought from all groups to influence the development of any actions arising.

An employee booklet will be available on interchange for the workforce with access to a paper version available for employees without ready access to a work computer following this committee.

8. CONCLUSION

- 8.1 The results of the 2021 mental health and wellbeing survey contain a mixture of positive results and identifies key areas for improvement.**
- 8.2 It is proposed that further work is undertaken with departments and services to identify solutions.**
- 8.3 Any actions will become part of the engagement and culture work, or set up as distinct pieces of work specific to the services where the issues are prevalent.**

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Background Papers:
Ref: SPMAN-1656699058-70 / SPMAN-1656699058-71 / SPMAN-1656699058-72
Appendices: Appendix A – Survey Headlines, summary of findings and next steps
Appendix B – Emerging Trends