

## **Local authorities' mental health challenge**

### **Cllr Caritas Charles**

This council notes:

- 1 in 4 people will experience a mental health problem in any given year.
- The World Health Organisation has highlighted the adequate provision of mental health services one of its key priorities for 2021.
- Mental ill health costs some £105 billion each year in England alone.
- People with a severe mental illness die up to 20 years younger than their peers in the UK.
- There is often a circular relationship between mental health and issues such as housing, employment, family problems or debt.
- Just over three out of 4 suicides (76%) are by men and suicide is the biggest cause of death for men under 35.

This council further notes:

- The Pandemic has caused an unprecedented rise in issues around collective and individual mental health in the last 12 months.
- The Centre for Mental Health forecasts a rise in those in poor mental health to 8.5 million this includes an additional 3.2 million who have never previously reported mental health concerns.
- The centre also predicts that over 200k of NHS workers may need support including nearly 37 k for PTSD.
- A recent survey by the charity Young Minds found that 67% of the young people they surveyed ( aged 13-25 ) believed the Pandemic will have a long term effect on their mental health.

This council believes:

- 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.

This council resolves:

- 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.\*see footnote
- We commit to appoint an elected member as 'mental health champion' across the council.
- We will seek to identify a member of staff within the council to act as 'lead officer' for mental health
- Consider mental health impact within our COVID recovery plans across all aspects of our work.

- The council will also:
  1. Support positive mental health in our community, including in local schools, neighbourhoods and workplaces
  2. Work to reduce inequalities in mental health in our community
  3. Work with local partners to offer effective support for people with mental health needs
  4. Tackle discrimination on the grounds of mental health in our community
  5. Proactively listen to people of all ages and backgrounds about what they need for better mental health.

\*Footnote:

By signing up to the challenge North Somerset Council will receive the following benefits.

- resources (for example published evidence, expert opinion and briefings) to help the council in its work.
- networking opportunities and peer support for mental health champions, including an annual meeting and through use of electronic media.
- Recognising and acknowledging publicly the councils that sign up to the challenge and the champions they appoint.

Signing up to the challenge requires no cost to the council.

## Member champion role description

The role of member champion for mental health may include, but not be limited by:

- 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
- Scrutinising the work of local services that have an impact on mental health: eg health, social care, housing, police.
- 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 (usually by phone or email)
- 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 to share intelligence, experiences and ideas.

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
- Identify at least one priority each year for focused work
- 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.

We are aware 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.

## **Lead officer role description**

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.