

Overview Committee: Local Authority Mental Health Challenge

Notes to summarise and supplement the meeting of the Overview Committee held on 27 February 2020

The Mental Health Challenge for Local Authorities began in 2013 to encourage and support councils in England to champion mental health in their communities. In principle the Challenge offers a way of focusing on evidence-based priorities and of working within an established national structure:

<http://www.mentalhealthchallenge.org.uk/>

Budget and resource commitment would be required if East Devon District Council signs up to the Mental Health Challenge, because councils who sign the Challenge:

- A. Commit to appoint an elected member as 'mental health champion' across the council
- B. Seek to identify a member of staff within the council to act as 'lead officer' for mental health.

Full details of both these roles are listed in the notes for the Overview Committee of 27 February 2020 [Appendix 1].

The concerns raised by members and the prevalence of poor mental health in communities today are recognised by the council. EDDC already has initiatives which go some way to supporting those experiencing mental health issues. These local activities through which we already make a difference are listed in the Overview Committee notes [Appendix 1].

The mental health champion role is limited. It is not a clinical role, but would operate along the lines of our equalities and safeguarding work by raising awareness inside the organisation.

To appoint a Member Champion and officer time dedicated to mental health, during the current covid-recovery work, and with the possibility of further local outbreaks to manage, may be more than what EDDC can realistically achieve beyond what is currently undertaken within existing resources and budgets.

We recommend that Overview Committee approve the following:

1. To note that our Public Health Strategic Plan already recognises the importance of mental as well as physical health
2. That during the covid-recovery phase we continue to work with our partners within existing parameters
3. To note that specialist skills sets are required for mental health interventions; this is the role of the Devon Partnership Trust and other agencies. EDDC does not have dedicated or experienced officer resource for mental health

4. To note that our current priorities do not offer us the scope to afford additional resourcing.