

## OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH & WELLBEING TEAM BUSINESS CASE

### Internal/external context and influences

The demand for the occupational health service is consistently high and will potentially increase with an ageing workforce and the extended retirement age for operational staff.

Recruiting qualified occupational health (OH) nurses is extremely challenging due to a national shortage and an increase in demand. We have used the Service's Market Supplement policy and the offer of funding the 3 year degree course to become a qualified OH practitioner with some degree of success. However, having a trainee OH nurse brings the requirement for a qualified OH nurse to supervise their learning and development. We therefore propose to create a new Senior OH nurse post, who can undertake supervision when we have a trainee nurse and provide a clinical lead role generally.

SYFR has employed an occupational health technician on a part-time (0.65 fte) fixed term contract for 6 months and this has recently been extended by a further 6 months, using Service improvement funding. The technician cannot do all the duties of a qualified occupational health nurse, but can undertake a significant percentage of them and particularly helps with 3-yearly medicals, recruitment medicals and record-keeping.

The Service's fitness advisor has recently qualified as a sports therapist and is now able to carry out physiotherapy with staff, which means we can respond quickly to need and save costs on external therapists, although there will still be some demand for external input. We are also moving the Service's Health and Wellbeing Manager into the OH team, renaming it the OH and Wellbeing team, so that there is even closer collaboration and the post holder is part of a team rather than working in isolation.

### Current arrangements

The current structure and grades for the team are:

|                            |          |
|----------------------------|----------|
| OH & Wellbeing Manager     | grade 11 |
| Health & Wellbeing Manager | grade 9  |
| OH Nurse x 2               | grade 8  |
| Fitness Advisor            | grade 7  |
| OH Technician (FTC 0.65)   | grade 5  |
| OH Administrator           | grade 3  |

### Proposed arrangements

We propose the following structure and grades:

|                                  |   |
|----------------------------------|---|
| OH & Wellbeing Manager (0.8)     | grade 11                                    |
| Health & Wellbeing Manager       | grade 9                                     |
| Senior OH Nurse                  | grade 10                                    |
| OH Nurse                         | grade 9 (qualified) / grade 8 (unqualified) |
| Sports Therapist/Fitness Advisor | grade 8                                     |
| OH Technician (0.65)             | grade 5                                     |
| OH Administrator                 | grade 3                                     |

## **Risk Analysis**

The risk of not being able to recruit and retain qualified and experienced OH nurses will significantly undermine our ability to provide an in-house OH service. The specialised nature of some of the roles within the service, particularly operational roles, would challenge an external provider, but more significantly, the cost of an external provider and the level of service provision would change dramatically, to the detriment of the Service.

The ever increasing cost of external physiotherapists and the ability to source this local to stations/staff with speed and efficiency is becoming more challenging and leads to some staff being on modified duties for longer periods than necessary.

The OH technician role has taken on duties (relevant to role) that were previously performed by OH nurses, which was a costly method of delivery and limited the time OH nurses could spend on casework. Removal of the technician role will mean that OH nurses will revert to carrying out the statutory 3 yearly medicals for operational staff and other standard checks, significantly impacting on their ability to undertake proactive, preventative clinical work.

## **Benefits Analysis**

The benefits of the investment in the OH and Wellbeing team will address the risks identified above. Having a Senior OH nurse, provides clinical expertise within the team and will enable us to supervise unqualified OH nurses, who we are likely to have to recruit due to the national shortage of qualified OH nurses. We will then have a clear pathway for development within the team.

The OH technician is a very cost-effective means of delivering some of our statutory and non-statutory OH requirements and has ensured that we get back on track (post-pandemic) with our 3 yearly medicals and other basic medical checks. The role frees up our OH nurses to carry out proactive work with all employees and provide a very responsive service.

Having an in-house physiotherapist will allow for some savings on external physiotherapist costs, but more significantly will allow us to respond much more quickly and easier to urgent need and enable more preventative work to be carried out.

## **Contribution to the SYFR Annual Plan**

These proposals contribute mostly to priority 1 – Productivity – by ensuring our staff are fit for work and resilient.

## **Financial Implications**

|  | <b>2023/24</b> | <b>2024/25</b> |
|--|----------------|----------------|
| Change of OH Nurse (grade 8) to Senior OH Nurse (grade 10)                         | £10,540        | £10,961        |
| OH Nurse grade uplift (when qualified) – from grade 8 to grade 9                   | £1,558         | £1,620         |
| OH Technician (grade 5 0.65 fte)   | £19,822        | £20,614        |
| Role change for Fitness Advisor to Sports Therapist/Fitness Advisor (grade 7 to 8) | £895           | £930           |
| <b>TOTAL</b>   | <b>£32,815</b> | <b>£34,125</b> |

**However, the above costs will be offset by identified savings from the 0.2 fte saving for the OH & Wellbeing Manager post; savings on external physiotherapy support and other identified supplies and service costs.**