

BSS/23/12
Farms Estate Committee
20 November 2023

The County Farms Estate Mental Health Strategy

Report of the Director of Transformation and Business Services

Please note that the following recommendations are subject to consideration and determination by the Committee before taking effect.

1) Recommendation

That:

- (a) literature be produced and circulated to tenants signposting them to existing mental health support, possibly within the winter newsletter.
- (b) A series of training events be arranged for tenants to discuss mental health, signs and symptoms to be aware of, and steps that can be taken to improve mental health resilience, subject to funding being made available.
- (c) Norse Land Agents be provided with mental health awareness training to ensure early indicators are capable of being identified and tenants can be signposted to appropriate sources of support.
- (d) Periodic 'pasty and pint nights' be arranged for tenants to get together with the Land Agents to meet and chat on an informal basis.
- (e) A business case be prepared to consider adopting more of the initiatives already implemented by the Duchy of Cornwall's 'Tenants Support and Wellbeing Service' that cannot be delivered without additional funding being made available.

2) Background / Introduction

- 2.1 In February 2023 the Farm Safety Foundation Charity published research suggested that 94% of UK farmers under the age of 40 rank poor mental health as the biggest hidden problem facing farmers today – a rise of 10% since 2018.
- 2.2 The Royal Agricultural Benevolent Institution's (RABI) Big Farming Survey conducted in 2021 revealed that 36% of farmers in the UK are probably depressed, while 47% are constantly struggling with anxiety. Moreover, of the 15,000 respondents involved in the survey, only 8% of women and 12% of men reported having good mental well-being.
- 2.3 Sadly, and according to the Office of National Statistics, there were 36 suicides recorded in England and Wales among those working in the farming and agricultural industry in 2021.

- 2.4 Fortunately, the crisis is being recognised by the industry and much work is being done to improve awareness within professionals such as vets who work closely with the farming community and to promote the problem, remove stigma, and encourage farmers to talk.
- 2.5 In October 2023 Adam Henson partnered with Team Doctor to create the 'Keeping on Track' podcast series, which aims to erase the stigma around mental health in farming and raise awareness of the challenges those in the rural profession face.
- 2.6 The Farming Charity 'yellow wellies' has now published its fifth edition of its 'Mind Your Head' Booklet which provides a wide range of general guidance, advice and signposting. A copy of the booklet is attached at Appendix 1.
- 2.5 There are also a number of national charities that are able to support the farming community with 24 hour helplines. Some of those Charities are listed below:

National Contacts:

- Royal Agricultural Benevolent Institution (RABI) Helpline – 0800 188 4444; website: www.rabi.org.uk; and email: help@rabi.org.uk
- Farm Safety Foundation (Yellow Wellies) website: www.yellowwellies.org and email: farm_safety_foundation@nfumutual.co.uk
- Farming Community Network (FCN) Helpline – 03000 111 999; website: www.fcn.org.uk; and email: help@fcn.org.uk
- Addington Fund website: www.addingtonfund.org.uk; and email: enquiries@addingtonfund.org.uk
- You Are Not Alone (YANA) – Helpline: 0300 323 0400; website: www.yanahelp.org; email: helpline@yanahelp.org
- Perennial – website: www.perennial.org.uk; and email: info@perennial.org.uk
- Samaritans – 116 123
- NHS Emergency – 999
- Papyrus HOPELINEUK – 0800 068 4141

Local Contacts:

- Dartmoor Hill Farm Project – website www.dartmoorhillfarmproject.co.uk and email: hfp@dartmoor.gov.uk
- Exmoor Hill Farming Network CIC – website – www.ehfn.org.uk; and email Katherine@ehfn.org.uk

3) Best Practice Exemplar in the Agricultural Landlord and Tenant Sector

- 3.1 In September 2023, the Duchy of Cornwall launched its 'Tenant Support & Wellbeing Service' as part of its Mental Health Strategy. Attached at Appendix 2 is a copy of the leaflet sent to all tenants.

3.2 Following the launch of the service, the Duchy's Rural Director, Matthew Morris, was contacted to gain a better understanding of the Strategy. Mr Morris kindly shared a copy of the Duchy's Mental Health Strategy on which much of this report is now based.

3.3 It is encouraging to see that His Royal Highness Prince William has placed mental health as a key objective for his time as Duke and for the Duchy of Cornwall to be the leading provider of mental health support to tenants and staff.

3.4 The key objectives of the strategy are:

- To ensure that the Duchy is an exemplar Estate, providing its tenants and its staff with the best resource it has at its disposal.
- For its tenants and staff to have access to a range of advice which is accessible in person, on the telephone and online.
- To build resilience and remove the stigma of talking about mental health.
- To be able to spot trends and to tailor advice on offer. Their farmers will be able to talk to someone who knows one end of a cow from another.
- Ensure that they make an active difference. They will host events and bring people together.

3.5 With a wider portfolio of tenants - from farmers to commercial business tenants to residential tenants, they have invested in and are delivering a range of services for its diverse tenants, as well as its staff.

3.6 A major part of the support offering includes:

- The delivery of the Tenants Assistance Programme providing a wide range of advice including access to trained counsellors, financial advice, and a range of wellbeing information.
- Direct links to farming specific assistance working alongside established 'farming help' charities.
- Training and support for 'front-line' staff including land agents & building surveyors.
- Establishing a network of mental health first aiders within the organisation.

3.7 The Duchy of Cornwall staff have been provided with training and mental resilience workshops and have access to an Employee Assistance Programme (provided by Health Assurance).

3.8 For their farm tenants they have hosted popular group events, albeit without a specific mental health focus. The events were in the form of 'pasty and pint nights' which proved popular and an excellent opportunity to get together in an informal setting and emphasising the importance of non-agenda meetings. They also intend building on Focus farm events and holding farm get togethers.

3.9 As part of the Tenant Support and Wellbeing Programme it is providing a bespoke service for its farm tenants ensuring they have access to agricultural advice via:

- A link to Duchy sponsored Farm Community Network (FCN) bespoke service including offering mental health resilience training

- Additional signposting to 'We Are Farming Minds' and RABI
- Link to Duchy Future Farming information.
- Offer of targeted farm business advice (in conjunction with Andersons/KMT consulting)

4) Options / Alternatives

- 4.1 Alternative options have been considered and discounted as they are believed to either be contrary to current Estate policy and/or not in the best financial interests of the Estate.

5) Consultations / Representations / Technical Data

- 5.1 The views and opinions of the Devon Federation of Young Farmers Clubs and the Estate Tenants Association will be presented by the two co-opted members to the committee.
- 5.2 No other parties have been consulted and no other representations have been received
- 5.3 The technical data is believed to be true and accurate.

6) Strategic Plan

- 6.1 This report has a direct alignment with the Council's Strategic Plan 2021 – 2025 - <https://www.devon.gov.uk/strategic-plan>

Improving health and wellbeing - improve mental health by improving access to mental health and wellbeing services and strengthening support for young people at risk of emotional or mental health problems

7) Financial Considerations

- 7.1 The Author is not aware of any financial issues arising from this report.

8) Legal Considerations

- 8.1 The Author is not aware of any legal issues arising from this report.

9) Environmental Impact Considerations (Including Climate Change, Sustainability and Socio-economic)

- 9.1 The Author is not aware of any environmental impact (including climate change) issues arising from this report.

10) Equality Considerations

10.1 The Author is not aware of any equality issues arising from this report.

11) Risk Management Considerations

11.1 No risks have been identified.

12) Summary / Conclusions / Reasons for Recommendations

12.1 The Author has prepared this report in accordance with the findings of the County Farms Estate Strategic Review (April 2010).

Matthew Jones,
Director of Transformation and Business Services

Electoral Divisions: All

Local Government Act 1972: List of background papers

Background Paper

Date

File Reference

Nil

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