**Guidance for Managers**

**Supporting The Wellbeing of You and Your Staff**

Please save and refer to this guidance which contains information and practical advice for managers as part of supporting the wellbeing of you and your staff, including those who may be experiencing stress and mental health issues.

The guidance has been prepared to provide support to managers on an ongoing basis and may be particularly useful at times of uncertainty, where it is recognised that there may be a heightened impact on wellbeing.

It contains information to supplement as well as signpost to existing information, all of which is available on the wellbeing website.

The Wellbeing team are currently running a programme of Wellbeing workshops. They can be delivered at a senior and middle management level as well as a team level. Bespoke sessions can be created to meet your specific needs. If you haven't already done so you can also book a wellbeing workshop for your team.

## 1. What is wellbeing?

In the Staff and Student Wellbeing Strategy 2021–2025 we have defined wellbeing as the state of being **comfortable, healthy and happy.** We regularly ask staff and students what this means for them and below are some of the indicators that they have contributed.

*Emotional wellbeing, Physical wellbeing, Positivity, social, healthy, comfortable, happy, work-life balance, mental Health, coping with demands, Spiritual, Respect.*

One of the key aspects of our strategy and driver to the work we do is **developing a shared understanding of wellbeing** at the University, including institutional and individual responsibilities – whether that is using the resources available, reading communications or being open about workload and how you are feeling.

Prioritising wellbeing can be particularly challenging in times of stress and uncertainty – for example, it's easy to say "I don't have time for that" – I have too much to do today so will work through lunch.

As managers and leaders, we have a crucial role to play here to support our teams to remember the importance of making time – whether it is using some of the tools and resources available, encouraging breaks or assessing and supporting with stress.

We all have a part to play in this for our own and others' wellbeing.

## 2. Why does good wellbeing matter?

Managing and supporting wellbeing at work is a critical and growing challenge for employers. Promoting good health and wellbeing is a core element of providing good work for people and improving their working lives.

Equally important are the positive business reasons for supporting staff mental health: positively managing mental health can reap rewards in terms of staff engagement, performance and loyalty.

**Thriving at Work: The Stevenson-Farmer review of mental health and employers** highlighted the significant costs to employers of mental health illness.

**Deloitte** has subsequently published biannual updates to this analysis, with the March 2022 report finding costs to employers amounting to £56 billion a year. This is made up of:

- absenteeism cost: £6.1 billion
- presenteeism cost: £24.8 billion to £27.6 billion
- staff turnover: £22.4 billion.

Poor wellbeing can impact in several ways:

- increase in absence
- increase in presenteeism
- increase in staff turnover
- conflict at work

## 3. Prevention – helping you and your staff to stay well

It is difficult but important for managers to model positive wellbeing behaviours, particularly during periods where there is change and uncertainty. Think about one small change you could make to your week to do this. The [managers guidance](#) outlines some steps you can take to proactively support your teams.

Remember that there is support for you and your teams. The Wellbeing website is constantly updated and all the information you need is there to refer to or signpost to.

It is important to lead by example – we have suggested some ways that you could do that:

- Take your **annual leave** and encourage your staff to do the same. You should only decline leave requests where operational demands make the request genuinely challenging and, where this is the case, agree alternative dates as soon as possible, that suit the member of staff foremost.
- **Encourage staff** to talk to you about concerns that they may have, actively listen and signpost to other support that may be helpful to them.
- **Workload** is a key area that we are aware causes concern. Embrace opportunities for addressing workload through more efficient working and follow guidance available on this. Again, actively encourage your staff to discuss concerns that they have with you. More guidance about addressing workload is also available below.
- Create time for you and your team to undertake **wellbeing activities** and to take activity breaks.
- Encourage open communication and practise [activie listening](#)
- Be open about your own workload demands and coping mechanisms


**More information on how to support your and your teams' wellbeing**
Staff Wellbeing Events & Activities – such as the Wellbeing Roadshows aimed at informing, empowering and supporting staff in relation to wellbeing and mental health.

Information about how to support your wellbeing.

July 2024

Learning and development (in person and online) training modules are available which can be accessed via the Wellbeing training webpage.

There are several Support Services available to you and your staff and you can also contact the following direct for advice: Wellbeing (wellbeing@adbn.ac.uk), Health and Safety (healthandsafety@abdn.ac.uk), Human Resources and the Trade unions.

Staff may also find joining one of our Staff networks helpful.

**Workload Management**

We know from feedback that workload is a key area that may impact on wellbeing and which we need to address.

Action is being taken, such as through the Workload Engagement Exercise  and activities undertaken between August 2023 and January 2024 (information about this is available online here). Work is also continuing to complete the other key priority actions,

As a manager you can play a part in proactively determining workload for you, individuals in your team and the team overall. There is guidance is available on having discussions about workload as well as strategies to manage workload.

To further help with reducing workload pressure, you should reinforce the guidance that was previously introduced with the aim of supporting a healthy work-life balance, in particular email etiquette and meeting free Fridays

## 4. Addressing wellbeing concerns, including supporting stress and mental health

As a manager you may have to take steps to actively manage and address wellbeing concerns being raised by your staff or where you have concerns about staff, based on indications that they may be struggling (e.g., due to absence, behaviours etc).

There are other resources available to support you including guidance to undertake a Wellbeing Conversation with staff. You may also find it helpful to develop a Wellness Action Plan.

Remember you can reach out to Human Resources and Health and Safety for advice/guidance on how to manage individual cases.

- **Stress**

Reasonable pressure at work can be positive and help individuals to thrive. However, work-related stress can occur when pressure exceeds a person's capacity to cope. The stage at which excessive pressure leads to work-related stress will vary between individuals.

Although stress is not a medical diagnosis, where it is prolonged, it can lead to both physical and psychological damage including anxiety and depression. Work-related stress can also aggravate an existing mental health problem, making it harder to control.

We all have a responsibility to address stress in the workplace, the Policy on the Management of Work Related Stress explains the responsibilities of both managers and employees in managing stress in the context of work and should be referred to regularly and as required.

All managers should proactively assess work-related stress. You may already be doing elements of this and perhaps don't realise. Perhaps through good practices such as regular team meetings, 1-1s, appraisals and regularly checking in with colleagues encouraging open dialogue about workload and their wellbeing can help to minimise the causes of stress.

Best practise is to proactively complete a stress risk assessment and action plan for your team at least once a year or when there have been changes within the team – this can be referred to and adapted as situations arise to support both manager and staff to manage stress.

A stress risk assessment can also be completed at an individual level for members of staff who may be particularly vulnerable and require additional support.

If you suspect or know that stress is a significant risk whether staff are absent or not, you should contact Health and Safety or your HR Partner to conduct a Stress Risk Assessment.

More information is available for managers at Stress Management and Support.

If you have any queries about this guidance, please contact your HR Partner.