

University of Aberdeen - Staff mental health and wellbeing case study

At the University of Aberdeen, we have a number of ongoing projects to support staff mental health:

Mental health and wellbeing working groups

The University has a Mental Health Working Group and a Stress Management task and finish group. With representation from across academic and non-academic sections of the University, these groups are responsible for influencing the content and delivery of action plans. In addition, there is a Workload Reduction Working Group.

Mental health and wellbeing resources

The [Wellbeing toolkit](#) and the [Mental Health](#) section of our website provide our community with access to essential information, support and activities to aid positive mental wellbeing.

Every week there is a wellbeing section in the staff e-newsletter providing regular information about a wide range of activities and support. For example, our weekly top tip feature shares peer advice on managing all aspects of wellbeing including mental health. Last year we created a staff wellbeing Facebook page which is used to share information and advice with colleagues across the University. In addition, it provides a space for colleagues to support and engage with each other – with over 900 members, this has proved to be an extremely useful network.

Our [wellbeing calendar maps](#) out our communication and engagement activity, in line with national campaigns. This month we have focused on [Men's Mental health](#), running a campaign to raise awareness and encourage our community to talk. We are currently in the process of creating a staff pressure point matrix which will look at the specific needs of the University's community, providing us with useful insights to better inform the information and support that we share, ensuring our community benefits from the support when they need it most.

Wellbeing activities

We organise a number of activities to encourage staff to be mindful of and to manage their mental wellbeing. A recent example of this is the [Walk this May](#) campaign which promoted and encouraged staff to have outdoor meetings, take regular screen breaks and to enjoy nature.

In addition to our employee assistance programme, access to [mind eLearning](#) and together all, during the Covid-19 pandemic, we have opened up our counselling services to support staff as well as students (check). The team has also organised a number of anxiety workshops over the summer months for both staff and students.

Other initiatives

We are in the final stages of developing our Wellbeing Strategy, which will be underpinned by a Mental Health Policy and Stress Management Policy. These are expected to be completed and launched for the start of the next academic year.

Our network of [Mental Health first aiders](#) and mental health champions meet monthly. The role of these individuals is to raise awareness of mental health and the support available to our staff as well as to champion the reduction in mental health stigma.

Throughout the pandemic the University has provided staff with a number of extra rest days and we have recently developed a new working from home policy.

Impact of initiatives

The initiatives have been well received and have been seen to have had a positive impact on staff wellbeing. The Wellbeing toolkit which was developed initially to support staff during the winter months of the Covid pandemic has proven to be a valuable resource. We have monitored link clicks since its creation and have seen high levels of engagement. Engagement continues to be monitored and content amended to reflect the key areas of interest. We monitor newsletter click throughs to content and gather anecdotal feedback from staff. A communication and engagement plan has been developed to target relevant support at key times of the year.

The development of the staff wellbeing Facebook page has visibly increased colleagues' connectivity with each other as well building awareness of the University networks and services resulting in increased interactions with these services. The Facebook page has also been actively used by colleagues who have shared their experiences, wins, and struggles over the last year. This has allowed for open conversations about mental health and has begun to reduce stigma and has created a sense of community and togetherness.

Engagement with focused national campaigns has varied. The campaigns that get the most engagement are those that focus on live experiences from the University community. An evaluation of the Mental Health First Aid network is ongoing but there has been significant positive anecdotal feedback from first aiders about the network and access to resources and training.

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