

University of Gloucestershire - staff mental health and wellbeing case study

Mental Wellbeing Policy

The University of Gloucestershire is committed to ensuring staff maintain good mental health and to providing support in the event that staff experience poor mental health. This is backed up by our Mental Wellbeing Policy introduced in 2019 to make the University's commitment to safeguarding mental health and wellbeing, and to promoting a supportive workplace culture. It also sets out responsibilities at key levels within the organisation, including for staff.

Alongside this policy, we have a Stress Management Framework, and work to the HSE Stress Management Standards. During 2020 we undertook a survey of staff, which included some of the key areas for assessing against the HSE standards and resulted in a Stress Risk Assessment. We continue to work through the findings of this Assessment – focusing on the areas with the highest levels of risk. The organisation Risk Assessment has been published to all staff.

Embedding a supportive wellbeing culture

We operate a Health and Wellbeing Steering Group, which sits alongside the Health and Safety Committee to review key issues and identify further support that can be put in place. The University works to the Public Health England Workplace Wellbeing Charter standards and these have been instrumental in guiding us to focus on those issues of most import – and helped us to identify in 2017 that we needed to do more to meet the standards with respect to mental wellbeing. This led us to commit to the Time to Change Pledge, which we refreshed in 2020. Since 2017 we have been on a journey to enhance our approach and support to staff, most recently resulting in the creation of a team of Mental Wellbeing Facilitators to seek to embed a supportive culture of wellbeing, who have received bespoke training and achieved their Mental Health First Aid Certificate.

The Mental Wellbeing Facilitators promote all the wellbeing offers we have available to staff to ensure broader understanding of the information and broad range of support that people can tap into both internally and in the local community. It is also to encourage conversation and to normalise conversations around mental health in the workplace, and to offer initial support to colleagues who may be struggling. We also offer an Employee Assistance Service through an outside provider, which ensures that staff who need counselling support can access that easily with no gateways. We recognise that mental health is greatly impacted by physical health, and since January 2021, particularly recognising the impact of Covid on staff wellbeing, have provided staff with access to a comprehensive programme of on-line exercise activities such as Pilates, Yoga, strength and conditioning, and other types of classes. This has been very positively received by staff and has had a good level of take-up. The programme is provided through [King's College London](#). Over this period, we have also promoted a range of webinars for staff to ensure awareness of how to maintain good mental health and what to do if staff experience difficulties.

Maintaining high standards into the future

We plan to conduct a further survey of staff on other initiatives that may enhance wellbeing in the next academic year once some of the initiatives implemented over the last year have had a chance to embed. A particular initiative of importance has been to review how workloads are allocated to our academic staff due to concerns identified through our staff survey about the level of work pressure. The approach will change in preparation for 2021-22 academic year and the impact of this will be regularly reviewed. We also continue to work with Gloucestershire Lifestyles, an arm of Public Health in the county, to meet the local standards that have been developed to ensure healthy workplaces.