

University of Wolverhampton – Supporting the mental health of our staff

As a result of the pandemic, the University has further developed its offering, available to all staff.

1. The core offering

The University provides both an Occupational Health Scheme and an Employee Assistance Programme (which offers counselling support where appropriate). This is supplemented by a 24/7 online, self-help support platform 'Togetherall' which provides support for any staff member who is struggling to cope or needs a place to talk.

In January, support was extended to include the 'Access to Work Mental Health Support Services' offered in partnership with Remploy. By June, 14 members of staff have contacted Remploy for support.

2. The Staff Wellbeing Hub

The University responded to the first national lockdown and the move of staff to home working, within days. Web pages were produced which advised staff of general Covid-19 advice, mental health support, musculoskeletal support etc... This was developed into a '[Staff Wellbeing Hub](#)', which now receives on average 350 visits per month. There is now a full section of resources to support mental wellbeing within the Hub as well as sections on 'crisis' (focusing on suicidal thoughts and self-harm) and domestic abuse. The Hub also includes links to the 'Good Grief' support sessions to help those who have been bereaved.

3. Online workshops

The University has moved many of its workshops online, including the suite of Resilience and Mindfulness programmes. In addition, we are about to recommence our award-winning 'Three Minutes to Save a Life' workshops in an online format. These workshops focus on suicide and self-harm.

We have launched a 'Let's Talk' workshop in the last month which helps line managers to have effective wellbeing conversations with their staff. It is built around the HSE six drivers of stress described within their '[Talking Toolkit](#)'.

4. Collaboration

Since the first national lockdown, the University has run two pulse surveys aimed at understanding how staff were coping during the pandemic and one full survey focused on health and wellbeing. From the results of these surveys, each Faculty and Directorate has their own local action plan to support staff. These local actions are in addition to university-wide actions which are now in train (a new section in the Hub around Staff with Caring Responsibilities, a new Health and Wellbeing strategy based around prevention etc...)

5. A calendar of events

The University now runs regular events to support the wellbeing of staff. Below are two examples of this:

- World Mental Health Awareness Day on 10 October became a focus of activities for the whole month. This included Resilience and 'Let's chat' workshops and a promotion of the [#DoOneThing activity](#) (reference Mind – the mental health charity) where staff sent in pictures of things they were doing to support their mental wellbeing during lockdown.
- [National Day of Reflection](#) – 23 March – a full programme of events which staff could dip in and out of during the day (approximately 100 staff took part) and the University promoted the minute's silence at mid-day to help staff to reflect in a positive way and remember the bereaved.

6. Vice Chancellor Q&A sessions

Throughout the pandemic, the University has hosted a series of live staff Q&A sessions giving colleagues the opportunity to pose questions to senior leaders and the Vice Chancellor. Each session is recorded so that staff who cannot attend can catch up by watching the video. As well as general sessions where questions on any topic have been invited, there has also been specific questions for HR and our Living Well Campus project. Future themes will cover research and the course portfolio review.

Keeping staff informed and giving them the opportunity to ask questions, has certainly supported mental wellbeing in these extraordinary times.

7. Covid-19 testing

A recent staff survey showed that 80% of our staff felt that the University managed the risks related to Covid well or very well. This has been achieved by many activities from communicating the location of local test sites (and even hosting a test site on our Walsall campus for a period of time) to return to campus eLearning modules developed for staff and students. This work will be continued and enhanced as more staff return to working on site.

Future focus

Our staff are telling us clearly, within employee surveys, that they want to see a much greater emphasis on prevention rather than remedy within our wellbeing activities. This will be reflected in the HR Operations plan for the next three years

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