

## Wellbeing Annual Report Summary 2015-16

### 1. Summary

This paper provides a summary of the work undertaken by the Wellbeing Steering Group and related groups during the 2015-16 academic year. It also examines stress and wellbeing related information collected by the University and provides an overview of the services available to staff and institutions to enhance wellbeing and reduce the risk of stress at work.

Section 7 of this paper summarises actions being taken forward for the coming year.

### 2. Background

The University of Cambridge recognises it has a legal obligation to look after the physical and mental wellbeing of its employees. Our Wellbeing Strategy defines wellbeing as:

*'creating an environment that promotes a state of contentment which allows an employee to flourish and achieve their full potential for the benefit of themselves and their organisation'.*

The Strategy recognises that, through the integration of wellbeing in all work activities and practices, a positive environment can be created compatible with promoting staff engagement, performance and achievement.

The Preventing Stress and Promoting Wellbeing policy implemented in 2014 sets out the University's commitment to providing a safe and healthy working environment for its staff whilst recognising the importance of fostering psychological as well as physical well-being.

### 3. Wellbeing Steering Group

This Group (established in 2011) produces an annual report, which is presented to the HR Committee, Health and Safety Executive Committee and the Trade Unions. A summary of the work undertaken last year related to wellbeing is set out below.

### 4. Wellbeing Initiatives

#### 4.1 Festival of Wellbeing (27 June – 8 July 2016)

People Matter Week (PMW) was first held in 2010 and then repeated annually, extending from a one-day event to activities over two weeks. In 2016 the event was renamed the 'Festival of Wellbeing' to reflect the programme's development, covering a range of events related to mental and physical wellbeing. It highlights the University's recognition that a safe and healthy working environment contributes to staff motivation, job satisfaction, performance and creativity.

**The most popular events** were the 'Power of negotiation', SPACE – Supporting Parents and Carers at Cambridge; Sleep and Transition; Recharge and Refocus and sessions run by the Sports Centre.

Very positive responses about the events and the Festival were given in a feedback survey completed by attendees.

Other E&D Activity around Wellbeing which formed the basis of the new Equality and Diversity Strategy included Athena SWAN, introducing My Family Care (emergency family care), Unconscious Bias online training, 'Where Do you Draw the Line' training and the Race Equality Charter.

#### 4.2 Management Essentials

This programme (comprising two half days) continued with the aim of developing foundation level management and leadership skills, covering management responsibilities, leadership styles, giving feedback and handling difficult conversations. There were just under 200 participants last year.

#### 4.3 Wellbeing Programme run by the School of Clinical Medicine

The School of Clinical Medicine ran a Wellbeing Programme in 2015/16 which was highlighted as a “beacon activity” for the School’s Athena SWAN renewal in November 2016.

## **5. Review of Wellbeing Data**

Several of the University’s staff support services record stress-related data. A summary is provided below to illustrate the focus of this report.

### **5.1 Occupational Health Service**

Improving sickness absence management and keeping people at work is in line with the government’s agenda of protecting an individual’s longer term health and wellbeing. The Occupational Health Service provides an annual report to the Health and Safety Executive Committee on their activity.

**In 2015/16 there was an increase in new referrals of 13% compared with the previous year.**

Psychological conditions accounted for 37% of these (decreased from 45% the previous year), of which 42% presented work as being a contributory factor. Musculoskeletal health issues accounted for 50% (same percentage as last year).

Over the year the OHS provided 10 training sessions to University staff and students on subjects ranging from workplace ergonomics to advice on mental health at work.

### **5.2 Staff Counselling Service**

This Service also reports annually on its work, including case data. Staff usually come to the Service with an immediate concern. However, there are often other issues underlying this which are very likely to affect their personal and work life.

**In 2015/16 the Staff Counselling Service received 3% more new referrals,** continuing a trend of year-on-year increases. Additional posts were created during the year to deal with increased demand.

The growth in referrals was due to a number of factors, including the increase in staff numbers, the Service’s success, increasing awareness of this facility, and the depletion of external services.

The Service continues to work closely with colleagues from the Occupational Health Service (OHS) and HR and line managers, with priority given to clients who these departments feel require urgent attention. These early interventions often help to ameliorate problems before they reach crisis point.

The Service changed its waiting time policy as a result of responses to a client survey, implementing a single session initial consultation policy. The Service now aims to see 75% of clients within two weeks of referral. The client survey found that 94% felt that counselling helped them deal better with life as a whole.

### **5.3 Sickness Absence Data (CHRIS)**

The rate and trends of sickness absence across the University are monitored on an annual basis from absence data input by institutions directly into CHRIS.

Mental health/stress is one of the listed ‘reasons for sickness’ on CHRIS. However, it should be noted that this very broad definition of stress, including ‘work related stress’, is not distinguished as a separate category. Also, staff may use the ‘other’ category when recording absence, if they do not wish to disclose the reason for their absence. In addition, prolonged exposure to stress symptoms can result in other disorders, including musculo-skeletal problems, depression, headache/migraine, gastro-intestinal or circulation/heart problems, which could be recorded as the reason for absence.

**During 2015/16 the average sickness absence per employee in the University was 3.7 working days, of which 0.5 days’ absence was due to stress or mental health** (the same rate as last year).

These figures compare favourably with national figures of 6.9 days sickness absence on average per annum across industry, 8.3 days in ‘not for profit’ employers and 10.1 days in the Education sector. *However, as in previous years it is likely there is under-reporting and recording of sickness absence, particularly for academic and research staff, resulting in lower average figures.*

Mental health/stress makes up 17% of all sick leave (compared with 13% last year), below the cold or flu rate (increased from 17% to 19%).

It should also be noted that the 'other' reason is still high at 21% (30% last year). It is hoped that the focus on mental health awareness, one of the initiatives to be taken forward further to the work of a strategic working group, may result in a further reduction in this reason for sickness absence. Ways of encouraging recording will be explored.

#### **5.4 Staff Turnover**

Data taken from the CHRIS system show a current turnover rate of 18%, lower than the average across all industries in the UK in 2015 (21%). For resignations only, the rate (10.3%) is comparable with the median rate across the UK (9.8%).

### **6. Other Initiatives to improve well-being in the workplace (including monitoring data)**

#### **6.1 University Mediation Service**

Disputes and disagreements between staff can be a significant source of stress. The University has its own confidential internal staff mediation service for quick and effective informal resolution of workplace disputes.

**During the academic year 2014/15 a small number cases went ahead, but more than last year.**

In addition to full day mediation sessions (with two mediators), from January 2016 the Service piloted offering a 'Facilitated Discussion' service, with positive feedback so far. The discussion, which takes between 2-3 hours, involves the two parties (as in mediation) but with one mediator facilitating.

#### **6.2 University Dignity at Work Service**

**During 2016 the Dignity at Work Service dealt with under 30 cases, fewer than last year (under 50).**

The Dignity at Work Policy and new toolkit were launched during summer 2016, with new publicity material.

#### **6.4 Other work supporting wellbeing:**

Other initiatives supporting the wellbeing agenda include:

- *Wellbeing related benefits and discounts* offered through the CAMbens scheme.
- *Salary sacrifice schemes* including childcare/nursery fees and travel season tickets.
- *Equality and Diversity initiatives*, for example on gender equality, including Athena SWAN activity.
- *Staff Surveys*: Analysis of responses to questions related to wellbeing shows that the main area of concern was the University support offered to balance work and home life. Initiatives proposed by the Health and Wellbeing Group will help address these concerns (see para 7).

### **7. Wellbeing Plans for 2016/17**

#### **7.1 Health and Wellbeing Working Group**

This strategic working group was set up to review the current approach to stress and wellbeing at the University with the goal of developing initiatives that provide a more comprehensive and holistic approach to health and wellbeing for staff that progresses our wellbeing strategy and takes into account best practice within the University, the HE sector and industry.

Proposals put forward by this Group to focus initially on mental health awareness, managing work demands and developing a website to host wellbeing information were approved by HR Committee in January 2017. These initiatives will be launched by Professor Ferran, Pro Vice-Chancellor for International and Institutional Affairs at the Festival of Wellbeing in June 2017.

*An operational group* will take this work forward, reporting back to the Health and Wellbeing Working Group which will provide strategic oversight. This Sub-Group will replace the Steering Group but its terms of reference will include reviewing and reporting on relevant annual data so that progress on taking forward wellbeing initiatives and their impact can be evaluated.

In addition, the *People Matter Week Planning Group* will continue to support the planning and implementation of the '*Festival of Wellbeing*' in the Summer of 2017 (26 June to 7 July 2017 inclusive).

## **7.2 Developing Managers' Skills**

The following programmes will be provided:

- *Essential Skills for Leaders and Managers*: this will continue to be included on the scheduled PPD programme, as well as being offered locally. The separate *Managing Change* briefing will also continue to be provided, to support managers in taking forward organisational change.
- *Leadership Essentials for Academics, including PI's*: this briefing session will be developed and taken forward as part of the Health and Wellbeing Group proposals, as part of the actions proposed to address concerns about the impact of work demands on staff wellbeing.
- *Staff Counselling Workshops*: these will continue to be provided, as well as a session for managers (with PPD) on stress management responsibilities.

## **7.3 Developing Individuals' Skills**

Various sessions will be provided to build staff skills with the aim of improving wellbeing, as follows:

- *Mental health awareness*: this initiative is being taken forward as part of the Health and Wellbeing Working Group proposals and will include providing the Mental Health Lite session run by the charity Mind to Wellbeing Advocates nominated by departments.
- *Lunchtime briefings*: this initiative is also being taken forward as part of the Health and Wellbeing Working Group proposals and will provide information on topics related to mental health awareness and managing work demands, such as building resilience, mindfulness, meditation, work/life balance and lifestyle/diet.
- *Stress, Coping and Relaxation*: these courses provided by Staff Counselling will continue, reviewing the provision of a shorter briefing (than a full day) so to reach more staff.
- *Mental Health, Wellbeing and Resilience*: this one-hour session has been piloted by Occupational Health Service in departments and will continue to be provided, together with tailored briefings on request covering topics such as mental health at work and ergonomics. A programme of activities for 2017/18 will be circulated to departments.
- *Fitness and diet*: the Sports Centre will promote its activities and its staff will also provide information on ways of improving fitness through local activities.
- *Local wellbeing activities*: the Wellbeing website will provide a place where, in addition to centrally run initiatives, local wellbeing activities can be displayed to improve staff awareness and participation. In particular, links to the Wellbeing Programme run by the School of Clinical Medicine which continue to provide much information (including Newsletters) and support will be provided.

## **8. Conclusion**

The work of the Wellbeing Steering Group by taking forward a few key initiatives each year arising from reviewing the data and discussion at the annual meeting, as well as producing an annual report, has helped in building awareness of wellbeing issues. This work, including developing a framework strategy document, laid a solid footing to take forward a more comprehensive approach by the strategic working group, taking into account best practice across HEIs and in Industry.

The initiatives proposed by the Working Group, focussing initially on mental health awareness and managing work demands, and launching them at the Festival of Wellbeing 2017, with improved communications including a Wellbeing website and a Wellbeing logo (WellCAM), will provide a more comprehensive approach. The governance structure, with a operational group reporting to the working group, will enable the development of further programmes of work, supported by a Wellbeing Champion to be appointed by E&D Division in October 2017 that will broaden the scope of wellbeing to include disability.