

Welcome

Welcome to the first e-newsletter of the Improving performance through wellbeing and engagement project.

Following on from the successful HEFCE funded Creating Success Through Wellbeing in Higher Education project, this two-year HEFCE funded project aims to take institutions to the next level in terms of their understanding and practice relating to employee wellbeing and engagement.

The project aims to:

- Develop robust evidence for a higher education specific business case for employee engagement and wellbeing
- Increase sector understanding around topic-based interventions, their implementation for maximum benefits, and the impact they can have on performance indicators
- Develop a clear evaluation criteria for a range of workplace interventions
- Increase expertise, and build

capacity, across the sector around key engagement and wellbeing topics, creating a sustainable solution which supports institutions beyond the lifetime of the project.

This month we launched our new website. We aim to make www.wellbeing.ac.uk the go-to place for information, resources and advice on establishing, developing and improving your institution's wellbeing and engagement initiatives.

We hope you enjoy this first issue of our e-newsletter. This quarterly e-newsletter is part of the benefits enjoyed by subscribers to our website. For details of how to subscribe visit www.wellbeing.ac.uk

“This project aims to take institutions to the next level in their understanding and practice relating to employee wellbeing and engagement.”

Get involved

The easiest way to get involved is through our new website at www.wellbeing.ac.uk

Here you will find all the latest information about the project as well as a range of online resources and information designed to help you and your institutions to enhance your practice.

Inside this issue

Why wellbeing matters

Professor Michael Arthur, Vice-Chancellor of the University of Leeds and Professor Eric Thomas, Vice-Chancellor of the University of Bristol share their thoughts on what this project can contribute to the higher education sector.



Wellbeing, work and higher education



Professor Ivan Robertson shares his views on the importance of psychological wellbeing at work and why he is supporting the project.

Plus...

Case Study

Lifestyle and fitness testing.

Wellbeing by numbers

Focus on disengagement.

Resources

Our directory helps you to find resources to inform and support your practice.

Why wellbeing matters

A message from our joint project sponsors.



Professor Michael Arthur,
Vice-Chancellor,
University of Leeds

Professor Eric Thomas,
Vice-Chancellor,
University of Bristol

“We must not forget that our people are the key to success.”

As we face the challenges of a difficult economic climate, changing demands and the ever-competitive international market, we must not forget that our people are the key to success.

Improving Performance through Wellbeing and Engagement will help us develop successful and resilient institutions and staff who remain motivated, healthy and engaged.

We know from experience that it does not take huge sums of money to make a difference – but the commitment needs to be in the longer term if we are to realise the true benefits for individuals and institutions alike.

Universities recognise they have work to do in this area, and we are on the journey to equipping our leaders and managers to meet these challenges, developing the right policies and putting support structures in place.

We are extremely pleased to see the investment being made by HEFCE in this project. Through developing a robust business case, practical tools and case studies, and creating opportunities to learn and share, we are confident that this work will provide significant benefits to the sector.

“Improving Performance through Wellbeing and Engagement will help us develop successful and resilient institutions and staff who remain motivated, healthy and engaged.”

Wellbeing by numbers

Counting the cost of disengagement

£44billion

The amount research for the civil service estimated that disengaged workers cost the UK per year in lost productivity (IPA, 2008).

78%

of highly engaged workers in the UK public sector said they can make an impact on public services delivery of customer services delivery versus only 29% of disengaged employees (Civil Service – making the case, cited in MacLeod Review, 2009).

59%

of engaged employees said that their job brings out the most creative ideas against only 3% of disengaged employees (Gallup, 2008).

£598million

If 10% increase in performance is worth a minimum 5% of salary (£1606 per employee), potential financial gain to the UK HE sector is £598,170,760 (calculations taken from Robertson Cooper Ltd).

Scottish Funding Council joins project partnership

We welcome our Scottish colleagues to the project.

We are delighted to announce that the Scottish Funding Council will be joining the project partnership this April.

Support from the Scottish Funding Council means that colleagues in higher education institutions in Scotland will now have full access to the project, events and resources.

“colleagues in Higher Education Institutions in Scotland will now have full access to the project, events and resources”

The University of Glasgow will be the lead institution for Scotland. Selina Woolcott, Director of Health, Safety and Wellbeing at the University of Glasgow will be joining our Executive Group and acting as lead representative for Scotland.

If you work in a Higher Education institution in Scotland and would like further information or to get involved, please contact Kim Shutler-Jones, Project Manager, at k.shutler-jones@leeds.ac.uk

Wellbeing events

13th – 14th April
USHA Spring Conference
TLC Training, Learning and Competency
Manchester Metropolitan University
www.usha.org.uk

19th – 21st April
AHUA Spring Conference
Aston University
www.ahua.ac.uk

28th April
Academy of Social Sciences Work and Wellbeing Conference
London, Unilever House
www.acss.org.uk/news.htm

11th – 14th May
UHR Annual Conference
'Fit for Purpose, fit for the future'
including HR Awards Gala Dinner
Leicester Marriott
www.uhr.ac.uk/conferences

13th – 16th July
BUCS Conference 2010
University Challenge:
Delivering more for less
Keele University
www.bucs.org.uk

New guidance on employee engagement

Following on from the findings of David MacLeod's Report, *Engaging for Success: enhancing performance through employee engagement*, the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills (BIS) has recently launched new guidance for employers.

The Department for Business, Innovation and Skills has worked with a range of business leaders, employers and employee engagement practitioners to develop a range of practical guidance to help employers improve the way they engage with their employees.

Available resources include: an overview of what engagement means, its benefits and how to get started; advice on communicating your strategy; inspiring managers in your organisation to challenge and support their people and help those employees achieve their potential; establishing an employee voice in your organisation; and defining, communicating and embedding employee engagement values and behaviours in your business.

The resources are available at:

<http://www.businesslink.gov.uk/bdotg/action/detail?type=CAMPAIGN&itemId=1083721380>

Wellbeing in action

Newcastle University carried out lifestyle and fitness testing with their estates maintenance staff – what were the results?

Newcastle University carried out MOT lifestyle and fitness testing and launched a programme that included lifestyle and fitness screening for estates maintenance staff.

Timed so that it was aligned with Men's Health Week UK, Occupational health, Maintenance management and their staff led the initiative, and staff from Sports and Recreation supported the screening processes.

The initiative was designed to give participants an indication of their current health and fitness. It engaged staff with the topic of healthy lifestyles and fitness in an appealing way, motivating them to make proactive health improvements.

Communication was aligned with the work for Men's Health Week UK 2008. A poster and flyer were produced and sent to maintenance staff, followed with team briefings by maintenance management.

Initially, maintenance team were sceptical about the motives for the

work, but with reassurance through briefings were happy that there was no hidden agenda. And support from senior managers within the maintenance team to test employees during work time, made it easier for the vast majority of the team to attend testing.

There was an 80% take-up on the screening – a baseline fitness and lifestyle profile using the MOT Passport document. Notably three employees were identified as having significant health issues that were previously undiagnosed and were forwarded to their GPs for follow up.

Newcastle is tracking improvement in absence frequency rates, particularly for lifestyle issues.

Do you have a case study you would like to share?

We are seeking examples of work from inside and outside the sector to add to our growing library. To share your story please email f.m.livermore@adm.leeds.ac.uk

What's new at www.wellbeing.ac.uk

Our new website is now live! The website has been re-designed to be easier and quicker to use as well as to enable us to offer a wider range of resources. Over the coming months we will be adding new materials to the website including new case studies, tool-kits and resources.

Subscribers to the website gain full access to all our online resources as well as mentoring through our expert panel, a quarterly e-newsletter and become part of our growing network.

We hope you enjoy the improvements and look forward to hearing your feedback.

New workplace wellbeing tool

A new Workplace Wellbeing tool has been developed to replace the Business Health Check Tool.

An improved web-based version, it provides step-by-step guidance to employers to support them to work towards improving the health and wellbeing of people in their organisation.

The free tool, allows employers to: estimate the cost of employee ill-health in their organisation; benchmark this against other organisations; get practical ideas on how to improve health and wellbeing related costs; and analyse the costs and benefits of investing in a wellbeing programme.

For more information please visit: <http://www.workingforhealth.gov.uk/Initiatives/business-healthcheck-tool>

People Management Framework

The People Management Framework has now been piloted and is currently being refined by PwC who are working with Universities HR on the project.

The tool enables organisations to measure the effectiveness of their people management interventions and activities and has the ability to demonstrate links between people-management practices and university-wide performance - including student outcomes.

It can provide a platform for discussions between HR and managers, giving a 'scorecard' activities and measures and should encourage local benchmarking.

The tool will be launched at the UHR conference in May, and available to use thereafter.

For further information, contact the UHR project leader for PMF, Nick Rogers, HR Director, Kingston University nick.rogers@kingston.ac.uk.

Research and resources

Useful resources to inform and support your practice

Clever: Leading Your Smartest, Most Creative People

Rob Goffee, Gareth Jones, Harvard Business School Press, 2009.

In brief: (from the publisher) "Clever people are as fiercely independent as they are clever. So, how do you corral these players in your organization and inspire them to achieve their highest potential?"

In *Clever*, Rob Goffee and Gareth Jones offer insights drawn from their extensive research. This book provides ideas, practices, and examples to create an environment where your most brilliant people can flourish."

Where to find it: Bookshops or <http://www.amazon.co.uk/Clever-Leading-Smartest-Creative-People/dp/1422122964>

Working our way to better mental health: a framework for action

In brief: In December 2009 the Government launched *Working our way to better mental health: a framework for action*, the first ever national mental health and employment strategy.

Where to find it: with related documents at <http://www.workingforhealth.gov.uk/Initiatives/Mental-health-and-employment-strategy/Default.aspx>

Is Knowledge Work Better For Us? Knowledge workers, good work and wellbeing

Michelle Mahdon, Rebecca Fauth, Ian Brinkley and Sotiria

Theodopoulou, February 2010.

In brief: Drawing on the findings of The Work Foundation's Knowledge Workers survey, this report asks if knowledge work is good work and therefore better for our health and wellbeing.

Where to find it: <http://www.theworkfoundation.com/research/publications.aspx>

Mental Capital and Wellbeing: Making the most of ourselves in the 21st century

Foresight Mental Capital and Wellbeing Project, 2008.

In brief: The project looked at the available scientific and other evidence and considered the factors that influence an individual's mental development and wellbeing from conception until death.

It assessed how these are affected by: the policies of key Government departments; important stakeholders such as educators, healthcare professionals and employers; and the diverse environments in which we live. It also analysed possible interventions to address future challenges.

Where to find it: <http://www.foresight.gov.uk/OurWork/ActiveProjects/Mental%20Capital/ProjectOutputs.asp>

HEFCE Higher education workforce framework 2010

The higher education (HE) workforce framework looks at the major considerations and challenges that face the workforce of the English HE sector. It examines key issues and draws on evidence to inform policy making and strategic planning at higher education institutions (HEIs).

As part of the underpinning research for the HE workforce framework reports, HEFCE have commissioned and published five independent reports.

The framework, reports and a sector impact assessment of the framework are available to view at <http://www.hefce.ac.uk/lgm/hr/frame/>

The page also includes an overview of trends and profiles of staff employed in English HEIs.

Wellbeing, work and higher education

Professor Ivan Robertson shares his views on the importance of psychological wellbeing at work and why he is supporting the project.



Prof. Ivan Robertson

Ivan Robertson is a Chartered Psychologist, Fellow of the British Psychological Society and Fellow of the British Academy of Management. He holds a Chair in Work and Organisational Psychology at Leeds University Business School and is Emeritus Professor at the University of Manchester. He is also Managing Director of Robertson Cooper Ltd – a University of Manchester spin-off business dedicated to improving well-being, performance and leadership.

Robertson Cooper Ltd.

We are working closely on two strands of the project with Robertson Cooper, who will be providing guidance around the development of an evaluation framework and criteria for our topic-based interventions as well as carrying out the wellbeing and performance mapping exercise.

I have spent well over thirty years working as an academic in the British university system. During that time I have seen colleagues wilting under extremely high degrees of pressure and others who have apparently been untouched by the stresses and strains of the job – either because they seemed to be someone who thrived on pressure or able to manage their professional life in a way that limited their exposure to extreme pressure.

The university system is about to feel the impact of massive financial cuts. I was working in the system throughout the 1980s and recall that for many years we had to cope with year on year cuts of 1-2%. This was hard. We won't be able to be sure until after the election, but the impending cuts seem as if they may be even more severe.

As well as first hand experience of working as an academic during good times and bad I also have a specific research and professional interest in wellbeing, especially psychological wellbeing. This is an interesting field of study and is capable of producing findings that are both uplifting – and bleak or frankly, quite scary!

“Psychological wellbeing...is an interesting field of study and is capable of producing findings that are both uplifting – and bleak or frankly, quite scary!”

Some of the scary findings include relationships between psychological wellbeing and serious physical illness. For example in a study published in 2004 Carol Ryff and colleagues reported links between psychological wellbeing and a range of serious health conditions such as higher cardiovascular risk, poorer immune system functioning lower HDL (good) cholesterol.

“positive psychological wellbeing has a favourable effect on survival in both healthy and diseased populations” Chida and Steptoe

There is another way of looking at links between psychological wellbeing and physical health. In a recent article, published in Psychosomatic Medicine, Yoichi Chida and Andrew Steptoe carried out a meta-analysis of 35 separate

longitudinal studies examining the relationship between psychological wellbeing and mortality. They found that positive psychological wellbeing had a protective effect. Overall, the research that they examined showed that positive psychological wellbeing was associated with reduced mortality rates for healthy people and reduced mortality for patients with specific illnesses, such as immune system viruses and kidney failure. They concluded that, “...positive psychological well-being has a favourable effect on survival in both healthy and diseased populations.” So, in my mind, there is little doubt that positive psychological wellbeing is a good thing.

Another stream of research in this field has looked at the workplace factors that have an impact on psychological wellbeing – again uplifting or scary findings, depending on how you look at them.

The impact of job strain on the individual has been heavily reported by researchers. One of the best series of research studies in the UK (the Whitehall Study) has explored the relationships between job conditions, individual health and other outcomes in a study of government employees. The results revealed that factors in the job, such as low levels of control and autonomy, were associated with an increased risk of serious illness. So, low psychological wellbeing caused by workplace factors is a major health risk for employees and improving the job factors reduces this risk.

The workplace factors that have an impact on psychological wellbeing are beginning to be reasonably well-understood, and of course, if they can be identified and influenced, it should be possible to ensure that fewer people are exposed to the

“low psychological wellbeing caused by workplace factors is a major health risk for employees and improving the job factors reduces this risk.”

kinds of serious risks that reduced levels of psychological wellbeing can bring about.

The fact that workplace factors, such as control, autonomy and relationships with others can damage psychological well-being should not automatically lead to the conclusion that work itself is a bad thing. Indeed, another stream of research has established that work is actually good for people – well actually that’s not quite what’s been established – it’s only “good” work that is good for people!

Quite a lot is known about what constitutes “good” work. Recently the National Institute of Clinical Excellence (NICE) and the TUC, amongst other bodies, have drawn on the available research and spelled out what they see as the characteristics of “good” work - that is work that leads to higher levels of well-being.

“Some of the characteristics of good work include: opportunity for esteem, support and respect; being free from precariousness; enabling some control and participatory decision-making.”

Some of the characteristics of good work that come through most strongly include: opportunity for esteem, support and respect; being free from precariousness; enabling some control and participatory decision-making. It’s very clear that certain kinds of work (some – but by no means all – call centre jobs) fall into the category of

“bad” work. My experience in universities showed me several examples of work that certainly lacked some of the key ingredients of good work.

Redesigning work is only one of the initiatives that can be introduced to improve psychological wellbeing at work. Other possibilities include better support and counselling services, better management and supervision and flexible working.

Initiatives to improve wellbeing are sometimes clustered into one of three levels: primary; secondary and tertiary. Primary level interventions include things such as the redesign of the work people do. At the other end of the scale, tertiary interventions involve initiatives that attempt to improve wellbeing without making fundamental changes - for example, employee counselling services.

In some senses tertiary level interventions may sound like mere “sticking plaster”. This may be true but when used as part of an overall, strategic approach to wellbeing they have a part to play.

With the impending cuts that are likely to be made in university funding it seems to me that anything that might help to safeguard, or improve the wellbeing of members of staff in the system is to be welcomed, that’s one of the reasons why I am happy to be involved in the work that is being done as part of this project.

“anything that might help to safeguard, or improve the wellbeing of members of staff in the system is to be welcomed, that’s one of the reasons why I am happy to be involved in the work that is being done as part of this project.”

Resources

www.roberstoncooper.co.uk

www.nice.org.uk

Ryff, C.D., Singer, B.H., & Love, G.D. (2004). [Positive health: Connecting well-being with biology](#). Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society of London B, 359, 1383-1394.

Chida Y, Steptoe A. [Positive psychological well-being and mortality: a quantitative review of prospective observational studies](#). Psychosom Med. 2008;70:741-756

Kuper, H. and Marmot, M. [Job strain, job demands, decision latitude, and risk of coronary heart disease within the Whitehall II study](#). J Epidemiol Community Health 2003;57:147-153

Wellbeing is...

Nina Quinlan, Wellbeing Project Manager, The University of Leeds.



Nina Quinlan joined the University of Leeds in September 2007, as the HE sector's first full time dedicated Wellbeing Project Manager.

With a remit to promote organisational wellbeing, she manages the wellbeing support services for staff at the University, including a legal advice helpline; as a qualified mediator she runs an in-house mediation service, and a staff counselling service.

“for me, organisational wellbeing is about influencing all levels of a workplace, from individual to structural and political levels, to embed principles of support, understanding and alignment.”

As an organisational wellbeing specialist, I believe that although wellbeing is very much an individually defined set of feelings, there are two key workplace elements that can have a major influence on it.

Firstly, positive wellbeing is reported by people who feel that the work they are doing is congruent with their internal values and consistent with their personal goals. In practice this means that organisations can create wellbeing by enabling staff to understand and value how the work that they are doing fits in with the 'bigger organisational picture', as well as ensuring that the skills and interests that staff have are matched

with the roles that they are fulfilling.

The second major influencing factor is the organisational structure and culture. My perspective on wellbeing is based on the Ottawa Charter principles, that emphasise viewing the workplace holistically when seeking to improve health and wellbeing, taking account of the structures, the behaviours, the communication methods, the cultures and the underpinning policies and processes. So wellbeing is about considering 'people' at all these levels. And within a workplace this may mean overt acceptance of the workplace as challenging, and then looking at how to support staff within this environment as much as possible.

So, for me, organisational wellbeing is about influencing all levels of a workplace, from individual to structural and political levels, to embed principles of support, understanding and alignment. Along the way this can include some of the more 'fun' elements of wellbeing support, but without framing this within an overall programme of organisational change and improvement then 'fun' will only ever be sticking plaster.

Your letters

Sharing information and experiences across the sector is a vital part of this project. Please send your letters, comments and views to f.m.livermore@adm.leeds.ac.uk

A selection of letters will be published in future e-newsletters and/or our website, www.wellbeing.ac.uk

If you prefer to remain anonymous please indicate this clearly on your communication.

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