

New College Durham

**Mental Health
and
Wellbeing Strategy
(Staff)**

**(Including Action Plan for
2021-2022)**

1. Context

1.1 National/Global Context

For many, work is a major part of life. The Mental Health Foundation identified that workplaces with high levels of mental wellbeing are more productive.

However, Mental Health.org.uk reports that:

“Mental Health problems are a growing public health concern. They are prevalent not just in the UK, but around the world.

- *Mental health problems are one of the main causes of the overall disease burden worldwide.*
- *Mental health and behavioural problems (e.g. depression, anxiety and drug use) are reported to be the main drivers of disability worldwide.*
- *Major depression is thought to be the second leading cause of disability worldwide and a major contributor to the burden of suicide and ischemic heart disease.*
- *It is estimated that 1 in 6 people in the past week experienced a common mental health problem.”*

In terms of mental health at work, they state:

“Working conditions and environment can have a huge impact on mental health and equally, someone’s mental health can have a significant impact to perform well in their job.”

- *1 in 6.8 people experience mental health problems in the workplace (14.7%).*
- *Women in full-time employment are nearly twice as likely to have a common mental health problem as full-time employed men (19.8 % vs 10.9%).*
- *Evidence suggests that 12.7% of all sickness absence days in the UK can be attributed to mental health conditions.”*

The World Health Organisation adopts a positive view of the term and defines mental health as

“a state of wellbeing in which every individual realises his or her own potential, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively and fruitfully and is able to make a contribution to his or her community”.

2. College Context

This strategy complements the College Mental Health Charter and recognises the impact of mental health and wellbeing issues within the workplace. Mental and physical health are completely entwined, our mental health has an impact on our physical health. It is however acknowledged that not all staff mental health issues translate into sickness with staff presenting for work when sickness absence would have been justified (presenteeism).

The College has a long-standing approach to the support of staff with a mental health condition which includes:

Provision of an on-site Counselling Service.

College funding up to five external counselling sessions where a need is identified.

Signing up to the Charter, making us a Mindful Employer.

Returns to work from long-term absence are carefully managed, in line with the College's sickness absence procedure.

Referrals to the on-site Occupational Health Nurse for a mental health related absence, to ascertain whether any support/adjustments are required.

An analysis of key metrics e.g. sickness absence data, staff feedback, individual sickness absence case illustrates that mental health issues are becoming a growing issue in the College which needs a strong and effective response. It is recognised that mental health is a complex situation and often it is combination of various factors both work and home related. This often manifests itself in the sickness absence which is consistent with that detailed within other organisations.

The breakdown of days lost in College during 2019/20 and 2020/21 was as follows:

| Description | Days Lost | |
|--------------|------------|----------------|
| | 2019/20 | 2020/21 |
| Stress | 391 | 245.5 |
| Anxiety | 235.5 | 662 |
| Depression | 247.5 | 336 |
| Total | 874 | 1,243.5 |

A survey undertaken by XpertHR entitled "*Absence rates and costs: 2019 XpertHR Survey*" detailed:

"In terms of changes to sickness absence rates, over the past 12 months almost one in three (29%) respondents told us the rate had increased... Many organisations referenced a growth in sickness absence due to stress, depression and mental health issues."

The College recognises this as a significant concern, with one in four people likely to experience a mental health problem in their lifetime, thus a clear College wide focus on mental health and wellbeing would clearly benefit staff and in return our students.

3. Key Definition

New College Durham is committed to social, economic and environmental well-being by:

- Changing lives for the better by enabling people of all abilities to fulfil their potential.

- Celebrating achievement in learning for people of all abilities.
- Fulfilling our commitment to equality and diversity and the rights of others.

Mental health and wellbeing can have an impact on the quality of life, ability to work and sickness levels at work. Good mental health and wellbeing can also be a protective factor for good health in general.

The College is committed to providing a working environment which actively promotes the positive health and wellbeing of all staff.

Through strengthening our staff mental health and wellbeing we want to ensure that our staff have a positive and supportive working environment.

The College will adopt the World Health Organisation (WHO) definition of good mental health as:

“A state of wellbeing in which every individual realises his or her own potential, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively and fruitfully and is able to make a contribution to her or his community.”

This strategy sets the aspirational goal that all our staff achieve good mental health or if this is not possible, they feel supported to continue in their employment at the College.

4. Scope

This strategy focusses generally on staff, we have developed a separate strategy for students and although they are largely the same, the decision to develop two separate strategies reflect key nuances between the working and studying environment. This strategy will focus on staff and the working environment.

The College recognises that staff are very much a valued resource and their health and wellbeing is critical to the effective operations of the College.

As a result of Covid-19 the Centre of Mental Health identified that:

“At least half a million more people in the UK will experience some kind of mental health difficulty this year as a result of COVID-19.”

Such impact on mental health and wellbeing can stem from:

- Fear and worry of contracting the virus
- Illness as the direct impact and potential lasting impact from contracting the virus
- Bereavement – dealing with the death of loved ones either from the virus or not being able to say a proper goodbye to loved ones with the number of restrictions that have been imposed to control the spread of the virus
- Impact of lockdown – social isolation and restrictions placed on individual’s abilities to see friends and family.

The College recognises, that there will be an impact of COVID-19 on our staff’s mental health and wellbeing for the considerable future, as we all learn to live and work with the virus and ongoing pandemic.

We recognise that staff are feeling anxious and uncertain during these unprecedented times, and we have sought to increase our offer of support focussing specifically on mental health and wellbeing challenges.

The scope of this strategy is to develop practical, actionable approach that the College can implement to promote positive mental health and wellbeing in the workplace.

This strategy and accompanying plan outline the intentions of the College in the management and support of staff mental health and well-being. Through strengthening our staff mental health and wellbeing we will ensure that our students have a positive and supportive learning experience.

This strategy is underpinned by annual action plans (Annex A details Action plan 2021-2022). The action plans and the strategy will be reviewed annually by Governors to ensure effective monitoring and that the strategy and plan continues to be fit for purpose and seeks to respond to the challenges and difficulties faced by individuals in their day to day lives.

This strategy will be driven forward by every employee, governor and student who makes up the New College Durham Community.

The Human Resources Department will primarily focus their support for the mental health of staff but achieving good mental health is everyone's responsibility.

In supporting the implementation of this strategy, the HR department will work with colleagues across the College and with external groups recognised for best practice in enhancing staff mental health.

This strategy will support and complement the College's HR strategy, the College's Mental Health Charter and the Mental Health and Wellbeing Strategy for Students.

This strategy has been developed in consultation with the College's recognised Trade Unions.

5. Aims

The three key aims of the College's strategy are to:

1. Create a positive working environment that supports staff mental health and well-being, creating a culture of openness by lifting the stigma surrounding mental health.
2. Ensure that Governors, Staff and Students recognise and embraces that mental health and wellbeing is the responsibility of everyone.
3. Enhance the support available to staff and to increase awareness of and participation in wellbeing activities and initiatives.

We will achieve these aims by:

- ensuring mental health and wellbeing are a strategic priority for the Principal and the Board of Governors;

- highlighting the importance of positive mental health and wellbeing and how to maintain it;
- tackling the stigma associated with having or discussing poor mental health; encouraging open conversations about mental health and wellbeing and the support that is available when staff are struggling.
- demonstrating our commitment to investing in mental health and well-being through the implementation of key activities and initiatives;
- ensuring staff are appropriately trained to understand mental health and wellbeing issues; to offer support and guidance and to signpost staff as appropriate;
- ensuring New College Durham is a healthy and safe place to work, promoting mental and physical wellbeing.
- considering the impact of other policies on staff mental health and wellbeing and look to provide support accordingly.

The College's Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Steering Group will promote positive mental health and wellbeing for everyone at New College Durham.

6. Ten Key Standards

The key achievement of the strategy is underpinned by 10 mental health standards as set out in 'Thriving at Work' (2017) review (6 were recognised for all organisations and a further 4 as an enhanced that all public sector organisations or those companies that employ more than 500 staff, should also consider).

Mental Health standards

1. **Produce and Implement and communicate a mental health at work plan** that promotes good mental health of all employees and outlines the support available for those who may need it.
2. **Develop mental health awareness among employees** by making information, tools and support accessible.
3. **Encourage open conversations about mental health and the support available when employees are struggling**, during the recruitment process and at regular intervals throughout employment, offer appropriate workplace adjustments to employees who require them.
4. **Provide employees with good working conditions** and ensure they have a healthy work life balance and opportunities for development.
5. **Promote effective people management** to ensure all employees have a regular conversation about their health and well-being with their line manager, supervisor or organisational leader and train and support line managers and supervisors in effective management practices.
6. **Routinely monitor employee mental health and wellbeing** by understanding available data, talking to employees, and understanding risk factors.

Enhanced standards:

1. **Increase transparency and accountability through internal and external reporting**, to include a leadership commitment and outline of the organisation's approach to mental health.
2. **Demonstrate accountability** by nominating a health and wellbeing lead at Senior Leadership level, with clear reporting duties and responsibilities
3. **Improve the disclosure process** to encourage openness of declaring of Mental Health history/diagnosis during recruitment and throughout, ensuring employees are aware of why the information is needed and make sure the right support is in place to facilitate a good employer response following disclosure
4. **Ensure provision of tailored in-house mental health support and signposting to clinical help**, including digital support, employer-purchased Occupational Health or Employee Assistance Programmes, or NHS services, amongst other sources of support.

These standards are mapped against our action plan to demonstrate how the College is supporting good mental health in the workplace.

7. Responsibilities

This strategy combined with the Student mental health and wellbeing strategy, Single Equality Scheme and HR Strategy confirms our commitment to staff mental health and wellbeing.

- 7.1 **The Board of the Corporation (and/or sub committees)**, in conjunction with the College's **Senior Leadership Team** will seek to monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of this strategy.
- 7.2 **Senior Managers are responsible for** providing a safe and healthy environment for all employees at work ensuring that there are safe systems of work to safeguard employees' health and wellbeing and understand that the College is accountable for the organisation's health, behaviour and performance. Senior managers need to ensure that they have a strong understanding of mental health and wellbeing issues and ensure that there is a positive and proactive approach to support staff mental health and wellbeing.
- 7.3 **Managers are responsible for** engaging with staff to promote and enhance employee mental health and wellbeing by ensuring that they risk assess work stress and implement necessary control measures to prevent harmful stress and consider appropriate support mechanisms.

By ensuring that recruitment is effective, relevant and purposeful staff development and training and supported to create a culture where should problems arise, they are quickly identified, and solutions considered against an individual's needs.

Managers should ensure that they implement the monitoring of workloads in relation to health and work and should a member of staff be absent that the College return to work process is followed.

- 7.4 Staff are responsible for** engaging with management to work together to enhance employee wellbeing by ensuring that stress and ill health are reported to management as early as possible.

Staff should ensure that they develop and maintain a working environment which is supportive of individuals mental health and wellbeing and engage with training and development opportunities.

Staff must ensure that they are clear on their responsibilities and the guidelines in place for students as set out in the student mental health and wellbeing strategy which complements the staff strategy.

- 7.5 Trade Union Representatives** will help the College promote this strategy and encourage full participation by all staff. They will support the monitoring and review of this strategy and provide feedback from members where appropriate.

8. Partnership and Engagement

- 8.1** The College actively supports and encourages staff to collaborate with students and external groups and networks and recognises the key role they play in promoting and supporting mental health and wellbeing across the College. The College will make available such resources as is reasonable to ensure the effective implementation of this strategy.

9. Monitoring & Review

- 9.1** The Board and the Joint Consultative Committee will receive annual report(s) which will enable them to evaluate the effectiveness of this strategy and the actions plans.
- 9.2** The Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Steering Group will monitor the objectives and impact of this strategy and ensure that appropriate actions are taken to fulfil our responsibilities under legislation and that all aspects of staff mental health and wellbeing are monitored and actions are taken to address areas for improvement.

Annex A - Action plan for 2021-2022 detailing our key priorities under this strategy

| | Strategic Aim | Priorities | What we will do 2021/22 | How will this be achieved? | Mental Health Standards that actions link to: | What will the impact be? |
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| 1 | <p>Create a positive working environment that supports staff mental health and wellbeing, creating a culture of openness by liftin the stigma surrounding mental health.</p> | <p>Highlight the importance of positive mental health and wellbeing and how to maintain it.</p> | <p>Work towards becoming a more agile organisation (where practicable) through the development of agile working practices and procedures to support greater options around flexible working and thus positively impacting on health and wellbeing.</p> | <p>Right to disconnect policy has been published, has been communicated to staff and is available for staff on the intranet.</p> <p>Remote Working policy has been published and will be communicated to staff available for staff on the intranet.</p> | <p>Produce and implement and communicate a mental health at work plan.</p> <p>Develop mental health awareness among employees.</p> | <p>Staff understand that they have the right to disconnect to achieve better work life balance.</p> <p>Staff understand that they have the right to request remote working to achieve better work life balance.</p> <p>Measure the impact data will be collected on the number of requests received and those approved.</p> |
| | | <p>Tackle the stigma associated with having or discussing poor mental health; encouraging open conversations about mental health and wellbeing and the support that is available when staff are struggling.</p> | <p>Encourage managers to include regular positive mental health and wellbeing discussions in their team updates</p> <p>Mental Health and Wellbeing strategy is in place and objectives for 2021/22.</p> | <p>Taking Care of Your People delivered from May to July 2021 – 36 managers engaged to be repeated January 2022 – March 2022.</p> <p>Mental Health and Wellbeing to be a standard item on team meeting agendas.</p> <p>All managers to complete face to face training on managing mental health in the workplace – March 2022.</p> <p>All staff will complete mental health awareness training by March 2022.</p> | <p>Encourage open conversations about mental health and the support available when employees are struggling.</p> | <p>All managers will have the knowledge to support their staff and discuss mental health and wellbeing within team meetings and 121.</p> <p>Staff will develop their knowledge of what good mental health is and how they can support themselves, colleagues and students.</p> |

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| | | | | <p>Ongoing opportunity for staff to complete Mental Health Level 2 – starting Cohort 4 in January.</p> <p>Bespoke training for curriculum support staff on having discussions with students on mental health – March 2022.</p> | | |
| | | <p>Consider the impact of other policies/practices on staff mental health and wellbeing and look to provide support accordingly.</p> | <p>To review the appraisal/probationary process to encourage discussions around wellbeing and ensure staff feel supported</p> <p>Re-issue You Said We Did Survey to staff in January which will give feedback as to what the policy changes and work we have been doing in college has meant to them.</p> <p>Sign up to the Department for Education (DfE) Wellbeing Charter when released</p> <p>Achieve Silver Award for Better Health at Work Award .</p> | <p>All relevant paperwork and policies will be updated to reflect question/s on mental health – January 2022.</p> <p>Signed up to DfE Education and Wellbeing Charter – complete self-assessment by February 2022.</p> <p>Started to collate portfolio for silver award, to be assessed as part of annual review in May 2022.</p> | <p>Provide employees with good working conditions.</p> <p>Promote effective people management.</p> <p>Routinely monitor employee mental health and wellbeing.</p> | <p>Staff Survey will be re-issued to staff in January 2022, the survey will use the same questions as January 2021 so that we will be able to draw out comparative data which will be reported across college and used to inform future planning.</p> <p>Through completion of the DfE Education and Wellbeing Charter assessment will allow us to look at what we have already achieved and assess where they may be gaps and what we need to continue to do to ensure that we are continually improving and developing support for staff and students.</p> <p>Achieving Better Health at Work Award – silver will demonstrate to staff, students and partners that the college is committed to mental health and wellbeing and encourage more staff to want to work with us and students to learn.</p> |

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| 2 | Make mental health and wellbeing everyone's responsibility | Ensure mental health and wellbeing are a strategic priority for the Principal and the Board of Governors. | Continue to include questions in our annual staff survey around mental health and wellbeing to inform future planning and to undertake an analysis of year-on-year results. | <p>Regular SLT newsletter circulated to staff throughout 2021/22.</p> <p>Ensure feedback is given to staff on the results of You Said We Did.</p> <p>Ensure feedback is given regularly to SLT and Governor Body on progress being made for mental health and wellbeing.</p> <p>Termly Mental Health and Wellbeing, Equality Diversity and Inclusion Steering Group Meetings are held.</p> <p>Ensure that JCC are engaged in any progress or plans to fully assess impact on staff and to gain views and opinions.</p> | <p>Provide employees with good working conditions.</p> <p>Promote effective people management.</p> <p>Routinely monitor employee mental health and wellbeing.</p> | <p>Employees with feel supported within their workplace.</p> <p>Feeling valued and supported will hopefully ensure that staff remain to work with us and value our support – monitor reasons why staff leave.</p> |
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| | | Ensure New College Durham is a healthy and safe place to work, promoting mental and physical wellbeing. | Working with Occupational Health and Health & Safety colleagues we will commit to training managers/Heads on completing, reviewing and undertaking departmental stress risk assessments and advising managers on the undertaking of individual stress risk assessments with staff that report work-related stress issues. To ensure that stress is not viewed as a HR issue, but managers are equipped to respond to concerns within their own team | <p>Ongoing provision of on-site counselling for both staff and students throughout 2021/2022.</p> <p>Occupational Health Technician to support broad range of health and wellbeing activities across college throughout 2021/2022.</p> <p>Diverse activities are available as part of Staff Development that focus on mental health and wellbeing.</p> <p>Continue to share with staff Supporting You updates (termly).</p> <p>Health and Wellbeing portal to be updated half termly.</p> | <p>Increase transparency and accountability through internal and external reporting.</p> <p>Demonstrate accountability.</p> <p>Improve the disclosure process.</p> <p>Ensure provision of tailored in-house mental health support and signposting to clinical help.</p> | Having a workforce that feels supported will ensure that our students are supported – feedback from learner voice will show some evidence of this. |
| 3 | Enhance the support available to staff and increase awareness of and participation in wellbeing activities and initiatives. | Demonstrate our commitment to investing in mental health and well-being through the implementation of key activities and initiatives. | <p>Allocated funding to support staff and students' mental health and wellbeing.</p> <p>Roll out and review/expand the offer included as part of the wellbeing calendar of events and seek feedback accordingly.</p> | <p>Top slice training and development budget to ensure that there is dedicated funding to support continued development of staff mental health and wellbeing throughout 2021/22.</p> <p>Recruitment of Health and Wellbeing Coach within curriculum to further support student engagement and development.</p> <p>Recruitment of Occupational Health Technician to further support staff engagement and development.</p> | <p>Produce and implement and communicate a mental health at work plan.</p> <p>Develop mental health awareness among employees.</p> <p>Promote effective people management.</p> <p>The monitoring of provision of tailored in-house mental health support and signposting to clinical help.</p> | <p>The monitoring of provision of tailored in-house mental health support and signposting to clinical help will have to measure the impact of the offer.</p> <p>Through the attendance at mini health checks and the opportunity for staff to have 121 with a health provision will help the college to identify key themes and they to tailor relevant support for staff.</p> |

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| | | <p>Ensure staff are appropriately trained to understand mental health and wellbeing issues; to offer support and guidance and to signpost staff as appropriate.</p> | <p>Exploring ways in which our current online offer can be developed to include mental health and wellbeing.</p> <p>Consistently monitoring feedback from staff development activities to ensure the workshops are fit for purpose and relevant.</p> <p>Ensure overall training and development offer for mental health is purposeful and supporting staff.</p> | <p>Investment in our software with a view to developing a standalone mental health awareness module through MIND.</p> <p>All managers to complete face to face training on managing mental health in the workplace – March 2022.</p> <p>All staff will complete mental health awareness training by March 2022.</p> <p>Ongoing opportunity for staff to complete Mental Health Level 2 – starting Cohort 4 in January.</p> <p>Bespoke training for curriculum support staff on having discussions with students on mental health – March 2022.</p> <p>Comparative results from staff survey January 2022.</p> | | <p>Having a bespoke training offer for staff demonstrates further our commitment to ensure that they have the knowledge and skill hopefully helping to create a healthy workforce.</p> <p>Staff Survey will be re-issued to staff in January 2022, the survey will use the same questions as January 2021 so that we will be able to draw out comparative data which will be reported across college and used to inform future planning.</p> |
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