

Mental Health and Wellbeing

Our People Plan



Introduction from Claire Buchanan

Chief People Officer



Mental health and wellbeing affects all aspects of university life, and at Bristol we are committed to developing a whole university approach which includes both the provision of appropriate accessible services and interventions; and the creation of an environment and culture that enable all our students and staff to maintain their wellbeing.

As we emerge from the Covid-19 pandemic, the national and global concerns about mental health, and the continuing pressures people face living, working and studying in this world means that promoting good mental health and all-round wellbeing remains our absolute priority at Bristol. We launched our first Mental Health and Wellbeing Strategy in 2018, and I am proud of the progress we have made together since then. Now is the right time to refresh our plans to ensure they remain appropriate for our community particularly as we begin to understand how our approach to working and learning will impact on the wellbeing of our community in a post-pandemic world. This plan will continue to complement the recently refreshed Student Mental Health and Wellbeing Strategy.

Our University's mental health and wellness remains everybody's responsibility, and we are committed to providing support to our staff when they need it, and to create working environments that help us to achieve and sustain a state of good mental health.

We know that we have more work to do, and our refreshed plan sets out the areas we will focus on over the next three years. This will

include, amongst other things, continuing to shape and evolve our support offer and develop an approach to accessing our services which is easy to understand and enables all staff to receive timely support. We'll continue to work with and support our staff to understand their roles and responsibilities, and ensure they have the information and training they need for their role. We'll also continue to focus on our proactive preventative interventions that encourage healthy behaviours, and support staff to proactively manage their wellbeing.

I am delighted that as we move into this next phase, we will be guided in our work by being part of the Student Minds University Mental Health Charter Programme and the Mental Health at Work commitment. We have aligned this plan with both frameworks and will be using them to further reflect on and evolve our approach and provision.

This Plan has evolved from the previous strategy and provides an action-centred framework enabling the whole institution to continue supporting mental health and wellbeing. We already have several effective policies and procedures in place to support employee health and wellbeing at Bristol and we will continue to regularly review these to ensure that they support the Plan and its delivery.

As an institution, we recognise the broader university and sector-wide issues such as the gender pay gap, casualisation in the workforce and workload, as well as the post pandemic ways of working that continue to have an impact

Introduction from Claire Buchanan (continued)

Chief People Officer

on overall wellbeing in the workplace. These issues feel very real at our university, and our staff continue to feel strongly about the support and action needed to address them.

We recognise that our staff come from a range of backgrounds with different cultures, beliefs, abilities, and gender identification. We will ensure that any initiatives suggested or implemented consider these differences so that we don't knowingly preclude any group from participating. Working together I believe we will continue to make positive progress in the years to come and achieve our vision of creating a university experience which supports and promotes the wellbeing of all members of our community where all aspects of wellbeing are reflected in every facet of the University of Bristol experience. This can only be achieved with the support and backing of leaders and managers across the organisation looking out for and supporting staff who may need help with their mental health.

Thanks for taking the time to read our plan.

Take care

Claire Buchanan
Chief People Officer



University of Bristol Staff Mental Health and Wellbeing Plan

Vision

The World Health Organisation states that mental health is a state of wellbeing in which an individual realises their own abilities, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively and is able to contribute to their community.

At Bristol we place wellbeing at the heart of our University, as it impacts on how we all feel and our ability to function. We want to equip our staff and students with the understanding, skills and experiences to lead satisfying, worthwhile and happy lives. We take an institution-wide approach to mental health and wellbeing to provide the best possible experience for all our staff and students. We are committed to mental health permeating every aspect of the University culture and experience and it being part of the language of education.

Our approach aims to reflect and foster the diversity of the staff and student community at the University of Bristol. We acknowledge that mental health interconnects with all aspects of working life and that every staff member will experience mental health differently.

Aims

We:

- expect everyone in the whole University community to support staff and student mental health and wellbeing;
- expect staff and student mental health and wellbeing to be a priority for leaders across the University;
- expect mental health and wellbeing to be everybody's responsibility in our University;
- review the University environment and culture to ensure that it impacts positively on staff mental health and wellbeing;
- work proactively in partnership with academic schools and professional services divisions to promote improved mental health and wellbeing;
- aim to deliver effective support for staff and managers that is easy to access and supports a wide range of staff needs;
- aim to further reduce the stigma associated with mental health and promote positive mental health and wellbeing within the University;
- use data and research effectively to provide support for mental health and wellbeing, helping us to monitor trends and plan improvements.



Background Context

One in four people will experience a mental health problem in their lifetime. At any one point, one in six of the working age population will be suffering from a mental health condition. In 2019/20, stress accounted for 55% of all working days lost in the UK due to ill health and for 51% of all work-related ill health cases. Stress, depression or anxiety is more prevalent in public service industries such as education and health and social care (HSE report March 2020).

Young people's mental health remains one of the most challenging public health issues of our time.

We know that staff in our University are representative of this national picture. Our Staff Counselling Service continues to see a rise in demand for appointments and we have invested further in the service.

Our 2020 wellbeing pulse survey feedback shows that 51% of staff who responded to the survey feel that the University takes an active role in supporting staff mental health and wellbeing. This has increased from 42% in 2018 but something that the University wants to further improve on.

We also know that 49% of staff who responded to the staff survey feel stressed at work 'frequently' or 'always', up from 42% in 2018 although it should be noted that the pandemic would have had a bearing on this result.

The University is committed to understanding and then addressing the causes of stress at the University.

Our Plan

This Plan has evolved from the previous strategy written in 2018 and provides an action-centred framework enabling the whole institution to continue supporting mental health and wellbeing. We already have several effective policies and procedures in place to support employee health and wellbeing at Bristol and we will continue to regularly review these to ensure that they support the Plan and its delivery.

As an institution, we recognise that broader university and sector-wide issues such as the gender pay gap, casualisation in the workforce and workload continue to have an impact on overall wellbeing in the workplace. These issues still feel real at our University and our staff continue to feel strongly about support and action to address these issues. This Plan will further complement the actions already taken and will continue to complement the Student Mental Health and Wellbeing Plan.



Cornerstones of our plan



Leadership Mental health and wellness is everybody's responsibility

Everyone in the University community is expected to support staff mental health and wellness. Mental health and wellness is a strategic priority supported by the University Steering Group for Mental Health and Wellbeing led by a Pro Vice-Chancellor.

Prevention Integrating a positive culture and healthy behaviours to promote positive mental health and wellness within the workplace

We expect and support our staff to adopt the University Values. We seek to understand how the University culture acts as a contributory factor in achieving positive staff mental health and wellness.

Early Intervention

Taking early intervention and reducing stigma

We encourage early disclosure of issues via open discussion, and promote Wellness Action Plans as a proactive tool for staff to use to support their own wellbeing. We review relevant policies to ensure they support our wellbeing ambitions.

Support

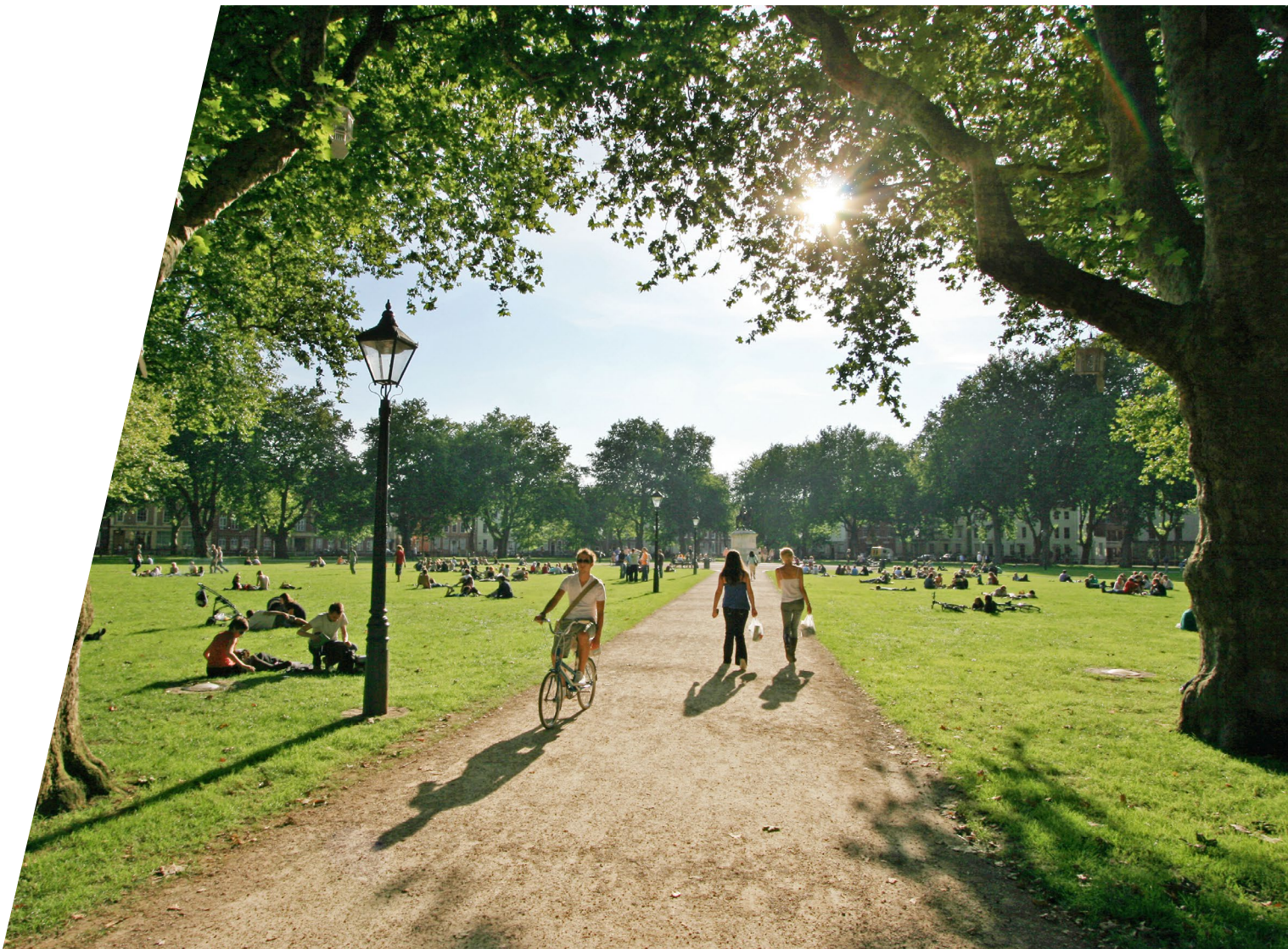
Connecting and communicating our support for staff and managers and between staff and student communities for mutual benefit

We provide staff counselling facilities, training and other online resources to support staff and better equip them to support each other and students. We continue to offer training relating to student mental health for staff.

Data and Metrics

Using data and metrics to support mental health and wellbeing initiatives

We take an evidence-based approach to our plans and measure the impact of interventions.



Leadership

What we achieved 2018-2021:

- A University-wide approach to mental health and wellbeing led by a steering group accountable to the Deputy Vice Chancellor and the Board of Trustees.
- Training interventions made available to all managers for supporting staff wellbeing and mental health at work.
- A Steering Group that leads on the development of University-wide Student and Staff Mental Health and Wellbeing Plan with input from our students and staff.
- Focus given to the role of the manager in supporting staff mental health and wellbeing and included in University leadership and staff induction programmes.

What we will do next (2022-2024)

- Managers to continue to focus on staff wellbeing and for staff review conversations to include wellbeing matters.
- Continue to provide an annual report to the Board of Trustees on progress and escalate issues of concern onto the University Risk Register overseen by the Board of Trustees.
- Ensure that the University Steering Group reflects staff views.
- We will continue to subscribe to wellbeing best practice and benchmark ourselves against other organisations.
- Ensure academic and service leaders take ownership for addressing concerns about the workload of their staff.
- Ensure managers implement our frameworks to provide greater employment certainty for staff wherever possible.
- We will support our leaders and managers to lead their teams in a fair and consistent way.



Prevention

What we achieved 2018-2021:

- We have raised awareness of mental health and the support available to staff.
- We introduced an email charter to reduce our reliance on email communication.
- We introduced Wellness Action Plans – a personal, practical tool that all staff can use to help identify what keeps them well at work, what causes an individual to become unwell at work, and how to address a mental health problem at work.
- We have introduced Wellness Toolkits through our Staff Counselling Team for staff to access.
- We have reduced the gender pay gap and are measuring the ethnicity pay gap ahead of legislative requirements.
- We have reduced the number of fixed term contracts and reduced our reliance on casual contracts in the organisation.
- We have recruited 60 Mental Health Champions across the organisation to help promote support for mental health and normalise conversations about mental health.

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Early Intervention

What we achieved 2018-2021:

- We have increased resources in Staff Counselling reducing waiting times.
- We have developed Wellness Action Plans that can be shared with managers to help recognise early symptoms of poor mental health.
- We have implemented essential online mental health training for supporting students which all staff are required to take, with more in-depth training already being provided for those with key student support roles.
- We have simplified our grievance procedures and increased the number of Acceptable Behaviour Supporters.

What we will do next (2022-2024)

- We will review our Wellness Action Plans and ensure they are an effective tool for staff and managers.
- We will continue to support our Mental Health Champions to help break down stigma and to engage staff in wellbeing initiatives.
- We will provide support for staff who encounter sensitive or distressing work either through their research or through their interactions with students.
- We will continue to support staff to tackle microaggressions and other behaviour concerns in the workplace.

Support

What we achieved 2018-2021

- Enhanced our staff support arrangements including accessibility to culturally appropriate Counselling.
- Provided online staff training relating to student mental health as part of the suite of essential training within staff review for all.
- Provided training for managers to give them a better understanding of how to support mental health in the workplace.
- Further training and resources made available to staff through a range of workshops and online material, including training for managers to ensure they are well equipped to support staff.
- Feedback sought from staff via a pulse survey on wellbeing issues.
- Support for staff in managing the menopause

What we will do next (2022-2024)

- We will spotlight our services to staff and managers so that everyone knows the support available to them.
- We will trial a Blended Working Policy to see how it supports work life balance.
- We will provide enhanced training resources to personal tutors to ensure they are equipped and supported when working with student wellbeing issues.
- We will continue to provide targeted support for specific issues that staff may be facing such as bereavement or menopause symptoms.

Data and Metrics

What we have achieved 2018-2021:

- All staff wellbeing pulse survey completed and the results are used to help shape future interventions.
- Staff Counselling and Occupational Health employing a range of monitoring and evaluation methods including service usage and satisfaction ratings. Results have been used to increase resource in both areas.

What we will do next (2022-2024)

- We will monitor progress in implementing this Mental Health and Wellbeing Plan reporting to the University Steering Group.
- We will seek to benchmark our wellbeing offer across the wider HE sector.
- We will evaluate the Blended Working trial to assess the impact on staff wellbeing.

Related policies and resources

- Managing Health and Absence Policy
- Supporting Mental Health in the Workplace
- Wellness Action Plans
- Employee Assistance Programme
- Acceptable Behaviour Policy
- Report and Support Tool
- Staff Counselling Service
- Guidance for Carers at Work
- Prevention of Sexual Misconduct Policy
- Stress Management and Risk Assessments
- Flexible Working & Blended Working Policy
- Menopause Support & Guidance for Managers
- Mental Health Training and Awareness Programmes (via Staff Development)