

The Evolve Trust

Staff Wellbeing Strategy

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Executive Summary

Whatever our age, background or role in life, from time to time we all have problems – whether personal, family or work related. Talking to a counsellor or an advisor can help us understand a problem, try a different approach or just learn how to cope with a situation that we can't change. By ensuring that staff are supported with their own wellbeing, they in turn will be better equipped to carry out their roles to support our young people and ensure that each of our schools and learning environments are safe and inclusive places.

Poor wellbeing has costs to employers, sick absence, poor performance and staff turnover, however promoting wellbeing leads to many benefits, better staff engagement and morale, a more healthy and inclusive culture, lower sickness levels. It can also have a positive impact of productivity, motivation performance, retention. Given the ongoing recruitment and retention challenges across the sector and debates on workload nationally it has never been more important to ensure the trust is doing as much as they can to promote the wellbeing of our staff.

The Evolve Trust values its staff and aims to be an employer which those in our communities want to work for. We will treat our employees with respect, offering professional opportunities, training and development, together with a meaningful wellbeing and employee benefits scheme.

We strongly believe in the development of all staff. Everything we do is about creating a culture with committed professionals who share the Trust's vision and who live by the Trust's values, enabling the creation of an exciting, enjoyable and rewarding working environment.

Quite simply, our aim is to employ people who match our ethos and values and enable them to truly collaborate with colleagues across the Trust so that they are satisfied professionally. Having happy and healthy staff is key to a successful organisation. The trust is committed to:

- Providing employees with a safe, healthy and supportive environment in which to work
- Recognising that the health and wellbeing of our employees is important
- Providing a supportive workplace culture

Background

Whether or not staff have a pre-existing mental health condition, it is clear that workplace practices can impact on their mental wellbeing. Poor workplace practices can lead to significant ill health through stress, burnout and poor management. Office for National Statistics data shows that, in 2016, 15.8 million days were lost because of poor mental health (including stress, depression, anxiety and more serious conditions), accounting for 11.5% of all days lost.

Creating a supportive environment where our staff feel valued and able to flourish underpins all we do as an organisation. We feel it is our role, as an employer, to provide a comprehensive range of services for all our staff to access to support them and their wellbeing.

Objectives

To enable us to deliver our vision and support staff wellbeing on an ongoing basis within our academies we are taking the following measures.

- An annual staff survey will be conducted with staff wellbeing and work conditions as a key element. Also, to ask the staff what they want in terms of wellbeing – (stress workshops, keep fit classes, lunchtime walking club, pub quizzes, free flu jabs, mentoring / buddy scheme, team building).
- Regular promotion of the channels of support available to staff and especially as ‘post incident’ support will be immediately accessible, where required.
- Flu jabs will be offered to all staff in the Autumn term every year.
- Open door policy operated by principals.
- Associate staff pathways to be developed.
- A greater focus on behaviours as part of performance management with the aim of understanding how tasks are delivered and how staff are coached and supported.
- Wellbeing initiatives designed to raise awareness of health and lifestyle issues affecting mental health and wellbeing to be included in inset days.
- Flexibility will be offered to all staff, where possible, to take into consideration individual circumstances.
- Create faculty networks to enable opportunities for faculties to share good practice and new ideas with colleagues across the school.
- Good communication protocols in place with staff.
- Academies to promote an inclusive social calendar to aid wellbeing – the to include quiz nights, sports tournaments, summer end of term BBQs and Christmas nights out.
- The Trust recognises that terminal illness requires support and understanding and not additional and avoidable stress and worry. We will provide our employees with the security of work, peace of mind and the right to choose the best course of action for themselves and their families which helps them through this challenging period with dignity and without undue financial loss.
- The Trust is committed to be a disability confident committed employer and will ensure our recruitment process is inclusive and accessible. We will support any existing employee who acquires a disability or long-term health condition, enabling them to stay in work
- The Trust will work in conjunction with Trade Unions in order to support staff.
- The Trust will ensure that all staff have access to the ‘whistleblowing’ policy on our website if they feel unable to raise concerns directly with school leaders
- The Trust is committed to protecting the life / work balance of our employees;
 - We ask that staff and school leaders do not routinely send emails to staff after 7pm in the evening or before 7am in the morning, at the weekends or during school holidays. Functionality within Outlook allows staff to write messages and send them at more convenient times.
 - We will put in place processes and procedures to reduce duplication of work.
 - Academies to create bulletins with news that staff need to read
 - People limited who can send all staff emails.
- Our commitment to the scheduling of meetings to;
 - Only hold meetings when necessary with the appropriate individuals in attendance (part
 - Aim to finish meetings to time.

Strategies

The purpose of the Trust Wellbeing Strategy is to provide a framework within which to:

- Ensure staff understand the Trust's commitment to their wellbeing
- Collect and report on appropriate data relating to staff wellbeing and identify actions required to further promote wellbeing.

Policies:

All policies and procedures across the Trust will consider the impact on staff workload and wellbeing, associated policies below:

- Communication Charter
- Trust Complaints Policy
- General Data Protection Regulation Policy
- Trust Equality and Diversity Statement
- Trust Charging and Remissions Policy
- Privacy Notice – Staff
- Whistleblowing Policy
- Wellbeing Strategy

Employee Assistance Programme

The Evolve Trust have partnered with APL Health which provides staff with fantastic wellbeing and health related benefits such as virtual GP and private prescription services, helpline assistance, counselling, physiotherapy and stress coaching. APL Health also provide the Trust with an occupational health service.

As part of the programme, staff are able to access confidential support and counselling via a 24/7 freephone helpline and are also able to access counselling support and advice on a variety of personal, family or workplace issues. This service is paid for by the Evolve Trust and can be accessed by all members of staff. This is a confidential and anonymous services provided by an independent organisation. No personal or identifying information is communicated to the Trust. Only in the most extreme and unusual circumstances may this confidentiality and anonymity be broken.

Occupational Health

Occupational health professionals from APL Health will provide a comprehensive service designed to help staff stay in work, or to return to work, after experiencing health problems. This will include preparing medical assessments of individuals' fitness for work following referrals from line managers and the HR team, liaising with GPs and working with individuals to help them to retain employment.

APL health professionals will play a critical part in developing rehabilitation plans for staff returning to work after absences related to ill health, and work with GPs and line managers on designing jobs and working environments to ensure that rehabilitation is successful.

Annual flu vaccination programme

Seasonal flu is a big cause of short-term illness. It's highly contagious and can affect a large number of working adults of all ages. We take the wellbeing of our staff very seriously and a flu vaccination is a simple way to keep healthy. We have partnered with Boots pharmacy to offer free flu vaccinations each year to any member of staff that wishes to take up this offer.

Induction Process

It is important to us that every member of staff has the right start to working in our Trust. The importance of a good induction is invaluable for new starters irrespective of previous experience. To support this, we have a New Staff Induction Day before the start of term, which enables colleagues to get a real understanding of what the school is about and what it means to be part of the Trust.

Equal Opportunities

Across the Trust we pride ourselves on equal opportunities for all staff, irrespective of background, gender, disability, religion, sexual orientation or age.

Our Trust and its academies are committed to ensuring equality of opportunity in line with the Equality Act 2010. The Trust seeks to reduce disadvantages, discrimination and inequalities of opportunity, and promote diversity in terms of its students, workforce and our wider communities we serve.

Union recognition and consultation

We are committed to continuously build good relations with the recognised unions which are NEU, NASUWT, ASCL, NAHT, Voice, UNISON, UNITE, ASCL and GMB. The Trust encourages all employees to join a union. The Trust also consults with representatives of the recognised unions on a number of issues and prescribed policies via a Joint Consultation Negotiation Council prior to be adopted.

Professional Development

As a Trust we always look to invest in our staff and pride ourselves on our 'home grown talent'. We pride ourselves on this and believe this has the biggest impact on how our staff understand their communities and make a difference to the lives of our young people.

We provide outstanding training pathways which draw on excellence and enables you to develop the professional capital for staff.

We believe that everyone has an entitlement to professional learning and development. Pathways are available at apprenticeship level, NQT, aspiring middle leader, Lead Practitioner and aspiring senior leader level. The Trust offers highly individualised and award-winning professional development which is available to all staff and includes bespoke, accredited training, personal coaching, mentoring as well as exceptional shadowing and deployment opportunities across our Trust. Additional accredited fellowship programmes are offered enabling staff to engage with and critically reflect on an action research project linked to school development priorities. Associate staff pathways will be offered in 2020/21 to ensure they receive the necessary coaching and training opportunities, in order to help them feel empowered and in charge of their own development.

Training

- As a minimum, all staff will receive regular training about recognising and responding to mental health issues as part of their regular child protection training to enable them to keep students safe. A nominated member of staff will receive professional Mental Health First Aid training or equivalent.
- We will host relevant information on our website for staff who wish to learn more about mental health. The MindEd learning portal provides free online training suitable for staff wishing to know more about a specific issue.

- Where the need to do so becomes evident, we will host twilight training sessions for all staff to promote learning or understanding about specific issues.
- Suggestions for individual, group or whole school CPD should be discussed with Academy Principals who can also highlight sources of relevant training and support for individuals as needed.
- Offer support as required in efficient approaches, such as basic skills on how to manage your workload, how to become more efficient.

NQT Programme / Continued NQT and RQT support

Where possible we try to ensure that NQTs and second year teachers have reduced teaching loads to allow them more opportunities for CPD throughout the school week. This also allows for peer to peer observations and additional coaching to take place to develop their practice.

Listening

We actively seek feedback from our workforce through surveys, team meetings and staff forums. And we use this feedback to continually develop and refine our practices.

Team meetings and 1:1s provide informal opportunity to bring a wellbeing aspect to meetings enabling discussions on managing their workload, and how the team can support each other, share ideas of how to work smarter, collaborate and share tasks – a discussion on how much work people work at home might flag up issues with managing their time.

Sources of Support

We support colleagues through coaching, enabling reflection, collaboration with peers and new approaches to practice are encouraged.

At times, despite the best efforts of managers staff may feel stressed for a number of reasons. If staff do feel stressed it is important that they seek support to try and alleviate the symptoms as quickly as possible. There are a number of options available:

1. Speak with their line manager / principal– requesting a confidential meeting with them to discuss the issue and signpost them to support.
2. Speak with the Employee Assistance Helpline
3. Speak with their own GP.
4. Ask their line manager / principal to make a referral for them to speak to an Occupational Health nurse or examine the options for counselling provided by the Trust.
5. Principals / Executive Team experiencing stress should speak about their concerns with the CEO who will either support them individually or sign-post them to additional services.

Signposting

We will ensure that staff are aware of the support and services available to them, and how they can access these services.

Within the school (noticeboards, common rooms, toilets etc.) and through our communication channels (newsletters, websites), we will share and display relevant information about local and national support services and events.

The aim of this is to ensure staff understand:

- What help is available?
- Why should they access it?
- How to access it?

Sickness absence policy

We have worked, in consultation with unions, to develop a Sickness Absence Policy that establishes a framework for effective management of staff sickness absence considering both the welfare of employees by supporting them and our requirements to deliver an effective education to our pupils. The Evolve Trust has created a policy which reflects our duty to be fair and consistent in any dealings with members of staff who are absent due to short or long-term sickness.

Absence Management

Procedure in place which includes 'return to work' discussions related to health and wellbeing following short term absences and benchmarking of absence data.

Mental Health

Non-judgmental and proactive support provided to individual staff experiencing mental health issues is managed through HR. Sympathetic approach will be taken by listening effectively and being approachable, with communication channels kept open.

Outcomes and Successes

- Annual surveys with a wellbeing focus to be issued to all staff
- Social events held across the Trust
- Induction feedback collated
- HR data gathered around Occupational Health referrals and returns
- Flu vaccinations delivered
- Associate pathways implemented
- Reduction in staff absences