

Ten ways to support staff wellbeing

An action-planning guide



Anna Freud
building the mental
wellbeing of the
next generation

Supporting staff wellbeing in schools and colleges

School and college staff play a crucial role in supporting the education and mental wellbeing of their students. However, the pressures of workloads, deadlines, and a lack of resources can often significantly impact staff's own mental wellbeing.

Supporting staff wellbeing is a central part of a whole-school or college approach to mental health and wellbeing. This action-planning guide and template is designed to help school and college leadership teams plan and implement effective staff wellbeing support.

It contains information on ten different ways to support staff wellbeing, space to record notes, and an action-planning template.

You will find the action-planning template on page 24. This can be used to record agreed actions, alongside any deadlines and success measures.

It's important to note that this process should be collaborative and iterative. Where possible, all staff should be involved in planning and decision-making, and regularly review the support in place.

5 Steps: a whole-school or college approach to mental health and wellbeing



[Supporting Staff](#) is part of our [5 Steps to mental health and wellbeing framework](#) - a free, evidence-based framework to support the implementation of a whole-school or college approach to mental health and wellbeing.

The framework aligns with the Department for Education's [whole-school whole-college approach guidance](#).

5 Steps includes guidance, resources and an action planning tool to help schools and colleges take a considered approach to the mental wellbeing needs of all students and staff.

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Ten ways to support staff wellbeing

1. Embed a senior mental health lead with responsibility for staff wellbeing

A senior mental health lead (SMHL) works to embed a whole-school or college approach to mental health and wellbeing in education settings.

Supporting staff is a key component of any whole-school or college approach. As well as promoting a positive culture around staff wellbeing, a senior mental health lead can help staff to:

- understand the importance of looking after their own mental wellbeing
- access resources and learn strategies to support their own wellbeing
- know how to seek further support where necessary.

They can also act as a bridge between staff and leadership, ensuring that staff wellbeing remains a priority in policies and practices, and is central to the school or college's ethos.

It's important to note that no one person can embed a whole-school or college approach to mental wellbeing alone. Senior mental health leads will need support from both the leadership team and school or college governors.

Key considerations

- The SMHL will require ongoing support, training and development
- The SMHL should have dedicated time for this role and be effectively supported
- Create clear communication channels between the SMHL and the wider leadership team

Reflections

- What support will the SMHL need from the leadership team to be able to implement whole-school or college approach and lead on staff wellbeing?
- How will the SMHL work in collaboration with other staff members?
- How will the SMHL role and responsibilities be communicated to all staff?

Resources


Senior mental health lead training

Our senior mental health lead training equips staff with the knowledge and skills to develop and implement a whole-school approach to mental health and wellbeing.

[Book now](#) 

Mental health lead resource hub

A hub of resources to support senior mental health leads to develop and embed a whole-school or college approach to mental health and wellbeing.

[Explore resources](#) 

Notes

2. Measure and monitor staff wellbeing

Measuring and monitoring staff wellbeing is crucial for understanding your staff's needs and providing effective support.

This can involve using surveys, focus groups, and other measurement tools to find out how best to support staff wellbeing in your setting.

Staff wellbeing surveys can be especially effective in gathering information about:

- ▶ overall staff wellbeing
- ▶ factors affecting mental health (including work practices, culture, management)
- ▶ perceived levels of support
- ▶ confidence in supporting students' mental wellbeing.

It's important to make space to reflect with staff on the results and work together to agree how to implement any changes to wellbeing policies, support and strategy.

Key considerations

- Use consistent questions in surveys to track changes over time
- Ensure anonymity to encourage honest responses
- Carry out the survey at convenient time for staff (e.g., INSET day or staff meeting)
- Combine surveys with other tools like wellbeing check-ins and observational data

Reflections

- How can staff be encouraged to provide honest feedback?
- How will the importance of the survey and its results be communicated to staff?
- How will survey results be incorporated into planning processes and policies?

More information

5 Steps: [Conduct a confidential annual staff wellbeing survey](#)



[Wellbeing measurement for school staff survey](#)

This resource from the Child Outcomes Research Consortium (CORC) provides survey questions and guidance to help school and college leadership teams better understand their staff and provide them with the support they need.

[Download now](#)

Notes

3. Develop a staff wellbeing policy

A comprehensive staff wellbeing policy is a formal document that outlines the school or college's commitment to supporting staff mental wellbeing. It may form part of a school or college's broader [mental health and wellbeing policy](#).

It should cover a range of areas including work-life balance, stress management, support mechanisms, and procedures for addressing mental health concerns.

It should also take account of the fact that some staff, including those who are neurodivergent, LGBTQI+, and from [racially minoritised groups](#) may be disproportionately affected by mental wellbeing difficulties.

This policy serves as a reference point for staff and leadership, ensuring consistency in approach and demonstrating your setting's dedication to staff wellbeing.

Key considerations

- Involve staff in the policy development process
- Ensure the policy addresses both universal and targeted support
- Include clear procedures for accessing support
- Regularly review and update the policy

Reflections

- What key areas should your staff wellbeing policy cover?
- How will all staff be aware of and understand the policy?
- How often will the policy be reviewed and updated?

Resources

[Staff mental health and wellbeing plan](#) - Education Support

A template to support school and college leaders to develop and implement a staff mental health and wellbeing plan.

Developing a policy for your whole-school approach to mental wellbeing training

Our evidence-based training courses have been written by mental health professionals and education experts. Every session is delivered by one of our highly experienced qualified trainers.

Book now 

Notes

4. Promote an open, positive and inclusive culture and ethos

Fostering an environment where all staff feel comfortable discussing mental wellbeing is pivotal for creating a supportive school or college culture.

Promoting openness about mental wellbeing can reduce stigma, encourage early intervention, and create a more positive, inclusive workplace.

While this might be led by a senior mental health lead, it requires senior leadership and all staff to create a supportive culture where effective communication and honest feedback are prioritised.

Staff and school leaders can ensure student wellbeing is prioritised by [identifying wellbeing needs](#), encouraging open mental health conversations as part of everyday school life, and teaching students about mental health and wellbeing through RSHE delivery and across the entire curriculum.

There are opportunities across the academic year to highlight to students the importance of looking after your wellbeing, such as before exams and during periods of transition.

Key considerations

- Have staff mental health and wellbeing as a standing item in staff and governor meetings
- Provide safe spaces for staff to share experiences and concerns, and clear accessible pathways for seeking support
- Review RSE and RSHE delivery to ensure mental health and wellbeing content is being delivered effectively
- Consider ways to incorporate wellbeing across the curriculum and at key times across the academic year

Reflections

- How can senior staff model a positive and inclusive approach to mental wellbeing?
- What regular opportunities can be created for all staff to discuss mental wellbeing?
- How could anonymous feedback systems be used to gauge staff comfort with mental health discussions?
- What steps could be taken to reduce stigma around mental wellbeing in your setting?

Resources

[Mentally Healthy Schools](#)

A hub of free, quality-assured mental health resources, information and advice for schools and colleges.

Notes

5. Create a supportive physical environment

Creating a supportive environment is both a cultural and practical step to supporting wellbeing. The physical environment plays an important role in staff wellbeing.

Where it is practically possible, this involves ensuring spaces are accessible, cater to staff members' different needs, and promote a sense of comfort, collaboration and productivity.

Consider factors such as lighting, noise levels, ergonomic furniture, and areas for both social interaction and quiet work.

In particular, it can be helpful to designate a reflective space that is available for staff when needed.

Key considerations

- Designate a comfortable staff-only space
- Involve staff in decisions about the space
- Ensure the space is appealing and well-maintained
- Consider providing amenities like comfortable seating, a kitchenette, or quiet work areas

Reflections

- What spaces are currently available for staff, and how can they be improved?
- What amenities would staff find most beneficial in a dedicated space?
- How can all staff have access to and feel comfortable using these spaces?

Notes



6. Offer supervision or reflective space opportunities

Reflective practice and supervision offers an opportunity for staff to effectively support themselves, their students and each other.

Staff in some roles, such as Pastoral or Safeguarding Leads, may be offered access to clinical supervision, while other staff can be offered a form of peer reflective practice.

This space allows professionals an opportunity to talk about difficult or distressing disclosures and work proactively with another member of staff or as a staff group. Effective reflective practice and supervision can help staff think through how they can support their students, respond to specific challenges, and feel more confident in their roles. It also offers a structured way for staff to voice concerns and receive guidance.

Key considerations

- Determine the most appropriate reflective practice or supervision model for your setting, taking into account your resources, budget, and your staff's specific needs
- Ensure supervisors are appropriately trained, or work with an appropriate external provider
- Schedule regular, protected time for supervision, decide who will access supervision
- Create a supportive, non-judgmental environment for discussions


Reflections

- What form of reflective practice or supervision would be most beneficial for staff?
- Are there specific staff members (e.g., DSL, SMHL, leadership, those with mental health responsibilities) who would particularly benefit from clinical supervision with a trained professional?
- Where will supervision sessions be held?
- What training or support will supervisors need?

Resources

Reflective practice and supervision training

Our evidence-based training courses have been written by mental health professionals and education experts. Every session is delivered by one of our highly experienced qualified trainers.

[Book now](#) 

Notes

7. Promote work-life balance

Given the pressure that school and college staff work under, it can be difficult to maintain work-life balance. This can have a negative effect on staff mental wellbeing.

Prioritising work-life balance in education settings is crucial. This might include reviewing workload, implementing email protocols, having protected time for breaks, and promoting flexible working arrangements where possible.

It can also help to earmark time for staff to socialise more informally. This can help staff to relax, build a sense of community, and demonstrate your commitment to supporting their wellbeing.

This might involve holding team breakfasts or weekly coffee mornings, organising staff away days and social events, and providing free or low-cost activities, such as yoga, mindfulness sessions, or sports clubs.

Key considerations

- Review and potentially revise marking and planning policies with input from staff
- Implement email protocols to limit after-hours communication
- Encourage staff to take regular breaks and leave work on time
- Model good work-life balance practices at leadership level

Reflections

- What current practices might be negatively impacting staff work-life balance?
- What will make it easier to maintain boundaries between work and personal time?
- What changes can the leadership team make to model good work-life balance?
- Are there any staff social activities or events that could be organised as part of the school calendar?

Resources

[Improve workload and wellbeing for school staff - Department for Education](#)

Resources to help promote staff wellbeing and support workload reduction in schools and colleges.

Notes

8. Provide mental health and wellbeing training and development

Mental health and wellbeing training can play a vital role in helping staff feel confident and empowered in their roles. It can help staff to support their own wellbeing, as well as to know how to best support the wellbeing of their students.

It can also equip staff with the skills to support a whole-school or college approach to mental health and wellbeing. This could include mental health awareness for all staff, as well as specialised training for specific roles and responsibilities.

Any training should respond to specific needs which should be identified in consultation with staff. It's important to ensure that any external provider has appropriate credentials and expertise to deliver effective, evidence-based training.

Key considerations

- Conduct surveys and consult with staff to identify specific training needs
- Consider provider credentials, training content, and delivery method, ensuring the training is credible, accessible and meets your staff's specific needs
- Integrate training into existing INSET days or professional development time
- Explore opportunities for collaboration with other schools for cost-effective training

Reflections

- How will staff's current knowledge and skills in mental health and wellbeing be assessed?
- What mix of general and specialised training would best support your setting's mental health strategy?
- How can you ensure the training is practical and applicable to your setting's specific context?
- What methods will you use to evaluate the effectiveness of the training over time?

More information

5 Steps: [Provide training for staff with responsibilities for mental health and wellbeing](#)



Anna Freud training for schools and colleges

Our evidence-based training courses have been written by mental health professionals and education experts. Every session is delivered by one of our highly experienced qualified trainers.

We offer both shorter and more intensive training courses for staff in primary schools, secondary schools, alternative provision settings, and further education colleges. This includes training on:

- Reflective practice and supervision
- Parent and carer partnership
- Developing a policy for your whole-school approach to mental wellbeing

[See our trainings](#)

Notes

9. Identify and signpost appropriate support

Identifying and effectively signposting mental wellbeing support is vital to ensuring staff know where to turn when they need assistance. The support offered for staff will depend on their needs.

This support may be a combination of universal (e.g., a staff mental health policy and wellbeing information and resources), targeted (e.g., mental health training and supervision) and specialised (e.g. Employee assistance programmes and access to crisis support).

This support should be clearly signposted and easily accessible. It can be communicated in staff areas, via newsletters and on the intranet, and as part of staff inductions, training and development.

Key considerations

- Offer different levels of support to address varying needs among staff
- Ensure support options are clearly visible and easily accessible
- Provide a variety of support options to meet different needs
- Communicate support structures regularly and clearly
- Maintain confidentiality and offer anonymous support options

Reflections

- What universal, targeted, and specialist support can be offered to staff?
- How can support information be more visible in your setting?
- What methods can be used to regularly communicate available support to staff?
- How will support be accessible to all staff, including those who may be reluctant to seek help?

More information

5 Steps: [Ensure support structures are clearly identified and signposted](#)



Notes

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10. Recognise and celebrate staff contributions and achievements

Recognising and valuing staff efforts and achievements can boost morale, increase job satisfaction, and contribute to a positive school culture.

Recognition should be timely, specific, and tailored to individual preferences, ranging from public acknowledgments, celebrations in newsletters to personal thank-you notes.

It can also be helpful to earmark staff time to celebrate achievements, as well as to relax and socialise together.

Key considerations

- Implement both formal and informal recognition systems
- Ensure recognition is fair and inclusive
- Celebrate both individual and team achievements
- Earmark time for staff to relax, socialise and celebrate

Reflections

- What current systems are in place for recognising staff contributions?
- How can all staff feel valued and appreciated?
- What new ways of celebrating staff could be implemented?

Notes

Further resources

[Education Support](#)

Information, support and guidance to support education staff with their mental wellbeing.

[5 Steps to mental health and wellbeing](#)

A framework and tool to help you to embed a whole-school or college approach to mental health and wellbeing in your setting.

[Anna Freud School and college services](#)

Training, clinical support, webinars and resources to support the development of a whole-school or college approach to mental health and wellbeing.

[Mental health lead resource hub](#)

A hub of resources to support senior mental health leads to develop and embed a whole-school or college approach to mental health and wellbeing.

[Mentally Healthy Schools](#)

A hub of quality-assured mental health resources, information & advice for schools and colleges.

[Education staff wellbeing charter](#)

A charter from the Department for Education which includes information and resources to support staff mental health and wellbeing.

Action-planning template

Support	Agreed action	Owner	Deadline	Progress and success measures	Review date
Embed a mental health lead with responsibility for staff wellbeing					
Measure and monitor staff wellbeing and implement learning					
Develop a staff wellbeing policy					
Promote an open, inclusive culture and ethos					
Provide a supportive physical environment					

Support	Agreed action	Owner	Deadline	Progress and success measures	Review date
Offer supervision and reflective space opportunities					
Promote work-life balance					
Provide mental health and wellbeing training					
Identify and signpost appropriate support					
Recognise and celebrate staff contributions and achievements					

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