

University of Stirling - staff mental health and wellbeing case study

The University of Stirling recognises its responsibility as an inclusive, supportive employer and educator. We are committed to identifying and addressing systemic factors or barriers that might prevent our community from achieving optimal mental health.

1. Mental Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2021-2024

The joint University and Students' Union Mental Health and Wellbeing Strategy was agreed in May 2021. The University committed to:

“foster and nurture a culture and environment that respects, protects, promotes, and enhances the mental health and wellbeing of our students and staff, enabling them to thrive and achieve their potential whilst achieving our institutional ambitions”.

2. Realising these objectives

Induction

Every new employee attends an induction session, which provides an overview of the Mental Health and Wellbeing Strategy, its aims and priorities and how it relates to all staff

Health Awareness Campaigns

The University undertakes targeted campaigns and outreach activities to raise awareness of wellbeing and mental health issues and promote available support. Since September 2020, these campaigns have run alongside nationwide campaigns including Stress Awareness Month, Time to Talk, and suicide prevention.

Mental Health Training

The University runs mental health and wellbeing sessions to help employees to identify mental health 'red flags' and respond appropriately. The development sessions include:

Mental Health First Aiders trains participants to give initial support to an individual experiencing a mental health problem.

Mental Health Awareness for Line Managers helps managers to understand triggers, impact and how to deal with and manage challenging situations.

Mental Health Awareness for Staff enables participants to gain a better understanding of how individuals are affected by mental ill-health and offers appropriate support.

Personal Resilience helps participants develop strategies to identify the components of personal resilience and coping mechanisms.

Restoring Balance supports participants to manage stress through mindfulness.

Employee Assistance Programme (EAP)

Launched in May 2020, the EAP provides a range of services including free, confidential advice, 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. Employees can expect up to six free counselling sessions, arranged on average within 3.7 days.

TogetherAll

TogetherAll (formerly Big White Wall) was commissioned to provide employees and students with safe, anonymised access to online resources, communities and forums to support mental health and wellbeing, accessible 24 hours a day.

Stirling Student and Staff Life Programme - Be Connected

Launched in April 2020, Be Connected blends online and face-to-face activities, events, and resources, designed to build a sense of community. The successful programme has seen thousands of students and staff engage with activities, including online fitness, skills development and social events.

Online resources

A suite of resources was developed to support employees during lockdown including mental health pages which included links to the resources above plus a specific focus on remaining healthy while homeworking. Managers were encouraged to think about what practical support they could give to employees including encouraging more rest breaks, support in prioritising workload, flexibility around childcare, and establishing a buddy system.

Rest/Wellbeing Days

Since March 2020, eight additional “rest days” have been provided to all staff, recognising the efforts made during the pandemic.

Time off for Dependants

The University enhanced its Time off for Dependants provision from three to five days paid leave per financial year, enabling employees to support dependants in emergencies.

Progressive Working Practices – agile working

The University developed guidance to support staff through Covid-19, particularly with balancing workloads and caring responsibilities and is now taking the opportunity to refresh their working practices.

Remote working has been positive for many; boosting agility, productivity, and wellbeing, while providing insights into progressive, inclusive ways of working that can optimise organisational resilience and development. An agile working framework is under development, facilitating a high-performance, inclusive working culture that recognises the diverse experience of their workforce.

Evaluation

The University’s Mental Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2021-2024 was drafted following consultation with staff, students and other stakeholders to help inform and focus the strategic aims and associated action plan.

Since the introduction of the EAP, staff who have used the service have recorded a 90% improvement rate. Feedback on all the University’s programmes to date has been very positive following evaluation after each session and their Spring and Summer Wellbeing programmes have been consistently fully booked. Feedback comments from attendees of the Metal Health Awareness Sessions includes:

“As a relatively new Team Lead, this course was enlightening and also very helpful to network and hear real life examples of mental health issues from other line managers”.

“I especially appreciated the advice on how to approach others (e.g. what to say) with mental health issues. I loved this session! Thank you very, very much”.

They are also reviewing the Attendance Management Policy and improving associated processes to facilitate attendance at work and clearly signpost the support mechanisms in place.

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