

## University of the West of England - staff mental health and wellbeing case study

In 2017 we pledged our commitment to make the mental health and wellbeing of our university community a strategic priority for UWE Bristol. This became our **Mental Wealth First strategy**, which we launched in spring 2018 and is now embedded in our Strategy 2030. We set out clear objectives and goals representing three themes, **Promotion, Prevention and Provision**. Under these three themes we developed a number of initiatives:

### Promotion

**#LetsTalkNow Hub** is an ongoing communications campaign encouraging students and staff to think actively about their mental health. The campaign has included positive messages, podcasts, and year-round communications and events programme supporting World Mental Health Day, University Mental Health Day, Mental Health Awareness Week and Feel Good February.

Our **Mental Wealth Lab** communications initiative, explores innovative approaches to promoting positive mental health through a series of activities, events and research, offering opportunities for our university community to get involved. Activities have included;

- A CAR event from the University's Centre for Appearance Research, 'The role of positive body image in mental health'
- A pilot for listening skills workshop for staff
- Craft sessions, led by MA Design students
- Photography workshops, led by photography students
- A prototype app to support wellbeing walks.

### Prevention and provision

Our Prevention and Provision Theme includes piloting interventions to improve H&W, embedding best practice into all strands of university life. We introduced Mental Health mandatory training programmes including the Charlie Waller Memorial Trust e-learning modules 'Supporting Student MH&W'. Other initiatives for staff included culturally appropriate talking therapies with 'Nilaari' (a local community group), manager support sessions on mental health with 'WECIL' (West of England Centre for Inclusive Living), five ways to wellbeing, and The Happy Mind Collective offered 15-minute videos, easily applied to daily work tasks.

### Response to Coronavirus

Our response to Coronavirus gave us the opportunity for increased focus and targeted responses to staff wellbeing. The Recovery Coordination Group which formed to ensure action in response to the pandemic facilitated this through the formation of a Staff Health and Wellbeing Group. We launched our Covid Care Survey, to check in with staff. The results of each of three surveys were collated and reviewed at the most senior level in order to shape university plans. Weekly VC updates were introduced with Live Q&A sessions, reaching over 400 staff. We introduced multiple levels of training and support webinars as a result of feedback as well as support guides and information updated weekly through the intranet. During the second lockdown, the group reviewed initiatives and developed a lockdown support plan to **reassure and remind** staff, it included helpful hints to have fun virtually, a feel-good guide to look after your wellbeing, poetry workshops and an online comedy night, 'Thank You Thursday' and a parents' network forum to support home learning, mental health blogs and resilience workshops.

### Reflections

We continue to develop new wellbeing initiatives for staff and students which integrate and align with the Universities Mental Health Charter, and key themes in our 2030 strategy. Our recent audit

by PwC on Staff Wellbeing highlighted many areas of good practice, and our ability to demonstrate a 'well-known' wellbeing strategy. During Covid-19 we were able to pivot our focus and support effectively. Our success has been due to our holistic and integrated approach with internal teams across UWE, including Health and Safety, EDI, Internal Communications, HR&OD and with Senior Management Endorsement.

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