



Understanding and Managing Staff Anxiety



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Supporting staff returning to work

Contents:

- Background 3
- Introduction to staff wellbeing 4
- Anxiety in the work place 5
- Individual risk assessment 6
- Adapting to new ways of working 7-8
- Developing a wellbeing strategy 9-10
- Staff Wellbeing Survey 11-12
- Employee Assistance Programme 13
- Easing the pressure at work 14-15
- How Strictly Education can help 16



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Background

Working within education has long been challenging and the prevalence of work-related stress amongst teaching and education professionals is currently much higher than average.

With the on-going pandemic, there may be individual concerns for each employee. This eBook is designed to guide you through dealing with complicated situations which may occur in your working environment, some resulting from concerns over health matters, perhaps new ways of working and/or pressures outside of work.

We hope that you will find the contents helpful.

The HR Team, StrictlyEducation



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Introduction to staff wellbeing

Feeling healthy and happy

Wellbeing is more than momentary contentment. It is a state of feeling healthy and happy and may rely on a combination of factors, such as a sense of social connectivity, a feeling of purpose and prosperity.

Nick Gibb has written to the Expert Advisory Group, accepting all the recommendations made to improve school staff wellbeing. The [letter](#) (June 2020) commits that the DfE will publish a wellbeing charter setting out actions that educators can commit to boost staff mental health.

work to reduce workload, support early career teachers, promote flexible working and tackle accountability pressures which we know can drive poor wellbeing.

Finally, I recognise that these recommendations are the start of a long term collaborative process. The evidence is clear that wellbeing relies on a combination of other factors, so we will need to monitor and review progress periodically. Also, whilst the recommendations cover both schools and FE colleges, we will need to approach implementation differently.

I believe that the work of the Expert Advisory Group will make a significant contribution to improving the wellbeing of staff in our schools and colleges.

Once again, please accept my congratulations and thanks to all members for the dedication that you have shown to this work.

With best wishes.



Rt Hon Nick Gibb MP



Rt Hon Nick Gibb MP
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7 June 2020

Dear Expert Advisory Group Member

IMPROVING THE WELLBEING OF STAFF IN SCHOOLS AND COLLEGES

I am writing to thank you for submitting your recommendations to the Department, following the conclusion of your work to help improve the wellbeing of staff in schools and colleges. I would like to express my gratitude to all members for giving up their time to undertake this very important work.

This topic is more important now than ever. Keeping people safe at this difficult time continues to be the Government's top priority. I know that staff in schools and colleges are working selflessly and flexibly, going above and beyond to help their students. This is why we are supporting leaders so that they are able to fulfil their duty of care to their staff, building on the excellent practice that exists in the sector.

I welcome your recommendations along with the principles underpinning them, and the emphasis on developing a whole system approach to improving staff wellbeing. The wellbeing charter that you recommended will set out commitments from government and educators on actions they will take to improve wellbeing of staff in schools and colleges. It would not be an accredited 'kitemark' or an accountability tool, but would act as a public pledge from employers and government. The charter will include a set of wellbeing commitments for schools, colleges and employers to sign up to voluntarily. It will also include commitments from the Department to:

- Integrate wellbeing into its schools workload policy test, and embed staff wellbeing into any relevant training, standards and guidance for which it has responsibility;
- Build staff wellbeing and mental health into our wider communications strategy around tackling stigma and recruitment and retention, linking to existing campaigns in the third sector; and
- Measure the wellbeing of staff at regular intervals, and publish findings.

We will now work with you and others in the sector to develop, test and launch this charter later this year.

As you have noted, the recommendations build on the commitments in the Department's Teacher Recruitment and Retention Strategy for schools, including our

Anxiety in the workplace

Change can be stressful

Staff are working in new ways - with some in different roles – and many will have concerns about getting things right for their pupils and also balancing these with their own personal situations.

Ultimately, each employer has to determine whether or not it is safe for staff to return to work, based on their own situation.

Many schools have been busy producing a risk assessment using our risk assessment template and consulting with staff and safety representatives about safe systems of work in place for a wider opening. The template can be found on our [Coronavirus Hub](#).

[Risk Assessment Template](#)



Who might be harmed and how?	Measures to control the risk	How are you already controlling this risk? <i>(Consider any practical factors - similar controls to reflect your setting. BUIE and indicators additional requirements must be incorporated supplementary DfE advice)</i>	What further actions (if any) do you need to take to control the risks?	Who needs to carry out the actions?	When is the action needed by?	Dose
<ul style="list-style-type: none">StaffPupilsParentsVolunteers / governorsVisitors	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Minimising contact with individuals who have coronavirus symptoms (or have someone in their household who does)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Staff given instruction on what to do if they or someone in their household experiences symptoms.Staff given instruction on what to do if a pupil shows symptoms on school.Any staff / pupils displaying symptoms of coronavirus in school to be sent home.Parents / pupils and other potential visitors	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Send any actions, including any of those from the suggestions on the ppt, which have been identified but not yet carried out.			



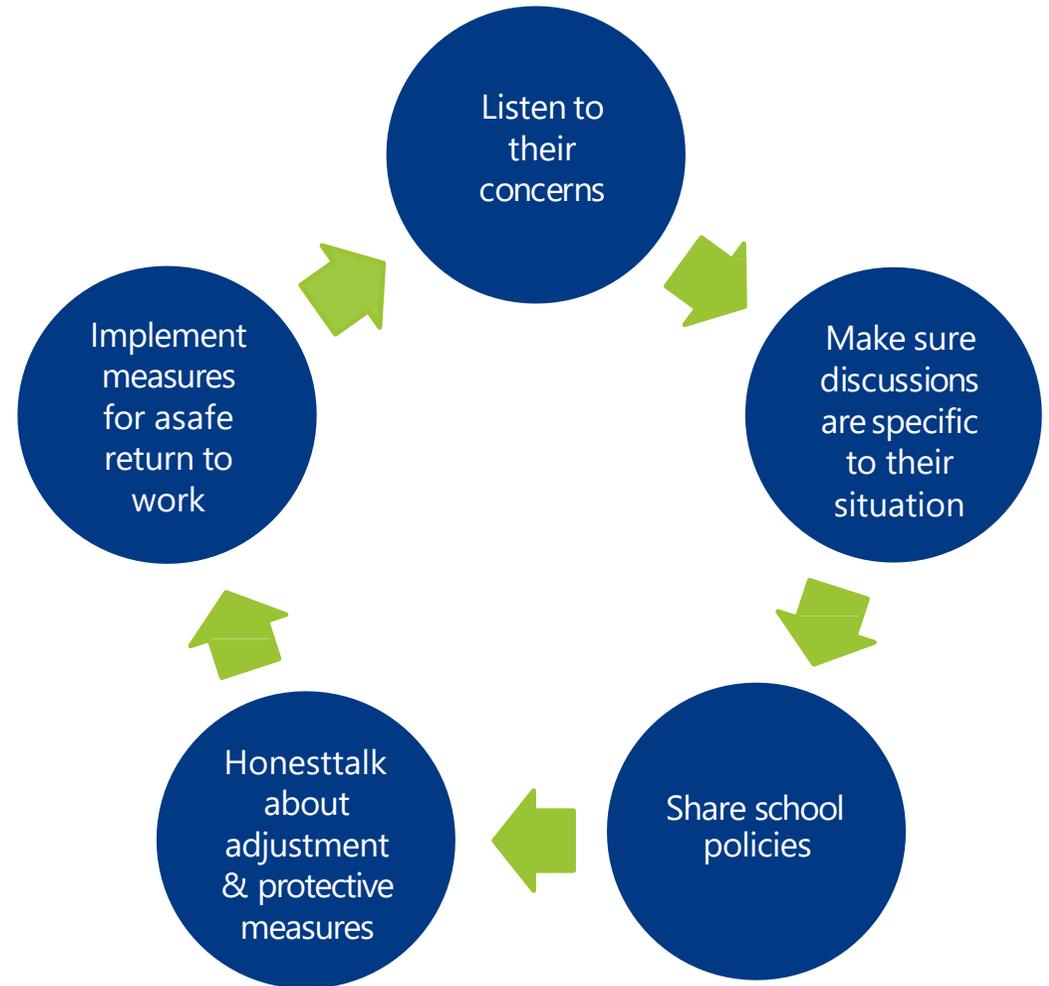
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Individual risk assessment

Exploring the options

Consider filling out an [individual risk assessment form to consider measures](#) such as:

- ✓ Redeployment into a role that minimises contact with others
- ✓ The use of protective equipment
- ✓ New routines for the individual and the area in which they work
- ✓ Agreeing time off with or without pay
- ✓ A medical suspension, including a referral to occupational health for advice, with a reviewed period built in



Adapting to new ways of working

Managing the changes

There is an expectation across the government and the DfE that schools have plans in place to deliver remote education.

This advice will help teachers and school leaders adapt to the sudden change of having to work remotely and ensure that these new ways of teaching and learning is undertaken in a way that is safe, sustainable for the workforce and secures the best possible educational experiences for children and young people.

- Have reasonable expectations about what can and cannot be achieved through remote education and blended learning as it's unrealistic to expect the same outcomes as face-to face teaching
- Take care not to monitor teacher's online lessons for performance appraisal and quality-assurance purposes as some teachers may not have had experience of teaching remotely prior to the pandemic



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Adapting to new ways of working (cont.)

Managing the changes

- Support teachers by creating a climate where teachers can collaborate and share experiences and practice about what does and doesn't work
- Give teachers the time that they need to plan, prepare for and teach pupils who are learning remotely
- Take regular breaks from the computer screen
- Take into account the extraordinary circumstances arising from the pandemic such as caring responsibilities which may disrupt individuals usual work schedule

For more support on home working during school closures please visit our [Education HR website](#).



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Developing a wellbeing strategy

For mental health and wellbeing

Aside from the legal duty of employers to ensure the health, safety and welfare of all employees at work, there is a strong business case for fostering employee wellbeing as those with high levels of wellbeing tend to perform better at work.

It will also help mitigate against the risk of claims against the employer for physical or mental injury, such as stress-related illness.

A practical approach would be to structure a wellbeing programme around organisational and individual need that is supported by the board of governors/trustees and the senior leadership team.



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Developing a wellbeing strategy (cont.)

Initiatives may include:

- ✓ A plan based on the school's needs, specific risks and priorities in relation to wellbeing at work
- ✓ Effective communication systems, enabling all staff to feel able to talk about physical and mental health without fear or stigma
- ✓ Training line managers to spot the signs of an employee struggling with a mental health issue and signpost them towards the appropriate support and services available. Details of our training programmes can be found [here](#)
- ✓ Aligning wellbeing with development plans and school improvement strategies
- ✓ Clear supportive protocols for managing a return to work where mental health issues have arisen
- ✓ The integration of clear and simple wellbeing performance targets into routine performance appraisal systems, to enable the continuous evaluation of the programme
- ✓ Effective use of external sources of support such as [MHFA training](#) and [Employee Assistance Programmes \(EAPs\)](#)

Staff Wellbeing Survey

Developing an understanding

To understand how staff are experiencing the working environment and any areas they feel are working well or are in need of improvement, one approach is to use a [staff wellbeing survey](#).

Following the survey, a **detailed bespoke report** containing an analysis of the survey results with recommendations and suggested areas to prioritise is provided.

Alongside our usual wellbeing survey, we have developed a light survey for just £95.

This can be for an unlimited number of staff and includes:

- A detailed independent survey that provides a reliable and authentic perspective on staff wellbeing
- A comprehensive report of raw data including charts and anonymised respondent comments



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Detailed guidance on strategy development can be found in:

[the step-by-step guide](#)

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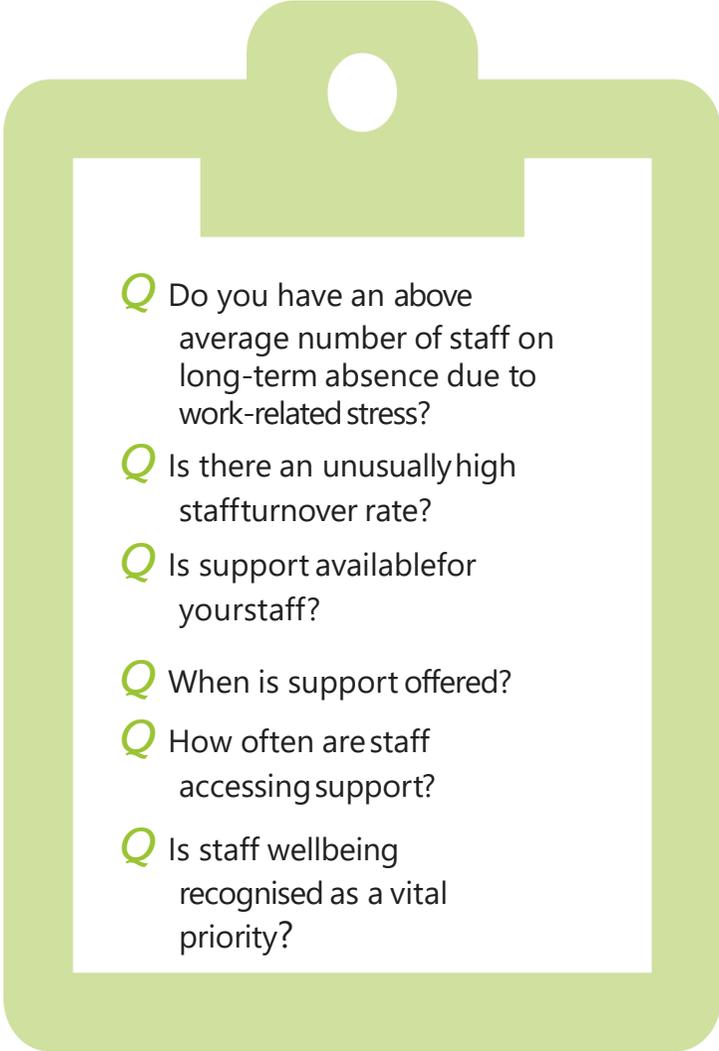
Staff Wellbeing Survey (cont.)

A different type of check-up

A staff wellbeing survey is not a one-off exercise and the survey should be repeated at regular intervals to gauge the impact of your wellbeing strategy and inform future wellbeing policies and procedures.

In creating a suitable wellbeing strategy, it is key to understand how healthy your workplace is now and to prioritise areas for improvement.

Analysis of results should be used to prioritise objectives and develop a strategy for improving staff wellbeing.

- 
- Q Do you have an above average number of staff on long-term absence due to work-related stress?
 - Q Is there an unusually high staff turnover rate?
 - Q Is support available for your staff?
 - Q When is support offered?
 - Q How often are staff accessing support?
 - Q Is staff wellbeing recognised as a vital priority?

Employee Assistance Programme

Support at times of need

An [Employee Assistance Programme](#) (EAP) assists employees often at times of great need. If there are personal problems or health-related issues that are affecting an individuals' wellbeing or workperformance, then access to a good EAP can support through the following:



Helpline



Manager coaching



Counselling



Legal support



Onlineresources



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Easing the pressure at work

Tips for you and your team

- ✓ Take a break between meetings
- ✓ Close the office door from time to time
- ✓ Be clear about what is acceptable/unacceptable levels of contact outside of 'normal working hours' and ensure all within the school know what this means and apply this
- ✓ Plan in advance whenever possible
- ✓ Delegate key activities so that there are fewer surprises
- ✓ Reflect on the week/term, remembering:
 - when you've been at your best
 - how your interactions with individuals/groups have gone and how you can improve these



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Whether it's a walk, run, soak in the bath, or a chat with family or friends; do something that has a positive effect on your own wellbeing.

Eat healthily, avoid stimulants and try to get some fresh air.

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Looking after yourself

Easy to say not always easy todo!

Where possible, balance difficult conversations off against positive ones. Difficult conversations can feature heavily, particularly for senior leaders, and can lead to anxiety and self-doubt.



Take advice



Tackle situations



Create peer network



Identify triggers



Reflect



Reframe experiences



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Be kind to yourself!

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How Strictly Education can help?

Experience and expertise in wellbeing

Working specifically in the education sector, we understand the pressures facing school employees, be that teaching staff or behind the scenes.

For more information about our EAP and Occupational Health programmes, please visit:

[Strictly Education 4S HR: Other HR Related Services](#)

For more guidance on managing staff and employment issues follow [this link](#).

If you are interested in purchasing any of our services, please contact us for further details and a quote:

enquire@strictlyeducation.co.uk

For more information please do get intouch.



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