

Approach to Staff Mental Health and Wellbeing

Vision

The School will provide an inclusive workplace where the physical, social, emotional and mental wellbeing of staff enables them to achieve their full potential and thrive at work. By fostering a working environment that supports employees' wellbeing at work, the School aims to deliver an employee experience that engenders commitment and loyalty as well as enabling personal and collective success.

The School seeks to support all strands of wellbeing in the workplace, whilst recognising that mental and emotional wellbeing can underpin much of a person's sense of wellness. As such, developing a School environment that understands we all have mental health that will fluctuate over time, just as we all have physical health that will change, is at the heart of our approach policy.

Background and context

In October 2017 the Government published "Thriving at work" an independent review of mental health and employers that sets out what employers can do to better support all employees, including those with mental health problems to remain in and thrive through work.

It includes a detailed analysis that explores the significant cost of poor mental health to UK businesses and the economy as a whole. Poor mental health costs employers between £33 billion and £42 billion a year, with an annual cost to the UK economy of between £74 billion and £99 billion.

The review quantifies how investing in supporting mental health at work is good for business and productivity. The most important recommendation is that all employers, regardless of size or industry, should adopt 6 'mental health core standards' that lay basic foundations for an approach to workplace mental health. It also details how large employers and the public sector can develop these standards further through a set of 'mental health enhanced standards'. The review also makes a series of recommendations to government and other bodies.

The Government has also drawn attention to the recent Universities UK '[Stepchange framework for Mental Health in HE](https://www.universitiesuk.ac.uk/policy-and-analysis/stepchange)'¹, as well as specific guidance relating to creating [Safer Universities](https://www.universitiesuk.ac.uk/policy-and-analysis/reports/Documents/2018/guidance-for-sector-practitioners-on-preventing-student-suicides.PDF)² and [Transitions guidance](http://www.studentminds.org.uk/transitionintouniversity.html)³ for students in their early terms at university. The School has now initiated a major review of its approach to MHW, drawing upon the [Stepchange framework](https://www.universitiesuk.ac.uk/policy-and-analysis/stepchange), which recommends a whole university approach to cover all areas of community, learning, living and support services⁴. The Government is planning to draw on

¹ <https://www.universitiesuk.ac.uk/policy-and-analysis/stepchange>

² <https://www.universitiesuk.ac.uk/policy-and-analysis/reports/Documents/2018/guidance-for-sector-practitioners-on-preventing-student-suicides.PDF>

³ <http://www.studentminds.org.uk/transitionintouniversity.html>

⁴ These elements comprise:

COMMUNITY - promoting community awareness and cohesion

LEARNING - fostering connectedness and motivation through learning communities, tutors, flexibility in course design/ assessment and regular feedback to reinforce the student-staff connection

LIVING – enhancing social, physical and digital environments to support healthy cultures

SUPPORT – good quality specialist services, effective signposting and linked academic policies

the framework in creating a University Mental Health Charter, which will specify new MHW standards for universities⁵.

Underpinning all of this is the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) Management Standards which cover six key areas of work design that, if not properly managed, are associated with poor health, lower productivity and increased accident and sickness absence rates.

Whilst taking a whole University approach to the wellbeing of both staff and students it is recognised that there are differing needs across the whole School community. This work will be effectively co-ordinated to ensure a collective approach is undertaken.

Strategic Aims

The working environment at LSE will be one where staff:

- a) *Can work safely, comfortably and with minimal risk to their health*
- b) *Feel valued and supported*
- c) *Have an appropriate work-life balance*
- d) *Are confident that their health and wellbeing matter to the LSE*
- e) *Feel confident, equipped and supported to demonstrate resilience and respond flexibly and positively to both temporary increases in demand and an evolving work environment*
- f) *Are provided with advice, support and a working environment that encourages healthy lifestyle choices*
- g) *Feel able to seek support from their line manager, work colleagues or other sources of assistance in relation to stress and other mental health issues.*

This will progressed through a Mental Health and Wellbeing Policy and a detailed action plan [*link*] which is underpinned by the following key themes:

1. Collaborating with key internal and external partners to create a shared understanding of wellbeing in the workplace and to develop appropriate wellbeing interventions.
2. Promoting better social, physical and mental wellbeing through an improved bank of information resources and encouraging participation in healthy initiatives at individual, team and School levels.
3. Training and supporting our leaders and managers to manage staff effectively and create a healthy working environment.
4. Creating a community of wellbeing volunteers to develop and co-ordinate a range of 'grassroots' wellbeing initiatives, whilst providing opportunities for the wider School community to contribute ideas and to engage and connect with other members of staff.

Governance

The Human Resources Committee will have a key role in overseeing the Mental Health and Wellbeing strategy and policy. Progress on the action plan will be taken to HRC with regular updates when relevant also being provided to Health and Safety Committee. The work will be championed at SMC by the Chief Operating Officer

⁵ The Government have invited Student Minds to engage in widescale collaboration with sector partners to develop the new University MH Charter over the course of 2018-19, with an expected launch later in 2019
December 2018