

Building Team Wellbeing: A Guide for Managers

Welcome to this guide

While individual wellbeing practices certainly have their place, one of the best ways to build a work culture which really values wellbeing is to nurture wellbeing at a team level. A shared sense of wellbeing can mean a team which is better functioning, more motivated, and more resilient.

If you're a line manager reading this, you aren't expected to be an expert in wellbeing. However, you can help to positively impact on the wellbeing of your team if you:

- Help to shape a positive working environment by being engaging and showing compassion for other people. Prioritise getting to know people on an individual level and encourage others in your team to do the same.
- Manage your own wellbeing and understand how your own behaviour impacts on others: this includes being open about your wellbeing and asking for help when you need it. It may also include the times at which you send emails or appear to be online. Remember that, whilst this may work for you, others may see it as a sign that they are also expected to be working out of hours – so be clear about your expectations.
- Trust your team members: give them the autonomy and control to do their jobs.
- Implement good people management practices and support wellbeing initiatives: this includes giving due consideration to the wellbeing and work-life balance of your team.
- Know how to access further wellbeing resources: this guide is just part of an expanding range of resources in the School that support wellbeing at an individual and group level.

We know that 'wellbeing' can mean different things to different people at different times. This guide recognises this by providing both an overview of general good practice when it comes to team wellbeing and ideas for how to agree and introduce local wellbeing actions that are right for your team. There's nothing complicated or expensive here – just tips and suggestions for how to create a team culture of wellbeing in a simple, practical, and engaging way. This guidance should complement the ways in which individual staff are supported, for example by discussing wellbeing during one-to-ones and the Career Development Review (CDR) process.

We hope that you find this guide useful. Naturally, these pages can't cover everything, but there should be something here for you and your colleagues no matter what your team's wellbeing priorities are. Please contact Staffwellbeing@lse.ac.uk if you have any comments, queries or suggestions about the contents of what you read here or about staff wellbeing in general.



Contents

[How to use this guide](#)

[How to start talking about team wellbeing](#)

[How to look out for each other's wellbeing](#)

[How to identify your team's wellbeing goals](#)

[How to sustain an ongoing sense of team wellbeing](#)

[Further wellbeing advice and resources](#)



How to use this guide

This guide consists of a series of sections that will help you to further explore and improve your team's wellbeing, at a pace which works for your team's own style and ways of working together. Each section includes both some easy-to-implement ideas as 'Quick wins' and 'More in-depth' guidance for when the team has the time to take a deeper dive into wellbeing.

We'd suggest that you start with '**How to start talking about team wellbeing**' and then dip in and out, but there's no set order in which to work through these sections and there's no particular timescale – you can choose where to start based on your team's situation and preferences. Of course, you can also choose to repeat sections or particular activities, embedding them into the team's culture in the longer term. You may also find it useful to revisit parts of the guide when new members join the team.

How to start talking about team wellbeing

One of the general ideas behind this guide is that, if people feel that they can talk openly about their wellbeing, potential problems are less likely to build up. Naturally, talking about wellbeing doesn't come easily to everyone and some people might not feel comfortable talking about their wellbeing straight away – or at all. It's important that colleagues don't feel pressured to share more than they're comfortable sharing but that they have the opportunity to do so.

This section provides some initial ideas for having conversations about team wellbeing in ways that are unintrusive and can be adapted depending on your team's own ways of working, roles and history when it comes to wellbeing discussions. Doing this will give your team a starting point to begin exploring how to build a sense of team wellbeing together. Of course, you and your team may well have been thinking about and working on your wellbeing for some time now, and you may already have a good idea of what works well for you, in which case feel free to skip this part of the guide.



A sensible first step is to make sure that the team has opportunities to talk about wellbeing as a group. You don't necessarily need to go out of your way to schedule anything new. For example, if you already catch up as a team at the start of each week – whether virtually or in-person – here are a few suggestions for starting to talk about team wellbeing.

Quick wins

You can encourage colleagues to start reflecting on their wellbeing by introducing a few quick questions to your team catch-up, such as:

- What are you looking forward to this week?
- What one thing are you doing today for your wellbeing?
- What's your favourite habit which helps your wellbeing?
- Or (reflecting on the previous day/week) what went well yesterday/last week?

More in-depth: talk about what wellbeing means to the team

Making the time to have a more in-depth discussion about wellbeing can really help to capture the things that positively and negatively contribute to the team's wellbeing. Understandably, as a team you will want to identify what you can do to maintain the things that positively impact and reduce or remove the things that are having a negative impact.

At a convenient time (for example, at the next team meeting), reflect on and share:

- What does wellbeing mean to you? To start the discussion off, you could refer to the Oxford English Dictionary of 'wellbeing': "...the state of being healthy, happy or prosperous..."
- When was the last time you felt really well, at home or at work? Is there anything in particular about your habits that might have contributed to that feeling?
What is positively contributing to our team's wellbeing culture? For example, "having regular wellbeing conversations."
- Is anything negatively impacting on our team's wellbeing culture? For example, "wellbeing can be prioritised less when the team is under pressure." Understandably, workload peaks can impact on wellbeing, and it's important that staff feel comfortable raising this if they feel that it's an issue. Depending on the nature of the conversation, you may also wish to pick up on any concerns about workload in individual one-to-ones.

If you're having these discussions virtually, you might find it helpful to capture the team's responses on a virtual pinboard or message board (such as [Padlet](#), which allows you to create a free team account).

How to look out for each other's wellbeing

When working in teams, we are often best placed to spot when a colleague's wellbeing is not at its best. Discussing and sharing how to spot the early warning signs can help team members to support each other at the earliest opportunity.

Step 1 – Spotting the early signs when a team member’s wellbeing isn’t at its best

Ask team members to reflect individually on the question “what early warning signs do you think you might show if you’re feeling under pressure?” Ask them to share their responses, if they are comfortable doing so. Some examples of early warning signs might include: looking tired, relying more than usual on sugar or caffeine to get through the day, being distracted or not performing as they usually do, struggling to meet deadlines, being less talkative in team catch-ups or one-to-ones. There may also be signs that are particular to remote working, such as turning off cameras during meetings. You may find it useful to capture these warning signs, e.g. on a shared platform. Encourage team members to add to the list of warning signs over time.

Step 2 – Supporting each other

Ask team members to reflect individually on “what could you do to support a team member if you notice their wellbeing deteriorating?” Ask team members to share what they could do to support a team member – as well as helping colleagues to empathise with each other; this can also be an opportunity to signpost to other wellbeing-related resources in the School (see **Further wellbeing advice and resources**).



How to identify your team’s wellbeing goals

Once your team has become comfortable with the idea of regularly discussing wellbeing, in the longer term you could as a team identify some shared wellbeing ‘goals’. This might not be straightforward – we are all different, and our individual wellbeing will be influenced by many factors (including those outside work) - but it can help the team to know what areas of wellbeing to prioritise going forward.

More in-depth: tips for facilitating a wellbeing activity

Given how busy we often are, the usual team catch-ups might not be the most convenient time to have the sort of in-depth conversation that the team might need to come up with shared wellbeing goals. This section contains a little more detail about how to go about facilitating that sort of deeper discussion. Anyone in the team can lead a wellbeing discussion or activity (in fact, it’s often a good idea to share this sort of responsibility around), although you might want to agree in advance who will take the lead so that they have time to prepare.

Teams at LSE come in many shapes and sizes. Your team might work face to face, or in a blended way which means plenty of virtual interactions. If some or all of your team work shifts, it could mean that they see each other less often. If it's a large team, you might think about running the discussion or activity across several meetings so that you have enough time, or breaking into smaller groups. If you're meeting virtually, both Teams and Zoom have the facility to arrange separate virtual breakout rooms.

If this will be a separate event from your usual team catch-ups or meetings, think about time and location so that it's as inclusive and accessible as possible, for example if staff in your team have childcare or other caring responsibilities. Also, keep in mind that different team members may have different learning styles, so it's a good idea to ask the team if there's a particular approach (or combination of approaches) that they would prefer. For example, you could agree to share ahead of the day a quick summary of what you'll be talking about and anything else that might help to prompt conversation (such as relevant wellbeing-related resources or webpages). It might be useful to share the link to this guide with your colleagues ahead of the discussion. If you'll be asking the team some questions as part of the activity, it might be a good idea to have some 'answers' up your sleeve, to introduce if people need a few suggestions to get going.

On the day, ask for a volunteer to take and share some brief notes of what's said. These sorts of records can be an important part of building team wellbeing – they can be a record of shared experiences and understanding, which can in turn help to keep morale up and sustain a sense of progress.

The following is a useful crib sheet for how to handle any potential sticking points on the day and keep the discussion moving forward.

Situation	What you could do
The whole team is silent and unresponsive	Split the team into small groups – ask them to reflect on the question(s) and be prepared to share their thoughts with the whole team.
A team member is silent and unresponsive	Avoid pushing team members to engage in the discussion – remember that silence can be thinking time for some people. If your team member remains silent, you could check in afterwards to talk about what might help them to participate next time.
The discussion goes off the point	Note that the discussion has gone off track and come back to it later - if there isn't time to do this, make a note to raise it in a future team meeting.
One member of the team is very dominant	Go around each team member and ask for their ideas. Suggest that people raise hands to contribute to the discussion.
The discussion doesn't seem to be engaging the team	Pause and ask team members if there is anything you could do differently. If external factors are too distracting, think about rescheduling.
The discussion is going round in circles	Reflect that you feel a bit stuck and ask the team how to break the circle.

More in-depth: the link between team workload and wellbeing

It can be easy, especially at busy times of the year, for wellbeing to have lower priority when the team's workload is high. If you feel that this happens in your team, think about how you could encourage team members to share their comments or concerns. Some questions to prompt discussion could include:

- Does our workload feel achievable? [Of course, this is also a question to be picked up in individual one-to-ones]
- Which tasks are taking up most of our time?
- Do we feel that the deadlines we have are realistic? Are there particular deadlines we should be prioritising above others?
- Would any training help us?
- What improvements could we put in place? For example:
 - Supporting colleagues to take regular breaks and encourage team members to hold each other to account.
 - Commit to talking about any workload issues both in team catch-ups and in individual one-to-ones, especially ahead of any predicted busy times.
 - Consider whether any adjustments to ways of working and/or working pattern might help the whole team, for example changes to start and finish times at particular times of the year. This is in addition to any arrangements that you might agree individually with staff, e.g. if they have caring responsibilities outside work.

Agree to review and revisit any actions or goals that you agree on as a team.

How to sustain an ongoing sense of team wellbeing

Building a lasting sense of team wellbeing won't happen overnight, and you should aim as a team to review and reflect on your progress on an ongoing basis – reflect on what's working well and what else you need to continue working on. It's also a good idea to review progress when there are any changes in the team.

Quick wins (general)

- Encourage staff to:
 - Share any good wellbeing resources or new learning that they find – this could be podcasts, wellbeing apps, news articles etc.
 - Identify any aspects of the team's work environment that they would like to improve.
 - Commit to trying something new each week.
- Consider introducing an informal 'buddy' system for new starters to help them get used to how the team works.
- Consider asking Staffwellbeing@lse.ac.uk to present on staff wellbeing at LSE, perhaps at your next team meeting.

Quick wins (on campus)

- Arrange to take a break with a colleague: you could eat lunch together, get outside for a short walk, go to an [LSE event](#), or grab a drink on or nearby campus.
- Take a fresh approach to individual catch-ups by going for a walking meeting on or near campus: Lincoln's Inn Fields is a good choice if the weather is good.
- Be more active during your lunch hour: for example, you could book one of the squash courts in the [Marshall Building](#) (especially outside term time) or go with a colleague to the [SU Gym](#).

Quick wins (if working remotely)

- Agree joint screen breaks, e.g. at a mutually agreed lunchtime.
- Identify blocks of time for collaborative team working via Teams or Zoom: as well as giving team members the opportunity to share ideas in a similar way to being in the office, this can help colleagues to feel more connected when they're working from home. [Focusmate](#) is one alternative tool for doing this and it's free to sign up.
- If your team works remotely for part of the week, it's also a good idea to agree your all-in days a few weeks in advance where possible: this will help team members to organise their time in ways that suits their own wellbeing and work-life balance.

More in-depth: create a culture of regular appreciation

One way to sustain an ongoing sense of team wellbeing is to create a culture in which team members are encouraged to recognise and thank colleagues, not just for their work contributions but also for supporting each other in other ways.

For example, you could:

- Ask team members to reflect on and then share how they can show appreciation to one another (for example, being invited to share ideas and opinions, being thanked, being given extra responsibilities, being acknowledged for contributing to a task, giving a small token of appreciation to a team member – e.g. biscuits, a thank you note).
- Ask team members to think about something they're pleased about with regards to how they've worked together recently as a team.
- You could take a few minutes at catch-ups or team meetings for team members to give a 'shout out' for support they've received. You could also recognise a contribution in (for example) Staff News. On an individual level, talk with employees at their next one-to-one about how they would like to be appreciated or recognised.

More in-depth: celebrate success

As your team's wellbeing journey progresses, take the time to celebrate what the team has achieved. Some ideas to celebrate with your team include:

- Organise a bring-and-share lunch.
- Consider sharing your team's story with the rest of the School to inspire others, for example in Staff News (Staffwellbeing@lse.ac.uk would be happy to help to draft some comms).
- If your team's work makes this feasible, agree to take some time away for collective wellbeing: for example, meeting up on campus to do something for the group's wellbeing.
- Plan your next team away day around something related to wellbeing.

You can help to embed this further by making team away days, events and planning meetings also opportunities to recognise how individual contributions have helped to shape team progress.

Further wellbeing advice and resources

This guide is just part of a range of wellbeing resources and advice to support better wellbeing for LSE staff.

Other key wellbeing guidance:

- [Staff Wellbeing](#) webpages
- [Wellness Toolkit](#): provides practical tips and tools to support individual wellbeing, including Wellness Action Plans and a section on stress identification and management
- LSE's (Staff) [Wellbeing and Mental Health Policy](#)

Contacts for further advice and support:

- Your [HR Partner](#)
- LSE's [Staff Disability and Mental Health Adviser](#)
- [LSE Staff Counselling](#)
- The [Employee Assistance Programme](#) (EAP)

Peer support:

- [Staff Networks](#)
- [Safe Contacts](#)
- [Mental Health First Aiders](#)

