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Staff Wellbeing Policy

2024 - 2027

Mission Statement

To inspire our family of schools to provide opportunities for our pupils, staff and leaders to be the best they can be; to create a passion for lifelong learning; to enable our pupils to become kind, confident and impactful world citizens.

Statement of Intent

'What Works Wellbeing' (the UK's independent body for wellbeing evidence, policy and practice) defines wellbeing as how we're doing as individuals, communities and as a nation, and how sustainable that is for the future. It encompasses the environmental factors that affect us and how we function in society, and the subjective experiences we have throughout our lives.

Empower Learning Academy Trust wants to ensure that staff are supported and encouraged to develop personally and professionally. We recognise that staff are our most important resource and we seek to value our them through personal and professional support, involvement in decisions and access to professional development. As the employer, the Trust has a duty to ensure the health, safety and welfare of its employees. It is also required to have in place measures to mitigate as far as practicable factors that could harm employees' physical and mental wellbeing, which includes work-related stress. This duty extends only to those factors which are work-related and within the Trust's control.

We are united in our view that optimal wellbeing among staff is vital if we are to ensure the highest quality of education within our academies. We value our staff as precious and supporting their wellbeing and mental health is critical in recruiting and retaining high quality education staff now and in the future. It is also crucial in securing better outcomes for young people, including regarding their own wellbeing and mental health.

This policy accepts the Health and Safety Executive definition of work-related stress as "the adverse reaction a person has to excessive pressure or other types of demand placed on them". There is an important distinction between 'reasonable pressures' which stimulate and motivate and 'stress' where an individual feels they are unable to cope with excessive pressures or demands placed upon them.

This policy recognises that there are many sources of work-related stress and that stress can result from the actions or behaviours of managers, employees or students.

For Empower Learning Academy Trust, wellbeing extends beyond stress reduction alone however. The Trust champions innovation and autonomy in its academies' approach to the local management of staff wellbeing and is committed to sharing good practice so that it benefits all employees. Wellbeing extends into financial wellbeing, physical wellbeing and support for significant life events. The Trust's Employee Assistance Programme complements support for these aspects also.

We are committed to making sure that this Staff Wellbeing Policy is implemented so that each individual is able to cope successfully with the demands in their lives, whatever the cause of stress, within a 'no-blame' environment.

The purpose of this policy is to maintain a shared ethos which supports staff health and wellbeing by making sure that all employees are treated fairly and consistently.

This policy applies to all employees working in Empower Learning Academy Trust. The Trust's performance on wellbeing and stress management will be assessed within the context of the HSE Management Standards and through the outcomes of the annual staff survey as an evaluation of progress made against the individual academy and trust staff wellbeing action plans.

Guiding Principles

- To develop a healthy, motivated workforce who are able to deliver a high-standard of education for our pupils.
- To help ensure that our trust and its academies promotes the health and wellbeing of all staff members, recognising the impact work can have on employees' stress levels, mental and physical health.
- To develop and maintain a positive health and safety culture through regular communication and consultation with staff and their trade union representatives on health and safety matters.
- To recognise that excessive hours of work can be detrimental to staff health and effectiveness and to agree on flexible working practices where possible without damaging opportunities for pupils to succeed.
- To communicate and model the importance of a work-life balance to all staff, and to ensure that all policy updates are communicated regularly.
- To encourage staff as individuals to accept responsibility for their own mental, physical and emotional wellbeing.
- To comply with all statutory requirements.
- To respond sensitively to external pressures which affect the lives of staff members.
- To provide staff with training to deal positively with stressful incidents and provide them with a sense of confidence to deal with emergencies via training.
- To improve staff development, co-operation and teamwork by creating effective leaders.
- To make staff members aware of the channels which can be used to manage and deal with stress or work-related health and wellbeing issues.

The Trust's values of Passion, Respect, Inclusion, Challenge and Openness inherently support staff wellbeing. The specific Trust beliefs of: developing exceptional leadership at all levels; clear empowerment and accountability; providing outstanding personal and professional development; building self-esteem at all levels of the Trust community; rewarding effort and making learning fun all have a direct correlation with staff wellbeing.

Legislation

Legislation that will be considered when promoting positive mental, physical and emotional wellbeing, including, but not exclusively:

- The Health and Safety at Work Act 1974
- The Equality Act 2010
- Working Time regulations
- Employment Rights Act 1996
- Employment Relations Act 1999

In addition, the Trust and its academies have all signed up to the Department for Education's Education Staff Wellbeing Charter ([The Education Staff Wellbeing Charter - November 2021 \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](#)) and are committed to its responsibility on educational employers to:

1. Prioritise staff mental health.
2. Give staff the support they need to take responsibility for their own and other people's wellbeing.
3. Give managers access to the tools and resources they need to support the wellbeing of those they line manage.
4. Establish a clear communications policy.
5. Give staff a voice in decision-making.
6. Drive down unnecessary workload.

7. Champion flexible working and diversity.
8. Create a good behaviour culture.
9. Support staff to progress in their careers.
10. Include a sub-strategy for protecting leader wellbeing and mental health.
11. Hold ourselves accountable, including by measuring staff wellbeing.

Roles and Responsibilities

Trustees and Local Governance Committee Members will:

- Take overall responsibility for the implementation of this policy while ensuring that staff enjoy a reasonable work-life balance.
- Adopt the appropriate policies in respect of 'family friendly' employment, including consideration of part-time working, flexible working patterns etc., where this can be implemented without detriment to the operational requirements of the academy/Trust.
- Actively demonstrate recognition and acceptance of common mental and physical health problems by creating an environment where staff feel comfortable in asking for help.
- Ensure that staff roles and responsibilities are clearly defined.
- Promote information about, and access to, external support services, and make sure that there are clear routes in place to escalate a concern in order to access further support.
- Ensure that all of the Trust's policies are assessed for workload impact.
- Act early and provide consistent support.
- Ensure this policy is monitored, evaluated and reviewed with the recognised workplace unions on an annual basis, in the light of changing needs and legislative frameworks.
- Implement a sub-strategy for protecting leader wellbeing and mental health.
- Conduct an annual survey of staff, focussed on health and wellbeing, and share and act upon results.

Senior Leaders will:

- Support the relevant governing body in ensuring that strategies are implemented to effectively manage and, where necessary, reduce employee stress.
- Lead in setting standards for conduct, including how they treat other members of staff, and adhere to agreed working hours and protocols.
- Foster a supportive work environment, operating in a fair and consistent manner and managing a non-judgemental and confidential support system for staff.
- Ensure that there is clear communication between staff and management with regards to all areas of school life within a clear policy on out-of-school hours working, including guidance on when it is and is not reasonable for staff to respond to communications.
- Signpost trust-wide support services available e.g. HSF Assist, Cycle to Work Scheme, Occupational health etc.
- Create opportunities for employees to discuss concerns and will enable staff to do so in an environment where stress is not considered a weakness.
- Ensure job descriptions are kept up-to-date, with clearly identified responsibilities and staff being consulted before any changes are made
- Follow agreed procedures when there are concerns or absence due to work related stress and other mental-health problems, ensuring that a return-to-work policy is established in the workplace that is supportive of staff both while absent and upon return to work.
- Monitor and review any measures that are planned and assess their effectiveness, ensuring accountability systems are based on trust and professional dialogue, with proportionate amounts of direct monitoring.

- Ensure that all staff have access to regular training sessions on health and wellbeing in schools, including practical sessions to deal with mental, physical and emotional wellbeing issues, and that they are given the appropriate time and resources to undertake this.
- Ensure that the efforts and successes of staff are recognised and celebrated.
- Produce calendars of meetings, deadlines and events so that staff can plan ahead and manage their workload.
- Organise extra support during times of stress, such as Ofsted inspections.
- Organise, facilitate and engage in a Staff Wellbeing Group at each academy. The Trust Executive will do the same at trust-level.
- In consultation with stakeholders, act upon the results of the annual staff survey for their institution and lead the creation and completion of the Annual Wellbeing Charter Action Plan (Appendix 1).

Line Managers will:

- Maintain positive relationships with their staff and value them for their skills and impact, not their working pattern.
- Provide a non-judgemental and confidential support system to their staff.
- Take any complaints or concerns seriously and deal with them appropriately using the Trust's policies.
- Monitor workloads and be alert to signs of stress and regularly talk to staff about their work/life balance.
- Make sure new staff are properly and thoroughly inducted and feel able to ask for help.
- Understand that personal issues and pressures at work may have a temporary effect on work performance, and take that into account during any appraisal or capability procedures.
- Promote information about, and access to, external support services.
- Help to arrange personal and professional development training where appropriate.
- Keep in touch with staff if they are absent for long periods.
- Monitor staff sickness absence, and have support meetings with them if any patterns emerge after consultation with Human Resources.
- Conduct return to work interviews to support staff back into work.
- Facilitate exit interviews with staff leaving to help identify any wellbeing issues that led to their resignation, in line with policy and procedure.
- Refer onwards feedback and concerns to Senior Leaders and Human Resources.

The Staff Wellbeing Groups will:

- Work in partnership with senior leaders and stakeholders to evaluate, shape and implement the Wellbeing Policy.
- Attend and contribute to Wellbeing Group meetings as is reasonable.
- Give constructive, solution focused feedback in response to the outcomes of the annual Staff Survey.
- Engage with the other Staff Wellbeing Groups across the Trust to share best practice and co-create solutions to wellbeing issues.
- Help devise, implement, monitor and review the academies' Annual Wellbeing Charter Action Plans.

Staff will:

- Take responsibility for actively seeking their own optimal wellbeing.
- Treat each other with empathy, respect and kindness.
- Keep in mind the workload and wellbeing of other members of staff, including leaders and managers.
- Support other members of staff if they become stressed, such as by providing practical assistance or emotional reassurance and by sharing this information with relevant leaders and managers when sufficiently concerned about a colleague.
- Report honestly about their wellbeing and let other members of staff know when they need support.
- Follow the Trust's policy on out-of-school hours working, including guidance on when it is and is not reasonable to respond to communications, as well as what is an acceptable timeframe for a response.
- Contribute positively towards morale and team spirit.
- Use shared areas respectfully, such staff rooms or offices.
- Take part in training opportunities that promote their wellbeing.
- Give honest feedback when asked for it, including completing the annual staff survey.

Implementation

Support Mechanisms

- Senior Leaders must encourage the creation and maintenance of an atmosphere where all staff members feel comfortable asking for help or raising concerns. They should be sensitive to any problems which may cause the employee stress-related issues and should act in a professional, fair, consistent and timely manner when a concern arises.
- Where additional, professional advice is required, then Occupational Health Professionals and Employee Assistance Programmes should be utilised, in consultation with and support from the Trust's Human Resources team.
- Where necessary, staff should be encouraged to use the free Employee Assistance Programme, provided by HSF and found here: [Employee Assistance Programme \(sharepoint.com\)](https://sharepoint.com)
- On joining the Trust and/or one of its academies, and/or also moving to new roles, the following support will also be offered:
 - All new staff will be given an academy specific induction and ensure that they receive the relevant documentation, resources and guidance in a timely manner and prior to the start of their employment.
 - All new staff will be made to feel welcome, given as much support as possible and provided with a 'buddy'.
 - There will be reviews for new staff held throughout the first 6 months of employment.
 - Discussion of new roles and expectations alongside support for any new role and related tasks.

Additional Arrangements for Implementing the Wellbeing Policy

Arrangements for wellbeing and stress prevention through good management practices include the following:

- Recruitment and selection procedures.
- Clear job descriptions and person specifications to ensure that the 'right' person is recruited for the job.

- Formal accreditation such as a workplace charter.
- Agreed knowledge, skills and behaviours for managers, to be cascaded through to all levels of management and supervision.
- Training and development procedures to ensure that individuals have the necessary skills and competencies to undertake the tasks/duties required of them.
- Promotion and reward procedures.
- Managing performance procedures.
- Capability, absence management and return to work procedures to ensure that individuals are supported back into work following illness.
- Suitable adaptations for disability.
- Harassment and anti-bullying procedures.
- Procedures for communicating with employees on the work of the academies and the Trust and issues affecting their work.
- Flexible working arrangements, and contact days with staff on maternity leave.
- Annual individual academy Wellbeing Charter Action Plan.

Arrangements will be updated and augmented as required and when deemed necessary by the findings of stress risk assessments.

Policy Monitoring and Review

This policy will be monitored annually by evaluation of the annual staff survey, the academies' [Staff Wellbeing Audit \(sharepoint.com\)](#) and progress against each academy's individual Wellbeing Charter Action Plan.

The annual monitoring and evaluation will be undertaken by the Trust and academy executive teams, presented to the relevant governing bodies and shared with staff wellbeing groups, workplace trade unions and with the wider staff.

This policy will be reviewed every three years as a minimum.

In between updates, the policy will be updated when necessary to reflect local and national changes.

This is the responsibility of the CEO.

Related Policies

[ELAT Dignity at Work Procedure \(sharepoint.com\)](#)

[ELAT Flexible Working Policy \(sharepoint.com\)](#)

[ELAT Grievance Policy \(sharepoint.com\)](#)

Equality Impact Assessment

Empower Learning Academy Trust is dedicated to promoting staff wellbeing and ensuring a supportive work environment. This equality impact assessment aims to evaluate the policy's potential impact on various groups within the organization.

The Staff Wellbeing Policy outlines the Trust's commitment to supporting staff members' physical and mental health. It emphasizes personal and professional development, involvement in decision-making, and access to resources. The policy recognizes that work-related stress can affect employees and aims to mitigate such factors.

Key Considerations

Equity and Diversity: The policy must align with the Trust's commitment to equity, diversity, and inclusion. It should not disproportionately impact any specific group based on protected characteristics (e.g., age, gender, disability, race, religion).

Reasonable Adjustments: The Trust must consider reasonable adjustments for staff with disabilities or specific needs. These adjustments may relate to workload, working hours, or access to support services.

Gender: The policy should address gender-specific concerns related to work-related stress. For example; facing additional pressures due to caregiving responsibilities; menopause support.

Age: Consider the impact on staff of different age groups. Younger staff may experience stress differently from older colleagues.

Mental Health: The policy's implementation should prioritize mental health support. This includes awareness campaigns, support services, and stress management resources.

Cultural Sensitivity: Recognize that cultural backgrounds influence how individuals perceive stress and seek help. Ensure that support services are culturally sensitive.

Mitigation Strategies

Training and Awareness: Regular training sessions should educate staff and managers about work-related stress, its signs, and coping mechanisms. These sessions will be both planned and shared in a timely manner and also responsive to patterns and/or events that may emerge in-year.

Flexible Working: Endeavour to offer appropriate flexible working arrangements to accommodate individual needs. This could include remote work, adjusted schedules, or job-sharing for example.

Support Networks: Establish peer support networks where staff can share experiences and coping strategies.

Clear Reporting Channels: Ensure transparent reporting channels for stress-related concerns. Staff should feel comfortable seeking help without fear of reprisal.

Regular Reviews: Periodically assess the policy's effectiveness and adjust as needed based on feedback and data.

Conclusion

The Empower Learning Academy Trust Staff Wellbeing Policy reflects our commitment to staff welfare. By considering equity and diverse needs, we can create a supportive environment that benefits all employees.

Please note that this assessment provides a high-level overview. Specific details and implementation steps will be further developed by the Trust's leadership and HR teams.

Appendix 1: Annual Wellbeing Charter Action Plan Template

Academy name:

<i>Aspect of Wellbeing Charter</i>	<i>Summary of Actions to date</i>	<i>Plans for (INSERT ACADEMIC YEAR)</i>
Prioritise staff mental health		
Give staff the support they need to take responsibility for their own and others' wellbeing		
Give managers access to the tools and resources they need to support the wellbeing of those they line manage		
Establish a clear communications policy		
Give staff a say in decision making		
Drive down unnecessary workload		
Champion flexible working and diversity		
Create a good behaviour culture		
Support staff to progress in their careers		
Include a sub-strategy for protecting leader wellbeing and mental health		
Hold ourselves accountable by measuring staff wellbeing		