

Employee Wellbeing Policy

Prepared by:	Director of People, WHMAT in consultation with WHMAT colleagues and recognised trade unions
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This policy should be read alongside WHMAT's Wellbeing Toolkit

1.0 Introduction and commitment

- 1.1 Washwood Heath Multi Academy Trust ("WHMAT") recognises that its colleagues are its greatest asset and is therefore committed to:
- a) nurturing a culture of trust, kindness and support so that colleagues can talk openly about all wellbeing matters that may be affecting them or others;
 - b) providing a healthy working environment for its colleagues so that they are happy, productive and engaged and so that work-related ill-health is minimised;
 - c) embedding a culture where employee wellbeing is everybody's responsibility, regardless of role, hierarchy or experience and where talking about wellbeing is the norm rather than the exception.
 - d) Embedding a culture and climate where work-related stress is minimised, through supportive policies, practices and management behaviours/actions.
- 1.2 This policy is part of WHMAT's overarching wellbeing strategy and aims to support one of the objectives in its 5-year People Strategy; namely of *"creating a culture of sustainable wellbeing where our colleagues are fit and able to deliver the best for our pupils"*.
- 1.3 This policy describes WHMAT's commitment to the mental health and wellbeing of colleagues in its broadest, holistic sense, setting out how WHMAT fulfils its legal obligations, the responsibilities of different colleagues and specialists and the range of services and initiatives available to help colleagues maintain positive wellbeing. WHMAT recognises that improving colleagues' ability to remain resilient and to balance work and home life will ultimately lead to improved individual and organisational performance.

2.0 Scope

- 2.1 This Policy applies to all WHMAT colleagues regardless of grade or length of service.

3.0 What is employee wellbeing and why is it so important?

- 3.1 The Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (CIPD) define wellbeing as:
- 'Creating an environment to promote a state of contentment which allows an employee to flourish and achieve their full potential for the benefit of themselves and their organisation' (2016)*
- 3.2 Wellbeing is a wide concept with many definitions, so this policy will be broken down into 4 key areas: a) psychological/mental wellbeing; b) physical wellbeing; c) social wellbeing; and d) financial wellbeing.

4.0 Roles and Responsibilities

WHMAT

4.1 WHMAT (including its associated academies) has a legal duty of care to colleagues to ensure health at work, as set out in the *Health and Safety at Work etc Act 1974* and the *Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999*. WHMAT will ensure that its policies and practices reflect this duty and review the operation of these documents at regular intervals.

4.2 Senior Leaders and line managers will:

4.2.1 put in place measures to minimise the risks to employee wellbeing, particularly from excessive pressure at work. This means familiarising themselves with the Health and Safety Executive's stress management standards (see WHMAT's Stress at Work Policy at www.whmat.academy policies tab), and using these to promote positive employee wellbeing in the key areas (psychological, physical, social, financial) in their teams/departments. For example, managers should ensure that colleagues understand their role within the team and receive the necessary information and support from managers and team members carry out their role effectively;

4.2.2 keep colleagues in their teams/departments/faculties up to date with developments at work and how these might affect their job and workload;

4.2.3 ensure that colleagues know who to approach with problems or concerns about their role and how to raise issues with senior management;

4.2.4 make sure job descriptions are designed fairly and that work is allocated appropriately between team members; and

4.2.5 ensure that work stations are regularly assessed to ensure that they are appropriate and fit for purpose (WHMAT's Estates team will support with this).

4.3 The People Matters team will:

4.3.1 develop MAT-wide policies, procedures and initiatives to support the wellbeing of colleagues, assist line managers in supporting individuals, and liaise as appropriate with occupational health and other medical professionals, with the object of helping colleagues to maintain positive wellbeing;

4.3.2 roll out MAT-wide training on employee wellbeing issues;

4.3.3 be available to provide confidential support by phone, email or face-to-face on wellbeing matters, which may include signposting colleagues to key services (see WHMAT's wellbeing toolkit);

4.3.4 support wellbeing champions and heads with the development of wellbeing committees and the wellbeing steering group as set out in this policy (see paragraph 10 and wellbeing toolkit).

4.4 Occupational Health professionals will:

- 4.4.1 provide a comprehensive service designed to support colleagues to continue in their role, or to return to work, after experiencing ill-health. This will include preparing medical assessments of individuals' fitness for work following referrals from line managers and the People Matters team, liaising with GPs and working with individuals to help them to return successfully and to retain employment in appropriate circumstances.

4.5 Colleagues should:

- 4.5.1 take responsibility for managing their own health and wellbeing, by adopting good health behaviours and informing the People Matters team and their line manager if they believe work or the work environment poses a risk to their health;
- 4.5.2 take up opportunities for wellbeing training that are offered in directed time/contractual working hours so that they are aware of its importance and can help build a culture of trust, kindness and positive employee wellbeing (see further at 6.2);
- 4.5.3 Colleagues are also strongly encouraged to participate in WHMAT's annual (anonymised) employee engagement survey so that perceptions can be captured on culture and climate and improvements made to support retention, productivity and discretionary effort (otherwise known as "going the extra mile");
- 4.5.4 treat one another with empathy, respect and kindness;
- 4.5.5 take care of their own health and safety at work and communicate with key staff where they need support or have any concerns;
- 4.5.6 be committed to the ethos of staff wellbeing and being mindful of the workload and wellbeing of colleagues;
- 4.5.7 contribute to the ethos and social aspects of academy life where possible to contribute to the building of morale and effective team spirit.

4.6 Wellbeing Champions will:

- 4.6.1 Support CEO/Heads and the Director of People with analysing annual survey results, creating action plans and ensuring that these are embedded throughout the year to improve the employee experience;
- 4.6.2 Seek views from staff and provide feed-back to the People Matters team and/or CEO/Heads on staff wellbeing matters;

- 4.6.3 Hold a termly wellbeing committee meeting within their base academies to ensure that wellbeing is prioritised and improvements are made;
- 4.6.4 Attend a MAT-wide termly wellbeing steering group to share ideas, concerns and good practice (see role profile and terms of reference for committee meetings and steering group in the wellbeing toolkit);
- 4.6.5 Assist with the promotion of MAT-wide wellbeing initiatives e.g. building resilience and avoiding/preventing stress, social events, cycle to work schemes (this list is not exhaustive);
- 4.6.6 Seek views from colleagues on wellbeing matters and provide regular feedback to staff on initiatives and updates with support from the People Matters team.

5.0 Psychological/Mental Wellbeing

Introduction

- 5.1 At WHMAT, it's important to support colleagues' wellbeing - this includes mental health. For some people, talking about mental health can be uncomfortable. Sometimes people experience mental health concerns that last a few weeks or months, and some have more serious issues that are longer term. All colleagues have mental health and that this may change over time, just like physical health. This section should be read in conjunction with the advice provided by the leading charity "Mind" on how to support staff experiencing mental health concerns <https://www.mind.org.uk/media/550657/resource4.pdf>.

6.0 WHMAT's approach to psychological wellbeing

- 6.1 At WHMAT, we are committed to taking all reasonable steps to nurture a kinder culture, where talking about and supporting colleagues with their mental wellbeing is the norm. WHMAT acknowledges that nurturing and embedding a culture like this takes time and effort from all. Line managers will be provided with training by the People Matters team on how to support colleagues. Once trained, line managers should:
 - 6.1.1 Listen to concerns that colleagues may have about their own mental wellbeing, ensuring that everyone is treated with respect, and that judgements or assumptions are not presumed after being made aware of a mental health issue;
 - 6.1.2 Keep information about the mental health of others confidential;
 - 6.1.3 Support colleagues who are experiencing mental health issues by making reasonable adjustments where needed, developing a wellness action plan in consultation with them (see paragraph 11 and wellbeing toolkit) and/or signposting them to key services/additional support (see wellbeing toolkit);
 - 6.1.4 Treat any issues of bullying and harassment in relation to mental health issues seriously by discussing them with the People Matters team.

6.2 WHMAT will provide a range of training materials for colleagues to access to promote a wider understanding of wellbeing issues. For example, it will signpost colleagues to online employee wellbeing training via Hays Educate. Bespoke training on embedding a culture of kindness and supporting colleagues with mental wellbeing will also be rolled out by WHMAT's People Matters team. In addition, WHMAT will, where possible, utilise internal expertise to support the MAT-wide wellbeing strategy, for example, trained counsellors.

7.0 Psychological wellbeing and the law

7.1 The Equality Act 2010 ("the Act") protects people from being discriminated against because of certain specific characteristics. The protected characteristics are: age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, race, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation and pregnancy and maternity. Mental health conditions are covered by disability under the Act and examples and further guidance can be found in "The Government Office's Guidance on Disability Issues" at https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/570382/Equality_Act_2010-disability_definition.pdf.

7.2 WHMAT acknowledges that, under the Act, it is unlawful to discriminate against a colleague because of a mental disability or to fail to make reasonable adjustments to accommodate a colleague with a disability (see further at 9.0).

8.0 Communicating wellbeing concerns

8.1 Work can be one of the most stressful factors in people's lives but often people don't feel able to ask for help when they're struggling. This is why it's vital that managers routinely check-in with staff whom they line manage to ask about wellbeing, and, if appropriate, to discuss mental health. In consultation with colleagues, creating a wellness action plan is a recommended way of structuring and recording these conversations where issues are shared/discussed between colleagues and managers. In addition, wellbeing should be routinely discussed during check-ins with colleagues and their managers (see 11 and wellbeing toolkit).

8.2 Colleagues are encouraged to start a conversation with their line manager or another colleague whom they trust and feel comfortable with, so that support can be provided or at least an empathetic ear. The wellness action plan template in the toolkit can be a useful way of focussing the conversation and recording key areas. Colleagues may also a) speak to WHMAT's independent employee assistance programme counsellors via Health Assured, b) call the Employer Support Partnership for help and advice; or c) contact one of WHMAT's designated Mental Health First Aiders (see further at 12).

8.3 Once line managers or the People Matters team are aware of the challenges colleagues are facing, it may be appropriate to signpost to a GP and/or to refer to occupational health so more information can be acquired about how specific mental health issues are likely to affect workload, and what adjustments could be made to

support (see 9.0 below). Depending on the circumstances, colleagues may also be referred to other appropriate agencies (see wellbeing toolkit for details).

- 8.4 If a WHMAT colleague informs their manager or another colleague about mental health concerns, the details will be kept confidential and related information must not be shared unless consent is given to do so. However, if there are serious concerns for an individual's safety or that of others, following discussion and agreement, professional advice may need to be sought. Only in exceptional circumstances will WHMAT seek professional advice without agreement i.e. where someone's safety or that of the pupils in the care of WHMAT, is placed first. In these circumstances, the employee will still be informed of this.

9.0 Making reasonable adjustments

- 9.1 WHMAT acknowledges that there may be reasonable adjustments that can be made to help colleagues with mental health issue(s) in the workplace. These could be permanent or temporary changes to their contract depending on the circumstances.

- 9.2 Colleagues who perceive that reasonable adjustments would support them, should discuss these with their line manager or another appropriate manager. Examples of reasonable adjustments may include:

- 9.2.1 Talking to a manager more often;
- 9.2.2 Agreeing to a temporary change of duties or working pattern;
- 9.2.3 Agreeing to changes to their start and finish times;
- 9.2.4 Agreeing for them to work somewhere else at times if they need to;
- 9.2.5 WHMAT acknowledges that sometimes, colleagues may be so unwell, that they need time off work to recover. We recognise that the way WHMAT manages a period of sickness absence is key in shaping how well and how quickly an employee is able to return to work. To effectively support colleagues to recover and return to work as quickly as possible WHMAT will follow the principles/steps in our Sickness Policy, see www.whmat.academy policies tab.

10.0 Wellbeing champions & committees

- 10.1 Every WHMAT academy (and core team) has nominated and will continue to nominate well-being champions (a minimum of 1 for support staff and 1 to represent teaching colleagues), whose role is to be the "go to person" for employee wellbeing issues. These individuals will support the Heads and CEO (Core Team) with employee engagement and support with wellbeing initiatives and wellbeing committees (see paragraph 10 and wellbeing toolkit).

- 10.2 Each academy shall hold at least a termly wellbeing committee meeting. A suggested agenda and terms of reference is located in the wellbeing toolkit. Where possible, a representative from WHMAT's People Matters team will attend the meeting as a guest, or the Chair should ensure that agreed actions are shared with peoplematters@whmat.academy to aid communication, information sharing and resolution of concerns across WHMAT.

10.3 WHMAT's People Matters team has also established a Wellbeing Steering Group (see functions and terms of reference in wellbeing toolkit). This group will be chaired by a representative from the People Matters team and will be an opportunity for wellbeing champions to help develop and embed a MAT-wide strategy that supports positive employee wellbeing. It will also enable wellbeing champions to share ideas, concerns and initiatives in a supportive environment so as to help build an ongoing culture of sustainable wellbeing across the MAT.

11.0 Wellness action plans

11.1 WHMAT recognises that "wellness action plans" can be used to help colleagues identify what keeps them well at work, what causes them to become unwell, the support they would like to receive to boost their wellbeing and strategies that they can use to support their own mental wellbeing. WHMAT also acknowledges that they can be agreed between employee and line manager, or another appropriate manager, even if there are no apparent wellbeing issues identified.

11.2 Colleagues can complete "wellness action plans" themselves and then share with their line manager, or complete it with them. Either way, once an employee has shared this with their line manager, the line manager will keep it confidential and will only share it with their permission. Colleagues should use check-ins to discuss and/or review their wellness action plans as appropriate (see template in wellbeing toolkit). Mind's guidance for colleagues and managers when completing these is at <https://www.mind.org.uk/workplace/mental-health-at-work/taking-care-of-your-staff/employer-resources/wellness-action-plan-download/> (see also template in managers' toolkit).

12.0 Mental Health First Aiders

12.1 WHMAT has a number of colleagues who are trained Mental Health First Aiders. They will have completed a recognised course and have:

12.1.1 an in-depth understanding of mental health and the factors that can affect wellbeing;

12.1.2 practical skills to spot the triggers and signs of mental health issues;

12.1.3 are confident to step in, reassure and support a person in distress;

12.1.4 have enhanced interpersonal skills such as non-judgemental listening;

12.1.5 the knowledge to help someone recover their health by guiding them to further support such as a referral to the counselling service run by Health Assured or to their GP.

12.2 Colleagues should contact peoplematters@whmat.academy if they wish to discuss their concerns with an accredited Mental Health First Aider.

13.0 Support for Colleagues

- 13.1 Colleagues who feel that they are experiencing a mental health problem, should talk to their GP as soon as they can.
- 13.2 Colleagues who require additional support can contact the education charity “Employee Support Partnership” for 24/7 telephone counselling on freephone 08000 856 148. In addition, WHMAT colleagues who subscribe to the online benefits platform, “Perkbox”, can also access the Employee Assistance Programme via Health Assured, which provides 24/7 telephone counselling.
- 13.3 A list of useful contacts providing wellbeing support in a wide range of areas can be found in the wellbeing toolkit.

14.0 Physical Wellbeing

- 14.1 WHMAT recognises that “self-care” is a key driver to colleagues’ physical wellbeing. This includes key fundamentals such as regular exercise, eating a balanced diet, getting enough sleep, not drinking too much, not smoking and spending time doing the things that we enjoy and that make us happy (see self-care infographics in wellbeing toolkit). WHMAT recognises that this aspect of wellbeing is very much linked to positive psychological wellbeing.
- 14.2 Different WHMAT academies offer a range of wellbeing activities, such as badminton and walking clubs – please liaise with WHMAT wellbeing champions to find out more or to suggest new clubs and initiatives.
- 14.3 Perkbox users may also log on to their accounts from a work computer or download the Perkbox app via Play Store (Android) or App Store (iPhone) to access discounted gym memberships and gym wear as well as access to a wellbeing portal with exercise videos and nutritional advice.
- 14.4 Colleagues who are regular display screen users may be eligible for a paid eye test and contribution of up to £60 towards glasses – see further in Eye and Eyesight Testing Policy at www.whmat.academy policies tab.
- 14.5 To access discounted bike and bike wear, WHMAT colleagues may sign up to its “Cycle to work scheme” by going to <https://www.cyclescheme.co.uk/> and following the instructions. This is a salary sacrifice scheme, which means agreeing to give up part of a salary in exchange for a bike and/or accessory. The salary sacrifice is taken from the gross salary (before tax) which means paying less income tax and national insurance.
- 14.6 Colleagues who are struggling physically due to the menopause or peri-menopause should refer to WHMAT’s Menopause Policy, see www.whmat.academy policies tab.

15.0 Social Wellbeing

- 15.1 Social wellbeing is an integral part of our overall wellbeing. It’s the extent to which we feel a sense of belonging and feel supported in our society. Research tells us that

lifestyles, ways of living together, value systems, traditions and beliefs are all important to our social wellbeing and quality of life. If we don't have strong relationships in our lives, our ability to thrive is limited. In addition, healthy relationships both inside and outside of work can impact positively on colleagues mentally and physically.

- 15.2 Wellbeing champions will work both on academy based and MAT-wide opportunities for staff to come together to socialise. However, these will be voluntary activities. In addition, efforts will be made to raise money for charitable causes through group initiatives such as sponsored runs, quizzes and curry nights. As well as supporting worthy causes, this can be rewarding on an individual level.

16.0 Financial Wellbeing

- 16.1 WHMAT recognises that poor financial wellbeing for colleagues can lead to the greatest sense of insecurity and unhappiness. With research carried out by Barclays showing that 1 in every 10 colleagues is silently struggling financially, WHMAT recognises the importance of supporting colleagues who are experiencing this within the workplace.

- 16.2 Although WHMAT acknowledges that the burden of financial stress can be avoided through sensible budgeting, saving, and living within means, it is appreciated that poor financial wellbeing can impact on colleagues' stress levels, productivity and engagement levels. WHMAT also acknowledges that for some colleagues, experiencing financial difficulties may be due to reasons beyond their control.

- 16.3 To address this, WHMAT will offer:

16.3.1 Financial education or guidance as part of its wider wellbeing programme, helping colleagues to more effectively budget and begin to work towards a state of financial wellbeing;

16.3.2 The opportunity for colleagues to save each month via City Save's salary sacrifice scheme;

16.3.3 Competitive salaries that represent at least the hourly rates recommended by the Living Wage Society;

16.3.4 The opportunity for other generous contractual benefits, such as sick pay and annual leave, and opportunities for staff to attend briefings with relevant pension advisers.

- 16.4 Any WHMAT staff experiencing financial concerns should not suffer in silence and should contact a line manager or another trusted colleague. In addition, colleagues may wish to consider contacting the Education Support Partnership's advice line on 020 7697 2772 or emailing grantscaseworker@edsupport.org.uk to see if they are eligible for a grant – see further guidance at <https://www.educationsupport.org.uk/helping-you/apply-grant>.

17.0 Policy Review & Storage of Paperwork

- 17.1 This Policy will be reviewed every 12 months by a WHMAT Working Group in consultation with MAT-wide colleagues and recognised trade unions to ensure that it is working effectively and that it is complying with employment legislation and good practice. There is also a commitment to monitor the workload impact of the policy through regular professional dialogue and feedback between the People Matters team and WHMAT's wellbeing champions.