



MINUTES of the 13 May 2021 meeting (held via Teams)

Present:

Sarah Swales* (Chair)

Oliver Bray

Katie Davies

Wendy Huntriss

Andrew Manley

Gareth Robertshaw

Chris Watts

Andrew Cooper

Kate Davis

Jo Jones

Steve Mardy

Mphango Simwaka

Roland Cross

Dee Grismond

Lee Jones

Annemarie Piso

Susan Smith

In attendance:

Nicola Beaumont (Secretary)

Laura Jones

Laurie Wilson

Ann Coulson

Sarah Tomlinson

Sally Griffiths

Paul Tyrer

Apologies:

Andy Allison

Stephen Murphy

Mobina Begum

Daniel Stanley

Dev Capps

Bryony Walker

*Chaired the meeting

Part A: Preliminary Items

Welcome, Introductions and Apologies

096.2020.WSC The Chair welcomed all members to the Wellbeing Sub-Committee and apologies were reported by the Secretary.

Committee Terms of Reference and Membership 2020/21

097.2020.WSC The Committee received a report (paper WSC-1920-025) for information on the changes made to the Terms of Reference and membership.

098.2020.WSC It was **noted** that:

- a) The Terms of Reference and membership had minor changes to reflect the Director of Student Services leaving the university, Wendy Huntriss joining as Head of Health and Safety and Jo Jones as Associate Director of Student Services.
- b) It was proposed that Stephen Murphy continues to represent directorates.

CONFIRMED / OPEN

- c) The Terms of Reference and membership were taken as accepted by the Chair and it was noted that these will be subsequently reviewed at every Wellbeing Sub-Committee meeting.

Chair approved Minutes of the last meeting held on 21 January 2021

099.2020.WSC The Committee received a report of the Chair approved Minutes of the last meeting held on 21 January 2021 (paper WSC-1920-026).

100.2020.WSC It was **AGREED** that:

- a) A minor amendment be made to the January 2021 Chair approved minutes in relation to a verbal update from UCU regarding monitoring teaching and research on staff workloads in 2020 –21.
- b) With the inclusion of the minor amendment to the 21 January 2021 Chair approved minutes these were an accurate record and Committee approved.

Matters Arising – From the 21 January 2021 meeting

101.2020.WSC The Chair presented a report on the matters arising from the minutes of the last substantive meeting of the Committee held on 21 January 2021 (paper reference WSC-1920-027).

102.2020.WSC It was **AGREED** that:

- a) The Committee accepted the updates and completions on the matters arising as shown on the report.

Part B: Main Item of Business: COVID-19

A further COVID update

103.2020.WSC The Committee received a verbal update from the Deputy Director of HR on the University's response to Covid-19.

104.2020.WSC It was **noted** that:

Student cases:

- a) Up to the 7 May 2021 the university had experienced 1077 student cases in total. Of the 1077 cases, 758 of these had been in Leeds. In the last seven days there had been ten cases, and in the last 90 days there had been 90 cases.
- b) The university continued to be reported daily to Public Health England.
- c) Whilst cases had significantly reduced there were still cases in the student population.

Staff cases:

- d) No cases had been reported in the last seven days, with only one case reported since the 16 April 2021. The total cases for staff was 109 since the start of the pandemic.
- e) Two colleagues were known to be self-isolating following test and trace notifications from the NHS.

Local information

- f) There had been a slight upturn in cases in Leeds with 60 positive tests recorded daily and 405 positive tests in the last seven days, an increase of 17% on the previous seven-day period.

Management of response to the pandemic:

- g) The University continues to monitor and report to Public Health England and will maintain contact with them and council colleagues in the city to monitor cases.
- h) Twice weekly lateral flow testing continued to be offered to staff and students. The University had two test centres at City and Headingley campus, and test collection points.
- i) The university's approach to vaccination had been publicised and people were being encouraged and allowed to take paid time off to be vaccinated.
- j) The university has two subgroups which continued to meet with Trade Union colleagues; one focussed on health and safety related matters and one to discuss matters relating to academic planning and the continuity of teaching.
- k) A pilot Pulse Survey had run in the Resources group in February 2021 and was now open to the University with a closing date of 14 May 2021. The Pulse Survey aims to understand the experience of colleagues and identify expectations for future ways of working.

Guidance:

- l) 17th May 2021 was a new point in the lifting of restrictions as part of the Government's Road Map.
- m) The university is still going to offer blended learning rather than look to manage a full return to campus.
- n) Professional and support staff would continue to work from home to manage footfall and interaction on campus.
- o) Social distancing will remain in place and there would be a relaxation around the rules of face masks where social distancing allowed or where groups were small and there was adequate ventilation in classroom or communal settings.
- p) In transit around the university face masks will continue to be required.
- q) More communication will follow regarding face masks from the 17th May. The relaxation around the rules of face masks followed the guidance from DFE who confirmed the rules applied to Higher Education.
- r) UCU's understanding was that face masks still needed to be worn in classroom settings.
- s) UNISON's understanding was that any relaxation around the use of face masks would require a change to the University Risk Assessment through

consultation with the Trade Unions at the Health and Safety subgroup meetings.

- t) The Health and Safety Adviser confirmed that any change to the University Risk Assessment would go through the Health and Safety subgroup for consultation and as soon as a further detail was known regarding face masks the University Risk Assessment would be updated and uploaded for consultation in the standard process.
- u) UNISON proposed that any change to guidance or signage on campus be deferred until the Trade Unions had a chance to consult.

105.2020.WSC

It was **AGREED** that:

- a) The Deputy Director of Human Resources would ensure that Health and Safety consult with the Trade Unions prior to the next Health and Safety subgroup meeting on the 25 May 2021 regarding any change to the University Risk Assessment in relation to face masks, and ensure that there is consultation on any change that happens.
- b) The Pulse Survey will inform any planned return to campus in due course and the data will be shared in more detail on the 16 September 2021.

Part C: Wellbeing Developments and Projects

Student wellbeing – update on issues and activity

106.2020.WSC

The Committee received a report from the Associate Director of Student Services providing an update on the issues and activities in relation to student wellbeing (paper reference WSC-1920-028).

107.2020.WSC

It was **noted** that:

- a) There were four key issues in the paper; the University Mental Health Charter Award, current trends in student mental health and their access of support, School-Based Wellbeing Practitioner Service and suicide prevention, intervention and postvention.
- b) A Student Union representative referred to previous work on suicide prevention that had been carried out two years ago. The Associate Director of Student Services was looking to bring together a working group to look at this work.
- c) The Organisational Development Partner acknowledged the historical guidance available for staff on suicide intervention.
- d) The Associate Director of Student Services referred to a community-based approach for colleagues and students and the benefit of joining this together.
- e) UCU raised the 40% reduction in terms of students accessing the service which had been contrary to expectations in terms of the isolation caused by the pandemic and asked what sort of initiatives there were to mitigate this.
- f) UCU asked what the university were proactively doing to support students and recognised the complexity of addressing student needs.
- g) A lot of proactive work had been underway to push information out to students for them to access services virtually, including links to Kooth,

and services via telephone text chat and email. Wellbeing emphasis was embedded in the Study Ready and Study Smart modules developed that had been rolled out to students in 2020, which included strategies for students to maintain wellbeing.

- 108.2020.WSC It was **RECOMMENDED** that:
- a) Students Services and the People and Organisational Team join together in relation to the new and updated guidance available to support and signpost students and colleagues regarding suicide intervention.
 - b) Induction week signals the support available to students universally.

- 109.2020.WSC It was **AGREED** that:
- a) The Associate Director of Student Services to contact the Student Union Representatives to involve them in the work around suicide prevention, intervention and postvention.

Part D: Reporting

Stress Risk Assessments; report on action from the joint HR and Trades Union group

- 110.2020.WSC The Committee received a verbal update from the Organisational Development Partner.

- 111.2020.WSC It was **noted** that:
- a) Since the last wellbeing subcommittee in January 2021 a further full round of stress risk assessment activity had taken place locally across the organisation; the most recent set being from March/April 2021.
 - b) Colleagues in HR continue to meet with Trade Union colleagues to discuss key aspects of the wellbeing offer and anything emerging from the Stress Risk Assessment exercise.
 - c) HR had connected the Stress Risk Assessment exercise with other people metrics such as absence, occupational health referrals and EAP data.
 - d) Common concerns previously were increased workload, workflow, pressures on workload balance and wellbeing, juggling work and caring responsibilities, remote IT concerns and job security because of external pressures on the sector.
 - e) New emerging themes were changes imposed at short notice by government regulations, a reduction in staffing following the VS Scheme, juggling home and working responsibilities, uncertainty around what working practices would look like for the next academic year, and some feeling of a disconnect to central university decisions.
 - f) Mitigating factors that had been put in place locally included sustained increase in local team, service and university communication and connections, more workload planning activities, and increased awareness of development opportunities and the wellbeing offer.
 - g) Changes had been made to the Flexible Working Policy and principles in connection with the flexibility in hours and patterns of working.
 - h) Emphasis was being placed on the Stress Risk Assessment exercise and how it was carried out; looking at how the focus could be retained on

impactful and valuable discussions and to have the paperwork and process to support that.

- i) The Associate Director of the Centre for Learning and Teaching supported the review of the paperwork and was happy to contribute to this.
- j) UNISON conveyed how the reporting on the Stress Risk Assessment in the groups had gone well and recognised the importance of the reporting and data in tackling stress.
- k) The Health & Safety Adviser wondered how stress management could be captured in the existing process in terms of home working in light of the hybrid working arrangement going forward, and recognised the elements of leave and presenteeism when there was an expectation of home workers in terms of outputs.
- l) The Head of Subject for Carnegie School of Sport commended the work on this so far in terms of the staff and student wellbeing and emphasised the importance of maximising the perception that people were truly listened to and the multiple opportunities for their views to be shared.
- m) UCU highlighted the importance of there being an understanding at senior management level and a compassionate and flexible approach to how some of the communications and guidelines were interpreted. Rather than communications (following the latest Government guidance) being delivered as instructions there needed to be involvement from the bottom up and from within the groups and teams who would be delivering these changes.
- n) The feedback from the Pulse Survey results in HR was that some of the bottom up communication was working well, connection with the university was strong through some of the university level messages, and connections with teams were strong where managers had put effort into having more team meetings.
- o) The Centre for Learning and Teaching now had fortnightly practice sharing meetings as people had felt like they were working in silos, were being very coherent with their language and messages, and flexible regarding people's working hours, so long as the outputs were complete.
- p) UCU referred to the revised Flexible Working Policy that looked at both a formal and informal level and requested that the more informal approach of constructing a working day be continued as this was healthy.
- q) The Organisational Development Partner highlighted that these were headline observations that would be detailed in a report for the next Health & Safety Consultative Committee in June 2021.

112.2020.WSC It was **RECOMMENDED** that:

- a) areas of good practice and areas of poor practice are identified, and with greater insight though data UNISON would like to see the university moving to review what happens in local action plans in terms of tackling stress.
- b) The good points that had been shared be included in well-being communication and other elements relating to a new hybrid way of working in the future.

University Mental Health Charter

113.2020.WSC The Committee received a presentation from the Associate Director of Student Services providing an update on the University Mental Health Charter.

114.2020.WSC It was **noted** that:

- a) There were three elements; A framework document published in December 2019, a University Mental Health Charter Programme, and the Charter Award.
- b) The University Mental Health Charter Framework was a whole university approach to the mental health and wellbeing of both colleagues and students. The Charter was undertaken in partnership with UUK, NUS, UCU, AMOSSHE, OFS and DFE. Some of these organisations had created the steering group for the development of the Charter Framework.
- c) The Charter Framework was evidence based, its research had been conducted through focus groups and surveys with colleagues and students and was UK wide. There had been additional focus groups focusing on black, male, and disabled people because these were seen to be the voices that were sometimes unheard of in the literature.
- d) The whole Framework document had been peer reviewed by academics, clinicians, and researchers both nationally and internationally.
- e) In April 2021 a Programme was announced that people and universities could apply to join; this was a community of practice to bring together universities who were committed to making mental health and university wide priorities to share practice and bring about cultural change right across the sector.
- f) Universities could apply for the Award to achieve recognition for excellent practice around 18 dimensions. The concept of this award was that it is an ongoing improvement tool.
- g) Universities who apply for the award had to fill in a self-assessment document around key question sets and provide evidence. An assessor team would then come to the institution for couple of days with pre-planned focus groups of staff and students to get the felt experience and triangulate that with the self-assessment report.
- h) Following the assessor visit a recommendation would be provided for the Award to the institution and more importantly the institution would be supported to create an action plan of continual improvement with an expectation that each university would then update their action plan.
- i) Universities could apply for an award at a different level every five years and ask for reassessment should they wish. Universities could not apply for the award without joining the Programme.
- j) The self-submission for the Award will be one side of A4, with specific items of evidence; it would be natural for a few areas of the institution to come together to write a section i.e. on staff development.
- k) The two days of the assessor team visit is the most time consuming as people would need to commit to being in focus groups that would run for about an hour.
- l) The MIND Project will provide evidence for the Award, along with the any other work that been undertaken, the wellbeing champions and the workshops that had been delivered for students.

- m) More information was available at universitymentalhealthcharter.co.uk or the Associate Director of Student services was happy to be contacted separately for conversations about this.
- n) UNISON expressed how they would be happy to get involved in this.

- 115.2020.WSC It was **RECOMMENDED** that:
- a) The Framework, Programme and Award get wider commitment and engagement from SMG and UET to how this is taken forward.

- 116.2020.WSC It was **AGREED** that:
- a) Comments and feedback on the University Mental Health Charter, the merits of applying for the Award and how the Committee can contribute to be sent to the Associate Director of Student Services.

Occupational Health Report

- 117.2020.WSC The Committee received a report from the Occupational Health Manager providing an update of the University's Occupational Health activities (paper reference WSC-1920-029).

- 118.2020.WSC It was **noted** that:
- a) The main reasons for referral to Occupational Health remained at Mental Health and musculoskeletal disorders.
 - b) Since the last statistics were collated there had been an increase in the number of referrals to the department.
 - c) There had been a noticeable increase in colleagues with Specific Learning Differences who had been struggling with remote working and needed to adjust their methods of working.
 - d) To date 12 people had booked onto the financial wellbeing webinar and 28 people had booked on to the menopause webinar run by Heath Assured on the 8th June 2021.
 - e) Much of the report was based around Long COVID; internal support was available through Occupational Health referrals where people could be referred onto physiotherapy to support physical symptoms, as well as the EAP to support mental health and wellbeing.
 - f) External support was also available for people with Long COVID through NHS referrals. Colleagues who needed to travel were able to refer themselves to access to work for support with taxis should they not wish to use public transport.
 - g) UNISON had seen an increase in work related stress issues, and in particular requests for Occupational Health mental health referrals having to be made repeatedly before they were progressed, and sought insight in to what could be done to encourage managers to progress mental health referrals in a timely manner.
 - h) The Occupational Health Manager would advise colleagues to speak to their line manager or HR Adviser in the first instance regarding a referral to Occupational Health.

- i) The referrals to Active Care were few and far between; the level of awareness in managers could be increased and the service promoted as it had good evidence of success. If a member of staff was struggling to make a referral to Active Care, then their manager could make the referral for them with their consent.
- j) The Health and Safety Advisor referred to other areas where Active Care could be promoted, through the advisory groups, a thematic presentation at the Health and Safety Consultative Committee and the Coordinators Network.
- k) The Head of Subject for Carnegie School of Sport referred to there being a clear sense of people being aware of the services available but acknowledged people's hesitation to engage or consent to engage and wondered how this could be addressed.
- l) UNISON recognised a certain level of work-related stress being normalised and referred to small areas and individuals who didn't consider their work related stress to have reached a certain threshold and were therefore reluctant to make the referral, which needed tackling at management level.
- m) Employee reluctance was outlined as a reason that inhibited some cases being referred to Occupational Health and UCU highlighted the importance of this culture being looked at.
- n) The Occupational Health Adviser had produced an information leaflet to inform staff about Occupational Health referrals to give people insight into what they could expect.

119.2020.WSC

It was **RECOMMENDED** that:

- a) All managers to be encouraged to book onto the menopause webinar taking place on the 8 June 2021 to increase understanding.

120.2020.WSC

It was **AGREED** that:

- a) HR will identify what can be done to improve the promotion of Active Care, and Health Assured.
- b) HR will provide more information on Occupational Health and its purpose.
- c) The Deputy Director of HR will follow up separately with the Associate Director of Student Services to discuss strengthening communication around stress and wellbeing.

Draft Absence Report

121.2020.WSC

The Committee received a report from the Deputy Director of Human Resources providing updated sickness absence data and analysis for the University for the period 01/02/2020 to 31/01/2021 (paper reference WSC-1920-030).

122.2020.WSC

It was **noted** that:

- a) In terms of trends over the past 12 months there had been a lower level of absence but in the last quarter there had been a small increase.

- b) Against the sector benchmarks the overall absence at the university was slightly lower but longer-term absence was slightly higher. A reduction had been noticed in short term absence.
- c) Changes had been made to the report from previous discussions which included some observations about leavers; when the Voluntary Severance scheme was offered a proportion of these applications were from people who cited their health as a reason why they wanted to take voluntary severance. This had been included in the report as it was relevant to note it in the last 12 months.
- d) More information had been provided in the report on mental health; mental health was the top reason for absence at the university which reflected the sector pattern. The university's absence level was slightly higher than benchmark.
- e) Absence due to COVID was in the top ten reasons for absence at the university but cold, flu and cough had diminished and was no longer in the university's top absences, which was a change over the last 12 months.
- f) In the report mental health had been split down into stress, anxiety, and depression; over the last twelve months fewer days had been lost to mental health issues than may have previously been seen at the university. There had been an increase in depression over the last quarter possibly due to the prolonged impact of the pandemic.
- g) Poor mental health didn't always result in an absence, and therefore it was important to have a proactive wellbeing offer and supportive management to ensure that staff who were at work experienced good mental health and wellbeing.
- h) People may be more inclined to carry on working when they weren't well, feeling ill or mentally distressed whilst working from home, and therefore UCU believed the figures needed to be treated with caution.

123.2020.WSC

It was **AGREED** that:

- a) Rather than excluding specific areas from the absence report (where numbers were low and there was a risk to individuals being identified in the report) areas would be grouped in the report for the Health and Safety Consultative Committee.
- b) The Deputy Director of Human Resources will include commentary that reflected on the trends seen across the UK and also that people working remotely may not be declaring themselves ill or taking absence because they were already at home.
- c) The Occupational Health Manager would follow up with the Data and Insights Manager to look at the self-identified absence list on I-Trent.
- d) The committee report back to the Deputy Director of Human Resources with any questions or observations on the draft absence report in advance of the Health and Safety Consultative Committee on the 10 June 2021.

Part E: Other Business

Schedule of Business 2020/21

124.2020.WSC The Chair presented the Schedule of Business to the committee (paper reference WSC-1920-031).

125.2020.WSC It was **noted** that:
a) The Schedule of Business presented the standing items for the next Wellbeing Sub-Committee meeting on the 16 September 2021.
b) The committee would feedback to the Deputy Director of Human Resources with any additional agenda items for the next Wellbeing Sub-Committee meeting on the 16 September 2021.

126.2020.WSC It was **RECOMMENDED** that:
The following items be included on the agenda for the next Wellbeing Sub-Committee meeting on the 16 September 2021:
a) An update on the Pulse Survey and for the information to be reviewed.
b) The University Mental Health Charter to become a substantive item.

Date of next meeting

127.2020.WSC The date of the next Wellbeing Sub-Committee meeting is the 16 September 2021.

Confirmed by the Committee/Board as a correct record and signed by the Chair:

Signed: _____ Date: 07/10/21