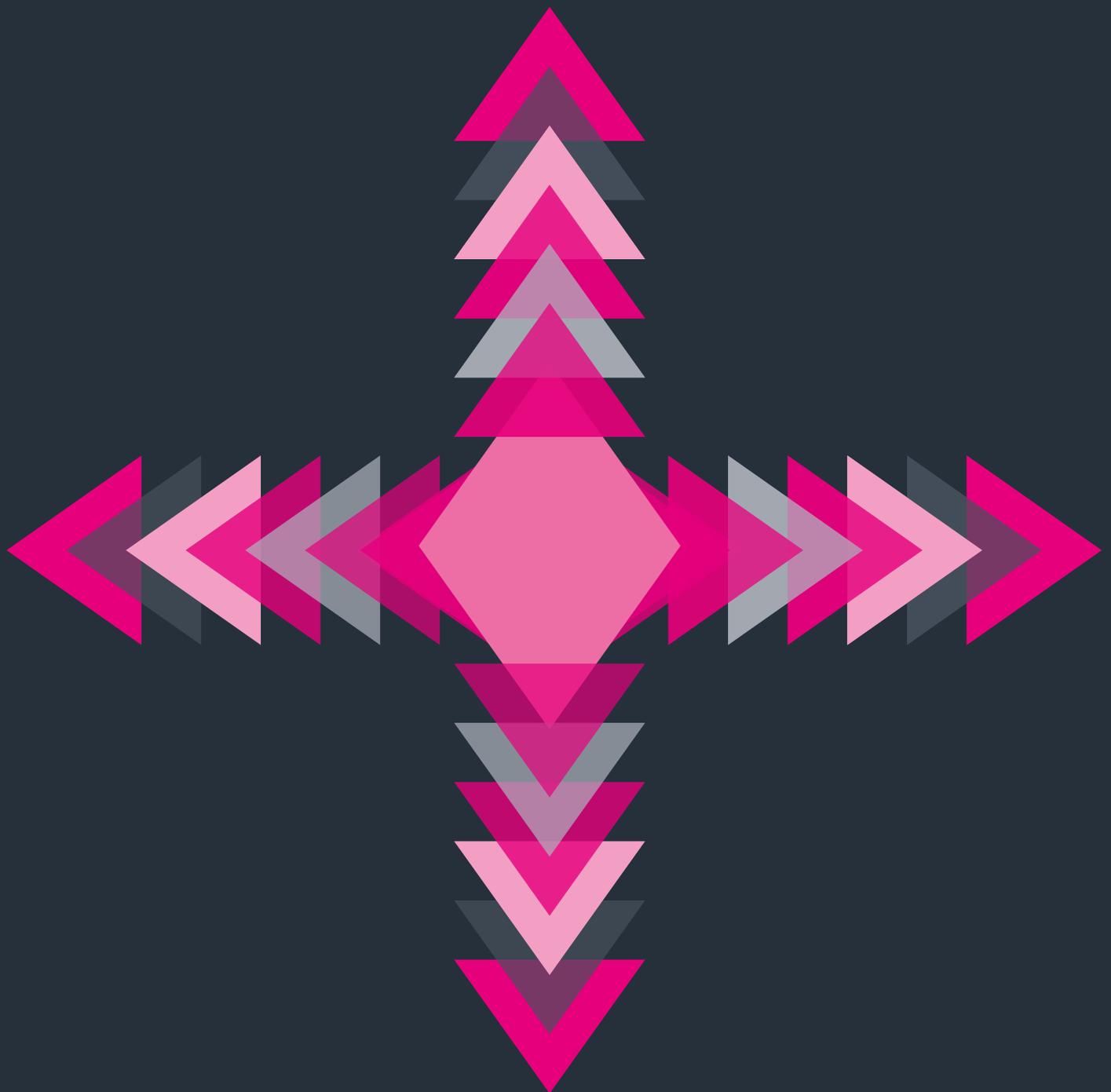




UNIVERSITY
of York

Creating a thriving workplace

HEALTH AND WELLBEING PLAN **2019/22**





Saul Tendler



Joss Ivory

INTRODUCTION

**SAUL TENDLER, ACTING VICE-CHANCELLOR, AND
JOSS IVORY, DIRECTOR OF HUMAN RESOURCES.**

The University is committed to providing a healthy working environment and improving the quality of working life for all staff. We know that people can face significant physical and mental health challenges in the course of their working lives, which have an enormous impact on individuals, their friends and families, to our public services and to employers.

This issue is important to us because the success of the University rests on the ability of all colleagues to contribute their very best at work. We believe this happens when we create a working environment in which individuals feel they can openly discuss their health and wellbeing and access support when they require it. We have made progress in this area over the past five years, for example becoming the first university to introduce mental health first aid for staff. However, there is much more to do.

We recognise the importance of both physical and mental health, the two are often intertwined. We have introduced initiatives to improve physical health and will continue to do so. However, a key focus of our health and wellbeing plan will be on mental health related issues. Mental health issues amongst colleagues at the University have been highlighted through our 2017 staff survey and our staff absence figures. Our aim is to remove the stigma of discussing mental health; reduce stress levels and improve understanding of what support can make a difference to staff.

This agenda will be actively led by the University Executive Board (UEB) members, who have given their full support to the development of this plan and in particular, Joss Ivory the University's Director of Human Resources who will act as UEB champion for health and wellbeing in the workplace.

Our vision for health and wellbeing in the workplace is: The University will create a culture in which we can talk openly about health and wellbeing, and commit to developing and maintaining a healthy lifestyle.

We will achieve this by:

- **Clear leadership in relation to health and wellbeing**
- **Optimal engagement of all partners to benefit staff**
- **Best use of available resources**
- **Taking actions which lead to long-term, sustainable improvements in health and wellbeing in the workplace**

THIS PLAN AIMS TO:

- **Create a culture where colleagues can be open about their physical and mental health at work with a view to ending the stigma associated with mental health and to ensure appropriate support can be accessed when required.**
- **Strike the balance between proactive and preventative measures to reduce instances of unacceptable levels of stress requiring us to respond reactively.**
- **Offer a range of policies, procedures, guidance and practices/activities to support colleagues in managing their physical and mental health, whilst recognising it remains the responsibility of the individual to own and manage their own health and wellbeing.**
- **Identify responsibilities of managers and employees in managing workplace health and wellbeing.**
- **Offer new and innovative approaches to health and wellbeing in the workplace.**
- **Connect with partners such as student groups, trades unions and City of York Council to work for the good of the University community.**
- **Set out an employee charter explaining what colleagues can expect from the University to help them manage their health and wellbeing at work together with their commitments to keeping healthy.**
- **Align with the overall University strategy for sport and wellbeing and #stepchange (the campaign to raise the issue of student mental health up the strategic agenda and take a whole university approach to student mental wellbeing).**

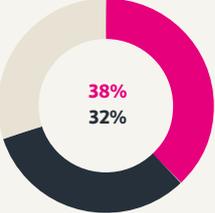
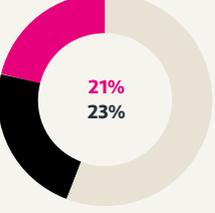
The plan does not seek to take responsibility for the health and wellbeing of each individual, this remains a personal responsibility. However, we realise that much can be done within the work environment to improve health and wellbeing and that everyone has a part to play in understanding their physical and mental health. We need managers who are comfortable having open and honest conversations with colleagues; who will empower others to find the best solutions to the situation rather than seizing control of a problem to resolve it, when that may not be the best approach.

It is important to acknowledge that, just like physical health, our mental health fluctuates. We are all aware of how to look after our physical health - a balanced diet, exercise and adequate sleep - although achieving it can be a challenge at times. In the same way, we need to be aware of our own mental health and understand the factors which influence it. We may experience short term emotional issues which can be supported through acknowledgement, support and signposting to the right service. It could be that we experience mental ill health which requires a more significant intervention - medical or therapeutic. We need to understand how to feel our best and how to reach out for support when we feel we need it. With a better understanding of our own mental health we will be able to appreciate the impact we can have on the mental health of others and how our actions and behaviours can have a positive effect on those around us.

The University acknowledges our lifestyles are often busy and pressured. We recognise the desire of staff to have control over their working patterns and arrangements and will seek to balance that with the external pressures on the University. Where possible we will seek to offer as much flexibility as we can to colleagues, though there will always be situations where flexibility will be constrained by the demands of the role or service.

STAFF FEEDBACK

To inform our approach to this plan, we have drawn the following facts from our 2017 staff survey:

 <p>29% of staff report they have always or frequently experienced work related stress in the past 12 months.</p>	 <p>Colleagues working in facilities support and academic roles were most negative about the statement <i>"My line manager is considerate of my life outside of work"</i>. Amongst facilities staff, 38% were negative or neutral regarding this statement, amongst academic staff the figure was 32%.</p>
<p>Colleagues across all faculties reporting working excessive hours – this is primarily academic, teaching and scholarship, and managerial grade staff.</p>	<p>Teaching and scholarship and facilities staff were least positive about policies and practices to help them manage their physical health, safety and wellbeing.</p>
 <p>39% of colleagues report they are either negative/neutral regarding the statement <i>"The University has policies and practices in place to help me achieve the right balance between my work and home life"</i>. Academic and teaching scholarship colleagues were most negative regarding this statement, with 62% of those staff groups providing a negative or neutral response.</p>	 <p>Colleagues in facilities and academic roles were less likely to be aware of channels of support in the University to help deal with stress, with 23% and 21% respectively responding negatively or neutrally to this question.</p>
 <p>20% of colleagues who responded to the survey could not work flexibly or did not believe they could work flexibly.</p>	 <p>Across all staff groups there were low levels of people reporting issues with just 43% of staff reporting stress to anyone at work.</p>

We are also aware that, in common with many other employers, mental health issues are amongst the most common causes of long and short term sickness.

Absence from work as a result of mental health illness is of significant concern to all colleagues at the University; it is the highest cause of absenteeism and has been increasing in recent years.

1/1/2015 to 31/12/2015

- 177 absences
 - 2,693 FTE days lost
 - £301k base salary
- attributable to mental health related absence*

1/1/2016 to 31/12/2016

- 173 absences
 - 3,792 FTE days lost
 - £450k base salary
- attributable to mental health related absence*

1/1/2017 to 31/12/2017

- 289 absences
 - 4,563 FTE days lost
 - £580k base salary
- attributable to mental health related absence*

This was the biggest cause of sickness absence at the University. This is consistent with the findings of the CIPD Health and Wellbeing at Work Survey (2018) which found that the majority of employers reported mental ill health as

being among their top three causes of long-term absence, and more employers reported increasing levels of anxiety and depression than in the preceding year.

WORKING WITH PARTNERS

We will work collaboratively with our external and internal partners to deliver this plan for the benefit of staff. Together we will organise joint events, explore funding opportunities, share networks, connections and good practice. Specifically, we will work with:

- ✓ Mental Health Research group (part of the health and wellbeing research theme at the University of York)
- ✓ Trades Unions - UCU, Unite, and Unison
- ✓ City of York Council
- ✓ York Mind
- ✓ York Sport
- ✓ YCL (York Conferences Limited)
- ✓ York University Students Union (YUSU)
- ✓ Graduate Student Association (GSA)
- ✓ Other Higher Education Institutions (HEIs)

Themes

We have organised this plan around five themes:

- Culture and openness
- Health services/benefits and interventions
- Leadership and training
- Policy/guidance and online support
- Raising Awareness

THEME 1 – CULTURE AND OPENNESS



If we are to end stigma around mental health we must allow all staff to be open and honest about their health and wellbeing. This theme is aimed at creating a workplace where we talk and act in a way which promotes positivity about health and wellbeing.

We will promote our “Mindful Employer” commitment

Mindful Employer is a voluntary commitment an employer can make to supporting mental health at work. The organisation has almost 2,000 members (at June 2018). The University became a signatory to Mindful Employer in 2015 and recently renewed its pledge to be positive about mental health. We will communicate to staff why we have made this long term commitment, what it means, and how we are using it to pursue a more positive culture surrounding mental health at work. We will also use our network of other signatories and seek out best practice on using this commitment to positive effect.

We will better understand the staff survey 2017 findings in relation to health and wellbeing

It is important that we better understand the reasons why people answered the staff survey in the way they did and why people feel negative about certain parts of their working life. We will offer the opportunity for colleagues to explain their experiences in more detail, for example, using focus group formats and reference the Health and Safety Executive management standards to assess and act on the causes of stress. This will enable us to develop initiatives targeted at colleagues experiencing challenges at work that impact their wellbeing.

We will inform all new starters to the University about physical and mental health support and opportunities

The University's Health and Safety Officers and Human Resources leadership team will include information on physical and mental health at the University in the induction programme as part of their presentation to each cohort of new starters. This will include information about our policies, and the resources and support available to

staff. In addition, all new starters will be issued with a free day pass for York Sport on joining the University.

We will organise events to mark a series of health related national celebration days

We will identify at least three national celebration days promoting physical and/or mental health each year, and will work alongside our partners to organise University-wide events in recognition of these. This will include British Heart Foundation and Mental Health awareness events. We will work with staff Equality, Diversity and Inclusion networks to contribute a health and wellbeing theme to any celebrations which they would wish to mark. We will work with Trades Unions, YUSU and GSA to ensure we coordinate our efforts across the campus for the good of staff and students.

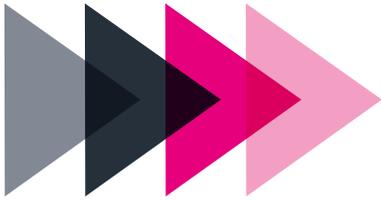
We will continue to support and develop staff networks and forums

We recognise that staff from under-represented groups may wish to have a forum where they are able to discuss common issues and make recommendations to the University. We will continue to support and develop staff networks such as INCLUDE, Staff Race Equality Forum, LGBTI, and Mental Health First Contact.

We will seek to demonstrate equivalence of mental health first aid with physical first aid

We will seek to put mental health first aid for staff on an equivalent footing with physical first aid, identifying the mental health first aider for localities and departments on posters displayed in areas where staff will see them. Mental Health First Contact Network members will wear pin badges to enable them to be easily identified in the workplace.

THEME 2 – HEALTH SERVICES, BENEFITS AND INTERVENTIONS



The University provide a number of services, benefits and interventions to promote physical and mental health wellbeing. This theme is aimed at ensuring these are the the most comprehensive, best quality and best value for money services that we can offer to staff.

We will formally review and re-tender our employee assistance programme

We will review employee usage of the existing employee assistance programme over the past five years, and ask for qualitative, anonymous feedback from colleagues about their experiences and levels of satisfaction with the service. This will form a benchmark for us to measure against similar employers. We will re-tender this service during 2018/19 and seek the very best in class provider of our employee assistance programme.

We will promote and expand the benefits available through our Rewards Extra programme

We will promote the existing provision we have for staff to improve their overall health via our Rewards Extra scheme such as Cyclescheme and health benefits. We will also seek to expand our offering of benefits, for example with a rental deposit loan scheme. We will work with external suppliers to offer discounts to University staff on mental health related training such as mindfulness.

We will work with partner organisations to offer on-site health and wellbeing activities

We will work with external and internal partners to offer activities such as yoga and meditation on campus, with discounted rates where possible . We will examine demand amongst staff for support with financial wellbeing including employee debt and retirement planning and provide appropriate, independent interventions where necessary.

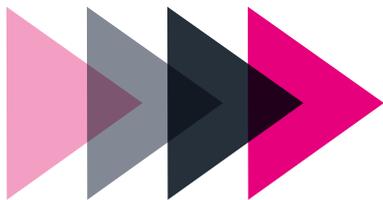
We will seek to fund selected and limited health interventions for specific, individual cases

Where we have a member of staff who is in need of a physical or psychological intervention such as cognitive behavioural therapy and who are unable to access that service within a reasonable time frame in the NHS we will fund, or partially fund, access to such services. This would be managed and accessed via the Occupational Health service and subject to a clinical assessment.

We will work with University departments to offer health and wellbeing input to their events

We will work with departments who wish to implement health and wellbeing initiatives for example organising an annual fair, providing access to health checks such as Body Mass Index (BMI) or cholesterol testing, or offering mental health training. This will often be in conjunction with partners internal and external to the University, and will be subject to resource and timings of events.

THEME 3 – LEADERSHIP AND TRAINING



Good leadership and people management practices form the foundations of building a healthy workplace. However, all staff have a role to play in creating a workplace which is supportive and positive. This theme seeks to build on the great initiatives already in place to build our leadership and training capacity.

We will review leadership/managerial training to ensure that attention to health and wellbeing features in all our programmes

Having capable, positive and approachable leaders who are not afraid to have open conversations with colleagues is crucial to the success of the University. Managers need to have insight into the behaviours which can have a positive impact on staff wellbeing at work and lead by example. Ensuring staff are empowered to take responsibility for their own health and wellbeing and engaged with the support on offer is also key. We will therefore review all our leadership and managerial training to ensure this is embedded into the programmes.

We will expand our offering of mental health related training for staff and teams providing regular and bespoke resilience training to support change programmes in departments

We recognise uncertainty is often a source of stress and anxiety to colleagues. As the University must change to respond to the demands of an externally challenging environment, we will develop and adapt our approach to change giving particular consideration to dealing with change in a consistent, fair and considerate manner.

We will continue to expand our Mental Health First Contact network

We will continue to offer the suite of mental health first aid training courses to members of staff and recruit from the pool of fully qualified mental health first aiders to our Mental Health First Contact network for staff. We will actively manage the network, monitor its effectiveness and offer a range of continuing professional development to members of that network including a number of "lived experience" talks.

We will seek to introduce the role of "wellbeing champions"

We will explore the potential for establishing a role of wellbeing champions across the University. They will be advocates for wellbeing at the University and work in their departments to embed wellbeing and gather feedback on the initiatives that staff would like to see as part of the health and wellbeing agenda.

We will ensure there are conversations in performance development review regarding health and wellbeing

Managers and colleagues will have conversations, via the performance development review system, regarding workload pressures, excess hours and workload priorities. We appreciate that staff will find themselves managing excessive workload demands from time to time. However, where this becomes an unsustainable feature of employment, discussions need to take place to establish what actions can be taken to relieve workload pressures.

Expanding our mental health training

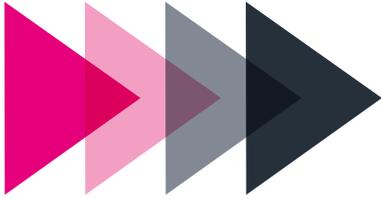
We will expand our mental health training offering to staff. We will offer specific two hour training sessions based on the principles of cognitive behavioural therapy techniques, such as dealing with anxiety or uncertainty. We will offer resilient leader and resilient team training to support teams experiencing challenging times.

We will improve our policies and support for colleagues diagnosed with a life threatening or life changing conditions such as cancer, and for their managers

Using anonymous information gleaned from Occupational Health referrals and sickness absence reporting, we will understand better the life threatening or life changing conditions faced by our staff.

We want to be the very best employer we can when an employee is faced with a life threatening diagnosis. We will work with outside agencies, beginning with Macmillan Cancer Support, to review policies and training relating to such conditions to ensure that we are offering a supportive workplace. We will issue guidance to all staff on ways to help a colleague who's been affected by cancer or other life threatening conditions.

THEME 4 – POLICY, GUIDANCE AND ONLINE SUPPORT



The University has in place a number of policies and guidance documents to support health and wellbeing in the workplace. This theme seeks to expand on those, offering increased options and support for work life balance and health/wellbeing issues.

We will consider further policy expansion in our suite of work life balance policies

We will consult those groups who have specifically identified the ability to balance work and home life as problematic via the Staff Survey (2017) and consider what further policies or guidance may assist colleagues to strike a better balance.

We will further expand our suite of guidance on specific health and wellbeing issues for example, support for parents of premature children, for bereaved parents, and for those experiencing the menopause

We will introduce guidance on dealing with topics which may previously have been regarded as taboo, or which could be considered extremely sensitive, and will seek to raise the profile of these issues.

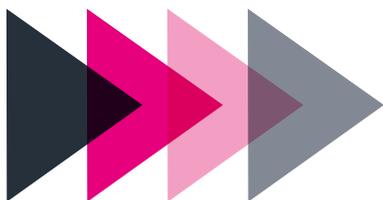
We will review our “Well@York” website

Well@York was launched in 2015 as a hub for all health and wellbeing related issues. We will re-launch Well@York, aiming to make it relevant and engaging for colleagues.

Review our bullying and harassment policies

We will review our bullying and harassment policies (which will become known as the Dignity at Work Policy). Our revised policies will reflect best practice in dealing with such matters and the aim will be to provide swift and appropriate resolution to such complaints in the workplace.

THEME 5 – RAISING AWARENESS



This theme aims to raise awareness of health and wellbeing amongst all staff

We will help staff understand and respond to the causes of stress

We will provide managers and supervisors with an understanding of the nature and causes of stress, and also provide practical tools to help them monitor, manage and minimise the risk of their employees experiencing unacceptable levels of stress. This will include various methods of preventing stress levels becoming unacceptably high. We will provide information to all staff to help them manage their own stress levels, including a stress management pathway, and will link this to offerings in the wider health and wellbeing plan. This will include awareness of our mediation network, which aims to offer positive and constructive conflict resolution between those experiencing problems with work relationships.

We will introduce a Professional@York award to recognise health and wellbeing

We will invite nominations from across the University to recognise and celebrate health and wellbeing initiatives. This will allow good practice and ideas to be shared with others and for these to be replicated elsewhere.

We will communicate with staff the range of policies; practices and services we have available to support their health and wellbeing

We will use appropriate and effective communication channels to raise awareness of the health and wellbeing options and activities available, to help colleagues minimise unacceptably high levels of workplace stress.

We will work collaboratively with academic colleagues on research opportunities

We have already had exploratory talks with academic colleagues on the potential to collaborate on research projects and will continue to do so. We will seek opportunities to raise the profile of York academics, particularly those working within the mental health research group of the health and wellbeing research group at the University and identify opportunities to work together to further our knowledge on health and wellbeing in the workplace. This will include networking with external organisations such as the Chartered Institute of Personnel Development (CIPD).

Employee Charter

In developing this plan, we have agreed and stated a range of standards that our employees can reasonably expect us to work towards, and a number of commitments that we would ask staff to make. The Employee Charter has been written on the premise that individual employees have a personal responsibility for their own health and wellbeing. It will be issued separately to the plan, but will form an important element of it.

The employee charter would include the following statements for staff:

AS AN EMPLOYEE OF THE UNIVERSITY, YOU:

- ✓ Will be able to access immediate emotional support and assistance 24 hours a day, seven days per week through our employee assistance provider and to be offered face to face counselling (if clinically appropriate) within a few days.
- ✓ Experience a positive and supportive approach to physical and mental health, to ensure that you feel confident in openly discussing any issue you consider is affecting your health at work with your manager.
- ✓ Are invited to join a staff forum.
- ✓ Are invited to participate in national celebration events such as World Mental Health Day.
- ✓ Can expect your manager to explore with you, during the PDR process, your workload and priorities with a view to ensuring that demands on employees are reasonable and managed appropriately.
- ✓ Will enjoy discounted membership rates to join York Sport facilities.

In return, there is an expectation that employees will commit to maintaining a positive approach to their own health and wellbeing.

YOU WILL COMMIT TO:

- ➔ Initiating honest conversations with your line manager about your health and wellbeing, when you consider it to be necessary.
- ➔ Familiarising yourself with the support available from the University to support your health and wellbeing.
- ➔ Taking responsibility for your own health and wellbeing and taking steps to manage it positively, using University support mechanisms and seeking professional advice where necessary.

Monitoring

This plan will be a dynamic document and will be augmented in light of changing facts, feedback, and opportunities presented to the University. The plan will be delivered via the Health and Wellbeing project team using existing financial resources in the occupational health budget. An annual review of progress will be reported on to Council as part of the HR annual report

and to UEB for assurance that progress is being made. There will be close monitoring of sickness absence statistics, level of workforce engagement in activities, and qualitative feedback.



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