



Improving Staff Wellbeing in Schools and Colleges

A guide to measuring staff wellbeing and developing an action plan

June 2023

Introduction

This guide has been created by the [What Works Centre for Wellbeing](#), the UK's independent body for evidence policy and practice. It is intended to guide schools and colleges in England to take action to protect and promote the health and wellbeing of staff in education settings.

Who is the guide for?

This guide has been created for all staff involved in, or with responsibility for, staff wellbeing. It is for all schools and colleges who are keen to learn more about this topic.

The guide will also support schools and colleges to implement the [Education Staff Wellbeing Charter](#), which commits schools, colleges and trusts to placing wellbeing and mental health at the heart of their decision making.



How to use this guide

The **first part of this guide** introduces the concept of wellbeing and explores what matters for wellbeing at work. The [five drivers](#) of workplace wellbeing are described and provide a framework for measuring staff wellbeing and developing an action plan.

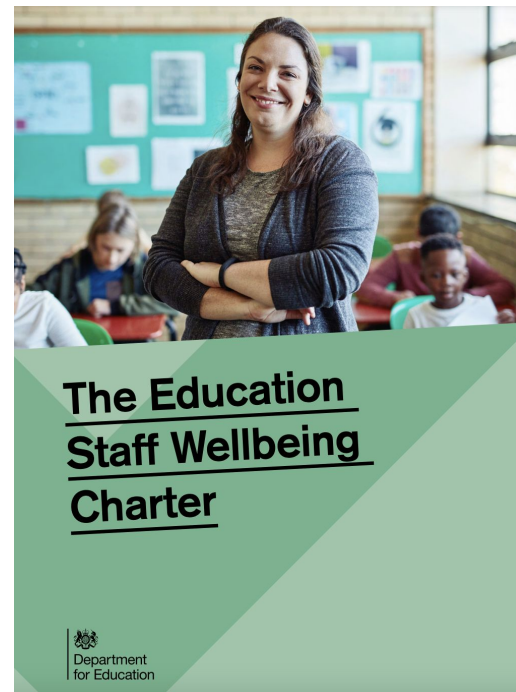
The **second part of this guide** details 6 steps to understanding and measuring staff wellbeing and preparing an action plan.

1. Getting to know your context ([slide 18](#))
2. Getting to know your people ([slide 19](#))
3. Analysing results and benchmarking ([slide 28](#))
4. Action Planning ([slide 32](#))
5. Evaluating Impact ([slide 36](#))
6. Sustaining improvement ([slide 37](#))

The Education staff wellbeing charter

The charter commits schools and colleges to develop a long-term strategy for improving staff wellbeing across eleven areas:

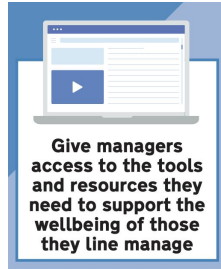
1. Prioritise staff mental health
2. Give staff the support they need to take responsibility for their own and other people's wellbeing
3. Give managers access to the tools and resources they need to support the wellbeing of those they line manage
4. Establish a clear communications policy
5. Give staff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



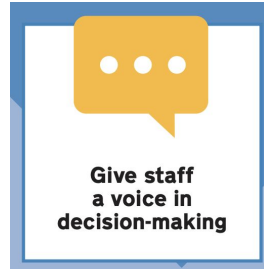
This guide provides resources for five of these commitments:



1



3



5



10



11

We will use these logos to indicate how content supports each of these commitments at various points in the guide.

Part 1

Wellbeing and what matters at work

Defining wellbeing

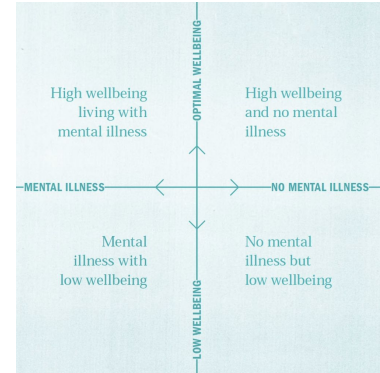
The Education Staff Wellbeing Charter defines wellbeing as:

'how we are doing' that includes, but is not limited to, our physical and mental health, and the quality of our social relationships. Wellbeing can therefore be described as a state of total health that is not merely the absence of disease or illness.

You might also find it helpful to think about wellbeing at different levels:

- Individual wellbeing - feeling good and functioning well
- School wellbeing - being well together as a school community

You can learn more about wellbeing in this [free, short online course](#) from the What Works Centre for Wellbeing.



Mental health refers to a spectrum of experience, from good mental health to mental illness and distress.

Wellbeing includes wider physical, social and economic experience.

Why focus on staff wellbeing?

The relationship between work and wellbeing is a complex and dynamic interaction. There is evidence of strong bi-directional links between wellbeing and work: being employed can improve your wellbeing, and having good wellbeing can make it easier to work.

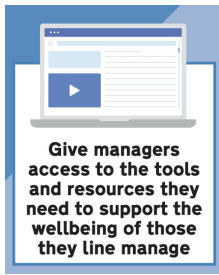
Wellbeing has been found to shape productivity and the performance of an organisation.



Our feelings of wellbeing at work are influenced by the day to day interactions we have with colleagues and management, our working environment and job quality.

School leaders can have a major influence on both protecting and improving staff wellbeing. Measuring staff wellbeing and proactively responding to changes is a way to show current and prospective staff that your school or college prioritises staff wellbeing. This guide will help to identify individuals and groups who are at risk of low wellbeing so that you can support staff in the ways that are the most useful to them.

The five drivers of workplace wellbeing



Health

Relationships

Security

Environment

Purpose

The [five key drivers of workplace wellbeing](#), brings together the drivers of wellbeing as they apply in the workplace based on evidence & practice. The model can help schools and colleges understand which factors may be contributing to higher or lower staff wellbeing at work.

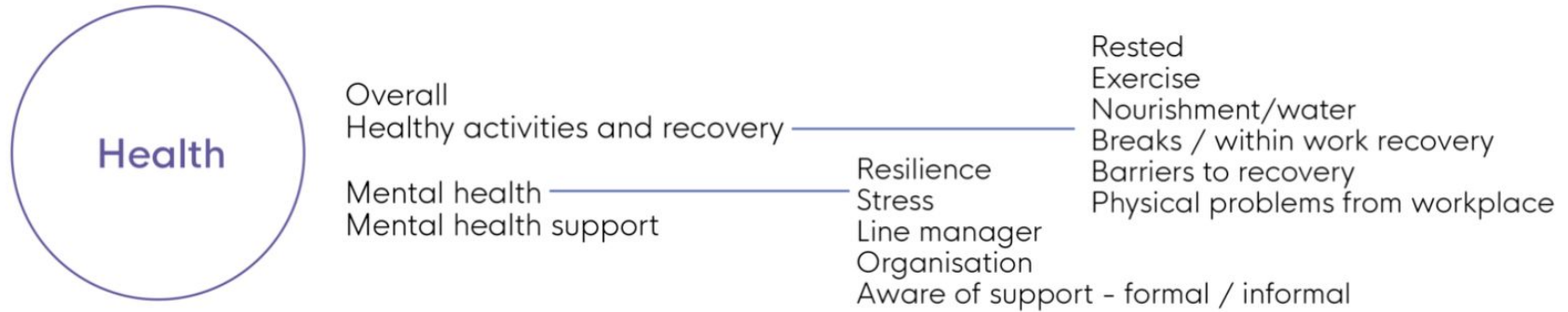
In order of importance, the five drivers are:

- **Health and Relationships** (both drivers ranked most important)
- **Security and Environment** (both drivers ranked of next importance)
- **Purpose**

The five key drivers model can help to identify the areas senior leaders can target resources in order to have the greatest likely impact on improving staff wellbeing.

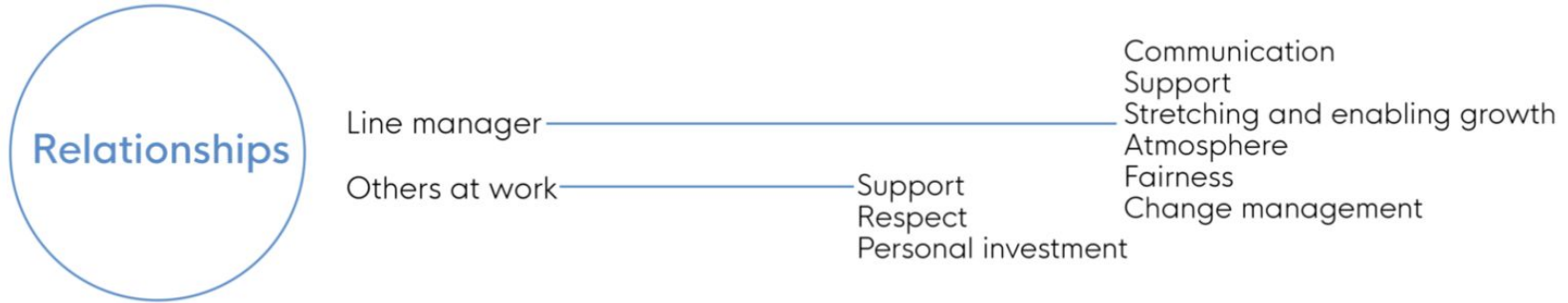
Let's explore each of these five drivers in more detail.

Exploring the health driver of workplace wellbeing



Health: here we consider mental and physical health together. In education, there is often a focus on stress caused by excessive workload (especially hours worked) and lack of recovery time. Importantly, pupils and students can also present with highly complex emotional needs, including mental and physical health issues. This can directly impact the health of those who support them.

Exploring the relationship driver of workplace wellbeing



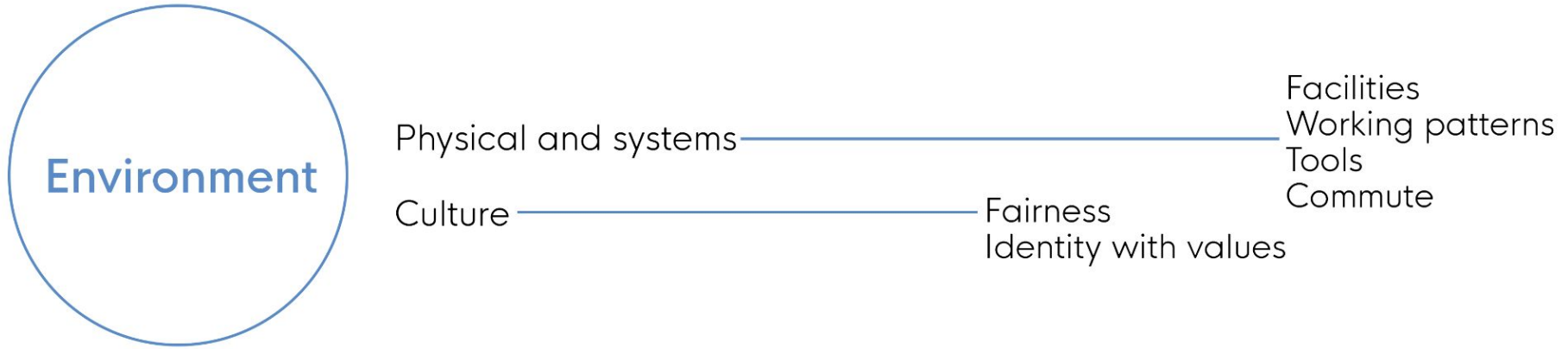
Relationships: In particular, the degree of support and respect an individual has from immediate colleagues, line managers, and leadership. It can also include relationships with students and parents.

Exploring the security driver of workplace wellbeing



Security: Including working conditions, safety, bullying and harassment, and financial security. Equality and diversity are important, especially where a member of staff has protected characteristics that they feel make them vulnerable to discrimination.

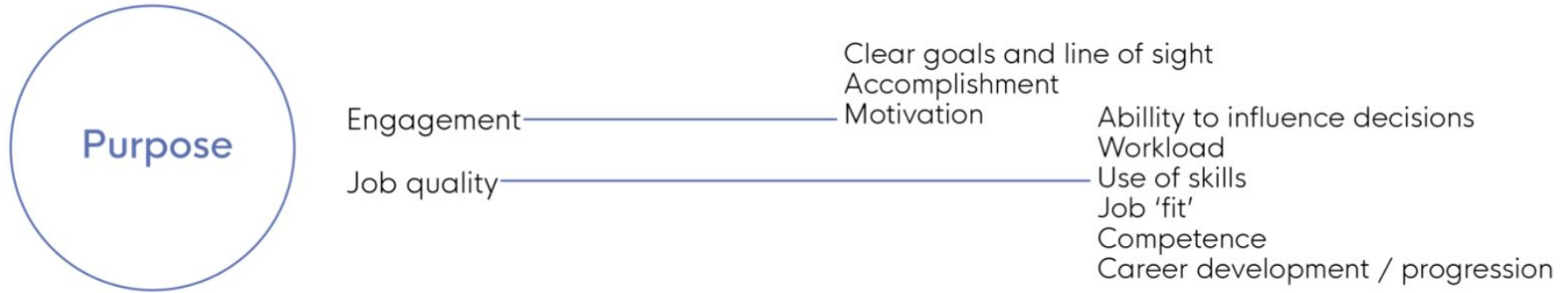
Exploring the environment driver of workplace wellbeing



Environment: This is a broad category that in education can cover both:

- The organisational environment:* including the physical environment (school or college facilities), the culture in a school, and systems (such as the availability and efficaciousness of flexible working arrangements). This may also include the degree to which a member of staff identifies with organisational values.
- The policy environment:* including the policies of the government of the day, and public perceptions of the status of the profession.

Exploring the purpose driver of workplace wellbeing



Purpose: In particular, high-quality job design. For staff, this can mean:

- the right type of work for the individual
- a sense of 'belonging' – including shared organisational goals and vision
- the opportunity to develop and demonstrate competence, and progress in their career
- an appropriate degree of autonomy

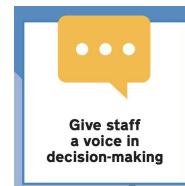
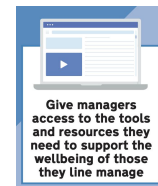
Part 2

Now we have defined wellbeing, and understood what drives workplace wellbeing, the next section of this guide identifies six steps to understand how staff are doing, consider the effectiveness of existing wellbeing support, and take action to protect and improve wellbeing.

Six steps to improve staff wellbeing

| | | | |
|--------|------------------------------------|---|--------------------|
| Step 1 | Getting to know your context | This step encourages your school or college to reflect together on what you would like to achieve, what you currently do for the wellbeing for your organisation's people and community, and to think about your needs going forward. | 17 |
| Step 2 | Getting to know your people | This step includes suggested standard, validated questions, that can be benchmarked. | 19 |
| Step 3 | Analysing results and benchmarking | This step takes you through analysing your results and discusses how you could use benchmarking to provide context to your results. Knowing how the drivers of workplace wellbeing play out in your context informs what action you take. | 28 |
| Step 4 | Action Planning | This step introduces an action plan grid to help identify activities currently in place that are working well, that you wish to retain, and areas for development. | 32 |
| Step 5 | Evaluating Impact | This step considers the effectiveness of an initiative or programme implemented to improve staff wellbeing in your school or college. | 36 |
| Step 6 | Sustaining Improvement | The final step introduces tools to evaluate the cost-effectiveness of an initiative or programme and signposts to additional resources. | 37 |

Step 1. Getting to know your context



Evidence shows that when organisations collectively consider [three questions](#) when designing and implementing workplace health and wellbeing programmes, they are more likely to be successful.

| | |
|--|---|
| 1. Where are we now? | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Thinking about your school or college, is it the 'done thing' for people to share how they are feeling?• What typically happens when someone does share that they are feeling unwell as a result of work related stress?• What are the common approaches your school/college takes towards supporting staff health and wellbeing?• What might be making it harder for people to speak up?• What works well when they do?• What are the specific challenges your organisation is facing and how might these relate to employee wellbeing? |
| 2. What does improved and embedded wellbeing look like in our school/college? | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• What structures and processes might make it easier to implement a workplace wellbeing programme, initiative or programme?• What would a positive and healthy working school environment look like?• Is the current health & wellbeing provision delivering improvements for staff? How do you know? Is the impact equal across different staff groups within the school community? |
| 3. How can you sustain wellbeing in your workplace? | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• What tangible changes to how people work and to workplaces will lead to lasting and positive wellbeing effects? |

Context: Job Quality

Being in a job is good for wellbeing. Being in a 'high quality' job is even better for us. By high quality, we don't mean a certain skill level, job type or role. It's about what makes a job worthwhile for us.

International research shows that 'good jobs' that lead to higher wellbeing provide staff with these 11 dimensions.

What does a 'high quality' job look like for the different roles and staff groups in your school or college?



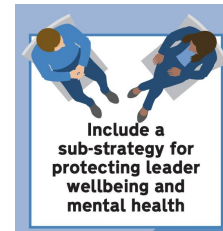
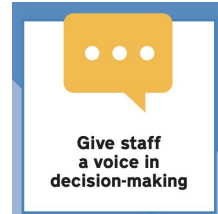
Step 2. Getting to know your people

To understand how staff are doing with respect to the five drivers of workplace wellbeing, and core elements of job quality, we recommend measuring staff wellbeing at regular intervals.

In the following pages we provide a workplace wellbeing survey comprising 20 questions:

- 13 questions are the [national recommended questions](#) to measure employee wellbeing (identified with *)
- 3 questions have been included from the What Works Centre for Wellbeing [workplace wellbeing question bank](#) (identified with ^w)
- 4 questions from the [Working Lives of Teachers and Leaders 2022](#) survey (identified with ^{WLTl})

A [word version](#) of this questionnaire, and a [google form template](#), are available to [download](#). As you build your understanding of staff wellbeing you might like to explore our [workplace wellbeing question bank](#) and the [Working Lives of Teachers and Leaders survey](#) to tailor and adapt your school or college survey to meet your specific needs.



Workplace wellbeing survey: 5 headline questions

On a scale of 0 to 10, where 0 is “not at all” and 10 is “completely”...

1. Overall, how satisfied are you with your life nowadays?*
2. Overall, to what extent do you feel that the things you do in your life are worthwhile?*
3. Overall, how happy did you feel yesterday?*

Response scale

0 (Not at all) 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 (completely)

On a scale where 0 is “not at all anxious” and 10 is “completely anxious”

4. Overall, how anxious did you feel yesterday?*

Response scale

0 (Not at all) 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 (completely)

On a scale of 1 to 7 where 1 means ‘Completely dissatisfied’ and 7 means ‘Completely satisfied’

5. Overall, how dissatisfied or satisfied are you with your present job?*

Response scale

- 1 – Completely dissatisfied
- 2 – Mostly dissatisfied
- 3 – Somewhat dissatisfied
- 4 – Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied
- 5 – Somewhat satisfied
- 6 – Mostly satisfied
- 7 – Completely satisfied



Workplace wellbeing survey: health



- 6. How would you rate your overall physical health now?*
- 7. How would you rate your overall mental health now?*

Response scale

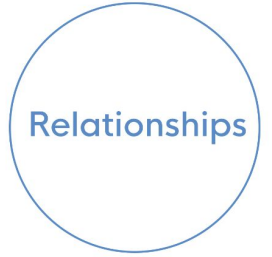
- 1 – Very good
- 2 – Good
- 3 – Fair
- 4 – Bad
- 5 – Very bad

- 8. My manager supports my wellbeing ^{WLT}

Response scale

- 1. Strongly agree
- 2. Tend to agree
- 3. Neither
- 4. Tend to disagree
- 5. Strongly disagree

Workplace wellbeing survey: relationships



For each of the following statements, please select the response which best describes your work situation:

- 9. My manager helps and supports me***
- 10. My colleagues help and support me***

Response scale

- 1 – Always
- 2 – Most of the time
- 3 – Sometimes
- 4 – Rarely
- 5 – Never

- 11. My school followed its own pay policy in making decisions about my pay ^{WLT}**

Response scale

- 1. Strongly agree
- 2. Tend to agree
- 3. Neither
- 4. Tend to disagree
- 5. Strongly disagree

Workplace wellbeing survey: security (1 of 2)



To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statement?

12. I feel safe from threats and physical hazards in my work environment*

Response scale

1. Strongly agree
2. Agree
3. Neither agree nor disagree
4. Disagree
5. Strongly disagree

For the following statement, please select the response which best describes your work situation

13. You are treated fairly in your school/college ^w

Response scale

1. Always
 2. Most of the time
 3. Sometimes
 4. Rarely
 5. Never
- Don't know

Workplace wellbeing survey: security (2 of 2)



14. How would you say you yourself are managing financially these days? ^w

Would you say you are...?

Response scale

1. Living comfortably
 2. Doing alright
 3. Just about getting by
 4. Finding it quite difficult
 5. Finding it very difficult
- Don't know

Workplace wellbeing survey: environment



To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements?

- 15. I am satisfied with my physical working environment*
- 16. I would recommend my school/college as a great place to work*
- 17. My school provides staff with opportunities to actively participate in whole school decisions ^{WLT}

Response scale

- 1. Strongly agree
- 2. Agree
- 3. Neither agree nor disagree
- 4. Disagree
- 5. Strongly disagree

Workplace wellbeing survey: purpose

For the following statement, please select the response which best describes your work situation...

18. My work gives me the feeling of job well done*

Response scale

1. Always
 2. Most of the time
 3. Sometimes
 4. Rarely
 5. Never
- Don't know

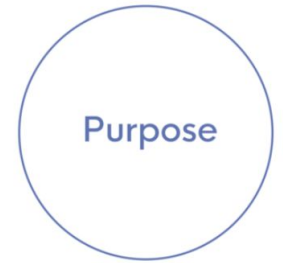
To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements?

19. My manager trusts me to work independently ^{WLT}

20. I am able to access the right learning and development opportunities when I need to ^W

Response scale

1. Strongly agree
2. Tend to agree
3. Neither
4. Tend to disagree
5. Strongly disagree



Sample characteristics

Finally, you will probably find it helpful to capture some information about the people responding to your survey. This might include:

- Age (under 35, 35-44, 45-54, 55+) gender, ethnicity, disability
- Job role (eg classroom teacher, middle leader, senior leader, support staff)
- Key stage/area of work

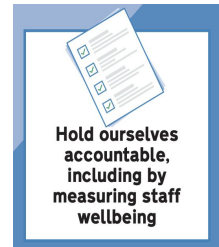
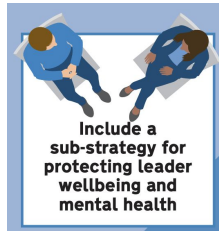


Step 3. Analysing your results and benchmarking

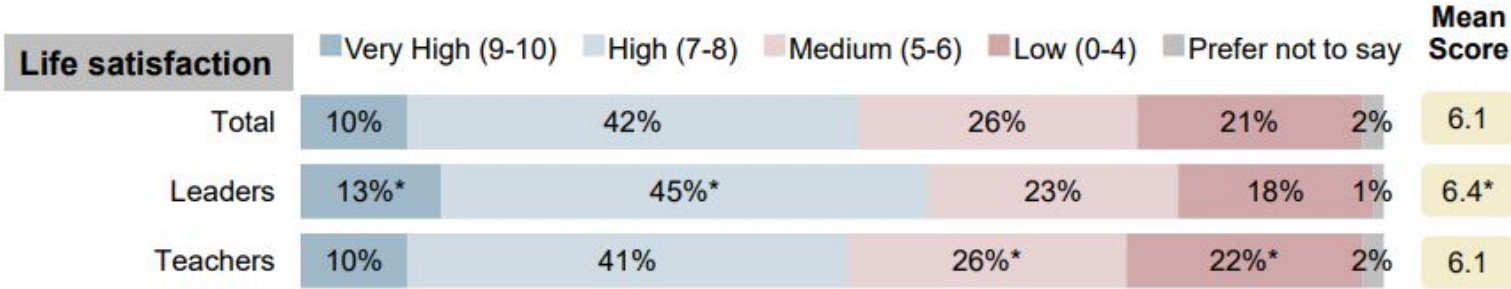
Having collected your survey data, the next step is analysing this data and interpreting your findings. In this guide, we are using the workplace questionnaire as a diagnostic tool. The aim is to understand which factors may be contributing to higher or lower wellbeing for different roles and staff groups.

There are lots of different ways in which you can analyse your data and present your findings. Regardless of the approach you choose, there are some important considerations:

- How representative is your sample? Who responded; who didn't? If you are looking to understand wellbeing differences across teams and roles, have you got enough responses from these different categories?
- Can you design your analysis to enable you to see headline findings and the distribution of wellbeing across groups?
- When analysing your results, you will need to be careful not to disclose individual results or identify responses from people working in very small teams.

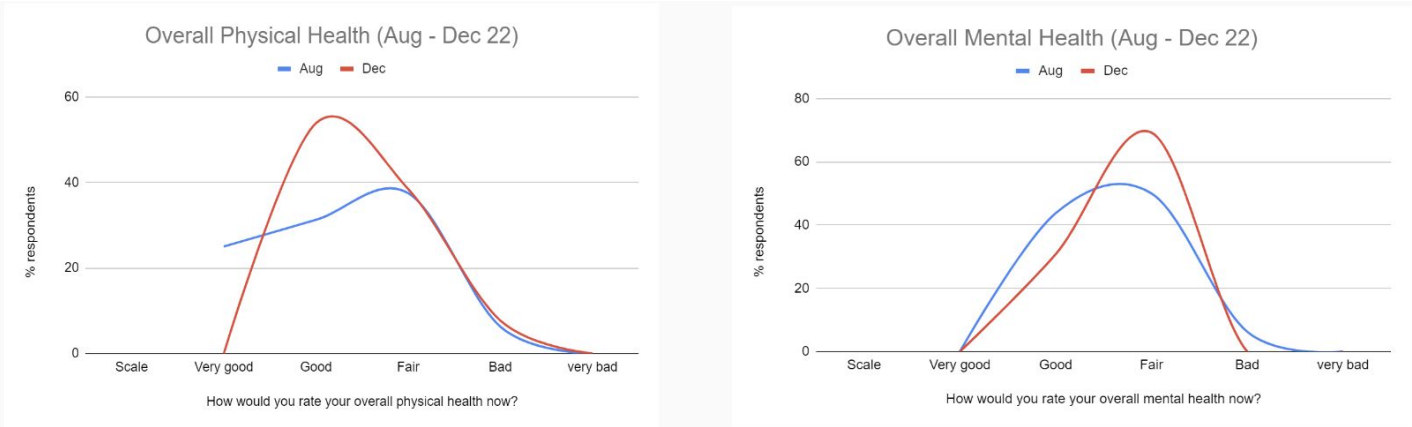


Examples of analysing and presenting results



Source: [Working Lives of Teachers & Leaders Survey](#) April 23, p. 77.

The illustrative example below, shows how you might compare data from two surveys across different time points. You might use this approach if you plan to conduct a staff wellbeing survey each term.



Heatmaps

If you are working with a large enough sample, perhaps combining data across schools in an academy, you might find it helpful to create a 'Heatmap'. Here colours are used to represent distance from the organisational average (mean) for each question.

This example, from the [Ministry of Defence](#), shows differences in wellbeing across sites and across roles. Where there are two columns of data for a site, this illustrates the split between military and civilian roles.

| Driver | Sub-Driver/ Question Set | Site 1 | | Site 2 | | Site 3 | | Site 4 | | Site 5 | Site 6 | Site 7 | Site 8 |
|----------------------------------|-------------------------------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|-------------------|--------------------|-------------------|--------------------|
| | | Civilian | Military | Civilian | Military | Civilian | Military | Civilian | Military | 94% Civ., 6% Mil. | 17% Civ., 83% Mil. | 6% Civ., 94% Mil. | 12% Civ., 88% Mil. |
| Overarching Wellbeing Indicators | Life Satisfaction | 6.6 | | 6.5 | | 6.6 | | 6.7 | | 6.3 | 6.5 | 6.7 | 6.5 |
| | Job Satisfaction | 6.2 | | 5.8 | | 6 | | 6.3 | | 5.8 | 5.1 | 6.3 | 5.4 |
| | Anxiety | 3.8 | | 4 | | 3.5 | | 3.8 | | 4.2 | 3.4 | 3.2 | 3.9 |
| Health | Physical Health | 2.1 | -1.8 | -5.4 | 2.4 | -1.4 | 2 | -5.6 | -3.1 | 0.1 | -0.9 | 3.4 | 1.6 |
| | Mental Health | 5.3 | -1 | -5.7 | 3 | 1 | 3 | 2.3 | -2 | 0.7 | -1 | 9 | -3 |
| | Support and Accessing Support | -8.3 | -11.8 | -5.3 | 2.5 | 12.3 | 3 | 18.3 | 10.3 | 4 | 1 | 13.5 | 1.8 |
| | Presenteeism | -1.7 | -3 | -1.3 | 4.7 | 1.7 | -1.7 | -1 | 2.2 | 5.3 | 3.7 | 5.2 | -3.3 |
| Relationships | My Manager | -2.7 | 1.3 | 0 | 3.3 | 3.3 | -3.3 | 15.7 | 8.7 | 0.7 | -3.3 | 11.7 | -2.3 |
| | My Colleagues | -2 | 3.5 | -0.5 | 4 | -2.5 | 2.5 | 4.5 | 4 | 0.3 | -1 | 4 | 2 |
| | Workplace Culture | -3.2 | 3.2 | -4.3 | 0.2 | 8.3 | 3.3 | 0.5 | 7.8 | 3 | -3 | 14 | -7.8 |
| Environment | Facilities, Tools and Systems | -4.3 | -1.3 | -1.8 | 1.8 | 16 | -3 | 12 | -0.5 | -0.5 | 1.3 | 15.6 | 2.8 |
| | My Working Pattern | -5 | 4.8 | 0.3 | -3.3 | 1.8 | 0.5 | 0.3 | -2 | 15.8 | -2.3 | 7.3 | -21.3 |
| | My Commute | -19.5 | -15 | 5 | -8.5 | 12 | -0.5 | 20 | 1.5 | 0 | 5 | 0.5 | 13.5 |
| Security | My Employment | 6 | -4 | 3 | -2 | -12 | -2 | 7 | -2 | -3 | 4 | 5 | 2 |
| | My Financial Security | 2.4 | 0.2 | 0.3 | 3.9 | -5.3 | -2.9 | 1.8 | 0 | -3.9 | 1.2 | 7 | 4.6 |
| Purpose | My Work | 2.2 | 4 | -2 | 1.5 | 6.9 | 3.4 | 7.7 | 7.1 | 0.5 | -8.1 | 12.8 | -9.1 |
| | My Organisation | -0.5 | 2.5 | -4 | 3 | 12.5 | 8.3 | 5.8 | 4.8 | 3 | -7.5 | 10 | -10 |
| | Opportunities | -5 | -7 | 0 | 4.5 | 4.8 | 4 | 11.3 | 7.3 | 5.8 | -5.6 | 8.5 | -9 |

Benchmarking

Another approach to understanding staff wellbeing in your school or college, is to compare your scores to the national picture, using wellbeing data from national surveys.

The What Works Centre for Wellbeing has [benchmarking data](#) for many of the questions in this survey.

For teachers and leaders results, it might be helpful to benchmark your results against those from the latest [Working lives of teachers and leaders survey](#)



It is important that you look beyond the averages in your organisation and pay attention to the groups of employees who are scoring particularly low in the different wellbeing dimensions.

Step 4. Action planning

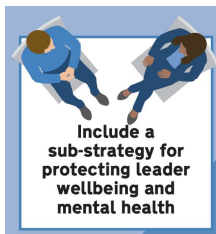
Bringing together the insight gathered from answering the 'getting to know your context questions' and the results from your staff survey, you can start to develop an action plan. It can be difficult to know where to start so:

- Look at what you already do
- Build on your strengths
- Plan to cover your weaknesses

[NICE recommends](#) adopting a tiered approach to mental wellbeing in the workplace by using organisational-level approaches as the foundation for good mental wellbeing, followed by individual approaches and targeted approaches, for example working directly with employees who have or are at risk of poor mental health.

The What Works Centre for Wellbeing has reviewed the global evidence base on what organisations can do to improve workplace wellbeing in four areas:

- [Good people management practices](#)
- [Teamwork and supportive social relationships](#)
- [Job quality](#)
- [Learning at work](#)

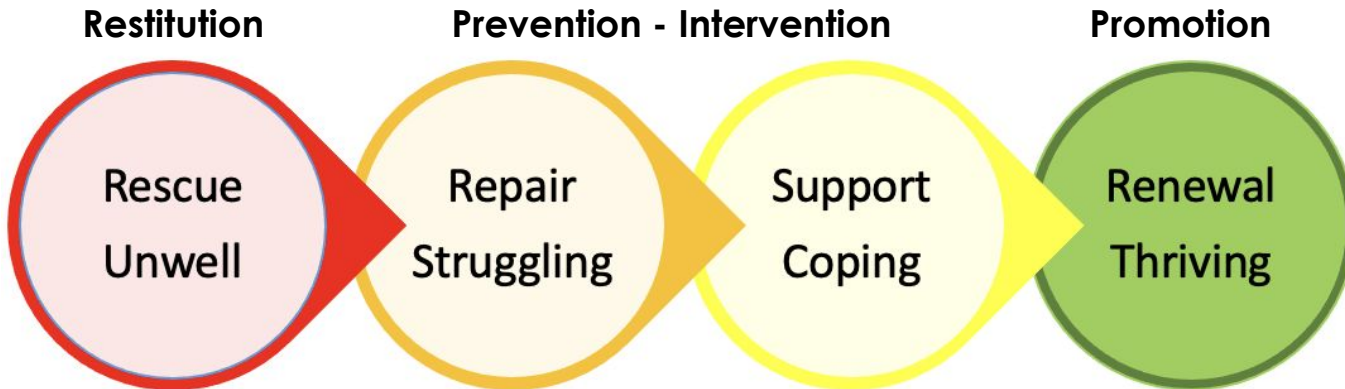


Create your action plan...

... paying attention and differentiating between types of intervention and need. Consider

- low wellbeing groups, those who might need restitution i.e. those experiencing burnout, low mental and physical wellbeing overall,
- groups that may not be critical but still require intervention to sustain good wellbeing in the workplace i.e. those with moderate wellbeing, and;
- those who have good wellbeing and what can be learned/shared and promoted
- sub-strategies for a range of roles, including leaders.

Target resources on areas where the impact on staff wellbeing is likely to be greatest



A WELLBEING ACTION GRID

| Wellbeing | Health Physical Psychological Emotional | Security Safety Financial Contractual | Environment Conditions Culture Systems | Relationships Family work Community | Purpose Belief Engagement Commitment |
|---------------------|---|---|--|---|--|
| Promotion | | | | | |
| Intervention | | | | | |
| Restitution | | | | | |

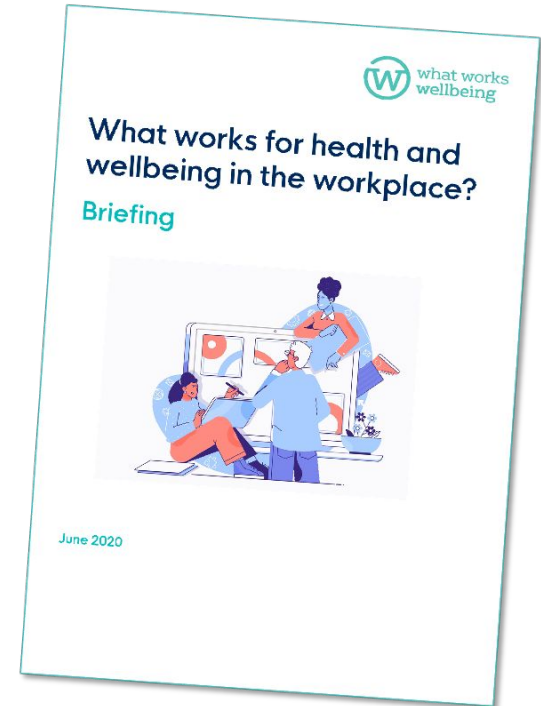
Steps to take in populating the table:

- | | |
|-------------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| 1. What do you already do? | Where are there gaps? |
| 2. What is easily available (free)? | Where is there duplication? |
| 3. What do people say they want? | What are the priorities? |

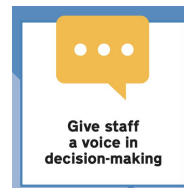
What impacts success when implementing a workplace wellbeing programme?

The What Works Centre for Wellbeing has reviewed [the evidence](#) and found:

- Regular [communication](#) about wellbeing reinforces the message that wellbeing is important, and that something is being done. Messages of care must be followed by tangible and continuous supportive efforts to be seen as [authentic](#). Having a plan that integrates all aspects of people's wellbeing, monitoring it regularly and adapting it to change of circumstances, is likely to meet this need.
- Commitment and perseverance is vital. Where employees and management are supportive of wellbeing initiatives and delivery teams are competent, there is a greater chance of success.
- It is important to dedicate resources to oversee the delivery of workplace wellbeing programmes. Learning as you go, [balancing consistency and flexibility](#), all help.
- We need to pay attention to, and learn more about, how to resolve conflicts between workplace wellbeing programmes and other organizational priorities.



Step 5. Evaluating Impact



Evaluation is the process we use to find out how well an activity or intervention has worked. It's about gathering evidence to help us judge the value and success of an activity, so that we can learn and make improvements for the future.

You can evaluate whether and how a project or programme worked, as well as how efficiently it was delivered.

[NICE](#) recommends organisations monitor employee wellbeing, and evaluate the support they provide, **at least on an annual basis** using a relevant evaluation tool.

The Office for Health Improvement and Disparities have an [Evaluation in health and wellbeing resource](#).

The What Works Centre for Wellbeing has a [practical guide](#) to help organisations measure the wellbeing impact of activities and interventions.

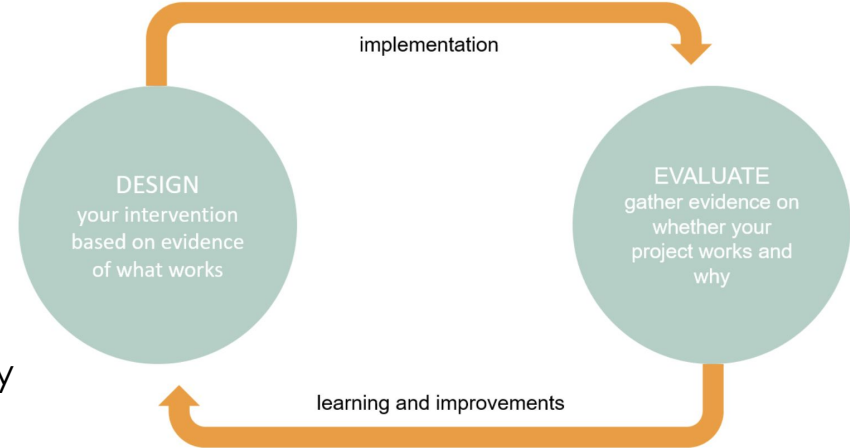
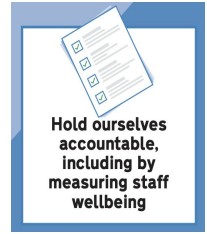


Step 6. Sustaining Improvement

It takes time to embed an organisation-wide approach to improving staff wellbeing. Maintaining momentum requires as much effort, skill and knowledge as getting started, so it's important that leaders continue to prioritise staff mental health.

As you develop your organisation's approach, there are a range of additional resources you can access including:

- Exploring the [cost effectiveness](#) of your workplace wellbeing interventions
- Learning more about research on [wellbeing and productivity](#) from the team at the University of East Anglia and RAND Europe
- Building a [whole school approach](#) to wellbeing with resources from the Anna Freud National Centre for Children & families



And finally....

This guide has set out six steps to support your school or college take action to protect and promote the health and wellbeing of staff in education settings.

This is the first version of our improving staff wellbeing in schools and colleges guide, and we would be grateful if you could take time to share your experience of using it.

- Which parts were most helpful?
- Were there any areas of the toolkit that were unclear, where more direction would be useful?
- Do you have any suggestions for future versions to this toolkit?
- Would you like us to feature your school's use of the guide in a future version?

Please share your feedback via info@whatworkswellbeing.org

Suggested citation: Smithson, J and Raman, R. Improving staff wellbeing in schools and colleges: a guide to measuring staff wellbeing and developing an action plan, April 2023, What Works Centre for Wellbeing.