Introduction

Ulster University’s People and Culture Strategy provides clarity and sets direction around the ‘conditions which will let people flourish’. It sets out the Vision for creating an environment where we ‘achieve excellence by working together’.

As part of this Vision, the People and Culture strategy recognises the priority to ‘promote wellbeing’ and includes three aspirations for Employee Wellbeing, namely:

• We will provide a healthy, happy and purposeful environment that promotes the physical and mental wellbeing of all our staff
• We will create a workplace where individuals can be supported to develop their own ideal work/life balance
• We will promote an environment where staff wellbeing is integrated into day-to-day practices – where it is at the heart of what we do, rather than a separate process and approach.

This vision supports the University’s commitment within our Health, Safety and Wellbeing Policy ‘framework’ to create a culture that “ensures and promotes the health, safety and the physical, mental, social and emotional wellbeing of all staff, students and partners”.

Responsibility for this strategy and its implementation lies with the Senior Leadership Team. The Strategy is approved by the University’s Health, Safety and Wellbeing Committee and reviewed and endorsed by the Council of the University on an ongoing basis. Furthermore, we all have a role in supporting ourselves and others to proactively manage our personal, team and organisation wellbeing.

In policy and in practice, the links between our Equality, Diversity & Inclusion Strategy, the promotion of a sustainable environment and Employee Wellbeing are well established. The University views these areas as being inextricably linked to our Employee Wellbeing Strategy.

We recognise that delivering this strategy will take time and will require staff to work in partnership with stakeholders including our key delivery partners, the Trade Unions and others to contribute to our combined success.

This Strategy provides detail on how we will achieve our aspirations for Employee Wellbeing.
Growing evidence shows that the workplace can be an effective place to improve the wellbeing of individuals, families and communities. Being in work can offer financial reward, social connections, satisfaction and a sense of belonging, meaning and purpose. As we spend a significant proportion of our waking hours at work, it goes without saying that the University plays a significant part in influencing our overall health and wellbeing.

The 2017 Staff Survey, in which 70% of our staff participated, showed that:

- 83% of staff feel proud to work for the University;
- 91% of staff generally, enjoy their work; and
- 83% feel the University is a good place to work

From the survey, however, comments relating to Wellbeing showed that only:

- 43% of staff feel valued by the University;
- 42% of staff feel the University provides good support to help them balance work with personal commitments; and
- 40% of staff feel the University is interested in their wellbeing.

This evidence has highlighted the importance of wellbeing for Ulster University. This in turn has led to the creation of the Wellbeing team within the People and Culture Directorate and to the development of this Employee Wellbeing Strategy.

In addition to improving our individual wellbeing, this strategy will have a positive impact on our teams, our students, the University as a whole and on the wider society in which we live. Delivering this strategy will also act a differentiator allowing us to attract, retain and improve employee engagement.

Finally, and most importantly, it is only right that in wanting to become an employer of choice that we pro-actively support the wellbeing of our staff as our greatest resource.
Wellbeing Strategy

Pillars

This strategy has six pillars and we have outlined how we will strengthen each of these pillars.

Physical

- Provide the opportunity and support for all employees to increase physical activity
- Raise awareness of healthy lifestyle options and support these in the workplace
- Develop policies, procedures and facilities to support employees who are unwell to remain at work and to return to work after sickness absence, e.g. through access to physiotherapy, rehabilitation, occupational health, phased returns, etc. This includes those with hidden illnesses
- Support the opportunity for healthy affordable food choices via on-campus outlets and facilities

Mental

- Manage stress proactively, including ensuring that stress risk assessments are completed and regularly reviewed for all areas of the University
- Develop policies and procedures that represent best practice with regard to mental health including creating an open and inclusive workplace culture which displays respect for those experiencing mental ill health and challenges the stigma around this
- Ensure reasonable workloads that allow for sensible work/life balance and downtime and that are also stimulating and engaging
- Offer 24 hour support to all staff and the provision of counselling services on request, free of charge and within three working days
- Enable and equip staff with the skills, knowledge and confidence to support themselves/others, as appropriate, who may be experiencing mental health issues
By concentrating on these pillars, Ulster University will be well placed to create and sustain a culture that differentiates us as a place of learning and achievement, where all are proud to work, and focused on both our personal and collective wellbeing.
**Strategy Timeline**

**Year 1 (2018/19)**
Developing the Strategy

- **February**
  - Presentation to the Joint Negotiating Committee (Unite)

- **March**
  - Eight campus conversation events were held with over 200 members of staff attending along with members of SLT and Council
  - Presentation to the Joint Negotiating Committee (Unite)

- **April**
  - Discussion with Unite representative

- **May**
  - Presentation to Professional Services - Health, Safety and Wellbeing Committee
  - Discussion with UCU and Unite representatives at Cooperation meeting

- **June**
  - Discussion with UCU representative

- **July**
  - Presentation to the University Health, Safety and Wellbeing Committee

- **August**
  - Discussion with Unite representative

**Year 2 (2019/20)**
Introducing Wellbeing

**Year 3 (2020/21)**
Embedding Wellbeing

**Year 4 (2021/22)**
Living Wellbeing

**How will we measure our success?**

Success is not one dimensional and there are multiple metrics, factors and aspects to consider within both a University and a wellbeing context. Therefore, a robust process is required to continually reflect upon and review the delivery of our Wellbeing Strategy – utilising both qualitative and quantitative data, and through continual dialogue with staff, students and other stakeholders.

As such we will use measures and methods, examples of which are listed, against which we will set tangible targets, to monitor actual progress.

- Increasing participation levels in wellbeing activity both at work and outside the workplace
- Benchmarking ‘success’ via staff surveys
- Monitoring levels of employee engagement
- Utilising innovative methods of capturing and analysing data in addition to more traditional metrics such as sickness absence, Occupational Health appointments, use of Counselling services, etc.
- Evaluating all training, activity and opportunity for continual improvement in a dynamic and timely manner
- Creating a comprehensive annual report
- Providing regular communication to employees
- Seeking feedback from stakeholders on a regular basis
Delivery

In each of the three years of the strategy, plans of work will be developed, communicated and delivered based on the priorities agreed by SLT for that year and linked to the phase as outlined in the timeline. The priorities and plan of work for Year One, Introducing Wellbeing, are included in appendix 1. Subsequent priorities and plans will be issued in due course. An annual report will be presented to the University Health, Safety and Wellbeing Committee that will set out the progress made in the delivery of these plans of work, and the wider progress made towards achieving the strategy overall.

Appendix 1

Wellbeing Strategy Priorities for 2019/20

Introducing Wellbeing

1. Engaging Staff
   - Recognise employee contribution appropriately
   - Create a wellbeing resource of Wellbeing Champions in each Faculty and Directorate to be advocates for Wellbeing across the University
   - Develop a calendar of wellbeing activities for each campus, coordinated in conjunction with recognised Wellbeing Champions

2. Promote good Work/Life Balance
   - Review Work/Life Balance policy in line with modern workplace practices and ensuring transparency and fairness
   - Review Leave policy
   - Encourage Civic/Community engagement
   - Review models for workload assessment

3. Develop good Wellbeing communication channels
   - Employee Wellbeing Week
   - Campus workshops/discussion opportunities
   - Making use of
     - Insight
     - Portal
     - Wellbeing webpage
   - Look at the feasibility of apps, blogs, emails, social media and existing networks, such as the Disability Network and Women’s Network

4. Create mechanisms to assess staff wellbeing
   - Create and trial pulse surveys
   - Wellbeing Champion forum meetings
   - Focus groups
   - Inputs at team meetings
   - Feedback to staff

5. Provide assistance for managers in supporting their teams
   - Identify and design courses to support management
   - Organise initial courses to run during 2019/20
   - Introduce a revised Sickness Absence Policy at earliest opportunity
   - Integrate with leadership development programmes to ensure the strategic necessities of wellbeing are addressed, e.g. vision, values, behaviours, workloads, change management, performance and development, etc

6. Enhance Mental Health Awareness
   - Enhance mental ill health awareness, knowledge and skills in collaboration with Student Support colleagues
   - Sign up to the Equality Commission’s Mental Health Charter
   - Relaunch the Employee Assistance Programme (EAP)
   - Train a network of mental health first aiders
### 2019/20 Wellbeing Activity Plan

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Action</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Engaging staff</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Organise and deliver Employee Wellbeing Week</td>
<td>Sept 19</td>
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<td>Recruit Wellbeing Champions</td>
<td>Sept 19 – Dec 19</td>
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<td>Develop Wellbeing Champions via training and informal Forum meetings</td>
<td>Nov 19 – May 20</td>
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<td>Deliver ‘Introduction to Wellbeing’ for Managers workshops</td>
<td>Oct 19 – Apr 20</td>
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<td>Deliver Stress Management training</td>
<td>Nov 19 – Mar 20</td>
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<td>Organise stress awareness sessions for staff</td>
<td>Oct 19 to May 20</td>
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<td>Organise ‘mindful managers’ courses</td>
<td>Oct 19 – May 20</td>
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<tr>
<td>Review Work/Life Balance Policy in line with modern workplace practices</td>
<td>Dec 19</td>
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<tr>
<td>Encourage Civic/Community engagement</td>
<td>Sept 19 – July 20</td>
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<tr>
<td>Develop Campus Wellbeing action plans</td>
<td>Oct 19 – July 20</td>
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<td>Develop Wellbeing page on internet accessible via the portal</td>
<td>Dec 19</td>
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<td>Create library of wellbeing material</td>
<td>Oct 19 – June 20</td>
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<tr>
<th>Promote good Work/Life Balance</th>
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