amie
for leaders in education

Well-being: leading and managing a well workplace

By David Green and Mark Wright

ATL
the education union

AMiE is ATL's section for leaders in education. We champion our members, influence education policy and provide bespoke expertise. We help members achieve their potential with our career development programme, while our information resources help them to understand how the latest issues impact on their working lives. Our team of legal experts is available to provide confidential advice, guidance and support for members in times of need.

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Foreword

As a professional association, AMIE, ATL's leadership section, works to identify good practice in order to assist school and college leaders' focus on delivering an effective education for their learners in a manner that is sustainable for the workforce.

Leaders and managers have significant power to shape a healthy working culture that nourishes staff well-being and underpins improved organisational performance. In today's pressured working environments, where so many demands are made on education professionals, it is more important than ever that leaders and managers take care of their own well-being and that of their colleagues.

This booklet has been informed by the learning from casework undertaken by AMiE and ATL on behalf of members where staff health and well-being have been placed at risk due to the lack of good well-being practice.

The UK has some way to go to emulate the German model of social partnership where unions play an integral part in highlighting where workplaces fail to perform effectively. A lack of a robust feedback loop means we all too often encounter the same problems time and again. We see members subjected to chronic health and well-being challenges when the causal factors could have been recognised and mitigated given sufficient foresight, insight and will. These repeating patterns cost everyone; the organisation, the learners, the public purse, the unions, and, not least of all, the health and well-being of members.

This booklet is a response to the clear need for help and support in maintaining good health and well-being derived from the many examples of members finding themselves in difficulty. It is also a resource to help leaders and managers instil a greater degree of well-being into their school or college in an effort to maintain a more sustainable and effective organisation. Given the unrelenting pace of change across the system the need to raise capacity in this area has never been more acutely needed.

We hope this publication will assist efforts to build and maintain workplace harmony, no matter how challenging the working environment becomes. It is simply not worth risking your health and fundamental well-being, nor that of your staff to whom you have a duty of care.

Dr Mary Bousted, ATL general secretary

1. Introduction

The health of an organisation is founded on the welfare and well-being of those who work within it. Truly efficient and effective organisations tend to be happy places with low staff sickness absence. This can all too often be overlooked in the rush to meet deadlines, targets and in dealing with the many rigors of school and college life.

The purpose of this publication is to raise awareness of the connection between work and health and, importantly, to highlight that this is often an area that suffers from poor leadership and management. In the rush to achieve organisational goals core personal needs can go unmet. Leaders can sometimes neglect their own core needs and lack awareness when staff do the same. While this is tenable in the short term it is unsustainable and can lead to well-being challenges and dulled organisational performance. Good management necessarily starts with self-management.

This publication outlines:

- what constitutes healthy working
- what hazards to look out for and manage out
- how to be open-minded in the face of health.

It offers tools to help with time management, establishing a work-life balance and recognising and dealing with the insidious impact of undue stress. Further, it offers tips to help you look after yourself and your staff and identifies the characteristics of a healthy working environment.

'Health and safety', a strand of the well-being agenda, is often viewed as a dry and process-orientated topic, which at times can appear too risk averse and contrary to the flexibility that leaders and managers feel is required to prepare learners for the rigors of life. This publication rightfully places health and safety in its broader health and well-being context where, in the interests of both organisational effectiveness and sustainability, leaders take a proactive leadership role rather than simply a 'tick box' approach.

Leadership is essentially about awareness and responsibility. It places an onus on leaders to be aware of what's happening both inside themselves and to their staff. This is a proactive process and requires both sensitivity and an enquiring mind. It is far from a tick list exercise to be forgotten once a policy

has been drafted – a well-being approach needs to be present and alive at all times. It means truly taking responsibility for the health of the team or broader organisation. You have the responsibility, ie an ability to respond to the needs of staff to be able to carry out their work in an environment that is conducive to their well-being. This is the intrinsically ethical dimension to leadership which can sometimes become lost amid the focus on raising attainment. While attainment is naturally important, how it is achieved is equally important. Good leadership is typified where means and ends accord. Shape a healthy working culture and it will benefit both the staff and learners and contribute to those all-important results.

Forging a well-being culture based on care and engagement will also help provide a more robust foundation to cope with the significant changes coming down the funding and policy pipeline over the next few years. These are likely to present a real challenge to many schools and colleges and maintaining a strong well-being ethos will both help deal with the changes process and ensure that the post-change organisation is as effective as possible.

Where staff engagement has been measured to be positive and above the norm, the level of performance compared to others is significantly higher and where there are disengaged staff, significantly lower. Lack of effective engagement is bad for your organisational health and that is often one step away from being bad for your own emotional and physical health.

Well-being and performance are enhanced when the organisation operates through healthy workplaces. The leadership has a key role in setting a culture that enables this. Success comes with leaders' ability to maintain an effective dual focus on the well-being of their organisation as well as their own. This is a foundation for outstanding performance.

> 'The education system can certainly seem against you at times. Working extremely long hours to jump through hoops, which you know are not bringing real benefit to the students just to be able to find time to do the things that really make a difference to their lives. It wears people down but you've got to be strong despite the system and inspire staff to do the right thing.'
>
> Secondary headteacher

2. A healthy workplace

Given a globalised economy and the need to do more with less we are now at a stage where a healthy, committed and engaged workforce is becoming the essential bedrock of organisational success. Increasingly, successful workplaces will be those where synergy occurs; the creative hum of the whole organisation is greater than the sum of the constituent members of staff. Fortunately, the workplace is a controlled space in which good leadership has a huge opportunity to set a culture that facilitates both staff well-being and optimum organisational performance.

No matter what external pressures and challenges are impacting the organisation its leaders have a responsibility to aspire to good leadership, which means setting a culture where staff feel motivated, inspired, safe and cared about.

This can seem an unreasonable challenge when wave upon wave of change has driven out energy and goodwill in the workplace. Constant pushing to raise attainment can feel like an uphill struggle of cajoling and dealing with increasing resentment. It becomes all too easy to think the only way is to 'manage' the situation rather than seek to 'lead' your way out of it.

In such circumstances your first priority as a leader is to reconnect with your own sense of well-being, physically, mentally, emotionally and spiritually. Ironically, at the very time these qualities need to be reinforced they are often eroded by attempts to micro-manage through a challenging time, such as a restructure. The primary questions need to be:

- Am I in the right place physically to ensure a well workplace – what might I need to work on to ensure I feel physically vital?

- Am I in the right place emotionally to ensure a well workplace – what might I need to work on to develop sensitivity to the needs of staff and resilience to cope with challenges?

- Am I in the right place mentally to ensure a well work place – am I sufficiently open and clear thinking enough to establish what personal and organisational well-being looks like?

- Am I in the right place spiritually to ensure a well workplace – have I the faith in myself to inspire others to maintain a healthy and buoyant attitude despite the challenges the organisation may face?

Reflection on these questions is instrumental – it is necessary to ensure that your own well-being is in the right place before you can sustainably seek to ensure a positive well-being culture in your organisation. Besides a solid grasp of teaching and learning, successful leadership in our field entails a need to be exceptional at:

- self-awareness
- leading and driving change
- thinking strategically; acting tactically
- inspiring and motivating others
- demonstrating sound ethics and courage
- staff engagement
- resilience under pressure
- developing well-being and fitness in leadership.

Well-being baseline

The well-being of school and college leaders and their organisation are inextricably linked. Once the leadership is coming from the 'right place' the foundation is set to develop the well-being of the organisation. This starts with an evaluation of the current well-being baseline – the health of the organisation in terms of both staff well-being and organisational performance, which are strongly associated. Assess the factors that build commitment and trust among the workforce and those that might fracture it.

A framework such as the one below presents a useful starting point to aid your reflection and analysis:

High personal well-being/good or outstanding performance

- clear purpose
- staff commitment, trust, engagement
- effective recruitment practice
- good terms and conditions
- good team working and high staff involvement
- adaptive leadership & management
- both learner and staff care focus
- low sickness absence
- low staff turnover
- low cost/high performance

Acceptable personal well-being/ poor organisational performance

- ambiguous purpose
- poor recruitment practices
- average terms and conditions
- mismatched skills to jobs
- poor performance management
- few well-being initiatives
- average staff benefits package
- average rates of staff sickness
- average sickness absence
- high staff turnover
- high costs/mediocre performance

Poor personal well-being/ acceptable organisational performance

- clear purpose
- average terms and conditions
- limited staff development
- transactional management
- incentives and bonus schemes
- high levels of sickness absence
- high number of employment relations issues
- limited well-being programme
- average staff turnover
- very high costs/low performance.

Poor personal well-being/ poor organisational performance

- ambiguous purpose
- poor terms and conditions
- lack of staff commitment, trust, engagement
- coercive, competitive, bullying culture
- high level of presenteeism
- high number of employee relations issues/tribunals
- high levels of sickness absence
- high staff turnover
- high costs/low performance.

Good leadership is typified by the characteristics outlined in the top left quadrant and thus the direction of travel for leaders who aspire to develop their organisation based both on high personal well-being and excellent performance. Where your organisation is at present may well consist of a selection of characteristics from across all four quadrants but your assessment will help you determine your priorities.

Reflect on...

- Where would you place your school or college in terms of the framework? (on page 5)
- What could you do to help move it toward the top left quadrant if it isn't there already?

A vision of good organisational well-being

It is important to articulate to staff where your organisation is aiming for as part of its well-being agenda and how it complements the overarching organisational performance agenda. Getting this written down and shared enables staff to 'see' your vision and builds common purpose while also helping to tease out areas that conflict with the vision.

The Management Advisory Service (MAS) have a useful *Charter for Well-being and Performance* that you can adapt and deploy as part of your work to embed a healthy, well workplace culture. The following is taken from the charter which can be obtained from the MAS website at **www.mas.org.uk**.

- *A clear unambiguous purpose, expressed as a simple 'big idea', an idea which all the staff relate to closely, and are proud to discuss with friends and colleagues.*

- *An atmosphere of confidence, where all the staff are interested in each other, support each other, and project this confidence towards learners.*

- *Staff who behave respectfully towards each other, value each other's views and opinions, work in teams which are centres of mutual support, where anything is debated without a hint of humiliation, where the critique of individual and team work is welcomed, discussed and where lessons are learnt and implemented.*

- *Staff who 'go the extra mile' by providing unsolicited ideas, thoughts, stimulus to each other, and where their interest in their learners offers something more than is expected, beyond courtesy, and beyond service, offering attentiveness and personal interest.*
- *Challenges for their staff that provide opportunities for personal development through new experiences, and which treat everyone with fairness and understanding.*
- *Staff who are personally driven towards organisation and personal success – intellectually, financially, socially and emotionally.*

We lead and manage through the workforce so it is vital that, for organisation performance reasons alone, staff well-being is not delegated to a particular part of the organisation (typically HR in larger schools and colleges). Staff well-being needs to be central and considered as the flip side of the organisational performance coin.

> 'I don't feel comfortable pushing staff without considering the impact the demands are likely to have on them. Sure, you can secure some quick wins by pushing but it's rarely worth it given the longer term implications that come back to bite you later down the line.'
>
> Primary headteacher

Having taken robust steps to gauge the 'well-being temperature' it should be possible to alight on a well-being strategy that forms a key strand of the corporate strategy – it's important that well-being isn't simply a bolt-on. Centralising well-being helps you to stay close to the foundation of organisational success and your most valuable resource – your staff.

Professor Derek Mowbray from MAS recommends the following framework for an effective well-being strategy.

Well-being strategy

Discovery/ monitoring	Culture	Leadership and management	Working environment	Personal resilience
Assessment of staff well-being	Purpose	Ethics	Staff health	Self-awareness
	Vision	The person		Determination
	Values	The leader		Vision
	Culture	The style		Self-confidence
	Corporate strategy	Emerging leaders		Organisation
	Structure	Adaptive		Problem-solving
	Rules			Interaction
	Resolving issues			Relationships
	Partnerships			

An effective strategy will reflect this pattern. It:

- assesses a baseline to ensure that the understanding of well-being is grounded in reality
- sets the culture, the messages about how well-being will be approached across the organisation
- is clear on what is expected from leadership and management in order to drive the strategy
- generates clear and linked policies and practices relating to a healthy working environment
- builds personal responsibility among staff and empowers their own sense of well-being as a foundation for their growing effectiveness at work.

Leadership styles

Some leadership styles tend to be more effective than others when it comes to successfully embedding a high performing culture based on good staff well-being. It calls for a style that is inclusive and empowering. Taking the lead in building and sustaining commitment, trust and engagement requires a leadership style and approach that persuades employees to trust their leaders.

Adaptive leadership principles and style have the attributes that encourage just such commitment, trust and engagement at a time when organisational effectiveness is increasingly going to depend upon whole staff ownership of the performance agenda.

The principles are:

- shared responsibility for the organisation amongst all staff, as well as leaders and managers
- honesty about the 'wicked issues', the tough questions that need exposing and resolving
- independent judgement by all employees is expected
- reflection and continuous learning are expected and supported
- leadership capacity is developed and expanded.

Engaging staff

A healthy workplace is clearly not just a safe workplace. Controlling hazards is only part of the equation – encouraging staff to naturally take responsibility is the way forward. The style of leadership and management and the culture this creates can make an enormous difference to the overall health of the workplace. It may sound simplistic, but good relationships and good employment practices make for a happier workplace; and this will normally result in less sickness absence. What's more, the added value this brings is better service, increased productivity, and more creativity - or to put it another way, improved performance:

- engaged staff display a positive attitude towards work and have high energy levels – both of which are essential ingredients of personal resilience

- engaged staff show high levels of self-efficacy and organisational commitment – both of which are essential ingredients of corporate and personal resilience
- engaged staff are inclined to work extra hours, help their colleagues if needed and stay healthy in stressful environments – all of which are essential ingredients for psychological well-being and performance.

The key to unlocking this performance potential is effective and transparent leadership that engages fully with staff at all levels. Adaptive leadership is the ideal approach; coercive leadership based on compliance and penalty is usually an unsatisfactory option. In the report, *Engaging for Success*, Macloed and Clarke highlight four key themes:

- strategic leadership that enables individuals to see how they each contribute to the organisation's vision, and how their work fits into the bigger organisational picture
- engaging managers who respect, empower, develop and reward their staff
- an effective staff voice, whose opinions count and can make a difference
- behaviour throughout the organisation based on trust and shared values.

By engaging effectively with staff, leaders and managers set the foundation for a healthy workplace. It also provides a powerful mirror to determine your own level of awareness, which may at times conflict with your own self-image. For example, consider the situation where you see staff exhibiting:

- deep reticence when faced with new situations
- negative responses to new situations
- evidence of self-medicating through drink and drugs
- apprehension when something new is suggested.

A manager might well view these as evidence of 'dead wood' among staff unable to keep pace with change and who need to be threatened with competency measures. A leader will instead see them as evidence of the need to build capacity – to lead them from the dark and into the light of the changed organisation. This is a key distinguishing feature between managers and leaders. There are unfortunately too many leaders who are, in reality, managers - unable or unwilling to lead the staff and instead are keen to discard, at considerable cost, and bring in new people without first seeking to fully address the fundamental issues behind the problem.

Staff should only be 'managed out' when all possibilities to 'build up' have failed and it is clear that the staff member absolutely lacks the competence to meet the learning needs of the students under their care.

Some managers also become frustrated at insufficient levels of staff engagement without recognising the impact that burn out through weighty workloads has on staff. Burnout and staff engagement are on opposite ends of a continuum – when one is high, the other is low.

Leaders and managers desiring high-quality performance, creativity, innovation, and smooth management of change will be challenged to achieve these goals with a burned out workforce.

Signs of a healthy workplace

Acas highlights six specific indicators which all contribute towards what prompts this sense of evident well-being in a healthy workplace; some workplaces feel intuitively healthier than others within the first several minutes of visiting:

- line managers are confident and trained in people skills
- employees feel valued and involved in the organisation
- jobs are flexible and well-designed
- managers have working knowledge and practical experience of risk assessment parameters
- managers use appropriate health services (eg occupational health referrals) to help people get back to work
- managers promote a health and well-being culture by conducting return to work discussions when staff have been off sick
- managers know how to deal with common problems such as stress and musculoskeletal disorders.

These go hand in hand with proper staff engagement. Together with an effective safety policy your institution should be a happier and healthy place to work. Some of these indicators are covered in more detail in this chapter. The others are covered elsewhere in this booklet.

Of course, we recognise that in today's climate, the demands made on education staff are great. We work, after all, in probably the most regulated and politically controlled sector of society. So the challenge for leaders and managers is enormous. But a healthy workplace is not a luxury that can be sold off when the going gets tough. Rather, it is a pre-requisite for organisational success and needs to be approached as such.

> 'I really care about my staff. If I didn't they'd be less likely to care about their work I think, but that's not why I care. It's not only just the right thing to do it also makes my life easier, I know that if people are ill they are keen to come back in again as soon as they can. It builds capital and people will go the extra mile even though the college is going through yet more change. People are supportive of each other.'
>
> Sixth form college manager

Good people skills

The link between good line management and good health is well recognised. Various reports such as Dame Carol Black's report on the health of Britain's working population have shown that management buy-in and implementation of good practice can make a difference to a workplace, leading to lower sickness absence levels. Conversely, it has been found that poor management and lack of leadership skills is associated with a higher risk of stress-related health problems (Donaldson-Feilder *et al*, 2009).

This means managers must be more aware of how they express and manage their own emotions, manage conflict, manage workload, deal with problems and make themselves accessible. To help make this happen, managers must insist on the appropriate training, and ongoing support such as mentoring and coaching. Consider using AMiE's publication entitled, *Improving Performance Through Critical Conversations*, available for download as a PDF from AMiE's website at **www.amie.atl.org.uk**, as a basis for a CPD session with staff to help build people skills within your school or college.

'Treat staff with respect and really listening to what they are saying to you is a huge part of building the trust required to shape a happy workplace. Visitors remark on being able to sense it as soon as they walk through the door.'

Secondary deputy headteacher

Flexible and well-designed jobs

Organisations increasingly seem to be giving very little attention to job design and flexibility. With management restructures so prevalent these days in educational institutions, people are often given jobs over which they have very little say since the alternative is usually redundancy.

Yet we know that if people have more control over their work they are less likely to suffer ill health (the Health and Safety Executive [HSE] actually includes job control as one of the six desirable management standards for preventing work related stress).

So, how can leaders bring about flexible and better designed jobs? The key, as we have seen elsewhere, is to engage with staff. Discuss with them and consider their ideas for flexible working, seek their views on how their jobs can be improved; and finally, make sure they receive suitable training and development to enhance and improve their skills and abilities.

Leaders and managers need to avoid the mistake of assuming that job design is only concerned with the needs of the organisation. This dehumanises the legitimate human needs of staff tasked with executing these jobs. Good practice is clear that the core social and personal requirements of the post holder need to be considered in order to avoid damage to well-being and performance. In designing roles careful consideration must be given to:

- Skill variety – the range of skills and activities necessary to complete the job. The more a person is required to use a wide variety of skills, the more satisfying the job is likely to be.

- Role identity – the degree to which the job requires completion of a whole and identifiable piece of work.

- Job size – degree to which the total load of the job is manageable, ie do-able without undue stress.

- Role significance – the impact and influence of a job. Jobs are more satisfying if staff believe that they make a difference.
- Autonomy – the amount of individual choice and discretion involved in a job.
- Feedback – the amount of useful information staff receive about their performance.

The six core job dimensions listed above result in three different psychological states necessary for the sustainable well-being and performance of the workforce:

- experienced meaningfulness of the work
- experienced responsibility for the outcomes of work
- knowledge of the actual results of the work activity.

The balance for leaders to strike is between accountability and autonomy. Too many accountability measures placed on staff (ie constant form filling) can easily unduly stifle both well-being and performance. Conversely, too much staff autonomy without effective accountability merely places the stress burden on to leaders and managers. However, a positive well-being strategy can build the trust and commitment essential for greater frontline autonomy. More autonomy leads to greater job satisfaction. The job is likely to be more satisfying if staff are involved in making decisions, instead of simply being told what to do – a key reason for using an adaptive style of leadership.

Adaptive leadership is ideal for engaging the whole organisation and distributing leadership across the organisation. The front line of the organisation is its cutting edge and the perspective this brings can be incredibly important in knowing straight away whether a new role is likely to work or not. If sufficient trust and commitment has been cultivated by leadership then any feedback becomes business critical information that ought to be given serious consideration rather than over ruled, just because it doesn't fit with what the plan says should be happening!

3. Promoting well-being at work

Promoting well-being can help to maintain a happy and healthy workplace. Not surprisingly, this requires an organisational approach and a culture of engagement with employees. Promoting well-being can be broken down into four closely related areas:

- Finding out: what are the problems, issues or pressure points affecting health? What needs to be done?

- Taking action: reaching agreement on changes, actions and policies.

- Raising awareness.

- Monitoring: are policies working? Are we getting it right? What needs review?

Above all, if well-being is going to be promoted with any good effect there must be a strong commitment from the organisation's leadership. You need to be not just aware, but fully signed-up and evidently engaged in the process, leading by example.

Finding out

If your organisational culture is based upon trust and shared values, then your managers will get on and deal with any problems, keeping you in the loop as and when necessary. But this works best when there are systems in place to identify or raise potential problems, and then deal with them accordingly.

This may seem a little obvious, but the following can help you measure the well-being of your workplace:

- Staff questionnaires and surveys – these can help to give a general overview on well-being, or they can be used to seek information on a specific issue. Their value will be greater if the results are shared, and where necessary, actions are agreed.

- Return to work interviews (following sickness absence) – these may already be written into your sickness absence policy. As well as helping reach agreement on an individual's return to work, they can be a useful way to identify whether or not there was any work-related issue contributing to their illness. Changes can then be considered and introduced to help prevent any repeat. Return to work meetings are supportive, and should not be used to deal with abuses of the sickness scheme.

- Reviewing sickness records – monitoring of sickness records can help to identify trends or highlight potential problems. These can be investigated further to see if action can be taken to help ease or prevent a reoccurrence.

- Joint consultative committees and safety committees – these are a very useful way of identifying the issues raised by staff with their unions. By sharing information and exchanging views, you can reach agreement on issues affecting well-being such as new or updated HR policies.

- Team meetings – managers and team leaders are in a good position to find out what their staff are saying, to make changes where appropriate or to report issues to yourself or human resources etc.

- Day-to-day contact – if you have encouraged a culture of openness and shared values, then your regular daily contact with staff will make it more likely they will provide information about their well-being and about issues of concern to them.

Taking action

Acting upon the information is perhaps the important step in promoting well-being; this means consulting staff and reaching agreed ways of improving it. Some of this may need only a simple change. Other times it might mean, for example, negotiating improvements to specific HR policies and procedures affecting the entire organisation. The important thing is to engage and involve staff in the process.

Raising awareness

Raising awareness of your approach to well-being is an ongoing process. Ideally, you should be trying to embed well-being into your organisational culture. Line managers, union reps, and, of course, the leadership team are all part of this process. Your methods of delivery are various, but team meetings, union meetings, staff handbooks, CPD, coaching and mentoring are all part of the process. You will also wish to make use of your staff handbook or the organisation's intranet, but it is activity and leadership commitment that promote well-being at work.

Monitoring

This is not unlike the steps used for 'finding out' above. Indeed, they are two sides of the same coin. Monitoring gives you an opportunity to check that everything is well, that HR policies are fit for purpose, that occupational health services are working, and that staff and unions are engaged in well-being matters. Risk assessments on individual issues or on employees should always have a timescale and should be considered interim for the purposes of assisting an individual as a reasonable adjustment. However, this is within the overall context that management of health and safety is always a balance between the needs of the organisation and the workforce.

Make well-being strategic

It is highly desirable that well-being forms part of the organisation's strategic plan. The senior leadership/management team needs to consider organisational performance in tandem with information about staff well-being rather than as if they were entirely separate subjects. The leadership often has more power than it imagines to deploy well-being measures as a means of tackling the organisation's performance issues.

4. Work-life balance

The pressure of a demanding job can take a serious toll on an individual's work–life balance. As well as the effect long hours can have on yourself (and perhaps an associated anxiety over meeting targets), your working life can also impact upon family and friends. Without action this can strain those relationships and therefore increase the pressure on you personally.

> 'I work more than 80 hours a week and can honestly say that it's just not enough to do the job properly, to do all that's expected of me. I'm 50 and I'd retire tomorrow if I could. I'm just getting by week to week.'
>
> Primary headteacher

According to the Mental Health Foundation around a third of people are unhappy about the amount of time that they spend on their work. In a sector like education, where the long hours culture is normal, this figure, we suggest, could be very much higher.

As a leader, you play a key role not just in your organisation's performance but also in its culture. You can therefore be a key driver for better work/life balance. It is a goal to aim for and ideally an eventual output of a sound well-being strategy.

Good work-life balance is also good for the workplace

Improving work–life balance does not just mean you get to see your family and friends more often. It will improve your own personal well-being and that of your staff. Employees in organisations already implementing work-life balance practices enjoy significant benefits such as:

- being able to effectively manage multiple responsibilities at home, work and in the community without guilt or regret
- being able to work in flexible ways so that earning an income and managing family/other commitments becomes easier
- being part of a supportive workplace that values and trusts staff.

In addition, the added value to your organisation can be:

- a more stable workplace, enabling you to keep hold of staff
- reduced absenteeism
- better performance and productivity.

Most importantly, a better work-life balance can help to promote positive mental health and avoid work-related stress.

Manage your own time

Better time management can contribute towards ending the long-hours culture and so improve work-life balance. Start by looking at your own behaviour. It might even help to keep a log of your time spent on various tasks in order to identify areas for change. If, as many leaders do, you put in seriously long hours, then make changes in small gradual steps. For example:

- Try to 'work smart, not long'. This involves tight prioritisation - allowing yourself a certain amount of time per task - and trying not to get caught up in less productive activities, such as unstructured meetings that tend to take up lots of time.
- Take proper breaks at work, for example, by taking at least half an hour for lunch and getting out of the workplace if you can.
- Try to ensure that a line is drawn between work and leisure. If you do need to bring work home try to ensure that you only work in a certain area of your home - and can close the door on it.
- Don't always be first to arrive and last to leave.
- Plan time slots when you will not look at emails, or take phone calls.
- Challenge anything that could be wasting time and effort, particularly habitual tasks, meetings and reports where responsibility is inherited or handed down from above. Don't be a slave to a daft process or system.
- Break big tasks down into stages and plan time-slots for them, including any research or preparation time.
- Avoid trying to multi-task, by having a number of jobs underway at the same time.

You also need to be self-aware of the impact that long working hours can have, and act accordingly:

- Recognise the importance of protective factors, including exercise, leisure activities and friendships. Try to ensure that these are not sacrificed to working longer hours, or try to ensure that you spend your spare time on these things.

- Watch out for the cumulative effect of working long hours by keeping track of your working hours over a period of weeks or months rather than days. Take account of hours spent worrying or thinking about work when assessing your work-life balance. These are a legitimate part of work and a good indicator of work-related stress. If possible, assess your work-life balance with your colleagues and with their support and involvement. The more visible the process, the more likely it is to have an effect.

- Finally, remember to schedule some time for your family and friends. After all, you work hard and you deserve to enjoy life.

Enabling better time management in others

In leading by example you will also be helping the time management and well-being of your staff. Think about whether, in your organisation, there are:

- Too many meetings? Hold departmental or area reviews of meetings procedures and practice, looking at schedules, purpose and efficiency etc with a view to reducing time spent in meetings.

- Too many emails? Review email use and other internal communications with a view to cutting back on the amount of messages.

- Raise awareness of better time management; improving work-life balance is a necessary part of changing the culture.

Here are some suggestions to improve time management:

- insist that managers work sensible hours

- make Friday an official go home on time day

- hold your next meeting without chairs to encourage people to stick to the salient points and not speak for the sake of it

- provide workshops on time management.

Encourage individual managers to support their staff by:

- helping them to prioritise tasks and re-negotiate deadlines where appropriate
- have regular contact with team members to ensure understanding of challenges and pressures, and gain team cohesion and commitment
- early identification of work load problems.

Flexible working

As part of your strategy to improve time management and improve work-life balance, consider developing a progressive flexible working policy in consultation with union reps. Although there is a law giving staff the right to request flexible working, it will send a much clearer signal to everyone that you are serious if flexible working options and a process for change are already in place.

Flexible working can take many forms, and will need to suit the organisation and the individual. Here are some examples:

- Compressed hours - the same number of hours per week/fortnight but worked over fewer days.
- Flexi-time - variable starting and finishing times, operated around a core period when employees must be at work. Schemes usually permit the carry-over of excess or deficit hours beyond the accounting period (eg monthly), with the option to take time off in lieu or make up hours accordingly.
- Staggered hours - different starting and finishing times for some or all days, but the overall number of hours remain the same.
- Annualised hours - contracts set an annual number of hours rather than weekly. Hours can therefore vary by agreement on a month-by-month or week-by-week basis, and salary is paid for 12 equal months.
- Term time working - very similar to annualised hours. The contract is continuous and permanent, but the hours are worked during term time only. Again the salary is paid in 12 equal months.
- Home working - arrangement where employees can work some or all of their contractual hours at home.
- Career break/sabbatical/study leave - employees who meet specific criteria can take an extended period of usually unpaid leave. It is often

used for study or travel. Employees would return after their career break to their own post or a similar post.

- Job share - two people on a part time basis perform a single post. It is often used to provide part time opportunities to employees in more senior positions.

Taking action for better work-life balance

Here are some suggestions you can take forward to develop better work-life balance across your organisation:

- promote the messages about work-life balance to individuals, staff and unions in the workplace (including awareness of your flexible working policy)

- develop policies that acknowledge the association between work-related stress and mental health. These policies should also describe the roles and responsibilities of staff at all levels in the organisation in promoting mental health, and describe mechanisms to support staff who experience mental health problems

- encourage a culture of openness about time constraints and workload. Staff must feel able to speak up if the demands placed on them are too great

- give better training to managers so that they can spot stress, poor work-life balance and its effects on the individual. They should also be trained to develop better systems to protect everyone in the workplace

- promote a culture of 'working smart, not long', as outlined above

- ensure that employees' jobs are manageable within the time for which they are contracted

- audit their work environments to identify elements of practice, policy or culture that may be detrimental to a healthy work-life balance

- regularly monitor and evaluate policies against performance indicators such as sickness, absence and improvements in staff satisfaction

- allow staff to attend counselling and support services during working hours as they would for other medical appointments

- encourage activities that promote good mental health, for example, lunchtime exercise or relaxation classes.

5. Managing stress

Work stress can be described as the adverse reaction people have to excessive pressure or demands placed upon them in the workplace. People react to pressure and demands in different ways. What might lead to stress in one person, might not in another. However, the serious nature of stress cannot be understated. It is the second largest cause of occupational ill health in the UK and can quite easily cause actual damage to a person's health.

How bad can it be?

Later in this chapter we look at the tell-tale signs of stress. Indeed, there are usually five identifiable stages, the worst of which can be seriously damaging to health. But do not underestimate the effect of stress on an individual. Common symptoms, albeit not seen in everyone, are irritability, constantly feeling tired, shortness of breath, dizziness, loss of interest in work or social activities. Other symptoms may include headaches, insomnia, indigestion or heartburn, skin rashes, frequent crying, failure to concentrate, changes in appetite, and increases in alcohol or tobacco consumption.

The effects on health can be considerable. These include anxiety, depression, lower resistance to infectious diseases, circulatory problems (including risk of heart disease or stroke), menstrual difficulties, ulcers and muscular problems.

Those affected often take time off sick. Morale can suffer, and work performance can easily dip as a result.

'Sickness is a real problem here. People are stressed about the workload, which increases to try and keep our finance director happy. Yet the sickness means we often have to bring people in to cover at great expense. There has to be another way.'

FE college manager

What causes work-related stress?

As we have seen elsewhere in this publication, how an organisation engages with staff can have a big impact on well-being. For example, where staff are consulted, and have some control over their job role and workload, they are much less likely to suffer from work-related stress. So, many of the causes, and many of the ways of preventing stress, are down to organisational culture and leadership style.

Certainly, there are a wide variety of individual workplace hazards that can lead to work-related stress, either in combination or on their own. Examples of hazards are:

- bullying by senior or other members of staff

- a culture of blame when things go wrong

- an expectation that staff will work long hours

- low levels of consultation with staff

- uncertainty about what is happening and/or job insecurity

- inconsistency, and/or the lack of any clear business objectives

- the concerns of staff being ignored and/or denial that problems exist

- poor planning and/or imposition of change

- lack of career development opportunities for staff

- work overload, too little to do; or unrealistic deadlines

- long hours, shift working or excessive travel

- boring or repetitive work

- insufficient resources to carry out duties effectively

- unacceptable noise, temperature or other physical conditions

- lack of control over work activities and/or ambiguity over role

- lack of suitable training for the job being performed

- lack of flexibility and/or ability to improve work-life balance

- racial, sexual or other forms of harassment

- lack of support and/or recognition from managers and co-workers

- failure to respect confidences, particularly in relation to an individual's performance

- conflicts between members of staff
- isolation from others, or overcrowding.

This is quite a lengthy list, but they tend to fall within six main headings. As we will see later, these have been recognised by the HSE and used to establish a set of management standards that employers can use to prevent work-related stress (see HSE management standards below).

How can leaders tackle work-related stress?

If work-related stress is largely caused by the culture in the workplace, then tackling and preventing it is a leadership issue. It requires an organisational commitment, where staff are engaged and valued. The basic approach will be much the same as with other health and safety issues, ie starting with a risk assessment, but some of the subsequent control measures will mean reducing or eliminating these organisational risk factors; something that usually brings better results when staff are consulted and involved in developing solutions.

However, stress should not be tackled in isolation. Action taken should also relate to and complement other policies on important matters such as safety, staff training, capability, sickness absence, and bullying etc. Indeed, the role of bullying as a cause of stress cannot be understated. Researchers at UMIST estimate that between a third and a half of all work-related stress is caused by bullying. One of the following sections includes a look at the drama triangle as a means of understanding the stress-inducing dynamics within the workplace. Awareness is crucial – given the preoccupation on raising attainment, it is rare for leaders or managers to acknowledge that they may have strayed into a style that might well be considered as bullying by those affected.

All working environments should foster a culture of inclusivity and comply with the Equality Act. Everyone should feel welcome and valued regardless of:

- gender
- ethnicity
- race
- nationality
- disability

- age
- pregnancy and maternity
- religion and belief (or none)
- sexual orientation
- civil partnership/marital status.

An accepting culture can help release staff potential and help improve the conditions for learning, enabling students to likewise realise their own potential.

Finally, an organisational policy on stress must include procedures to help those already affected. This includes systems for recognising stress, encouraging employees to raise concerns or potential stress hazards, and providing appropriate counselling and support.

Any school or college policy on stress would therefore need to include the following, as a minimum:

- a statement of intent
- procedures for assessing risk (leading to practical changes that control or eliminate work-related stress)
- training for managers and staff
- procedures for reporting work-related stress
- monitoring and review of the policy.

What's more, to work effectively, a policy must:
- recognise that stress is about the organisation of work
- be developed jointly and agreed with the school or college trade unions
- indicate commitment and responsibilities from top management
- apply to everyone.

A good starting point for an organisational approach to tackling stress is the HSE's management standards, which are discussed on page 27.

The HSE's management standards

The HSE has produced some minimum management standards that employers can use to help prevent work-related stress. The management standards cover the primary sources of stress at work which are:

- demands – eg workload, working time, work patterns and the working environment

- control – how much or how little say an individual has in the way that they work

- support – the extent of organisational or managerial processes such as encouragement, acknowledgement, communications, training, development and resources

- relationships – the way interpersonal relationships are managed, the extent of conflict or otherwise, bullying and harassment etc

- Role – whether or not people understand their role within the organisation and how it relates to others (the degree of conflict or otherwise)

- change – the extent of organisational change and how it is managed.

These standards should be used to identify potential hazards, assess risk and control the level of exposure to stress hazards. They should form part of the overall approach in the organisation to tackling stress.

Information on the management standards is downloadable from the HSE website at **www.hse.gov.uk**.

AMiE managers report that a particularly effective approach is a whole-organisation generic risk assessment where staff have direct input into the control measures and bespoke risk evaluation on employees suffering from mental health problems, for example. This done 'with' rather than done 'to' approach helps ensure that the ends and means of the well-being agenda are in accord.

What can I do if my staff are suffering from stress?

At the first sign of staff exhibiting stress overload behaviour you should help them become aware of it, should they not be already. It sometimes takes an honest reflection for someone to even realise that they are not in a healthy place, especially when coping has become the new norm. Refer to the 'Taking care of yourself' section which follows to draw on measures that may well help address the staff member's stress reaction. Seek to inform but also encourage personal responsibility for the aspects of the situation they have control over.

Your school or college may have a procedure for reporting stress. If you are a manager speak to your own line manager or, if you have one, personnel department about support and help from the school, college or local authority. Also, encourage the affected staff member to visit their doctor if you suspect that the issue is likely to otherwise become a larger problem.

If they are advised to stay off work, ensure they only return when they feel ready and their doctor is satisfied that they are well. Above all don't try to coerce them into struggling on in silence because the chances are, things will only get worse.

Offer a return to work interview, be clear to determine the underlying causes of their illness and the work changes they may wish to see to prevent a reoccurrence of the problem.

If not through a return to work interview, then at some point they should still raise with their employer the problems that led to the stress. This is vital to prevent the stress from continuing or reoccurring. Such interviews are ripe for using a coaching conversation focused on empowering the staff member to address the issue – this can help them feel they are regaining some control, an important part of reducing the stress response.

Tell-tale signs: the five stages of stress reaction

As we have emphasised throughout this publication, leadership and management need to be founded on the careful management of 'self'. This includes a keen awareness of what's happening inside the 'self' to prevent you being so focused on fire fighting external problems that, before you know it, you have eroded your own foundations. Once you have shored up your own foundation through awareness you will be better able to help staff assess their own level of stress and what they can do to alleviate it.

The cause of stress, therefore, first needs to be identified and analysed.

There are five stages of stress; five distinguishable stages we pass through as our reaction to stress increases from minor irritation to major physical or mental difficulties. Most people experience these stages as they become less able to cope with the stresses in their lives. Some will repeatedly cycle through the various stages while others tend to become stuck on one particular stage. The stress reactions are accumulative though; the earlier stage symptoms continue as the cycle continues. Being aware of these stages acts as a useful 'reality check' benchmark.

1. **Chronic physical or mental tiredness**:
    - needing a coffee to get you moving in the morning
    - feeling alright but only with the help of several caffeine drinks to keep you going
    - need for a mid-afternoon nap
    - very tired or wired at the end of the day, need a few drinks to unwind
    - wake up tense and not feeling refreshed
    - disturbed sleep
    - over time the tiredness slump gets earlier, till you struggle to get out of bed.

2. **Relationship problems**:
    - begin to have problems relating to those close to you, colleagues, family and friends
    - start to withdraw from these people
    - becoming hostile to them
    - getting increasingly irritated
    - withdrawing into yourself even more
    - spending less time bothering to get on with people
    - keep energy simply for getting through the day.

3. **Emotional roller-coaster**:
    - constantly on the boil, both inwardly and outwardly
    - riddled with self-doubt
    - unable to cope with making decision

- obsessed with problems rather than solutions
- relationships become even more tenuous
- reactions become out of all proportion to the cause
- mood swings; hyper, depressed, crying fits
- real difficulties managing to perform at work
- life feels out of control – directionless
- feeling psychologically worn out.

4. **Chronic physical distress**:
   - body tells you you're spending too long in the resistance stage of the stress reaction
   - you're in a state of chronic alertness – totally wired, very poor sleep
   - chronic muscle tension
   - headaches, migraines, occur whenever you let down the pace eg weekends, or school holidays.

5. **Stress-related illness**

Having left the state of chronic resistance you now enter the chronic version of the exhaustion stage. The damage done to the body now reveals itself in specific diseases:
   - Flu (not just man-flu), ulcers, asthma, hypertension, cardiovascular problems
   - fifth stage is synonymous with rapidly accelerating ageing.

Once you have become aware of the level and extent to which stress is affecting you or your staff it is easier to alight on relevant remedial actions. It is far easier to tackle problems in the early stages of stress response than those that appear later, so the sooner you are able to encourage self-reflection among staff the better. However, the well-being focus must be on well-being and not on the stress, so make clear that this self-auditing is just the necessary precursor to assessing what is required to attain a good level of well-being.

The key to an accurate self-assessment or stress audit is heightened 'awareness'. This means taking time to pay attention to what's happening inside yourself and is greatly advanced through activities aimed at building awareness, such as outlined below.

Growing awareness

Cultivating awareness is simple but easily lost among the cacophony of thoughts and emotions relating to what you have been doing in the past or should be doing in the future. These thoughts and emotions swamp your present moment, which is where the main source of stress relief resides. Awareness is thus simply the process of acknowledging what's going on in the present moment. This in-turn crowds out the future and past thinking that can so easily obsess our attention and lead to multiple worries and tension in the physical body; a perfect recipe for stress.

Renowned psychologist, Ellen Langer, writing in the *Harvard Business Review*, said: 'Leaders trying to balance hectic schedules with peak performance and enjoyment of a very full life really benefit from mindfulness.'

'Mindfulness' is old wine in new bottles; a new presentation of an ancient practice. It has stood the test of time and demonstrated its usefulness to the point that it is increasingly being deployed in schools and colleges, not least in an effort to calm learners in order to encourage learning. Mindfulness is synonymous with awareness and involves just noticing thoughts, physical sensations, sights, sounds and aromas - anything we might not normally notice. The actual skills might be simple but because it is so different to how our minds normally behave it can take some getting used to. No wonder given the mind's default orientation to the past and future. Being mindful helps train our attention. Our minds wander much of the time, particularly when we are consumed with stress. Shaking the mind from this attachment to stressful thoughts exercises our attention muscle and enables a mental calmness and renewed sense of well-being. No matter what storm is happening at work this process allows you to feel that you have some control – of yourself even if you can't currently control the external events prompting the stress. It enables you to think more clearly and therefore respond more appropriately to events, ie the awareness can refresh your responsibility and therefore sharpen your leadership.

- Bring your attention to your stomach, feeling it rise or expand gently on the in-breath and fall or recede on the out-breath.

- Keep your focus on the breathing, 'being with' each in-breath for its full duration and with each out-breath for its full duration, as if you were riding the waves of your own breathing.

- Every time you notice that your mind has wandered off the breath, notice what it was that took you away and then gently bring your attention back to your stomach and the feeling of the breath coming in and out.

- Even if your mind wanders away from the breath countless times your job is simply to bring it back to the breath each time, no matter what else it focuses on.

- Practice this exercise for at least 10 minutes at a convenient time every day, whether you feel like it or not, for one week and see how it feels to incorporate a disciplined meditation practice into your life.

What other practical steps can be taken to prevent stress in the workplace?

The following list includes commonly suggested actions that can be introduced by managers as part of an overall stress prevention policy:

- Avoid the long hours culture. Be clear to staff that productivity doesn't necessarily improve by working late into the evening. Persistently long hours should be a trigger to explore how to work smarter rather than just harder.

- Recognise and tackle excessive workloads. Plan and prioritise tasks, cut unnecessary work and/or change the way jobs are done. Innovate wherever possible.

- Make sure staff are trained for their job. Equally, embed a learning organisation culture so that staff take sufficient responsibility for maintaining their own professional development.

- Provide staff with clearly defined objectives and responsibilities.

- Review the effectiveness of appraisal systems and make improvements where needed. Reflect upon whether the system truly contributes to improved performance or whether it impedes staff potential.

- Consider ways to introduce flexibility and create a better work-life balance. This should include consideration of home working at times, where possible. Carefully managed this can improve both well-being and performance – far better to have motivated staff working at home than those who are psychologically non-sufficiently present while in the workplace and therefore dampening the organisations performance.

- Provide opportunities for staff to contribute ideas, especially in planning and organising their own jobs. Building trust in staff can pay dividends in greater staff ownership of organisation objectives.

- Talk to staff, support and encourage them, even when things go wrong. Avoid hiding behind barriers and stonewalling the need of staff to know what's going on. Being transparent and open, particularly when things have not gone well, is a crucial part of good leadership. This can keep staff engaged and gives you the opportunity to sell a vision of how you will successfully move forward together.

- Introduce clear business objectives, good communications and close employee involvement.

- Be honest with yourself, set a good example and listen to and respect others.

- When things go wrong, avoid shouting or pointing the finger of blame; and encourage others to do likewise. Treat these events as they should be, as learning experiences. Ensure there is sufficient reflection to embed the learning.

- Set up effective anti-bullying systems. Bullying undermines the potential of the organisation and can seriously damage staff well-being. Treat signs of bullying as a symptom of a work problem that needs careful emotional intelligence to resolve. Draw on help if required.

- Inform, consult and actively encourage input from staff (and trade union representatives) on matters of organisational change.

- Treat all members of staff fairly and consistently. Be overt in your support and praise. If staff begin to feel that they are out of favour their performance and well-being are likely to dip.

- Being able to share a laugh and a joke makes school far better. The ability to step out of teacher or manager mode and be a real person is a must.

6. Taking care of yourself

The core of leadership and management is the leadership and management of you – the foundation upon which all success is built. It is your prime duty; so obvious and yet so often forgotten given the pace of education and the constant focus on others' needs ahead of your own.

Unfortunately for many, the ever faster pace of education has drifted beyond the point where personal optimal health and well-being can be maintained at the same time. While there have always been spikes of intense activity during the academic year this intensity has pretty much become the baseline norm. Regularly working at such a pace can result in an imbalance to health and well-being and lead to problems at both work and home if these risks are not recognised and mitigated.

Education leaders and managers need to consciously take care of themselves if they are to maintain high performance levels over the longer term without running the risk of burn out (see chapter 5). This includes developing resilience in the face of constant challenges which otherwise can so easily chip away at your physical, emotional and mental foundations.

It is easy to reach the end of the day realising that you have spent it in your head and only notice how tired you feel on the journey home. This is why it is important to stay present and use your physical body as the delicate instrument panel it was intended to be. By taking a moment to tune in to how you really feel you will begin to get a better understanding of your stress levels and start thinking about what you can do if they are clearly too high. Stress is pernicious and can creep up with debilitating effect if it is not acknowledged and addressed in good time.

> 'I think I hit a wall. I couldn't remember what time the school day was supposed to start. Trying to solve simple problems became acutely difficult. I never thought I'd reach that state. It crept up on me. I was coping. And then I hit the wall and needed time out.'
>
> Primary headteacher

The body and mind can cope with a tremendous amount of stress for short bursts but it is important to be able to be aware when you are stressed – something that many leaders and managers are not always good at. For example, feeling you haven't digested your meal properly or are over tired are signals that you need to take extra care. While it is not often possible to have a cat nap under the desk it is possible to lighten the load on the body-mind in other areas in an effort to achieve some measure of personal balance.

The following techniques and strategies may seem simple or familiar but time and again we find that members have neglected the basics of personal care in the rush to stay on top of work pressures. This is not a good strategy in the medium to long term.

Instead, keep the following tips and techniques at the forefront of your mind, both to meet your own needs and to recommend to others as appropriate.

Meeting your physical needs

Drink plenty of water

Water is crucial; we are walking rivers so keep the water flowing throughout the day. Dehydration leads to a sluggish mind and greater difficulty with memory recall. Also ensure that the fluid is taken away from meals. You need to ease the burden on the body and diluting your stomach acids taxes the digestion process – and digestion is one of the most energetic exercises we do! Try to replace at least some of your tea and coffee with water, and given the stimulating effect of these try to avoid them two hours before bedtime in order to optimise your chances of a rejuvenating sleep.

Eat well

You need to be relaxed in order to digest food adequately. If you are under stress your body will mirror the tension this involves. It means that your intestines are also tense and less able to digest your food, leading to mal-absorption and tiredness. In such circumstances it is important to eat lightly and instead wait until you have taken measures to physically and mentally relax before you tackle a heavy meal. Cut down on your sugar intake, which has become embedded in the western diet and significantly taxes the body. Make a conscious effort to eat healthily (lots of fibre, green vegetables, nuts, fruit and lean meat unless vegetarian), cooking from scratch where possible (avoiding too many ready meals) and in a calm atmosphere (avoiding the urge to multi-task while eating).

Exercise

It is essential to make sure that you get sufficient exercise. Raise your heart rate for optimum effect, aiming for at least 20-30 minutes two to three times a week, although even a lunchtime walk refreshes the mind and can ease physical tension. Exercise provides a pretty immediate payoff yet many leaders report being 'too busy' for even the basic requirements. While this is understandable in the light of dealing with short term pressure hot spots it is a poor strategy if continued into the medium term and beyond. A sluggish body will impact on the mind given the two are part of the same continuum.

Relax

Relaxation is often viewed as the opposite of work but it is in fact an important complementary factor in an organisation's ability to perform both effectively and sustainably. The, at times over-looked, act of relaxing has surprising health benefits. In addition to the obvious psychological effects of relieving stress and mental tension, relaxation, if practiced regularly, can strengthen the immune system and produce a host of other medically valuable physiological changes. Relaxing switches on the parasympathetic nervous system, which repairs cells. It also switches off the sympathetic nervous system, the overload of which prompts the stress response. Maintaining a healthy work-life balance provides an opportunity to literally recharge in readiness for work. Any relaxation technique will do so long as it successfully breaks the train of everyday thought. If at all possible, switch off your work mobile when you are on leave!

Sun exposure

Sunlight is the origin of up to 90% of vitamin D in the body but most people in the UK are not exposed to sufficient sunlight and become open to the risks associated with a lack of this crucial nutrient. A report by the Health Research Forum reviewed hundreds of scientific papers and demonstrates as 'outdated and mistaken' warnings about the dangers of going out into the sun. You are more at risk of developing diseases associated with a lack of vitamin D due to a lack of sunlight than you are of contracting skin cancer.

A lack of this vitamin causes significant stress upon the body and leads eventually to physical problems due to lowered immune functions, impaired calcium absorption and cell growth. It is linked to a range of chronic illnesses including heart disease, schizophrenia and some cancers.

Not least a vitamin D shot from direct sunlight can relax the body and thus the mind. The amount of direct sunlight required varies according to skin colour. While a white-skinned person needs at least three 15 minute sessions a week of sunbathing in bright midday sunlight in order to access the healthy level of vitamin D, those with darker skin will require longer exposure. The angle of the sun in UK latitudes also means that the sun's rays are only sufficiently powerful enough to generate vitamin D in the body from around late April until early October. You need to build supplies over the summer to last you the winter – this is a key contributing factor why so many staff are off sick with heavy colds over the winter months, a lack of immune tuning vitamin D.

Light

Throughout our evolutionary past we were active in the day and resting at night. Science is clear that there is a cost to the modern life temptation to 'live against' your body clock, with damaging consequences for health and well-being. People are getting between one and two hours less sleep a night than 60 years ago and being stimulated by light in the evening in a way that runs counter to our light-dark evolutionary cycle.

Furthermore, Professor Charles Czeisler of Harvard University reports that energy efficient light bulbs as well as smartphones, tablets and computers have high levels of light in the blue end of the spectrum which is 'right in the sweet spot' for disrupting the body clock. 'Light exposure, especially short wavelength blue-ish light in the evening, will reset your circadian rhythms to a later hour, postponing the release of the sleep-promoting hormone melatonin and making it more difficult for you to get up in the morning. You are unlikely to notice any short-term changes in your health following circadian disruption, but over a long period of time, the consequences could be quite severe. It is therefore worth being aware of this and looking to, where possible, limit your light before bed and use a small light for the bathroom for brushing your teeth, and ceasing work or leisure use of smartphones and tablets late at night.

Sleep (at night, not at work)

Securing sufficient sleep is crucial for physical and emotional well-being. If you temper your light exposure late at night we have established that this will enable you to sleep better.

Aim for seven hours but if sleep is interrupted it is important to accept this and rest rather than fight against it or use the time to think about what you need to do when you arise. If you must work in the evening then you are likely to be more productive if you take a deep rest, almost sleep break when you arrive home from work for around half an hour. This should sufficiently refresh you to engage in further work more effectively – in the interests of work-life balance this will hopefully be a solution to a short term work demand problem. This deep rest will help ensure you don't become overtired by the end of the evening, which is again something that can easily impact negatively on your ability to achieve a rejuvenating sleep.

Meeting your emotional needs

Emotions - energies in motion - can be incredibly draining of all sense of well-being unless they are processed effectively. There is a temptation to keep your feelings to yourself in the mistaken assumption that expressing them will be taken as a sign of weakness or that you are unable to cope. Although your role means that you will have had to 'don the cloak of leadership' ie appear like a leader, you must simultaneously acknowledge the 'real you' beneath that cloak and find supportive outlets to share how you really feel. Leadership, especially at the top, can be a very lonely place and it is very easy to feel isolated.

Identify a friend or someone who you can trust as an informed sounding board, someone who will be in your corner and able to help you maintain clarity and the strength to navigate challenging times. The AMiE helpline is a further option. We'd much rather help and advise early on when there's a challenging leadership and management issue rather than be asked to help solve a more problematic employment relations dispute which can often have more far reaching consequences.

A key part of well-being involves an ease with the different aspects of self. A useful model is to view these aspects of self as forming a spectrum between externally focused power 'selves' and inwardly vulnerable 'selves'. While the balance between the two sides of the spectrum may vary between people we all have both a power and a vulnerable aspect of self. The school or college leaders' authority indeed comes from the way in which they project their power aspects of self. However, once this authority has been established it is incumbent upon the leader to demonstrate 'authentic

leadership' by being honest about feelings, not least vulnerable ones. Demonstrating how to manage vulnerable feelings helps others do the same. And by giving the message that it's okay to be vulnerable with a purpose it relaxes staff and provides a foundation from which they can hone their confident power aspects of self. This tends to bring rich benefits to both personal well-being and future organisational performance.

It is also important to recognise the physical need behind some emotions. Scientists have even determined the molecular impact of touch and our innate need for hugs in order to maintain good health, not least during challenging times. This is echoed by psychotherapist Virginia Satir: "We need four hugs a day for survival, eight for maintenance and 12 hugs a day for growth." Hugs are incredibly effective at healing sickness, disease, isolation, depression, anxiety and stress and ideally need to play a role in maintaining personal well-being. There may be times when as leader or manager you deem it appropriate to offer a hug or a hand on the shoulder when a member of staff is clearly in need of emotional support. While not necessarily advocating an overly sensitive touchy-feely culture it is certainly worth aiming for a culture where staff are unafraid to express their vulnerabilities and receive the physical and emotional support that can make a big difference to their well-being and help them regain their personal effectiveness. A compliance-based culture cannot deliver this; it arises naturally when leadership has encouraged a culture of commitment and trust to flourish across the workforce.

Resilience

One of the current buzzwords in leadership and management is 'resilience'. Resilience is your capacity to deal with emotionally demanding situations without becoming overwhelmed. However, it can be something of a double-edged sword. On the one hand it is about building mental, emotional and physical robustness in the face of stress but on the other it can easily be mistaken for 'toughing it out' or 'just getting on with it'. This is only a short step away from the bad old days of burying your feelings and 'keeping a stiff upper lip' in the face of adversity. All of this may be unwittingly contributing to an acceptance of a non-viable status quo when, as a leader, there may be good evidence-based reasons to challenge this. Ask yourself what might your personal trigger points be where you say 'enough is enough' and refuse to deliver at all costs?

It is important to view any strong emotions in a positive light. Rather than either trying to bury them, or exploding, a middle way is to learn how to channel such emotions into a 'will make changes and see them through'. After all 'what doesn't kill you makes you stronger' and such uncomfortable emotional experiences are useful for developing personal insight and building emotional intelligence. It is easier to keep yourself emotionally centred in difficult situations if you maintain an awareness of your own needs during a time when everyone may seem to be demanding your attention. It is too easy to give out more than you've got in such situations.

Often, stress is an accumulation of little things that roll into a stress response. By re-framing the event you can buffer against the stress response it usually leads to. The following are some examples of what we mean.

You feel: inconvenienced

- **The situation** – You have to cancel some meetings that took ages to set up because the principal calls an urgent meeting. Then, for some reason, the principal is unable to make the meeting.

- **How to stay calm** – Reframe the circumstances. Take back control of your emotions, don't feel disempowered and at their mercy. Try thinking of the big picture to de-personalise it and prevent you feeling you're a victim of circumstances. The principal won't have cancelled at short notice for no reason and it could be resolving a problem that will make things easier for you in the long run.

You feel: defeated

- **The situation** – You've prepared for a presentation for a staff meeting for weeks, but you are unable to deal with key concerns that staff raise. Back at your desk, you're feeling deflated and emotional as you replay the experience.

- **How to stay calm** – Focus on the present. In the moment you are okay, your emotions are being triggered by thoughts of the future based on what you think the outcome of the meeting is. So, if thoughts are triggering the reaction getting them into perspective can turn off the alarm bells. Regaining a place of peace helps 'reset the dials' and enables you to see you simply have a problem that you are capable of solving, perhaps by issuing a follow up email that addresses any concerns now that you have had a chance to reflect on these from a point of centeredness.

You feel: anxious

- **The situation** – The MIS manager hasn't arrived (although he swore he would be on time). Now you're going to be late for your next appointment which will require you to be on top of the data, and in your distracted state you spill coffee on your clothes.

- **How to stay calm** – Problem-solve. Focus totally on seeking solutions. A no-show MIS manager and soiled clothes aren't catastrophes to be cursed but circumstances to be fixed. As soon as you become aware of anxious feelings treat them as triggers to get you into the positive and empowering mind-set of 'How am I going to solve this?

Handling challenges with a reflective mind-set and support helps build personal resilience, the fifth stage of the well-being strategy outlined in the first chapter. Resilience grows self-awareness, determination, personal vision, greater self-confidence, better personal organisation, better communication and relations with others. It is a flowering of well-being that adds real value both to the individual and the workplace. It is worth cultivating through implantation of the earlier four stages of the strategy.

Understanding personal dynamics

The reframing process highlighted above becomes a whole lot easier once you have established the nature of the underlying communication dynamic. A useful and helpfully simple model that builds on the power-vulnerability spectrum outlined above is Eric Berne's Transactional Analysis. According to this there are three ego-states that people consistently use; parent, adult and child.

- **Parent** – a state in which people behave, feel, and think in response to an unconscious mimicking of how their parents (or other parental figures) acted, or how they interpreted their parents' actions. For example, a person may shout at someone out of frustration because they learned from an influential figure in childhood the lesson that this seemed to be a way of relating that worked for them.

- **Adult** – a state of the ego which is most able to be aware, think and determine action for ourselves, based on received data. The adult in us is the means by which we keep our 'parent' and 'child' under control. If we are to change our 'parent' or 'child' we must do so through our 'adult'. Learning to strengthen the adult is a goal in effective leadership

communication. While a person is in the adult ego-state, he/she is directed towards a more objective and inclusive appraisal of reality.

- **Child** – a state in which people behave, feel and think similarly to how they did in childhood. For example, a staff member who receives a poor evaluation at work may respond by looking at the floor, and crying or pouting, as they used to when scolded as a child. Conversely, a person who receives a good evaluation may respond with a broad smile and a joyful gesture of thanks.

In other words:

- parent is our 'taught' concept of life
- adult is our 'aware' concept of life
- child is our 'felt' concept of life'.

Cultivating an 'adult' awareness builds a sense of well-being and doesn't preclude from slipping into parent or child when necessary. For example, there are times when an immediate directional style of leadership is required and the authoritative parent state can be an appropriate way of conveying the message. Similarly, the child is the source of emotions, creation, recreation, spontaneity and intimacy, which all serve a purpose at the appropriate moment. A fundamental awareness of self and others garners greater understanding, confidence and an ability to remain resilient amid the stressful events around you.

Reflect on...

Think about some of the stressful experiences you've experienced lately and the negative reactions this may have triggered in yourself and those around you. Consider:

- which of the three ego states were you acting out?
- which of the three ego states were you communicating?
- how might you have handled the situations if you were firmly in adult mode?

What might you do to help ensure that you and those around you are more likely to communicate adult to adult rather than unwittingly let unhelpful parent and child dynamics get in the way?

The Transactional Analysis P-A-C model offers a prism through which to appreciate what's going on 'behind the scenes' of the personality and can be an effective prompt for greater awareness. Another useful prism, again from Transactional Analysis is Karpman's 'Drama Triangle'.

The model posits three habitual stances which people often take in response to stressful situations. Although originally applied to family dysfunction it has also been seen to resonate with the dramas that can develop around the workplace, for example, during restructures, preparing for inspection or responses during the appraisal process. The three stances are:

- the person or people who play(s) the role of a victim
- the person who pressures, coerces or persecutes the victim
- the rescuer who intervenes, seemingly out of a desire to help the situation.

The three roles operate to keep people in the illusion of power and are associated with parent and child ego-states. The roles incorporate learned patterns of habit and control mechanisms that bond people together in toxic ways. They are symbiotic, destructive patterns that affect many in the workforce, eg unhelpful gossip.

Of these, the rescuer is the least obvious role. In terms of the drama triangle, the rescuer is someone who has a mixed or covert motive that is actually benefiting in some way from being 'the one who rescues'. The rescuer has a surface motive of resolving the problem, and appears to make great efforts to solve it, but also has a hidden motive to not succeed, or to succeed in a way that they benefit.

The key is to grow awareness and encourage the adult state to prevail as much as possible across the workforce so that trust is built and personal responsibility increases. Psychologist, Claude Steiner, is clear that awareness reveals that: 'the victim is not really as helpless as he feels, the rescuer is not really helping, and the persecutor does not really have a valid complaint'.

In a fast-paced stressful work environment the positions often shift as people change emotions to protect the ego, which feels threatened. For example, the victim may become angry at the injustice of being persecuted by their manager, thereby shifting into the perpetrator role, by resisting change the managers need to improve performance. The abuser may become tired with his angry barrage then feel guilty and shift into the rescuing role when he realises the impact that his style has had upon his direct report's performance.

These roles are the ways people attempt to stay safe, feel important and stroke their own egos. Participating in the drama of the triangle keeps people stuck in lies, blame and shame, unhealthy secrets, 'shoulds' and addictions to crisis, chaos and manipulation. These are all hallmarks of a toxic workplace in need of a revitalised sense of well-being if health and performance are to be engendered. Without awareness the Drama Triangle positions are largely unconscious in nature and are kept in place by denial, arrogance, helplessness and collusion (tacit agreement from all players to keep the status quo). Themes of desperation can form around the roles - themes of depression, abuse, scapegoating, blame, manipulation and co-dependency; all of them all too recognisable in the unhealthy workplace.

All roles are perpetuated by the denial of feelings, first in the self and then in others. Leaders and managers, in accord with the moral purpose of education, have a duty to build self-awareness so that these patterns can be recognised and steps taken to change them.

Reflect on...

Consider any unhealthy patterns you have noticed in your workplace and the roles that members of staff may have played out in response to a stressful situation. What experience do you have of each role? Have you experienced being seen as a perpetrator by those resistant to your change processes?

7. Working environment

There are a number of well-known health risks associated with the working environment that can contribute to the well-being of yourself and your staff. We look briefly at some of these here. All are either fully preventable, or they can be controlled effectively. As such their impact on well-being should be minimal, but as we say a number of times in this booklet, regular engagement with staff is advisable. This will help to ensure your policies and preventative measures are still working; and to alert you to any potential problems.

But there may be times when you need to dig deeper to explain why you may be struggling to cope, or if some members of staff are repeatedly falling absent. There could be currently unknown risk factors within the working environment that need detecting and resolving.

Slips and trips

Slips and trips are a particularly well known hazard in education. Slips and trips occur across all education premises, but please don't assume that because the risks are known they are somehow less important.

Slips and trips are significant hazards because they are relatively common; they can cause serious injury, long term disability and even death.

The HSE say slips and trips typically involve:

- members of staff or pupils/students running or carrying heavy or awkward items, wearing unsuitable footwear
- poor lighting - particularly where there are uneven surfaces and changes of levels
- contamination – both from wet surfaces (caused by water, and fluid spillages) and slippery surfaces (caused by contaminants eg food, litter etc)
- obstructions – particularly bags and trailing cables.

Slips and trips are preventable, not inevitable. As a leader you have a legal duty to your staff and students' health, safety and welfare which means assessing, preventing and controlling risk. On the HSE's website you will find a whole page on slips and trips in education with a number of useful links on prevention.

Lighting

In terms of well-being, the contribution made by lighting is perhaps underestimated. But it is important because firstly, accidents are more likely to occur if potential hazards are poorly lit. Secondly, poor or incorrect lighting can lead to individual health problems such as eye strain, headaches, migraine, lethargy and lack of concentration. Not surprisingly, the impact can be increased absenteeism and reduced performance.

You should be able to find out if lighting is a problem through speaking to staff and union safety reps. Even if this doesn't throw up any problems or suggestions, you are advised, when monitoring your sickness absence records, to consider whether lighting might be responsible or a contributing factor.

Ideally, you will be able to plan and design the workplace so that your lighting is suitable for the type of working being done. Existing lighting needs to be assessed and brought up to the required standard. Any associated risks, such as glare, flickering, or reflective surfaces need to be removed or controlled. In particular, proper account should be taken of individual needs such as any medical conditions. A growing number of staff report feeling less stressed when working under full spectrum lighting rather than halogen or fluorescent lighting. They report being able to concentrate for longer and are less tired at the end of the day.

The HSE have published a useful guide *Lighting at Work* (HSG38) which can be downloaded free of charge from their website.

Back pain arising out of movement and posture

Most of us, if we haven't experienced it ourselves, will know someone who has suffered from acute back pain. It can be very painful and in some people, can take days to ease. It is usually the result of a particular twist, bend, reach or stretch movement and can be quite sudden or delayed.

In the workplace back pain can result from a range of activities including:

- lifting heavy or bulky loads
- carrying loads awkwardly, possibly one handed
- stooping, bending or crouching, including work at PCs (poor posture)

- pushing, pulling or dragging heavy loads
- working beyond normal abilities and limits
- working when physically tired
- stretching, twisting and reaching
- prolonged periods in one position.

As leaders, we can assess the risk of these activities in the workplace and make changes where needed. Regular consultation and engagement with staff and union reps can help to identify concerns and developing trends. It is also important to respond promptly when an individual worker reports back pain. This may mean referring them to your occupational health adviser if you have one and/or providing encouragement and support with their recovery. Some acknowledged steps you might suggest include:

- steadily increase their level of activity.
- doing a little bit more each day if the pain has been restricting movement
- not staying in one position for too long
- getting up and stretching regularly
- move about and take some walks, building activity as the pain eases
- consulting with the individual on any short term and longer term changes to their job role to help facilitate movement and prevent any reoccurrence.

When assessing the risk caused by lifting and posture, it can be helpful to call on the services of a professional in ergonomics. This can be particularly helpful where staff are required to carry many (or heavy) items, or where roles are mostly sedentary. It follows, however, that having asked for such advice you must be prepared to take action should any required changes be identified.

Once again, there is detailed information about back pain and some useful links on the HSE website.

Noise

Noise at work can cause hearing damage that is permanent and disabling. This can be gradual, from exposure to noise over time, but damage can also be caused by sudden, extremely loud, noises.

Schools and colleges are not generally places where excessive noise is a daily problem. However, you will probably need to do something about the noise if any of the following apply:

- the noise is intrusive - like a busy street, a vacuum cleaner or a crowded restaurant, or worse than intrusive, for most of the working day

- your staff have to raise their voices to have a normal conversation when approximately two metres apart for at least part of the day

- your staff use noisy powered tools or machinery for more than half an hour a day

- you teach students in sectors that are known for their noisy tasks, eg construction, engineering, vehicle repair and catering.

But noise can also play a role in the cause of stress. It may not need to be as loud as a drill, for example, but when people are under pressure, noise can be a contributing factor.

It is important then to take the issue of noise seriously. The first step is to speak to staff and find out whether noise is indeed a problem or not. You can then assess the risk and take appropriate control measures.

Temperature

Not surprisingly, working in a suitable ambient temperature can help individuals deal with the task at hand and is unlikely to impact on general well-being in the workplace. But if their thermal comfort becomes too hot or too cold, not only will there be short-term affects, prolonged thermal discomfort can contribute to individual changes in behaviour (eg becoming short-tempered, or loss of attention leading to increased risk of accident) and it is also known to be a contributory factor in work-related stress.

There are various ways to deal with thermal discomfort. These include:

- administrative changes, such as room changes, timetabling changes, alteration of break times etc

- engineering changes, from installing better heating or air conditioning, to simple solutions such as blinds to block out direct sunlight

- consulting with staff. Ultimately you and your staff will want to have a comfortable thermal environment, so by working together you can come up with short and long term solutions that will improve well-being in the workplace.

Electro-magnetic stress

One example of a below radar issue that seems to have affected a growing number of educational professionals around the world is electro-sensitivity, the impact upon health caused by electromagnetic stress. It is worth apprising yourself of risks such as this, and testing for it should you suspect that this may be a contributory factor in compromised health and well-being in your workplace.

It is easy to dismiss suggestions that the increasing smog of electro-pollution presents; of course, schools and colleges are now electro-magnetic hot spots owing to the preponderance of Wi-Fi enabled gadgets concentrated around the premises. Indeed, there is a not inconsiderable chance that electro-pollution could develop into the public health disaster of the 21st century, just as tobacco was in the 20th.

Symptoms produced by exposure to excessive electro-pollution range from fatigue, headaches, dizziness and sleep problems. It is crucial that awareness is raised when these symptoms are experienced and effort is taken to rule out sources of electro-pollution, among other sources of stress that can lead to compromised health.

Removing staff from the source of strong electromagnetic fields and reassessing how they feel after doing this is naturally the way to discern whether or not electro-magnetic fields are triggering compromised health.

8. Supporting your well-being strategy

By now we hope you will appreciate that well-being is important on both the organisational and individual level. Not surprisingly, your strategy, when put into effect, will overlap with many of the day-to-day aspects of running your school or college. Indeed, some of these may be the responsibility of others in your team. But they are important, so we include this section as a guide to the key areas, and also as a reminder that well-being can be influenced greatly by your operational approach.

HR policies and procedures

It may be a cliché, but your staff are your greatest and most valuable resource. So, effective management of human resources is vital.

Throughout this booklet we have mentioned engaging with staff. This can be reflected in your HR policies, including having an effective joint consultative committee to meet with union representatives, and robust policies for managing change, avoiding and resolving problems.

Then there are the related policies on recruitment, selection and training. Making sure you have correctly trained staff, that continuing professional development is appropriate and effective; and ensuring that your organisation mentors and inducts new staff efficiently, while providing coaching on an ongoing basis for line managers and other staff.

But there are many other areas where well-being overlaps with HR. We've already mentioned flexible working, but your approach to avoiding work-related stress and workplace bullying may also be covered by HR policies and procedures. Clearly, your sickness policy is going to be an important element of your well-being strategy, as will the safety policy. But other less obvious areas may also require a policy. For example, you may want to consider policies on drugs and alcohol, manual handling, display screen equipment use, and even driving for work (if appropriate). We cover some of these in more detail below.

The safety policy

Any healthy workplace needs to have a robust safety policy. Indeed, by law the organisation has a duty to look after the safety, health and welfare of its employees, students, contractors and visitors. The purpose of the safety policy is to set out how this is to be managed. A typical policy will include:

- A statement of general policy on health and safety at work. This sets out your commitment to managing health and safety effectively, and what you want to achieve.

- Details of responsibilities. This section sets out who is responsible for specific actions in the management of health and safety.

- An arrangements section. This contains the detail of what you are going to do in practice to achieve the aims set out in your statement of health and safety policy

We believe a good policy will include details about consulting and engaging with staff, and also link effectively to the organisation's general approach to promoting well-being. The important thing to recognise though is that your safety policy is not to be used just to tick a box on your list of legal duties. It is a living policy and must be embedded into the culture of the organisation. If people know their responsibilities, and if leaders show by their actions that health, safety and welfare is vital to the success of the organisation, then there should be every likelihood that your workplace will be a healthy one.

Union safety representatives and safety committees

As we have said above, engagement with staff is an integral part of a healthy workplace. As the HSE point out, workplaces where employees are involved in taking decisions about health and safety are safer and healthier. What's more, as part of an organisation's duties under the Health and safety at Work Act, it must consult all employees, in good time, on health and safety matters. An important aspect of this is working with union safety representatives. These are a particular type of union official and have certain rights in law, set out in the Safety Representatives and Safety Committees Regulations.

A good leader will encourage unions to elect safety reps and involve them in their overall approach to safety and well-being. Safety reps can help you to manage health and safety in a practical way by:

- helping you spot workplace risks

- making sure health and safety controls are practical

- increasing the level of commitment to working in a safe and healthy way

- sharing information with the employees they represent

- providing you with feedback on the effectiveness of your welfare, health and safety arrangements and measures to control risk.

A useful way to involve safety reps in your overall well-being and safety strategy is to set up a safety committee. This is a forum that allows leaders and senior managers to meet with safety reps to discuss and plan and monitor the approach to well-being and safety in the workplace. Run properly, with a genuine commitment from those involved, safety committees can be very helpful. However, without the support of leaders a safety committee can turn easily into an ineffective talking shop.

An effective sickness policy

A well-managed sickness absence policy together with good HR practices should help to keep sickness absence among staff at low levels. Indeed, occupational health referrals (see below), return to work interviews, and a sick pay scheme will all contribute towards sickness absence management. We believe the approach in such policies should be supportive, complementing an overall well-being strategy.

It is not unusual, though, for such policies to also include a procedure for tackling repeated short term sickness absence, or prolonged periods of long term absence. Clearly, if someone is appearing to abuse the sickness absence policy, then measures should be in place to fully investigate and if necessary, deal with instances of misconduct.

For people with chronic illness, or those who are on long term sickness absence, a more sensitive approach is needed. It is reasonable for an employer to have certain trigger points in their sickness policy. These usually prompt events such as an occupational health referral or a meeting with the employee who is off sick to review their health situation.

Some institutions, such as Basingstoke College of Technology (BCoT), have deployed the Bradford Factor to good effect and appreciate its value in monitoring the health and well-being of its staff. The Bradford Factor, or formula, is an HR management tool designed to measure absenteeism. It is based on the theory that short, frequent, and unplanned absences are more disruptive than longer absences. It was developed at Bradford University School of Management as a means to highlight disproportionate levels of

disruption on an organisation's performance that can be caused by short-term absence compared to single instances of prolonged absence.

It is best used as part of the overall investigation and management of absenteeism and uses a scoring system. In contrast, if used in a very limited way to address absence or by setting unrealistically low trigger scores then this short-sighted approach is unlikely to be successful and could lead to staff disaffection and grievances. BCoT uses it holistically to offer staff the support they need. The scores trigger discussion at a staffing and resources group and leads to an action plan negotiated with each individual. This is aimed at restoring their well-being and enabling them to quickly return to contributing to the success of the college.

> 'I am a total fan of the Bradford Factor. It distinguishes clearly between those who are suffering from serious illness and those who have a number of short-term sickness absences. It helps to identify where management attention needs to be directed, with the emphasis on identifying patterns and looking to resolve any underlying issues that might be leading to a poor absence record.'
>
> College principal

AMiE has produced an employment relations leaflet on *Sickness*, which is available to members from AMiE's website at **www.amie.atl.org.uk**, which gives more information on best practice in relation to sickness absence.

Occupational health support

Access to occupational health support can help in controlling and reducing sickness absence. They are an integral part of any healthy workplace. Good occupational health support can:

- provide early intervention to help prevent individual staff being absent for health related reasons
- provide support to the process of effective absence management
- promote the health and well-being of the workforce
- fulfil the statutory requirement to have access to competent occupational health advice.

Occupational health is a specialist field. Its primary role is the prevention of work-related injury and disease. This makes it different, but not an alternative, to the health services provided by GPs and, where they exist, student health facilities. Occupational health support should therefore be seen as complimentary, enabling you as leader and manager to help look after the health, safety and welfare of your staff.

Arrangements for the provision of occupational health support should be set out in your safety policy. There are various types of support available, so it is important, when choosing or reviewing occupational health support, to consult and match provision to need.

Employee assistance schemes

Educational professionals are used to providing pastoral support for their students. However, it is also a good idea to make such support available to staff. This can be another aspect of a healthy workplace, and may prove helpful in supporting staff coping with change and problems in their private, as well as, working lives.

The provision of an employee assistance scheme can fulfil this role. However, as with occupational health support, there are a variety of services and providers, so it is important to consult with staff and only buy the service you need.

The inspecting bodies

Given the regulatory role of Ofsted and Estyn in our sector, it is worth mentioning them, briefly, in respect of health, safety and well-being.

A strong well-being culture set by leaders permeates the school or college and contributes to mitigating the risk of inspection failure. For example, Ofsted is clear that leaders must 'promote an ethos of safety' and a leadership and management judgement criteria includes whether or not leaders and managers 'take steps to promote the safety of all pupils and ensure that they are safe.'

Estyn is even more explicit. Besides standards it also specifically inspects for well-being as an outcome. It also looks for care, guidance and support as part of the provision, including attitudes to keeping healthy and safe. Estyn also judges leadership specifically on its resource management of staff.

The inspection bodies, particularly Ofsted, are, of course, a key source of angst within schools and colleges and can seriously disrupt both organisational and personal well-being. Leadership has a responsibility to shield staff from undue stress around inspection. Ideally, leadership need to set a culture that is performance focused but not structured around meeting the regulator's needs. Meeting these needs should be a by-product of striving for excellence in teaching and learning. It's therefore a good idea to avoid the jargon of inspection, replacing 'outstanding' with 'great,' for example. The leadership needs to take responsibility for inspection and resist the temptation to press the panic station button. This, ironically, often unsettles staff and leads to a more challenging inspection process than otherwise might be the case if staff feel empowered to get on with delivering what is required, which will have been made clear by a strong system of performance management.

> 'I get chest pains at night until about Wednesday when it's clear I won't be getting 'the call'. I then sleep much better the rest of the week. This is my weekly pattern.'
>
> Primary headteacher

The above quote, from one of the country's leading headteachers, demonstrates all too painfully that even the best struggle to maintain their own sense of well-being given the undermining influence of a punitive high stakes inspection regime.

Keeping it legal

Employing staff and providing for their health, safety and welfare places certain duties on an employer. Many of the issues we have raised are covered by either general or specific laws on employment and health and safety.

We don't intend to cover these issues here as you can find useful advice from organisations such as the HSE and Acas. In addition, AMiE members can seek information and support directly by contacting the union.

9. Conclusion

The purpose of this publication has been to instil a need for a well-being strategy to help ensure a vibrant and effective workplace, and not least to encourage you to look after your own health and well-being needs. Well-being is central to sustained success rather than the sideshow it is often taken to be amid the busyness and attainment hungry nature of the current education system.
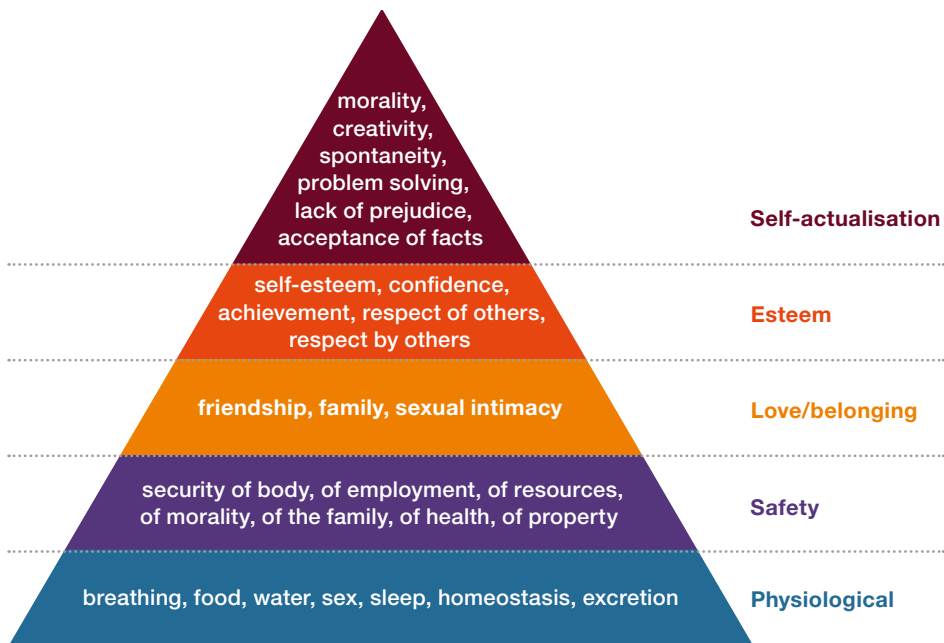
The seemingly intractable problem is that while policy is fast, education is slow; it's those who mediate between the two who are left to absorb the stress caused by the disparity - leaders and their teaching staff. Our casework files are, unfortunately, littered with examples of members who have put themselves into great imbalance, both to the detriment of themselves and their families. It is vital to make space for awareness so that you can at least ask the questions 'is this all worth it?' 'Am I paying too high a price?'

Some members are expending huge amounts of energy and approaching burn-out when they perhaps need to ask themselves 'am I doing the right things?' This is of course the essential question for leaders. And too often the focus on organisational performance has been at the expense of self and staff well-being to the point where this question really needs answering again. Many schools and colleges do not have a vibrant and effective well-being strategy which aligns with the schools or colleges' performance goals and this is far from ideal given a need for both sustained success and coping well with significant changes to the school or college.

Managers who find themselves in a 'performance at all costs' culture report being uncomfortable and compromised, feeling that they have to use coercive measures with staff in an effort to raise grades. Their discomfort is an indication that something is wrong with the culture but they do not often feel in a position to do anything about it. They feel disempowered by a culture that lacks a foundation on both well-being as well as performance.

This is important. Schools and colleges are tasked with the crucial role of shaping a new generation of hopefully happy, positive and productive citizens within the context of a much more fiercely competitive globalised world. The UK simply has little viable option but to realise the creative potential of its people – it needs self-actualised citizens. This takes us to Maslow's Hierarchy and we must ask the question 'is the system designed to produce self-actualised people?'

Diagram 1. Maslow's hierarchy of needs

Self-actualisation — morality, creativity, spontaneity, problem solving, lack of prejudice, acceptance of facts

Esteem — self-esteem, confidence, achievement, respect of others, respect by others

Love/belonging — friendship, family, sexual intimacy

Safety — security of body, of employment, of resources, of morality, of the family, of health, of property

Physiological — breathing, food, water, sex, sleep, homeostasis, excretion

To enable the flowering of self-actualised learners the first four levels of Mazlow's pyramid need to be in place. We already know that students who turn up without having eaten adequately, or who have bullying issues, or are from dysfunctional families, or who lack confidence, are not in a place receptive to learning. If schools and colleges are to be true learning communities they need to recognise the intrinsic learner needs of physiological, safety, belonging, and esteem requirements in order for their full potential to have the opportunity to be realised. Not offering this opportunity is likely to have problematic consequences for both learners and the economy in the more competitive future we're moving toward.

School and colleges will therefore need to develop holistic well-being strategies that combine together both care and performance, and there are already examples of where this happens to good effect. But unfortunately too often we see 'the end justifies the means' approaches to raising attainment at a cost to organisational well-being and this we argue is a hazardous short term solution and an unsustainable model for the future.

We hope that this publication prompts new thinking on how well-being can be approached more strategically, more holistically, more compassionately and thus more effectively in future. Leaders and managers have a moral duty of care for their staff and unless everything possible has being tried in an effort to build capacity and lead change then it is unfair to point the finger of blame at staff. Workplaces are controlled spaces and leaders have the power to nurture a well workplace that buzzes with vitality and creativity, a place where staff feel valued and safe and where they are recognised as a pivotal stakeholder in the learning process.

Hopefully you will have found something to take away and implement from what has been covered. This includes the need:

- for a strategic and integrated approach to well-being

- to adopt a leadership style that complements the well-being agenda

- for staff engagement at all levels

- to recognise stress symptoms in both yourself and your staff

- to be conversant with a range of ways to tackle stress

- to actively promote the well-being approach – lead by example.

It is important that the well-being agenda is not just 'yet another thing to do' on top of everything else, it is more about the way to be. It is education in action, getting things right at the outset so that a healthy culture permeates the school or college and into the lives of the learners. Well-being is about 'learning to love, leading to a love for learning' and indelibly connected with so much else that education is about, such as sustainability and the need for a rounded and grounded education for learners. This is much less likely to occur when staff well-being is at a low ebb.

Not least there is good evidence that teacher well-being significantly contributes to students' results. The well-being agenda is not simply the fluffy and woolly stuff that schools and colleges might choose to engage in as a side project when time allows. The facts highlight that it needs to be core business. Recent research from the Work Foundation at Lancaster University highlights that staff well-being makes a marked difference to exam grades. The research quantifies that teacher happiness and well-being can make an eight per cent difference to exam grades in all phases. This is good news because it is an area over which leaders and managers have significant control, as opposed to the challenges of students' social class, student absence, and the level of special educational needs, among other

factors, that can significantly dampen grades and over which the scope for intervention is often limited. Well-being is therefore totally connected to organisational performance.

There are a plethora of changes which will impact on education over the coming years in terms of funding restrictions, technological change, and changing roles, for example. We believe that this should not be an excuse to place well-being on the backburner and instead resort to crisis management in an attempt to cope with what at times may seem like seismic change. Rather, now is the time to bolster your well-being approach both for the sake of learner needs and to ensure that staff are led through the change process with compassion and support.

Please do continue to draw on the advice and support of AMiE in your efforts to lead on the development of a positive well-being culture that benefits both staff and learners. We will also continue to lobby government on your behalf to change the things beyond your control that are impacting unduly on your efforts to achieve this goal.

Good luck with positive changes; we wish you well(being)!

> 'The single biggest factor determining whether an organisation is going to get healthier—or not—is the genuine commitment and active involvement of the people in charge.'
>
> Patrick Lencioni

10. References

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For more information

Health and Safety Executive
www.hse.gov.uk

Acas
www.acas.org.uk

Management Standards for a Healthy Organisation
www.orghealth.co.uk/uploads/articles/The_Management_Standards_
for_Healthy_Organisations_Oct_2011.pdf

11. Appendix

The dull but important bit: the law relating to stress

Although there is no specific law on stress, employers have duties under various statutes including the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974, the Equality Act 2010 (which replaced the Disability Discrimination Act) and the Working Time Regulations 1998. There have also been a number of successful civil actions seeking compensation for personal injury caused by work-related stress. However, the Court of Appeal has made some important judgements that have implications for anyone considering such a claim.

For a successful claim you have to show firstly that your employer has a duty of care and that this duty of care has been breached, and secondly that you suffered damage (ie injury and loss) as a result of the breach. It has to be emphasised that suffering from 'stress' is a wholly insufficient basis for a claim. You must have suffered a psychiatric injury or developed a psychiatric condition.

Of most importance is the need to make sure your employer is told about your stressful working conditions at the earliest opportunity. This is because a court will consider whether the stress was foreseeable in relation to you as an individual. Put another way, your employer can assume you are able to cope with the normal pressure of a job unless told something specific about the job or about you that gives cause for concern. If you fail to tell your employer then it will be difficult to show the court that your employer's duty of care wasn't reasonable.

It should also be noted that an employer who offers a confidential advice service such as counseling is less likely to be found negligent unless unreasonable demands are placed on an individual where the risk of stress-related injury was clear.

This doesn't mean an employer simply has to set up a counseling service to be protected against compensation claims. A reasonable employer should still introduce effective policies (like those described in this publication) and carry out regular risk assessments.

In deciding upon injury and loss, the court will need to be shown that the breach of duty of care made a genuine contribution to the psychiatric illness. Unfortunately, the existence of other known stressors such as bereavement, divorce, physical illness etc. will make it very difficult to establish a direct link.

If you have suffered a psychiatric illness and believe it has been caused by work-related stress then please contact AMiE (hopefully you'll have contacted us long before things get that bad). We will look at the background to your case and if there is a reasonable chance that you may have a claim, we will refer the matter to our solicitors for detailed consideration.

AMiE produces a range of resources – all free to members – that can be used either towards your CPD or as an aid to your working practice. Listed below is a selection; for full details visit AMiE's website at **www.amie.atl.org.uk**.

Data Gold: the Importance of Management Systems Data for Colleges
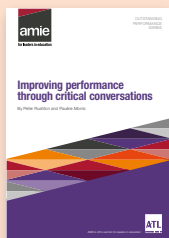
Improving Performance Through Critical Conversations

Finished with your copy?
Pass it on to other colleagues who might find it useful.

The **Outstanding performance**
series seeks to help leaders
and managers raise the
performance bar by optimising
the effectiveness of their staff
and resources. AMiE offers
help and guidance to enable
leaders and managers drive
the performance agenda
rather than feel driven by
the process of inspection.