

NOVEMBER 2014

1. WE GET IT – ZERO TOLERANCE TO HARASSMENT AND BULLYING

Feedback from the Staff Survey 2013 revealed that 4% of staff who responded said they were currently being harassed or bullied at work. This equates to 285 members of staff. As a result of the overall feedback from the Staff Survey, four University-wide action groups were formed and I am a member of one of these groups looking at 'Behaviours'. This group is chaired by Professor Clive Agnew, Vice-President for Teaching, Learning and Students. One of the actions this group has put into place is a new emphasis on a zero tolerance approach to harassment and bullying at our University.

To support this, a campaign called 'We Get It' is being launched across the University to both staff and students, with a zero tolerance approach to bullying, harassment and discrimination. The campaign has been organised by the University and our Students' Union and is being launched to coincide with Anti-Bullying Week (17-21 November). In addition to this campaign there is a drop in session on Thursday 20 November at the Atrium on the first floor of University Place between 11am and 3pm where you can find out more about how to report bullying and harassment and the support on offer to colleagues. There's also a new and easier way to report bullying and harassment at www.manchester.ac.uk/we-get-it and for staff without PC access there's a confidential phone number to call or text (0794 3600656). You can also contact the Equality and Diversity Team on 306 5857.

To help inform their future work around zero tolerance, the Equality and Diversity team is asking for your feedback on your perceptions of bullying and harassment. Spend some time in your team brief meeting to discuss these scenarios and return your feedback to the Equality and Diversity team. You can also find out more about the work of the Behaviours Staff Survey action group at: www.staffnet.manchester.ac.uk/staff-survey/themes/behaviours/

2. ANNUAL PERFORMANCE REVIEW 2014

Last week, the PSS Leadership Team met with Nancy and the University's Senior Leadership Team for the Annual Performance Review (APR) meeting. This meeting is part of our annual planning and accountability cycle, which gives an opportunity to review and discuss the performance of the PSS, each Faculty and the Library and Cultural Institutions over the past year and to discuss priorities for the future.

I am pleased to say that the PSS APR was a positive experience and we covered a wide range of issues, including PSS support for the Research Excellence Framework (REF); the student experience; support for the social responsibility signature programmes; PSS performance and effectiveness; staff development; standardisation of processes; HR Services; the IT Transformation Programme; support for communications and marketing; fundraising and compliance issues. It was also an opportunity for the PSS LT to raise some key issues with the APR Review Group, including partnership working and the University's appetite for change.

We await the formal feedback from the APR, but I think we were able to demonstrate that we are working as a single team and are open to change. I was heartened by Nancy's comments at the end of the three hour session, where she commented that many PSS colleagues were amongst the best in the sector and thanked colleagues from across the PSS for their hard work over the past year.

3. PENSIONS UPDATE

You will be aware that the ongoing triennial revaluation of the Universities Superannuation Scheme (USS) is likely to reveal a significantly increased deficit, which the USS Trustee Board will be required to address by the Pension Regulator in order to ensure that the scheme is financially sustainable. You can find out more on StaffNet at: www.staffnet.manchester.ac.uk/news/display/?id=13141. The UCU has now tabled a formal proposal for changes to the USS pension scheme, following on from a proposal that Universities UK (UUK) recently tabled. USS is now being asked to fully cost both proposals and give a view on whether they are viable within the legal constraints the USS trustees have to meet and whether they are likely to satisfy the Pensions Regulator. UUK and UCU have agreed to an intense series of meetings in November and December to explore both the employers' and UCU's proposals and further updates will be available on StaffNet and eUpdate. Two information sessions have been organised here at the University which staff are invited to attend and which will be hosted by myself; Karen Heaton, Director of Human Resources; or Heather Mawson, Head of Pensions. These are taking place on Wednesday, 26 November, 12pm-1pm in the Alexander Theatre in the Samuel Alexander Building and on Monday, 1 December, 12pm-1pm in Lecture Theatre B in the Roscoe Building. Details of how to book a place at these sessions will follow on StaffNet and eUpdate.

Members of the Universities and Colleges Union (UCU) have voted to take 'action short of a strike' over proposed reforms to the USS pension benefits to address the deficit. Of course we will aim to do everything possible to ensure that no student is disadvantaged by the industrial action and that a spirit of collegiality is maintained across the University.

4. WORKPLACE GIVING SCHEME LAUNCHES

The University has launched a scheme which gives all employees the option to donate to their chosen charity directly from their pay. The Workplace Giving Scheme gives you immediate tax relief on the value of your donation, so a monthly gift of £10 from your take-home pay will be boosted to £12.50 for a basic rate taxpayer and to £16.66 for a higher rate tax payer. Donating via your pay is the only method of giving that allows your charity to receive the full taxable amount automatically every month. If you are a higher rate tax payer and give via Direct Debit and tick the Gift Aid box your charity will only be able to claim 20% back, as this is capped at a standard rate of tax and the charity may not have the resources to claim this back. If you are already giving via Direct Debit you may want to consider the benefits of changing to the Workplace Giving Scheme – it's simple and quick. It's easy to sign up either online, via a mobile phone app or by completing a paper form and for more information visit: www.manchester.ac.uk/workplacegiving. While at the moment staff who are part of UMC are not eligible to take part in this scheme, discussions are taking place with a view to extending Workplace Giving to these staff in the near future.

5. RACE CHARTER MARK SURVEY

The University has been selected to trial the Race Equality Charter Mark, to address racial inequalities and create an inclusive culture and environment where individuals are able to thrive, irrespective of their race or ethnicity. So that we can understand more about this issue, staff from minority ethnic backgrounds are invited to take part in a survey. All responses will be anonymous and the survey is open until 28 November either online at:

<https://survey.ls.manchester.ac.uk/TakeSurvey.aspx?SurveyID=n6K3m6IK> or if you don't have access to a PC at work ask your supervisor or manager for a paper copy to complete.

6. WEBSITE SUCCESS

Following the rebuild and redesign of our website in April, we have seen some very positive changes in our comparative web rankings, according to two separate independent sources:

- Sitemorse - we are now the highest ranked of all Russell Group Universities. This is based on more than 238 million checks on websites involving 334 universities, colleges and HE institutions in the UK. In the past six months we've climbed from 73rd place to 14th place.
- SimilarWeb - we are now number one in the UK. SimilarWeb analyses the number of visits and views of websites and their latest results based on the UK top 50 university and college websites ranks Manchester in first place.

Although the new website gained many accolades from colleagues and users at the time of relaunch, it's great to have this in a more official and analytical capacity from two independent sources. It is a real tribute to the work led by the Division of Communications and Marketing and which involved colleagues from Directorates, Schools and Faculties working together as a single team to achieve success in this project.

7. PSS PROJECT ON WASTE AND INEFFICIENCY

Earlier this year we asked for your feedback via CoreMunicate on opportunities for reducing waste (both physical and financial) and increasing efficiency and effectiveness across the PSS. We received a lot of helpful feedback, covering everything from better using our current IT systems to the way we procure stationery, travel and catering.

We would like to establish a small group to progress a number of these areas. This work is being led by Simon Merrywest (Director of Faculty Operations, Faculty of Life Sciences) and he is interested to hear from anyone who would like to join the group. In particular, he'd like to hear from colleagues who have not yet had the opportunity to contribute to a PSS-wide project. Please contact simon.merrywest@manchester.ac.uk if you want to get involved.

Will Spinks
Registrar, Secretary and Chief Operating Officer