

## **Feedback on the PSS Behaviours Consultation**

Thank you to everyone who provided feedback on this work. We really appreciate your input and have tried to respond below to the most frequently raised points

### **Where has this work come from?**

The story of this leaflet began at the first PSS Conference for managers, where it was determined that the PSS should work as 'One Team'. Registrar, Secretary and Chief Operating Officer Will Spinks set up three groups to take this forward, looking at values, team working and recognition/reward. As part of the exploration of the existing PSS values (Professionalism, Teamwork, Open to Change and Continuous Improvement), the wider PSS management team felt that the values were fit for purpose, but that they were very generic business words that could be interpreted in different ways. It was agreed that these needed to be defined more clearly so that we all understood what was meant by them. It was also recognised that the work on values, team working and reward/recognition all had a common root, which was behaviours, since these are the outward evidence of what we each value at work, what affects good team working and what drives recognition/reward. A new, merged working group was then formed to look specifically at behaviours – that is, the way that colleagues work together to achieve our common aims. After a number of sessions looking at creating a clear set of jargon-free statements using plain English, the team produced a draft behaviours leaflet to be used for consultation with staff.

### **Why just PSS staff?**

This work initially grew out of an exploration of PSS working as 'One Team'. It is recognised that the University as a whole should follow a common set of behaviours, since we are all one team working with common aims. However, given the scale of the University, it was felt that it was important to trial the approach in one part of the institution first. Since Will Spinks was leading this piece of work it was agreed that this would be done within the group of staff who report directly or indirectly to him, namely the PSS. Depending on the success of this, it is anticipated that the products of this work will be shared and explored with staff in other parts of the University as well. Indeed, you may have noticed that developing a University-wide set of behaviours is one of four themes to have emerged from the Staff Survey and a group chaired by Clive Agnew is now taking this forward.

### **Isn't this rather patronising?**

The Professional Support Services is made up of a large and diverse group of employees (covering the breadth of grades 1-9) and the challenge was therefore to put together a form of words which would be relevant and understandable to this group of staff. We wanted to keep the language and tone direct, straightforward and unambiguous. Clearly our intention wasn't to patronise anyone and many drafts were worked on before the wording was agreed.

We feel that the wording as it stands is clear and accessible and we received hardly any comments along the lines of 'I'm not sure what this actually means', and so we intend to continue with the current language and tone.

Some people said that they felt it was patronising that this document had been produced in the first place – and some wondered what the PSS had done 'wrong' to warrant this piece of work. As the introduction from Will Spinks outlined, this work was done to ensure that all PSS staff can work co-operatively and helpfully together.

Of course we recognise that most PSS staff exhibit these behaviours most of the time, but felt that having an explicit list was the best way forward as this makes it easy for us to recognise and reward staff, as well as challenge on the occasions where things are not working well. It was also intended that line managers would provide some context and background during the Core Brief process, rather than simply distribute the leaflet (we have received feedback that this contextualisation did not always happen).

The clarity and simplicity of the document will also prove helpful when carrying out procedures like recruitment, induction and performance and development reviews and the working group are looking at how we can embed the document in these activities.

As mentioned previously, we worked hard to make sure that the wording was clear and unambiguous. In the feedback which we received, we looked carefully for any 'themes' or particular words or phrases that caused concern.. However, no themes were easily identified and there was no words or phrases which were consistently raised as being problematic. We did, however, note a few comments about "going the extra mile", which is a bit of jargon that had managed to make it into the leaflet. In future versions we will remove this reference.

### **Leadership and management**

A number of people commented on the degree to which they believe that more senior colleagues (particularly line managers) work to the principles outlined in the leaflet and the lack of challenge of poor behaviour in some areas. These points echo feedback that came out in the recent Staff Survey and leadership and management has been prioritised as one of four major University-wide themes to arise from the survey, so you can expect to see some work in this area in the coming months. Will Spinks has, however, already been extremely clear with his direct reports that he expects them to lead by example in exhibiting the types of behaviours we have outlined.

### **Thoughts on what else could be included and what should happen next**

The purpose of developing the document was many fold, although first and foremost it was intended as a reference point. Ways in which this work could now be taken forward include:

- To celebrate the excellent service which the PSS delivers to its stakeholders
- To provide some examples of how the service looks, this allows staff joining the University to understand our approach to working both upwards, outwards and internally
- To help colleagues understand that if they believe the service or attitude is not as they would expect that is acceptable to raise the matter in one of the many ways available to us (e.g. through line managers, heads of specific teams or HR)
- To be used alongside Performance and Development Review and when setting expectations during probation

To show our commitment to the implementation and recognition of the behaviours we have already linked the criteria in the Distinguished Achievement process to this work.

We now plan to work with the concept for the next year or so and we will then consult again and take lessons learnt to develop and improve our approach. During this time you should start to notice it being used in some of the ways described above.