Our Wellbeing Commitment

1. Introduction

The University of Manchester made a clear commitment to wellbeing in both the 'Our People, our Values' plan and the People and OD strategy, launched in 2022. We want the University to be a place to work where all our people feel able to thrive, feel well and achieve their potential.

This employee wellbeing commitment sets out our vision for wellbeing, how we will achieve this and measure our progress. It has been informed by colleague focus groups, attendance at meetings, feedback during workshops and 1-2-1 meetings, as well as looking at our 2022 Staff Survey results, best practice, research and externally benchmarking our current approach.

In the development of our commitment, we have been mindful of the challenges that colleagues have raised with us in relation to workload and wellbeing and we recognise that fully embedding our commitment will take time. The commitment provides the framework to guide our action and work towards our colleagues consistently experiencing good days at work.

2. What is workplace wellbeing?

Wellbeing is about functioning well and feeling good. When we feel good and function well, it has positive outcomes for us, those around us, the University, our students and wider society. Social, financial, psychological and physical wellbeing are just some examples of the factors that can influence how we feel on a day-to-day basis.

Specifically, our wellbeing is influenced by how clear we are on the purpose and meaning in our work, our relationships at work, how engaged we are and the extent to which we feel positive and negative emotions at work. In summary, it's about how we feel when working at the University of Manchester and how we feel about our work.

3. Why is wellbeing important to us at The University of Manchester?

Our conversations with colleagues highlighted three key reasons:

1
A social responsibility

As a large employer in Manchester, we have a social responsibility to create work environments where all our people can thrive and feel well – it's the right thing to do to look after our people and is strongly aligned with our core value of humanity.

2
It helps us to make a difference

Being happy and well enables people to thrive and perform at their best in their roles here, helping us to achieve positive and lasting impact in line with the strategic aims of the University.

3
Attracting and retaining talent

A focus on wellbeing forms part of our University of Manchester employee value proposition, helping us to attract and retain talent.

4. Our workplace wellbeing vision.

Our conversations with colleagues made it clear that a 'built in' wellbeing approach is what they want to see within our University culture – with wellbeing as integral to everything we do. Using this and other feedback from colleagues we have created our vision for workplace wellbeing, highlighting our shared responsibility for good wellbeing:

> We take a proactive approach to enable positive wellbeing, creating environments across our University where people can thrive and encouraging individuals to prioritise their wellbeing.
>
> Wellbeing is embedded within our University culture and is a key consideration during times of change.

Specifically, the realisation of our vision will mean the University provides:

A thriving place to work, where:

- our people are clear on their purpose and how they contribute to the University (whether working within Faculties or in central Professional Services) to support the success of our students, deliver on our research priorities and meet our social responsibility objectives.

- our people experience more positive than negative emotions in relation to their work and have good connections and conversations with those they work with. People feel appreciated for the work they do.

- we have University systems, policies and processes that are supportive of good workplace wellbeing.

- we encourage individuals to look after their wellbeing and we promote good wellbeing through central campaigns, through our staff networks and wellbeing champions and through people at all levels telling their stories and role modelling positive wellbeing behaviours.

Head space for people to work at their best:

- in environments that support collaboration and focus time.

- with opportunities and places to have time away from their workspace.

- through teams having conversations about how they work best together, balancing meeting and individual working time.

- where people feel they have the right balance of work and life.

A psychologically safe place, where:

- There is proactive management of high workload and other workplace demands and factors that can impact on wellbeing – both day-to-day and during times of change.

- we value and encourage psychologically safety in and across teams, so that our people feel they can safely speak up when something doesn't feel right, have autonomy to make decisions within their sphere and are comfortable exploring new ideas and innovating.

- appropriate training and development are available at all levels to support a well workplace, along with clear accountabilities, helping everyone to understand the role they play in relation to workplace wellbeing and the value of self-development.

- we have clear pathways for support when people aren't well, are a disabled member of staff or experience adverse challenges to their wellbeing.

5. Delivering Our Commitment

Moving forward, there will be a greater emphasis on being preventative and proactive in our approach to wellbeing at the University. Yet, we also need to be able to respond appropriately and with empathy when people are unwell at work. We will deliver our commitment by focusing on identifying how we prevent poor wellbeing, promote good wellbeing and respond when people aren't well.

Promote – these are actions and approaches that can be taken by anyone to promote good wellbeing, It's also about providing opportunities to support people in managing their wellbeing and, for line managers, supporting their direct reports.

Prevent – taking action to prevent poor wellbeing has a positive impact for everyone. Listening to our people and reviewing evidence-based practice we have identified the approaches that can make a significant difference to the wellbeing of individuals.

Respond – this is about how we support our people when they aren't feeling well and how we support disabled colleagues. This might be as identified during the induction process, in response to work demands or something that has happened outside of work. It may also be supporting people to recover from work-related stress or burnout.

Overlaid with our objective areas, our focus areas for delivering the commitment are summarised below:

	Prevent	**Promote**	**Respond**
Thriving place	Meaningful connection and conversations Clear purpose	Embedding 'Six Ways to Wellbeing' Role modelling positive wellbeing behaviours	
Head space	Ways of working Time away from the workplace	Finding personal balance Understanding of diverse needs	Manager support Internal and external support Peer support networks Staying in work and return to work
Psychological safe place	Managing work demands, including workload Developing physchological safety and trust	Self-development Belonging and inclusion	

6. Enablers of our commitment

Embedding a positive approach to workplace wellbeing within our culture requires a joined-up approach across our University and the following are key to enabling us in achieving our vision:

- A **whole university approach** to health and wellbeing in our staff and student populations. We are already signed up to take a whole university approach to mental health and wellbeing and developed a strategy in 2022 to reflect our shift to aligned working across students and staff, in line with best practice within HEIs.

- Our **strong focus on EDI** and working to enable all our University community to have **a sense of belonging**, an important factor in experiencing good wellbeing.

- The developments in our approach to workplace wellbeing don't stand on their own – they form part of a wider piece of work to implement our P&OD strategy. **Improvements in wellbeing will be enabled by work in a number of different areas**, including leadership, culture, reward, performance and employee voice.

- Additionally, we will **continue to work with other functions** across the University to deliver this commitment, including the Mental Health and Counselling Service, Occupational Health, Learning and Organisational Development, DASS, our GP practice, P&OD partnering and Health and Safety services.

- **Buy-in at all levels** and across all areas of the University, academic and professional services, to the importance of workplace wellbeing.

- **Measuring our progress through metrics and key performance indicators**, helping us to adapt and tailor our approach as needed.

7. Our Guiding Principles

The following reflects our principles and values in relation to taking action to embed our wellbeing commitment:

- While we have a unifying commitment, there is a recognition that different approaches may be required to meet different needs, e.g. the needs of early career researchers, those with disabilities, those working in non-desk-based roles. We need to consider context when thinking about the needs of each group and where there are opportunities to try new approaches to support good wellbeing.

- Employee voice is key to understanding what is required and engaging staff in co-creating and designing interventions that will lead to more effective wellbeing approaches. In practice, this means regular dialogue with our academic and PS colleagues to share ideas and gather feedback (for example through our staff network groups), and then using these insights and good practice to experiment and learn what works best for different groups and functions.

- No single approach works to create good workplace wellbeing. It requires a whole systems approach focused, for example identifying what processes may be impacting on work demands and how can these be resolved to improve wellbeing. In practice, therefore, this means thinking about wellbeing from the perspective of individuals, groups and teams and those leading people, leading change and leading the University.

8. Meeting our Commitment

The following provides a more detailed overview of focus areas, aligned to our three core objectives – thriving place, headspace and safe place. The Wellbeing Team will engage and work with our colleagues in Directorate of Student Experience (DASS, OH, Mental Health and Counselling), staff networking groups, Health, Safety and Wellbeing committee, Faculties and Directorates to identify specific actions and approaches within these focus areas and measure progress.

Objective 1 – Thriving Place to Work

Prevent – action areas

CONVERSATIONS AND CONNECTION
Social connection in the workplace supports positive health and wellbeing outcomes and engagement, e.g. for example having informal conversations with colleagues and feeling like you have someone who supports you at work. Our commitment encourages connection and conversations between all individuals. This is particularly important as we learn to work in new and more flexible ways.

Linked to this element of the commitment is our new approach to performance, which puts the focus on the importance of conversations, and our wider work on Leadership Shifts. This focuses on the accountability of leaders to establish and develop meaningful interactions with individuals and teams.

PURPOSE AND VALUE
When we our work is meaningful and we feel appreciated and respected it can have a positive impact on our wellbeing, our commitment and our performance.

Our objective here is to ensure that everyone at the University can see meaning in the work they do and feel valued for the work they do. The importance of being valued and receiving feedback were strong themes in our focus group conversations.

There is already work underway to provide tools for leaders, managers, teams and individuals to focus on their values and build confidence in having meaningful conversations about how these link to the wider University purpose and values.

POLICY AND PROCESSES
Policies that support good wellbeing and are inclusive of diverse needs, are an important part of creating thriving workplaces. We will consider wellbeing when introducing new policies and refreshing existing ones.

Through our consultations, we also heard that ineffective processes can be a blocker to good wellbeing. Through the commitment, we want to encourage groups and teams to look at ways to reduce these hindrance factors, co-creating approaches that make work easier to do. This links to the wider Reshaping PS agenda.

To ensure wellbeing is considered across the university, we will look at the structure for wellbeing and reporting across Faculties and Directorates.

Promote – action areas

EMBEDDING THE SIX WAYS TO WELLBEING AND HEALTH AWARENESS
Mental and physical health are the biggest drivers of individual wellbeing. And the relationship goes both ways, meaning that subjective wellbeing can also influence health.

While the 'Six Ways to Wellbeing' is a well-known framework across the University, there is work to do to further embed this in teams and ensure campaign and awareness raising activities are linked to the framework. We continue to work with the UoM Sport team to promote activity as a pathway to wellbeing. In addition to this, we will work with colleagues in Pensions and Reward & Benefit to support engagement with financial wellbeing. Together, these activities also support our aim to create greater levels of social connection.

ROLE MODELLING AND STORY TELLING
Individuals at all levels of the University role-modelling positive wellbeing behaviours will help to embed the importance of good wellbeing within our culture. Our leaders play a key role in modelling behaviours that are supportive of good wellbeing.

Reducing stigma and enabling individuals to feel comfortable sharing their wellbeing stories and journeys, for example we have recently welcomed Andy's Mawill support a greater level of openness and acceptance of the importance of mental health and wellbeing.

Objective 2 – Head space

Prevent – action areas

WAYS OF WORKING
We will work to provide resources and development opportunities to groups and teams to help them understand how they can best work together to support wellbeing. This includes thinking about balancing technology, with focus time and collaboration across teams, as well as ensuring people are taking breaks.

DIFFERENT SPACES
We have heard that employees are keen to have spaces away from their main work areas, where they can eat lunch and take a break from work. This feedback came from a range of colleagues including those in Campus Life and those in desk-based roles.

Promote – action areas

FINDING BALANCE
We have already moved a long way in adapting to new ways of working following the pandemic. However, we have heard that people want more support to think about how they best manage their boundaries – whether when working in a hybrid working pattern or when dealing with multiple demands.

PROVIDING FOR DIVERSE NEEDS
The Wellbeing Team, EDI, DASS, OH, our GP practice and the Mental Health and Counselling Service will continue to collaborate to best understand and meet the diverse needs of our colleagues in relation to wellbeing. For example, supporting those experiencing peri-menopause symptoms or better understanding the needs of neurodivergent colleagues in relation to work environments.

Encouraging proactive referrals to and awareness of DASS, for both line managers and colleagues, forms part of our commitment. Colleagues who access DASS prior to the start of the employment or when they become disabled, are supported to access the adjustments they need, which in turn helps support good workplace wellbeing.

Objective 3 – Psychologically safe place

Prevent – action areas

MANAGING WORK DEMANDS, INCLUDING WORKLOAD
Across the HEI sector there is discussion on the levels of work demands in the workplace, including workload, and The University of Manchester is no different. We want to develop our approach and ensure that across the University our workplaces support and promote individual's psychological wellbeing through good management of psychosocial risks in the workplace.

We will review our processes and approaches to these psychosocial risks and encourage local areas to identify solutions and try out new ways of working to best manage work demands and increase levels of control and support. We will work with colleagues in SCO on a methodology for measuring wellbeing impact ahead of and during change programmes.

Promote – action areas

SELF-DEVELOPMENT
Leaders and managers play an important role in relation to workplace wellbeing, through demonstrating the following behaviours:

- Engaging with the importance of wellbeing and understanding the contribution they can make to positive work environments, whether for desk-based staff, those working in laboratories or colleagues in student facing roles

- Having regular and proactive conversations with staff about their wellbeing.

- Committing to the development of a psychologically safe culture across the University, where individuals can speak openly about concerns.

- Taking proactive steps to create a work environment that supports good wellbeing and performance; understanding the factors that can lead to work-related stress.

All managers and leaders can start to evaluate and take action on evolving their approach and skills in this area. Alongside side this, we will provide development opportunities and resources to support the implementation of these behaviours.

And for everyone, work-related and personal self-development can play a positive role in our levels of psychological wellbeing – whether specifically related to wellbeing or more general learning.

Prevent – action areas

PSYCHOLOGICAL SAFETY

Psychological safety is the belief that it's ok to take risks, to express ideas and concerns and to ask questions and to be honest about mistakes, without fear of negative consequences. We want our employees to feel comfortable and safe in sharing their views and that they can be their authentic self at work.

We will collaborate with our L&OD colleagues to look at opportunities to develop leader skills to foster a psychological safe environment and culture.

Promote – action areas

BELONGING & INCLUSION

Our EDI agenda has a strong focus on belonging and inclusion, which both have the potential to impact on our workplace wellbeing. The Wellbeing team will continue to work with the EDI team to support their work and promote the Report and Support tool.

How we respond when people aren't well

Across our three objective areas, getting the response right when people aren't well or require additional support is a key part of a holistic wellbeing approach. While we have several provisions already in place, we will collect further feedback and data to best understand what is working well and where we can develop our approach further.

Our commitment areas

MANAGER SUPPORT

We will evolve our development offer (Wellbeing team in conjunction with P&OD partnering, L&OD partnering, DASS and OH) to support managers in being equipped to have wellbeing conversations, respond appropriately when team members are unwell and know how to identify support options for those returning from long-term sickness absence.

In conjunction with other teams, we will provide development opportunities to better understand mental health and neurodivergent conditions and develop the confidence to have conversations on these and other topics.

INTERNAL AND EXTERNAL SUPPORT

We will review our EAP provider and new opportunities for external support, as well as continuing our partnership with colleagues in P&OD, DASS, OH, our GP Practice , Health and Safety and the Counselling and Mental Health services to ensure our approaches are joined up.

Working with our internal communication colleagues, we will look at barriers to engagement and review how we disseminate information, so it is accessible for all, e.g. for example ensuring those in non-desk-based roles can access resources and information.

PEER SUPPORT NETWORKS

Our wellbeing champions already signpost to support when people aren't well, as do are other staff network groups. We will work with our wellbeing champion network to provide further training and development and liaise with our EDI colleagues who oversee a range of staff network groups.

More generally, the wellbeing team will refresh the Compassionate Colleague training launched during the pandemic, to meet current needs and ways of working. We will expand development opportunities focused on mental health, both for managers and all employees.

STAYING IN WORK & RETURN TO WORK

We will work with our P&OD partners and OH to review presenteeism and absence data in the university, to inform our approach to prevention, promotion and responding. Wellness Action Plans are a helpful tool to support individuals staying in work and planning return to work and working with Employee Relations, OH, DASS and P&OD partnering we will further embed the use of these Plans across the university.