



Staff Wellbeing during COVID-19

During this time we have found much of what we used to do we now cannot and many things are beyond our control. It is understandable and normal to be feeling worried during this uncertain time. Routines and structure have been altered and the security we had in predictable work patterns and environments has been lost. This will affect our physical and mental wellbeing, for example our attention span, energy levels, motivation and memory. It is more important than ever to ensure school staff are supported, heard, and connected. This will involve prioritising and monitoring wellbeing at all levels: individually, at a team level, and school level. This leaflet highlights how staff can implement strategies and monitor their wellbeing at an individual level. As with most emergencies, it is vital that we ensure our own needs and wellbeing are met, so we can best support others, including the pupils we work with.



Unique Experience

It is really important to acknowledge that staff members will have had very different lockdown experiences depending on:

- Differences in their level of social interaction and changes to their relationships, including access to school.
- Potential exposure to adverse experiences (bereavement, loss, anxiety, financial pressures, domestic abuse, isolation etc.).
- Differences in resources available (space at home, access to the internet and technology etc.).
- Differences in health needs within the family.

What could make a difference?

Research by Hobfoll et al. (2007) identified five key principles that support recovery following a disaster or serious incident. These principles can help guide thinking on how to support staff wellbeing.

1) A sense of safety

- Prioritise your own wellbeing. Do you have a routine? Regular relaxation time?



- Start with clear, realistic expectations of yourself and any others with whom you are working.
- Seek information and assurance from your managers and colleagues about practical expectations – social distancing, group size, PPE for certain situations, resources, and share any concerns.

2) A sense of calm

- Find ways to “check-in” during the day. Being able to notice how you are feeling, in a safe and structure way, can help you be less reactive to worry or stress.
- Mindfulness-based approaches can help. Apps such as Headspace and Smiling Mind have a range of resources for staff and pupils.



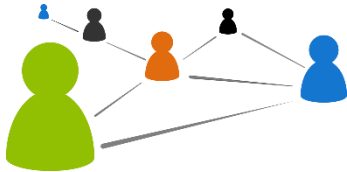
3) A sense of self and collective efficacy

- Reflect on what you and your team’s priorities are for supporting your pupils and their wellbeing. How has this now changed given the circumstances? How will you acknowledge when you and your team are working well to achieve this?
- Continue to support your own development and learning by reading, watching webinars, online seminars etc.



- Continue to give praise and feedback to each other about the work you are doing and the efforts you are making.
- Acknowledge your own accomplishments (speak with someone or jot down 3 things you have achieved today, personal or professional, big or small).

You might want to map out your thinking about efficacy and change. Draw 4 boxes, labelled A to D. In Box A list all the things “I can control/change”; in B “What my team can control/change”; in C “What my school can control/change”; in D “What is out of our control”. It might be helpful to discuss A (and possibly B and C) with a colleague/team to explore what you aim to change and how.



4) Create connection

- Check in with each other formally and informally on a regular basis including a virtual staff room, full staff meetings, individual sessions and ‘buddy networks’.
- Could you use a colour coded message system for colleagues to communicate how they are feeling?
- Make time every day or week to tend to relationships. You may draw upon friends or family to speak to. However, you may



also want to make a time where you and fellow staff can have “work-free” talk.

5) Foster a sense of hope

- Communicate updates regularly amongst staff and encourage participation of all members.
- Ensure positive praise and feedback is given freely and feelings are acknowledged in various ways.
- Communicate with staff frequently and openly, focusing on positives, successes and future hopes, despite uncertainty.
- Celebrate positive events during lockdown with the school community.
- Convey hope that things will be okay and that the community is resilient.

Useful Resources

- Octavo Educational Psychology Service edpsychology@octavopartnership.org
- UK charity that supports wellbeing of education staff. Helpline 0800 562 561 www.educationsupport.org.uk
- NHS information and guidance for mindfulness, with some useful links for adults <https://bit.ly/NHSMindful>
- An interactive game designed to inform and help young people cope with the death of a loved one. <https://apartofme.app/>
- Teacher resilience during coronavirus school closure: British Psychological Society <https://bit.ly/BPSResilience>



- Coronavirus and your wellbeing (Mind UK): <https://bit.ly/MINDCOVID19>
- How to protect your mental health (BBC): <https://bit.ly/BBCmentalhealth>

Support for when things are particularly challenging

Where possible seek support from your GP or NHS 111. If there is a threat to life 999.

Alcoholics Anonymous. For those experiencing challenges with alcoholism. Call 0800 917 7650 (24hrs)

Anxiety UK. If you have an anxiety condition, can call: 03444 775 774 (Mon-Fri, 9.30am-10pm; Sat-Sun, 10am-8pm)

Mind. Information on mental health for friends, family, professionals. Phone: (7 days, 4.30pm-10.30pm) 0300 304 7000. www.mind.org.uk

No Panic. Offering support for those with panic attacks and OCD. Daily phone line (5p per min/10am-10pm) 0844 967 4648. www.nopanic.org.uk

Refuge. For dealing with domestic violence 24/7 call: 0808 2000247 www.refuge.org.uk

Samaritans. To talk about anything that is upsetting you, Samaritans 24/7.

Freephone: 116123 or io@samaritans.org
SANEline. If you're experiencing a mental health problem or supporting someone else, you can email support@sane.org.uk

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