

Mental health and wellbeing plan

Five top tips for engaging school staff

The most effective mental health and wellbeing plans are those that are developed as a result of staff participation and input. Although the plan should be held by senior leadership teams for accountability purposes, what's included in the plan should be driven by staff input.

The staff voice should be at the heart of the plan during its development, delivery and whenever it is reviewed. Below are five top tips for senior leaders in how to engage staff when developing a mental health and wellbeing plan:

1 Understand what your staff need

Where possible try to ensure full staff participation so that everybody's voice is heard, as you are developing your plan. Run a staff survey to understand the current needs, levels of wellbeing and to gain an understanding of the types of support staff want. The result of the survey should drive the inputs into your plan.

2 Focus on the voices that aren't heard

A survey will only ever tell you so much. Understanding the specific needs of different staff groups is important, especially focussing on the voices that are often unheard. This might include Black and Minority Ethnic staff, LGBTQI+ staff, parents etc. Don't assume that everybody has the same needs or the same barriers to accessing support.

It's also important to break down the barriers between teachers/support staff/ non-teaching roles. Everybody should have equal importance in the plan.





3 Hear from those that have lived experience

For people living with mental health problems having their voices heard is important and a good mental health and wellbeing plan will pay particular attention to their needs. When developing your plan it's important to consider those who are living with mental health problems and what their support needs might be. It's also important to listen to a range of staff experiencing different types of mental health problems, as everybody's experience will be different.

4 Create opportunities for continuous feedback

When developing your plan it's important to allocate time for staff to feedback, before agreeing the final version. Although senior leadership will have the final sign off, getting collective agreement that the plan represents what staff need is a positive step to take. Throughout delivery of the plan, it's important to create opportunities for continuous feedback. The plan should be regularly reviewed, measured against and updated. All of these should be done with staff input.

5 Communicate, communicate and communicate

Launching the plan at a dedicated event can go a long way in showing staff that this is a priority, but it can't stop there. Regular communication about how the plan is progressing, what's going well and not so well and sharing successes is important in showing staff that the plan isn't just a document on the shelf gathering dust! The plan should be a living, breathing, document that staff hear about time and time again. And remember to celebrate the wins!