

# The Well-Being Programme for Secondary Schools

## Programme overview

### Background

Established by the national charity Teacher Support Network, Worklife Support specialise in programmes that focus on the wellbeing, motivation and effectiveness of people working in schools. We have already worked in partnership with more than 2,600 schools across the UK.

Worklife Support have led a number of important research projects investigating workplace wellbeing in the education sector, including:

- 2003-2005: London Well-Being Pilot Programme, funded by the then Department for Education and Skills, involving more than 400 schools across London
- 2006-2008: research projects commissioned by the Health and Safety Executive to find the most effective ways of tackling work-related stress in schools
- 2007: working with Birkbeck College, University of London, a research project (the first of its kind in the UK) that drew a clear and consistent link between staff wellbeing and pupil performance

Worklife Support is currently focused on a national study of the wellbeing of staff working in secondary schools. Using a development fund established with the Department for Children, Schools and Families, Worklife Support has developed a unique Well-Being Programme specifically designed to help secondary schools foster the culture, ethos and working environment that support staff and enable them to perform at their best.

### Proven benefits

The Health & Safety Executive estimates that nearly half of all absence in education is stress-related and expects all employers to carry out risk assessments for stress in line with Health and Safety legislation. The Well-Being Programme is recognised as a suitable and sufficient risk assessment and will therefore enable all schools to meet their duty of care in this regard. In addition, the Well-Being Programme has demonstrated a positive impact in the following areas:

- Enhancing the morale and motivation of staff
- Reducing sickness absence
- Improving recruitment and retention
- Enhancing school performance
- Providing a wealth of management information

### The Well-Being Programme for Secondary Schools

Our experience of working with over 2,600 schools across the UK tells us that the most effective strategies to improve workplace wellbeing are those that rely on a combination of measures aimed at both:

- supporting individuals to perform at their best and
- creating a working environment that enables and motivates

## Supporting individuals to perform at their best

As part of the Well-Being Programme, each member of staff will be given access to a wide range of advisors, coaches and counsellors, trained to help individuals resolve work-related, or personal, issues that could get in the way of them giving of their best at work. For example:

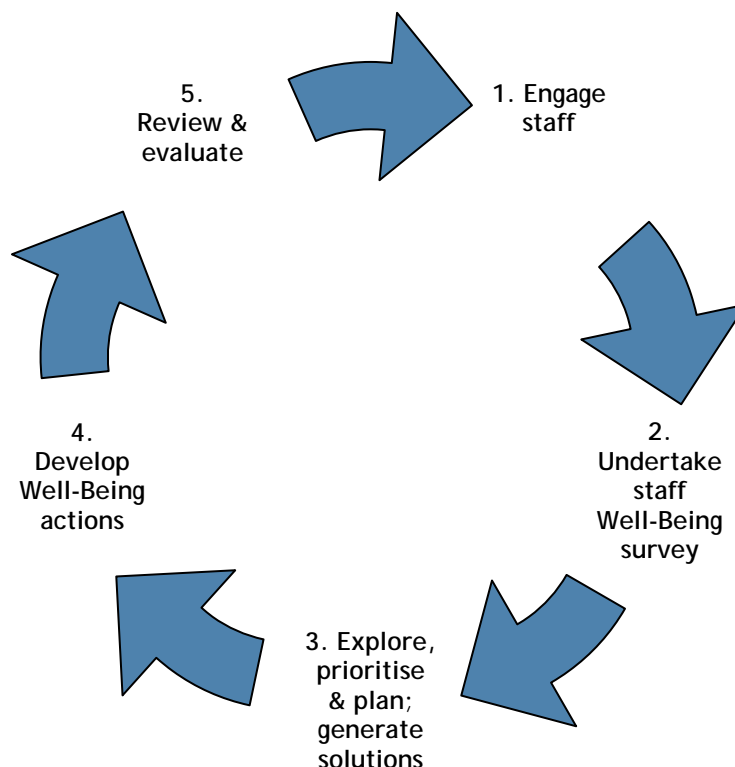
- Work issues such as managing workload, coping with pressure, relationships with colleagues, motivation issues, confidence and assertiveness, communication
- Home issues such as coping with family responsibilities, money and debt, legal problems
- Life events including dealing with bereavement, divorce, moving home, ill health
- Personal issues such as anxiety, depression, self-esteem
- Face-to-face counselling (up to 5 sessions) is provided locally where necessary and the service is also open to family members

We have also developed a specific component of this service for leaders and middle leaders to support and coach them in the social and emotional aspects of managing others. For example, in:

- managing performance
- motivating others
- tackling difficult issues
- supporting the wellbeing and effectiveness of colleagues

## Creating a working environment that enables and motivates

The Well-Being Programme is a tried-and-tested approach specifically designed to help schools create a healthy working environment that gets the best from staff. The Well-Being process helps schools identify the organisational factors that support staff wellbeing and effectiveness. As part of the programme, all staff complete an Organisation Self-Review Measure (survey of staff perceptions) that enables the school to identify its strengths and areas for development. With help from Worklife Support, the school reviews the survey findings and together develops a Well-Being development plan to foster the conditions that support staff wellbeing and effectiveness.



## Critical success factors

We have identified a number of factors that we believe are critical to the success of the Well-Being Programme in secondary schools:

**Engaging staff:** We help schools to ensure staff are motivated and engaged in the programme. Individual responsibility is at the heart of the Well-Being Programme and the aim is that colleagues at every level take responsibility for resolving problems and bringing about sustainable improvement. Staff not only identify what needs to change in their school, but share responsibility for making it happen.

**Establishing an effective Well-Being team:** Establishing a motivated and energised Well-Being team or task force to coordinate the Well-Being Programme is critical to programme sustainability. A diverse team that represents a good cross-section of staff at every level ensures the programme retains bottom-up ownership.

**Working with leaders and middle leaders:** Our experience tells us that buy-in from the school leadership is critical to the programme's success. We also recognise the pivotal role played by middle leaders in a secondary school and have put significant emphasis, in the secondary programme, on mobilising their commitment and potential.

**Learning from other schools' experiences:** With more than 2,000 schools having already participated in the programme, no school is working on their own. Some of the programme's richest learning experiences come from schools sharing what has worked and what has not.

## What other schools say

*"I would wholeheartedly recommend the Well-Being Programme. At a time of unprecedented educational change, it serves as a timely reminder of the importance of investing in the wellbeing of the staff who represent our most valuable resource. In particular, the Well-Being survey provides schools with very clear feedback about strengths and areas for development in this crucial aspect of school life."*

**Headteacher, secondary school**

*"I have to admit I'm a bit of a sceptic... I didn't actually go into the Well-Being Programme at the first opportunity. It seemed like just another initiative and I thought my staff were alright... I'm now into the programme in a big way - because the staff value it; it's what they want."*

**Headteacher, secondary school**

*"I don't see Well-Being as a project, but as part of the ethos of the school. I would recommend every single school in the country to take part. It isn't about whether they can afford to, it's about whether they can afford not to."*

**Deputy headteacher, high school**

*"We, the staff, are beginning to feel we have the power to improve and develop the school for the better."*

**School Well-Being facilitator**

*"I think the programme gives people a personal responsibility... helps people to think how they can improve their situation within the constraints of the working environment, and gets them to take more responsibility rather than just moaning and groaning."*

**School Well-Being facilitator**

## Programme specification

As part of the national Well-Being Programme for Secondary Schools, Worklife Support provide all participating schools with the following:

- **Comprehensive support package** provided for all individual employees and their family members
  - Available 24 hours a day, 365 days a year
  - One-to-one support from trained professionals
  - Specialist support for managers
  - Fully qualified legal, money and debt advisors
  - Face-to-face counselling (up to 5 sessions per person) where appropriate
- **SLT induction meeting** - to plan the implementation of the programme and engage leaders in the process
- **Staff orientation** - to introduce staff to the programme
- **Well-Being team induction** - training for members of the school's Well-Being team
- **Individual access for all staff to the online Organisational Self-Review Measure (Well-Being survey)** - the survey takes about 15 minutes to complete
- **A comprehensive 'data profile'** - a report analysing the school's survey data
- **Well-Being development session for all schools** - at this session, the head and the rest of the Well-Being team work through their data profile, facilitated by Worklife Support, and receive training and resources to assist them in addressing the issues raised back in school
- **Review meeting for all schools** - approximately 6 months after the Development day, schools come together again to review progress and plan their next steps
- **Ongoing support and resource materials** - to ensure that staff wellbeing becomes an integrated part of schools' organisational practice

The programme is based on a cohort model whereby a number of schools work together through the programme. Where there is a cohort of 5 or more schools, Worklife Support will also provide:

- **Facilitated termly networking meetings** - at which school Well-Being teams can learn together and support each other

*[Schools to provide meeting/training venues and refreshments where necessary.]*