

MINUTES OF THE WELLBEING SUB-COMMITTEE MEETING ON 13 May 2026

Present: [Sarah Swales], James Chester, Jackie Hargreaves, Katie Hughes, Jo Jones, Andrew Manley, Steve Mardy, Sarah Moore, Sue Smith, Daniel Stanley, Sarah Tomlinson, Lindsay Trelford, Bryony Walker.

In attendance: Samia Azim, Nicola Beaumont, Sharon Swales, Ben Turner-Chastney.

Minute	Paper Reference
PRELIMINARY ITEMS	
1. Apologies and Welcome	
1.1. Apologies: Faisal Alsammarraie, Oliver Bray, Deveral Capps, Katie Davies, Sareen Galbraith, Vicki Johnson, Lee Jones, Gary Lawson, Gareth Robertshaw, Sarah Stone.	
2. Declarations of interest	
2.1. No declarations of interest were made.	
3. Committee Terms of Reference and Membership 2025/26	WSC-2526-05-13-P3
3.1 The Chair noted that recent meetings had not been quorate and proposed reviewing attendance and updating the membership of this committee going forward. The chair proposed writing to members who had not attended for some time, and asked committee members present to share any thoughts with the co-chairs in terms of future membership.	
3.2 The Health and Safety Consultative Committee Steering Group had disbanded. Chairs had met with unions regarding this to discuss the implications for the Terms of Reference for the Health and Safety Consultative Committee. The Wellbeing Sub-Committee will continue, and major changes were not anticipated here.	
4. Minutes	WSC-2526-05-13-P4
4.1 The Committee agreed that the minutes of its meeting on 17 September 2025 were an accurate record.	
	WSC-2526-05-13-P5
5.	
5.1 The Committee agreed that the minutes of its meeting on 21 January 2026 were an accurate record.	
6. Matters arising	WSC-2526-05-13-P6
6.1 There were no points of clarification raised for the matters arising.	

7. Chair's Business

Verbal update

7.1 The Chair had no specific items to raise.

ITEMS TO CONSIDER

8. University Mental Health Charter Update

Verbal update

8.1 The following was reported:

- The Deputy Director for the Centre for Learning and Teaching has set up a learn domain subgroup; this had received good response from Schools. The group was being co-chaired by Tara Fox (Lecturer) and Maria Dobrzanska.
- This group will meet for the first time on 14/05/2026, and then again in June 2026, to look at gaps and progression and to push best practice across the institution.
- The weakest area noted for our re-submission (as with other universities) is evaluation.
- The charter is a whole university approach to students, researchers (PGR's), and colleagues.
- The Wellbeing Managers would be leading the four main themes across HR for staff at the university.

9. Sickness Absence Report

Verbal update

9.1 The following was reported / presented:

- The Deputy Director of Human Resources talked the committee through the Sickness Absence Annual Report 2024/5; this had been presented to and was positively received at the Health and Safety Consultative Committee on the 5/2/2026.
- This report had previously been brought to this committee on a six-monthly basis, but it had been agreed to amend this to annually; the report was based on recorded absence, and highlighted sickness absence monitoring and management being the responsibility of line managers, with support and advice from HR as necessary.
- The average days lost had reduced in each of the last 3 years for each staff group, with the trend broadly the same for academic and professional/support groups.
- Short term absence accounts for the highest number of individual absences (1213) compared to 139 for long term absence.
- Academic staff have higher levels of long-term absence than for professional/support staff.
- Short term absence for academic staff had doubled from 7.1% to 14.03%, and for professional/support staff had increased from 16.6% to 27.3% in the last 5 years.
- In 2024-2025 the average length of long-term absence was 47.9 days for LBU overall.
- In 2024-2025 the top reason for absence was cough, cold, and flu, with twice the level of short-term absence than any other reason. Stress was the second highest reason with the most absence long term. Absence due to stress had decreased since 2022/2023.
- Long term absence due to mental health is reducing – from 4530 days in 2021/2022 to 3071 days in 2024/2025.
- A significant proportion of staff take no absence at all.
- Female absence is higher than male absence for both professional support and academic staff groups.

- The consensus of the committee was that the reporting of absence was improving; in the School of Sport a focus had been put on destigmatising absence and recognising and encouraging the reporting of absence.
- Hybrid working is a factor for when colleagues were deciding whether to take time off or not. Colleagues had reported working from home, where they perhaps wouldn't have worked on campus, based on their symptoms.
- The guidance around hybrid working could be explored in more detail, to place focus on reducing the stigma of taking time off but also giving managers a way to support colleagues more effectively.
- Collegiality was recognised as a positive but could also be deemed counterproductive if a colleague was working when they should really be absent due to ill health.
- Switching the language, i.e. from stress to wellbeing was seen to be a positive, as was being proactive as oppose reactive to the management of potential leave.

9.2 The Committee **recommended**:

9.3 The Secretary circulates the report with the committee post meeting.

9.4 The Deputy Director of Human Resources check and report back to the committee in September, on whether the higher absence levels reported for females applied to all absence reasons.

9.5 The Deputy Director of Human Resources and Wellbeing Managers to check and report back to the committee on whether disability related absence can be identified.

9.6 The Human Resources team investigate providing improved guidance around hybrid working (and the provision that is there), including the language used and other potential improvements, and for the Deputy Director of HR to bring this back to the committee in September 2026, as an ongoing agenda item.

10. Financial wellbeing of students

Verbal update

10.1 The following was reported / presented:

- The Student Money Manager provided the committee with the annual update regarding financial aspects and how they are impacting LBU students.
- There have been no dramatic changes to the update provided in May 2025, but the aggravations of previous challenges have raised amongst the student community slightly.
- Demand for the hardship fund has remained high this academic year, with applications only marginally down on previous years.
- Since 2022/2023 the proportion of pre-emptive funding has increased from less than 10% to over a third of the student money team's support, providing greater financial security and less financial anxiety to more students.
- An increasing number of students are undertaking paid work and/or declaring that they are working more.

- As with the previous academic year, the Money Team proactively contacted students whom the Incomes Team had identified as without a Tuition Fee Loan but with that as the declared payment method. Of those responding many were able to secure funding following advice. This reduced financial stress and uncertainty for the impacted students in response to invoice requests.
- This year has seen slightly fewer referrals for emergency funding or accommodation compared to previous but there remains an ongoing demand.
- Work in relation to gambling awareness and activity was highlighted; the Money Team had a partnership with GamCare. The provision of a hardship fund would occasionally be held back until a student directly affected by gambling had contacted the helpline.

10.2 The Committee recommended:

10.4 The Secretary circulates the Student Money Manager's written update with the committee post meeting.

10.5 The Student Money Manager share with the committee the data regarding the average paid working hours that students undertake on a weekly basis.

10.6 The annual update from the Student Money Manager remains on the agenda for the May committee meetings.

11. Autism and suicide prevention project

Verbal update

11.1 The following was reported / presented:

- The Senior Wellbeing Practitioner provided the committee with key findings and agreed actions from the Autism & Suicide Prevention Project (ASPP) Review & Improvement Plan, based on survey data and a staff workshop.
- 95% of staff reported little or no training in autism & suicide awareness/prevention.
- There are systemic gaps in training, and a need for improvement of joint up working across the university.
- Staff are committed, open and willing to improve practice. Many low-level actions can be implemented quickly, but medium- and high-level actions require cross-university coordination, policy review, and senior leadership support.
- Leeds Autism AIM will continue to offer consultation beyond the end of ASPP funding.
- The plan is to work with colleagues in the School of Health, and a full write up/ improvement plan will be shared from Autism AIM; this will be applicable to colleagues too.

11.2 The Committee recommended:

11.1 The Senior Wellbeing Practitioner share with the committee (via the committee secretary) the summary update on the autism and suicide prevention project (discussed on 13/05/2026).

11.2 The Senior Wellbeing Practitioner share the resources provided by Autism AIM with the wellbeing sub-committee.

12. Organisational Change and Wellbeing

Verbal update

12.1 The Chair led this item as an open discussion for the committee.

12.2 The following was reported / presented:

- Change was ongoing at the university, tending to affect Schools and Services in isolation as oppose university wide.

ITEMS TO NOTE (FOR INFORMATION ONLY)

13. Schedule of Business

WSC-2526-05-13-P7

13.1 The Schedule of Business was noted.

13.2 The following was reported / presented:

- The Wellbeing Assessment will be brought to the September 2026 Wellbeing sub-committee meeting.

14. Any other business

14.1 The following was reported / presented:

- The debt management approach and its connection to wellbeing in Schools and Services was highlighted as a concern, specifically the approach finance are taking with people not able to pay their tuition fees.
- The Chair recognised the good balance of student and staff data presented at this meeting.
- The Chair recognised the upcoming retirement of the Deputy Director of the Centre for Learning and Teaching, with commendation for her significant contribution and support shown over the years towards the Wellbeing sub-committee, as well as leading activity for the University Mental Health Charter.

14.2 The Committee **recommended:**

14.3 The Deputy Director of Human Resources consider how the debt management approach can be reviewed and improved, in partnership with colleagues in finance and HR.

DETAILS OF THE NEXT MEETINGS

- 1 The next meeting of the Board / Committee would be held on [xxx September 2026] at [XXX am] in [XXX, Headingley campus].

Confirmed by the Board / Committee as a correct record and signed by the Chair:

Signed: J Jones Date: 23 September 2026