



Minutes of the 22nd January 2025 meeting

Present: Jo Jones (Chair)

Mobina Begum, Deveral Capps, James Chester, Sareen Galbraith, Dee Grismond, Jackie Hargreaves, Victoria Johnson, Andrew Manley, Steve Mardy, Sarah Moore, Susan Smith, Daniel Stanley, Sarah Swales.

In attendance: Nicola Beaumont.

Apologies: Oliver Bray, Katie Davies, Katie Hughes, Harish Jayaseelan, Lee Jones, Gareth Robertshaw, Sarah Stone, Bryony Walker.

Attendees' apologies:

Preliminary Items

Terms of reference and membership

057.2425.WSC The following was noted:
a) Jackie Hargreaves (Senior Lecturer – Carnegie School of Sport) became a co-opted member of the committee.

Minutes

058.2425.WSC The Committee **agreed** that the minutes of its meeting on 18th September 2024 were an accurate record.

Matters arising

059.2425.WSC The Committee reviewed the previous Matters Arising from the 18th September meeting, with no further actions.

Main Items of Business

The University Mental Health Charter Update

060.2425.WSC The Chair reported the following:
a) The third-year wellbeing improvement plan 2024/25 was shared with the committee for them to read over. Any concerns or queries were to be raised with the Chair prior to or in the next committee meeting.
b) The university had received note that the annual report is due in June 2025, the process of identifying what had been achieved was underway.

Committee approved

- c) The university have a reassessment within five years. The option to reassess early had been discussed, to achieve Award with Merit. To achieve this, six out of eighteen themes would need to be improved.
- d) A national advisory group had been established to look at the reassessment process. The Chair has been invited to join the Advisory Group which is meeting for the first time in February 2025.

061.2425.WSC

It was **agreed** that:

- a) The Chair would re-share the improvement plan 2024/25 for all to have access.
- b) The Chair would update the committee on the reassessment at the next committee meeting.

Wellbeing and Occupational Health Update

062.2425.WSC The Wellbeing Manager reported the following:

- a) Since the summer and following voluntary severance Occupational Health and wellbeing were being combined in these reports.
- b) In terms of staff changes following voluntary severance, an internal Occupational Health Advisor (Anne Wilson) had been retained, the university continued to use an appointed physician, support had been added through Heales Services, who were mainly being used for pre-employment health checks and surveillance.
- c) Case management was still managed in house by Anne Wilson who was providing the occupational health service.
- d) The School of Health have a contract with Heales that went through a tender process. A separate specification had been drawn up for staff; this was an interim measure.
- e) From August 2024 – December 2024 there had been 123 referrals through to Occupational Health; a proportion were re-referrals for the same condition or review appointments. The top reasons for referrals were medical, mental health, neurodiversity, MSD and DSE.
- f) The mental health awareness module had been communicated through various channels including LBU voices and had been sent to SMG with a request for them to cascade.
- g) Usage of Spectrum/ EAP was at 16% for the organisation.
- h) The asbestos register was held by Alex Dobson (Head of Building and Grounds) in the Estates Team.

063.2425.WSC

It was **agreed** that the Wellbeing Managers would:

- a) Share Heales data protection and equality processes with the committee.
- b) Link in with Nick Hatton (Disability Service Manager) to understand the anticipatory and reasonable adjustments that are recommended for students. Share more with the committee around the neurodiversity piece and the reasonable adjustments being put in place.
- c) Work with Mobina Begum around the challenges within the university in supporting people to feel confident in declaring neurodiversity.
- d) Share the wording around 'in the moment support' with the committee.
- e) Share the equality data for the organisations 16% usage of Spectrum/ EAP with the committee.

- f) Circulate the [mental health awareness module](#) with the committee for them to complete and cascade to their teams.

Organisational Change and Wellbeing

- 064.2425.WSC The committee reported that:
- a) This item would remain as a standing agenda item and was an opportunity for people to raise the impact on wellbeing following organisational change.
 - b) Organisational change worked well when managed and planned properly and when all risks were identified in terms of who the stakeholders were.

Annual Absence Report

- 065.2425.WSC The Deputy Director of Human Resources reported that:
- a) This quarter (November 2024 - January 2025) had seen an annual peak in sickness absences; this spike was seen every year.
 - b) For academic staff, long term absence had increased over the last four years and for support staff, decreased.
 - c) Medium periods of absence had increased for both academic and support staff in the past twelve months.
 - d) Short term absence for academic staff was lower than in the previous year but higher for support staff.
 - e) The top three reasons for absence were the same as for 2022/3. For academic and support staff, mental health is the top reason. For academic roles heart/cardiac related was second as for last year and for support/professional the second reason was coughs, colds, and flu.
 - f) One of the main reasons people were referred to Occupational Health was musculoskeletal related.
 - g) Over 50% of the university's workforce had not taken any sickness absence in the past twelve months.
 - h) There needed to be more analysis and linkage around the gender and age piece in relation to different types of absence; to produce a more sophisticated view, to be able to target more effectively.
 - i) At the next meeting in May 2025 the colleague survey data would be available, which could also be looked at in relation to absence and variations.

- 066.2425.WSC It was **agreed** that:
- a) The Absence Data January 2025 slides would be shared with the committee after the meeting (this would include a slide on gender and age from an EDI aspect), as well as a meaningful narrative (produced by the Deputy Director of Human Resources) to go with the slides, so the committee can discuss at the next meeting.
 - b) Incidents of reoccurrence would be analysed and added into the absence data.

Ripple suicide prevention

- 067.2425.WSC The Head of Student Wellbeing reported that:
- a) R;pple was now installed across the university as a browser extension.
 - b) If someone were to enter concerning information into their browser around how to take your own life, information would pop up on the screen with an instant support for the person in crisis.
 - c) The advice had been to keep the communication around this to a minimum; the information provided was supposed to interrupt the persons thought, where they had explicitly entered something about taking their own life.
 - d) Within R;pple there were links to Shout (in the moment information) and other organisations such as the Samaritans.

- 068.2425.WSC It was recommended that:
- a) Legal advice be sought on whether it was better not to have anything in connection to R;pple as a browser extension, or if this were to be available, that the university be covered from an institutional and legal perspective.
 - b) Clarity be sought on what responsibility the university was taking in relation to R;pple.

- 069.2425.WSC It was **agreed** that the Head of Student Wellbeing would:
- a) Link in with the Wellbeing Managers on R;pple suicide prevention.
 - b) Feed back to the committee at the next meeting with more detail and rationale on why it was not possible to track who was accessing R;pple.
 - c) Have a conversation with the university's legal team about the legal risks on the university not being able to act on who was accessing R;pple (once it had been reconfirmed that it was not possible to track who was accessing R;pple).

Other Business

Schedule of meetings and business 2024/25

Date of next meeting

- 070.2425.WSC The next meeting of the Committee would be held on Wednesday 21st May 2025.

Other business

- 071.2425.WSC It was **agreed** that:
- a) The financial wellbeing of students would be linked to student wellbeing as a standing agenda item.

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

Signed: Sarah Swales Date: 21.05.25