

Wellness Action Plan Guidance

1. Introduction

The University recognises the importance of good mental health and wellbeing for all staff and is committed to providing a healthy and happy workplace.

Wellness Action Plans are a voluntary, stand-alone and private individual reflection tool that anyone can use - they will not form part of the University's Sickness Absence Management procedures.

This document seeks to guide and support individuals who would like to learn how to use Wellness Actions Plans to support their wellbeing and good mental health at work.

2. What is a Wellness Action Plan?

The Wellness Action Plan was developed by the Charity Mind. It is a practical way of thinking about what keeps us mentally well at work, any triggers that may lead us to experience a mental health issue, and the proactive steps that can be taken towards good mental health. It is useful for everyone, whether we are experiencing a mental health issue or not.

The Wellness Action Plan comprises the following set of questions that prompts us to think about what keeps us well at work:

1. What helps you stay mentally healthy at work?
2. Are there any situations at work that can trigger poor mental health for you?
3. How might experiencing poor mental health impact on your work?
4. Are there any early warning signs that people might notice when you are starting to experience poor mental health?
5. What support could be put in place to minimise triggers or help you to manage the impact?
6. Are there any elements of your individual working style or temperament that it is worth your manager being aware of?
7. If your team members or manager notice early warning signs that you are experiencing poor mental health, what would you like them to do?
8. What steps can you take if you start to experience poor mental health at work?
9. What can your colleagues and/or manager do to proactively support you to stay mentally healthy at work?
10. Is there anything else that you would like to share?
11. Do you feel comfortable sharing your plan with your line manager? If so, relevant details of your discussion may be noted.

3. What are the benefits?

The Wellness Action Plan encourages you to proactively manage your own mental health at work, seeking support from your colleagues and manager where necessary. If you feel that you do need additional support, it can help guide a structured conversation with your line manager around the support and reasonable adjustments that may be necessary. A Wellness Action Plan may also be helpful for individuals to use privately when returning to work after a period of sickness absence, where this has been linked to a mental health issue.

It is hoped that the introduction of Wellness Action Plans will lead to the following benefits:

- Encouraging an open environment in which staff can talk freely about mental health issues, thus reducing the stigma sometimes associated with them.
- Increased awareness of the importance of taking proactive steps to maintain good mental health at work.
- Increased ability of individuals to identify workplace triggers for poor mental health and positive steps that can be taken to lead to improved mental health.

4. As an individual, how do I go about using a Wellness Action Plan?

The main aim of using a Wellness Action Plan is to support and promote your mental health and wellbeing at work. You may be experiencing a mental health issue currently or be feeling well and wish to use a Wellness Action Plan as a proactive tool, which sets out what needs to be in place to maintain your good mental health at work.

When you start to use a Wellness Action Plan, make sure you set aside some quiet thinking time to reflect on your own personal experience and needs. You may find it helpful to do this with a colleague, a friend or your line manager. There is no 'correct' approach – it is whatever you find helpful in working through the questionnaire. By answering each question, you will be able to identify what keeps you mentally well at work, any triggers that lead you to experience stress or poor mental health, and the proactive steps that can be taken towards good mental health.

You may find that by identifying what causes issues for you, you are able to pinpoint proactive steps you can take in your daily life that will help you to maintain good mental health. There may be times when you need a little extra support, so think about what your colleagues and/or manager can do to help you. Remember, you are not alone. In addition to your manager and colleagues, the University offers the following resources to help you:

- **Employee Assistance Programme** provided by Health Assured is a free and confidential service offering support to all staff and their immediate family (spouse/partner and their dependents aged between 16 and 24).

You'll find help on a wide range of topics, including physical and mental health, relationship problems, and financial and legal issues.

Additionally, if you think your issue would benefit from counselling, you can request telephone or face-to-face sessions, giving you the opportunity to talk through your concerns with a qualified counsellor.

- Confidential helpline available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.
- Freephone number: 0800 028 0199 (Republic of Ireland: 1800 936071).
- [Health Assured](#) website: Username: Open

Password: Uni

- A factsheet on the [Remote work wellbeing](#) web page provides links to external sites where support is available for mental health issues. It also gives ideas for helping to manage anxieties, worries and stress.

Once you have completed your Wellness Action Plan, it is helpful to review it on a regular basis so that you can update it to reflect changes in your experiences and needs. The plan encourages you to be proactive and take ownership of the process, which may help you to feel more in control.

If you are finding it difficult to complete a Wellness Action Plan on your own, you could ask someone else for help, such as a trusted colleague, the People Hub or your manager.

5. As a manager, how can I support my team member in using a Wellness Action Plan?

As a line manager, your management style and behaviour are central to supporting the mental wellbeing of your staff. Being supportive, approachable and open to receiving feedback on your management and communication style are vital. Building a good working relationship with the people you manage helps to create a healthy and productive working environment.

If you haven't used a Wellness Action Plan before, you are advised to read the full details on the Mind charity website, which includes a 'Guide for line managers: Wellness Action Plans' as well as a separate guide for employees. The manager's guide sets out how you can support a member of your team who has decided to write their own plan. The website also provides information on a wide range of mental health issues, which could be helpful when you talk to your staff.

The Wellness Action Plan is a template to help individuals reflect on their mental health and wellbeing. Your team member is responsible for the development of their plan, as this will empower them to take ownership of the practical steps needed to manage their own mental health issue and stay well at work.

If an individual asks you for help in completing a Wellness Action Plan, or chooses to share it with you, the questions provide a good framework for a collaborative conversation between you both. The aim of a Wellness Action Plan is to enable you to understand your team member's needs better, so that you can support their wellbeing at work.

Your role as a line manager is to discuss the plan with the individual and provide support, including guidance on what may be possible in terms of any reasonable adjustments that they ask for.

It is good practice to make reasonable adjustments for all employees who are experiencing mental health issues, regardless of whether these are defined as a 'disability' under the Equality Act 2010. The University will endeavour to support employees in their requests for reasonable adjustments, wherever possible. Guidance around reasonable adjustments can be found on the People Services intranet under "Disability Awareness" on the A-Z.

As a line manager you need to refrain from influencing the individual by offering your own advice or suggestions. It is not your role to provide medical advice if a member of your team discloses a mental health issue to you. Instead, you need to focus on what you can do to support them. For example, you could draw the employee's attention to the assistance offered by the University via the **Employee Assistance Programme** and the resources on **My Learning Centre**.

If a team member chooses to share their Wellness Action Plan with you, it should always be held confidentially between you and your team member.

You are advised to encourage your team member to regularly review and update their Wellness Action Plan, offering them the opportunity to discuss it with you, if desired.

6. Are there any circumstances in which the University cannot retain confidentiality?

If you choose to share your Wellness Action Plan with a colleague, the People Hub or your line manager, it would be held confidentially between you.

Confidentiality would only be broken if a situation arises where your colleague, the People Hub or line manager, believe that you are experiencing a crisis. In this situation they are obliged to break confidentiality in order to fulfil a duty of care to keep you safe at work.

If they become aware that you or someone else is at serious risk of harm, they may decide to call the Employee Assistance Programme helpline for advice and clarification as to what they should do.

7. Useful references

Wellness Action Plan Template
Employee Assistance Programme