Healthy Working Lives Survey Results

1. Background

The Healthy Working Lives (HWL) Award process is an integrated approach to improving health, safety and wellbeing at work.

As part of the preparation for submitting an application for the HWL Bronze Award, the University of St Andrews ran a Healthy Working Lives survey during April 2014. The survey was publicised via our internal staff memo system, and featured in the staff e-newsletter ‘In the Loop.’ Additional publicity was via staff networks (the Wellbeing and Engagement Group) and social media (Twitter).

The survey comprised the following sections, each with a mixture of standard Healthy Working Lives survey questions plus University-specific questions. About You

- Workplace policies and practices
- Occupational Health and Safety
- Your health and wellbeing (physical activity; healthy eating, sustainable food and FairTrade; alcohol; smoking; mental health & wellbeing; violence and aggression)
- Health, safety and wellbeing at work

The survey was approved by the Office of the Principal and the University Teaching and Research Ethics Committee (UTREC).

2. Respondents

The survey was completed by 110 staff members, comprising approximately 5% of the workforce. The majority of respondents were from the Managerial and Specialist/Administrative job role category (57%) but there were respondents from all six job role categories. 80% of respondents had permanent contracts and 90% worked full time (99% of respondents did not work shifts.) The majority of respondents were female (75%), and there were respondents from all age categories apart from 65+. The most common age category was 45-54 (34%), followed by 35-44 (25%) and 25-34 (25%).

Whilst the overall number of respondents was disappointing, it is hoped that the findings will still give a helpful indication of staff knowledge, concerns and priorities. This is the first time the University has conducted a Healthy Working Lives survey, and we would hope that more staff opt to complete subsequent surveys as the work of the Healthy Working Lives initiative becomes more widely known.

3. Findings

3.1. Workplace policies and practices

Respondents were asked if they were familiar with 7 key workplace policies and practices and where to access them (family friendly; sickness absence; equality; grievance; harassment and bullying; special leave; health and safety).
Levels of familiarity ranged between 62% (Harassment and Bullying) and 85% (Sickness Absence). Knowledge of where to access the policies tended to be slightly less, ranging from 61% (Harassment & Bullying) to 43% (Sickness absence). Interestingly, there was not always a correlation between how well known a policy was, and whether people knew where to find it. For example, the relative scores for Bullying and Harassment were 62% and 61%, versus 85% and 43% for Sickness Absence. As almost all University policies can be found in the same location (HR web page), one action point is to publicise this fact, and link to those which are not.

Question 9 queried how familiar staff are with various sources of health and wellbeing support. Results ranged from 57% (Bullying and Harassment support) through to 81% (Staff mentoring schemes) with knowledge of where to access these resources mostly significantly lower. Whilst encouragement can be taken from the high awareness of mentoring schemes, coaching (80%), sports facilities (79%), Equality and Diversity Officer (74%) and University Chaplain (74%), further efforts can be made to advertise the support services with least recognition including Bullying and Harassment support (57%), resilience workshops (57%) and Health and Fitness Consultations (59).

3.2 Occupational Health and Safety

The majority of potential workplace risks were not applicable to our survey respondents. Of those that were, 97% of respondents were aware of the risks associated with display screen equipment, 47% aware of musculo-skeletal risks and 44% aware of manual handling risks to health. Our Environmental Health and Safety Services provide training in these areas. With regards to safety risks, the two risks that the majority of respondents felt were applicable were slips/trips/falls and electrical hazards. 71% and 51% respectively were aware of the risks.

Question 12 investigated rates of respondents who have received various health and safety training. Fire safety had been received by 78% of respondents, followed by Health and Safety at Induction (74%) and workstation assessment (67%). First Aid and Risk Assessment was the training with the lowest completion rate (57% and 48% respectively) and the delivery of these will be reviewed. Only 2% of respondents did not feel they had been provided with suitable Personal Protective Equipment.

3.3 Your health and wellbeing

a. Physical Activity

Encouragingly, the majority of respondents indicated that they did over 150 minutes of moderate physical activity per week (33%), with 10% doing less than 30 minutes per week. Over 75% of respondents were already aware of the University’s cycle to work scheme and discounted gym membership, although fewer people were aware of fitness groups (45%) and the fitness and personal training service (60%). One action will be to promote these more amongst staff, especially as 73% of respondents indicated they would like to be more physically active at work.

With regards to what would encourage staff to be more physically active, free fitness classes (72%), increased showering facilities at work (54%) and baseline fitness assessments (44%) were the top
three responses. Investigating these will be carried forward into our action plan. Some of the related respondent comments included reviewing timings and costs of fitness classes, and this can also be considered.

Respondents were asked to list what would make them exercise more. Common responses included flexible working time, changing and shower facilities and a swimming pool. With regards to the former, demonstrating the benefits of fitness to managers would be a suggested action.

b. Healthy eating, Sustainable food and Fair-trade

There was strong recognition amongst respondents regarding Fair-trade products (80%) but less awareness about how the University procures its food (26%), sustainable food policy (45%) or Food for Life Mark (14%). Further promotion of these is needed.

The majority of respondents consumed an average of four portions of fruit and vegetables a day, which is just under the recommended amount of 5. 40% of respondents consumed more than 5 portions per day. Ways to encourage staff to increase their fruit/veg intake will be explored. For example, staff ordering food from the internal catering service could be encourage to opt for fruit/veg. 87% of respondents said that the provision of free fruit in the workplace would encourage them to eat more.

c. Alcohol

30% of respondents consumed alcohol once or twice a month or less, and 40% drank on 1-2 days of the week (the most common response). There was some confusion amongst participants on whether alcohol consumption was permitted in the University, but reasonably high awareness as to alcohol support (76% of respondents were aware of alcohol advice; 74% awareness of alcohol counselling and 50% had awareness via our alcohol awareness week campaign.

d. Smoking

93% of respondents reported that they did not smoke. 7% of respondents reported that they did smoke and would like to stop. 92% were aware that counselling and cessation support was available via Occupational Health. Of the staff who smoke there was support for a workplace smoking cessation group.

6% of respondents stated that they were exposed to second hand smoke, mostly outside the entrances of buildings. Action will be taken to remind staff that this is not permitted.

e. Mental health and wellbeing

The findings confirmed that support was available and most commonly the greatest support was at team level. In each of these cases greatest support was shown by team, then line manager, then School/Unit, then the University in general.
Stress was covered in a series of questions. Encouragingly, 75% had some say over the way they work and 92% had the skills needed to do their job. More focus could be placed on ensuring staff are consulted about change at work (28%), get supportive feedback on the work they do (44%) or are informed of organisational practices and decisions (38%). In the open-ended comments, volume of work was by some margin the most reported reason for stress. Relationship with line manager, colleagues, lack of resources and unreasonable deadlines also featured.

There was high awareness of the staff counselling service (81%) and mindfulness workshops (65%) but less of the mental health first aid workshop (38%), Occupational Health referrals (34%) and stress awareness training for managers (30%). Expanding the reach of stress awareness training, and publishing a list of mental health first aiders, are actions to carry forward.

Overall, 89% of respondents would recommend the University as a good place to work, 73% would recommend their School/Unit as a good place to work and 94% would recommend their team as a good place to work.

f. Violence and aggression

The majority of respondents did not know how to report incidents of violence and/or aggression at work (57%), and so this is an action point. The vast majority of respondents felt that the University, their School/Unit, line manager and team would all be supportive of employees experiencing violence and aggression at work. In the past 12 months, 1% of respondents said they were aware that the University or themselves were occasionally or often subject to violent threats, 5% to harassment, 8% to unfair treatment, 6% to bullying, 3% to physical violence and 10% to discrimination from someone associated with the University (customers, contractors, visitors).

When it came to awareness of the University or themselves being subject to these by people within the University (staff and students) figures rose in all categories apart from physical violence (0%). These results will be passed to HR and EHSS for action.

3.4 Health, safety and wellbeing at work

Respondents ranked health, safety and wellbeing the topics they would most like additional information, education and support on. The top 5 (in order of most to least popular) were: stress (84%), back care (66%), diet and fitness (60%), women’s health (41%) and cancer awareness (40%). These will inform the work of the Wellbeing and Engagement group for the next 12 months.

4. Action Plan

The action plan resulting from the survey finding will be split into four areas: culture change, practical steps, proactive promotion and training, including:

4.1. Culture change

- Work with key stakeholders to achieve culture change relating to wellbeing at work.
• Recruit new members to the Wellbeing and Engagement Group to increase representation from different staff cohorts.
• Recruit local ‘Health at Work’ champions to promote initiatives, distribute publicity, facilitate in-workplace visits, events, roadshows etc.
• University to work towards Healthy Working Lives silver and ultimately gold awards following attainment of the Bronze Award.
• Through the Gender Equality Charter Mark and Athena SWAN School committee within Schools, encourage Head of Schools to encourage academics to take part in wellbeing activities.

4.2 Practical steps

• Engage with Catering Services to explore ways to raise awareness of healthy eating and to encourage users of the Catering Services to include healthy options in catering orders. For example, healthy option notices on menu selectors, healthy eating placards to display with buffets.
• Explore sources of funding or sponsorship for free fruit ‘events’.
• Conduct a workplace smoking cessation campaign
• Investigate feasibility of baseline fitness assessments roll out.
• Publicise the Alcohol Policy to raise awareness.

4.3. Proactive promotion

• Link to Health and Safety Policy from HR site.
• Include HWL information in staff induction handbook
• Publicise availability of Bullying and Harassment support, resilience workshops and Health and Fitness consultations.
• Promote fitness groups and personal training services to staff.
• Promote stress awareness training.
• Publish list of mental health first aiders.
• EHSS/HR to disseminate advice on how to report incidents of violence and aggression at work.
• Wellbeing and Engagement group to concentrate on stress, back care and diet and fitness resources for academic year 2014/15 and to link calendar of events to NHS calendar of national initiatives
• Improve the dissemination of health and wellbeing information using a range of methods
• Follow up participants in previous campaigns to develop HWL case studies and use these in publicity to demonstrate successful outcomes and generate interest

4.4 Training

• EHSS to review demand for first aid and risk assessment training.
• Promote stress awareness training.
• Continue to run range of mental-health related workshops
• Include information on Healthy Working Lives award in Manager training.
• Promote awareness of stigma relating to physical/sensory disabilities and mental health.
Online guidance for managers in supporting staff with the type of adjustments required specific to the type of disability.

5. **Next steps**

An action plan, drawing on the results of the survey, has also been produced and has been published along with this survey summary. This summary and associated action plan will form part of the institutional Healthy Working Lives Bronze Award submission.

The implementation of the action plan will be monitored by the Wellbeing and Engagement Group.

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