



Rt Hon Nick Gibb MP
Minister of State for School Standards

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Dear Expert Advisory Group Member

IMPROVING THE WELLBEING OF STAFF IN SCHOOLS AND COLLEGES

I am writing to thank you for submitting your recommendations to the Department, following the conclusion of your work to help improve the wellbeing of staff in schools and colleges. I would like to express my gratitude to all members for giving up their time to undertake this very important work.

This topic is more important now than ever. Keeping people safe at this difficult time continues to be the Government's top priority. I know that staff in schools and colleges are working selflessly and flexibly, going above and beyond to help their students. This is why we are supporting leaders so that they are able to fulfil their duty of care to their staff, building on the excellent practice that exists in the sector.

I welcome your recommendations along with the principles underpinning them, and the emphasis on developing a whole system approach to improving staff wellbeing. The wellbeing charter that you recommended will set out commitments from government and educators on actions they will take to improve wellbeing of staff in schools and colleges. It would not be an accredited "Kitemark" or an accountability tool, but would act as a public pledge from employers and government. The charter will include a set of wellbeing commitments for schools, colleges and employers to sign up to voluntarily. It will also include commitments from the Department to:

- Integrate wellbeing into its schools workload policy test, and embed staff wellbeing into any relevant training, standards and guidance for which it has responsibility;
- Build staff wellbeing and mental health into our wider communications strategy around tackling stigma and recruitment and retention, linking to existing campaigns in the third sector; and
- Measure the wellbeing of staff at regular intervals, and publish findings.

We will now work with you and others in the sector to develop, test and launch this charter later this year.

As you have noted, the recommendations build on the commitments in the Department's Teacher Recruitment and Retention Strategy for schools, including our

work to reduce workload, support early career teachers, promote flexible working and tackle accountability pressures which we know can drive poor wellbeing.

Finally, I recognise that these recommendations are the start of a long term collaborative process. The evidence is clear that wellbeing relies on a combination of other factors, so we will need to monitor and review progress periodically. Also, whilst the recommendations cover both schools and FE colleges, we will need to approach implementation differently.

I believe that the work of the Expert Advisory Group will make a significant contribution to improving the wellbeing of staff in our schools and colleges.

Once again, please accept my congratulations and thanks to all members for the dedication that you have shown to this work.

With best wishes.

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Nick Gibb". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'N' and 'G'.

Rt Hon Nick Gibb MP

Annex: Recommendations of the Expert Advisory Group on Staff Wellbeing

Overview

The formation of the Expert Advisory Group on Wellbeing was announced in March 2019. Membership of the group can be found [here](#). Its work covered the wellbeing of all staff working in school and FE colleges. It was set up to:

- Provide expert advice and work with the Department to understand the causes of poor teacher and leader wellbeing.
- Understand what the Department can do, in partnership with the sector, to help schools and colleges promote good wellbeing.
- Inform the direction of future wellbeing policy, to be agreed by Ministers.

The Group drew on evidence from DfE user research and other evidence reviews as part of its work. The group concluded its work in March 2020 and submitted its recommendations to Ministers.

Recommendations

The group wished to emphasise the need to view wellbeing as a cultural issue – one that should not be treated as an ‘extra’ responsibility. Rather, future policy in this area should aim to encourage systemic change through interventions that can have an impact at multiple levels.

Many of the major causes of poor staff wellbeing – such as unmet demand for flexible working, unnecessary workload and pressures from the accountability process – are already subject to major DfE policy drives of which the Group is supportive and wish to see sustained.

The recommendations are **the beginning of a long term collaborative process of learning, evaluating and adapting**. This also means taking an empirical approach, with a commitment to developing our evidence base over time.

The Group recommends that DfE should:

1. Set the Direction: Work with the sector to develop a **wellbeing charter** for all education staff. This should capture the main conclusions of the Group’s work, as well setting out expectations, roles and responsibilities. The charter should have full ministerial backing.
2. Improve Access: Launch a project to **improve online access** to resources relevant to teacher wellbeing and mental health.

3. Evaluate Staff Wellbeing: **Measure the wellbeing of staff** at regular intervals, and publish findings. DfE should commit to reviewing the impact of its approach at regular intervals
4. Design-In (i): Integrate wellbeing into its schools workload **policy test** and encourage schools and colleges to build staff wellbeing strategies into their structures.
5. Design-In (ii): **Embed staff wellbeing into any relevant training, standards and guidance** for which it has responsibility.
6. Send the Message: Build staff wellbeing and mental health into its wider **communications strategy** around tackling stigma and recruitment and retention, linking to existing campaigns in the third sector.
7. Clarify and Confirm Requirements: Work with the Health and Safety Executive and Ofsted to clarify and confirm **employers' regulatory responsibilities** around wellbeing (this should be articulated in the new charter).