

Foreword (H.Lederer and C.Edwards)

The Cabinet Office is committed to creating a working environment which encourages our people to be themselves and reach their full potential. We recognise that our people can perform at their best if they work in an environment which is built on respect, trust and collaboration.

We operate at the heart of government to support the Prime Minister and the Cabinet to deliver government programmes, drive efficiencies and reforms to make government work better and support a secure and united democracy. As a result, our people work on a wide range of portfolios across a number of government priority areas. We pride ourselves on embracing difference in all its forms and fostering a working environment which supports people to find meaning in the work they do.

We have a dynamic and evolving workforce. Over the past few years we have welcomed the Government Equalities Office, Government Digital Service, Civil Service Human Resources, and the Fast Stream to the Cabinet Office. This means the department is over three times the size that we were in 2015 and we have people working at 14 sites across the UK. In the context of expansion and heightened uncertainty, it is more vital than ever for our people to feel supported.

We strive to integrate the wellbeing of our people into everything we do. The Cabinet Office is pleased to report our approach to making the department a great place to work in line with the Civil Service commitment to meet the enhanced requirements set out in the [Thriving at Work](#) independent review. We are delighted to share some of the key statistics which inform our decision-making. The data highlights what we have achieved to date and where there are still areas for improvement. We believe that transparency and reporting can support the cultural change required to build a more inclusive workforce and our ambition is to be a leading employer on mental health and disability.

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Disability

1.1 Context

The Cabinet Office is a Disability Confident Leader, and consistently promotes policies to enhance the experiences of people with disabilities. In recruitment, short-listing is name-blanked to support diversity, and a guaranteed interview is offered to disabled candidates meeting the minimum role criteria.

There is an active staff network, ABLE, which empowers disabled colleagues and provides peer support. The network presented its aims and ambitions to the Executive Committee of the Cabinet Office in 2019, and has worked with senior champions to draw attention to invisible disabilities.

In 2018, the department conducted a comprehensive series of focus groups on disability in Cabinet Office sites all across the country, to identify changes that could be made in all areas of the employee lifecycle over the short and long term. This work has been maintained by the Disability Action Group, led by our Executive Committee Disability Champion, which meets regularly to address issues affecting disabled people. We also have a new partner organisation supporting our occupational health system.

The department is at the centre of government and hosts a number of teams that seek to reduce discrimination and disadvantage in the UK, as well as across the Civil Service, including the Government Equalities Office (GEO) and Civil Service Human Resources (CSHR).

1.2. What are the latest numbers on disability?

Our people are asked to anonymously answer 'Do you consider yourself to have a disability/long term health condition?' on the department's Human Resources (HR) system. In 2017, the last year for which full results are available, 7.9% of employees answered 'Yes' to this (as a proportion of all those who reported their status); this represents an increase of 1.9 percentage points from 2014. 9.9% of civil servants overall recorded themselves as having a disability in 2017. There has also been a significant significant shift in disability recording rates for Cabinet Office's Senior Civil Servants (SCS), which more than doubled between 2017 and 2018, from 5% to 11%.

An increasing number of people are choosing to record their diversity data. This shows a positive response to ongoing intranet campaigns and simplified HR systems.

Wellbeing

2.1 Context

The late Lord Jeremy Heywood established a staff network dedicated to employee wellbeing in 2012. The WorkWell network was run by a group of volunteers who met regularly to raise awareness of staff wellbeing and resilience in the Cabinet Office. Over a six year period, the group built momentum around topics, such as the working environment, relationship-building, productivity and job satisfaction. The group established an annual staff health and wellbeing survey and initiated a number of support services, including a listening service run by trained volunteers. In October 2014, the Cabinet Office signed the *Time to Change* pledge to demonstrate our commitment to change how we think and act about mental health in the workplace and ensure that our people feel supported if they have mental ill health.

The groups achievements were recognised in 2018, when the Cabinet Office integrated staff health and wellbeing into HR and created a dedicated full-time post. In November 2018, the Cabinet Office launched its approach to wellbeing, including mental health, physical activity, social and financial wellbeing. Based on data about our people, the strategy outlined three key priorities. These are:

- **Ways of working** - equipping our people with a great working environment, the right tools, resources and flexible support to build a happy and healthy workforce.
- **Healthy you** - ensuring our people take responsibility for their own health and wellbeing. We see our people holistically, as whole individuals, and we understand that they will face a variety of challenges throughout their time at work.

- **Visible leaders and capable managers** - prioritising the health and wellbeing agenda at a senior leadership level and visibly demonstrating through their actions that it is a Cabinet Office priority. Leaders and managers will be held accountable for the wellbeing of their teams through revised performance management steps.

To support our leadership ambitions, we have integrated staff wellbeing into our training, performance management, and staff activities. Wellbeing is now included in the mandatory leadership objective for SCS. As part of our wider performance management review, we also introduced monthly performance conversations across the Cabinet Office. The emphasis is on regular, holistic conversations that touch on areas such as wellbeing, learning & development and career progression alongside performance against objectives.

In 2018, we trained 48% of our senior leadership in Wellbeing Confident Leaders training. The aim of the training is to enable our leaders to define what wellbeing is, and identify the steps they can take to make a positive difference to the wellbeing of their teams. To complement this, senior leaders are also encouraged to share tools and tips with colleagues on how they have operated best practice in their teams. For example, at the last away day for SCS in May 2019, five masterclasses were delivered by senior leaders across the business who shared experiences on staff resilience, improving wellbeing and understanding stress triggers.

In addition to the holistic strategy, the Cabinet Office also launched a specific Mental Health Action Plan in January 2019. This was a positive way to respond to the 3800 working days lost due to mental ill health in 2018, which is the equivalent of 11% of all recorded sickness absence. The action plan demonstrates our commitment to reducing the stigma which surrounds poor mental health through four pillars. These are:

- Training and capability building
- Events, awareness and visibility
- Guidance, process and policy
- Measurement

To support the action plan we have trained over 150 employees as Mental Health First Aiders throughout the department, across a number of grades and locations. Their role is to provide peer support to colleagues, listen and signpost to further support. We are in the process of establishing a community of practice, which will improve the support mechanisms Mental Health First Aiders have to share their experiences and suggest improvements to increase visibility. For example, later on this year all Mental Health First Aiders will be required to wear a green lanyard to improve awareness of their role across all sites.

Our commitment to wellbeing is also reflected in our third party contract with our Occupational Health provider, People Asset Management (PAM), to provide a confidential Employee Assistance Programme (EAP). Through the EAP, Cabinet Office employees are entitled to a 24/7 support helpline, up to six psychological therapy sessions, a dedicated website with health-related guidance and a LifeChat feature. In addition, the Cabinet Office are launching a mobile application to support regional sites and encourage

easier, on-the-go management of our people's wellbeing. Staff engagement with the EAP has increased in direct correlation to promotion of the service. We also have a full-time post dedicated to managing the contract with PAM, monitoring service delivery and promotion of the service.

In addition, the Cabinet Office is committed to delivering a number of national and cross-government health and wellbeing campaigns for our people, which involves running events and introducing initiatives. The Cabinet Office has already delivered five campaigns in 2019, including Wellbeing Month; Time to Talk Day (including a talk from Dame Kelly Holmes); Stress Awareness Month; Mental Health Awareness Week and Active Wellbeing Week. The department receives consistently strong engagement rates in activities relating to campaign events, with more than 1500 members of staff taking part in events and initiatives in the first six months of 2019, either physically or remotely through the use of video technology. The level of interest, particularly in mental health, has gained significant momentum and page views on content relating to information on Mental Health First Aid has increased by 53% from February to July 2019. Intranet content relating to Mental Health Awareness Week received in excess of 20,000 unique page views in May 2019.

To continue to build interest in other topics relating to health and wellbeing, we plan to deliver eight campaigns from August to December 2019. These include: Know Your Numbers Week; World Suicide Prevention Day; Stoptober; World Mental Health Day; Talk Money Week; and Alcohol Awareness Week. Our campaigns are supported by a network of Wellbeing Ambassadors who volunteer as part of their corporate contribution to cascade information and deliver events tailored to their local units. We conducted an internal audit in Spring 2019, which confirmed that we have a wellbeing representative in the majority of units, locations and buildings. To complement this approach, we have also established strong working relationships with HR Business Partners to cascade information, deliver training and raise awareness in their units of responsibility. Finally, we also work closely with internal communications to ensure a consistent profile of content on our intranet, such as blog posts, articles, events and signposting.

What are the latest numbers on employee wellbeing?

We measure personal wellbeing levels in Cabinet Office through the [Civil Service People Survey](#) using the same national statistics that the [Office for National Statistics \(ONS\)](#) use for the UK population as a whole. Some personal wellbeing levels have improved between 2017 and 2018 with a larger proportion of Cabinet Office employees rating their life satisfaction as high (70% up 1 percentage point) and sense that their activities in life are worthwhile (75% up 2 percentage points). The improvement in these indicators is even greater over the longer term, with both up 3 percentage points between 2014 and 2018.

In contrast, there has been a small decrease in the proportion of employees who rate their anxiety as low (46% in 2018 in comparison to 48% in 2014). This change takes place over a time period associated with increased political uncertainty, which includes planning for EU Exit, and is broadly reflected across the Civil Service as a whole.

We use an index based on the PERMA framework to measure the extent to which employees are flourishing (click [here for details](#)). PERMA combines measures of positive emotion, engagement, relationships, sense of meaning and sense of accomplishment from the Civil Service People Survey. In 2018, Cabinet Office employees had a PERMA index score of 75%, which is two percentage points higher than the Civil Service as a whole. The index score in Cabinet OfficeCO has generally remained stable since 2012.

We calculate a stress index score using Civil Service People Survey questions aligned to the dimensions of the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) Management Standards. The higher the index, the more challenging the workplace environment is for stress - for example due to high workload, low control over work, poor support from colleagues and managers. The stress index has remained stable over the last year with no change reported between 2017 and 2018. Over the longer term the index score has also remained stable with only marginal differences - 27% in 2014 compared to 28% in 2018. Further details are available within the [Cabinet Office People Survey results pack](#).

Conclusion

Overall, these figures indicate consistency and stability around the wellbeing of our people, with modest positive movement in measures relating to sense of meaning and feeling things our people do in life are worthwhile. In the context of preparing for our exit from the European Union and the heightened uncertainty that this process brings, it shows great strength and resilience from our people that in such a time of increased pressure and delivering high quality products under compressed timeframes, we have seen stability in our indicators of stress and only marginal deterioration in anxiety.

Despite the positive indications from these measures, we recognise the continued challenges and understand the difficult and complex environment our people face in the broad range of their roles. In the next year, the Cabinet Office will continue to identify areas to improve our wellbeing provision, particularly in specialist roles and those working shift-patterns, to ensure all of our people across all roles, grades and locations feel consistently supported and are able to be themselves at work.