



Mental Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2021-2023

*Providing a healthy and inclusive study and work environment that supports and promotes
health and wellbeing for all*

Introduction

The College Merthyr Tydfil is committed to making the health and wellbeing of its learners and staff an integral part of college life, providing an inclusive learning and work environment that supports diversity, collaboration and wellbeing for all.

Vision

Our vision is 'to provide a healthy and inclusive study and work environment that supports and promotes health and wellbeing for all'

Key Aims

We aim to take an institution-wide approach to mental health and wellbeing to provide the best possible experience for all our learners and staff, through:

- Fostering a whole college community that is committed to supporting learner and staff mental health and wellbeing, and to communicating well about mental health;
- Providing focused support for learners at key points of transition into and out of the college and at all transition points where students may be particularly vulnerable; ensuring early identification and support for learners with additional health needs
- Promoting healthy behaviour and positive mental health within the college's vision, mission and supporting strategies
- Ensuring that the early identification of learners at risk is facilitated by a co-ordinated range of services and practices including personal/course tutor, wellbeing and learner support, peer support, engagement monitoring, and readily accessible services, resources and information; deliver effective learner and staff support services which are easy to access, meet the needs of all, and are resourced sufficiently to meet demand;
- Providing training and support for staff relating to mental health and wellbeing, connecting support for staff and learners to mutual benefit and foster mutually-supportive initiatives among staff and students;
- Fostering collaborative working and strong partnerships with external organisations to support the delivery of comprehensive mental health and wellbeing services;
- Utilising data and information to support mental health and wellbeing, conducting regular staff and learner surveys, monitoring trends, devising improvement plans and measuring success in relation to our aims in an evidence-based and transparent manner.

Our Strategy

Our Mental Health and Wellbeing strategy 2021-2023 outlines how we intend to achieve our vision and aims and provides a framework enabling a whole college approach to supporting mental health and wellbeing. The strategy is based on eight key priority themes and areas:



Underpinning Strategies and Policies

The strategy is both informed by, and underpins, the 'Healthy Colleges and Universities Framework' six Wellbeing Pillars and associated priorities for tackling healthy workplaces and wellbeing. These are:



The Strategy also underpins and supports a range of college strategies and policies, including:

- Safeguarding Children (Young People) and Vulnerable Adults
- Dignity at Study
- Dignity at Work
- Learning Support Policy
- Personal Relationships
- Tutorial Policy
- Sickness and Absence
- Attendance Policy
- Strategic Plan–2020-2024
- Teaching, Learning and Assessment Strategy

Background and Context

Any institution performs better when its learners and staff are healthy, motivated and focused. The College Merthyr Tydfil would be unable to deliver a first class learning experience which ensures that learners achieve their maximum potential without the contribution of healthy staff in a healthy workplace.

When individuals feel they are valued and supported, they tend to have higher wellbeing levels, be more committed to their own and the institution's goals and perform better. There is, therefore, a direct relationship between an individual's health and wellbeing and positive personal and educational outcomes.

Ethos and Culture

Through this strategy, The College Merthyr Tydfil will strive to provide an environment with opportunities that encourage and support 'active engagement' and 'health and wellbeing' and provide a culture where all staff and learners can get the right help at the right time.

The College recognises the impact of COVID-19 on staff and learners' mental health and wellbeing, will have long-term implications as we all learn to live and work with the virus and ongoing pandemic. Therefore this has been acknowledged and incorporated into the priorities and themes to be taken forward, whilst at the same time acknowledging the six wellbeing pillars:

- Mental and Emotional health and Wellbeing
- Physical Activity and active Wellbeing
- Healthy and Sustainable food
- Substance use and misuse
- Personal Relationships and Health
- Sustainable and positive environment

Key Priority Themes and Areas

1. Leadership

Mental health and wellbeing is a strategic priority for the college and there is a commitment from senior managers to sign up to the Association of Colleges Mental Health Charter, to support the mental health and wellbeing of learners and staff, and to positively change policy and practice towards mental health.

Through focusing on mental wellness, the college will champion and promote good mental health for all, ensuring that we are proactive in encouraging and supporting learners and staff to maintain good mental health and that they can get the right help and support at the right time.

Key Objectives:

- We will review all policies and strategies to include mention of or consideration of Mental Health and TrACE informed practice
- We will drive forward our strategy and formalised action plan to address Mental Health and Wellbeing for learners and staff
- We will take part in the Mind Workplace Wellbeing Index to assess our approach to mental health, and recommendations of how to progress.
- We will establish a cross college working group on Mental Health and Wellbeing
- We will undertake specific training for those in Leadership and management roles in both Mental Health and TrACE, in order to provide support to those they are responsible for
- We will promote dignity, understanding, respect, inclusivity and fairness in our support and care of all staff and learners.
- We will develop a policy on alcohol, drug and other substance use that is not solely disciplinary and that clearly describes how the duty of care responsibility is fulfilled towards the individual.
- We will drive forward the college's approach to equality across all aspects of college provision and the college environment, promoting a positive environment for all that has non-judgemental practice and behaviours
- We will work to develop new sustainable approaches and products across the college, including the introduction of re-fillable water bottles and re-usable drink cups
- We will drive forward the achievement of the Green Dragon Award and other key external awards that showcase the college's commitment to providing a safe, healthy and inclusive environment for all.

2. Transition

We will work with our local schools and partner external agencies to ensure that we capture any mental health or wellbeing issues during the learner's transition into college and prior to arrival so that the college can proactively support their effective transition into the college environment and their studies. We will also work to promote and ensure more joined up support for learners at key

transition points during their studies, providing tailored guidance and support as they transition to further or higher study or employment.

Key Objectives:

- We will provide information, advice and guidance relating to learner wellbeing within all of our recruitment and admissions promotional material, guidance documents, Website, school talks, open evenings and other transition events.
- We will actively encourage all learners to declare any mental, emotional or physical health conditions or issues as part of their application and enrolment process.
- We will drive forward the creation of a learner transition passport and underpinning information sharing protocol with local schools, the local authority and appropriate external agencies
- We will develop a range of targeted support measures for learners who may face challenges during transition

3. Intervention

We will encourage early disclosure through the college's transition, enrolment and induction processes, providing the right environment to encourage and enable learners to seek guidance, information and support on all aspects of mental health and wellbeing.

We will offer a comprehensive range of enrichment activities, initiatives, training and pathways to support staff and learner physical and mental wellbeing.

Key Objectives:

- We will continue to review our induction programme to ensure that support for mental health and wellbeing is promoted consistently to all learners
- We will drive forward the new college Learner Support and Wellbeing Centre and on-line support services with clear signposting to ensure that we actively promote and offer:
 - Easy-to-access enhanced mental health and wellbeing support
 - Advice and guidance services for all learners and staff, including:
 - Counselling
 - Sexual Health Nurse
 - Wellbeing Services
 - Inspire to Achieve
- We will ensure that support services are easy to access so that learners receive timely interventions before issues escalate
- We will drive forward the development of the college's sports academy, tutorial and other key programmes, ensuring that they work together effectively to promote and encourage staff and learners to participate in physical activities that positively support their mental health and wellbeing.
- We will work together with the Sports Academy Co-ordinator to develop programmes of activity that can help relieve stress and anxiety at key points in the year e.g. during examination periods.
- We will provide support for sports clubs and activities that support positive wellbeing.

4. Staff

We will provide enhanced staff training, and online resources to support staff wellbeing and better equip staff to support learners.

Key Objectives:

- We will support further training for staff who are required to teach subjects that include or cover Mental Health and Trauma/ACEs.
- We will integrate mental health and wellbeing resources, training and events into the college's staff development and pdf programmes
- We will ensure that we have staff members in every department trained to be Mental Health Champions.
- We will ensure that all staff have access to appropriate guidance, activities, support and training to help manage their work and life balance.
- We will promote healthy lifestyles behaviours by working with Public Health Wales in line with Corporate Health Standards and Cwm Taf University Health Board
- We will work in partnership with the college's sports department, Sports Academy, Learner Senedd, Staff Forum and external partners like Active Merthyr to actively seek feedback on physical and mental health and wellbeing activities and support to encourage all staff to engage in physical and wellbeing activities. This will include monthly staff challenges and events.
- We will work with the Catering manager to offer a balanced menu with the promotion of healthier options to support staff healthy lifestyle choices
- We will undertake a staff survey to identify and prioritise staff training needs
- We will include ACEs awareness information within the Induction program for all new staff
- We will introduce the use of Wellbeing Action Plans for staff as part of their return to work
- We will actively promote the college's Communications Protocol as a means of supporting staff work life balance.

5. Learners

We will ensure that all learners have access to appropriate guidance, activities, support and training to help manage their life and study balance.

Key Objectives:

- We will drive forward education, training, advice and guidance on the key protective factors that can enhance mental health and well-being, with a specific focus on the five ways to wellbeing:
 - Connect
 - Be active

- Take Notice
 - Give
 - Learning
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- We will update the college's Learner voice surveys to seek feedback from learners on 'respectful relationships' and 'sense of belonging' 'feeling safe to discuss wellbeing and mental health concerns with staff'
 - We will create a fitness to study policy which addresses support and sanctions in context of Mental Health Issues and TrACE informed practice
 - We will promote healthy lifestyles behaviours by working with Public Health Wales in line with Corporate Health Standards and Cwm Taf University Health Board
 - We will work in partnership with the college's sports department, Sports Academy, Learner Senedd, Staff Forum and external partners like Active Merthyr to actively seek feedback on physical and mental health and wellbeing activities and support to encourage all learners to engage in physical and wellbeing activities.
 - We will organise awareness raising sessions on alcohol, drugs and other substances as part of the college tutorial and enrichment programme and as part of scheduled health events
 - We will actively promote and support the college's LGBT student community through the LGBT group and through participation in key national campaigns e.g. Pride week
 - We will actively support the Period Poverty/ Red Box campaign initiative, ensuring that learners have access to period products within both the college and home environment.
 - We will establish a college wide Eco group as part of the Learner Senedd
 - We will encourage and facilitate opportunities for learners to input on policies that directly affect them such as behaviour management, code of conduct.

6. Partnerships

We will develop and foster strong partnerships with external organisations to support mental health and wellbeing and drive forward a holistic and integrated approach to 'ensuring a sustainable and positive environment for all'.

Key Objectives:

- We will promote relevant external services to encourage all members of our community to seek help when needed.
- We will work with local partners to deliver appropriate and relevant mental and emotional wellbeing sessions for all staff and learners
- We will promote local partnerships to support living healthy lifestyles. These will include health clubs, healthy eating, smoking cessation clinic, Drink Wise Age Well.
- We will raise awareness of, and participate in national campaigns that promote physical activities and healthy lifestyles in a way that maximises positive benefits and minimises negative impacts on our economy, society and environment.
- We will liaise with external agencies to ensure staff and students have access to information and support in regards to personal and sexual health.

- We will promote national and local campaigns to raise awareness and drive attitudinal change
- We will work with Cwm Taf Morgannwg University Health Board to provide an effective and relevant sexual health and nurse practitioner service for all learners
- We will reflect upon local and national best practice in order to continue to enhance our services and support staff and learner wellbeing

7. Curriculum

We will embed mental health and wellbeing into our curriculum planning process to explicitly include teaching and tutorial support on Mental Health and Wellbeing

Key Objectives:

- We will review our curriculum plan to explicitly include teaching on Mental Health and Wellbeing
- We will work with Cwm Taf Morgannwg University Health Board to integrate healthy lifestyle sessions into the college's curriculum, tutorial and enrichment programme
- We will integrate mental health and wellbeing resources, healthy relationship resources, training and events into the college's tutorial programme.
- We will ensure that wellbeing is a key focus of college Quality Weeks and Learning Walks

8. Data and evaluation

We will utilise data and feedback to support our approach and priorities for mental health and wellbeing

- We will make better use of information and use planning, data and measurement for improving the range of opportunities and activities on offer for staff and learners, including using the outcomes of staff and learner surveys to inform future actions and planning
- We will monitor and review progress against our aims and priorities and key performance indicators on a bi-monthly basis.

Implementation of the Strategy

Roles and responsibilities

In line with the Healthy Colleges and Healthy Universities framework, leadership will ensure that “concern for the mental and emotional health and wellbeing of staff and students informs strategic planning and policy development at the highest level and is included in published strategy documents... (and)... is committed to supporting the development of service provision which supports the positive mental and emotional wellbeing of staff and students.”

Key to successful delivery of the strategy are all staff and learners. Staff are responsible for:

- Engaging with learners and other support services to enhance everyone’s wellbeing
- Referring learners to the appropriate resources, either online or in College for additional support where required
- Engaging with training and development opportunities
- Engaging with any external projects that aim to develop positive mental health and wellbeing as directed by senior managers

Learners are responsible for:

- Engaging with support services to work together to enhance everyone’s wellbeing
- Engaging with appropriate resources either online or in College for additional support where required
- Engaging with any projects that aim to develop positive health and wellbeing

The strategy will be driven forward and managed by the Head of Learner Support and Wellbeing, the Mental Health Co-ordinator and the college’s Executive Team.

Monitoring, Review and Evaluation

The success and delivery of the strategy will be monitored through the development of key performance indicators. Performance against these indicators will be reviewed on a termly basis through regular feedback from staff and learners, evaluation of training, support and activities and through the outcomes of the college’s annual learner and staff surveys. Key Performance Indicators will include, participation levels in training and development, participation in Sports Academy initiatives, participation in learner and staff challenges, number of referrals to counselling and other key support services.

In addition, success will be measured by the achievement of a range of external accolades and awards, including the bronze award of the Corporate Health Standard for Health and Wellbeing in the workplace, together with the Mind Workplace Wellbeing Index Award.

The ultimate outcome of developing and implementing this strategy would be the improved mental health, wellbeing and resilience of staff and learners, leading to improved quality outcomes and success rates for all.

Partner Agencies and Signposting

The college works with the following partner agencies:

Valleys Steps <https://valleysteps.org/> - Online resources for both learners and staff, as well as live online wellbeing courses on a range of wellbeing related topics.

Togetherall <https://togetherall.com/en-gb/> - Online support platform that provides learners with 24/7 anonymous support for mental health, including community support, courses and resources.

CareFirst <https://www.care-first.co.uk/> Staff Employee Assistance Program

Ace Aware Wales <https://aceawarewales.com/about/>

Health Services, general health and wellbeing initiatives

There are several opportunities for identifying learners with additional health needs:

- Transition meetings/NEETs
- Open evening
- Application
- Enrolment
- Disclosure after enrolment

When a disclosure is made prior to enrolment that information is shared with the Wellbeing Team, in the first instance the Transition Officer and ALNCo. Learners with additional health needs will then be invited to discuss their individual needs to ensure the relevant support is put in place, including the creation of Individual Support Plans (ISPs) and Personal Emergency Evacuation Plan (PEEP).

Counselling provision: The college has two counsellors, Theresa Cadd and Nikki Barney who provide counselling to staff and learners. Learners may be referred in by a member of staff or they can make a self referral. Counselling@merthyr.ac.uk

Inspire 2 Achieve (I2A): I2A is an ESF project that provides pastoral and wellbeing support to students between the ages of 16 and 25 years old who are at risk of becoming NEET. Learners are referred in by a member of staff, and allocated a leadworker who works with the learner to create a personalised action plan of support. T_I2A@merthyr.ac.uk

Mental Health and Wellbeing Coordinator: Provides support to learners over the age of 25 years who are therefore ineligible for I2A. Coordinates provision of external wellbeing initiatives. R.lewis@merthyr.ac.uk

Nurse Practitioner service: The CHOICE project provides specialist confidential advice and administration of all individual Contraceptive needs; specialist confidential advice, investigation and treatment of issues concerning Sexual Transmitted Infections and onward referral to appropriate partner agencies as required. Natalie Brogan, CHOICE Project Lead Nurse
Natalie.Brogan@wales.nhs.uk

Togetherall <https://togetherall.com/en-gb/> - Online support platform that provides learners with 24/7 anonymous support for mental health, including community support, courses and resources.
CareFirst <https://www.care-first.co.uk/> Staff Employee Assistance Program

Occupational Health

Working with parents and carers

The college welcomes the involvement of parents/carers and will work with them to ensure that their son/ daughter achieves their maximum potential.

In order to achieve this, we will work with parents/carers to ensure that they are able to:

- Play a full role in the partnership between their son/ daughter and the college
- Have an opportunity to engage with the transition process and at the beginning of the academic year to talk to the support and wellbeing teams about the support on offer
- Access relevant information and policies/strategies on the college website, including an 'Information for parents/carers guide