HR policy briefing

31 October 2023
Agenda

• Health Assured and wellbeing initiatives
• New Ways of Working survey
• Revised fertility leave policy and new pregnancy loss guidance
• Prevent Duty
• HR Policy: local initiatives and local discretion
• General Updates
• Communications Poll
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Services

**Internal**
1. Employee Assistance Programme – Health Assured
2. Togetherall
3. Work+ Family Space

**External**
1. Able Futures
2. Maximus
3. NHS Oxfordshire Talking Therapies
The EAP: Health Assured

• The service provides:
  o Counselling: 6 sessions online, telephone or in person
  o Legal Information and guidance
  o Money guidance
  o Critical incident advice
  o Managerial support and consultancy
  o Online portal and My Healthy Advantage App

• Next information session available to book 21 Nov.
## Eligibility

<table>
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<th>Yes</th>
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<tr>
<td>University staff</td>
<td>College-only staff*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Staff working abroad*</td>
<td>International staff</td>
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<tr>
<td>Fixed-term contracts</td>
<td>Casual workers</td>
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<td>Partners and dependants*</td>
<td>Contractors</td>
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How do I access this service?

We truly believe in promoting equality and diversity. Our internal culture is to embrace diversity and protected characteristics, and we ensure that our services are delivered in a sensitive manner.

- **Freephone**
  A true 24/7/365 service, no answering machines, separate triage team

- **LiveAgent**
  Access through instant chat, via our online portal

- **Online Web Access**
  MHA app and Online Health & Wellbeing Portal allowing for increased

- **Email**
  If an employee prefers, we can offer initial access to the service via email before a telephone triage

- **Interpreters & Translation Services**
  High quality interpreters and translation services in over 240 languages

- **Relay**
  Supporting those who are deaf, hard of hearing or speech impaired
Self Referral Pathway

Individual contacts Health Assured*

Welcome & triage with a counsellor

Legal & information Services

Counselling 24/7 Access & Assessment

Immediate 'in the moment' support & at risk process

Face to face
Telephone
Online or video
Manager Support & Coaching

*Via Freephone, Email, Health Portal, Livelagent, Mobile App, Translation Line or Minicom
Data and Health Assured

• Personal information gathered is **not** shared with the University
• Data shared with the University:
  • Number and types of calls via 24/7 helpline (e.g. legal or counselling)
  • Reason for counselling calls (e.g. life event, trauma, work)
  • Number accessing structured counselling including counselling type (e.g. telephone)
  • Categories of legal calls (e.g. Civil, Consumer)
  • Number of Online portal hits
  • Staff demographics (e.g. female, male, family member)
  • University data – division and staff type

• Data will be shared with the Wellbeing Programme Team via quarterly data reviews.
How can you promote?

- Signpost to the Health Assured information page
- Signpost to the Health Assured information sessions
- Request a Thriving at Oxford roadshow for your area
- Comms material is available to print or include on your intranet
- Let us know what would help!

- This is a key resource for all staff and managers.
- It does not replace Mental Health Crisis services.
MHFA Guidance

• MHFA Support Trial run in Trinity Term 2023
• MHFA Guidance has been submitted to the HR Advisory Group
• MHFA Guidance is due to be published in November 2023
• Alongside a system of support including masterclasses and reflective practice sessions via the Counselling Service

• There is no requirement for departments to have departmental MHFAiders, but Mental Health Awareness Training for all staff is recommended.
  • Contact Ruth.Collins@admin.ox.ac.uk to book
Get involved!

• **Become a Staff Wellbeing Champion**

• **Share best practice on the Wellbeing Teams Channel**

• **Staff Gateway Wellbeing Webpages**

• **Connect with the Wellbeing Team:** [wellbeing@admin.ox.ac.uk](mailto:wellbeing@admin.ox.ac.uk)
New Ways of Working Survey (1)

- 2nd pulse survey – summer 2023
- 1470 responses (24% of PSS) slightly up on 2022 (but not clear who has responded)
- Results being analysed, some trends but no significant change in views
- Lots of qualitative/free comment sections
- Demographics stable (gender, disability, ethnicity, caring responsibility)
- No divisional/departmental indicators requested
- Questions same yr on yr = problematic!
  - may not have been understood as intending comparison with pre-pandemic as opposed to comparison with last year (ie ‘better’ than what?)
  - New joiners have only worked current pattern and have no comparator – therefore not ‘New’
- Seems to suggest that hybrid working has become normalised (no longer New Way of Working?)
- Full summary will be added to feedback section of website shortly

New Ways of Working | HR Support (ox.ac.uk)
% working fully on-site and occasional remote (very slight change)

% working regular and primarily remote (very slight change)
- Over 80% satisfied with working pattern - agreed it meets operational needs, balances work and home life, and supports their health and wellbeing
- 1/3 would leave job for more flexibility, 1/3 have all the flexibility they need

Slight decrease in perceived benefits – eg
- Over 62% of those with caring responsibilities 'better able to fulfil' them (65% 2022)
- 45% of those with disability 'better able to manage' their disability (56% 2022)
- 52% better work-life balance (60% 2022)

But also slight decrease in perception of many downsides eg
- 9% more isolated (14% 2022)
- 15% fewer networking opportunities (21% 2022)
- 6% harder to switch off (13% 2022)
NWW survey (3) – headlines

• Of managers – 80% consider they have tools, skills and support needed to manage hybrid/remote staff
• New questions added re: service user views.
  - 49% positive
  - 17% mixed
  - 2% negative
  - 32% no feedback
• Equality analysis underway
• Summary of free text fields will be included in published report
• Notable themes inc NWW enabling Oxford to be seen as a more inclusive and diverse employer.
• Preview...
I couldn't have maintained my job without the shift to hybrid working. I returned from maternity leave in April 2020 and was expecting to last less than a year having to commute a long way each day I didn't think I would cope. Remote working came at just the right time for me and now with hybrid working I am able to just about balance work with caring responsibilities and keep my job.

Benefits for Parents and Carers – example comments

‘I have caring responsibilities for an elderly parent and NWW has enable me to continue in my role at the University which would not have been possible if NWW had not be introduced.

I am currently pregnant and have really appreciated flexible working approaches during morning sickness periods.

I'm working more hours than I would be if I wasn't able to work flexibly. Dropping my child at nursery and getting to Oxford is a long commute and I have to leave early to pick her up on time. Being able to work some days from home means I get the opportunity to work longer days to balance the shorter ones. If this wasn't an option I would need to reduce my working hours.

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Benefits for those with disabilities/health conditions

Example comments:

Being able to work remotely means I'm better able to manage my chronic health condition and be off sick less.

Neurodiversity - busy offices can be overwhelming and I can be so much more productive on "head-down" tasks working from home.

I can control my environment and stay cool, whereas office environment not suitable for women with menopause symptoms.

The biggest benefit is that I am able to work at all, following serious illness.

‘I am ill less than before NWW and take far fewer absences due to illness. In addition, I have been able to reduce medication for depression and anxiety, due to having a better work-life balance.”
Fertility treatment leave – update

Reminder:

• Many elements of fertility treatment are covered by other provisions (eg medical treatment, sick leave, etc). 2 days per year available eg to allow time to deal with "physical or emotional effects of investigations/interventions".

• Guidance recognises the issue and 'creates space' for employees to discuss with manager.

• (With thanks to our volunteer reviewer) we have now undertaken a thorough review of our existing fertility treatment leave policy and made 3 key changes:
  1. De-gendering the language
  2. Now a Day 1 right
  3. Fathers/other parent now also included explicitly (also impacted by emotional effects, etc)

• On the horizon - Fertility Treatment Bill currently at early stages may formalise the right to time off for appointments

Further information:
Fertility treatment leave | HR Support (ox.ac.uk)
Pregnancy loss

• New guidance for supporting employees going through pregnancy loss, which is now separate to the maternity guidance.

• NHS Definitions:
  • *miscarriage/foetal loss* = Pregnancy loss **before 24** completed weeks
  • *Still birth* = pregnancy loss **after 24** completed weeks

• Gov.uk - Maternity leave SMP or MA
  • Still birth – individual who has experienced the pregnancy loss and the father/partner qualify for both statutory and contractual scheme
  • Miscarriage – no qualification for maternity/paternity schemes but compassionate/special paid leave can be offered.

• New guidance includes advice for managers on how to manage and support an employee who has experienced pregnancy loss and where to signpost employees for internal and external support.

• On the horizon - Miscarriage Leave Bill at early stage of consideration would give specific right to 3 days paid bereavement leave.

Further information
https://hr.web.ox.ac.uk/pregnancy-loss
Prevent Duty

A strand of Gov counter-terrorism strategy (Contest – Prevent, Pursue, Protect, Prepare)

Prevent duty – Specified authorities inc education to "help prevent the risk of people becoming terrorists or supporting terrorism"

Important – within HE context compliance needs to respect academic freedom, freedom of speech and other rights – covered in training

Quick poll – MT2022 link to Prevent training was circulated – did you attend?

New online training available (director of SWSS) on CoSy soon – look out for Cascade message during November

Numbers being tracked for OfS, please sign up – aimed at those with ‘welfare’ angle to role inc HR staff

More information: Prevent | Compliance (ox.ac.uk)
HR Policies (1): Local initiatives

• Local initiatives such as running menopause or wellbeing events very much encouraged

• But where we already have central HR policies and guidance please use them and don't create local versions:
  • May affect contracts and terms and conditions
  • May cause confusion
  • May be divisive across the University
  • We don't have time to review local rewrites of existing policies

• If a central HR policy isn't working well at departmental level please come and talk to us so that we can review it
HR Policies (2): Local discretion

• We understand it can be frustrating when local discretion is built into policies (although we do get asked to bend firm rules as well!)

• Policies have to work across all our very varied departments and staff groups

• Aim for consistent overarching framework to ensure fairness for all staff, but with some space for local HR teams to respond to local or individual circumstances

• Where there is discretion it's there for a reason and responsibility sits with the department, not central HR
General updates

Annual leave and sickness

• Employees who are sick during a period of booked holiday can ask for this to be recorded as sickness (and holiday recredited)

• Reminder - recently extended to include fixed closure days (but not bank holidays)

• A reminder also - recrediting of holiday, whether personal leave or fixed closures, is not automatic and should only be actioned at the request of the employee.

Priority Candidate Support Scheme

• The PCSS which provided some additional support to professional services staff seeking redeployment has been discontinued.
General updates

OA1 Guidance and UDF

• Reminder: the OA1 Form was updated in July 2023 to include country information on the appointment and to include additional guidance for applicants.

• A new UDF for recording outside appointments in PeopleXD has also now launched.

• New guidance for Heads of Department on reviewing OA1s and addressing potential conflicts of interest. See Compliance webpages.

Disclosure and Barring Service checks

• Reminder: DBS checks now carried out via Horus.

• Recent audit identified issue with inconsistent record keeping - reminder that there is a pro-forma for recording DBS checks on the website DBS checks | HR Support (ox.ac.uk)
General updates

Onboarding in PeopleXD

• A new Onboarding process will be live in PXD and will apply to new appointments with start dates from 1 November.

• A briefing session was held in September and the recording is available online. The HR Systems team will continue to run drop-in sessions throughout November and December to answer any questions you may have adopting to the new process.

• Guidance for HR staff has been updated to reflect the introduction of this new feature.

Academic Further Particulars and Standard Job Description - clarification

• Mis-communication in our recent Newsletter – apologies!

• To clarify:
  • Academic FPs have been updated with regards to the EJRA dates
  • Standard JD template has been updated to include links to the Oxford Research Staff Society
General updates

Equipment Loan Form

• A new Equipment Loan Form will be added to the New Starter Arrangements Day 1 checklist in early November.

• From 1st November all new starters/movers will be prompted by PeopleXD as part of the Onboarding Module to discuss and complete the form with their line manager.

• The form will capture details of all the equipment on loan to the employee and include a signed declaration that they accept the conditions of the loan and that they will familiarise themselves with the relevant University-wide IT policies:

  • The University’s IT Regulations 1 of 2002
  • The Information Security Policy, including the Information Security and Data Privacy Awareness Training
Policy team communications

- Briefings and Newsletter continue to now just be HR policy issues
- Broader HR issues coming in new HR-wide newsletter
  - Twice per term
  - To: administrators-personnel mailing list. To join list - [HR communications | HR Support (ox.ac.uk)]
  - Using click-through email format, like Bulletin
  - Covering news from all central HR teams
Polls

1. HR Policy Briefings
   • Do you continue to find these briefings useful, with the operational focus?

2. Policy team Newsletter for HR colleagues
   • Do you still prefer to have the Policy news separately from the wider HR-news newsletter?