

National Action Enquiry Programme - Angus Wellbeing Module

School Staff Wellbeing and Covid – 19: What do we know?

The Covid-19 pandemic has resulted in significant personal and organisational change, for all staff in education, in a way that was never anticipated or planned for. Prior to the pandemic, [research](#) showed that education professionals already experienced lower wellbeing than the general population. The wellbeing of school staff matters, for both the long term mental and physical health of teachers¹ ([Travers, 2017](#)) and for the wellbeing and educational outcomes for pupils ([Hattie, 2009](#)). Better teacher wellbeing is associated with better pupil wellbeing and with lower levels of psychological difficulties ([Harding et al, 2018](#)).

Local and National research indicates that the pandemic has further affected the wellbeing of school staff.

Local Research:

During the Spring of 2020, Angus Educational Psychology Service surveyed 1078 school staff on the impact of Covid-19 and found that of those who responded, more than 60% experienced feelings of stress in relation to their work over the last few months and/ or had higher levels of anxiety.

National Picture:

A [YouGov Survey](#) (September 2020) commissioned by the charity Education Support, reported on school staff wellbeing across the UK during the Covid19 pandemic and noted that 52% of the UKs schoolteachers felt their mental health had declined during the first few months of the coronavirus pandemic. Areas for concern for staff highlighted within the report included:

- keeping children and young people safe
- developing skills and knowledge to strengthen their own and their student's wellbeing
- adapting quickly to changing circumstances, guidance and working practices

Heightened levels of anxiety and fear experienced by teachers in Scotland have been reported throughout the pandemic by the [EIS](#). (Educational Institute of Scotland) particularly as community incidence rates have increased.

In support of school staff and recognition of the pressures they are facing as a consequence of Covid19, the Scottish Government in September 2020, set out [plans](#) for a package of support with significant funding, developed in partnership with organisations represented on the Education Delivery Group.

¹ Our wellbeing module is for all school staff and we choose to use this term in this report. However, a lot of the available research is focused on teachers so when reporting on this research we refer specifically to 'teachers'.

How can staff wellbeing be supported in schools?

“Mental Health and Wellbeing (MHWB) at work is influenced by the relationship between the individual, the nature of their work and the work environment”.

(White, 2020, page 4)

Different approaches to supporting wellbeing have been highlighted in the literature. Each school is different, and what will work will vary depending on the unique needs and environment of each setting.

A [2019 literature review](#) for the Department for Education, England and Wales identified six core themes in supporting staff wellbeing in schools:

1. Engagement from senior leaders
2. Implementing whole school approaches
3. Provision of support, mentoring and training
4. Fostering resilience and mindfulness
5. Promoting healthy and active lifestyles
6. Ensuring a positive environment, including signposting to other resources

Further research required

Most research to date has focused on individual coping mechanisms along with prevention of mental health problems. Whilst there is recognition that demands, control, support, relationships, role and change at work ([Health and Safety Executive](#)) all influence levels of work related stress, there is limited research focusing on:

- how organisational change within schools can promote teacher wellbeing
- the impact of wellbeing interventions in schools ([White, 2020](#))

The Angus Wellbeing Module - aims and rationale

“Achieving and maintaining good wellbeing can be defined as a cumulative process of continually balancing the challenges that any individual experiences, with the resources that are available to them to address those challenges.”

(Dept for Education, England and Wales, 2019, p55)

The Angus Wellbeing Module was developed to support school staff wellbeing within the context of Covid 19.

In developing our Wellbeing Module, we were mindful of the need for an intervention which considers:

- the impact and measurement of wellbeing interventions for all staff

- how systems change within schools can enhance staff wellbeing ([White, 2020](#))
- the need for senior leadership teams to make changes based on the specific staff needs of each school ([Brady and Wilson, 2021](#))

Therefore, we wanted to measure the impact of an intervention which sought to promote positive wellbeing for school staff through **both** individual approaches, grounded in positive psychology, **and** organisational systems change, within the context of identifying wellbeing needs of all staff groups.

The [module](#) itself is a self-study module based on the Compassionate and Connected Community Professional Learning Resource, which aims to give an understanding of the challenges and supports to wellbeing in a school setting. Following completion, staff give feedback which can be used to plan, implement, and evaluate wellbeing support in school.

We will use survey feedback from staff to highlight which aspects of the module are most applicable to their own wellbeing, and what changes they think could be made to improve wellbeing in their school. Based on this information, we will also invite a small number of schools to participate in action research to identify and evaluate next steps.