

## Wellbeing Peer Support Role Profile

### Purpose

The University of Reading recognises that wellbeing and good mental health are as important as physical health and is aware of the statistics which confirm that, on average, one in four people will experience a mental health difficulty in the course of a given year and that such problems can impact colleagues at work.

The University also recognises that the majority of people who experience mental health difficulties recover or learn to manage their symptoms, especially if they are supported early on.

Wellbeing Peer Support volunteers are employees of the University who have volunteered their time to provide confidential support and information to staff members who are experiencing a mental health issue or emotional distress and need the support of someone to talk to but are unable to approach a colleague or line manager.

The interaction could range from having an initial conversation through to supporting the person to get appropriate professional help. Wellbeing Peer Support volunteers are valuable in providing early intervention help for someone who may have poor wellbeing or may be developing a mental health issue.

### A Wellbeing Peer Support volunteer will:

- Be aware of the early signs and symptoms of mental ill health
- Start a supportive conversation with a colleague who may be experiencing a mental health issue, poor wellbeing or emotional distress
- Listen to the person non-judgementally
- Maintain confidentiality as appropriate
- Encourage the person to access appropriate professional support or self-help strategies. This might include encouraging access to internal support systems such as the University's Employee Assistance Programme (EAP).

### A Wellbeing Peer Support volunteer will not:

- Make judgements or statements about the legitimacy of someone's mental health issue
- Provide counselling or attempt to diagnose the member of staff or be responsible in any way for whether or not the individual seeks professional support

### Who are Wellbeing Peer Support volunteers and how can they be contacted:

Wellbeing Peer Support volunteers are drawn from across the University and are in a variety of different roles. They are people who are:

- Empathetic to people's problems by being good listeners
- Able to communicate clearly and effectively
- Non-judgemental and objective in their approach

A list of Wellbeing Peer Support volunteers can be found on the Wellbeing web pages.

### **Support and Development of Wellbeing Peer Support volunteers:**

HR colleagues' co-ordinate the Wellbeing Peer Support network and provide support, guidance and training as necessary. This includes a regular termly meeting to ensure consistency of approach, to share ideas and experiences, and to monitor how the network is being used.

Wellbeing Peer Support volunteers will be required to undertake refresher skills training in order to maintain their skills.

All Wellbeing Peer Support volunteers have undertaken a comprehensive two day MHFA course before they become a member of the staff network. This is a comprehensive awareness and skills course.

Anyone interested in becoming a Wellbeing Peer Support volunteer should contact Alan Twyford, HR Partner, in the first instance. The role will be suitable for anyone with an interest in mental health and wellbeing, and a desire to support others. You will need to be able to attend a two day course, and have the time to fulfil the role once trained.

### **Monitoring and Data Protections:**

- A Wellbeing Peer Support volunteer may need to meet with members of staff more than once. To avoid the need to cover ground already discussed, with the agreement of the member of staff, they may make some notes at a meeting. Notes will be kept by the Wellbeing Peer Support volunteer and will where possible not record any personal details.
- Any notes taken will be stored confidentially. They will be retained for a period of six months after the final meeting after which they will be destroyed.
- For statistical purposes, information relating to the number of contacts made will be collated using a monitoring form and may be used in reports made for Diversity & Inclusion purposes and to senior management. This information is always anonymised and will not be presented or used in any way which identifies individuals.

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