

WELL-BEING STRATEGY

MAKING A POSITIVE IMPACT
FOR COLLEAGUES AND STUDENTS



2023/25





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VICE-CHANCELLOR'S FOREWORD

The University of South Wales is made great by the passion and commitment of our colleagues and the incredible stories of our students.

Being part of the USW family is an exciting and rewarding experience. However, we know that there are times and circumstances which may be challenging and impact on mental health and well-being. That is why we are committed to developing a whole university approach and aspiring to be a Healthy University.

We first published a USW well-being strategy in 2020 which demonstrated an inclusive, proactive and values-based approach. We were ambitious in our aims and I'm proud of the progress achieved against all elements, providing a solid foundation for our next phase which is equally as aspirational.

We have reviewed our policies and procedures to thread the concept of well-being into our functions and activities. In particular in recent work, we have synchronised the well-being strategy with the USW safeguarding policy. Keeping this focus is an on-going commitment which our established Well-being Steering Group will oversee.

The landscape within which this strategy is set is increasingly complex with 74% of students

reporting the pandemic impacted on their mental health. We are proud of the changes made to our support offer for students with the development of an effective triage service for those seeking help, to a comprehensive Mental Health Liaison Service in partnership with the NHS and other HEIs. Well-being is a key feature in our curriculum design principles the Strategic work around the student experience and success, for example Transition and Student First Experience.

We recognise the importance of creating a community in which individuals can thrive and the close link to the equality and diversity agenda is demonstrated throughout this strategy and its implementation. Our realisation of a 'report and support' system is a demonstration of our organisation commitment to foster an inclusive environment providing resources and opportunity to report, respond and record identity-based violence, bullying, harassment or discrimination.



Dr Ben Calvert
Vice-Chancellor

CHANGING LIVES AND OUR WORLD FOR A BETTER TOMORROW



OUR AMBITION

USW is ambitious to be:

**CHANGING LIVES AND OUR
WORLD FOR A BETTER
TOMORROW: USW WILL BE A
LEADING UK UNIVERSITY,
MAXIMISING POSITIVE IMPACT
FOR OUR STUDENTS, PARTNERS,
AND COMMUNITIES.¹**

Within a context of environmental and society challenges of this time, moving forward from a global pandemic and navigating the impact of cost-of-living increases, the well-being and health of individuals and the organisation is a central component to achieving our ambition.

USW has aligned itself to the Universities UK Stepchange Framework, and this forms a backbone to our approach, informed by recommendations from an assessment of performance against the framework commissioned in early 2022. We intend to repeat the assessment against the framework in Spring 2024 determining progress and informing a further review of this strategy.





LEADERSHIP



Institutional leadership for well-being and health is securely placed with the Executive Team with responsibility for the delivery of the USW Well-being Strategy and related action plan empowered to the cross-university Well-being Steering group jointly led by the Director of Human Resources and the Director of Student Services.

The Well-being Steering Group is one of three governing pillars of USW², working in synchronisation with the Health and Safety Committee and the Equality and Diversity Steering group.

Well-being is at the heart of USW and for maximum impact demonstrating a whole university approach, this strategy aligns with a number of internal policy documents³ and strategic drivers:

- The University's Strategic Plan – USW 2030, is explicit on the core purpose to making a positive impact on the communities we serve.
- USW's People Plan⁴ is built upon the four critical themes of culture and behaviours, development and leadership, talent management and performance and recognition.

- USW Core Values⁵ and Student Charter⁶ outline the expectations on students and colleagues which align to behaviours supporting good well-being.
- Strategic Equality Plan⁷ has the stated intent to build a culture of inclusion by promoting dignity, respect, fairness and well-being.
- Health and Well-being Accelerator⁸ articulates how USW is "inspired by the opportunity to improve the health and well-being in the region, and focussed on applying these principles to deliver impact both within and far beyond the region" drawing on its wealth of experience and expertise.
- USW Sports strategy aims to make sport and physical activity a visible and vibrant part of life at the University, playing a central role in positive well-being that engages students and colleagues.

² Link through to a connect page giving an overview of the structure, TOR and post-cards
³ Link to a page with all listed policies and regulations
⁴ USW People Plan | ⁵ Core Values: Professional, Responsive, Creative, Inclusive, Collaborative
⁶ Student Charter | ⁷ Strategic equality plan | ⁸ Health and well-being Accelerator



UNDERSTANDING WELL-BEING

USW strives to become a Healthy University⁹ which means we will:

ADOPT A HOLISTIC UNDERSTANDING OF HEALTH; TAKE A WHOLE UNIVERSITY APPROACH; AND ASPIRE TO CREATE A LEARNING ENVIRONMENT AND ORGANISATIONAL CULTURE THAT ENHANCES THE HEALTH, WELLBEING AND SUSTAINABILITY OF OUR COMMUNITIES AND ENABLES PEOPLE TO ACHIEVE THEIR FULL POTENTIAL.

USW is committed to providing a safe and secure environment for all members of its community, including students, colleagues, volunteers and visitors, with well-being at the forefront of how we work. This commitment is sometimes understood to be how we **Safeguard** individuals and groups, keeping people safe from abuse, neglect or harm.

We recognise that the University and individuals also have legal obligations relating specifically to **Safeguarding** Children and Adults at Risk and there is a separate policy, definition and guidance¹⁰ available.

USW has adopted a pastoral approach set within the well-being framework to fulfil obligations under **Prevent** and Violence Against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence (**VAWDASV**) legislation. We have also committed to incorporate the approach to **Substance Use** and **Cost of Living** impact, with our governance and operational processes designed to effectively manage the connection between well-being and these related topics¹¹.

USW has embraced a principle of 'no wrong door' to raising a concern¹² with the implementation of a report and support system.

⁹ Healthy Universities | ¹⁰ Link to safeguarding policy pages
¹¹ Link to well-being page where ToR explain the connection | ¹² How do I raise a concern?



PARTNERSHIP

To create a *Healthy University* learning environment and culture we must work in partnership, recognising our own and others locus of responsibility within a context of our shared values¹³.

USW

We will discharge our legal and moral obligations with positivity and care, transforming how individuals approach their own well-being and health through engagement, appropriate tools and resources, the promotion of good well-being and positive mental health. Support and referral will be available for those who need it, accessed by processes and mechanisms for timely identification of need, early intervention and effective response and addressing vulnerability.

EXTERNAL PARTNERS

USW has established and fledgling partnerships with agencies, groups and charities. We will continue to invest and nurture relationships to enrich the USW well-being culture and share learning and opportunities for others beyond our immediate community. We will do this through various formal and informal referral, commercial, procurement & learning routes under the strategic direction of the USW Engagement policy.

USW COMMUNITY MEMBERS

Students and colleagues are invited and encouraged to inform the USW approach to well-being and health while all individuals are expected to be responsible for their own four elements of well-being:



EMOTIONAL

Look after your mental health; positivity; mind-set; research the negative signals.



PHYSICAL

Be active, proportionate to your circumstances, but push yourself. Make sure you get your rest.



SOCIAL

Cultivate relationships, take action to boost your confidence, become involved in USW community



FINANCIAL

Manage your money effectively; this will be so important during the period covered by this strategy.

Emotional

Physical

Social

Financial



STRATEGIC WELL-BEING PRIORITIES

Three strategic priorities are identified which build on the previous Well-being Strategy and are informed by recommendations from the StepChange Audit undertaken in early 2022. These priorities form the basis of a university wide action plan, the delivery of which is overseen by the Well-being Steering group and associated operational groups.

The USW well-being strategy priorities are:

COLLEAGUE WELL-BEING

Remaining committed to a whole-university approach and continuing with the alignment of student and colleague well-being, health and allied¹⁴ policies and initiatives. We will facilitate opportunities for all to contribute to the development of a culture, environment and practice which promotes good well-being and supports positive mental health.

Community building, creating a sense of belonging and pride in the USW collective and identity will be integral to our activities. We are committed to a one-University approach to inclusion, equality, diversity and well-being, recognising them as vital components of our high-performance culture. We will identify differentiated career pathways, illustrating routes for progression and growth across USW, maximising opportunities for growth across our own organisational structure.

We will deliver awareness and training opportunities enhancing the skills and confidence to promote good well-being and respond

effectively to indicators of poor mental health and crisis situations including self-harm & suicide. We will regularly review services and resources available to promote well-being, working with partners to encourage colleagues to take personal responsibility for their physical and mental health whilst taking proactive steps to provide an appropriate working environment¹⁵.



STUDENT SUCCESS

We will outline a framework for student success at USW with well-being as a central consideration, harnessing the commitment to, and effective delivery of activities which support student achievement. Tailoring for the diverse student populations, individual strengths and vulnerabilities and sensitive to the various pressures throughout a student journey, including transitions. As such there will be explicit alignment with the Strategy Implementation Groups (SIG) focussing on Transitions and Graduate employability.

The framework for student success will articulate the importance of well-being and health in the curriculum design content and delivery of our portfolio. The Strategy Implementation Group (SIG) tasked with embedding curriculum design principles will be inclusive of well-being, facilitating its integration across all programmes supported by developing resources and up-skilling colleagues.

We will progress a range of student support actions to build on recommendations of the StepChange audit which includes the introduction and evaluation of a new student well-being triage provision. We will continue our active engagement in student mental health issues at the NHS interface.

EMBRACING TECHNOLOGY FOR WELL-BEING

Apply new knowledge, technologies, processes and operations, including data analysis, that enhance the development of well-being and health now and in the future, and underpins the delivery of the above two priorities. Learning from our own and the sector experiences will be key and we will review data sharing and approaches to confidentiality. We will implement and evaluate the impact of a report and support system.

We will progress from the previous activity which reviewed sector digital resources to implement and evaluate the impact of the Togetherall platform, an anonymous online peer support, community moderated provision. This is supported by trained professionals to complement our in-house support offer.

We will establish a framework for data capture and analysis which allows measurement of the effectiveness of our governance and leadership and impact of the action plan, informing further EDI dialogue.

We will establish a risk management methodology consistent across the three pillars of governance¹⁶ which will serve to assure our Board of Governors on compliance with regulation and legislation and enables central oversight, locally managed risk mitigations and institutional learning.



¹⁴USW people plan, Safeguarding, Prevent, VAWDASV, Dignity@USW, Substance Use & Suicide Safer
¹⁵ Including review of work patterns and keep under review hybrid working arrangements

¹⁶ H&S committee, Wellbeing Steering Group and Equality and Diversity Steering Group

