

Committee(s): Corporate Services Committee	Dated: 11 th September 2024
Subject: Update on Wellbeing and Belonging workstream initial activities	Public
Which outcomes in the City Corporation's Corporate Plan does this proposal aim to impact directly?	
Does this proposal require extra revenue and/or capital spending?	No
If so, how much?	
What is the source of Funding?	
Has this Funding Source been agreed with the Chamberlain's Department?	N/A
Report of: Alison Littlewood, Chief People Officer & Executive Director or People and HR	For Information
Report author: Kaye Saxton-Lea, Acting Assistant Director of Learning and Organisational Development, People and HR	

Summary

The purpose of this report is to update the committee on the proposed initial activities for the wellbeing and belonging workstream as an integral part of the People Strategy. The strategic approach to wellbeing across the organisation will involve integrating wellness into the overall people strategy to improve employee health, engagement, productivity, and organisational culture.

Recommendation(s)

- Move from wellbeing initiatives as standalone activities to fully embed them within the organisation's core operations. This will ensure that wellbeing becomes an integral part of our future culture and leadership and aligns with the People Strategy.
- Further enhance the Management Development Programme to include more targeted training on supporting employee wellbeing, especially in relation to building psychological safety, handling challenging conversations, and fostering an inclusive work environment.
- Strengthen efforts to support EEDI (Equity, Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion), given its clear links to wellbeing and belonging. Ensure that these areas are a focus in both the immediate action plan and longer-term strategy to enhance organisational culture and manager effectiveness.

Main Report

1. Background

City Well was initiated at the City Corporation following a report by Wellbeing Associates who submitted a comprehensive report in 2015, presenting strategic recommendations to enhance the existing wellbeing strategy and foster a pervasive culture of health and wellbeing within the Organisation.

Following the report, several actions were implemented, most notably the introduction of the City Well programme. This initiative successfully addressed several key recommendations, including the deployment of Mental Health First Aiders and the establishment of Wellbeing Champions. Additionally, the programme organised effective health promotion days.

Despite these achievements, the overall impact of the wellbeing initiatives remained fragmented. While certain aspects of the programme demonstrated success, the integration and holistic influence of wellbeing efforts appeared limited, indicating a need for further refinement and cohesion in the strategy.

This challenge was further exacerbated by the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic and subsequent lockdowns, which brought significant changes to working practices.

Despite ongoing efforts to enhance employee wellbeing across the organisation, these initiatives often failed to reach their full potential due to their perception as standalone activities, disconnected from the core operations of the business. To achieve meaningful and lasting impact, it is imperative that employee wellbeing is integrated throughout the organisation, becoming an integral part of our culture, leadership, and people management practices.

With the introduction of the People Strategy, which positions Wellbeing and Belonging as a critical component, it is important to ensure that all dimensions of wellbeing are addressed comprehensively. This integrated approach will not only better support our employees but also foster a thriving organisational environment.

The 2023 CIPD Health and Wellbeing at Work survey¹ highlighted the top three benefits for employers who increase their focus on employee wellbeing: improved employee morale and engagement, develop a healthier and more inclusive culture, and enhance work-life balance. These outcomes underscore the value of embedding wellbeing initiatives across all levels of the organisation in a more strategic and inclusive manner.

Following the staff survey in 2022, wellbeing was identified as an area requiring additional support and review. Specifically, the survey highlighted the need for enhanced development of managers to better support individuals and teams in the realm of wellbeing and performance. A Management Development Programme was established to start to address this for those with line management responsibilities. Following feedback from each cohort the programme is reviewed and amended. Key areas of the programme are:

- Introduction to people management
- Communication as a manager
- Leading diverse teams *
- Building high performing teams
- Performance management
- Strategic decision making

¹ [Wellbeing at Work | Factsheets | CIPD](#)

- Grievance management

In addition, two self-directed learning courses focus on the probation and appraisal processes. EEDI principles are fully integrated throughout the entire programme. Notably, the course on **Leading Diverse Teams* emphasises inclusive decision-making, awareness and reduction of unconscious bias, celebration of diversity within teams, and the application of scenarios taken from "Equally Yours" to foster practical understanding.

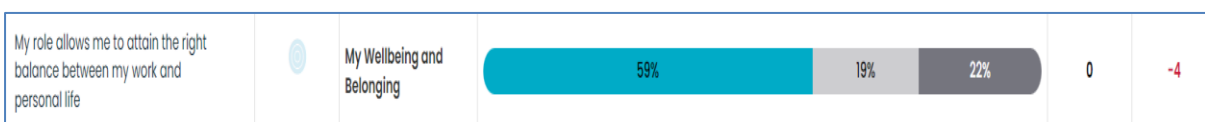
2. Current Position

Staff survey results – 2024

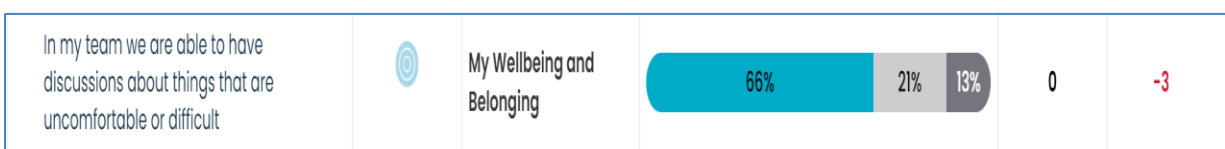
The recent staff survey has provided valuable data that will serve as the foundation for developing our five-year people strategy, aimed at positioning us as a world-class organisation. Leveraging these insights, our long-term plans include the introduction of new organisational values and behaviours, which will be embedded across the organisation. Additionally, we will be designing a new performance framework that will enhance our leadership and management capabilities, ensuring that we foster a culture of excellence and continuous improvement.

In the 2024 staff survey, 10 questions were introduced under the theme of My Wellbeing and Belonging. Among these, three questions can be benchmarked against the previous survey, while seven new questions were added.

The lowest score within the wellbeing questions was for the statement, "My role allows me to attain the right balance between my work and personal life," which showed a decrease of 4% from the 2022 survey. This decline may be attributed to the recent changes in the workplace attendance policy, increasing the requirement from two to three days in the office, which coincided with the release of the 2024 survey. Many of the open-ended responses in the survey indicated a strong connection to this issue



The second lowest score within the survey “In my team we are able to have discussions about things that are uncomfortable or difficult” showed a decrease of 3% from the 2022 survey. This indicates a need for further efforts to support Equity, Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion (EEDI) across the organisation. There are clear links between EEDI and the themes of wellbeing and belonging. Enhancing these areas will contribute to improving organisational culture and equipping managers to handle challenging conversations more effectively.

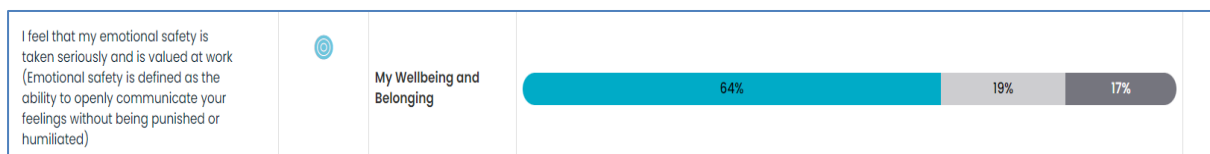


In 2024, a new question was incorporated into the survey to begin assessing the level of emotional and psychological safety within our organisation. “I feel that my emotional safety is taken seriously and valued at work.” Emotional safety in the workplace is achieved when employees feel secure enough to bring their full, authentic selves to work. However, establishing such an environment is a gradual process that requires deliberate effort and commitment.

Creating an emotionally safe workplace involves several key initiatives. Building trust is paramount, as it lays the foundation for open communication and genuine interactions. Strengthening diversity and inclusion efforts ensures that all team members feel valued and respected, fostering a sense of belonging. Additionally, cultivating a no-blame culture encourages learning from mistakes rather than assigning fault, which promotes innovation and collaboration.

Recognition and praise play a crucial role in reinforcing positive behaviours and contributions, further enhancing emotional safety. Lastly, consistently showing employees that they matter through supportive actions and communication strengthens their sense of security and commitment to the organisation.

By focusing on these areas, we aim to create a work environment where all team members feel comfortable, valued, and safe, leading to a more engaged and productive workforce.



The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) annual statistics for work-related ill health and workplace injuries², covering the period of 2022/23. The data revealed that 1.8 million workers reported suffering from work-related ill health during this period. Notably, half of these cases were attributed to stress, depression, or anxiety, underscoring a significant concern for mental health in the workplace.

Within the reporting period from 8th August 2023 to 7th August 2024 at the City Corporation, 236 cases of anxiety, stress, depression, or other psychiatric illnesses were documented. This highlights the continued need for robust workplace health and safety measures, particularly in addressing the psychological well-being of employees.

3. Next Steps

The strategic approach to wellbeing should be holistic, inclusive, and integrated into the organisation's core values and operations. By doing so, the organisation can create a healthier, more engaged, and productive workforce, which in turn drives us to becoming a world class organisation and an employer of choice.

² Health and safety at work summary statistics for Great Britain 2023

To address these challenges, People and HR are working collaboratively with colleagues from Health and Safety, EEDI, and Occupational Health to produce a comprehensive wellbeing and belonging action plan.

To support this a monthly meeting will be established to continue this vital work. This action plan will cover all aspects of wellbeing and align with the People Strategy, clearly set out the priorities over the next five years and link to the five pillars of wellbeing. The five pillars are: Connect, Be Active, Take Notice, Keep Learning and Give.

Some of the immediate actions to be implemented are listed below, however a full action plan is in appendix 1 of this document.

- Continue to work with managers and leaders to support and develop their understanding of wellbeing and responsibilities to build psychological safety across the organisation.
- Update the Mental Health First Aider (MHFA) register, recruit, and train MHFA's in areas where there is a gap or greater need
- In alignment with the People Strategy, we will be working in collaboration with Dr Hazel Harrison, an expert in psychology and wellbeing. Dr Harrison will support the development and implementation of initiatives focused on the wellbeing and belonging and Trustworthy Leadership strands of the People Strategy. Creating bespoke programmes, that are grounded in evidenced-based theories.
- To effectively support the Future Ambition 18 Leadership Exchange, the aim is to enhance the overall leadership capabilities while simultaneously fostering a culture of wellbeing across the organisation. By strengthening decision-making processes and promoting collaboration across key organisational projects, this initiative will result in a more capable and cohesive leadership cohort. Additionally, it will prioritise wellbeing as a strategic imperative, ensuring that leaders are equipped to drive both performance and a healthier workplace culture. This dual impact will create a leadership group that not only excels in their roles but also champions a workplace environment where wellbeing is integral to organisational success.
- Monthly virtual lunch and learns to be reintroduced to support key initiatives within wellbeing and belonging. A calendar of events will be publicised, however likely first topics will be related to the five pillars of wellbeing and commence with connect and keep learning linked to additional manager support, financial wellbeing and lifestyle choices
- A paper on the benefits refresh will be going to the November Corporate Service Committee, any recommendations linked to the wider wellbeing and belonging piece will be added following approval.

Corporate & Strategic Implications

Strategic implications – This proposal will support our priorities of the wellbeing and belonging theme of the people strategy more effectively, improving employee's wellbeing and a sense of belonging.

Financial implications - Currently there is no allocated budget to support the work of the People strategy themes. The costs will therefore need to be met from the People & HR Corporate Training

Budget for 2024/25 which is significantly underfunded to achieve everything set out across the five themes.

Resource implications – staff resources will be required to manage, prioritising and implementation of the wellbeing and belonging strategy which include an additional FTE Wellbeing post above current structure, programmes design and facilitation in specialist areas, process improvements and clear communication on actions undertaken, it is estimated that an additional budget of around £244,000 will be required.

Legal implications – None

Risk implications. Not implementing the wellbeing plan can lead to several risks which may include increased absenteeism, higher turnover rates, lower employee engagement, decreased innovation and reputational damage.

Equalities implications – Full consideration will need to be given to ensure equity, inclusion, and accessibility when designing all wellbeing and belonging initiatives to ensure no one is excluded

Climate implications - None

Security implications – None

Conclusion

The outlined recommendations provide a clear framework for clear actions to support and build wellbeing and belonging across the organisation. With structured timelines, regular updates, and a focus on alignment with strategic objectives, the organisation will be well-positioned to enhance staff wellbeing, engagement, and overall organisational performance.

Appendices

Appendix 1 – Wellbeing action plan

Kaye Saxton-Lea
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