**Course: Promoting staff wellbeing**

**Unit 2: Leading change**

**Overview**

**Aims and outcomes**

This unit aims to expose the challenges of change and its implementation. It highlights the potential of real, perceived or imagined stress that implementing change can evoke. There is an opportunity for enhanced understanding about responses to stress and the development of healthy coping strategies.

Participants will:

* appreciate the impact and influence the SLT have on staff performance
* understand that change can be experienced as a stressor or stimulator
* explore the main stressors in your school
* consider the possible staff perception that senior leaders are generators of stress for staff and how best to address this
* prepare for a whole-staff wellbeing audit.

**Participants**

This unit is for the senior leadership team and any other assigned middle leaders invited to

contribute.

**How this fits in with whole-school improvement**

* Improving quality of leadership.
* Raising the standard of management.
* Developing whole-school wellbeing.

**Resources**

* PowerPoint presentation for Unit 2
* Large mind mapping paper or whiteboard sheets
* Coloured markers
* Spare copies of Handouts 1.2 and 1.4
* Handout 2.1: The Hawthorne Effect
* Handout 2.2: Core values
* Handout 2.3: ‘Provided that…’
* Handout 2.4: ‘Good luck, bad luck?’
* Digital camera to record outcomes
* Diaries for date of next meeting

**Timing**

This training unit is designed to take 90 minutes. Depending on the size of your staff and their level of interaction, you may need some flexibility and feel you want to add a little extra time, say to two hours. Finish at the time you announce to the group.

**Rationale and background**

Stress means different things to different people. What one person considers stressful another may enjoy as a challenge. Change is the one constant in our lives. However, it can trigger fear, resistance and feelings of powerlessness.

The World Wide Web has created far-reaching changes in many aspects of our lives. There are new opportunities for learning, communicating and working. This brings its own unique challenges and opportunities in our society and especially in our schools. The way senior leaders perceive, embrace and manage these changes will directly correlate to the successful growth of the school.

Education is under constant government reform. Whether the reform is perceived as positive or negative, the manner in which the changes are implemented is crucial to its successful implementation. Senior leaders are the backbone of the school. They are the foundations and the underlying structure that support the school’s ability to grow and flourish. The strength of these foundations will determine the ability to welcome and handle change.

How senior leaders influence the reception of change, building healthy relationships and developing effective communication with staff, cannot be overestimated.

A team of social scientists led by Harvard Business School professor Elton Mayo carried out a study of efficiency in the workplace at a Western Electric factory. They were commissioned to see if its workers would become more productive in higher or lower levels of light. Whether the lighting was increased, decreased or remained the same, output improved. It was concluded that the single most important factor in positively affecting the efficiency and wellbeing of employees was the feeling that attention was being paid to their efforts.

Researchers also surmised that choosing one’s own co-workers, working as a group, being treated as special and having a sympathetic supervisor were critical reasons for the productivity increase.

The American Society of Training and Development claims that if someone is held accountable, their efficiency moves from 40% to 95%. What’s measured gets done!

This unit helps highlight the influence senior leaders have to support staff during times of stress and with chronic low level stressors. Remember your team does not need to know all the answers to tackles these issues. Use this as a starting point. This training serves as a vital tool to raise awareness and challenge conscious and subconscious assumptions, attitudes and behaviours.

NB: send out **Handout 1.4: Stressors questionnaire** again two days prior to the meeting and ask participants to have filled in the answers. Ask them to spend no more than 10 minutes on it so that their answers are instinctive.

**Step 1: Review and SLT influence (15 minutes)**

First 15 minutes: ask for individual feedback from each SLT member regarding their awareness and experience of stressors since Unit 1, as on **slide 2**. Ask them to refer to their Stressometer (**Handout 1.2: My Stressometer**) notes. Clarify objectives for Unit 2 from **slide 3**.

Distribute **Handout 2.1: The Hawthorne Effect**. Ask the group to read the social study outline by Elton Mayo on efficiency and wellbeing on **slide 4**. Open a brief group discussion as to how understanding the main findings will influence the way the SLT interact with their staff.

Distribute **Handout 2.2: Core values**. In pairs pick five core values for each category. Rank them 1-5 in the grid. Show participants the sample handout on **slide 5**. Invite feedback to the group. Record findings on a flipchart and encourage explanations for the rankings given.

**Step 2: Staff stressors (20 minutes)**

Compare and discuss the participants’ completed **Handout 1.4: Stressors questionnaire**. Invite participants to list what they believe are the top five stressors for staff from **slide 6**.

List and prioritise the main stressors on a flipchart. Mind map practical ways in which the SLT can exhibit caring core values (such as showing staff they care about their wellbeing and appreciate the pressure) to support staff.

Consider:

* personal connection
* informal check ins (especially if a staff member hasn’t been seen in the staff room for a while)
* open door/open ears availability (formal and informal listening)
* unspoken support such as body language and smiling
* gestures of praise (thumbs up as you pop your head into their classroom).

This mind map serves to raise awareness about how the simplest of behavioural changes can gain emotional loyalty and ease stress, especially when undergoing change.

**Step 3: Appreciation obstacles (5 minutes)**

Play the ‘provided that…’ game on **slide 7**. This is a simple, fun way to examine how participants have the best intentions to do something (to get fit), provided that the environment/time/place/ circumstances are just right (I’ll get fit provided that it’s not raining, provided that it’s not too cold outside, provided that my jogging buddy comes with me, provided that I’m not too tired, etc).

Invite participants to be as honest as possible about what might stop them expressing appreciation for staff – such as ‘I’ll say well done to Miss Jones, provided that I finish this report first, then I’ll go to see her’.

This gives the team an opportunity to get real with whether they can really follow through on the concepts discussed. Distribute **Handout 2.3: ‘Provided that…’** for guidance. Invite group feedback.

**Step 4: Perceptions of change (5 minutes)**

Understand that change can be experienced as a stressor or stimulator. The purpose of this exercise is to develop appreciation for our unique coping strategies and to understand that this needs to be taken into consideration when implementing change for staff members.

Respond to the situations on **slide 8**. Notice that there are positives and negatives to each situation depending on your point of view. Invite participants to consider how they can help make change easier for staff to accept by exploring advantages and disadvantages of the change. Feed back key findings to the group.

Distribute **Handout 2.4: ‘Good luck, bad luck?’**. Invite them to contemplate their perceptions of enforced change.

**Step 5: Impact and Plenary (15 minutes)**

**The Butterfly Effect**

Using the example on **slide 9**, invite participants to consider for five minutes how they can demonstrate their appreciation and thanks to individual staff members and reward the staff as a whole, especially in times of radical change or high pressure.

**Plenary**

The purpose of this plenary is for the SLT to reflect on the unit:

* what they have learned about their responsibilities as a member of the SLT,
* their influence on positive staff relationships
* and providing a wholesome and encouraging environment in which staff can produce excellent classroom outcomes.

Invite them to consider the acronym ‘CHANGE’ on **slide 10** and how they can respond to each point. Remember to take photographs of all flipcharts from this unit for future planning.

**What’s next?**

* Consider the possible staff perception that senior leaders are generators of stress for staff and how best to address this.
* Continue observing your attitudes, behaviour and interaction with others. Notice what you do to reinforce care for your staff. Focus on cultivating opportunities for staff to develop healthy relationships and raise morale.
* Check in with your wellbeing buddy at least once a week – again this can be informally over a cuppa. Discuss your observations of yourself.

You can follow up this unit by…

* exploring ideas and strategies to support staff and raise wellbeing standards. What practical

initiatives can be implemented to help staff?

* agreeing action steps that will improve staff wellbeing and increase engagement.

**Alternative/additional development activity**

Prepare for a whole-staff wellbeing audit. Assign responsibility to one or two SLT members to examine the key areas, such as

* perceptions of stress,
* work-life balance,
* physical, mental and emotional symptoms,
* how staff perceive they are supported under stress (or not),
* home life stressors
* and measuring how well they feel they are coping.

Use the Stressometer and the stress questionnaire as a starting point. If you want to undertake an audit prior to the full staff training, you can create an ‘our school’ specific series of questions and use an easy to respond and assess online tool such as Survey Monkey to complete it. There are also other external resources available from the Teacher Support Network[[1]](#footnote-1) such as The Stress Test[[2]](#footnote-2) and The Wheel of Wellbeing[[3]](#footnote-3) as quick overviews to gauge your staff wellbeing baseline.

Begin preliminary discussions about setting up a whole-school wellbeing forum. Assign responsibility

for overseeing the birthing of the wellbeing forum and key issues to address. You may want to initiate this immediately or wait until the five units are complete before initiating the forum.

**What’s changed?**

Evaluate the impact of the unit. Ask participants to complete the evaluation sheet if appropriate or simply discuss the progress the team is making. Invite each participant to share one area they have found useful and one personal commitment they will begin to apply to help reduce their own levels of stress to increase their wellbeing.

Before closing:

* Set date and time for next training. Suggest no longer than a two week interval.
* Thank your team for their participation and continued efforts.
* Emphasise the importance of the SLT having heightened awareness and emotional intelligence for the school to strengthen as a cohesive community.

**Further reading**

Butterflies for School Improvement

http://dera.ioe.ac.uk/7719/1/1924-2005PDF-EN-01.pdf

Gerber M E, The E Myth: Why Most Businesses Don’t Work and What to Do About It, HarperBusiness, 1991

1. http://www.teachersupport.info [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. http://www.teachersupport.info/tools/stress/ [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. http://teachersupport.info/tools/wheel-of-wellbeing/ [↑](#footnote-ref-3)