==Meeting the mental health needs of post-16 education staff==

We have had a number of UCU Reps asking about issues re. mental health and well-being.

One of the things that Branches may want to consider is using this information to draw up a list of things to ask for. This is sometimes about asking for a change of attitude, which can often be broken down into asking for the approach of management to change by doing some simple things such as:

- Being clear to staff about expectations;
- Communicating to staff (and allowing them to communicate with you);
- Signposting where they can get help and their concerns addressed;

Useful Resources and Information

There are a number of items that the union has published recently, which you might find of use.

The Northern Region Office has produced a podcast giving some tips to Reps about helping members with mental health concerns. Search "UCU Northern Region" and look for the episode on "Supporting the mental health needs of UCU members", or click **here**. This is useful for Reps who are involved in directly supporting members.

Jenny Sherrard, UCU National Head of Equality and Participation, wrote a piece on the worrying picture that is emerging about the state of mental wellbeing amongst post-16 education staff. Her article is part of a longer series of article that you can find here on "Understanding and Overcoming a Mental Health Crisis in 2021".

She makes three recommendations:
Recommendation 1
UCU calls for a holistic approach to improving mental health in post-16 education which includes staff and students across colleges, universities and prisons.
Recommendation 2
Colleges, universities and prisons must be fully inclusive environments for all post-16 staff. From delays to securing reasonable adjustments for disabled workers, to systemic racism frustrating the career progression of black female academics, too often staff face avoidable obstacles to full engagement at work which cause unnecessary distress and anxiety, and exacerbate mental health problems.
Recommendation 3
The pandemic has placed additional pressures on our working and personal lives. If we really want to see improvements in mental health and wellbeing amongst post-16 staff, it's more important than ever that employers move beyond sticking plaster interventions and get to grips with these major structural causes of stress and anxiety amongst staff. Top of the agenda is addressing excessive workloads and ending insecure employment.

Some of the latest Government Guidance – what it says about mental health

All employers have a duty of care to their employees, and this extends to their mental health. Because some staff may be particularly anxious about attending, you may need extra systems in place to support staff wellbeing.

Many students and staff members will be feeling uncertain and anxious at this time. It is important to support positive mental health and wellbeing, which is necessary for young people to engage in learning. You should identify young people and members of staff who may need additional support and engage with them and their representatives to understand their needs and ensure they have appropriate mental health and wellbeing support in place.

Taken from here

<u>**UCU Guidance**</u>

Published in March 2021, <u>the latest UCU guidance</u> has recommendations to HEIs and FE Colleges for staff mental well-being. Worth having a look at. Part of it is here:

> *Mental Health*
> *• Employers should identify a number of measures they can take to improve staff mental health and well-being*
> *• Employers should undertake institution wide stress risk assessments, ideally following the HSE management standards approach and keep these under regular review in consultation with UCU safety reps and branch officers*
> *• Employers should identify a range of preventative and protective measures that will avoid or mitigate the impact of various stressors in the work place.*

SUPPORTING MEMBERS WITH MENTAL HEALTH CONDITIONS AND ISSUES
There is detailed advice and guidance in the UCU Toolkit:
https://www.ucu.org.uk/media/5922/Supporting-members-with-mental-health-conditions-and-issues-UCU-branch-toolkit/pdf/ucu_supportingmembers-mentalhealthconditions.pdf

<u>**Other Useful Resources and Guidance**</u>

Education Support
Education Support has some <u>useful links</u> on their website.
One of the links is about <u>how managers can support staff</u>. You might consider tabling some of these as a list of "demands".

ACAS
Two recent blog posts which you might find useful
https://www.acas.org.uk/the-road-to-enlightenment
https://www.acas.org.uk/the-power-of-the-small

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