

Wellbeing Guardian: Example Role Description

The Wellbeing Guardian role will be different in each healthcare organisational context and setting. Therefore, these role guidelines should be considered developmental and adapted to the local context and used as a flexible starting point, rather than mandate.

When implementing the Wellbeing Guardian role, the organisation should keep in mind that the role is that of leadership and strategic assurance to enable a culture of wellbeing. It is not intended to be a management or operational delivery role. Therefore, the organisation should ensure that there is operational infrastructure and support available to empower the Guardian to be effective and maximise their time in role.

Purpose

The overriding purpose of the Wellbeing Guardian is to routinely challenge the organisation's activities and performance to create a compassionate environment which promotes the culture of wellbeing of our NHS people, where organisational activities empower the holistic health and wellbeing of its NHS people.

Promoting Holistic Wellbeing: Enabling the organisation to consider a holistic health and wellbeing approach, intended to reflect:

- **equality and inclusion** – eg taking steps to understand and support the individual and diverse needs of people working in the organisation so that they can thrive at work
- **civility and respect** – eg addressing incivility which can lead to bullying
- **physical wellbeing** – eg taking proactive steps to create a healthy working environment, including by making food available, providing equipment to keep our people safe and active, and ensuring rest breaks and working patterns support good health

- **mental/psychological wellbeing** – eg recognising that we all have mental wellbeing and that we need a psychologically safe environment to work in, with support available when it is needed
- **social wellbeing** – eg recognising that informal chats, shared rest spaces and moments of down-time enable our people to re-charge, bond and share resilience
- **spiritual wellbeing** – eg creating a working environment where our people feel able to share their whole selves, beyond just their beliefs or faith (including people of no faith), sharing who we are as individuals, our relationships and what gives us meaning and purpose.
- **financial wellbeing** – eg ensuring that the employer recognises the diverse ways that our NHS people are financially impacted by internal or external activities, making different sources of support available for all

Seeking Assurance: The Wellbeing Guardian may request information from the executive/operational management team, to give the board / senior leadership team the necessary assurance that a healthy working environment is being created. This should enable the board / senior leadership team to determine what is important for them to pay attention to so that improvement can be made and shared. For example, they may wish to request frontline feedback in the form of stories from our NHS people and the corresponding updates and assurance from the executive/management team that the organisation is taking action if required.

Questioning: The Wellbeing Guardian should, through their line of questioning, help the board / senior leadership team to be mindful of the organisational responsibility to the health and wellbeing of our NHS people. The Wellbeing Guardian should challenge the board / senior leadership team to account for its decisions and their impact on the health and wellbeing of our NHS people. Any identified unintended negative consequences of organisational actions need to be reviewed with a view to mitigating them. As this becomes routine board practice, the Wellbeing Guardian's need to challenge should reduce over time.

Diversity of people: The Wellbeing Guardian will recognise and respond to the need for a tailored, holistic health and wellbeing approach for different groups within the workforce. Diverse cultural backgrounds may need to be engaged in different ways and may require different responses, and the potential impact of intersectionality needs to be recognised. For

example, different cultures and faith groups do not approach bereavement and grief in the same way and therefore more than one support offer may be needed.

Connectivity: Operating in an inclusive manner, the Wellbeing Guardian will actively encourage leadership of the wellbeing agenda across all executive/management functions in a way that engages ownership and advocacy across the organisation, valuing and building on existing internal resource.

Values

The Wellbeing Guardian will act as a critical friend to board / senior leadership team colleagues, based on the available evidence showing that organisations which promote workforce wellbeing deliver safer, higher quality patient care.

Leadership that focuses on how people are treated as well as what they achieve is critical to a wellbeing culture. The Wellbeing Guardian will therefore role model the values of fairness, compassion and inclusivity.

Wellbeing inequalities are particularly damaging, and an organisation's most vulnerable people are therefore at greatest risk. The Wellbeing Guardian should therefore be mindful of their perceived seniority and will actively promote opportunities for the most vulnerable in the workforce to contribute.

Consideration of personal characteristics is critical when deciding who to appoint to the Wellbeing Guardian role. A successful Guardian will be open, honest and willing to challenge the status quo in promoting a wellbeing culture within the organisation.

Recommended main duties and responsibilities

To meet the aims and principles of this role, the Wellbeing Guardian may:

- Request **evidence** on behalf of the board to provide assurance of the organisation's strategic approach to a culture which is supportive of NHS staff and learners, fostering the ambition of creating a happy, healthy and psychologically safe workplace.
- Routinely **challenge** senior leaders, to ensure that holistic health and wellbeing is considered in all aspects and levels of the organisational structure.

- Support the development of the organisation's **holistic health and wellbeing strategy** to meet the requirements outlined in the NHS People Plan.
- Encourage high level engagement with the wellbeing strategy, questioning whether the **appropriate level of resource, capacity, infrastructure and capability** are in place to deliver sustainable change and improvement.
- Provide opportunities for existing **good practice** to be shared and recognised more widely to aid learning.
- **Challenge the board / senior team to monitor** and receive reports on the implementation and delivery of the wellbeing strategy, benchmarking progress on the principles supported by the Wellbeing Guardian and the high impact actions of the NHS People Plan. This will include identification of immediate risks to staff and learner holistic health and wellbeing and the mitigating actions.
- Receive **evidence and assurance** that an appropriate programme structure is in place to yield **successful delivery** of the wellbeing strategy, including scope, objectives, project plans, risks, interdependencies, resources and measures of success.
- Confront and **challenge organisational behaviours** that are detrimental to staff and learner health and wellbeing at the individual, team and system level.
- Influence senior managers in the organisation through complex and **cultural change**, promoting involvement and engagement for wellbeing improvements.
- Provide **innovative and progressive thinking**, guidance and challenge to senior stakeholders about what it means to be a supportive organisation.
- Where appropriate, participate in regional and national Wellbeing Guardian networks to **maximise the opportunity for system-wide partnerships** and cross-organisational learning.

Recommended principle-specific responsibilities

- Influence senior leaders in the organisation to ensure that the same **weight is given to holistic health and wellbeing** as to other aspects in organisational performance assessment.

- Receives assurance that **health and wellbeing strategies protect holistic health and wellbeing** and meet the specific needs of the organisation's staff and learners.
- Request strategic oversight on the **organisation's environment and infrastructure** (eg civility and respect, inequalities, etc) to ensure that it is safe and supportive of the holistic health and wellbeing needs of staff and learners.
- **Support the lead for the organisational People Plan** (sometimes called the Workforce Strategy or part of the organisational Strategic Development Plan).
- Request assurance for the board that the necessary process and infrastructure is in place for a self-referral, **proactive and confidential occupational health service** that protects wellbeing and meets the specific needs of the organisation's staff and learners.
- Request assurance for the board on the development of the policy and infrastructure required to provide meaningful and timely **wellbeing impact assessments** for staff and learners following their exposure to difficult or distressing incidents (including but not limited to clinical incidents).
- Request progress updates on the implementation of the organisation's **wellness induction** (previously wellbeing 'check-in') policy, process and reporting systems.
- Request reports evidencing the organisation's compliance with meeting the wellbeing needs and necessary adjustments for the **nine groups protected under the Equality Act 2010** (including consideration for how intersectionality may impact on wellbeing).
- Challenge the board to ensure that policies and processes are implemented to provide assurance that the **spiritual and cultural needs** of the organisation's staff and learners are protected, and that the support available to staff is equitable and appropriate.
- If ever appropriate, commission the **independent examination** of a death by suicide of a member staff or learner on placement with the organisation. Invite presentation of the findings of 'death by suicide reviews' to the board, and leading frank and open discussions of deliverable improvement plans, where recommended.