

Employee Wellbeing Survey October 2020

Corporate survey results

Introduction

Welcome to the results of the October 2020 wellbeing survey. We would like to say a big thank you to every member of staff who took the time to tell us about their experiences and challenges.

This survey was carried out in order to check-in on the wellbeing of staff and monitor any significant emerging trends in employee wellbeing since the previous survey was conducted in May 2020.

During the last few months, alongside responding to changing national restrictions and requirements, the council has also been planning towards recovery from the effects that the pandemic has had on the council and wider community. This has included setting up both internal and external recovery workstreams, ensuring that buildings are COVID secure to allow some staff to safely return to workplaces and introducing wellbeing tools through our [Flourish](#) website and on [HR Direct](#).

As the council continues to respond to and recover from the pandemic, the results of this survey will be used to inform us of any areas of concern for staff and help to map out what our new normal will begin to look like.

- ✓ The first section summarises responses including response rate, respondent type and the percentage of employees who are either working from home or in different locations.
- ✓ The second section gives a detailed breakdown of data using infographics to represent responses around aspects such as challenges to working from home, how well employees understand what is expected in their role and the impact of COVID-19 on wellbeing.
- ✓ The third section shows a summary of key themes, identified through staff responses and comments, and reflects on how these compare with the key themes from the previous wellbeing survey.

Survey overview

The total number of responses from across the council was 2194, representing around 50% of the workforce. This scale of response is lower compared to the previous survey's 61% response rate; however, given that the results in this report reflect half of the council's workforce, they remain significant.

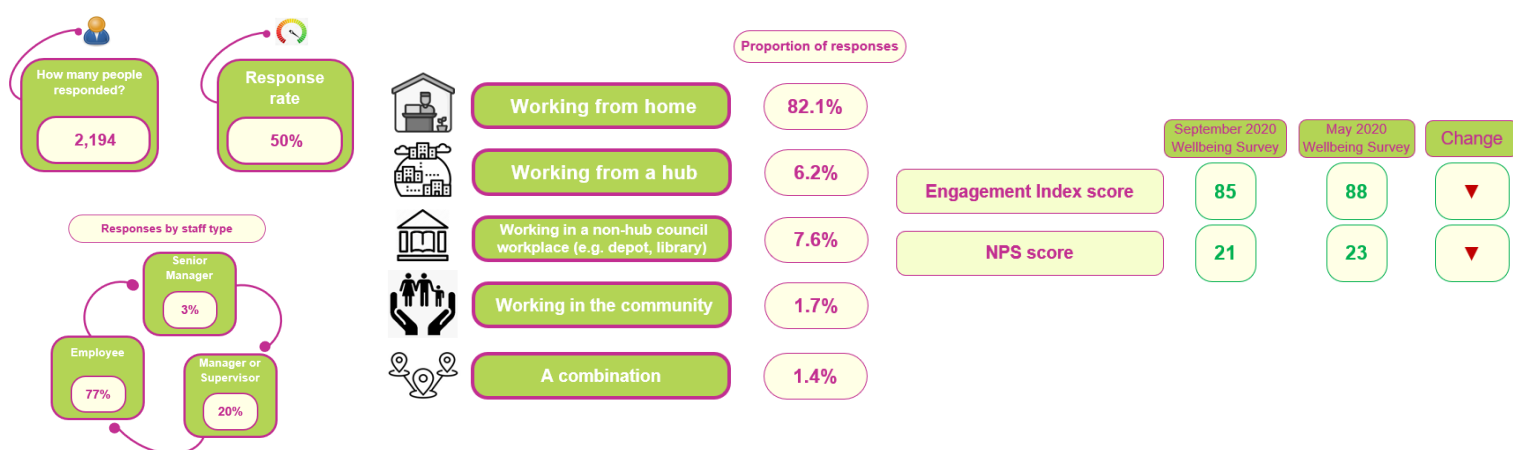
As the outbreak of the virus continues to affect our usual ways of working, results show that the majority of staff are continuing to work from home. Since the previous survey was conducted, fewer staff have highlighted physical workspace as a challenge to working from home. This may be due to the improved distribution of equipment with over 500 chairs, 300 keyboards and 400 monitors provided to staff since the start of the pandemic. This has helped staff to create more recognisable and comfortable workstations at home.

The survey indicates some positive changes related to concerns identified in the previous survey. Responses relating to caring responsibilities, work/life balance and productivity in question 15 have all improved overall since the previous survey, with positive responses to productivity in particular more than doubling. There are many factors that may have influenced this including children returning to school, more staff having access to workplaces and the continuation of working from home, which offers increased flexible working arrangements.

However, the survey also highlights that a lack of empowerment and access to equipment continue to pose challenges to staff. New issues including not feeling part of the organisation and increased workload have been identified and will need to be addressed to support the ongoing wellbeing and engagement of staff.

Results – summary for Wiltshire Council

The first section of results below summarises the responses received from staff, including a breakdown of responses by staff type, current working location and other factors including engagement index score and net promoter score (NPS). The survey results show that the engagement index score has slightly decreased from the previous wellbeing survey from 88 to 85, however this is still a positive increase compared to the previous staff engagement survey in 2018 (70).



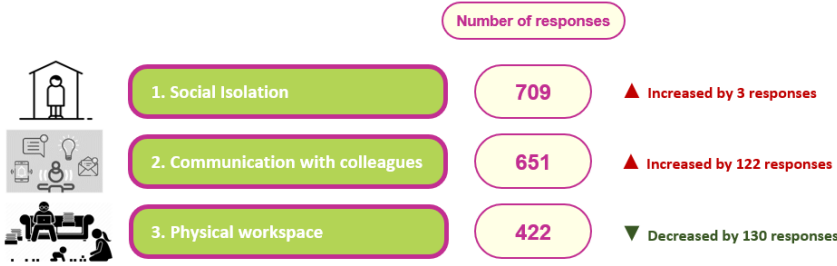
Important notes:

- ✓ Staff engagement figures and Index are based on responses to six control questions in the survey.
- ✓ The Engagement Index figure is based on positive responses to the control questions; the average of these responses is calculated to give your service engagement index.
- ✓ NPS score shows the net difference between whether staff would recommend (promoters) or deter others (detractors) from working for Wiltshire Council. The scale for this runs from -100 (all detractors) to +100 (all promoters), therefore any score greater than 0 means there are more promoters than detractors.

Results – Wellbeing

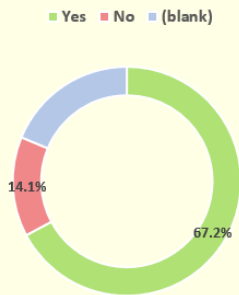
The survey gave staff an opportunity to tell us more about the main things that have impacted their wellbeing, implications of working from home and work-related concerns. We also asked them about what support is needed to help them to be more effective in their role. The infographics below show how staff responded to these questions and will help us to identify areas which require further attention.

Q10. 3 biggest challenges to working at home?



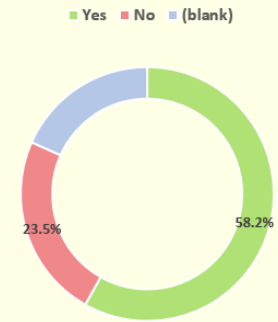
In May 2020 'No significant challenges' was the most frequent response, however this would now only be the 3rd highest response (624 responses)

Q8. Do you have all the equipment you need to be able to work from home effectively?

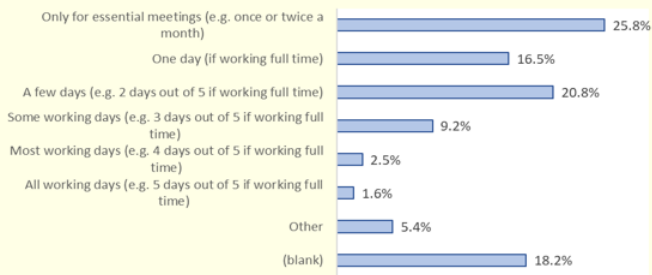


Compared to the previous wellbeing survey numbers indicate less staff feel that they have the equipment they need

Q9. Do you have a dedicated workspace at home?



Q13. If the council were to maintain some of the current working arrangements, how many days per week would you need or want to work in a council workplace?



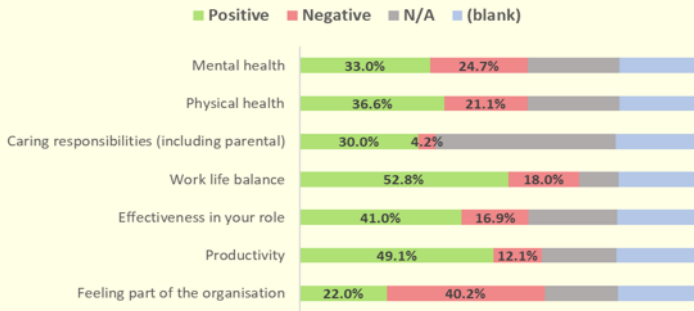
Q14. What would enable you to work at home more effectively?



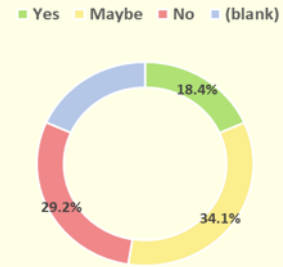
Important notes:

- ✓ Free text responses have been reviewed and categorised into key themes or areas; the word clouds below provide a powerful view of what themes are most important to our staff, based on their own direct feedback. In these word clouds, the larger the word the more times that theme was referenced in the comments.

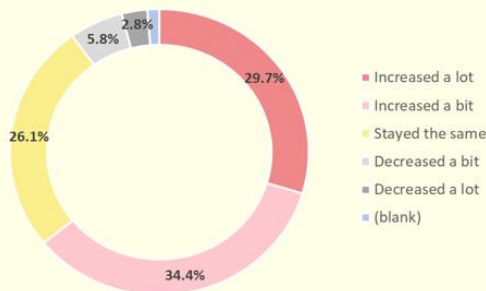
Q15. Should working from home continue for you, what would the implications be for your:



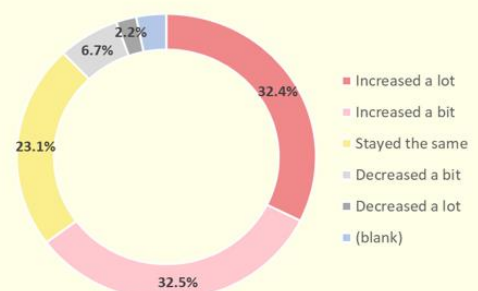
Q16. If more workplaces were available in your local communities (e.g. at partner locations) would you use them?



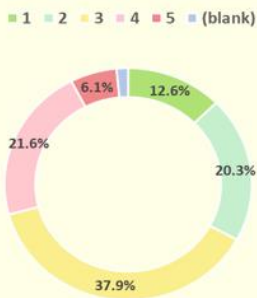
Q19. Since COVID-19 has your workload:



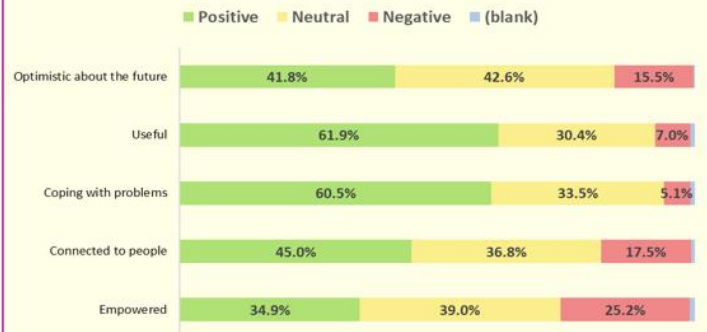
Q20. Since COVID-19 has your team's workload:



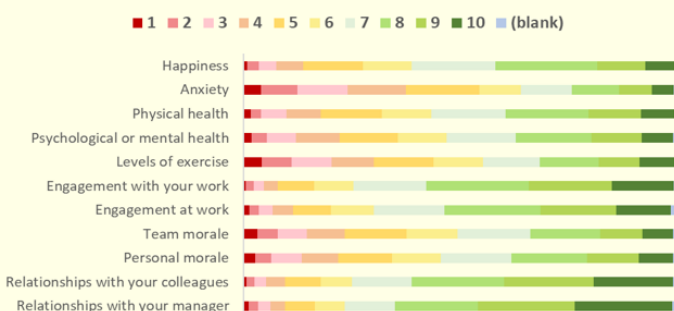
Q21. How worried are you about the impact of coronavirus on you personally? (where 1 is not worried and 5 is very worried)



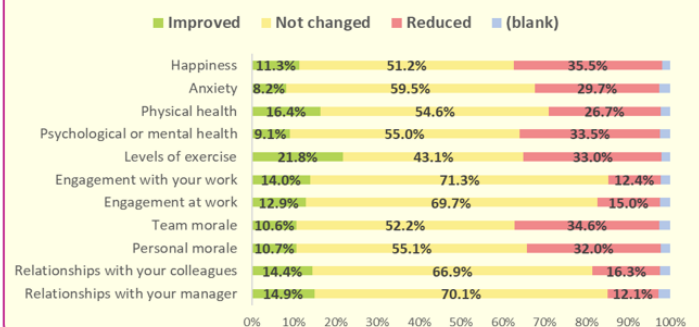
Q22. How are you feeling?



Q23. How would you rate your levels of the following, where 10 is good and 1 is not good:



Q24. Compared to when the last survey went out in May, what affect has the COVID-19 situation had on you:



Q25. What is your single greatest work-related concern right now?

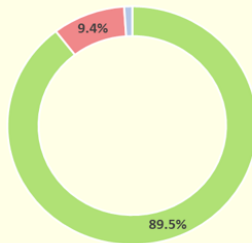


Q26. We know this is a challenging time for everyone, but is there anything about this situation which has been positive for you?



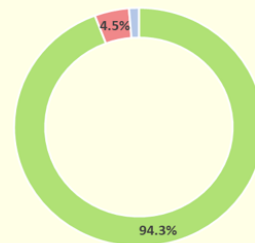
Q28. I feel a sense of belonging to my team

■ Yes ■ No ■ (blank)



Q33. I understand what's expected of me in my role

■ Yes ■ No ■ (blank)



Key themes and observations

Wellbeing challenges

In the May survey the most common response was “no significant challenges”, however in this survey that is now the third most common response, with 207 fewer staff choosing this option. Due to the decrease in numbers of respondents to the survey, it may be that some staff who previously indicated they had no challenges felt less inclined to take part. However, this cannot be confirmed and therefore it is important to ensure we address the concerns and challenges highlighted by staff through this current survey.

Social isolation

As anticipated, based on the council’s approach to minimising the return to workplaces for non-essential reasons, 82% of respondents are working from home. As indicated by 709 respondents, the biggest challenge to working from home continues to be social isolation. This was also the biggest challenge to working from home in the May wellbeing survey. It should be noted that whilst the 709 mentioned above is similar in number to the May wellbeing survey, the overall response rate to this survey was lower so this result is proportionately more significant. Whilst working from home is likely to have some impact on this response, there are likely to be other factors related to the wider effects of the pandemic which also influence this.

Communication

A recurring theme identified by staff throughout this survey is communication, this was the second biggest challenge to working from home identified by staff. There has been a significant increase (+122 responses) in staff indicating that communication is a challenge to working from home. The word cloud in question 25 also indicates that for some staff communication is a concern. These concerns are supported by question 22, which found that staff felt less connected to people and question 23, where team and personal morale have dropped since the previous survey. This may also have impacted on engagement results and feeling part of the organisation, because if staff are feeling isolated and do not feel connected to their team, they may find it hard to feel part of the wider council.

Reflecting on changes since the previous survey, heavy workloads and more pressure could result in employees now having less time to have informal conversations. This is something that would naturally occur in an office environment and can be hard to replicate virtually. Although Microsoft Teams continues to be an important tool for collaboration, engagement with this communication tool for wellbeing purposes such as team chats may have decreased due to increased workloads and pressure. Managers should discuss and monitor this within their teams to ensure that concerns around communication are addressed.

Workspace

The third biggest challenge, physical workspace has reduced in significance since the previous survey, with 130 fewer staff identifying this as an issue. This is likely due to efforts to create a more recognisable workstation at home. For some staff however, work environment, is still an issue, with aspects such as limited space continuing to cause concern with this issue specifically being raised by staff in their comments.

Working from home

Question 13 offers one of the first insights to employee's feelings towards working from home. Results indicate that the majority of staff would prefer increased home working to continue, with two thirds of staff wanting to do 2 days or less a week in the office. The most common response was to be in the office only when essential, with a quarter of respondents choosing this option. The word cloud in question 26 also indicates that working from home has been seen as a positive change for many staff, with this being the most common theme that staff identified as a positive from the outbreak.

There are many reasons that working from home has benefited staff, such as increased work/life balance resulting from less commuting, being more productive in their role and the opportunity to spend more time with family. Although these benefits are a real positive in terms of wellbeing, attention must also be given to factors that have been negative, such as communication with colleagues while working from home, in order to ensure that staff can continue to work from home effectively.

Question 15 signifies that there is still some work to do around supporting staff to work from home; including feeling part of the organisation and mental and physical

wellbeing. Although social isolation continues to be the biggest challenge to working from home, staff have indicated that coming into the office may not necessarily be the solution. Significantly, two thirds of the respondents who stated social isolation as a challenge to working from home would still like to continue working either 2 days or less in the office, suggesting the issue of social isolation is wider than being able to return to an office building. Although, it should be noted that there are pockets of staff who are affected by social isolation who have indicated they would like to return full time. In both instances, managers should be discussing the issue with their staff and putting in place support, however if returning to the office is the main identified solution, managers should be completing a [return to work request](#) with approval from their director, taking into consideration the current government restrictions and council approach. Furthermore, the continuation of social isolation as the foremost challenge to working at home suggests that we need to explore other ways of supporting these staff, this will be reviewed by the wellbeing and engagement workstream in the organisational recovery programme.

Workload

Results from the word cloud suggest that workload is the biggest work-related concern for employees. Additionally, two thirds of employees stated that their personal and team workload has increased since the start of the pandemic (Q19 and Q20). Significantly, 1 in 3 staff who responded stated that their workload had increased by 'a lot'. However, question 26 identifies work life balance as a positive for many employees, suggesting that workload is not impacting this for all respondents. This may be due to factors such as employees spending less time commuting.

It is vital that the workload concern is addressed due to the negative impacts this may have on wellbeing. Increased workload may also be a factor which contributes to stress related sickness absence, burnout and increased staff turnover, which would further limit capacity and reduce employee productivity.

In light of the current recruitment freeze it will be vital to ensure that workforce capacity is maintained, and this will be impacted negatively by any increases in sickness absence or turnover caused by unmanageable workloads. Therefore, this is a critical issue for services to monitor and manage, through the prioritisation of work activities and a recognition that some lower priority activities may need to be postponed or stopped with the agreement of relevant senior managers.

Future uncertainty

Future uncertainty is another theme identified by staff which is having a negative impact on wellbeing. Responses to question 25 indicate that future uncertainty is the second biggest work-related concern that employees are facing, with question 22 also identifying that many employees feel less optimistic about the future than in the previous survey. There are many concerns that could be affecting wellbeing, including job security, finances and COVID restrictions; for example, lack of clarity about when staff might return to workplaces. As this theme has been highlighted as a work-related concern, it may impact the way that staff perceive the organisation. It will be important that wherever possible these concerns are addressed through the relevant workstreams within the organisational recovery programme and for there to

be clear, regular communications with managers and staff to ensure they feel informed and involved with changes.

Not feeling part of the organisation

Question 15 indicates that 40% of staff feel that continuing to work from home would have a negative impact on how much they feel part of the organisation. There are a variety of factors that could contribute to this. Since the previous survey employees now feel less connected to people and as discussed previously, communication with colleagues has been highlighted as an area of concern and may be contributing to this. Also, social isolation may be a contributory factor, with 76% of those identifying social isolation as a challenge to working from home also giving a negative response towards feeling part of the organisation. However, this issue appears to be specific to feeling part of the wider organisation, as almost 90% of those who responded to the survey, responded positively towards feeling part of their team. Therefore, this appears to be something that should be addressed through corporate communications and the wellbeing and engagement workstream in the organisational recovery programme.

May to September significant changes and observations from key themes

The wellbeing and engagement survey conducted in May highlighted several areas of significance; work/life balance, mental wellbeing, systems and equipment and empowerment. This report will now draw on the results of the most recent survey to evaluate if these issues have been addressed and consider which areas need further attention. It should be noted that during the first survey restrictions were significantly tighter on aspects such as mixing households etc, whereas responses to this survey were submitted prior to the more recent national restrictions which came in on 5 November 2020, which may also be a reason that some of these factors have changed.

Work/life balance

In the previous survey, work/life balance was referenced negatively in four different questions, suggesting it was a significant aspect of employee wellbeing. The previous report proposed a number of factors which could have caused this including lack of physical workspace, longer work hours and cancelled annual leave. The results from this survey indicate that work life balance has improved overall for staff.

As discussed earlier in the report, factors that may have impacted work life balance for staff previously such as workspace and childcare arrangements have improved. The government also relaxed restrictions throughout the summer which may have influenced employees to take more annual leave than they had earlier in the year. The organisation also identified ways to address this concern, such as auto setting meeting times to allow staff to take short breaks between meetings and more focused wellbeing communications.

Mental wellbeing

The previous staff survey also indicated that the impacts of COVID-19 had understandably affected employee's mental wellbeing. Results showed that over half of employees felt less happy compared to pre-COVID, however results this time suggest that although there has been an improvement, there is still some work to do around mental wellbeing. Question 24 identifies that happiness levels have improved, however, with the passive option removed since the previous survey from question 15, there has also been an increase of the amount of negative responses towards mental health. [Flourish](#), [HR direct](#) and the [Wellbeing Centre](#) on Wiltshire rewards all have wellbeing tools around aspects such as exercise, food, money and mental wellbeing and also contain useful contacts such as the [employee wellbeing helpline](#) and [external charities](#). Wellbeing Wednesday communications likewise address aspects of mental wellbeing, which provides staff with further information on specific topics. Managers should remind staff that these resources are there for them to use and make sure they are checking in with their teams.

Systems and equipment

Compared to the previous survey, fewer staff now feel that they have the right equipment to be able to work effectively from home, reducing from 78% to 67%, although employees can request additional equipment such as chairs, keyboards and extra monitors and, since the start of the pandemic the council has provided significant amounts of equipment to staff for use at home. Question 14 also found that staff highlighted equipment as the biggest theme in response to what could help them work more effectively at home. Comments highlighted that, due to the continuation of working from home, staff have less access to the equipment needed to carry out their role longer term; such as printers.

With the current government restrictions limiting access to workplaces, employees should speak to their managers if they feel that they do not have the correct equipment to carry out their job. With approval from their director, managers can [request access](#) to one of the council buildings for their staff in order to carry out tasks that they otherwise cannot do at home or they can arrange to collect additional equipment.

Empowerment

Feeling empowered has continued as an issue in this survey, with one quarter of staff responding negatively towards feeling empowered (Q22). This is particularly important as empowerment is a brand pillar in our People Strategy and part of our EPIC culture. Although results indicate that employees feel more useful, it was also found that employees felt less connected to people, less optimistic about the future and more employees now feel they do not have the correct equipment to carry out their job from home. These concerns may affect how empowered employees feel and could be having an impact on their wellbeing. As part of the organisational recovery programme, the wellbeing and engagement workstream will aim to address this issue in order to understand how to better support staff to feel empowered in their role.

Next steps

The results of this survey will be used to identify areas of concern for employees and begin to address these through the organisational recovery programme workstreams. We will engage with staff and managers as part of this, for example through forums such as Team EPIC. The impact of actions to address issues identified will be monitored through further staff engagement surveys to assess how effective these have been. The focus of these surveys may change depending on the outcomes we identify; however, we will continue to monitor some common factors such as the engagement index to give a consistent point of reference.

Alongside this corporate report, directorate dashboards have been produced to enable senior management teams to identify and action plan around specific issues within their own services.