

Culture&

Internal Wellbeing Policy

Introduction

This policy outlines Culture&'s philosophy and procedures for effectively supporting staff (including freelancers') wellbeing.

Definition of Wellbeing

Well-being encompasses quality of life and the ability of people and societies to contribute to the world with a sense of meaning and purpose. - World Health Organisation¹

Mental wellbeing doesn't have one set meaning. We might use it to talk about how we feel, how well we're coping with daily life or what feels possible at the moment. Good mental wellbeing doesn't mean that you're always happy. Or that you're unaffected by your experiences. And having good wellbeing doesn't always mean that you don't have a mental health problem. You may live with a mental health problem, but have good wellbeing right now. Or you might not have a mental health problem, but be struggling with your wellbeing at the moment. Poor mental wellbeing can make it more difficult to cope with daily life. - Mind²

This policy is based on Culture&'s core values:

- To foster an environment of trust where staff feel able to tell us what we need to know to be able to support them in the most appropriate way.
- For staff to feel a sense of meaning and purpose in their work to open up who makes and enjoys arts and heritage.
- To maintain a healthy work-life balance with boundaries in place so staff can enjoy their lives outside of work.
- To appreciate that what may work for one member of staff could cause stress for another and we will be flexible in finding ways to support staff however is most appropriate for them, and seek solutions through dialogue where conflicting needs may require people to compromise.
- To routinely check in with staff during staff meetings, scheduled wellbeing days and appraisals. The aim is to ensure that structures in place to support them are sufficient and where changes can be implemented, with the understanding that people's health and wellbeing is not consistent.

Disclosure and communication

Poor mental and physical health is something we all encounter to some extent at some point in our lives, but we often do not talk about it because we do not want to be seen as vulnerable or have our ability to do our job questioned. We want to build a supportive working culture, and this starts with being open about the challenges we are facing; we can only help each other based on the information we know.

- We encourage open communication, normalising talking about our mental and physical health so that we can support each other. No one is required to disclose or talk about anything they don't want to, but we are all happy to talk about health if it is helpful. We have personal check-ins built into the start of team meetings to facilitate this.

- We ask people to disclose disabilities, long-term health conditions and mental health challenges after we have made an offer of employment; this is not compulsory but allows us to make reasonable adjustments and offer ongoing support. Similarly, if a physical or mental health issue arises during employment, we encourage staff to talk to their Line Manager, Wellbeing Officer or trusted member of the team they are comfortable discussing it with so we can support them.
- We encourage anyone who would benefit from one, to share a [collaboration rider](#) with us. We do this at the point of interview but can also provide examples and support in writing one if they are unfamiliar.
- Your rider should be sent directly to the Wellbeing Officer. Relevant information will be added to a shared [spreadsheet](#) which will be viewable only to other staff members.
- Staff appraisal meetings always start with a wellbeing check-in to give staff an opportunity to formally raise anything they are struggling with. If it is helpful, staff may fill in this [stress checklist](#) as support.

Access built into our working culture & environment

Where possible we have designed our working practices and working culture with access in mind. This means that people do not necessarily have to disclose conditions or share information they are uncomfortable with as their needs can be met anyway. It also means these practices are not just there for those with specific diagnoses or living with disabilities but there for everyone if they need them.

- Flexible/Work from home schedule. Staff meetings take place on Monday afternoons as a way for the team to see each other. An agenda will be set prior to the meeting and will not exceed 1.5 hours.
- We have a TOIL policy which allows for staff to fit their working hours around their needs and ensures that where people have exceeded their contracted hours, they are able to take time off.
- We have a dedicated [policy to support trans and non-binary staff](#) in the workplace.
- We have time off built into our working pattern, including bank holidays and office closures between Christmas and New Year.
- We hold an annual Wellbeing Day where we put work aside for a day to focus on tending to our needs as a team. This includes facilitated activities and social time.
- All staff members are invited to attend social gatherings following events and board meetings.
- We have an experienced Wellbeing Officer who can signpost to counselling and other forms of support if needed. They can also assist in writing Access to Work applications.

Workplace stress & triggers

Despite the measures above, there may be specific triggers or stresses that impact staff physical and mental health at work. No one should feel unsafe at work and work should not interfere with staff personal lives.

- We also acknowledge that the practices in this policy may have an impact on events going to plan and will monitor this so that our approach can inform our programming and delivery plans.
- We deal with work which can be deeply personal and may be triggering for some people. We ask staff to tell us if they are not comfortable working on certain projects so we can work with them to develop coping strategies or alternative work plans.
- We understand that boundaries look different to everyone and will respect the boundaries people put in place. This may mean opting out of WhatsApp groups and not responding to messages out of hours, or for other people it might mean checking emails during time off so as not to feel overwhelmed on their return.
- Due to the nature of our work, there will be times when there is more to do and the working environment is more stressful. This should never be unmanageable for anyone, and we ask that people tell us if they are struggling with workload so we can make adjustments and offer the appropriate support.
- Similarly, there will be times when staff are asked to undertake physical tasks; we ask that everyone follows health and safety procedures when doing this and that they stop and tell someone if they are struggling. We can always find another solution rather than cause someone a physical injury.
- We try to avoid using complicated language in our policies and communications with staff; where this language is essential (e.g. in employment contracts) we offer to talk through it to make sure staff understand. We encourage everyone to ask if they don't understand something.
- We are clear about payment terms and consistent with paying everyone promptly, for wages, fees and expenses.
- We aim to build a working culture where everyone feels safe and valued; if for whatever reason we fail to uphold this culture, we have strong processes including Grievance and Disciplinary policies and procedures in place to deal with it.
- There may be times when working with external companies and partners, where our employees are not treated with the same level of respect and care that we expect internally, and may face issues such as racism, homophobia, transphobia, misogyny or ableism. In these cases we will support the staff affected in whatever way is most appropriate for them, whether that be helping them to make a formal complaint, offering space for them to talk about it, or sourcing external support.

External stress & triggers

There will be moments during everyone's lives where their personal lives impact their working lives. Given the nature of work Culture& undertakes, it is also likely that staff might feel personally connected to, activated or distressed by the work itself and no one should feel alone with this.

- Frontline programmers are invited to take part in scheduled debriefs during the course of a project. These debriefs will take place before, during and after projects, with the aim for peers to talk through and process feelings, achievements, concerns and stressors in relation to the work. If the length of a project exceeds 6 months, debriefs sessions will be increased accordingly.

- At any time, staff can update their [collaboration rider](#) to reflect any changing needs over the course of a project. Please ensure you email your update rider to the Wellbeing Officer.

We hope that by encouraging open communication, building access and peer support into our working culture we will be able to support Culture& colleagues through their wellbeing needs.

—

This policy is not complete and will continue to be reviewed and to evolve based on the needs of the particular staff team as that changes and based on the impact it is having.

Primary Contact Info

Dr. Errol Francis - Artistic Director & CEO

errol.francis@cultureand.org

Lamya Sadiq - Wellbeing Officer

lamya.sadiq@cultureand.org