

# Leadership Bites: Wellbeing Conversations

LEADERSHIP LEARNING IN 20 MINUTES

**NHS**

**Leadership Academy**

**South East**

## The importance of Health & Wellbeing

- ✓ Finding balance between our personal and professional lives
- ✓ Getting enough rest and recuperation
- ✓ Maintaining effective working relationships
- ✓ Staying connected to family, friends and community
- ✓ Feeling supported at home and at work
- ✓ Managing workload effectively
- ✓ Maintaining good physical and mental health



Maintaining good health and wellbeing has become more challenging in recent times, but it is also more necessary than ever before. With the ongoing implications of COVID-19, everyone is affected in some way and we all have our own capacity for uncertainty and level of resilience.

## What is a wellbeing conversation?

### What It Is

- A preventative conversation designed to support wellbeing. Staff do not have to be physically or mentally unwell to benefit.
- Designed with everyone in mind.
- An informal, safe space for each employee to reflect and share how they are feeling, what their concerns are and what areas in their life they would like to see an improvement.
- An opportunity to inform employees of the organisations wellbeing offer by signposting to internal & external support.



### What It Is Not

- Psychological interventions – they are not designed to be counselling or therapy sessions.
- Intended to be used to judge the performance of an individual or as a trigger point for a disciplinary process.
- Intended to be documented, they are confidential conversations between you and the participant.
- A Risk or Mental Health Assessment: Wellbeing Conversations are for all people, not just at-risk groups.
- A form of treatment for mental or physical health conditions.

## What is the purpose?

The purpose of a wellbeing conversation is to establish a supportive and confidential space to discuss a person's wellbeing and how it might be impacted by current situations. A wellbeing conversation can establish the following:

**Any issues that require action at organisational level to change**

**Areas of health and wellbeing that could be improved**

**Highlight where someone may benefit from further support, if appropriate**

**Where to go for additional/specific support when needed**

## What is expected of me?

### Do's

- ❖ Enable all members of your team to have a confidential conversation about their wellbeing and how it might be impacted by different factors
- ❖ Help take appropriate action to reduce the negative effects of stressful working environments moving forward.
- ❖ Signpost to useful information and resources and inform employees of the national wellbeing offer.
- ❖ Be open, to listen, and to be supportive, without judgement.
- ❖ Consider reasonable adaptations for staff shielding, working remotely, with disabilities and other protected characteristics.
- ❖ Know how and where to escalate any issues that are shared with you that you believe need further attention
- ❖ Agree on the duration of the conversation. This helps to manage people's expectations and sets clear boundaries for yourself.

### Don'ts

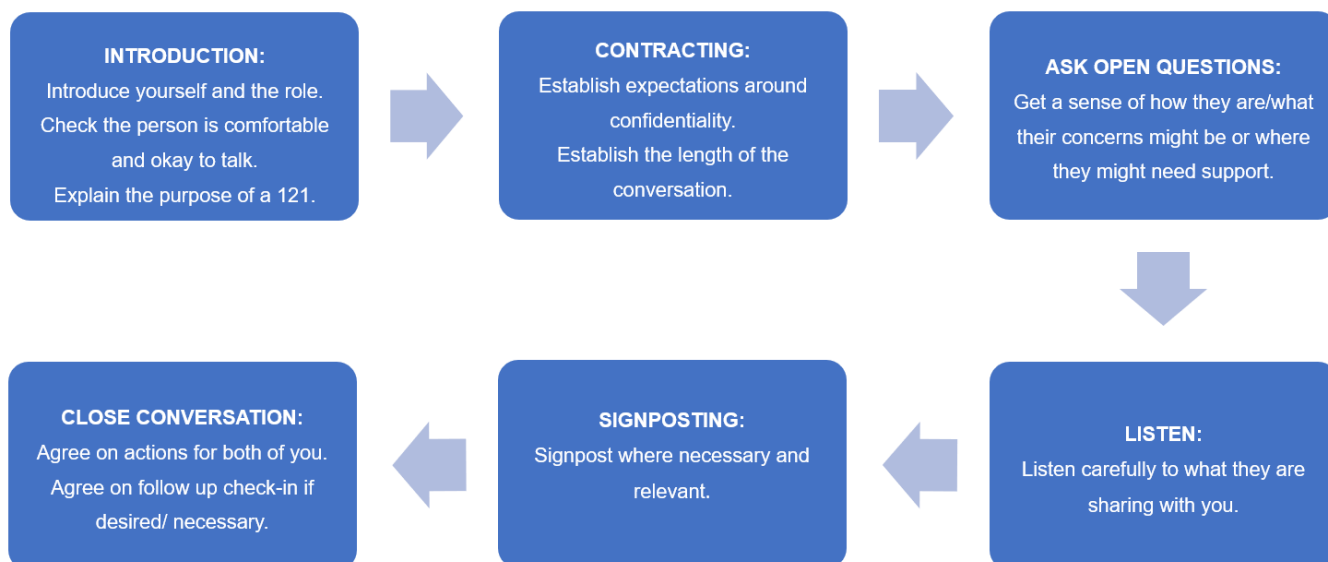
- ❖ Record phone calls or video calls.
- ❖ Make promises that you cannot keep. You are not here to diagnose or treat people, so do not make any attempt or promises to do so.
- ❖ Judge the reflections and information that is shared with you.
- ❖ Offer your opinion on subject matters. You are a neutral person to speak to. You can offer compassion and support without sharing your opinion. Remember this is about them, not you.
- ❖ Feel obligated to know the answer to every question. It's okay to get back to people once you have found out the relevant information. This is better than misinforming someone.
- ❖ Let your personal preferences for the individual inform your offer of support. Everyone needs to receive the same consistent care and aid

## Contracting: Confidentiality Disclaimer



**Any information shared will remain confidential, unless there is a risk of harm to the participant or others, or there are any safeguarding concerns. In this case, you will inform the participant that confidentiality will be broken. An agreement must be set at the start of the conversation. If you do take notes about actions you agree to help participants with, be sure to be open and transparent about what you write down and why. You must inform the participant that while confidentiality will be respected, general themes will be captured to inform the wellbeing offer and for managerial and organisational development.**

## A Framework



## Open Questions

These are questions which require more than just a 'yes' or no' response and usually begin with 'How?' 'Where?' 'What?' 'Who?'. They encourage the participant to reflect and share and prevent you from having to ask lots and lots of questions. For a good conversation, the participant will do most of the talking and you be **listening**.

### Instead of....

Are you ok?  
Have you had a break?  
Do you feel rested?  
Do you have a good work-life balance?  
Do you feel supported?  
Is there anything we can do to help?

### Why not try

Where is the most useful place for us to start?  
What does a good day look like for you?  
What do you like to do to relax?  
How do you manage balancing work and home life?  
What could you proactively do to improve things?  
How can we help to make you feel more supported?

## Key Points



Try to ensure you are approachable: be authentic and open in your concern.



Allow them the space to share and reflect without judgement.



Listen actively to what they are sharing and don't be afraid to use silence.



Ask open questions, be curious, and if you don't know the answer, be honest.



Show understanding and respect as their concerns are real.

## Tools

These tools and tips are suggestions to help your conversations run smoothly. The reading and training aren't mandatory but it's recommended to help you feel most prepared.

### How to manage signposting



- Know the material you are signposting people to
- Listen to feedback and be mindful about what you signpost to
- It's okay to signpost after the conversation
- Don't hesitate to signpost the participant to their GP, health professional or HR specialist.

### Support follow-up arrangements

- Check back in on the people you have had wellbeing conversations with. The frequency of your check-ins will vary from person to person
- direct and encourage the participant to make their own follow-up arrangements to support their personal wellbeing.



### Setting boundaries



- Setting clear boundaries helps to manage expectations and avoid misunderstandings.
- Having an agreed time limit (and sticking to it)
- Be clear from the offset that it is an informal, friendly chat
- Having someone that you can talk to, to download and debrief, is a helpful way to ensure you aren't carrying the problems of others.

### Tips for closing a conversation

- 1) RECAP:** shortly before the end of your allotted time, suggest a recap where you can revisit what you have covered so far.
- 2) RAISE:** towards the end of the meeting note how much time you have left together and offer them a chance to raise any further issues.
- 3) REBOOK:** If it seems as though the conversation is not naturally drawing to a close, suggest a follow up meeting where you can continue the discussion.

# Time to reflect...



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Take some time to note down your thoughts on what you've learned;

What resonated?

What has made you curious?

What small changes could you make to start having an impact differently and quickly?

What might you need to share with your team, and commit to 'testing and learning' together?

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