

Mental Health & Wellbeing at the Bar

Sample Wellbeing
Survey Questions for
Chambers



Wellbeing
at the Bar

Introduction

If you are looking for effective ways to promote wellbeing in your chambers or organisation, we recommend you start with some research. The approach adopted by a number of chambers is to initiate activity by undertaking a survey to work out the appropriate priorities and support required. Chambers can then proceed with activity based on the feedback received.

Chambers who have successfully run a wellbeing survey as part of their wellbeing programmes have kindly shared tips and advice in this guide, along with sample questions for use by others. To help you create a survey for chambers, take a look at the three sample surveys and pick and choose the questions and/or approach most suitable for you. Feel free to mix the questions up and tailor it to suit your needs.

A couple of tips to set yourself up for success:

1. Make sure that the survey has the backing of both Chambers' Management Committee and any other relevant committee; ask the Chair(s) of any sponsoring Committee to take responsibility for communicating the survey and for encouraging participation.
2. In any communication, explain why it is important to participate in the survey e.g. the survey will help ensure chambers gets any approach to wellbeing right.
3. Protect anonymity both in platform use and by not asking anything of the members, pupil barristers or staff that would render them identifiable; reassure respondents on this point.
4. Make sure your covering letter reassures respondents (we have included an example of a covering letter in this guide).
5. Use an appropriate platform. Online surveys are useful, quick and easy to send out, but before selecting your online platform consider carefully issues like data storage or GDPR etc.
6. Don't ask too many questions and re-assure your workforce that it won't take long to complete (e.g. circa. X minutes).
7. Set a sensible timeframe for responses. One chambers successfully set a timeframe of just one week, sometimes setting a long deadline means people forget to respond.

Response Rates: typically chambers who run wellbeing surveys enjoy high response rates (in the chambers which set a one-week deadline they received responses from 50% of members/staff within the first week, following a chase up they had responses from 79% of chambers.

Example of a covering letter

“Dear all,

The X Committee is considering practical and meaningful steps to improve the wellbeing and mental health of all at chambers and we have decided to conduct a survey.

Please can we ask you to complete the survey regarding member & staff wellbeing at the following link: [\[link provided here\]](#).

The survey is a key part of the X Committee’s work, under Y’s direction, to consider the steps needed to promote the wellbeing and mental health of members and staff in our organisation. These issues have come into particular focus over recent years both in Chambers and at the Bar generally.

We appreciate that not everyone will consider that any/all of the issues are relevant to them, but we would nonetheless ask everyone in Chambers to take a brief moment to complete the survey so that we can gain a full picture of people’s views.

The survey can be completed in under 3 minutes. It is really important everyone takes part so please do so!

It is completely anonymous. *The site has been set up so that there is no way of seeing the identity of anyone completing the survey.*

Please complete the survey by Time on Date.

Thank you very much for your time.

Please contact me or one of the Committee members if you have any queries.

Best wishes”

Example Survey 1

Personal information

Gender

- Male
- Female

Age group

- 16-29
- 30-49
- 50+

Job role

- Staff member
- Barrister

Practice area

- Criminal
- Civil
- Commercial
- N/a (staff member)

Mental wellbeing

Mental wellbeing is not just about whether we have mental health problems or a diagnosed mental illness. By 'mental wellbeing' we mean the way we think and feel about ourselves and others, our confidence, and our ability to control things in our life.

Scale:

1 (very dissatisfied) 2 3 4 5 (very satisfied)

- 1) I am satisfied with the amount of information on wellbeing that my workplace provides
- 2) I am satisfied with the opportunities I have for looking after my health and mental wellbeing before, during or after work

Sources of support and communication

Within the workplace healthy functioning teams and individuals represent a source of social connection and support and as such represent a vital link to optimal performance.

1 (very dissatisfied) 2 3 4 5 (very satisfied)

- 1) I enjoy good support from my friends/ social network
- 2) I am supported by my colleagues/clerks/ senior managers
- 3) Bullying and harassment are seen as unacceptable at work and complaints are always acted on
- 4) I am satisfied with the channels of communication that exist within my organisation
- 5) I am satisfied my line manager will listen to my concerns and take them on board

Job control

Scale:

1 (very dissatisfied) 2 3 4 5 (very satisfied)

- 1) I am satisfied with my working hours
- 2) I think that excessive working hours are discouraged at my workplace
- 3) I am satisfied with the opportunities for flexible working

On average how many hours do you work each day? _____

Work environment

Scale:

1 (strongly disagree) 2 3 4 5 (strongly agree)

- 1) Within the environment in which I work, there is generally a sense of cooperation and collaboration
- 2) I have significant control over the content and pace of my work
- 3) I am able to integrate the things that are most important to my life and work
- 4) I am expected to work as the need arises
- 5) Within the environment in which I work, the value of my work is understood and recognised
- 6) Individuals are treated fairly within Chambers
- 7) Losing a client/ case has an impact on my confidence

- 8) A work project going badly has an impact on my confidence
- 9) Overall, I find my workload manageable
- 10) Within the environment in which I work, I feel comfortable to express my opinions, thoughts and ideas

Are you satisfied with the following aspects of your physical environment:

- | | | |
|-------------|------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| Noise | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| Ventilation | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| Temperature | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| Humidity | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No |

Other/ further comments: _____

Stress and health

We all need a level of stress to motivate and energise us for optimal performance. Without it we become bored and lack stimulation. We are designed to deal with short-term levels of heightened stress and our resilience is measured by how we cope, learn and recover from these times. If acute periods of stress continue and become chronic our health and performance will be negatively impacted as will our impact on others.

Stigma around stress in the work place has a profound impact on individuals who not only feel unable to speak up but are then more likely to get stressed about being stressed. This cumulative effect represents risk to health, performance and reputation.

Scale (unless a different one is present):

1(strong disagree) 2 3 4 5 (strongly agree)(N/A option)

- 1) I find it difficult to control or stop worrying
- 2) I tend to dwell on my mistakes
- 3) I tend to feel nervous, anxious or on edge
- 4) I tend to be very critical of myself
- 5) I feel that if I do show signs of stress at work it indicates weakness

How would you describe the following when you are at work:

	Very Poor	Poor	Fair	Very Good
Energy levels				
Mood				
Concentration				
Stress levels				

Wellbeing events/ activities

How likely are you to take part in each of the following activities/programmes if they were offered to you at work (tick boxes):

- Physical activity sessions
- Stress-buster sessions such as massage, yoga or Pilates
- Regular social events (not just drinking nights) – bowling? Food?
- Organised family events
- Weight management/ healthy eating programme
- Workshops or talks on:
 - Mental health awareness
 - Time management
- Book/ film/ culture club with monthly meetings
- Distribution of wellbeing resources and materials for breaks– adult colouring books? Sudoku?

Do you have any other suggestions for events/activities:

If you have any general comments, thoughts or ideas that you would like to suggest, please let us know here: _____

Thank you for completing this survey.

Example Survey 2

1. Have you experienced wellbeing issues yourself?

Yes

No

2. Have you supported others in chambers with their wellbeing issues?

Yes

No

3. Should we have a wellbeing policy for chambers?

Yes

No

4. Should we appoint a wellbeing representative and mentors to whom members and staff can approach if necessary?

Yes

No

5. Should there be a counselling / therapeutic resource appointed which members and staff can access?

Yes

No

6. Would you attend wellbeing seminars/workshops once or twice a year?

Yes

No

7. Can you suggest any other initiatives which may assist with our wellbeing?

Example Survey 3

1. Gender

- Male
- Female
- Prefer not to say

2. Role/Year of Call

- Junior Member (0 – 5 years' call)
- Junior Member (5 -12 years' call)
- Junior Member (12 years' plus call)
- Silk (0 – 10 years' call)
- Silk (10 plus years in silk)
- Pupil Barrister
- Employee
- Prefer not to say

3. What issues, if any, do you consider affect your wellbeing in Chambers? Rank in order of importance. (You don't have to rank every single one, just the ones most important to you).

- The impact of remote working on opportunities for seeking support/assistance
- The configuration of Chambers' premises
- Financial pressure
- Client pressure
- Long hours
- Too much work
- Not enough work
- Unpredictability of working hours
- Unpredictability of working locations
- Difficulties getting the type of work that I want
- Isolation
- Email management when in Chambers
- Difficulties communicating with others in Chambers
- Difficulties communicating with clients
- Family responsibilities/caring responsibilities
- Lack of professional support from other members of Chambers
- Lack of professional support from clerks or other members of staff

- Lack of moral support/emotional support
- Stress/Anxiety
- Other

4. If you have any issues relating to the wellbeing issues listed in the question above, who would you go to (e.g. pupil supervisor, head of practice group, senior clerk)?

[insert text box]

5. What steps have you taken to address any wellbeing issues that may have arisen thus far? (e.g. seeking assistance from a clerk, a colleague, a team leader; there is no need to name individuals unless you specifically wish to do so).

[insert text box]

6. Is there anyone at chambers who currently supports you in addressing these issues?

- Yes
- No

7. If yes, please give examples of the support you have been given if you wish to do so.

[insert text box]

8. Would you welcome more support being available?

- Yes
- No

9. What, if any, other support do you consider should be available? Please give details if you wish.

[insert text box]

10. Please indicate agreement/disagreement to the following statements

I am happy with my working hours

1 (strongly disagree) 2 3 4 5 (strongly agree)

I am able to balance my work and non-work lives

1 (strongly disagree) 2 3 4 5 (strongly agree)

I often feel I am under too much work pressure

1 (strongly disagree) 2 3 4 5 (strongly agree)

I am able to cope with the level of stress in my job

1 (strongly disagree) 2 3 4 5 (strongly agree)

There are skills I need in my job which at present I do not have

1 (strongly disagree) 2 3 4 5 (strongly agree)

11. Please give further information in respect of your responses to the previous question if you wish, including indications of what you would want to see change?

[insert text box]

12. Do you think Chambers could do more to promote the wellbeing of its members, pupils and staff?

Yes

No

13. If yes, what do you think Chambers could do? Please give details if you wish.

[insert text box]

14. Which, if any, of the following measures do you consider would assist (tick all that apply).

- Implementation of formal 'support options' (e.g. formal mentor/mentee system, wellbeing champions)
- Increased opportunities for social interaction within Chambers
- Increased opportunities for participation in organised sporting/leisure activities
- Allocation of more time for paperwork/non-court work
- More detailed timetabling of non-court work
- Emphasis on collecting in papers/briefing earlier
- Emphasis on managing quality of briefs
- An opportunity to review workload with clerks on regular basis
- Greater administrative assistance in managing paperwork (e.g. scanning briefs rather than collecting them, assimilating electronic briefs into a single file)
- More selective/limited involvement in seminars, marketing, drinks functions
- Emphasis on minimising administrative work

- Emphasis on minimising impact of non-core commitments (e.g. limiting involvement in committees, permitting attendance)
- Implementation of practice group or Chambers Whatsapp group(s)
- Regular 'afternoon tea'/daily gathering within Chambers

15. Please give details if you wish.

[insert text box]

16. If there were specific training in response to issues raised in this survey relevant to you, how likely would you be able to attend?

- Highly likely
- Quite likely
- Unlikely
- Not at all

17. If not, why not? Please give details if you wish.

[insert text box]

18. Do you consider it would be a good idea to have a space in Chambers as a dedicated relaxation area/refreshment area?

- Yes
- No

19. If yes, could you indicate what facilities you consider would be helpful to encourage wellbeing? If not, why not? Please give details if you wish.

[insert text box]

20. If you had a mental health concern (for yourself or someone else) would you be hesitant about raising this within Chambers on a formal basis?

- Yes
- No

21. If yes, please give details if you wish.

[insert text box]

22. If you had a mental health concern (for yourself or someone else) would you be hesitant about speaking to other people in Chambers informally about it?

- Yes
- No

23. If yes, please give details if you wish.

[insert text box]

24. Do you think that there is a stigma surrounding mental health issue in Chambers?

- Yes
- No

25. If yes, please explain if possible and give details as to what you think Chambers could do to remove or reduce any stigma that does exist.

[insert text box]

26. If Chambers were to offer a training session within Chambers to raise awareness of mental health issues, would you be likely to attend?

- Highly likely
- Quite likely
- Unlikely
- Not at all

27. If 'unlikely' or 'not at all', please give details if you wish.

[insert text box]

A couple of final tips

- Make sure to communicate the results of the survey as those involved will be keen to know the results.
- Then keep members informed as to what initiatives/activity you are introducing as a response to survey comments.

If you would be willing to share your own tips and advice with respect to wellbeing surveys, please email KWong@BarCouncil.org.uk