



Department meeting – improving wellbeing

If you become aware that your science team would like more support with their well-being in general, tackling this in a department meeting can be an effective way to decide on bespoke priorities and actions. However, well-being is not supported by one-size-fits-all approaches. Understanding the emotional needs of your department is a useful insight to what changes can be made that are bespoke to your department and your staff. Equipped with the data from the ASE RISE Autumn survey, you can justify spending an hour understanding the needs of your staff and working together to improve wellbeing.

General Guidance

- To keep the meeting focussed on being problem solving and proactive, limit the time spent talking about the issues and spend time focusing on their resolution. If you have the survey results, the key issues will have been raised.
- Set guidelines to support honesty, respect and confidentiality.
- Start with the assumptions that we are all responsible for our own wellbeing and should take responsibility to support each other's as well.
- Acknowledge that we all have different needs to get our job done effectively and consider how to do that by meeting individual needs.

Example 1: A work-life balance focus

If there is a general issue with work-life balance, use the ASE Work-life balance organiser. Staff complete it during the meeting and then use the analysis to start finding out what they want to do less of and what they may want to do more of and how to address that balance. Working in pairs or groups allows general discussion, then they decide the specific points they wish to put forward. As well as looking at general workload, look at the calendar and identify particularly busy times. Possible outcomes include:

- Working together at busy times, e.g. plan to meet in the same place and mark mocks (drinks and biscuits provided).
- Department decisions to do less of something, protect time to achieve something important, give permission to have rest time in the week or at weekends, set limits on email times etc.
- Staff are likely to come up with their own solutions as well, so listen to them and consider them.

([This article](#) from the Royal Society of Chemistry also contains some useful insights)

Example 2: Improving professional relationships

If your department has some issues with relationships within the science department, you may wish to address this in a meeting with a view to resolving them. This can be useful if the tensions are not too high. You will have the list of niggles from the ASE RISE Autumn survey and may be able to address them as a team. For this meeting, have a clear focus of improving working/professional relationships.

Identify the issues and solutions together, for example:

- Recognising that not everyone has to be friends, but do need to have a functional working/professional relationship.
- Recognise that the team has the same goals but different colleagues may have different needs and ways of achieving those goals. E.g. when and where you do your marking.
- Introduce the concept of the drama triangle and how to move out of it. Work together to [identify the changes](#) needed in the department to develop more productive relationships.