

Case Study: Achieving the People, Culture & Wellbeing Quality Mark at Weston College

Introduction

Weston College's commitment to enhancing the wellbeing of its staff and students has been further solidified through achieving the People, Culture & Wellbeing Quality Mark. The rigorous assessment process was instrumental in helping the College evaluate and improve its practices, resulting in tangible, impactful changes across the organisation. This case study explores how achieving this accreditation has positively influenced the College's culture and wellbeing initiatives, leading to a more supportive and vibrant community.

The accreditation process

The College approached the accreditation process with enthusiasm, recognising it as an opportunity to both celebrate its existing practices and identify areas for growth. The assessment was thorough and supportive, providing a well-structured framework that allowed the College to build an evidence base showcasing its efforts. The resulting report from AAL (Association for Accredited Learning) served as a guiding document, shaping the College's strategy over the past 24 months. This report was not just a reflection of current achievements but also a roadmap for future development.

Key outcomes and initiatives

Since receiving the Quality Mark, and during our three-year accreditation period, the College has made significant investments in staff and student wellbeing, implementing a series of initiatives that have had a profound impact on the organisation's culture. Some of the most notable outcomes include:

- **Appointment of a full-time staff welfare officer** - to provide dedicated support and resources for staff wellbeing, ensuring their needs are addressed promptly and effectively.
- **Introduction of 20 staff wellbeing champions** - these champions are distributed throughout the College, providing peer support and promoting a culture of wellbeing at all levels of the organisation.
- **Enhanced induction process** - a restructured five-day induction process has been introduced, ensuring new staff members feel welcomed, supported, and integrated into the College community from day one.
- **Re-focused Mental Health and Wellbeing Committee** - this committee has been re-energised to focus more sharply on mental health and well-being, driving initiatives that support staff and student mental health.
- **Refurbishment of the Staff Hub** - the College has renovated the staff hub, creating a comfortable and inviting space for staff to relax and recharge during breaks.
- **Development of Student Services Hubs** - improvements to the College estate have enhanced the Student Services Hubs, providing better support and resources for students.

- **Organisational structure review** - the College has reviewed its structure to ensure a strong talent pipeline, developing future leaders and creating opportunities for career progression within the organisation.
- **Middle Managers Programme** - a new programme has been introduced to support staff transitioning into management roles, equipping them with the skills and knowledge needed to succeed.
- **Staff Wellbeing Days** - well being days have been established, allowing staff to focus on their mental and physical health through various activities and workshops.
- **Online exit interview process** - the College has created an online exit interview form to better understand why staff leave and to use this data to improve retention strategies.
- **Open and transparent communication** - more frequent campus-based staff meetings with the Principal and leadership team have been introduced, fostering a culture of openness and transparency.
- **Improvements to work-life balance** - in response to staff feedback, the College has refined policies to allow greater autonomy and flexibility around hybrid working, increased college closure days, and brokered a deal for free staff parking in council car parks around the town centre campus.

Celebrating Success: The Wellbeing and Community Day

In July, Weston College held its first annual Wellbeing and Community Day, an initiative that underscores the College's commitment to fostering a supportive and healthy environment. This event allowed staff from all departments to participate in activities that boost well-being and strengthen connections within the College community. Staff had the freedom to choose their team activities, which ranged from BBQs and bowling to pottery painting, escape rooms, and even a 'Bake Off.'

One standout event was 'Project Tractor,' undertaken by the Construction and Civil Engineering staff team. This project involved restoring and painting Noah's Ark Zoo Farm's beloved tractor, "Gilbert," which now serves as a centrepiece for the zoo's 25th-anniversary celebrations. The project was a perfect blend of team building, skill demonstration, and community contribution, exemplifying the College's commitment to meaningful, impactful initiatives.

Conclusion

Achieving the People, Culture & Wellbeing Quality Mark has been a transformative milestone for Weston College. The accreditation process not only validated the College's existing efforts but also highlighted opportunities for further improvement. Over the past 24 months, the College has embraced these opportunities, implementing a range of initiatives that have enhanced the well-being and culture of the organisation. The College continues to prioritise these areas, recognising that a supportive, healthy environment is essential for the success of both staff and students.