**Department of Veterinary Medicine**

**Wellbeing and Mental Health Oversight Group**

**Minutes: Wednesday 12th March 2025, 2.30-3.30pm HR Meeting Room**

**Members:**

Present: Dan Tucker (DT), Joanna Hudson (JH), Julie Ingham (JI), Bethany Guy (BG), Alina Solina (AS) Sharon Chandler (SC), Julian Parkhill (JP)

Apologies: Rachel Worsley, Nicky Holdstock Nick Bexfield, Katie McCallum, Jane Dobson, Mark Holmes

**Agenda:**

1. Apologies for absence: as above
2. Minutes of meeting of 12th December 2024: accepted
3. Matters arising from previous meeting (not addressed elsewhere in the agenda):

None that weren’t otherwise covered below.

1. Main business:
   1. Standing items:
      1. Student related matters:

**EAVE (verbal) feedback**

The group was updated with the (verbal) feedback after the EAEVE accreditation visit. The feedback was mostly positive with many commendations and only one point needing addressing. The EAEVE visit team will send formal feedback and recommendations to the vet school, then we will collate documentation to send back in March. It was noted that this was a much more successful visit than the RCVS visit and the documentation and management of the visit will work towards a similarly successful visit by the RCVS in September.

It was noted that staff wellbeing and morale has been affected throughout the fallout from the RCVS accreditation visit and feedback and the negative press surrounding this. Also, from the GB review and the perceived uncertainty, lack of support and unanswered questions surrounding this. It was noted that communication from HOD with open Town Hall Meetings are well received, staff grateful for transparency.

DT agreed to explore with Andi Bawden if/how WMHOG might support upcoming RCVS accreditation process.

**Action: DT to offer WMHOG’s assistance to Andi Bawden**

* + 1. General staff related matters
* Staff ideas from World Mental Health Day (10/10/24) ‘Ideas Tree’.

A number of anonymous ideas were submitted. These were considered in categories:

* Community related (coffee machine, walking group, running group) – a number were already actioned.
* Staff Review and Development (SRD) related: ‘Employee of the month’ – group was wary of this approach as potential for divisiveness. The recent approval of contribution increments was noted. The group recommended that PIs and managers use the newsletter to celebrate team members’ achievements through that channel. ‘Peer support for managers’ – this was being considered by JI.

A member proposed that there could be a ‘you asked, we’ve done’ section on the Wellbeing webpages.

**Action: JH**

* Staff morale-boosting activities: The group was encouraged by the description of the successful Quality Review of Clinical Governance process in the Hospital, facilitating open discussion of successes, and opportunities for improvement at team level. The approach could be applied more widely in other areas of the Dept.
* A member asked if there was a pathway to provide feedback to RCVS on the Accreditation process. JP replied that the Department is adding our members of staff to RCVS Committees – this would provide an opportunity to influence at a broader level.

**4.2 Feedback on Departmental W+MHOG event / week, Feb 2025**

We put on the second annual wellbeing week at the beginning of February. This included:

* Lunchtime Mindfulness session delivered by Tiny Pause – giving those attending tips on being able to regain focus and how to alleviate anxiety.
* On the Wednesday – we had a brisk walk around the lake and back again – the weather was dry, chilly but sunny and those who attended took away with them renewed sense of purpose and a lung of fresh air!
* Thursday was a talk from our Keynote speaker – Vet and metal health advocate Katie Ford who talked to us about how she overcame Imposter Syndrome - a topic that affects people across organisations / different roles and levels. Like reframing negative thoughts, credit yourself for your accomplishments and making time to take note to others for their accomplishments. Be kind to yourself when you make mistakes.
* After the keynote speech by Katie we had a drinks and nibbles event in the staff room.
* The Friday newsletter bookended the week and rounded up the week’s events with signposting to departmental, university and wider signposting to wellbeing websites and where to find help if you are struggling – around a very timely Wellbeing week due to the cloud over the department.
* Over all the attendance at these was moderate to poor. The group discussed the events, dates and timings. Further thought would be given to how to improve attendance and engagement….different timings, spreading events over a longer period of time. A Dept-wide survey would be undertaken in coming months.

**Action: All members to reflect and consult with colleagues**

**Action: JH to conduct a survey on future Dept Wellbeing weeks**

**4.3 Budget**

An updated budget was required.

**Action: DT to request updated budget from Accounts**

**4.3 Dept Wellbeing Communications**

* Going forward, we are adding a wellbeing section into the newsletter each issue – to remind people what wellbeing support is available to them, also remind people about the initiatives we have – like the quiet room, the tickets to the botanical gardens and all the help and support on the notice boards, wellbeing pages on the intranet site and on the mental health first aiders.
* The TV from outside the old library is in the process of being moved to the staff room and will have wellbeing messaging as a priority put onto it, but it would be nice to add a new initiative for this year to the offer.

**4.4 Upcoming wellbeing events to bring to attention of Dept members:**

* World Mental Health Day – October 10th 2025 –
* [www.mentalhealth.org.uk/our-work/public-engagement/world-mental-health-day](http://www.mentalhealth.org.uk/our-work/public-engagement/world-mental-health-day)
* The [University’s Key Dates](https://universityofcambridgecloud.sharepoint.com/sites/UoC_StaffWellbeing/SitePages/Wellbeing-Calendar-of-Events.aspx?csf=1&web=1&e=Q5zndU)
* RCVS Mind Matters Initiative [calendar](https://vetmindmatters.org/events/): MHFA training days in April-June, Mind Matters Initiative (MMI) Research Symposium 10/10/2025.