

Inclusive institutions: enabling and supporting culture change

The Board's role in wellbeing as a strategic imperative
Transcript.

Thursday 5 May 2022

Transcript

KIM: Welcome, everyone, thank you for joining so promptly. We will just give it a minute or two, in fact a minute probably, just to see who else is arriving. While we are waiting for colleagues to arrive, I would just like to ask if you are able to, could you rename your name, so we can see your institution as well. When my colleagues are setting up the breakout rooms, we would like to make sure we don't put people from the same institutions in the same groups. If you can rename yourself, that would be really helpful, thank you. A few people still coming in, so I will give it another few seconds.

I think everyone is in from the waiting room now. Late comers can catch up as soon as possible. Just to repeat for anyone who didn't hear that, if it's possible to change your name so that you can add your institution for when we sort out the breakout groups, that would be really helpful, thank you very much.

So good morning and welcome, everyone. We are delighted to see so many of you here today. I'm Kim Ansell from Advance HE. I'm joined by Nancy and Barbara, who you will hear more from in a moment. Any technical issues, can you please private message my colleague Suzanne who you will see, give us a wave Suzanne, thank you. Suzanne can help out with any connectivity issues and so on. Do contact her. If you could keep your sound off when we have the presentations, that would be great. But feel free to keep your cameras on and if we have problems with the bandwidth we may have to rethink that, but for now let's keep our cameras on if you would like to so we can see each other's faces, that would be great.

The event is being live closed captioned and Suzanne will put a link in the chatbox now if you need to access that. We also have here today a great team of facilitators. Vicky, Kay, Mel, Dan and Charles and you will see more of them later as well when we go into our breakout groups. Thank you everyone for joining. The sandpit event today explores the governing body's role in making well-being part of the university strategy. It is part of a two-member benefits themes running at Advance HE at the moment organisational well-being and inclusive institutions enabling culture change.

As this is a short session, finishing at 1015 we do not propose to have a break. But if you need to step away, turn off your camera and sound and come back to us as soon as you can. A sandpit aims to convene participants from different disciplines or different parts of the organisation to discuss challenges and uncover creative or innovative solutions to offer new ways of working or thinking about particular issues. We're going to consider the link between healthy and prosperous universities, and the well-being of staff and students. How culture structures and policies can enable or prevent the expression of full human potential, collaboration, creativity and innovation. Over the last five years, particularly since the pandemic, student and staff well-being has been on board agendas more than ever before. However, talking about well-being and being updated about well-being initiatives does not necessarily translate into a healthy and inclusive culture where everyone has a sense of belonging. The senior leadership is responsible for strategic oversight and governors need to hold the executive team to account. Creating the right conditions and

culture for the strategy to be successfully implemented and ensuring that the core values on which governance should be founded includes the well-being of the community which it serves.

Today you will hear two provocations which are intended to stimulate thinking about the whole system in which we work. Lift our gaze beyond our usual thinking horizons and help us learn from each other. The CUC code of governance requires that boards promote and develop a positive culture which supports ethical behaviour. We want to look at how boards integrate their thinking about well-being with the oversight of culture and their strategic planning and if so, how. So to our provocateurs. Nancy Hey is a global leader in the field of well-being. She set up the what works centre for well-being, the first of its kind, which is the UK's national body for well-being evidence and practice. Past and present her advisory roles spans sectors geographies and purpose. Barbara Bassa is a valued and gifted colleague at Advance HE with experience across sectors and geographies Barbara promotes transformational leadership underpinned by deep thinking about authenticity, compassion, presence, collaboration and creativity. More about Barbara later. I would now like to hand over to Nancy for our first provocation. Nancy, welcome.

NANCY: Thanks Kim, great to be here and it's fantastic to see so many of you. I'm going to give you some contents to help lift horizons and start thinking. So it's quite a lot of content, it will be there to share afterwards if you want it as well. I was going to start with just a breath in and think about when you were at your best at work, what was that like? What contributed to you performing at your best? I'm not going to ask you for those things, just hold it in your head and we will pick up those as we go through the session, which will be under pinned by as much evidence as I can give you.

We're going to talk about Board role as being a strategic issue rather than an HR Director, or head of well-being in an organisation, this is very much that governance and assurance role of which we have done research looking at that. The UK agencies national body of well-being evidence policy and practice and we are pulling on all the research out there, making sense of it understanding how much we can rely on it and working out how we can make this happen in practice. It's all very well academic paper saying this is the most important thing, when actually in practice it doesn't work in your organisation.

What we do is turn that into a principle based practice and bring it into a whole range of different sessions. You can see some of your organisations there, or colleagues involved in it. We work with the UK's national well-being measures. So this is when we are talking about how we're doing as individuals, as communities and as a nation and how sustainable that is for the future. So this is looking full at that triple bottom line and this is how robust that data is, it's been collected over decades and we know quite a lot about it.

We can look at how people in your sector are doing by occupational data and that is important because there will be people with different types of roles within your organisation, and we can start to see that pay matters. But other things matter, too. And we can also look at the graduate outcomes data and see how different graduates are doing. In this case by anxiety and by salary. So you can see this data as well about how your students do after they leave. And the value add that you provide as an organisation. We can also look at specifically the interventions that the projects programme approaches that you use to support and build student mental health and well-being and we did a review published in 2020 look can at all the different approaches. How

confident we can be in that knowledge and what we might do as a result. That is just a bottom line we can start to see a whole load of evidence that is useful and more coming out on Monday about this. This field is rapidly growing. Not because students are particularly at higher risk for poor mental health, they are not particularly, but actually on all the normal things that we would say were successful life, these students should be doing way better than they are. So mental health is a key driver of overall satisfaction with life in adulthood as well as early life. These are student reviews and I can talk about that later. We can also look at well-being at work and with a works for well-being at work. We can give things three lots in terms of confidence, two lots 23 it is promise. We have reasonably good evidence that you can do things that improve the well-being of your staff and in some cases improve performance. And then the big one is that if you integrate organisational, all these things that are happening to improve the well-being, ie anything that isn't about performance, you can bring that together in an organised way and you will get performance improvements as well as well-being improvements. That is that bottom organisational wide approach, which is why this type of conversation is important. We can look at what makes the biggest difference at work, and pay is important. Objectively fair pay is important. That includes everything around it. That will vary by different people at different stages, but that is important. But we can also see having an interesting job and those great relationships at work, whether that's with your colleagues, your manager particularly, or with your customers for various, they will be different in different types of organisation, are the biggest drivers. It's worth 23% of pay, it is really important. At the other end we have work-life imbalance, difficulty stress and danger and in the modern world in the UK it's usually about stress rather than danger. We have managed to eliminate a lot of the really unsafe physically unsafe jobs, but in some cases that will be the case. There's a load of other things in the middle that matter, too. We have taken that and put it into the key drivers of well-being so we can start to integrate the belonging, the culture, the ethics, the inclusiveness into your thinking about how you look after the well-being of the organisation. So not all work is the same. So there will be different jobs within your organisation, what makes the biggest difference for your team where you are, your organisation, where you do the things you do. The top two are people work for people. So this is about health and relationships. That purple block, are we physically and mentally well, do we have the support if we get sick, can we get back quickly, those types of things. Our relationships, the blue blob, the line manager one, brilliant, people management practices, really, really matter. And that support from work from other people. And then we need to feel safe, the second most important driver, so this is the security in environment, that orange and green on the chart there, so your work conditions. Your physical and emotional safety, bullying has an outsized negative impact. But there's very little evidence about what works for tackling bullying and harassment or promoting or preventing it, think carefully about what you are doing and why. That financial security, so money, pay isn't just about money now, it will vary by different people. So have you got money to help you with stand a financial shock. What is your future, what is your pension, those sorts of things. And then environment is about your physical systems, your facilities, working patterns, tools, community, IT and the culture you work in, that sense of belonging and pride and that shared values you've got and the ethics which is in the organisation are fundamentally important and particularly important for purpose-driven jobs which often will be the case in our organisations. And then than purpose bit, do we have engagement with our job? Are we getting things done that matter? Clear goals, and that job quality, is it the right one for us? Are we developing all those sorts of things as well. Those are the orders of priority. Those buckets of things matter when we are looking at well-being of staff. This is the voluntary reporting standards for the UK for well-being. This is the thriving at work review. Do you know how your people are doing against all those buckets. It might be you survey, it might be you have

information from a whole range of different sources about these aspects of our lives and you can see from this from the Ministry of Defence, they had eight different sites and within those sites they had people who civilian and military, so different specialities within those sites and you could see that those drivers were doing differently in different places. You really need to understand what's going on holistically across your organisation, so you can respond appropriately. And responding appropriately is really important. So we are often seeing we are comparing apples with pears, so things we do when somebody is in trouble, they have had a mental health crisis, they have had a disciplinary procedure or illness and there's things we do when we need to do that. There's things we need to do where there is slightly higher risk, so for example, if you've got a medical school, there will be things you will need to do around the drugs you've got there in terms of preventing access, higher risk things, but people are at higher risk, where they are recovering in some way or other vulnerabilities. There are a whole load of things we do that we invest in day after day that the difference we make about promoting the things that help keep us well. Those relationships we have, are they good. All those things that allow us to live well. Just thinking about those different aspects is quite important. Then you can organise that into an action plan. This is just an example, it's the very practice and evidence based one. What are you doing in each of those areas, how are your people do, what do we already do in promotion intervention and restitution and what gaps do you have. What do you know about what you're doing as an organisation. And that takes me to the governance role. Because the governance role is a particularly important one. You are not delivering this, you are not doing it. So we reviewed the different types of governance roles in a whole range of different context, roles on boards, councillors governors and what is we found as well as the authentic header ship for well-being. Effective governance on well-being in itself improves effectiveness of well-being strategies because the leadership is there and that oversight and integration is there. Authentic leadership for well-being means two things. One, yes, caring about it and visibly seeing to be caring about it before the crisis hits, but also having an action plan that you actually thought about and that works. What is your strategy aligned with your values is a key part of that. Is it integrated? Are your systems there to monitor, are you in touch with what's going on. Do you have a clear description of your role on the board? And have you got space to do it, are you using information that is helping you understand how your people are doing and some of that will be data that you've got or reports that you've got, but it also may be great understanding of how people are doing in your organisation and that can be involved where sites visits and regular assurance of that, are you checking in regularly, because it changes over time. So the sort of governance questions we see are effective and we are still testing this, but how are your people doing, how do you know, what source of information do you have? How does it cover the key drivers we talked about for different groups in different contexts, how your admin staff versus your teaching staff in different faculties, how do we look at this regularly, are there functions for you to do that. What are you doing about that, what are you already doing, there will be loads of things, health and safety to HR to recruitment, loads of different things you are doing, your maintenance staff. And how do you know it makes a difference? Is it working well? How do you know? What evidence have you used to think about your plan? What gaps do you have? What are you trying out, how are you learning from what you are doing? Those are the sorts of questions we see effective assurance roles asking about well-being. So why does this matter. Happier people perform better. Simple. This is in call centres who are the most miserable workforce in the UK, happier people perform better. And there's a ripple effect. The value add of your institution is huge. Your well-being of your staff and your students makes a difference for the things that they do and they matter for the nation, but people take that home to their family and their friends and they are part of their communities, they are part of, they run the football club, they do the Brownies, they are

part of the Residents' Association, they help out in the communities and that is what makes our nation great. Thank you very much. There is discussion time and particularly the questions are asking today, should an organisational well-being become an integral part of a university strategy and how can it positively impact the culture of the institution and what is the role and responsibility of the governing body in embedding well-being in the organisation strategy. I will pass back to Kim for the discussion today.

KIM: Fabulous Nancy, thank you. It was great to hear those insights from beyond our sector, just to get a slightly different perspective and a different take on our thinking. But to think about how those issues that you see line up with governance in different types of organisations. So Suzanne has kindly put those key questions that you are going to discuss into the chat room, and we're going to break out until 9.05 to discuss those questions in small groups. So have a good chat. I know that you will probably go off-piste and won't answer the homework set. But see how you go with what connects with you on that particular presentation, think about the questions, and we will see you back in the room at five past nine.

(Breakout rooms)

KIM: Everyone comes flooding back into the room, which is great. Welcome back everyone. I hope you had a good discussion. Sorry if you were mid-conversation and Zoom zoomed you out of the room. But we're going to ask our facilitators now to give us a quick summary of the discussions that you had. I am sure they will do your conversations justice. But what I would like to ask is, as our facilitators are feeding back, if you were in their group, please do add any additional comments that you want to enhance what they're telling us and what they're feeding back. If something particularly resonated with you, or you heard an example or area of good practice that you really liked the sound of, please share that in the chat so that we can get a diversity of feedback from our facilitators and our participants. Thank you for that. I would like to start by asking Vicky to feedback from her group first.

VICKY: Thanks, Kim, we had a really, really great and quite rounded discussion really about this topic, provoked by the questions that you had set and Nancy's presentation. I think should well-being be part of strategy was a resounding yes. However, I think there were some sticky moments identified in terms of what that means in practice. I think we felt that there was a strong link to getting or helping to improve the issues that persist around diversity and inclusion for different communities. We felt that people would be more likely to, or equipped to respond to change and we live in a sector that's dealing with constant, constant change. We felt that if well-being was being properly addressed, it equips our staff and our students better to respond to change both within institutions and beyond. There was, however, some really important points about the power of the listening and the power of the quality of the evidence that you get to inform the Board's role and how it knows what is going on within the culture of the institution. So I think there's two points to that. The first bit is almost around board's culture and the way it works with the executive to be able to get an understanding and a feel properly about culture and have good conversations and good evidence about what that looks and feels like, and how you use the appropriate metrics over time. And the other piece I think is about how governors and senior leaders actually really truly listen to the organisation and we noted I think obviously there's been less opportunity for governors to be on the ground, so to speak, in the last couple of years. That might make a difference. But also the way in which senior teams actually engage with their staff

and the way in which they listen. We had a powerful example about how senior leaders do that in one institution. But also thinking about strategy and when it does roll round for refresh or when the opportunity is taken for refresh, that can be a really great opportunity to seize, to really check in with the organisation around what is happening, how it feels about its values, what values it wants and how those are lived and what the strategy can help set the path towards. So a lot within that, but a really great conversation I think, so a resounding yes, with some, but it's quite hard to do points.

KIM: Thank you Vicky. Really that listening point is so important. It's something that Barbara and I cover in a programme we run about transformative conversation and reminds me of the famous quote listen with the intent to understand before you listen with the intent to be understood. Stephen Covey quote there. Really super important. So thank you for that. Do please add your comments and that great example Vicky mentioned in the chatbox. And I'm going to move over to Dan for feedback from the second group.

DAN: Thank you Kim. Similarly we had a fantastic discussion and what was really interesting, we had a range of governors and staff from different size, different types of institutions, very small and specialist, and we had such a different approaches coming through but shared similarities. Likewise we completely agree yes organisational well-being should be part of the strategy, but actually what that means and how it's done is quite difficult, and there was a real good discussion on actually not looking at putting people into homogenous groups of the student experience, the staff experience, and that it's individuals' experiences as students or staff members, and that needs to be thought about with a variety of initiatives that can be put in place for the organisation to support well-being. We then talked around actually if we support staff and students to do better and to have a greater well-being, that they will perform better for the organisation and particularly in terms of staff strategy there, the more supportive you are of individuals, the more they are likely to give back to the organisation and produce better results. That well-being can't be masking for poor performance at the same time. Likewise, with Vicky's group, we had a real good chat about EDI, taking it from the point of groups who are affected, so those who were neurodiverse came up as an example and what extra measures can support people who face more challenges, that was a real key point that boards have to think about. We also talked around how boards can put processes in place to see this and building on strategy and values, processes in place such as what HR gets, are there people committees that will deal with this. We had a check if anybody had a well-being committee set aside, nobody does but that might be something to think about for organisations in the future. Taking things like staff sickness and reasons why and using that how that can prompt discussions and seeing that there have been more staff off for mental health reasons has prompted governors to talk about what can be done further as well as being on established initiatives like staff survey where things like well-being come in as part of the data collected and then being able to build that into organisational strategy. Really interest point about made the difference between small and specialist, where you know your staff and students a lot more because there's fewer and while that's great to see what's happening, it is a real strength, it can also be quite a challenge as well because you rely on those personal relationships rather than thinking about this as strategic approach as an organisational approach, just go fix with the individual rather than seeing what issues could be happening. So that for me is a real key point to end on that, in different sized institutions, different approaches are taken, which have both strengths and challenges as well.

KIM: Fantastic, thanks Dan. That was really interesting, I particularly like the thing that surfaced in your group around stakeholders and understanding them better and the diversity of stakeholders. It reminds me of the king code of governance, which is an internationally recognised governance code, which originated in South Africa. It requires boards to understand that NIEs of their stakeholders, the needs, interests and expectations and I know the CUC code as well has emphasised its need for boards to understand their stakeholders better. So, really interesting. Thank you. Kay, could we ask for feedback from your group please.

KAY: Yes, a lot of similar points made to both Dan and Vicky, so I won't reiterate too many of those. I think we had a great illustration where it was contested I think in a board meeting, where some people considered, the majority considered that having this as part of the strategy was absolutely the right thing to do, and similarly as other colleagues have mentioned it was important to be nurturing staff and students, productivity, retention, student success, all those things can flow from that kind of well-being ethos. But then I think there was concerns about mission drift, how far is the institution responsible for the well-being? Are they encroaching on basically the NHS and what should be core business. I think that the knock-on from that, lots of other points made, but then if it's in the strategy and we can identify ways of measuring it and I think again metrics are challenging, and need to be really considered, but then who is responsible on the ground? Is it another thing that you are putting on lecturers to be responsible for the well-being of their students. Is it line managers who have already got this huge remit, are you piling on more stress down the line. How do we support the people who are supporting others. That's something that we really need to think about. And then the final one that I don't think has been mentioned elsewhere was where well-being sits within the organisation also kind of has a message. So shifting it for example from health and safety to part of an EDI brief or whatever, where you actually situate it kind of models what you are trying to say to the organisation as well in terms of the importance that you put to well-being and how you consider it. Is it a problem or is it something you want to make the place a better place to work?

KIM: Really interesting, thanks Kay. Love the way that the student emphasis has come out there, but that real important interplay between the well-being of staff and well-being of students is something that we really need to think more about. There is a sort of circular process there, so I think we should definitely explore that more. Understanding boundaries as well, definitely important, so something that we would like to look at as we follow on the work that we're doing in this sandpit today. So last but not least, I would like to ask Charles to feedback from his group please.

CHARLES: Hello, any misrepresentations from my group let me know, I won't repeat any points that have been made, I will pick out a few different points. One of the things that we discussed was that there is a tension between organisations, universities saying it's embedded across our strategy and trying to make sure it is clearly articulated and measured in the ways KPIs. And we also talked about different institutions have different academic missions. So we need to make sure that there's an evidence-based approach to make sure that that is linked and articulated in line with the academic mission. The other thing we discussed was if you look at the current context as well, the sector as a recruitment and retention crisis, this whole concept has different meanings for different groups. And as we move into this nominally called post-COVID period it's really interesting that we are moving into a space where people are moving to working in entirely different ways, hybrid potentially 100% remote, which means that many of the challenges we now have with our

strategies in this area are different to what they would have been two years ago. The other thing that we touched upon is it's really difficult actually, even if you take an evidence-based approach, to understand what the evidence is actually telling you and an example I would give you of that, we discussed the concept of staff churn. So you could take the position quite high staff churn is a sign that there are issues within the organisation and that action needs to be taken. But in some organisations, there is concern that churn is too low and that represents a risk to the organisation because you actually do want people to move on and a steady churn of staff in and out of the organisation for knowledge exchange and knowledge reasons. So it's a very fast-moving space and I guess to summarise what people were discussing and it was a very full discussion, it's a very fast-moving space and some of the ideas that we've had about well-being prior to COVID potentially need re-examination and just to finish another point which I thought was really interesting that was made in our group, we are now in this hybrid space where many university workers are working two or three days a week at home. That in itself creates well-being issues about how do we support those workers, but equally, the point was made that many frontline workers who work in career service, estates, security, do not have that option and that creates a tension in the organisation around how do we manage the different expectations of different groups about what this means. Thank you.

KIM: Really interesting, thank you Charles. I'm going to ask for a couple of reflections from Nancy and Barbara on the points that have just been fed back. Nancy in particular, your reflections on the understanding the evidence base that's in front of us.

NANCY: So the evidence is moving quite quickly but we know a lot and actually didn't move very fast for 30 years. And so what happened during the pandemic a lot of organisations who hadn't thought about it hugely, suddenly started thinking about it but they were almost catching up with some of the organisations that had done more. So there is actually quite a lot out there. We know a lot. What I have shared with you is that bringing together of the evidence, it's not random stuff that I have just picked out, because I think it's interesting. So the staff churn one is really interesting, some of the top performing organisations have up to 40% staff churn and so I would caution against only looking at the negative indicators, or assuming something is a negative indicator, because what is right for your organisation might be, orbit of the organisation, might be really different. That takes me to the staff absence data and sickness data and yes that is important indicators, but actually they are where the biggest benefits come is on the rest of the population of the organisation where they are mostly reasonably okay, but it's that presenteeism and you get much more from that. That's that approach of treatment if they are ill, but that at risk and that promotion, those other boxes are way bigger and the benefits are bigger in that boxes. You also talked about line managers and I think this boundaries bit is a really interesting one. What is your responsibility as an organisation. The best thing an organisation can do is provide a job and a good job. And there may be a limit to how far you go in terms of okay this is as far as we can take T as long as it's fair and clear and you have thought about it, that's probably fine. And a business has that responsibility. You also talk about line managers and line managers are really key people here. So there's two things. One is that we are least happy, after being ill in bed, we are least happy at work in the presence of our line manager, and that's the most second most miserable thing you can do, but that's partly because it's not all about feeling happy, it's also about doing hard things well with other people that are done effectively. It's about how much balance we get. And also line managers themselves are often under huge pressure. Middle managers are often in really quite poor health and there is an argument for improving the well-being of managers enabling them

to manage effectively as possible. I have popped stuff about teacher student evidence base in there as well. We think there is a link and it looks likely but it's not absolutely certain and so if you are doing this, the key bit is to learn from it and add to that evidence base.

KIM: Fantastic, thanks Nancy. Barbara, picking up on that point that we heard from Kay and which Nancy has reflected on, what for you is the real challenge around being responsible for the well-being of others, particularly students, when you are also thinking about your own well-being?

BARBARA: Yes, thank you. I think Nancy just touched on it a minute ago, talking about the fact that we see a lot of burnout amongst staff in higher education, and we are seeing this phenomena of compassionate fatigue that leaders and managers are talking about. And that's purely because they are responsible for well-being of their staff, their students, but statement they are not immune to the challenges that everybody else is experiencing. So obviously, they have this additional burden of not only having the challenges themselves, but also helping other people. So I think it's really, really important to start with ourselves and that's really the focus. You cannot pour from an empty cup. We need to first start taking care of ourselves looking at our own boundaries, looking at our own well-being before we can go and help anybody else. I think that linked with this notion of authentic leadership as well. So the fact we are coming to work and acknowledging that we are struggling as well or saying it out loud that we are not immune to the challenges that the staff face as well, I think it's quite important.

KIM: Thank you. I saw a hand go up. Shaid, did you want to ask a question?

SHAIID: No, I didn't, I just had a comment. I am happy to wait. Yes it was just a quick comment in the chat about the well-being of managers. I think particularly managers in that middle piece are either frontline or second line management, my sentiment is managers in a lot of institutions and organisations now are feeling severely challenged because the expectations and demands of staff at a time when we know recruitment and retention is a specific challenge as well, particularly across further education and higher education, at the very least, if not other sectors, how does that translate into how that manager now manages post the last two years. I think there's without doubt been a paradigm shift. The expectations of all staff are very different. People have changed their lives over the last two years to work differently at home and feel like they have been actually very productive in the process of doing that. And there was a great article in the Forbes magazine about the return to the office and the challenges for managers and there's been that development around Apple, the expectation of executives, versus what the staff might think and there is that debate about whether now we've got some very old school thinking on the part of executives, which then translates into pressure into that middle management cohort, which then gets challenged by staff. So I just wonder whether we have actually changed irreversibly and actually we do need to get into the fundamentals of the disconnect between what staff want now and what executive managers think they want for people coming back in. I'm not sure if I have described that particularly well.

KIM: Great thoughts there, thank you, appreciate that reflection and you picked up on a few points there. A lot of boards are struggling with the issue of what's being called the great resignation and Charles has put a comment in the chat about conflicting goals and Nancy has put a comment about conflicting goals and this disconnect you mentioned. I think Barbara may pick up on some of this in her presentation. I'm going to dive straight in to hand over to Barbara and ask her to give us

our second provocation.

BARBARA: Welcome to this second provocation. I'm going to build a little bit on what Nancy said, but also offer a completely different perspective on organisational well-being as well. I work, I direct organisational well-being benefit theme and I am responsible for directing a number of national and bespoke programmes, started my career in Europe where I worked across various sectors and started working in higher education in 2008, fell in love with the sector. And worked in a variety of roles and well-being always seemed to be the underpinning theme around leadership, around widening participation, organisational development, change management, so I'm really, really passionate about the topic, plus my own personal challenges with health really challenged me to look deeply into this. So we know that the pandemic has brought well-being into the forefront of our thinking, and we know there have been quite a lot of national and local efforts to tackle this and Nancy already mentioned some, the step change in mental health initiatives, quite a few universities signed up for however, there are some challenges that our current approaches and I am going to highlight three of them in my provocation.

So the first challenge is how what we are saying in our strategies, in our policies, in our manifestos, how does it really translate on to the real experience of students and staff. And we may be asking ourselves some questions in terms of, okay, let's look, how staff is managing the workloads, do they feel inspired to think about the future of higher education, or do they feel worried, stressed, over-worked? How do students feel in universities? Do they feel included, do they feel that staff approaches them in a compassionate way? So these are some of the indicators that we may need to consider to look at what is really happening and what we are saying, because I think there are some gaps there.

The second challenge to our current approach is if that currently we are looking at well-being from the perspective of physical and mental, and predominantly we have been talking about students, although over the last two years that has been changing, so we are now expanding our thinking on to staff, which is great, however, what we are not doing, we are not necessarily talking too much about emotional well-being and we are not talking about deeper levels of well-being, spiritual well-being which I called consciousness here and Nancy talked about it in terms of alignment with purpose, organisational and personal purpose alignment, alignment of values. Really asking ourselves what are we here for.

I believe that, you see it on the screen on the holistical organisational development model which I developed in 2017, I believe that all these four aspects need to be considered in order to really truly implement organisational well-being. And how do they all link, that was my question. And I discovered the body of work developed by Dr David Hawkins, a renowned American psychiatrist and researcher. He had an extensive clinical practice and a lot of research into this. And what he's arguing is that actually the roots of our well-being is in our consciousness, in this deeper levels of thinking about well-being. That's where it starts. So it starts with how what we feel, how we identify, what our values are, how is it aligned with what's happening within organisations. And obviously what we are doing currently in higher education, but also in other sectors, we are predominantly looking at physical health, mental health, sometimes we explore a little bit of emotional health, but there is not a lot of capacity to be doing that. And actually if there is no alignment between our values and our purpose, then that will translate on to poor mental health, that will translate on to limiting belief that hold in their minds, how they think, how creative they are. It would translate on to

emotional levels. So experiencing stress, for example, and then innovatively, that will translate on to the physical level.

The physical level is the final effect of it, it's the barometer telling us there's something deeper going on there. So if consciousness is such an important element, then why are we not considering it? How should we be considering it? Again, using a model developed by Hawkins, he proposes this MP of consciousness and he looks at different kinds of states or emotional states responses that we have which contributes to organisational well-being. He says that any level which calibrate below 200, which expresses itself in a way when we feel angry or afraid about what's coming next, when there is a lot of grief that people are dealing with, a lot of guilt or shame, if we are making strategic decisions from that level, it will impact negatively on organisational well-being and our personal well-being as well. If we then start making decisions from the level that he calibrated 200 and above, that's a different story. So if we are acting from the point of courage and acceptance, willingness to see things from different perspectives, inclusion, optimism, fears regard we have to others at work, these kind of approaches and making decisions from those levels will help increase organisational well-being. So the invitation is to really start thinking about it when we are making decisions at work and when we are making strategic plans.

The third challenge, and we already talked about it in your breakout room, is the question about how important is it to align or to make well-being a part of the overall strategy. And we know that post-pandemic we will need different ways of thinking in order to thrive. And there is so much evidence from research from brain biology, from innovation and I have got two names here I highly value, Professor Paul Gilbert from Derby University talks about it and Dr Sharma from Massachusetts Institute of Technology, they talk about how it is really impossible to innovate and to be truly creative when we are stressed and when we constantly operate in a survival mode. So if we want to create better future for high education we know we have to create more stable, more nurturing, more compassionate conditions in universities. Therefore, I truly believe that we need to start putting well-being very firmly as a part of an overall strategy and really considering it at very early stages of implementation and planning. I'm going to leave you with two questions to take to your breakout rooms. So the first one is what is the level of consciousness with which we approach strategic design, decision-making and strategic oversight? And you've got the map of consciousness in your hand-out, so you will be able to refer to that. And the second question, what impact does the well-being of staff and students have on university culture? And how can we shift on to a higher level of consciousness to improve it? Thank you.

KIM: Fantastic, thank you Barbara, that was super interesting. I'm really interested in how that thinking about consciousness links to how effective decision-making happens. So I hope you all have some interesting discussions in your breakout groups. And you've got until about 9.50 and we will send you a message we are about to wrap up the discussion groups. Have a good conversation.

(Breakout rooms)

KIM: Welcome back everyone. No doubt your conversations were as interesting and varied as they were last time. I am going to stick with the same order so our facilitators know what to expect and

start off straightaway with the feedback from Vicky from your group.

VICKY: Yes, absolutely, another really stimulating conversation. Definitely acknowledged the importance of getting decision-making framed in the right conditions, so recognising the importance of those levels of consciousness and the impact that can have. We talked about really needing to move from reactive to proactive approaches and what might that look like by a board getting beyond the data and hearing and listening and really understanding real-life experiences. I think we touched on some ways in which we're quite good at doing that with students or there is certainly progress being made in how we listen to students, perhaps that needs to improve still in terms of staff well-being. We talked about the ripple effect and needing to look after the staff who are looking after the staff, who are looking after the staff, who are looking after the students. And recognising that this is about everybody. It's not about certain, not just about one part of the institution, it's about recognising the needs of individuals and groups within the institution, which I think we picked up on earlier. Of really a call that governors really need to ask about this, and really do their best to understand how it's being addressed and what more might be able to be done. And use their powers to really ask those questions and leverage that data. We also touched a bit on though managing expectations, and where we listen to people and get their input and ask them in a way I guess to expose how they're feeling perhaps in new ways, that actually we are going to commit to taking some forms of action and we might need to manage those expectations around how we are gathering that intelligence in the feedback and what can be done as a result. Really I think it's that closing the loop piece that we often talk about in student engagement and feedback. Again, coming into the start space, how can we have good conversations and good evidence, but also manage expectations and be able to close that loop so that people feel like they've had a meaningful engagement around this agenda. A final postscript around workload and a recognition that sometimes when we're asking people to do things differently or to take greater care of the way in which they're doing things, it can feel like asking them to do more, and one of the biggest issues that we have in our sector is around the perception and the realities around workload and lack of resources. So how do we manage that as someone put it, that sort of getting into a cul-de-sac around that. I will stop there.

KIM: Great, thank you. I did wonder how long it would take before the thorny issue of workload and resources got on to the agenda. And yes, it's incredibly important. We may touch on that more later but I'm going to go straight to Dan for the second lot of feedback. Please continue to put your comments in the chatbox.

DAN: So we started with a bit of discussion around what do we actually mean by level of consciousness and how can you pitch where you are and it's quite difficult to take into a singular word there. And what that means for being a governor and how you can be an inclusive governor to raise that. How do you go out and listen to people. How do you give people platform to speak. How do you understand others' experiences and opinions? We moved into a bit of a chat around actually what is the university there for, what is the mission and understanding that and bringing that back to conscious decision-making, with a well-being perspective. And again, a bit more back on the inclusive board member and the higher level of consciousness again.

There was a discussion around how culture can be driven by senior execs and how that can change from institution to institution and how you get a different approach there and how that affects conscious decision-making. There was a fantastic point made around how a lot of systems

and processes are in place for when institutions were much smaller, 3 to 4,000 students, and through no fault of anybody's institutions have grown, systems have not grown to change that. That makes it quite difficult for going out and finding what the experiences of your staff, students, other key stakeholders are, as individuals, because systems have been designed for much smaller cohorts of staff and students. So that actually needs a bit of design thinking and systems thinking and a bit of change from board members to lead that. That will be tough, it's not an overnight solution, but that will need to be put in place to enable true conscious decision-making. So I thought that was a fantastic point. We were talking about looking at things through an intersectional lens just as we were getting cut off. Paul if you want to type any of that in the chatbox, that would be really useful if you are able to, absolutely no pressure if not. But actually, going back to that organisational well-being and conscious decision-making, EDI perspective and move away from health and safety lens.

KIM: Thank you. That point about size matters is really important and we're seeing a lot of maybe faculties or maybe schools, experiencing unplanned growth at the moment, which puts a real strain on the processes, the procedures and the ways of working. I wrote a blog about it last week, Suzanne is going to put a link in the chat any minute so we can carry on that bit of the conversation and Charles has put a couple of comments in here as well, which I encourage you to think about. Thank you very much, Dan. I will move to Kay please.

KAY: Thanks, Kim, thanks, colleagues. I think our group really struggled with this concept, please if anyone who is in my group has got it and I am misrepresenting us pop it in the chat. We wanted longer to really pull apart that matrix and understand it. And what does it actually mean in terms of, I think there was a recognition that universities are incredibly diverse organisations, and there are professional values and principles that inform the different disciplines which are the core parts of an institution, and I think not only do we have that kind of disciplinary differences we also have individual differences. I think there was this kind of tension about what does that actually mean, should we all be behaving in exactly the same way all the time and even in one person are going to be days they are going to be in different parts of that map themselves. And we also reflected on the different experiences people had through COVID and how that's impacted things. So even if you are making all these changes, you are going to have to go much more slowly because people aren't in a position to have the capacity to change at the moment because different people have had such traumatic experiences, or different types of experiences. So I think we did really struggle with it. But I think the last take home point which I think we possibly coalesced around was that this idea of emotion, the comment was made boards pride themselves in the fact that they don't act emotionally and the fact that they have collective responsibility it balances out some of those kind of diverse voices. So you think is it a collective conscious of the board we are talking about rather than individuals. That is as far as we got. Please colleagues from my group add anything else you think I have misrepresented.

KIM: You can see Barbara is delighted that you struggled with it, because this means you are thinking really deeply about it, which is wonderful. For me, I thought there was a really great point came out of that around the need to take longer over your thinking. We've seen throughout COVID board red teams, COVID crisis teams, we have seen boards councils courts jump into action to make fast decisions and actually decision-making in universities typically has been quite slow. So there's been a desire to quite enjoy that experience of making decisions quickly, and actually there's a real risk there that if we don't take a step back and we continue that fast paced

decision-making we will miss things. We do need longer to reflect on things, to think about things, and to understand them better before we go into our decision-making. I think that's a great point. Even though it's relevant to the model, it was really interesting for me. Thank you Kay and Kay's group. And last but not least...

BARBARA: Can I add one sentence about that, I think it's really important to make a distinction between making emotional decisions, and acknowledging your own decisions when, your own emotions when making decisions. Because we always have emotions. You know, even if we don't necessarily acknowledge it in the moment. We do. That's exactly the level that the invitation is we go to when we are able to acknowledge what's happening inside and how that inside, even though it's not expressed, can potentially impact on what then happens in terms of the decisions that you make and in terms of how we run the organisations. Kim. Great: Thank you Barbara. So last group to feedback from Charles please.

CHARLES: Thank you. We found it really interesting provocation because of the complexity. I won't repeat points made by previous, we had a conversation because I admitted to the group that I am an emotionally repressed technocrat so the idea of some of the things we discussed are not easy for me to sit well with. We talked about the fact there's a complexity because this is about putting the human in front of the role and one of the core themes that kept come across was these kind of conversations require a level of organisational capability and maturity that often is lacking. And we also discussed the fact that even if you have that maturity, how do you make sure that the conversations you are having with people in the organisation around these issues are reflective of the whole organisation, because organisational cultures can vary enormously from discipline area to discipline area, let alone a whole institution. A point we finished on, we didn't think was contentious, one of the outcomes of these conversations actually might be this isn't the organisation for you. And we thought it was really interesting because there can be a tendency to say we are trying to build an organisation that fits everybody, but in reality if you are building an organisation with a focus it's not going to fit quite a lot of people. A really positive conversation to have which could come across as negative is maybe this isn't the organisation for you, but it's always about the framing. So for us, it was about that how does the organisation get to the maturity to get to that level of having conversations about consciousness.

KIM: Great, great reflection there around sub cultures and we might ask our panel for some feedback on that in a minute. So thank you everyone for your comments and discussions. I would like to ask Barbara in particular to reflect on a comment that I think it was Dan made around the risks of making yourself vulnerable and this issue around managing expectations.

BARBARA: Okay, I don't like the question! Because if you ask what are the risks of making yourself vulnerable, you are already thinking, oh, there is a risk there. I would like to change the question and flip it on its head and actually ask what are the risks of you not making yourself vulnerable in organisations. With so many challenges we are facing we cannot just be approaching it from our heads, from our rational minds. We need to bring emotional intelligence to work. We need to be talking about it and we need to be becoming more comfortable with it. Because even if it's not expressed, okay, even if emotions are repressed, we are still expressing it. Okay. Not necessarily in a positive way because they will be in all sorts of ways, how we deal with stress, how quickly do we burn out. How do we approach performance management. There's all sorts of things that we will be doing in a particular way when we are "emotionally repressed". So the sooner

we get there and start becoming more comfortable with that space I think the sooner we will be able to start creating more transformative space, because that is where we need to be now. Facing the changes that we face. We need to think about transformation rather than just replicating things. So we talked a little bit about okay so coming back to the question about what is the risk of not being vulnerable, we touched on two things that I want to look back to. So the first one is the notion of authentic leadership and authenticity at work. You cannot do that without bringing the vulnerability to the stage with you and expressing it in the way that is felt as attending to other people. And then the notion of trust. If we are not vulnerable, if you are not allowing ourselves to be vulnerable at work and Brenda Brown talks about it in her extensive work and research on vulnerability, which I highly recommend, if we are not then creating trust will be very, very challenging. So it is essential. It is essential in organisations, for organisations to thrive.

KIM: Fantastic answer Barbara. I love the way you flip things on their head. Perfect. Thank you. The other point I would like to pick up on from the feedback was around this issue of sub cultures. And reflecting on that as an organisational issue. Nancy, have you got any views on that that you might be able to share with us, particularly from beyond the sector?

NANCY: Yes, so having worked with organisations of all different sizes, people work for people, so all big organisations are made up of smaller groups of people, and sub groups. Even in massive global come glomerates, you have still got individual little teams. So when we are talking about well-being we are talking about am I feeling good and functioning well as an individual, how are we doing together and that together can be a small team, it could be a community, a place. It could be an organisation, it could be a nation. And so what we've done is taken a principled approach to it. I think authentic leadership for well-being at work, there's something about your personal authentic leadership. I think how comfortable you feel sharing stuff or not is your personal thing but at least you know what it is. There is something about authentic leadership for well-being as an organisation, and that is about the intention with which you are doing it, do you care and having a plan alongside. I don't think you necessarily have to say here's my entire emotional life story, but you just need to recognise that there's emotions involved in any decisions making. We really need both the people who can do that sensing of how people are feeling and okay how do we solve this challenge together. And practically make it work. Systems can be a really great way of managing these emotional touch points.

KIM: Thank you, Nancy. Really helpful. From a board's perspective, which I'm just thinking about now in a number of institutions, it's how do they make sense of that, how do they make sense of all those sub cultures and help to have the oversight to be able to pull all that together, to have the information they need, to have the evidence they need, to make sense of the sub cultures, but ensure that there is that overarching fit with the strategic aims and the values of the organisation. So a real challenge there for boards, no easy answer, but hopefully we will get just a little bit closer to it today. We have got time for one very last question, if anybody would like to ask one or one comment or reflection. Anyone got any burning issues they would like to ask about. Kathryn, from Swansea.

KATHRYN: Thanks, I suppose it's that tension that you highlight at the end and we had it at the beginning, of the change we need to bring about in our thoughts and our sensitivities and our awareness, and the systems, the institutional systems that exist. And that's what we're always coming back on. We can have great awareness, lots of people accepting the words, which is great

and using the words, sometimes acting and changing behaviour, but there are the systems inside that block it, and I think that's where we should go next, maybe, if you can arrange another meeting. I'm very supportive of all of this, but we have discussed this, we are trying to do this, but we're constantly being blocked by the institutionalisation of these ideas.

KIM: Really good point, Catherine. For me, the behaviours, the systems, the ways of working create our culture, but they stem from our values, and so for me, finding out how all that fits together and being able to effect and affect them is a really key skill for an institution. Thank you for the suggestion of what where we go next. We will certainly think about that and take it on board and perhaps for our next session we will try and pick that up.

I'm sadly going to wrap up now. Good conversations all go very quickly, and you wish they never ended. I would like to thank you very much our two provocateurs, Barbara and Nancy. I would like to thank the facilitators of the groups and I would specifically like to thank all of you today for attending today, it's been a great conversation. Thank you for your comments in the chat and if you would like to add more please do. Just want to let you know what happens next. Barbara and I will be writing a blog and we hope Nancy will contribute as well. To just offer some reflections from this sandpit event. But we will also be having some discussions with two institutions where we will talk about the implementation phase, so what does this strategic thinking mean for management, for implementation for delivery and how might that work in an institution and also Barbara has recorded some videos on everyday well-being at work, and Barbara and I are facilitating a reflective event based on those videos on 4th July. So if you are interested in those Suzanne is going to put a link in the chat for that now. It only remains for me to say have a very good day, take care of yourself and others. Thank you for participating today. Bye.



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