

Benefits of wellbeing are crucial and far reaching

Health and wellbeing is always a hot topic but never more so than during the cold winter months when people often find themselves feeling low. Here, we find out how the Family First nursery group help its teams feel their best in order to benefit children at their nurseries.



If nursery staff are happy, then the children who attend are more likely to be, too.

This is the ethos Family First live by and why employee wellbeing is a key part of everything they do.

Now, with almost 100 nurseries spread across the country, it is up to Wellbeing Lead Oliver Nathan to ensure all settings have the resources and support they need to keep mental health robust amongst their teams.

“We’ve seen health and wellbeing move more to the forefront recently across the board, but I think it is especially important in the nursery industry,” he said.

“It can be incredibly fast-paced and challenging so we need to make sure all our colleagues can bring their whole selves to work.”

“Wellness matters because it helps us to create positive work environments where people can thrive.

“When our teams are happy, the children in our care are happy.

“It’s a huge part of our culture and part of my role is to make sure that stays the case.”

“It can be incredibly fast-paced and challenging so we need to make sure all our colleagues can bring their whole selves to work.”

“If the staff are thriving then it’s much more likely the children will be, too.”

Championing wellbeing

To support his ambition, Oliver has trained a team of Wellbeing Champions dotted across the country to help make sure there is support available at every turn and a happy and positive environment is commonplace.

The team regularly get together online for training and forum events where they share ideas about individual schemes which work in their own settings and may be transferable to another.

“This not only provides nursery and support teams with additional tailored provision, but also gives individuals with a passion for wellbeing the opportunity to develop their skills and knowledge,” Oliver said.

“With the rate we’re growing, it’s so important we have people on the ground keeping health and wellbeing at the forefront and supporting their teams.

“People might worry that being part of a larger nursery group means you’re merged into one corporate entity but it’s nothing like that at Family First.

“What works at one setting may not work at another, and we support them to do what’s good for them.

“It isn’t a one size fits all because wellbeing as a whole isn’t like that.”

Champions are all equipped with a calendar of relevant awareness days and weeks to promote in their own settings



Oliver Nathan

and key events like World Mental Health Day are planned into the diary in advance to ensure appropriate training and conversations can take place.

There is also specific training for apprentices. Often, but not always, they are the youngest people in the company and may need tailored coaching to help deal with the challenges of the world of work.

“It’s so important because they are forming the future of our organisation and so we want to make sure they are fully supported,” Oliver said.

Family First also provides its employees with a 24/7 confidential helpline service which empowers teams to get non-judgmental advice and support on a range of issues.

“Introducing this has seen some real success stories,” Oliver said.

“There have been several occasions where people have started talking on this



helpline, received the right guidance and got themselves back on the right path.”

Oliver’s role has also seen him run week-long awareness campaigns on important topics including cervical cancer awareness and baby loss because of suggestions he has received from colleagues, which he hopes will have helped people who may not be comfortable coming forward themselves.

“Although these have been prompted by people coming to me because of their own experiences, the feedback from others has been so pleasing to hear.

“I’ve been told it has prompted them to get checked or given them an important reminder on how crucial looking after yourself is and that’s so powerful.”

Tackling the cost-of-living crisis

There is also a quarterly newsletter called ‘Staff in Mind’ which is sent to everyone at Family First, which includes helpful seasonal topics, but also touches on issues and concerns raised by colleagues.

At the moment, the cost-of-living crisis

is dominating the agenda and impacting everyone.

As a result of this, Family First has been evaluating their own offer to staff and plan to make adjustments to suit the current challenging circumstances.

“It’s been a worrying time for everyone, naturally, and we’ve tried to be prepared as much as we can,” Oliver said.

“We surveyed our teams and tried to narrow down exactly what they were concerned about.

“Following on from this, we are reassessing the perks and benefits we offer to make sure they are relevant for the times we live in and actually do what they’re supposed to do, benefit our

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employees, encourage them to stay and make Family First a great place to work.”

A company’s commitment to wellbeing can’t be half-baked and Oliver is backed by his team of champions, but also from Family First’s leadership team.

“I have a lot of faith in Family First and know they care deeply about their teams, because if they didn’t, they would not be employing me to do this role,” he added.

Family First Chief Executive Ollie Humphries said: “We are totally dedicated to ensuring the health and wellbeing of our teams is as good as it possible can be and looking at how best to engage with people.

“Everyone is well aware of the staffing challenges in the industry. Investing in wellbeing is a way of retaining our great people up and down the country and creating nurseries we are proud of and children love coming to.” ■

If you are interested in finding out more about Family First group, please visit: www.familyfirstnurseries.com