**Date:** Thursday 17th March 2022
**Time:** 10:00-12:00
**Venue:** Online via Zoom
**Resources:** [Available here](#)

## MINUTES:
## EAUC-S Health and Wellbeing Topic Support Network
## Burnout

### Attendees

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| Katie McIntosh | Mental Health Coordinator | New College Lanarkshire |
| Sue Henderson | Executive Assistant | University of Oxford |
| Neil McBeth | Active Travel Coordinator | University of Strathclyde |
| David Charles | Energy Engineer (Sustainability & Environmental Management) | University of Strathclyde |
| Seona Mckenzie | Health and Fitness Lecturer | University of Strathclyde |
| Louise Gill | Wellbeing Adviser | Queen Margaret University |
| Adam Kesby | Active Travel Champions Project Officer, FHE | Sustrans |
| Rebekah Walker | Wellbeing Adviser | University of Aberdeen |
| Alan Jack | Lecturer | Glasgow Caledonian University |
| Claire Mitchell | Member Engagement Officer | EAUC |
| Matthew Woodthorpe | Scotland Programme Co-Manager | EAUC |
| Lizzie Reather | Organisational Development Specialist | Glasgow Caledonian University |
| Beth Brownlee | Head of Quality, Student Support & Learning Resources | West Lothian College |
| Siobhan Wray | Senior Lecturer in Organisational Behaviour | University of Lincoln |
| Holly Patrick | Human Resource Management Lecturer | Edinburgh Napier Univeristy |
| Kate Carmichael | Workshop co-ordinator | Re:Markable |

### Apologies

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| Rebecca Petford | Scotland Programme Co-manager | EAUC |
| John Thorne | Sustainability Coordinator | Glasgow School of Art |

| | SUMMARY OF DISCUSSIONS | Time |
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| **1** | **Welcome,**<br><br>*Beth Brownlee, Head of Quality, Student Support and Learning Resources, West Lothian*<br><br>Everyone was welcomed to the event and Beth highlighted that great learning for all our students starts with everyone who works in universities and colleges, but we can't pour from an empty cup. Members of EAUC who have a passion for sustainability may be at extra risk of burnout due to feeling their efforts aren't being effective compared to the global scale of the problem and a feeling of time running out.<br><br>She then introduced our three speakers:<br><br>Siobhan Wray, Associate Professor of Organizational Behaviour. Co-author of 'supporting staff wellbeing in higher education' report published by Education Support.<br><br>Dr Holly Patrick, Lecturer in Human Resource Management. Undertook research into activism burnout and networks of solidarity amongst freelance creatives during the covid pandemic.<br><br>Kate Carmichael, Organisational Development Consultant. Supports organisations to recognize importance of creating safe spaces in which staff can be confident and open to admit challenges with mental health. | 0.00 |
| **2** | **Burnout in higher and further education staff**<br>*Dr Siobhan Wray, Research lead of the education support wellbeing survey 2021, University of Lincoln*<br><br>Burnout is not considered a disease, unlike depression, it's a phenomenon conceptualized by three elements that arise from chronic workplace stress that has not been successfully managed: exhaustion, mental distancing, and reduced professional efficacy. Since 2008 Siobhan has researched the predominance of burnout in the UK's universities and colleges through national surveys of wellbeing in higher and further education alongside Gail Kinman of Birkbeck, University of London. In this TSN she presented the findings of both the UCU FE survey (2014) and recent HE education support survey (2021). These surveys identified are a number of potential triggers for burnout in education including; job demands in terms of quantitative demand and role creep, work typology, social support and control. Leading to common consequences such as; ill health, psychological distress, depression, drops in job satisfaction, stress symptoms, withdrawal, and intention to quit. Comparison of the 2014 survey data to post-covid 2021 data surprisingly showed negligible difference in staff reporting any of the three parameters of burnout, suggesting a potential floor effect where things can't get worse in the sector. Comparing FHE levels of caseness (the level it's suggested someone get external support for their mental health) to other sectors such as police and NHS, the education sector has by far the greatest levels. Yet levels of job satisfaction are still high due to intrinsic factors such as colleagues. To address | 4.00 |

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| | burnout in the sector we require a multi-level evidence based approach at the policy level, organizational level and operational level. | |
| | For more information on her research contact swray@lincoln.ac.uk . | |
| 3 | **Activist Burnout and Networks of Solidarity**<br>*Dr Holly Patrick, Human Resource Management Lecturer, Edinburgh Napier*<br><br>During the covid pandemic freelance creatives were left unsupported by government furlough schemes. As such several groups (Excluded UK, Forgotten Ltd, among 17 others) arose to support these less obvious victims that were struggling to cope with finances and mental health. Dr Holly Patrick studied these networks of solidarity and observed several volunteers of these groups reached a point they no longer had the mental capacity to continue this level of activism. In these cases, people reported feelings of burnout due to managing negativity and anger, workloads, emotional stress, tensions over representation and exhaustion. From this Holly determined the speed with which these groups grew from grass roots to sitting on Government round tables contributed to both their success in supporting freelancers but also to the volunteers' level of burnout and may be a lesson for activists when considering the longevity of their workload.<br><br>For more information on her research contact h.patrick@napier.ac.uk . | 28.53 |
| 4 | **Psychological Safety and Burnout**<br>*Kate Carmichael, Workshop Lead, Re:markable*<br><br>Burnout is a preventable phenomenon. Kate helps organizations to change their culture to be more inclusive and more vulnerable through their languages and practices to build psychological safety for their staff. She frames her presentation with a quote from author, Gabor Maté- "safety is not the absence of threat. It is the presence of connection". To build connection within the group she sent attendees into breakout pairs to share how they were feeling and, also, if there was anything they needed to let go to be fully present in the session. This was an example in practice of how we can connect more, even in a work from home environment, to improve our psychological safety in a team. Low psychological safety is linked to greater exhaustion and greater depersonalization, both of which contribute to burnout. Research by Amy Edmondson showed teams with high psychological safety were more collaborative, more creative, more productive, more inclusive, more resilient, and better able to take managed risks to reach excellence. Amy explains this further in a video here. Kate ran polls for us to consider our own level of psychological safety and used her analysis of its results to demonstrate how to create a psychologically safe environment: vote first THEN discuss, embrace the outliers anonymously.<br><br>For more information on what Re:Markable can do to support your institution contact kate.carmichael@thisisremarkable.com . | 51.15 |

| 5 | **Summary**<br>*Lizzie Reather, Organisation Development specialist, Glasgow Caledonian University*<br><br>Presented in a clear diagram Lizzie summarized the session in the following main areas:<br><br>What is burnout?<br>- Energy depletion/ exhaustion (cognitive, physical and emotional)<br>- Negativism, cynicism and mental distance<br>- Reduced efficacy<br><br>Why does it happen?<br>- Demands (excessive hours, multiple jobs)<br>- Control<br>- Social support<br>- Precarity/ uncertainty/ ambiguity<br>- Lower levels of psychological safety<br><br>Risk and consequences<br>- Ill health<br>- Psychological distress and poor wellbeing<br>- Job satisfaction/ disengagement/ turnover<br>- Lack of psychological safety: avoidable failure and dangerous silence<br>- Sector-wide impacts, company closures etc.<br><br>How much of a problem is it?<br>- No change 2014-2021 HE Management standards-floor effect?<br>- High level of "caseness" (mental health issues) in FE/HE<br>- Pandemic- impact on creative industries<br><br>Benefits of addressing burnout/ building psychological safety<br>- Collaboration<br>- Creativity and innovation<br>- Productivity<br>- Resilience and adaptive to change<br>- Inclusiveness and diversity<br>- Managed risk taking<br><br>Ways of addressing (individual)<br>- Manage negativity and anger<br>- Manage level of support for others/ involvement in activism<br>- Be yourself<br>- Have open conversations<br>- Ask for help<br>- Assume positive intent<br><br>Ways of addressing (connections and networks)<br>- Solidarity and connection<br>- Advice and support on accessing services and help | 1.15.50 |
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|   | - Communities need to be actively maintained to avoid becoming toxic<br><br>Ways of addressing (systemic and structural)<br> - Audits and actions<br> - National guidance<br> - Best practice sharing<br> - Culture of communication and co-production/ inclusive and vulnerable cultures<br> - Workload, roles and responsibilities and resourcing<br> - Leadership and management priorities |   |
| **6** | **Questions and Answers**<br><br>**NM- Siobhan, really interesting that the only measure where FE was higher was fellow workers - any thoughts on that?**<br><br>SW-HE over last decade has become more fractured in terms of how people work together, it's become a more competitive environment. There's also been an extensive move in academic contracts where people are working more precariously eg. 9-month teaching contracts so people don't become embedded in a department.<br><br>**NM- Siobhan, could you explain a bit more what the HSE measure is here?**<br>SW-The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) did a systematic review of key psychosocial hazards at work. Out of this came the HSE management standards indicator tool which is a standardized measure to look at the level of resources available to individuals in an organization covering all job demands (quantitative/qualitative), control, support (both manager and peer), relationships, role clarity, and change. These have a traffic light system, where less than 20% of benchmark is considered red. Everything other than control in education we don't hit that benchmark, in fact on average its about 5%.<br><br>**NM- In terms of how that's measured is that something staff are asked how they feel?**<br><br>SW- Yes, responded to by individuals.<br><br>**BB- Siobhan, Interesting that there is no student related measure of job satisfaction (that I could see) - has this been measured at all? e.g. the feeling of making a difference and helping students reach their career goals**<br>SW- There have been a couple of papers that have tweaked scales to look directly at relationship with students. I do think it's an area that needs captured: the impact of staff wellbeing on the student outcome too. | 1.21.54 |

BB- A lot of people are motivated to make a difference and that keeps them in a job even when it damages their health.

**KC- Siobhan - what's your confidence that these messages of what needs to happen are being heard and acted upon?**

SW- I think we're being heard! Society of medicine hosted us at a seminar of 180 people last year. But I think there's still a lot of work to be done to marry up the messages we've got with universities.

**AJ- Siobhan: When it comes to role-creep, clarity on your role, etc., in your research has it shown that people get opportunities to discuss meaning and motivation within roles? Do you think a task-focused approach might be contributory to burnout in that sense?**

It's dependent on the role and the local context. In qualitative responses to support needs 'I'm expected to be exceptional in everything' came through often. There's that sense of being measured against constant metrics and I question how much of that can be directly controlled- you can control some things of your students experience but not everything. In complex organizations there will be competing priorities. Does that answer your question?

AJ-Yes very much so, that's been my experience of shifting from lectures to project based education where your suddenly also a mentor.

SW- It's that but also ensuring resources are in place. We have phenomenal ideas of how to educate but if we give a lot of personal resource to supplement a lack of institutional resource its unsustainable for our wellbeing.

**NM- Holly, really interesting research. Did you find there was a local thread to these groups forming or was it more shared experience on type of work that had disappeared / specific challenges?**

HP- The nature starting my research online, most is not local. Most formed on facebook around shared issues so were sector specific. The groups that existed before covid were highly local and actually my current research is on peer advice for addressing tricky issues which is mainly locally embedded. Particularly freelance creatives that work in creative hubs find advice from those outside their sector is sometimes more helpful as theyy're looking through a different lens.

**BB- Holly, I wonder to what extent it would apply to other networks of solidarity, either around working in FE and HE or environmental campaigners?**
HP- In FE and HE we've been hugely impacted by pandemic but most have kept jobs, so different picture. Unions are much stronger so there are less

independent networks but I find twitter a space for people to sympathise with each other.

**AJ- Kate, How do you cope with the balance between passionate and emotive decision-making and evidence-based, logical decision making?**

KC- Obviously a key role is looking at data to figure out what we know about the situation but if we stamp out the passion we're missing a whole dimension. The word that stood out in your question was emotive-I think if people feel a situation is targeting their emotions we set of their fight-flight thinking so their not thinking their best. They feel threatened as they may feel they're not being heard, so doing things like voting first and discussing we give people a chance to be heard. It may not change what we do but improves the situation. We need to really listen in whatever role we're in, listen to understand. Then we can marry that up with evidence.

AJ- Thank you that supports what I've been thinking recently. I teach in a creative team working subject and I fear voting as it's more about populism and have been told in the past as I teach too much evidence based stuff that feels robotic as a consequence.

**HP- Kate - I see you offer the fearless org scan - is this a good tool for leaders to use to understand barriers to PS at the organisational level, or does it work better at the team level?**

KC- Yes, both. We can work with whole organisations to identify weak points. However, the most benefit comes from working at the team construct level.

**AJ- Having come from an industry that's famous for Burnout, the big thing we always talked about was how a lot of Burnout was actually purposeful exploitation of individuals' perfectionism and passion for their roles (the idea that "if people are willing to do extra hours, why would I say no?" and the inadvertent cultural impact that has in teams). Have you seen any evidence of this in education through your research?**

SW- Oh yes. One of the major issues is the sense of duty, if I don't do this students will suffer or I won't get my publication etc. Gail once broke her leg and told me she was working from her hospital bed- and we were meant to be leading on this! Guilt worries me on a policy level, we are made to feel very responsible for our students outcome. It is why levels of presenteeism are so high in FHE, working over hours.

**NM- Kate - are there any quick resources you could recommend for bringing in some PS principles to meetings / teams you work with less regularly and wouldn't have time to develop that way of working more gradually?**

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| | **KC (post event)-** Video from Charles Duhigg – Project Aristotle. They've identified two things we can do: equality in conversation turn-taking and ostentatious listening.<br>You can also adapt your language and how you ask questions: Seven Deadly Sins of Questioning | | |
| 7 | **Next Meeting:**<br><br>*Beth Brownlee, Head of Quality, Student Support and Learning Resources, West Lothian*<br><br>The next health and Wellbeing TSN will take place in Summer 2022. Attendees expressed an interest in the theme of supporting student resilience. If anyone has any suggestions for it's agenda please contact lpatterson@eauc.org.uk . | 1.44.00 | |
| 8 | **THANKS AND CLOSE**<br>*Beth Brownlee, Head of Quality, Student Support and Learning Resources, West Lothian* | 1.49.43 | |

Minutes prepared by Lucy Patterson, EAUC-Scotland Sustainability in the Curriculum Project Officer, 21/03/2022