

Case Study

Developing Mindfulness Training for Public Servants in Wales



RESEARCHERS

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THE OVERVIEW

Researchers at Aberystwyth University developed a Mindfulness Based Behavioural Insights and Decision Making (MBBI) training programme that has informed the practices of the Welsh public sector and other UK organisations.



THE RESEARCH

The MBBI programme was developed from research that explored the connections between age-old practices of mindfulness meditation and modern insights from the behavioural sciences. The programme was adopted by the Welsh public sector to support the delivery of the landmark Wellbeing of Future Generations Act (WFGA) (2015); and has also been used by other organisations across the UK. The programme has informed the strategic revisioning of workplace training alongside radical changes in working practices.

“Research at Aberystwyth University used a radical combination of training in mindfulness and behavioural insights to help us see how public servants can become more effective leaders, better decision-makers, and provide better advice. And I want to see all of these insights contribute to the kind of leadership I want to see in our public services in Wales.”

RT HON MARK DRAKEFORD, FIRST MINISTER FOR WALES, DEVELOPING MINDFULNESS IN WALES CONFERENCE, 20 NOVEMBER 2019



THE IMPACT

INFORMING THE STRATEGIC REVISIONING OF PROFESSIONAL SERVICE TRAINING IN THE WELSH PUBLIC SERVICE

The MBBI has become a core component of the Welsh Civil Service’s Internal Change Programme. Through this programme, the MBBI has been delivered to approximately 200 civil servants and reoriented other staff development initiatives. The MBBI has been used to support the Welsh Civil Service Permanent Secretary’s ‘Let’s Talk Respect’ campaign. Adapted versions of the MBBI programme were also delivered to Welsh Government staff to support them during the Covid-19 crisis.

INFLUENCING THE WORKING PRACTICES OF CIVIL SERVANTS

The programme changed how some senior civil servants related to others and made them better able to address the emotional barriers that exist to behaviour change in large organisations. This directly supported the operationalisation of the collaborative and transformative practices demanded within the WFGA.

INFLUENCING THE DEVELOPMENT AND DELIVERY OF PUBLIC POLICIES IN THE CONTEXT OF THE REQUIREMENTS OF THE WFGA

The programme directly supported the collaborative development of the Healthier Wales national strategy. Learning from the programme was also utilised by the Fairer Futures Division of the Welsh Government in the development and delivery of the WFGA.

The Wellbeing of Future Generations Act (WFGA) (2015) places a legislative requirement on public bodies in Wales to work in more collaborative ways to identify solutions to persistent problems. The WFGA presents a significant challenge to the working practices of the Welsh Public Service. The MBBI programme has facilitated enhanced working practices within the Welsh Civil Service, which has enabled the Five Ways of Working, envisaged within the WFGA to be realised.