Involving key stakeholders

Overview of actions

Stakeholder involvement was central to the design, delivery and success of the wellbeing champion initiative. From strategic partners to frontline staff, collaboration shaped every stage of development, ensuring relevance, buy-in and sustainability across diverse care settings.

- **Strategic leadership and operational delivery** – The ICS retention team provided oversight and alignment with workforce priorities, while the ICB People Partners drove implementation. Their relationships with registered managers secured early buy-in and helped overcome barriers to cascading information to frontline staff.

- **Wellbeing Hub** – The Staff Psychological Wellbeing Hub was crucial to the initiative, providing practical resources, specialist advice and workshops to equip champions for their role. They created a safe space for peer learning, and ensured champions had access to psychological support and signposting tools. This was critical for sustainability, enabling champions to focus on frontline engagement while the ICS retention partners managed resource sourcing, held the virtual quarterly meetings and maintained system-wide communication.

- **Skills for Care** – Played both strategic and operational roles, using sector-specific insight to align the initiative with workforce development priorities. They promoted the programme through established networks, supported resource development, and elevated adult social care's voice within ICS planning forums, strengthening its integration into system-wide strategies.

- **Specialist and technical support** – Technical teams set up digital communication channels. These efforts ensured champions were visible, approachable and equipped to share resources effectively across care settings.

- **Wellbeing champions** – Champions were the vital link between high-level strategy and frontline reality. Drawn from diverse roles – including carers, nurses, kitchen assistants and maintenance staff – they ensured wellbeing support was accessible and relatable. Trusted by peers, they promoted resources, offered informal emotional support and fostered a culture where wellbeing was openly discussed.

- **Resource provision and partnerships** – All wellbeing resources were sourced at no cost, including access to the Staff Psychological Wellbeing Hub, local colleges, financial wellbeing advice, menopause support, bereavement and suicide resources, LGBTQ+ toolkits, and training such as MHFA provided by Stoke on Trent College, and British Sign Language. Local businesses also provided free team-building events, boosting morale and cohesion.

- **Local authorities** – Provided communication channels and access to registered manager networks, enabling early engagement and buy-in. Their advocacy and facilitation of forums helped maintain momentum and broaden the initiative's reach across diverse care settings.

"We engaged local authorities and forums early, but peer-to-peer conversations proved most powerful for spreading the initiative across providers."

Diane Mellor, ICS People Partner, Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent ICS/ICB

Key decisions

- Partnered with Skills for Care to ensure sector relevance and strengthen resource development.
- Introduced informal, themed virtual meetings to foster trust and build community among champions.
- Leveraged local authority networks for early engagement and broader programme reach.

Key learning

Inclusive stakeholder engagement was critical for ownership, credibility and sustainability. Key lessons include:

- **Frontline voices ensure relevance** – Direct engagement with staff grounded the programme in lived experience and increased uptake.
- **Partnerships improve quality** – Collaboration with sector experts strengthened credibility, enriched resources and aligned the initiative with wider workforce priorities.
- **Informal engagement builds trust** – Themed virtual meetings and peer led discussions encouraged participation and created a supportive community.
- **Diverse contributors drive resilience** – A wide network of partners created stability and enabled long term cultural change.