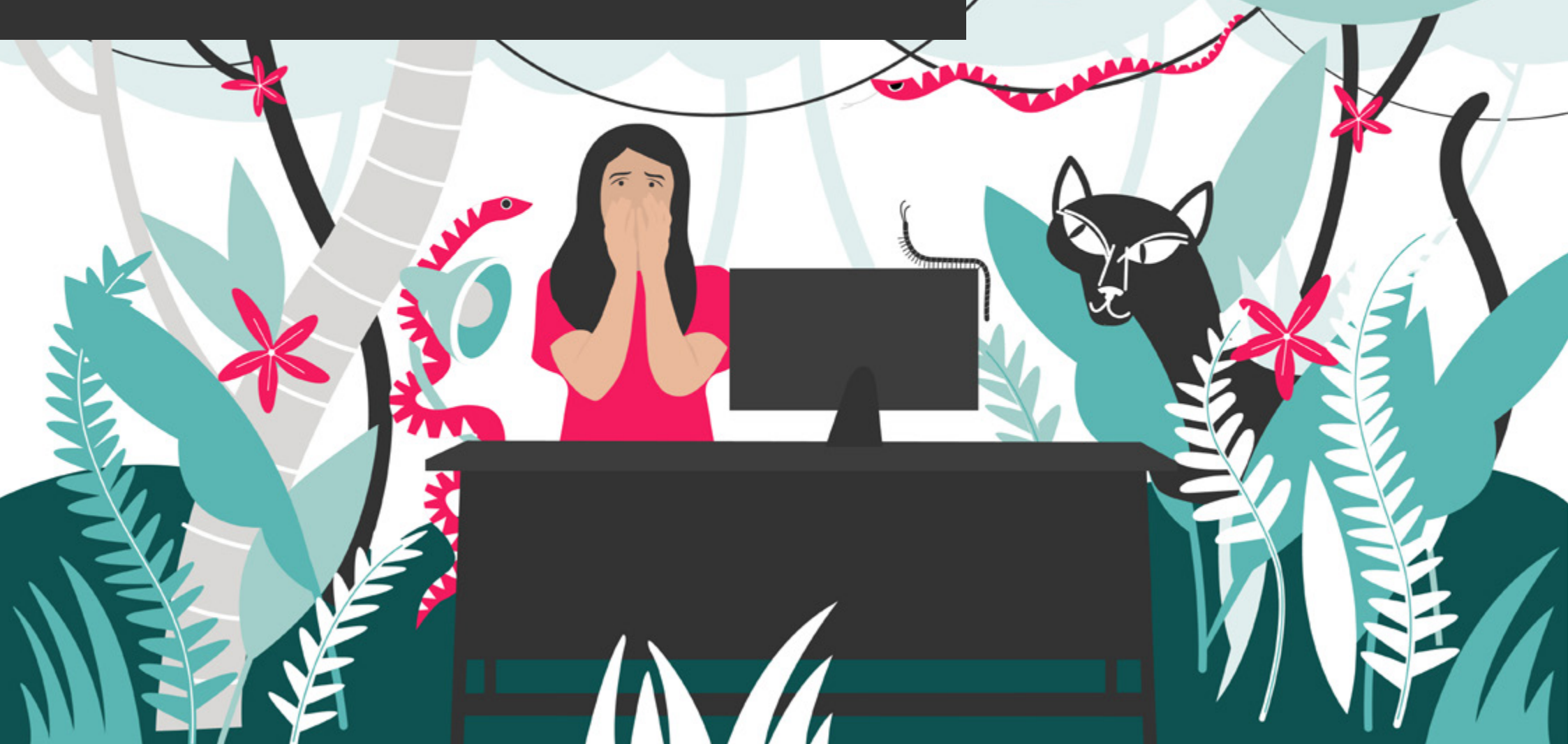


# Mastering Wellbeing at Work.

The Employer Guide.



Health insurance · Life insurance · Car insurance · Investments

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# Mastering Wellbeing at Work.

## Why supporting employee health and wellbeing is more vital now than ever before

No part of our wellbeing has been left untouched by the COVID-19 pandemic. It's impacted mental health, finances, our levels of physical activity as a nation and much more. Meanwhile, the healthier we are, the better our chances of surviving the virus<sup>1</sup>. All of this underscores the notion that protecting our health and wellbeing is more important now than ever before.

Even before the COVID-19 pandemic, workplace wellbeing was already firmly on the business agenda, with the Stevenson/Farmer report<sup>2</sup> and Taylor Review<sup>3</sup> exposing the importance of keeping employees happy and healthy at work. Our Britain's Healthiest Workplace research from 2019 found that the UK economy loses £92bn through low productivity and 38 days per employee a year – an increase of 15 days since 2014.

The pandemic has brought with it a host of brand-new challenges, while starkly highlighting the duty of care that employers have for employee wellbeing. This has undoubtedly helped HR directors make the economic case for action as a result.

There are clear signs that employers are rising to this challenge. For example, recent research suggests that 75% of UK companies plan to improve their mental health services in the wake of the pandemic<sup>4</sup>. However, the important question is whether we are seeing this as a

reaction to the immediate troubles of a global health crisis – or a more long-lasting shift in mindset?

Embracing a long-term workplace wellbeing strategy comes with key advantages for both business leaders and individual staff members. Those who implement a supportive environment into the culture of their organisation tend to have more positive workplaces, higher levels of productivity, and greater resilience among employees – and this can help employers navigate even the most challenging of times<sup>5</sup>.

As we'll explore in this guide, research studies indicate that a set of underlying principles can guide us to more positive outcomes, whether we're in a time of crisis, or experiencing relative normality. And while some organisations will always be more equipped than others, there are a number of core areas that employers can address in order to make progress.

A long-term workplace initiative can be built with all kinds of employees in mind. Here, we aim to provide a holistic picture of wellbeing, while outlining what tips are available to make a longer, healthier life possible – for individual employees and employers themselves. We'll also explore how a more supportive workplace culture can benefit an organisation, its people and society as a whole. We hope you find it useful.

1. BMJ Sports Medicine Physical inactivity is associated with a higher risk for severe COVID-19 outcomes | 2. Thriving at Work: a review of mental health and employers, Department of Work and Pensions and Department of Health and Social Care, 2017 | 3. Good work: the Taylor review of modern working practices, Matthew Taylor, 2017 | 4. Emerging Trends in Health Care Delivery, Willis Towers Watson, April 2021 | 5. CIPD Health And Wellbeing at Work 2021



**David Iliffe**

**Creator of Mastering Wellbeing at Work - A Digital Learning Series for Employers from Vitality.**

# Putting wellbeing on the map.

The nation's health by the numbers ...

£92bn

the annual cost of productivity lost to poor health in the UK (2019)

38 days

lost productivity per year per employee (2019) - an increase of 15 days since 2014

If the world's adult population increased physical activity by 20%, it could add \$93bn to the global economy.



Sources: Britain's Healthiest Workplace 2019 and RAND

## How healthy is Britain's workforce?

Even before the pandemic, the physical, mental and financial health of UK employees was a growing concern.

### Physical Health

- More than half of employees reported two or more musculoskeletal conditions
- Almost 40% reported at least one chronic condition

### Mental Health

- 42% reported problems with quality of sleep
- 56% suffered from at least one dimension of work-related stress
- 35% felt unwell because of work-related stress

### Financial Health

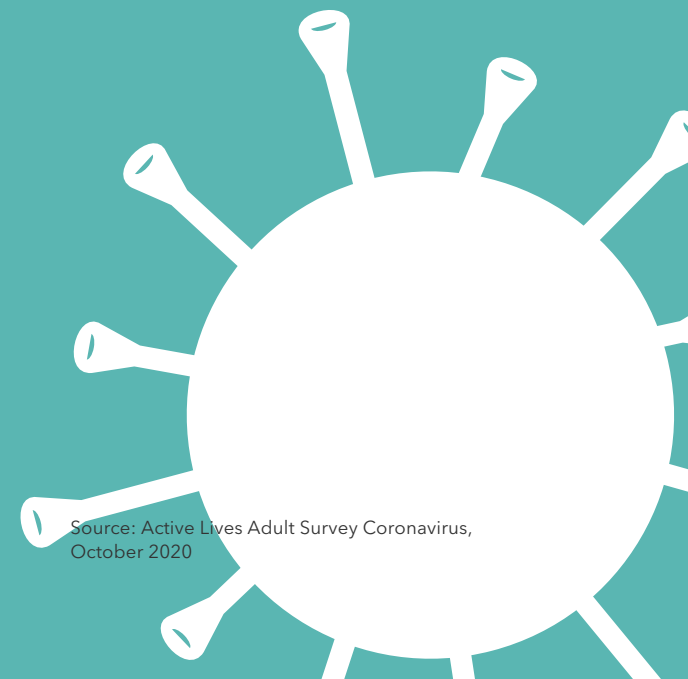
- 51% reported some level of financial concerns

## The impact of the pandemic



**1 in 3 adults** unable to meet minimum levels of physical activity during the first lockdown.

The first three months of the COVID-19 pandemic saw just over **three million fewer active adults.**



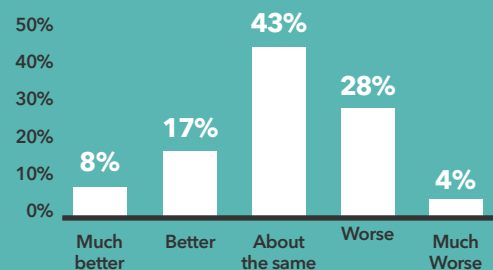
Source: Active Lives Adult Survey Coronavirus, October 2020

## Data from January 2021 showed...



**2 out of 3 were watching more TV and exercising less than in the first lockdown<sup>6</sup>.**

**And almost a third reported worse sleep during COVID. However, a quarter said they were sleeping better...**



**Suggesting a nuanced picture of how changes to our working lives are impacting us.**

Source: Vitality survey of 2,000 UK adults, November 2020

6. University College London Study, January 2021

## And work-life balance?

- Almost 60% of office workers struggled to separate work and home life
- 40% worked longer hours
- 45% were less happy due to stress

Source: Vitality survey of 2,000 UK adults, November 2020

## Mental health has also suffered

- Twice as many adults were suffering from some form of depression (1 in 5)<sup>7</sup>
- Over a third of employees reported significant challenges while working from home
- Those feeling lonely jumped from 10% (March 2020) to 25% (November 2020)<sup>8</sup>
- 1 in 5 people turned to drinking more alcohol to cope with stress<sup>9</sup>

7. ONS figures, June 2020 | 8. The Mental Health Foundation, 'Coronavirus: Mental Health in the Pandemic' and Mind, 'The Mental Health Emergency' 9. The Mental Health Foundation (Wave 2) | 10. World Health Organisation | 11. British Journal of Cancer, March 2018 | 12. Saarland University, Germany, 2015.

## A healthier future is possible

Did you know? Four types of behaviour lead to 60% of premature deaths worldwide<sup>10</sup>...



**Poor diet**



**Smoking**



**Physical inactivity**



**Excess alcohol intake**

**And 4 in 10 cancers could be prevented through lifestyle changes<sup>11</sup>**

## Small changes can make a big difference



**A 25-minute brisk walk a day can add 7 years to your life span<sup>12</sup>**

**And these five lifestyle behaviours can add 10 years to our lifespan...**

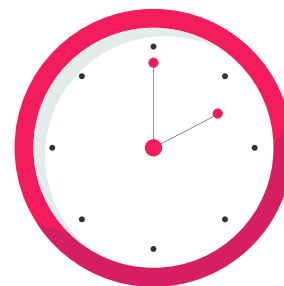
- Not smoking
- Maintaining a healthy BMI of between 18.5 to 24.9
- Completing at least 30 minutes exercise a day
- Drinking less than 2 units of alcohol a week for women - less than 4 units for men
- Eating well

Source: Saarland University, 2015

# Are you Britain's Healthiest Workplace?

Take part in the **Britain's Healthiest Workplace** survey when it reopens in 2022, and discover how you can help your employees be healthier and more productive.

REGISTER YOUR  
INTEREST **HERE.**



BRITAIN'S  
HEALTHIEST  
WORKPLACE



*If you would like to find out more about Britain's Healthiest Workplace, simply complete a short form. Our team will be in touch with more information.*

# Why workplace culture matters and the shifting role of employers.



The dynamics of workplace culture are changing in line with evolving employee expectations, so hiring line managers that help cultivate a supportive and inclusive workplace is key, writes **Judy Parfitt, Chief People Officer at Vitality.**

We spend a lot of time working; when not in the grip of a global pandemic, the average full-time employee works around 37 hours every week<sup>1</sup>. So, as anyone who has had a bad experience knows, being unhappy at work has a major impact on our health and wellbeing.

Factors that affect how we feel about our jobs tend to include our working relationships, whether our work has meaning, and the hours we are expected to do. However, arching over all such concerns is simply the way we are treated. For employees who feel valued, work can be a fundamentally positive force.

But for those who feel their efforts are not appreciated, it's a cross to bear, not a place to shine. To encourage high levels of employee engagement and performance, employers therefore need to take a good look at their organisation's values, leadership and culture – and act to improve them where they can.



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*"Unless company culture is conducive to a supportive working environment, even a first-class benefits programme is unlikely to have the desired effect."*

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1. Average actual weekly hours of work for full-time workers, ONS, July 2021



### The impact of social issues at work

Much as our working lives impact our overall wellbeing, social issues such as debt, domestic violence, and mental health also have a profound effect on our performance at work.

This has been particularly true recently, as the restrictions imposed to contain Covid-19 further blurred the lines between work and home life. Statistics suggest there is still a long way to go before employees' wellbeing needs are met.

Only 27% of UK employees feel their employer cares about their overall wellbeing, according to a recent Gallup poll<sup>2</sup>.

The good news, however, is that a growing number of employers now recognise the value of benefits programmes offering financial education and advice, as well as support for those struggling with poor mental health.

According to insurance broker Willis Towers Watson, 75% of UK companies plan to improve their mental health services in the wake of the pandemic<sup>3</sup>. The fact remains, though, that unless company culture is conducive to a supportive working environment, even a first-class benefits programme is unlikely to have the desired effect.

### The power of good line managers

Employers naturally seek outperformance. But pushing people without offering them the support they need to manage the associated stress and fatigue can lead to high levels of employee burnout – now classified by the World Health Organisation as an “occupational phenomenon”.

It's a common problem in the UK, especially at the moment. According to a Mental Health UK survey conducted earlier this year, one in five employees feel “unable to manage stress and pressure in the workplace”<sup>4</sup>.

This is bad news for employers as well as their employees, as burnouts mean absences, underperformance, and the loss of talented, otherwise highly engaged individuals to rival companies.

So, it is in employers' interests to work towards achieving sustainable performance that avoids a destructive cycle of short-term gains and costly burnouts. And the best way to do this is to ensure workers feel valued and able to voice their worries and concerns.

### Start by employing good line managers

While CIPD statistics show that 25% of employees rarely or never have the opportunity to raise concerns or share ideas to improve the organisation, among those who do feel they have a voice, the overwhelming majority use it with their line managers<sup>5</sup>.

Couple this with the fact your immediate boss, or line manager, has a massive impact on your working life, and it's hardly surprising that research indicates employee engagement is 70% influenced by line managers<sup>6</sup>.

From signposting issues before they become crises, to promoting benefits and providing a bridge between employees and executives, line managers are a vital part of any supportive culture strategy.

2. Why UK leaders need to build trust with their employees, Gallup, June 2020 | 3. Emerging Trends in Health Care Delivery, Willis Towers Watson, April 2021. | 4. Burnout poll, Mental Health UK, March 2021. 5. Health and Wellbeing at Work 2021, CIPD, April 2021 | 6. State of the American Manager, Gallup, April 2015.

## Creating an environment that aids resilience

By building a supportive culture, employers can create the circumstances employees need to perform to the best of their ability long term.

Steps businesses can take to achieve this include:


- Go beyond isolated initiatives; develop a business case and strategy for creating a supportive workplace environment
- Listen to your workforce; encourage two-way communication and give line managers the training and support they need to be your eyes and ears on the ground
- Aim high; don't settle for a 'do no harm' approach, make changes that will truly help your people to flourish

To go deeper, why not try our **Work Heaven, Work Hell - Creating a healthier workplace culture learning module?**





# All aboard? Making the case for employee wellbeing.



Getting buy-in from the board for employee wellbeing initiatives is not always easy and with no real playbook for measuring return on investment, where on earth should employers start?

Covid-19 helped reinforce what most of us know already about health and wellbeing - whether in a pandemic scenario or not - but often choose to ignore. Namely, the healthier we are, the better our chances of survival. And for leaders, it has opened their eyes to the fact that healthy workforces really are the 'be all and end all' to the bottom line.

The worry is that these lessons will become lost as restrictions are lifted and the pressures of businesses increase to full pelt.

## A long-term approach

It's those organisations that realise that wellbeing should be embraced as a full-time strategy, with a purpose, a framework, communicated in a tailored way and led from the top, that will reap the rewards in terms of usage, value and a culture that engages and excites. That, in turn - and over time - translates into happier, more productive employees, ergo organisational prosperity and sustainability.

## Overcoming challenges and communicating wellbeing value

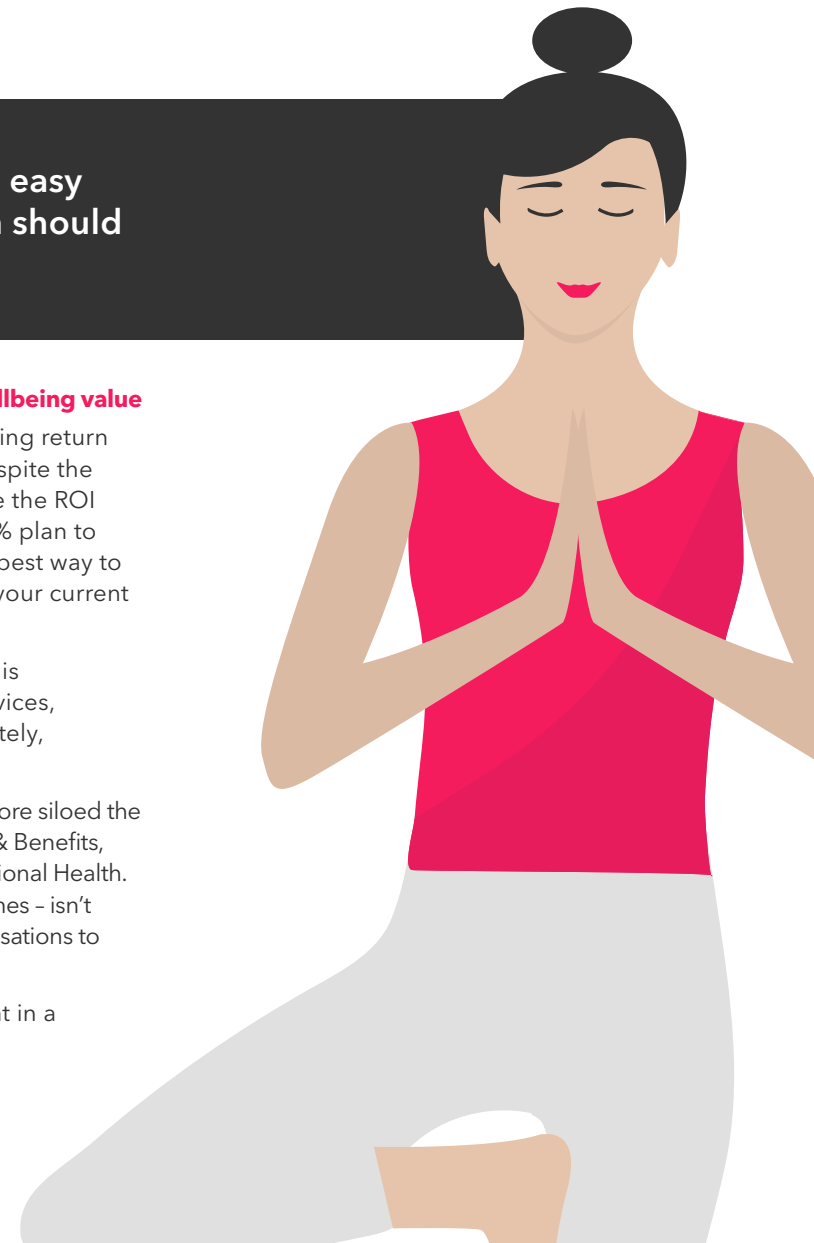
While intent certainly seems to be there, measuring return on investment (ROI) is easier said than done. Despite the fact that only 9% of employers currently measure the ROI from their health and wellbeing programme, 59% plan to do so in the next 12 - 18 months<sup>1</sup>. However, the best way to tackle this is always to take a closer look at how your current wellbeing strategy is set up.

Why? Because in many organisations, wellbeing is characterised by a set of disjointed benefits, services, apps and initiatives; each communicated separately, in a broadcast, one-size-fits-all way.

At the same time, the larger the organisation, the more siloed the people departments tend to be. Think HR, Reward & Benefits, Learning & Development, Health & Safety, Occupational Health. So, important data - such as risk assessment outcomes - isn't necessarily being shared in a way that allows organisations to make better use of existing benefits and services.

What's more, employee views aren't often sought in a way that translates into programme design and communication changes.

1. Aon Benefits and Trends Survey 2021



## Implementing schemes and achieving engagement

But with no playbook for any of this, where should employers start?

Ask first, what is the purpose of the benefit and wellbeing strategy and assess whether it is currently being fulfilled. Is it aligned with company values? Does it meet employee needs? Is it communicated in a way that connects with all the different audiences in a diverse workforce? And is it being assessed against the things that matter to your business?

All too often, health and wellbeing initiatives, contracts or products are just assessed on price and a narrow range of minimum criteria, rather than performance against a measurable objective linked to business outcomes.

### The upshot?

Only 27% of UK employees feel their employer cares about their overall wellbeing<sup>2</sup>.

2. Gallup, Why UK leaders need to build trust with their employees, June 2020

## Let's consider the key components of a purpose-led wellbeing strategy:

### 1. Stakeholder advocates

Wellbeing must be lived and breathed amongst leaders and line managers in order to be truly felt, believed and trusted by an organisation's people.

Who talks about wellbeing, how frequently and on what stage, can all signal to employees its importance to leadership and the organisation. The CEO emphasising wellbeing regularly through business updates, then reinforcing this through line managers and digital communications can send a powerful message. For an even better chance of success, ensure clear lines of accountability and get employee advocates involved.

### 2. Insight

Tailoring wellbeing strategy to people and business needs is paramount; in terms of programme design and also communication. And you cannot possibly hope to meet people needs if you haven't taken the trouble to get to know them; where they like to hang out (to help determine the right communication channels) and what interests them (to get the design and messaging right).

### 3. Strategy

With the insight in place, it's now possible to create a strategy for what wellbeing means to the organisation and create objectives. This should be specific and measurable, allowing you to gauge your success and refine your efforts. This targeted approach can assist in creating a stronger business case and in maximising impact and return on investment.

### 4. Measuring health and wellbeing

Use insights to also assess the impact of your programme over time, and to learn when to change priorities. Combined with business outcome data such as absence, recruitment and retention statistics, you can make informed decisions about tweaks to programme design and communication to help better meet people and business needs. Meanwhile, wide research and credible statistics (found in this guide) can also help quantify the monetary value of health and wellbeing in your business case.

### 5. Value on Investment

While return on investment (ROI) refers to the end financial value produced by an organisation's investment - such as reduced absence cost or medical claims - organisations can also consider value on investment (VOI). This is not immediately visible in the form of financial gain, but can show improved productivity, engagement, job satisfaction and retention - all of which provide a great deal of value to businesses.



## Calculating ROI

Vitality can help here, with our recently launched ROI calculator, which generates a free, comprehensive and personalised report in five minutes by completing just four questions about your business.

The calculator, whether you're a Vitality client or not, analyses the impact of the Vitality Programme on key health and lifestyle areas such as physical activity, smoking and nutrition, along with its impact on clinical risk factors including: blood pressure, blood glucose, cholesterol and BMI. Improvement in each of these risk factors can be associated with positive impacts on individuals' health (resulting in higher life expectancy), workplace health-related productivity and job satisfaction.

Wellbeing has come a long way from fruit bowls and bean bags. So, write your own playbook by putting the pointers supplied here into action to secure that buy-in at board level. Your people and your business will thank you.

## The Vitality Return on Investments Calculator


In just five minutes you'll understand the health and wellbeing initiatives most likely to improve your business results.



Explore putting a successful wellbeing plan in action further with our **The Perfect Plan learning module.**



# The wellness toolkit: Taking control of our own health.



Small, simple lifestyle changes and habits can make a big difference to our overall wellbeing. Here are some tips to improving **mental, physical** and **psychological health**...

As we've already mentioned in this guide, around four in 10 cancers can be prevented through healthy lifestyle changes<sup>1</sup>. And a study published in the *British Medical Journal* found that five lifestyle behaviours can add 10 years to our lifespan<sup>2</sup>.

It's widely known that lifestyle choices such as eating well, not smoking, exercising regularly and not drinking too much help keep us healthy. However, what's perhaps most surprising is that those four controllable behaviours are connected to four diseases - cancer, diabetes, heart disease and lung disease - which account for 60% of deaths worldwide<sup>3</sup>.

And while there are many complex factors at play, making just simple and small changes to our lives can be enough to make a significant difference. Here we explore some of the ways that adopting healthy habits can significantly improve our mental, physical and psychological wellbeing.

## Building better mental health

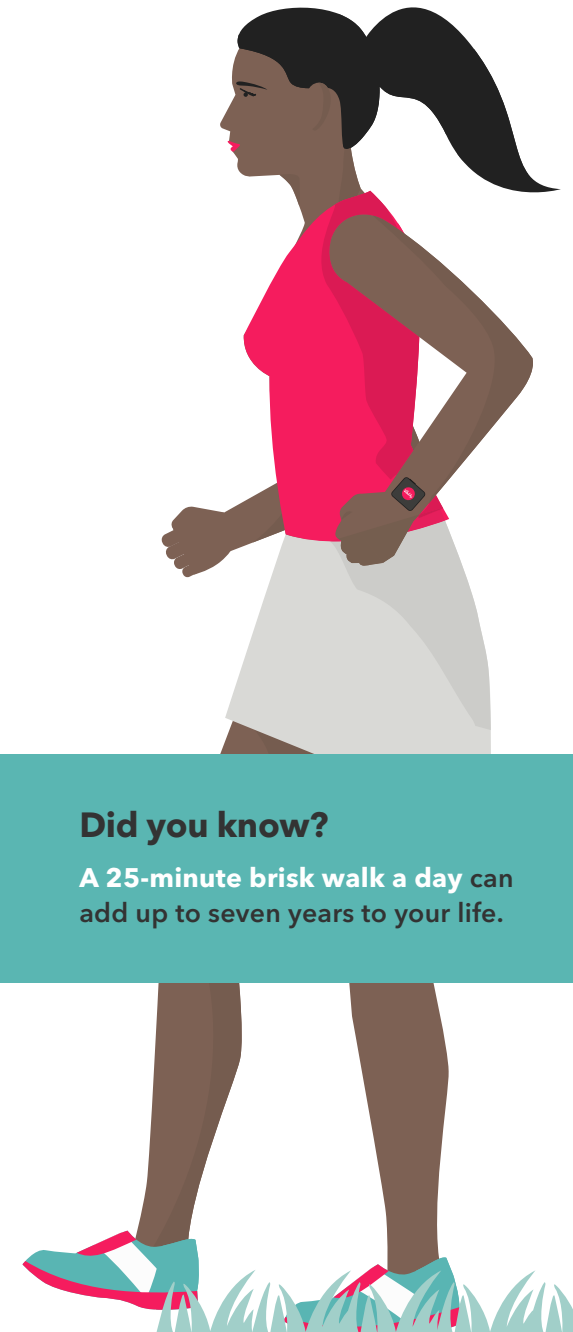
According to a Deloitte report from January 2020, a sixth of workers were experiencing a mental health problem at any one time, while stress, anxiety and depression are thought to be responsible for almost half of working days lost in Britain due to health issues<sup>4</sup>. The onset of Covid-19 only saw this situation worsen, with ONS stats revealing that instances of depression doubled during the first part of the pandemic<sup>5</sup>.

GP consultations, talking therapies and other forms of psychological support, such as cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT), alongside prescribed forms of medicine, are available for those who may need help - especially where there may be a diagnosis of mental illness. Alongside the NHS, support can also be offered through employer-led private health insurance and other related products, such as health cash plans and employee assistance programmes (EAP).

1. British Journal of Cancer, March 2018 | 2. Saarland University, Germany, 2015 |  
3. World Health Organisation 4. Deloitte, Mental health and employers: Refreshing the case of investment January 2020 | 5. ONS data June 2020

## Did you know?

**A 25-minute brisk walk a day can add up to seven years to your life.**



However, there are a number of ways that individuals can preserve their mental health and wellbeing through straightforward lifestyle factors as well as preventative techniques. **Here are just five:**



### 1. Physical activity

Physical activity can increase our lifespan<sup>6</sup>, as well as reduce our risk of serious and chronic illnesses. But evidence also shows that it can help prevent health conditions and to treat them if they occur. It is also effective at reducing fatigue, improving alertness and concentration, and enhancing our overall cognitive function. In other words, it can boost our energy, mood and performance<sup>7</sup>. The NHS recommends 150 minutes of moderate exercise a week, or 75 minutes of vigorous exercise for our overall health. Just a 10-minute walk can be as effective as a 45-minute workout in relieving symptoms of anxiety and depression<sup>8</sup>.



### 2. Healthy sleep

Sleep is critical to our health and wellbeing. It affects almost every type of tissue and system in our bodies, including brain, heart, lungs, metabolism, immune system and mood. Poor sleep increases the risk of high blood pressure, heart disease, obesity, diabetes and lead to early death<sup>9</sup>. There are also close associations between poor sleep and mental health issues. Historically, it was thought that where both are present, not sleeping well was a consequence of poor mental health. But increasingly evidence is showing they are connected – there is a bidirectional relationship between them, which means they influence one another<sup>10</sup>.



### 3. Limit alcohol

Alcohol is a depressant and disrupts the chemistry of the brain – the neurotransmitters that influence our mood. Over time, this can worsen symptoms of anxiety and depression. It can also disrupt our sleep and weaken its quality when we do sleep, which can negatively impact our physical and mental health. A 2018 study found that the more we drink before sleep, the greater the negative impact. For example, high alcohol consumption was found to decrease sleep quality by 39% - compared to 9.3% for low amounts<sup>11</sup>. On top of this, it can put strain on other areas of our lives, such as work and relationships, which can also lead to mental health challenges<sup>12</sup>.



### 4. Breathing exercises

When our stress response is triggered, our autonomic nervous system enters fight or flight mode. Stress hormones are released, and these create a set of physical reactions that change our state of mind. One of these responses is breathing. For example, faster shorter breaths when in a state of greater stress and anxiety. However, we can change our breathing to influence our mind, prompting our body to revert to a state known as rest and digest. Engaging in this can also help distract us from troubling or repetitive thoughts – a common CBT technique.



### 5. Mindfulness

Mindfulness is learning how to be fully present and engaged in the moment, aware of our thoughts and feelings without distraction or judgment. Through meditation and greater self-awareness, these practices can help us become more aware of our thoughts, feelings and body sensations, so that instead of being overwhelmed by them we are more able to manage them. Recommended as a preventative mental health tool by the National Institute for Clinical Excellence (NICE), mindfulness was also found to have the same effect as anti-depressants in reducing symptoms of depression and anxiety<sup>13</sup>.

6. Saarland University, Germany, 2015 | 7. Anxiety & Depression Association of America | 8. Anxiety & Depression Association of America  
9. <https://www.ninds.nih.gov/Disorders/patient-caregiver-education/understanding-sleep> | 10 <https://www.sleepfoundation.org/mental-health>  
11. <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/29549064/> | 12 Alcohol Change | 13. Meditation Programs for Psychological Stress and Well-being, JAMA Network, March 2014 .

## Ways to boost physical activity in the workplace

We all experience barriers to being more active, especially in the workplace.

Here are some ways that employees can get moving...

1. **Try audio-only meetings**, so they can walk and talk
2. **Build activity into social occasions** - meet outside or on the move
3. **If using public transport**, exit early to walk part of the journey
4. **Walk or cycle instead of driving**
5. **Schedule time each week for physical activity** - employees should stretch 10 minutes a day



## Eight ways to greater wellbeing

According to researcher Courtney E. Ackerman, there are a number of ways to achieve a happier, more fulfilling life.

### 1. Focus less on wealth

While money does affect us, focusing less on attaining wealth will likely make us happier<sup>14</sup>.

### 2. Spend money on experiences

Spending less on material possessions and more on doing things we enjoy is scientifically proven to boost our wellbeing<sup>15</sup>.

### 3. Cultivate gratitude

The more we show gratitude, the happier we tend to be, research studies show<sup>16</sup>.

### 4. Hug it out

Hugs or other displays of physical affection can induce oxytocin, a hormone which helps provoke trust, empathy and morality in humans<sup>17</sup>.

### 5. Happiness is contagious

Those with happy friends and significant others are more likely to be happy in the future<sup>18</sup>.

### 6. Perform acts of kindness

People who perform acts of kindness towards others not only get a boost in wellbeing, they are also more likely to be accepted by their peers<sup>19</sup>.

### 7. Volunteer for a cause

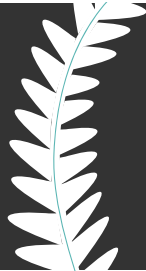
Giving up your time for something you believe in can improve our sense of wellbeing and may even reduce symptoms of depression<sup>20</sup>.

### 8. Spend money on others

Giving generously is better for us than receiving, research suggests<sup>21</sup>.

14. Aknin, Norton, & Dunn, 2009 | 15. Howell & Hill, 2009 | 16. Seligman, Steen, Park, & Peterson, 2005 | 17. Barraza & Zak, 2009 | 18. Fowler & Christakis, 2008 | 19. Layous, Nelson, Oberle, Schonert-Reichl, & Lyubomirsky, 2012 | 20. Jenkinson et al., 2013 | 21. Dunn, Aknin, & Norton, 2008.

# The carrot - but not the stick.



A whole load of psychology and behavioural economics goes into building an effective wellbeing programme that successfully encourages positive lifestyle choices. **Here's the what, why and how.**

With the right tools and education, a longer, healthier and happier life is possible. Yet even despite knowing this, it is not always easy for us to make healthy choices.

Our brains are hardwired in such a way that we are prone to seeing our wellbeing as better than it is and that our decisions tomorrow will be different. This sort of thinking applies to physical activity as much as it does the food we eat.

Luckily, there are ways that a workplace wellbeing strategy can help employees overcome this challenge. Findings from our Britain's Healthiest Workplace study revealed that one of the most powerful agents for change can be rewards<sup>1</sup>.

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*"Most of economics can be summarised in four words: people respond to incentives. The rest is commentary."*

Steven E. Landsburg, Economist

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1. Britain's Healthiest Workplace 2019

2. Michael Silverman, 2004, Non-financial recognition, the most effective of rewards?

What **motivates** employees to engage with benefits?<sup>2</sup>

**+70%**

Providing incentives and rewards for participation

**+19%**

Health promotion available for family members

**+5%**

Allow participation during working time





## Tips to offering the right rewards

Psychology and behavioural science play a big role in helping employees to overcome cognitive biases and encourage them to engage with behaviours that might benefit their health and wellbeing.

### 1. Make them short but sweet

Providing tangible short-term rewards often work best if any wait for the reward is kept to a minimum – in behavioural economics terms this is sometimes called our present bias<sup>3</sup>.

### 2. Don't be afraid to be creative

Even with limited resources, a creative approach to rewards can still pay dividends, such as offering an additional day of annual leave, or symbolic recognition – for example, a thank you note, public recognition or an award.

### 3. It's all about the experience

Vouchers are less likely to be forgotten than cash and experiences tend to make us happier than money<sup>4</sup>. We've also seen through behavioural economics that the perceived value of monetary amounts can vary, so providing tangible non-cash items, such as personalised gifts, can help address this<sup>5</sup>.

### 4. No need to stop at one

You need not limit yourself from offering just one reward – they can be combined to boost the total value available, or to provide a choice of rewards. Both of which can broaden the appeal and motivate a wider range of employees.

### 5. Everything is connected

As we've explored, the different elements of our wellbeing are interconnected across all multiple pillars (see sidebar), so all must be supported. But we cannot tackle everything at once. To get the journey started, perhaps focus on one area at first and space them across a wellbeing calendar.

### 6. Onwards and upwards

A low threshold for a reward might help some but provide little motivation for others. One way to overcome this is to use a system of escalation, so people can do more to unlock further rewards (for example, a steps challenge).

### 7. Incentivise healthy behaviour

The principle of harnessing our psychology can also be seen in workplaces where nutritious food is subsidised or provided for free. Those who wish to indulge in something not as healthy incur an additional cost, which can play into a sense of loss aversion and motivate us to choose the better – but perhaps less appealing – option.

### 8. Keep it simple

The design and communication of a health and wellbeing programme must be simple, intuitive and accessible to avoid overloading employees with information and spoiling engagement – something illustrated by the Fogg Behaviour Model<sup>6</sup>, which shows the interplay between perceived effort and personal motivation.

3. O'Donoghue & Rabin, 1999 | 4. Pchelin & Howell, 2014, The hidden cost of value-seeking: People do not accurately forecast the economic benefits of experiential purchases | 5. Michael Silverman, 2004, Non-financial recognition, the most effective of rewards? | 6. Dr BJ Fogg, Behavior Design Lab, Stanford University

## Wellbeing pillars

PHYSICAL

MENTAL

SOCIAL

LIFESTYLE

CAREER

WORK LIFE

To learn more about how psychology can be used to help drive wellbeing success within your organisation, why not try our

**Why is it so hard to make healthy choices?**



# Five key takeaways.

The role of employers is evolving alongside growing awareness of what really constitutes good health at work today. Both of these dynamics have been catalysed by the COVID-19 pandemic, as we learn more as a society about a whole host of preventative wellbeing factors.

At the heart of everything however is workplace culture; a healthy organisation starts with buy-in from the board and a mentality that trickles down throughout every level - from CEO to line manager to individual employees.

Hopefully you are now convinced that a more holistic approach to wellness is not only good for business but also achievable within your organisation. To help you on your way, here are five key takeaways for any business leader implementing an effective long-term employee wellbeing initiative.

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Don't forget you can take our **Mastering Wellbeing at Work Course** to explore everything we cover in this guide further.

## 1. Leadership

Showing commitment to mental health and wellbeing publicly has never been more important. This includes very top business leaders setting an example - perhaps even sharing their own stories. In addition, line managers are thought to account for 70% of employee engagement and the majority of people who share concerns, ideas, feelings in work do so with their line manager. Line manager training around employee welfare is therefore essential.

## 2. Conversation

If we feel unable to influence our world, it can lead to stress and unhappiness. Allowing employees to develop a strong voice means that a two-way dialogue can exist in which individuals have a say in the day-to-day running of their company. And it is crucial they see evidence that their voice counts. It can't be an exercise in listening only. This extends to empowering employees to influence wellbeing at work, allowing them to create and drive their own initiatives.

## 3. Insight

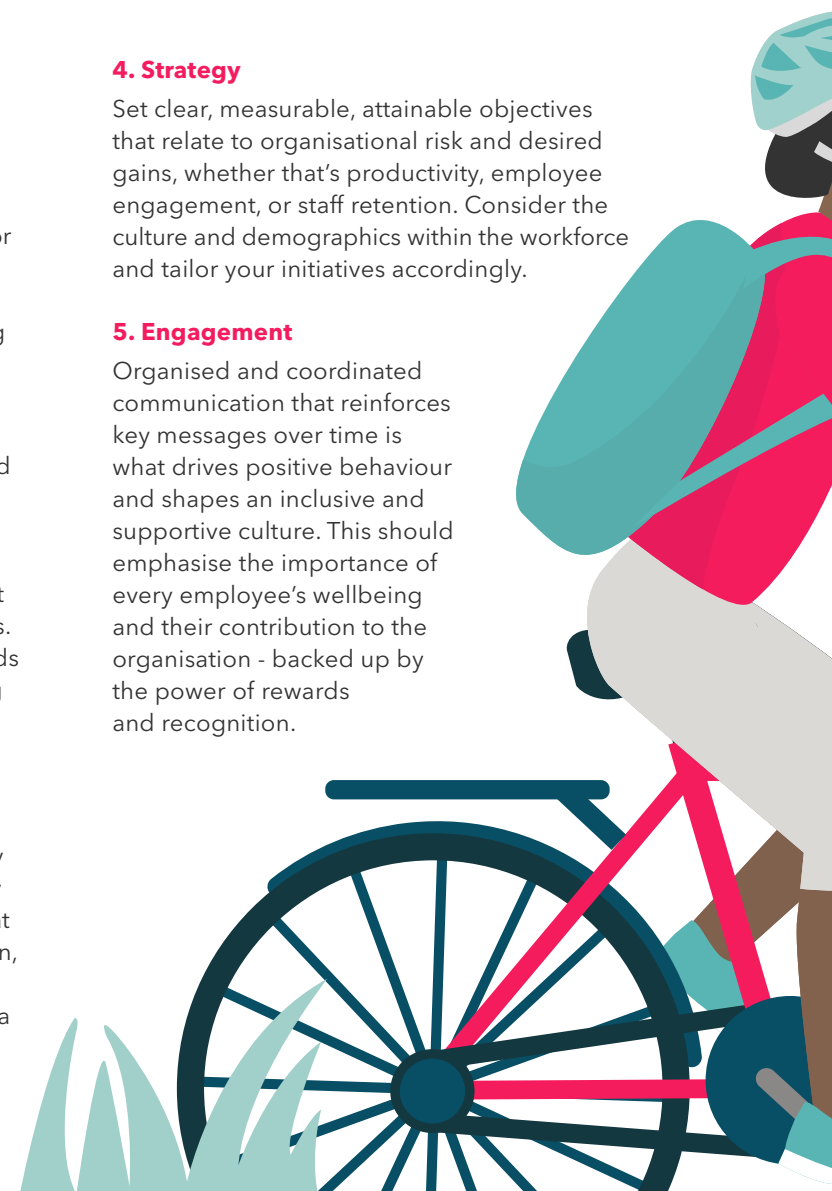
It is vital that employers truly understand the reality of their organisation. This is achieved by accurately measuring the right things and understanding what you are seeing. Using this management information, business leaders can set priorities, track and monitor value and allocate spend efficiently. Build a clear picture to make a case for the business - then invest in the wellbeing of your people.

## 4. Strategy

Set clear, measurable, attainable objectives that relate to organisational risk and desired gains, whether that's productivity, employee engagement, or staff retention. Consider the culture and demographics within the workforce and tailor your initiatives accordingly.

## 5. Engagement

Organised and coordinated communication that reinforces key messages over time is what drives positive behaviour and shapes an inclusive and supportive culture. This should emphasise the importance of every employee's wellbeing and their contribution to the organisation - backed up by the power of rewards and recognition.



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