

Workplace wellbeing guide

When your employees are happy and healthy, it shines through and makes a better business.



Helping you create a happy, healthy and financially strong workforce.

We will certainly not forget the last couple of years. There have been many lows, some highs and plenty of changes for almost everyone. But now, as we head into a post pandemic life, the way in which we live and work, is likely to have changed.

By now though, you'll probably have an idea on how your employees will return back to the workplace, how they feel about doing so, and what evolving priorities you as an employer will have over the next 12-18 months.

To help you through the wellbeing maze, we've written this guide with the latest information on employee wellbeing, as well as our tips on how to create a good wellbeing strategy.



Why workplace wellbeing matters

Employees are one of the biggest assets to any organisation. That's why, ensuring they are happy and healthy at work is key to a successful business. Without wellbeing support from you, employees can be left feeling stressed and overwhelmed, resulting in a lack of productivity and sometimes time off work.

However, good employee wellbeing can enhance employee engagement, improve how employees perform their day-to-day jobs and also have a positive impact on their peers and your clients.

59%



of people said their workloads/
volume of work was the biggest
cause of stress at work¹.

Why employers should focus on employee wellbeing now

Some organisations and industries were hit harder than others during the Covid-19 pandemic. But during country-wide lockdowns, most businesses would have been affected in some way. This included the introduction of furlough, additional PPE, working from home and even redundancies. In July 2021, a report by mental health charity Mind, found that 65% of adults and 68% of young people with mental health problems said their mental health had got worse since the first national lockdown. As well, one in four adults and over one in six young people experienced mental distress for the first time during the pandemic². These stats alone highlight the impact the pandemic has had on employees and the need for employer support more than ever right now. But there are also areas in particular which emphasise why employers should focus on employee wellbeing now.

Burnout

According to [Mental Health UK](#), burnout is a state of physical and emotional exhaustion which can occur when employees experience long-term stress in their job, or when they have worked in a physically or emotionally draining role for a long time.

The Furlough scheme was introduced to support businesses and people financially throughout the pandemic. This time was difficult for those employees who were furloughed; however, it was also a tough time for those who remained working. Some employees had no choice but to take on extra work, leaving them feeling overwhelmed and unable to cope. And although Furlough has ended and employees will now be returning to the workplace, the stress from the last 2 years could still be having an effect on employees.

As well, those employees who have subsequently returned, will be going from working very little or not at all, to back into regular work, potentially leaving them feeling overwhelmed and exhausted. On top of this, all employees have had to adapt to new ways of working, as well as dealing with personal issues at home as a result of Covid-19. And now post pandemic, most businesses are working harder than ever to make up for any losses from the past 2 years. It's clear to see that the wellbeing roller-coaster we've all been on recently, will undoubtedly be taking a toll on some employees.

23%



of people said Covid related
anxiety was the biggest cause
of stress at work³.

¹ https://www.cipd.co.uk/Images/health-wellbeing-work-report-2021_tcm18-93541.pdf P.14

² <https://www.mind.org.uk/media/8962/the-consequences-of-coronavirus-for-mental-health-final-report.pdf>

³ https://www.cipd.co.uk/Images/health-wellbeing-work-report-2021_tcm18-93541.pdf P.14



1.7 million

job openings in October - almost 400,000 higher than before the pandemic⁴.

Recruitment and retention

Another vital reason employers should be focusing on wellbeing now, is to help with the recruitment and retention of employees. For the past year and a half, job security has been more important to employees than ever before, with many people sticking at their current job due to the uncertainty of the recruitment market. However, as businesses open their doors to new recruits again, people are feeling more at ease now about making the jump, and this is leading to job vacancies hitting a record high. According to the Office for National Statistics (ONS), there were 1.17 million job openings in October - almost 400,000 higher than before the pandemic⁴.

Living throughout the pandemic, being forced to stay home with or without loved ones and being isolated from our family has also reminded us how important spending time with family and friends is. This has meant that some people's attitudes to working has changed, and where commutes and long hours were part of their desired roles, being at home with family is now more important to them. This has meant some employees are now looking for jobs which accommodate full or part time working from home, more flexible hours, or jobs closer to where they live. The time at home has also given people the chance to start their own businesses, follow new career paths they've always dreamt of, or re-train in another profession.

Ultimately, the pandemic has contributed towards a surge in vacancies, increasing the competition between businesses. That's where having an effective wellbeing programme can help. Not only can it help attract the best talent on the market, but it can also help by retaining your current employees.

⁴. <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/business-59302574>

How workplace wellbeing is different today

The way in which we work was changing before the pandemic even started. However, this has only been accelerated over the last 2 years.

Shift in priorities

There has been a complete shift in priorities for many employees. Where free lunches or extra holiday were once a desired benefit, this has recently changed. Flexible working hours are now the most desirable work benefit for UK employees, with almost half (45%) of those surveyed stating this benefit is or would be valuable to them⁵. Health-related company benefits have also gained importance, with the most valued being dental care (43%), optical care (31%) and mental health counselling (18%)⁵.

Preventative wellbeing

This method of tackling employee wellbeing is now becoming an important part of many employers' strategies. This includes identifying stress and mental health triggers, asking employees how they're feeling and ensuring team leaders and management can spot any signs. Using these methods can help to prevent employees reaching burnout, feeling overwhelmed or needing time off work for stress related illnesses.

Presenteeism

Another area of concern which is on the increase is presenteeism. With more people having the flexibility to work from home, many are choosing to do so when they are ill. A recent survey that examined presenteeism during lockdown found that nearly half of people (46%) felt more pressure to be 'present', with 24% feeling they needed to prove they are working every day⁶. As well, more than a third (35%) continued to work whilst feeling unwell, often due to fears about redundancy⁶.

Although sometimes having the ability to work from home can be beneficial when sick, for example if an employee has a mild illness like a cold, it's vital that employees know when to take time out to rest and fully recover. It's also important that they can feel it's ok to do so, and managers can recognise when employees need to recuperate for the benefit of their work and wellbeing.



⁵. <https://www.businessleader.co.uk/half-of-uk-employees-feel-their-current-work-perks-leave-a-lot-to-be-desired/>

⁶. https://www.som.org.uk/Presenteeism_during_the_COVID-19_pandemic_May_2021.pdf P.3

Challenges from Covid-19

Although we are hopefully through the worst of the pandemic, the lasting effects on our employees and businesses, and the challenges that come with them, are likely to be around for some time yet.

Employee challenges

There have been many challenges employees have faced over the past year and a half including:



Isolation



Losing loved ones
to Covid-19



Financial stress



Working at home

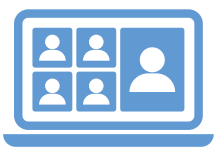


Increased health
issues

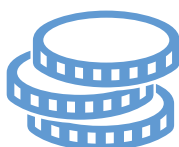
Now as we move into a new year, some of these challenges will continue. Many employees will be faced with anxiety about returning to the workplace. This could be anyone from your younger employees, those who are clinically vulnerable, to those who joined during the pandemic and are yet to meet their colleagues in person. There are also other challenges which are continuing for employees including managing their finances now social events and gatherings are back. It's vital that employers understand everyone is different, and although things are returning to normal quite quickly, your employees might not be.

Employer challenges

Employers have also had a fair number of changes to deal with:



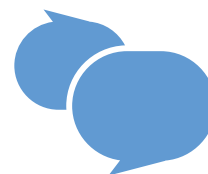
Remote working



Furlough



Redundancies



Employee
communication



Employee
engagement

A massive challenge for HR departments was to adapt and implement everything listed above, in a matter of days. And now, these challenges are continuing. Working policies are changing to incorporate hybrid working, employee comms continue to need to reach a wider audience, and Covid-19 is still playing a role in increased sickness and time off work.

But the main challenge employers are continuing to face is that most employees had a different pandemic experience. This has left HR departments trying to help employees who are at different stages, return to some sort of normality.

The missing piece of the puzzle

Money problems can affect us all at times. And no matter how big or small the problem may be, the knock-on effect to your employees' mental health can be detrimental. It can also have a significant impact on an employee's work including decreased morale, lack of productivity and increased absenteeism. That's where financial education comes in.

Financial education is not a new initiative, and more employers are introducing this into their organisation. However, there is clearly still work to be done.

According to CIPD, only 23% of people surveyed reported their organisation has increased their focus on financial wellbeing in response to the pandemic. They also reported that there has been only small improvements in activity to promote financial wellbeing, other than signposting people to external sources of advice⁷.

For those organisations who have not factored financial education into their wellbeing programme properly, or at all, it could be the missing piece of their wellbeing puzzle.



5 tips to creating a good wellbeing strategy

Even though the last 2 years have been difficult for many, it is vital we use our learnings to create a better workplace for our employees going forward. Here are our 5 tips to creating an effective wellbeing strategy to help you do just that.

Plan



Many HR professionals are juggling different work tasks and it can be hard to find the time to sit down and put plans in place. This leaves many employers making reactive decisions for their employees' wellbeing. These ad-hoc initiatives can mean employees are left feeling unsupported, vulnerable and without anywhere to turn for help. Putting a plan in place will not only benefit your employees, but they will save you time in the future as well.

Remember, when planning your wellbeing strategy, you need to be realistic with what you can achieve with the time, resource and budget which you have available. Don't forget a great starting point is to look at what you already have in place. Quite often you will already have resources, tools or programmes in place which just need a refresh, rebrand or a different style of communication. You can also look at what's not working, and look for other initiatives which could take their place. Not everything will be right for your business so don't be afraid to put new ideas into your plan and take them out if they don't work.

A good way to help you create a plan and keep it on track is to set goals. By outlining what you want and need to achieve, you can create a clear, achievable plan.

4 pillars



A good wellbeing strategy should include four key pillars:

Physical - Supporting your employees to make the right lifestyle choices to remain healthy and avoid preventable problems in the future.

Social - Having a sense of belonging and connection with society, with the appropriate support available should individuals need it.

Mental - Ensuring employees feel as though they can confidently cope with the stresses and strains of daily life.

Financial - Offering support and advice around finances to ensure employees feel in control of their money.

Ensuring your wellbeing strategy consists of all four pillars is vital for your employees' wellbeing, as all four are interlinked with each other. For example, physical health supports mental wellbeing and good financial wellbeing improves mental health but can also support your employees' social wellbeing. A wellbeing strategy is more likely to be successful when it covers all four of these.

Communicate



When you are creating your plan, communication should form part of it. There is no point coming up with great ideas and planning new initiatives if you don't communicate them well.

There are a few things to consider when planning your communication; the first is your audience. It's likely you will have various demographics working within your organisation and each one of them will be different and so will their wellbeing requirements. Ensuring you have something for everyone is really important for a successful wellbeing programme.

Also, how people digest information is different too. That's why it is important to share your information through multiple communication channels and methods. Some people like to receive emails, others like to watch videos, and some like to be given information face to face. So, ensuring you have various options available will help you reach everyone.

How often you communicate your wellbeing initiatives is just as important as what you are communicating. Putting out regular and consistent messaging should be a key part to your wellbeing strategy. And keep in mind, what might not be relevant for someone one week, could be a vital piece of information for them the following week.



Start at the top

Another key area to consider is including your management team into your strategy. They will be the best place to start when promoting existing initiatives or implementing anything new. When they can see and understand the benefits to supporting and improving the wellbeing of employees, the effects will filter down throughout the rest of the organisation.

It's also important for everyone in the business to feel comfortable talking about their wellbeing, and when managers set an example by creating an open dialog around all 4 pillars of wellbeing, this can help create an open culture for employees.

Try getting your managers ideas as well. Afterall, they are on the front line and look after your employees on a day-to-day basis, so may have their own ideas as to what would benefit their teams.



Assess

Once you have created your strategy and have started to implement your wellbeing plan, you need to keep assessing how it's doing. If it's a wellbeing webinar make sure you get attendees feedback, or if you've implemented a new benefit, ask how beneficial it is to everyone. Keep asking your employees how they like to receive your information, or if there is anything else they feel they could benefit from.

Also, make sure you revisit your plan throughout the whole year, noting down what works, what didn't and what you could do differently. This will help you when you come to planning for the following year.

And as we mentioned above, make sure you speak to your managers. Asking them to get their teams feedback on any recent activities and creating a discussion can be very useful.

Working with Secondsight



We believe that by utilising a wellbeing programme covering all these areas can help your employees feel healthier, more motivated, physically and mentally stronger and more valued, resulting in a workforce that is not only happier and healthier but also more productive and efficient.

At Secondsight, we've been delivering employee benefits and educating employees for over 15 years, and running workplace financial education programmes for over 7 years. We recently won the Financial Education Provider of the Year Award at the WSB awards, as well as winning the Employee Benefits Provider award at The Rewards. We were also finalists at the Workplace Savings and Benefits 2019 awards and were nominated most outstanding workplace pension adviser by the Global Business Excellence awards.





To find out how our wellbeing programmes could benefit your business, get in touch today:
call 0330 332 7143*;
email info@second-sight.com; or
visit www.second-sight.com

* Calls are charged at your standard landline rate.

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SSWBBL_0122