

Health and Wellbeing Good Practice Guide



Contents

- /04 Introducing Health and Wellbeing
- /06 Business benefits
- /07 Measure your wellbeing performance
- /08 Planning
- /10 Supportive management
- /12 Workplace culture
- /14 Stress management
- /16 Work-life balance
- /18 Absence management and return to work
- /20 Why is managing return to work important?
- /22 Occupational health
- /24 Fit for work
- /25 Effective evaluation
- /27 Health and Wellbeing checklist
- /29 Helping you go further
- /30 Get in touch

The biggest asset your organisation has is its people; the biggest asset they have is their health and wellbeing – so it makes good business sense for you to look after it.

Introducing Health and Wellbeing



Investors in People recognises the importance of health and wellbeing in any organisation.

According to the Investors in People Wellbeing at Work survey, 2014, over a quarter (29%) of those in full-time employment in the UK are unhappy in their job. More than one in five (23%) workers 'pulled a sickie' in the last year, and 6% did so more than five times.

So what are possible solutions?

- 80% of people said they would feel more positive towards their employer if they offered better health and wellbeing benefits
- One in ten workers even stated that job satisfaction is or could be improved with complimentary fresh fruit (10%) in the office.

It may sound obvious, but the key determinants of health and wellbeing at work are: good line management and having a supportive team. These are particularly important currently, due to the amount of change and often additional workloads that people have to take on in the current climate.

Everyone knows that good health and wellbeing produces a wide range of benefits for those who enjoy them, but employers can benefit too – happy, healthy employees are more likely to be present, motivated and productive.

They are also more likely to be flexible and be prepared to commit to change – which is a vital requirement for organisations coping with the downturn or preparing for the upturn.

Many of the most successful organisations have adopted a coordinated approach towards health and wellbeing and are reaping the rewards of their commitment.

What is covered by this guide?

This guide and the Investors in People Health and Wellbeing Good Practice Award aim to help you to meet the health and wellbeing needs of your organisation.

The *Health and Wellbeing Good Practice Guide* looks at why health and wellbeing has emerged in recent years as such an important issue for employers, and considers the business benefits that are driving improvements. It outlines how you can improve the health and wellbeing of your people in a targeted way that will produce results, while also enhancing your organisation's ability to achieve its business goals.

Whilst workplace health and wellbeing can cover many different subject areas, this guide focuses on those where Investors in People can help ensure good practice. This includes information on planning health interventions (including employee engagement), supportive management and culture, stress management, work-life balance, absence management, return to work, healthy food and physical fitness, and evaluating interventions. It highlights why these issues are important and looks at what the related people issues are, some proven solutions, and how these can improve health and wellbeing within an organisation.

Also included is a checklist to assess what your organisation is doing, information regarding free supportive resources both from IIP and other organisations, and details of our online wellbeing diagnostic to see how you shape up.

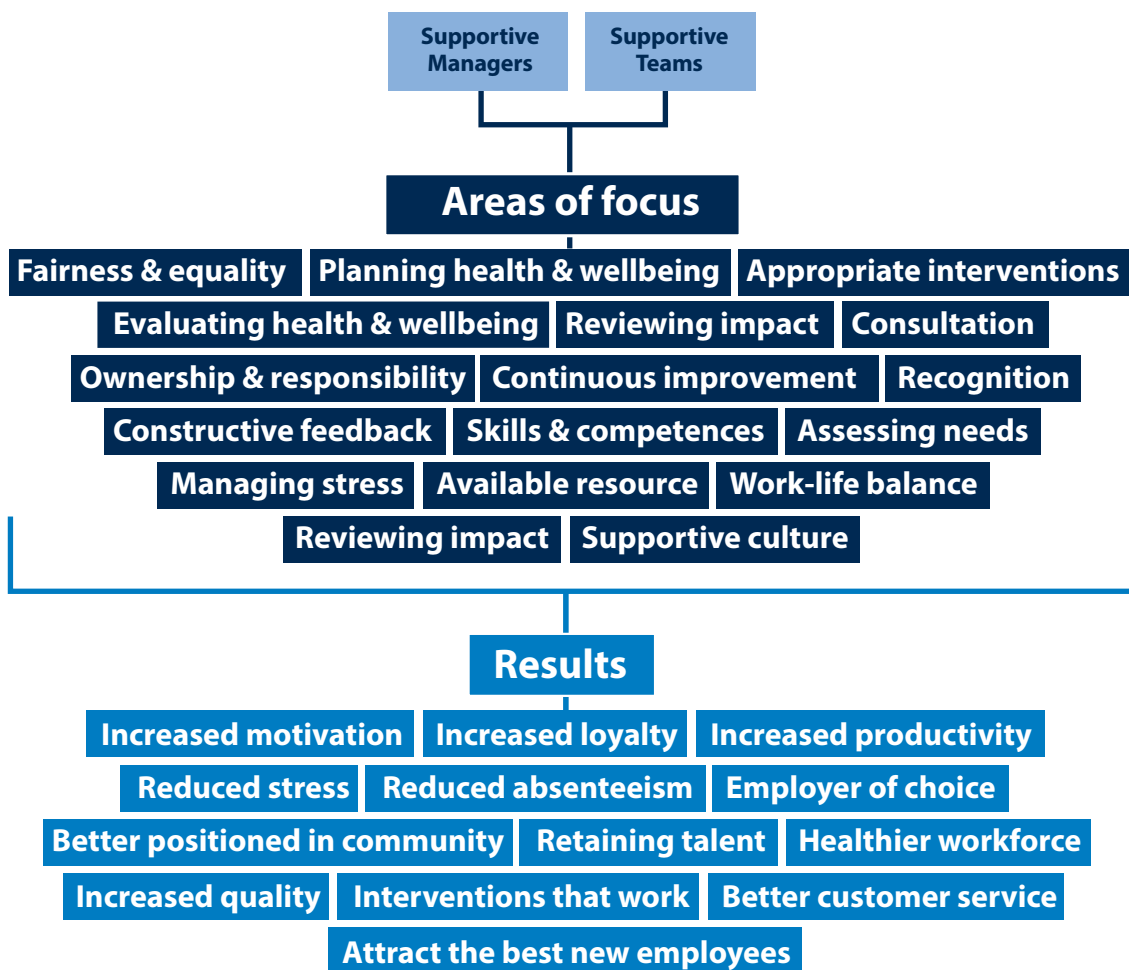
“Happy and healthy staff equals happy and healthy students and that in turn equals good results”

Simon Jarvis
Vice Principal, Farnborough Sixth
Form College

“The Investors in People Health and Wellbeing Good Practice Award has given us an edge in terms of the health and wellbeing programme we offer our employees which in turn has improved their engagement, morale, team dynamics, resilience and performance levels.”

Linda Mabb,
Director of Health Services EMEA, Kimberly Clarke

Workplace health issues and their impact



Business benefits

Health and wellbeing needn't be expensive.

Even some of the healthiest organisations – those that are performing well, with excellent employee engagement and motivation – don't have the resources to support expensive wellbeing schemes.

They succeed by concentrating on the fundamentals: good communication, flexible working practices, effective and fair line management, and the team support people need to meet the challenges they face at work.

These elements may already be in place if your organisation works with the Investors in People Framework, and this guide will help you make sure you're doing as much as you reasonably can to address health and wellbeing in the workplace.

It will help you to:

- Strengthen your understanding of the relationship between employee wellbeing and reduced sickness absence, better productivity and motivation; and common factors that influence health in the workplace
- Establish the link between healthy organisations and improved business performance, to help build a business case for investment in health and wellbeing
- Create a framework to use in planning, implementing and reviewing steps you can take to improve the performance of your people through better health and wellbeing.

“Staff are the bedrock of what we do, and looking after their health and wellbeing has benefited us with low staff turnover and low sickness absence”

Stuart Patterson
Director, Physiotherapy Solutions

How will you benefit?

Organisations effectively supporting the health and wellbeing of their people are likely to benefit in a number of ways, including:



Figure 2 Outcomes and benefits of the Health and Wellbeing award

Measure your wellbeing performance

Investors in People has developed a simple benchmarking tool to help you gauge how your organisation is doing.

This will:

- Give you an overview of the health and wellbeing issues that Investors in People addresses
- Help you to review how your organisation currently supports the health and wellbeing of its people
- Enable you to identify your organisation's strengths and development areas

Access the benchmarking tool at:
www.investorsinpeople.co.uk

By assessing yourselves against our Framework, you'll get an even clearer idea of how your organisation is performing. An Investors in People Specialist will gather evidence from interviews with your employees and identify your areas of strength, and possible further development.

While we recommend a holistic approach – incorporating management, job design and work-life balance issues – our Framework also encourages employers to think about how they support people in improving their own health.

Any size, any sector

The Investors in People Health and Wellbeing Good Practice Award is designed for organisations of all sizes and sectors. Investors in People doesn't require your organisation to adopt any particular scheme, but seeks to help you develop a culture of health improvement that works for your organisation.

“Investors in People has a pivotal role to play, not just in promoting the message about health at work, but in delivering accessible and relevant support to employers across all sectors and of every size.”

Stephen Bevan
Managing Director, The Work Foundation



Planning

Promoting health and wellbeing in the workplace is about more than just healthy living initiatives or new employee benefits. It's about working with your people to develop strategies to improve their wellbeing, and giving them clear frameworks and practical support to do this. Your health and wellbeing strategy does not need to be a written document, or distinct from your other strategies. It can be included in your employee handbook, pay and benefits policy, induction programme and overarching business plan.

Why is planning important?

It's important to consider why your organisation wants to support health and wellbeing, and what your people want, or need. Providing additional support in this area is a way of recognising people's contributions and showing them that they are valued. This can be very beneficial in terms of motivation and retention.

By studying any available data or resources it may be possible to identify particular trends or difficulties that are affecting individual or organisational performance – for example, sickness absence or stress can have a negative impact on quality and productivity.

How can we get there?

Having assessed where your organisation currently stands on the issue of health and wellbeing, and considered what you want to achieve by investing in it, plans for improvement can be made. Keep your strategy simple and make sure it is communicated effectively. It may be beneficial to write down exactly what the plan is and circulate it, or use a diagram or picture to represent the different stages of the proposal.

Monitor the tasks in your business plan that link objectives and targets with the health and wellbeing of your people. Focus on areas where investing time, money and effort could benefit your organisation's aims.

Top tips for effective planning

Gather evidence

Collect as much information as possible – this could include management reports, staff surveys, performance reviews, and occupational health reports. Statistics are useful for identifying trends and focusing attention.

Liase with senior managers

Explain the benefits of good health and wellbeing to senior managers, using the evidence you have gathered.

Be proactive

Don't wait for management reports, or to be told about problems at exit interviews.

Talk with employees

Identify what is valuable in your organisation's existing approaches, and where improvements can be made, by asking employees if they feel supported. Once a new approach has been decided, keep everyone regularly informed of progress. If you show your people how their support is valued, the strategy is more likely to succeed.

Focus on what's important

Knowing what to prioritise is often the first big challenge. Budgets and time are limited, so focusing on some quick wins can generate investment for more challenging initiatives.

Measure from the start

Before beginning any new health intervention, it is important that you know how you are going to evaluate its success. Effective measures will help identify what is, or isn't, working.



People issues in planning

Understanding your organisation's needs through analysis and employee engagement is crucial to planning effectively. When developing the strategy, ask yourself:

- What health and wellbeing issues are affecting our organisation?
- Do we know how to support the health and wellbeing of our people?
- What support do we have in place for our employees' health and wellbeing?
- What is our strategy to support health and wellbeing?
- How are employees' ideas incorporated into our health and wellbeing planning activity?
- How do we ensure that everyone has the support to improve their health and wellbeing?

Solutions

Incorporate health and wellbeing in your mission, vision and values

Ensure that health and wellbeing is built into the everyday life of your organisation. Including references to health and wellbeing in the mission, vision and values will show the importance your organisation places on its people.

Assess the current situation before implementing improvements

Use a questionnaire to establish the current health of your employees so that improvements can be measured. Remember to review your procedures on a frequent basis.

Benchmark against industry norms

Learn what best practice is and what the key health and wellbeing performance indicators are for your industry. This will help you to benchmark your organisation's performance.

Reduce costs

When you put together the business case for investing in health and wellbeing, remember to look beyond any initial startup costs. Litigation, errors, poor customer service, high staff turnover, increased sickness absence and poor publicity are all costs that could be incurred if health and wellbeing is not supported effectively.

Define objectives for health and wellbeing programmes

Incorporate in your business plan some key health and wellbeing related objectives – for example, aim to gain a better understanding of ill health, prevent absence and support absent employees, have fewer injuries and absences resulting from accidents, and help employees, and their families, improve their own health.

Supportive management

How people are managed on a daily basis is crucial in supporting their health and wellbeing. Managers – as leaders, coaches and role models – play a vital role in establishing the culture of an organisation and they can influence outcomes, positively or negatively.

In order to confidently deal with health and wellbeing issues – from sickness absence to alcohol abuse, remote working to rehabilitation – managers need to be clear about what is expected of them and made aware of the tools and sources of support available to them



Top tips for supportive management

Involve the right people

Recruit the right people to drive forward improvements. Involve those who are enthusiastic and can bring about real change.

Use available resources

Strategies will benefit from involvement and financial support from all parts of the organisation. You may also be able to take advantage of other opportunities, such as schemes run by primary care trusts, councils, further and higher education colleges, the police service, and the fire service. Although these schemes may not be available in all regions, they are certainly worth investigating.

Make policies relevant to everyone

Ensure that policies related to childcare, caring for elders, and part-time working are accessible and relevant to everyone – flexible working, for example, should not only be geared to those with families.

Promote initiatives

Ensure people are aware of health and wellbeing policies. Many schemes fail through lack of promotion and engagement. Make sure policies are actually implemented, and not just written down.

People issues in supportive management

Managers need to be clear about the capabilities (knowledge, skills and behaviours) required to support health and wellbeing within their teams. Ask yourself:

- What capabilities have been identified to ensure that managers support people's health and wellbeing?
- Is performance measured against these?
- How are your managers performance reviewed in terms of commitment to the health and wellbeing of their teams?
- How effective are managers in leading, managing and supporting their people to improve their health and wellbeing?
- Can managers give examples of timely and helpful health and wellbeing feedback they have given to employees?
- What does your organisation do to ensure that managers promote and support health and wellbeing?
- How does your organisation ensure that managers lead on health and wellbeing issues?

How Investors in People can help

By working towards the Health and Wellbeing Good Practice Award, you will be able to:

- Improve the ability of line managers to manage fairly and supportively, and tackle issues related to health and wellbeing at work
- Empower people to act with more autonomy, and encourage decision making related to their work
- Improve the support systems you have for your people – for example, improved team support, better skills training, practical advice – and the working practices that enable them to balance competing pressures, a heavy workload or difficult customers.

Solutions

Remember that little things mean a lot

Say 'thank you' regularly and, where possible, adjust timetables and workflows to allow employees to visit sick relatives, attend children's school events etc. This can help develop a nurturing culture and, as a result, people will show greater commitment and enthusiasm.

Get involved with local partners

Organisations such as your local primary care trust or Sport England can provide information on cycling or walking to work, lunchtime sports and healthy eating. The government also has a number of schemes (related to smoking, exercise and alcohol, for example). Linking your schemes to these can be a cost-effective way of reducing illness and absenteeism.

Involve your people in operational decisions

When decisions are being made that could affect people's health and wellbeing, make sure you involve all the experts and enthusiasts in the organisation.

Remember health and wellbeing in appraisals

When setting objectives, consider the impact of people's work on their health and wellbeing, and what support or flexibility they might need to achieve their objectives.

Look at your capability or competence framework

It's a good idea to extend your management competencies framework to include the behaviours expected from managers to support health and wellbeing within their team.

Offer a flexible benefits package

By allowing people to choose from a range of options, they will be able to match their rewards to personal needs, which will improve their health and wellbeing.

Review the effectiveness of your team meetings

Evaluate meetings in terms of working practices, management style and organisation.

Give positive feedback

Praise and reward achievements, letting people know what they have done well.

Make time for individual discussions

Provide regular opportunities for one to ones, be flexible, and understand individual needs.

Workplace culture

The culture of a workplace is extremely important and any change requires everyone, from top managers to junior employees, to modify their behaviour. With commitment and engagement, it is possible to change workplace culture for the better.

Why is workplace culture important?

Having a sense of ownership over our work and a degree of autonomy is strongly linked to health. Limited decision-making opportunities, and a general feeling of powerlessness can create stress which, in turn, can cause accidents, illness and despondency.

People issues in workplace culture

Organisations looking to improve their workplace culture could ask themselves:

- How are people encouraged to take action in support of health and wellbeing?
- How do we ensure that different health and wellbeing needs are met?
- What involvement do employees have in health and wellbeing related improvements or initiatives and decisions?

How Investors in People can help

Investors in People helps you to look at how your managers encourage people to take ownership and responsibility, and participate in decision-making processes.

Top tips for a healthy workplace culture

1 Collaborate to reach a common goal

Organisations benefit from people working together towards clear goals.

2 Have inspirational and trusted leaders

Good leadership promotes positive attitudes, cross-team working and better service.

3 Create an open-minded culture

Employees should understand the business and be able to suggest and deliver creative responses to challenges. Consultation will increase confidence and encourage engagement.

4 Be positive about change

A static culture can be bad for business. If internal communications emphasise the value of positive change, they can help to create momentum.

5 Encourage face-to-face communication

Encourage office-based employees to get out of their chairs and speak to colleagues. It will improve their working relationships and give people a bit of exercise throughout the day.

6 Set up a wellbeing committee

Ask for volunteers to set up a wellbeing committee to promote initiatives, champion the wellbeing effort and encourage employee involvement.

7 Encourage development

Supporting employee training helps keep people motivated and interested in their current and future roles within the organisation.

“We feel that staff who are healthy themselves and who are supported to have good mental and physical health are happier and more productive”

Tony Bell

Chief Executive Officer, Royal Liverpool Children's NHS Trust



Reward and recognition

It's important that people are rewarded in the right way. Try to:

- Balance effort and reward: where effort is not fairly or consistently rewarded, this can cause stress and damage morale
- Reward effort in the right areas: rewarding effort can be damaging to health – for example, encouraging excessive overtime or unsafe working. Reward people for completing their objectives, rather than for hours worked
- Use health-related benefits wisely: some employers use wellbeing rewards in recognition of effort or seniority, but rewards should be linked to individual roles.

Solutions

Create a supportive culture

Health isn't all about physical fitness. Some organisations with a successful health and wellbeing approach may have simply created a culture where people support each other.

Create a health section on the company intranet or start an internal newsletter

Use your internal communications channels to share information.

Train the workforce to understand health and wellbeing issues

People who understand the issues will be in a better position to support each other.

Improve the working environment

A staff survey can help to identify areas for improvement. Addressing these issues can improve satisfaction in the workplace and, ultimately, have an impact on performance.

Introduce an induction programme

An induction to your organisation should specifically address issues of health and wellbeing.

Implement job rotation

Job rotation (for routine and repetitive jobs) will stimulate employees and combat boredom.

Set up a social club

Establish a social club that organises regular out-of-work events.

Be strict on hours

Long working hours can lower morale, and lead to stress and poor physical health. Promote a work-life balance and ensure people are only working in line with their contracted hours.

Stress management

Stress in the workplace can be caused by both internal and external influences. Common causes include high workloads, unrealistic deadlines, job insecurity, lack of clarity of role, and feeling undervalued. Roles without sufficient levels of challenge, a lack of clear policies and procedures, and poorly managed organisational change can also lead to stress.

Stressful circumstances cannot be entirely avoided and helping employees to develop resilience and coping strategies is an effective way of minimising impact. While external causes of stress are more difficult to proactively manage, an employee who feels supported within their organisation is less likely to let stress impact on their work.

Why is stress management important?

Whatever the cause of stress, it can hinder the productivity and performance not only of individuals, but also of their teams and, in some cases, the wider organisation. Line managers play an important role in minimising stress and reducing the cost of its impact.

People issues in stress management

Continued exposure to stressful situations can impact on:

- **Physical health**
- **Mental wellbeing** – leading to distress, anxiety, depression, lack of concentration, vulnerability, tearfulness, moodiness, or reduced self-esteem and/or interpersonal skills
- **Engagement, motivation and commitment** – when an employee feels they are exposed to stressful situations the employee–employer relationship can breakdown, resulting in lower employee engagement, reduced motivation and less commitment.

Top manager tips for managing stress in the workplace

Process planning and organisation

Always be aware of workloads and plan to ensure they remain manageable.

Empower your people

Trust your team. By giving them responsibility they will feel more respected and valued.

Develop skills

Help to develop individuals, and their skills, within the scope of their role.

Make yourself available

Have regular contact with your team and let them know they can come to you for support.

Manage conflict

Prevent bullying by dealing with incidents immediately. Resolve conflicts fairly and justly.

Manage your emotions

Remain calm under pressure. Understand the need for different management styles and see each team member as an individual with different lives, stress levels and needs.

Communicate

Keep your team updated. Communicate goals and objectives and explain how they relate to the organisation's overall aims. Listen to individual viewpoints and consult with the team on matters that affect them and their jobs.

“There are many physically and mentally demanding roles, and therefore there is an important focus on the health of staff and their wellbeing”

Claridges



Investors in People believes there are three tasks that can help to tackle stress:

- 1 Creating a management environment that is aware of the causes of stress and that takes actions to avoid it, with an emphasis on altering an individual's situation or perception
- 2 Undertaking a stress audit as part of a risk-assessment process
- 3 Undertaking individual risk assessments.

How Investors in People can help

In order to ensure that employee stress does not impact on the performance of your organisation, it is essential that line managers:

- Do all they can to prevent stress at work
- Recognise the pressure points and signs of building stress within their team
- Effectively advise and assist individuals in managing and alleviating stress.

Managers should know how to identify and tackle stress, and also what behaviours they need to show to prevent and reduce it. They may need support or training to do this.

Solutions

Identify the pressure points

There may be specific times that are particularly stressful. Identify these and make sure that everybody plans for them. If possible, provide coaching and mentoring during these periods.

Pick up the stress vibes

Help people support others – consider introducing stress awareness training so people can help colleagues deal with pressure before it becomes excessive.

Support people in stressful situations

In a stressful environment, offer employees stress counselling and an employee support line.

Use a stress survey tool

Stress survey tools are available from the Health and Safety Executive, and commercially. Follow up with focus groups and consultative committees. Interventions include team reorganisations to deal with workload, or manager training to improve understanding of the nature and causes of stress and how to make improvements.

Review shift patterns

Shift patterns, particularly at night, can have a negative impact on health. Organisations could benefit from enabling workers to design their own rosters.

Work-life balance

Work-life balance is about enhancing organisational capability and resilience by helping employees achieve a sustainable balance between work, life and family. It is made up of a group of practices, practical help and cultural factors, some of which are protected by legislation, and some of which go beyond it.

Top tips for achieving work-life balance in the workplace

Understand existing attitudes to work-life balance

Attitudes and support – particularly among line managers – will strongly influence success. Assess whether views and objections on flexible working are justified.

Talk to your employees

Work-life balance interventions will only work if they are genuinely matched to employees' needs. Employees must understand flexible working legislation, know how to apply for flexible working and understand why they might be refused. Early consultation on change is essential so that employees remain engaged and trust the motives behind any changes.

Establish work-life balance as part of your business objectives

Communicate the benefits of a work-life balance. Managers may be negative or nervous about flexible working if they have not considered how it will impact on their team's work, so encourage them to analyse roles to explore the scope for flexibility.

Explore flexible working issues at an individual level

Ensure managers focus on individual needs. They will need to apply a

strategy fairly and consistently and consider, in discussion with the employee, the effects of flexible working on the department, the role, the financial situation and the individual's home life.

Equip managers with the skills to manage flexible working within their team

Managing people on flexible schedules can demand different skills and requires managers to think of jobs in terms of roles, performance and tasks, rather than time in the workplace.

Manage concerns of other employees and build ongoing support

Resistance may occur from those not applying for flexible working. Managers need to plan for and review the impact of flexible working to ensure colleagues are not disadvantaged.

Manage your own work-life balance

Managers are often at greatest risk of working long hours. As with other workplace health issues, self discipline and seeking out appropriate support can maximise manager effectiveness whilst reducing risk of illness and fatigue.

Why is work-life balance important?

Helping people achieve a work-life balance benefits employees and employers.

Benefits of work-life balance policies for employees include:

- Reduced stress levels
- Autonomy to make decisions regarding work-life balance
- Increased focus, motivation and job satisfaction
- Increased job security, in the knowledge that workers with families are supported.

Work-life balance policies also benefit the employer. They can result in:

- Reduced employee turnover rates
- Lower recruitment and training costs associated with reduced staff turnover
- Becoming a good employer or an employer of choice
- Increased return on investment in training as employees stay longer
- Reduced absenteeism use of sick leave
- Improved morale or job satisfaction
- Greater employee loyalty and commitment
- Improved productivity.

“Everyone benefits from having a good work-life balance. Our employees have more flexibility and job satisfaction, we benefit from a productive workforce and our customers get a welcoming and attentive service”

Sue Shuttleworth
Shuttleworth Veterinary Group



How Investors in People can help

Investors in People encourages organisations to look at approaches that incorporate:

- A framework to request, review and implement flexibility, focused on the organisation's needs, and the scope to meet individual needs within it
- A fair, consistent application and decision-making process
- A broad menu of options and practical implementation with detailed guidelines
- Training, especially of managers, to raise awareness of flexible working, so that they manage people in meeting objectives, rather than measuring time in the workplace.

Solutions

Make sure people take regular breaks

Ensure managers are aware of the hours people are working and insist on team members taking holiday entitlement, lunch breaks etc.

Focus on creative work-life balance ideas

Help managers and teams to focus on creative approaches – hold a ‘work-life balance week’ to raise the profile of different approaches to flexibility.

Increase people's mobility and flexibility

Providing people with mobile phones and laptops can increase their work flexibility.

Introduce flexible working policies

Flexible working empowers people and prevents them from taking unnecessary absence.

Schedule meetings to accommodate employee responsibilities

Change times of meetings etc. to accommodate people's responsibilities.

Include work-life balance in coaching for managers

Ensure that the coaching training programme for managers includes work-life balance and covers legislation, company policies and practical approaches that managers can take.

Vary seasonal hours

If there are heavier workloads at certain times, organisations may benefit from cutting working hours at other times. This can reduce overtime without impacting on salary.

Absence management and return to work

Absence management

There are major savings to be made from reducing sickness absence levels. The return to work section includes information about helping those who have left the workplace due to illness. Being proactive about ensuring people remain well and able to attend work has considerable benefits, but this must be managed carefully – the aim is not to keep people working when they are too ill to be effective (see [Presenteeism](#)). Managing attendance effectively requires employers to look at patterns of absence (which requires effective measurement), address the root causes, and ensure that these are applied fairly.

“Staff can go through rough times working with people. We need to provide a supportive environment for them and deal with their issues”

Community Options

Why is absence management important?

Line managers are responsible for effectively managing attendance. They need to have the skills, knowledge and confidence to support those who are off sick and help them return to work. They also need to be firm with those who are not genuinely ill.

To support effective attendance management, organisations should ensure that:

- **Employees** are clear on what the policy is on sickness absence from work, to whom they must report it, and when they can expect to be contacted
- **Managers** know how and when it is appropriate to make contact, or to challenge sickness absence, the rules around sick notes and medical information, and what sources of help they have available to enable people to return to work
- **The organisation** considers how it can be flexible in supporting rehabilitation – for example, allowing people to return to work on flexible hours or with adjustments to their role. You may also want to explore options to support employee health, such as an occupational health service or employee assistance programme. See page [23](#) for more details.

Employers need to consider how they support work-life balance, and whether working patterns are impacting on levels of sickness absence. For example, do working parents in your organisation currently have to take sickness leave to deal with a family crisis, or to fit in with childcare? Could you offer flexible or home working some of the time?

Where employee illness is apparent or likely, employers can minimise the impact by making reasonable adjustments, changing work patterns, or transferring duties.

How Investors in People can help

Investors in People challenges organisations to:

- Develop strategies to manage all health and wellbeing needs and communicate these throughout the organisation
- Ensure that everyone's role is clearly defined in relation to sickness absence, and there is support available for managers to acquire the knowledge and skills they need to manage attendance effectively
- Ensure people are clear about their responsibilities when they are ill, and what return to work procedures are in place
- Ensure absence management processes are applied fairly across the organisation, and evaluate their impact.

“Working on health and wellbeing with Investors in People has delivered a range of business benefits for the Lyness Group enabling us to drive the company forwards and our people to take on new challenges. It also helped us manage the early return to work of a key employee. We will certainly be recommending the Award to our clients”

Sue Lyness
Operations Director, The Lyness Group

Good-practice examples

Have clear and transparent policies for sickness and unplanned absence

Policies and procedures should outline clearly how absence and sickness will be monitored and dealt with, detailing employee rights and obligations. Good absence and sickness policies should include:

- Details of contractual sick pay terms and the relationship with statutory sick pay
- An outline of the process employees must follow if taking time off sick, including when and whom employees should notify if they are not able to attend work
- When (after how many days) employees need a self certificate form
- When they require a medical certificate (sick note) from their doctor
- The potential consequences of not complying with the policy, e.g. when disciplinary measures will be taken.

Use a confidential helpline

Provide a confidential helpline which is available to everyone to assist with personal issues or crises.

Implement disciplinary procedures for unacceptable absence

If an employee is often absent or late for unexplained or unconvincing reasons, you may need to view it as a conduct issue. Ensure that this is done in a fair and transparent manner, and in line with existing absence and sickness policies.

Train effective line managers

Make sure managers are sufficiently trained in dealing with absence management, and consider including absence management performance in performance reviews.

Provide sickness absence policy information to line managers

Don't just leave it to HR, provide your managers with data to use when reviewing sickness absence within their teams.

Limit or withhold sick pay

Take firm action where there is a problem identified with non-genuine sickness absence. Have policies that are clearly defined and communicated, and form part of the employment contract.

Return to work

Avoiding absence is important but avoiding prolonged periods of absence is essential. Extended periods of absence can be detrimental to employee health and could permanently lead to a loss of skills and expertise from the workplace.

The cost of long-term absence involves not only sick-pay for the absent employee, but also a range of other costs that might include: temporary or replacement cover for the absent employee, overtime, reduced productivity, compromised customer care or service delivery, disruption and risk to other employees. Returning an absent employee to work in a timely and appropriate way is essential in minimising the costs of long-term sickness absence.

Why is managing return to work important?



The costs of absence, particularly long-term absence can be high – and not just financially. That's why managing employee absence is an important issue for all organisations. It's in the interests of your organisation, as well as your employees, to be flexible and open in helping to facilitate speedy returns to work. The key issues are:

- **Communication:** keep in touch with employees who are absent from work, so you know how their diagnosis or treatment is progressing. It's also good to keep them up-to-date with news from your organisation.
- **Support:** offer help to employees to enable them to return to work – from small things like providing suitable equipment, through to occupational health services or counselling.
- **Legal issues:** balance an employee's right to privacy, in relation to their medical records, with the rights of you, as their employer, to understand the likely duration of their absence and any support that they may need. An employee with a disability may expect their employer to make reasonable adjustments to their role or working environment to enable them to return to work.
- **Flexibility:** think about how people might return to work while recovering from illness – consider assigning them temporarily to a different role, offering different hours or giving them additional support.

How Investors in People can help

Enabling people to return to work after illness, or to manage a health condition in the workplace, is central to Investors in People. Investors in People looks for:

- People management strategies that address the needs of a diverse range of people
- Support for health and wellbeing that is fair and appropriate
- Line managers with the skills and confidence to fulfil their role in facilitating the rehabilitation of absent team members
- Learning and development opportunities that enable people to cope with their work, including providing assistance to help people adapt to new roles if necessary.

Good-practice examples

Maintain contact with employees who are absent from work

Ensure managers are equipped with the confidence to make contact with absent team members in a supportive way, so that absent members remain in touch with the workplace without feeling under pressure to return before they are able to.

Be flexible

When a team member is returning to work after illness, help them to make a phased return to work by offering different hours, the option to work from home, a different role or adjustments to their existing role, and training for new skills.

Return-to-work programme

Develop a therapeutic return-to-work programme for people who have been off sick for some time. They may need to gradually increase their hours over a period of time until they are ready to be back in their normal routine. When necessary, reasonable adjustments should be made to their workload and suitable equipment provided.

Return-to-work interviews

Return-to-work interviews show people that you have noticed their absence, you are concerned about their absence, and you want to help them improve their attendance record. They also help you to monitor absence and spot any trends.

Effective rehabilitation

When someone has been absent for a long period of time, it is important to take steps to ensure their successful rehabilitation back into the workforce.

Consider:

- Getting medical advice to check the employee is ready to return
- Encouraging the employee to make an initial social visit to the workplace to chat to colleagues and get up to date on news
- Providing a mini-induction if necessary to give an update on changes to the organisation while they have been away
- Involving a mentor or buddy to support the employee in the first few weeks
- Identifying meaningful work the employee can do from the outset, but prevent them from being faced with a huge backlog of work
- Monitoring the situation over the first few weeks to check the employee is able to cope.

Avoiding 'presenteeism'

Most definitions of 'presenteeism' describe a situation in which an employee attends work but is less productive than normal because of illness. Usually, this is because they feel there is an expectation for them to be at work even though they are ill, or because they want to avoid letting colleagues down by being absent from work.

Working while you are ill affects how much work you are able to do, and also the quality of the work you produce. If you have a contagious illness, it can also lead to your colleagues becoming ill unnecessarily. Unlike sickness absence which is visible and measurable, the symptoms of presenteeism may not be.

Health and wellbeing focused organisations acknowledge that genuine illness exists, and ensure their people are given the support – and time off if needed – to get better and back to work quickly.

You can challenge presenteeism by:

- Considering the impact of your organisation's objectives and business strategy on health and wellbeing – do people feel under pressure to be at work, even when they are too unwell to be productive?
- Having strategies to support health and wellbeing that demonstrate that the organisation is committed to the long-term health and wellbeing of its people, recognises the existence of genuine illness and will support employees to keep healthy and allow flexible return to work after illness.

Occupational health



Many people with long-term health problems want, or need, to work for as long as their particular circumstances allow. Some may wish to return to work once their condition has stabilised. Individuals may be able to remain in the workplace if they are assisted in managing their illness and finding ways of coping with their symptoms.

Why is occupational health important?

Employers naturally want to retain the skills, knowledge and experience of their people and enabling them to remain part of a productive environment can have very positive effects on those with a condition. Line managers are often unsure about their rights and responsibilities in relation to medical advice and health records, and may be reluctant to challenge an employee or even contact them while they are absent from work due to sickness. Though an employee may be unable to perform their work, they may be fit enough to be contacted by their manager, to attend a meeting or have a home visit, or even to do alternative tasks. Establishing an occupational health service in-house (or by contract) gives people easy access to independent medical advice.

Solutions

Put the focus on occupational health

This can include health screening, stress surveys, regular reviews of people, lifestyle and healthy eating advice, monthly workshops focusing on healthy lifestyles, and return to work interviews.

Keep employees up to date

Consider building an intranet site to give details of occupational health issues, where to get help, information sheets on illnesses and conditions, travel health, and health promotions.

Familiarise yourself with the Employment Practices Data Protection Code

This is non-binding guidance for employers dealing with employees' health.

Advice includes:

- Keeping sickness records separate from absence records
- Using medical examinations only when necessary
- Assessing the justification for holding employee health information
- Limiting access to employee health information to a select group of authorised people
- Leaving judgements about fitness for work to qualified medical practitioners.

How to get involved with Employee Assistance Programmes (EAPs)

EAPs are independent and confidential support programmes that encourage employees to deal with any problems before they start to impact on their work.

EAPs are usually provided by specialist, external organisations that establish various programmes to help employees deal with any issues, at home or at work – from personal and emotional problems, to legal and financial advice. Although this service is generally provided through confidential telephone contact most EAPs also have the provision for face-to-face sessions if required.

An effective EAP contributes to improved productivity and higher employee morale, indicating at an early stage any workplace issues that need addressing. Their emphasis is on short-term, solution-focused interventions.

When introducing an employee assistance programme:

- Ensure that the programme is well publicised and that the confidential nature of the service is emphasised to employees
- Ask for feedback from the EAP provider. Although the service is confidential, it is important that you are made aware of any emerging trends that need addressing
- Think about whether the service is accessible. You will need to consider the nature of your workforce and whether employees have access to telephones on which they can talk privately, at home or at work
- Consider whether your employees will feel comfortable talking about their problems on the telephone
- Ensure that senior management visibly endorses any EAP programme
- Ensure the providers of the EAP are aware of any major developments that might affect the wellbeing of your workforce and prompt extra phone calls.



Fit for work



Why is physical health important?

Poor physical health is a major problem for the nation and it can have a large and detrimental impact on employee productivity.

Adults can spend up to 60% of their waking hours in a work environment, and many eat one or more meals and snacks at work. The promotion of healthy food choices at work (in canteens, vending machines or restaurants in or near the workplace), at business functions, and in fundraising ventures can help to build a supportive environment for healthy eating practices.

Encouraging your people to live a healthy lifestyle will make them proactive, and happier, within the workplace. Good physical health can also have a positive influence on mental wellbeing and, these combined, will improve motivation within the workplace.

Solutions

Plan an active team building event

Make your next team building day a physical as well as a mental challenge.

Encourage community work

Get involved with the local community by volunteering the team to help with projects.

Invest in a company bicycle programme

Run a cycle centre and bicycle users forum. Look at implementing a bike rental scheme or provide interest-free bike loans. Alternatively, you could have a pool of bikes on-site, and cycle paths around the site for lunchtime exercise. Try out the [Government's cycle to work scheme](#).

Organise a lunchtime walk

Organise walking groups and upload routes and maps onto the intranet. Regular lunchtime activities will encourage people to develop an interest in other healthy activities.

Make health days fun

Run positive-living days. These might include workshops on healthy eating and relaxation, or taster classes in activities such as yoga and meditation.

Collate information on local health and wellbeing centres and activities

Create a booklet about all the local leisure facilities near your organisation. This can be especially popular with new recruits, particularly if they are not familiar with the area.

Provide facilities that encourage exercise

To help people walk or cycle to work look at upgrading showers, installing personal lockers for clothing and equipment, providing a secure bike shed, and offering personal alarms for safety.

Effective evaluation

Too often, organisations introduce initiatives designed to support health and wellbeing without a clear rationale or means of evaluating their success. It's important that the resources invested in this kind of support can be quantified. Likewise, in order to enhance your organisation's performance in this area, it's essential that improvements are thoroughly evaluated to determine which forms of support work best. Of course, not everything can be easily quantified (preventative support is especially hard to assess) but evaluation using other, more qualitative, feedback is still useful.

Why is effective evaluation important?

It is always important to evaluate strategies to assess whether investment has been worthwhile. Senior managers should review and compare the investment in health and wellbeing with its impact in real terms – for example, on planned performance improvements. Managers need to use this information to inform future strategy and people should be made aware of how support for health and wellbeing has improved organisational performance.

Top tips for effective evaluation

Make regular checks

You may need to introduce audits to ensure that new procedures are being followed correctly – whether it is an induction programme or a performance management activity, such as regular one-to-one meetings.

Gather evidence

Employers should ensure that any intervention introduced can be effectively evaluated. This means it is important to set robust measurements at the start of the process so impact can be assessed.

Build on success

Having assessed the impact of your health interventions, keep momentum going by building on any successes. For example, where particular health and wellbeing programmes have been well received by employees, expand upon this initiative if there are still needs to be addressed.

Stick with it

You are unlikely to see immediate improvements. Staff surveys can offer early indications but the impact on productivity will take longer to assess. Changing the culture of a workplace is a long process, and takes time to succeed.



People issues in health and wellbeing

Managers need to use the outcomes of evaluation to make ongoing improvements to the health and wellbeing strategy, and ensure that people are informed of these improvements. To achieve this, organisations should ask:

- What improvements are being planned for the health and wellbeing of employees?
- How does my organisation use information from internal and external sources to deliver improvements in health and wellbeing?
- How does my organisation collect feedback on the effectiveness of any health and wellbeing initiatives?
- Has support for staff health and wellbeing led to any business benefits? If so, what are these benefits and how are they measured?
- How do you know that people's views on the support of their health and wellbeing have improved?

Solutions

Analyse data

Collect information to determine the costs and benefits associated with, for example, cases of work-related stress, reported cases of personal stress as reasons for absence, and staff turnover compared with the industry average. A strong retention rate can bring significant cost savings in terms of recruitment and induction.

Assess the current situation before implementing improvements

Use a personal questionnaire to establish the current state of health in the workforce before launching programmes so that improvements can be assessed and effectiveness tracked. Review after a set period, say six months.

Collect data that will help with evaluation

Keep data that will aid the evaluation of health programmes and work practices. This will help you understand what is affecting and motivating employees. It is important to also keep in mind the benefits that cannot be measured so easily, such as improvements in employee morale (although this can be measured to some extent with an employee survey).

Define objectives for health and wellbeing programmes

Set some key objectives in your business plan aimed at improving health and wellbeing.

Monitor and measure the impact of initiatives

Regularly monitor programmes and initiatives to ensure effectiveness. Take a long-term view of investment – and don't seek only immediate paybacks; consider non-financial benefits too.

Conduct a staff survey

Surveying employees' views can be helpful in understanding what the key issues are, and the perceptions people have about their work and communications within your organisation. Adding questions about health and wellbeing can help raise the profile of these issues and offer a useful insight into people's priorities – for example, are people feeling under too much pressure? Which forms of health support would be most appreciated? Are there particular groups of people who tend to use the gym, and why? Repeating the survey regularly will help to evaluate the success of health and wellbeing programmes.

Health and Wellbeing checklist

Use this checklist to assess what your organisation is currently doing to support the wellbeing of its employees, and identify areas for improvement. This will help to build and sustain an environment that protects and promotes wellbeing at work.

Do managers...	Yes	No	Do employees...	Yes	No
Set a good example in the way they manage their own personal levels of health and stress?			Have clearly defined job roles and responsibilities?		
Understand the main health issues facing their team, and know the key facts about important health concerns, such as depression, stress, substance misuse etc.			Have some degree of control over when and how they work, and are they encouraged to work regular hours to manage their work-life balance?		
Cope with difficult conversations and deal with emotional employees with confidence?			Believe that their jobs are well-designed and flexible enough to be considered for alternative working arrangements?		
Conduct comprehensive return-to-work interviews following health-related absences?			Have regular meetings with their managers and feel that managers listen to, and understand, them – especially where they think that their jobs could be improved or where they are feeling under unreasonable pressure?		
Acknowledge the importance of rehabilitation following long-term absence?			Are well informed about organisational performance and progress?		
Use any appropriate/available resources (e.g. occupational health professionals) to help employees return to work after periods of health-related absence?			Are familiar with the channels available for addressing problems/grievances?		
Regularly monitor employee workload and assess the time needed to complete tasks, and discourage excessive overtime?			Feel valued and regularly receive recognition for work well done?		
Review policies and procedures regularly to determine if they are helpful or harmful to employees' health and wellbeing?			Have the tools and time they need to do their work properly?		

Training and development	Yes	No	Provision of health-related support	Yes	No
Do employees receive suitable training for their jobs and are they given the opportunity to attend refresher courses (where appropriate)?			Do employees have access to adequate support or advice on health, safety and wellbeing?		
Are employees actively helped to develop skills and abilities, and encouraged to apply for higher-level positions within the organisation (where appropriate)?			Are employees encouraged to take regular breaks, including lunch and annual leave?		
Are employees provided with education and training on the main health-related issues facing them – for example, stress, back pain, help in developing their own self-care plans?			Do employees feel able to discuss organisational or job-related concerns with any senior member of staff, without negative consequences?		

When you have finished filling out the checklist, consider the following questions:

- 1 Did any of the responses surprise you and, if so, which ones?
- 2 What areas provide adequate support and what areas are identified as needing improvement?
- 3 What will be the easiest to improve? How will you do this?
- 4 What will be harder to improve? How will you do this?
- 5 What barriers/challenges to improvement can you think of? How can you overcome these?

Using your answers to these questions, create an **action plan** for improving wellbeing in your organisation.



Helping you go further

Realising the importance of these key health and wellbeing issues in the workplace and for your workforce is at the heart of Investors in People. We're here to support you invest in your people's wellbeing.

Good Practice Award

The Investors in People Health and Wellbeing Good Practice Award is a framework that helps organisations to develop further and celebrate achievements around this important workplace issue. It works in a similar way to the main Investors in People Framework, allowing organisations to choose where to focus efforts. Whether you're an existing IIP employer or new to what we do, learn more about the benefits of this Award.



See how you compare



Benchmark your health and wellbeing practices with our wellbeing diagnostic. The tool includes 20 questions, it takes 15 minutes and you'll receive a full report indicating areas of strength and insight on improvements within areas of weakness.

Explore and learn

We have a variety of resources available to help you on your journey to invested health and wellbeing. Try our articles, quick downloads and templates for top tips, advice and insight from the experts online at www.investorsinpeople.co.uk



Get in touch

Begin your partnership with Investors in People by arranging a no-obligation consultation.

 Call 0300 303 3033 today

 Follow us on twitter: @IIPtweets

 Go online: www.investorsinpeople.co.uk

