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# WELLBEING IN THE WORKPLACE

A LINE MANAGER'S GUIDE



it all starts with you™

INTERNATIONAL  
WORKPLACE

# INTRODUCTION

Wellbeing is a dynamic mental state. Individuals with good mental wellbeing are able to:

- Feel and express a range of emotions.
- Feel engaged with work in general.
- Feel relatively confident in themselves and have positive self-esteem.
- Live and work productively.
- Cope with the stresses of everyday life.
- Adapt and manage in times of change and uncertainty.

Mental health includes our emotional, psychological and social wellbeing. It affects how we think, feel and act. It also helps determine how we handle stress, relate to others and make choices. Mental health remains a neglected part of public health agendas, even though mental health conditions account for nearly 20% of years of life lost due to disability and are associated with up to \$1 trillion per year in economic losses.

*“A state of wellbeing in which an individual realises their own abilities, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively and is able to contribute to his or her community.”*

World Health Organization



**JAMIE ROBINSON**

Health and Safety Trainer,  
International Workplace

# HEALTH MANAGEMENT AT WORK

We spend a large proportion of our lives and our time at work. The workplace (whether that is an actual place of work, our home, or a range of different places) can have a major impact on our mental health. It can both promote wellbeing and trigger a number of issues.

The concept of employee wellbeing has grown over the past few years and there is a growing emphasis on employers to promote good mental wellbeing practices rather than using traditional absence management strategies that often result from work-related issues.

Occupational health is fundamentally about the protection and promotion of the health and wellbeing of people at work.

This is best achieved through:

- Effective leadership.
- Proactive management of health risks.
- Maintenance of optimal physical and mental health.
- Enhancement of wellbeing.

Helping workers to improve or manage their health can result in increased attendance and performance.



# COMPANY CULTURE

All employers have a duty of care towards their employees and this means adopting a socially responsible approach to looking after staff. Workplaces have an important role in promoting mental wellbeing. Work can also provide a sense of fulfilment and opportunities for social interaction. Being as focused on its employees as much as its business objectives is what every organisation should strive to achieve. There are real benefits to this approach, including a commitment by the workforce to ensuring that the work gets done.

Addressing employee wellbeing should not be seen as a regulatory burden – it offers significant opportunities. Governments have long recognised that business has a leading role in preventing work-related ill health, supporting workers who become ill, and promoting good health. A good business should therefore recognise that a healthy workplace is a happy and productive one. All employees should play their part by recognising the importance of their own individual health and maintaining open communication with their managers about how their health needs can be managed.



***"The wealth of business depends on the health of workers."***

**Dr Maria Neira,  
Director of the Department of  
Public Health and Environment,  
World Health Organization**

# WORK IS GOOD FOR WELLBEING

Research shows that being in work is generally good for people's health and wellbeing, and being out of work is detrimental to it. A study in 2006 concluded:

"There is a strong evidence base showing that work is generally good for physical and mental health and wellbeing. Worklessness is associated with poorer physical and mental health and wellbeing. Work can be therapeutic and can reverse the adverse health effects of unemployment. That is true for healthy people of working age, for many disabled people, for most people with common health problems and for social security beneficiaries.

"The provisos are that account must be taken of the nature and quality of work and its social context; jobs should be safe and accommodating. Overall, the beneficial effects of work outweigh the risks of work and are greater than the harmful effects of long-term unemployment or prolonged sickness absence. Work is generally good for health and wellbeing."



# HEALTH BENEFITS OF WORK

Effective and healthy practices can boost morale, increase productivity and save costs. Good work also has many benefits for sick or disabled people.



## Work can be therapeutic

Physical and mental activity and work can be therapeutic for many common health problems.



## Work can promote recovery and rehabilitation and reduce the risk of long-term incapacity

Physical activity is fundamental to physiological health and fitness and an essential part of rehabilitation from injury or illness. Evidence shows that rehabilitation and return to work for workers with cardio-respiratory conditions can be beneficial for general health and wellbeing.



## Having a job improves quality of life and wellbeing

People with musculoskeletal conditions who are helped to return to work can enjoy better health (in terms of levels of pain, functionality and quality of life) than those who remain off work.



## Work helps financially

Obviously, work is the most common way in which people earn money, and having a stable income helps reduce anxiety and money-related stress.

Helping workers to improve or manage their health can result in increased attendance and performance – so good health is also good for business.

# THE IMPORTANCE OF THE MANAGER

All organisations have a duty to protect the health, safety and welfare of their employees. This duty includes the provision for providing a good quality of working life and creating a good work environment.

For an organisation to successfully influence health and wellbeing in the workplace, it must recognise and support the key role that line managers play as the frontline representative of the organisation. Managers should be given adequate time, training and resources to ensure they balance the aims of the organisation with concern for the health and wellbeing of employees.

An organisation should also regularly seek the views of line managers on staff morale and human resource issues. Managers provide a two-way communication link between the workforce and the organisation, supporting workers to perform at their best and informing the organisation about staff morale, health and wellbeing.

Line managers also play an important role in protecting and promoting the health and wellbeing of the workforce through involvement in job design, person specifications, work meetings, appraisals or informal chats about progress to discover any problems an employee may be having.

## KEY TAKEAWAYS

- > Mental health affects how we think, feel and act. It also helps determine how we handle stress, relate to others and make choices.
- > The workplace (whether that is an actual place of work, our home, or a range of different places) can have a major impact on our mental health.
- > Workplaces have an important role in promoting mental wellbeing.
- > Helping workers to improve or manage their health can result in increased attendance and performance – so good health is also good for business.
- > Line managers play an important role in protecting and promoting the health and wellbeing of the workforce.

# FURTHER READING

World Health Organization

CIPD

HSE

Is work good for your health and wellbeing?

IOSH – The role of line managers in promoting positive mental health

## IOSH Managing Occupational Health and Wellbeing

eLearning | Virtual Classroom

All of the content in this guide is taken from International Workplace's IOSH Managing Occupational Health and Wellbeing course.

### THE COURSE COVERS:

- Ergonomics, demographics and types of working.
- Giving employees the knowledge and skills to identify wellbeing issues, and to act on them.
- Work-related health issues – such as how to deal with employees living with cancer, long-term diseases, mobility issues and poor mental health.
- Understanding that an employer's duty of care extends beyond health and safety, to employee wellbeing.