Workplace Mental Wellbeing Strategy Guide

This comprehensive guide outlines five practical steps to develop and implement an effective workplace mental wellbeing strategy.

It provides clear guidance on building a business case, data analysis, implementation, communication, and evaluation.

altruist

Table of Contents

1. Developing a Business Case for Mental Health at Work

Workplace Wellbeing Forum

The Altruist Wellbeing Forum is an exclusive free online community for HR professionals and Wellbeing Champions to connect, learn and grow.

Our quarterly meetings provide members with the opportunity to engage in meaningful conversations with fellow organisations and professionals.

Learn more about the Altruist Wellbeing Forum

Introduction

Your employees are your organisation's most valuable asset and so taking care of their health and wellbeing makes complete business sense.

Having a clear business case for your mental wellbeing strategy ensures a shared understanding of why it matters and the benefits of investing in such initiatives. This is critical for buy-in and engagement.

Mental health problems are estimated to cost employers on average £1833 per employee per year for private sector organisations and £1772 per employee per year for public sector organisations[1].

Research indicates that 30% of the UK workforce has been formally diagnosed with a mental health condition at some point in their lifetime[2]. Organisations that take a strategic approach to wellbeing report positive achievements. However, only 53% of organisations have a standalone wellbeing strategy, including only 37% of SMEs[3]. Additionally, only 9% of employers measure the return on investment from their wellbeing programmes, highlighting a gap in evaluating their effectiveness[4].

This section includes a wealth of evidence and research that you can use to inform your business case that covers financial implications, productivity and workplace culture.

Presenteeism - the cost of reduced productivity

Presenteeism refers to a decline in productivity that occurs when employees are physically present at work but unable to perform at their full capacity due to ill health. This can lead to reduced engagement, difficulty concentrating, and lower overall performance.

While often overlooked, presenteeism carries significant costs for the employer and the employee. Working while unwell or not taking opportunities to relax outside work may have far greater long-term cost, than taking time off to recover.

Buy-in from senior leaders and line managers is critical for tackling presenteeism as they have a significant role to play in creating a culture where people do not work when ill and are encouraged to take time off. Presenteeism has been observed in 87% of organisations (employees in the workplace and who work at home). Only two-fifths (41%) of organisations are taking steps to discourage presenteeism[3].

---

1 Deloitte, 2024, 'Mental Health and Employers'
2 BITC, 2019, 'Mental Health at Work Report 2019, Time to Take Ownership'
3 CIPD, 2023, 'Health and Well-Being at Work'
4 Aon, 2021, 'UK Benefits & Trends Survey'

How much is presenteeism costing your organisation?

Presenteeism, as a result of poor mental health, costs UK employers £24bn annually[1].

Employees lose the equivalent of 9 days of productivity each year due to presenteeism[5].

To estimate the cost of presenteeism in your organisation, use the following formula:

(Working days lost per employee from presenteeism/Annual number of working days per employee) x (Average gross wages plus non-wage costs) x Number of employees
= Cost of presenteeism to your organisation

FOR EXAMPLE: $\dfrac{9}{228}$) x (£37,430 + £7486) x 50 = **£88,650**

Absenteeism and the cost of absence due to mental ill-health

Employee sickness absence is at the highest level in over a decade. Mental ill-health remains the leading cause of long-term absence (63%) and the third most common reason for short term absence (39%)[3].

How much is absenteeism costing your organisation?

Absenteeism, as a result of poor mental health, costs UK employers £7bn annually[1].

The average rate of employee sickness absence is 7.8 days per employee per year[3].

To estimate the cost of absenteeism in your organisation, use the following formula:

(Working days lost per employee from sickness absence/Annual number of working days per employee) x (Average gross wages plus non-wage costs) x Number of employees
= Cost of absenteeism to your organisation

FOR EXAMPLE: $\dfrac{7.8}{228}$) x (£37,430 + £7486) x 50 = **£76,830**

To accurately assess the number of sick days attributed to mental ill-health and stress in your organisation, measure the reasons for long-term and short-term absences.

When monitoring these absences, be mindful that many cases go unreported due to stigma and a lack of awareness.

In the above examples, we assume:
- 9 days lost per employee from presenteeism
- 7.8 days lost per employee from absenteeism
- 228 is the average number of working days for a full-time employee working 5 days a week
- £37,430 median gross annual earnings for full-time employees (April 2024)
- Non-wage costs are 20% of gross annual earnings (£7486)
- 50 employees

Considerations:

The figures above may not fully capture the total cost of presenteeism or absenteeism to your organisation. Additional factors that could impact these costs include:

- Expenses such as overtime payments, hiring temporary staff, or decreased overall productivity.
- The effect on team performance, workplace morale, and customer satisfaction.

---

5 WPI Economics, 2023, 'Health, Happiness and Productivity'

Staff recruitment and retention

Prioritising mental wellbeing gives organisations a competitive edge in recruitment and retention.

Gen Z and Millennials in particular focus on mental health support, work-life balance, and environments that emphasise diversity and inclusion when choosing employers. Companies that invest in these areas are more likely to attract and retain top talent, reducing turnover and fostering long-term success[6].

Staff turnover

Staff turnover, as a result of poor mental health, costs UK employers £20bn annually[1].

Each year 300,000 people with a long-term mental health problem lose their jobs[7].

Staff turnover costs include hiring temporary workers, management time spent interviewing, recruitment agency fees, and advertising the new role.

How much is staff turnover costing your organisation?

Research estimates that the replacement of leaders and managers costs around 200% of their salary, the replacement of professionals in technical roles is 80% of their salary, and frontline employees 40% of their salary[8].

To calculate your staff turnover rate, use the following formula:

(Number of leavers/Average number of people employed in that year) x 100

For example, on 1st January, there were 50 people employed
During the year, 4 people left the company and 7 people joined.
On 31st December, there were 53 people employed (50-4+7)
The average number of employees during the year was (50+53)/2 = 51.5

THE TURNOVER RATE IS THEREFORE: $\frac{4}{51.5}$) x (100 = **7.76%**

When calculating the staff turnover rate, you can choose to use:
- Employees who leave for mental health, stress or wellbeing related reasons
- All leavers

To calculate your staff turnover rate, use the following formula:

(Number of employees x turnover rate) x average turnover cost per employee

FOR EXAMPLE: **(53 x 0.0776) x £14, 972 = £61,576**

In the above example, we assume:
- 53 employees
- Staff turnover rate is 7.76%
- Average turnover cost is 40% of £37,430 median gross annual earnings (£14,972)

---

6 Deloitte, 2024, 'Gen Z and Millennial Survey'
7 Thriving at Work, 2017, 'The Stevenson / Farmer review of mental health and employers'
8 Gallup, 2024, 'Employee Retention and Attraction'

Leavism

Leavism is when employees work during non-paid hours or annual leave.

Nearly two-thirds (63%) of organisations have observed some sort of leavism, such as working outside contracted hours or using holiday entitlement to work, over the past 12 months. However, only 35% of organisations are attempting to reduce leavism[3].

Legal costs and avoiding litigation

Legal considerations are crucial for all organisations, as even well-managed businesses can become mired in costly litigation.

Employer Risk: 9% of employees who disclosed a mental health condition reported being dismissed, demoted, or disciplined as a result[2]. Such actions may violate disability provisions under the Equality Act 2010, exposing employers to legal consequences.

Rising Claims: Workplace disability discrimination claims surged by 30%, increasing from 6,545 to 8,496 between 2021 and 2023. These claims now account for one-quarter of all cases referred to Acas for conciliation. This rise reflects the increasing recognition of mental health conditions as disabilities under the law[9].

Employer Responsibility: Employers have a legal duty to identify and address mental health challenges within the workplace, mitigate work-related stress, and protect employees from harm and discrimination.

To reduce legal risks, ensure your organisation has clear workplace policies that support employee wellbeing, provide reasonable adjustments, and foster an inclusive work environment.

Key laws governing mental health at work:

- The Health and Safety at Work Act 1974
- The Equality Act 2010
- Employment Rights Act 1996

EXAMPLE CASES

Griffiths vs Essex Council
£150,000 pay out

A social worker was informed of complaints against her but given no details, leaving her feeling targeted and anxious.

Her employer's lack of transparency worsened her mental health, leading to extended sick leave and financial hardship.

Dickens vs O2
£110,000 pay out

An accountant who suffered ill-health due to excessive working hours and a demanding workload.

Dickins, had warned managers that she could not cope and was 'at the end of her tether'. Managers did nothing about it.

Green vs Deutsche Bank
£828,000 pay out

Green, a high flyer at the bank, was admitted to hospital suffering a major depressive illness as a result of a 3-year campaign of bullying.

Green raised the problem with her manager and HR department but her complaints were ignored.

9   Nockolds, 2024. Analysis of ACAS employment tribunals data

Stress and workplace accidents

High levels of stress increase the risk of workplace accidents and injuries. Stressed employees may have difficulty maintaining concentration, motivation, and adherence to safety precautions, making them more prone to mistakes[10].

Stress can also impact communication and interpersonal skills, potentially leading to conflicts between employees and teams. This can strain workplace relationships and further affect productivity and wellbeing.

The outcomes and savings you could achieve

Implementing a Workplace Mental Wellbeing Strategy can have a significant impact on both employee wellbeing and your bottom line. Research shows that for every £1 invested in employee mental health, organisations can expect an average return of £4.70[1].

Deloitte's analysis consistently demonstrates a positive return on investment (ROI) from wellbeing initiatives, supported by numerous academic meta-studies which demonstrate the benefits of good work for mental health[7].

The best companies go beyond compliance

While most organisations aim to save money and meet legal requirements, the best employers go further by fostering a workplace culture that actively supports mental wellbeing. Culture is embedded in policies, processes, communication, decision-making, and daily interactions, reflecting what an organisation truly values.

When organisations prioritise employee wellbeing, they create a more engaged, productive workforce, leading to better outcomes for customers and stakeholders.

Research shows:

- Happy employees are 20% more productive than unhappy employees.
- Salespeople perform 37% better when they are happy[11].
- An extensive study found that happy workers are 13% more productive overall[12].

The business impact of mental health training

A recent study found that mental health training for line managers directly improves business performance by:

- Enhancing staff recruitment and retention
- Improving customer service quality
- Boosting overall business performance
- Reducing long-term sickness absence due to mental ill-health[13]

A healthier, happier workforce

Your strategy will ensure that you have your employee's needs in your best interests, whilst creating a happier, more supportive working environment and better employee experience for all.

10   Health and Safety Executive, 2006, 'Investigation of the links between psychological ill health, stress and safety'
11   Social Market Foundation, 2015, 'Happiness and productivity: Understanding the Happy-Productive Worker'
12   University of Oxford, 2019, 'Does Employee Happiness have an Impact on Productivity?'
13   University of Nottingham, 2024, 'The relationship between line manager training in mental health and organisational outcomes'

2. Gathering and Analysing Organisational Data

Workplace Wellbeing Checklist

Free online tool that helps you identify your workplace wellbeing strengths and development areas.

Your feedback will allow you to assess your current position and where you need to go next with your employee wellbeing strategy.

Complete the Workplace Wellbeing Checklist

Before you begin writing, it is essential to understand where you are starting from. Start by gathering and analysing existing organisational data to ensure your Mental Wellbeing Strategy is tailored to your workforce's specific needs. Performing a Workplace Wellbeing Audit maximises your programmes impact and provides a baseline for evaluating the strategy's effectiveness and Return on Investment (ROI).

Collecting this data will enable you to answer the following questions:

● Why do we want to produce this strategy?

● Do we have the information we need in order to produce this strategy?

● Are we complying with the law?

● Do we have a problem with stress, mental ill-health or wellbeing in the workplace?

● Do we know if we have such a problem?

● What are our organisation's views/beliefs/actions on mental wellbeing?

● What do we want to say, who to and why?

● How is this strategy going to be used and how will it be used effectively?

In this section, we will cover a number of data sources and why they are important.

Demographics

What are the demographics of your organisation e.g. gender, age, profile, working arrangements, job level? Are there any groups that are most at risk?

Younger employees are disproportionately affected by poor mental health. Almost three-quarters (72%) of people in early careers have experienced poor mental health in the past year[14].

---

14   Mind Forward Alliance, 2021, 'Time To Act: Mental Health in Early Careers'

According to the CIPD line manager index, a measure of line manager quality:

- Female employees rated their line managers more highly than men
- Employees with a disability did not rate their line managers as highly as employees without a disability
- Employees with an ethnic minority background did not rate their line managers as highly as white employees
- Employees in routine, low-skill occupations did not rate their line managers as highly as employees in professional occupations
- Employees who never worked from home gave their managers a much lower rating than employees who did some work from home[15]

Mission, vision and values

Are your employees aware of the company values? Do not be afraid to ask your staff the question; what is our culture?

What are your organisations Environmental, Social and Governance (ESG) objectives?

Purposeful employee volunteer programmes can boost productivity and profit as well as improving participants' skills, confidence and wellbeing[16].

Management

Why is good management important?

Line manager quality has a substantial impact on employee health and wellbeing.

Employees with good line managers are significantly more likely to:

- Be productive
- Display a high level of commitment to their employer
- Feel fully competent to perform the tasks required by their job
- Supply discretionary effort beyond employment contract or job description
- Make innovative suggestions to improve quality
- Stay at the organisation
- Have a manageable workload
- Experience less work related stress
- Be satisfied with their job

Employees with good line managers are significantly less likely to:

- Take stress-related absence
- Experience negative mental health impacts as a result of work[15]

How do we ensure good management?

- Leadership – starts from the top and feeds into systems, policies, processes and procedures
- Value the role of line managers
- Line manager selection – clear roles and responsibilities
- Policies, practices, procedures and systems
- Manager skills and knowledge

---

15 CIPD, 2023, 'The importance of people management'

16 Pro bono economics, 2024, Triple dividend: How workplace volunteering can make us happier, healthier and more productive

Policies, processes and procedures

Understand which policies and procedures your organisation has in place to ensure that they meet the needs of the relevant legislation; namely:

- The Health and Safety at Work Act 1974
- The Equality Act 2010
- Employment Rights Act 1996

Your organisation's policies and procedures could include:

- Health and Safety Policy
- Stress Risk Assessments
- Flexible Working Policy
- Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy
- Recruitment Policy
- Sickness Absence Policy
- Disciplinary / Dismissal and Grievance Policy

You may also want to consider where your policies and procedures are located, how accessible they are to staff and how well they are implemented.

Physical environment

The surroundings in which employees spend their working lives are an important source of job satisfaction and impact on work motivation and patterns of interaction[17].

If some or all of your organisation is **office based**, consider the layout to ensure maximum employee wellbeing. For example, open plan offices help boost innovation but it is important that organisations integrate a quiet space for employees to work from.

For remote workers, the home environment plays an equally important role. Providing guidance on ergonomic setups, minimising distractions, and ensuring proper lighting and ventilation can help maintain productivity and wellbeing.

Key factors for a healthy and productive workplace:

- Air quality
- Lighting and temperature
- Noise and distractions
- Layout
- Integrating nature
- Ergonomics

---

17   Public Health England, 2015, 'Physical environments and Employee Wellbeing: Topic Overview

Organisational health

Absence management data

Does your organisation measure absence and if so, do they measure the reasons for absence, both short and long term? How could this data inform your mental wellbeing strategy?

Existing levels of mental ill-health

It is important to consider the quantity and quality of information you have regarding existing levels and incidence of mental health problems within your organisation. Who is aware of such information? How is it obtained?

Employee assistance provider data

Do your employees have access to an employee assistance programme? Do you monitor the volume of calls to this service and the reasons behind them? How could this data help inform your mental wellbeing strategy?

Existing employee health and wellbeing support

What support do you offer to employees around health and wellbeing (exc. training)?

Initiatives could include flexible working, employee assistance programmes, Mental Health First Aiders, occupational health services, counselling sessions and coaching and mentoring.

- How are employees made aware of the support available to them?
- How do you measure the take up and the impact of wellbeing initiatives?

What training do you provide to employees to support health and wellbeing?

Training could include Mental Health First Aid, Line manager mental health training, Resilience and stress management, Employee mental health awareness and Menopause awareness.

- How is training delivered? Online, in-person, E-learning or a hybrid approach.
- How do you measure the take up and the impact of wellbeing training?

Employee feedback

Staff surveys

You may already conduct annual staff satisfaction surveys. Why not incorporate questions which gauge the mental wellbeing of your workforce?

Example questions for managers include:

- How confident do you feel in supporting those you line manage with mental wellbeing at work?
- Do you feel you have been given sufficient information and guidance from your organisation on how to support those you line manage that experience mental ill health?

Examples for the wider employee base include:

- Are you aware of any support your organisation offers to staff on health and wellbeing?
- Do you feel comfortable talking openly to your line manager about personal and workplace wellbeing issues?

Staff focus groups

Facilitate informal discussions to gather valuable feedback on what's working well and where improvements can be made. Engaging employees in open conversations fosters collaboration and continuous improvement.

Senior leadership discussions

Conduct one-on-one interviews with senior leaders to gain insights into their perspectives on wellbeing and how it aligns with broader business strategies. This approach ensures leadership buy-in and integration into company goals.

Case Study:

Service: Workplace Wellbeing Audit

Sector: Non-profit organisation | **Number of staff:** 90 employees

About Bowel Cancer UK:

Bowel Cancer UK is a non-profit dedicated to raising awareness, funding research, and providing support for those affected by bowel cancer. It values employee wellbeing, recognising a healthy, engaged workforce as key to its mission

Why Bowel Cancer UK undertook a Wellbeing Audit

The organisation aimed to:

- Develop a comprehensive wellbeing strategy.
- Integrate wellbeing into strategic HR objectives for employee engagement and retention.
- Strengthen existing support for staff who work tirelessly for others.

To gain an objective, honest assessment of their current wellbeing initiatives, Bowel Cancer UK enlisted Altruist to conduct an independent audit.

Key outcomes of the Audit

The audit provided valuable insights, enabling the organisation to:

- ✓ Recognise existing strengths.
- ✓ Identify areas for further improvement.
- ✓ Implement a clear, actionable plan including establishing a wellbeing staff focus group and expanding Mental Health First Aid training.

> Wellbeing is a core enabler to our employee engagement and retention strategy.
>
> We chose Altruist to deliver our Workplace Wellbeing Audit because we wanted to use an expert with an objective view, where our employees can be completely honest with giving their feedback.
>
> As a result of our wellbeing audit, we've been able to see a comprehensive view of our current wellbeing provision. This has enabled us to identify our strengths and areas for development. We have a clear and robust action plan for the way ahead!'
>
> Kate Sarama, Head of HR, **Bowel Cancer UK**

🎥 **Watch the 2-minute video to hear Kate's experience firsthand**

Learn more about our **Workplace Wellbeing Audit**

3. Writing your Strategy

Mental Health Awareness Calendar

Ensure that your organisation is aware of upcoming national and international mental health awareness days with our free helpful calendar.

Find days to focus your employees on their personal wellbeing, as well as raise awareness of mental health within your workplace.

Download your Mental Health Awareness Calendar

After identifying your organisation's business case and analysing its data, you will have established a strong foundation for your strategy. This process will highlight key areas for intervention and provide insight into how your organisational structure and functions may contribute to or mitigate stress and mental ill-health.

This section of the guide offers a framework for structuring your strategy. Think of your strategy as telling a story, we have suggested several key sections your plan could include.

Under each suggested section, you'll find guidance, sample text that you can use or adapt, and prompts to help you tailor the strategy to your organisation's unique needs.

Suggested titles

Foreword / Purpose of this strategy / Goals and rationale

This section sets the scene for your strategy, outlining why it has been developed and how it aligns with your organisation's broader objectives. It serves as the foundation for the rest of your strategy and should include:

Context: What key factors have influenced and informed the development of this strategy? It's good practice to align it with your overall business strategy.

Examples of strategic drivers include:

- Integrating mental wellbeing into our broader HR/people strategy
- Demonstrating best practices in employee care and support
- Fulfilling our commitment to the Mental Health at Work framework
- Strengthening our position as a top employer (e.g. ranking in the top 100 companies to work for)
- Meeting employee wellbeing requirements in tendering and procurement processes
- Empowering employees to take ownership of wellbeing through our Employee Resource Group (ERG)
- Adapting to emerging research and best practices in workplace mental health

By clearly articulating the purpose of your strategy, you create a compelling case for its importance and ensure alignment with your organisation's vision and goals.

Values and beliefs: This section should articulate the core values and beliefs that underpin your commitment to mental wellbeing. It helps to reinforce why this strategy is important and how it aligns with your organisation's culture and mission.

For example:

- "We recognise that our employees are essential to delivering our organisation's vision and directly impact our customers' experiences. When our employees feel healthy, motivated, and supported, both workplace engagement and overall outcomes improve."

- "We are committed to fostering a healthy working environment and enhancing the quality of working life for all staff. By prioritising wellbeing, we create a more productive, inclusive, and resilient workforce."

This is also an opportunity to reference your organisation's values, ensuring alignment between this strategy and your broader mission. Consider linking your wellbeing initiatives to existing commitments, such as Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) and Environmental, Social and Governance (ESG).

Purpose: This section establishes the strategy's direction and highlights its role in building a supportive and resilient workplace.

For example:

"to create a workplace culture that prioritises wellbeing, ensuring that employees have access to the support, resources, and working conditions needed to maintain good mental health."

"to improve wellbeing promotion in the workplace and strengthen the prevention, early identification and management of stress and mental ill-health".

Objectives: This section outlines the key aims of your Mental Wellbeing Strategy, providing a clear direction for its implementation.

For example:
- Improve staff recruitment and retention
- Increase employee engagement and motivation
- Improve productivity and team effectiveness
- Support and maintain a culture of **psychological safety**
- Enable early identification and intervention
- Support **hybrid and remote workers**

What is mental health and why does it matter?

Mental health affects how we think, feel, and behave in our daily lives. However, people may have different understandings of what mental health is and why it is important. This section helps create a shared understanding, ensuring alignment across the organisation and reinforcing the rationale behind this strategy.

Definition of mental health

The World Health Organization (WHO) defines mental health as:

'a state of wellbeing in which each individual realises his or her own potential, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively and fruitfully, and is able to make a contribution to her or his community'.

Why it matters

Use information and data from sections 1 and 2 to highlight why supporting mental health is important to your organisation.

For example:

- "the organisation will be experiencing rapid change over the next two years so actively supporting staff to build resilience will ensure overall positive levels of mental wellbeing and will benefit organisational effectiveness".

- "With an increase in remote and hybrid working, it is essential to ensure employees feel connected, supported, and equipped to manage work-related stress effectively."

The current picture

In this section, you will provide an overview of where you are now in relation to mental wellbeing. Rather than presenting a long list of statistics, aim to create a clear and engaging narrative that summarises key findings from your data analysis. This will serve as the foundation for the actions outlined in your strategy.

You may want to consider how you organise this data with one suggestion being:

- Demographics (gender, age, profile, working arrangements, job level)
- Company culture (mission, vision and values, managers, policies, processes and procedures, physical environment)
- Organisational health (sickness absence, presenteeism, staff turnover, Employee Assistance Programme data)
- Existing wellbeing initiatives and training
- Employee feedback (employee engagement survey, focus groups, discussions)

While identifying areas for improvement is crucial, this section should also highlight what is working well. Recognising successful initiatives provides an opportunity to build on strengths and scale up best practices across the organisation.

What we need to do/ What we plan to do/What actions we wish to take

This is the main part of your strategy where you will identify what action you will take. This should be informed by the current picture and the purpose and objectives that you have identified for the strategy.

For each of the actions you identify, provide a short narrative that highlights the issues this will be addressing and why it is important to achieving your objectives.

The actions will be described in broad strokes, rather than in detail. For instance, if policies need to be written, they will be mentioned with a brief description of what will be included. The particular detail will be in the actual policies. Similarly, if systems and procedures are absent or in need of improvement, point to the elements that need attention, rather than writing a full description.

Below, you will find areas to include within this section and some ideas for action.

Communication and engagement

- Incorporate wellbeing check-ins into manager one to one meetings
- Hold regular awareness events and lunch and learns on the topic
- Engage with a Mental Health Speaker for your employee conference
- Implement communication channels such as MS Teams, Slack, or Google Meet
- Encourage story-telling and role modelling to reduce stigma
- Launch an Employee Resource Group (ERG)
- Host in-person meetings and social events

Learning and development

Training and coaching are important interventions for building awareness and providing people with the capability, confidence and tools to support themselves and others.

Below are recommended training courses that can be delivered online and in-person:

- Mental Health First Aid - an internationally recognised mental health awareness course, approved by the Royal Society for Public Health. On completion of this training, candidates are certified as 'Mental Health First Aiders'.
- Mental Health First Aider Refresher Training – a refresher course that enables MHFAiders to renew skills, update mental health knowledge and apply new MHFA techniques.
- Mental Health Training for Managers – an interactive course that equips managers with practical skills to promote wellbeing, spot the early signs of stress and mental ill-health and engage in helpful conversations.
- Mental Health Awareness Training for Employees – an engaging course designed to increase employees' understanding of mental health and boost their confidence in supporting colleagues.
- Resilience & Stress Management Training – a skills-based course that helps employees improve self-awareness, build resilience and improve stress management techniques.
- Mental Health & Wellness Lunch & Learns – live sessions that bring employees from all areas of your organisation together to improve mental health awareness, discuss stress management techniques and promote wellbeing at work.
- Bitesized Mental Health E-learning Training – interactive 30-minute sessions serve as a taster or refresher, helping individuals enhance their understanding of mental health and resilience.

Coaching

Coaching is a structured one to one process which focuses on what each individual needs to help them navigate both personal and professional challenges. By concentrating on personal growth and wellbeing, coaching helps individuals thrive and, in turn, drive organisational success.

Coaching is most effective when integrated into a comprehensive wellbeing programme that includes training and consultancy, ensuring impactful and sustainable outcomes.

Policies and processes

- **Mental Health and Wellbeing Policy** that covers wellbeing promotion and the prevention and response to mental health issues.
- Supportive return-to-work interviews that provide a safe space for discussion, reassurance, and tailored support.
- Engaging performance management practices with regular, meaningful conversations and constructive feedback to foster growth and wellbeing.
- Clear boundaries for work-life balance by discouraging out-of-hours emails and working beyond set hours.
- Senior leadership model healthy work habits, including avoiding work while ill or on holiday.
- Flexible working options that accommodate individual needs and contribute to positive mental health.
- Access to professional support services such as occupational health, employee assistance programs, and counselling to provide guidance when needed.

Wellbeing initiatives

- Facilitating volunteering opportunities to promote purpose and engagement.
- Yoga and mindfulness classes to enhance physical health and reduce stress.
- Health education events to encourage a healthy lifestyle.
- Providing nutritious snacks to support overall wellbeing.
- Organising social events and **nature walks** to strengthen workplace connections

Review and measure the impact of your strategy

To ensure the success of your Mental Wellbeing Strategy, it is important to establish clear methods and metrics for tracking progress and measuring impact. This not only helps refine your approach but also strengthens engagement with key stakeholders, especially when securing funding for implementation. Demonstrating return on investment (ROI) is crucial for gaining organisational buy-in.

Section 5 of this document provides some specific ways that you can do this.

4. Launching and Implementing your Strategy

Mental Health First Aider Poster

A free resource that enables you to promote:

- Who your Mental Health First Aiders are
- The role of Mental Health First Aiders
- The phone number for your Employee Assistance Programme
- Key external support lines

Access your **Mental Health First Aider Poster**

MHFA

Your Mental Wellbeing Strategy represents a commitment to supporting your employees' mental health and wellbeing. Implementing it effectively requires clear communication, engagement, and careful planning. Ensuring staff participation is essential for sustaining a wellbeing programme, so make employees aware of their role in its success.

Top tips

No matter the size of your organisation or available resources, here are some top tips for a successful launch:

1. Communicate the strategy

Approach the strategy like a story. Explain why it matters, what it involves, and what will change as a result. Employees want to understand how it impacts them, so tailor messages to different roles, such as line managers or frontline staff. Share how employees have been involved in shaping the strategy and how they will continue to contribute.

2. Have a realistic plan

Your strategy outlines desired changes, but a clear, actionable plan is crucial for implementation. Break down each area of change into steps, such as research, engagement, development, and testing.

Ensure these steps follow SMART principles, Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic, and Timely, to enhance success.

3. Align with the mental health calendar

Leverage national or international awareness days in the **Mental Health Calendar**, such as World Mental Health Day, Mental Health Awareness Week, or National Stress Awareness Day, to amplify your launch. Consider engaging a **Mental Health Speaker**, running **lunch-and-learn sessions**, or organising creative initiatives like attempting a world record to engage employees.

4. Make it accessible

Ensure that all employees, including remote and hybrid workers, can engage with the strategy. Use multiple communication channels, such as webinars, e-learning modules, intranet updates, and team briefings, to reach everyone effectively.

5. Break down barriers

Despite progress, mental health stigma still exists. Encourage participation by introducing mental wellbeing in informal settings, such as tea-and-talk sessions or lunchtime discussions. Providing free refreshments or goody bags can increase engagement.

Additionally, sharing personal stories from senior leaders and employees who have experienced mental health challenges, such as through initiatives like the 'This is Me' campaign, can help normalise conversations and reduce stigma. 97% of organisations who registered with 'This is Me' believe the campaign has had a positive impact on reducing the stigma attached to mental health at work[18].

6. Integrate wellness into recruitment

For long-term impact, embed mental health and wellbeing into your recruitment and onboarding processes. Consider how new hires are introduced to your organisation's wellbeing culture, whether through induction training, coaching and mentoring programmes, or policies that highlight your commitment to mental health.

A strong wellbeing strategy can also enhance your employer brand and Employee Value Proposition. Research suggests that 61% of employees consider wellbeing benefits a major factor in their decision to stay with their current employer[8].

7. Commit to the programme

A wellbeing strategy is not a one-time initiative, it requires ongoing commitment. Define clear responsibilities, set performance measures, and track participation rates.

Signing a public wellbeing pledge at your launch event can reinforce leadership's dedication. To sustain progress, maintain open communication, regularly seek employee feedback, and empower staff to take ownership of the strategy.

By following these steps, you can ensure that your Mental Wellbeing Strategy has a meaningful and lasting impact on your organisation.

---

18   West Midlands Combined Authority, 2019, 'This is Me'

Case Study:

QSIX

Service:
Mental Health Training for Managers, Mental Health First Aid and Mental Health Awareness Training for Employees

Sector: Real Estate Asset Managers

Number of staff: 50 employees

About QSix:

QSix is a real estate asset management firm where pressure and responsibility are integral to the work environment. Recognising the importance of mental health in high-stress industries, QSix needed a strategic approach to ensure their employees received the support they required.

Why QSix implemented a three-tier training approach

The organisation experienced the following challenges:

● Employees felt overwhelmed by the stress and pressures of the demanding sector.

● More employees struggled with mental health issues after the pandemic.

● QSix recognised the need but lacked the tools to properly support staff wellbeing.

Qsix chose a three-tier mental health training approach which involved online Mental Health Training for Managers, Mental Health First Aid and Mental Health Awareness Training for Employees

Key outcomes of the training:

✔ A drop in absence levels

✔ More staff coming into the office

✔ More open conversations about issues affecting mental health

✔ A positive attitude towards wellbeing which helped generate ideas for further improvement

> We saw a drop in absence levels as a result of Altruist's three-tier mental health training approach. We've noticed more staff coming into the office, more open conversations and a positive attitude towards wellbeing.
>
> Altruist met our expectations 100%, I would even say 200%. The way the training was delivered was amazing. We had such great feedback from colleagues!
>
> Bogna Wleklinska, Head of HR and Ops, **QSix**

🎥 **Watch the 2-minute video to hear the interview in Bogna's own words**

Learn more about our **Mental Health Training**

5. Evaluating your Strategy

Stress Bucket Template

A free worksheet designed to help employees:

- Visualise stress levels and identify coping mechanisms
- Enhance wellbeing by recognising triggers and making positive changes
- Facilitate open conversations during manager one-to-one meetings

Access your Stress Bucket Template

Evaluating your strategy allows you to measure the impact and effectiveness of the changes implemented. Regular assessment helps answer key questions:

- Have we achieved our objectives?
- Has there been a change in data and feedback?
- What difference has the strategy made?
- What have we learned?
- Where can we improve?

Evaluation should be an ongoing process, integrated into your strategy delivery plan. This ensures you can track progress, identify what is working, and make necessary adjustments. It is not just a learning exercise but also a way to demonstrate impact, maintaining momentum and engagement across the organisation.

Establishing a baseline for measurement

Your Wellbeing Audit and current state analysis serve as a starting point for evaluation. This baseline data allows you to track changes and measure the Return on Investment (ROI).

For example, if your current sickness absence rate is 10%, with 4% attributed to mental health, you can assess progress by monitoring how these numbers change over time.

Macro vs. micro evaluation

- Macro evaluation looks at overall trends, comparing past and present data to assess broad changes.
- Micro evaluation focuses on specific interventions and their impact, such as tracking whether introducing a weekly yoga class has improved wellbeing scores or reduced presenteeism.

To measure impact effectively, ensure your action plan specifies expected benefits and outlines how they will be tracked.

Key metrics for evaluation

Your evaluation will likely rely on similar data sources to those used in your initial assessment, such as:

- Sickness absence rates and reasons
- Presenteeism levels
- Staff turnover and retention rates
- Employee engagement surveys
- Participation rates in awareness events and training

While quantitative data is essential, complement it with qualitative insights, gathering employee feedback to understand why, how, and what has changed.

Below are two primary methods to evaluate the effectiveness of your Mental Wellbeing Strategy:

1. Gather staff feedback through open questions

Encouraging employees to share their experiences provides valuable insights into what is working and what needs improvement. Consider asking:

- What has positively impacted your mental wellbeing?
- In what ways, and why?
- How has this affected you personally and professionally?
- Have you noticed any changes in how you feel or act as a result?
- What has made the biggest difference?
- What has been less effective, and why?
- What else could we do, and what impact would this have?

These open-ended questions are especially useful for evaluating training programmes.
For example:

- How confident do you feel after the training?
- Is this an improvement from before?
- How has your behaviour or approach changed?

You can collect this feedback through surveys or focus groups. While surveys provide broad reach, focus groups offer deeper insights into the employee experience and allow for real-time discussion.

2. Observe workplace behaviour and culture

Changes in workplace behaviour can signal the impact of your Mental Wellbeing Strategy.
Pay attention to:

- Employee engagement – Are more people attending training sessions?
- Openness around mental health – Are employees discussing wellbeing more freely?
- Workplace culture shifts – Have relationships or interactions changed?
- Participation levels – Are more staff engaging in wellbeing initiatives?
- Remote work engagement – Are virtual wellbeing initiatives being utilised?
  Are remote employees feeling included and supported?

By combining staff feedback with direct observations, you can gain a comprehensive understanding of how well your strategy is working and identify areas for further development.

Case Study:

BNP PARIBAS
PERSONAL FINANCE

Service: Mental Health First Aid and Mental Health First Aider network consultancy

Sector: Financial Services | **Number of staff:** 810 employees

About BNP Paribas Personal Finance

BNP Paribas Personal Finance is dedicated to creating a supportive and inclusive workplace where mental wellbeing is a priority. To foster a culture of openness and accessibility, the company took proactive steps to enhance mental health support for employees.

Why BNP Paribas Personal Finance implemented a Mental Health First Aider Network

The organisation aimed to:

- Train a diverse network of 25 Mental Health First Aiders (MHFAiders) from different roles, teams, and backgrounds.

- Create a safe and supportive peer-to-peer environment where colleagues can share experiences and be signposted to relevant support.

- Take a more structured and strategic approach to workplace wellbeing.

To achieve these goals, BNP Paribas Personal Finance partnered with Altruist, a trusted and authentic provider, to deliver high quality training and help establish a sustainable MHFAider network.

Key outcomes of the training

Since implementing the Mental Health First Aider network five years ago, BNP Paribas Personal Finance has seen:

- Greater confidence among colleagues in discussing mental health.

- A more open and supportive workplace culture.

- An active network of MHFAiders working collaboratively to share information and organise wellbeing events.

- Stronger senior leadership commitment to a strategic approach to mental health and wellbeing.

With strong leadership support, BNP Paribas Personal Finance has invested more resources into data gathering and analysis, focusing on MHFAider conversation trends, mental health related absence levels, and colleague confidence and understanding.

This data driven approach has shaped ongoing wellbeing initiatives, such as Mental Health Training for Managers, Lunch & Learn events for colleagues, and embedding best practices into daily business activities.

> "
> We've seen an increase in confidence in talking about mental health, an openness of culture and have achieved buy-in from senior leaders to drive a more strategic approach to wellbeing. I would describe Altruist as knowledgeable and collaborative.
>
> Clarisse Smith, Diversity and Inclusion Partner, **BNP Paribas Personal Finance**
> "

Watch the 2-minute video to hear Clarisse's experience firsthand

Learn more about our Mental Health Training

How Altruist can Help
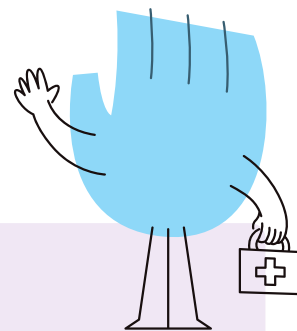
Altruist is a passionate, expert provider of tailored mental health and wellbeing training, consultancy and coaching to organisations.

Formed in 2013, we have partnered with over 500 businesses and schools to help them establish effective wellbeing programmes.

We provide your staff with the skills to support themselves and each other through the many challenges of work and home.

We help create a healthy, motivated and more productive workforce, increasing retention and reducing absenteeism.

For further details on our training, consultancy and coaching services, please see below:

Training

Mental Health First Aid – an internationally recognised mental health awareness course, approved by the Royal Society for Public Health. On completion of this training, candidates are certified as 'Mental Health First Aiders'.

> *It was an excellent safe and open space to talk about difficult topics, apply practical based knowledge on how to deal with mental health first aid situations and also reassured us that it's okay not to have all the answers.*
>
> MHFA Course Delegate, **Steelite**

Mental Health First Aider Refresher Training – a refresher course that enables MHFAiders to renew skills, update mental health knowledge and apply new MHFA techniques.

> *As was the previous course, this refresher was very well presented and really helped to remind us of the principles of MHFA. It's always good to hear others perspectives and everyone was engaged.*
>
> MHFA Refresher Course delegate

Mental Health Training for Managers – an interactive course that equips managers with practical skills to promote wellbeing, spot the early signs of stress and mental ill-health and engage in helpful conversations.

> *It was a brilliant course, bringing my own knowledge and understanding around this topic to a higher level but also now having the confidence to support others in a more detailed/structured way. I can only thank Rob for the way he delivered this course. It was very engaging and I took an awful lot from it. Thank you.*
>
> Manager, **Jemca Car Group**

Mental Health Awareness Training for Employees – an engaging course designed to increase employees' understanding of mental health and boost their confidence in supporting colleagues.

> *I came from this course with a much better understanding of mental health and how to deal with it, both for myself and with others.*
>
> Maeve McGlynn, Bid Coordinator, **Jestico + Whiles**

Resilience & Stress Management Training – a skills-based course that helps employees improve self-awareness, build resilience and improve stress management techniques.

> *I learnt how to recognise situations in my daily working and home life that I can work on to reduce my personal stress and build my resiliency skills. We were taken through a process which allowed us to challenge our negative thoughts and look at things from a different perspective. I found the mindfulness techniques really interesting and it is something I am interested to explore further and use as a tool to reduce the level of stress. Overall, a very helpful course.*
>
> Federica Merella, Consultant Anaesthetist, **Birmingham Children's Hospital**

Mental Health & Wellness Lunch & Learns – live sessions that bring employees from all areas of your organisation together to improve mental health awareness, discuss stress management techniques and promote wellbeing at work.

> *I've had the chance to participate in two really enlightening workshops.*
> *They were informative and engaging... and a real help in raising stress awareness in a powerful visual way.*
>
> Jon Formby, HR Advisor, **Guildford Borough Council**

Bitesized Mental Health E-learning Training – interactive 30-minute sessions serve as a taster or refresher, helping individuals enhance their understanding of mental health and resilience.

> *Great course to kick start a long term adventure through resilience and stress management.*
>
> Alessandro Grech La Rosa, **Make Architects**

Consultancy

Workplace Wellbeing Audit – a dedicated consultant works in partnership with you to measure your existing wellbeing data, gather employee and leadership views and provide independent recommendations for your wellbeing strategy.

> *Wellbeing is a core enabler to our employee engagement and retention strategy.*
>
> *We chose Altruist to deliver our Workplace Wellbeing Audit because we wanted to use an expert with an objective view, where our employees can be completely honest with giving their feedback.*
>
> *As a result of our wellbeing audit, we've been able to see a comprehensive view of our current wellbeing provision. This has enabled us to identify our strengths and areas for development. We have a clear and robust action plan for the way ahead!*
>
> Kate Sarama, Head of HR, **Bowel Cancer UK**

Strategy Design and Implementation – a three stage approach that involves assessing your current position, developing a tailored strategy and creating a communication plan to embed a long lasting wellbeing culture.

Coaching

Executive Coaching: Personal Growth and Wellbeing – a structured one to one process which focuses on what each individual needs to help them navigate both personal and professional challenges. By concentrating on personal growth and wellbeing, coaching helps individuals thrive and, in turn, drive organisational success.

> *I took part in one-to-one coaching through Altruist's comprehensive wellbeing program. As a result, I've become a more confident leader, and our team has successfully implemented clear policies and training, reinforcing staff support.*
>
> Leah Frisby, Compliance Manager, **Step Into Teaching**

Mental health speakers

Keynotes, speakers and panels – Altruist provide world-class mental health speakers for your event. Bringing stories of their own experience, they'll share their honest and relatable accounts of their own challenges with mental health while inspiring the audience with their expert advice.

> *Rob's speech was fantastic – I was absolutely delighted that he held the room for the duration – at points you could have heard a pin drop! This was a new addition to these meetings, and the response was incredible. The attendees truly connected with Rob, his experiences, and his expertise. It couldn't have gone any better.*
>
> Michelle Knight, UK Wellbeing Lead, **Smurfit Westrock**

0121 271 0550 | **info@altruistuk.com**

altruist

References

1. Deloitte, 2024, 'Mental Health and Employers'
https://www.deloitte.com/uk/en/services/consulting/research/mental-health-and-employers-the-case-for-employers-to-invest-in-supporting-working-parents-and-a-mentally-health-workplace.html

2. BITC, 2019, 'Mental Health at Work Report 2019, Time to Take Ownership'
https://www.bitc.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/10/bitc-wellbeing-report-mhaw mentalhealthworkfullreport2019-sept2019-2.pdf

3. CIPD, 2023, 'Health and Well-Being at Work'
https://www.cipd.org/globalassets/media/knowledge/knowledge-hub/reports/2023-pdfs/8436-health-and-wellbeing-report-2023.pdf

4. Aon, 2021, 'UK Benefits & Trends Survey'
https://www.aon.com/unitedkingdom/employee-benefits/resources/benefits-and-trends/default.jsp

5. WPI Economics, 2023, 'Health, Happiness and Productivity'
https://wpieconomics.com/publications/health-happiness-and-productivity

6. Deloitte, 2024, 'Gen Z and Millennial Survey'
https://www.deloitte.com/content/dam/assets-shared/docs/campaigns/2024/deloitte-2024-genz-millennial-survey.pdf

7. Thriving at Work, 2017, 'The Stevenson / Farmer review of mental health and employers'
https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/658145/thriving-at-work-stevenson-farmer-review.pdf

8. Gallup, 2024, 'Employee Retention and Attraction'
https://www.gallup.com/467702/indicator-employee-retention-attraction.aspx

9. Nockolds, 2024, 'Analysis of ACAS employment tribunals data'
https://www.peoplemanagement.co.uk/article/1887115/workplace-disability-discrimination-claims-surge-30-per-cent-analysis-finds-employers-struggle-tackle-mental-health-issues

10. Health and Safety Executive, 2006, 'Investigation of the links between psychological ill health, stress and safety'
https://s3-eu-west-1.amazonaws.com/altruist-enterprises-files/HSE-Investigation-of-the-links-between-psychological-ill-health-stress-and-safety.pdf

11. Social Market Foundation, 2015, 'Happiness and productivity: Understanding the Happy-Productive Worker'
http://www.smf.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2015/10/Social-Market-Foundation-Publication-Briefing-CAGE-4-Are-happy-workers-more-productive-281015.pdf

12. University of Oxford, 2019, 'Does Employee Happiness have an Impact on Productivity?'
https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=3470734

13. University of Nottingham, 2024, 'The relationship between line manager training in mental health and organisational outcomes'
https://journals.plos.org/plosone/article?id=10.1371/journal.pone.0306065

14. Mind Forward Alliance, 2021, 'Time To Act: Mental Health in Early Careers'
https://mindforwardalliance.com/Resources/Guidance-and-Insights-Papers#1441

15. CIPD, 2023, 'The importance of people management'
https://www.cipd.org/globalassets/media/knowledge/knowledge-hub/reports/2023-pdfs/2023-report-importance-of-people-management-8329-may23.pdf

16. Pro bono economics, 2024, 'Triple dividend: How workplace volunteering can make us happier, healthier and more productive'
https://www.probonoeconomics.com/Handlers/Download.ashx?IDMF=5ab77848-1d21-4bfd-8425-f5f768b8b425

17. Public Health England, 2015, 'Physical environments and Employee Wellbeing: Topic Overview'
https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/772615/20150318_-_Physical_Environments_-_V3.0_FINAL.pdf

18. West Midlands Combined Authority, 2019, 'This is Me'
https://www.wmca.org.uk/news/turning-the-west-midlands-green-for-blue-monday/

Workplace Mental Wellbeing Strategy Guide

For more information on mental wellbeing training, consultancy and coaching, use our **contact form**, call us on **0121 271 0550** or email **info@altruistuk.com**