

The Employee Mental Health Handbook

2023

Exclusive data and practical actions
for HR leaders to support mental
health at work.

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CHAMPION
HEALTH

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The why behind mental health

I have worked in mental health for two decades and I have supported thousands of professionals across hundreds of companies, including Rolls-Royce and the NHS.

In that time, something has become clear to me: supporting your people means supporting your business. This is true whatever industry you're in.

The costs of poor mental health are now well documented and workplace health initiatives provide a significant return on investment for the organisation - if invested in wisely.

I also believe the workplace can provide a supportive culture that encourages mental wellness. To create this culture, employers must help their people to thrive through a positive and progressive approach that prioritises staff health and wellbeing.

So, whether you're a seasoned employee wellbeing expert or have found yourself responsible for the health of others, use this guide to support yourself and those around you. Use The Employee Mental Health Handbook to:

- > Discover exclusive mental health at work data that reveals your opportunity to support others
- > Refresh your knowledge of the most common mental health challenges at work
- > Learn what really works from workplace health experts at leading organisations

Ultimately, supporting employee mental health is good for business, good for your people and good for you.



DR STEPHANIE FITZGERALD
Founder of Soyo Ltd, clinical psychologist,
author and consultant

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ABOUT THE DATA

The data in this report was gathered between September 2022 and February 2023. It comprises 4,075 employees from organisations across the globe and consists of thousands of data points covering key areas of mental wellbeing. The participants represent a range of demographics and work in a variety of employment sectors. All data is gathered anonymously.



CHAPTER 1

Anxiety and depression

From one crisis to another, it's been a challenging few years for our mental health. As a people leader, you have an incredible opportunity to lessen the impacts of this turbulence.

That's because when work is designed well it can provide purpose and structure, create connection, act as a route to professional support, and ultimately boost health.

But as our data reveals, mental health problems among professionals are a lot more common than most people may realise. And these conditions have a significant impact on the health, wellbeing and performance of your people.

That's why employers must be aware of the most common mental health issues affecting employees. While there are many different mental health challenges, anxiety and depression are the most prevalent within your workforce.



Anxiety is a feeling of unease, worry or fear. Everyone feels anxiety in their life. However, some find it hard to control their worries.

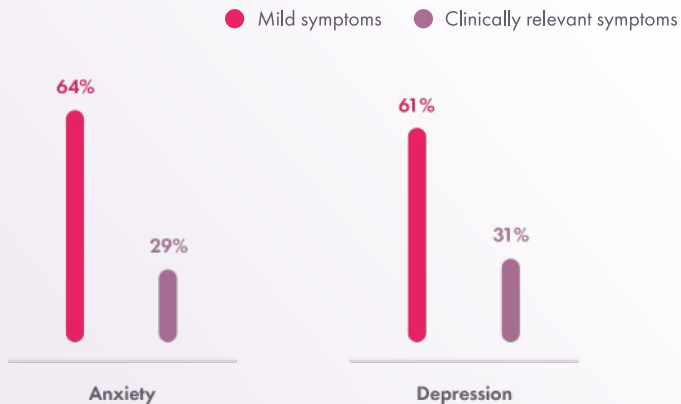
Anxiety can become a mental health problem when someone's worries affect their day-to-day life.

Depression causes a long-lasting low mood that can heavily impact day-to-day life. People with depression might feel down, hopeless or numb and may have difficulty sleeping, or sleep too much.

Some people may think about taking their own life.

Employees experiencing symptoms of anxiety and depression

Symptoms of anxiety and depression as measured by the GAD-7 and PHQ-9. Mild symptoms defined as scoring ≥ 5 . Clinically relevant symptoms defined as scoring ≥ 10



Our findings show that 64% of employees are experiencing symptoms of anxiety and 61% are experiencing symptoms of depression.

In addition, 29% meet the criteria for 'clinically relevant' symptoms of anxiety and 31% meet the criteria for 'clinically relevant' symptoms of depression. 'Clinically relevant' symptoms suggest that these employees would benefit from further assessment and support from a qualified mental health professional^[1].

Clearly, anxiety and depression have a huge impact on the wellbeing of your colleagues. The data overleaf goes further by describing in real terms how these challenges are reflected within the experiences of our people.

“ Employee anxiety represents a huge opportunity for HR leaders to make a difference for their people.

Our people were already anxious three years ago and now that level of anxiety has been exacerbated by what we've been through in that time.

Reducing anxiety for employees means helping them deal with what they're worrying about by changing their situation or alleviating their stresses.

Whether that means changing their work situation, offering support and resources, or just being understanding and empathetic, employers who provide that support can have a huge impact on their employees' lives.



NICK DAVISON
Managing Director of Myadv1ce
and Wellbeing Strategist



Why should we discuss mental health at work?

Your colleagues - and yourself - might feel unsure about discussing a mental health problem. But, within a supportive workplace culture, there are benefits to sharing.

A stronger basis for requesting support

Opening up is the first step to getting support, whether through reasonable adjustments or existing workplace services.

Not having to hide difficulties

Hiding our challenges can make us feel more isolated and prevents us from seeking potentially life-saving support.

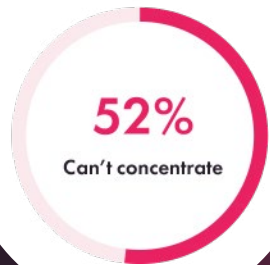
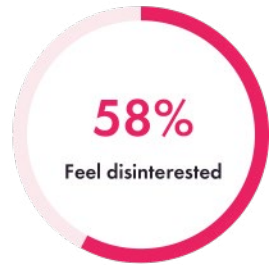
Helping others open up

We all experience mental health. By talking we can encourage others to get the support they need.

^[1] National Institute for Health and Care Excellence: Clinical Guidance

Beyond the numbers

How poor mental health affects us



This data comprises aggregated answers to various questions from the GAD-7, PHQ-9 and Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Wellbeing Scale.

From leaders for leaders

Frontline insights from the top workplace health leaders

NEGATIVE NEWS

“ The news environment is very worrying. And news agencies tend to always push the negative side. This has led to a lot of people feeling very hopeless.

Therefore, as leaders, you can give your people hope by promoting positive news when you can. This could be a success story, a promotion, or a positive business development. If it's positive, let your people know.

When you can't push positive news, promote transparency. Uncertainty breeds anxiety, so make sure you communicate clearly with your people when changes are happening within the business.



DR STEPHANIE FITZGERALD

Founder of Soyo Ltd, clinical psychologist, author and consultant

Discover how Champion Health empowers data-driven wellbeing



WATCH VIDEO

BUILD SELF-AWARENESS

“ As managers, you can't manage everyone's health and wellbeing for them.

You need your people to self-manage, and the first step to this is self-awareness.

To aid with this self-awareness, introduce reports and surveys, that will enable employees to see for themselves where they are struggling, and where they are thriving.

If you can't provide the survey yourself, partner with an external provider, who can provide that service for you.



NICK DAVISON

Managing Director of Myadv1ce and Wellbeing Strategist

VULNERABILITY

“ With so many people in our workplaces experiencing mental ill-health, leaders at all levels have a duty to create cultures where colleagues feel safe in speaking up and seeking help.

Being vulnerable about their own challenges and improving non-judgemental listening skills are two ways leaders can have a big positive impact in this regard.



ROB STEPHENSON

Founder of the InsideOut LeaderBoard and FormScore

COACHING

“ Both you and your line managers can't support with every challenge an employee faces. But, you can help by coaching them towards supporting themselves more effectively.

Here are five starter coaching questions your managers (and you) can use when speaking to someone that needs support:

1. What are you finding helpful for supporting yourself currently?
2. Who are you speaking to about your wellbeing?
3. Who else could you speak to?
4. Where are the gaps in support for you at the minute?
5. How might you be able to find resources in those areas?



JAMIE BROADLEY
Group Head of Health & Wellbeing at Serco

serco



3 things every employee should know

1. The member of your HR or wellbeing team to contact in a crisis
2. The point of access for your existing support offerings - e.g. the number for your EAP
3. The contact details for relevant third-party support services like CALM and Samaritans

LISTENING

“ It's hard for businesses to pick just one cause of poor mental health to focus on - it's going to be different for every organisation and every individual.

Therefore, businesses must implement a culture of employee listening. Whether that's through leaders having 1:1s with every employee, anonymous and regular surveys, group sessions, or anything else - make sure you're taking the time to listen to your people.

Find out what they're struggling with, what about the workplace isn't working for them and what's going on outside of work.

Then you know where to focus your time, energy and budget. Take time to listen to your employees and find out what they truly need - they have the answers within them.



GEORGE BELL
LinkedIn Top Voice on Work-Life Balance & Mental Health

Discover tips for leaders to talk mental health at work



WATCH VIDEO



CHAPTER 2

Suicide and self-harm



This chapter contains discussion of suicide and self-harm which may be triggering for some individuals.

Despite the progress we've made in normalising mental health, there is still a stigma around talking about suicide, especially at work.

Like anxiety and depression, thoughts of suicide and self-harm among professionals are far more common than many may realise.

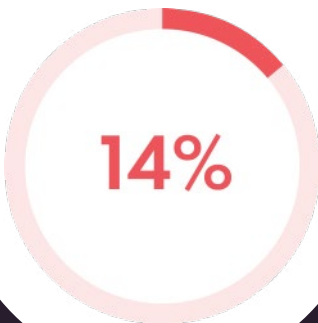
Effective suicide prevention is possible but it requires a combination of interventions at many levels ⁽¹⁾. The workplace is one key arena in which we as leaders can make a real difference.

Preventative action is urgently needed. Our data shows that 14% of employees are currently experiencing thoughts of suicide or self-harm.

This means that, in an average organisation of 10,000 employees, 1,400 may be experiencing thoughts of suicide or self-harm. This is an incredibly worrying statistic which highlights the urgent need for organisations to get proactive.

As leaders, managers and colleagues, we can all play our part in reaching struggling employees and getting them the support they need.

Employees experiencing thoughts of suicide or self-harm



Warning signs

Suicide is complex. There's no one reason why an individual experiences thoughts of suicide or self-harm.

This complexity makes it difficult to know the warning signs when someone is in crisis. However, there are some behaviours to look out for.

Communication

- Talking about dying or ending their life:
"I'd be better off dead"
"I wish I hadn't been born"
- Talking about feeling hopeless or lacking purpose:
"There's no way out"
"What's the point"
- Talking about being a burden to others:
"Everyone would be better off without me"

Behaviour

- Excessive alcohol or drug use
- Severe shortage of sleep
- Sudden social withdrawal
- Unusual changes in behaviour
- Organising personal affairs
- Saying goodbye to loved ones

⁽¹⁾ National Institutes of Health: Can we really prevent suicide?

During our lives, many of us will spend more time with our colleagues than with our family and friends. That's why organisations are well-placed to take action in reducing suicide.

The guidance on the next page provides six simple steps employers can take to prevent cases of suicide within the workplace. By working together, we can change and save lives.



Need to know: Confidentiality

When someone shares something with us, we should treat it with the strictest confidence.

However, confidentiality has its limits, and when a person is at risk of harming themselves, the limits of confidentiality are reached.

In this situation, we should do everything we can to keep them safe, including informing a relevant person or calling emergency services. This ensures they will get access to timely and appropriate help.

“ Suicide education and intervention training must be at the heart of all workplaces. Talking about suicide is the single biggest preventative tool that we have within us, but we need to equip people with the confidence to talk and have those potentially life-saving conversations.



HARRY CORIN
Founder of Corin & Co



The CLASS Approach

If you're worried about a colleague's safety, it can be daunting to know what to do or say next. To navigate that scenario, use the CLASS Approach, a five-step guide to supporting a colleague in crisis.

Connect

Make time to ask how the person you're concerned about is doing.

Listen

Allow the person the time to talk things through and listen to what's being said.

Assess

Assess the situation and consider what support the person could benefit from.

Support

Make it clear that you're there to help. Explore with the person the support they could access.

Signpost

Connect the person with services so they can access timely support. Main points of contact include their GP, NHS 111 (if out-of-hours) and confidential helplines - like CALM and Samaritans.

Take action to prevent suicide in the workplace



READ GUIDE

Six simple ways to address mental health and suicide prevention in the workplace



ALICE HENDY
Founder of R;pple Suicide Prevention

Reduce the stigma of suicide

One of the greatest challenges for individuals struggling with mental health is the associated stigma which prevents them from reaching out to get treatment. Businesses have a responsibility to ensure the correct language and terminology is used, as well as ensuring mental health is embedded at the core of its company values.

Prioritise social inclusion

Isolation in the workplace contributes to mental health issues and it is important that employees are able to talk to one another. Businesses must encourage socialising during office hours and arrange social events to ensure teams are bonding and engaging with one another.

Provide support for financial struggles

Financial struggles are linked to mental health issues and businesses must do everything they can to support their staff. Providing free financial counselling for employees is a simple but effective way to do this.

Train colleagues in suicide prevention

One of the most important (and obvious) steps to preventing suicide in the workplace is to recognise it and know the signs to look out for when someone is struggling. Businesses should set up annual training exercises with staff to ensure vulnerable employees are identified and receive the support they need.

Address work-related stress

Employers must ensure that workloads are realistic and achievable, and that employees aren't taking that stress home with them. Flexible working hours, meeting-free time and regular check-ins are good ways of doing this. Employers should also support staff suffering a mental health crisis with access to paid leave using supportive policies.

Intercept harmful web searches

Utilise tools, like R;pple, to intercept harmful searches relating to suicide or self-harm. R;pple can be integrated into workplace Wi-Fi networks to intercept these searches by instead providing routes for people to seek free, accessible, 24/7 mental health support.

An hourglass with blue sand is the central visual element. The sand is flowing from the top bulb to the bottom bulb. The hourglass is set against a dark, moody background with a faint, blurred landscape visible through the glass. The overall tone is somber and reflective.

CHAPTER 3

Stress and burnout

As a people leader, there are two key things you must remember when it comes to stress:

- > The experience of stress is unique to the individual
- > Not all stress is bad

In the workplace, the right amount of stress drives us forward to meet the demands of our roles. However, when stress exceeds our capacity to cope, it can have adverse effects on both our health and performance.

Prolonged periods of high stress can lead to physical, mental, and emotional exhaustion - commonly known as burnout.

The Yerkes-Dodson Law (shown below) helps visualise the delicate balance between stress and performance.

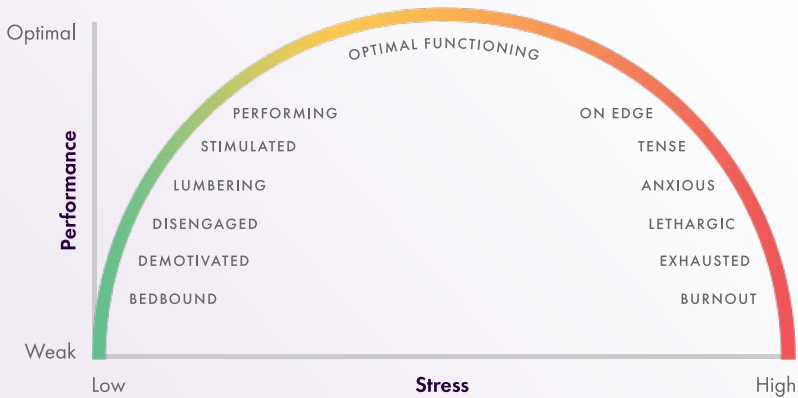


Stress is the impact of there being 'too much'. Too many demands, too many changes, too much to do and too many decisions to make. Chronic stress has the potential to deplete your energy, undermine your belief in your own abilities and efficacy, and lead to burnout.

Burnout means feeling like there is just 'not enough'. Not enough time, energy, enthusiasm, ability and inner resource. It is commonly described as 'being emotionally drained', 'feeling empty' or 'just not being able to be myself anymore'.

NHS Leadership Academy: Stress and burnout

The Yerkes-Dodson Law



Our findings reveal that a large number of employees are experiencing too much stress and are at risk of burnout: 80% of employees are experiencing moderate-to-high levels of stress.

This data should raise alarm bells for leaders. That's because research shows that stress is one of the main causes of short and long-term absence from work ^[1].

To understand how the workplace contributes to employee stress, we also asked professionals to share their experience of stress at work.

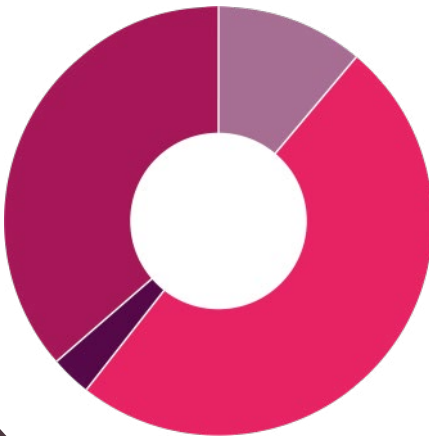
The findings reflect each individual's unique relationship with stress. For example, 50% of the sample report that they are experiencing a perfect level of stress at work. At the same time, 40% of employees report that the stress they experience at work is having a negative impact.

Employees experiencing moderate-to-high stress



Experience of stress at work

Responses to the question: Which statement about stress at work do you most agree with?



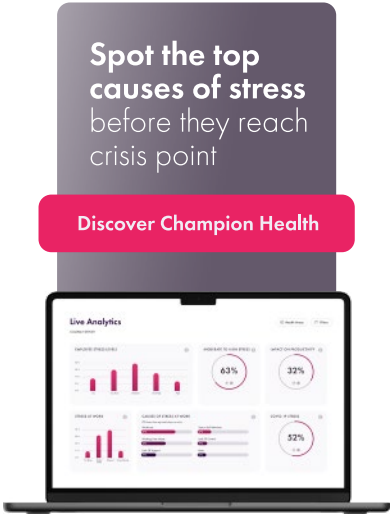
- 10% No stress at work
- 50% Perfect amount that helps me thrive
- 37% Stress has a negative impact but can cope
- 3% Overwhelmed and cannot cope

^[1] CIPD: Health and wellbeing at work

To effectively manage stress, it's key that we identify the primary causes of stress in the workplace.

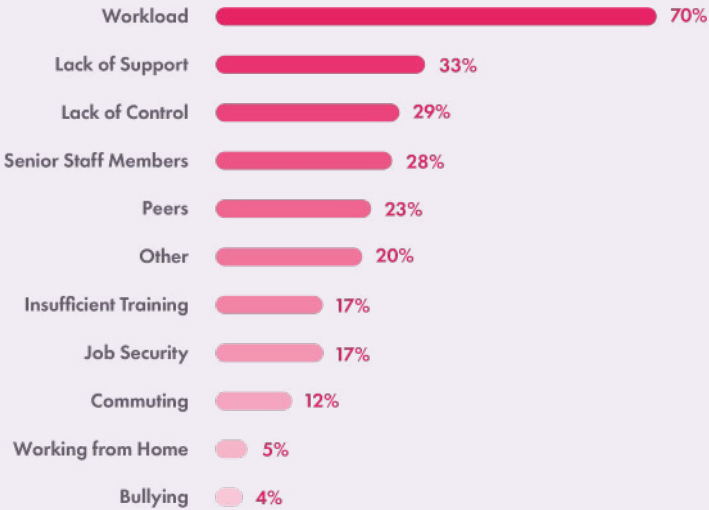
The data below summarises the results of thousands of professionals across hundreds of organisations. Employers will also find value in running surveys internally to discover their own stress landscape.

Our findings show that workload is by far the most common cause of stress among employees. This factor significantly outranks other stressors such as lack of support, lack of control, and issues with senior staff.



Causes of negative stress at work

Reasons for negative stress at work. Multiple options could be selected.



The meeting audit

Workload is the top cause of stress within the workplace, yet we waste so much time in meetings that could have been emails.

Challenge your colleagues to audit their calendars using the following framework. This works best when teams and entire organisations participate.

For every meeting in the diary, ask the following questions:

Does the meeting have a clear agenda, with set objectives?



Is my role in the meeting clear?



Is the meeting within my set working hours?



Am I a contributor, subject matter expert or decision maker?



Will I be impacted by a resulting outcome?



Will reviewing the meeting action items not be sufficient?



If the answer to any of those questions is no, take one of the following courses of action:

Decline the invite



Query whether you're really needed at the meeting



Suggest a different communication channel, e.g. email



Ask for an updated agenda



Ask to be sent the action items after the meeting



RYAN HOPKINS
Future of Wellbeing Leader at Deloitte

While we all try to compartmentalise difficulties, pressures outside of work will inevitably impact stress and performance inside of work - and vice versa.

It's therefore important that employers understand the external stressors affecting their employees, even if they cannot solve these issues.

With this in mind, we asked employees to identify their sources of stress outside of work. This data underlines the need for employers to consider the unique circumstances of each employee when addressing stress management.

Highlighting the impact of the global cost of living crisis on employee wellbeing, financial pressure emerged as the most common cause of stress outside work.

Our data also demonstrates the significant impact of caring responsibilities - like parenting and care - on employee stress.

SUPPORTING CARERS

“ Here are three ways employers can provide practical support for parents and carers:

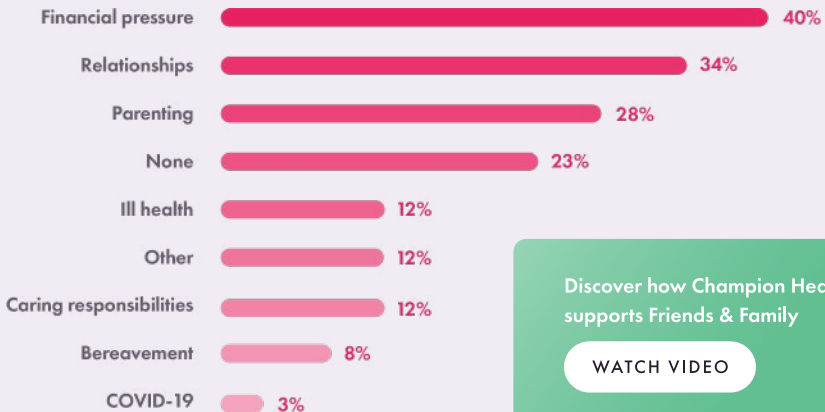
1. Educate the whole team on what it feels like to be a working carer
2. Develop a clear framework that shares the support your organisations offers, including signposting towards useful resources
3. Give employees the opportunity to work flexibly, as this can be a huge relief for employees who juggle caregiving commitments with work



CHRIS DONNELLY
Co-founder of Seniorcare by Lottie

Causes of stress outside work

Reasons for stress outside of work. Multiple options could be selected.



Discover how Champion Health supports Friends & Family



WATCH VIDEO

From leaders for leaders

Frontline insights from the top workplace health leaders

SUPPORT AT WORK

“ While workload remains a huge cause of stress for most workers, just as worrying are the numbers of employees who do not feel supported by their employer.

Here are four steps employers can take to address this:

- Ensure managers have regular, open dialogue with their people about workloads and create safe spaces for employees to raise concerns
- Confirm that every employee is clear on their role and what is expected of them and has appropriate key performance indicators in place
- Provide evidence-based support for those that are struggling to manage their wellbeing, such as stress management practices and mindfulness
- Encourage regular breaks, time away from work and social interaction with colleagues to buffer against the harmful effects of stress



GETHIN NADIN

Award-winning psychologist, author and Chief Innovation Officer at Benefex

RING-FENCE YOUR 1:1S

“ From an employee perspective, knowing that your manager will hold space for you really matters - so managers must make the most of 1:1s.

Inspirational leaders understand the paramount importance of never moving these meetings, unless they absolutely have to.

They also ensure there is a set intentional agenda at each 1:1 to discuss general work-life wellbeing, capacity and workload planning, which are the biggest causes of work-related stress.



BEX MOORHOUSE

Founder of Invigorate Spaces Ltd, previously Workplace Design + Connectivity Director at Nike

CO-CREATING SOLUTIONS

“ The starting point to addressing work-related stress is always consultation with the employee, rather than assumption of their needs. As adults, we all know our boundaries and ways in which we thrive, therefore co-creating solutions is the key to success.

The solutions that you come to together have far greater impact on employee wellbeing than a new wellbeing initiative or a company-wide webinar.



HAYLEY FARRELL

Global Director & LinkedIn Top Voice on Psychological Health & Safety



How Strata reduced work-related stress by 68%

For 100 years, Strata have built “homes” rather than “houses”. And during the pandemic, Strata’s leadership team were determined to support their people.

“One of the big challenges facing us was helping our team transition into this new world. We knew that we were going to have to help the team adapt and change going forwards.”

Gemma Smith Managing Director at Strata

To support their people, Strata partnered with Champion Health. They quickly:

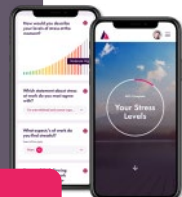
- Rolled-out digital health assessments to their people
- Provided personalised wellbeing action plans and content through the ‘Netflix of Wellbeing’
- Leveraged data insights to identify the health areas most important to their people

Working alongside their Champion Wellbeing Lead, Strata introduced new initiatives to reduce stress. These included:

1. 1:1 consultations with each employee to discuss workloads and work-related stressors
2. Regular “talking sessions” which provided employees with a chance to discuss concerns with managers
3. Introducing “Stress Champions” to hold monthly focus groups in the workplace and discuss actions for change

Strata’s wellbeing strategy hit the nail on the head - their data dashboard revealed a 68% reduction in work-related stress.

Discover how Strata made **data-driven** decisions



[Watch Video](#)

A close-up, slightly blurred photograph of a hand holding a credit card over a laptop keyboard. The scene is dimly lit, with a dark, moody atmosphere. The hand is positioned on the left, and the credit card is held horizontally across the middle. The laptop keyboard is visible in the foreground, with several keys clearly defined. The overall composition suggests a focus on digital transactions or financial technology.

CHAPTER 4

Financial wellbeing

Financial wellbeing

Financial wellbeing is an essential pillar of workplace health because it's closely linked to our mental health.

In times of economic uncertainty, financial wellbeing is more important than ever. Leaders like you should be concerned that many are feeling the pinch.

Our data reveals financial pressure as the leading external cause of stress for employees, beating out other factors like bereavement and relationships.

Financial wellbeing is also linked to mental health. Alarmingly, employees experiencing financial stress are almost twice as likely to experience thoughts of suicide or self-harm.



What is financial wellbeing?

Financial wellbeing is the state of feeling content, comfortable and secure with your financial situation - while having the freedom to choose how you want to live your life.

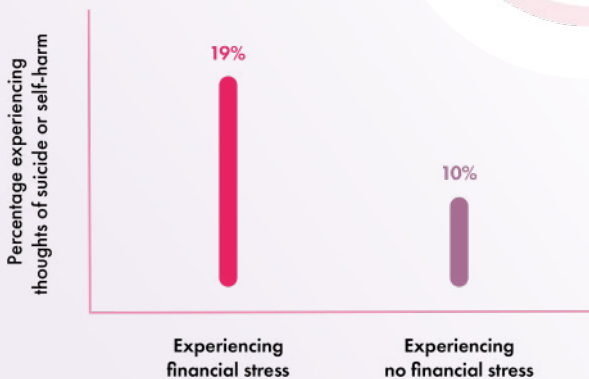
It's a highly personal state, not fully described by objective measures such as salary. Therefore, every employee can experience financial wellbeing - or a lack of it - regardless of income.

Employees experiencing financial stress



Relationship between suicidal thoughts and financial stress

Employees experiencing thoughts of suicide or self-harm on at least "several days".



Five key reminders for HR leaders



RYAN BRIGGS

Founder of FinWELL



We're all in the same storm but not in the same boat

These challenging times are affecting us all in different ways and employers must recognise and appreciate this.



Think long-term about finances

A cash lump sum is fantastic but should only be part of a wider, long-term and more sustainable approach to supporting financial wellbeing.



The effects on employee wellbeing

Employers need to understand the intrinsic links between financial wellbeing, mental health and the subsequent effects on performance and productivity.



We don't learn the basics at school

The majority of employees need to build their knowledge, understanding and confidence around money matters at key stages along life's financial journey.



Don't neglect feelings

The best feedback we've heard is that employees no longer feel alone in this cost of living crisis, that their employers genuinely care about them, and are doing what they can to support them and their families.

Four elements that every organisation needs to support financial wellbeing



SAMUEL LATHEY
CEO and Founder at Bippit

Psychological safety

Unfortunately, it's still very hard to talk about financial matters in our society.

So, the first and most important step to supporting financial wellbeing is to cultivate psychological safety within your organisation so there are fewer barriers for employees reaching out for or exploring support.

Training and signposting

Ensure that your HR and wellbeing professionals receive sufficient training and guidance around the resources and support that they can signpost employees towards.

This training should include how to notice who is struggling.

Normalising the conversation

Culture comes from the top. When your leaders open up about their own relationship with money, this normalises the conversation and shows your people that they're not alone in experiencing anxiety and stress around money.

For example, a leader saying a few words at the start of a financial wellbeing webinar, explaining that they still worry about their financial responsibilities and are keen to learn more in the upcoming session, will be very powerful.

Dedicated support

Introduce effective forms of bespoke support for your people. That could be through digital apps, remote workshops, enhanced educational resources, or even one-to-one coaching in a safe and confidential space.

Every employee should be able to have confidential conversations about their financial concerns and receive expert help.

From leaders for leaders

Frontline insights from the top workplace health leaders

LET'S TALK MONEY

“ Talking about mental health is tough. Talking about personal finances can be even tougher.

But, as with mental health, normalising conversation around money can help others access the support they need.

Open up the financial wellbeing conversation in your organisation by:

- Reinforcing communications to ensure your people understand the financial benefits you offer
- Bringing in senior leadership to share personal stories and promote your financial support offerings
- Training managers to have sensitive conversations about money with their teams
- Ensuring everyone knows who they can speak to confidentially about money worries



LOUISE ASTON
Wellbeing Director at Business
in the Community

FINANCIAL WELLBEING

“ For almost two decades, financial pressures have remained one of the biggest causes of stress and anxiety in the lives of most people.

The cumulative effect of this pressure has eroded financial resilience so much that we can rationally declare financial stress a public health concern.

Therefore, if an employer isn't supporting the financial wellbeing of their people, they aren't effectively supporting wellbeing at all.

To better support the financial lives of your people, you must ensure:

- Employees can have constructive conversations with their manager about money and money stress without fear of stigma and embarrassment
- Financial education is available to improve the financial literacy of your people - those with higher financial literacy scores tend to report less financial stress
- Benefit schemes include products that make common financial decisions, like obtaining a loan or opening a savings account, easier.



GETHIN NADIN
Award-winning psychologist, author
and Chief Innovation Officer at Benefex



CHAPTER 4

DEI and mental health

Mental health and diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) are inextricably linked. As the data shows, identity markers like age, gender and ability have a significant impact on our mental health.

Our data shows that female employees are more likely than their male colleagues to experience symptoms of both anxiety and depression.

Similarly, employees aged below 35 report higher levels of anxiety and depression versus their older peers.

Further research reveals that 81% of LGBTQ+ employees experience a mental health condition, with 72% attributing these health challenges to their experience at work ^[1].

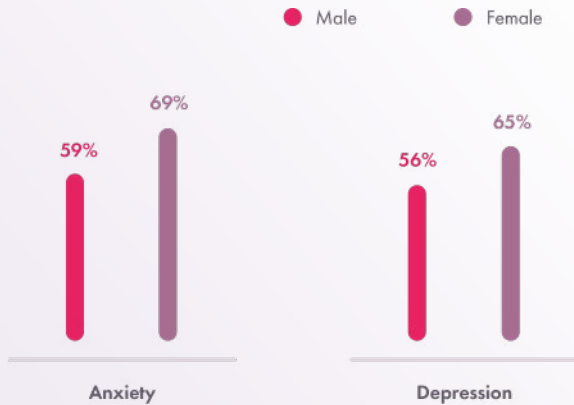
In addition, people of colour are more likely to report mental health challenges ^[2], as are neurodiverse employees ^[3].

This makes mental wellbeing a key part of your DEI strategy. Initiatives that support mental health will also support DEI - and vice versa.



Employees aged below 35 are 18% more likely to experience symptoms of anxiety, versus employees aged 35+

Symptoms of anxiety and depression in males and females



^[1]BITC: Working with Pride - Issues affecting LGBTQ+ people in the workplace

^[2]BITC: Race and mental health at work

^[3]Willis Towers Watson: Global benefits attitudes survey

Creating and utilising ERGs

Employee resource groups (ERGs) are internal communities of workers with shared identities and interests. When used effectively, they are key to fostering a more diverse and inclusive workplace^[1].

To help you create or improve your own ERGs, ask yourself these three questions.

Where are you hoping to drive change?

When managed well and supported properly, ERGs can become powerful enablers of an organisation's success. With that in mind, consider the aims your organisation has that can be better achieved by bringing people together around a shared experience.

This is particularly effective with ESG-related aims. For example, at Serco we are exploring where we can drive social impact and are leaning on our network groups to help us think this through and identify initiatives. Networks are also great for collating stories which you can then use to drive change in other areas of the business.



JAMIE BROADLEY
Group Head of Health & Wellbeing at Serco

Where are there wellbeing conversations that need a bigger platform?

Consider where there are shared experiences in terms of wellbeing challenges. Bringing groups together around these commonalities provides a platform for addressing challenges, accessing peer support and changing policy. Examples from Serco include parents, carers, veterans and graduates. With these groups in place, you can personalise your wellbeing content and support for the specific needs of these groups while also driving engagement and feelings of belonging.

Which groups are under-represented in your organisation?

ERGs boost visibility and inclusion for under-represented groups of workers. To get the most out of your ERGs, identify these groups in your organisation.

Ensuring network groups for protected characteristics is a good starting point but also consider multiple dimensions. For example, at Serco we created specific groups for different sectors of the business, like women in defence. You can also ask your employees which groups they'd first like to have created.

From leaders for leaders

Frontline insights from the top workplace health leaders

BUILDING DEI NETWORKS

“ As a leader, although you can sympathise, you will not be able to understand every DEI challenge that your people face as their lived experience will be different to yours.

Where you can't directly understand the experiences and concerns of your colleagues, make sure you can signpost towards somebody who can help.

Find the external networks around your organisation that will be able to support with different DEI challenges. Charities, volunteer or community groups and local faith groups are a great place to start.

Make sure you really engage with these organisations - contact and speak to them directly. Then you can speak more confidently about what they offer, and this will in turn make your team feel more confident about engaging with them.



DR STEPHANIE FITZGERALD

Founder of Soyo Ltd, clinical psychologist, author and consultant

HOLISTIC WELLBEING

“ A one size fits all approach to wellbeing is outdated and will only serve a proportion of an organisation's workforce.

Adopting an equitable approach to health and wellbeing will ensure that every individual benefits. Health equity considers the needs of a diverse workforce and should encompass all aspects of life that can have an impact on people being well.

At Keller we adopted a holistic and inclusive wellbeing model that identifies five Foundations of Wellbeing to support our people's unique and individual needs – Body, Mind, Community, Growth, and Financial Security.

To enable our leaders to support our people effectively, we provided them with the tools and know-how through the delivery of targeted training programmes, a leadership toolkit and by embedding wellbeing into career conversations.

Our annual engagement employee surveys also give us the opportunity to hear what matters most to our people and how we are doing on wellbeing and inclusion.



SANDY-LEE CONNOLLY

Group Head of Talent and Diversity at Keller Group

TAILOR YOUR APPROACH

“ When we were building our wellbeing strategy we found that everyone’s wellbeing journey was different and therefore a one size fits all approach wasn’t appropriate.

It’s important to find a solution that can be tailored to each individual’s needs and I would also say listening to colleagues is key to this.

Gather as much information as possible from different colleague groups to help you build your understanding and insight on what will have the biggest impact.



STEVE BIRD
Wellbeing Manager at Currys

ABSENCE POLICIES

“ As an employer it’s important to strip back your absence policies and review them with an inclusion lens. How are you providing equity for all staff experiencing poor mental health? What are the unique barriers to accessing support for different groups in your organisation?

It may help to do this review using a working group comprised of a cross section from the wider team, rather than just HR.



BETH SAMSON
People Director at Investors in People

REMOVE UNCERTAINTY

“ Employers must understand that uncertainty creates anxiety, and in a world full of conflict and bad news, young people need to feel supported to get the best out of them.

Clear communication, regular 1-2-1 interaction, and being predictable as a leader are great ways to ease symptoms of anxiety and potentially low mood. If your employees can predict how you will act in any situation and receive clear guidance with regular support, they are far less likely to feel anxious, and more likely to exceed your expectations.



SIMON JAY
Director of Strategic Partnerships at Thriva


VISION AND VALUES

“ To establish and sustain healthy working environments, leaders must consider different wellbeing needs across demographics. Therefore, develop your vision and values to include a commitment to wellbeing and belonging. This should be reflected in your policies, recruitment, induction process and line manager training.

You should also get to know the individuals on your teams. To find out how to support someone, ask them, and empower them with the space and safety to answer you honestly.



SARAH RESTALL
Director of People and Client Services at Wellbeing With Cari



CHAPTER 5

Support seeking

Despite considerable mental health investment by organisations, ensuring that this support is actually utilised remains a key challenge.

While many organisations now offer mental health support, such as employee assistance programs, employees are still reluctant to engage with them.

The scale of this challenge is laid bare in the numbers: our data reveals that just 9% of employees are currently seeking support for their mental health.

Consider this figure alongside the scale of mental health challenges facing our employees - 64% are experiencing symptoms of anxiety - and you'll understand the importance of this issue.

Employers must be proactive about addressing the gap between employees who need support and employees who access support.



Broadening the definition of support seeking

Support seeking does not need to mean professional support from a therapist or counsellor. While invaluable for many, this level of support can be prohibitive.

Alongside professional support, consider other ways to provide help to your people.

Having a person-centred conversation is support. Just checking in with someone is offering support.

These forms of support are far easier to proactively offer and will lead to employees seeking more professional services if they need to.

Symptoms of anxiety vs support seeking



What's more, despite the prevalence of feelings of anxiety and low mood, just 1 in 5 professionals report a current mental health diagnosis.

This suggests many undiagnosed mental health conditions within the workforce.

Ultimately, providing support is not enough. Employers must also take a proactive approach that ensures colleagues are able to fully utilise existing support.

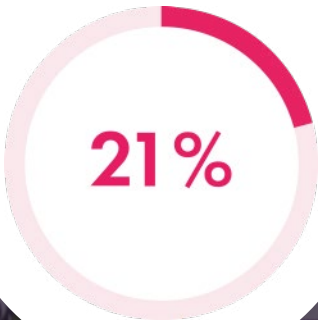


What is a mental health diagnosis?

A mental health diagnosis is made by a mental health professional - like a GP or psychologist - based on an evaluation.

Mental health diagnoses can help individuals understand and manage their symptoms. They can also be a helpful step in the process of seeking treatment and support.

Employees with a current mental health diagnosis



LINE MANAGERS

“ Line managers play a crucial role in supporting individuals and creating inclusive teams, where people feel psychologically safe on a day-to-day basis.

Their effectiveness in doing so is ever more important as more and more people work flexibly.

Good managers want to manage people. They recognise that performance and wellbeing go hand in hand. Doing their job well means having good quality conversations about mental health and knowing how to support people to access further help.

This means they need both the training and dedicated time in their day to manage and support their teams. Great managers are worth their weight in gold. At MHFA England we have produced a free toolkit for managers to support with this ^[1].



SIMON BLAKE OBE (HE/HIM)
CEO at Mental Health First Aid England

^[1] Search 'MHFA My Whole Self resources'

Removing barriers to support

As part of a wider report into mental health at work, leading charity Business in the Community asked professionals why they did not seek support from their employer when they were struggling ^[1].

On this page, we've summarised the top reasons why employees did not seek support and asked the experts to provide actions you can take to address these.

ACCESSIBILITY

“ Offer a variety of wellbeing entry points, to ensure every employee can access support when they need to. For example, younger employees are much more likely to use text rather than in-person services, so make sure you offer those alternatives.

You must also use language that is inclusive and accessible. Be mindful of cultural barriers. Pushing someone towards certain types of support may be frowned upon in their culture and is making the problem worse.

Finally, have people who are representative of the employees promote the services. Manual employees are unlikely to respond to someone wearing a suit. They need to see someone they resonate with promoting the services.



JAMIE BROADLEY
Group Head of Health & Wellbeing at Sercos

CONSEQUENCES

“ Develop an open culture where people are encouraged to be vulnerable and share their personal stories. As a leader, you have a key role to play in this.

If you want your team to seek support, without fear of any judgement, then you need to show that you proactively seek help and use the tools provided by your business yourself. Openly discussing lived experience with your teams provides that permission, and sets a powerful example of the positive impact it can have.



BEX MOORHOUSE
Founder of Invigorate Spaces Ltd, previously Workplace Design + Connectivity Director at Nike

CONFIDENTIALITY

“ Be very transparent with your people about your organisation's confidentiality clauses, including when confidentiality must be broken.

Promise that nothing will be disclosed to people who do not need to know. If anyone breaks that promise, then hold them accountable to that.

Trust in confidentiality is very difficult to repair when it is broken.



DR STEPHANIE FITZGERALD
Founder of Soyo Ltd, clinical psychologist, author and consultant

A glowing lightbulb is the central focus, filled with a dense cloud of red and blue particles that create a vibrant, energetic atmosphere. The lightbulb is positioned on the right side of the frame, with its glow illuminating the surrounding dark space. The overall aesthetic is futuristic and dynamic, suggesting innovation and action.

CHAPTER 6

Insight into action

Making the case for mental health investment



HARRY BLISS
CEO and Co-founder at Champion Health

Looking at this data, you can see that mental health is everyone's business - quite literally.

If your employees are struggling with their mental health it will be reflected in their performance. Poor mental health leads to absence, presenteeism, and staff turnover.

When implemented well, mental health initiatives provide a significant return on investment. Follow these steps to maximise your return:

1. Find a route to generate data on the specific health areas that need investment
2. Use this data to develop a proactive health and wellbeing strategy
3. Ensure your strategy focuses on prevention and intervention

Without following these three simple rules, you risk reacting to issues when it's too late. You're also at risk of allocating resources to the health areas that don't require attention while missing the areas that urgently need it.

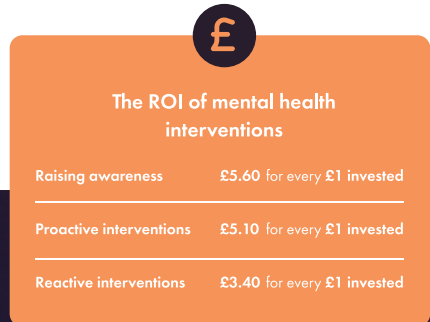
Use these statistics to underpin your rationale when presenting the business case.



Deloitte: Mental health and employers: refreshing the case for investment



Champion Health: The global productivity report [↗](#)



Deloitte: Mental health and employers: the case for investment – pandemic and beyond

Securing senior leadership buy-in with wellbeing

You've built your business case for mental health investment. But how do you convince your senior leadership team to invest?

Securing leadership buy-in is a journey. Luckily, this journey can be expedited. When it comes to getting leadership buy-in, think about it in terms of **zealots** and **converts**.

In every senior leadership team I've worked with, I've found that there is almost always someone already on board with wellbeing. This is your zealot.

Your zealot is already bought-in to wellbeing and they know how decisions are made at the top. Talk to them to understand the who, the how, and the decision-making points you need to get wellbeing embedded across the whole organisation.

Now you know what to do, your next challenge is to convince everyone else. Do this by identifying the most sceptical member of the senior leadership team when it comes to investment in wellbeing. This is your convert.

Your convert may be familiar with profit and loss accounts, but less familiar with the factors that increase or decrease the 'wellbeing accounts' of their people.



Your convert needs to visualise the return on investment – and this means providing data. Luckily, the data on the previous page presents a strong business case for even your toughest convert.

Search online and you'll find plenty more studies showing that when leaders invest in wellbeing, business outcomes improve. These outcomes include increased long-term stock price, higher retention rates, and an improved ability to recruit top talent.

Present your business case and work that space until your convert is convinced – and converted. When your convert is talking about wellbeing and why your company should invest, the wider leadership are much more likely to follow their lead.



DR RICHARD HERON

Health, Work, Wellbeing & Performance
Consultant, Former Vice President, Health
at BP

Choosing the right wellbeing provider

ARTI KASHYAP-AYNSLEY
Global Head of Wellbeing & Inclusion
at Ocado Group



You've won over the senior team and secured budget to invest in supporting employee wellbeing. Now you have the responsibility to spend that budget wisely.

So how do you choose the right provider? Here are six key questions to ask your potential partners. You may already have a supplier. If so, test yourself - can you answer these questions?

What is the full user experience?

For each employee persona, you must explore the full user experience, identify gaps, and ask clarifying questions. To communicate effectively and generate engagement, you must first understand the entire experience.

What Service Level Agreements (SLAs) are in place?

This question lets you test out what the level of service really is. Is it different to what was pitched to you? The SLAs are your way of ensuring a level of service you expect. As a buyer, you are promising something to your staff and you have a right to require a level of service.

Can I pilot the offering first?

Testing the service on a subset of employees before committing to a long-term contract allows you to try-before-you-buy. It will also help you to understand if the provider is willing to meet you where you are. Plus, it allows you to open up conversations about licence numbers.

Can I speak to other clients of yours about your product?

Ideally, you're looking for client contacts in similar industries or those with similar employee demographics. In my experience, clients of providers will openly talk and share both benefits and pain points. Both are so helpful and will give you a real view into what it is like to work with a given partner.

How does your team work with ours after the contract sign on?

When you sign up with a provider, you sign up to a partner. You want to ensure they are just as invested in you as you are in them. Find out how often you'll meet, who your key points of contact are, and who you should contact for escalation. Document the response and ensure it's reflected in the contract.

What level of reporting and data do we get?

If you can't measure it, you can't manage it. You ultimately want to ensure the data you receive is meaningful and relevant for your business. Test if the provider is willing to understand what you need and provide for that. Finally, ask if your data can be viewed by country, region, or office location.

Why your leaders must become influencers

A significant value gap has emerged within the wellbeing sector. Despite investment in wellness, many employees are not engaging.

This gap is a huge challenge for employers. When a mental health or wellness programme fails to deliver, it can lead to frustration, disappointment, and employee disengagement.

There are many reasons for this, but - crucially - key people are failing to grasp their role in making a wellbeing programme successful. It's time for HR to get in the driving seat and start a brave conversation with their leaders.

In today's digital age, the similarities between business leaders and social media influencers are significant. But most leaders don't appreciate why. Because of the impact on their respective audiences, one of the key similarities is the importance of building and maintaining a personal brand.

Just as influencers curate their online presence to engage followers, leaders must develop a strong personal brand to attract customers, investors, and employees. And just as social media influencers must be authentic to build trust with their followers, business leaders must be authentic to build trust with their employees - and customers.

Leaders and influencers must also be able to connect with their audience on a personal level, and use their platform to inspire, educate, and engage.

Finally, both leaders and influencers have the ability to inspire and drive action. Put simply, by leveraging influence and authority, leaders can help drive positive change within their organisation and beyond.

Can you spot the issue? Most, not all, leaders do not apply the above principles to the wellbeing conversation.

Your objective as a HR professional is to help your leaders understand their role as influencers. For wellbeing to be a success, your leaders must be authentic, value-driven, and expert communicators.

For many, this will be a challenge. But, it can be overcome. And when it is, I believe you'll see better results within your wellbeing programmes.



NICK MCCLELLAND
Chief Growth Officer at Champion Health

10 ways to support mental health at work

For HR and people leaders, this checklist contains small (and large) changes you can make in your workplace to support mental health.

1 Promote a mentally healthy organisational culture. Ensure that your people leaders role model healthy behaviours, are open about their own struggles, and discuss employee mental health empathetically in 1:1 meetings.

3 Train your team in the CLASS Approach. The CLASS Approach (P9) will give every employee the confidence to connect, listen, assess, support, and signpost their colleagues, so they can get the right help at the right time.

5 Offer flexible working. Flexible working hours can provide huge relief for employees, particularly those with caring responsibilities.

7 Promote financial wellbeing support. Clearly communicate your financial benefits. If you don't offer any, signpost employees to free external services, like the UK's Money and Pensions Service helpline.

9 Develop your external DEI network. Are there DEI issues your HR team can't help with? Create a group of external organisations that you can refer employees to if they need assistance. Revisit P27 for more information.

2 Collect data on mental health. Use data to identify the areas of mental health in which your employees need support. Achieve this through internal surveys or wellbeing services, like Champion Health.

4 Implement stress reduction initiatives. Audit your meetings (P15), ring-fence your 1:1s and ensure that you're working with your employees to come up with solutions to help manage their workload.

6 Provide crisis training for your team. Ensure your colleagues understand the warning signs of suicide and can signpost struggling employees towards the right support. Every employee can help save lives.

8 Create or improve your employees resource groups (ERGs). ERGs boost inclusion, enhance feelings of belonging and foster a more diverse workplace. Use Jamie's questions (P26) to create or improve your own ERGs.

10 Measure the impact of your wellbeing services. Use Arti's questions (P36) to determine if your wellbeing services provide effective support. If you don't have a service in place, use them to choose the right provider for you.

Discover Champion Health

Support your people with a powerful digital platform and human-led expertise.

Champion Health provides your people with the tools they need to improve their wellbeing through an award-winning digital platform and in-person support – all in one place.

And as your people improve their health, we'll turn your wellbeing strategy from gut-feel to data-led and provide the foundations you need to drive cultural change.

Find out how you can support your people, managers, and leaders as you generate sustainable engagement with wellbeing. Talk to us today and discover Champion Health.

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