

Employee health and well-being

Explore the CIPD's point of view on health and well-being at work, including actions for Government and recommendations for employers

With only half of organisations having employee well-being on senior leaders' agendas, health and well-being needs to be a core element of any HR strategy, and central to the way an organisation operates.

The latest official data shows that almost 27 million working days were lost to work-related ill health in 2017/18, with 1.4 million people suffering from a work-related illness. CIPD research shows that the average level of employee absence is 5.9 days per employee per year. Although this figure has been falling over the last decade, it does, however, mask the fact that most people continue to work when unwell, while many employees even use holiday or sick leave to work.

The UK's ageing workforce also means that employers will increasingly need to ensure they are taking a more strategic approach to supporting the health and well-being of their employees.

Employers have a fundamental duty of care for the physical and mental health and well-being of their workers. However, our research shows that only around half of organisations have employee well-being on their senior leaders' agendas.

A focus on employee health and well-being should be a core element of any HR strategy, and central to the way an organisation operates and fulfils its mission. It should not simply consist of one-off initiatives.

As well as benefiting employees, an integrated approach to well-being can increase employee engagement, fostering a joint commitment to organisational success.

In line with wider evidence, our research shows that the main risks to employee health are now psychological, with mental ill-health and stress being the top two causes of long-term absences. Yet an ageing workforce means implications such as age-related disabilities and long-term health conditions must also be weighed and managed if workplace health and well-being is to be holistically addressed.

- Launch a major, ongoing and well-resourced publicity and education campaign,

aligned with the Disability Confident campaign, to encourage a culture of inclusion among employers.

- Establish a 'one-stop-shop' to make it easier for employers to navigate the many sources of information, advice and guidance already available on workplace health and well-being.
- Ensure that employers conduct risk assessments for work-related stress by providing the Health and Safety Executive with the resources to promote employer compliance with obligations under existing health and safety law.
- Redesign statutory sick pay so that it can support employees to make a more effective and sustainable phased return to work.
- Allow other allied healthcare professionals to sign fit notes, building on the review of how the fit note operates.
- Replace the Fit for Work Service with the national implementation of a preventative and targeted occupational health service to support organisations with return-to-work programmes, particularly SMEs.
- Ensure that senior leaders are aware of the importance of workplace health and well-being, and that they champion the relevant actions to ensure that it's taken seriously across the organisation.
- Train line managers and supervisors to manage people well. Line managers are key to employee well-being. Good line managers ensure people's workloads are manageable, provide clear objectives and constructive feedback. They also provide support and flexibility if their employees have health problems or struggle to manage caring responsibilities.
- Provide early access to occupational health support.
- Develop an evidence-based understanding of the causes of absence and unhealthy practices, such as 'presenteeism' and 'leaveism'. Unless the underlying issues prompting people's behaviours are addressed, efforts to support employees and improve health and well-being will be short-lived.
- Tailor policies and practices to organisational and employee needs. There is no 'one-size-fits-all' approach to designing an effective employee well-being strategy; its content should be based on the organisation's unique needs and characteristics, and of course those of its employees.

- Build a more robust organisational framework to promote good mental health.
 - Carry out a risk assessment or audit on work-related stress across the workforce. This is a statutory duty but should also be seen by employers as a preventive measure.
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Reports

- [Health and well-being at work survey report 2019](#)
- [UK Working Lives 2018](#)
- [Employee Outlook: mental health and well-being 2016](#)
- [Growing the health and well-being agenda: from first steps to full potential](#)

Guidance and factsheets

- [Well-being at work](#)
- [Mental health in the workplace](#)
- [Recruiting, managing and developing people with a disability or health condition](#)
- Joint guidance for people managers with Mind: [Supporting mental health at work](#)

Consultation responses

- [Work, Health and Disability Green Paper: improving lives](#)