

Staying well in
the workplace:
setting up a supportive
wellbeing strategy

Introduction



Workplace health and wellbeing is one of the most important parts of your business.

Simply, this is about how your company demonstrates the value of your people, and how you support them to lead healthy and fulfilling lives, both inside and outside of work.

Yet despite this, many employers remain slow to make the connection between workplace wellbeing and the effect on the health and performance

of the organisation.

Wellbeing is already a complex topic, with no 'one size fits all' solution - and with more and more of the population working remotely, as well as expectations rising for employers to provide a top office culture, setting a wellbeing strategy that works for everyone is becoming even more of a challenge.



So, what's the problem?

Common challenges include lack of budget, low priority, low buy in, and that wellbeing strategies are seen as wishy washy or an unmeasurable return on investment. Some employers also don't believe it's their responsibility to look after the wellbeing of their people –

other than meeting the standards set by employment law.

But employers who think that way are very much missing the point. Because, not only is focusing on employee wellbeing a question of morality it also reaps business rewards.

In fact, investing in employee health is good for business.

In addition to encouraging your workforce to stay well (and therefore reduce absence), office culture is fast becoming a key differentiator for recruitment and retention. But reshaping the workplace to appeal to potential employees needs to go beyond the delivery of the latest technology and pay rises.

Improving employee health and wellbeing is a powerful workplace benefit. Showing your business as a responsible employer plays a huge part in attracting talent, retaining staff, improving employee engagement and boosting your business' reputation.



But why do you need a specific wellbeing strategy?

Without an overarching strategy, many companies end up implementing wellbeing initiatives separately without considering what their employees really need and how the initiatives can work alongside each other.

This can create a disjointed, underused strategy that wastes money and is hard to measure – ultimately, causing decision makers to question the value wellbeing initiatives have in their workplace.



So, in the rest of this guide we'll offer guidance on setting up a wellbeing strategy that works. Take a look...

7 areas of wellbeing

There are seven main areas of wellbeing that could be useful to include in your wellbeing strategy.

Emotional

Most business employ human beings and that means we come with emotions. These are triggered by events that are not necessarily limited to the work situations we're facing. It can often be difficult to leave our personal lives at the office door, particularly through times of bereavement, relationship break down, concern over ill health and much more. So, the emotional wellbeing side of your wellbeing strategy should cover a range of issues including mental health issues such as stress, depression and anxiety, and work-specific areas that could affect employee emotional health such as workload management, dealing with conflict in the workplace and working as a team.

What could you do?

Employee assistance programmes (EAP), mental health awareness activities, mental health in the workplace training, mental health first aiders, emotions at work training, flexible working arrangements, duvet days.



Financial

Worrying about finances can be detrimental to our wellbeing. Financial wellbeing is about feeling in control of your day-to-day finances and being able to plan for the long term - bringing a sense of security .

What could you do?

Share scheme, savings scheme, bonus, pay rise structure, debt advice, money advice, mortgage advice, childcare vouchers.



Physical

Staying in shape is important for all kinds of health reasons – and this means different things to different people. But of course, physical wellbeing doesn't stop at diet and exercise; workplaces are often rife with risks to physical wellbeing including neck and back pain from sitting at desks, repetitive strain injury caused by completing manual tasks, and eye strain caused by office lighting or equipment.

What could you do?

Discounted gym schemes, cycle to work scheme, lunch time exercise clubs, desk assessments, optical health care, health care scheme, fruity Friday, walking meetings.

Environmental

In addition to having the equipment you need to do your job comfortably, your office space can be extremely important to your wellbeing. Considerations include: office cleanliness, the office temperature, availability of break rooms and quiet spaces, proximity to clean air and nature, availability of food and equipment that provides the ability to make your own food.

What could you do?

Add a pool table, make sure there's an adequate amount of kitchen equipment, refresh your cleaning strategy, provide cleaning wipes, tissues, and quality soap.

Giving back

Helping others plays a huge role in our wellbeing. Some organisations may contribute to this area of wellbeing naturally (for example, charities), but others may decide to offer employees the opportunity to take part in activities that promote giving back to the business, community or society at large.

What could you do?

Philanthropy groups such as charity committees, mentoring schemes, giving back days, charitable giving through salary sacrifice, in-house recycling.

Community

While a percentage of employees will tell you that they want to keep their personal and work lives separate, it is still important for wellbeing that you feel valued and know that your work matters. While this might sound idealistic, building your business around a thriving community of people working together towards a common goal is a great step forward in fulfilling this area of wellbeing.

What could you do?

Social clubs for employees, regular social events, set budget for team activities.

Intellectual

A focus on continuous improvement and career development is another important aspect of our wellbeing. As human beings, we need to feel stimulated and that we're progressing, and for most of us work plays a huge role.

What could you do?

A learning and development strategy that includes items such as mentoring, training courses, professional qualifications, career paths.

Setting your strategy

Ask for input

It's important to ask your people (at all levels) what a useful wellbeing strategy looks like at within your business. You could set up focus groups to gain insight into the types of activities that could help, or a working party to help you put your plan in place.

Gain buy in

One of the key reasons wellbeing in the workplace isn't given the attention it deserves is because leaders and other key decision makers don't recognise the importance. So, find your backers and doubters early and get them on board. Use stats on workplace wellbeing, testimonials from employees (with permission), and case studies from other businesses to help them recognise all the ways a supportive wellbeing strategy will help the business thrive.

Set a budget

If you were lucky enough to have an unlimited budget, you could spend millions on employee wellbeing. But to make sure you set up a spend that can be carried by the business, set a budget early on so there are no expensive surprises along the way. Consider setting a start-up cost and an annual cost for any schemes you want to offer. Also remember to budget for any in-house activities you'd like to run (such as fruity Friday). Remember though, that there are also a lot of activities you can run for free – particularly by involving employees in sharing best practice or using technology and tools that you already have.

Stay flexible

Wellbeing isn't a 'one size fits all' topic, so it's important to make your wellbeing strategy flexible in as many ways as you can. For example, childcare vouchers won't be useful for your employees who don't have kids. You should also remember that your workforce may live and work in different offices in different towns, so a discounted gym will be no use to them if not close to where they live. Include remote workers too – they're not likely to be able to join a lunchtime financial workshop in meeting room two. So, make sure you consider how you make your plans accessible to everyone. Similarly, make items optional wherever you can – especially if there are tax implications for example when signing employees up to healthcare schemes.

For more guidance on wellbeing and other topics affecting your business due to the Coronavirus pandemic, explore the free resources on our Here to Help hub.

irishr.co.uk/here-to-help

Utilise external experts

You're not expected to be the experts in all aspects of workplace wellbeing, so reach outside the business to find organisations who can contribute to your strategy. For example, mental health charity Mind offer lots of free information and activities to help promote wellbeing in the workplace. There are also numerous fantastic organisations you can partner with to provide aspects of your employee wellbeing scheme, such as a healthcare scheme and EAP.



Communicate

A top notch wellbeing strategy that your employees don't know about would simply be a waste of time. So, you need a dedicated communication plan to set out how you're going to launch your plan and how you'll keep an ongoing interest in wellbeing within your business. Areas to consider include: will everything be ready to go at the same time, or do you need to introduce the plan gradually?; can you 'brand' your strategy so your wellbeing communications are instantly recognised by employees?; how can your employees find out all the wellbeing available to them and where can they find out more? You should also set up channels for your employees to let you know how they're feeling and to make suggestions on how you can enhance your wellbeing offering even further.

Build in measurement

How will you measure the success of your wellbeing strategy and how can employees provide ad hoc feedback and suggestions? You need to build these things into your strategy from the beginning. If your business already runs an employee survey, perhaps you can build questions around both general wellbeing and the wellbeing strategy. Or you might be able to create a wellbeing microsite that provides analytics on how many employees have viewed information on each item of your strategy. Whatever you decide is fine - as long as you're able to gather insight on what aspects of your strategy are helpful, what's not working and gather suggestions from your employees, you'll be able to keep refining your strategy to make it the most useful it can possibly be.

Remembering remote workers

With more and more employees working away from a traditional office setting, make sure your wellbeing strategy is support them too. Here are a few ideas...

Stay connected

Working from home with no water fountain chat or group lunches can be isolating. So, it's essential you find ways to keep all of your employees connected – not only for work purposes, but to build a sense of community within your business. Social video calls will help with this – suggested topics include funny things your pets have been doing, great films you've been watching, or you could even set up a regular virtual 'pub quiz'.

Recognise and reward

Reward and recognition should be open to all of your employees – an early finish, extended lunch break, and an additional day's annual leave are all great ways to reward your hard-working remote workers. And praise for a job well done can continue on video calls, through email, and publicly on LinkedIn.

Get equipt

You should be making sure your remote workers have all the office equipment they need to work away from the office. If they travel often, what could help them while on the road? Or if they're working from home, do they have the same standard of equipment as your office based workers? If they don't, let them know how they can request items.



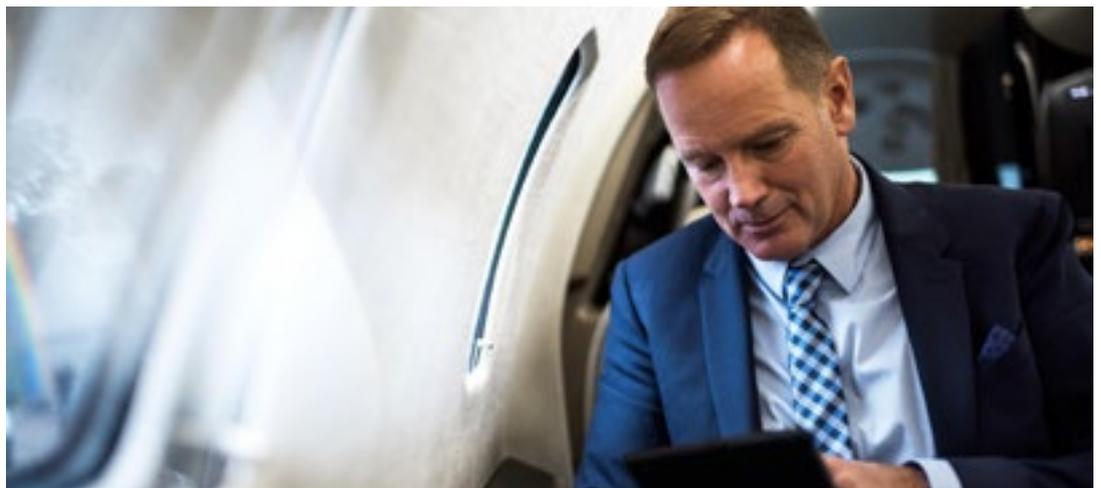
Offer flexibility

Wherever possible, offering flexibility will be a great way to show your remote workers you trust them.

If they're working remotely for a reason, for example childcare, would flexible working hours help? Or if they're travelling

frequently, they're likely to be racking up long working days - can they take back some of their travel time as time-in-lieu?

Find out and be as accommodating as you can.



Keep moving

It's all too easy to become sedentary while working remotely - particularly if you're working from home. And this is unhealthy for all kinds of different reasons. Encourage your people to keep moving by launching 'steps' competitions, setting up 'walking meetings', or even putting on virtual lunchtime yoga.

Listen

It's important to remind your remote workers about the wellbeing schemes available to them, highlighting anything that could be particularly helpful while they're away from the office. But it's even more important to ask them what else could help. Set up channels so your remote workers can let you know how they're feeling and to make suggestions on how you can enhance your wellbeing offering even further.

How IRIS HR Professional can help

A few of the ways our software can support your wellbeing strategy:

Managing absence

- > IRIS HR Professional can enable you to automate return to work processes which can help to make sure your employees are supported when they come back to work after any type of absence, but especially when mental health related. In this situation, it's even more important to offer a smooth integration back into the business, without additional stress.
- > Payroll integration enables you to easily calculate statutory sick pay and pay for other statutory leave including maternity pay and adoption. This clear visibility of pay can reduce additional stress caused by financial concerns.

Monitoring stress levels

- > You can run detailed absence reports on topics such as the cost of absence, the Bradford factor, weekly holiday leave, and headcount status. Absence types and reasons can be customised to make sure it's relevant to your company.
- > You can also build surveys (which can be anonymised) to monitor stress, wellbeing and employee engagement using the 'query builder' function.

Supporting a work/life balance

- > Time sheets for flexible working patterns, as well as time off in lieu, can be managed through IRIS HR Professional's self-service functionality
- > You can also keep a wellbeing library of documents within IRIS HR Professional, offering your employees help and advice on a host of wellbeing topics, including stress management.

Book a demo to explore how IRIS HR Professional can support wellbeing in your workplace.

Or speak to one of our expert team on 0344 815 5554.



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