

The future of financial services:
how work is impacted by the connection and convergence
of people and technology

The future of wellness programmes

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Where are we now?

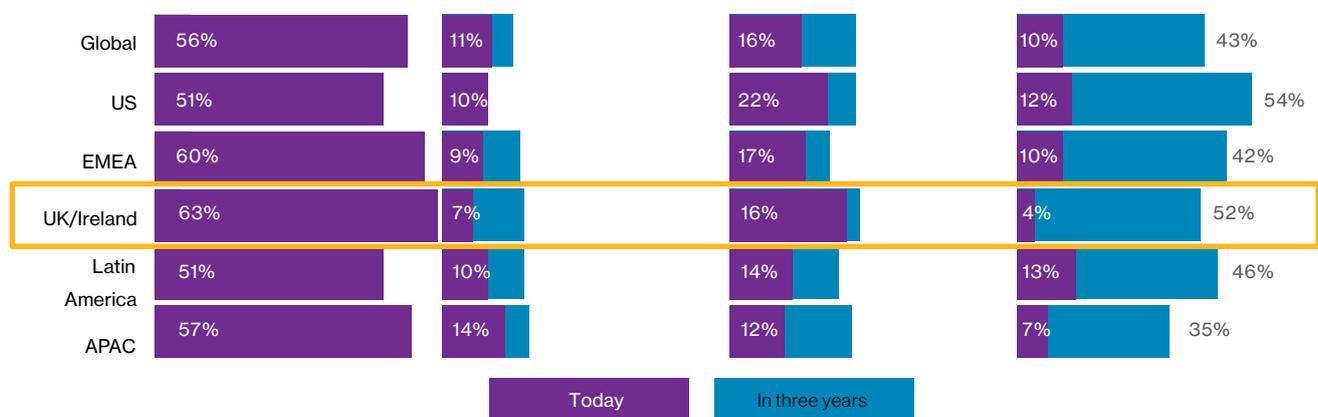
It is widely accepted that positive wellbeing and productivity are intrinsically linked.

And on the whole, employers understand that programmes that look to reduce their employees' health risks and improve overall health and wellbeing will lead to better business outcomes and heightened levels of financial performance. But it takes more than recognition of a correlation to implement an effective and robust health and wellbeing strategy.

Willis Towers Watson's Staying@Work Survey found that over 60% of UK employers have no health and wellbeing strategy and instead simply offer various standalone health and wellbeing programmes.

Employers are taking the next step in health & productivity (H&P) strategy as a key competitive advantage

No strategy	Adopt strategy	Communicate and deliver	Differentiate H&P strategy
Offered various programmes but have not articulated and H&P strategy	Articulated an H&P strategy with stated objectives and goals for each programme	Effectively communicated the value proposition behind the H&P programme and delivered on its promises	Customised for critical workforce segments and used organisational analytics to test programme effectiveness

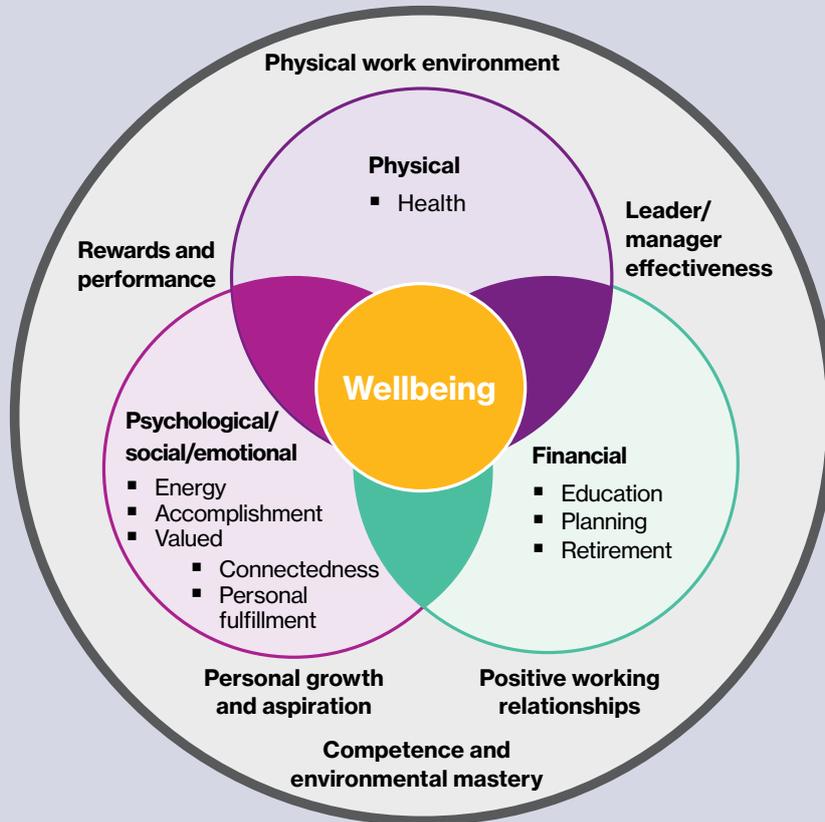


Source: 2015/2016 Global Staying@Work Survey

But with employee health risks among the foremost workplace issues faced by employers today, businesses can ill afford to take a fragmented, disconnected approach to health and wellbeing.

Wellness programmes need to move away from being rigid and meaningless tick-box exercises (standalone programmes) towards being holistic, tailored, adaptable and most importantly, measurable (a coherent strategy). After all, the value of wellness initiatives can only be appreciated – and direction decided – if results are available.

The ultimate goal for businesses is to build a culture of health and wellbeing within the workplace, which will, in the long-term, help them to retain key talent, boost productivity and cement their reputation as a leading employer in their field. A recognition should be made that wellbeing, in its broadest sense, addresses physical, psychological, social and financial wellbeing and also considers the impact of the working environment and relationships on employees.



A new chapter

We are at a crucial crossroads when it comes to wellness initiatives – what would have been deemed appropriate a few years ago is no longer sufficient. The workplace is fast evolving, accelerated by advances in technology.

We are witnessing a shift towards flexible and remote working, a rise in contract workers and outsourced resources and a move towards assigning ‘tasks’ as opposed to job roles.

To keep up with such changes, companies will be looking at their business strategy, talent landscape and organisational culture. And as wellness programmes underpin a business’s total reward offering, it is imperative that these are adapted to suit the new workplace environment and changing demographic.

After all, two-thirds of UK workers claim benefit provision is important in their decision to work for a company, with 28 per cent of them claiming it is very important¹. Only 4% say it is not at all important.

Now is the perfect opportunity for companies to review and reinvigorate the wellness conversation and consider if they are taking a holistic approach to wellbeing, in line with the changing profile of the organisation, employee needs and expectations.

Time to listen

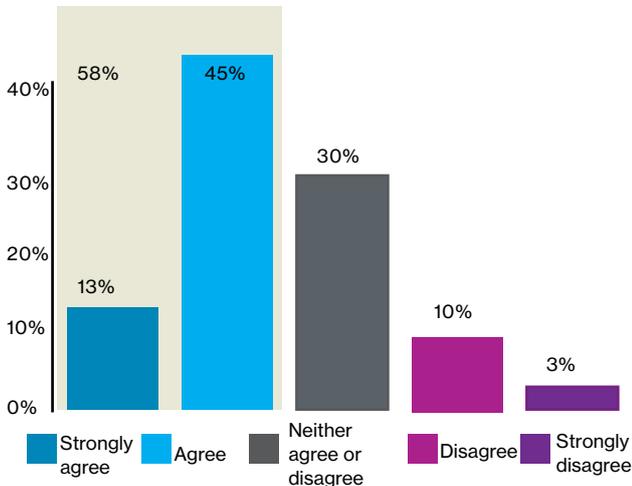
Workers’ expectations of wellbeing initiatives are changing too, due in part to the greater normalisation of mental health considerations in the workplace, employees becoming more receptive to psychological interventions and improved understanding of non-communicable diseases.

Willis Towers Watson’s Global Benefits Attitude survey found that the majority (56%) of UK employees believe their employer now has a role to play in helping them live healthier lifestyles and three in five employees view managing their health as a top priority in their life.

Couple this with the fact that 97% of UK employers are committed to health and productivity in the years ahead² and you have a strong springboard for positive interaction and engagement. The intent is there.

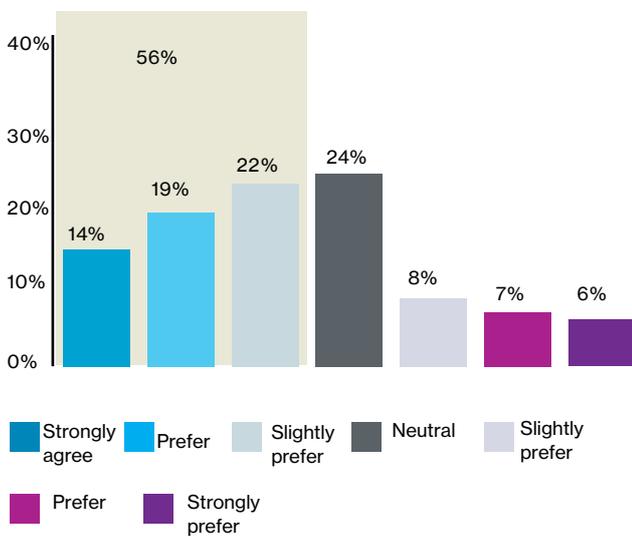
Yet, health is a clear employee priority in the UK

Employees: health as a priority



Employers should take an active role in encouraging their employees to live healthy lifestyles

It is not the role of an employer to encourage their employees to live healthy lifestyles



Leading the way

Less than half (44%) of UK employees are satisfied with the range of benefits they receive from their employer¹ and two-fifths claim that initiatives offered by their employer do not meet their needs², there is an evident disconnect between what employers think employees need and what they really value.

In order for employees to be convinced that employers have their health and wellbeing at heart, businesses need to build trust. Senior leadership is key in building this trust and shaping a general culture of health and wellbeing in the workplace – so early leadership buy-in should be encouraged.

Employee engagement and senior leadership co-operation should be the building blocks of any effective health and wellbeing strategy and businesses can help achieve this goal by being transparent with the workforce and listening to their feedback.

It is tempting to take a top-down approach to health and wellbeing strategies but in the long run, this will only serve to fail the very people the strategies are meant to be benefitting. Businesses should look to strike the balance and promote interconnectivity.

Return on investment (ROI) vs value of investment (VOI)

Just as the workplace and employee expectations are rapidly changing, so too is the definition of a successful wellness strategy.

More and more companies are using VOI to evaluate their employee wellness programmes. This is because it encompasses the invaluable benefits of employee health, as opposed to strictly the financial return. With VOI, values such as employee satisfaction, sickness absence and change in health risks are taken into account, alongside the financial savings on healthcare and disability costs.

It is becoming an increasingly popular measure and reinforces the ideal that employers take a co-ordinated approach to wellness instead of focusing solely on cost and ROI.

Changing profile of workers

We are familiar with the concept of the aging workforce. Over the next decade in the UK there will be 3.7 million more workers aged between 50 and state pension age, according to the Office for National Statistics (ONS).

In addition, the scrapping of the default retirement age, combined with other factors, including shortfalls in pensions and savings provision, is expected to significantly compound this trend.

So, wellness programmes will increasingly have to cater for a multi-generational workforce. But there is a danger that subsets will feel isolated if benefits are not seen to be inclusive.

In Willis Towers Watson's GB Health and Benefits Barometer 2017, a disconnect was identified among older workers. Close to half (49%) of those surveyed said their employers make provision for their health and wellbeing but this figure drops to 39 per cent among 45 to 54-year-olds and 31% among 55 to 64-year-olds.

¹ Willis Towers Watson GB Health and Benefits Barometer 2017

² Willis Towers Watson GB Health and Benefits Barometer 2017

And then there is the issue of the crisis-hit NHS. Almost half (48%) of respondents agreed that businesses are increasingly expected to provide for employee health in order to mask cuts to the NHS.

Considering this climate, companies should look to preventative wellness benefits and maintaining a healthy and productive workforce as a whole – taking a proactive, rather than a reactive, approach to wellbeing.

Companies should take a lead from the modern concept of Willis Towers Watson-coined human-centric health. Human-centric health leverages the precepts of behavioural economics to drive prevention and better treatment of non-communicable diseases (NCDs), such as cardiovascular disease, mental illness, cancer, respiratory disease and obesity and diabetes.

NCDs represent one of the 21st century's most significant burdens on productivity and could be responsible for an estimated cumulative output loss of US\$47 trillion globally over the next two decades.

With the concept, the onus is on the individual to take control of their own well-being rather than being passive recipients of care defined and delivered by healthcare providers. It promotes a move towards individualised treatment, based on genomics and personal preference and away from homogenous therapies.

This reinforces the need for benefits to be increasingly differentiated and individualised for them to be meaningful for employees and encourage engagement.

The research also highlights the need for behavioural changes. It found that, by default, people discount future benefits radically, displaying an irrational preference for payoffs that come today. They are optimistic about the future, so they don't always take precautions to forestall future hazards. And this trend is expected to continue.

Companies should look to address this by ensuring rewards support desired behaviour, opportunities to 'win' are embedded in programmes and communications, emphasis is placed on short-term rewards and campaigns are not just built around the risk of a future disease³. Short-term rewards will help to drive engagement in wellbeing programmes and support behavioural change although there is little evidence to suggest financial incentives are effective in driving longer-term sustainable change.

³ World Economic Forum/Willis Towers Watson report: Human-Centric Health



Embrace technology

Technology plays an integral part of human-centric health, in line with the virtual diagnostic care concept and it is set to feature more frequently in future wellness programmes.

The good news is that employees are eager to embrace new technologies to help manage their health and wellbeing. Forward-thinking employers have an opportunity to capitalise on this trend by adopting, offering and utilising the latest digital-health tools, such as wearables and apps.

By doing so they can encourage employees to make smarter health-related decisions, promote workforce engagement and take a more strategic approach to health and wellbeing programmes with employee-generated data insights.

There is a growing trend towards online coaching around health and wellbeing, which offers employees the opportunity to access guidance and training at their convenience – and in private.

Virtual access for UK employees to GPs is also becoming an increasingly common offering as a stand-alone service but also available from medical insurers and cash-plan providers. The provision enables consultations to take place via webcam or video link from a computer, tablet or smartphone. These can help overcome some of the hurdles associated with the traditional, face-to-face, family doctor appointments, including protracted waiting times and leave from work.

'Artificial Intelligence' doctors are now being developed, capable of making diagnoses using data algorithms and these also have the potential to find their way into the future workplace.

Interim workers

Another question companies must ask themselves is if and where interim workers fit into the wellness equation. And this feeds into the debate on whether benefits should differ dependent on worker type.

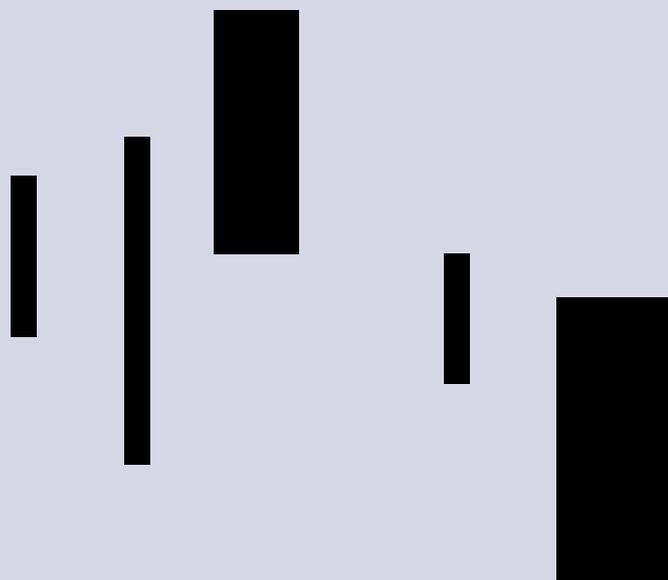
With transient staff becoming a more common occurrence in the workplace, this will become more of a prevalent issue for employers. When considering this, employers should take a number of factors into account, the first of which is productivity.

It cannot be denied that contractors are an important cog in the corporate machine and are not immune to wellbeing issues. They will be equally impacted as a permanent worker.

There is also the question of moral obligation. The Willis Towers Watson GB Health and Benefits Barometer 2017 revealed that three-quarters of workers believe their employers have a moral obligation to offer the same healthcare provision to all staff.

Protecting the brand and upholding reputation may encourage companies to look at their healthcare and wellbeing strategy and see if there is an opportunity to establish a baseline of benefits for these types of workers.

Another consideration is administration. The more inclusive the wellness programme, the more streamlined the administration process can be. Companies must weigh up the benefit of a sliding scale benefits system and the costs associated with governance.





Looking to the future

It is understandable if companies are somewhat apprehensive when it comes to developing health and wellbeing strategies in a rapidly evolving workplace – after all they are crossing uncharted waters. But they should remember that positive wellness is correlated with heightened levels of financial performance and therefore needs to be an integral part of business strategy. Treating it as so – with clear objectives and careful planning – will help companies keep focus and strive for success.

Companies already committed to a wellbeing strategy should get the best out of their current projects but look for opportunities to improve outcomes and redirect resources into new wellness benefits where possible.

Conversely, companies that have tended to take a fragmented approach to wellness in the past should look to establish a strong foundation on which to build an effective and measurable strategy suitable for a modern workplace. But no matter where a company is on their strategy 'journey', they should embrace change and keep abreast of new opportunities, such as technology developments.

And above all, they should take the time to review communications and engagement approaches so that employees can see the breadth of what wellness means for both them and their organisation.

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