

# Mental Health: We're Ready to Talk

Rethinking the approach to

mental wellbeing in the workplace

I've noticed you've been staying really  
tired. Let me know if you need to talk. Have you spoken  
Your wellbeing  
is important to this company. Investing  
in mental wellbeing is vital to our effectiveness.  
You don't seem yourself. Anything I can help  
with? We have someone you can talk to about this.  
We are a progressive business – we know it's time to change.  
I have experienced mental ill health – I can empathise.  
Let's catch up on how you're doing and what I  
can do to help. You seem yourself again.  
I'm really pleased for you. We value our  
people because that's what drives our business.  
Mental wellbeing is a boardroom issue in this company.  
We're ready to talk about mental health.

Responsible  
business  
starts at  
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With thanks to



BITC Workwell would also like to thank Cary Cooper, Distinguished Professor of Organizational Psychology and Health at Lancaster University, the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (CIPD) and The Work Foundation for their assistance in producing this report.

Founding members of the BITC Workwell Mental Health Champions group



# 1. Introduction



**BITC Workwell's new Mental Health Champions Group – which authors this report – has been founded through a desire from leading businesses to end the hugely damaging culture of silence around mental health and to develop positive steps that every business can take to improve public dialogue around the issue.**

It is my absolute pleasure to chair this group, which represents a collaborative, business-led movement, providing dedicated support and momentum to help affect change. The aim is to help mental health achieve parity with physical health as a strategic boardroom issue; to build a compelling business case for improving employee mental health; and to develop best practice resources to benefit both individual employee wellbeing and business performance.

This paper sets out the evidence that UK businesses are less competitive due to a culture of silence around mental health in the workplace, and demonstrates why the time is now for business leaders to show the way in encouraging conversation around the issue. Through an analysis of the business costs of growing levels of pressure on UK employees and by identifying key criteria for responsible people management, this report provides a route map to help ensure that mental wellbeing becomes a strategic boardroom issue.

It should be the marker of every responsible business to talk openly about mental health in the workplace. One of the first actions of the Mental Health Champions Group is working in alliance with Mind to help promote the Time to Change pledge.

We are launching the group and the campaign in Responsible Business Week 2014 and I look forward to sharing a detailed update of the campaign's achievements in Responsible Business Week 2015, after its first year. Look out for news and campaign updates over the next 12 months.

Our group has vowed to talk about mental health more openly within our organisations and with our peers because we have faith in the benefits that transparency will bring.

**We're ready to talk – are you?**

**Patrick Watt, Corporate Director, Bupa UK and Chair of BITC Workwell Mental Health Champions Group**



## Welcome to a new focus on mental health

**BITC Workwell has been developed by international business leaders with a core purpose of creating happier and healthier workforces.**

Right now, mental health is one of the biggest threats to the wellbeing of business and society. Employees across the UK are working harder and are under more pressure than ever before. Yet there remains a culture of silence around mental health at work and businesses are reluctant to report publicly on the proactive steps that are being taken to foster mental wellbeing. Employers and employees are unwilling to talk about stress, anxiety and depression openly, fearful of the associations with weakness and failure.

This culture of silence – on an individual and organisational level – results in suffering, inequality and discrimination. By not taking simple steps to discuss mental wellbeing, issues that could otherwise be resolved simply can soon develop into ill health, absence and disengagement. Organisations that ignore the need for preventative action on mental health risk long term problems, including reduced competitiveness, lower productivity and fewer prospects for sustainable growth. Conversely, the rewards for businesses that engage with this issue are huge. We need to see an urgency applied by business leaders to help bring greater momentum to ending stigma and improving the capacity for positive mental wellbeing.

BITC Workwell provides a unique business lens to the issue and is encouraging business leaders to join its campaign and to commit publicly to addressing the need for more robust support strategies in the workplace around mental health conditions such as stress, depression and anxiety. This is a crucial aspect of the BITC Workwell model, which provides a framework for businesses to support the physical, social and psychological wellbeing of employees.

**Louise Aston, Workwell Director,  
Business in the Community**

**Ready to talk? Visit:**

**[www.bitc.org.uk/programmes/workwell](http://www.bitc.org.uk/programmes/workwell)**

**#readytotalk**



## It's Time to Change

**I'm delighted that we have formed an alliance with BITC that builds on the Time to Change campaign.**

Mental health is one of the biggest health challenges of the modern age, and our understanding of it continues to grow rapidly. Fifty years ago, conditions such as stress and anxiety weren't taken seriously. Now we know that, if left untreated, they pose serious threats to mental wellbeing in the long term, presenting equal if not greater risks to reduced performance as physical ill-health. The number of people living with the everyday symptoms is vast, but these are often hidden.

This is in large part due to a culture of silence that masks the scale of the problem. Although mental health problems are common, people don't talk about them – often because they fear a negative response. However, this means people don't get the timely support they need to steer them away from developing a more serious problem.

This culture of silence is beginning to break down. Some top organisations do now talk about mental health and prioritise it. They realise that open and supportive workplaces benefit everyone – employees, employers and the bottom line. By looking after their employees' mental wellbeing, they reap the benefits through increased staff morale, loyalty, productivity and profits. But this enlightened approach is far from universal.

A stronger business voice on mental health is mission critical for UK PLC because stigma around mental health in the workplace poses acute challenges for business sustainability. Other powerful forces are also shaping our workplace culture. The way we work is changing and in-demand skills such as teamwork, collaboration, joint problem solving, flexible working and staff development all require employees who are mentally healthy, resilient, motivated and focused.

Time to Change is England's biggest programme to end the stigma and discrimination faced by people with mental health problems. It aims to break down stereotypes through social contact and has seen a 3.6% improvement in public attitudes towards people with mental health problems since its launch in 2007.

The Time to Change pledge recognises the importance of that first conversation around mental health as the most effective tool for driving long lasting change. Over 160 organisations have made a public commitment to tackle mental health stigma by signing the pledge, including Accenture, BAE Systems, British Gas, BT, Channel 4, Deloitte, E-ON, Ernst and Young, Legal & General, Lloyds TSB, PepsiCo, Shell, Telefonica and Bank of England.

Our goal is to mainstream good mental health and make it core business for all employers. As the economy recovers, we need a healthy national workforce as a key building block for growth. This is why we are working with BITC Workwell to bring Time to Change to the heart of progressive thinking around business sustainability.

**Paul Farmer, Chief Executive of Mind**

## 2. The business case for employee mental wellbeing

### The business cost of ignoring mental health

**One in four adults in the UK will experience a mental health condition in any given year, with the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) estimating the cost of mental health to the UK economy at £70 billion per year, equating to 4.5% of GDP<sup>1</sup>. Mental ill health at work is thought to cost UK employers £26 billion each year – on average £1,035 per employee<sup>2</sup>.**

Common conditions such as stress, anxiety and depression arise through a combination of work and non-work related factors, but these can soon become exacerbated through the lack of mental wellbeing support from employers.

In the right amounts, pressure at work can be positive, helping to drive results and improve individual performance. But excessive pressure – often caused by unrealistically demanding workloads – can quickly cause stress and trigger anxiety and depression. Not only does this stifle employee confidence, productivity and wellbeing, but it can also lead to more serious, chronic mental ill-health, if left untreated.

The pressure on employees is increasing as companies work to become more effective and maximise their potential for long term growth. Longer hours, increased competition for jobs and the blurring of traditional work-life boundaries is quickly leading to unprecedented emotional demands on employees.

In a recent survey the CIPD reported that half of employees surveyed had noticed an increase in workloads in their organisation in the 12 months previously, with 39% of employees reporting that

they typically feel under excessive pressure at least once or twice a week<sup>3</sup>. The Trades Union Congress has recently revealed that UK employees worked a record amount of unpaid overtime in 2013, with over 5.4m employees contributing around £640m worth of unpaid hours every week<sup>4</sup>.

*“A certain level of pressure may be desirable in a work environment as it can help motivate and encourage people to go the extra mile. But when pressure becomes excessive and exceeds individuals' ability to cope, it can have a negative impact on workers and organisational performance. Stress can impair people's cognitive ability and increases the likelihood of poor decisions or mistakes. Employees operating consistently under excessive pressure are more likely to provide poor customer service, to take time off sick, or leave permanently.*

*“Organisations that take regular temperature checks on staff stress levels, and take action to prevent or reduce stress, are much more likely to be able identify problems before they escalate to the point they damage people's health, compromise safety or impact the organisation's reputation.”*

**Ben Willmott, Head of Public Policy, CIPD**

1 Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, Mental Health and Work; United Kingdom (2014) [www.oecd.org/els/empl/mentalhealthandwork-unitedkingdom.htm](http://www.oecd.org/els/empl/mentalhealthandwork-unitedkingdom.htm)

2 Sainsbury's Centre for Mental Health (2007) [www.centreformentalhealth.org.uk/pdfs/mental\\_health\\_at\\_work.pdf](http://www.centreformentalhealth.org.uk/pdfs/mental_health_at_work.pdf)

3 CIPD, Employee Outlook (2013) [www.cipd.co.uk/hr-resources/survey-reports/employee-outlook-autumn-2013.aspx](http://www.cipd.co.uk/hr-resources/survey-reports/employee-outlook-autumn-2013.aspx)

4 Trade Union Congress, Jobs recovery and rising work pressures have led to record levels of unpaid hours (2014) [www.tuc.org.uk/workplace-issues/work-life-balance/jobs-recovery-and-rising-work-powers-have-led-record-levels](http://www.tuc.org.uk/workplace-issues/work-life-balance/jobs-recovery-and-rising-work-powers-have-led-record-levels)




Significantly, almost half (48%) of respondents to CIPD's 2013 Employee Outlook survey said that being under too much pressure at least once a month makes them feel anxious or depressed. In the same survey, only 4% of people who experience excessive pressure every day reported that it enhances their performance, while 62% of these respondents said it reduces their performance<sup>5</sup>.

The Office for National Statistics (ONS) states that 15.2 million days of sickness absence across the UK in 2013 were caused by stress, anxiety or depression, a dramatic increase from 11.8 million days in 2010<sup>6</sup>. This is also borne out in CIPD's 2013 Absence Management report, which revealed that two-fifths of organisations saw an increase in mental health problems last year, compared with only one-fifth in 2009<sup>7</sup>.

Stress is now one of the biggest causes of long-term sickness absence among all workers, with one in six employees experiencing depression, anxiety or stress at any one time<sup>8</sup>.

Companies that don't take a proactive approach to creating a culture of 'good work' and promoting positive employee mental wellbeing risk exposing themselves to higher staff turnover, reduced competitiveness and damaged corporate reputation. Research has indicated that highly engaged organisations have the potential to reduce staff turnover by 87%<sup>9</sup>.



*"We've seen politicians, celebrities and sports stars talk about their psychological health. Now it's time for heads of businesses to take to the stage and normalise this issue to ensure that those employees with a mental health problem know that help is at hand when they need it most. Absence from work shouldn't be the only trigger for intervention; businesses and organisations need to take steps towards developing a holistic preventative approach to employee wellbeing."*

**Patrick Watt, Corporate Director, Bupa UK and Chair of BITC Workwell Mental Health Champions Group**

5 CIPD, *Employee Outlook* (2013) [www.cipd.co.uk/hr-resources/survey-reports/employee-outlook-autumn-2013.aspx](http://www.cipd.co.uk/hr-resources/survey-reports/employee-outlook-autumn-2013.aspx)

6 Office for National Statistics, *Full Report: Sickness Absence in the Labour Market* (February 2014) [www.ons.gov.uk/ons/dcp171776\\_353899.pdf](http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/dcp171776_353899.pdf)

7 CIPD *Absence Management Survey* (2013) [www.cipd.co.uk/pressoffice/press-releases/employers-adopt-flexible-approach-working-patterns-effort-reduce-absence-levels-finds-cipd-simplyhealth-absence-survey-141013.aspx](http://www.cipd.co.uk/pressoffice/press-releases/employers-adopt-flexible-approach-working-patterns-effort-reduce-absence-levels-finds-cipd-simplyhealth-absence-survey-141013.aspx)

8 Office for National Statistics (2009) in CIPD / Mind, *Managing and supporting mental health at work: disclosure tools for managers* (December 2011) [www.cipd.co.uk/binaries/5715MentalHealthguideWEB.pdf](http://www.cipd.co.uk/binaries/5715MentalHealthguideWEB.pdf)

9 Corporate Leadership Council / Corporate Executive Board, *Driving Performance and Retention Through Employee Engagement* (2004) [www.stcloudstate.edu/humanresources/trainingDev/supvBrownBag/documents/CLC-Employee-Engagement.pdf](http://www.stcloudstate.edu/humanresources/trainingDev/supvBrownBag/documents/CLC-Employee-Engagement.pdf)

## The culture of presenteeism

**Presenteeism – attending work whilst sick or disengaged – can have a huge impact on individual productivity and wider company performance. The failure to identify and support poor health and wellbeing early will also have repercussions in the long term.**

The resource needed to intervene and offer support for employee conditions identified at a later stage incurs significant costs. The expenses associated with manager level presenteeism and loss of productivity can be especially high. Stress, depression and anxiety all have a major influence on rates of presenteeism, as their symptoms often go unnoticed.

Studies suggest that presenteeism from mental ill health alone costs the UK economy £15.1 billion per annum, in what is almost twice the business cost as actual absence from work<sup>10</sup>.

Over two thirds of respondents to CIPD's 2013 Employee Outlook survey (67%) said they went into work in the past 12 months when they were genuinely ill, rather than take the day off sick<sup>11</sup>. Nearly one third of respondents (29%) said they had seen an increase in presenteeism in their workplace in the previous 12 months<sup>12</sup>.

Promoting open and honest dialogue around mental health at work is key to tackling the culture of presenteeism and will help employees feel more comfortable seeking help or speaking up without the fear of repercussions.

*"With stress-related illness now the leading cause of sickness absence in many developed countries, now is the time for business leaders to intervene and help reduce or moderate the excessive pressures that employees are increasingly facing at work. The costs to employers, the economy and the health services related to poor support for mental health are huge. Action needs to be taken to implement stress management programmes and evaluate their impact."*

**Cary Cooper, Distinguished Professor of Organizational Psychology and Health at Lancaster University**



<sup>10</sup> Centre for Mental Health, [www.centreformentalhealth.org.uk/employment/presenteeism.aspx](http://www.centreformentalhealth.org.uk/employment/presenteeism.aspx)

<sup>11</sup> CIPD Employee Outlook (2013) [www.cipd.co.uk/hr-resources/survey-reports/employee-outlook-autumn-2013.aspx](http://www.cipd.co.uk/hr-resources/survey-reports/employee-outlook-autumn-2013.aspx)

<sup>12</sup> CIPD Employee Outlook (2013) [www.cipd.co.uk/hr-resources/survey-reports/employee-outlook-autumn-2013.aspx](http://www.cipd.co.uk/hr-resources/survey-reports/employee-outlook-autumn-2013.aspx)



# 3. Taking responsibility

## for mental wellbeing

### The culture of silence

**Almost half of employees (44%) surveyed by CIPD last year said their organisation did not promote health and wellbeing.**

In the same survey only 28% of employees said they knew what wellbeing benefits were on offer and how to access, or take part in, the services<sup>13</sup>. A third of UK organisations that have identified stress as one of their top five causes of absence are not taking any steps to address it<sup>14</sup>.

Even if businesses have employee support mechanisms in place, such as counselling support, stress management workshops or cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT) sessions, many companies do not disseminate public information because they fear that it equates to admitting that a problem exists, or is out of control. Another issue is organisations with ineffective, or poorly implemented, mental wellbeing strategies in place, which may create the illusion of cultural change, but with no improved outcomes for employees in real terms.

In BITC Workwell's 2014 benchmark survey of FTSE 100 and non FTSE 100 organisations' public reporting on employee engagement and wellbeing, results showed that there is no reporting of psychological health, and very few statistics for the use of Employee Assistance Programmes (EAPs)<sup>15</sup>.

The Workwell benchmark responded to investor demands for a standardised measurement of employee management that could inform investment decisions. Recent research has suggested that UK businesses are becoming less competitive<sup>16</sup>, with one study showing that UK productivity was 20 percentage points lower than the rest of the G7 in 2011<sup>17</sup>.

*"Understanding that everyone needs support to cope with mental health, just like their physical health, will mean that fewer people suffer in silence. If you can't talk openly about mental health at work, you can't manage it. This is why we need to see more organisations speaking publicly to help normalise discussions around mental wellbeing and end the culture of silence that currently exists. Helping to elevate mental wellbeing as a strategic boardroom issue will increase transparency across workforces as a whole, strengthening responsible and sustainable business practices."*

**Louise Aston, Workwell Director,  
Business in the Community**

13 CIPD Employee Outlook, (2013) [www.cipd.co.uk/hr-resources/survey-reports/employee-outlook-autumn-2013.aspx](http://www.cipd.co.uk/hr-resources/survey-reports/employee-outlook-autumn-2013.aspx)

14 CIPD Absence Management, Annual Survey Report (2013) [www.cipd.co.uk/pressoffice/press-releases/employers-adopt-flexible-approach-working-patterns-effort-reduce-absence-levels-finds-cipd-simplyhealth-absence-survey-141013.aspx](http://www.cipd.co.uk/pressoffice/press-releases/employers-adopt-flexible-approach-working-patterns-effort-reduce-absence-levels-finds-cipd-simplyhealth-absence-survey-141013.aspx)

15 BITC Workwell Benchmark results (2014) [www.bitc.org.uk/our-resources/report/ftse-100-public-reporting-wellbeing-and-engagement](http://www.bitc.org.uk/our-resources/report/ftse-100-public-reporting-wellbeing-and-engagement)

16 Engage for Success, Nailing the Evidence (2013) [www.engageforsuccess.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/09/The-Evidence.pdf](http://www.engageforsuccess.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/09/The-Evidence.pdf)

17 Office for National Statistics, International Comparisons of Productivity, First Estimates for 2011 (2011) [www.ons.gov.uk/ons/dcp171778\\_279491.pdf](http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/dcp171778_279491.pdf)



A recent Populus study conducted by Mind found that, of surveyed employees who had ever been diagnosed with a mental health condition, fewer than half told their bosses after being diagnosed. This indicates that the majority of employees fear that admitting a mental health condition will make them look weak. Thirty three per cent of employees also reported that they had received support upon informing their bosses of a mental health condition, but that no further adjustments were made as a result. Perhaps most significantly, less than half of employees surveyed (41%) said they would feel able to talk openly with their line manager if suffering from stress<sup>18</sup>. Another Mind poll showed that one in five workers would not disclose stress or mental health issues to their manager for fear of being placed first in line for redundancy<sup>19</sup>.

All employees must be given the freedom and opportunity to talk openly about their mental wellbeing, without the fear that it will jeopardise their career prospects or ostracise them from their colleagues. This is vital to establishing good mental wellbeing and resilience in life, both in and outside of work. Creating this is dependent on how well the organisation (and particularly the line manager) is seen to support mental health and wellbeing – employee perceptions about attitudes towards mental health and available support may be as important as existing available services.

Greater dialogue around mental health should be accompanied by a direct commitment to improve employee support services, whatever the appropriate action for that individual case. This may cover a range of interventions, from conducting skills sessions or offering one-to-one support, to establishing flexible working schedules.

Transparency will facilitate earlier intervention through putting the right mechanisms in place and increase capacity for long term growth, with investors now taking an active interest in the degree to which organisations manage the health and wellbeing of their employees. Progressive companies are now beginning to realise that the wellbeing and resilience of an organisation are key contributing factors to sustainable performance.

*“The link between employee health, productivity and sustainable business performance is important from an investor’s perspective. More and better debate is needed around this and the focus companies need on the connection between them; something that all too often gets overlooked when considering if a health and wellbeing strategy is really fit for purpose. Taking a holistic view and getting it right can deliver a real return on investment and offer a potential competitive advantage.”*

**Iain Richards, Head of Governance and Responsible Investment, Threadneedle Investments**

<sup>18</sup> Mind / Populus Media Poll, (March 2013) [www.populus.co.uk/Poll/Mind-Workplace-Survey](http://www.populus.co.uk/Poll/Mind-Workplace-Survey)

<sup>19</sup> Populus poll for Mind, from Mind / CIPD; Managing and supporting mental health at work: disclosure tools for managers, (December 2011)

## Leadership from a boardroom level

**In the majority of cases, the causes of mental health problems are triggered by factors outside of the workplace, but these still affect people's working lives enormously and have a significant impact on workplace performance.**

This means that mental health affects every business in Britain, yet the evidence outlined in this paper suggests that the business impact of mental health still isn't properly recognised by some employers.

It's crucial for all members of an organisation to remain sensitive to the work and life pressures that others may be going through, and to feel able to discuss these. Employers need to understand people's experiences of mental health – both positive and negative – to help create a working culture in which positive mental wellbeing is supported from the outset. Key to this is effective people management that focuses on both the physical and psychological health of the employee and facilitates early intervention, rather than simply tackling problems as they arise.

The steps needed to encourage this cultural shift are, in the majority of cases, simple – but they need to be driven at a boardroom level to help implement lasting change. Increased dialogue and public disclosure will help to reassure businesses nervous about speaking out to follow suit.





## Creating a collective responsibility

**Employers, and line managers, are not counsellors, but they hold a duty of care towards their employees, and should be able to signpost them to the support they need to maintain their health.**

An important aspect of this is equipping all employees – line managers in particular – with a basic but robust understanding of how to offer initial support and advice for cases of stress, anxiety and depression. Line managers need to be able to provide ongoing workplace adjustments to their teams and feel able to promote mental wellbeing more generally, and should receive the appropriate training to do so.

In CIPD's most recent Absence Management Survey (2013) almost half of respondents (46%) cited management style and volume of work as within the top three causes of stress, indicating that there needs to be a greater emphasis on line managers to intervene to prevent their employees becoming overworked, and communicating available support<sup>20</sup>.

Even simple changes such as holding regular one-on-one catch up sessions between employee and line manager, or introducing flexible working hours, can be good, cost-effective ways to create a culture of trust, which can help to boost motivation and performance levels. Better literacy around mental health at work will benefit managers and employers looking to understand the challenges of those coping with stress, anxiety and depression, enabling them to offer more effective, practical advice.

Straightforward actions can help reassure employees that they don't have to suffer in silence. Employee Assistance Programmes (EAPs) are a good example of this. Offering employees greater access to psychological therapies and support, alongside increased access to support services at work, can play an important role in making simple, cost-effective adjustments to help

support employees. The NHS has a wide range of resources to help facilitate this framework<sup>21</sup>.

The UK Health and Safety Executive (HSE) also offers useful resources on introductory stress management strategies, including a 'five steps to risk assessment' tool<sup>22</sup>.

*"Spotting the signs of stress, anxiety and depression and intervening early can be the difference between a brief period of illness, and long term sickness absence and the development of a chronic mental health condition. Signs are often quite subtle – they may include a change in demeanour or attitude, in quality of work, in appearance, in working patterns and sickness absence. Spotting them can be difficult – it requires familiarity and frequent interaction and a good level of communication."*

*"Having a well-trained manager who employees feel they can turn to in times of hardship can be the first step to building an open workplace, where employees feel confident that they will get the support they need to continue working effectively and living healthily. In balancing the varying demands of management, the value of 'people management' is often neglected, with implications for employee mental health."*

**Karen Steadman, Researcher, The Work Foundation**

20 CIPD Absence Management, Annual Survey Report (2013) [www.cipd.co.uk/pressoffice/press-releases/employers-adopt-flexible-approach-working-patterns-effort-reduce-absence-levels-finds-cipd-simplyhealth-absence-survey-141013.aspx](http://www.cipd.co.uk/pressoffice/press-releases/employers-adopt-flexible-approach-working-patterns-effort-reduce-absence-levels-finds-cipd-simplyhealth-absence-survey-141013.aspx)

21 NHS Health at Work, [www.nhshealthatwork.co.uk/dhguidance.asp](http://www.nhshealthatwork.co.uk/dhguidance.asp)

22 Health and Safety Executive Guidelines, [www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/indg163.pdf](http://www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/indg163.pdf)



## Preparing for the future generation

**Businesses making a public commitment to helping employees cope with the everyday psychological challenges of working life will make themselves more attractive to prospective new employees and to customers.**

As the next generation of graduates enters a rapidly changing working world, they will increasingly look for employers who will offer support to keep them healthy, engaged and resilient throughout their lives. As public consciousness grows, and as individuals assess their social and working routines, businesses need to demonstrate that they take an active interest in helping to support employees' physical and mental wellbeing. What many organisations don't realise is that greater transparency is likely to strengthen an organisation's responsible business credentials, as cultural attitudes towards mental wellbeing shift.

The strong relationship between levels of staff wellbeing and motivation and business performance has in recent years become much better and more widely understood. The twin goals of increasing levels of staff wellbeing and engagement should be a major priority for UK business leaders. A recent Populus survey supports this – 60% of employees said they'd feel more motivated and more likely to recommend their organisation as a good place to work if their employer took action to support the mental wellbeing of employees<sup>23</sup>.



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<sup>23</sup> Mind / Populus Media Poll, (2013) [www.mind.org.uk/media/43330/line\\_manager\\_Webinar\\_FAQs\\_final.pdf](http://www.mind.org.uk/media/43330/line_manager_Webinar_FAQs_final.pdf)



# BITC Workwell public reporting initiative and benchmark




## Workwell's Public Reporting Guidelines on employee engagement and wellbeing uses BITC's Workwell Model as a public reporting framework.

Organisations looking to improve transparency around employee mental health can use these as a starting point<sup>24</sup>. The guidelines have been developed by an expert Steering Group and with input from the investment community, in partnership with CIPD and Towers Watson. For the results of the 2014 BITC Workwell Benchmark visit: [www.bitc.org.uk/our-resources/report/ftse-100-public-reporting-wellbeing-and-engagement](http://www.bitc.org.uk/our-resources/report/ftse-100-public-reporting-wellbeing-and-engagement)<sup>25</sup>

*"As we enter a new era of reporting on responsible business that moves away from an isolated CSR Report, the Business in the Community Workwell Benchmark enables organisations to demonstrate their responsible people management and its impact on improved business performance."*

**Stephen Howard, Chief Executive of Business in the Community**



-  Business benefits
-  Employee actions recommended by Foresight Mental Capital Report
-  Employer actions recommended by BITC

\* Using 'good work' criteria defined by Coats and Lehki (September 2008)

<sup>24</sup> BITC Workwell, Public Reporting Guidelines (2014)  
[www.bitc.org.uk/our-resources/report/bitc-public-reporting-guidelines-employee-wellness-and-engagement](http://www.bitc.org.uk/our-resources/report/bitc-public-reporting-guidelines-employee-wellness-and-engagement)

<sup>25</sup> BITC Workwell Public Reporting Benchmark (2014)  
[www.bitc.org.uk/programmes/workwell/public-reporting](http://www.bitc.org.uk/programmes/workwell/public-reporting)

## 4. Join our movement

### Sign up to Time to Change

**There are a number of simple ways you can show your support and join our campaign.**

Businesses committed to ending the stigma around mental health at work can show their intent by signing up to the Time to Change organisational pledge.

Time to Change is England's biggest programme to end the stigma and discrimination faced by people with mental health problems. The programme is run by the charities Mind and Rethink Mental Illness, and funded by the Department of Health, Comic Relief and Big Lottery Fund. Overall, the campaign has received £23.6million in funding.

Time to Change aims to work with all sectors and communities to encourage more open conversation about mental health and ensure that people with mental health problems can be equal and active citizens.

The Time to Change pledge is a public statement of aspiration that an organisation wants to tackle mental health stigma and discrimination within the workplace.

BITC wants to build on the momentum gained from Time to Change by asking all businesses to deliver focused actions around promoting better mental health at work and addressing the culture of silence around mental health at work.

In order to make the signing of the pledge meaningful, organisations are asked to develop a pledge action plan. This should detail the tangible activities you will undertake or celebrate at the time you sign the pledge.

Your plan can be expanded over time but must provide some immediate goals to make the pledge a reality and signal your commitment.

You can find out more information and a whole range of tools and guidance here: [www.time-to-change.org.uk/bitc](http://www.time-to-change.org.uk/bitc)

**time to change**

**let's end mental health discrimination**



## Become a Mental Health Champion

**BITC Workwell has formed the new Mental Health Champions Group to help drive forward a collaborative, business-led movement to tackle mental health in the workplace. This represents an exciting and vital step change in how the issue is to be addressed.**

The aim of the group is to help ensure that mental health is elevated to a strategic boardroom issue by continuing to build a compelling business case for improving employee mental health and to help develop best practice resources to benefit both individual employee wellbeing and business performance.

This is the first time that business leaders have come together to address the culture of silence and stigma around mental health at work and act collectively to tackle the impact of poor mental health on business competitiveness.

The group has 12 founding members – senior directors and senior practitioners of national companies – who have committed to act as mental health ambassadors and advocates. By joining the group, those businesses have also committed to signing up to the Time to Change pledge and will create an action plan to improve employee mental health in their own organisations. Members of the group will help to further inspire the vision of the campaign, shape the agenda on employee mental health, share best practice and provide leadership for peers by encouraging others to join.

**Founding members of the BITC Workwell Mental Health Champions group:**

- American Express
- BaxterStorey
- BT
- Bupa
- Business in the Community (BITC)
- Friends Life
- Mars
- National Grid
- Procter & Gamble
- Right Management
- Royal Bank of Scotland (RBS)
- Santander

**If you would like to discuss becoming a Mental Health Champion, register your interest at:**

**Email:** [mhchampions@bitc.org.uk](mailto:mhchampions@bitc.org.uk)

**Tel:** 020 7566 6672

**Visit our website**

To find out more about the campaign and to discover tools for you, your business and your employees visit our website: **[www.bitc.org.uk/programmes/workwell](http://www.bitc.org.uk/programmes/workwell)**



# 5. What action businesses can take

## How do you change your culture to improve stress management?

**All organisations need to take steps to proactively incorporate better management of mental wellbeing into the everyday working environment.**

This includes taking action to promote wellbeing among staff, being alert to workplace triggers for poor mental health and having the right policies in place to support staff who may be experiencing mental health problems. Organisational psychology experts Professor Cary Cooper and Professor Susan Cartwright have suggested a specific three-pronged strategy for stress management in organisations undergoing increased, existing pressures in current workplace culture<sup>26</sup>.

**Primary** – stress reduction

**Secondary** – stress management

**Tertiary** – employee assistance programmes / workplace counselling

### Primary prevention

Primary prevention is concerned with addressing sources of stress inherent in the work environment, so reducing their negative impact on the individual. The focus of primary interventions is in adapting the environment to 'fit' the individual.

Possible strategies to reduce workplace stress factors include:

- Redesigning the task
- Redesigning the working environment
- Establishing flexible work schedules
- Encouraging participative management
- Including the employee in career development
- Analysing work roles and establishing goals
- Providing social support and response
- Building cohesive teams
- Establishing fair employment policies

Primary intervention strategies are often a vehicle for culture change. Any intervention, therefore, should be guided by prior diagnosis or a stress audit, or risk assessment, to identify the specific factors responsible for employee stress.

### Secondary prevention

Secondary prevention is concerned with the prompt detection and management of experienced stress. This can be done by increasing awareness and improving the stress management skills of the individual through training and education activities. Individual factors can alter or modify the way employees, exposed to workplace stress, perceive and react to their environment.

Awareness activities and skills training programmes, designed to improve relations techniques, cognitive coping skills and work/lifestyle modification skills (e.g. time management courses or assertiveness training) have an important part to play in extending the individual's physical and psychological resources.

In secondary prevention, it is often the consequences, rather than the sources, of stress, which may be inherent in the organisation's structure or culture, that are being dealt with. They are concerned with improving the 'adaptability' of the individual to the environment.

### Tertiary prevention

Tertiary prevention is concerned with the treatment, rehabilitation and recovery process of individuals who have experienced, or are experiencing, serious ill health as a result of stress.

Intervention at the tertiary level typically involves provision of counselling services for employee problems in the work or personal domain. Such services are provided either by in-house counsellors or outside agencies, which provide counselling, information and/or referral to appropriate treatment and support services, usually through EAPs (employee assistance programmes). There is evidence to suggest that counselling is effective in improving the psychological wellbeing of employees and has considerable cost benefits.

Counselling can be particularly effective in helping employees deal with workplace stress and non-work related stress (e.g. bereavement, marital breakdown etc.) which tends to spill over into work life.

An employer needs to offer interventions at the three different levels to ensure a robust approach to stress management.

26 Wellbeing: Productivity and Happiness at Work (2012), Ivan Robertson & Cary Cooper, Palgrave Macmillan

## 6. Case studies

Here are a few examples of leading organisations who can demonstrate the business benefits of clear strategy to help provide better mental health support for employees.

### Deloitte.

#### John Binns

**John Binns is an Independent Advisor on Mental Health and Resilience, previously a Partner at Deloitte. He joined Deloitte in 1994 where he worked as a Partner until 2013. John now advises companies on mental health and personal resilience issues.**

In 2006/7 I found myself in a position where I was suffering from very severe depression and ended up having three months off out of the business.

At that time there was much less of a culture of speaking up about mental health issues. Many still feel that if they admit to suffering from a stress-related depression issue, they are regarded as weak or incapable of doing their job. We've made significant strides to improve the culture around that – indeed it's what BITC Workwell's activity is all about.

The help in returning to my previous role and the support I got from colleagues and the organisation was absolutely excellent. The difficulty was more that there wasn't a culture of openness; there wasn't a culture of recognising mental health as an issue. Therefore, in the lead up to my 18 month incremental descent into depression, I didn't recognise the symptoms, get help, or talk to colleagues about it.

On returning to work I set up a mental health champions initiative where employees can speak confidentially to partners trained in mental health issues. Managers can also speak to them confidentially if they have concerns about staff they look after. I also lead a programme of awareness-raising initiatives within Deloitte focused on recognising the importance of prevention, if possible, and early identification and support if not.

There is a real business, as well as moral, case for organisations to invest in mental health programmes. It's the right thing to do as a responsible employer and getting it right and investing in preventative work, particularly, will go straight to the bottom line.

#### Tom Rowland

**Tom Rowland is a Senior Manager in Deloitte's Consulting service line. In 2012 Tom experienced some mental health issues and was supported by the firm's mental health champions, its employee assistance programme and an occupational health advisor.**

About 18 months ago I experienced some mental health issues connected to anxiety and low levels of professional confidence.

I sought help from within Deloitte and found it very useful to have access to mental health champions within the company; somebody senior who had already broken down some barriers around mental health in the organisation and made themselves available for people to go and speak to confidentially.

Through speaking to a mental health champion, I was advised on the best route of action to take. I spoke to Occupational Health and received further support from the firm's employee assistance programme, including counselling.

Deloitte was able to take my problem seriously and give me the time and space that I needed to actually deal with these issues. I ended up having four weeks off work and was then supported, when I came back into the workplace, on a phased return basis. The support I received from Occupational Health in putting that in place and subsequently from colleagues made the return to work much easier.

It's absolutely vital for leaders and senior people to speak out about mental health, to try and reduce some of the stigma and advocate an open culture around the issue. It's the only way that we're going to get improvement across the board in terms of how these issues are dealt with.

It's important all companies invest in mental health programmes. Not least because from a business point of view it's profitable to have a workforce which is healthy, happy and productive so that people are taking less time off and things don't reach a crisis point.





## Niall de Lacy

**Niall de Lacy is Director, Human Resources at Procter and Gamble for the United Kingdom and Ireland and a member of the BITC Workwell Leadership Team. P&G are currently introducing a Healthy Minds programme; a mental health and resilience initiative to support all employees.**

We truly believe that our employees are our most valuable asset. We demonstrate this by providing a culture, an environment and support structure to help them feel included, supported and perform at their peak, allowing them to bring their complete selves to work every day. There are multiple strains, or stress points, attached to this ambition, one being mental health awareness and support, which can affect any of us at any time. We see this as an opportunity to strengthen our business through a healthy and resilient organisation. It may impact someone we work with or manage, or perhaps our loved ones. Therefore it's an area that is impossible to ignore, one that business can't afford to ignore either.

We continue to address mental health issues through our Vibrant Living programme, a wellbeing programme with three focal points: mind, body and agility. In the past, we have had success supporting our employees via healthy improvements in body and agility at work, whether that's through healthy eating, physical exercise and challenges or support to improve a better work life balance by providing flexible working and effective use of time. We see the third component, mind, as the area with the greatest opportunity to impact on, one which fits nicely with mental wellbeing and resilience.

Stress continues to be the issue that affects our employees the most; we know this from employee surveys, anecdotally from line managers and employees, our Employee Assistance Programme (EAP) provider, and external data. This is why we are developing a holistic programme to sit under the Vibrant Living banner which will focus on 'Healthy Minds'. We are looking at this through a number of areas: creating the right culture of support for our employees and line managers, developing the right tools and resources to proactively assess potential support needs or issues early, and ensuring partnership with Occupational Health and our EAP provider to readily help and support when needed. We are currently in the process of engaging senior managers, in what we aim to be a programme supported from the top. The leadership team has an important role to play in creating the open culture we aspire to have.

There are undoubtedly still aspects of stigma attached to individuals who are known to have suffered mental or stress related illness; this is something we plan to tackle head on by becoming more proactive in this area and which we hope our Healthy Minds programme will address. This is a journey we are on, we recognise we're not perfect, but it's important to stay the course as we want our people to be productive, feel valued and stay with P&G, this means being physically and mentally healthy.

## Andy Buxton

**Andy Buxton is Health and Wellbeing Manager at National Grid and has developed with the business the occupational health and wellbeing strategy, incorporating mental health alongside physical programmes, to provide holistic support to employees.**

We are very much at the beginning of our mental health wellbeing journey, having focused primarily on employee physical wellbeing over the past decade, with successful programmes such as '10 000 steps' and 'Shape Up National Grid' an activity and weight management campaign that engaged 23% of the workforce.

In 2012 we decided to design a fuller wellbeing strategy, tackling issues around mental health illness more broadly. This was quite a difficult agenda to progress. It was easy for senior management and employees to engage with our physical wellbeing programmes as everyone understood the issues around not being physically fit – obesity, diabetes and other physical related diseases – but this was not the case with mental illness. There is still a huge lack of awareness about it, and stigma around declaring it.

To get employees talking more openly and to promote our new proactive Employee Assistance Programme we introduced a campaign called 'The Elephant in the Room'. We were supported by Mind who advised us about how to frame our programme in line with their 'Time to Change' campaign.

Our campaign, which ran for five months, provided information to managers and employees on mental illness, provided tips on how to approach difficult conversations around mental health and notified managers and employees about the support services available, such as our Employee Assistance Programme. Underlying this programme was the ambition to make it acceptable to talk openly about mental health issues in the workplace.

The result from this initial programme was encouraging; we saw a significant increase in the use of our Employee Assistance Programme, which has plateaued at around 7.5% (annualised rate) and is above the 5.6% national average of use.

We were encouraged but realised the limits of this type of reactionary assistance, which catches people while they are under stress or experiencing mental illness, and wanted to move to a more proactive approach. We went about this by identifying where the workplace pressures were building up, and attempting to pre-empt any future issues by trying to reduce the pressure in these areas, and creating a work environment that is supportive. This is all only possible if our leadership team and managers support and engage with our mental health programmes, so a key part of our strategy is engaging training managers. This involves giving them a framework to support people and developing their own mental health literacy. We are currently running pilot sessions with some of our senior teams and hope to extend the programme more widely to all employees.

We are starting to see tangible impacts, such as employees suffering from mental health problems being referred to the appropriate services more quickly and therefore returning to work faster.

Anecdotally, we can see our programme is enabling a greater culture of awareness and the support from within the business has been great. Some of our employees are starting to openly come forward to talk about their experiences of mental health issues and our senior leaders have started to introduce mental health into their broader communications agendas. We are very optimistic in the ability of our mental health programme to create real value for business.



## Helen Wray

**Helen Wray is Health and Wellbeing Business Partner at Mars Chocolate UK. She has over 20 years experience in occupational health and leads Mars's award winning wellbeing strategy.**

Our mental health support programme is part of our broader well-being programme, which has three parts: keeping our well people well, providing a healthy work environment and ensuring we have support services in place when people do become unwell.

We keep our well people well through our physical and activity programme; providing employees with exercise classes, onsite gyms, physical activity challenges and through our resilience workshops. These workshops are currently being piloted and are about sustaining performance and good mental health by focusing on mind traps and recovery behaviours for employees to put in place to ensure that they stay well.

A healthy working environment is promoted through our principles of mutuality and responsibility promoting good communications, working relationships and job roles.

The third part of our mental health programme is in place to support employees if they become unwell. We have a team of Occupational Managers who are able to refer people to our associate assistance programme, provide cognitive behaviour therapy referrals or referrals into psychiatry, depending on level of need. They are also able to support our line managers with providing modified work programmes and return to work programmes.

During 2011, a period when the country was in recession, we started to see an increase in mental health-related issues in our sales force, so we utilised our wellbeing support services and put in place a programme for all of our employees in sales. This included resilience workshops, a physical activity challenge, and a health road show so employees could learn about our benefits including our employee assistance programme. At the end of the programme, 12 months later, we saw some big changes: absence due to mental health had almost reduced to zero, reported levels of sleep, stress management and performance at work had improved and their ability to cope with change and stress had improved. Essentially, the return on investment was high.

Following such impressive results, we are currently rolling out our resilience programme to other divisions and business units. We also hope to become more proactive in our approach to training our line managers, so they are able to spot the early warning signs of mental illness, know the right support services available and refer employees as early as possible if needs be.

At Mars, we understand that our employees are at the heart of our business and that they drive our performance so we see our wellbeing programmes as mutually beneficial; it's an investment not a cost. We know if we provide a healthy work environment and support our employees with their mental and physical wellbeing they're likely to drive our business forward. That's good for us, and it's good for them and their families.

# 7. Appendix

## Mental health glossary

### Mental health

We all have mental health, just as we all have physical health, and how we feel can vary from mental wellbeing to severe mental distress.

### Mental wellbeing

Mental wellbeing is recognised as being able to cope with the normal stresses of life, work productively, interact positively with others and realise our own potential.

### Mental distress

When times are tough we may struggle to cope – we may feel angry, or upset, or find it difficult to concentrate or engage with those around us. In many cases this will pass as the period of stress comes to an end.

### Stress

Work-related stress is defined by the Health and Safety Executive as the adverse reaction people have to excessive pressures or other types of demand placed on them at work. Stress, including work related stress, can be a significant cause of illness and is known to be linked with high levels of sickness absence, staff turnover and other issues such as increased capacity for error. Stress is not a medical diagnosis, but severe stress that continues for a long time may lead to a diagnosis of depression or anxiety, or more severe mental health problems.

### Mental health problems

When an individual experiences mental distress that is long-term or permanent and adversely impacts their ability to live life to the full, we refer to this as a mental health problem.

### Common mental health problems

These include depression, anxiety, phobias and Obsessive-compulsive Disorder (OCD). These make up the majority of the problems that lead to one in four people experiencing a mental health problem in any given year. Symptoms can range from the comparatively mild to very severe.

### Severe mental health problems

These include conditions like schizophrenia and bipolar disorder which are less common. They can also have very varied symptoms and cause different degrees of disability but are more often regarded as severe mental health problems, as they can require more complex and long-term treatments.

## External resources

### BITC Workwell, Public Reporting Guidelines

[www.bitc.org.uk/our-resources/report/bitc-public-reporting-guidelines-employee-wellness-and-engagement](http://www.bitc.org.uk/our-resources/report/bitc-public-reporting-guidelines-employee-wellness-and-engagement)

### 2014 BITC Workwell FTSE 100 Benchmark findings

[www.bitc.org.uk/our-resources/report/ftse-100-public-reporting-wellbeing-and-engagement](http://www.bitc.org.uk/our-resources/report/ftse-100-public-reporting-wellbeing-and-engagement)

### 2015 Workwell Public Reporting Benchmark

[www.bitc.org.uk/programmes/workwell/public-reporting](http://www.bitc.org.uk/programmes/workwell/public-reporting)

### Workwell Benchmark Support Programme

[www.bitc.org.uk/programmes/workwell/reporting-workwell/public-reporting-benchmarking-support-programme](http://www.bitc.org.uk/programmes/workwell/reporting-workwell/public-reporting-benchmarking-support-programme)

### Centre for Mental Health

[www.centreformentalhealth.org.uk/employment/presenteeism.aspx](http://www.centreformentalhealth.org.uk/employment/presenteeism.aspx)

### Health and Safety Executive Guidelines

[www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/indg163.pdf](http://www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/indg163.pdf)

### Mind

[www.mind.org.uk/work](http://www.mind.org.uk/work)

### Time to Change

[www.time-to-change.org.uk/bitc](http://www.time-to-change.org.uk/bitc)

### NHS Health at Work

[www.nhshealthatwork.co.uk/dhguidance.asp](http://www.nhshealthatwork.co.uk/dhguidance.asp)

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Health and Safety Executive Guidelines,  
[www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/indg163.pdf](http://www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/indg163.pdf)





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