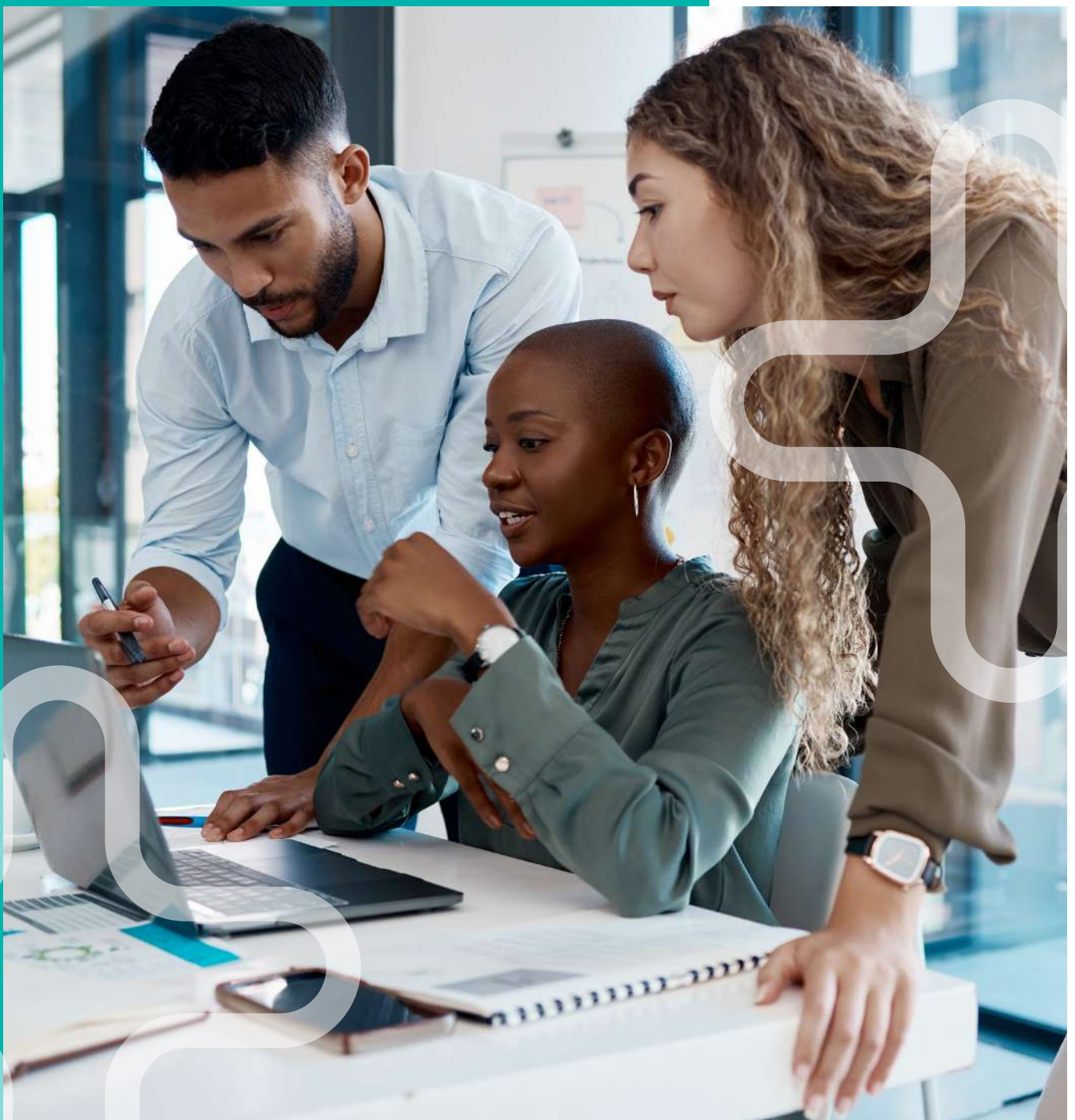




KEY EMPLOYEE WELLBEING TRENDS FOR 2024

The wellbeing challenges & solutions set to define the workplace in 2024



Foreword



To say that we live in turbulent times would be an understatement.

In the past four years, we have experienced a global pandemic, international conflicts, political turmoil, and a national cost of living crisis. The world in which we live and work today could not feel more different from that of the previous decade; and this, naturally, has had an immense impact on today's workplaces.

Thankfully, it's not all doom and gloom – our ever-accelerating understanding of technology is just one example of how these global events have inspired new developments in our everyday lives. Here at the Medicash Health & Wellbeing Group, we've seen a dramatic surge in digital benefits usage across our services, particularly in use of our wellbeing support app. Not only does this point to an increased need among our customers for high-tech, accessible healthcare options, but also to the potential for employers to support equal and fair access to healthcare and ease the burden on our NHS. This, in turn, highlights a growing culture of employer responsibility, where organisations can make a meaningful difference in the lives of their employees and beyond.

This book – half report, half guide – has been designed to offer you a thorough insight into how employee wellbeing is set to influence retention and recruitment practices in 2024, together with practical advice on how to implement these concepts into your own work environment.

Having watched the incredible growth in understanding how employee wellbeing can shape a workforce, I am immensely excited for the possibilities of the coming year – I look forward to welcoming you on this journey.

Sue Weir
Chief Executive



CONTENTS

THE KEYWORDS OF 2024: RECRUIT & RETAIN	4
Workplace Wellbeing: The Key To Retention	5
Top 3 Focus Areas For 2024	6
EMPLOYEE WELLBEING IN 2024: SURVEY REPORT	7
THE MOVEMENT FOR MENTAL HEALTH	8
Key Concern 1: Burnout & Stress Management	9
Key Concern 2: Presenteeism	11
Key Concern 3: Work-Life Balance	13
Mental Health - Solutions	14
TAKING THE HOLISTIC APPROACH	20
Key Concern 1: Long-Term Wellbeing Strategies	22
Key Concern 2: Recognised Individual Needs	23
Key Concern 3: Financial Wellbeing	24
Holistic Wellbeing - Solutions	26
EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT – THE KPI YOU NEED TO WATCH	31
TECHNOLOGY MATTERS	33
Key Concern 1: Access To Healthcare	34
Key Concern 2: Maximising Data Use	34
Key Concern 3: Preventative Healthcare	35
TECHNOLOGY & WELLBEING - SOLUTIONS	36
Digital Wellbeing Solutions	36
Synchronise Digital Platforms	38
CRACKING THE CODE: NEW HEALTHCARE FRONTIERS	39
KEY TAKEAWAYS	42
REFERENCES	44

THE KEYWORDS OF 2024: RECRUIT & RETAIN

The past few years have seen the HR landscape marked by phenomenon – ‘The Great Resignation’, ‘The War for Talent’, ‘The Big Stay’. But what have these all meant in reality?

The employment sector has seen a massive and rapid transformation in recent years, with global events causing a seismic shift in employee expectations. Thankfully, 2024 seems set to be - we hope - the year in which employers are ready to leave behind those scary headlines and get back to the basics.

Cultivating talent & cutting costs

Ongoing economic and political turbulence has left many businesses struggling to recruit amid increasing employee demand and pay concerns – with three quarters of British firms reporting difficulties hiring¹. As a result, the primary concerns for the year ahead are set to be both investing in recruitment and, more importantly, increasing retention, with over a third of HR professionals naming retention as their biggest priority for the foreseeable future².

It's in this context that 2024 is set to become the year of retention, as employers seek to save on recruitment costs and nurture talent within their existing employee base. With workplace research firm Gallup finding that over 50% of employed workers in the UK were currently seeking new opportunities³, employers now face the challenge of keeping their employees engaged while keeping their budgets down – with many seeing the solution in employee wellbeing.





WORKPLACE WELLBEING: THE KEY TO RETENTION

Few words have come to hold as much significance in the employment space in recent years as wellbeing. While salary still tops the priority list for the majority of employees – something unlikely to change as the cost of living crisis continues – research is showing that everyday wellbeing is an increasingly important factor for many workers in their choice of employer. In fact, as many as 88% of UK workers now say that their wellbeing is as important to them as salary⁴, leaving the door wide open for employers to improve their retention and engagement rates by investing in their wellbeing strategies.

“
Our survey found that more than 80% of respondents see employee wellbeing as important or very important to their business strategy – and over 90% placing it at the heart of their recruitment and retention strategy for 2024.
”

TOP 3 FOCUS AREAS FOR 2024

When it comes to employee wellbeing, it can be hard to cut through the noise and work out what really matters – and what really makes a difference.

Using existing market research, trend analysis, and surveying our own community, we've identified the key areas of concern for employers and employees alike for 2024. In this book, we'll cover the top three wellbeing trends, as well as offer guidance on how you can stay ahead of the curve and boost your retention this year:

1. Mental health

How burnout, presenteeism, and work-life balance concerns will shape the conversation surrounding how and why we work.

2. Holistic wellbeing

Understanding how our work and home lives interact with our unique health and wellbeing profiles.

3. Technology

From AI to data security, anticipating and evolving with the rapidly developing technology at our fingertips.



EMPLOYEE WELLBEING IN 2024: SURVEY REPORT

In December 2023, we asked the wider Medicash and Health@Work communities – including HR professionals, workplace wellbeing professionals, senior managers, and business owners – for their insights into the world of employee wellbeing and how they expected things to change in their own workplaces.

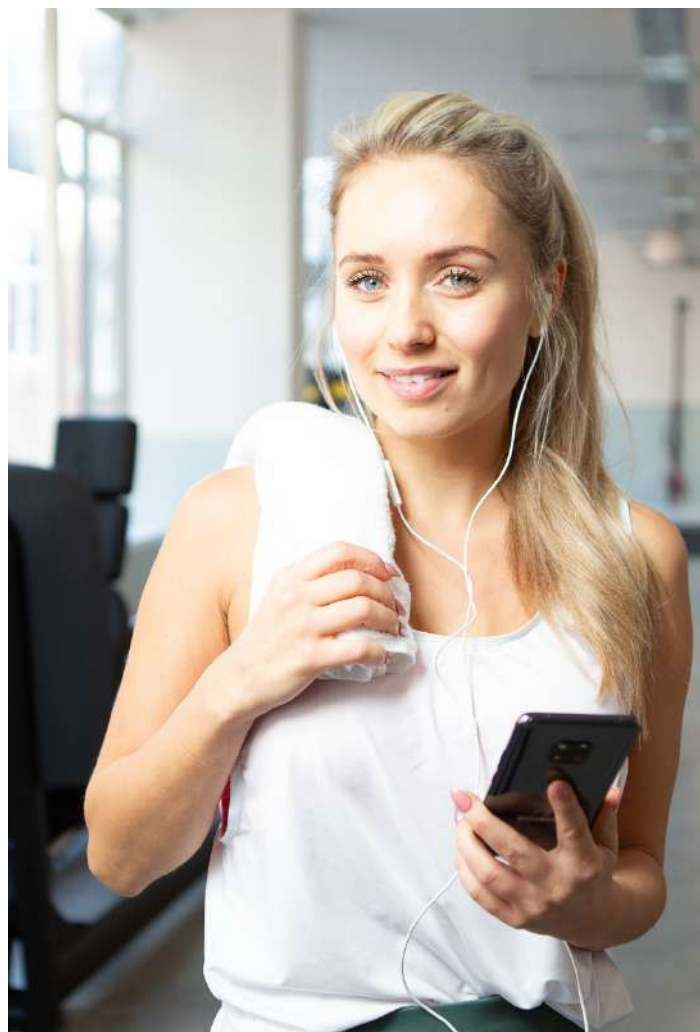
We've used the data from this survey throughout this book.



THE MOVEMENT FOR MENTAL HEALTH

As the conversation surrounding mental health becomes more open in our modern society, so too does the mental health culture of our workplaces. It's estimated that as many as 1 in 6 adults experience symptoms of a common mental health problem, such as anxiety or depression⁵, making poor mental wellbeing one of the most prevalent health concerns of our time.

With new data on the prevalence of mental ill-health constantly emerging, it's already been suggested that 2024 could be the year of make-or-break for mental health support. As financial concerns continue to skyrocket stress levels of both employers and employees alike, safeguarding the mental wellbeing of your workforce is set to be vital in the coming year.



“

Almost **83%** of our survey respondents said they expect to see increased **mental health concerns** in their workplace in 2024.

”

KEY CONCERN 1: BURNOUT & STRESS MANAGEMENT

Workplace stress is on the rise – research by the TUC has found that over half of the UK workforce feel their work is getting “more intense”, with 3 in 5 workers feeling exhausted at the end of each day⁶.

Burnout: a syndrome resulting from chronic workplace stress that has not been successfully managed. (WHO)

Often categorised as the result of chronic workplace stress and demotivation, the symptoms of burnout or chronic workplace stress are typically:

- Increased feelings of being drained or tired
- Increased feelings of being defeated or trapped
- Feelings of detachment or loneliness
- Persistent negative self-outlook & self doubt
- Procrastination
- Feelings of being overwhelmed



Work-related stress is estimated to cost the UK economy up to £28.3 billion per year

AXA Mind Health Report, 2023

Worryingly, a study by Mental Health UK found that **two-thirds** of UK employees mistake symptoms of burnout for symptoms of anxiety⁷. This points to a key area of improvement for employers in the coming months – better stress management is vital for not only retaining employees, but also for reducing the cost of burnout on our economy and healthcare system.

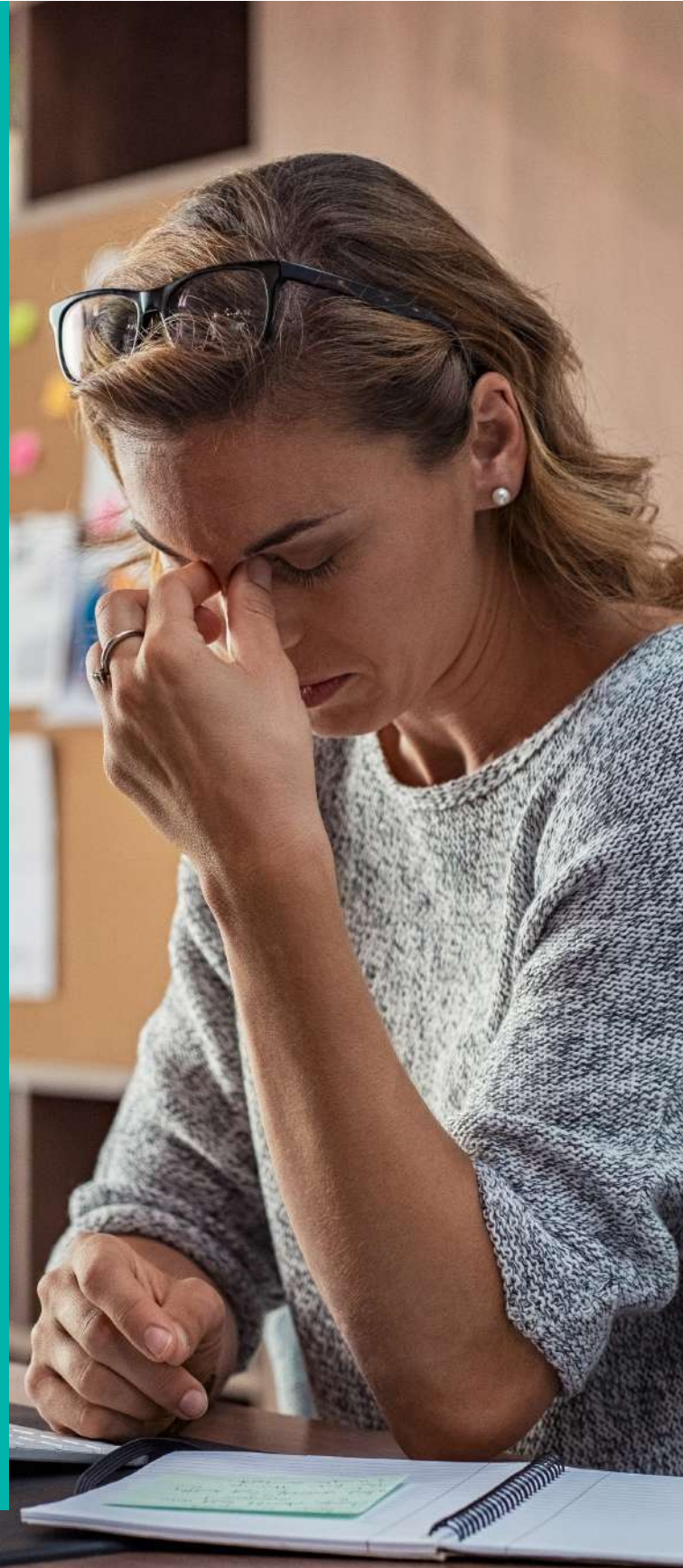
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Burnout is the result of three main elements: low energy, loss of interest in job, and reduced performance output. So, if you as an employer aren't actively identifying and addressing the root causes of burnout among your employees, you shouldn't expect to see any improvement in their stress levels.

Declan Doyle

Learning & Development Officer,
Health@Work

”





KEY CONCERN 2: PRESENTEEISM

It's perhaps unsurprising to many in the HR world that the primary mental health concern to emerge in recent years has been presenteeism, with up to 78% of UK workplaces reporting increased levels⁸.

The direct opposite of malingering and absenteeism, presenteeism is defined as an employee continuing to work despite working at lower productivity or capacity, for instance due to illness or stress. Ask yourself: should your employee be working today? If not, but they are anyway, you may be facing a case of presenteeism.

Often seen as a by-product of the new wave of home - and hybrid working in the pandemic years, the biggest impact of presenteeism is felt in lost productivity – making it potentially even more costly to businesses than absenteeism⁹. What's more, presenteeism typically emerges in workplace cultures with low psychological safety, prompting insecurity and anxiety in employees.

FREE TOOLKIT: ASSESSING PRESENTEEISM IN YOUR WORKPLACE

Assessing levels of presenteeism can be difficult. As cases of presenteeism often occur as a result of employee insecurity around taking time off work, an accurate portrayal of how ingrained presenteeism is within your workforce can be hard to gauge.

To help, we've put together a guide to the Stanford Presenteeism Scale (SPS) – a widely-used metric to help wellbeing and HR professionals accurately assess an employee's level of presenteeism

THE STANFORD PRESENTEEISM SCALE


Presenteeism occurs when employees continue to attend work despite being too ill, stressed, or tired to work productively. Despite stemming from good intentions, this means that presenteeism can be one of the biggest wellbeing-related costs to your business – as well as take a huge toll on your employees' mental and physical health.

However, presenteeism can also be a challenge to directly measure, particularly when gathering data for your employee wellbeing strategy or initiative. Below you'll find a guide to using the Stanford Presenteeism Scale, or SPS-6, a peer-reviewed method of quantifying the level of presenteeism within the workforce.

Simply distribute the employee questionnaire you received with this guide to your workforce for them to complete. (You may wish to remind your employees that the questionnaire is a means of assessing how your company can support them, rather than to analyse their individual productivity!)

STATEMENT	SCORE PER ANSWER				
	Strongly Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Uncertain	Somewhat Agree	Strongly Agree
Because of my wellbeing concerns, the stresses of my job were much harder to handle.	5	4	3	2	1
Despite having my wellbeing concerns, I was able to finish hard tasks in my work.	1	2	3	4	5
My wellbeing concerns distracted me from taking pleasure in my work.	5	4	3	2	1
I felt hopeless about finishing certain work tasks, due to my wellbeing concerns.	5	4	3	2	1
At work, I was able to focus on achieving my goals despite my wellbeing concerns.	1	2	3	4	5
Despite having my wellbeing concerns, I felt energetic enough to complete all my work.	1	2	3	4	5

Scores on the SPS-6 can range between 6-30. A higher SPS-6 score indicates (but does not prove) a higher level of presenteeism; that is, a higher likelihood of engaging with and accomplishing work while experiencing poor health and/or wellbeing. When using multiple responses to assess the level of presenteeism across your business, it is recommended to find the mean average.

 medicash
wellbeing & supporting practice



[Click here for Employer copy](#)



[Click here for Employee copy](#)



KEY CONCERN 3: WORK-LIFE BALANCE

The surge in hybrid working has revolutionised traditional workplace paradigms. While some employers encourage a 'return to office' approach in 2024, research by the CIPD has found that hybrid working is just as popular today as in the wake of the pandemic, with **83%** of UK employers having now implemented full-time hybrid arrangements¹⁰.

However, concerns surrounding the 'always-on culture' brought about by hybrid working are set to continue into the year, as new findings show that **over a third** of employees spend more time dealing with emails and tasks outside of their contractual hours today than in previous years⁶.

In fact, poor work-life balance was found to be the **number one reason** for employees leaving their roles in 2023¹¹, highlighting a distinct shift toward personal fulfilment as a priority for modern employees.

“

**25% of workers
say they struggle
to meet personal
commitments due
to work**

CIPD

”

MENTAL HEALTH – SOLUTIONS

WORKPLACE CULTURE

There's no doubt that workplaces are set to become the deciding factor in protecting employee mental health this year. With conversations regarding both **toxicity** and **authenticity** on the rise – the latter even being named Merriam-Webster's 2023 Word of the Year – workplaces have a new mandate from their employees to ensure a safe, productive, and nurturing environment.

Ultimately, this means assessing the existing culture of wellbeing in your workplace – do employees feel safe in their roles? Do managers feel equipped to discuss wellbeing concerns with employees?

“

Our focus for 2024 will continue to be on our people. By improving our current wellbeing offering and continuing to build a psychologically safe environment for our crew. It's crucial that we put the work in to improve our current processes whilst also embedding our ambassadors and the support currently offered.

Wellbeing Survey Response

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On the following pages, we've outlined three ways you can begin to assess and improve your workplace's culture for better mental health.

Psychological Safety

A psychologically safe workplace is one where employees feel empowered to express their thoughts and concerns without fear of reprisal and is central to an emotionally healthy workplace. Consider ways that your organisation can build an open and inclusive environment, encourage communication, and destigmatise discussions around mental health.

Want more tips on psychological safety? Check out our blog post, **Why Psychological Safety Should Be on Every Organisation's Radar.**



[Click here to read](#)



Stress Management

While the causes of stress are seemingly endless, the most reported sources of workplace stress include workload, expectation, and trust. Seek to proactively address stressors by promoting balanced workloads, realistic expectations, and clear communication channels between employees and line managers – particularly when managing home or hybrid working staff.

You can also download a free copy of our **Stress Management Tips for Employers.**



[Click here to read](#)

Manager Training

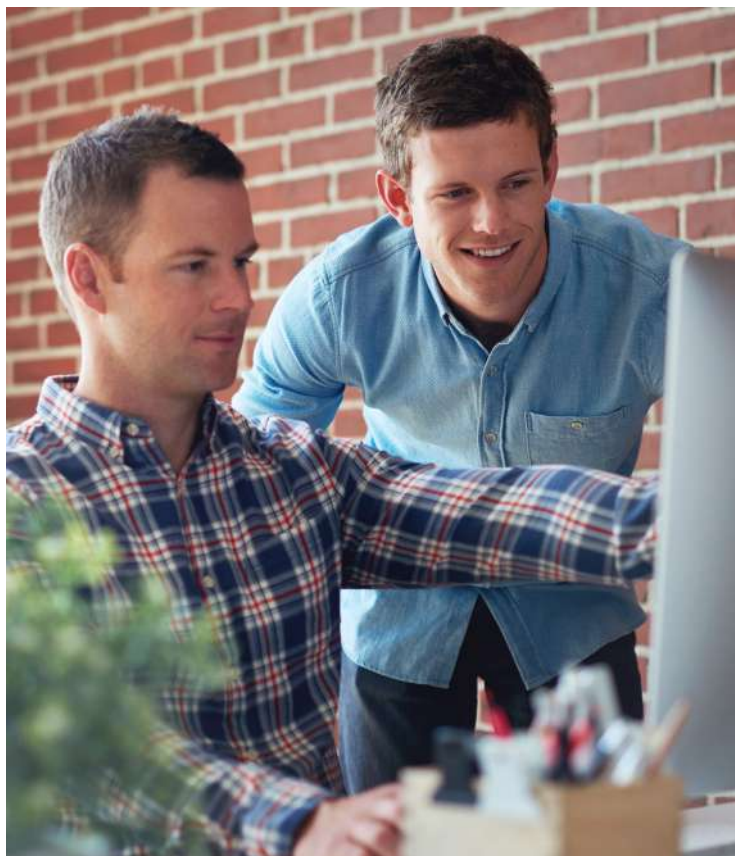
Preparing managers with the skills to recognise signs of distress, initiate supportive conversations, and direct employees to appropriate resources is vital to both your employees' wellbeing and that of your managers.

Training your employees and managers to better understand, recognise, and monitor the unique welfare needs of your workforce is a vital starting point for your wellbeing strategy goals. That's why Health@Work's wide variety of training courses are designed to equip your leaders and managers with the tools they need to nurture a healthier workplace culture, including:

- **Psychological Safety for Driving Team Performance**
- **Health & Wellbeing for Leaders – Leading a Culture of Wellbeing**
- **Mental Wellbeing for Leaders and Managers**

OFFERING PROACTIVE SUPPORT

When it comes to mental health, there's no time like the present. While workplace wellbeing has, until recently, focused on providing reactive support – offering support following a mental health crisis or illness – new approaches to mental wellbeing encourage employers to think proactively and support their workforce before they reach breaking point.



Employee Assistance Programme

By implementing preventative strategies for mental health support, businesses can quickly reduce mental-health related absences, and their associated costs, for minimal investment.

Among the most popular preventative solutions are Employee Assistance Programmes (EAPs), providing employees with accessible mental health and everyday wellbeing resources – allowing employees to access in-the-moment support before their concerns escalate.

“

72% of employers surveyed currently offer an EAP service to their employees, while almost 60% already have trained Mental Health First Aiders

”

Our EAP helps your people overcome life's hurdles and let's face it, life is full of them. If something's going wrong in someone's life, we want to offer something proactive that empowers them to speak to someone whenever they need it. By intervening and supporting them from day one, our EAP is designed to prevent them from reaching that moment of crisis by helping them proactively look after their day-to-day health and wellbeing.

Tristan Rigby
Head of Wellbeing at Vivup





Mental Health First Aiders

Integrating Mental Health First Aiders into the workplace can offer a vital early support mechanism for employees to reach out to. Your company's MHFAs are trained to identify the early signs of mental health challenges, as well as offer initial support and signposting towards appropriate resources.

You can find more information on Mental Health First Aider training at the Health@Work website healthatworkcentre.org.uk/wellbeing-course/mental-health-first-aider/

FLEXIBILITY

The CIPD has reported that when home working and flexitime is offered, these initiatives show massive uptake among employees – with just 5% and 12% of employees respectively saying they don't use these benefits¹². Flexible working, including remote working and flexible hours, can empower individuals to better align their professional responsibilities with personal needs, both reducing stressors associated with rigid work schedules and promoting a healthier work-life balance.

It's important when offering flexible working to provide regular check-ins and feedback sessions to serve as constructive tools for understanding individual workloads, identifying challenges, and tailoring support so that employees feel heard and valued in their roles.

Productivity monitoring while flexible working

While workplaces have traditionally relied on generic means of monitoring employee productivity, such as hours logged, this can be made difficult with a flexible working arrangement. For instance, an employee's 'online hours' may be taken up by meetings and admin tasks, instead of engaging with tasks which can be achieved while offline.

Additionally, many hybrid - and home-working employees have pointed to an increasing sense of digital presenteeism, where anxiety over their online status being seen monitored both impacts their mental wellbeing and productivity levels, and erodes trust.

Adopting a results-oriented approach, where the focus is on the quality and impact of work rather than minute-by-minute surveillance, can help to foster a more positive work environment, boosting morale and reducing unnecessary pressure.

“

Almost 69% of our survey respondents said that family & caring responsibilities were a concern for their employees.

”



TAKING THE HOLISTIC APPROACH

Although we'd all love a quick fix, there's unfortunately no one size fits all solution when it comes to wellbeing. This is why the term 'holistic' has become such a hot topic in the wellbeing space – referring to an all-encompassing approach that considers the interconnection of the many various factors of our health, including physical, mental, and emotional factors.

This can be further seen in the increasing impact of diversity and inclusion on modern workplaces, with two-thirds of UK employees stating that an employer's approach to ED&I is an important factor when considering jobs¹³. Employees' differing ages, genders, ethnicities, and backgrounds mean that their health needs, experiences, and routes into healthcare can differ wildly. This is why a diverse and holistic approach to wellbeing is fundamental to creating a comprehensive strategy that acknowledges and supports individual wellbeing journeys.

INCLUSIVITY: THE CASE FOR BETTER UNDERSTANDING

The terms 'diversity and inclusion' have become hot topics in today's world – and increasingly politically charged ones, leading to what many have termed 'DEI fatigue' as rhetoric continues to outpace real progress. Reflecting this, our survey saw a distinct split in viewing the value of inclusion, with **55%** of respondents stating their employees had 'some' or 'great concern' over workplace inclusivity, while **44%** stated they saw 'no concern'.

Despite almost half of respondents saying they saw no inclusivity concerns, the same respondents also noted marked interest in issues such as **personalised healthcare**, **gendered health** (including menopause & fertility awareness), and **financial wellbeing**. This highlights a discrepancy in many workplaces between what is perceived to be inclusive practice, and the realities of building an inclusive wellbeing strategy, and points to a need for better understanding of how and why workplace inclusivity is put into practice.



KEY CONCERN 1: LONG-TERM WELLBEING STRATEGIES



2024 is set to be the year that the rapid acceleration in wellbeing standards becomes embedded within workplace culture. With 53% of UK companies taking a standalone strategic approach to employee wellbeing – up from just 40% in 2018¹⁴ - it's clear that more and more employers are waking up to the need for long-term, strategic planning when it comes to their employees' wellbeing.

This shift toward an institutional approach has been largely driven by a deeper understanding of holistic wellbeing, as traditional one-off wellbeing initiatives – often applied as temporary solutions to visible issues such as absenteeism – are unable to accommodate the wide-ranging and complex factors that make up our everyday health.

While the number has reduced since 2018, it's estimated that around half of UK workplaces still see wellbeing as an 'ad-hoc' requirement¹⁵ – leaving thousands of employees falling through the gaps when their symptoms are less visible or apparent.

KEY CONCERN 2: RECOGNISED INDIVIDUAL NEEDS

Although conversations surrounding diversity & inclusion continue to prove inflammatory in the media, the appetite for personalised and inclusive wellbeing approaches among employees is only set to grow throughout 2024. As many DEI experts point to a universal weariness of verbal commitments and platitudes, more emphasis is now being placed on an employer's ability to translate these declarations into actionable, individualised practices – something made evident through workplace wellbeing practices.

This includes the ability to support a wide variety of unique health and wellbeing needs and experiences, such as:

- Menopause
- Fertility
- Men's health
- Family & caring responsibilities
- Hormonal treatment
- Neurodivergence

“

Common approaches to inclusive wellbeing (as reported by our survey respondents):

- Menopause awareness training
- Fertility support options
- Men's & women's health awareness
- Flexible working arrangements
- Financial wellbeing support
- Diversity & inclusion training

”



KEY CONCERN 3: FINANCIAL WELLBEING

As the cost of living crisis continues to impact households across the UK financial wellbeing is predicted to be one of the most important areas of employee support in 2024. With organisations now reporting an estimated average increase of 4.4% to salaries in the coming year, but over half of employers now also promote some form of financial wellbeing support to their employees¹⁵.

HOW ARE FINANCIAL PRESSURES AFFECTING PEOPLE IN GREAT BRITAIN?



49% OF PEOPLE WHO ARE BEHIND ON HOUSEHOLD BILLS REPORT HIGH LEVELS OF ANXIETY



1 IN 5 ADULTS ARE NOW BORROWING MORE MONEY THAN IN 2022



4 IN 10 ADULTS SAY THEY DON'T EXPECT TO SAVE MONEY IN THE NEAR FUTURE



47% OF ADULTS IN THE UK NOW FIND IT DIFFICULT TO PAY THEIR ENERGY BILLS

Source: ONS

“

Financial wellbeing is going to be paramount to success in 2024. With the cost of living getting out of hand, people need all the help and advice they can get on how to manage their money and survive the coming difficulties. If we don't get this right, then both stress levels and mental health issues will skyrocket as many people fall into desperate and difficult times.

Wellbeing Survey Response

”



HOLISTIC WELLBEING - SOLUTIONS

DEVELOP A WELLBEING STRATEGY

Building and implementing a comprehensive wellbeing strategy is the most important step in implementing a holistic approach to employee care – but it's also the most complicated. By integrating employee wellbeing as a definitive part of the broader business strategy, employers can ensure that their approaches to wellbeing are correctly targeted, budgeted, and used by their full workforce and become a key tool in their talent management assets.

While there is no one way to develop a wellbeing strategy, Health@Work's Learning and Development Officer Decland Doyle suggests that for a strategy that truly works for your employees' unique needs, look to the data.

"Something we teach on our courses," he says, "is the importance of collecting and exploring wellbeing data. You want to find out what your employees' current health risks are, and then craft your plan. If employees across your organisation show a certain type of risk – for instance, blood pressure, diabetes, stress – that provides a clear insight into where you need to focus going forward."





workplace
wellbeing
CHARTER

Health@Work's specialist training course, 'How to Build & Maintain an Effective Workplace Wellbeing Programme', is designed to help you build a framework for your own workplace's wellbeing strategy, from the importance of leadership and collaboration through to gathering data and implementing changes. You can find out more about the course at www.healthatworkcentre.org.uk

OFFER COMPREHENSIVE SUPPORT OPTIONS

In order to cater to the many varying needs of a diverse workforce, it's important to offer a variety of support options, including so-called 'taboo' topics such as menopause and menstrual health.

It may help when assessing the potential needs of your workforce to consider the four key pillars of wellbeing:



Physical

The state of our physical health, such as our exercise regimes, eating habits, and health conditions.

Mental

How we engage with and support the way we feel, including how much stress we're under, our levels of overall happiness, and a sense of purpose.

Financial

The way we manage (and are managed by) our money, such as our balancing of budgets, savings, and debt worries.

Social

How we maintain relationships with others and engage in social interactions, such as with our friends, family, and work colleagues.

ENGAGE EMPLOYEES IN WELLBEING

Improving awareness

Investing in comprehensive training is key when engaging employees in wellbeing initiatives, whether that's to recognise signs of stress or address everyday health concerns like nutrition and exercise. Improving training opportunities for all staff can promote a shared understanding of your organisation's commitment to employee wellbeing.



Employee Resource Groups (ERGs)

Employee Resource Groups (ERGs) can be a powerful tool to champion wellbeing initiatives among certain staff groups. Seek to establish specific ERGs focused on mental health, physical wellness, financial literacy, and social connections, through which employees can find platforms for open dialogue, idea sharing, and the development of targeted initiatives that resonate with their diverse needs. ERGs are crucial in empowering employees to take an active role in shaping wellbeing efforts, particularly with an inclusive and tailored approach.

The Crucial Role of Employee Buy-In

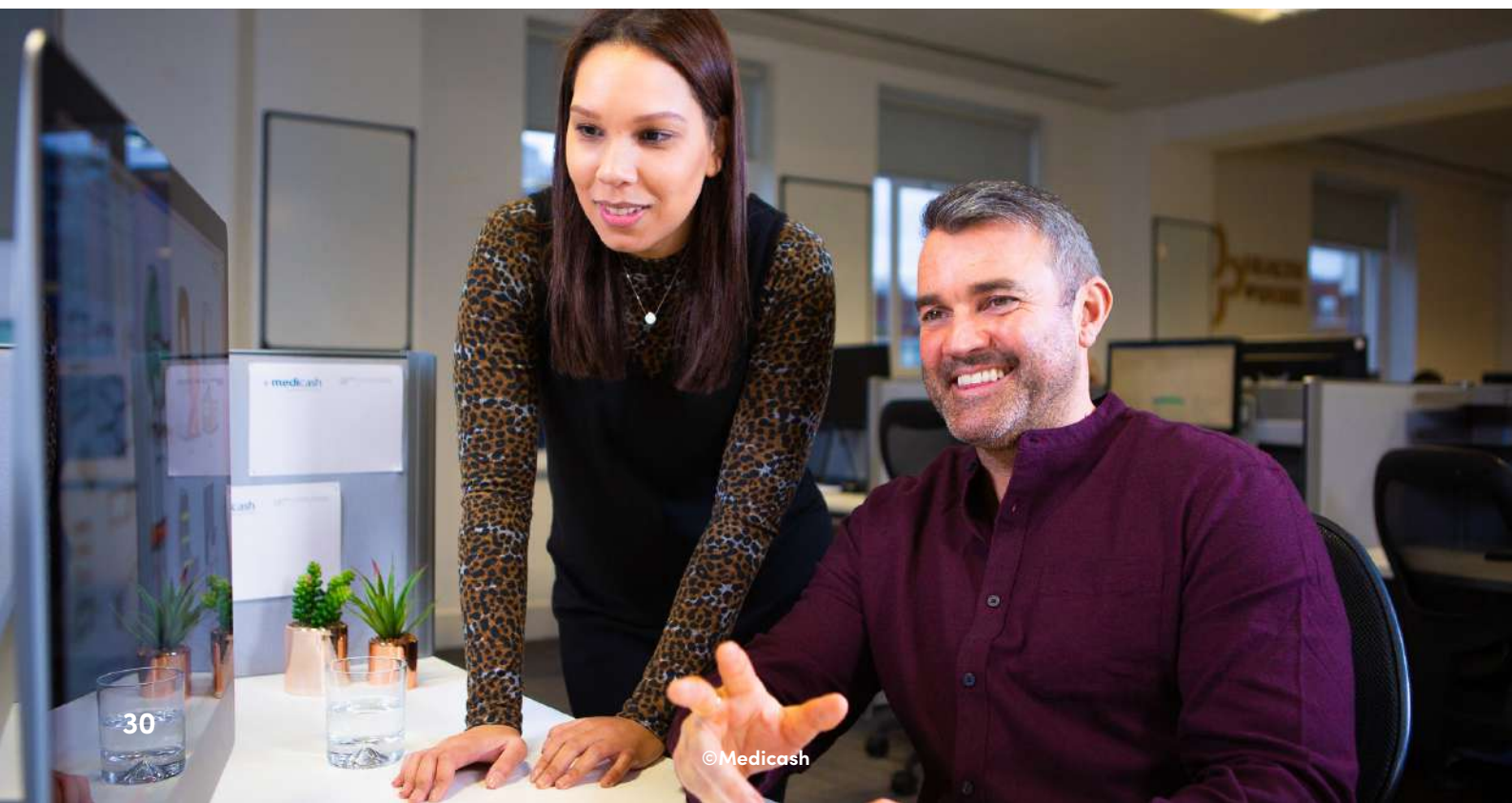
Employee buy-in is the linchpin for the success of any wellbeing programme, as actively seeking input from employees in the design and implementation of initiatives can help to cultivate a sense of ownership and involvement in wellbeing and so promote higher uptake.

In addition, it's important to provide transparent communication about the specific offerings and benefits of your wellbeing programmes – when employees are able to recognise that their wellbeing is genuinely prioritised, they can become enthusiastic advocates for not just your employee wellbeing, but your overall brand.

“

The CIPD have identified employee engagement as the most commonly reported development opportunity for employers in 2024

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EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT – THE KPI YOU NEED TO WATCH

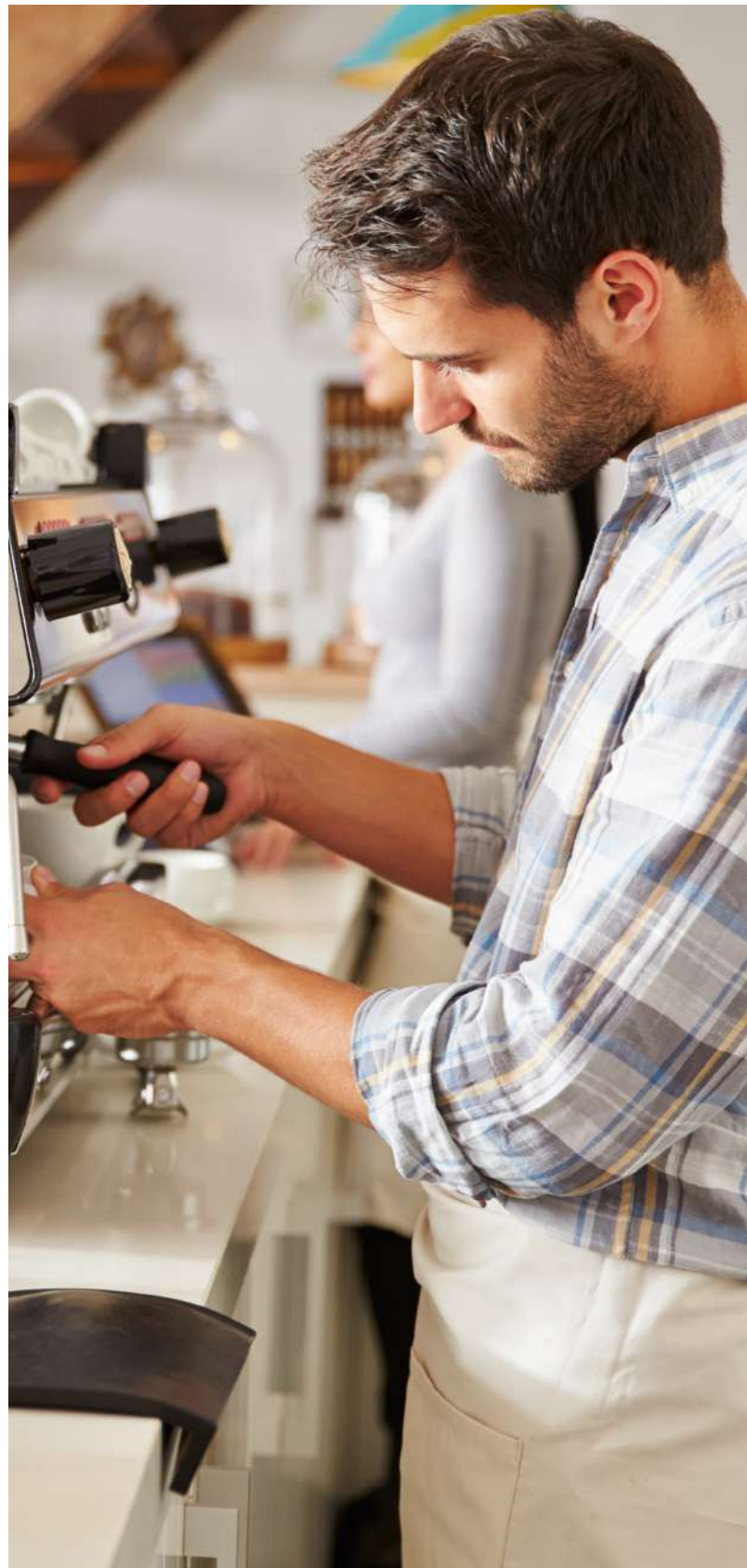
Employee engagement: the level of commitment, enthusiasm, and dedication that employees exhibit toward both their work and employer.

While this may sound simple, engagement is a multifaceted concept that stems from nebulous and complex factors such as emotional connection, job satisfaction, and sense of purpose. Yet positively engaged employees are proven to actively contribute to the success of the company, showing:

- Increased productivity
- Improved retention rates
- Improved workplace culture

If today's workforce is seeking employers who proactively support better health and wellbeing, it's clear that just as many companies are taking note of the benefits of an actively engaged workforce.

Employee engagement will continue to become a key focus of the employment sector in 2024, with research by the CIPD finding that one third of employers who offer health & wellbeing initiatives see better employee engagement and an overall healthier company culture¹⁴.



The ROI (or VOI) of employee wellbeing

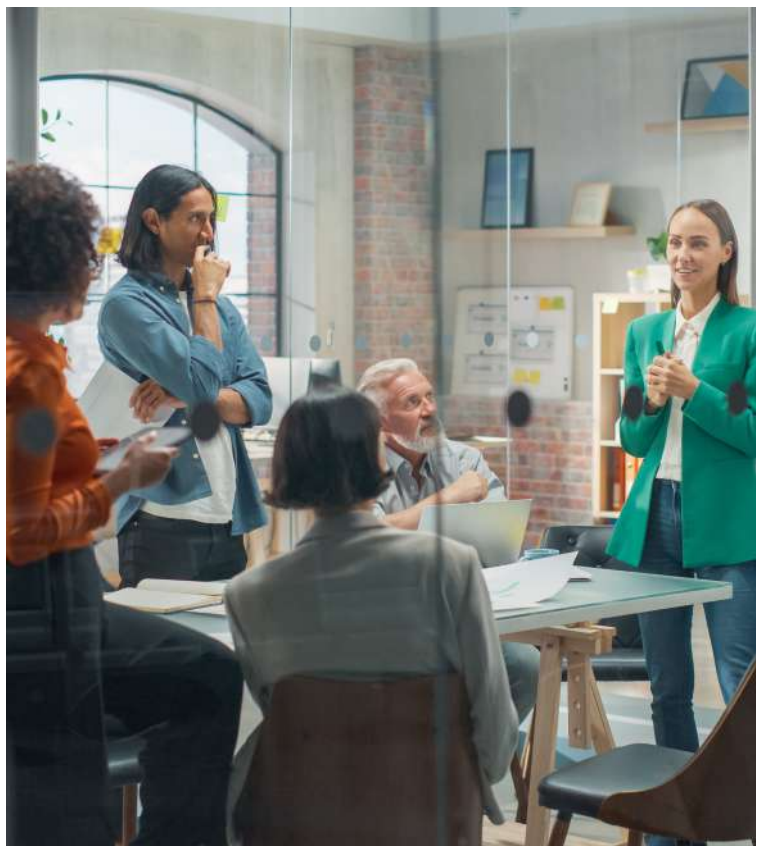
While concerns such as absenteeism can be easily found through statistical data, assessing the full benefit impact of employee engagement can be harder to accurately quantify.

The EAP Association have found that the average return on investment for an employee assistance programme now equals around £10.85 for every £1 spent¹⁶, indicating a huge increase in return on investment (ROI) for workplace wellbeing in general. However, as wellbeing strategies are increasingly being focused on holistic wellbeing and proactive, long-term support, it has been suggested that ROI is no longer a meaningful way of measuring a wellbeing initiative's overall impact.

Instead, many businesses now choose to assess their employee wellbeing impact via VOI, value of investment. Whereas typical ROI is only able to calculate an estimate of hard costs such as health-related absence and insurance claims, VOI takes a broader look at the impact of wellbeing – including cost savings, retention, engagement and morale, productivity and job satisfaction – that can have a significantly more widespread impact on a company's bottom line.

Even so, for those companies who do use ROI as a key metric for their wellbeing initiative, it's estimated that 9 out of 10 companies who track their wellbeing KPIs reported seeing a positive return on investment.

Additionally, 85% of HR leaders further reporting that their wellbeing strategy has led to an overall decrease in talent management costs⁴.





TECHNOLOGY MATTERS

Technology today is evolving at a faster pace than at any other time in history. From the rapid advancements in Artificial Intelligence (AI) to cutting-edge software applications, the way we use the latest tech is not only enhancing the efficiency of employee wellbeing, but facilitating a revolution in personalised, far-reaching wellbeing solutions.

Technology has already situated itself at the heart of employee wellbeing – our survey found that 93% of the employers we surveyed already offer access to digital or virtual healthcare tools. So where is today's tech really making its mark, and how is this set to develop?

KEY CONCERN 1: ACCESS TO HEALTHCARE

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The CIPD have identified employee engagement as the most commonly reported development opportunity for employers in 2024

”

Accessibility of healthcare options was listed by our survey respondents as the most important wellbeing issue among employees – alongside NHS waiting times being noted as the second most common cause for concern in terms of health and wellbeing.

The current pressure on the NHS to manage increased waiting times for both regular check-ups and treatments has led to increased reliance on private digital health offerings such as Virtual GPs – reported to be the most used standalone employee health benefit in the UK in 2023¹⁷.

KEY CONCERN 2: MAXIMISING DATA USE

With data collection becoming a major topic of discussion both on and offline, 2024 poses an opportunity for employers to not only better address transparency in data processing, but also to maximise the use of health and wellbeing data to tailor and enhance wellness initiatives.

The digitisation of many HR processes has now enabled the collection of real-time data on employees' reasons for sickness absence, with day-one absence being particularly of use to employers looking to identify patterns in their employee absence. These patterns – as well as the use of physical activities, sleep aid, or stress management tools available to employees – can provide a comprehensive picture of a workforce's overall health and allow organisations to craft bespoke wellbeing programmes that offer meaningful interventions for employees.

KEY CONCERN 3: PREVENTATIVE HEALTHCARE

The escalating waiting times within both the NHS and private treatment providers, coupled with an increasing awareness of health & wellbeing, have propelled a growing interest in both preventative healthcare and early diagnosis that is set to define approaches to healthcare in 2024.

In response to these challenges, both digital and AI (Artificial Intelligence) technologies have emerged as the key to personalised wellbeing programmes, addressing the unique factors of our individual health profiles in order to prevent illness via continuous monitoring, predictive analytics, and personalised health assessments. Organisations, recognising the value of preventative healthcare in lowering both absence rates and presenteeism cases, may seek this year to integrate these technologies into their wellbeing strategies.

“

Our survey highlighted some lingering uncertainty over the impact of AI technology, with the majority of respondents saying they were ‘unsure’ regarding the influence AI will have on workplace wellbeing (43.1%). However, this was closely followed by respondents who believe AI will impact wellbeing (42.7%), suggesting a willingness from employers to embrace the potential of AI within their workplace wellbeing strategy.

”

TECHNOLOGY & WELLBEING - SOLUTIONS

DIGITAL WELLBEING SOLUTIONS

Digital wellbeing, such as apps, telemedicine offerings, fit-tech, and online services, can increasingly be strategically integrated into employer offerings via various benefits packages and health cash plans. By providing an alternative solution to NHS treatment, particularly in the realm of mental health, digital healthcare and wellbeing not only increases accessibility for employees, but offers a much needed respite to NHS services.

Firstly, consider the ways in which your employees are able to interact with digital solutions; do you have a tech-savvy workforce, or will they need more support in learning how to access and use their digital tools? Ensuring that your employees fully understand their benefits is key to a high ROI on your wellbeing strategy, so it's important to fully assess your own workforce's unique needs.

Mental health support

Digital mental health support for employees can take the form of digital Employee Assistance Programme (EAP) offerings or dedicated mental wellbeing and mindfulness apps, such as Headspace, Calm, or the mProve YOURSELF app.

While these forms of support cannot and should not replace good psychological safety and stress management techniques within your workplace, offering ways for employees to engage with everyday mental wellbeing practices can promote a better mental health baseline for your workforce. What's more, many EAPs – including the Medicash and Health@Work employee assistance programme – are designed to include professional support via counselling and CBT therapy techniques, offering access to specialist help during a time of increased NHS pressures.

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The CIPD have identified employee engagement as the most commonly reported development opportunity for employers in 2024

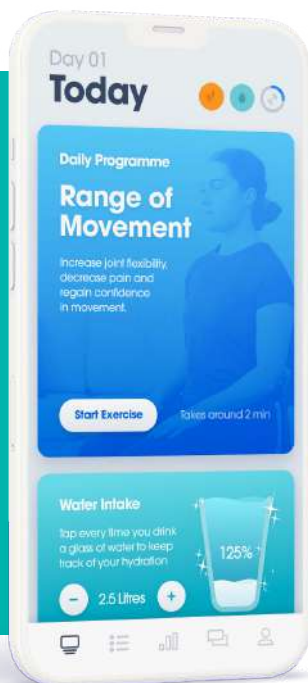
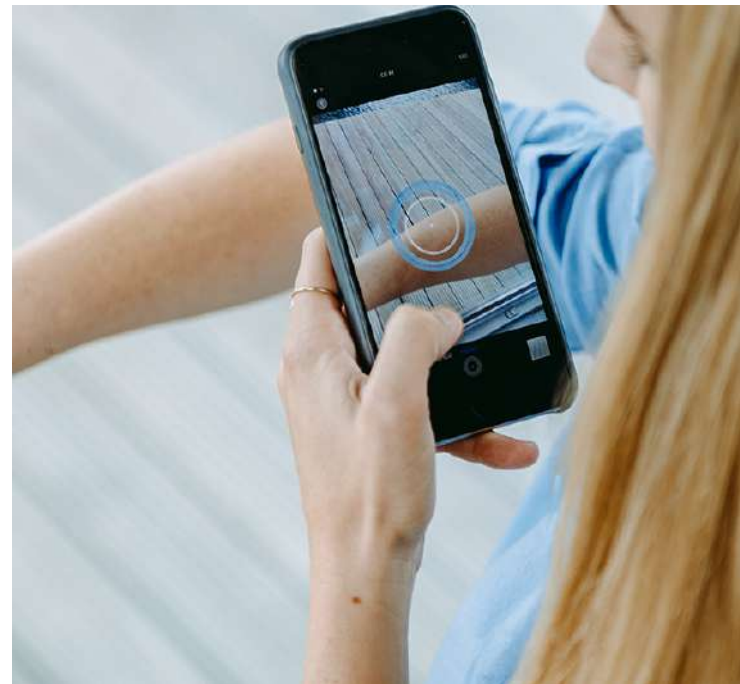
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IMPROVING TREATMENT ACCESSIBILITY WITH MEDICASH

We're proud to be among the most tech-forward health cash plan providers in the UK, having been providing our policyholders with cutting edge technological solutions to help them stay on top of their health; here's some of the digital benefits we offer.

SkinVision

With skin cancer cases on the rise, being able to quickly spot the early signs of skin cancer is an invaluable tool. Using the revolutionary AI tracker SkinVision, users can perform regular skin checks to assess their skin spots and moles for the most common types of skin cancer. With results provided in just 30 seconds, alongside expert assessment by real dermatologists, clear signposting and guidance on next steps, users can have peace of mind about their skin health.



Phio

Take control of the physiotherapy journey with access to Phio, a clinically-led digital physiotherapy assessment app that provides 24/7 remote access to the right care. Able to adapt to over 3,000 different scenarios, track user progress, and employ a variety of tools to help users stay engaged, Phio ensures that users receive the right treatment at the right pace for faster recovery.

SYNCHRONISE DIGITAL PLATFORMS

Take advantage of the latest synchronising capabilities between personal tech devices such as Fitbits, Apple watches, or personal apps, and your digital employee wellbeing platform to make your wellbeing offerings useable both in and out of the workplace.

By seamlessly integrating employees' own devices into their digital wellbeing platform, synchronising data allows employees to build personalised health profiles for meaningful health outcomes – improving the utility and uptake of your offerings.

“

When asked how they would like to see technology used to support employee wellbeing in 2024, the majority of those surveyed said:

- Offering personalised support paths
- Improving access to treatment & support
- Promoting preventative healthcare

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YOUR CARE: Cutting edge data syncing for optimal health outcomes



As part of the Medicash and Health@Work employee assistance programme, employees have access to Your Care – a cutting edge digital healthcare platform where users can assess their personal wellbeing with a variety of health status tests, earn badges for positive health behaviours, and synchronise their personal fitness apps – including Fitbit, Garmin, Strava, and UnderArmour – for improved personal health tracking and awareness.

You can find more information about our EAP, including Your Care, on our website.

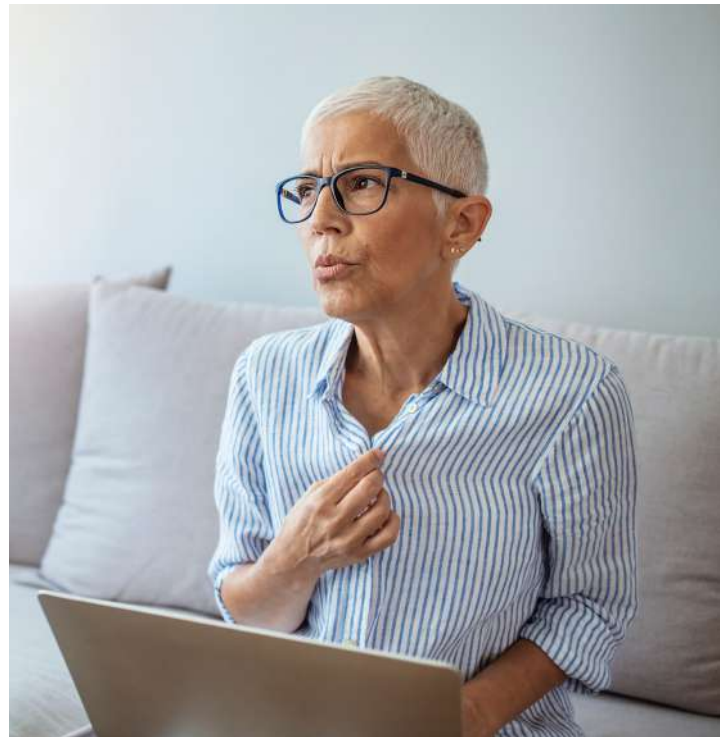
CRACKING THE CODE: NEW HEALTHCARE FRONTIERS

We live in an era of innovation – shown no clearer than through the rapid development of technology used to assist our everyday health and wellbeing, allowing us to gain better insights into our health than ever before. These new frontiers in the world of health and wellbeing are already set to shape the way personalised healthcare is offered in the future.

Menopause Support

Menopause support has been previously identified as one of the fastest growing areas of employee wellbeing, as more women and AFAB (assigned female at birth) people remain in the workplace for longer – allowing employers to retain the skills of long-standing employees for longer.

You can find more information on supporting employees experiencing menopause with our dedicated Menopause Guide for Employers, available at healthatworkcentre.org.uk/menopauseguide



Hormonal Health

In recent years, more attention has been paid to the specific health needs of both male and female bodies – specifically, the impact of our hormonal health. From increased awareness of the causes and effects of menopause to a growing movement for fertility support from employers, the way we interact with our hormones has become a focal point in health & wellbeing.



Menstrual Health

As menopause becomes an increasingly discussed topic in the workplace wellbeing space, so too is the often taboo subject of menstrual health.

As well as recognising the regular wellbeing concerned associated with menstruation – specifically period pain, heavy bleeding, and PMS symptoms – ‘menstrual health’ also encompasses additional health & wellbeing concerned experienced by women and AFAB people.

This includes endometriosis, PCOS, PMDD, and adenomyosis. As discussions surrounding workplace equality continue to grow, it’s expected that so too will this previously ‘unspoken’ aspect of female health.

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Half of employees who are forced to take sickness absence due to menstrual symptoms don’t feel comfortable disclosing this to their manager

CIPD, ‘Menstruation & Support at Work’, Nov 2023

”



Men’s Health

Discussions around the hormonal health of men and AMAB (assigned male at birth) people still trails behind in popular culture, yet new research has found links between testosterone levels and sleep health, chronic illness, ageing, and even cancer risk.

As such, questions around gender equality and inclusive wellbeing practices at work may yet pave the way these topics to develop.

GENETIC TESTING & DNA INSIGHTS

As new developments in DNA testing have democratised the world of genetic health, it's now estimated that more than 26 million people worldwide have taken a direct-to-consumer genetic ancestry test¹⁸, showing a surging interest in the health insights made available via DNA testing.

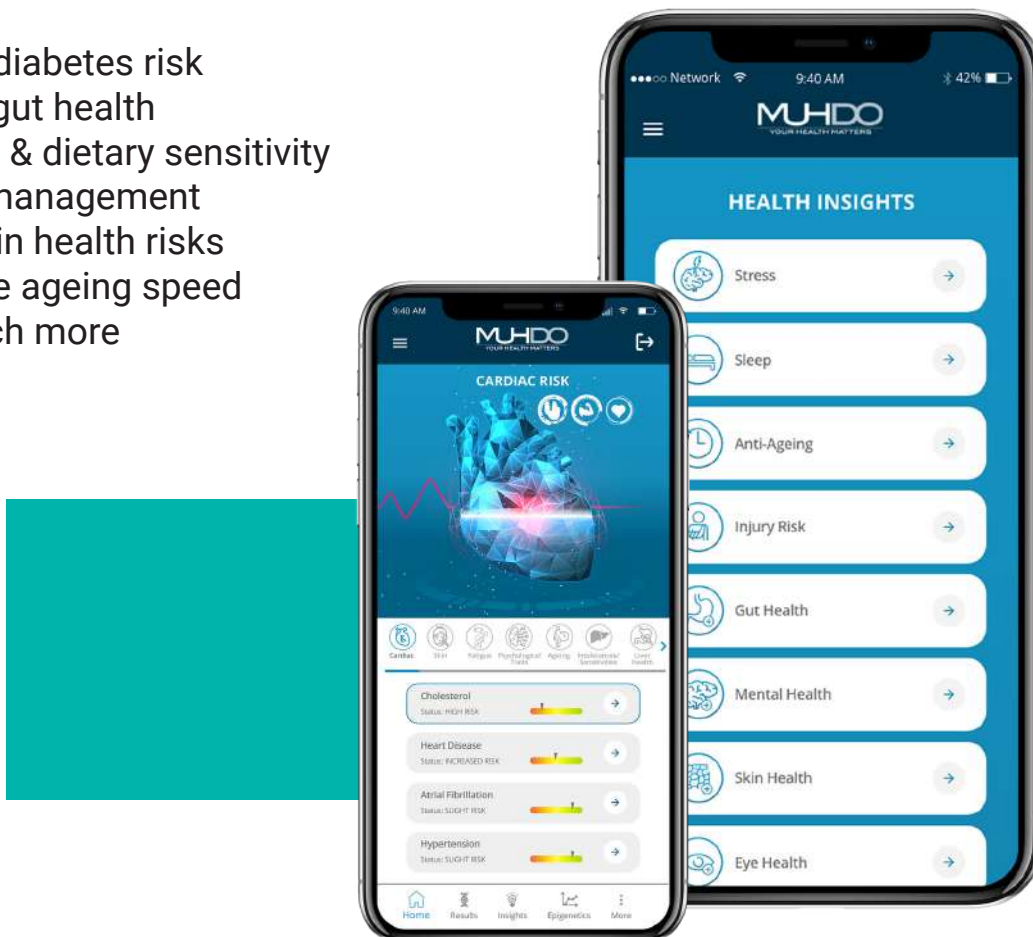
With genetic profiling able to inform personalised health risk assessments and allow individuals to develop their own personalised health, fitness, and nutrition plans, access to genetic health testing could be the next big moment in wellbeing trends this year.

UNLOCK YOUR HEALTH SECRETS WITH DNA INSIGHTS FROM MUHDO

Medicash have teamed up with the DNA experts Muhdo to help our customers uncover the secrets of their DNA – at a fraction of the normal cost.

Using our exclusive discount, Medicash policyholders can receive both the DNA Insights Kit offering over 100 unique insights into their genetic health, plus access to DNA 12 which provides additional monthly health insights over the next 12 months. These include:

- Genetic diabetes risk
- Heart & gut health
- Nutrition & dietary sensitivity
- Weight management
- Eye & skin health risks
- Cognitive ageing speed
- And much more





KEY TAKEAWAYS

It's clear that as we head into 2024, workplace wellbeing is set to focus on addressing both improving employee engagement and providing meaningful changes as part of a wellbeing strategy.

So with this in mind, here's the key takeaways that you'll want to watch this year:

Mental wellbeing

Prioritise initiatives to address stress, burnout, and psychological safety in your work environment.

Holistic approach to everyday health

Recognise the interconnectedness of physical, mental, and emotional wellbeing and how these all impact your employees' health and wellbeing.

Proactive & preventative healthcare

Consider how you can offer early intervention and personalised preventive strategies.

Benefits & challenges of hybrid working

Consider the importance of remote and flexible work arrangements to your employees and tailor support for the unique wellbeing needs that can arise from these setups.

Maintaining employee engagement

Evolve your wellbeing & employee strategies to bolster connection, motivation, and a sense of purpose.

Personalised wellbeing options

Leverage modern technology and data for customised health and wellbeing solutions.

Digital access to health & wellbeing

Seek out new ways to integrate telemedicine, health apps, and wearable tech to form comprehensive wellbeing strategies.

Want to know more about how we can help?

Interested in developing your wellbeing offerings to keep up with the coming year's key focus areas? With the Medicash Health & Wellbeing Group, you can safeguard both your employees' everyday health and workplace wellbeing – without breaking the bank.

We offer award-winning health cash plans to give your employees peace of mind on their everyday health (and financial) needs, alongside access to a host of digital services to track cancer risks, physiotherapy treatment, or even just everyday mindfulness techniques.

What's more, with Health@Work, you can bolster both your workforce's wellbeing awareness and your company strategy with a wide range of expert wellbeing consultancy services.

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TRAINING FOR HEALTHIER WORKPLACES




Throughout this book, we've mentioned how important it is to ensure that your employees and managers alike feel confident and prepared to assess the wellbeing of your workforce.

Health@Work's range of courses have been designed to provide both comprehensive information and practical tools to help your team build their awareness and understanding of health & wellbeing at work. Here are a few of our top recommendations as you begin refining your 2024 strategy.



How to Build an Effective Workplace Wellbeing Programme

We take the stress out of planning, implementing, and measuring your workplace wellbeing programme. Combining the latest research with a bespoke approach to your organisation, this course offers step by step guidance on building an employee wellness strategy that makes you stand out from the crowd.

-  **The How's and Why's** – Gain a new perspective on how and why wellbeing works for organisations like yours, and how to motivate your employees to adopt healthy behaviours and practices
-  **Mastering engagement** – Define your wellbeing strategy and know what keeps your employees engaged, including collecting and analysing data to boost their motivation
-  **Evaluating success** – Learn how to measure your programme's success using both qualitative and quantitative data, how to set goals, measure your baseline data, and adapt to an ever-changing workforce.



Mental Health First Aid Training

Data shows that less than half of UK employees feel comfortable approaching their line manager for mental health support. This course, delivered by an Mental Health First Aid England licensed trainer, provides your organisation with fully trained mental health first aiders to spot and support mental health concerns among your workforce.

-  **Improve understanding** – Your Mental Health First Aiders gain an in-depth understanding of mental health and the factors that can affect wellbeing
-  **Active listening** – We'll provide your chosen attendees with the practical skills and confidence to identify and listen to your employees, as well as signposting them to further resources
-  **Promote a positive culture** – We'll equip your mental health first aiders with the knowledge and skills to support and promote a positive mental health culture within your workplace.

Supporting Employees Through Menopause - Menopause Training for Managers

Wellbeing Champions Training

According to government research, less than 1 in 3 women discuss their menopause symptoms with their line manager. This course is designed to engage, inspire, and prompt managers and leaders in supporting employees experiencing menopause by sharing up-to-date resources, signposting advice, and offering impartial guidance.

- ✚ **Identify support needs** - Learn more about the symptoms, triggers, and misconceptions of menopause
- ✚ **The legal side** - Discover the legal and business reasons why menopause should be a key consideration for employers
- ✚ **Create a culture** - Develop best practices for your workplace solutions and policies that builds a menopause friendly culture

Your company's chosen Wellbeing Champions lead the way in promoting health and wellbeing in the workplace, supporting your overarching wellbeing strategy. With this course, they'll be able to engage your employees in wellbeing initiatives and understand how to use expert interventions to embed healthier wellbeing practices throughout your organisation.

- ✚ **Behaviours** - Use behavioural science to inspire and engage your employees in making healthy lifestyle changes
- ✚ **Barriers** - Use the latest resources and up-to-date advice to support colleagues in overcoming barriers to wellbeing
- ✚ **Benefits** - Gain the skills and knowledge to implement a great wellbeing strategy for your organisation.

Men's Health Awareness

This course is designed to empower and equip men with information, knowledge and strategies to help manage their health and wellbeing. Following the latest research into the factors affecting men's health, this course helps men increase their health awareness and boost their confidence into taking steps to protect their wellbeing.

- ✚ **Raising awareness** - Improve your understanding of both men's health and the barriers to accessing the right care
- ✚ **Everyday tips** - Learn about the impact of diet and lifestyle choices on everyday health
- ✚ **Future-proof strategies** - Build your own strategies for increasing resilience, setting goals, and improving your health



Medicash and Health@Work provide award-winning health and wellbeing services across the UK. Get in touch to find out how we can help your business thrive.



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