

Guide to Developing an Effective Workplace Mental Well-being Strategy

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Foreword by

Rt Hon. Sir Norman Lamb



Foreword

£45 Billion every year! That's the cost of poor mental health to UK employers. And the worrying thing is, the cost seems to be rising. According to a recent report by Deloitte, there has been an increase of 16% since 2016 - an extra £6 Billion every year. But imagine what that also represents in terms of human suffering, misery and anxiety.

In my time, first as an employment lawyer and then as a Member of Parliament, I have been faced with so many examples of failure - where someone's health slowly deteriorates and no one does anything about it. The causes may be in the workplace - for example, a bullying line manager or someone feeling under intense pressure, regularly emailing late at night, well outside of working hours - or it may be something at home. Neglect that situation and the risk is that anxiety and depression will set in. The longer you leave it, the more entrenched it can be. Too often, colleagues at work and managers fear intervening. No one says anything. The employee fears the consequences of speaking out. The misery grows.

The good news is that it doesn't have to be like this. We can do something about it. We now have plenty of evidence of things we can do in the workplace to reduce this massive burden on individuals and to improve the bottom line for companies. The potential prize is that, by following the evidence of what works, it is possible to reduce sickness absence, address the problem of presenteeism - where an employee turns up for work but cannot be effective because of their ill health - and cut the number of people who fall out of work because of ill health. Analysis shows that for every pound spent on effective action in the workplace, you can see a return of £5.00.

So, the message is clear. Enlightened and wise employers are increasingly confronting mental ill health in the workplace. This guide is invaluable in demonstrating what you can do. I applaud Altruist Enterprises for producing it. Follow the guidance set out here - and perhaps investigate the sector-specific training that Altruist can offer - and you will demonstrate to your workforce that you take this seriously and that you are doing something about it. Increased loyalty, an enhanced culture, improved productivity and a reduction in the costly loss of expensively trained employees because they feel they cannot carry on.

This guide covers the following 5 steps to developing an effective workplace mental health and wellbeing strategy.

1. Developing a Business Case for focusing on Mental Health at Work;
2. Gathering and analysing data;
3. Writing your strategy;
4. Launching and implementing your strategy;
5. Evaluating your strategy - so that you can properly assess the effectiveness of what you are doing.

I wish you well as you embark on this journey. You will not regret it. And the impact you can have on people's lives makes it really worthwhile along with an improved bottom line.

Rt Hon. Sir Norman Lamb



1. Developing a Business Case for Mental Health at Work

Introduction

Your employees are your organisation's most valuable asset and so taking care of their health and well-being makes complete business sense.

Having a clear business case for your mental well-being strategy ensures a shared understanding of why it matters and the benefits of investing in such initiatives. This is critical for buy-in and engagement.

Mental health problems are estimated to cost employers on average £1652 per employee per year for private sector organisations and £1716 per employee per year for public sector organisations¹.

A whopping 30% of the UK workforce has been formally diagnosed with a mental illness at some point in their lifetime². Yet, only one in ten (9%) of organisations have a standalone Mental Health Policy for employees and less than half of organisations provide Mental Health Training³.

This section includes a wealth of evidence and research that you can use to inform your business case that covers financial implications, productivity and workplace culture.

Presenteeism - the cost of reduced productivity

'Presenteeism' is defined as the loss of productivity that occurs when employees come into work, but cannot function at capacity and complete work at the normal rate due to ill-health. Employees exhibiting presenteeism may not be fully engaged, they may lack the ability to concentrate, or perform at lower levels as a result of ill health. Presenteeism is often overlooked when assessing mental health in the workplace which can come at a high cost. Working when ill or not taking opportunities to relax outside work may have far greater impact on employees' long-term physical and mental health, than their absence.

Buy-in from senior leaders and line managers is critical for tackling presenteeism as they have a significant role to play in creating a culture where people do not work when ill and are encouraged to go home if they are unwell. Four out of five employees have observed 'presenteeism' in their organisation over the past 12 months and 25% of organisations report an increase in presenteeism from 2018³. Research also shows that 60% of those experiencing mental health difficulties stay in work, without time off⁴.

Whilst presenteeism can have a negative impact on business, managing mental health well will lead to improved engagement and reduced costs. Teams with high levels of psychological safety outperformed targets by 17%, whilst those with low levels missed targets by an average of 19%².

1. Deloitte, 2020, 'Mental Health and Employers: Refreshing the Case for Investment'

2. BITC, 2019, 'Mental Health at Work Report 2019, Time to Take Ownership'

3. CIPD, 2019, 'Health and Well-Being at Work'

4. Stevenson & Farmer, 2017, 'Thriving at Work: The Stevenson/Farmer review of mental health and employers'

How much is presenteeism costing your organisation?

Presenteeism is estimated to cost employers a massive £4,058 per employee per year⁵. To get a rough idea of how much presenteeism is costing your organisation, work out:

Number of employees x £4,058 = Cost of presenteeism to your organisation

Absenteeism and the cost of absence due to mental ill-health

Mental health problems are increasingly prevalent as a cause of both short and long-term absence. Along with stress, musculoskeletal injuries and acute medical conditions, it remains most commonly responsible for long-term absence³. Furthermore, a third of organisations include mental ill-health among their top three causes of short-term absence, continuing the growing trend noted in 2018³.

How much is absenteeism costing your organisation?

The median absence cost stands at £522 per employee per year⁶. To get a rough idea of how much absenteeism is costing your organisation, work out:

Number of employees x £522 = Cost of absenteeism to your organisation

According to the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development, 34% of sick days are as a result of mental ill-health.

Again, for a rough idea, work out:

Cost of absenteeism x 0.34 = Cost of mental health related absenteeism to your organisation

This figure might still not accurately depict the total cost of mental ill-health to your business. Out of those who have taken sick leave due to mental ill-health, a huge 95% say they have given a different reason for their absence⁷. Therefore, undisclosed mental health related sick days may increase your costs further still.

Staff turnover

A shocking 300,000 people with a long-term mental health problem lose their jobs each year⁴

Staff turnover costs include hiring temporary workers, management time spent interviewing, recruitment agency fees, and advertising the new role. A 2014 report carried out by Oxford Economics revealed that replacing a member of staff costs £30,614 per employee⁸.

5. Nottingham Trent University, 2017, 'Sickness Presenteeism: Measurement and Management Challenges'

6. CIPD, 2016, 'Annual Survey Report Absence Management'

7. Mind, 2014, YouGov survey of 1,251 workers in Britain

8. Oxford Economics, 2014, 'The Cost of Brain Drain: Understanding the Financial Impact of Staff Turnover'

Legal costs and avoidance of litigation

The law is an area that needs to be considered. Even the best run organisation can find themselves mired in a costly web of litigation. Of those people who disclosed a mental health problem to their employer, 9% were reprimanded or dismissed as a result². This behaviour by employers contradicts disability provisions of the Equality Act 2010 and can result in legal action.

There were 6,550 disability discrimination claims at employment tribunals in 2018, a 37% rise on the year before⁹. The significant increase of disability discrimination cases is not only down to the abolishment of tribunal fees in 2017, but an increased willingness of employees to raise claims relating to mental health.

As an employer, it is your legal obligation to identify problems that your organisation may be having in relation to mental ill-health. Similarly, this also applies to controlling the potential causes of work-related stress and protecting employees from harm and discrimination.

Laws pertaining to mental health at work include:

- The Health and Safety at Work Act 1974
- The Equality Act 2010
- Employment Rights Act 1996
- Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999

Example cases

Dickens vs O2 - £110,000 pay out

An accountant who suffered ill-health due to excessive working hours and a demanding workload. Susan Dickins, had warned managers that she could not cope and was 'at the end of her tether'. Managers did nothing about it.

Green vs Deutsche Bank - £828,000 pay out

Helen Green, a high flyer at the bank, was admitted to hospital suffering a major depressive illness as a result of a 3-year campaign of bullying. Green raised the problem with her manager and HR department but her complaints were ignored.

Stress and accidents

Individuals who are experiencing high levels of stress are more likely to have, or cause an accident or injury. This is because staff who are stressed may lack motivation, are unable to concentrate or focus, and are less able to follow necessary precautions¹⁰.

Stress can lead to poor communication, poor interpersonal skills and stretch as far as workplace and personal relationships. Conflict between employees and teams may then occur as a result.

Stress and insurance premiums

High stress levels in organisations, and especially in the absence of stress and mental well-being provision may lead to an increase in insurance premiums e.g. Employer Liability Insurance. Some insurers now demand that employers instigate stress management activities as a prerequisite for insurance. Yet, less than half (48%) of organisations carry out risk assessments or stress audits³.

9. Figures from Ministry of Justice, 2018.

10. Health and Safety Executive, 2006, 'Investigation of the links between psychological ill health, stress and safety'

How much is mental ill-health costing your organisation?

Have you considered how much you would save through taking a few simple steps to improve the management of mental well-being in your workplace?

The savings you could make

By implementing a workplace mental well-being strategy, you will be making a real difference to your bottom line. For every £1 invested in mental well-being, businesses can expect to see an average return of £5¹.

Deloitte's analysis of the case studies where investments have been made in improving mental health show a consistently positive return on investment, a finding which is bolstered by a number of academic meta-studies which demonstrate the benefits of good work for mental health⁴.

Yet, 62% of managers say they have had to put the interests of their organisation above staff wellbeing, either sometimes, regularly or every day. A further 41% of employees experiencing a mental health problem report there has been no resulting changes or actions taken in their workplace².

The first step in achieving an ongoing and sustainable cost reduction is to put together your Mental Well-being Strategy.

Focusing on value

Most companies want to save money and be legally compliant when it comes to mental well-being but it is the best companies that go beyond this and focus on nurturing a workplace culture that reflects and promotes positive mental health and well-being.

Culture is reflected in every aspect of organisational life. We can see it in policies, processes, meetings, the way people talk to each other, how decisions are made, and the way business is carried out with customers. It is driven by what the organisation and those that work within it value and consider to be important.

When organisations value the health and happiness of their employees, it leads to a better and more productive working environment and better outcomes for customers and stakeholders. One study showed that happy employees are 20% more productive than unhappy employees. When it comes to salespeople, happiness has an even greater impact, raising sales by 37%¹¹.

Your strategy will ensure that you have your employee's needs in your best interests, whilst creating a happier, more supportive working environment and better employee experience for all.

Three-quarters of employees from organisations with health and well-being activity believe it has resulted in positive organisational outcomes over the last 12 months³.

Isn't it time to get started on yours?

Notes

11. Social Market Foundation, 2015, 'Happiness and productivity: Understanding the Happy-Productive Worker'

2. Gathering and Analysing Data

Before you begin writing, it is essential that you understand where you are starting from. You can do this by gathering and analysing existing organisational data. This ensures that your Mental Well-being Strategy is tailored to the needs of your workforce and will have the greatest impact. It also provides you with data that you will use when you come to evaluate the difference that the strategy has made.

Collecting this data will enable you to answer the following questions:

- Why do we want to produce this strategy?
- Do we have the information we need in order to produce this strategy?
- Are we complying with the law?
- Do we have a problem with stress and mental ill-health in the workplace? Do we know if we have such a problem?
- What are our organisation's views/beliefs/actions on mental well-being?
- What do we want to say, who to and why?
- How is this strategy going to be used and how will it be used effectively?

In this section, we will cover a number of data sources and why they are important.

Demographics

What are the demographics of your organisation i.e. age profile, gender ratio and employee location(s)? Are there any groups that are most at risk?

Younger employees are the most exposed to mental health concerns. They have a higher rate of depressive symptoms, work related stress, report more financial concerns and are subject to higher rates of bullying¹².

Company culture

Values

Are your employees aware of the company values? Do not be afraid to ask your staff the question; what is our culture?

What are your organisations Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) objectives? Many employees find that volunteering and charity work help improve their mental well-being¹².

Managers

Poor management is one of the top three causes of stress-related absence³.

Are line managers trained in managing people? It sometimes happens that an individual is promoted because of their technical skills but this does not necessarily mean that they are good people managers.

Good line management is key to employee well-being. Do your managers effectively communicate with members of their team? Do they create an open forum where issues can be discussed? Are your managers trained in mental health at work?

12. Financial Times, 2018, 'Health at Work Report'

Current policies and procedures

Undertake an audit to understand which policies and procedures your organisation has in place to ensure that they meet the needs of the relevant legislation; namely:

- The Health and Safety at Work Act 1974
- The Equality Act 2010
- Employment Rights Act 1996
- Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999

Your organisation's policies and procedures could include:

- Health and Safety Policy
- Stress Risk Assessments
- Recruitment Policy
- Sickness Absence Policy
- Disciplinary / Dismissal and Grievance Policy

You may also want to consider where your policies and procedures are located, how accessible they are to staff and how well they are implemented.

Physical Environment

The surroundings in which employees spend their working lives are an important source of job satisfaction and impact on work motivation and patterns of interaction¹³.

If some or all of your organisation is office based, consider the layout to ensure maximum employee well-being. For example, open plan offices help boost innovation but it is important that organisations integrate a quiet space for employees to work from. Higher rates of sickness absence have been associated with a lack of perceived control and privacy at work.

You may also wish to consider the following aspects of the physical environment:

- Furniture
- Level of Noise
- Lighting and Temperature
- Employee Control over their Working Environment

Organisational health

Absence management data

Does your organisation measure absence and if so, do they measure the reasons for absence, both short and long term? How could this data inform your mental well-being strategy?

Existing levels of mental ill-health

It is important to consider the quantity and quality of information you have regarding existing levels and incidence of mental health problems within your organisation. Who is aware of such information? How is it obtained?

Employee assistance provider data

Do your employees have access to an employee assistance programme? Do you monitor the volume of calls to this service and the reasons behind them? How could this data help inform your mental well-being strategy?

13. Public Health England, 2015, 'Physical environments and Employee Wellbeing: Topic Overview'

Existing well-being initiatives

What initiatives do you already have in place and what is the take up and the impact?

Initiatives could include information on the intranet, yoga sessions, lunch and learns and employee assistance programmes.

We know that generally speaking, employees are largely unaware of the mental health initiatives available to them at work. But for those that do access them, the vast majority feel that these initiatives help improve their mental health¹².

Employee Feedback

Staff surveys

You may already conduct annual staff satisfaction surveys. Why not incorporate questions which gauge the mental wellbeing of your workforce?

Example questions for managers include:

- How confident do you feel in supporting those you line manage with mental wellbeing at work?
- Do you feel you have been given sufficient information and guidance from your organisation on how to support those you line manage that experience mental ill health?

Examples for the wider employee base include:

- Are you aware of any support your organisation offers to staff on health and well-being?
- Do you feel supported by your line manager?
- Do you feel that your organisation encourages staff to talk openly about mental health?

Staff focus groups

Consider facilitating an informal discussion to gain feedback on what is working well and what improvements could be made.

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3. Writing your Strategy

Having identified your organisation's business case and gathered and analysed your organisation's data, you will have established a good starting point for your strategy. The process will have identified areas for intervention, and you will better understand how your organisational structure and function could be contributing to or preventing mental ill-health.

This section of the guide will give you some ideas on how to structure your strategy. It is helpful to see your strategy as similar to telling a story so we have suggested a number of titles which your plan could contain.

You will notice that under each suggested title, there is information and suggested text which you are welcome to copy and use, or pointers to the areas where you need to customise the strategy to your own business.

Suggested titles

Foreword/ What is this strategy about? / What do we want to achieve and why?

Here, you will need to state why you have produced your strategy. It sets the scene and acts as a foundation for the rest of your strategy and therefore should include:

Context – what is the broader context that has driven and informed the development of your strategy? This will be specific to each organisation but it is good practice to make reference to the overall business strategy to ensure there is alignment. Examples include:

- It will form part of our broader HR/people strategy
- It is good practice as we want to take care of our staff
- It will help us to meet the Thrive at Work commitment
- It is our business objective to be rated in the top 100 companies to work for
- We are operating in accordance with recent research and evidence

Values and beliefs – why do we believe this is important? For example, “we recognise that our employees are key to the delivery of the organisation's vision and have a direct impact on the experience of our customers. When our employees are healthy, motivated and have a sense of wellbeing, then the experience and outcomes improve”, or “we believe in providing a healthy working environment and improving the quality of working lives for all staff. This is also an opportunity to reference any organisational values to ensure alignment.

Purpose – what is the overall purpose of the strategy? What is it intended to do? For example, “to improve mental health promotion within the workplace, along with improving the prevention, early identification and management of stress and mental ill-health”.

Objectives – what are the specific aims that the strategy will deliver? This may include:

- Increase employee engagement and motivation
- Improve the productivity and effectiveness of staff and teams
- Support staff experiencing mental ill-health to get better and stay in work
- Support and maintain a safe and healthy working environment
- Ensure that colleagues experiencing mental ill-health get treated fairly
- Have the ability to identify signs earlier and intervene sooner

What is mental health? / why does it matter?

Your readers will likely have different understandings of what mental health is and why it matters so this section helps to create a shared understanding. This is important as it directly informs what action you will take as a result of this strategy so you want your readers to understand the logic and reasoning.

Definition of mental health – ‘...a state of well-being in which each individual realises his or her own potential, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively and fruitfully, and is able to make a contribution to her or his community’. (World Health Organisation)

Why it matters – use information and data from Section 1: Developing the Business Case to highlight why supporting mental health is important. You may want to include external data and anything that is particularly pertinent to your organisation’s context, for example, “the organisation will be experiencing rapid change over the next two years so actively supporting staff to build resilience will ensure overall positive levels of mental wellbeing and will benefit organisational effectiveness”.

The current picture

In this section, you will provide an overview of where you are now in relation to mental well-being. The aim here is to present a synopsis and narrative of the data you have gathered and analysed (Section 2) rather than a long list of statistics and information.

You may want to consider how you organise this data with one suggestion being:

- Demographics (age profile, gender ratio, employee locations)
- Company culture (values, managers, policies and procedures, physical environment)
- Organisational health (sickness absence rates and reasons, presenteeism, turnover, Employee Assistance Provider data, e.g. number and type of calls if applicable)
- Existing well-being initiatives
- Employee feedback (employee engagement survey, focus groups, team meetings)

Draw on what feels most relevant to your organisation as this will inform the actions you take.

It may be tempting to focus solely on the areas that need more work but it is also important to consider what is working well. This could be an opportunity to scale up or replicate best practice in other areas of the organisation.

What we need to do/ What we plan to do/What actions we wish to take

This is the main part of your strategy where you will identify what action you will take. This should be informed by the current picture and the purpose and objectives that you have identified for the strategy.

For each of the actions you identify, provide a short narrative that highlights the issues this will be addressing and why it is important to achieving your objectives.

The actions will be described in broad strokes, rather than in detail. For instance, if policies need to be written, they will be mentioned with a brief description of what will be included. The particular detail will be in the actual policies. Similarly, if systems and procedures are absent or in need of improvement, point to the elements that need attention, rather than writing a full description.

Below, you will find areas to include within this section of your strategy and some ideas for action.

Communication and engagement

- Hold regular awareness events and [lunch and learns](#) on the topic
- Encourage story-telling and role modelling to reduce the stigma surrounding mental health
- Create space for employees to be involved especially with the decisions that affect them
- Communicate information regularly in a transparent way
- Create methods for staff to suggest ideas and improvements

Learning and Development

Training is an important intervention for building awareness and providing people with the capability, confidence and tools to support themselves and others at work. Below are some of the recommended training courses that are available:

- [Line Manager Training](#) – Mental Health at Work: Managers is a one-day workplace specific course. It gives managers the practical tools they need to assess mental health needs on an individual basis and provide support accordingly.
- [Mental Health Awareness for Employees](#) - Mental Health at Work: Colleagues is a three-hour awareness course designed to increase understanding of mental health, and confidence in approaching the subject. It enables employees to recognise some of the signs of stress and mental health issues in themselves and others.
- [Train the Trainer](#) - a four-day course spread over one month, supported by West Midlands Academic Health Science Network (WMAHSN). This course enables participants to cascade essential information throughout your organisation in a cost-effective manner.
- [E-learning](#) - 30-minute Mental Health at Work and Resilience eLearning courses which act as a taster or refresher and provide individuals with a greater understanding of mental health, personal resilience and stress management.
- [Resilience and Stress Management](#) - a 3-hour course which helps build employee resiliency skills and mental fitness in an ever-changing work environment using evidence-based approaches. It enables employees to increase their capability to 'bounce back' and helps them to identify strategies to reduce their stress levels.
- [Mental Health First Aid](#) is available as a 2-day or ½-Day course and is designed to help minimise the impact of mental ill-health in the workplace, giving you the tools to support all employees' well-being. On completion of this training, candidates are either certified as 'Mental Health Aware' or 'Mental Health First Aiders'.

Policies and processes

- Return to work interviews that focus on providing a space for discussion and support
- Performance management processes that centre around regular conversations and meaningful feedback
- Encouraging no out of hours emails and/or being explicit that there is no expectation to engage with work out of hours
- Offer flexible working that promotes and supports positive mental health.
- Offer occupational health/employee assistance programme/counselling services

Wellbeing initiatives

- Yoga and/or mindfulness classes that promote physical health, build resilience and reduce stress
- Health education events that promote a healthy lifestyle
- Provide healthy snacks
- Organise events that bring people together and facilitate social networks
- Facilitate volunteering opportunities

How we will review and measure the impact of our strategy

Here, you will want to include some of the methods and metrics that will be used to measure the impact and effectiveness of the strategy. This helps to build engagement and buy-in with key stakeholders especially if you are asking for funding to enable delivery of the strategy. Return on investment is an important consideration for most organisations.

Section 5 of this document provides some specific ways that you can do this.

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4. Launching and Implementing your Strategy

Your strategy is a commitment to promoting and supporting the mental well-being of your employees. It will involve making changes so effective communication, engagement and planning is critical.

Participation is essential in sustaining any well-being programme so make staff aware of the important role they play in its implementation.

Whatever the size of your organisation or level of resourcing, below are some top tips for a successful launch:

1. Communicate the strategy

When telling people about the strategy remember to tell it like a story. A strategy is a change so remind people why it matters, what it involves and what will be different as a result. People want to know what it means for them so discuss any personal impact remembering that it may be different depending on their job role, e.g. line manager, and the support that will be available.

Explain the process that you have followed, how you have involved people along the way and how you will continue to do so.

2. Have a realistic plan

Your strategy sets out what you want to change but having a realistic plan that will support you to implement your strategy is important.

For each area of change, identify what steps you need to take to make it happen. This may include stages such as research, engagement, development and testing.

For each step, try to ensure that they are SMART: specific, measurable, achievable, realistic and timely.

3. Align with the mental health calendar

A great way of raising awareness of your plans is to align your launch with a national or international Mental Health Day or Week. These include World Mental Health Day, Mental Health Awareness Week and National Stress Awareness Day. For a full list of applicable dates, take a look at our [Mental Health Calendar](#).

Run a well-being day, deliver a [lunch and learn](#) or even attempt a World Record, the possibilities are endless.

4. Make it accessible

It is important that you communicate with employees where they are. If only a percentage of your workforce is based at an office or it is difficult to get everyone in the same place at the same time, then think about alternative methods of delivery.

Cascade information via an [e-learning course](#), deliver a webinar or communicate key messages via the intranet.

5. Break down barriers

Although the landscape is slowly changing, there is still a stigma attached to mental health. This means that some employees may be reluctant to engage with a programme if they feel that it does not apply to them.

Introducing the topic slowly and in an informal manner over lunch or through a tea and talk will help staff to feel more comfortable in discussing mental health. Perhaps provide free cake and give away goody bags to help maximise attendance.

Another great way of breaking down barriers is by encouraging people with experience of mental ill-health to share their stories. An excellent example of this is the 'This is Me' campaign. Some 97% of organisations who have registered with 'This is Me' believe the campaign has had a positive impact on reducing the stigma attached to mental health at work¹⁴.

6. Integrate wellness into recruitment

To ensure longevity of your strategy, consider your future workforce. What is your employee onboarding process? What is included in your induction training? How could your strategy be integrated into your recruitment processes?

Competition to recruit the best talent remains high so staff who feel that their employer is taking steps to support their well-being is more likely to recommend them. In fact, 60% of employees say they would feel more motivated and more likely to recommend their organisation as a good place to work if their employer took action to support mental well-being¹⁵.

7. Commit to the programme

A lot of hard work will go into developing your strategy but as with many new initiatives, there is a danger of it being left on the shelf, once the novelty has worn off. It is essential that your approach maintains momentum in order to achieve your desired outcomes.

Make sure you define responsibilities and set expectations in relation to performance measurements and participation rates.

Sign a pledge at your launch event to demonstrate your ongoing commitment to mental well-being in the workplace.

Sustainability is key so communicate often with your employees, gain feedback and allow your staff to take ownership of the strategy.

Notes

14. West Midlands Combined Authority, 2019

15. Mind, 2013, 'How to Promote Wellbeing and Tackle the Causes of Work-Related Mental Health Problems'

5. Evaluating your Strategy

By evaluating your strategy, you want to be able to measure the impact and effectiveness of the changes that you have made. Evaluation helps us to answer the questions,

- Have we achieved the objectives that we set out?
- Has there been a change in the data and feedback?
- What difference has it made?
- What have we learned?
- Where can we improve?

Evaluation is not a one-off activity but should be a regular exercise that is built in to your strategy delivery plan. This enables you to assess whether change is happening, understand what is working and where you may need to adjust your plan. It is an important learning activity but also creates momentum for others by showing where the strategy is having an impact and where progress is happening.

Although evaluation is one of the latter stages of this process you have already laid some of the groundwork in the earlier stages through analysis of the current position. This data provides a baseline that you can use to measure change and improvement. For example, if your existing sickness absence rates are 10% with 4% of this attributed to mental health, one of the ways that you will evaluate will be to measure how these rates change over a period of time.

This is macro evaluation where you compare data from the past to the present and see how it has changed. This is useful and tells an important story but you ideally want to be more specific by measuring the difference of individual intervention(s) and how that has driven a change in the data. This is called micro evaluation.

For example, measuring how the start of a weekly yoga class has influenced overall rates of wellbeing or reduced the level of presenteeism.

To do this, it is important to be specific on your action plan about how this change will benefit employees and the organisation and how you will measure the impact.

The types of data and information that you may use to evaluate your strategy will be similar to what you have used in Section 2, for example:

- Sickness absence rates and reasons
- Presenteeism
- Turnover
- Employee engagement survey
- Number of people that have attended awareness events and/or training

However, it is helpful to support this with qualitative data that provides a narrative around why, how and what has changed.

On the next page are two of the primary methods that you can use to do this.

1. Gather staff feedback by asking open questions

This could include:

- What has contributed positively to your mental well-being?
- In what way and why?
- How has this impacted you personally and at work?
- Have you felt or acted any different as a result?
- What has made the biggest difference?
- What has not been as effective? Why do you think this is?

There is always room for improvement so include questions that provide suggestions for the future, for example:

- What else could we do?
- What difference would this make?

Open questions are particularly useful when measuring the impact of training. For example:

- How confident do you feel as a result of the training?
- Is this an improvement from before?
- How are you behaving and working differently as a result?

You could ask these questions via a survey and/or through focus groups. Consider the size and demographics of your workforce and what is realistic, however, the additional benefit of holding focus groups is that you can build a better understanding of the employee experience.

2. Observation

Observing the environment around you and any changes in employee behaviour may indicate the impact of your mental well-being strategy. For example, you may observe that more staff are attending awareness sessions or that people are talking more openly about mental health.

Some questions to consider:

- How are people behaving or acting differently?
- What events are happening now?
- What are people talking about?
- How have relationships changed?

Notes

Hints and Tips

Here, we have collated some hints and tips that you can apply as you approach, develop and implement your mental well-being strategy.

1. Engage and involve

Engage and involve people at the earliest possible stage of developing this strategy. This builds engagement and ownership which is especially important when deciding what action will be taken. Ensure good representation from across your organisation.

2. Leaders and Managers are key

Leaders and senior managers are important role models in an organisation so engage with them to ensure that they understand their role, responsibilities and that their actions and behaviours support the strategy purpose and objectives.

3. Communicate

Communication is one of the most important aspects of strategy development and delivery. Ensure that this is regular, open and two-way. You may wish to use different methods such as a monthly email update that outlines what has been happening and what is coming up, intranet polls to gather insight and opinion and focus groups to measure the impact of the strategy.

4. Focus on culture

Focusing on culture is important when it comes to any change in an organisation. One of the ways to drive culture change is through reinforcing mechanisms, e.g. policies, processes, environment. Consider how these need to change in order to align with and reinforce the positive mental well-being culture that you are building. One example could be changing the flexible working policy so that it is open to everyone.

5. Highlight the importance of employee self-management

Employee self-management is important in developing mental well-being so consider how you can empower staff to make positive decisions that benefit their mental health and how they can successfully manage their boundaries between home and work.

How Altruist Enterprises Can Help

Altruist Enterprises - Your trusted, expert employee well-being partner

Altruist Enterprises was pioneered by Katie Buckingham in 2013 and has since grown into an award-winning provider of bespoke Resilience, Stress Management and Mental Health at Work training to organisations nationally. We ensure your staff have the necessary skills to support themselves and each other, through the many challenges of work and home.

Altruist Enterprises provide a range of tailored courses suited to the needs of managers, the wider employee base and in-house training teams. These include our recently launched E-learning training and our 4 day 'Train the Trainer' course, which enables your staff to deliver our courses inhouse to colleagues. We work in partnership with our clients to ensure effective management of well-being in the workplace using the following steps:

Prevention - boosting confidence and building employee resilience. Providing organisations with the tools to implement relevant internal processes, whilst adhering to workplace Equality and Health and Safety regulations.

Early Identification - increasing understanding and enabling managers and employees to spot the early signs of stress and mental ill-health within themselves and colleagues.

Support - providing staff with techniques to maintain their emotional wellbeing, encouraging useful conversations and enabling managers and employees to signpost colleagues to appropriate support in a timely manner.

When reviewing your employee well-being and training needs, we encourage you to take advantage of our complimentary telephone consultation to determine which offering is best suited to launch your well-being programme.

Call us today on [0121 271 0550](tel:01212710550), email info@altruistuk.com or contact us [here](#) to find out more.

For further details on our training courses, please see below:

Mental Health at Work: Managers is a one-day workplace specific course. It gives managers the practical tools they need to assess mental health needs on an individual basis and provide support accordingly.

"The full day managers mental health training was very insightful. We discussed how we could bring up the conversation of mental health with colleagues and then put this into practice and tested our listening skills. The course was expertly delivered with lots of time for discussion."

Rachel Smith, Senior Health Officer, Wolverhampton Wanderers Foundation

Mental Health at Work: Colleagues is a three-hour awareness course designed to increase understanding of mental health, and confidence in approaching the subject. It enables employees to recognise some of the signs of stress and mental health issues in themselves and others.

"Essential learning to deal with modern day life at home or at work"

Mark Coleman, CEO, Coleman Group

Train the Trainer: Mental Health at Work is a four-day course spread over one month, supported by West Midlands Academic Health Science Network (WMAHSN). This course enables participants to cascade essential information throughout your organisation in a cost-effective manner. This programme is best suited to colleagues with relevant experience in facilitating learning and delivering training or in employee mental health e.g. well-being lead/advisor.

"All that attended the training found it to be engaging, interactive and extremely beneficial. Time with the Altruist trainers was invaluable as they were happy to explore topics in detail and provide helpful insights"
Elizabeth Edwards, HR Business Partner, Paragon Banking Group PLC

E-learning training are a series of 30-minute Mental Health at Work and Resilience online courses which act as a taster or refresher and provide individuals with a greater understanding of mental health, personal resilience and stress management.

Our online courses have been created to enable staff to access essential information remotely at a time that suits them. It also enables employers to cascade key messages across various locations in a cost effective and scalable manner.

"The course was interesting and thought provoking as it highlighted the importance of looking after the mental well-being of ourselves and employees. The training was helpful in refreshing my knowledge of the subject area"
Derek Baker, Head of Health, Safety and Compliance, Nationwide Crash Repair Centres Ltd

Resilience and Stress Management is a 3-hour course which helps build employee resiliency skills and mental fitness in an ever-changing work environment using evidence-based approaches. This course is ideal for employees who wish to increase their stress management skills and capability to 'bounce back'.

"I learnt how to recognise situations in my daily working and home life that I can work on to reduce my personal stress and build my resilience... Overall a very helpful course"
Federica Merella, Consultant Anaesthetist, Birmingham Children's Hospital

Mental Health First Aid is available as a 2-day or ½-Day course and is designed to help minimise the impact of mental ill-health in the workplace, giving you the tools to support all employees' well-being. On completion of this training, candidates are either certified as 'Mental Health Aware' or 'Mental Health First Aiders'. These programmes are best suited to colleagues who have the confidence and ability to be a point of contact for those experiencing stress and/or mental ill-health at work.

"Content was relevant and enjoyable and delivered in a professional and sensitive manner by the instructor. Toolkits and supporting booklets will certainly be a useful reference point. An excellent course!"
Phil Loach, Chief Fire Officer, West Midlands Fire Service

Lunch and Learn sessions are 1-hour interactive workshops which bring employees from all areas of your organisation together, to discuss topics which can affect each and every one of us.

'I've had the chance to participate in two really enlightening workshops run by Katie. The workshops were informative and engaging... and a real help in raising stress awareness in a powerful visual way.'
Jon Formby, HR Advisor, Guildford Borough Council

Training is delivered onsite at your company premises to a minimum of 8 and a maximum of 16 delegates per course. Alternatively, we also hold a number of public courses across England for your staff to attend.

Lunch and Learn sessions are delivered to a minimum of 20 and a maximum of 100 staff per workshop.

To discuss a bespoke package for your organisation, take advantage of our free consultation.

Call us today on **0121 271 0550**, email info@altruistuk.com or contact us [here](#) to find out more.

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Notes

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