



A guide for businesses:

# Supporting Employee Health and Wellbeing

Straightforward steps towards a health and wellbeing programme that supports and rewards the heart of your business



# Welcome

**At Sovereign Health Care, we believe better health is for everyone – regardless of where you live or work, the job you do, age or any existing health conditions.**

We want to help as many businesses as we can prioritise employee health and wellbeing – not only because we think it's the right thing to do, but because it will benefit your business, your employees, and their families. It really is good all round!

To help, we have created this guide to give businesses the information they need to quickly and easily make a start on looking after their employees' health and wellbeing. Taking the simple steps outlined in our guide, could help to reduce employee absence, develop a positive culture and, ultimately, help your business to achieve its full potential.

We hope you find this guide useful. If you have any questions, please [get in touch](#).

We will show you:

Why employee health and wellbeing is important for businesses



The building blocks for a straightforward health and wellbeing plan



Quick, easy and cost-effective ways to get started

# Employee health and wellbeing at the forefront

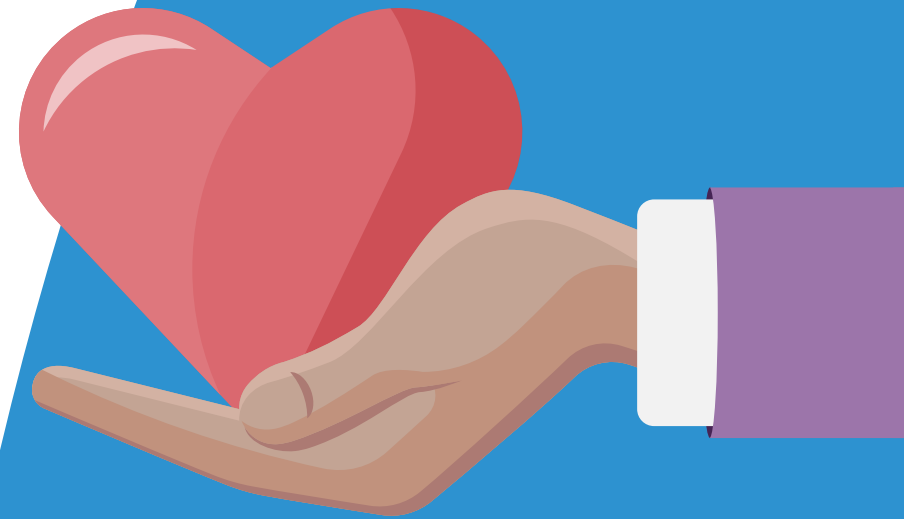
The challenges posed by COVID-19 have shone a spotlight on our collective health and wellbeing, with the impact on society only just beginning to emerge. With NHS waiting lists at record levels, these challenges will likely be further exacerbated by the added pressure facing everyday health services, making it difficult for employees to access help – for both physical and mental health conditions – as quickly as they may need.

**These changes mean looking after employee health and wellbeing is no longer a ‘nice to have’ but increasingly a necessity.**

## Time for action

**So how can organisations rise to the challenge of supporting employee health and wellbeing while staying focused on the day-to-day realities of running a business?**

This guide provides straightforward, affordable steps you can take to put a health and wellbeing plan in place in your business which, in turn, could prompt and help your employees to look after their physical and mental health.

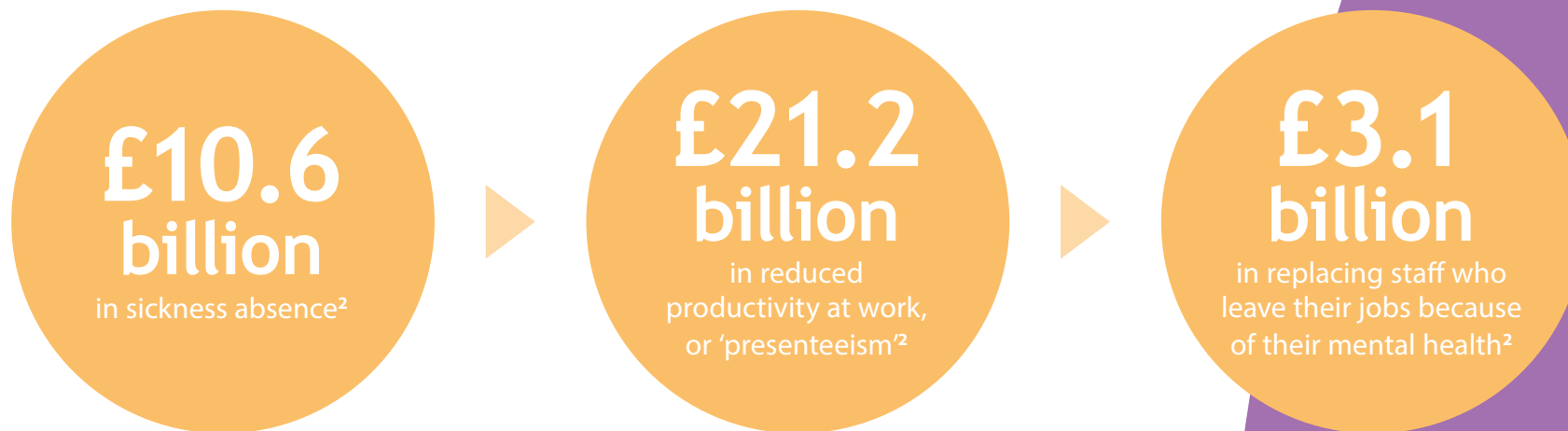


# Why employee health and wellbeing matters

Attitudes towards health in the workplace have changed over the last few years. Many businesses now recognise the positive impact looking after their people's health and wellbeing can have on business performance.

## Counting the cost of employee health issues

Mental health alone has a major impact. Evidence suggests that 12.7% of sick days<sup>1</sup> can be attributed to mental health conditions, costing UK employers almost £35 billion per year<sup>2</sup> through:



**Add the impact of poor physical health into the mix, and it's clear why a positive approach to employee health and wellbeing is now an important part of business planning.**

# Positive business impact

How a business approaches employee wellbeing is increasingly seen as a reflection of its culture, values and overall business strength and sustainability. Taking a proactive approach can have a positive impact across several essential areas by helping to:

1

## Reduce absence and sickness rates

**In 2019, the average absence rate was 5.9 days per employee, per year.<sup>3</sup>**

Implementing a health and wellbeing programme can help to reduce days off for sickness by enabling employees to proactively tackle health issues before they potentially become major problems.

By raising awareness of the importance of looking after our mental and physical health, employers can help to reduce factors such as stress and anxiety that can lead to significant absence.

2

## Increase staff engagement and retention

**Employee turnover is costly for many businesses; it costs around 25% more to hire versus retain staff.<sup>4</sup>**

Introducing benefits such as flexible working, health care cash plans and childcare support will demonstrate that you look after employees, and can be used to increase staff retention by incentivising teams and rewarding length of service and strong performance at all levels.



3

## Improve reward packages and recruitment

**Nearly 7 in 10 (69%) of companies have reported talent shortages and difficulty hiring – a 15-year high.<sup>5</sup>**

When you need to recruit, the battle for talent is fiercer than ever.

Businesses must find new ways to stand out from the crowd, and knowing that a prospective employer looks after employee health and wellbeing is an increasingly important priority for job seekers. Not only that, but usable health and wellbeing benefits are often a welcome boost to reward packages, further increasing the attractiveness of your business to potential recruits and existing employees.

4

## Increase productivity

Together, these factors can help to boost business productivity by increasing morale, and reducing the cost and disruption created by staff turnover and absence.



# Getting started

To help you get started, here's our quick and easy checklist of the things we think are helpful to consider when planning your health and wellbeing programme. These will deliver impact whilst also being affordable and easy to implement.

## Remember!

Employers have a duty of care to look after their employees' health, safety and welfare whilst at work – this includes proactive management of stress in the workplace. You may already have some of these things in place in your business, particularly when it comes to meeting your legal obligations, but it's still a good idea to consider when you last reminded employees about any existing provisions. People forget, and a quick regular reminder can be really useful.



## Legal requirements

As an employer, you are legally required to protect your workers from the health risks of working with display screen equipment (DSE) such as computers and smartphones.<sup>6</sup> Taking the right steps will help to prevent issues such as pain in necks, shoulders, backs, wrists and hands, fatigue and eye strain.

### Checklist:

- ☑ Complete a DSE and workstation assessment for each employee
- ☑ Introduce guidance and policies to make sure workers take regular breaks from DSE work
- ☑ Provide eye test funding for employees and remind them that this is available to them
- ☑ Provide training and information for your people



## Physical health

Empowering employees to take care of their physical health can help to make a real difference to their wellbeing, which in turn could reduce sickness days and boost productivity. Enabling your people to afford and proactively arrange day-to-day health treatment will help them to address small niggles so they hopefully don't turn into major issues which disrupt their lives and your business.

### Checklist:

- ☑ Encourage exercise through a Cycle to Work scheme or discounted gym membership
- ☑ Support healthy eating by providing information, recipes or a free fruit perk
- ☑ Give every employee convenient access to affordable everyday health care and specialist services by offering a health care cash plan - Sovereign Health Care can help you with this!
- ☑ Consider the physical environment employees are working in. Do they have enough light, ventilation and rest areas? If they're at home, do they have a comfortable, safe set-up?
- ☑ Signpost employees to the numerous, free NHS apps such as 'Couch to 5k' and 'Active 10' which are easy to use and aim to help people get moving

## Mental health

Mental health can be hard to monitor and manage in the workplace, indeed 56 per cent of employers would like to do more to improve staff wellbeing but don't feel they have the right training or guidance.<sup>7</sup> To help minimise potential problems, employers can get one step ahead by helping staff and managers to take a proactive approach to managing and protecting their mental health.

### Checklist:

- ☑ Provide access to an Employee Assistance Programme (EAP), offering confidential support, assistance and counselling
- ☑ Ensure your business encourages work/life balance and signpost employees to the support that's available to them through the NHS and other mental health organisations
- ☑ Create a team of mental health first aiders, skilled in how to spot and address signs that a colleague may be struggling. Offer employees mental health training, teaching awareness, resilience and what action to take
- ☑ Enable positive steps such as volunteering by allowing staff to use one or two working days each year to give back to local communities and charities

# First steps for immediate impact

**The most important move businesses can take towards looking after employee health and wellbeing, is simply to take a first step; and this can be something really quite straightforward.**

Small and affordable tweaks to employee benefits packages can be a great way to kickstart employee health and wellbeing. In particular, health care cash plans and employee assistance programmes (EAPs) are a straightforward way to deliver an immediate positive impact with minimal time needed from your business leaders.



Watch our short [video](#).





# 1 Health care cash plans

Starting at just a few pounds per employee per month, these plans pay employees cash back towards everyday health costs and more specialist treatments.

**By supporting with the affordability of health treatments and services, cash plans encourage employees to take a proactive approach to their health care, helping to reduce disruption to your business.**

**One example is Asset from Sovereign Health Care**, a comprehensive employer paid cash plan. Not only does Asset enable you to cost-effectively support the health of your workforce, it also offers the following advantages to businesses:

- ☑ **Supports employee health and wellbeing to help reduce absence** - it can help your employees through difficult times and can encourage them to seek treatment and faster diagnosis so they can return to work quicker, or not need to take time off in the first place
- ☑ **Helps meet display screen equipment (DSE) requirements** by covering the cost of eye tests and contributing towards the cost of corrective glasses
- ☑ **Helps meet duty of care obligations** by providing a comprehensive EAP including a 24-hour telephone helpline and face-to-face counselling, to help proactively manage stress
- ☑ **Enhances employee benefits packages** to help boost retention and recruitment

## Asset - what's included?

Asset covers a wide range of treatments and services to help look after employees' mental, physical and emotional health. It's quick and easy to implement, delivering immediate usable benefits for your employees, including:

- A comprehensive EAP (see next page)
- Cover for:
  - Everyday health care such as dental treatment, eye tests and glasses/contact lenses
  - Specialist treatments including physiotherapy, osteopathy, chiropody and acupuncture
  - Preventive benefits including health screening

Sovereign membership also provides access to a 24-hour GP service and a range of online and high street discounts through Sovereign Perks.



## 2 Employee Assistance Programmes (EAP)

EAPs give employees access to confidential support, assistance and counselling to help them deal with a range of life events. Sovereign Health Care works with a specialist third party to provide a comprehensive and market leading EAP service.

### What's included:

- ✓ **A 24-hour telephone support helpline** – available 365 days a year
- ✓ **Face-to-face counselling** – up to 8 sessions of face-to-face counselling, including cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT) where clinically appropriate
- ✓ **Online support service** – provides a wealth of information and advice across a range of topics including home life support, work life assistance and physical and emotional health
- ✓ **Medical information** – qualified nurses are available to offer information on a range of medical or health related issues
- ✓ **Access to legal, financial and consumer information**
- ✓ **Support for managers** – telephone support and guidance to help managers deal with workplace challenges



We hope this guide has been helpful. This page signposts to other useful links and resources. If you have any questions, please [get in touch](#).

## Sovereign Resource Hub

Sovereign Health Care's business customers receive free access to the Sovereign Resource Hub. This online information centre is designed to support health and wellbeing programmes by focusing on a new topic each quarter. It's FREE to use and provides activities and materials to help employees make simple lifestyle changes that could lead to big improvements at home and at work and includes:

- ✔ Employer resources
- ✔ Podcasts and webinars
- ✔ Quizzes and polls
- ✔ Digital banners
- ✔ Support and signposting

The types of topics we cover are:

- Power UP your mental and physical energy
- Stand UP to everyday stress
- Charge UP for 2022



For a closer look at the Sovereign Resource Hub, watch this short [video](#).

## Useful links and resources

### [Health and Safety Executive \(HSE\)](#)

Line Managers' Resource guide produced by Shift in partnership with the Department of Health, Department for Work and Pensions, HSE and Health Work Wellbeing.

### [Health and Safety Executive \(HSE\)](#)

Working safely with display screen equipment (DSE).

### [NHS Employers](#)

Managers' guide about how they can support workplace mental wellbeing.

### [National Institute for Health and Care Excellence \(NICE\)](#)

NICE quality standard 'Healthy workplaces: improving employee mental and physical health and wellbeing'.

### [ACAS](#)

Gives employees and employers free, impartial advice on employment rights, best practice and policies, and resolving workplace conflict.

### [CIPD](#)

Professional body for HR and people development.



## Sovereign Health Care:

The straightforward solution to employee health and wellbeing.

Let us help you get started. Talk to us today!



Call us on: 01274 841 127



Email: [Enquiries@sovereignhealthcare.co.uk](mailto:Enquiries@sovereignhealthcare.co.uk)



Or visit: [sovereignhealthcare.co.uk/business](https://sovereignhealthcare.co.uk/business)

Sovereign Health Care is a company limited by guarantee. Registered in England no 85588. Authorised by the Prudential Regulation Authority and regulated by the Financial Conduct Authority and the Prudential Regulation Authority. Registered office: 2<sup>nd</sup> Floor, West Wing, The Waterfront, Salts Mill Road, Shipley, Bradford BD17 7EZ.

