



Health

Together with



make a difference

workplace culture / mental health / wellbeing

UK Mind Health -

Key themes your employee
mental wellbeing plans must
consider for 2022 and beyond

Welcome

from Tracy Garrad, CEO, AXA Health UK

Mental health doesn't discriminate and it can impact us all. It spans sectors, it spans company size and is a consideration for all business leaders.

As we approach the anniversary of the pandemic's first UK lockdown, it's an opportunity to stop and think. To acknowledge the challenges we've faced, but also the qualities we've gained and how - looking to the future - we can continue to adapt for the better.

Crucially, AXA's 2022 Study of Mind Health and Wellbeing indicated that empathy and compassion are growing and the UK leads the way

in destigmatising mental health. However, the study also highlighted, there's much more work to be done. Workplaces have an integral role in better supporting mind health. And for those that get this right there is real business benefit.

With Make a Difference Media we've formed this paper to help companies act. With an open door of increased empathy and compassion for our colleagues, we highlight key themes companies like yours should explore to progress their support of mind health for 2022 and beyond.



Tracy Garrad,
CEO
AXA Health UK

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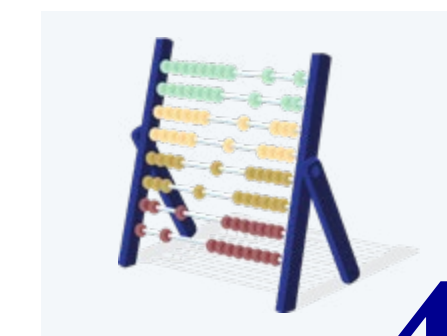
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Executive summary

In January, AXA published its [**2022 Study of Mind Health and Wellbeing**](#) which gathered information from 11,000 people aged between 18 and 75 across 11 European and Asian countries and territories (including the UK).

The study offers valuable insights for UK companies:

- The UK and Ireland led the field in believing COVID-19 had reduced the stigma surrounding mind health.
- The UK currently has the highest prevalence of mind health conditions in Europe.
- More people are now aware of and are comfortable to self-report about their mind health, with **49%** in the UK feeling that they are better able to acknowledge when they may need support.
- Only **40%** in the UK say they feel their company provides good support regarding their mental health.
- UK employees offered support by their employers are twice as likely to flourish.

The study also paints a picture of an

evolving nation, with the collective experience of the pandemic bringing about deeper human connections, kindness and empathy: 58% reported that friendships and relationships have become more meaningful; 55% now make an effort to be kinder to their colleagues; 50% say they're kinder to themselves since the pandemic and 45% feel more compassionate.

UK employers have both an opportunity and challenge. The challenge: a clear need and gap in better supporting mind health at work. The opportunity: an increased openness and receptiveness to discuss our mind health.

“People risk is business risk. In a period when we're more empathetic and compassionate towards our colleagues, as employers we've a great opportunity to do more.”

Tracy Garrad, CEO, AXA Health UK

In this paper, in line with AXA's study, we've chosen to use the expression mind health – rather than mental health – as a way of further breaking down stigma and to promote the idea of emotional, psychological and social wellbeing.

In the pages ahead, we report on an AXA Health and Make A Difference virtual roundtable discussion, which includes the perspectives of prominent business and thought leaders. We also showcase three spotlight interviews with leading companies; Wells Fargo UK, PwC UK, and Spotify UK, alongside the City Mental Health Alliance UK. In addition we draw out key insights from the AXA study. All of this with the aim to add depth and practical recommendations for future focused employers.

Key themes to consider in your 2022 employee mind health strategy:

1. Adopt a proactive approach that helps individuals better understand their wellbeing and empowers them to develop the right traits and skills to better aid coping, build resilience, and flourish.
2. Nurture a culture and environment that's safe, inclusive, has integrated support and is focused on whole health and accessibility for all.
3. Encourage social support, connectivity, meaning and purpose.
4. Invest in line managers for now and tomorrow, including nurturing empathy and compassion.
5. Ensure a focus on listening to employees, gathering data and evidence in order to achieve the best possible outcomes, both for employees and employers.

How to flourish - the AXA Abacus

“Amongst setting the right culture and environment, companies must empower individuals to proactively own and better understand their health.”

Dr Chris Tomkins, Head of Wellbeing, AXA Health

What is needed to help people who are struggling, languishing or just getting by to reach their peak mind health and flourish?

The AXA Abacus provides a practical, proactive way of identifying where to focus mind health support, by recognising skills which promote a path to flourishing.

An individual’s mind health state is ultimately associated with how many of the 10 abacus skills they have and how strong they are in each.

To reach flourishing, AXA’s research suggests an individual needs to have at least eight of these 10 skills and some skills are more important than others in helping people to improve their mind health.

Self-acceptance is perhaps the most important – and key to the idea of flourishing, assisted by a sense of achievement and purpose, social connection and self-awareness.

The skills	
Emotional Intelligence (EQ)	Self-confidence
Self-acceptance	Close relationships
Connectedness	Physical health behaviors
Pride in achievement	• Nutrition
Meaning and purpose	• Exercise
Challenge response	• Sleep
Resilience	• Smoking
	• Alcohol
	• Me-time

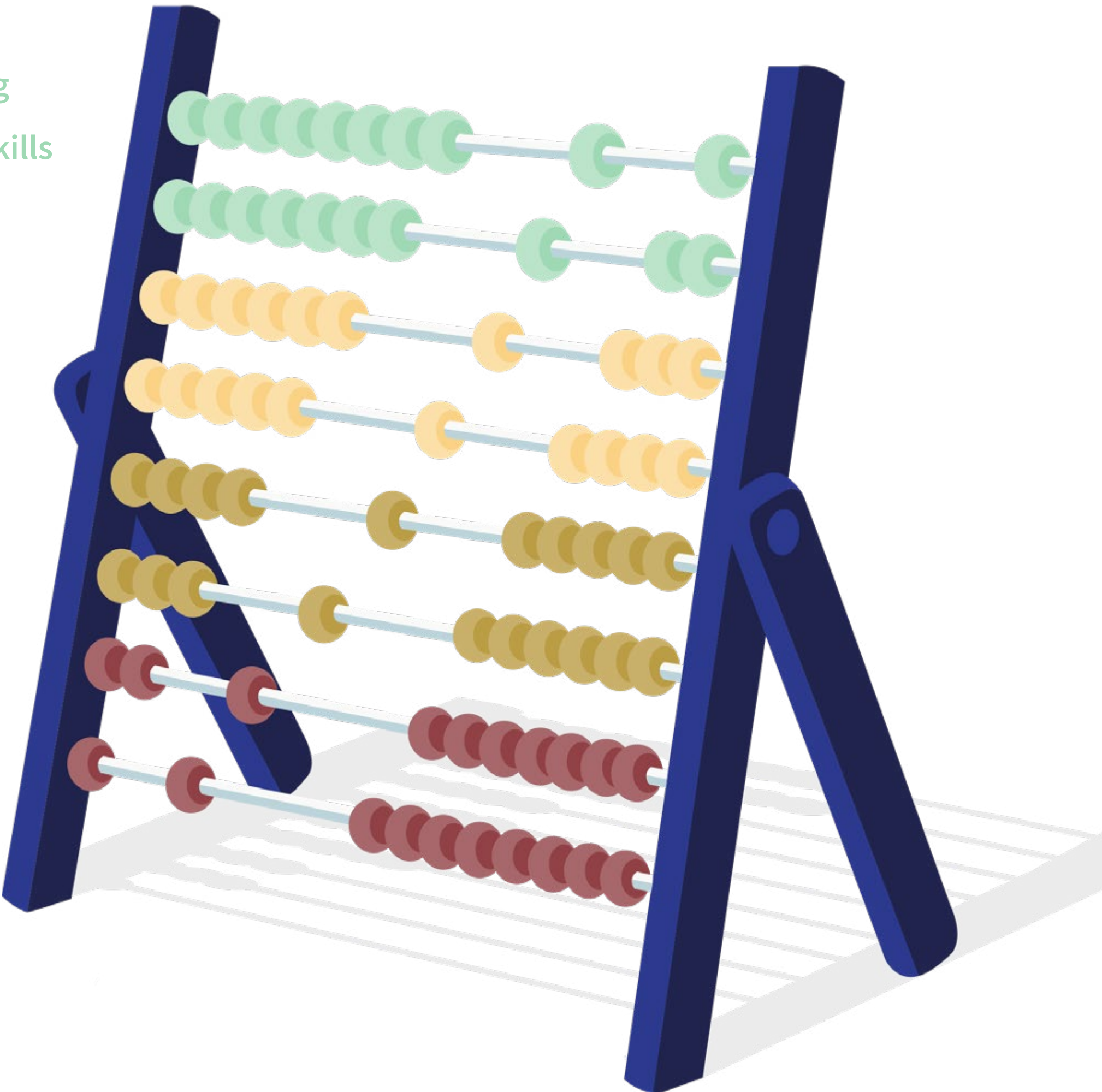
The Abacus of skills as a path to flourishing

Flourishing
8-10 skills

Getting by
6-7 skills

Languishing
4-5 skills

Struggling
0-3 skills



Why now is the time to scale-up mental wellbeing plans

Research by the Centre for Mental Health, suggests that 8 million British adults and 1.5 million children will need mental health support in the next 10 years as a direct result of the pandemic*.

Almost 37% of UK people surveyed for AXA's Mind Health and Wellbeing Study said they were suffering from a mind health condition and 24% reported they were struggling. Whilst these figures indicate a significant need, they are further indicators mind health stigma has reduced as people feel more open and comfortable to seek support.

With people in the UK becoming more literate about mind health, the NHS experiencing unprecedented demand exacerbated by a focus on COVID-19 and EAP case incidence for stress and anxiety on the rise**, workplaces need to focus their efforts:

- Less than a quarter (23%) of those surveyed agreed that the UK's public health system can provide support for people with mental health conditions.

- People often turn to family and friends for help rather than healthcare professionals.

- 34% of workers and 36% of people managers recovered via self-care. However, 79% of those who self diagnosed and self managed felt their condition management could be better or was poorly managed.

- Women and young people's mind health has been disproportionately affected by the pandemic.

- 1 in 4 managers (24%) are experiencing one mind health condition compared to 1 in 5 of all adults (20%).

- And crucially, in working environments where receptiveness to mind health is on the rise, vulnerable staff can perform at the same levels despite experiencing stress, anxiety or depression.

“Workers offered support by their employers are twice as likely to flourish as those without.”

AXA's 2022 Study of Mind Health and Wellbeing

The lasting impacts of the pandemic on the mind health of the nation cannot be ignored. Which is why now is the time for companies to scale-up support for employees.

The UK is an international pioneer in workplace mental wellbeing

For over 10 years, the UK has been an international leader in de-stigmatising mind health at work. Over this time, UK companies have been at the forefront of introducing diverse, evidence-based mental wellbeing support plans.

2011	Time to Change England (Anti-Stigma Campaign) Employer Pledge launched.
2012	The City Mental Health Alliance was formed.
2017	(Former) Prime Minister Theresa May commissioned the Thriving at Work Review, led by Paul Farmer, CEO of Mind and Lord Dennis Stevenson. The government endorsed Thriving at Work Review set forth evidence-based, practical core standards for companies to use as guidance towards workplace mental wellbeing plans.
2019	Mental Health at Work Commitment launched (based on Thriving at Work core standards).
2020	Mental Health at Work Commitment core standards guidance adjusted to account for impacts of Covid-19 on workers.
2022 (Feb 3)	The UK celebrates its 8th annual Time to Talk Day (a day dedicated to starting conversations about mind health).

“I see far more employers willing to put health and wellbeing high up on the agenda now. I'm not sure that everybody was doing that before. They talked about it but now it's become an essential.”

Dame Carol Black, DBE, FRCP, FMedSci Expert Adviser on Health and Work to NHS Improvement and Chair Ageing Better

* Covid-19 and the nation's mental health: October 2020 - Centre for Mental Health; **AXA Health customer usage statistics comparing 2020 and 2021 full year figures.

Make a Difference Media together with AXA Health Roundtable Discussion

The Recipe for Employee Mental Resilience – Is Your Workforce Fit To Thrive In 2022 And Beyond?

From meaningful work to developing the coping skills to thrive, there are many ingredients which can contribute to employee resilience and successful mind health support plans.

In order to better understand these ingredients, AXA Health joined forces with Make a Difference Media to host a rich, honest and challenging virtual roundtable discussion with some of the UK’s leading voices on this topic.

Chaired by **Claire Farrow**, Global Head of Content, Make A Difference, the panel included:



Tracy Garrad, CEO, **AXA Health**, Exec Sponsor for D&I, **AXA UK**



Dame Carol Black, DBE, FRCP, FMedSci Expert Adviser on Health and Work to **NHS Improvement** and Chair **Ageing Better**



Dr Shaun Davis, Global Director, Compliance & Sustainability, **Royal Mail Group**



Chloe Davies, Head of Social Impact, **Lucky Generals**



Simon Blake OBE, Chief Executive, **Mental Health First Aid England**



Stephen Bevan, Head HR Research Development, **Institute for Employment Studies**

The discussion centred around the key themes employee mental wellbeing plans must consider for 2022 and beyond (see p3).

Understanding our health

“Whilst acknowledging that culture is the bedrock of an organisation’s approach, how can we help individuals to understand their own mind health and wellbeing and take ownership?” It’s a question we often hear employers ask, which provided the springboard for our discussion.

Tracy Garrad explained that AXA Health’s customer insight shows that people want to be understood and treated as an individual; to learn to better understand and equip themselves for everything that life can throw at them - both personally and professionally; and to improve and maintain their physical and mental health.

Businesses must ask the question what are they doing to help their employees to be proactive? How are they equipping and empowering people to understand and be the best version of themselves? These are important questions. But not in isolation.

Reflecting on AXA Health’s own approach, Garrad explained that first they ensure the basics of social connection and purposeful work are in place. Crucially, AXA Health

have EAP, counselling and a full range of solutions in place so that care can be escalated at point of need at various stages of mental wellbeing.

More recently technology has offered new routes of support, aiding education and self-care in more personalised ways. Garrad added: “The AXA Health app is one new way we’re helping our clients support their workforce’s mind health - providing guided self-help and self-care alongside connection to trusted expert support”.

Know and engage your audience

Dr Shaun Davis outlined the suite of support that Royal Mail Group provides, emphasising that to enable employees to help themselves, it’s essential to know who your audience is, think about different communication and learning styles but also about how and where colleagues will be receiving your messages.

This is true for managers too. Uptake of wellbeing packs could be low because managers might not understand the language, the tone or the intent of the materials. This leaves them feeling ill-equipped to support their own wellbeing, engage with what the organisation has

to offer and provide support to team members.

Dr Davis advocates encouraging manager role modelling and cross-manager communication to ensure engagement with wellbeing plans.

For Chloe Davies, empowering individuals comes from understanding what mind health means from person to person. Differences should be celebrated when we think about the language that we use.

Dr Davis agreed, pointing out that when communicating about mind health and wellbeing, it’s essential to consider the different representative groups you are reaching out to and what might be impacting them personally - from life events through to what’s in the news.

Equip your line managers

Another key theme of the discussion was the pivotal role of line managers when it comes to creating good working conditions that enable employees to thrive. But also, when it comes to spotting signs that team members may be struggling.

Stephen Bevan explained that the employees who fared best during the

pandemic were those that had most frequent and empathetic contact with their line managers. Team members also flourished when managers were prepared to be more vulnerable, empathetic and to trust people to get on with their jobs.

But this approach doesn’t come naturally to all. Simon Blake called for systemic improvement in the quality of management practices.

The panel agreed that for line managers to create the conditions that enable people to thrive they need to be trained in:

- Learning to listen – to understand, not to respond.
- How to have tough, but constructive conversations.
- What empathy is and how to put themselves in team members’ shoes, whilst understanding and celebrating difference.
- How to be the “canary in the coalmine” so that they are able to spot signs that people are struggling and signpost to help, but also understand they are not expected to diagnose.

As managers are at the highest risk of poor

mind health, they too need to be equipped with the skills and time to look after their own wellbeing.

It’s also crucially important that vulnerable teams know expert support is available - and how to access it.

Measurement matters

Following Dame Carol’s lead, the conversation shifted to consider best practice approaches to measuring impact of interventions and assessing needs.

Davies reminded us that asking colleagues about their needs underpins engagement with interventions and that it is essential to look at data collected through a lens of difference.

Dr Davis called for employers to gather and analyse both hard data and “heart-shaped” data. At Royal Mail Group they look at absence data, utilisation of the EAP and their employee engagement survey. “I love the numbers but I also love the free text comments” he explained.

Bevan pointed out that often employers only measure the cost of an intervention and how many people use it. Instead, they should also be measuring health outcomes.

All agreed that it also makes sense to look at the health of the organisation overall, as measured not just by hard metrics but by the feeling of inclusivity, belonging and advocacy that an employee will have from the support that is wrapped around them.

Whilst concurring on this point, Blake stressed that the starting point of measurement has to be absolute clarity about what you’re trying to achieve. And once you’ve gathered the insight, you have to act on it.

Closing the gap

Having explored measurement, the discussion moved on to consider the dichotomy that whilst the UK leads the way in creating a safe environment for people to come to work, only 10% of UK employees strongly agree that their workplace provides good mind health support.

When asked what employers can do to close this gap, we were reminded of the inextricable link between physical and mental wellbeing. Employers need to have a joined-up strategy that not only supports mental, physical, financial and social wellbeing, but also recognises that work environments underpin psychological safety.

However, whilst a wellbeing strategy can be all-encompassing, interventions need to be flexible. Life stage support is also an ever-emerging theme for many employers.

Davies highlighted the need for employers to create safe spaces where employees can be themselves and seek help without fear of judgement or reprisal. When thinking about facilitating access for all to mind health support, employers also need to consider accessibility to counsellors employees will identify with.

The leading role

In essence, we all impact the culture in which we work and this has to be co-designed, deliberate, understood and owned right across the organisation.

However, wrapping up, Dame Carol reminded us that ultimately the leadership sets the culture. Not having leaders on board would be like trying to bake a cake without baking powder - the cake simply would not rise.

Now - more than ever - we need really good leaders who can deal with uncertainty. And leaders, as well as managers, will need support and training in this new world of work.

Like with any great recipe, for a successful mind health support plan, the panel agreed you must get the right blend of ingredients. To get that blend right, companies must focus on skills and behaviours, environment and culture, as well as accessible support.

This summary captures a snapshot of the far-ranging discussion. You can access a recording of the full session [here](#).


What we need to get right

The panel’s key ingredients to help employers address our key themes and support mind health:



Tracy Garrad

The challenge of disparate initiatives is that they stay disparate. We need to remove complexity and really **create a connected system of resources, benefits, tools and signposting** to ease the journey and help people get the best from themselves.



Stephen Bevan

Focus on the causes and not just the symptoms. Look at risk and how people’s job demands may not be matched by their resources.




Chloe Davies

As businesses, as leaders, we think that sometimes we have the right answers but actually **we need to humble ourselves, really listen and make sure our people are a priority** and it’s not always about our bottom line.




Dame Carol Black

Leaders need to provide their employees with a sense of **connectivity** and a real **sense of purpose** and that requires them to be flexible.



Simon Blake OBE

Humanity. At the heart of it all, we must find ways of working that are focused on our common humanity. None of us are superhuman.



Dr Shaun Davis

Successful mind health plans cover everything from data, to empathy, to leadership, so you’ve **got to think about the bigger picture**. Think of a constellation, not a single star.



Claire Farrow

If you’re just beginning, don’t be put off by thinking it’s complicated. **Get started.** Do something simple then step back and consider how you’re going to connect everything.

Employer Spotlight Interviews

In order to scale-up support which will achieve sustainable impact, whilst taking into account that employers’ budgets will vary, focusing on best practice is a practical baseline approach to take.

This colour-coded key indicates which themes your employee mental wellbeing plans must consider are reflected in the spotlight interviews:

1. Adopt a proactive approach that helps individuals better understand their wellbeing and empowers them to develop the right traits and skills to better aid coping, build resilience, and flourish.
2. Nurture a culture and environment that’s safe, inclusive, has integrated support and is focused on whole health and accessibility for all.
3. Encourage social support, connectivity, meaning and purpose.
4. Invest in line managers for now and tomorrow, including nurturing empathy and compassion.
5. Ensure a focus on listening to employees, gathering data and evidence in order to achieve the best possible outcomes, both for employees and employers.

Spotlight 1 PwC UK

Professional Services
23,000 UK employees



Person interviewed:
Sarah Churchman,
Chief Inclusion,
Community and
Wellbeing Officer

PwC UK has for many years been considered as a progressive employer when it comes to supporting staff mental health and wellbeing, from being a joining member of the City Mental Health Alliance in 2012 to being recognised as only one of two employers attaining the highest award in the CMHA Thriving At Work Assessment. based on the Stevenson Farmer report of 2017.

Over the past two years of the pandemic, the biggest challenge for PwC UK employees has been grappling with the unknown.

“There has been no playbook to navigate the pandemic. People like routine/sameness, which has been a real challenge through the pandemic,” says Sarah Churchman, Chief Inclusion, Community & Wellbeing Officer. The impacts of uncertainty can result in fear, a negative frame of mind and reduced resilience. So, PwC’s wellbeing plan has had a big focus on helping shift and reframe thinking to a more positive and connected perspective.

This includes looking at approaching work relationships from a place of empathy versus individualism when it comes to wellbeing: “Looking at how we can be comfortable to make our own choices plus be conscious of the choices that work for the whole team. We need to listen to each other, not just be concerned about ourselves. We need to create complementary ways of working with colleagues, and with clients,” says Churchman.

PwC’s wellbeing plan also focuses on personal accountability. Every employee now has a wellbeing performance goal as part of their work objectives, to encourage people to take accountability for better understanding their health and looking after themselves. It also requires staff to consider what they’ll

do to support the wellbeing of their colleagues.

In terms of key priorities in PwC UK’s 2022 wellbeing plan, they’re now returning to a truly holistic approach in supporting staff wellbeing. This means they’re no longer mainly prioritising mental wellbeing, which has been the focus the past two years. They are focused again on promoting physical health, cancer screenings, etc.

Churchman added one final central focus for their plan going into this year, which is addressing aspects of the business model that impact wellbeing, shifting from a focus on symptoms to look more closely at the persistent barriers to positive wellbeing.

She stressed the importance of engaging with people through regular staff surveys and using the data and insights to understand where they’re at and what actions can be taken to drive improvements.

“We’re not there yet in achieving all the objectives in our wellbeing plan. But the good news is that wellbeing is on the business agenda. The pandemic has enabled us to see that wellbeing is essential to operate as a successful business,” shared Churchman in closing.

PwC UK spotlight - key takeaways:

- Counter uncertainty and reduced resilience by focusing on a more positive and connected perspective.
- Consider implementing wellbeing plans to encourage personal accountability and empathy for colleagues.
- Take a holistic approach to supporting wellbeing, including promoting physical health, cancer screenings etc.
- Use quantitative and qualitative insights to help identify and address causes and embed wellbeing across the organisation.

The pandemic has enabled us to see that wellbeing is essential to operate as a successful business.



Spotlight 2

Spotify UK

Media & Entertainment
463 UK employees



Person interviewed:
Jade Stanley – Client Services Team Manager and Heart & Soul London Lead

The global audio streaming giant, Spotify practises what it preaches when it comes to promoting mind health and wellbeing. In the same way it offers its listeners mental health resources through its Wellness Hub to connect with themselves and prioritise their wellbeing through both music and podcasts, they also created the Heart & Soul global programme (in 2018) as an internal resource for their people.

Illustrating how wellbeing is embedded across the company culture, since its launch in 2018 the Heart & Soul programme has been a key part of the onboarding process for new starters.

The Heart & Soul team uses shared internal channels to post mind health content, as well as to run regular seminars and events. While it’s become a fantastic, trusted internal Brand, Stanley and the Heart & Soul team recognise mind health is ongoing and is different for everyone, so they always prioritise keeping their wellbeing plan refreshed.

Stanley described some of the challenges Spotify UK staff have experienced through the pandemic, especially continuing to feel connected to each other in a virtual world. People have really missed “office breaks” and in-person interactions. Without these means to connect in person, it led to feelings of fatigue and disconnection. So Spotify has encouraged regular virtual check-ins with colleagues and making time to focus on self-care to stay energised in a way that works best for each individual.

One of the initiatives that helped Spotify staff most through the pandemic was running their first global Wellness Week last November. It gave people the chance to take a full week off paid to spend however they wish, with wellbeing in mind.

Describing ways in which the company plans to innovate its Heart & Soul programme in 2022, encouraging a more empathetic culture is of high importance. Stanley said developing more emotional intelligence at the leadership level will be a central theme.

Spotify UK spotlight - key takeaways:

- Build a wellbeing plan with mind health ambassadors that’s woven into company culture and rooted by inclusion and belonging.
- Continue to raise awareness through conversation – to break stigma.
- Give employees as much flexibility as possible when returning to work and help adapting to a new office/home balance.
- Support managers/leaders by giving them training and encouraging emotional intelligence, open dialogue about mental wellbeing in meetings and 121s.
- Empower employees to make their own decisions and find what works for them to stay mentally healthy.

I believe the pandemic has allowed people to be more open and honest in team meetings about how they’re really feeling, which has been great to see.

Spotlight 3

Wells Fargo UK

Financial Services
1,200 UK employees



Person interviewed:
Gareth Ashley-Jones, Head of International Benefits

With more than a quarter of a million employees across 21 countries outside the US, looking after the wellbeing of staff has been a key priority for Wells Fargo since first launching their international health and wellbeing programme in 2019.

Reflecting on what has been most difficult for Wells Fargo UK staff during the pandemic, Gareth Ashley-Jones says that isolation and being divorced from work colleagues was particularly tough for some people.

In order to try and support mental health and social wellbeing over the pandemic, the spotlight

has been on virtual events and activities that bring people together. Part of the success is also the commitment of Wells Fargo EMEA’s wellbeing champions who are driving these peer-to-peer events. If people know that their colleagues are taking part in the exercise class online, they’ll be more likely to try it too, as a social activity.

Ashley-Jones emphasises the importance of accessibility for a successful wellbeing plan saying:

‘Support initiatives must appeal to as many people as possible and the programmes should be engaging. What people don’t want is a corporate feel to wellbeing programmes. The comms should be engaging and refreshing - something other than what they’d expect for a traditional vocational work-related activity - if we really want people to participate.’

In terms of setting a culture of care around wellbeing, ‘Exec support is critical’, says Ashley-Jones. Over recent years things have changed significantly in Wells Fargo with significantly more people participating in a far broader range of support activities particularly around

acknowledging the importance of good mental health which has been facilitated by some of our wellbeing ‘storytelling’ events.

The final feature that Ashley-Jones suggests a solid wellbeing plan should include in 2022, is the means to collect data and measure impact. Collecting data has allowed Wells Fargo to have a starting point to know how to best support people.

‘We were able to understand what was making people unwell as we were able to look at medical spend vs loss in productivity’, Ashley-Jones reflected about the pandemic period. This starting point has also provided a baseline enabling Wells Fargo to monitor and understand the impact of the wellbeing plan on the health of employees and to be able to provide an ROI for the programme to their business leaders.

Wells Fargo UK spotlight - key takeaways:

- Build a network of Wellbeing Champions. Encouraging wellbeing peer-to-peer, can be invaluable.
- Ensure accessibility and engagement and that communications about wellbeing initiatives resonate with employees.
- Involve leaders in the conversation to normalise mind health.
- Collect data and measure impact to help provide ROI for programmes to business leaders.

We are social animals and we need other people’s company.



Spotlight 4
City Mental Health Alliance UK

Community Interest Company
11 colleagues - mixture of part and full time, remote working



Person interviewed:
Alison Unsted, Deputy
CEO & Global Strategy
Director

Established in 2012, The City Mental Health Alliance (CMHA) is a not-for-profit membership organisation who believe that the workplace has an opportunity and a responsibility to protect, support and create positive mind health for their people so that they can thrive.

CMHA has dozens of member partners globally, comprising some of the world’s largest and most successful companies in the areas of financial, professional and legal services. Their membership model brings together senior business leaders, mind health and industry experts to collaborate and share

knowledge in order to accelerate their journeys to building mentally healthy workplaces.

Alison Unsted shared that some of the most common issues businesses have addressed during these recent times have been feelings of isolation and loneliness from a lack of human connection, managing anxiety due to ongoing uncertainty and health concerns, exhaustion and burnout and support for parents and carers.

Considering the challenges businesses have been facing in recent times, CMHA's current recommendations to members for their mind health and wellbeing plans are underpinned by three key pillars.

- The first pillar is to create a culture of wellbeing and psychological safety. This includes communicating a mind health strategy/plan, putting in place initiatives to raise mind health awareness and challenge stigma and visible commitment from senior leadership.

- The second pillar is focused on developing a mentally healthy working environment. This includes providing mind health

training to line managers, reviewing existing processes, policies and systems to ensure they are inclusive of mind health. Throughout the employee lifecycle from recruitment to exit, promoting positive mind health and mitigating against any identified risks to psychological health is essential.

- The third pillar relates to providing and signposting to mind health resources and support. This includes encouraging open conversations about mind health and the support available, offering appropriate adjustments to anyone who requires them, providing access to employer funded support services or signposting to external resources and using data to inform your mental wellbeing plan.

The reality is that businesses need to focus on all three pillars, urges Unsted. All three pillars work together to create psychologically safe environments. This ensures that people feel safe to seek help in times of need and so that people are encouraged to practice self-care, preventing mind health issues arising in the first place.

There is also a need for mind health and wellbeing plans to work hand in hand with inclusion.

For businesses that are striving for more ambitious plans, Unsted says, they are seeing a stronger focus on the intersectionality of mind health with diversity and inclusion. For example, in the last year CMHA have been speaking to employers about the intersectionality of mind health with race, neurodiversity, LGBTQ+ and exploring the impact of experiences such as the menopause, starting a family, domestic abuse, bereavement and early careers on mind health.

Unsted shared a closing point that throughout the pandemic there has been a sense of common humanity – a sense that we are all in this together – and this speaks to the power of people recognising that when they are struggling, they are not alone. Empathy is a quality that many employers are now encouraging.

And whilst every person's individual experience is unique to them – the emotions they are experiencing will have been felt by many people. To this end, time and time again we hear businesses tell us the success they've had with storytelling as a means to create connection, build empathy and compassion and diminish stigma.

City Mental Health Alliance UK spotlight - key takeaways:

- Create a culture of wellbeing and psychological safety to encourage people to seek help and practice self-care.
- Focus on creating a mentally healthy work environment - including training for line managers.
- Encourage open conversations about mind health and the support available.
- To move to the next level, look at the intersectionality of mind health with race, neurodiversity, LGBTQ+ and the impact of life events and stages.



Conclusion

The pandemic has tested our resilience and helped to bring perspective to what matters most in both our personal and working lives.

As individuals many are more comfortable to admit we can't manage alone and are opening up and asking for help in record numbers. For the working population, employers can play an invaluable role in setting the right environment, culture and providing accessible support.

The world of work has evolved. Connection and meaningful work are increasingly important. Employee mind health and wellbeing must be prioritised and integrated throughout an organisation, embedded in its culture, leadership and people management in a way that empowers individuals to own their health and flourish.

We now have more data from healthcare providers and employers, along with 10 years of learning as a nation, to show us that investing in employee wellbeing can lead to increased resilience, better employee engagement, reduced sickness absence, higher performance and productivity.

We've outlined some practical considerations alongside key themes for your 2022 plans and beyond. All future-focused employers will see the clear business case for taking this agenda seriously, listening and acting to what the data is telling them, recognising the key role their line managers play, as well as the pressures they are under, and putting responsive workplace mind health plans in place now and for the future.

When it comes to mind health, AXA Health is focused on empowering more people to be the best version of themselves. We all want to be treated as an individual, heard and understood and have personally relevant solutions offered to us. Employers need to support the full mind health journey and offer solutions which enable individuals to take positive steps to manage and build both their physical and mental health long before they take a toll on their mental wellbeing.

Tracy Garrad, CEO, AXA Health UK



For more information on AXA Health's approach to mind health and wellbeing, and how we can support your business, please visit www.linkedin.com/company/axahealth

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