



## INTERACTIVE WEBINAR

How to meet increasing demand for personalised, inclusive workplace wellbeing support



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## Webinar transcript: How to meet increasing demand for personalised, inclusive workplace wellbeing support

### SPEAKERS

Vicky Walker, Fiona McAslan, Ruth Pott, Claire Farrow

#### **Claire Farrow** 00:03

Hello, everybody, welcome everybody pouring in. We're already up to nearly 100 participants, which is amazing to see. Welcome, everybody. For those of you who don't know me, my name is Claire Farrow, I'm the Global Head of Content for Make a Difference Media. And I also oversee the content for our annual MadWorld Summit. And for the Watercooler event, which is coming up in April. We've had a fantastic response to this webinar, which is focused on how to meet increasing demand for personalised inclusive workplace wellbeing support.

We've had over 700 people registering. So that's wonderful to see so much interest in this topic. Whilst we're waiting for the last few attendees to join, we've got a poll to run past you. And it's an anonymous poll. So please feel free to share your opinion. It really helps us to understand where you're coming from. And then hopefully, we can adapt the discussion as we go along to take that into account.

So the first question, hopefully, you can all see that on your screens. Where do your employees work? So if you just put one choice here, office based, working from home, hybrid working based on site, factory or distribution centre or other?

And then the second question is, are you finding increased demand for personalised wellbeing support? Yes, no, or not sure. We certainly think that there is great increasing demand for personalised wellbeing support. So it'll be interesting to see if you agree with that. People have been feeding back to us that the kind of one size fits all approach doesn't really necessarily work, doesn't deliver the kind of results that they're looking for. And so it's the trick is how do you offer personalised support that meets everybody's needs? And that's what we're going to be discussing today.

Okay, Laura, let's see the results, please. Okay, so we've got most people hybrid working. That's interesting to see. And based on site, not many from factory distribution centre. But not surprisingly, most people are hybrid working, which is interesting to see and I'd like to get some feedback from the speakers on that when we when we move on to the discussion.

**Claire Farrow 02:43**

And are you finding increased demand for personalised wellbeing support? Yes. 72% of people are saying yes. 8% no, and 20% not sure. So that's interesting. And I guess you probably wouldn't be joining this webinar, if you weren't finding there was increased demand, although a few of you aren't, so be interesting to get your views on that as well. So before we move on to introducing the panel members, I just wanted to remind anybody that hasn't joined us for these webinars before that we do like them to be as interactive as possible. You can't join with your video, but you can join the chat. And we encourage you to do that. Share your ideas, your experiences, your challenges with one another. I'll be keeping an eye on the chat, the speakers will be keeping an eye on the chat as well. You can put some questions in the chat, you can also use the q&a to ask questions. And we'll be keeping an eye on those and weaving them into the discussion as we go along as far as we can. I think the only other thing to say is that if you are a supplier in this space, and you've joined the webinars as an attendee, please don't use the chat to pitch your products and services. We've had a couple of people tried to do that. And that's not really what the intention is. It's there to share ideas and experiences. So that'd be great if you could do that. Okay, I think we're just about set. So with no further ado, I'm going to ask panellists to introduce yourself. I'll start with Fiona. Can you tell us a little bit about yourself? What your job is, who you work for, roughly how many people that you're supporting and so forth?

**Fiona McAslan 04:19**

Absolutely. So good morning, everyone. Lovely, lovely to be with you all today. So yes, my name is Fiona McAslan. I'm head of health and wellbeing for Royal Mail group. I've been with the organisation for about five months actually, sort of previous to that worked for NatWest for around about 18 years in a variety of HR roles, but latterly was was leading the NatWest wellbeing programme and obviously leading the programme here at Royal Mail.

Right now we have around about 140,000 people across the UK and a variety of different roles. So definitely some hybrid but obviously being Royal Mail majority of our are of our workforce are kind of operational, Posties, delivery etc. So, yes, a very varied organisation.

**Claire Farrow 05:09**

Fantastic. Thank you very much, Fiona. Ruth, can you introduce yourself, please?

**Ruth Pott** 05:15

Yes. Good morning, everybody. I hope you can hear me okay. I've got a hole being drilled in my ceiling because of a leak. I do apologise if you hear it. I'm from BAM UK and Ireland, I look after workplace well being. We are a construction civil engineering company with just under 7000 employees within UK and Ireland. My background is HR. I've been working in the wellbeing space for the last full time for the last four years. So a lot of our people are site based, project based, obviously being in construction. So we do have quite a mix of working arrangements, but we look after the well being of all of those, and it's predominantly a male environment, which raises a number of challenges as well.

**Claire Farrow** 06:01

Great, thank you for that. Ruth. Vicky, would you like to introduce yourself?

**Vicky Walker** 06:10

Hey, good morning, everybody. I'm Vicky Walker. I'm the Group director of HR for Westfield Health. We're an organisation that provides corporate health and wellbeing solutions across the UK and Europe. I've been with the organisation about five years now. Prior to that all my career has been in a variety of HR roles within Tesco in both retail and distribution centre. So yeah, variety of HR experience in the last 20 plus years.

## Approaches to understanding and providing the wellbeing support that colleagues need at different life stages

**Claire Farrow** 06:58

Fantastic. Thank you. So really, really varied organisations, some similarities, some differences. And I think it's going to be interesting to get different perspectives from from all of you as we kind of move along. So my first question to you and I have got this written down. So forgive me, I'm going to read it. So we've got, let's start with you, Fiona. Are you finding that there is increased demand for personalised wellbeing support? And how does it present itself?

**Fiona McAslan** 07:26

The answer is yes. I guess simply. We've certainly found that throughout the pandemic. I think that for us was probably the turning point we up into that point we would have we are that, as you said earlier, clear, that kind of one size fits all. And that's what we would we would have there. And I guess what is important to say is I think it's, it's still right, that you have a core proposition that's available for everybody. So that's kind of your foundation.

But through the pandemic, we certainly found that, of course, everybody's needs were very different. And that was very highlighted during during that time, and has continued. So we're certainly looking at making sure we've got a really core embedded proposition for our colleagues, and then starting to look at okay, so actually, where are those areas that we might want to dial up? Or do something a little bit

differently? And some of the things that we're looking at so that colleague journey, actually, what does it look like for somebody even before they've joined the organisation? What sort of wellbeing support would somebody need? Because actually, it's can be quite stressful starting a new job. For example, you know, right through all the touch points, and start to almost segment what the well being proposition is.

**Fiona McAslan 08:45**

I think the other piece, I would say, is it what's really helpful in this space is having what I would call kind of your army on the ground to help you. So for us, it's well being ambassadors, so that, you know, those are the people who really understand what's going on at a local level, and can help us help us understand, actually, where do we need to do something that's slightly different. So that sort of segmented approach as well. So I think those are the key things.

I think the final piece probably worth mentioning is I'm a huge advocate for data. I'm not a data geek, but I'm a huge advocate for data. And I think again, using data to help inform what you do is really important in this space, not only from a business case perspective, so if you're looking for sign off on anything, actually to have the data is really helpful. But you know, you get information from your suppliers and internal data, what's happening in the external market, all of that can really help to actually hone in on what are the things you need to do and perhaps slightly differently, so I think those are probably the areas that I would I would mention.

**Claire Farrow 09:51**

Yeah, I'm actually going to throw a question out to the audience because we've got lots of people commenting on in the audience already. How many of you have got networks of ambassadors, wellbeing ambassadors or champions? Just kind of drop something into the chat as we're going along, because it's interesting to see how much that resonates with you. Yes, lots of people. Yes. Yeah. We'll be working group not a formal one. Yes. Tea with three. Okay. That's that's really interesting to see. And I think that Ruth that you you have a master's as well, or champions, I'm not quite sure what you call them. Yeah, absolutely.

**Ruth Pott 10:32**

So Mental Health First Aiders, we call them wellbeing grandparents, but again, just work in exactly the same way, as Fiona has just described. And they're absolutely our ears on the ground. So our approach is broadly similar to Royal Mail, just on a much smaller scale. You know, everybody does need a different approach. So just support is tailored. But you know, even within an employee assistance programme, the advice that's provided is always deeply personal, depending on what it is that somebody actually wants.

We don't offer a personalised approach by just continually adding to our knowledge base, and something that we're about to start rolling out is sort of bite sized learning. So we have a sort of programme of events, you know, one key theme for each month. But we have such huge interest in so many really diverse topics and subjects, we're looking to just supplement that and support that with sort of probably 25/30 minute sessions in between. And we do have people in the business very keen to share their own personal stories and do video logs. So talk about bipolar or alopecia or whatever it

might be. So they're a very, very similar approach, it's very aligned to HR. HR, obviously, have their ear to the ground in terms of life events. So we have a whole programme or a whole package of benefits, and support that follows the sort of key life lifecycle events that people go through. So again, a lot of very generic stuff, but a lot of very, very personalised support available to people and it's constantly changing. It's constantly changing.

So you make it personal by having kind of lots of information, lots of different event information available in essence. Because we just find that the more you talk about things, the more people go, Oh, actually, I have experienced that, or I'm struggling with that, or somebody in the family's got that. So it's just continually expanding that knowledge base, you know, we started off with the sort of the stress and the tiredness, and the eat better kind of stuff.

But now we're getting requests for, can we learn more about self harming, because that affects all the people in one way or another. So it's very much tailoring it to the the feedback that we get, that's what people want to know about. That's what they want support with. That's what they want to have the confidence and the metaphoric toolkit to be able to deal with on a personal level.

**Claire Farrow** 12:59

And so you kind of you assess what people need, partly by kind of getting feedback from your network of champions, and partly from asking people, I guess the stigma is reduced so much in your organisation that people are more forthcoming with what they're looking for.

**Ruth Pott** 13:12

Absolutely. And like Fiona, I'm very data driven. But you know, poring over all the reports and one interesting thing that came up last year was the number of people using our EAP for legal advice and support, which I hadn't previously seen. So again, it's you know, do we think about providing a few more legal based webinars. But it's feedback. We as with many, many particular larger organisations, we do a lot of surveys.

So we get a lot of very, very detailed feedback, through that we get more granular detail with sort of text, or comments that come through. We try and get evaluation from the webinars and ask people what they would like to hear more about in future webinars. So we get feedback that way. And then just as previously discussed, you know, our network of wellbeing champions that we have sort of forums and sort of top down bottom up communication with them. So always trying to keep our ear to the ground in terms of what people are actually wanting in the business.

**Claire Farrow** 14:13

Yeah, fantastic. There's a couple of suggestions coming through the chat as well. David Daly has an interactive monthly wellbeing calendar and records a quarterly focus on areas such as get active, get talking, get together and get money savvy. And it's that's a great way to start to get people engaged, isn't it? But it's this kind of the constant feedback. It's that makes it easier to personalise, I think and things like tapping into what the feedback that you're getting from the ambassadors or the feedback that you're getting from individuals is really what makes a massive difference when it comes to personalising and Laura saying, totally agree, good quality data is so useful and look looking at what

people need and what works rather than what you just want to make assumptions about. So thank you very much about that. And Vicky, I wanted to ask you a question as well. How does this compare to your approach at Westfield health?

**Vicky Walker 15:08**

Very similar. And I noticed in the chat Jody mentioned there around post surveys. And I think, you know, we're constantly asking for feedback via post surveys, wellbeing surveys, by line managers feedback. And just generally having those sort of adult conversations with people, I think, it can't be underestimated the amount of having a good conversation with somebody to find out what what actually is going off in their world and what it is they're wanting support with. So really trying to be open to that, but also being realistic that you can't do everything that everybody wants.

So I think it's also understanding as much as you want it to be personalised for everybody. If you've got an organisation such as Royal Mail, you can't create a personalised individual wellbeing approach for everybody. But understanding not, not one solution will fit all but given people an opportunity to have a variety of solutions that they can pick and choose from what works well for them and giving them the autonomy to make those decisions around what works for them, whether it's a webinar or whether it's an AAP guidelines, that I think it's really getting to know your people and understanding that on that level really.

**Claire Farrow 16:12**

Yeah. And Jill Duggans actually just pops in the chat here. We use Westfield health, and are currently investigating our webinars and monthly learning. So if you provide all that so little, little plug for you, why not? So yeah, what else would you have to add to that? And I'm guessing it's quite difficult to practice, you have to make sure you really practice what you preach at at Westfield.

**Vicky Walker 16:33**

Yeah, and we're not immune to the same difficulties as as an organisation. So you know, because we provide corporate health and wellbeing, we're expected to be the best at what we do for our own colleagues. And it's really important to me that we practice what we preach. But it doesn't mean to say that we're immune to getting things wrong, you know, we can put on a webinar and only have a handful of people and think, oh, wow, why why it's not the content, it's not the delivery, it's just not hitting the spot, maybe it's just not what our people want. So I think don't give up too easily, when you perhaps didn't get the engagement you want in some of your, you know, your webinars or your wellbeing initiatives, it could just be it's not the right thing.

So I think understanding that some things will be more popular than others, some people will be more open to having those conversations with you than others. But absolutely, we do feel that pressure of practising what we preach. But we noticed similar to other organisations, we've still got, for example, an IT team that don't actually like to talk about wellbeing, because they'd like to be sat in front of their computer writing code, you know, be realistic around what what your colleagues want and need, and not forcing things that I think can be a bit like forced fun at work, isn't it? If forced wellbeing can feel intrusive to some colleagues? Yeah.

**Claire Farrow** 17:45

Yeah, and I'm good to come back onto this a little bit, because I know you wanted to talk a little bit about employee experience and stuff as well. We're going to come on to that next. But we've had some really interesting questions in the chat. And I just wanted to drill down a little bit more into the data issue. Somebody said, you don't have to name the names or anything, but what external, a lot of people are starting to switch on to the fact they need this data, but they don't really know how to access it. So where are you getting your data, which sort of external providers? It's EAP, where else do you get your data from? Can you answer that Fiona? I don't mean to put you on the spot with that.

**Fiona McAslan** 18:21

No, you're absolutely fine. So yeah, I mean, absolutely. Any suppliers that you have, will be able to provide provide you with data. And I think the other thing is that they also have their networks as well. So very often just sitting down with them to see actually, we want to look into this space, they can draw on some of some of the information that they get access to as well.

There's a plethora of information and you know, the Office of National Statistics has fantastic data available. Organisations like Deloitte have brilliant wellbeing research that they're doing. And recently, I think last year produced a great report, which I'm sure we can get a hold of, perhaps and send around everybody. So yeah, I would just say, use use the contacts, use contacts like this, the networking forums that you've gotten LinkedIn, etc, you know, what I tend to find in the wellbeing spaces. It's not like at school when everyone's got their arms down and they don't want to share information. It's very collaborative, and we're very lucky that we work in this environment, that actually people really want to share information as much as possible. So definitely use use your networks as well.

**Claire Farrow** 19:30

Somebody else is saying CIPD has access to great data, which I didn't know they do.

**Ruth Pott** 19:35

Can I just add to that, you know, with the with all the external providers, we have, EAP being a really good example. They do provide us, it's completely anonymized, as you would expect but they give us a lot of detail in terms of age profiles, gender breakdown, and the key reasons that people use the EAP, which is why we know that actually 20% of calls last year were legal advice calls as opposed to being predominantly counselling support, which is historically what the EAP has been used for. But we get a lot of detailed information from our medical insurance provider, again, with the same kind of granular detail, all the external providers we have, they all send through a management information report.

And I use that, you know, I aggregate that information, I share it with our board, and actually, I share it with the wider business in an annual report at the end of the year, because I think it's really important that everybody in our business knows that actually, we are supporting large numbers of people, you know, and out of the sort of near 7000 that we've got, it's the four figure number that used our support services in some way last year. And also well being transparent is, you know, we tried to capture the number of conversations that take place that's not quite as reliant as people using an app or routines form. But again, there are a lot of issues around just monitoring what our wellbeing champions are

doing. But it's hugely valuable to know them, the very large number of people they support across business.

**Claire Farrow** 21:04

Yeah, absolutely. And actually, somebody's just popped in there a reference to staff using lots of different channels for communication. And that's just reminded me about a conversation that we were having Fiona before. Because it's it's kind of this engagement aspect of personalization as well is so important and how you communicate about the various offerings and not taking a blanket approach. And I guess you've done that with your segmented approach. Yeah. Could you just tell us a little bit more about how you approach segmentation and also, the nudge aspect of what you do, because I've heard about that being used by university, interestingly, when they're communicating with students, so can you tell us a little bit about that as well?

**Fiona McAslan** 21:47

Yeah absolutely. So I think, I mean, having having a good communication strategy linked to wellbeing is I think it's absolutely crucial. And I'll be really honest, it's not easy sometimes. So, you know, if I think about, you know, in Royal Mail, actually, of course, we've got a large proportion of people who are out delivering, and it's not easy, you know, to to get information. But you do need to think kind of creatively around actually what is the channel that's best going to going to work for your people. And that sort of multifaceted approach, I say, I would say, don't stick to one channel, just try different things.

Because actually, as we all know, people like to receive information in different ways as well. So it's really great to have something like we have workplace so it's, you know, effectively Facebook, for business, I'm sure people on the call will have a similar thing where it's a very open collaborative community where you can share information right through to actually when when we've got Posties who are out and about and they've got their their devices, which are called PDAs.

Actually, we can do nudge messages through to that so at the right time, and we feel we know whether it's based on sentiment, or actually maybe it's a particular event, your Mental Health Awareness Week, for example, we're able to push push those messages out. So just think back to what Ruth was saying. Just really bite size. Just those nudges actually make people stop and think because we really want people to make those small changes and not to be overwhelmed by the information they're getting.

**Claire Farrow** 23:19

Yeah, fantastic. And have you brought some of that over from your work at NatWest. Because I know you've actually got a Behavioural Insights Team, haven't you?

**Fiona McAslan** 23:28

We do. Yeah, they were a fantastic team who yeah, behavioral psychologists. So you know, would just share with us actually, if you want to get your message across, you'll make sure it's, you know, it's two or three things and actually use that kind of drip feeding, just nudge to get people to think about it. It's, it's massively impactful.



**Claire Farrow** 23:48

That's really, really useful. But I mean, a lot of this is transferable, even if you don't have your own behavioural scientists working for you. It's just the key point is to kind of drip feed the information across and make it really relevant and think about actually, how different all the different audiences in your organisation are. Fantastic.

**Vicky Walker** 24:07

Claire, I was just going to add on the back to that Fiona, I think when we talk about wellbeing and wellbeing strategy, it can feel a bit intimidating. It can feel like it's huge. Yeah, actually, it's about keeping things simple, keeping things realistic, and simple and achievable. Really, rather than trying to, you know, climb Everest, let's just think about making a few steps forward. So I think sometimes we can be intimidated by the words wellbeing strategy.

**Claire Farrow** 24:31

Yeah, exactly.

**Ruth Pott** 24:32

And I was just going to add, you know, that just the whole communication point that Fiona raised is a huge challenge for us. You know, we'd have a large number of our population who don't readily use the company email so they're site base people, they don't have company issued devices. We've actually really gone back to basics in terms of having little pocket cards for them having dedicated well being noticeboards.

Also, our wellbeing champions, make sure that those boards have the most up to date wellbeing information. And we also encourage posters and literature in toilets, which is about as basic as you can get. But we know that people have that 30 seconds of attention. And actually, that's a really good place to get messages across. Even if it's just sellotaped, or blue tack to a notice board or above a urinal or on the back of the toilet door. That's a really good place to get messages across. So some of it is really simple, really, really simple.

**Claire Farrow** 25:26

Fantastic. Yeah, and lots of people agree we use toilet posters, has really worked well for us, we call it toilet training. So if the only thing is that like I guess a lot of people that responded to our initial survey said, their, their staff are hybrid working. So that's not going to necessarily, I guess some people will be in the office, sometimes they'll see those. But you know, we do have to keep into consideration that it's harder sometimes to communicate with people when they're at home, isn't it and working? Is there anything that you have, any kind of special tips you've got to share around that? And how you kind of personalised for people who are hybrid working? Vicky, what about you?

**Vicky Walker** 26:03

I think it's encouraging managers and team leaders to make those regular check ins. And I think, you know, we can use the habit of working or the remote working as a barrier, but actually, it's really quick enabler. And even if you, you know, you just drop in somebody a team's message. Hi, how are you opening those doors for conversations? I think it's that regular check in. And if some managers even,

you know, write themselves a list at start of the week to make sure they've checked in with certain people each week. So I think it's just that, I suppose, more forced and planned communication that you would naturally do in the office when you were seeing each other, just sort of that drip feed in conversations, either via teams via Slack. So whichever sort of digital online platforms you use,

**Claire Farrow 26:48**

Yeah, Sharon suggesting the banners on the intranet off work for our home, often work for our home workers, she said. So that's, it's just finding what works for your people, isn't it I guess, essentially. There was somebody also saying they find it hard to talk to people on site about wellbeing versus people in the office. And Fiona and Ruth, I'm getting this from you - just it's about understanding the language that will resonate with those.

**Ruth Pott 27:18**

Absolutely, I mean, something that we've had a lot of success with is just the wellbeing champions, going out on site and having wellbeing conversations, we have a particular safety advisor, sorry, it's somebody who started as a safety advisor, and then became a full time Wellbeing Advisor. But she actually goes out on site, and she talks the talk and walks the walk with people on site. And you know, we do have sites where we have people for who English is not their first language. So again, you know, huge challenges there in terms of language and culture. But she's become very skilled at actually having those conversations.

And even if people don't want to engage in talking, she planted that seed and she leaves them with the message that, you know, if they do need help, at some point in the future, she's always available there to have a chat to, and that really pays dividends. It is just being out there being visible, it's actually having those conversations, and sharing our own personal experiences. You know, you start talking about any of these issues, people will always go, actually I've I've suffered with stress, or I've had time off with anxiety or something that I had not so long ago, you know, 15 years ago, I had time in the primary, I had no idea. So people do really share those if you just share your own personal experience. People do share this really, really quickly.

**Claire Farrow 28:34**

And actually, I was going to ask you about this later, but I'm going to ask you about it now because it seems like a good moment. You've done something which is quite innovative with wellbeing rooms, haven't you? Which I think has initially it helped to engage people on site?

**Ruth Pott 28:48**

I always have to sort of preface this with I wish it was my idea but it really wasn't about it was the safety advisor, wellbeing advisor that I was just referring to. So 2019 she identified a need to create a safe space for people to come and have these conversations. So she asked the project director on a big motorway construction site, 300 people, if she could try the wellbeing room and the wellbeing room was simply if you imagine a typical construction sites just loads and loads of porta cabins all piled up on top of another and there was an unloved space in there as a stationary room or something.

So with a very modest budget, she was permitted to go off to IKEA and come back with you know a couple of armchairs, a sofa or a coffee table or rugs and pretty pictures and fairy lights, bookcase to make it look like an informal sitting room. And what she found was that people would come and talk to her about safety in the first instance. And then when that conversation finished, they would actually say actually while I'm here can I talk to you about such and such? And they would then sit down close the door, fire up the kettle, sit down, have a chat and she kept an anonymized record but she kept a record of the number of conversations and the kinds of things that were being raised. And it was 70 people over a three month period who between them had 210 conversations.

Suicide was a huge thing. People feeling suicidal, they'd attempted suicide, they've got somebody at home feeling suicidal, they'd been bereaved by suicide, they got teenagers self harming, teenagers being bullied, children being bullied, terminal illness at home, serious gambling, addiction, you name it, our folk were dealing with it. It was mostly personal stuff. But it was all personal stuff that was then coming into safety critical roles.

So we were able to support, signpost, train, get charities involved, just do all the right things for those people so that the worry that they had was lessened in whatever way it was that we could actually support them. And it was so successful. We won awards for it. And we've been rolling it out to all of our larger sites and offices. And even the smallest site can just have a small space where they can create a wellbeing space, place or garden. And it's paid dividends that are hundreds of times over it's been awesome.

**Claire Farrow** 31:12

And you really don't need a huge budget for that.

**Ruth Pott** 31:14

Absolutely not a huge budget. And of course, the staff that was on that site, then went up to the M 62. And then went down to the M 27. And I believe it's somewhere over in Arundel at the moment on the A27. So actually, it was hugely cost effective.

**Claire Farrow** 31:29

What do you think of that? If you've heard of that before?

**Fiona McAslan** 31:31

Yeah I have and just probably to build on it. I think, again, back to that hybrid working, what we've what we've tried to do is also create some online safe spaces for people actually who are who are remote as well. So you know, some good examples, I guess, in my previous organisation, but things like we would have bereavement cafes, menopause cafes, we did introduce a mental health cafe, so where people could come in, and that sort of psychologically safe environment, whether they wanted to break out into rooms, if they wanted to explore a particular subject that works particularly well as well. So and that's online, it would be it would be like this, you know, a zoom call or teams call, etcetera, but very clear parameters. And it's really helpful then, because you can, as Ruth said, you can bring in experts or charities, whoever into those meetings to help with that conversation as well.

**Claire Farrow** 32:33

And your rooms are manned by champions, aren't they Ruth? You have a wellbeing champion who is sort of working in the room?

**Ruth Pott** 32:42

Yes, where we have the wellbeing rooms. I mean, it's not not exclusively for the Mental Health First Aiders, you know, if somebody wanted to have a wellbeing chat with their line manager, or just with a colleague, it's just to have the conversation. But predominantly, the conversations are had with our Mental Health First Aiders, or as I say, we call them wellbeing champions, but it's for anybody to have a conversation. And that the you know, the rooms can be used as prayer rooms, they can be used, if somebody's not feeling very well, but we have created them as wellbeing rooms. So you know, sometimes people work in there for an hour a week, and just have a kind of drop in type session. Other times people are there for is just used out some way. So they are really, really flexible.

## How to ensure wellbeing is at the heart of the evolving employee experience

**Claire Farrow** 33:22

Fantastic. Thank you. Lots of lots of questions coming through, like we will get to more of those shortly. But I just wanted to kind of move the discussion on a little bit, too, because we've talked a little bit about the employee experience and, and kind of when you when it's best to reach out to people, you know, do you talk about to them in terms of life stages? Or should you talk to them in relation to their generation? Or should it be related to their employee journey, sort of through the company? So, Fiona what's your take on that?

**Fiona McAslan** 33:56

So I think in an ideal world, and probably what we are moving to is, it's all of those things, you truly truly personalised wellbeing proposition will have wellbeing embedded, whether it's, you know, whether it is those journeys, or its, or its life stages, etc. So, I think, to Vicky's point earlier, that can feel overwhelming to kind of look at that. So just to almost choose, which is where we are at the moment is actually what are the one or two areas that we might want to focus on. And then we'll we'll build up from there. So a good example for us is around induction, actually, what does it feel like when you join Royal Mail? And let's make sure that that wellbeing process, our proposition, is really embedded into it. So I think it's quite a long journey, excuse the pun, that you kind of you kind of go on with this. But for me, it's very much embedded at every point, whether it's a life moment or a work event, etc.

**Claire Farrow** 34:54

And you mentioned to us before that wellbeing is actually within the employee experience team at Royal Mail group,

**Fiona McAslan** 35:01

Yes. So now that I've worked in Wellbeing a while now, we've moved in, I've been in various different areas. And I don't think there's a right or wrong answer. But wellbeing sits. It feels like I'm home at the moment, if that makes sense. Wellbeing feels naturally good in terms of that employee experience team.

So it sits alongside our engagement team who work on communications, our recognition colleagues, but what we've actually done is we've we've also developed a kind of broader people group where we've got, you know, our performance or talent or learning team leadership, we've all come together, because actually, what we found is that, actually, everybody's working on kind of those colleague journeys and moments that matter. There's a danger of duplication. So we're actually we're we've come together to identify that, so we're all working on it, kind of about my squad team, as we're calling it, which is hugely helpful as well.

**Claire Farrow** 36:01

And ultimately, how you embed this across the organisation. Yeah, yeah, absolutely. How does that compare Vicky to kind of what your thinking is on this and how you approach this?

**Vicky Walker** 36:12

Yeah, very similar for me is about is the golden thread that goes right from, you know, recruitment, right through to live events. And I think, if you don't do it that way, and you just look at the live events, you haven't always necessarily got the trust from employees that then want to talk to you, when they really need that wellbeing support, they perhaps haven't, haven't got the trust or the feeling that they can, because they're not sure if wellbeing is a thing, and should you do it.

So I think having it right from, you know, application and understanding that in our job specs, that wellbeing is important to us. And it's important to our people, right, the way through helps it become that sort of golden thread that three feeds throughout the employee experience. So I don't think it's something that can be done as an as an aside, it's got to be part of and embedded within.

**Claire Farrow** 36:57

And also part of job design, I think I think that's really, really crucial thing that, you know, we're hearing that more and more people like the ITC CIPD Health and Safety Executive, they're all urging employers now to think actually about how they might be creating, you know, the conditions for poor mental health, within their organisations just through simple things like job structure, whether you're recruiting the right people, that kind of thing. Would you agree with that, Vicky?

**Vicky Walker** 37:26

Yeah, I think what you can't do is is, you know, put on webinars and think that that's your answer and your solution around wellbeing. If somebody's you know, job is too big, or they don't understand their objectives, or they don't understand that what they're here to deliver, then you're trying to ask them to come and you know, participate in some wellbeing activity. I think it has to start with the basic it has to start with what is it we're expecting this employee to do? And in what environment? What's the workload? What's the pressures? So I think really understanding that well being is part of everything rather than it's an add on. And it's something that you can do to tick a box, I think, long gone are the

things where you can do or we do wellbeing because we do free fruit - it's so much more than that. And it's so much more complicated. And I think what what we do is try and weave that throughout the employee experience. Yeah.

**Claire Farrow** 38:17

Sounds good. What about you, Ruth? I mean, I know you were saying that a lot of the problems, interestingly, are coming from outside the workplace. But do you have kind of measures in place also to look at how you're adapting ways of working to make sure that they're not sort of putting pressure on people?

**Ruth Pott** 38:34

Well, we did a work life balance webinar on Monday. And we did that, because we're getting a lot of feedback through surveys that work related stress, long hours working away from home, long commuting, times, complete lack of work life balance, were really big issues. And the themes there were massive, you know, and we couldn't actually answer all the queries that people were presenting. You know, construction is a difficult industry in that project. So based where our clients want us to be working, it all comes down to managers and leaders, it's encouraging individuals to have those conversations with their managers, you know, we have measures in place through our review scheme through training through our management and leadership programmes, to enable managers to have these conversations, but they do need to be two way conversations, flexible working, being a really key part of that, that a lot of the feedback we had was flexible working is not that flexible. So it's very a bit, you know, being applied in an inconsistent way. So again, it was directing people to have those conversations with their line manager in the first instance, or with you know, with support from HR if necessary.

We're also embarking on looking at work related stress risk assessments, because I think that will address a lot of the job design, but that those are the core six management standards that HFC had. So I think some of those issues will be addressed as we start seeing the feedback through doing work related to risk assessments, that we know that a huge amount of the stress that people have in their lives is personal stuff. And often it's just work, that's kind of the straw that breaks the camel's back. So it is really hard sometimes trying to separate it.

So we provide all the support we can for the personal staff, we're beginning to address the work related stuff. So hopefully later in the year, you know, you know, people would be in a much better place to be able to confidently have those conversations and make the necessary change to them well, and to get that work life balance or work life harmony, as I heard it referred to a couple of weeks ago, the the feedback on the call from Monday, it wasn't feeling that harmonious. I have to be honest. But you know, that's why we asked the questions, hiding away from the really, really difficult issues.

And I think that is a difficult issue when it's hours and workloads. Yeah, you know, most businesses expect people to do more with less. And that really is difficult and doesn't sit particularly well with wellbeing. We have to manage it as best we can.

**Claire Farrow** 41:06

Yeah exactly. And somebody else is suggesting risk assessments. And in fact, I heard that they're I think they're mandatory Now in Australia, for companies over with over 50 employees.

**Ruth Pott** 41:15

To be honest, there have actually been mandatory. If you look at the 1999 regulations that were mandatory for the last 24 years in the UK, it's just people haven't been doing them. So HMRC haven't been enforcing it, but actually, that there has been an obligation to do work related stress risk assessments.

**Claire Farrow** 41:33

Yeah, it's the psychosocial risk assessments mandate, you know, in Australia. Anyway. Thank you so much for that. That's really, really helpful. I'm just going to ask, we're going to move on to questions, questions around where family support fits into the equation in a moment. But we've got lots of questions. So I just wanted to get through a couple of them now. We've had difficulty somebody says, an anonymous attendee in the questions. We've had difficulty providing 15 minute bite size sessions, which is really what we need for our call centre sheduled staff. Do you think that this is trying to condense things too much? Ruth mentioned 25 minutes as bite sized? Just a quick fire answer. Ruth, what do you think?

**Ruth Pott** 42:15

I guess it depends what they're trying to address. We're trying to address particular conditions where it's more detailed things like stress and anxiety, I think it does need to that can't necessarily be dealt with as a really tiny bite size thing. Bite size, you can only offer really top tips and the key issues surrounding particular conditions. So I think you need to pick out what are the ones that are really important to people and the ones that will really make a difference. And perhaps look at that in a bit more detail.

**Claire Farrow** 42:44

Fiona, what would you add to that?

**Fiona McAslan** 42:46

Yeah, so I totally agree with what Ruth's saying there. When we were at NatWest, we produced a number of videos actually, rather than sort of webinars in this space. So you know, 5-8 minute videos, which almost bring a persona to life that people can relate to that can be hugely impactful. So I'd maybe suggest just thinking about actually does it need to be a webinar? Or are there some other channels that you can maybe use to get the same message across?

**Claire Farrow** 43:13

Yeah. So but generally, it's kind of less is more for people these days, grab their attention to start off with.

**Vicky Walker** 43:21

Yeah, and I think then you can always follow up with the signposting. Correct. Yeah. I think if that is your limit, 15 minutes and try and do something in that time rather than nothing. Yeah. And at least try and signpost people.

**Claire Farrow** 43:32

Yeah. Fantastic. And then another question here. How do you approach what you do differently for employees who aren't engaged in wellbeing? Vicky? No, I think it was Ruth, you mentioned the IT team who who aren't interested? Or is it Vicky? I can't remember.

**Vicky Walker** 43:48

It was, I think it's just talking to people so and try not to force it. So there will be a topic that actually there I think ooh I am interested in that and that you might only get one topic out of your 12, somebody mentioned the health calendar there.

So I think it's about being patient with people that aren't necessarily wanting to talk about it because there'll be something that will resonate with them and they will get engaged if it's something that really means something to them that they want to do so yeah, sometimes I think I know we're going to come on to about the wider family equation but sometimes some people will relate to something more because it impacts their family or their outside their wider network rather than just themselves as well. Ya know?

**Ruth Pott** 44:29

I think the whole asking twice in a way you gotta want engaging is just asking how are you? How are you really? Explaining to them why you're concerned about them if you are concerned and just following it up? That's usually powerful. So even though they might, you might get the push back the first time and when you ask them the next day or the next week, you are much more likely to get somebody say yeah, she can I just have a chat to you about such and such.

**Claire Farrow** 44:54

Somebody told me once actually, if you start a conversation about sleep, which they've had, did you sleep last night? How are you sleeping? At the moment, that's something that people are actually relatively happy to talk about, are comfortable to talk about. And it, you know, opens up a whole other conversation potentially. Fiona, have you got any other tips?

**Fiona McAslan** 45:12

Yeah, I would agree with that. I think back to what I was saying earlier, and I can think of groups of people where, you know, wellbeing is not at the top of their agenda or, you know, and actually, when you start to build, go back to that word personas, if you can, if you can capture what what what does a typical person in that team do on a day to day basis, and start to showcase how wellbeing in could fit into that? Yeah, actually, that that can be hugely impactful.



So if people can resonate with what they're seeing and think, oh, okay, actually, that that can be helpful, I think, to the point earlier, as well around bringing your managers managers on that journey with you. So get them involved, because they are the ones that are going to have, you know, really good discussions, I think.

So in the chat there's someone asking about wellness action plans, which are a fantastic tool to help have those conversations and something we've actually just about to roll out and roll meals out, sort of wellbeing, check in alongside the action plan so that managers have that tool to have a good conversation. And then do something on the back of it. So I would recommend the action plans through Mind if people haven't had a chance to look at them.

## Where wider family support fits into the equation

**Claire Farrow** 46:24

Yeah, I was going to ask if they were the Mind ones that you were talking about. Yeah, yes. Fantastic. I think I mean, again, got lots more questions. And don't forget, don't worry, everybody, I am keeping an eye on the chat, we won't be able to get to all of them. But I have got some more in mind that I've making making notes on my notebook about. I just wanted to move on to the third part of our discussion, which is around sort of family support and sort of how you how you support, you know, what kind of widest family support you can offer realistically. You know, it seems employers are expecting this. We've heard this more and more. Fiona, what are you doing at Royal Mail? What can you realistically offer?

**Fiona McAslan** 47:03

Yeah, and I think this is a really big area for us to think about going forward. It's not just about the individual, I think Vicky said that quite often the the wellbeing issues that people are facing are family related or outside of the work environment. So for us, it's really important where we can to offer to offer broader support. So it's that holistic view to wellbeing. So you as a person, yes, you come to work, you as a person, actually, we we want to look after the whole, the whole of you.

So just some examples, we've recently launched an online GP service and physiotherapy, all of which is also available to family members. We have mental health consultations, which can also be offered out to family members as well. So I guess that's just you know, where we can, we will absolutely make sure that we can offer out. Some things you can't for various reasons, but actually quite a lot of the time, most most wellbeing support can can be offered out and giving people something physical, or virtual, that they can go away and have a conversation with their family can be quite helpful as well.

So again, we were just about to issue colleagues with, you know, a booklet sounds simple, you know, booklet, but it's for you and your family so they can sit down and have those conversations because it can be quite difficult, you know, they're difficult to have at work, but actually wellbein conversations can be quite difficult to have with with people that you love as well. So to kind of help that is is definitely within our gift to do I think.

**Claire Farrow** 48:42

But it sounds like you've got a big budget to do that, do you?

**Fiona McAslan** 48:46

No, certainly not. And I think that's a key message. To do a lot of these things, you actually don't need a big budget in the wellbeing space. There is so much support that's out there and the wellness acts as a good example. When you go on to places like like mind and mental health UK, there's a plethora of support that's that's available. So I would say you do not need a big budget at all. And no, we certainly do not.

**Claire Farrow** 49:21

Ruth how does that compare to what you're doing?

**Ruth Pott** 49:25

Yeah, very similar are the EAP that we have, family can use it and we do know that dependents use it. Same with our medical insurance. We have on occasions actually paid privately, where for whatever reason we haven't been able to access the very specific nature of counselling or therapy that's needed, whether it's for an employee or dependent. We will just pay for that privately. So we have no difficulty supporting the wider family.

We have had particular webinars on child and adolescent mental health, we did that particularly in the pandemic, because there was a huge interest in that, for all the obvious reasons. And we have, I have seen or that we haven't actually, sorry, we have had it within our organisation, we have an external company providing a lot of family based support. So parental support, fertility, and particularly menopause. And they've actually had evening webinars. So again, that they are very much designed so that people can sit at home and watch them with their partner or their children, depending on what the subject matter is.

So again, it's just being as flexible as we possibly can. Again, for organisations who don't have a piece on medical insurance organisations, such as the NHS, in addition to the ones we've already mentioned, they have some brilliant stuff, just print stuff off the NHS website on short Child and Adolescent and adolescent mental health, you know that that is very easy to share with people and supports the wider family.

**Claire Farrow** 51:02

Yeah, thank Thank you. Vicky, what about you? Would you add to this particularly kind of, for people maybe so as a question from a small business in the chat earlier on? They said they've got an EAP. But they don't, you know, they want to manage to do everything else really on a shoestring. What would you suggest? Are you finding that you're getting increased demand for sort of support of the wider family as well?

**Vicky Walker 51:28**

Yeah, definitely. I think it's becoming a bit of an expectation. But I think remembering that your employees have got to look after themselves before they can look after the wider family. So you know, the old aeroplane analogy looking after themselves before they try and help other people. I think if you can do as much support as you can for that individual as an employee, first and foremost, then you would hope that that either that looking after them would then give them more headspace to be able to support their family around them.

But equally, if you've given them information or signposts in some way, that they feel able that they can share that as well, I think, especially if you can't, you know, give them access to GP's etc, how can you help the the employee to then help their family? First and foremost? Yeah, I think some of the topics will always be able to be relatable, and it's just trying to encourage the employees to share that then when they get home. I think the gift of time is always the easiest thing.

I think when people feel that pressure outside with family issues, a gift of time that an employee can give that, whether that's, you know, not not feeling guilty to take a longer lunch break or finishing a little bit early to be able to accommodate some family issues. I think that goes such a long way. And I wouldn't underestimate the impact that that would have for colleagues in the organisation.

**Claire Farrow 52:48**

And you've actually empowered your line managers to use their discretion when they can they can give that.

**Vicky Walker 52:53**

Yeah I think we absolutely our managers know their teams the best. So they can see whether it's workload or family pressures, and they have that empowerment to say, well actually log off right now go and go get yourself a walk and some headspace and then come back, or do you need to work differently this week? Do you need to have more condensed working weeks? And absolutely trying to empower our managers to be able to do that where we can, we still have call centres, they've got to be manned. And gyms have got to be manned as well. So it's sometimes you can't always give that flexibility. But I think it's about being honest with those conversations and offering what you can offer.

**Claire Farrow 53:28**

Yeah, fantastic.

**Ruth Pott 53:30**

I would just mentioned some free online training that's available at smaller companies, I'm sure will be aware of Acas, but they have a lot of free online training, they have a really good mental health course that's available for everybody. And there's an organisation called the Zero Suicide Alliance, which is actually an NHS produced online learning about suicide awareness and prevention. And there's some fantastic free resources anybody can use.

**Claire Farrow** 53:58

Fantastic. That's actually somebody's just, Helen Rob has just popped a question in there, and how do you ensure your initiatives are inclusive across all protected characteristics? When that I think is a real challenge? Or either maybe that's a topic for another webinar? Are either of you able to answer that briefly?

**Vicky Walker** 54:17

I would say it's a topic for another webinar. Talk to your people as to how they would want to feel more included. I think we didn't always know things. So yeah, I think it's definitely a topic for another webinar.

**Claire Farrow** 54:31

Right, right. We'll make a note about that one, but it's definitely a hot topic with the people that we're talking to as well. And so important as well. You know, people don't feel singled out. That seems to be what what I hear is like you put all this stuff on for people, but actually, you know, people don't want to be referred to in that way unnecessarily. So you've got to find a way of engaging them as well. We're nearly out of time, but I've got some more questions that have come through, a couple that I particularly wanted to ask you. One was around how you measure the ROI of personalised wellbeing? That's a tricky one that's come through the chat, are you able to measure it?

**Fiona McAslan** 55:14

It's a really interesting question. And I think it's one of those things we're all grappling with a little bit to be honest. So I guess can you measure it, you can measure, certainly you can measure usage, and all the various things that you have very simply. What we've introduced to kind of help in this area is a wellbeing index, like, we talked earlier about surveys, etc. So we have a suite of questions. Now, we used to ask one or two questions in the wellbeing space, but we have a suite that cover kind of the, what I would say the four pillars of wellbeing, you know, kind of financial, social, physical, mental health, etc. And we ask these all the way along.

So in addition to that, we're also then looking at every single intervention, we can and say, How are we going to measure this? And if we can't measure it, let's just really question ourselves as to actually is it the right, is it the right thing to be doing? So I think there's a lot more as a community we can do in this in this space. There was also a piece of work we did at NatWest where we took the the wellness barrier that Mercer's produced again, we'll find the link. But the wellness barrier kind of helps you to understand where people are on the wellness journey. And you can actually start to kind of plot where your intervention sits on it. And that's quite a useful tool as well. So I think there are things out there, but there's no one single thing yet that somebody has developed that would answer that I would see.

**Claire Farrow** 56:47

But increasingly, it's important, what you're saying is to have that front of mind, when you're kind of devising what intervention to put in place.

**Ruth Pott** 56:55

It's really important to note the number of people that you're supporting, which is where the data comes in. And there is actually an association of employee assistance programme providers, and they do have

a very basic ROI, online tool that anybody can use, I can't remember off the top of my head. But again, you know, we've mentioned the Deloitte Report, you know, the sort of ROI stuff and business risks of not doing well being? Well, we do focus very much on that in terms of if we didn't do it, what what it might cost us. So, you know, we do try and quantify it, we know how many people leave our business because of wellbeing issues, because of the exit interviews we do. And it's really, you know, when the CIPD stressed, it's 30,000 pounds plus per employee that you lose, you don't need to lose too many. And that's a very significant amount of money. And just that on its own is quite a powerful number.

**Claire Farrow** 57:50

Yeah. And that's that sort of across the board wellbeing there rather than personalised wellbeing.

**Ruth Pott** 57:55

Yes, true. It is. Yes, that would be general wellbeing.

**Fiona McAslan** 58:00

Often work life balance stuff.

**Claire Farrow** 58:03

Yes, exactly. Vicky, would you have anything to add to that?

**Vicky Walker** 58:07

I think nothing more really to add to that. I do think in terms of measurements, intuitive, we know that happier, healthier people perform better at work. So I know it's really hard to then describe that and measure that. It's qualitative data sometimes rather than quantitative, which it doesn't always sit well when you're asking for budgets, etc. So I think it's a hard one to answer, but it's something you should always keep in the back of your mind.

**Claire Farrow** 58:36

Yeah, definitely. We're just nearly out of time, and there was a really great question about champions. So I think I'll pick that up with you all later. And perhaps we'll do another webinar. But one last sort of takeaway from you, what what one thing would you like the audience to take away from from the chat? Vicky, what would you like the audience to take away?

**Vicky Walker** 58:57

I'd say, Don't, be frightened by wellbeing, doing something is better than doing nothing. And seek support and ask your colleagues what it is that means most to them.

**Claire Farrow** 59:07

Fantastic. Ruth, what one thing would you add?

**Ruth Pott** 59:11

Again I think just keep it simple. We can really easily over complicate things, keep it simple, because you can make a difference and everybody can make a difference.

**Claire Farrow** 59:20

Love that. And Fiona what one key takeaway, particularly perhaps around the personalised approach?

**Fiona McAslan** 59:32

So I think you don't need a big budget, you use the free resources that are there. And then just start to think about, actually what are the one or two areas those moments that matter that you could start to focus in on that, that brings it bit more personal.

**Claire Farrow** 59:47

Fantastic. Laura, could you pop up that last slide, please? Hopefully she can. Okay, it's just some contact details if you wanted to contact Westfield health for wellbeing consultation, free wellbeing consultation, got the email addresses there. I just wanted to say thank you so much everybody has just been, first of all an amazing audience. Wow, just the amount of discussion going on there and lots and lots of tips shared. And we will be sharing the anonymized chat transcripts as well and links to the various resources that have been referred to with the downloadable kind of downloadable PDF, which is alongside the recording, so we'll be sending everybody an email with those links after the webinar. Thank you so much to the panel of what amazing panel members so much knowledge I'm just feel so honoured to have you all with with me today. And thank you, Westfield health, for your sponsoring this and for making it all possible. So thank you very much, everybody. wonderful webinar, and I look forward to seeing you all very soon. Bye bye.