



Health

Together with



make a difference

workplace culture / mental health / wellbeing

UK Mind Health 2023

Key themes: supporting inclusion, belonging and helping our employees' wellbeing to flourish

Welcome

From Claudio Gienal, AXA UK&I's Chief Executive Officer

Mental health in the workplace is a critical concern, and the pandemic and the current cost-of-living crisis have exacerbated this.

While progress has been made - AXA's 2023 Mind Health Study shows a 10% increase in employees citing good mental health support from their workplace compared to 2022, a significant and concerning gap is emerging. The UK's level of mind health is lower than other countries surveyed (has more struggling) and those disproportionately affected are young adults, women, minority groups and line managers. New data and economic modelling from AXA UK and the Centre for

(Economics and Business Research Cebr) reveals people reaching the point of burnout and work-related stress is a significant issue for the UK economy, with an estimated £28bn lost last year due to poor mental health at work¹.

The majority of this cost is due to businesses losing c. 23 m working days as a result of stress, burnout and general poor mental health.

In the UK, hybrid working, when managed effectively, is being shown to have a positive impact on the workplace, both in terms of mental health and performance. Yet concern exists regarding feelings of isolation and loneliness, especially among younger employees.

Our study shows self-acceptance is the most crucial element for individuals to flourish, along with emotional intelligence, self-confidence, resilience, purpose, and connectedness.

What's also clear from our study is that **mental health support at work makes a big difference**. Those with good mental health support are **twice as likely to be happy and almost three and a half times more likely to be flourishing** (27% vs 8%). Those who are flourishing are also **far less likely to resign** than those who are struggling (6% compared to 21%). For those businesses that get it right there is real benefit.

I truly believe creating a culture built on trust, respect and kindness means organisations can not only be there for colleagues but they can also build a strong and successful business and have a positive impact on society as well.

With Make A Difference Media, we've formed this AXA Health report to help companies act. I hope that you find the research, our insight and the examples of best practice interesting and useful for your own workplace; enabling you to prioritise wellbeing and inclusion, so that everybody feels supported and valued.



Claudio Gienal,
Chief Executive Officer
AXA UK&I

¹www.axa.co.uk/newsroom/media-releases/2023/the-true-cost-of-running-on-empty-work-related-stress-costing-uk-economy-28bn-a-year/

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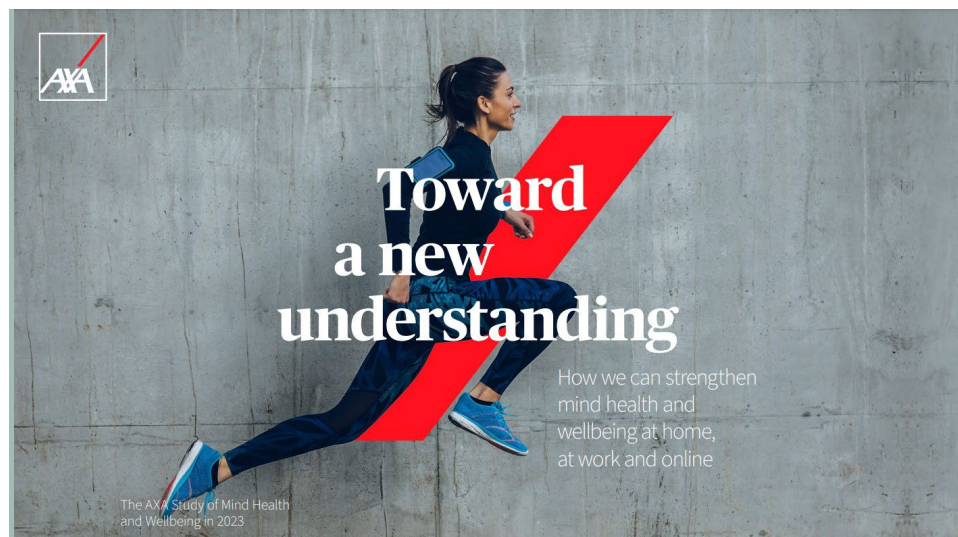
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About the Mind Health Study 2023

AXA has published its annual Mind Health Study. Globally, workers who feel they ‘belong’, thanks to a supportive environment, are 2.5 times less likely to say they plan to leave in the next year.

[Click here to read](#)



For the past three years, AXA’s Mind Health Study (MHS) has offered valuable insights into the emotional, psychological and social wellbeing of people around the world. While it was initially created in 2021 as a response to mental health challenges brought about by the global pandemic, it has since gone on to explore how people handle stress generally, and identify steps that might help them improve. More than just a survey, it’s a tool that can help reveal the complexities of mental health and pinpoint strategies for improving wellbeing, while tracking changes in mind-health over time.

Last year’s survey focused on the impact of COVID-19 on mental health and identified coping strategies that allowed people, employers, and society to flourish. With more than 30,000 participants from 16 countries and three continents, this year’s study has gone even further, covering new areas such as the workplace, young people, climate change, and gender. In this way, it is able to contribute to the collective knowledge around best practice; identifying flashpoints and dealing with them at source, during an era in which the NHS is over stretched and under resourced and work-related stress is costing the UK economy £28bn a year, according to AXA UK and Centre for Business and Economic Research (CBER).

As with previous years, AXA uses its Mind Health Index to help understand mental health, looking at individual skills and behaviours that can predict outcomes such as self-awareness, kindness, nutrition, mindfulness, sleep patterns and physical exercise (which can reduce anxiety and depression). It also considers factors that might impact those outcomes such as certain personality traits, including rumination: dwelling on things, and being overly self-critical, which can lead to anxiety and depression.

The great news from this year’s report is that UK mind health is improving – more people have flourishing mind health than last year – 23% up from last year’s 18% – but this is driven by men and the over – 25s. The study reveals a widening gender and age gap in propensity to flourish.

There is still a huge amount of scope for more people to flourish and, in the following pages, we will delve deeper into the main themes UK workplaces must consider and share practical and impactful initiatives from key industry players.

Key findings and themes to consider in your mind health strategy:

1. External factors are taking their toll.

The economy and health issues are having negative emotional impact for many people with one in two people feeling overwhelmed and uncertain about the future.

2. Young people’s mental health is particularly vulnerable.

One in two young people indicate that they are currently suffering from a mental health condition.

3. Inclusion and belonging are essential for good wellbeing.

When people feel included at work, it has an overwhelmingly positive effect on their mental health and wellbeing.

4. Care for line managers is key.

It’s important to support line managers with their own health and encourage them to show vulnerability.

5. Joined up thinking is impactful.

Reduce silos. The more diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI), wellbeing and solutions can be joined together, the better for the individuals.

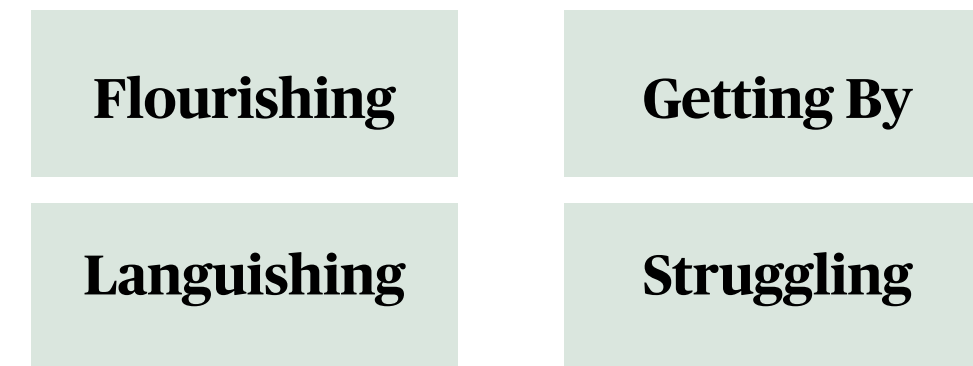
Key UK insights from AXA's global Mind Health Study 2023

“Supportive workplaces create working environments where people can flourish, where they want to stay, and where they can bring their whole selves to work.”

Claudio Gienal, CEO, AXA UK&I

The road to “Flourishing”

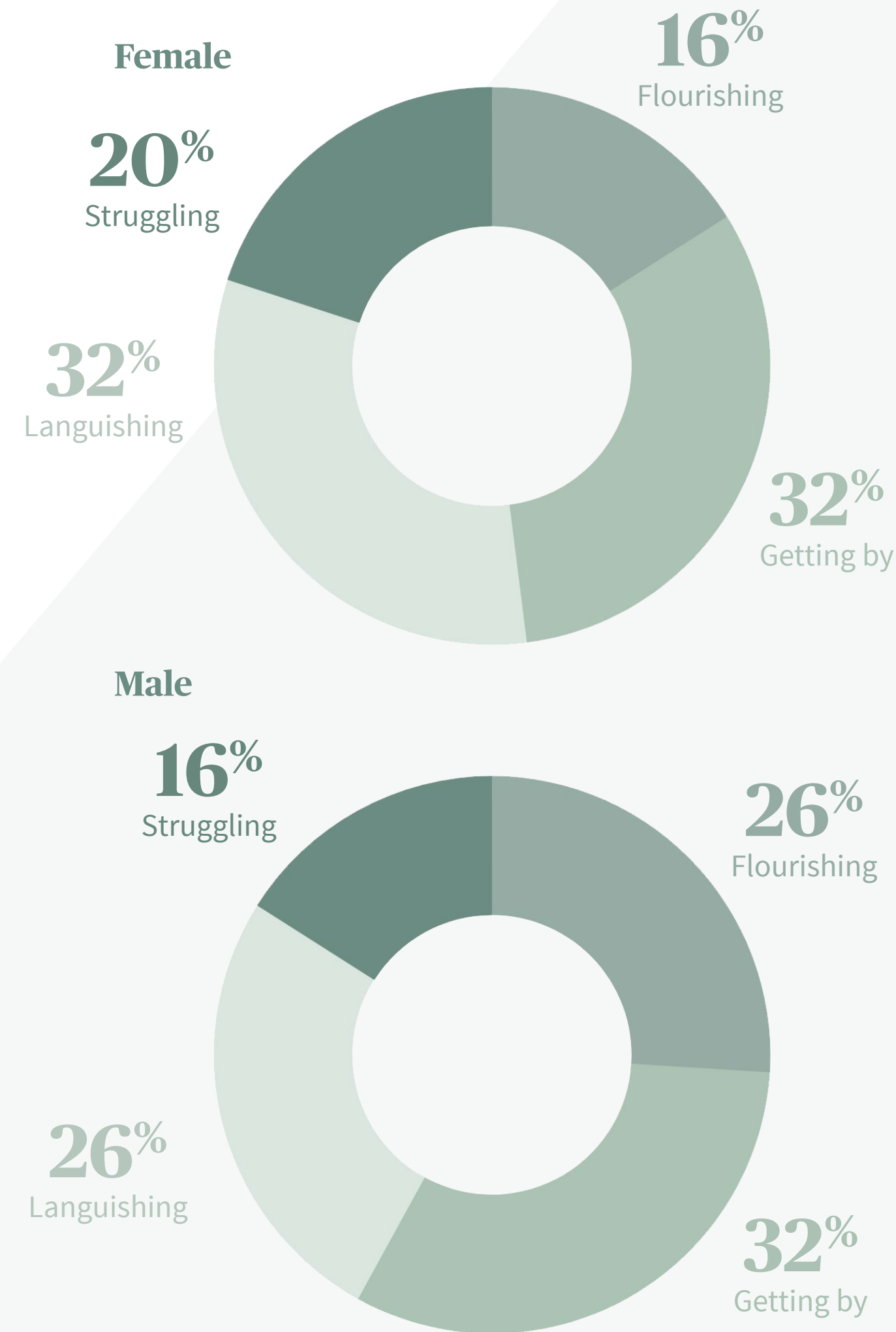
The MHS goes beyond mental health and asks questions to assess a broader mental wellbeing score (the higher the score, the better), and classifies the scores into four categories:



At the top end, flourishing represents the pinnacle of good mind health, classified by a MHS score greater than 74. The research suggests that to flourish, a level of mental health skills need to be present, with self-acceptance being the most important. Emotional intelligence, self-confidence, resilience and purpose are among other skills determining how well someone is flourishing.

Belonging and purpose matter. The likelihood for an individual to flourish is higher where they have a strong skill fit, control of their workload, and feel their company is supporting their personal development.

UK employee mind state by gender



However, the study also reveals a growing gap in mind health, with as many as one in five UK employees suffering with their mental health. Those disproportionately struggling or experiencing greater levels of stress, anxiety and depression are women, minority groups, line managers, and young people. A raft of challenges has been uncovered, including discrimination, harassment, and unwanted attention because of gender. Negative body image, tech addiction, unequal responsibilities at home, and societal expectations are also contributing to poor mind health.

Young minds

According to new research by UCL and the Sutton Trust, and born out by the MHS, while young people are much more aware and open about their mental health than previous generations, those between the ages of 18 and 24 are also twice as likely to have a mental health condition than those over the age of 45.



Other factors affecting their emotional wellbeing include addiction to technology, societal expectations – what others think and expect of you; the cost of living – and, paradoxically because many feel they have great social support networks - loneliness. In fact, only 48% of people under the age of 25 feel confident in their own abilities.

Shockingly, City Mental Health Alliance UK has found that 17% of young office workers have experienced suicidal thoughts within the previous year of research being undertaken. A devastating statistic that highlights the urgent need for action.

Managers Matter

The report highlights that employers, especially line managers, need to be aware of young people’s anxieties, provide positive reassurance and work collaboratively to achieve good outcomes at work. Mentoring, online tools and apps and other individualised approaches have been suggested; while findings also show the importance of employers demonstrating values that align with those of young people, as this can help them feel valued and supported in the workplace. Employees who feel they belong, thanks to a supportive environment, are 2.5 times less likely to say they plan to leave that workplace in the next year.

However managers need to be supported in order to support others – the MHS shows that working people who manage others are more likely to be at least mildly stressed, depressed and/or anxious than non-managers. Companies may need to better equip managers and adjust their workloads to help cope with the expectations placed on them.

Managers play a crucial role in employee wellbeing: studies show the way they interact with staff, both in and outside of the workplace, has a profound effect on mental health – and management

behaviour has often been cited as a major contributory cause of work-related stress.

According to statistics from **Mental Health at Work**², just 10% of UK employees with a mental health issue feel confident talking about their condition with their line manager; while fewer than 25% of managers have been offered training to spot early signs of mental ill-health.

Proactive not reactive

One thing to remember is that, among those who have recovered from a mental health condition, 40% said their recovery was thanks to professional care and medication, while 30% attributed their recovery to self-care. With a higher likelihood of mental ill-health occurring for those with a previous condition, workplaces must consider holistic support, including preventative and critical life stages, in the fullness of their strategies in the creation of supportive environments.

The importance of inclusion

What has been especially highlighted by MHS 2023 is the need for UK workplaces to focus on belonging and inclusion, with studies showing a sense of belonging leads to higher job satisfaction, increased productivity and improved mental wellbeing. However, in the UK more than 1 in 3 (34%) don’t feel a sense of belonging and inclusion in their workplace. As journalist and career coach Rebecca Fraser-Thill, writing in Forbes, says: “When we feel like we belong, we experience meaning, life satisfaction, physical health and psychological stability. When we feel excluded, physical pain and a wide range of psychological ailments result.” In fostering a sense of belonging, and taking proactive steps to reach diversity, equity, and inclusion, businesses can create environments where employees feel able to bring their whole selves to work.

In March, AXA Health’s virtual roundtable, in conjunction with Make A Difference, and a panel of experts, met under the banner, ‘The next steps to achieving flourishing mind health for the whole workforce’, looking at the critical issues for good employee mind health and the practical steps employers can take to ensure a thriving, supportive and inclusive workforce.

In the following roundtable report, they discuss their best practice and the journey to belonging and flourishing. Understanding the workforce’s makeup is critical, as is considering individuals’ unique needs. Rather than siloing health and wellbeing, companies should take a holistic approach and integrate DEI considerations into their wellbeing programmes.



²www.healthyperformance.co.uk/why-line-managers-are-key-in-managing-and-supporting-mental-health-at-work/

Roundtable

How to achieve flourishing: mind health for the whole workforce

Emotional intelligence, self-confidence, resilience, purpose and connectedness are amongst the skills that determine whether an employee is flourishing, just getting by or indeed struggling.

Tracy Garrad, CEO, AXA Health

The Panel

Chair:



Claire Farrow,
Global Head of Content,
Make a Difference

Roundtable guests:



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



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



Arti Kashyap-Aynsley,
Global Head of Wellbeing &
Inclusion, Ocado Group



Hannah Pearsall,
Head of Wellbeing, Hays



Farimah Darbyshire,
Director of Programmes, City
Mental Health Alliance UK

AXA's Mind Health Study 2023 has revealed that more people's mind health is flourishing than this time last year. But in certain demographics, the gap in the propensity to flourish has widened. So, what is fuelling this contrast and what can employers do to close the chasm?

To answer this question and explore the key causes, which includes a mental health crisis within young people entering the workforce and line managers not being sufficiently equipped to support their teams' wellbeing, AXA Health, in collaboration with Make a Difference Media, held a virtual roundtable. Leaders from a variety of businesses shared their experiences and exchanged illuminating insights into the practical work they are doing to support mind health.

The discussion centred around the key themes employee mental wellbeing plans must consider for 2023 and beyond.

Tracy Garrad opened with a positive finding from the AXA 2023 Mind Health Study, saying: 'Our continuing study of the mental wellbeing of people shows that 10% more employees are citing good mental health support from their workplace than last year.'

But she tempered it with, 'Whilst UK businesses are increasingly stepping up to the plate there is definitely room to go further.'

By digging beneath the surface of the study, Tracy said a telling trend emerged, highlighting the trends in flourishing mind health. Crucially, women, young adults, minority groups and line managers are disproportionately struggling or experiencing greater levels of stress and depression, with the UK reporting the highest number of cases out of the 16 markets surveyed.



Supporting younger employees

Hannah Pearsall drew attention to the struggles she has witnessed in younger people coming into the workforce, post pandemic. ‘What we’re seeing is that they might have strong technical skills in their job, but we’re really noticing a lack of softer skills, such as communication. Outside of using WhatsApp or email, many don’t know how to pick up the phone and have a conversation.’

Increased feelings of isolation and loneliness amongst the group – and the wider workforce – could be in part due to hybrid working, Pearsall admitted. During lockdown, her company, recruitment organisation Hays, was acutely aware of looking after the mental health of its work-from-home employees, holding virtual get-togethers such as coffee roulette. To redress the balance, Pearsall says the company is now encouraging employees to spend time in the office by highlighting the social connectivity aspect – the spontaneous chats you can have with co-workers and feeling part of the organisation’s culture.

Farimah Darbyshire, speaking on behalf of City Mental Health Alliance UK, went so far

as to call it ‘a mental health crisis’, pointing to research the company conducted which found that 17% of young people working in office-based environments had experienced suicidal thoughts within the previous year of the research being undertaken. Describing the statistic as ‘absolutely devastating’, Darbyshire said that employers must be aware that while younger employees have higher levels of mental health literacy than previous generations, the ‘perfect storm’ of not knowing the lie of the professional land and having no ‘credits’ in the work bank, makes them reluctant to admit they are struggling. They are also still fearful of being stigmatised.

Other strong threads to materialise through mental health network webinars for young professionals, conducted by CMHA UK, included financial instability exacerbated by the current cost of living crisis and feelings of loneliness due to remote working patterns. Farimah remarked: ‘What came through very strongly is the real stigma for a 22-year-old, who perhaps did a lot of university during lockdown and is now working far from home in a shared house, will feel by admitting to feeling lonely. This is a pressing issue.’

Arti Kashyap-Aynsley offered insights gleaned from her previous role at Deloitte, where she led the consulting practice covering junior talent from a pastoral care perspective. She challenged the labelling of this generation as entitled and outspoken, instead saying that it often masks an under confidence in terms of operating in an adult work environment.

To support and improve development, Arti introduced ‘personal manuals’ to help young employees ask themselves questions including ‘What’s the best way that I work?’ and ‘What are the things you might need to understand about me?’ This allowed for clearer communication with their line managers and a reduction in a sense of overwhelm that is ‘baked in’ with other factors such as financial concerns and the pandemic-induced lack of social contact with their peers.

The initiative also included educating the senior employee level, part of previous generations that have ‘compartmentalised’ or as Arti put it, ‘getting their head down at work and dealing with their issues at home’. She shared that while it was a trickier process in comparison to the younger counterparts, it ultimately led to a sharing of vulnerability, creating ‘such great conversations’.



Helping managers to help themselves and their team members

This conversation then turned to the critical role that line managers have in being equipped to deal with the psychological wellbeing of every member of their team. Line managers play such a crucial part in creating good working conditions that enable employees to thrive. However, line managers themselves need more support: AXA study has found that while line managers are flourishing more, they are experiencing greater levels of stress, anxiety and depression compared to those who don't manage people.

Dame Carol Black sounded a warning against the 'sheep dip' approach within some organisations, sending off managers on 'box ticking' courses, saying: 'There's very good evidence, specifically from a Swiss industrial psychologist, that the mental and physical health of a line manager directly affects the people they manage. So, while these courses can be helpful, how do you give the line manager the support they need for their own health, and then the support to be an empathetic people manager? It's a tricky job and they must be given ongoing support, as well as support from the top.'

AXA Health has already taken steps to address this issue for its own employees, with the creation of its wellbeing hub, an online resource packed with a wealth of information for line managers to easily access. In addition, Tracy said that the company has responded to data, which shows that managers are more likely to be stressed or depressed than non-managers, by giving them the time and tools to do the self-reflection necessary to nourish both themselves and their team. AXA Health has trained Mind Health Champions who are on hand within the company to provide support to employees who need it, the training has proved popular with clients too.

In her role as Head of Wellbeing at Hays, Hannah said the company has introduced a module into its management training to raise awareness about how seemingly innocuous day-to-day actions, such as cancelling an employee's one-to-one at the last minute without explanation, can significantly impact on their mental wellbeing. But it's not all on the line manager. Hays strives to promote a culture of wellbeing within the organisation where everyone recognises that they have a part to play, from the senior leadership down.

Hays also has a wellbeing championship network, comprised of HUMAN (healthier, unique, mentally aware and nurtured) champions; who are supported by their line managers in terms of the time commitment involved in providing this support to colleagues.



Joined-up thinking around DEI and wellbeing

A lively part of the discussion centred around the intersectionality of DEI (Diversity, Equity and Inclusion) and wellbeing. As Tracy mentioned in her introduction, one of the salient points in AXA's research is that it is now time for UK workplaces to focus on belonging and inclusion, supporting the mind health of all. This means looking at the intersectionality of DEI and wellbeing and ensuring wellbeing programmes are inclusive and personalised to meet individual needs.

This has been a key focus for Arti. Within her role at Ocado, Arti made the fairly radical move in October 2022 to combine these two departments with the goal of making a greater impact than when working 'in silo'. She had reaped the benefits of this approach by working hand-in-hand with her DEI counterpart at Deloitte. At Ocado, this has facilitated a deeper conversation within the organisation – at all levels – around the inextricable link between poor mental health and DEI aspects such as gender inequality, age and race discrimination and socioeconomic differences between able-bodied and disabled employees.

Arti cited the recent livestream event held to mark International Women's Day as a tangible marker of the positive benefits that are being produced. 'We're starting to see both sides lean in and understand how everything is connected. If we're going to put out something from a wellbeing perspective, we need to look at it through an inclusive language lens, and if we're going to look at something from an inclusivity perspective, we need to look at what the wellbeing impact is. That intersectionality is now becoming baked into the conversation.'

Tracy said that for the last 18 months, AXA UK has also recognised the importance of the link between the company's diversity, equity and inclusion goals and wellbeing. She noted that 'The first thing in any organisation is to clearly set the tone that everyone deserves to genuinely be themselves at work, without barriers to their progression.'

However, with AXA's Mind Health Study showing that some 41% of employees don't always think they are getting the same opportunities as others, Tracy acknowledged there's still a huge gap to be bridged. Specifically, around inclusion, she said that while there was 'no magic answer', companies need to seek

out strategies around DEI and wellbeing that are fair adding these organisations must be willing to commit to the interventions that will make the difference.

Echoing some of Arti's earlier comments, Tracy wrapped up by telling the roundtable it's key that employees should be looked at holistically. 'We do have a terrible tendency with anything health and wellbeing-related to be quite siloed. I think the more you can join it up to bring those aspects of DEI, wellbeing and the solutions together, that's going to be better for the individuals that go along that path.'

This summary captures a snapshot of the lively and detailed discussion. If you would like to watch the full session, you can access a recording [here](#).

Creating a sense of belonging

Claire Farrow concluded the discussion by asking the participants what each consider to be the requirements for colleagues to feel a sense of belonging in the workplace. Here's what they said:



"Meaning, purpose and clarity are all key. Our insight also reveals that those with a strong skill fit to their role, along with feeling in control of their workload, are four times more likely to flourish." **Tracy Garrad**



"Your employer's values – what's on the tin, if you like – aligns with your own. Trusting your employer is vital, as well as being listened to and feeling emotionally secure." **Dame Carol Black**



"Acceptance, appreciation, transparency and openness. A general sense of I'm coming to work and it's a place that's trusted, that trusts me, and allows me to be myself and be open with who I am." **Arti Kashyap-Aynsley**



"Matching up an individual's skills and passion with the right working model, whether that's working from home, hybrid or fully office based." **Hannah Pearsall**



"There's no 'code switching', so you're able to go to work and be allowed to be the true self you want to be." **Farimah Darbyshire**

Spotlight interviews: How to help employees flourish

Many businesses are already aware of the wellbeing challenges highlighted in the MHS. Here we talk to senior industry leaders about their company's wellbeing journey, the initiatives they have brought into their employee wellbeing strategy, their learnings and the opportunities ahead.

Spotlight

Who? Ocado Group

What? Online grocer & technology company

How many? 20,000 employees

Spokesperson:



Plamena Solakova,
Global Inclusion
Specialist, Ocado Group

Last summer Ocado Group made the decision to merge our diversity & inclusion and health & wellbeing teams. On the face of it, inclusion and wellbeing seem quite different. But we believe when people feel more included at work, this can have an overwhelmingly positive effect on their wellbeing. We also believe combining the work of our inclusion and wellbeing teams will result in a much more impactful, strategic approach to improving our people experience as a whole.

It's an action we've taken in light of the view that all our employees' needs are different. Simply, we've had to have a more inclusive approach to our wellbeing initiatives.

Our business is split between Ocado Retail (the online grocer many readers will be familiar with), Ocado Logistics

(where warehouse staff and drivers work tirelessly to deliver products to customers) and Ocado Technology (our innovation arm which aims to transform online grocery retail through new tech-led solutions). The physical health needs and sleep patterns of our shift workers – who often work night shifts or carry heavy boxes and bags – are very different to somebody like me who works 9am-6pm, Monday to Friday, sat behind a desk in the Ocado Technology office or home.

From a diversity and inclusion point of view, the expectations and makeup of our demographics are also different. That's why we believe marrying the expertise of our inclusion and wellbeing specialists, by bringing them together within one team, means we can come up with better solutions for everyone.

Hopefully, it should also mean we can make recommendations for different minority groups based on what they need, rather than a one-size-fits-all approach.

For example, research shows Black women reach the menopause earlier than white women.

They are also more likely to experience intense symptoms and for longer time spans. These different experiences need different support from both a health/wellbeing and an inclusion perspective.

The data the Ocado Group collects from staff surveys and feedback will also allow us to track trends and see where different demographics in our workforce are facing challenges. By using this data, we can create campaigns, initiatives and internal communications which should hopefully make minority groups feel a greater sense of belonging.

When you are in a minority group – whether that be in terms of gender, disability or race or others – you're already experiencing life differently on a day-to-day basis, and you may be carrying more pressure. Here at the Ocado Group, we want to ensure everybody feels supported and valued, and that they belong to their team and organisation.

I wouldn't say that the Ocado Group has all the answers on diversity and inclusion. But I do think health and wellbeing discussions can definitely benefit from contributions informed by an inclusion standpoint.

When people feel more included at work, this can have an overwhelmingly positive effect on their wellbeing.

Five key takeaways

1. Combining the work of inclusion and wellbeing teams results in a much more impactful, strategic approach to improving the complete people experience.
2. Remember, all employees' needs are different.
3. Different life experiences need different support from both a health/wellbeing and an inclusion perspective.
4. Tracking and measurement are key. Data is integral to creating campaigns, initiatives and internal communications which then foster a greater sense of belonging.
5. Health and wellbeing discussions benefit from contributions informed by an inclusion standpoint.

Spotlight

Who? Capgemini

What? A global business and services group

How many? 360,000 team members in more than 50 countries

Spokesperson:



Andrea Metherell

Head of Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Wellbeing, Capgemini

At Capgemini, we know everyone's work and life journeys are different and that wellbeing is an integral part of a person's identity and life experiences. In recognition of this, we provide flexible, adaptive, whole person support aligned to each employee's personal experience and stage of life.

We also recognise that the world of work continues to change rapidly. Multi-generational and increasingly diverse teams are working together in a hybrid model and one size does not fit all. By listening to the different needs of our employees and responding with flexible and adaptive solutions, we are enabling our people to deliver exceptional work in an environment of increasing flexibility and choice.

This approach has led to significant expansion of our wellbeing offer over the past few years and we are proud to provide multiple levels and channels of support to our employees.

These channels include both practical solutions and emotional support which collectively help to create an environment where the importance of wellbeing and of belonging is tangible.

To create a true sense of belonging at work, it's essential to have an inclusive work climate where inclusive behaviour is integral to the day-to-day, and where there is a strong sense of psychological safety. To promote this, we encourage our leaders and managers to show their own vulnerability to help normalise and give 'permission' for others to do the same as and when they are ready. Psychologically safe environments are good for people and good for their organisations – as well as increasing belonging and wellbeing, they increase collaboration, creativity, and innovation.

By providing dedicated training for leaders aimed at building a higher level of awareness and understanding of mental health and the different options available for supporting individuals and teams, we are building an integrated network of employee support across Capgemini UK.

Additionally, across our UK business, we have more than 160 Wellbeing Champions, specifically trained, who will listen and signpost to internal and external support.

We also recognise that people need different routes into employment as shaped by their life experience and access to opportunities.

We work hard to provide alternative, progressive access to work via a number of routes. We are particularly proud of our Relaunch@Capgemini programme which supports those returning to work after a career break. Between 2017 and 2021, 88% of hires through our Relaunch@Capgemini programme were female. In 2022, Capgemini was recognised as one of the best companies for building bridges into employment by WM People's Top Employer Awards, where we were shortlisted as Best for Returners.

As part of our ongoing efforts to normalise conversations about menopause in the workplace, we have signed up to the Wellbeing of Women's Workplace Menopause Pledge. We want our people to feel able to talk openly and honestly about the menopause, and to seek help if and when it's needed. To support this, we provide flexible working and temporary changes to working-hour patterns. Flexible working can be particularly helpful to create equity for women as they tend to be more likely, statistically, to be caregivers to children and other dependents; and older women, for example those experiencing menopause, can benefit from the ability to work from home.

We understand the importance of education around the menopause for all our people and so offer a comprehensive manager guide to support one-on-one conversations as well as online awareness learning about the menopause on our learning platforms.

Our healthcare app, Peppy, offers guidance on menopause, fertility and baby loss, with one-to-one support from highly trained menopause experts via chat and video calls.

We also offer Occupational Health support, a menopause toolkit and an app which connects our people immediately to a GP, wherever they are in the world. Additionally, our Thrive App, available via AXA Health, helps individuals monitor and manage their wellbeing. Our six national employee networks such as Women@Capgemini and Talking Heads offer a space to talk to people with similar experiences and share support.

Measurement is very important to us, and our ongoing Pulse employee engagement survey gives us insight into our team's views on wellbeing. We also run an annual DE&I survey as part of our Great Place to Work trust index partnership, which includes wellbeing questions. We survey employees bi-annually to assess gender equity/parity across a range of measures. We then analyse these survey results by demographics, including gender, to compare sentiment across genders.

All these combined efforts to support our employees' wellbeing have been recognised by Great Place to Work, who this year named Capgemini as one of the UK's Best Workplaces for Wellbeing.

Psychologically safe environments are good for people and good for their organisations.

Five key takeaways

1. Encourage companies to prioritise wellbeing initiatives for their employees, including mental health support and flexible working arrangements.
2. Advocate for increased diversity, equity, and inclusion in the workplace and make the changes necessary to achieve this.
3. Build psychological safety by encouraging leaders to show vulnerability and normalise conversations that are about life, not just work (e.g., caring responsibilities, menopause, mental health, and so on).
4. Listen to what employees are saying and respond with progressive solutions that resonate well with different populations.
5. Offer tailored support at different stages of an individual's working life.

Spotlight

Who? Microsoft

What? Tech multinational

How many? 5,000+ UK employees

Spokesperson:



Karen Sancto

EMEA Benefits Consultant (MEA), Chair Families Employee Resource Group, Microsoft UK

Two years ago, in the middle of the second national lockdown, I saw Microsoft UK launch its new Thrive employee engagement programme to help connect our people during this tough time. Online Teams events were hosted featuring high-profile names sharing their stories. The Radio presenter Roman Kemp talked candidly about his friend's suicide, broadcaster/DJ Reggie Yates discussed toxic masculinity, and Sophie Ellis-Bextor re-created her Kitchen Disco for some fun and dancing!

Because employees could join these sessions anonymously through Teams Live, I was initially surprised and heartened to see many of them leaving messages in the chatroom sharing their own experiences with these issues. Before long, we saw employees approaching us, wanting to tell their own stories about overcoming mental health challenges, raising awareness of their own health issues or sharing stories

of causes they were fundraising for. We found employees came forward to address some very raw and sensitive topics such as infertility, miscarriage, or grief and bereavement.

We invited health professionals to provide support to employees and used this opportunity to promote the services of our healthcare provider AXA Health, our employee assistance programme and our other wellbeing services. We saw employees coming forward to launch further initiatives and communities, including a men's health forum.

As well as highlighting the power of storytelling, I believe Thrive's success demonstrates that employees can find virtual events as valuable in hybrid working environments as in-person meetings. They connect the entire workforce, whether working in one of our office locations, at home or travelling to customer sites.

Part of the success of virtual sessions is their anonymity: if you're going through a private health issue or you're part of a marginalised group, it's sometimes easier to start the conversation online or in chatrooms, before broaching these topics with your manager or a colleague. It's another way to provide a safe space.

I also observed how these sessions could encourage better learning about diversity and inclusion. For example, Eugene Farrell, AXA Health's Mental Health Consulting Lead, talked about the challenges for the

LGBTQI+ community during lockdown. There were sessions on neurodiversity, to educate and inform employees, managers, colleagues and family members about how people can thrive in certain situations and how we can better support them.

Our employee resource groups (voluntary, employee-led groups which aim to foster a more inclusive workplace) may have helped embed this further. We saw key moments such as International Women's Day highlight aspects of women's health to provide more understanding about issues such as menopause, infertility and endometriosis. Alongside this, executive sponsors were engaged to champion awareness and promote resources.

As an employee of Microsoft, I really appreciate how the hybrid working model allows me to work flexibly – agreeing with my manager how, when and where I work – in terms of geographical location, physical location (office or home) and working hours. I'm aware of employees who work part-time, or full-time but compressed hours (eg full-time over 4 days) to suit their lifestyle or family commitments. I'm certain that the new hybrid way of working has also helped more Microsoft UK employees access our health services. Before the pandemic, AXA Health administered services such as physiotherapy and cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT) which were delivered at our Reading headquarters. The pandemic drove providers to deliver these virtually, enabling more people to benefit from them.

These were supplemented with our Microsoft CARES suite of wellbeing resources, which includes employee assistance and subscriptions to meditation and wellbeing apps.

Having access to a virtual emotional wellbeing therapist through AXA Health was also beneficial for our employees during the pandemic, when psychologists were hard to come by. They could help signpost whether individuals would benefit from counselling through our EAP provider, CBT or psychiatric help.

I've seen how engaging with employees through the Thrive programme, connecting through communities, and having a platform for individuals to be brave and inspire others has been a real game-changer through lockdown. It's inspiring to see this engagement continue as a hybrid model wherever opportunities for communities to meet in person and virtually, to allow them to thrive – when, how and where they are.

Employees can find virtual events as valuable in hybrid working environments as in-person meetings.

Five key takeaways

1. Find new ways to engage with your employees.
2. Be curious and learn from your colleagues.
3. Appreciate that we all thrive in different ways.
4. Be aware of how, when and where you can be your best self.
5. Support others to be their best selves.



Spotlight

Who? PwC UK

What? Professional Services

How many? 26,000 UK employees

Spokesperson:



Sarah Churchman

Chief Inclusion & Wellbeing Officer, PwC UK

We've always had a significant commitment to employee wellbeing and mental health. It certainly helped PwC weather the stresses and anxieties caused by the pandemic as the crisis put our previous efforts to the test.

Over the last 10 years, our approach has become more preventative rather than reactive in terms of our employees' wellbeing. What can we do proactively? This has been fuelled by the growing willingness, particularly among our younger employees, to talk about mental health and be more open from a psychological perspective.

The PwC UK workforce is around 26,000 and we recruit many university graduates and students straight from school, so one example of our preventative approach, has been outreach in the communities in which we work.

We provide mental health first aid training to teachers and help support them in equipping young people for the world of work through financial literacy, employability skills, and resilience skills.

We have found that our younger Gen Z employees tend to medicalise what are quite common feelings such as the "Sunday night blues" ahead of the working week. It's part of the world of work and this is where resilience comes into play and we are here to help our younger employees develop high performance routines based on rest and recovery. For us, it's about ensuring support is also being given to employees who are struggling because of stressful life events, such as bereavement.

We're particularly focused on supporting managers because they in turn are supporting a team of employees. Sometimes it can be about a lack of confidence, so by giving them mental health training, it shows them that they don't have to have all the answers or turn into a psychiatrist overnight. It's about being able to spot the signs of someone struggling with their mental health and being able to start a conversation with them. And of course, about knowing where to go themselves to get support.

The Green Ribbon Campaign, set up seven years ago, has been instrumental in embedding an open culture from the CEO down. It's given people the 'green light' to initiate conversations around mental health and wellbeing.

"It's about creating a sense of psychological safety. Talking about mental health should be encouraged. We're not going to be marginalised in talking about it."

A number of partners have stepped up to become a mental health advocate, using their own experiences. It has helped to humanise our workplace because it shows that mental health issues can affect everybody. There's not a 'them' and 'us' divide.

A current challenge we're facing is managing the return to the office for some employees. While the majority are coming back for two or three days because they flourish through the social interaction, we have to understand the reasons why some individuals are more comfortable to continue working from home. Some are experiencing fear associated with any return whilst others, perhaps those people who are neurodiverse, may feel more productive away from the office and its distractions. This falls under our inclusion agenda but is also tied to mental health.

Recently, PwC has taken a number of steps to further support employee's wellbeing.

These include offering additional payments to staff during the cost-of-living crisis and creating a financial wellbeing hub offering online support and access to talks. We've also focused on the topic of menopause, and it's been a real opportunity to educate people, particularly young women and also men to understand what women are dealing with.

Through employee engagement surveys, we've also identified emerging areas of concern such as the effects of sleep deprivation on our people. The firm is seeking to correlate these findings with overall levels of employee engagement and performance to identify areas where improvements can be made.

We're also encouraging our employees' to continue sharing how they're taking care of their mental wellbeing and supporting others to do the same through our social media #MyMindMatters campaign. It's about creating that sense of psychological safety. Talking about it should be encouraged; we're not going to be marginalised in talking about it. We want to create a sense of belonging. It's about trusting your organisational culture to be open and honest about what's really important.

We are helping our younger employees build resilience.

Five key takeaways

1. Put a range of initiatives in place, including mental health first aid training, outreach work in schools, financial wellbeing support, and a focus on menopausal changes in the workplace.
2. Use regular staff surveys and quantitative and qualitative approaches to drive improvement, and a Green Ribbon Campaign to encourage conversations around mental health and wellbeing.
3. Take a holistic approach to end the stigma around mental health and promoting wellbeing among its employees.
4. Use social media to connect with audiences, taking steps to support its employees in all areas of their lives.

Conclusion

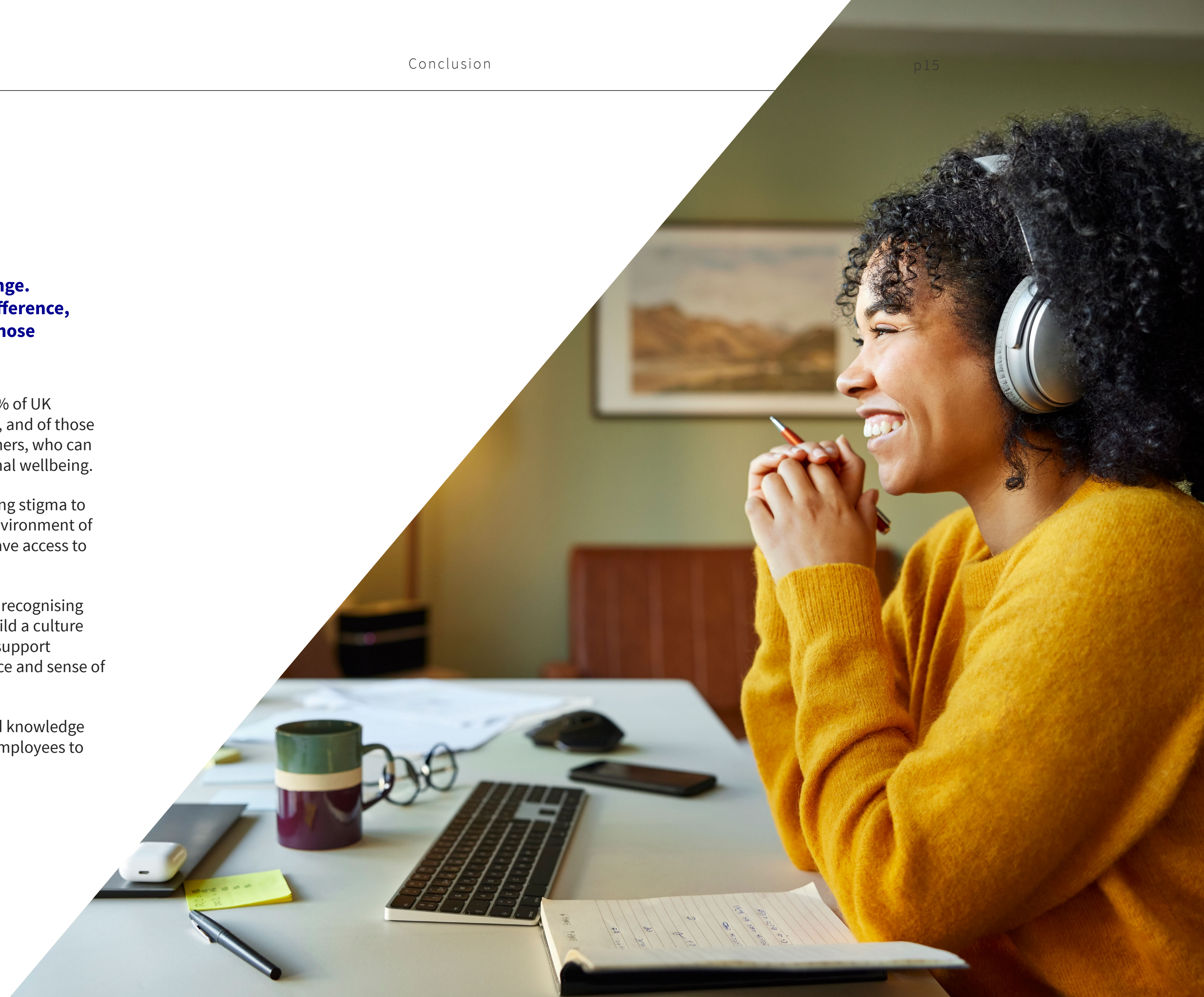
The landscape of health and work, has, and continues to change. Good mental health support for those at work makes a big difference, employees are more likely to be happy and flourishing, and those flourishing more likely to stay with you as an employer.

While there has been great progress in employee wellbeing, still only 50% of UK employees feel they get good mind health support from their workplace, and of those struggling, there are cohorts more disproportionately impacted than others, who can feel overwhelmed, stressed, anxious or are struggling with their emotional wellbeing.

Employers, and managers, need to go further and capitalise on a declining stigma to talk mind health. To do so they must ensure that all are working in an environment of psychological safety, belonging and inclusion, and that all employees have access to appropriate support both prior to, and as and when, it's needed.

Progressive companies are exploring the intersection of their initiatives, recognising DE&I and wellbeing must be prioritised and integrated throughout to build a culture where all can bring their best selves to work. How those strategies best support meaningful connection, quality employee experience, and build resilience and sense of purpose will be critical to success.

We hope that, by reading the insight and visions you have new ideas and knowledge to build into your own employee wellbeing strategies to support more employees to flourish as 2023 unfolds.





For more information on AXA Health's approach to mind health and wellbeing, and how we can support your business, please visit axahealth.co.uk/mindhealth

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