

Mind's Workplace Wellbeing Index 2016/17

Key insights



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Foreword



Emma Mamo, Head of Workplace Wellbeing

Over the past few years, employee wellbeing has been rising up the agenda for employers in the UK. A key aspect of this is the mental health of staff. Organisations depend on having a healthy and productive workforce: we know that when employees feel their work is meaningful and they are valued and supported, they tend to have higher wellbeing levels, be more committed to the organisation's goals and perform better.

Despite these strides, there's still a long way to go. Mental health problems affect one in six British workers each yearⁱ and are a leading cause of sickness absence in the UK, accounting for 15.8 million sick days in 2016ⁱⁱ. They can affect anyone in any industry and yet mental health is often still a taboo subject. Our poll in 2014 revealed that a staggering 95 per cent of people who have had to take time off due to workplace stress did not feel able to give their employer the real reason. Only 5 per cent of our survey respondents told their boss that their sickness was stress-related.

In 2014, the Time to Change Public Attitudes survey indicated that 49 per cent of people still feel uncomfortable talking to an employer about their mental health. Many staff worry about opening up if they're under unmanageable stress or experiencing a mental health problem. This is often because they fear that their employer doesn't treat mental health problems as seriously as physical health problems, when it comes to needing time off to recover. There is clearly still work to do when it comes to breaking down stigma and providing the type of open and supportive culture that enables staff to be honest with their manager, to access support and to enjoy a healthy working life.

Research shows that FTSE 100 companies that prioritise employee engagement and wellbeing outperform the rest of the FTSE 100 by 10 per cent.ⁱⁱⁱ By supporting staff wellbeing, they reap the benefits through enhanced morale, loyalty, commitment, innovation, productivity and profitability. Having strong organisational leadership, promoting a two-way dialogue and involving employees in organisational decisions, helps to build trust and integrity, vital ingredients of creating a culture where employees feel comfortable talking about their mental health.

ⁱ Mind (2014). Mind YouGov Poll 2014.

ⁱⁱ Office of National Statistics (2017). Sickness absence in the labour market: 2016.

ⁱⁱⁱ Soma Analytics (2017). Mental Health and Wellbeing: FTSE 100 Report.

Avoiding talking about an issue doesn't make it go away. Stress is hugely prevalent in workplaces and work-related stress can seriously affect both physical and mental health. It's vital that employers put in place measures to promote good wellbeing at work and tackle the causes of work-related stress and poor mental health among their staff. Employers that are proactive send the message to their staff that they will be supported if they are experiencing a problem. This should encourage people to seek help sooner, potentially minimising the need for time off.

In seeking to move from rhetoric to reality, employers must mainstream good mental health and make it a core business priority. We recommend that employers put in place a comprehensive strategy to help people stay well at work, to tackle the root causes of work-related mental health problems and to support people who are experiencing a mental health problem.

Many of the measures we recommend are small and inexpensive. Regular catch ups with managers, flexible working hours, promoting work/life balance and encouraging peer support can make a huge difference to all employees, whether or not they have a mental health problem. Above all, creating a culture where staff feel able to talk openly about mental health at work is vital. We need to normalise mental health so it's no longer the elephant in the room. We need to see staff of all levels talking about their own experiences, and we need employers to reassure staff that if they do talk about this issue, they'll be met with support, rather than stigma and discrimination.

The launch of our Workplace Wellbeing Index in 2016 marked a significant achievement for Mind in our mission to support a million people to have good mental health at work by 2021. The Index enables employers to celebrate the good work they're doing to promote staff mental wellbeing and get the support they need to be able to do this even better. This report highlights some of the key findings of the first trailblazing Index organisations. It shows that there is great work being done to promote positive mental health, but we can always strive to be better.

Be part of the movement for change in workplace wellbeing by starting your journey towards better mental health in your organisation today.

Introduction

About Mind

Every employer relies on having a healthy and productive workforce. A 2015 CIPD survey¹ found that 31 per cent of employees have experienced mental health problems. Stress and poor mental health cost UK businesses an estimated £34.9 billion a year through reduced productivity, high turnover, and sickness absence. This is equivalent to £1,300 for every employee in the UK workforce².

For the last seven years, Mind has been raising awareness of the importance of workplace wellbeing and helping to tackle the stigma surrounding mental health.

As part of our 2016-2021 strategy, 'Building on Change', we want to support a million people to have good mental health at work.

Employers are beginning to recognise the moral and business case for improving workplace wellbeing. In response to ever-increasing demand from employers, we now have a dedicated Workplace Wellbeing team that advises organisations on how they can effectively support staff experiencing stress or mental health problems and boost the wellbeing of each and every member of staff.

About Mind's Workplace Wellbeing Index

Through our work with employers, we're building a movement for change in mental health at work. A key part of this is our Workplace Wellbeing Index.

Our Index is designed to celebrate the good work employers are doing to promote and support positive mental health, and to provide key recommendations on the specific areas where there is room to improve. It helps organisations find out where they are doing well and where they can improve their approach to mental health in the workplace.

Participating organisations undertake staff and employer surveys to help us assess where the gaps lie between the organisation's approach to workplace wellbeing and staff perceptions. Additionally, organisations can also receive an in-depth review of their key organisational policies.

We can then provide the organisation with an assessment report with analysis of the survey results, highlighting what they are doing well and recommendations of where they can improve.

Organisations are then informed of their Index ranking and celebrate the good work that all participants are doing to promote workplace wellbeing at our annual awards ceremony.

Participating in the Index is a learning process and a long-term commitment to a better way of working, not only for individuals, but for the success and productivity of your organisation as a whole.

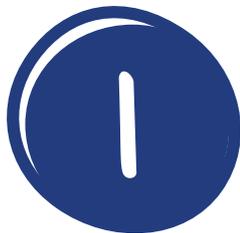
¹ CIPD (2016). Employee Outlook: Focus on Mental Health in the Workplace.

² Centre for Mental Health (2017). Mental Health at Work: The Business Costs 10 years on.

Executive summary

In 2016/17, 30 organisations took part in our first ever Workplace Wellbeing Index with 15,000 employees participating in the staff survey.

The findings from our first year have shown that employer policy and practice has a huge impact on our mental health and that more needs to be done by employers to help staff feel comfortable talking about their mental health. In this report, we've outlined key findings in the three areas that the Index measures; organisational policies, assessment of current employer approach and staff perceptions. Throughout the report we have included quotes from the staff survey respondents which can often illustrate a disconnect between what the employers report and how staff feel.



We all have mental health and it changes over time.

This one is obvious. Just as we all have ups and downs in our physical health, our mental health changes over time and is affected by a range of factors both in and outside of work.

The Index survey showed that 6 in 10 employees said their mental health was currently very good or good. However, 6 in 10 also said that they had personally experienced poor mental health at some point in their lives.



Stress at work can lead to poor mental health and time off work.

1 in 10 employees rated their current mental health as currently poor or very poor. Of these 25 per cent said this was due to problems at work and a further half said it was due to a combination of problems at work and outside of work. 40 per cent said they had taken time off as a result.

A poor work/life balance can quickly lead to stress and burnout, which may lead to sickness absence. Encouraging staff to work sensible hours, take full lunch breaks, rest and recuperate after busy periods, avoid working at weekends and take their full annual leave entitlement can all help avoid burnout.



We need more open conversations around mental health in the workplace.

Overall, only 49 per cent of respondents felt their employer supports their mental health and only 41 per cent felt their organisation encourages openness and discussions about mental health. Only 1 in 4 employees said they would be likely to talk to their manager if they were experiencing a mental health problem.

These figures are low and part of our mission is to encourage employers to have open discussions about mental health in the workplace. Line managers are in a great position to challenge stigma and play a crucial role in making sure employees feel confident that disclosure of poor mental health will lead to support and not discrimination.



There's a discrepancy between how well managers feel they support staff versus how well supported employees feel.

Only 54 per cent of respondents felt that their line manager supports their mental health, yet 73 per cent of line managers said they'd feel confident in supporting a member of staff experiencing a mental health problem.

It's encouraging that line managers rate their mental health literacy and skills highly, but far fewer employees feel their line manager actually supports their mental health.

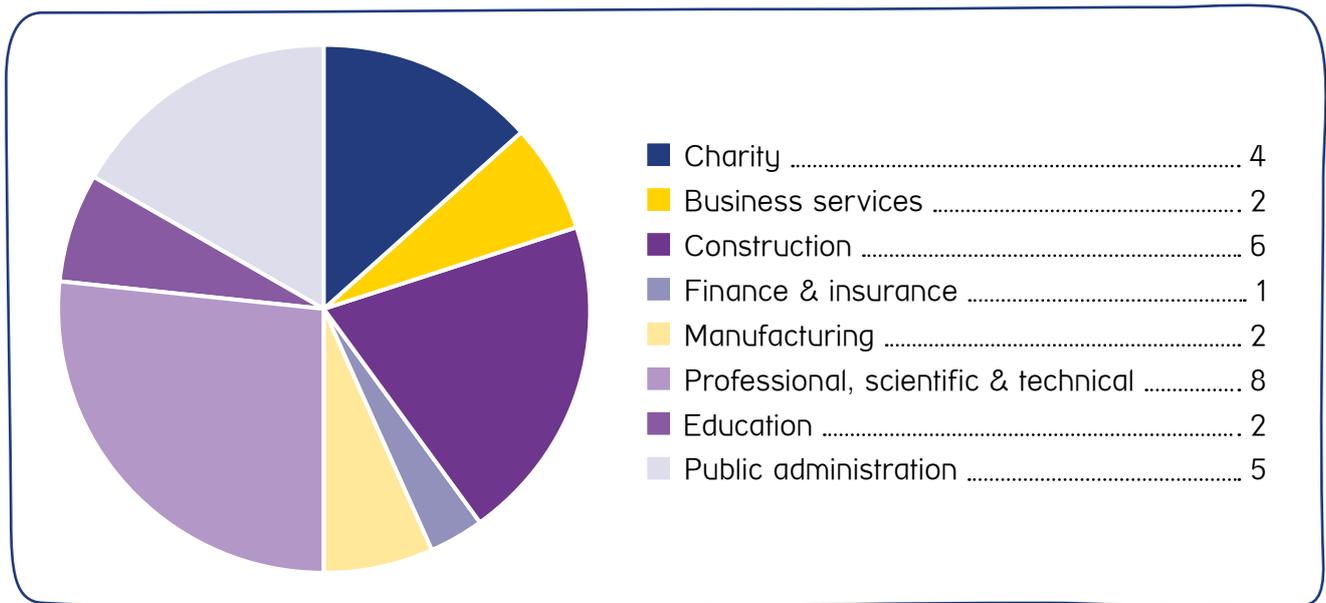


Employers should invest more in workplace wellbeing to benefit their bottom line.

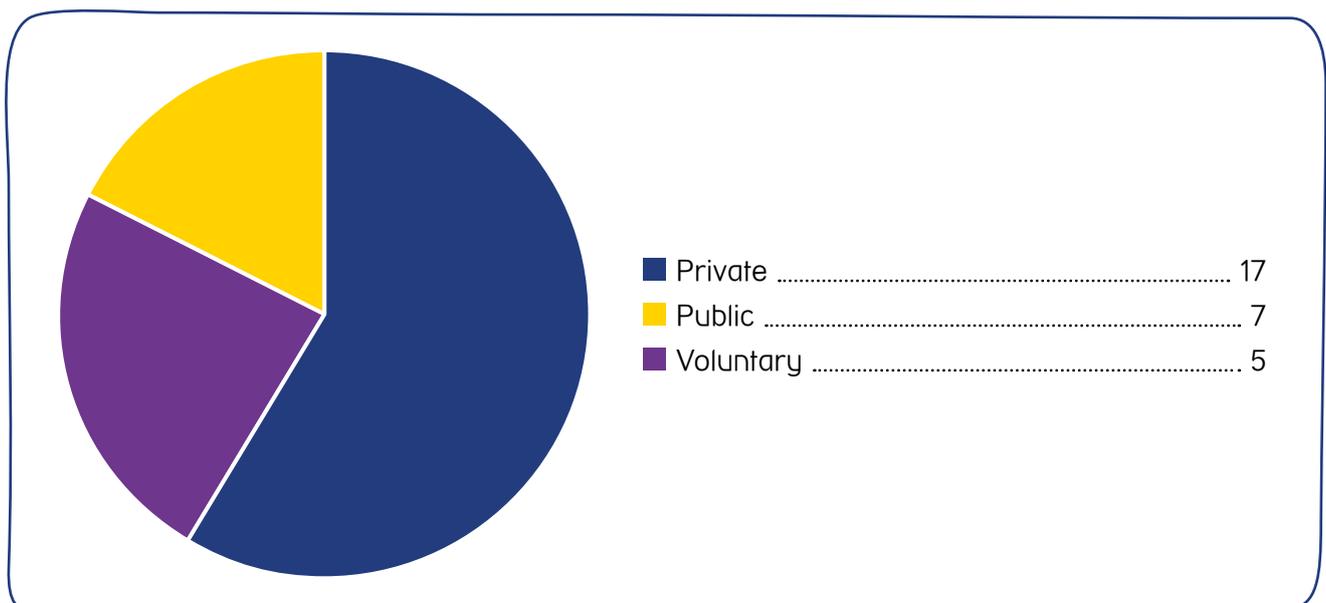
Only a third of the participating organisations provided data on how much of their annual operating budget was set aside for workplace wellbeing. Large organisations reported allocating an average of 11 per cent whilst small and medium organisations set aside less than 0.5 per cent.

2016/17 Index participants

2016/17 was the inaugural year of our Workplace Wellbeing Index and we are pleased that 30 organisations took part, with 29 completing the full assessment. Overall, 15,022 staff across these organisations shared their views and experiences through the staff survey. Participants ranged from very small voluntary organisations to large private sector companies.



Graph i: Number of participating organisations by industry



Graph ii: Number of organisations that completed the Index by sector

Organisational policies

Having the right policies in place and ensuring they take staff wellbeing and mental health into account is an important stage in developing a successful approach to creating a mentally healthy workplace.

As part of the Index, participating organisations submitted their policies for review. These were assessed for how well they address mental health and whether they effectively support and promote employee wellbeing.

Overall, organisations with a large headcount (1,000 or more employees) performed well within the policy section, with 21 per cent of large organisations gaining their highest score in this area. Large organisations, compared to small and even medium-sized organisations often have larger resource to support policy development processes. The main findings about all 29 participating organisations' policies are outlined below.

Key findings

2 in 5

had a mental health or wellbeing policy

14%

offered flexible working as a reasonable adjustment for staff with a mental health problem

25%

routinely carried out stress risk assessments

Mental health or wellbeing policies

A mental health or wellbeing policy should set out how the organisation will promote wellbeing for all staff, tackle the work-related causes of mental health problems and support staff experiencing them. An organisation-wide mental health strategy is essential, it should signpost to support available to aid employee wellbeing and manage stress. Mental health or wellbeing policies are there to ensure employees experiencing mental health problems get the support they need straight away.

Having a clear policy and approach for managing mental health helps organisations ensure consistency but in practice this may look different in different workplaces and contexts. For example, small businesses may not have formal policies for every situation but they can still develop a clear positive culture and policy on mental health which can be communicated to staff.

Of the organisations who took part in the 2016/17 Index, 41 per cent (12 organisations) had a mental health and wellbeing policy in place. Voluntary sector organisations and small organisations (less than 250 employees) reported not having a written mental health and wellbeing policy. We believe it is vital that workplaces develop an organisational policy or a statement which covers employee mental health and wellbeing as it will support in the journey of prioritising mental health, sending a message to all employees that practice is changing across the organisation.

Employees who have a mental health problem, which is classed as a disability, are protected under the Equality Act 2010. Of the organisations who had a mental health policy in place, only half acknowledged this within their document.

Whilst we have some great policies in place I do feel people are uncomfortable talking about mental health.

Index staff survey respondent

Bullying and harassment policies

A bullying and harassment policy should be in place to protect and support staff who experience any form of bullying or harassment in the workplace. It should also help to create an open and inclusive workplace culture and therefore needs to be well publicised to employees. It is important that the policy details an appointed person who can support individuals and should clearly set out the process to follow if you need to raise a complaint.

Overall, 26 of the 29 organisations (90 per cent) had a bullying and harassment policy in place, which is positive. Those without a policy tended to be employers in the medium to large banding (250-1000 employees) within the private sector.



Policies that relate to workplace culture such as bullying and harassment should acknowledge the negative impact this can have on the mental health of staff. However, less than half of the organisations who had the policy in place acknowledged the negative effect that bullying can have on an individual.

We also found that some organisations did not have a process in place for addressing bullying and harassment complaints. Of the 26 organisations who did have a policy in place, only 17 organisations said they provided training, or other practical guidance to line managers on how they can support their staff who may have experienced bullying and harassment in the workplace.

Disciplinary, grievance and conduct policies

Disciplinary, grievance and conduct policies should set and uphold standards of conduct across an organisation. The policies should ensure that all employees are treated fairly and clearly set out the process for each of these situations. It is important that the policies recognise that an employee's performance or behaviour can be affected if they are experiencing a mental health problem. As formal action can have a negative impact on an employee's mental health, appropriate support and adjustments should be explored and detailed in the disciplinary, grievance and conduct policies. The policies should also take account of the impact these processes can have on employees' mental wellbeing.

Organisations should also consider their disciplinary process and look at whether it should be adapted for an employee experiencing a mental health problem. A disciplinary process for an employee's poor performance will need to be addressed differently to poor performance related to a mental health problem. Although organisational policies and procedures for disciplinary, grievance and conduct are highly important to have in place, organisations should always treat the employee as an individual.

These policies were in place in all participating organisations. However, only 21 per cent (6 organisations) acknowledged the difficulty some employees could experience as a result of going through a grievance or disciplinary process. Further analysis also found that 10 per cent of disciplinary, grievance and conduct policies did not detail the support available to individuals when going through these processes.



Equality and diversity or equal opportunities policies

Equality and diversity or equal opportunities policies should be in place to celebrate diversity and uphold equality for all employees irrespective of their gender, race, ethnic origin, disability, age, nationality, national origin, sexuality, religion or belief, marital status and social class. Equality and diversity policies should make sure they reference mental health as it is a protected characteristic under the Equality Act 2010. Robust equality and diversity or equal opportunities policies help to create a positive culture where staff feel able to talk about their mental health.

All organisations had this type of policy in place. Overall, most private and public sector organisations who had the policies in place did acknowledge the importance of upholding employee wellbeing by providing equal opportunities to a diverse workforce. However, it was less acknowledged by organisations in the voluntary sector. Steps should be taken to ensure equality and diversity or equal opportunities policies recognise staff mental wellbeing.



It is important that the policy acknowledges that mental health problems which have a substantial, adverse effect on someone's daily life may be classified as a disability under the Equality Act 2010 and staff who are experiencing a mental health problem will not be discriminated against. However, only half of the organisations which had this policy in place state that people with disabilities are covered under the Equality Act 2010 and that people with substantial mental health problems are included in this definition.

Equality and diversity training is key for organisations to implement and should be made available to all staff, preferably as mandatory induction training for all new staff. The training should cover mental health and staff should also be given information on how mental health is managed and what support is available. Of all participating Index organisations, around two thirds (20 organisations) offered equality and diversity training to staff members.

Flexible working or home working policies

Flexible working, in terms of working hours, location or the pattern of working, can support healthier and more productive ways of working for all staff. Employers benefit from increased morale, commitment and productivity and reduced sickness absence. Employees are able to fit their lives around their work, helping them balance work and home life while remaining healthy and focused.

A flexible working policy should go beyond the statutory right to request flexible working and aim to highlight both the benefits to the individual and organisation. Of the participating organisations, 86 per cent (25 organisations) had a flexible working policy in place. Those that did not have a written policy in place tended to be small organisations (less than 250 employees). Flexible working policies can be harder to implement, and, in smaller organisations, the required resources and dedicated HR support may not always be available. Flexible working can support all staff but it can also be a vital early intervention to prevent mental health problems from getting worse and resulting in sickness absence. It can also support a phased return to work after a period of sickness absence. Employers should consider introducing a homeworking policy and providing reasonable adjustments to give employees more control over their working lives.

Only four of the 25 organisations with a flexible working policy offered reasonable adjustments or reviewed practical steps to ensure employees are supported when they are feeling unwell through Wellness Action Plans (WAP) or similar.

Senior leaders and managers should be role models for healthy work habits and encourage staff by leading by example. They should also make sure they are regularly monitoring employees' workloads and hours to ensure they are not at risk of burnout and that their work is manageable. We found that only a quarter (6 organisations) stated that their managers are required to monitor workloads and hours, or address these issues with employees.

Working from home sometimes was helpful. I was also offered adjustment in hours but did not take it up. Knowing I could take time if I needed it was enough to prevent me from feeling trapped.

Index staff survey respondent

Health and safety policy

A health and safety policy sets out the organisation's approach and commitment to supporting employees to be healthy at work and protect them from any harmful risks. All health and safety policies should have a named representative to manage concerns, give specific timescales of when an intervention is needed as well as document how employee health and safety is upheld in their organisation. Mental wellbeing should be at the heart of a health and safety policy, as it is a key component of overall employee health.

All participating organisations had a health and safety policy in place. However, over half (15 organisations) of the policies did not reference wellbeing, mental health or stress management. Health and safety policies should have a named person for undertaking risk assessments to help reduce any possible risks. Individuals should also be offered stress risk assessments, however, only around half (14 organisations) referenced that they do this. Training, including mental health awareness training, is vital for health and safety representatives to be able to carry out their duties effectively, however, only 7 organisations' policies referenced that appropriate mental health training was available to health and safety representatives.

Sickness absence policy

A sickness absence policy should outline the procedure for managing staff when they are unwell, ensuring that there is a fair process in place to effectively support them if they need to take time off work due to ill health. Throughout sickness absence policies, mental health should have parity with physical health. The policy should also be clear on workplace adjustments and phased return-to-work processes, which can be crucial for reducing the length of mental health related sickness absence.

The way organisations manage a period of sickness absence is key in shaping how well and how quickly people are able to return to work and get back to peak performance. Therefore it is encouraging to see that all but one organisation had a policy in place.

Sickness absence and return-to-work policies should make it clear that employees will be treated equally whether their sickness absence is for a mental health or physical health problem. However, only a quarter (7 organisations) referenced mental health in their policy. This trend was most noticeable in the private sector.

The majority of organisations' sickness absence policies were not aligned with the values that they reflected in their other policies and there was a considerable difference in tone. Most policies were punitive in their tone, with an implied assumption that an employee may give a false reason for their sickness absence. Three quarters of private sector organisations (13 of 17 organisations) didn't allow for their employees to accrue holiday entitlement during periods of sickness absence compared to two thirds (8 of 12 organisations) in the public and voluntary sector.



24%
referenced
mental health in
their sickness
absence policy

Performance management policy

Performance management policies should be in place so that employees understand what their organisation expects from them. A positive performance management policy gives employees greater control over their work and therefore these should not be used solely as a tool to address poor performance. It is important that policies set out the process for receiving ongoing feedback and provide regular opportunities for professional development. Performance management policies need to recognise that an employee's performance or behaviour can be affected if they are experiencing a mental health problem.

Overall, 86 per cent (25 organisations) had this policy in place. All voluntary and public sector organisations had a performance management policy, however, the majority of the policies were focussed on monitoring an employee following performance issues. One of the ways to ensure a positive, proactive approach to performance management is to train line managers. However, the data showed that only around a third (8 organisations) offered this.

Policies for performance management should take account of the impact these processes can have on employees' mental wellbeing. Staff should be signposted to appropriate support and made aware they are entitled to an advocate if their performance is under review. Policies on performance management also need to recognise that an employee's performance or behaviour can be affected if they are experiencing a mental health problem, and appropriate support and adjustments should be explored before proceeding with formal action. Only 16 per cent (4 organisations) gave consideration to the possibility that poor performance might be due to a period of poor mental health and whether reasonable adjustments could be made to support them to meet the requirements of their role.

Performance management should be a two-way dialogue between manager and employee, and managers should engage in open conversations with employees on how they would like to be supported. Only around half (15 organisations) outlined ways in which staff can provide feedback about how they would like to be managed.



Change management policy

A change management policy should detail the process for managing organisation-wide change in a way that minimises risk and detrimental impact to employees. Change management policies should ensure they take account of the impact this process can have on employees' mental wellbeing. In some cases, change management can lead to redundancy and policies should therefore detail the procedures for aftercare and signposting to appropriate support services for those whose jobs are at risk.

Only five organisations had a change management policy in place. Implementing organisational change is often necessary but can be difficult for employees to experience, therefore it is recommended that training is provided for line managers and senior leaders on supporting staff through organisational change. Only one organisation which had a policy in place highlighted that such training is made available. Encouragingly, all of the five policies reviewed provided clarity on the roles and responsibilities of those delivering the policy.



We have a Staff Forum where we are able to have our say, so we actually have a say in the making of some policies that affect our working life

Index staff survey respondent

Employer assessment

The employer assessment asked organisations to submit information on their organisational approach to mental health alongside organisational HR data. They were then asked to rate their practices in the key areas known to be associated with workplace wellbeing. You can see an overview of the employer assessment areas in the appendix (page 33) and a brief summary of the findings from the 29 participating organisations is presented below.

Key findings

Senior leaders in just under **50%** of the organisations have spoken out about their own mental health.

Around 50%

have run anti-stigma sessions to help change attitudes towards mental health.

2 in 5

have yet to incorporate mental health into line management training.

Sickness absence and disclosure

By aggregating data across all participating organisations, we found that, over the last 12 months, an average of 5 per cent of staff had formally disclosed a mental health problem. This included disclosures to either a member of staff, a HR representative or through any other formal means of disclosure.

This aggregated data also showed that across participating organisations an average of 12 per cent of all sickness absence is due to mental health problems. The rate of reported absence due to poor mental health over the past five years has increased for almost half of the organisations (13 organisations).

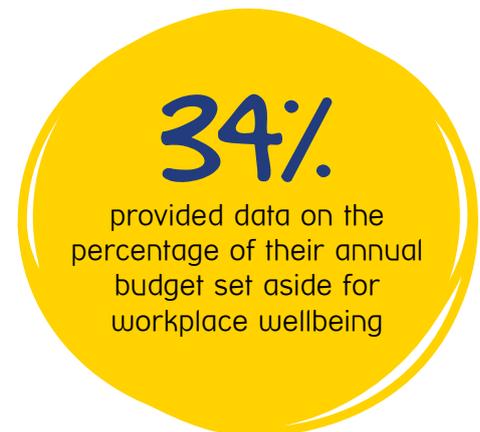
Organisations need to ensure that their disclosure processes are effective. Aggregated data from across all participating organisations' staff surveys show that 15 per cent of all respondents reported disclosing poor mental health, yet participating Index organisations only record an average disclosure rate of 5 per cent. This could suggest that there are cases where staff feel they have disclosed their mental health problem but this information is not reaching the appropriate people to trigger support. If mental health problems are disclosed, the first step is to establish honest, open communication with the employee, and this should be maintained if people take time off for sickness. Line managers play a crucial role in ensuring employees feel confident that disclosure will lead to support. Therefore, managers need to have the skills and knowledge to support staff when they are experiencing poor mental health.



Organisational spend on workplace wellbeing

Stress and other mental health problems are a leading cause of sickness absence, accounting for 15.8 million lost working days every year.³ Overall, it costs UK businesses an estimated £34.9 billion a year through reduced productivity, high turnover, and sickness absence.⁴ It therefore makes good business sense to set budget aside for supporting employee wellbeing. Your staff are your greatest asset, so investing in their wellbeing builds the trust and integrity essential to maintain their commitment and productivity levels.

A third (10 organisations) provided data on the percentage of their annual operating budget set aside for workplace wellbeing. Large organisations reported allocating an average of 11 per cent of their operating budget to workplace wellbeing, while small and medium organisations set aside less than 0.5 per cent.



³ Office of National Statistics (2017). Sickness absence in the labour market: 2016.

⁴ Centre for Mental Health (2017). Mental Health at Work: The Business Costs 10 years on.

Senior leader buy-in and organisational accountability

A senior champion for mental health is someone who speaks out about the importance of supporting staff wellbeing and mental health in a proactive and engaged way, sending a message to staff that workplace wellbeing is a priority for the organisation. In this assessment area we found some differences in scores across sectors and across organisations of different sizes. On average, public sector organisations scored better (63 per cent) than private sector organisations (55 per cent) and voluntary sector (48 per cent) at having senior representation for mental health in their organisations. Similarly, medium sized organisations scored better (62 per cent) than large organisations (60 per cent) and small organisations (49 per cent).

It is important that organisations have clear accountability when it comes to pushing the workplace wellbeing agenda forward. Senior leaders are in a position to demonstrate their commitment to the mental health agenda through leading by example. This creates a culture where healthy working habits are visible and valued and sends a message to employees that their wellbeing is important. Positively, almost all (27 organisations) have at least one senior sponsor who proactively champions mental health.

Job design and recruitment

Ensuring that jobs are designed with employee mental health and wellbeing in mind is crucial. Research shows that well-designed roles that give people autonomy, greater variety and a realistic workload lead to staff feeling more satisfied in their work.

When creating a new job role, 41 per cent (12 organisations) design the role so it actively promotes employee wellbeing. However, 38 per cent (11 organisations) do not conduct stress risk assessments during job design to ensure that workloads are realistic. During the recruitment stage, all 29 organisations ensured they offered reasonable adjustments to candidates with disabilities including people with mental health problems.



I hear peers talking about high levels of work related stress and anxiety directly related to heavy workloads, confusing processes, unrealistic expectations and a generally increasingly unforgiving and demanding work culture as the organisation expands very quickly. It feels to me that something about how we plan for growth - and what pressures this might mean for its staff - needs reviewing.

Index staff survey respondent

Some areas of roles and responsibilities are not clear due to inconsistencies between different directorates and teams and lack of clarity from senior management.

Index staff survey respondent

Physical workplace environment

An organisation's physical workplace environment can have a significant impact on the wellbeing of staff. Research shows that organisations creating the right environment for their staff can have a positive impact on employees' health and wellbeing, as well as their job satisfaction and productivity levels.

Over three quarters of organisations (22 organisations) reported that staff have exposure to natural daylight which is conducive to supporting employee wellbeing. However, almost a quarter (6 organisations) do not have access to a garden, park or outside green space.



People management

Research shows that effective people management and line manager capabilities are key drivers for good mental health at work. Additionally, organisations that are proactive in tackling the work-related causes of mental health problems are more likely to have lower levels of sickness absence and a happier, more motivated workforce. A key part of this is supporting line managers to improve their understanding of mental health and how to promote good mental health among their staff.

Overall, 21 per cent (6 organisations) gained their highest score in this assessment area. For almost half of public sector organisations (3 of 7) and voluntary sector organisations (2 of 5) this was their highest scoring area. Only 3 of 11 small organisations achieved their highest score in this area.

I think that managers should have training to understand mental health.

Index staff survey respondent

Encouragingly, organisations ensure that their line managers understand the importance of learning and development opportunities for their employees. All the organisations actively encourage their employees to make use of a wide range of learning and development and continuing professional development opportunities and permit them to take time out during their working hours to take part in these. However, almost half (12 organisations) have yet to incorporate mental health into existing line management training. Ensuring line managers are trained in spotting the signs and symptoms of poor mental health is crucial in supporting employees to stay mentally healthy at work.

The majority of participating organisations (26 organisations) agreed that their managers were good at encouraging their employees to take their full annual leave entitlement. Managers were also good at modelling these healthy work habits to their staff, with 85 per cent (25 organisations) saying their managers take their full annual leave entitlement and 83 per cent (24 organisations) saying their line managers encourage staff to take their full contracted lunch breaks. Getting away from your desk at lunch, taking a walk or enjoying a break with colleagues helps to build employee resilience and productivity. It is important that managers model good behaviours to their staff; if managers look after their own wellbeing this will encourage their staff members to do the same.

Preventative measures and initiatives

Taking a proactive, preventative approach to supporting the mental health of your staff is a crucial element of an effective workplace wellbeing strategy.

It may not be surprising that both private organisations and large organisations scored highly in preventative measures and initiatives. These organisations may have more budget or resources available to set up and run initiatives which support staff wellbeing. Public and voluntary sector organisations, along with medium and smaller organisations, could benefit from putting in place some cost-effective wellbeing initiatives to support their staff.

Running regular wellbeing days as well as organising regular awareness-raising events about mental health were the most common approaches to support staff wellbeing, with 85 per cent (25 organisations) implementing each of these initiatives. However, only around half (14 organisations) reported running anti-stigma sessions to help challenge any misconceptions and change the way employees think about mental health.

I think we have lots of measures in place but there are still some negative practices e.g. senior colleagues setting bad examples by working late, eating lunch at desks, sending emails late at night, etc.

Index staff survey respondent

Employee support tools and other means of support

In addition to proactively promoting the mental health of staff, organisations must also ensure that appropriate reactive support is in place for those who become unwell and need support to recover, whether in work or throughout a period of sickness absence. Research shows that organisations with high-quality return-to-work processes in place experience higher retention rates and lower sickness absence rates for staff experiencing a mental health problem.

Most organisations (24 of 29) offered an Employee Assistance Programme (EAP) to staff. Another way of providing support to employees who are experiencing a mental health problem is by having peer support groups set up across the organisation which focus on employee mental health and wellbeing, however, less than half (12 organisations) had this in place.

It would be good if we had Employee Champions, peer support groups, more events on key days such as World Mental Health Day, a space on the intranet on mental health including an area for people to share stories, information, etc

Index staff survey respondent

I feel confident that if I had a problem with my mental health I would be shown care and concern.

Index staff survey respondent

Building mental health literacy, awareness-raising and anti-stigma activities

With nearly nine out of ten people who experience mental health problems saying they face stigma and discrimination, raising awareness and reducing stigma is a critical part of an effective workplace wellbeing strategy. What an organisation does to build mental health literacy through awareness-raising and anti-stigma activities plays an important part in workplace wellbeing.

Overall, we found that public sector organisations were better at building employee mental health knowledge and running awareness-raising activities, with an average score in this assessment area of 60 per cent compared to 54 per cent for private sector organisations and 46 per cent for voluntary sector organisations. Similarly, large organisations also scored highest in this area (68 per cent) compared to medium sized organisations (45 per cent) and small organisations (39 per cent).

Almost two thirds (18 of 29 organisations) run mental health training for all staff to build knowledge around mental health and mental health problems, including educating employees about the signs and symptoms of poor mental health and providing tips on how to stay well. However, almost half (12 organisations) are yet to train line managers to spot signs of poor mental health in their team members. Training line managers in mental health as well how to have the conversation with an employee about their mental health is crucial as part of an organisation's early intervention strategy.



Lived experience leadership

Lived experience leadership is the term we use to describe an approach that empowers people with personal experience of mental health problems to be at the forefront of change. Within the workplace, this involves putting real stories at the heart of campaigns, initiatives or training around mental health. We know that by having people with lived experience telling their stories, we are able to demystify mental health and encourage open conversations.

The majority of organisations (14 of 29) had this as their lowest scoring assessment area. Over half of the organisations had not yet had a senior leader or high-profile employee speak out about their own experiences of mental health. Having leaders speak out about mental health helps to challenge stigma and create an open and inclusive environment.

I feel that a lot more senior managers could speak more openly about their own mental health. I think this top down recognition of their own mental health will encourage a more open culture for others to speak out. For example, I have no idea whether any of the directors or heads have or have previously suffered from a mental health problem - without knowing this I would not be comfortable in speaking out.

Index staff survey respondent

Staff survey

The staff survey gave employees the opportunity to share their experiences of their organisation's culture and support around workplace mental health. The staff survey was a way of exploring any discrepancies between the employer and staff survey. It assessed key areas known to be associated with workplace wellbeing.

We have included a summary of our key findings from this year's staff survey and their implications. You can see an overview of the staff survey assessment areas in the appendix (page 33).

Key findings

68%

of respondents have experienced poor mental health at their current employer

37%

of respondents felt their workload was unmanageable

26%

of respondents would be likely to talk to their manager if they were experiencing a mental health problem

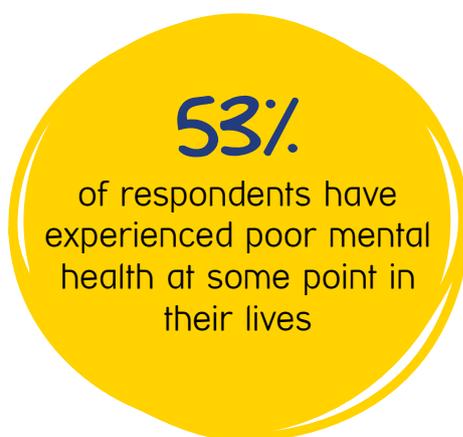
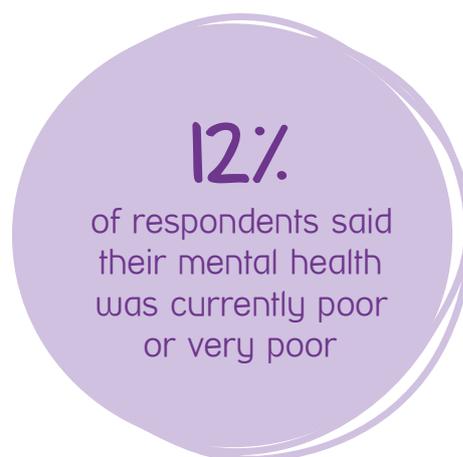
Personal experiences of mental health

This part of the survey explored employees' own mental health and the impact that work has on their wellbeing.

Around 6 in 10 employees (59 per cent) said their mental health was currently very good or good. However, around 6 in 10 employees (53 per cent) also reported experiencing poor mental health at some point in their lives.

Interestingly, we found that across all respondents, those aged 55 and over were most likely to report that their mental health currently was good or very good. When we asked about their happiness at work, younger respondents (aged 18 – 24 years) and older respondents (aged 55+ years) reported being happy at work more frequently than respondents in the middle age bracket (aged 31 – 40 years).

Only 35 per cent of respondents registered as having a disability said their mental health was either good or very good, compared to 60 per cent of those who are not registered as having a disability. This is at least in part driven by the level of support that employees feel their organisation provides. Half of those without a registered disability agree that their organisation supports their mental health, compared to two in five (43 per cent) of those with a registered disability.



Just over 1 in 10 employees (12 per cent) said their mental health was currently poor or very poor.

Of those respondents:

Just over a quarter (26 per cent) said this was due to problems at work.

Over half (54 per cent) said it was due to a combination of problems at work and outside of work.

Women were more likely than other groups to say that their poor mental health was due to a combination of work and home (59 per cent).

Encouraging staff to develop a Wellness Action Plan with their manager is a proactive way of understanding individual needs and how best to support people's mental health at work. Putting in place preventative measures and reactive support mechanisms help keep people well and productive at work, and also ensures they are effectively supported when they might be struggling with poor mental health. This is both good for boosting employee wellbeing and good for business.

Sickness absence and disclosure

This part of the survey captured data on employee sickness absence and whether individuals had experienced poor mental health whilst working at their current organisation.

Employees who reported that they were currently experiencing poor mental health frequently cited work as a contributing factor and are having to take time off. This needs to change.

Of the respondents who said they had experienced poor mental health at their current organisation:

4 in 10 employees (40 per cent) said they had taken time off as a result.

Of those employees who had taken time off, 87 per cent disclosed their poor mental health as the reason for their absence to their employer.

Of those who had ever experienced poor mental health:

Women were much more likely to have taken time off than men for mental health reasons, 43 per cent compared to 29 per cent.

Of those respondents who identified as having a disability:

Over 50 per cent have taken time off due to mental health problems (either from their current employer or a previous employer). Interestingly, respondents from the private sector were less likely to report having taken time off due to poor mental health (45 per cent).

Of those not registered as having a disability:

62 per cent said they had experienced poor mental health at their current or previous employer, however only 35 per cent said they have ever taken time off because of it. This rate was even lower in the private sector (28 per cent).

Younger employees were less likely to disclose that an absence was due to poor mental health:

Of respondents aged under 24, almost half (49 per cent) gave their employer a physical health reason for their absence when in fact it was due to poor mental health. In comparison, 70 per cent of respondents aged 41 to 64 openly disclosed that their sickness absence was due to poor mental health.

Of the Index participants who identified as transgender, 50 per cent said that they were willing to disclose their poor mental health to their employer.

A poor work/life balance can quickly lead to stress and burnout, reducing levels of employee productivity, performance, creativity and morale. This can be avoided by encouraging staff to work sensible hours, take full lunch breaks, rest and recuperate after busy periods, avoid working at weekends and take their full leave entitlement.

Impact on performance

Of those who reported experiencing poor mental health whilst at their current employer, only 8 per cent said it did not affect their performance.

However, the majority of respondents did feel it had an impact:

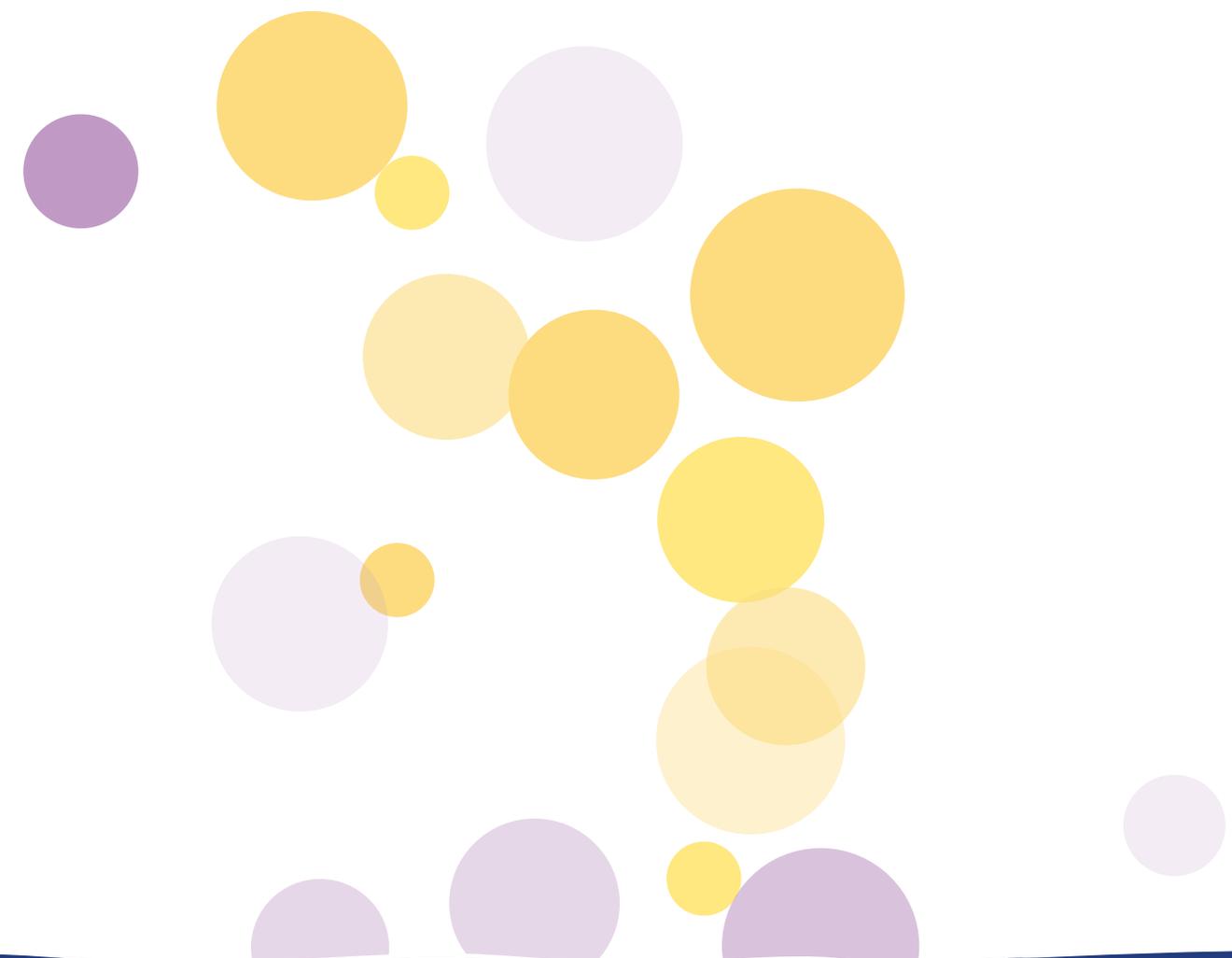
70 per cent said it makes it difficult to concentrate and 52 per cent said they found it more difficult juggling a number of tasks.

46 per cent said it sometimes made them put off challenging work whilst 43 per cent said it takes them longer to complete tasks.

39 per cent said they have difficulty making decisions and a further 24 per cent said they have difficulty learning new tasks.

22 per cent said they are more likely to get in to conflict with colleagues and 21 per cent said they can be less patient with customers and clients.

10 per cent felt that when their mental health was poor they rely more on colleagues to get work done.



Support tools

This part of the survey explored the support tools offered to individuals when they had disclosed to their employer that they were experiencing a mental health problem. It also asked employees where they would most likely seek help if they were experiencing a mental health problem as well as capturing whether remote workers had equal access to organisational support.

Of the employees who disclosed their poor mental health:

Just over half (53 per cent) said they felt quite or very supported by their employer.

Almost three quarters (72 per cent) said they had been made aware of the support tools available at their organisation, such as Employee Assistance Programmes (EAPs), counselling, staff support networks or informal buddying systems.

Over half (56 per cent) were offered reasonable adjustments or support measures, such as changes to hours worked or the nature of some of their duties.

Voluntary sector employees were less likely to be offered any adjustments (47 per cent) compared to 57 per cent in both private and public sector organisations.

Only 36 per cent of respondents over 65 were offered reasonable adjustments.

On average, employees in private sector organisations are significantly less likely (56 per cent) to feel that their employer offers flexible working arrangements compared to those working in the public sector (80 per cent). There is also a clear gender difference – more women (71 per cent) than men (61 per cent) said that their employer offers flexible working arrangements to balance work and home life.

However, there were differences according to sector. For men working in the private sector just over half (53 per cent) feel that their employer offers flexible working arrangements, compared to just under two thirds of women (63 per cent). Whereas the gender gap is much smaller in public and voluntary sector organisations.

Overall, the majority of employees who had disclosed their mental health problem to their employer felt supported (49 per cent), however of those who disclosed their mental health problem to their manager 15 per cent said they didn't feel supported. To effectively support staff to recover and return to work as quickly as possible employers should be proactive and get involved as early as possible. Employers should take a person-centred approach, be sensitive to the individual's needs, be positive, professional and supportive throughout the process and maintain contact with people throughout their sickness absence.

I would like to say that when I was having an extremely tough time a few months ago my manager visited me and suggested I use the counselling service we have... this service was perfect for me and got me through a tough few months, I believe without it I would have had to take time off work.

Index staff survey respondent

Personal mental health literacy

This part of the survey explored the relationships between staff and their managers, as well as how confident managers are in dealing with a colleague's poor mental health.

Around 3 in 4 line managers (73 per cent) said they feel confident in their ability to effectively support a member of staff experiencing a mental health problem at work.

More than half of employees (54 per cent) said their line manager supports their mental health.

Around 1 in 4 employees (26 per cent) said they would be likely to talk to their manager if they were experiencing a mental health problem.

Overall, 53 per cent of employees agreed that their manager regularly checks in on how they are feeling, with younger staff more likely to agree.

41 per cent of employees felt confident that their line manager would be able to spot the signs and symptoms that someone was struggling with their mental health. However, those registered with a disability showed slightly less confidence in their managers with only 35 per cent believing that their manager would be able to do so.

Overall, managers rate their mental health literacy and skills highly. This is encouraging, but proportionally, far fewer employees feel their line manager actually supports their mental health and even fewer would openly talk to their line manager if they were experiencing poor mental health. Managers need to ensure they are approachable and should take steps to normalise conversations about mental health in order to encourage open dialogue. Managers are in a great position to challenge stigma and prejudice throughout the organisation and to get mental health on the agenda. Therefore, it is important that organisations put an emphasis on upskilling line managers through training to ensure they are able to support staff.



Work/life balance and employee engagement

This part of the survey explored the experiences of employees and their views and perceptions on their workplace culture, it also aimed to explore the work/life balance of employees.

Over one third (37 per cent) of employees didn't feel that their workload was manageable.

Only 47 per cent felt motivated by their workplace culture. This rose to 50 per cent in the private and voluntary sectors, but decreased to 44 per cent in the public sector.

47 per cent of respondents felt that their employer supported their mental health, this increased for women to 51 per cent and decreased for men to 46 per cent.

Only 34 per cent of respondents felt that their colleagues had a good awareness of mental health. Interestingly, this was lower in the private sector (27 per cent) and higher in the voluntary sector (56 per cent).

42 per cent of respondents felt that their organisation encouraged openness and discussion about mental health problems. However, only 34 per cent thought that their organisational culture encouraged people who have experienced a mental health problem to talk openly about their experience.

Overall the majority of employees felt their workload was manageable despite the majority not feeling motivated. Organisations should take time to understand the wellbeing of their staff and how the workplace is positively or negatively impacting on their mental health.

Senior management is not doing enough to role model and champion good behaviours. There is a culture of high workloads and many people being overworked - an issue that senior management should be taking responsibility for getting to the bottom of.

Index staff survey respondent



Physical workplace environment

Overall, employees in the private sector are most satisfied with their working environment (62 per cent), compared to 60 per cent in the public sector and 55 per cent in the voluntary sector. Similarly employees in medium sized organisations are more content with their physical environment (71 per cent), compared to 60 per cent in small organisations and 57 per cent in large organisations.

I feel the physical environment is not great and not a lot of consideration is given to this. We feel much more cramped in now than we did a few years ago. Our desk size was reduced without consulting employees about the impact of this, and I definitely don't feel as comfortable, physically and mentally, feeling squashed in, and have heard a few other people say the same.

Index staff survey respondent

Conclusion

The findings from our first year of the Index have confirmed some of what we already know; employer policy and practice has a huge impact on our mental health and that more needs to be done by employers to help staff feel comfortable talking about their mental health.

Senior leaders play a key role in progressing the mental health agenda within all organisations. An increase in senior leader buy-in can improve the effectiveness of organisational systems and processes to promote employee wellbeing. Senior leaders should ensure they are promoting a work/life balance for all staff, discourage unhealthy working habits and lead by example.

Line managers also play a crucial role in supporting employee wellbeing. All managers across workplaces should have adequate mental health awareness training. This will help employees feel confident in their manager's capabilities, and ensure managers are committed to promoting wellbeing among their team members. Line managers are often the first step to helping normalise conversations about mental health in the workplace.

If staff do not feel comfortable to disclose that they are experiencing poor mental health then this can act as a barrier to them accessing appropriate support. Creating a more open and positive culture will help address this issue. It is also important that employees know their organisation is here to support them, so employers should make sure they routinely publicise the support available to staff.

HR policies underpin good mental health at work and set the foundation upon which employers need to build. Having a mental health and wellbeing policy which tackles the work-related causes of mental health problems from a staff wellbeing perspective is key. Results from the Index also show that many organisations do not have a change management policy in place. Organisations should strive to develop a policy for organisational change, while setting out a process for job design that promotes staff wellbeing and mental health.

Employers also need to consider the impact of the physical workplace environment on employees. Improving the workplace environment by ensuring that workspaces across the organisation have exposure to natural daylight, high quality indoor air and controls to maintain appropriate temperatures will boost employees' wellbeing.

Fully embedding a positive culture around mental health takes time. Organisations need to create a culture where employees feel comfortable to be open about experiencing a mental health problem and seek support at an early stage. Encouraging employees with lived experience of mental health problems to talk about their experiences will also help shape and drive your work around the mental health agenda. If employers commit to culture change then staff motivation, commitment and loyalty will begin to rise.

Appendix

Employer assessment areas

Senior leader buy-in and organisational accountability

What role do senior leaders play in progressing the mental health agenda and how does your organisation hold itself accountable?

Policies and your policy development process

What policies does your organisation have in place? How are they developed and to what extent is the mental health of staff embedded within these documents?

Job design and recruitment

To what extent are jobs designed with employee mental health and wellbeing in mind?

Physical workplace environment

What impact does your physical workplace environment have on the wellbeing of staff?

People management

How do line managers effectively promote good mental health among staff and tackle the work-related causes of mental health problems?

Preventative measures and initiatives

What preventative approaches or initiatives does your organisation have in place to promote the wellbeing of staff?

Employee support tools and other means of support

What reactive support is in place for employees who become unwell and need help to recover, whether in work or throughout a period of sickness absence?

Building mental health literacy, awareness-raising and anti-stigma activities

How is your organisation building knowledge and understanding, raising awareness and reducing stigma around mental health?

Lived experience leadership

Are there spokespeople and senior leaders within the organisation who talk about their experience of mental health problems? To what extent are real people's stories at the heart of initiatives?

Staff survey areas

Personal experiences of mental health

How do people rate their own mental health and how does this relate to the workplace?

Sickness absence

Have people experienced poor mental health at work and taken time off for it?

Impact on performance

If people have experienced poor mental health, how has this affected their performance at work?

Disclosure

If people have experienced poor mental health, how did they feel about disclosing it to their employer?

Support tools

If people did disclose mental health problems, how do they rate the support they received? If an employee did begin to experience mental health problems, where would they seek help?

Staff-manager relationships

To what extent do managers support the mental health of their staff and promote workplace wellbeing?

Personal mental health literacy

How confident do people feel in supporting and interacting with colleagues who are experiencing poor mental health at work?

Work/life balance and employee engagement

How do people feel about their work/life balance and how does the organisation support this?

Staff consultation

To what extent do employees feel consulted about key decisions within the organisation?

Five Ways to Wellbeing

The Five Ways to Wellbeing are a set of evidence-based actions developed by the New Economics Foundation⁵ that promote people's wellbeing. To what extent do staff feel they are able to undertake these actions at work?

We're Mind, the mental health charity. We want to support a million people to stay well and have good mental health at work by 2021.

Be part of our movement for change in workplace mental health.

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