



Keep mental health front of mind

Key takeaways to support employees' mental health and wellbeing

April 2021

Front of Mind 2018 refresh: a practical guide for members

Foreword CBI

Wellbeing is everyone's business

Businesses, and their employees, have been on a rollercoaster ride for the past 12 months. The pandemic has affected every aspect of our professional and personal lives and has fundamentally changed the relationship between businesses and employees. Never before have wellbeing and mental health been so high up on the agenda for boards. The scale of people's thoughts and feelings are now a topic of national conversation.

While the pandemic, and associated restrictions, will eventually come to an end, I am optimistic that this renewed focus on wellbeing will not. Businesses up and down the UK have stepped up to the mental health challenge and this guide contains stories of some of the incredible work they are doing to support their people. They have led by example, caring for their employees and demonstrating what they're capable of. Just as businesses innovated and adapted at speed to serve their customers during the pandemic, they have done exactly the same to care for their people. There can be no turning back. In fact, we can go further and faster.

The business case for improving workplace health and wellbeing is watertight – you can see some of the numbers behind this on **page 3**. Happy, healthy employees are loyal, productive employees. Every penny spent on wellbeing initiatives is a multiplier.

Over the next few pages, we set out some of the practical steps that businesses can take to improve workplace health and wellbeing. It includes **11 case studies** from businesses, large and small, which can help you think creatively about what's possible in your own organisation. They've certainly provided us with some food for thought at the CBI.

The UK is entering into a vital period – one where businesses adapt to a post-pandemic environment with a totally new set of 'rules' for what working life looks and feels like. I see this as an opportunity: to innovate, to grow and to put the health and wellbeing of employees at the very heart of this recovery. Our job, at the CBI, is to help business be at its best and, by extension, help the people at those businesses be at their best. Because if people feel well, then businesses will do well.



Tony Danker
Director-General, CBI



Get started

Jump straight to a section of our practical guide:

Champion mental health from the top	5
Targeted early intervention	11
Mental health and wellbeing culture	16



The business case for proactive mental health support

Supporting your employees' mental health is not only the right thing to do, but it also offers huge benefits to both the UK economy and to your business. The pandemic has put additional strain on people's lives and their mental health. Therefore, it is now more important than ever for companies to take a proactive approach to mental health and wellbeing and to support their employees as best as they can.

For your business:



For every **£1** invested in mental health by employers they get **£5** back



Businesses that invest in mental health have employees that are up to **12%** more productive



People spend an average of **90,000** hours at work over a lifetime

For the individual and business reputation:



63% of UK business leaders believe employers now have more responsibility for their employees' mental and physical health beyond the workplace



37% of millennials think that workplace health and wellbeing should be a priority for senior leaders, yet fewer than 17% think it currently is



61% of workers say the way employers treat their staff is the single most important factor influencing their perception of a business

For the economy:



1 in 4 people will experience a mental health problem in the UK



Before the pandemic, ill mental health was responsible for **72 million** working days lost and cost the UK economy **£99bn per year**



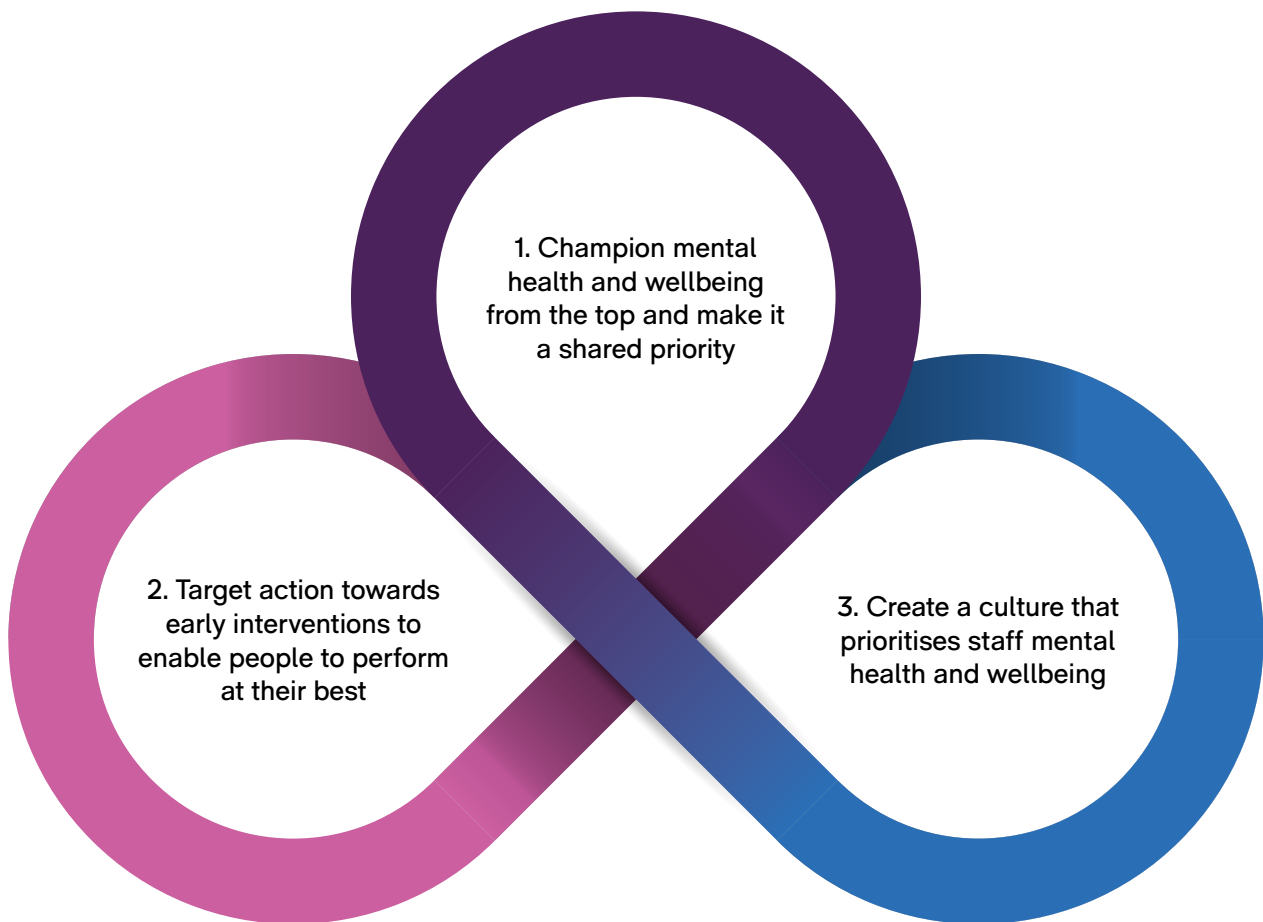
Since 2014 the levels of presenteeism — when employees turn up but feel unengaged and less productive — has jumped from **20.3 to 35 days**

How have employers responded to the pandemic?

- Businesses have learned how to quickly implement and adapt their mental health strategies virtually.
- They have upskilled employees by providing additional training to managers on how to spot signs of ill mental health remotely.
- Firms have made the topic of mental health and wellbeing an everyday conversation through check-in conversations with line managers, informal coffee chats and zoom-free lunch breaks.

Three steps to support your employees' mental health and wellbeing

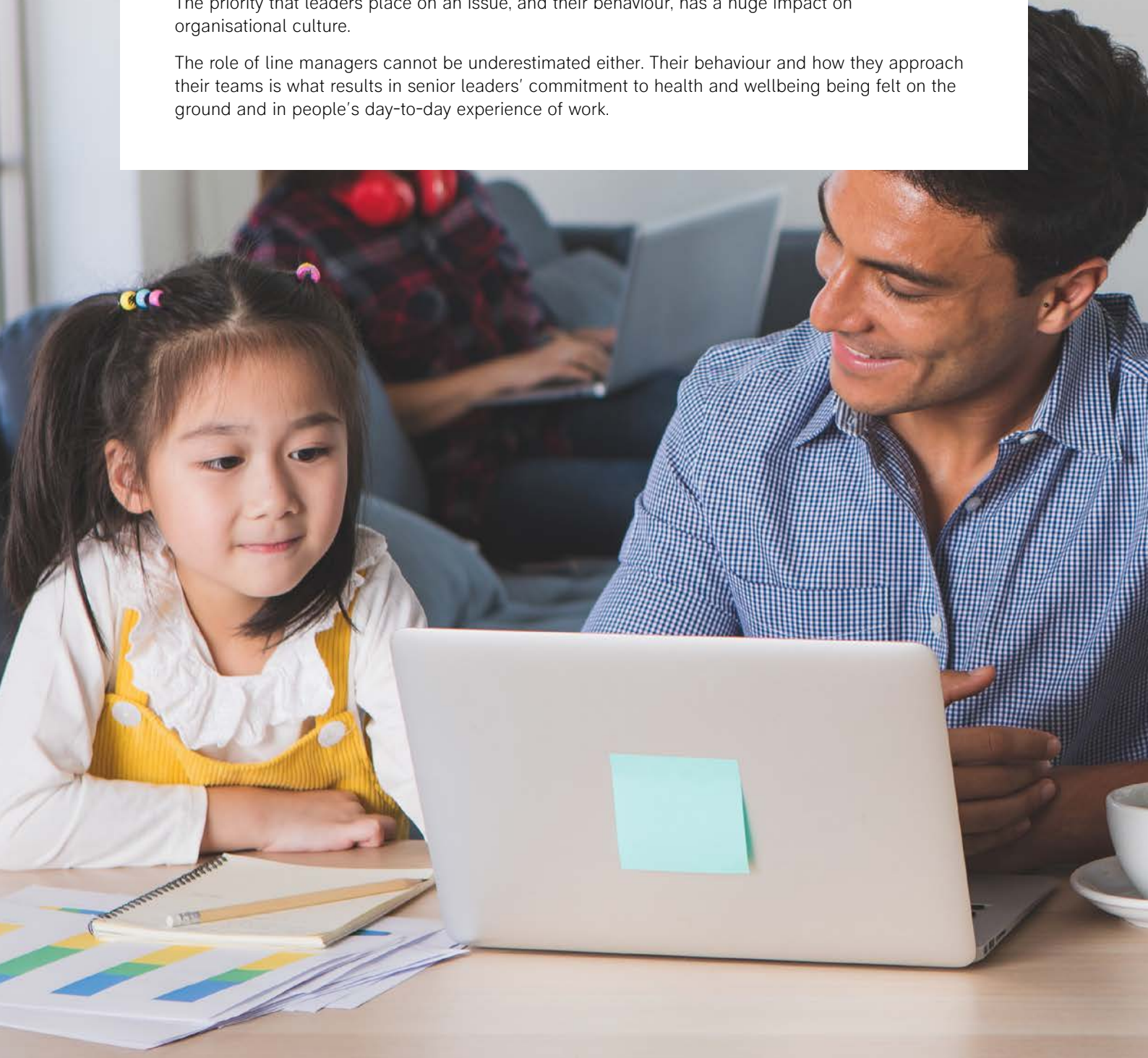
There is no one size fits all approach to improving the mental health and wellbeing of your staff, but there are three general interventions that you can adopt to support people in your business:



1. Champion mental health and wellbeing from the top and make it a shared priority

Leaders play a critical role in championing mental health and wellbeing throughout the firm. The priority that leaders place on an issue, and their behaviour, has a huge impact on organisational culture.

The role of line managers cannot be underestimated either. Their behaviour and how they approach their teams is what results in senior leaders' commitment to health and wellbeing being felt on the ground and in people's day-to-day experience of work.



How can senior leaders raise awareness for and show their commitment to mental health?

- Share their own stories about the ways they are coping with mental health challenges to normalise mental health discussions for all employees.
- Encourage staff to participate in the development and improvement of the health and wellbeing strategy by reminding them to fill in pulse surveys.
- Speak to staff networks to better understand their varied challenges and adjust the business mental health strategy accordingly.
- Help to communicate the different tools and relevant resources available to employees to support their mental health.

How can senior leaders effectively support line managers?

- Provide line managers with suitable training to help them spot signs of poor mental health remotely and in-person and host good conversations about mental health and wellbeing.
- Equip line managers with training that builds a basic understanding of common conditions such as stress, depression and anxiety and ensure they are familiar with the company's sickness policies, approach to flexible working and internal and external sources of support to help them to effectively manage mental health conditions.
- Encourage managers to frequently check in with their teams in meetings and catch-ups to normalise the conversations about mental health.



Key takeaways

- Senior leaders should demonstrate commitment to the organisation's health & wellbeing strategy and communicate its value.
- Train line managers so they can confidently discuss mental health, support their team's health & wellbeing, and spot signs of ill mental health.

Discover how other businesses are keeping mental health front of mind

Thirteen works with its mental health advocates to reach every employee in the business for a wellbeing call

Thirteen is a social housing landlord and housing developer, managing 34,000 properties from Northumberland to North Yorkshire. From the beginning of the pandemic the organisation wanted to make sure that all employees were supported with the new challenges they faced – from home schooling to social isolation. They also wanted to ensure that people had the opportunity to talk to someone other than their line manager and raise any concerns they had.

Before COVID-19, Thirteen had a well-developed network of trained mental health advocates who were raising awareness about mental health and signposting colleagues to support. During the pandemic, several advocates pledged to make a wellbeing call to all 1,500 colleagues to see how they were doing. The wellbeing call was repeated a second time, targeted to a smaller number of 'identified in need' colleagues. Many employees were very grateful; it showed that people cared about each other and reached out to someone they didn't really know, giving advice where needed.

Line managers, already trained on mental health questions, were using wellness action plans and the mental health continuum, a tool produced by Our Mind's Work and works like a traffic light system, to facilitate conversations about mental health and to spot warning signs. Senior leadership has continuously worked with line managers to ensure that they encourage their teams to work flexibly, where they can, take more frequent breaks, get out to exercise and look after their own wellbeing.

Thirteen's most recent employee engagement survey had some encouraging results. When asked if colleagues were feeling mentally well and maintaining a healthy work life balance, the score was 7 out of 10. When asked if colleagues knew about actions to take to help them stay mentally well and asked if they are having meaningful check ins with their manager, the scores were 8.2.

"We've all been living through a really unusual time over the last year and, like many people across the country, we know that some of our colleagues have been feeling the strain of the altered daily routines which has led to a lack of daily human interaction. Therefore, we have developed a comprehensive package of support to every colleague, and we work hard to help people tackle a range of issues that they may be facing."

Liz Thompson, Head of HR Business Partners, Thirteen



Key takeaway

Encourage your mental health advocates to reach out to colleagues to provide mental health support & employees to stay in contact with each other.



Barnett Waddingham inspires people to think differently by introducing sessions to build mindfulness and resilience in employees

Barnett Waddingham is an independent professional services consultancy at the forefront of risk, pensions, investment and insurance with over 1,300 employees across eight offices in the UK. During the pandemic, it was key for them to understand how the workforce was coping with remote working, whilst sharing ideas on how to achieve the benefits of working in a virtual environment, the impact on employee wellbeing and ensuring everyone remained connected throughout the pandemic.

The company undertook several employee pulse surveys over an eight-week period, asking questions around mental, physical and financial wellbeing to understand the level of support employees felt was being provided to them, and how they found the quality and level of communication. Key trends that became visible were concerns around mental health and the impact of COVID-19 on employees' families.

Following the results, the firm issued regular COVID-19 update emails from the COO, listened to their employees and responded via an FAQ and dedicated hub on the intranet. Barnett Waddingham implemented 'Fitness for the Mind' sessions, incorporating techniques for being present in the moment, daily gratitude and mindfulness and sessions around building resilience and full adoption to an agile 'doing what you can' approach. Additionally, the firm provided online training for their managers to help retain firmwide culture and help them support their teams within the virtual environment.

The sessions provided employees with tools and techniques to build resilience, with 88% reporting that the session inspired them to think differently. Managers have reported they feel they are better able to support their teams and help motivate them to remain engaged.

Going forward Barnett Waddingham is planning to continue supporting employees through their newly established Wellness+ network to achieve a happy, healthy, work-life balance which in turn helps the company to continue to support clients, teams and individuals.

“

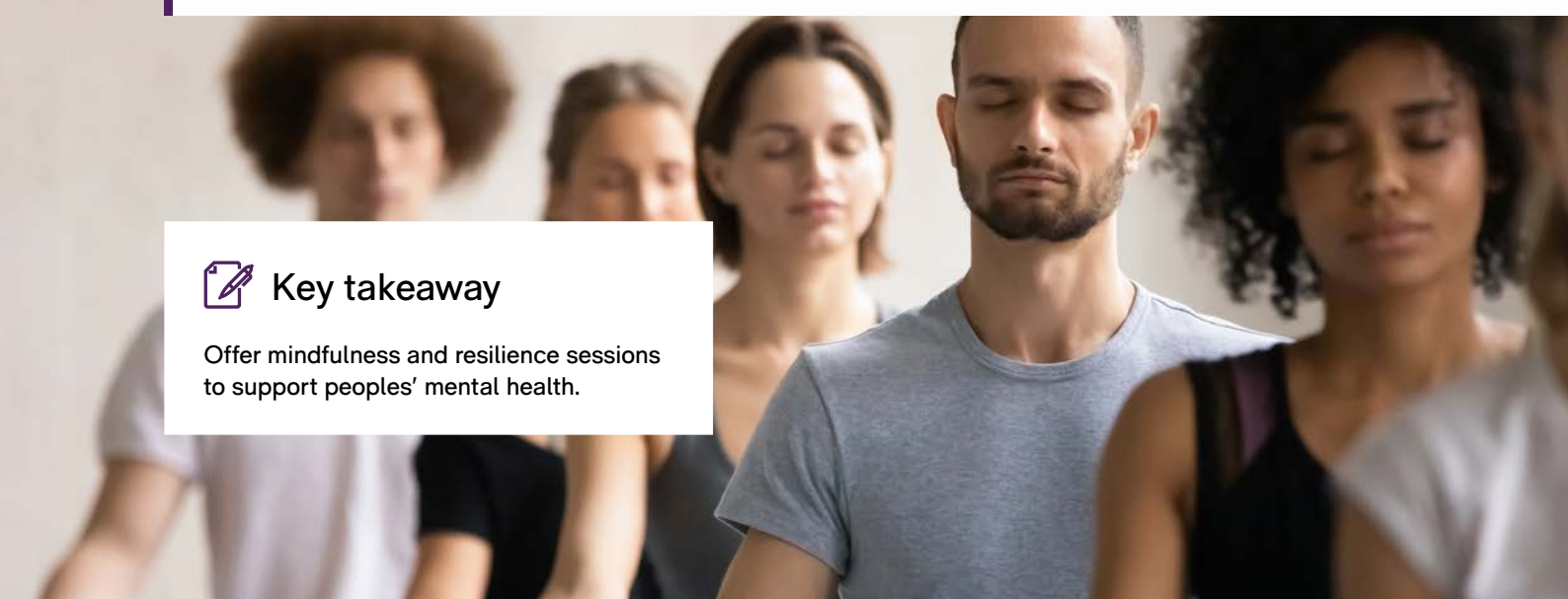
"At the heart of this is our teams and individuals' ability to adapt to an agile way of working, combined with our fast-paced decision making that has fully supported our client's needs. Asking the right questions in our surveys, we've been able to fully support our employees and their wellbeing needs throughout this pandemic."

Jacqui Derrick, Head of HR, Barnett Waddingham



Key takeaway

Offer mindfulness and resilience sessions to support peoples' mental health.



Panasonic's senior management team selects colleagues at random for a weekly wellbeing call to support mental health

Panasonic is a global company that provides consumer, automotive, industrial and lifestyle solutions and products. When the firm closed its offices for the first national lockdown, they decided to continue with a holistic approach to support its employees' mental health and wellbeing. This included physical, mental, financial wellbeing and responding to working from home challenges. It was important for the business to create a feeling of openness and honesty and a culture of approachability.

A decision was taken by the senior management team to call a number of colleagues each week at random to discuss how they were feeling. The feedback from staff was that this action sent out a positive and caring message.

Furthermore, an action that was most appreciated by Panasonic's employees was the creation of an in-house magazine that was emailed out on a regular basis. It contained wellness tips and fun competitions for employees to take part in, but also good news stories from around the business and the press to counter the challenging news of the pandemic that people found difficult to take in. For the magazine, the firm asked employees to share their personal stories and images as to how they were supporting their mental health. The business has also continued to provide webinars to help people with personal finances such as pensions and budgeting.

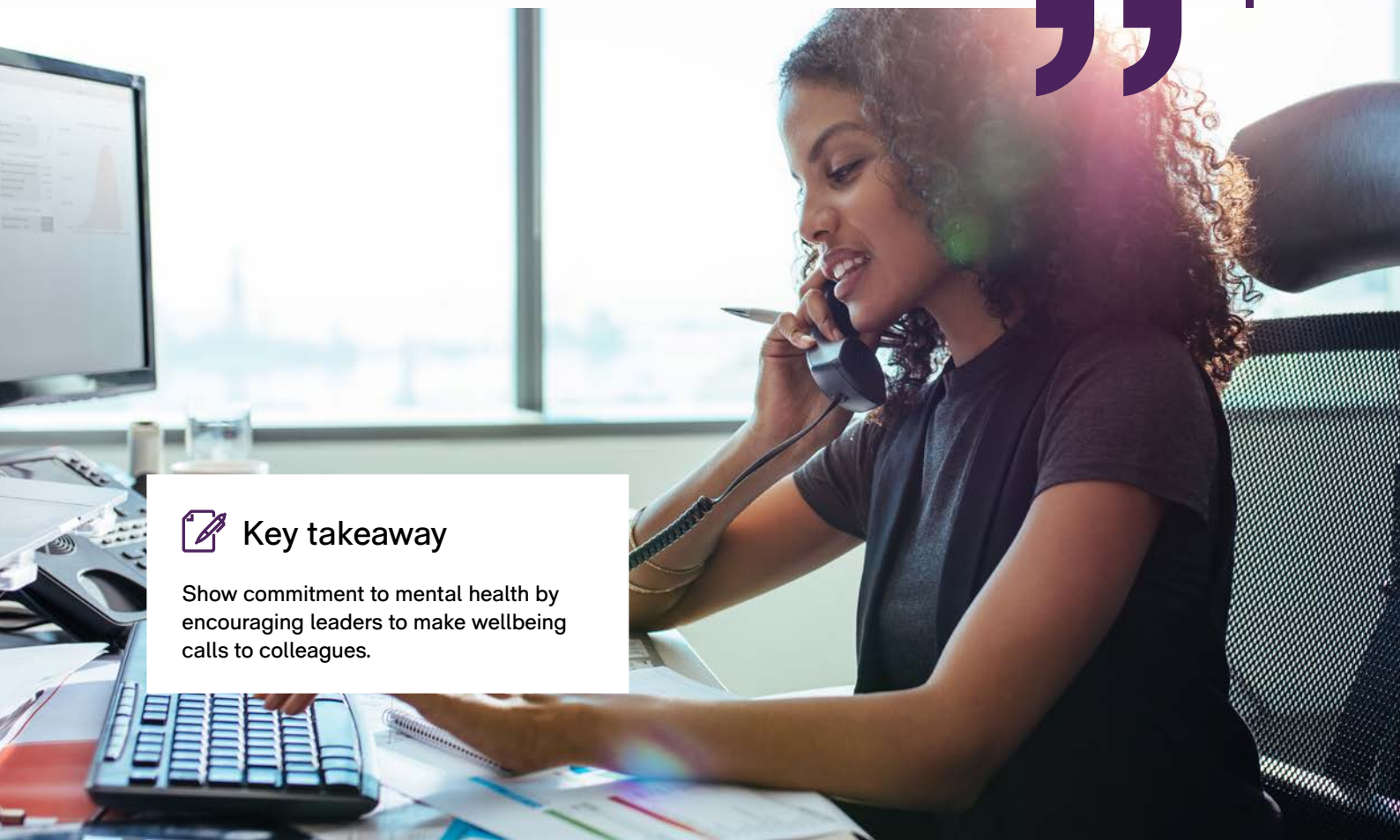
"It is seen as vitally important by our employees, that senior management support and endorse the Employee Wellbeing Programme. Our senior management team in turn, recognise the benefits of the programme. We believe in part the aforementioned is a consequence of the Employee Wellbeing Programmes holistic approach to employee health and wellbeing."

Simon Grantham, Managing Director, Panasonic



Key takeaway

Show commitment to mental health by encouraging leaders to make wellbeing calls to colleagues.



Dentons launches wellbeing network and survey to respond to the changing mental health needs of its workforce

Dentons is the world's largest law firm, with over 12,000 lawyers and professionals in more than 200 locations worldwide.

Ending the stigma around mental health issues is hugely important to Dentons' workplace culture of openness, listening to their people and making wellbeing a priority. This was the case before the pandemic hit, and when it did, Dentons responded by further increasing the support available to their employees.

Dentons created a Wellbeing Hub with resources to support mental and physical wellbeing, including mindfulness taster sessions. And most recently, Dentons has partnered with industry experts MYNDUP to offer free and confidential 1:1 live video sessions on wellbeing topics including therapy, life coaching and meditation.

Dentons' mental health and wellbeing programme, My Healthy Balance, focuses on early identification of mental health challenges, which can be managed before people reach crisis point. The firm has an in-house counsellor and 18 fully trained Mental Health First Aiders across UK offices, readily accessible to all employees. During the pandemic it was important for Dentons to have open conversations and to be there for people who might be struggling so they delivered drop-in sessions led by Mental Health First Aiders.

Dentons participate in panel and speaker events on relevant topics that coincide with key dates in the year, such as Time to Talk Day, with a partner speaking about their own mental health challenges, reinforcing the message that "it's ok not to be ok".

Dentons launched a wellbeing survey to help the firm understand what was and wasn't working well. Following the results, Dentons is working with teams to discuss key themes and practical steps to move the wellbeing agenda forward.

And positively, Dentons has seen a marked increase in open conversations taking place on mental health subjects throughout the firm.

“

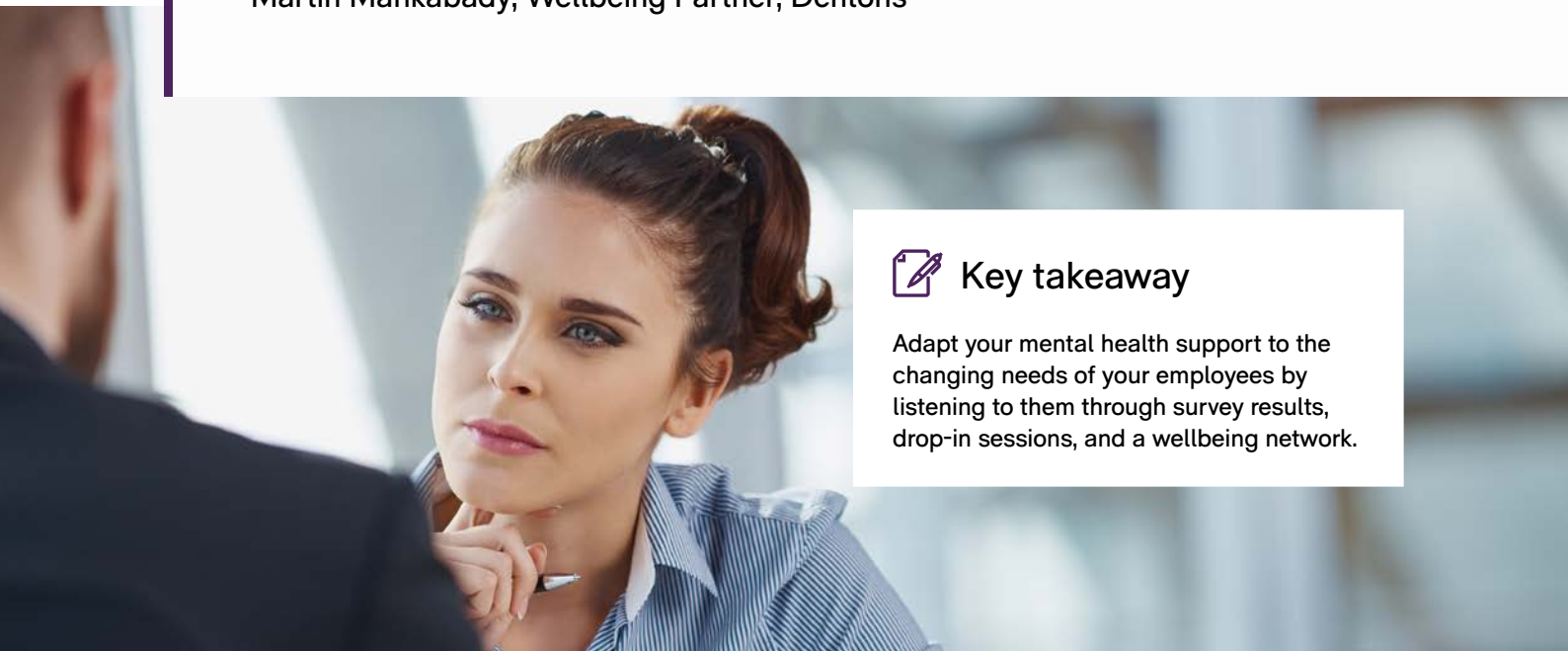
"Looking after the wellbeing of our people has never been more important than it is right now and will continue to be so as we transition from remote working to a more hybrid working environment. It is great to see how wellbeing is front and centre at Dentons, and embedded in our strategic planning and decision making."

Martin Mankabady, Wellbeing Partner, Dentons



Key takeaway

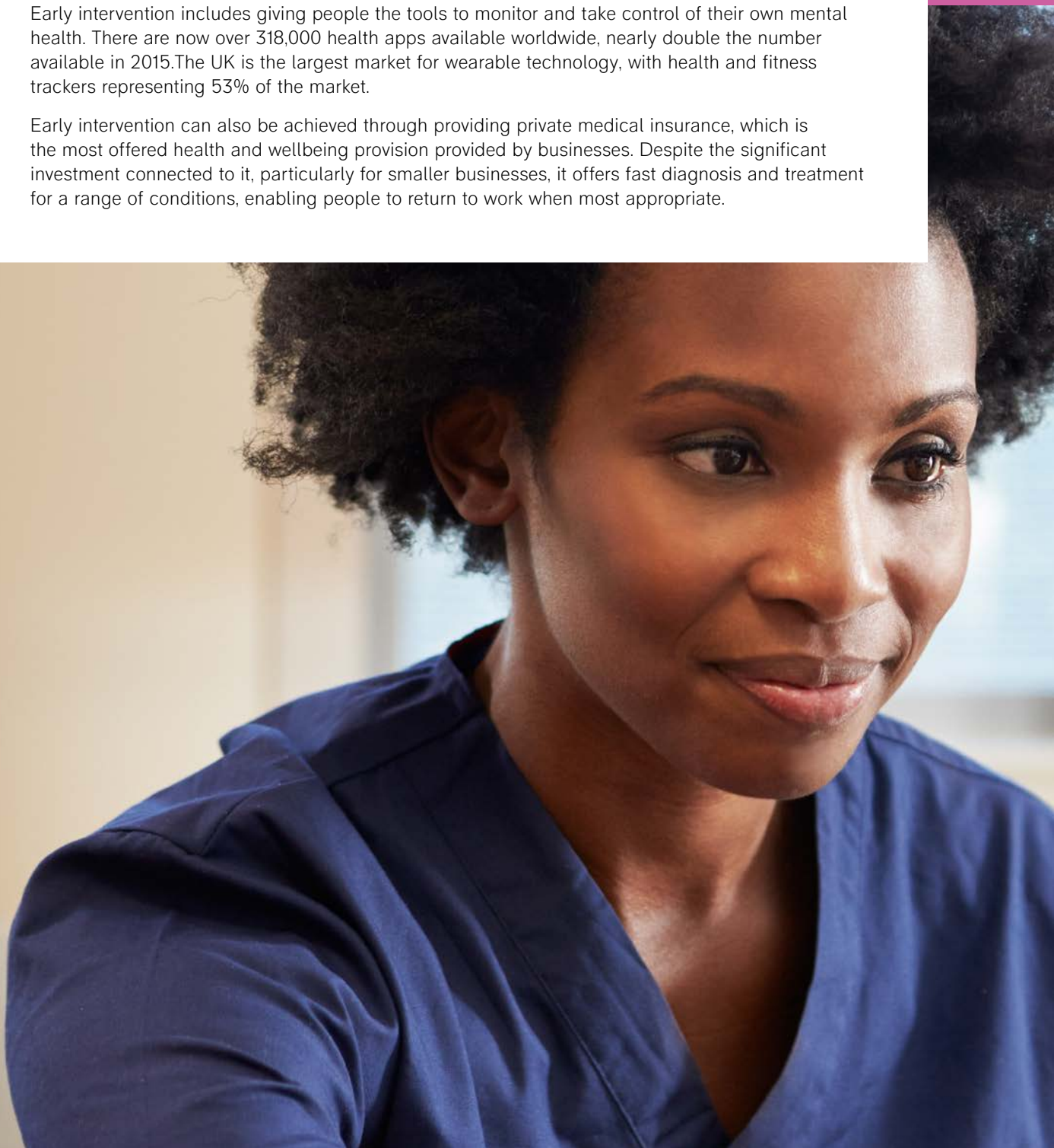
Adapt your mental health support to the changing needs of your employees by listening to them through survey results, drop-in sessions, and a wellbeing network.



2. Target action towards early interventions to enable people to perform at their best

Early intervention includes giving people the tools to monitor and take control of their own mental health. There are now over 318,000 health apps available worldwide, nearly double the number available in 2015. The UK is the largest market for wearable technology, with health and fitness trackers representing 53% of the market.

Early intervention can also be achieved through providing private medical insurance, which is the most offered health and wellbeing provision provided by businesses. Despite the significant investment connected to it, particularly for smaller businesses, it offers fast diagnosis and treatment for a range of conditions, enabling people to return to work when most appropriate.



How can employers encourage early intervention?

- Signpost employees to health apps such as Calm or Headspace or provide wearable technologies for employees to monitor their own mental health.
- Provide private medical insurance that includes access to preventative services, such as health risk assessments, which can support the identification of chronic conditions at an earlier stage.
- Make mental health support part of private medical insurance, such as 24/7 hotlines for staff or counselling.

The pandemic has shown us that the line between work and non-work-related reasons why people experience poor health is often blurred. In late November 2020 nearly one in four (24%) adults in the UK said they had feelings of loneliness in the previous two weeks. Additionally, Aviva found that more than half (55%) of adults aged between 45-54 agreed they are more worried about their financial situation now than before lockdown and 2 in 5 people (38%) are having trouble sleeping because of financial worries.

How should businesses respond?

- Help staff to build financial resilience by offering workshops, seminars or signposting to information about budgeting and planning for retirement.
- Offer benefits to boost staff's savings, improve cash-flow or manage debt through salary deduction schemes. Offer lump-sum payments for upfront costs like rent deposits and season tickets and reclaim it through monthly salary deductions to help staff manage their money.
- Provide opportunities for staff to virtually connect through team activities like quiz nights or coffee breaks.
- Encourage employees to reach out to each other, specifically to people who they know are struggling, so that they have an opportunity to talk to other people.



Key takeaways

- **Promote free mobile health apps to staff to enable them to be in control of their own health & wellbeing.**
- **Provide a comprehensive Private Medical Insurance package with access to preventative health & wellbeing support.**
- **Consider the needs of individuals inside and outside the workplace when developing your approach to health and wellbeing.**

Discover how other businesses are keeping mental health front of mind

pirkx creates a platform to provide affordable health and wellbeing benefits to all workers

pirkx is a platform designed to deliver affordable health and wellbeing benefits to the contingent workforce - contractors, the gig economy - and employees of SME businesses. Historically only employees in large companies had access to affordable health and wellbeing benefits. Everything that existed in the market (core physical and mental health services) was either expensive, hard to access or couldn't be used for a team of self-employed people. Driven by the experience of its founders, pirkx set out to find a solution.

The platform pirkx created has no complex onboarding processes. When people are on the platform or app, they have access to the full range of benefits, which currently include a 24/7 online GP, 24/7 dedicated counselling and mental health advice, access to an interactive app to improve mental health resilience, virtual gym classes, discounted gym memberships, discounted health insurances, money advice, credit score advice and debt help. Self-employed people can sign up and pay for themselves, business owners can sign up and invite their team for an affordable price. pirkx also offers complete flexibility, so people can pay monthly, quarterly or annually and cancel at any time in line with the chosen subscription period.

COVID-19 has highlighted the need for all elements of the UK workforce to be supported from a physical and mental health perspective. And it is particularly important that in an evolving world of work businesses keep up with these changes and provide relevant support to their teams.

"In a backdrop of severe uncertainty, wellbeing, including physical and mental health is key right now. We have a mission to positively impact 1m lives by 2025, by providing easy access to affordable health and wellbeing benefits to everyone, regardless of their employment status."

Stella Smith, CEO and Co-Founder, pirkx



Key takeaway

Businesses of all sizes need to find ways to support all their workers – and freelancers, contractors and self-employed are a key part of their teams too.



Portakabin introduces wellbeing app to enable employees to take control of their individual mental health and wellbeing needs

Portakabin is the UK's market leader in the manufacture and construction of modular buildings. Before the pandemic the company focused on equipping colleagues with knowledge, skills and support on how to manage their own mental health and wellbeing – a topic that Portakabin had not tackled head on before. The goal was to make people feel supported and encourage them to have open and honest wellbeing discussions with their colleagues and managers.

In 2019 Portakabin signed the Time to Change Employer Pledge. This action also saw increased internal communications and engagement to raise awareness and provide information on mental health and wellbeing such as courses, videos and online resources. Topics covered included remote working and wellbeing, the importance of looking after your own mental health and how to seek help. The company also introduced Mental Health First Aiders (MHFAs) to the business, training 50 to date. Due to the importance of the role and its impact, Portakabin is now recruiting additional MHFAs and has launched refresher training with existing MHFAs.

Portakabin has also signed up to wellbeing app, Everymind at Work, to provide information and support on a range of wellbeing related topics to its colleagues in the UK and Ireland. Everymind at Work enables users to customise the content and tools they see on the topic of mental health and wellbeing – by asking questions once signed up. Access to resources is anonymous, removing the fear of stigma. Portakabin has also run cancer awareness and other awareness raising campaigns, such as Mental Health Awareness Week and Time to Talk Day, which have been positively received.

In its latest employee engagement survey run during the pandemic, over two thirds of employees agreed they had been able to access support to maintain their health and wellbeing and over three quarters agreed their manager cared about their wellbeing.



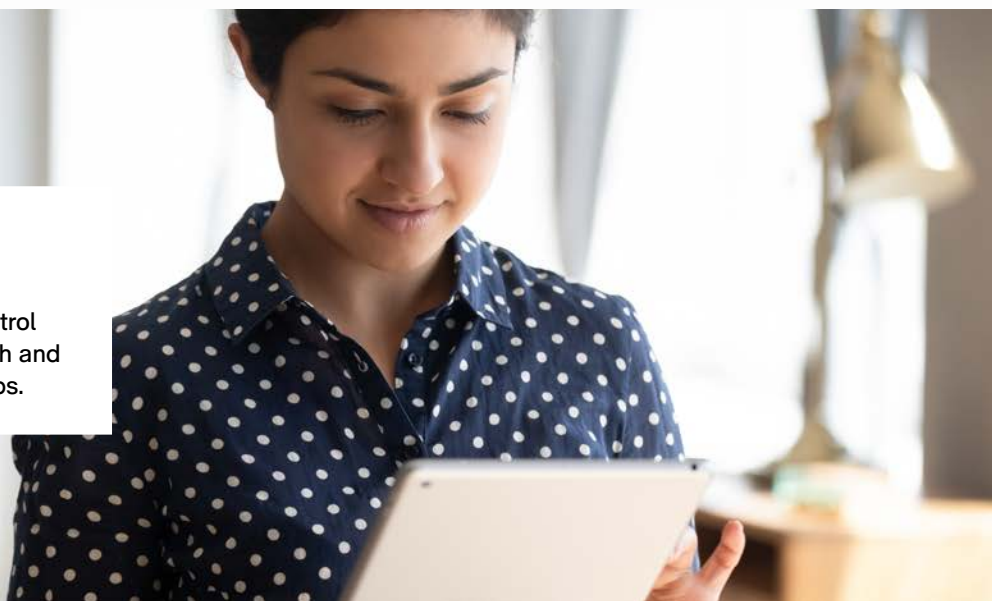
“Creating a positive wellbeing culture isn't something that happens overnight. It has been a journey that includes a holistic wellbeing strategy alongside dedicated commitment from our senior leaders. For me this is about how we build our supportive culture to ensure that every single colleague feels a strong sense of belonging and has the opportunity to contribute to our purpose and our success.”

Amanda Stainton, HR Director, Portakabin



Key takeaway

Enable your employees to take control and monitor their own mental health and wellbeing by providing relevant apps.



Close Brothers works with business to launch virtual toolkit to raise awareness and support financial wellbeing of employees during pandemic

Close Brothers provides financial education, advice and investment services to UK organisations to help improve their employees' financial wellbeing. They work with employers to design and deliver financial education programmes such as seminars, webinars and online education, together with access to financial advice and investments to support employees with planning and improving their finances.

Never has the importance of good financial education been illustrated as clearly as during the COVID-19 pandemic. Even for employees who kept their jobs, 2020 was a stressful and uncertain period due to money worries affecting their physical and mental health. Research¹ conducted by Close Brothers backs this up, showing that two in five workers (40%) have experienced increased financial anxiety in the wake of the pandemic, rising to 43% amongst women, clearly making the case for financial wellbeing in the workplace a clear win/win.

Launching financial wellbeing during a global pandemic

In recognition of their ambition to strengthen their financial wellbeing pillar to better support and improve their overall wellbeing strategy, a large FTSE 100 company wanted to educate their 2,500 UK employees to support their financial health. But due to lockdown, the programme had to launch entirely virtually.

Working with Close Brothers, they created a bespoke digital communications toolkit to raise awareness. This included an online financial wellbeing hub that hosted a suite of information and tools on financial topics such as; protection against financial abuse, budgeting and debt, pensions, retirement, tax and savings. Employees could also access an annual calendar of virtual events, view a variety of informative videos and contact a dedicated helpline for further 1-2-1 guidance.

Please be aware that the value of investments can fall as well as rise and you could get back less than invested.

Within the first week of launch, 59% of their workforce had visited the wellbeing hub, and 55% had booked onto financial wellbeing events. And 3 months after the launch 73% of people felt more confident to act to improve their financial health – up from 57% prior.

"When employers educate people on improving their financial wellbeing, they are putting them in the best possible position to make informed choices from a place of greater control, and help alleviate worry and stress."

Jeanette Makings, Head of Financial Education, Close Brothers



Key takeaway

Help your staff build financial resilience by offering a virtual hub that hosts information and tools to manage financial wellbeing.

3. Create a culture that prioritises staff mental health and wellbeing

Large-scale working from home and working flexibly during COVID-19 has shown that almost all jobs can have a degree of flexibility. It has helped people balance their home and work life and most companies are planning on embracing more flexible and remote working in the future. This will impact the way we work and work cultures in the long-term.

Building a culture in which staff's health and wellbeing is prioritised is likely to be more effective when people at every level of the business engage with it. But conversations about mental health can be difficult.



What can businesses do to help promote and support good health and wellbeing?

- Work with organisations like the charity Mind to develop the right language to talk about mental health, and provide advice, expertise and resources to confidently raise awareness and enable people to disclose and get support to improve their mental health.
- Provide on-going support by working with organisations like Mental Health First Aid (MHFA) England to provide training to colleagues who would like to be mental health first-aiders. This will increase the visibility of staff that colleagues can talk to about their mental health.

The ability to work flexibly is fundamental when people experience any form of poor health. Therefore, a transition to hybrid working after the pandemic can be positive for people with long-term health conditions.

How can businesses provide flexibility and support people with poor mental health?

- Advertise flexible jobs to demonstrate a commitment to normalising flexible working.
- Make conversations about work-life balance a key topic in regular 1-2-1 catch-ups.
- Enable people to agree informal flexibility with their line manager and arrange it to suit both them and the organisation.

However, hybrid working itself has its own advantages and challenges that employers need to consider and plan for. Read our new guide '[Adapting to hybrid working](#)' to learn more.



Key takeaways

- Work with external organisations to raise awareness of mental health and build a culture that talks about it confidently.
- Give physical and mental health equal focus and resources in health & wellbeing plans.
- Give people the option to work flexibly to help those experiencing poor health return to work.

Discover how other businesses are keeping mental health front of mind

Unilever works with Mental Health First Aid and launches Time to Talk network to destigmatise mental health issues

Unilever is a multinational consumer goods company employing around 6,000 employees in office, factory and R&D sites across the UK and Ireland.

Unilever has worked with Mental Health First Aid (MHFA) England, an organisation that trains people to support individuals experiencing mental ill health since 2013. Since then, Unilever has trained around half of its line managers and 450 employees through their Mental Health First Aid Programme.

The course teaches managers and employees to support their teams and colleagues with any mental health concerns by listening to them, normalising constructive conversations about mental health, and signposting them to the wide range of professional support tools available to Unilever employees.

In addition to MHFA training for managers, a peer-to-peer mental health support network was launched in 2017 called 'Time to Talk', which sees dedicated teams provide additional support for employees as part of their wellbeing. Each Unilever UK & Ireland site has a Time to Talk team and there are currently 270 Time to Talk volunteers available to support colleagues with any mental wellbeing concerns.

MHFA training and their Time To Talk networks are part of Unilever's wider wellbeing strategy, which aims to destigmatise mental health issues in the workplace and to ensure that no employee is ever more than one chat, one call or one click away from wellbeing support. Their Wellbeing Strategy focuses on four aspects of employee health: mental, emotional, and physical wellbeing and a sense of purpose, as they believe these key areas of wellbeing are interlinked and must be looked after simultaneously.

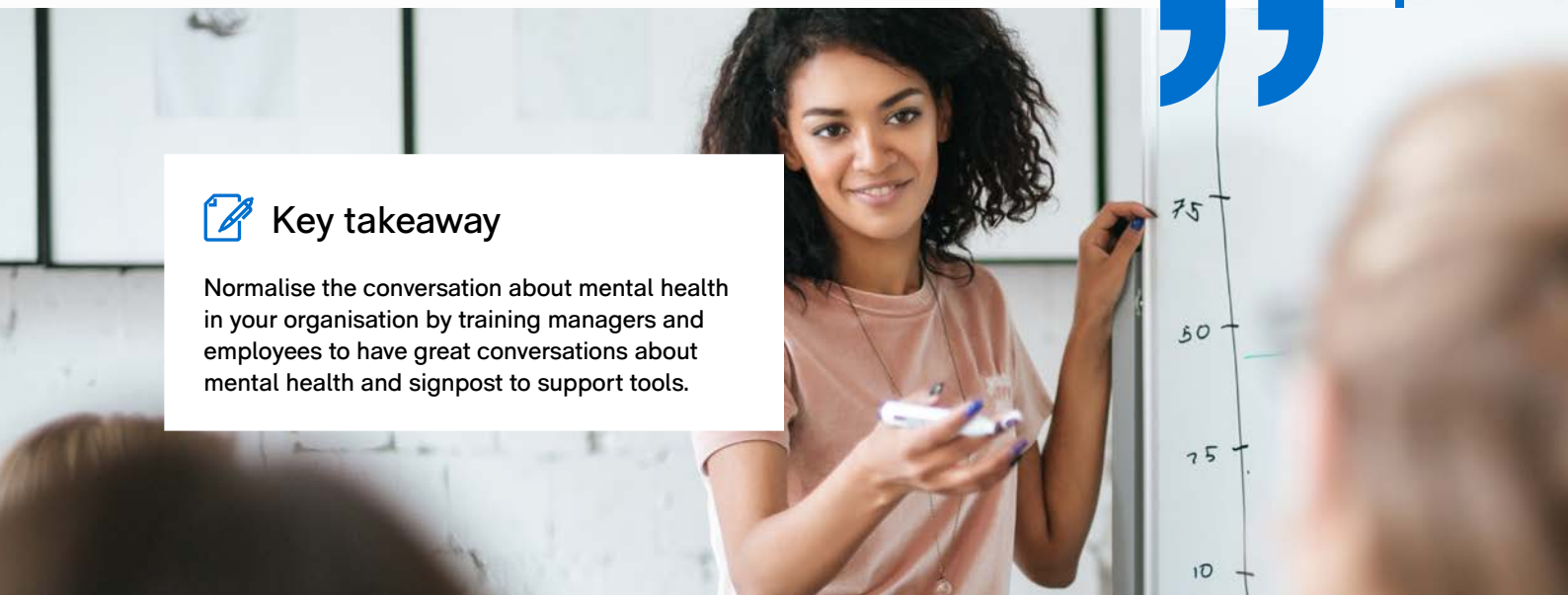
"Working with MHFA has helped us to raise the mental health literacy of our employees, created a supportive network throughout the business and enabled better confidence to talk about mental wellbeing."

Nikki Kirbell, UKI Wellbeing Lead, Unilever



Key takeaway

Normalise the conversation about mental health in your organisation by training managers and employees to have great conversations about mental health and signpost to support tools.



pladis builds its mental health and wellbeing strategy from the grass root project Positive Minds and expands it across the business

pladis is one of the world's leading snacking companies and home to brands including McVitie's, Ulker and Godiva.

The focus on Mental Health at pladis was a consequence of a tragic suicide of one of their colleagues in the UK due to depression. The fact that the colleagues working closely with this individual, day in and day out, were not aware of his depression was a huge awakening. A group of colleagues in pladis' UK & Ireland business started a grass roots project Positive Minds to raise awareness for mental health and wellbeing, with the mission to create an environment for all colleagues to be open with mental health challenges and thrive. The ambassador group soon grew to a network of over 120 ambassadors, all of which had mental health first aid training to sign post those who were suffering from mental ill health. The business also signed the Time to Change pledge and committed that all line-managers would go through Mental Health training by the end of that year.

pladis took the work of the Positive Minds ambassadors forward by developing a holistic approach to mental health including physical, social and financial wellbeing. pladis' workforce is made up of colleagues who are working remotely and a large population that are factory-based and have continued through the pandemic. Their response had to be mindful of both: for factory-based colleagues, anxiety levels were high, especially towards the beginning of the pandemic. So, the firm stressed the importance of the 24/7 Employee Assistance line, as well as Mind's 'Frontline Toolkit', which has provided guidance and resources for this group.

For remote colleagues, they have provided a guide on effective remote working and advice on how to look after their mental wellbeing, by maintaining a routine, exercising regularly and keeping in regular contact with teams. They also sent out boxes of their pladis biscuits and snacks to colleagues to help them feel connected, even though they're working remotely.

Given the widespread financial impact of the pandemic, the CEO, Salman Amin, made a Global Relief Fund available to provide financial support to any colleague worldwide that needs it which would be confidential and available to all.



"pladis colleagues were the pioneers of the Positive Minds ambassador network, formed to support colleagues across all office and factory-based locations. Since launch, it's been inspiring to see the momentum driven by this group, helping to increase awareness of mental health and build an open and inclusive culture."

David Murray, Managing Director, pladis UK and Ireland



Key takeaway

Encourage employee-led activities on the topic of mental health and wellbeing. This will help build a culture that normalises the conversation about mental health.



Channel 4 introduces meeting-free lunch breaks and Fridays to support staff's mental health in response to employee survey results

Channel 4 is a publicly-owned and commercially-funded UK public service broadcaster, with the goal to represent unheard voices and reflect the diversity of the UK.

Throughout the pandemic, staff wellbeing has been the firm's number one priority, so they started to track wellbeing through regular employee surveys. After they heard that staff were exhausted by back-to-back video calls the company decided to take measures, being particularly aware that during the winter months it was even more important that employees could get outside during the daylight hours.

To give staff a break from Teams meetings and a chance to get out for a walk or take some time for themselves the company implemented a C4 lunchtime between 12.30 – 2 pm to take normal hour-long lunch, where no meetings were held, and staff were encouraged to use the time to do something that supported their mental health and wellbeing. Channel 4 also introduced company-wide Meeting-Free Fridays where staff could have a day off from video calls and some headspace to think, breathe and catch-up. This was communicated by the CEO as part of a package of measures to support staff wellbeing and implemented with immediate effect. It was a simple but effective way to support staff through the pandemic and respond to their feedback.

The pandemic has made it more important than ever to be responsive to the needs of staff and to make wellbeing a top priority, clearly communicated by the senior leadership. It has brought challenges but also opportunities and the firm believes that a more open dialogue around mental health and wellbeing will bring long terms benefits for the business.

"As an organisation it's so important to create a culture where mental wellbeing is talked about openly so that no one suffers in silence and everyone gets the support they need."

Jonathan Allan, Chief Operating Officer, Channel 4



Key takeaway

Use employee surveys to track the sentiment and mental health & wellbeing needs of your workforce and take action in response.

The CBI introduces a wellbeing week to enable people to take care of their mental health

The CBI speaks on behalf of 190,000 businesses of all sizes and sectors. Its members employ nearly 7 million people, about one third of private sector-employees.

Their mental health strategy launched in 2018 with a focus on educating managers on how to support their team's mental health and raising awareness of the existing support on offer. The goal was to create a culture of openness and inclusion demonstrating the organisation's commitment to wellbeing. This led to the development of the wellbeing survey, training for managers and mental health first aiders and commitment to the 'Time to Change' pledge.

However, in 2020 the organisation understood that it had to do more – the way of working had changed, and many people were dealing with isolation, bereavement, workload, childcare, and the disproportionate impact that COVID-19 has on many communities. It also meant that the CBI had to take into consideration the killing of George Floyd and the impact on ethnic minority employees' mental health.

The organisation decided to run wellbeing surveys and focused on understanding and supporting the different needs of different groups in the organisation by listening to employee resource groups. The CBI introduced a wellbeing day and then created a wellbeing week, providing the opportunity for colleagues to practice mindfulness, yoga, photography and baking – to take a break from work. They also introduced two dedicated mental health first aiders to support the management board. The CBI also created a signposting tool for mental health first aiders – depending on whether an employee says their mental health was poor, fair, good, or above, there is dedicated support at each level.

As a result, 96.2% of staff in the 2020 D&I survey said that the CBI is a 'very' or 'somewhat' welcoming place for people with mental health conditions. 92% said that they were aware of the resources available to them and 80% believed that their manager supported their mental health.

However, the organisation understands it must continue to build on its existing work especially because the true and long-term impact of the pandemic on people's mental health and wellbeing is still to be seen.



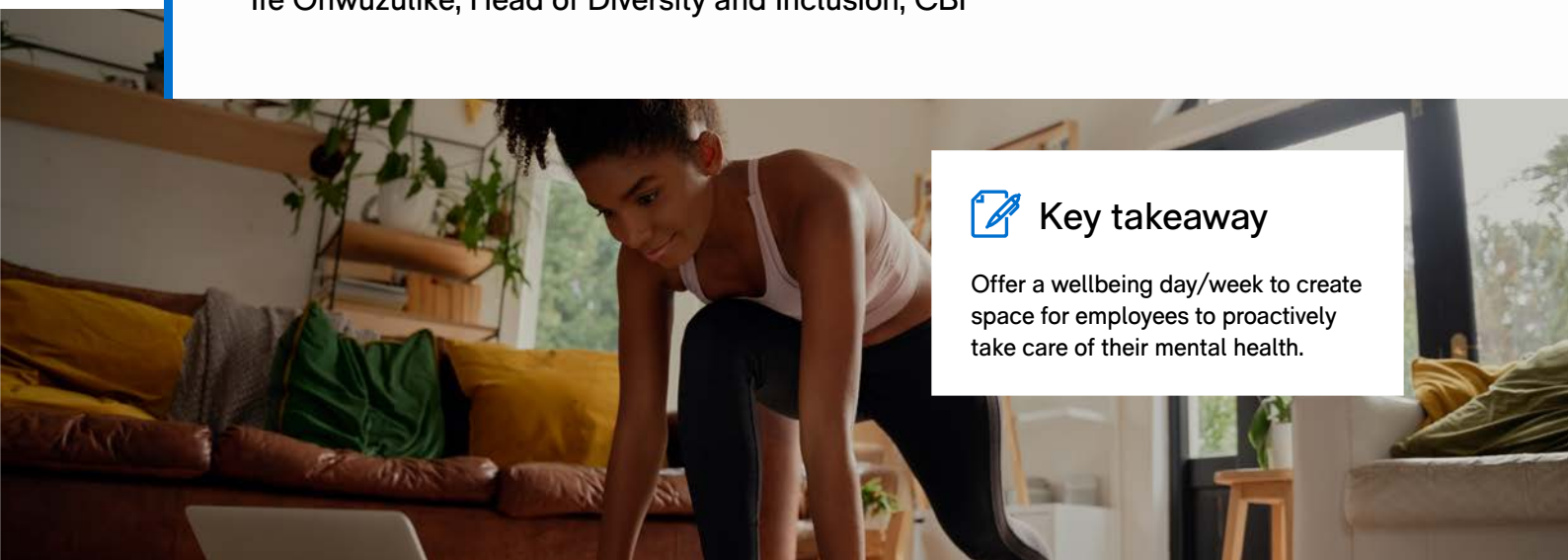
"The year 2020 has emphasised the importance of businesses playing an active role in supporting the mental health and wellbeing of their employees. And taking no action could have a significant impact in the years to come not just on the business but on the individuals too. To build a more diverse and inclusive culture we need to continue to prioritise and normalise talking about mental health and wellbeing."

Ife Onwuzulike, Head of Diversity and Inclusion, CBI



Key takeaway

Offer a wellbeing day/week to create space for employees to proactively take care of their mental health.



Useful resources for your business

To help people in these challenging times companies need to take action and support their employees' mental health. Join those already proactively working on their mental health and wellbeing strategy. If you'd like to find out more information, you can:

1. Discover useful CBI resources

- Eager to learn more about supporting your employees' mental health and wellbeing? Our factsheets on **mental health and wellbeing in a crisis** and **supporting employees to work from home** are filled with up-to-date insight, information and advice.
- From my desk to yours: read AXA Health's **top tips for mental health and resilience** throughout the pandemic and Facebook's case study on **prioritising your consumers' mental health**.
- **Visit My CBI**: the CBI's online hub is your go-to place for information on all strands of diversity and inclusion, including mental health and wellbeing, and is updated regularly. Visit the **Diversity & Inclusion page** on Ideas Forum for more inspiration and access to our gender and ethnicity pay gap guides: **Mind the Gap** and **Bridge the Gap**.

2. Explore the topic further using external resources

- **Mind** is a charity providing advice and support to everyone facing a mental health problem.
- **City Mental Health Alliance** is a not-for-profit membership organisation that is working together with mental health experts and partner organisations to provide resources, events and training to support employees' mental health.
- **Mental Health at Work** is a website curated by Mind and funded by the Royal Foundation to provide information and resources to businesses on how they can support their employees' mental health.

Produced by Anna Koch and the **People and Skills** team
To share your views on this topic or ask us a question, contact:



Anna Koch
Senior Policy Adviser
anna.koch@cbi.org.uk