



The Prince's  
Responsible  
Business Network



Public Health  
England

Protecting and improving  
the nation's health



Summary Toolkit

# HEALTH AND WELLBEING AT WORK

2021

Taking a whole person, whole  
organisation approach to embedding  
health and wellbeing



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### **PUBLIC HEALTH ENGLAND AND BUSINESS IN THE COMMUNITY SUMMARY EMPLOYER TOOLKIT – TAKING A WHOLE PERSON, WHOLE ORGANISATION APPROACH TO EMBEDDING HEALTH AND WELLBEING**

**Professor John Newton, Director of Health Improvement, Public Health England (PHE)**

**Louise Aston, Wellbeing Director, Business in the Community (BITC)**

Protecting and improving the health and wellbeing of employees is critical to the health and economic wellbeing of our population, especially as the impact of COVID-19 becomes more apparent.

Working adults spend on average one-third of their waking hours at work, so naturally, the workplace is a key setting to improve population health. Evidence shows that healthy employees drive a healthy business through reduced sickness absence, less turnover and increased productivity. BITC is the oldest and largest business-led membership organisation dedicated to responsible business. The aim of BITC's wellbeing campaign is to create environments where individuals and organisations can be their best.

Over the last couple of years, PHE in collaboration with BITC, has developed a suite of eight interconnected employer toolkits on [Mental health](#), [Musculoskeletal health](#), [Suicide prevention and postvention](#), [Sleep and recovery](#), [Drugs, alcohol and tobacco](#), [Physical activity](#), [Healthy eating and healthier weight](#) and [Domestic abuse](#). The suite consolidates the best evidence, employer practice and freely available resources and takes a whole person, whole system approach. Mental health is the common theme that runs throughout.

We have produced this toolkit in response to the Work Foundation's evaluation<sup>1</sup> of our suite of employer toolkits, which clearly showed that businesses wanted a general, overarching toolkit to draw out the common themes across the suite.

This toolkit provides practical, evidence-based guidance on how employers can support their employees to improve the health of their workforce.

We hope that employers can use this overarching health and wellbeing toolkit, alongside the suite of PHE-BITC employer toolkits, and that it provides real benefit to the health of their staff.



**Professor John Newton,  
Director of Health Improvement, Public Health England**



**Louise Aston,  
Wellbeing Director, Business in the Community**

Healthy, happy and engaged people are a cornerstone for running a successful organisation because business is at its best when people are at their best.

There is both a compelling business case and social case for putting the health and wellbeing of your people first. That is why BITC has partnered with PHE to produce a suite of toolkits for employers to take a whole person approach across a range of interconnecting health and wellbeing issues. Mental health is the common strand that runs throughout.

Health and wellbeing is a crowded and confusing marketplace so we have used the best evidence, best freely available resources and exemplar case studies. We have condensed the key elements, providing a shorter one-stop-shop for information, inspiration and support which you can use as a first point of reference on key actions to support the health and wellbeing of your employees. We would encourage you to take a look at the detailed toolkits for more comprehensive information and advice on specific topics; there are links to each of them further down in this section.

### **WHY IS THE HEALTH AND WELLBEING OF EMPLOYEES SO IMPORTANT?**

Good health and wellbeing are essential to successful, sustainable workplaces. The economic cost of ill health on the UK's economy is estimated at £100 billion each year<sup>2</sup>.

As an employer, you have a responsibility to support the health and wellbeing of your staff and we all want to see more people leading healthy lives and achieving their full potential. Supporting employee health and wellbeing is responsible business practice which will benefit you as an employer. Thriving people will result in a thriving business which, in turn, will support thriving communities. Put simply, good employee health and wellbeing is good for business.

### **COVID-19**

The full longer-term effects on health and wellbeing from COVID-19 cannot be known at this point but awareness of how reliant business is on a healthy workforce means wellbeing has shot up the boardroom agenda.

Although these toolkits were written before the pandemic, we hope that they will enable business to do more on preventing problems from arising in the first place and to embed health and wellbeing into organisational culture.



## WELCOME AND INTRODUCTION

### WHAT ROLE CAN YOU PLAY?

You can help your employees to thrive by taking a whole person, whole organisation approach to supporting health and wellbeing. That means taking steps to support mental and physical health equally and creating an inclusive and supportive workplace.

The toolkits provide a comprehensive set of resources, information and support for employers of all sizes and sectors, with case studies of how others have supported their employees across the range of issues. Built on the latest policy, guidance and research, such as the [Thriving At Work Review](#), the toolkits help you put in place the right support across three key areas:

- 1. Prevention** – what you can do to reduce the likelihood of employees being affected by health and wellbeing issues
- 2. Early intervention** – the action you can take to reduce their impact
- 3. Active rehabilitation** – what you can do to help your employees recover, return to work and hopefully thrive

Here, we give you an overview of the detailed toolkits available for the following topics:

- [Mental health](#)
- [Musculoskeletal health](#)
- [Physical activity, healthy eating and healthier weight](#)
- [Drugs, alcohol and tobacco](#)
- [Sleep and recovery](#)
- [Suicide prevention](#) and [postvention](#)
- [Domestic abuse](#)

The toolkit suite can be used alongside [BITC's Workwell model](#) which provides a framework for embedding health and wellbeing into organisational culture.

Our recommended approach for employers is to conduct an assessment to understand the health and wellbeing needs of their staff, develop a strategy and action plan that is informed by need and good practice, implement the plan and then evaluate. Employers can use PHE's [Workplace Health Needs Assessment Tool](#) to determine the health and wellbeing needs of specific groups so that any interventions planned can address those identified needs. Employers can then use the [Developing and Evaluating Workplace Health Interventions Toolkit](#) to develop and evaluate workplace health strategies.

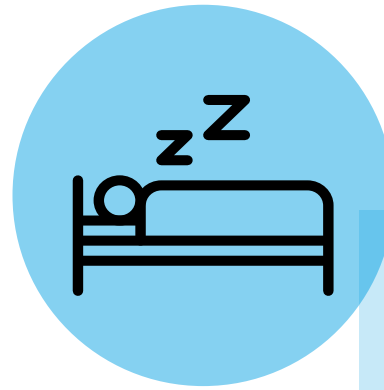
***“We are really proud of the toolkits that BITC has developed in partnership with Public Health England over the last few years. They’ve made a real contribution to helping employers of all types understand the importance and responsibility of supporting and enhancing their employees’ health and wellbeing, and the benefits for them of doing so. There is so much in the toolkits that is valuable, and I really hope this overarching guide to all that great insight and advice can help even more employers create healthier, happier workplaces.”***

**David Oldfield, Chair of BITC's Wellbeing Leadership Team and Group Director, Commercial Banking, Lloyds Banking Group**





# HEALTH AND WELLBEING MATTERS



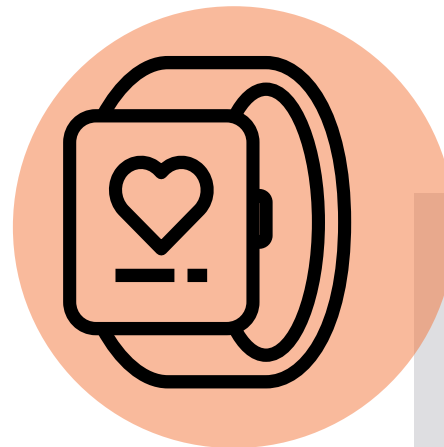
Adults who sleep less than 6 hours a night have a 13% higher mortality risk than adults who sleep at least 7 hours<sup>5</sup>.



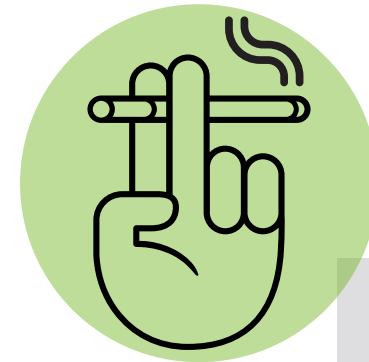
In 2018, more than 27.8 million working days were lost due to musculoskeletal (MSK) conditions<sup>7</sup>.



Suicide is the leading cause of death among young people aged 20 to 34<sup>3</sup>. Men are three times as likely as women to die as a result of suicide<sup>4</sup>. But the female suicide rate in England is at its highest since 2005.



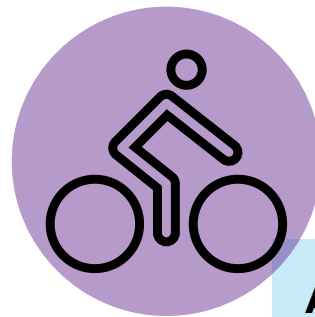
Employees who are in good health are less likely to need time off work and are likely to be more productive.



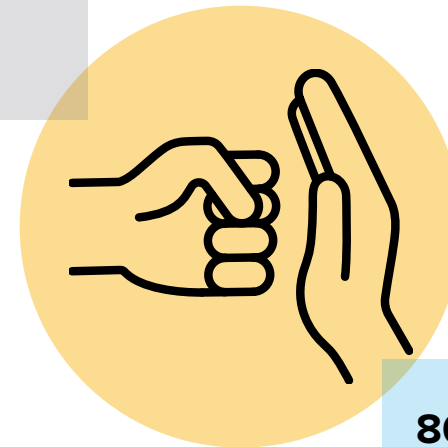
Smoking is the leading cause of preventable illness and premature death, killing around 78,000 people in England each year<sup>8</sup>.



Prevention and early intervention are the most effective ways to support workforce mental health, rather than tackling problems after they arise.



Around a quarter of all adults in England are likely to be damaging their health through a lack of physical activity<sup>6</sup>.



86% of HR leads agree that employers have a duty of care to provide support to employees on the issue of domestic abuse<sup>9</sup>.

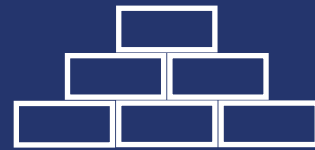
Our mental health affects how we feel about our jobs, how well we perform and how well we interact with colleagues, customers and clients. With one in six people experiencing mental health problems in any given week<sup>10</sup>, mental health is an essential business concern and psychological health and safety should be positioned equally and on a par with physical health.

# Actions for employers for good mental health in the workplace



## 1. Make a commitment to mental health:

- Ensure senior level buy-in
- Be visible to employees (e.g. sign up to the [Mental Health at Work Commitment](#))
- Have a senior Mental Health Champion
- Engage and consult employees about the approach



## 2. Build your approach:

- Understand the legal situation
- Assess employee needs
- Update policies, make plans to improve, and take action
- Co-produce a plan with employees



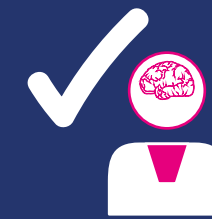
## 3. Create a positive culture:

- Support and value employees
- Promote healthy behaviour at work
- Reduce stress linked to work using HSE Stress Standards
- Review (and redesign if necessary) job roles
- Support social activities
- Communicate about wellbeing



## 4. Provide support and training:

- Share information freely
- Recognise importance of line managers
- Provide line manager training
- Build into induction
- Encourage dialogue at performance reviews



## 5. Manage mental health:

- Proactively tackle the stigma
- Openly discuss mental health
- Support employees with reducing stress (e.g. adopt HSE management standards)
- Signpost all information



## 6. Provide the right support:

- Train managers to be confident with sensitive conversations
- Be ready to make reasonable adjustments
- Provide a confidential support service



## 7. Help people to recover:

- Support employees back to work
- Make adjustments
- Use Fit for Work and Access to Work initiatives



## 8. Go further:

- Regularly evaluate your approach
- Share best practice with other employers

(Source: Mental health toolkit for employers)

## FOCUS ON MENTAL HEALTH

### Implement the recommendations from [Thriving at Work 2017](#)

The government's review, Thriving at Work, recommends that all employers, regardless of workplace type, industry or size, adopt the mental health core standards. These core standards are:

1. Producing, implementing and communicating a mental health at work plan
2. Developing mental health awareness among employees
3. Encouraging open conversations about mental health and the support available when employees are struggling
4. Providing your employees with good working conditions
5. Promoting effective people management
6. Routinely monitoring employee mental health and wellbeing

It also recommends four enhanced standards for larger employers and the public sector. These include:

7. Increasing transparency and accountability through internal and external reporting
8. Demonstrating accountability by nominating a health and wellbeing lead at Board or Senior Leadership level
9. Ensuring provision of tailored in-house mental health support
10. Signposting to clinical help

You may want to make a commitment to this by signing up to the [Mental Health at Work Commitment](#).

### Promote [Every Mind Matters](#)

Every Mind Matters is a set of resources that can help your employees discover simple steps to achieve good mental health in their work and personal lives. It's full of expert advice and practical tips. It also has a free NHS-approved online tool which provides users with an action plan to help them deal with stress, boost their mood, improve their sleep and help them feel more in control.

### MENTAL HEALTH AND OTHER ASPECTS OF HEALTH AND WELLBEING

Our physical and mental health are intertwined, so taking care of one will affect the other.

The chronic and disabling pain of musculoskeletal problems can put a real strain on mental health, so find out how you can support your employees [here](#).

Eating well and getting more active can play an important role in combatting mental health problems, so look at how you can encourage both in our [dedicated toolkit](#).

How we [sleep](#) and our use of [alcohol, drugs and tobacco](#) also impact on mental health and general wellbeing, so find out how you can support your employees more in these areas.

Experiencing domestic abuse may profoundly affect people's mental health. Find out what you can do to tackle the issue and provide support in [this toolkit](#).

Suicide is devastating and mental health problems are often a contributory factor. It also has an impact on friends, family and work colleagues. That's why it is crucial to find out more about what you can do as an employer to [prevent suicide](#) and deal with [its impact](#).

***“Health and wellbeing are key strands of responsible business. Doing the right thing for your employees is also doing the right thing for your business. Business is at its best when people are at their best. Let's ensure people can bring their whole selves to work and thrive.”***

**Louise Aston, Wellbeing Director,  
Business in the Community**



***“We had an employee that was suffering from depression and while he was off work he became increasingly anxious about returning to us as he felt like he had let his colleagues down. We provided reassurance and support by producing a tailored ‘back to work’ plan and spoke to him openly and regularly to ensure he felt confident about getting back into work.”***

**Lee Freeman, Managing Director,  
Public Sewer Services**



## FOCUS ON MAINTAINING AND IMPROVING MUSCULOSKELETAL HEALTH

Good musculoskeletal (MSK) health is integral to a full working life. It helps mobility and dexterity, balance and co-ordination, and contributes to muscular strength and endurance. All of these factors are important in the workplace. It also enables us to stay physically and mentally fit and reduce the occurrence of other health problems. Poor MSK health affects all industries and business sectors, from construction to banking.

Problems such as back, shoulder and knee pain are the leading cause of working days lost in the UK – an estimated 27.8 million days a year are lost due to these problems.<sup>7</sup> Taking a preventative approach to MSK health is the best approach to maintaining the overall health of your workforce.

There are four core steps you can take to support better MSK health among your employees:

- 1. Understanding MSK health** - MSK conditions affect individuals by causing pain, stiffness and limitation of movement. These conditions become more common as people age when many may face not just these issues but other health problems associated with ageing. Recognising the impact of these issues is the first step, followed by measuring the extent and impact of these MSK conditions on your employees. Once you understand the issue and how it affects your employees, you can build an approach to support them.
- 2. Maintaining MSK health** – assess the risks to MSK health in your workplace and take steps to minimise those risks. Encourage and support staff to self-manage but also be aware of and promote external support and resources they can access. Most importantly, review individual needs and make reasonable adjustments and adaptations to their work, while more generally promoting and supporting better physical and mental health.
- 3. Knowledge and training** – incorporate training on MSK health into your health and wellbeing strategy and make sure it is implemented. Get feedback from employees and line managers on

the training and make sure they know how to access further support and information on MSK health.

- 4. Going further** – become an ambassador for good MSK health by sharing the successes and learnings from your approach with other businesses, particularly those in your supply chain as well as other businesses or organisations in your sector.

### THE IMPACT OF MSK HEALTH ON OTHER ASPECTS OF HEALTH AND WELLBEING

MSK health and mental ill health are the greatest causes of work loss and are often interrelated. Chronic, disabling pain and ongoing MSK problems can be associated with depression and/or stress, leading to increased absence from work. Taking a whole-person approach to health and wellbeing for your employees will help you recognise if MSK problems are affecting people's mental health. You'll find guidance on providing the right support in the [mental health toolkit](#).

A lack of physical activity significantly raises the risk of developing MSK conditions, and those problems can themselves be a barrier to people being more physically active. There are many ways you can help employees to be more active, from encouraging screen breaks to providing secure bike racks, from stand-up desks to changing facilities for people who can cycle to work. Evidence shows that a workplace's culture is the most important factor in the success of a physical activity promotion programme. You can find out more about building a supportive culture in [the full toolkit](#).

*“Pretty much any adult you speak to has experienced a musculoskeletal problem some time in their life; whether it be a sports injury, back pain from working in the garden, a ‘touch of arthritis’ or a ‘dodgy knee’. Perhaps it is because these problems are so ubiquitous that they are not given the attention they deserve.”*

Jo Erwin, Bone & Joint Research Office





## FOCUS ON PHYSICAL ACTIVITY, HEALTHY EATING AND HEALTHIER WEIGHT

Physical activity is crucial to your employees' health and wellbeing, but not enough people are currently as active as they should be. Around a third of adults are likely to be damaging their health through a lack of physical activity<sup>11</sup>.

Eating a healthy, balanced diet is also a very important aspect of health and wellbeing. Healthy eating can reduce the risk of chronic diseases such as heart disease, stroke and some cancers<sup>12</sup>.

Both of these areas not only have an impact on the health and wellbeing of employees but can also increase costs to your business. Employees who are in good health are less likely to need time off work and are likely to be more productive, so there's a strong incentive to support them to eat well and get more active.

Personal responsibility is important, but you can make positive changes in the workplace that can help employees make healthier choices. It can take time to change habits that have been formed over a lifetime, so plan and prepare for the long haul. Small, incremental changes in physical activity and what you eat and drink can make a big, positive difference over time.

There are some simple steps you can take to help your employees:

- 1. Provide healthier food and drink options and information** - the [Eatwell guide](#) is an excellent introduction to healthy eating.
- 2. Create more opportunities and incentives to be physically active** – maximise ideas for how to encourage more physical activity through existing initiatives such as [Cyclescheme](#).
- 3. Help your staff access appropriate support** – for example, signposting to the [Change4Life](#) programme, along with lots of other sources of support and information in the [full toolkit](#).
- 4. Provide a supportive environment for employees and reduce stigma** – involve them in developing your approach in this area so they feel empowered and motivated to take action.

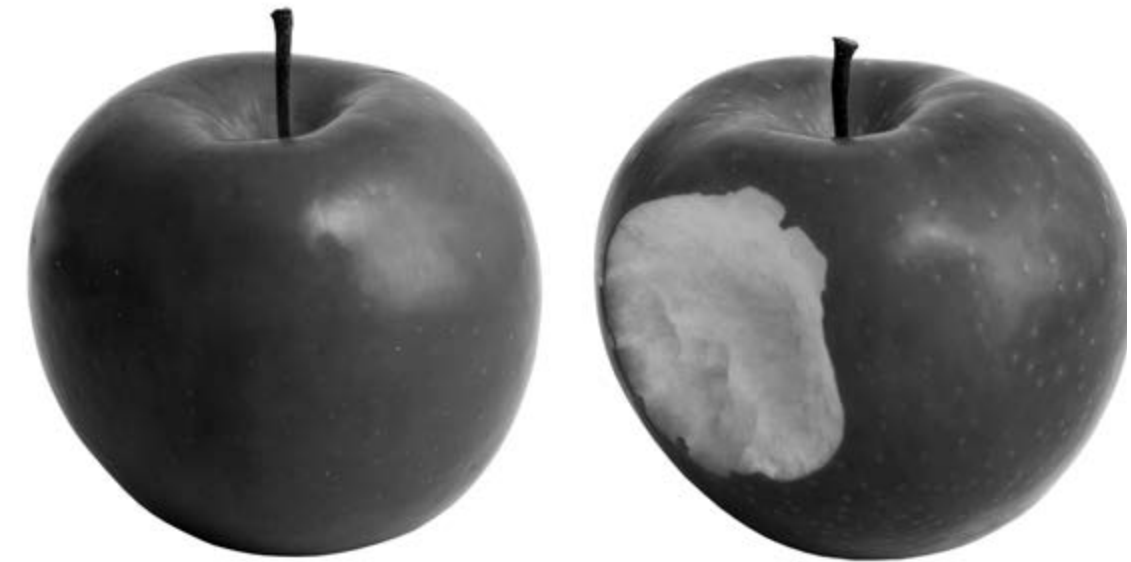
**5. Encourage senior staff** and line managers to lead by example.

**6. Make employees aware of information, support and programmes** like [Better Health](#) which provides support with losing weight and getting more active. You'll find a wide range of other trusted sources of information in the [full toolkit](#).

### THE RELATIONSHIP WITH OTHER ASPECTS OF HEALTH AND WELLBEING

Being active, eating healthily and maintaining a healthier weight are really important for other aspects of health and wellbeing covered by some of our other toolkits:

- Employee mental health can be significantly boosted by promoting a positive working culture and supporting people to be more active and to eat healthily. You can find out more about creating that culture in our [Mental Health Toolkit](#).
- People dealing with MSK problems like backpain may need extra support to be active. You'll find some useful guidance on this in the Managing MSK section of [our toolkit](#).
- Sleep, smoking, consuming drugs or alcohol, will all have a significant impact on being active and eating healthily. It's important to support your staff to enjoy a healthier lifestyle in those areas as it will make being more active and eating healthily easier and more impactful. We have a whole [toolkit on sleep](#), and you can find information on your responsibilities and ways of supporting employees in relation to drugs, alcohol and smoking in another [toolkit](#).



***“We know that being physically well has a huge influence on making sure we stay mentally well. I believe we should think about a ‘mental health five-a-day’ and focus on making positive changes through wellbeing at work to achieve this. For example, at Legal & General we have introduced free healthy breakfasts and installed StepJockey in our offices to encourage employees to take the stairs rather than the lift. As employers we should all be striving to build a holistic culture of mental and physical wellbeing and a circle of continuous improvement.”***

**Nigel Wilson**  
Chief Executive, Legal and General

## FOCUS ON DRUGS, ALCOHOL AND SMOKING

The misuse of drugs, risky drinking and ill-health caused by smoking, make a considerable contribution to workplace absence. This has a significant cost to business and the economy. For example, the economic burden of alcohol is estimated to cost up to 2.7% of annual GDP in the UK<sup>13</sup>.

So, supporting your staff to stop smoking and make healthier choices around alcohol and drugs is really important, for them and for you. Staff who misuse drugs and/or consume alcohol at levels above the guidelines for low-risk drinking are more likely to take time off, display poor performance and increase the risk of accidents. Staff who smoke are 33% more likely to be absent from work than non-smokers<sup>14</sup>. There is a responsibility for employers to understand the law, particularly in relation to drugs and tobacco, but also in relation to alcohol.

So, here are nine steps for supporting employees in this area:

- 1. Make a commitment** – have visible and endorsed policies on alcohol, drugs and tobacco as part of a wider commitment to employee health and wellbeing.
- 2. Build your approach** – understand the law, assess the needs of your employees and involve them in developing your approach.
- 3. Create a positive culture** – encourage openness around the issues, encourage senior leaders to be role models for a responsible approach, create opportunities for people to be active and spend time together in healthy environments.
- 4. Support and training** – train line managers on how to support people dealing with alcohol or drugs issues and how to encourage being more active and healthy; signpost useful guidance and information as well as sources for support outside the workplace. Offer advice, guidance and support to employees who smoke to help them stop.
- 5. Provide the right support** – train and support managers to spot potential alcohol or drugs

problems, be flexible to support people experiencing difficulties and give employees time off without penalty to get the external help and support they need. Allow staff to attend local stop-smoking services during working hours without loss of pay.

- 6. Help people to recover** – treat recovery as a health issue. Support employees while they are off dealing with an issue, make adjustments to help them get back into work and signpost support available through such government initiatives as Fit for Work and Access to Work.
- 7. Support people who smoke to quit and stay smoke-free** – provide information on the benefits of stopping smoking and the range of support available.
- 8. Go further** – make it part of staff surveys, evaluate the approach being taken and seek inspiration and learning from the experiences of other employers. Track the impact that activity in this area is having on absenteeism, staff morale and productivity and use that information to guide the development of the support you provide.
- 9. Know the law** - Drugs, alcohol and tobacco policy at work is covered by numerous pieces of legislation, which impose duties at corporate and often individual levels. You can read about the relevant legislation across all three areas in the [full toolkit](#).

### THE IMPACT ON OTHER ASPECTS OF HEALTH AND WELLBEING

Drug misuse, risky drinking and smoking can have a profound impact on health and wellbeing, particularly in terms of being active, disrupting sleep and affecting people's mental health. Issues with drugs and alcohol can be both a contributory cause of, and an effect of, physical and mental health problems. Use our toolkits on [mental health](#), [sleep](#) and [physical activity](#) so you can assess whether drugs, alcohol and smoking are having an impact and what you can do to support your employees.

***“Supporting employees to have healthy behaviours around alcohol and other drugs is a two-sided coin. It’s not just about addressing substance misuse that may be a result of factors outside the workplace – it’s also about ensuring the workplace environment itself does not serve to stimulate harmful substance misuse.”***

**Ed Morrow, External Affairs Manager, Royal Society for Public Health**

***“I worked with the employees to focus on the positives around stopping smoking and they came up with their own plan for how they would quit. This might for example mean identifying their habits and associations around smoking and how can they tackle them.”***

**Julie Harrington, Smoking Cessation Lead, Bath and North East Somerset Community Health and Care Services on the support she provided to Integrity Print**

***“We developed a UK Drugs and Alcohol Policy and Procedure, to enhance our wellbeing support and encourage everyone to make positive choices, ensuring we provide a safer place to work.”***

**Anna Rowland, Physical Wellbeing Advisor, National Grid**

**Read more about how National Grid's work to support employees in this area in the [full toolkit](#).**

## FOCUS ON SLEEP AND RECOVERY

We spend about a third of our lives asleep and the multiple risks of sleep deprivation are well documented. 200,000 working days are lost in the UK every year to insufficient sleep. Sleep is essential for good health and wellbeing. It is also essential for maintaining levels of cognitive skills such as speech, memory and innovative and flexible thinking. Lack of sleep has a profound impact on our brain's ability to function. The cumulative impact of successive nights of poor sleep is significant and there is a strong relationship between sleep and physical and mental health. These issues are also interrelated – physical and mental health problems can lead to poor sleep, and poor sleep can lead to other health issues. Here, recovery means recuperation following a period of sleep deprivation or disruption.

There are three main ways you can support your employees to enjoy better sleep:

- 1. Be prepared** – recognise the importance of good sleep, tell your employees that you recognise it and ask them about any problems they have with sleep and the impact it has on them as employees.
- 2. Encourage better sleep and recovery** – identify the threats to good sleep and the problems your employees face; assess the workplace for good lighting and ventilation; signpost line managers to the support and information available; identify external resources you can use to support sleep and recovery among your employees.
- 3. Provide knowledge and training** – Include training, information and guidance on sleep and recovery for managers and employees in your health and wellbeing strategy, then make sure it's implemented.

### THE IMPACT OF SLEEP ON OTHER ASPECTS OF HEALTH AND WELLBEING

- Regular physical activity can positively affect sleep and it is one of the key factors for a good night's rest. You can see more of those factors in the [full toolkit](#) and get inspiration for supporting your employees to be more physically active [here](#).
- Chronic pain or discomfort can also result in employees becoming sleep deprived, so supporting those with issues like back pain can make a real difference. You'll find ways of supporting employees dealing with musculoskeletal issues like back pain in [this toolkit](#).
- Good sleep is also a critical factor in maintaining and improving employee mental health. Living with a mental health problem can affect how well you sleep and poor sleep can have a negative impact on mental health. Our [mental health toolkit](#) provides straightforward advice and actions on how you can help.
- Sleep will also be affected by issues outside the workplace, such as domestic abuse. We have put together a [toolkit](#) to help employees provide better support in that area.

***“These days, poor sleep has an impact across society, affecting millions of people. Stress at work, or poor job design, can cause sleep deprivation or affect the quality of sleep. And because people spend so much time at work, the workplace is an ideal place to begin to offer the support they need to address these issues.”***

**Peter Simpson, Chief Executive Officer, Anglian Water**

***“You wouldn't expect our employees to be at risk of sleep deprivation. We don't have shift workers as such and many of our staff work in branches, which keep regular office hours. But when we started talking about sleep as part of our approach to health and wellbeing at work, we quickly realised how important sleep is as an issue.”***

**Sarah Moore, Wellbeing Lead, Yorkshire Building Society**

Find out more on page 50 [here](#) about what Yorkshire Building Society did when it woke up to the problem of sleep for some of its employees.



## FOCUS ON SUICIDE

More than 5,000 people in England took their own lives in 2018. Suicide is now the main cause of death for men under 50. Although women are less likely to die by suicide than men, the rate of female suicide is at its highest since 2005.

You have a crucial role to play in prevention and in supporting employees in the aftermath of a suicide. People in work spend about one-third of their lives at their place of employment. Colleagues and line managers can provide an important social and emotional support network, built on shared experiences. You are in a unique position to help colleagues understand the importance of wellbeing and good mental health, and the knowledge of how to keep safe and well as well as how to spot the signs of being unwell.

This is a complex and difficult issue. We strongly recommend going through the full toolkits on both prevention and what to do in the event of a suicide. However, as an introduction, we have pulled out the core points to consider for each area.

### REDUCING THE RISK OF SUICIDE – MEASURES YOU CAN TAKE:

- 1. Create a work environment that values its employees and their families**, and promotes respect, open communication, a sense of belonging, emotional wellbeing, and encourages people to seek help when they need it and to support each other.
- 2. Provide education and training on mental health**, including suicide awareness, for all employees, especially line managers.
- 3. Offer internal communications and induction programmes** that ensure employees are aware of resources and support available and that these are accessible to everyone.
- 4. Create clear policies, procedures and practical guidance** to help employees who need support around issues, including mental health, long-term health, domestic violence and financial insecurity.

**5. Provide specialised suicide awareness and prevention training** for the workplace’s Employee Assistance Programme (EAP) providers and/or HR staff.

**6. Signpost helplines with national reach and issue focus** across the workplace, such as Samaritans and national domestic violence helplines.

### CRISIS MANAGEMENT IN THE EVENT OF A SUICIDE – WHAT YOU CAN PUT IN PLACE:

#### 1. Be prepared

- Provide mental health training for line managers
- Recognise and assess the risk
- Form a postvention committee (postvention is support provided to the bereaved after a suicide and can include colleagues as well as friends and family)
- Have a plan for dealing with suicide and implement it
- Communicate openly and directly

#### 2. When suicide happens

- Support those affected
- Be empathetic when speaking to the family
- Reduce the risk of contagion
- Be aware of any Coroner’s inquest

#### 3. Grieving, post-traumatic phase

- Support the healing and recovery process
- Deal with the unanswerable questions
- Support and promote healthy grieving
- Help things get back to “normal”
- Reinforce and build trust in organisational leadership
- Be thoughtful regarding memorials and related events

#### 4. Legacy phase

- Prepare for reactions to anniversaries, events and milestones

#### 5. Reflecting and acting

- Create the time and opportunity to reflect
- Take further action

### SUICIDE AND OTHER ASPECTS OF HEALTH AND WELLBEING

Suicide is a complex issue and there can be many contributory factors and circumstances, often related to issues like mental health, chronic pain and drugs or alcohol dependency. We strongly recommend you develop a holistic approach to improving employee mental health and wellbeing; one which incorporates elements from all the toolkits we have covered here.

*“Suicide is a difficult subject to talk about. Taking positive and practical steps to support employees is important and can make a real difference in saving lives.”*

**Dr Steve Boorman, Director of Employee Health, Empactis**

*“One of my team took his own life earlier this year. It had, and still does have, a huge impact on us and I feel I have a responsibility to address the stigma about talking about suicide.”*

**Patrick Watt, Corporate Director, Bupa**

Read more experiences from a range of employers from page 46 [here](#).



## FOCUS ON DOMESTIC ABUSE

Domestic abuse is a hugely destructive problem and we have a collective responsibility to tackle it. As an employer, you have an important role to play in society's response to domestic abuse, a duty of care to employees and a legal responsibility to provide a safe and effective work environment. The cost of domestic abuse to business is estimated at £1.9 billion a year due to decreased productivity, time off work, lost wages and sick pay<sup>i</sup>. It can potentially have an adverse impact on staff morale, as well as on your organisation's image and reputation. Having a workplace policy or guidance on domestic abuse sends a clear message that it is not tolerated inside or outside the workplace, and that as an employer, you are there to help.

### WHAT IS DOMESTIC ABUSE?

Domestic abuse is the abuse of power and control over one person by another and can take many different forms including:

- Psychological
- Physical
- Sexual
- Emotional
- Verbal
- Economic

### WHAT YOU CAN DO

There are four key actions you can take to tackle domestic abuse:

- 1. Acknowledge** - Use the information and guidance in the full toolkit to help understand the issues and publicly acknowledge your responsibility as an employer to address domestic abuse. Enable colleagues to openly discuss this topic and provide a supportive workplace.

- 2. Respond** - Review your policies and processes to ensure you are providing a supportive workplace and can respond if an employee discloses an issue of domestic abuse. Make sure the policies and processes are implemented correctly.
- 3. Refer** - Provide access to organisations who can help employees affected by the issue. For example, signpost resources such as the [Bright Sky app](#) to report concerns.
- 4. Myth-bust** - There are many myths surrounding domestic abuse, such as it only happens to families from lower socio-economic backgrounds. Understanding the real facts helps to deconstruct these misconceptions so employers can develop truly effective support for their employees.

### DOMESTIC ABUSE AND OTHER ASPECTS OF HEALTH AND WELLBEING

Some of the changes in behaviour and demeanour that can be signs that someone is experiencing domestic abuse are similar to signs of mental health problems. Being focused on spotting the signs regarding mental health may help you to identify problems relating to domestic abuse. You can find out more about spotting the signs in our [mental health toolkit](#).

***“Although many employers are fully committed to meeting their legal and moral obligations to their valued workforce, we know that there is often a disconnect between employees who suffer domestic abuse and those who have responsibility for their wellbeing and performance.”***

**Annali-Joy Thornicroft, CEO & Company Secretary  
and Graham Cave, Director, Insurance Charities**

***“Gina was referred to the Women’s Aid’s No Woman Turned Away support project after the realisation that she and her children could not continue to live in a home where she was subjected to domestic violence, and that they needed to find a safe space to live away from her abusive partner.”***

**Anonymous**

**Find out more about how Gina’s employer supported her once they were aware of what she was experiencing on page 33 of the [full toolkit](#).**

<sup>i</sup> <https://www.nice.org.uk/guidance/ph50/resources/costing-statement-69194701>

## ENDNOTES

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- 5 RAND Corporation. Why sleep matters — the economic costs of insufficient sleep; A cross-country comparative analysis. [Link](#).
- 6 Business in the Community (BITC) and Public Health England (PHE). Physical Activity, Healthy Eating and Healthier Weight: A Toolkit for Employers. [Link](#).
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- 10 McManus S, Bebbington P, Jenkins R, Brugha T. (eds.). Mental health and wellbeing in England: Adult psychiatric morbidity survey 2014. Published on NHS Digital, 2016. [Link](#).
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