



Employee Health and Wellbeing

Executive Summary

Learning Together Industry Round Table Series

April 2025

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Why Supporting Employee Health Matters Now More Than Ever

Supporting employee health is no longer a luxury or the sole responsibility of the NHS. With a rapidly ageing population, rising chronic illness, and widening health inequalities, the number of healthy life years is decreasing even as life expectancy increases. By 2044, the over-65 population in the UK is expected to grow seven times faster than the under-65s, creating a 2:1 dependency ratio. Simultaneously, dementia, mental health conditions, and cancer rates are projected to rise significantly.

This shifting landscape will intensify pressure on both the workforce and public services. Employers must therefore play a central role in creating resilient, healthy workforces to protect individual wellbeing, drive business productivity, and support the wider economy. With long-term sickness already costing the UK economy £1.5 billion annually, the case for proactive, preventative employer action is clear.

About the Roundtable Series

In response to these challenges, the Bevan Commission hosted an industry roundtable in May 2024 focused on employee health and wellbeing. From this, the importance of collaboration and shared learning in driving positive, sustainable change was recognised. In partnership with CBI Wales, Healthy Working Wales (HWW), Business in the Community (BITC), and Industry Wales, the Bevan Commission launched the 'Learning Together' series. This programme comprises three themed events on:

1. Employee Health and Wellbeing
2. Corporate Social Responsibility
3. Learning from Industry

The first event convened leaders from across Welsh industry to explore shared challenges and solutions to supporting employee health and wellbeing. It further highlighted the need for an alliance that fosters cross-sector collaboration, shared learning, and innovation in workforce wellbeing.

Key Insights and Recommendations

Employers recognised a number of opportunities to improve workforce health, wellbeing, and resilience:

- Develop and embed clear organisational wellbeing strategies.

- Upskill managers to lead on wellbeing, communication, and inclusion.
- Provide flexible work arrangements and inclusive environments.
- Offer access to resources such as mental health support, an Employee Assisted Programme, occupational health and coaching.
- Create a culture of connection, joy, and psychological safety.
- Celebrate diversity, reduce stigma, and promote equity in access to support.

Organisations also expressed a need for:

- Simpler signposting to public and third-sector health and wellbeing resources.
- Shared tools and peer networks.
- Bite-sized, practical toolkits to help avoid information overload.

Despite progress, several barriers remain:

- Stigma around mental health and chronic conditions.
- Rigid, outdated workplace practices.
- Limited capacity and knowledge, especially among SMEs.
- An overwhelming number of support schemes and inconsistent access.
- Financial, time, and resource constraints.

Conclusion and Call to Action

Employee health is a shared responsibility across industry, public health, and government. To build sustainable, future-fit workplaces, employers must act now. The Bevan Commission and its partners advocate for an inclusive, preventative, and collaborative approach that improves outcomes for workers, businesses, and society.

There is a clear opportunity to form a national alliance of organisations committed to health and wellbeing. By pooling resources, sharing learning, and embedding evidence-informed practices, we can respond to today's challenges and ensure a healthier, more resilient future workforce for Wales.

“*We are delighted to be working with key partners and representative bodies from across industry and commerce to share and learn from each other in helping to secure healthy, resilient and resourceful people and communities --- Health and care is everyone's business from which we all benefit***”**

Helen Howson, Director, Bevan Commission

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