



Employee Health and Wellbeing
Learning Together Industry Round Table Series
April 2025

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Why Supporting Employee Health Matters Now More Than Ever

Looking after employee health is no longer a luxury or the sole responsibility of the NHS - it is a shared priority for employers, industries, and society as a whole. due to rising rates of ***Life expectancy is increasing, yet the number of years lived in good health is declining*** obesity, chronic illness, and stark health inequalities.

Over the next 20 years, the number of people aged over 65 will grow seven times faster than those under 65. ***By 2044, the ratio of working-age individuals to over-65s will fall from 3:1 to just 2:1.*** This demographic shift will place increasing pressure on our workforce and public services.

By 2044, significant rises in disease incidence are projected - dementia (up 70%), mental health conditions (up 33%), and cancer (up 20%). With a shrinking working population and an ageing, less healthy society, we face serious challenges:

- Fewer people to fill vital roles, particularly in health and care.
- Greater strain on public services and higher tax burdens.
- More individuals needing to work longer despite growing health issues.
- Increased sickness absence rates.

Already, long-term sickness costs the UK economy £1.5 billion a year. Employers must act now to create healthier, more resilient workforces - not only to protect individuals, but to sustain the economic and social fabric of the country. ***The Bevan Commission recognises the important role that industry and commerce have to play in supporting the health and wellbeing of its employees*** and has developed a collaboration with key agencies and organisations.

About the Round Table Learning Together Series

In May 2024, the [Bevan Commission](#) hosted an industry roundtable to explore how businesses can support employee health, corporate social responsibility (CSR), and contribute to improving population health in Wales. A key outcome of the event was a recognition of the importance of collaboration and shared learning in driving positive, sustainable change and the potential of developing an industry and commercial alliance.

In response, and in partnership with the [Confederation of British Industry \(CBI\) Wales](#), [Healthy Working Wales \(HWW\)](#), [Business In The Community \(BITC\)](#), and [Industry Wales](#), the Bevan Commission launched the ‘Learning Together’ series - a set of three events planned for 2025 focusing on:

1. Employee health and wellbeing
2. Corporate social responsibility
3. Learning from industry

The first event, *Employee Health and Wellbeing*, held with CBI and HWW on 7 April 2025, brought together Welsh industry leaders to explore workforce wellbeing. It fostered the exchange of strategies and insights, summarised in this report.

Learning from the Experts

Paul Billington, Senior People Partner, Admiral Group

Paul and his team drive Admiral’s UK wellbeing strategy, earning awards for health, inclusion, and disability support and recognition as a neurodiversity friendly and disability confident leading employer.

Admiral aims to create a workplace where colleagues are empowered to manage their wellbeing—boosting health, happiness, and performance to drive business success.

Their wellbeing approach is built around five pillars: health, work, relationships, resources, and culture, all supported by skilled managers and accessible tools. Wellbeing is embedded in their strategy, policy and operations, with tailored support including workplace adjustments, occupational health, mental and physical health programmes, and staff learning and development opportunities.

This commitment is delivering measurable results*. Between 2019 and 2025, Admiral reported:

- ***11% reduction in staff attrition***
- ***10-day decrease in calendar days lost per employee***
- ***26.5% reduction in mental health-related absence costs***

Notably, in 2024, 90% of colleagues (from a UK workforce of over 9,500) reported feeling supported in their physical and mental wellbeing.

**These figures include other work not specifically tied to health and wellbeing initiatives.*

Rachel Fleri, Director, Specialist Security Co Ltd

Founded in 2001, Specialist Security Co Ltd has grown into Wales’ leading independent security provider, known for raising industry standards and championing employee wellbeing.

With 150 security officers—some with over 20 years of service—the company’s exceptional staff retention reflects its flexible, people-first approach. Aware of sector challenges like lone working, long hours, and night shifts, Rachel understands that smaller, privately owned firms must offer tailored support to compete with larger organisations.

By fostering strong relationships, offering flexible shift patterns, and avoiding unwanted mixed shifts, the company has built a stable, resilient workforce. The result: low turnover, minimal absence, high staff satisfaction, easy recruitment, and no reliance on agency staff.

Gus Williams, CEO, Chambers Wales SE, SW and Mid and CEO, Bevan Buckland

Chambers Wales is committed to driving greater social and economic prosperity by supporting Welsh businesses to grow, overcome challenges, and seize new opportunities. ***The Chamber views health and wellbeing in the workplace as encompassing physical, mental, and neurodiverse needs.*** It recognises that many SMEs lack the knowledge, tools, or capacity to effectively plan for and respond to these challenges. To help prevent ill health and promote positive wellbeing at work, Chambers Wales emphasises the importance of ***education for both employers and employees,*** and the value of ***building supportive networks*** across the business community.

Oliver Williams, Public Health Consultant, Public Health Wales

Oliver leads the delivery of the [*Healthy Working Wales \(HWW\)*](#) ***programme which promotes the link between employee wellbeing and improved productivity, business performance, and broader economic and social benefits.*** The programme provides employers with practical tools and resources—including webinars, podcasts, case studies, news bulletins and e-learning—covering a wide range of topics from mental health and physical activity to financial wellbeing and flexible working.

Key programme aims include:

- ***Supporting healthy, safe working environments***
- ***Promoting positive health behaviours***
- ***Improving sickness absence management and return-to-work support***

This year, HWW will launch a new employer website, a digital Employer Survey Tool, and a Peer Mentoring Programme—initiatives designed to help build resilient, healthier workplaces across Wales.

Industry Roundtable Summary of Discussions and Learning

▪ **Unlocking Potential: Key Opportunities to Boost Employee Wellbeing.**

Table discussions highlighted ways to enhance employee wellbeing across strategy, culture, training, support, environment, incentives, and belonging.

Strategy & Culture

- Develop a clear wellbeing strategy with defined roles
- Use data and best practices to guide support systems
- Promote healthy behaviours and conduct regular risk assessments
- Empower managers to lead wellbeing initiatives
- Foster a [joyful workplace](#) culture

Training & Leadership

- Train managers in wellbeing support, communication, inclusion, and resilience
- Raise awareness of important health and wellbeing issues such as mental health, neurodiversity, menopause, etc
- Provide coaching and consider appointing [wellbeing champions](#) and [mental health first aiders](#)

Communication & Support Networks

- Create peer support and virtual social hubs
- Facilitate access to wellbeing champions and events

Environment & Infrastructure

- Design spaces promoting wellbeing (natural light, healthy food, social areas)
- Reduce mental load through process management
- Offer flexible work arrangements
- Encourage physical activity
- Promote office days that encourage face-to-face engagement and social interaction
- Develop a work social calendar and encourage participation in inclusive, culturally aware social events

Recognised Incentives & Benefits

- Employee Assistance Programmes (EAP)
- Health checks and surveillance

- Health insurance
- Financial support such as:
 - Interest-free loans for hardship
 - Vouchers for items like glasses (e.g. for VDU users)
- Recognise and reward employee contributions through formal schemes
- Introduce career development opportunities such as:
 - Apprenticeships
 - Work shadowing
 - Placement schemes
- Support access to medical appointments, including dental, optical, and hearing services

Connection & Belonging

- Cultivate inclusion, recognition, and job satisfaction
- Encourage open, safe conversations and team-building activities
- Support charitable activities and volunteering to support purpose and fulfilment

Industry leaders felt the following support would be useful to organisations:

- More simplified signposting to credible health information and support services
- A ‘map’ of public and private sector support services to aid signposting and access
- A self-help or self-care toolkit with bite-size, manageable content to avoid information overload

■ Challenges to Supporting Employee Health and Wellbeing

Organisational leaders identified key barriers hindering effective employee wellbeing support, spanning culture, awareness, practical constraints, and systemic issues.

Cultural and Attitudinal Barriers

- Negative attitudes toward change and ill health
- Stigma around mental and chronic health conditions
- Over-medicalisation instead of preventative approaches
- Lack of psychological safety and open dialogue

Knowledge and Awareness Gaps

- Limited understanding of health conditions and support roles
- Poor education on self-care and prevention
- Managerial unawareness and unconscious bias
- Low engagement with wellbeing initiatives

Structural and Systemic Issues

- Weak leadership and unclear responsibility division
- Rigid, inflexible work practices
- Concerns about misuse of sick leave and wellbeing policies

Information and Programme Overload

- Excessive wellbeing offerings causing confusion and disengagement
- Information overload impeding action and evaluation challenges

Social and Generational Factors

- Remote work causing isolation
- Generational differences impacting wellbeing approaches
- Burnout masked by continued high performance

Resource and Financial Constraints

- Limited funding, especially in smaller or lower-skilled organisations
- Financial insecurity affecting mental health and engagement
- Time pressures and digital access challenges

Collaboration across industry was felt to be essential to address these challenges effectively.

■ Common Workplace Health and Wellbeing Issues

Table discussions highlighted a range of prevalent health and wellbeing issues in the workplace, including:

- Mental health conditions such as stress, depression, and anxiety — with 69% reporting line manager impact
- Neurodiverse conditions, often poorly understood and unsupported
- Musculoskeletal issues, particularly affecting the back, neck, shoulders, wrists, hips, and knees

- Caring responsibilities, including childcare and eldercare
- Common illnesses and recovery management
- Menopause, especially significant in sectors with high female representation (up to 80%)
- Bereavement and associated support needs
- Accidents such as slips, trips, and falls
- Substance misuse, including drugs and alcohol
- Poor self-care and lack of preventative health behaviours
- Financial wellbeing and related stress
- Challenges returning to work, especially after long-term absence
- Lack of clarity around the use and interpretation of fit notes
- Stigma and judgement surrounding ill health and sickness absence.

These issues underline the importance of comprehensive, inclusive, and well-informed approaches to employee health and wellbeing.

▪ **Commonly Accessed Services, Resources and Support**

Organisations reported a wide range of services and resources used to support employee health and wellbeing, including:

- Employee Assistance Programmes (EAP)
- Occupational health and health checks
- Case management and return-to-work support
- Reasonable adjustments and Customised Adjustment Plans (CAP)
- Emotional support and mental health first aid
- Workplace stress and risk assessments
- Counselling, talking therapies, and coaching (e.g. menopause support)
- General health passports
- Wellbeing champions
- Peer support
- Staff networks, impact days and team building
- Financial support, including interest-free loans

- Support from external charities such as MIND

Additionally, the [*Education Programme for Patients \(EPP Cymru\)*](#) was highlighted as a valuable self-management resource for employees managing long-term health conditions.

▪ Opportunities for Cross-Sector Collaboration on Employee Health and Wellbeing

Round table discussions recognised the significant potential for industry-wide collaboration to enhance employee health and wellbeing. Key opportunities include:

- **Cross-sector mentoring** across public, corporate, and third sector organisations.
- **Cultural exchange** and better understanding of generational and ageing workforce needs.
- **Collaborative forums** to share learning, co-design solutions, and exchange data and resources.
- **Shared platforms and pooled resources**, including within supply chains, to reduce duplication.
- **Job and talent pools** offering cross-sector work opportunities and retention pathways.
- **Joint initiatives** such as social impact coalitions, themed events, and exemplar demonstrations.
- **Extension of the NHS Expert Patient Programme (EPP)** into workplace settings.
- **Empowerment through life skills** support—e.g. cooking, education, and wellbeing resources.
- **Community-focused efforts** to build inclusive, supported environments from “cradle to grave.”
- **Breaking stigma** and promoting understanding through open dialogue and education.

Conclusion

Supporting employee health and wellbeing is no longer optional - it is a critical, shared responsibility across employers, industries, and society. With life expectancy rising but healthy life years declining, and a rapidly ageing population placing growing pressure on the workforce and public services, proactive action is essential.

The economic and social impact of poor health, including rising disease rates and long-term sickness, is already significant. Employers must take the lead in building healthier, more resilient workforces to safeguard both individual wellbeing and national productivity.

While meaningful opportunities exist - ranging from strategic planning to creating cultures of connection and joy, there are also persistent barriers, including lack of awareness, resources, and

systemic challenges. Addressing these requires coordinated, cross-sector collaboration which the Bevan Commission and key industry partners and stakeholders can lead on.

By sharing knowledge and resources, and adopting inclusive, proactive, and preventive approaches, organisations can better address health challenges. Collective action is key to building sustainable workplaces where all employees thrive. A truly collaborative health strategy—including everyone, not just the unwell—is essential for future workforces. *This means prioritising wellbeing, prevention, early intervention, and tackling workplace challenges while leveraging opportunities in this report.* There is a clear opportunity to establish an industry alliance, bringing organisations together to drive forward this agenda and improve the health and wellbeing of employees across sectors.

“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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