



The Prince's
Responsible
Business Network



Report

WHAT IF YOUR JOB WAS GOOD FOR YOU?

A once-in-a-lifetime opportunity
to transform mental health and
wellbeing at work



In partnership with:

BITC Wellbeing
Leadership Team

and



Supported by:

CIPD

REPORT

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

THE PANDEMIC HAS ACCELERATED THE DEMAND FOR CHANGE AND CREATED OPPORTUNITIES TO MAKE WORK BETTER.

We have seen rising levels of mental ill-health – a trend that is likely to be long lasting, particularly amongst younger and more disadvantaged employee groups. Encouragingly, we have also seen progress in the way mental health has been prioritised across society and more organisations than ever are committed to protecting and promoting the health of their employees. The last year has also demonstrated that change can be achieved and achieved quickly. Changes to job design, such as the move to home and hybrid working, create opportunities for a more flexible future working model. We believe we have a once in a lifetime opportunity to transform traditional working practices, reimagine ways of working, and create jobs that allow people to thrive.

WORK IS PART OF THE ISSUE; GOOD JOB DESIGN MUST BE PART OF THE SOLUTION.

41% of employees have experienced mental health symptoms caused, or worsened, by work in the last year; a figure that would be seen as utterly unacceptable if discussing physical injury created by work. Before the pandemic, many organisations attempted to tackle mental health by a series of often reactive and standalone initiatives such as yoga, mindfulness and awareness training sessions. Rather than continue to deal with the symptoms, now is the time to address the systemic causes of mental ill health at work, focusing on prevention and creating work that is good for wellbeing.

THE SPINE OF OUR WELLBEING CAMPAIGN IS THE MENTAL HEALTH AT WORK COMMITMENT.

Through this Business in the Community (BITC) encourages all business leaders to make the commitment as a public declaration of your prioritisation of mental health at work. Before the pandemic, Standard 2 of this commitment (*to proactively ensure work design and organisational culture drive positive mental health outcomes*) had been perceived as the most challenging and hardest to tackle. Whilst our [Workwell Model](#) describes what elements create better work, this report uses evidence based suggestions to build a framework of *how*, in these unprecedented times, you can achieve Standard 2 through ways of working that enhance mental health and wellbeing. This ground-breaking report has resulted from collaboration, drawing from interview data with leaders in industry, institutions and national stakeholders, statistical data and a review of academic, practice and policy literature.

WELLBEING NEEDS TO BE PERMEATED ACROSS EVERY ASPECT OF BUSINESS.

Working together, and moving beyond the remit of Health and Safety, Diversity, Equity and Inclusion or HR, wellbeing needs to be seen as a mainstream business issue that is integrated across every business operation. The framework that we have developed sets out the ways of working that enable better work (including a collaborative, individual focused approach, and a focus on relationships and open dialogue) and the organisational values (empathy & compassion, inclusivity & equity, trust & appreciation and authenticity) that form the foundations of good work. A healthy business is a responsible business. We see the prosperity of business and society as inextricably linked, as operationalised by the [BITC Responsible Business Map¹](#) and therefore underpinning both the enablers and the values is the driver of sustainability.

PUTTING PEOPLE FIRST AS A STRATEGY TO THRIVE POST-PANDEMIC.

WHAT IF YOUR JOB WAS GOOD FOR YOU?

Those organisations that thrive will be those that put people first as they emerge from the pandemic. Not just because it is a clear way to improve productivity and address issues of absenteeism, presenteeism and leaveism, but because it is the right thing to do, the compassionate thing to do, for the benefit of society at large. It is about putting 'people first' further, to embrace an inclusive approach where employees are listened to and can speak up without fear of reprisal, where employees are viewed as customers and given the opportunity to say no; and where their feedback is considered at the highest level in the organisation. This extends to employees being given the opportunity to co create their own jobs, supported by managers and aligned with organisational practices and policies.

This report has created two calls to action for employers:

1. Achieve parity between the management of physical health and safety, and mental health and safety with an open and accountable culture.
2. Enable employees to co-create their own 'good jobs' supported by managers and aligned with organisational practices and policies.

WE ADVOCATE TAKING A TEST AND LEARN APPROACH, CREATING A PSYCHOLOGICALLY SAFE SPACE TO EXPERIMENT.

What we do know is that our society, our businesses and our people have changed during the course of the pandemic. Returning to pre-pandemic 'normal' is not an option. As we look to the future, it is clear that there are still many unknowns and therefore the guides and best practices around our future ways of working have not yet been written. This report represents the beginning of an understanding that we can't achieve change on our own. A positive legacy of the pandemic has been an increase in awareness of the importance of addressing and reducing mental ill-health. However only a quarter of organisations have increased their budget for health and wellbeing and still only half have an employee wellbeing strategy.²

We want to create a collaborative movement where we test and learn together, building knowledge and sharing insights to help us all to navigate the journey ahead.

Publicly demonstrate your commitment to [action](#), transform mental health and wellbeing at work.



WHAT IF YOUR JOB WAS GOOD FOR YOU?

“Overnight, the pandemic changed the nature and place of work for many of us and we now have a once in a lifetime opportunity to reimagine ways of working and transform mental health and wellbeing at work.

Working from home and hybrid working have created opportunities for taking a more inclusive and individual approach that enables people to co-create their own ‘good jobs’.

With the importance of listening to employee voices, mental health and safety needs to be established on a parity with physical health and safety so everyone can speak without fear of negative consequences.

I strongly urge employers to take action and learn from each other, to leave a positive legacy from what we’ve learned in the past 15 months.”

DAVID OLDFIELD, CEO COMMERCIAL BANKING, AND INTERIM GROUP COO, LLOYDS BANKING GROUP AND CHAIR OF THE BUSINESS IN THE COMMUNITY WELLBEING LEADERSHIP TEAM

“We’re proud to support this important new report from Business in the community which highlights the need for employers to take a strategic and integrated approach to workplace wellbeing in all its forms. Commitment and visible leadership from senior leaders on health and wellbeing is key to fostering an environment where people feel fully supported and able to speak up.

There is more expectation now that organisations put people first, provide good jobs together with supportive cultures and places of work, including opportunity for flexible ways of working. These are all essential in enhancing wellbeing, but also in engagement and retention of staff and critical business outcomes including productivity.

the pandemic has forced us all to focus more on people’s health and wellbeing, and we all have the opportunity to take these learnings forward to help better working lives for all.”

PETER CHEESE, CEO, THE CHARTERED INSTITUTE OF PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT

“Our report is evidence based but there are still many unknowns, with the best practices around future ways of working still to be written. During this period of transition into a new era, Business in the Community is convening a collaborative movement which enables businesses to take test and learn approach, where businesses can learn together, build knowledge and share insights to help everyone navigate the journey ahead, recognising that we can’t achieve change on our own. Publicly demonstrate your commitment to action, transform mental health and wellbeing at work.”

LOUISE ASTON, WELLBEING DIRECTOR, BUSINESS IN THE COMMUNITY

DEVELOPMENT AND PURPOSE OF THIS REPORT



This report has been developed collaboratively, drawing from multiple sources of data to access the best evidence. Data has included 20 interviews with members of BITC's wellbeing, gender and race equality leadership teams, Thriving at Work Leadership Council and national stakeholders including CIPD, Mental Health UK, Mind and the Society of Occupational Medicine; statistical analyses from the BITC mental health at work survey (2020) in partnership with Bupa UK Insurance and BITC's wellbeing leadership team, and a review looking across the academic, practice and policy literature that provides insights into the best ways of working to promote sustainable mental health outcomes.

"I CAN NEVER SEE US GOING BACK TO OLD WORKING PRACTICES. THIS COULD BE AN AMAZING NEW START FOR OUR COUNTRY." *Employee quotation from the Bupa UK Insurance YouGov 2020 survey*

This report sets out how you as business leaders can create an environment in which your employees feel supported to do their best work. It builds on Standard 2 of the Mental Health at Work Commitment, to 'proactively ensure work design and organisational culture drive positive mental health outcomes'. We recognise that this comes at a time of continued uncertainty and adjustment to different ways of working, and that it may take time for results to be realised.

Good work can be a positive force for wellbeing. This report provides key recommendations for employers about how to build that environment and achieve good jobs for all that drive sustainable mental health outcomes.

We don't have all the answers. This report is not an end in itself but a vehicle for engaging business leaders and driving actions that support the implementation of Standard 2.

WHAT IF YOUR JOB WAS GOOD FOR YOU?

Can you imagine the potential impact of happier, healthier and more engaged employees on UK success in terms of competitiveness, both the business and social benefits, that go beyond GDP?

BUILDING BACK RESPONSIBLY MEANS MAKING MANAGING MENTAL HEALTH A PRIORITY.

Mental health has been an increasing challenge for organisations over the past decade, however the COVID-19 pandemic has been an accelerant.³

More people have experienced a
mental health crisis
during the pandemic than ever before.⁴

Nearly 4/5
of respondents (79%) have reported some
form of stress related absence in the last
year.⁵

The impact of the pandemic on mental health is likely to be long-lasting. This means that more of your employees than ever will be suffering from mental ill-health – either at work or taking absence. Not only are younger workers likely to be suffering from mental ill health across the last year, but they also have a greater expectation that employers will protect their mental health and work life balance. To retain and attract this talent, promoting and protecting employee wellbeing will be essential going forward.

A reticence to focus on mental health at work has often been attributed to the questioning of whether the cause of mental ill health is work-related or

home-related. We assert that this distinction is unhelpful. Regardless of the cause, an employee experiencing mental ill-health will be significantly more likely to stay in work, and thrive in work, if they have support from their employer. The fact is that mental ill-health is often caused or made worse by work.

We know from our 2020 Mental Health YouGov research that:

69%
of employees have experienced mental ill
health because of work at some point.⁶

41%
of employees have experienced mental
health symptoms caused, or worsened, by
work in the last year.⁷

Can you imagine how entirely unacceptable it would be if nearly half your employees had experienced physical harm from work in the last year? **Why then do we tolerate psychological harm from work?** There should be no dichotomy between physical and mental health. Risks and hazards must be managed in the same way, and employees encouraged to call out all risks to health without fear.

What do good jobs look like?

Jobs that are good for employees, which promote and protect mental health, are defined in the “Better Work” component of the [BITC Workwell Model](#)⁸ as involving three elements: good work, job design and psychological safety.



Good work is where employees feel valued and appreciated for the work that they do, that they are paid fairly and that their work has meaning and purpose.

Good job design means jobs that provide employees with autonomy over how, when and where they do their job; have reasonable demands placed upon them in order that they can have a balance between work and home; are supported by and enjoy good relationships with their peers and colleagues; are clear about what they are there to do and are able to develop and grow in role.

Psychological safety where employees feel safe to be able to speak up and be listened to and make mistakes without fear of recrimination and reprisal – a culture where employees have a voice and a place at the table – and can perform at their best.⁹

We aren't there in providing good jobs for our people. Over the pandemic we have seen mental ill-health created by excessive working hours, work intensification and a reduction in opportunity for,

and uptake of, annual leave, particularly for those working from home.

57%

of mental ill health at work is caused by excessive demands for those working from home, compared to 46% of those attending the workplace a normal amount.¹⁰

Working hours increased by up to

12.5 hours

per week over the last year.¹¹

For too long, organisations have focused on reactive measures to attempt to tackle employee health and wellbeing focusing on 'low hanging fruit' such as awareness training, yoga or free fruit bowls. However, a large body of research indicates that levels of mental ill-health at work are influenced by more fundamental aspects of job design.¹²

"IF WE DON'T FUNDAMENTALLY THINK ABOUT HOW WE DESIGN WORK, LOOKING AT THE DRIVERS OF POOR MENTAL HEALTH AND TACKLING THIS, WE ARE NOT GOING TO SEE A SIGNIFICANT SHIFT IN LEVELS OF MENTAL ILL HEALTH AT WORK."

Faye McGuinness, Director of Programmes, Education Support

At the same time, complex and challenging issues have been exacerbated during the pandemic with consequences for severe mental ill-health. For example, many people have suffered **bereavement and grief**, losing loved ones and colleagues before their time and unable to grieve in ways that may have supported them due to social distancing restrictions. The soaring rates of **domestic abuse** have increasingly been recognised, with lockdowns creating further tensions and the safe haven of the workplace no longer available for many. While the true impact of the pandemic on **suicide** has yet to be known, as witnessed during the last 2008 recession, rates are expected to rise as people continue to struggle with unemployment, loss and isolation. BITC's evidence-based toolkits to support [Death, Bereavement and Grief](#), [Suicide Prevention](#) and [Domestic Abuse](#) provide practical guidance on how employers can support employees. For employees facing challenging home environments, good jobs and supportive employers are ever more important.

AN UNPRECEDENTED OPPORTUNITY TO BUILD BETTER WORK.

Emerging research also shows the disproportionate inequalities for mental health and job opportunities experienced by people from **minority groups, women, and young people**. Urgent action is required to ensure we do not lose decades of progress in the fight for equality in the workplace. For employees in these groups, a personalised approach to creating good jobs that enhance wellbeing for everyone needs to be at the

centre of our response to [building back responsibly](#).

"THE PANDEMIC HAS ACCELERATED THE CAUSE AROUND THE NEED FOR SUPPORTING EMPLOYEES' MENTAL HEALTH AND WELLBEING."

Sarah Murphy, Associate Director for Advice, Information and Training, Mental Health UK

A positive legacy of the pandemic has been an increase in awareness of the importance of addressing and reducing mental ill-health. At every level of society, the threat to mental health has been discussed and prioritised. This has translated into more organisations showing a commitment to health and wellbeing.

75%

believe that senior leaders have employee wellbeing on their agenda (up from 61% last year).¹³

77%

of employees feel that their organisation promotes good mental wellbeing (up from 58% last year).¹⁴

A significant fall

in organisations being more reactive than proactive (27%, down from 41% last year).¹⁵

The extent to which this increased awareness and priority is translating into long-lasting action is less clear. Only a quarter of organisations have increased their budget for health and wellbeing and still only half have an employee wellbeing strategy.¹⁶

The pandemic demonstrated that job re-design can be achieved and achieved quickly. Organisational change interventions and initiatives that could have taken years, were actioned in days. Working from home, previously seen as impossible for many roles, became the standard mode of work for many. As we transition out of the pandemic, there is an opportunity to embrace change and strive to create better jobs for everyone. Doing so will result not only in increased productivity, retention, resilience and wellbeing in our employees, but also across the organisation and in our wider society.

"IT SHOWED US HOW FLEXIBLE WE COULD BE. WE CATAPULTED OURSELVES FIVE YEARS DOWN THE LINE."

Satmeet Chahal, HR Generalist Manager, Enterprise RAC

Many organisations have 'learnt by doing' through the COVID-19 pandemic, working through a crisis and rapidly responding to the changing business, social and political environment. Moving now to a time of readjustment, we encourage organisations, teams and individuals to take time to reflect and reset. By embracing a 'test and learn' approach before establishing new structures and ways of working we will be able to unlock those working practices that no longer serve our people or our businesses and create a positive and sustainable transformation.

BUILDING JOBS THAT ARE GOOD FOR ALL: HOW TO ACHIEVE BETTER WORK.

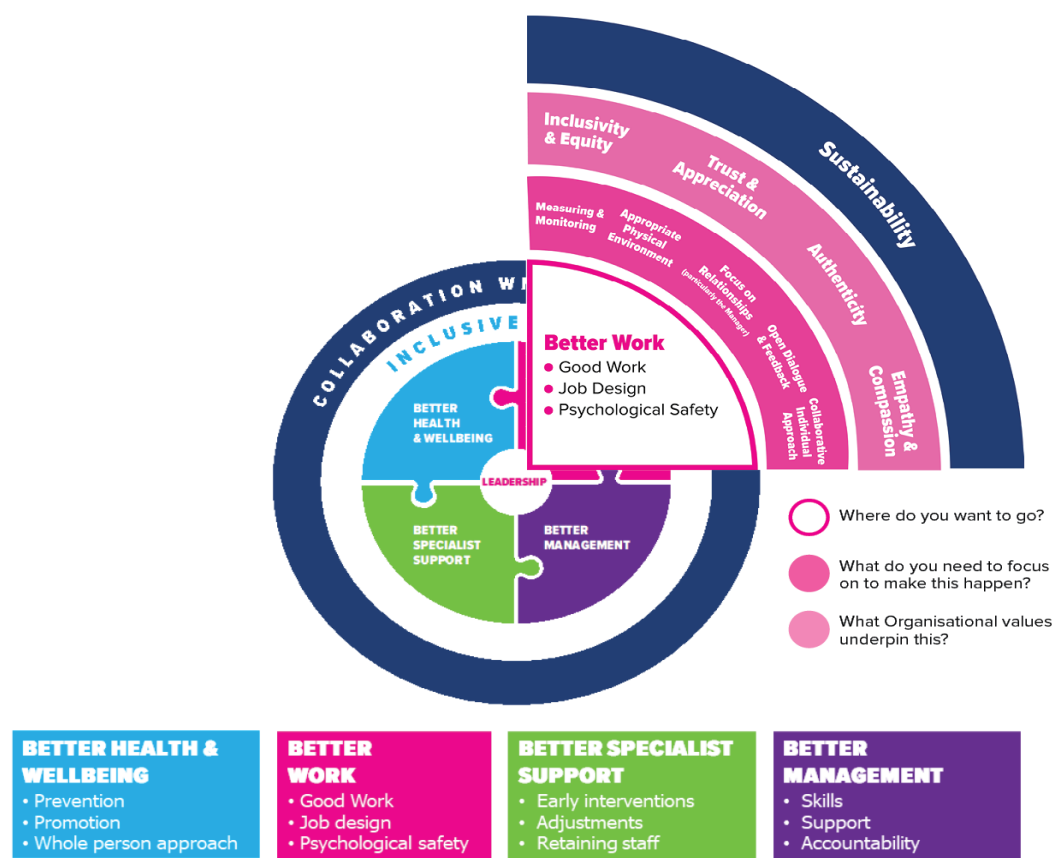
The 'Better Work' quadrant of the BITC Workwell Model describes *what* elements create better work (Good Work, Job Design, Psychological and Physical Safety). Here we aim to use evidence-based suggestions as to *how*, in these unprecedented times, you can achieve good jobs and better work for all. Creating a framework that brings together the of ways working that enhance wellbeing, and organisational values, that sit underneath and operationalise better work. The framework recognises that to achieve and maintain good jobs, wellbeing needs to be integrated into everything that you do as a business; moving beyond the remit of Health and Safety, Diversity, Equality & Inclusion or HR, to being a mainstream business issue. Managing mental health and wellbeing is not just about an awareness training programme but permeates every aspect of our everyday work, building resilience in both the individual and the organisation.

"HOW DO WE HELP PEOPLE TO NAVIGATE THEIR WAY TO A NEW NORMAL IN A WAY THAT BEST SUITS THEM?"

Damien Shieber, Head of Culture & Inclusion, Santander

WHAT IF YOUR JOB WAS GOOD FOR YOU?

FRAMEWORK ON ACHIEVING THE 'BETTER WORK' ELEMENT OF THE WORKWELL MODEL



- What Organisational values underpin this?
- What do you need to focus on to make this happen?
- Where do you want to go?



WHAT IF YOUR JOB WAS GOOD FOR YOU?

There are **five enablers** to achieving the aim of better work. If these five factors are in place, you are likely to achieve your aim of providing jobs that are good for your employees:

- Open dialogue and feedback
- Collaborative individual focused approach (as one size does not fit all)
- Focus on relationships (particularly the manager)
- An appropriate physical environment
- Measuring and monitoring

It is not just creating good jobs but maintaining good jobs that is important. Our research has highlighted four organisational values that provide the foundations for success. Without these values being embedded within the five enablers, your achievements will be wasted. These four values are:

- Empathy & Compassion
- Inclusivity & Equity
- Trust & Appreciation
- Authenticity

A healthy business is a responsible business. We see the prosperity of business and society as inextricably linked, as operationalised by the [BITC Responsible Business Map¹⁷](#) and therefore underpinning both the enablers and the values is the driver of sustainability. BITC's approach to sustainability focuses on both healthy communities (health and wellbeing, employment and skills and diversity and inclusion), and a healthy environment (circular economy, climate action and nature stewardship) to achieve positive societal and environmental outcomes. The purpose of achieving a healthy, resilient organisation is therefore underpinned by an overall responsible and positive approach to our impact on society and the environment. It is with this lens that making good jobs a reality is realised.

How do you make good jobs a reality for your business?

Here we focus on the actions you can take within your business under each of these areas.

1. Open dialogue and feedback

Having a conversation about mental health and wellbeing can be normalised as part of everyday conversation. Being able to talk openly at work, to freely contribute ideas, making mistakes without fear of reprisal and to feedback concerns (in other words operationalising psychological safety) has important benefits for employee mental health and wellbeing, enabling you to make necessary adjustments, and the employee to bring their whole self to work.¹⁸

Where employees can speak up, talk openly, share and feedback without fear of repercussions or discrimination, you are more able to address an issue quickly and support your people appropriately. We need to keep striving for open cultures as:

Only 56%

of employees were comfortable talking about mental health such as anxiety or depression.¹⁹

Significantly fewer

Black, Asian and Ethnic minority employees were comfortable.²⁰

Only 17%

of employees with mental health issues disclosed this to their line manager or HR. Of those that did, 12% were treated negatively (sacked, forced out, demoted, passed over for promotion, subject to disciplinary). Nearly half (44%) saw nothing change from their disclosure.²¹

WHAT IF YOUR JOB WAS GOOD FOR YOU?

CASE STUDY | RHA WALES

[Read how RHA Wales has built a culture of trust that drives wellbeing and performance.](#)

CASE STUDY | ROYAL MAIL

[Read how Royal Mail's award winning 'Because Healthy Minds Matter' activity has built a culture where asking for help and accessing support for mental health is as normal as receiving treatment for a physical health condition.'](#)

Examples of best practice in this area:

- Share lived experiences of mental health across the organisation to role model this open dialogue.²²
- Cultivating inclusive cultures and working environments is crucial to supporting the mental health of employees where they **belong**, have a **voice**, are **valued** and can be their true selves. Adopt actions that promote inclusion from the [BITC What really works? Ensuing inclusive culture report](#) and prioritise race by signing the [Race at Work Charter](#).

CASE STUDY | SANTANDER

[Watch how Santander employees advocate the different support networks within the business to promote wellbeing and inclusion to create a safe space for all.](#)

"FIND YOUR MOST SENIOR PERSON IN THE ORGANISATION WHO HAS HAD THEIR OWN LIVED EXPERIENCE OF A MENTAL HEALTH PROBLEM AND IS COMFORTABLE TO TALK ABOUT IT."

Paul Farmer, CEO, Mind

- Recognise that speaking up comes with risks for many employees of stigma and

discrimination. Only encourage this if you are comfortable that your organisational values are aligned with this initiative.

- Start meetings with discussions about physical and mental health and how employees are feeling or using questions such as 'What is your wellbeing score?' as a simple way to share and track mental wellbeing on a day-to-day basis using a score out of 10.

CASE STUDY | COSTAIN

"With every Teams meeting - first topic of conversation is always 'how are you', 'are you okay?', 'how are things going?' [Read more about how Costain are enabling their employees to create their own 'good jobs'.](#)

- Proactively seek out opportunities to talk to all employees across your business, across functional, hierarchical and demographic levels. One organisational example describes a senior manager asking employees at these meetings to ask difficult questions, those questions that employees think they 'shouldn't' ask; recognising the value in this approach for drawing out issues that matter to employees.
- Build a consistent narrative around mental health and create a blueprint for best practice in terms of conversations. At a time when many individuals may be apprehensive about returning the office, providing templates for return-to-work conversations will be key.²³
- Communicate constantly and through a number of channels. Simply putting material about mental health on the intranet risks many of your employees missing or failing to access this.

"CONSISTENT AND CONTINUOUS MESSAGING KEEPS THE DIALOGUE FLOWING, RATHER

THAN A ONE-HIT WONDER BIG SPLASH.”

Stacey Sutton, Executive Director, EMEA Benefits, Morgan Stanley

- Mirror your approach to openness in your policies and practices. Initiatives to create an open culture will not create change if your policies are not aligned, for instance if they are a discrimination trigger for those with mental health problems.

CASE STUDY | EMCOR UK

[Read how EMCOR UK encourage all employees to openly discuss mental health and wellbeing issues at work to proactively encourage access to the education, help and support available.](#)

2. Collaborative individual focused approach

“ANY BUSINESS WHO THINKS THEY CAN DEFINE THE NEW NORMAL IS KIDDING THEMSELVES. THE NEW NORMAL WILL BE DEFINED BY EACH AND EVERY ONE OF US.”

Dr Shaun Davis, Global Director Compliance & Sustainability, Royal Mail Group

One of the opportunities that the pandemic afforded was being able to gain insights into the working lives of employees. For most, this built a greater understanding of the range of pressures and the differing working and living environments employees had. For many years there has been a dissonance between the desire for more flexibility and differently designed jobs from employees, and the offering from employers. One of the reasons for this was a widely held belief that if employees were working from home without being in direct sight, that they would work less and shirk their responsibilities, a belief which has not been borne out by the evidence of the last year. Flexibility is not just about working from home and in many jobs that is not possible. A wealth of research has found

that giving employees opportunities to individualise and craft their job (such as decide on working hours or job share arrangements) can help to support wellbeing and protect mental health; in so doing increasing productivity.²⁴

Following the pandemic, more employers are open to seeing more flexible ways of working as both a viable, and preferred, opportunity for the future of work. It is worth recognising that working from home across the pandemic has been ‘fake flex’, a situation we had out of necessity rather than choice. Research shows that, as opposed to overall policies, decisions about flexible working need to be managed at the local level and based on what makes sense for the business.²⁵ As employees return to the workplace, businesses will benefit from taking an individualised approach, finding the right solution for employees and teams.

Examples of best practice in this area:

- Above all, recognise that one size does not fit all and ‘good jobs’ will look different to different employees. Further from the experience across the past year, employees may have changed their attitudes about what they need. Better jobs means giving as many choices over how, where, how often and when employees want to work, and support and encourage line managers to enable their choices.
- Taking a collaborative person-centred approach isn’t about always doing what the individual wants, but rather making a decision based on the needs of both the individual and the business. Consider the wider context and the impact that any decision will have on the rest of the business. Where there are conflicts, be honest and open.
- In a re-design, seek out diverse voices to shape your decisions. Ensure that you are inclusive and not impacting one population over another. It is often the case that decisions are made through a particular lens, such as white males. Hold discussions and collaboration sessions with a cross

section of employees and involve unions, employee representative or network groups.

CASE STUDY | ANGLIAN WATER

[Watch Anglian Water employees share their approach to ensuring their people are equally supported, regardless of their location or work role.](#)

"WE NEED TO EVOLVE THE CONVERSATION IN ORDER TO ENGAGE EVERYONE. WE NEED NEW CONVERSATIONS TO FIND AND HEAR THE DIVERSE VOICES IN THE ORGANISATION. THOSE ORGANISATIONS THAT ARE ABLE TO DO THIS SUCCESSFULLY WILL THRIVE."

Chris Young, HR Director, P&G Northern Europe, Procter & Gamble

- Value each individual in your business and consider the way that you promote your talent. The Procter and Gamble model of 'Build from within,' where all senior leaders joined at the bottom of the company, highlights that every employee could be a potential leader in the future.

3. Focus on relationships (particularly the manager)

"PEOPLE ACROSS AND WITHIN PROFESSIONS HAVE COME TOGETHER TO SHARE LEARNINGS AND WORK TOGETHER TO DEVELOP SOLUTIONS TO BETTER EMPLOYEE HEALTH AND WELLBEING."

Nick Pahl, CEO, Society of Occupational Medicine

The pandemic has seen relationships develop and deepen in an organisation like never before, and

there is a widespread desire that this level of human connection should be preserved and built upon. Research has consistently demonstrated the role that work relationships play in protecting the mental health and wellbeing of employees – or undermining wellbeing when behaviour is bad.²⁶ One of the most vital relationships is that of the line manager, with strong evidence reinforcing its importance in promoting and protecting the health and wellbeing of employees.²⁷ Managers occupy a unique role in being able not only to directly cause mental ill-health or enable good health by their behaviour and the way that they manage their work and delegation, but also spot early signs of ill-health in their team and therefore access help and support.

The data shows a clear dichotomy in this relationship. Although most (71%) employees feel that their manager is considerate of their wellbeing, and managers see supporting the wellbeing of their employees as a core competency (72%), this is not translating into action; with less than half (48%) of employees feeling that they could talk to their manager about their mental health.²⁸ Although employees are concerned about the unintended consequences of talking openly (such as lack of career progression or disciplining), the wider issue is that organisations are not investing in the essential training to enable managers to encourage and support these conversations.

Less than 2/3

of managers (61%) in the last year have been given training in the last year to manage their mental health (similar – 60% to 2020).²⁹

Less than half

of managers (43%) have been given training in how to manage staff with mental ill-health (a fall from 51% in 2020).³⁰

Only 38%

of employees think that their managers have the confidence to have sensitive discussions and signpost to help if needed.³¹

Given the increase in both lived experience, and priority placed upon, mental ill-health in the last year, the lack of overall progress in equipping managers with the skills, confidence and knowledge to manage ill health in their employees is worrying.

Examples of best practice in this area:

- Although the line manager may have the most influence on mental health in the workplace, peer relationships are also key to building and maintaining mental health. Reinforcing relationship building and social connections across the business will be important going forward, especially given the anticipated sustained use of remote working by many organisations and should be role modelled and cascaded throughout.

CASE STUDY | SANTANDER

[Read about the diverse strategies Santander have used to build strong relationships.](#)

- Evidence shows that diverse groups are particularly unlikely to feel comfortable talking to managers about their mental health for fear of repercussions; therefore, initiatives to build relationships need to be considered from multiple lenses to ensure that certain groups are not excluded. This could be by the encouragement of staff network groups and champions.
- There needs to be a culture shift to recruiting managers to manage people, rather than for their technical ability; with competencies linked to empathy, compassion and authenticity coming to the fore. This is particularly key when role

modelling will become more challenging in a virtual working environment.

- Senior leadership teams need to support and empower line managers to offer effective support.
- Managers need to be equipped with the skills not just to manage the health and wellbeing of their employees, but also to do this in a remote or hybrid way, such as training them to pick up on social, emotional and behavioural cues in a virtual setting. In a time when unprecedented numbers of employees will be returning to places of work, managers also need to be equipped with the resources to facilitate effective return to work conversations.³²
- Remote working places greater responsibility on a manager, and therefore to enable managers to prioritise relationship building, they need to be given both training and resources.
- As many as 69% of managers want training in managing the wellbeing of staff.³³ Being able to have conversations about sensitive topics can feel uncomfortable and a source of pressure, particularly if the organisational culture is not positively aligned and if managers are not equipped with the skills to do so.

4. Appropriate physical environment

The events of the past year have placed a laser-sharp focus on the importance of society and the impact that we have on the world. The heightened awareness of our environment, along with the realised benefits of reduced travel on air quality and emissions are increasingly key drivers for employees when considering where they work.

7%

of employees who struggled with their wellbeing, cited climate change as a non-work factor.³⁴

WHAT IF YOUR JOB WAS GOOD FOR YOU?

The events of the past year have placed a laser-sharp focus on the importance of society and the impact that we have on the world. The heightened awareness of our environment, along with the realised benefits of reduced travel on air quality and emissions are increasingly key drivers for employees when considering where they work.

People who work in environments with natural elements, such as greenery or natural light, report 15% higher wellbeing than those who don't.³⁵

As humans, we have an innate connection with the natural world, therefore connecting with nature is a core strand of wellbeing. Workplaces and urban landscapes are increasingly prioritising designs that aim to strengthen our connection with nature - recognising nature's restorative power. The benefits of green designs in both home-offices, workspaces and our surroundings include improved concentration, creativity, performance and wellbeing.³⁶

The importance of nature and the environment to employee wellbeing has been increasingly demonstrated in literature such as the [BITC Power of Nature for employee wellbeing report](#). With both employee demand and new ways of working, the opportunity to connect employee wellbeing and the environment has never been stronger.

23%

decrease in sick leave in employees with a view of nature.³⁷

15%

increase in productivity when office spaces are enhanced with plants.³⁸

Studies have even shown we have a physiological response to our work environment, with green workspaces lowering cortisol levels and heart rates.³⁹ Features such as living walls, water features, plants or pictures of greenery are no

longer seen as an aesthetic benefit but a core component of an organisation's health and wellbeing strategy. Access to green space such as parklands are beneficial and further benefits to mental and physical health can be realised through encouraging walking meetings.

Architects, ergonomists and environmental psychologists contribute to our understanding of how our workspace drives wellbeing and performance. Discussions have usually happened in silos but as we emerge from the pandemic, there is a unique opportunity to come together and leverage diverse expertise to create workspaces that are truly innovative and support our new ways of working. Ambient factors such as light, temperature, air quality and noise remain the key drivers of employee wellbeing and performance so must not be forgotten, however painted walls, places to have coffee and lunch, quiet work areas, collaboration spaces, wellness suites, internal staircases, sit stand work desks and working amenities are taken as a sign of appreciation for employees and value placed upon them. As many organisations repurpose office space, social connection and collaboration will be at the core.

Across the last year, the number of those employees working from home increased from 14% in 2019 to 43% in 2020.⁴⁰ It is clear going forward that most organisations will be continuing to facilitate a more flexible or hybrid form of working, when work is about outputs and outcomes rather than where or when it happens. While working from home may bring benefits to some groups of employees, specifically those with neurodiverse conditions and chronic illnesses,⁴¹ it is vital that we remember that working from home is not safe or desirable for everyone. For the two million men and women who experience domestic abuse, the workplace must remain a place of safety and security.⁴²

74%

of CFOs plan to move permanently to increased telework post pandemic.⁴³

Examples of best practice in this area:

- Whether working from home or in the workplace, adopting consistent and appropriate standards for the conditions under which employees should be working will ensure alignment with your values of equity and appreciation.
- The 'office' is likely now to be a place that focused on social connection and collaboration, and therefore providing a space that facilitates this will be a focus – think of the workplace as a 'destination with a purpose'.

"WE NEED TO PROVIDE A POSITIVE WORKING ENVIRONMENT – PEOPLE WILL NEED TO BE PERSUADED TO INVEST IN THEIR COMMUTE."

David Taylor, Group Commercial Director, Costain

- Include nature and the environment into the narrative around physical workspaces, whether that be providing access to windows and increasing pro-environmental behaviours or 'greening' the physical environment for all. Further, there is evidence to show that incorporating plants, water and wood into working environments can support wellbeing.
- When planning how your workplace may change, consider the impacts on individuals to ensure that none are left behind – for instance, how will there be shared inclusion across the team if three work remotely in a team and three are in the office? The demographics of the workplace may change, and your design will need to reflect this.

CASE STUDY | ANGLIAN WATER

[Read how Anglian Water have integrated connection to nature into their new ways of working programme.](#)

- Working remotely has provided great insight for many, with individuals able to see senior managers in their own environments and vice versa. Consider how your physical environment could build upon this further.

5. Measuring, monitoring and taking action.

"WHAT GETS MEASURED, GETS MANAGED."

Louise Aston, Wellbeing Director, Business in the Community

It is clear that the pandemic has created a momentum for organisations to take a more preventative approach to managing health and wellbeing.

77%

of organisations use surveys and focus groups to identify the causes of ill health (up from 61% in 2020).⁴⁴

65%

use risk assessments and stress audits to manage stress and mental ill-health (up from 52% in 2020).⁴⁵

That said, nearly one in five organisations are not taking steps to identify and reduce stress, and less than half (40%) have a written stress policy or guidance.⁴⁶ Organisations are likely to have annual employee surveys (some of which include measures of wellbeing), or data collection following an incident, but do not have a consistent and targeted approach to monitoring, or a set of objectives, targets or policy statements around which to focus these assessments. Only through a clear understanding of the situation within your business can you continue to provide good jobs, building organisational resilience to continue to deliver improvements in working lives.

CASE STUDY | DELOITTE

[Read how Deloitte use employee feedback and measurement to shape the support they provide for employees.](#)

workload, job control, working relationships, or just the outcomes?

“WHAT IS THE AWARENESS OF SENIOR MANAGEMENT OF THE WORK THAT HAS BEEN CREATED AND THE CAPACITY FOR THAT WORK TO BE DELIVERED?”

[Dr Chris Tomkins, Head of Wellbeing, AXA](#)

- Consider measures to capture strengths in the organisation such as wellbeing and engagement – how could you continue to build on these positives?

“FOR THE FIRST TIME EVER IN OUR SURVEY WE COLLECTED DATA ON MENTAL HEALTH. SUDDENLY WE HAVE THIS INCREDIBLE DATA SOURCE THAT WE CAN TALK ABOUT.”

[Sara Flanagan, UK Head of Wellbeing, Deloitte](#)

- Consult your employees around the best metrics to work with, for instance developing KPIs at a local level. There is no one set of metrics that is right for all and what you have in your ‘dashboard’ will depend on your organisational culture and context.

“CONSIDER BOTH WHAT YOU WANT TO MEASURE AND WHY AND HOW YOU WANT TO USE IT. IT MAY BE THAT THERE ARE MEASURES YOU CURRENTLY GATHER WHICH YOU ARE NOT USING EFFECTIVELY OR PAYING ATTENTION TO.”

Examples of best practice in this area:

- Create a plan for measurement and monitoring of health and wellbeing with clear accountability and feedback at each level of the organisation – in the same way that you would for physical health risk; ensuring that this is reviewed at a senior level. Work towards publicly reporting your mental health records.
- Look at your productivity metrics with a wellbeing lens. Consider the extent to which you take an output focused approach, holding your employees accountable for what they deliver rather than the hours of work that gets done. Is this knowledge aligned in your productivity metrics?

“BUSINESSES NEED TO UNDERSTAND PEOPLE AS DRIVERS OF VALUE AND NOT JUST SOURCES OF COST, AND WELLBEING IS CRITICAL TO ENHANCING VALUE.”

[Peter Cheese, CEO, The Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development](#)

- Almost all organisations measure absence, and most have a staff survey, but how is, for instance, excessive workload managed? Are your metrics tapping into the causes of ill health, for example the experience of

Dr Wolfgang Seidl, Leader Workplace Health Consulting UK and Europe, Mercer Marsh Benefits

- Move to a consistent, continuous approach to measurement rather than an annual or reactive where measurement becomes part of standard operations; focusing on gathering and acting upon feedback.
- Be careful of being too metric heavy. Quantitative data alone will not tell the whole story – it tends to give you ‘what’ data but not ‘why’ or ‘how’. Examples of qualitative data include focus groups, listening circles, employee forums, skip level meetings.

How do you maintain good jobs in your business?

“WE NEED TO MAINTAIN WELLBEING AS A STRATEGIC PRIORITY AND CONTINUE TO CHALLENGE OURSELVES ON WHAT MORE WE NEED TO BE DOING TO SUPPORT THE MENTAL HEALTH OF OUR COLLEAGUES. WE’VE MADE GREAT STRIDES TO EMBED WELLBEING IN THE CULTURE OF OUR ORGANISATION, BUT WE KNOW THIS PROGRESS CAN SOON BE DIMINISHED IF WE REMOVE OUR FOCUS.”

Holly Pearce, Senior Manager, Group Disability Team, Lloyds Banking Group

Employees say that their organisations have shown more authenticity, trust, appreciation and compassion across the pandemic than before: in their correspondence, their practices and their conversations. It is important not to lose sight of that fact that this is not the norm. Pre-pandemic, employees did not necessarily feel that organisational ‘warmth’.

47%

of employees find HR considerate of their wellbeing.⁴⁷

41%

see their CEO as considerate of their wellbeing.⁴⁸

35%

of employees see their CEO as not being very considerate or not being at all considerate of their wellbeing.⁴⁹

Aligning your activities and values in a systematic way will give you the best chance of creating and sustaining good jobs for all and achieving your overall purpose of a responsible organisation, best placed to manage future challenges.

The table below gives some examples of questions for organisations to test and learn whether they have achieved the five enablers and organisational values that underpin better work.

VALUES	EXAMPLES OF QUESTIONS UNDER EACH FACTOR				
	Open dialogue & feedback	Collaborative individual focused approach	Focus on relationships (esp. manager)	Positive physical environment	Measuring & monitoring
Empathy & compassion	Do you recognise the difficulty some people have in sharing, and meet this with empathy and compassion?	Do you consider the needs of both the business and the individual?	Do you start from the position of wanting the best for the other person?	Are you aware of the environments in which your employees live and work?	Are employees given the right not to share data? Are employees enabled to share their positive and negative experiences of their working life?
Inclusivity & equity	What more could be done to hear diverse voices?	Are your policies and practices clear, flexible, and able to accommodate individuals with different needs?	Have managers been equipped with the knowledge and resources to have inclusive conversations?	Where do your employees work best? How do they differ in their workplace needs?	Have you monitored and analysed the data on differential impacts across groups?
Trust & appreciation	Are promises kept to employees? Is feedback encouraged and rewarded?	Do your leaders trust their employees and do they know what matters to them?	How are employees recognised and congratulated for good work?	Can your employees choose where to work, in spaces that they feel they can do their best work?	Do you look beyond cost and reach and include metrics such as trust and appreciation?
Authenticity	Is there a culture of open and honest communication? Are your policies (such as disclosure) aligned with practice?	Do you call out when and why decisions need to be made that might go against individual needs?	Are behaviours and expectations role modelled by senior managers?	Do you prioritise appropriate working environments both at home and in the workplace?	Are you clear and transparent about how activities are measured and monitored?

OUR CALLS TO ACTION

We have a unique opportunity to tear down assumptions and transform our traditional practices to reimagine ways of working and create jobs that allow people to thrive. Work is not about where we work but about what we do and how we do it – whether that be at home or in the workplace.

We encourage all business leaders to make the [Mental Health at Work Commitment](#) as a public declaration that you prioritise mental health at work. [BITC's Workwell Model](#) provides a framework on 'how' to implement the Commitment, while this report specifically supports the implementation of Standard 2 of the Mental Health at Work Commitment, to 'proactively ensure work design and organisational culture drive positive mental health outcomes'.

The future of putting people first is about realising the power and value of your people. Organisations that put people first will thrive as they emerge from the pandemic. Not just because it is a clear way to improve productivity and address issues of absenteeism, presenteeism and leaveism but because it is the right thing to do, the compassionate thing to do, for the benefit of society at large. This work has identified **two calls to action for business**.

EMPLOYER CALLS TO ACTION:

- Achieve parity between the management of physical health and safety and mental health and safety with an open and accountable culture.
- Enable employees to create their own 'good jobs' supported by managers and aligned with organizational practices and policies.

In your organisation, would a physical injury be responded to in the same way as a psychological injury? Moving beyond disconnected initiatives and mental health awareness training, seize the opportunity to step forward, challenging your policies, practices and culture around wellbeing and creating lines of accountability through monitoring and reporting. By encouraging an open

dialogue and feedback across the organisations and at all levels, employees will be at the heart of the change. Rather being process led, active participation will empower employees to share in the responsibility and accountability for managing wellbeing; whether that be in preventing mental health risks and hazards, or by highlighting and addressing them. The aim is to enable employees to anticipate, avoid and call out mental health risks with the same level of comfort, trust, openness, and clarity as they would with physical health risks and hazards.

Principles to guide action:

1. **Challenge** the extent to which what you expect and ask of your workers (for instance working hours, working conditions) is considerate of the impact on their wellbeing and aligned with your organisational policies and practices.
2. **Measure** and monitor wellbeing with clear objectives and accountability at each level in a way that is integrated with core business metrics; working towards an aim of publicly describing activities and reporting your success.
3. **Communicate wellbeing as a priority** widely in all correspondence, consistently and through a number of media and channels.
4. **Role model** open dialogue about mental health across the business: from board level lived experience narratives, to wellbeing focused points in each team meeting.

CASE STUDY | BIRMINGHAM CITY COUNCIL

[Read about the powerful impact of the Director of Public Health at Birmingham City Council speaking openly about the impact of the pandemic on his personal health and wellbeing during weekly 'Yam Jams' on Yammer.](#)

5. Develop a dialogue approach to gaining feedback, moving away from annual measurements, to more of a consistent, open, and iterative approach. Create opportunities across the business and across functional, hierarchical, and demographic levels to gain qualitative and quantitative feedback from employees about their experiences of psychological risk and hazards.
6. Equip managers and employees with the skills, knowledge and abilities to recognise and manage psychological risks and hazards; and with templates from which to have open conversations.

“THOSE ORGANISATIONS THAT WILL FLOURISH ARE THOSE THAT ARE AS PASSIONATE ABOUT EMPLOYEE EXPERIENCE AS THEY ARE ABOUT CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE. THE MINUTE YOU SEE YOUR EMPLOYEES AS CONSUMERS, WHO HAVE A CHOICE TO WORK WITHIN YOUR BUSINESS OR NOT, IS THE MINUTE THAT YOU REFRAME YOUR MODEL IN HOW YOU TREAT THEM”

Mark Allan, Commercial Director, Bupa UK Insurance

The pandemic has afforded business leaders access into the lives of their employees; increasing awareness of the variety of pressures, responsibilities, environments and conditions in which they work, and building empathy. Managers have seen the benefits of working in a more human, relational way, appreciating the intersectionality that each employee brings to the role, while millions of people have been afforded the flexibility to work around personal demands.

There is an opportunity to harness this momentum, furthering this individual focused approach by empowering employees to co-create better jobs, supported by their managers, and aligned with organisational practices and policies.

Principles to guide action:

1. **Extend greater autonomy to line managers**, empowering them to make local-level decisions on working arrangements with their employees. Training and resource allocation will reinforce this approach.
2. Provide an appropriate working environment for all employees, wherever they work. Within that, enable employees to use a menu approach to individualise their preferred working arrangements, such as physical place of work, working hours and access to nature.
3. **Use this time of transition to encourage experimentation.** Provide opportunities for employees to try new ways of working and be part of an innovative, iterative, and open approach to transformation. Involve employees in the planning of your new ways of working to build good jobs together.

Where do we go from here?

This report represents the beginning of an understanding, but we can't achieve change on our own. We want to build a collective, progressive movement to create good jobs for all, recognising the bumpy road ahead. Join us to move from this starting point to accumulating knowledge and evidence of what works. Be a part of this journey.

Publicly demonstrate your commitment to [action](#), transform mental health and wellbeing at work.

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- [learn more about our advisory services](#)
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Talk to one of our expert team [today](#) to learn how membership of BITC can help you take your responsible business journey further, and drive lasting global change.

WHAT IF YOUR JOB WAS GOOD FOR YOU? CASE STUDIES AND VIDEOS

CASE STUDIES

[Anglian Water Group: ways of working to enhance wellbeing](#)

[Birmingham City Council: promoting and protecting wellbeing](#)

[Costain: enabling employees to create their own 'good jobs'](#)

[Deloitte: ways of working that enhance wellbeing](#)

[EMCOR UK: creating good jobs through open dialogue](#)

[Proctor and Gamble: ways of working that enhance wellbeing](#)

[RHA Wales: enabling employees to co-create their own 'good jobs'](#)

[Royal Mail Group: because healthy minds matter](#)

[Santander: promoting employee wellbeing and inclusion](#)

VIDEOS

[Supporting employee wellbeing at Anglian Water](#)

[Safeguarding employees experiencing domestic abuse](#)

[Supporting colleagues affected by bereavement at Royal Mail](#)

[Everyday inclusion at Santander](#)

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