

Mental wellbeing.  
Done well.

# Building a proactive & preventative mental wellbeing strategy.

Blueprint

unmind

# Foreword

It's been almost two years since Lord Dennis Stevenson and Paul Farmer published their independent review of mental health and employers, *Thriving at Work*. The paper has become an important reference point for companies across the world as they realise the positive impact that they can have in helping their workforce keep mentally well.

The challenge for these companies is to move from that awareness to real action, and this is the area covered in this excellent blueprint from Unmind. Based on real-world experience, in-depth clinical understanding and strong corporate relationships, they share eight important considerations in making proactive mental wellbeing programmes work. From getting the right tone of voice to catering to a diverse range of life experiences, this paper provides a compelling guide to anyone on the journey to a successful mental health strategy.

Importantly, it demonstrates how organisations can provide employees with the right care at the right time by taking a proactive and preventative approach to mental wellbeing. I thoroughly recommend it to you all.



**Sir Ian Cheshire,**  
Campaign Chairman, Heads Together

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of a stylized 'I' followed by a long horizontal stroke.

# Getting the right care at the right time.

In our personal lives, we brush our teeth for a few minutes a day to improve our dental hygiene and visit the dentist for regular checkups.

In our professional lives, we take advantage of subsidised gym memberships to improve our physical wellbeing and visit the doctor when experiencing aches or pains.

Be it dental, physical, financial or social; we aspire to take a proactive and preventative approach towards our wellbeing, maximising our ability to thrive whilst seeking immediate support when problems arise.

**Ultimately, we always aspire to get the right care at the right time. So, why can't the same be said for mental health?**



Prevention



Reaction

# Moving from 1 in 4 to 4 in 4.

It's estimated that 9 in 10 workers in the UK have been affected by mental ill-health<sup>1</sup>. Two-thirds report having had a personal experience, and even more state that someone close to them, such as a family member, friend or colleague have experienced mental ill-health.

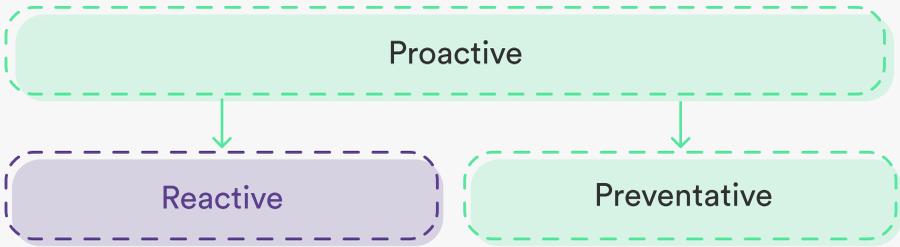
The impact that mental ill-health has on the lives of those it touches cannot be easily quantified; however, the effect on the economy is now better understood. A detailed study by Deloitte in 2017<sup>2</sup>, created in conjunction with the 2017 Stevenson & Farmer Thriving at Work<sup>3</sup> report, found that mental ill-health costs the UK economy £74-99 billion per year due to lost output.

For UK employers the figure is a staggering £33-43bn per year, split across absenteeism (£8bn), presenteeism (£21bn) and staff turnover (£8bn) - this is between £1,205 and £1,560 per employee per year.

According to the latest research from AON Employee Benefits, only two out of five organisations have a formal mental wellbeing strategy in place<sup>4</sup>, and for those that do, there is still significant room for improvement. Just half of the respondents to the 2019 CIPD Health and Wellbeing report believe that their organisation is effective at supporting staff with mental ill-health or that it actively promotes good mental wellbeing<sup>5</sup>.

## **A contributing factor to these findings?**

Organisations tend to focus solely on providing reactive support.



A sole focus on reactive support feeds into the stigma surrounding mental health and results in poor uptake and engagement of initiatives. Typical EAP usage can range anywhere from 2-4%, and this doesn't correlate with the 1 in 4 that are living with mental ill-health in any given year<sup>6</sup>.

Providing reactive support to those in need, while vital, is just one part of the puzzle. We know that prevention is better than cure, so how do we engage everyone in the workplace to understand, nurture, and celebrate their mental wellbeing? It is not a case of prevention vs reaction; it's about providing employees with the right care at the right time.

Over the next year, 80% of employers will be looking to improve education, awareness and prevention on health-related issues, and this correlates with the 80% of employees that now expect better awareness and handling of mental health problems<sup>4</sup>. Organisations and their people appreciate the importance of good mental health - it's time to take action.

The Deloitte study goes on to estimate that 'mental health awareness' and 'proactive interventions' can result in an ROI of up to £8.4 for every £1 spent. 'Reactive support' can result in an ROI of up to £5.1 for every £1 spent. The evidence suggests that providing a holistic approach is not only good for the mental wellbeing of the workforce; it's also good for business.

**So, what needs to be considered when building a proactive and preventative mental wellbeing strategy?**

# Tone.

## Use aspirational and engaging messaging

Communicating mental health as something aspirational and relevant to everyone is crucial to reducing stigma and improving employee engagement within organisations.

Traditionally, mental health as a ‘brand’ has suffered from the perception that it is synonymous with mental ill-health - with struggling and hopelessness. We’ve also become accustomed to black-and-white pictures of an individual with their head in their hands. This doom and gloom narrative is off-putting for those who do not identify with it, and this only hinders our ability to de-stigmatise the topic.

It is now widely acknowledged that mental health exists on a spectrum: on one end are individuals who are engaged and thriving, and on the other those who may be struggling or simply surviving. Regardless, we all sit on this spectrum, and it’s vital that we all aspire to maintain or improve our mental wellbeing whilst recognising and supporting those around us.

Adapting the terminology or tone that we use can have a significant impact on perception. It can be as simple as using more inclusive terms like calmness, coping and happiness instead of just anxiety, stress and depression respectively. On top of this, it’s essential to consider the imagery that we use when communicating mental health and wellbeing initiatives. Does the image used really convey the message we want, does it engage the right audience, and will it inspire people to take action?



“Talking about mental health as something to aspire to, rather than to hide from, changes the way that people relate to it, and subsequently determines the way they talk about it elsewhere.”

**Dr. Heather Bolton,**  
Clinical Psychologist, Unmind

# Measurement.

## Empower employees to measure and manage their mental health and wellbeing

Just like we measure our physical health through fitness trackers or our financial health through digital banking apps, measuring our mental wellbeing helps to improve our awareness, understanding, and impact of how we're feeling.

In recent years, science has unearthed a tremendous amount about the role emotions play in our lives. Researchers have found that, more so than IQ, our emotional awareness and ability to manage feelings plays an enormous role in our overall success and happiness in all walks of life, including family relationships, friendships and work.

Mental health assessments and mood journals enable employees to become more self-aware of feelings, and to better understand how subtle variations can affect their everyday wellbeing. Tracking these changes over time allows people to identify triggers, and ultimately empowers them to make more informed choices about how best to respond.

Digital mental health tools offer a scalable way to empower every employee with the ability to measure and manage their mental wellbeing. When considering such tools, it's critical to assess the confidentiality, anonymity, and scientific validity of the offering to ensure that employees feel comfortable engaging with such initiatives.

# 76%

of people would be interested in using their mobile phone for self-management and self-monitoring of mental health <sup>11</sup>



# Variety.

## Cater to a diverse range of needs and preferences

Our mental health and wellbeing are diverse, vibrant and ever-changing.

One size doesn't fit all, and what works for one individual might not work for another. From sleep and focus to parenting and body image, there is a vast range of topics and experiences that will be relevant to your organisation. While some might be more applicable to your workforce at large, it is important to provide variety and choice – our mental wellbeing is a fluid experience and changes throughout our lives.

For any organisation, it's also essential to consider how a diverse population will result in different preferences, requirements and outcomes. Are your initiatives globally relevant and culturally neutral?

How information and resources are presented is another essential factor to consider. Using a mixture of text, audio, video, and in-person interactions provides a well-rounded approach that can cater to a variety of different needs, increase employee engagement, and maximise overall learnings.



"With such a diverse workforce it's essential that our mental wellbeing initiatives cater to a broad range of circumstances and needs. We also aim to accommodate different preferences when it comes to how our Partners wish to interact with services - be it digital or face to face - and allow Partners to have options where possible."

**Yulia O'Mahony,**  
Head of D&I and Wellbeing

JOHN LEWIS  
PARTNERSHIP

# Credibility.

## Ensure initiatives are designed by experts in their respective fields

With so much information available it can be overwhelming and challenging to know where to turn. Harnessing expert insights from experienced clinicians and academics allows organisations to provide credible, reliable support, without building everything from scratch.

While not every initiative will be evidence-based it's important, where applicable, to assess the scientific validity of any offering and dig into the data where available. It's been shown that only a small proportion of the thousands of mental health applications are backed by clinical evidence<sup>8</sup>.

Speaking with the existing users of any proposed initiative, or those with subject expertise, can help to ensure that the services, resources, and support being provided to employees will ultimately be of benefit and not lead to misinformation or unintentional harm.

"There's so much advice out there about wellbeing, it can be hard to know who to trust. As a clinical psychologist, I feel it's paramount that wellbeing initiatives are underpinned by scientific evidence."

**Dr. Hazel Harrison,**  
Clinical Psychologist, ThinkAvellana



# Accessibility.

**Ensure that employees have access to services anytime, anywhere**

We all have mental health, all of time, so it's critical our workforces can access resources and support whenever necessary, regardless of department, role, or location.

Delivering in-person training for everyone will continue to be a challenge for most organisations. The adoption of remote and flexible working policies continues to affect how employees interact with their workplace, it's therefore crucial that alternative channels of communication are optimised. The rise in smartphone usage provides an exciting opportunity for employees around the world to proactively support and improve their mental wellbeing at any time.

A digital approach not only opens up access to the entire workforce it also importantly allows the workforce to engage with resources however and whenever they want. This might be an employee on maternity leave who can access valuable resilience training via their smartphone, or a remote worker who requires access to their EAP whilst travelling. Either way, a digital offering provides freedom and flexibility to employees and increases uptake, utilisation, and ongoing engagement.



"People expect to be able to access products and services at any time wherever they are – a wellbeing strategy that doesn't meet these expectations is just not going to work in a digital world"

Ed Airey,  
Group Reward Director

*William* **HILL**

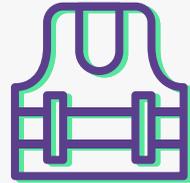
# Signposting.

## Direct employees to reactive support when necessary

In both physical health and mental health, our ability to access the right care at the right time is absolutely critical for our future wellbeing and recovery. That's why it's so important to bridge the gap between preventative and reactive initiatives within the workplace; ensuring that employees can easily understand and quickly access the relevant support for any given moment.

A recent report from the We Need to Talk Coalition<sup>9</sup> argues for the importance of both timely help and a sense of choice in treatment - both of which lead to better outcomes. For your organisation, this might include instant access to your EAP or occupational health services at the tap of a button, or it could be providing a list of helplines and charities that offer critical support. Likewise, it might simply be creating a basic directory of internal mental wellbeing champions so colleagues can easily contact them.

An early intervention is the most effective intervention. A proactive approach enables employees to spot common symptoms - in themselves and those around them - as early as possible, provides them with the necessary language to ask for help, and empowers them with transparent sources of support to take appropriate action.



# 2%

of employees sought help from an EAP when experiencing symptoms of poor mental health <sup>10</sup>

# 56%

of employees said no action was taken when they last experienced symptoms of poor mental health <sup>10</sup>

# Visibility.

## Combine a top down and bottom up approach to communication

Sharing stories and de-stigmatising the topic of mental health has a significant impact on awareness, perception, and engagement. We, humans, love stories, and the ability to connect or empathise with someone else's journey is very powerful.

Wellbeing champions and guardians play a significant part in communicating mental health initiatives of organisations up and down the country. On top of this, senior leaders and employees who share their stories are creating an important culture of openness and vulnerability, helping others to understand, appreciate, and embrace their unique circumstances.

Depending on the organisation, reaching a distributed workforce can be a challenge, and so it's important to ensure that any new mental health initiative is accompanied by a well-coordinated communications strategy. Digital signage and posters in the office, coupled with emails and newsletters, are invaluable to reaching everyone with an important message.

It's also essential that such a communication strategy doesn't just revolve around key dates like Mental Health Awareness Week. There needs to be an always-on approach to ensure that employees are continually reminded of the support, tools, and networks available to them



# 33%

of employees agree that senior leaders encourage a focus on mental wellbeing through their actions and behaviour.<sup>5</sup>

# Data.

## Use data and insights to influence your wider strategy

If you can't measure something, it's hard to improve it. Insightful and actionable data sits at the heart of any progressive strategy; mental health and wellbeing should be no different.

Historically, organisations have focused solely on problems – for example, absenteeism, staff turnover, or EAP usage. While valuable, it's essential to take a holistic approach when reviewing your organisation's mental health and wellbeing data.

Ideally, you should have data and insights around uptake, engagement, outcomes, improvements, and the collective wellbeing of your organisation; allowing you to track and understand the impact of any new initiative.

Having a real-time dashboard of how your organisation is feeling helps you make more informed decisions about your broader mental health strategy, enabling you to make more effective decisions about how improve it.

Furthermore, knowing how your organisation benchmarks against others in your industry or market can help to identify solutions, ideas, or strategies for the future.

# 69%

of employers are now looking to access available data sources to guide their decision-making process and measure impact.<sup>4</sup>

“It's important for us to understand how our employees across the globe are thinking and feeling, and the resources they're tapping into most. With these insights, we tailor our communications to ensure that we're continually meeting the needs of our people.”

**Sophie Warren,**  
Culture Architect



# Summary

As you shape your proactive & preventative approach to mental wellbeing, it's important to consider the following:

- 1. Tone** → USE ASPIRATIONAL AND ENGAGING MESSAGING
- 2. Measurement** → EMPOWER EMPLOYEES TO MEASURE AND MANAGE THEIR MENTAL HEALTH AND WELLBEING
- 3. Variety** → CATER TO A DIVERSE RANGE OF NEEDS AND PREFERENCES
- 4. Credibility** → ENSURE INITIATIVES ARE DESIGNED BY EXPERTS IN THEIR RESPECTIVE FIELDS
- 5. Accessibility** → ENSURE THAT EMPLOYEES HAVE ACCESS TO SERVICES ANYTIME, ANYWHERE
- 6. Signposting** → DIRECT EMPLOYEES TO REACTIVE SUPPORT WHEN NECESSARY
- 7. Visibility** → COMBINE A TOP DOWN AND BOTTOM UP APPROACH TO COMMUNICATION
- 8. Data** → USE DATA AND INSIGHTS TO INFLUENCE YOUR WIDER STRATEGY

We all have mental health, all of the time, and being proactive empowers us to understand, nurture, and celebrate our unique kaleidoscope of personal circumstances.

# About Unmind

Unmind is a workplace mental health platform. We empower organisations and employees to measurably improve their mental wellbeing.



## What gets measured gets managed.

Enable employees to assess, understand and track their mental wellbeing over time. Empower your organisation with aggregated, anonymous, real-time data to improve decision-making.



## Clinically-backed approach.

We work with the world's top clinicians, academics and authors; combining the latest research from positive psychology, cognitive behavioural therapy, neuroscience, and mindfulness.



## The right care, at the right time.

Proactively cater to the needs and preferences of your entire workforce. From sleep and coping through to parenting and body image, we provide tools and training across the entire spectrum of mental health.



## Anytime, anywhere, any device.

Our digital platform provides anonymous, confidential resources and support for every employee. Importantly, Unmind is available anytime, anywhere, and on any device.

## Featured clients

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FARFETCH

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Ready to find out more?  
Book a demo today.

[www.unmind.com](http://www.unmind.com)



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