

BEST HEALTH AND WELLBEING STRATEGY

WINNER

FIRST BUS

First Bus' sustainable approach to workforce wellbeing stood out for its scale and reach. The strategy was hailed for its holistic design and tangible impact.

With a workforce of 17,500 employees, including 13,000 drivers, the bus company set out to ensure that wellbeing was meaningful and accessible to all. To address rising workplace pressures and a need to build workforce resilience, the First Bus team wanted to embed wellbeing into the core of organisational culture. This involved shifting from reactive models to preventative practices that addressed physical, mental and emotional health.

The strategy was created in partnership with employees, occupational health leaders, people teams, inclusion networks, mental health first aiders and union representatives. This joined-up approach connected health, safety, inclusion and engagement.

Initiatives within the strategy included the expansion of mental health first aiders to one in 50 staff members over 18 months, and using information and awareness zones to educate employees on topics like sleep, menopause, diabetes and prostate health. Leaders introduced mandatory mental health champion training for all line managers, and brought



HIGHLY COMMENDED

- Sony Music Entertainment UK

SHORTLISTED

- Bupa
- Caravan and Motorhome Club
- Centrica x Benifex
- North East Ambulance Service in partnership with Talk Works
- Veolia UK
- Westmorland and Furness Council

in an improved employee assistance programme too, acting on previous employee feedback.

To address employees' physical wellbeing, kiosks were set up in 16 depots to provide health checks. Anonymous kiosks informed First Bus' wellbeing priorities, which included offering free flu vaccinations, thyroid and glucose testing, and The Great First Bus Expedition walking campaign.

As part of a broader nutrition campaign, leaders rolled out food tasting tables and education across 42 depots, to help staff make healthier food choices. The team addressed financial wellbeing by introducing 'money first aiders', along with increased benefits such as free mortgage advice, Costco

membership and the launch of cashback and GP appointment schemes.

To promote social wellbeing, First Bus used its inclusion networks to raise awareness and boost engagement in activities creating team connection. Leaders also boosted the organisation's partnerships with Strut Safe, which has a phone line for people who are out alone at night, and violence prevention charity White Ribbon.

Judges noted the wide breadth and reach of the First Bus team's strategy, as well as its dramatically improved impact: the team achieved a 320% increase in engagement with its wellbeing resources.

General employee engagement and morale also improved at the business since the strategy's introduction, driving better customer service, reduced absence and better retention, as well as more resilient and focused staff, which supports operational safety and reliability. By weaving wellbeing into the fabric of its culture and operations, First Bus has highlighted how to create a sustainable foundation for long-term workforce health.

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