



TOOLKIT

Creating a joined-up workplace wellbeing toolkit

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Why a joined-up approach matters

Whether employers are just starting to offer specific mental health resources or already have a range of benefits in their toolkit, most organisations are now clear on the business case for supporting mental health in the workplace.

Just having a selection of resources, however, may not be the most efficient or comprehensive solution for your business. Whilst plenty of organisations already have offerings in place, they may be seeing lower engagement rates than expected.

Having an interconnected web of resources means that individuals will be able to find the appropriate support for their unique needs. This is why taking a joined-up approach is important, as it will ensure that you have all the resources you need to support employees, and escalate further when needed, without unnecessary spend and overlap.

The stages of creating a comprehensive mental wellbeing strategy

There is a five-stage journey that organisations can take when approaching employee mental health:

Stage 1: At the beginning of the journey, organisations may have some basic offerings in place, such as an EAP, that have been implemented organically.

Stage 2: Leaders within the organisation recognise the need for a joined-up approach and will begin gathering insights to inform decisions.

Stage 3: Whilst in the process of a systematic review, organisations will start to create a framework that forms the foundations of their wellbeing strategy.

Stage 4: The organisation adjusts existing provisions and add more that build their toolkit.

Stage 5: The organisation has made the improvements and created a joined-up pathway of support services. At the final stage, organisations continually review processes and services in order to ensure they're the most efficient and effective for the business.

Every company is at a different stage in their journey. Showing support for your employees' mental health at any stage can reduce prevalent business issues, such as absenteeism and the ever-growing levels of presenteeism.

Assess what support you want to provide for mental health and wellbeing and how this will fit with your organisation's culture

During stage one of the process, businesses are considering the aims and objectives they are looking to meet when supporting their employees' mental health. Having a fully-formed idea of what your goals are, and how you can achieve them, will help to drive your approach.

Some tips to consider:

- Think about whether you need to focus first on awareness, education, breaking down stigmas, or building a company culture of open discussion on mental health. Each of these tasks will require different approaches and resource allocation.
- Consider the different work populations in your organisation. Do you have production as well as office-based workers? Think about how your approach to wellbeing will meet the separate needs of the populations but can still be joined-up and relevant to all.



Use feedback and data to understand your people's needs

The two best sources from which to gain an accurate insight into your business needs for your wellbeing programme are feedback and data.

Some tips to consider:

- Listen to direct feedback from employees – Surveys will help you to understand what kind of wellbeing support your employees are looking for, how needs vary across the organisation, and what you can implement that will help them most. If you as the wellbeing leader are finding it difficult to navigate the solutions that you have on offer, it's likely that your employees will find it hard to engage with them, too.
- Make use of data - Use data to prove that your programme is working and to give lead indicators – for instance around what users are engaging with – not just absence data which is lagging. Data will also help you to work out if you can pull back on some offerings that are less relevant now.

If you base your wellbeing decisions and investments on data and need, it gives you a licence to operate and helps to justify the introduction of new services. It also helps you to say “no” to requests that you know will not be useful to the majority.

Don't try too much, too quickly

At stage three, using both common policies and frameworks can help guide in the best choices of mental health services for your business and how to get them to work together. This helps to ensure consistency as you roll the programme out, whilst also showing that the business is serious about wellbeing. They require the senior buy-in that is needed for programmes to be effective and give you points to be accountable for.

Some tips to consider:

- Try to avoid using frameworks as a checkbox exercise, as this may mean that you disregard other, perhaps more valuable insights, gleaned from your team and HR data in creating your toolkit
- A policy can also provide nudges that help a culture of care to mature. It gives cynics a framework in which to operate. It can also be used to hold leaders to account and identify areas that need improvement or that have been neglected.

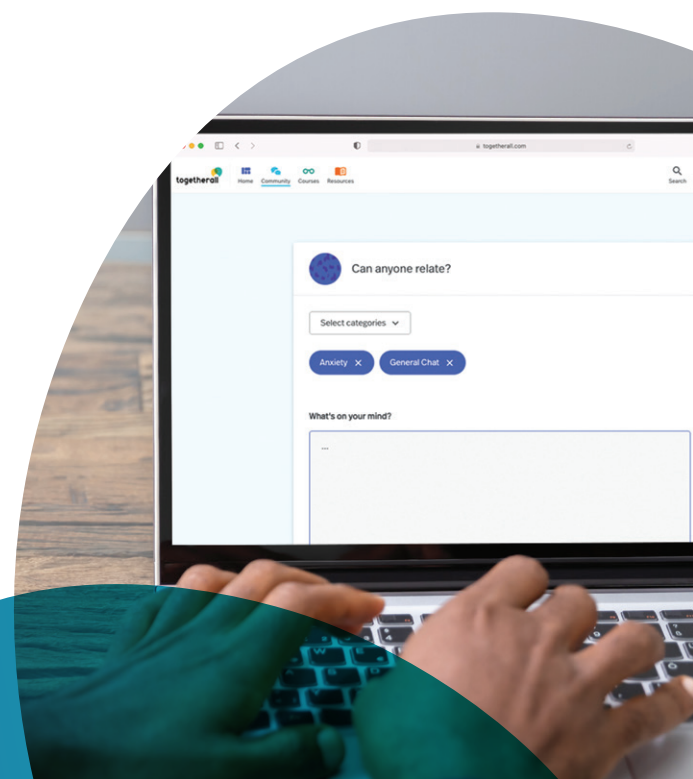
Develop this into a narrative that the organisation can use

As you enter stage four – the implementation phase – issues have been identified and you've chosen the appropriate providers to meet those needs.

A strategy as to how your toolkit can be rolled out and signposted across the whole business is important to ensure that any barriers to access are removed for your team. This sounds simple, but it takes a lot to develop a credible narrative that people will engage with. If you really want to change the way an organisation operates, you must build the change into the day to day of the business.

At this stage, the importance of company culture becomes clear in creating a comprehensive and joined-up employee wellbeing programme.

- When you ask your employees what they need and how they need it, also find out how it is most accessible – is this through physical signposting? Are the support offerings accessible digitally?
- Try to avoid telling people what is good for them, as it does not result in behavioural change and can even cause a backlash from the team.
- Gain support and ideas from people who feel passionate about the agenda, such as mental health champions who can help to spread key messages and provide swift feedback on how initiatives are being received.



Collaborate across the business to increase reach

Employee engagement is a real issue across all facets of business. How can you increase engagement in alignment with your employees' mental health? Involving members from across the business, not just HR, will ensure that engagement rates with your toolkit will be higher.

Some tips to consider:

- If you are a wellbeing leader, connect regularly with HR and Health & Safety and with the leadership teams in different parts of your business.
- Make it clear that you are not asking employees to look at wellbeing on top of their job – you are asking them to do it because it makes the rest of the job easier.
- Tie wellbeing events to a department plan or corporate message; it's important that the business owns it.

Train the leaders

Whilst in the process of implementing a new toolkit, train your leadership team and managers on what to look out for, when to assist, and how to signpost what is available.

One key issue is “accidental managers”; high-achieving employees that are promoted to management positions, but aren't given any guidance on their new role as they progress from delivery-based working to decision-making. This can create a rift between them and their employees, as they're not equipped to deal with any issues should they arise.

Considering that only half (51%) of CIPD surveyed professionals train managers to support staff with mental ill health, there is a clear need for leaders to take accountability for their teams' wellbeing. Wellbeing leaders who are working to create the toolkit should ideally be involved in designing management training programmes, too.

Some tips to consider:

- Line manager capability is critical – there are plenty of these aforementioned ‘accidental managers’ creating or exacerbating stressful work environments for their teams.
- Managers also need to be recruited with empathy in mind. If managers are empathetic and approachable, employees are far more likely to speak up if they're struggling. This could prevent longer-term and more serious mental health issues.
- Keep in mind that your managers may be under a lot of pressure too, so ensure that they have both the resources to redirect their team members should they not have capacity to discuss these issues, and a place for them to go should they also be struggling.

Deliberation, development, and discussion

Any ecosystem starts organically. Then, as it becomes more systematic, businesses start to look at what's needed for it all to work together. This is the natural evolution of the workplace mental health and wellbeing space.