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Employers must act now on workplace wellbeing

Nearly half of all employees (48%) had no wellbeing check-in from their employer in the past year, finds new research among 2,000 workers. The data released by Mental Health First Aid England to mark My Whole Self Day, 18 March 2022, reveals that double the number of employees report that their workplace has failed to check-in on their wellbeing over the past year (48% up from 25% in 2021).

The last 12 months of the pandemic has seen increased reports of mental ill health yet only 27% report receiving a wellbeing check-in from their employer monthly or more. This is less than half the number of workers who reported they had a wellbeing check-in, at least once a month, last year (60%).

Research from the Mental Health Foundation and LSE suggests that mental health problems cost the UK economy at least £118 billion a year. This, coupled with the demands of the pandemic and the many changes to our ways of working over this period, means that now is the time for employers to step up their efforts to better support staff and retain talent. [1]

As more people return to the workplace, employers have the opportunity to revisit their policies to help fuel productivity, reduce sick days, increase retention, and attract new talent. The ONS reports the number of people solely working from home is declining. The return to workplaces gives organisations the chance to change things for the better, yet with hybrid looking to establish itself as the new normal, there won't be a one size fits all solution. [2]

Employers should capitalise on the fact that half of employees surveyed felt most comfortable talking about their mental health face-to-face (47%). They will also need to consider the arrangements needed for remote staff and the one in ten who prefer discussions over Zoom, phone, or WhatsApp (13%).

When asked what initiatives would support their mental health, fully flexible working came out on top for employees. 39% of employees agreed this would have a positive impact on their wellbeing – yet only 20% of people said this was currently on offer at their workplace.

Despite variable efforts from employers, the pandemic has brought some benefits to our workplace wellbeing. Working from home may have given us more insight into each other's lives, as one in four of us feel we can always bring our whole self to work (24%). This is an increase from only 16% of people who felt they could always be their whole self at work pre-pandemic. More of us also feel more comfortable discussing our

workplace mental health, with a third of people (32%) saying they are more comfortable doing so since the pandemic.

Employers need to make the most of these pandemic silver linings and step up their approach. The highest performing workplaces are supportive and inclusive. By putting diversity and inclusion at the centre of mental health and wellbeing, employers can create a culture where people can bring their whole self to work. Doing so, helps people to feel more engaged, to think more boldly, find common ground, and work more effectively together. Regular wellbeing check-ins, ensuring managers have the training and resources they need to support their teams and having trained Mental Health First Aiders in the workplace can help achieve this.

As part of the My Whole Self campaign, Mental Health First Aid England has developed a suite of [free resources](#) to help empower organisations of all sizes to support their staff with regular wellbeing check-ins.

Simon Blake, Chief Executive of Mental Health First Aid (MHFA) England said:

“Employers have really stepped up their understanding of supporting mental health during the pandemic. This is great news and reflected in a range of exciting initiatives and approaches. These must be based on strong foundations of care, sustained over time. Our survey showed that 48% of employees were not receiving regular wellbeing check-ins. This percentage is up, with only 25% of people reporting this a year ago.

If we get the basics right, we can build workplaces where wellbeing and productivity fuel each other. That is why we are encouraging all employers to adopt wellbeing check-ins, as part of a comprehensive strategy. Our free My Whole Self resources offer practical advice to deliver these wellbeing check-ins and wider guidance on improving workplace culture”.

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NOTES TO EDITORS

For interviews or comment, or more information, please contact:

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About the research

- One Poll undertook the research for MHFA England during February 2022 with a nationally representative sample of 2,000 Employed UK Adults
- The year-on-year comparison statistics have been compared against YouGov data also commissioned by MHFA England in February 2021 with a nationally representative sample of 2,000 Employed UK Adults (not on furlough)
- [1] <https://www.lse.ac.uk/News/Latest-news-from-LSE/2022/c-Mar-22/Mental-health-problems-cost-UK-economy-at-least-118-billion-a-year-new->



[research#:~:text=Mental%20health%20problems%20cost%20the,cent%20of%20the%20UK's%20GDP.](#)

- [2] Among working adults, around one in six reported working from home only in the past seven days (15%, 16 to 27 February 2022), continuing the decline since mid-January (26%, 6 to 16 January 2022):
https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/healthandsocialcare/conditionsanddiseases/articles/coronaviruscovid19latestinsights/lifestyle#home_working

About Mental Health First Aid (MHFA) England

- Mental Health First Aid (MHFA) England CIC is a social enterprise, established in 2009
- MHFA England's vision is to improve the mental health of the nation by creating societal change, so we can all talk freely about mental health and offer and seek support when we need it. This will be achieved through its mission to train at least 1:10 of the adult population in mental health knowledge and skills
- To date 1:60 of the adult population is trained in MHFA England knowledge and skills
- MHFA England will achieve its mission by delivering mental health training into workplaces and will extend its reach to the NHS and Black People and People of Colour, through subsidised training
- MHFA England offers a number of face-to-face, online and digital training options to increase mental health awareness, knowledge and skills, including the internationally licensed product, Mental Health First Aid
- Mental Health First Aid is the mental health equivalent of physical first aid training and provides people with the skills and confidence to recognise the signs and symptoms of common mental health issues, start a conversation, and effectively guide a person towards the right support, be that self-help or professional services
- More information about MHFA England and its courses can be found at mhfaengland.org or by emailing info@mhfaengland.org.

About My Whole Self

- My Whole Self is the campaign for workplace culture change from Mental Health First Aid (MHFA) England that aims to create a healthier working culture built on respect and collaboration
- The campaign is backed by business leaders from CBI, Federation of Small Businesses, PRCA and more - it calls on organisations to empower employees to bring their 'whole self' to work
- On 18 March 2022 organisations across the country will take part in My Whole Self Day and share their activities using the hashtag #MyWholeSelf
- Free resources for workplaces, and more information about the campaign, can be accessed at: <https://mhfaengland.org/my-whole-self/>