



Investing In Workplace Health:

An Intelligent
Business Move

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Who is this paper for?

- If you don't think you need a workplace health programme, this paper sets out all the key facts and statistics that should convince you otherwise - spending on health and wellbeing has a clear ROI in business terms.
- If you're interested in workplace health but don't know where to start, this paper will outline for you the major ways in which poor health could be impacting your business, and how investing in workplace health could help.
- If you're already investing in workplace health, this paper will demonstrate the importance of developing a strategy that's tailored to the needs of your organisation and your staff.



To learn more about how Nudjed can help you to develop an effective, tailored health and wellbeing strategy, get in touch:

get.nudjed.com/insights hello@nudjed.com

Introduction

Two thirds of employers are increasing their spending on health and wellness in 2015.

(Edenred, 2015)

In recent years, more and more businesses are recognising the overwhelming benefits of investing in the health of their employees - a [report from Edenred](#) states that **two thirds of employers are increasing their spending on health and wellness in 2015**. New research has demonstrated that effective workplace health programmes are linked to lower absence levels, better retention of staff, and improved engagement. This white paper will discuss the ways in which poor health can have a negative impact on your business, and the clear ROI for workplace health programmes.

According to the [2011 CBI absence survey](#), “employers believe that health issues are the most common factor causing employees to work below their potential capacity.” A [report by Investors In People](#) outlined seven key business benefits of well-executed workplace health programmes:

- Reduced sickness absence
- Reduced accidents at work
- Improved staff retention
- Better employee engagement
- Enhanced productivity
- Employer reputation and brand is boosted
- Employees become more resilient, especially during periods of organisational change.

This report will cover a number of ways in which poor health can have a negative impact on business: mental health issues, musculoskeletal disorders, short term sickness absence, presenteeism, and the implications of an ageing workforce. It will then discuss the ways in which an effective, targeted workplace health programme can work to prevent or alleviate these issues, and the business benefits employers can see as a result.

Mental Health

The Impact on Business

1 in 6 UK adults are dealing with a mental health issue at any given time, and up to **70% of individuals with common mental disorders are in employment** - which means, statistically, it's likely that portion of your workforce are currently experiencing depression, anxiety, stress, and other mental health conditions.

20% of workers have taken a day off, and 10% have resigned from a job, because of stress.

(CIPD, 2011)

15.2 million workdays were lost to mental health-related absence in 2013 - [ACAS guidelines](#) state that mental health problems cost employers in the UK £30 billion a year through lost production, recruitment and absence.

20% of workers have taken a day off because of stress, and 10% have resigned from a job because of stress. In fact, stress is now the leading cause of long term sickness absence.

[CIPD research](#) shows that many of those with mental health issues find it difficult to concentrate, are more likely to get into a conflict with colleagues, find it harder to juggle multiple tasks, and take longer to complete tasks than their co-workers.

Note that these figures exclude mental health issues such as manic depression and schizophrenia, which are classified as serious mental health problems and account for around 1% of sickness absence.



Mental health can be surrounded by a degree of stigma. Simply changing the language you use - for example: mood, happiness, time pressure or work:life balance - can help engage users more effectively.

The Case for Workplace Health

[Research from the mental health charity MIND](#) found that **56% of employers said they would like to do more to improve staff wellbeing**, but feel they don't have the right training or guidance.

Investing in mental wellbeing can have a huge positive impact on staff happiness, engagement and productivity. [Research from the Business in the Community Workwell programme](#) shows that **FTSE 100 companies that prioritise employee engagement and wellbeing outperform the rest of the FTSE 100 by an average of 10%**. As explained in [the MIND report](#), "Good mental health underpins this. By fostering a mentally healthy workplace culture and putting in place the right support, businesses, small and large, find that they are able to achieve peak performance."

78% of employees state that they would stay long term with a company that cared for employees' health and wellbeing needs.

(HR Review, 2015)

Effective workplace health programmes encompass all aspects of employee health, and there is substantial evidence that mental and physical wellbeing are interlinked. **Physical activity is consistently linked with lower levels of depression, anxiety and stress** - so encouraging employees to participate in sports or other physical pursuits can also have a positive impact on mental wellbeing within your organisation.

Wellbeing is also a key factor in retention - [HR Review reports](#) that companies offering employee wellbeing benefits retain more employees, with 78% of survey respondents saying that they would stay long-term with a company that cared for their employee's health needs and well-being.

Steve Hatch, the Managing Director of Facebook UK, has written on the topic of mental health: "As leaders in business, I believe we have a responsibility to improve this situation and to openly support positive wellbeing in the workplace, not only because it creates better business outcomes but also because I can't think of a more rewarding goal of leadership than to help others become all they want to be. It's good for business, it's good for society and selfishly it's hugely fulfilling. **At their heart, all businesses are people businesses.**"

Musculoskeletal Disorders (MSD)

The Impact on Business

Musculoskeletal-related conditions - for example, lower back or joint pain - are the biggest cause of sickness absence in the UK, and make up around 60% of work-related illness. **MSD was responsible for 8.3 million lost workdays in the UK in 2013/14.**

Keyboard work is one of the leading causes of absence related to neck and back pain.

(HSE, 2014)

According to [Health and Safety Executive figures](#), the average worker with a MSD is absent for **16 days per year**. MSD-related injury and absence is not specific to sectors with physical labour requirements - one of the leading causes of absence due to back and neck pain is keyboard work. The repetitive nature of working at a computer is also a major factor in limb and joint problems.



Early intervention is key with MSD's. Raising awareness through internal comms, providing good communication tools for reporting low-level issues, and investing in preventative measures like good ergonomics are all valid strategies.

The Case for Workplace Health

[Research by Fit To Work Europe](#) suggests that **39% of short term absence and 50% of long term absence related to musculoskeletal conditions can be avoided with early intervention.**

*Up to 50% of long term absence related to MSD
is preventable with early intervention.*

(Fit To Work Europe, 2014)

[Employee Benefits Healthcare Research](#) explains that **workplaces that invest in preventative measures see huge improvements in rates of MSD absence.** Some recommended actions include encouraging good posture, providing ergonomic office furniture, and having employees participate in exercise classes such as yoga and pilates.

Short-Term Sickness Absence

The Impact on Business

It's widely accepted that some level of sickness absence is inevitable. The leading cause of sickness absence for non-manual employees is minor illnesses such as colds, flu and other viral illnesses - [government statistics](#) show that **27 million workdays were lost to minor illness in 2013**. Around 30% of all absences are related to these minor illnesses.

Each absent employee costs their employer an average of £975 in sick pay, lost output, and provision of cover.

(CBI, 2013)

[Research from QBE](#) found that **over 70% of senior HR professionals are unaware of the average daily cost of one of their employees being absent**. However, the business impact is clear: according to [CBI research](#), **each absent employee cost their employer an average of £975** in 2012 through a combination of direct costs in sick pay, lost output and provision of cover through temporary staff or overtime.



The things that move the needle here are small and incremental. Good sleep, nutrition and general physical activity all play big roles. Supporting your team to adopt healthy behaviours both inside and outside work is our usual strategy with clients.

The Case for Workplace Health

The [Healthy Workplace Project from Kimberley-Clark](#) suggests that **up to 80% of short term illness absence could be prevented through a combination of good hygiene and improved physical health.** Along with adopting good hand-washing practices and ensuring that workplaces are kept clean, employers can tackle short term sickness absence by promoting employee health.

Up to 80% of short term sickness absence could be prevented with good hygiene and improved physical health.

(Healthy Workplace Project, 2014)

Individuals with a good diet and a healthy body weight have stronger immune systems, and are therefore better at fighting off minor illnesses and viruses. [The US Centre for Disease Control and Prevention](#) reports that **companies that support workplace health see a clear return on investment in reduced absence levels.**

Presenteeism

The Impact on Business

Presenteeism is the practice of attending work while unwell, resulting in reduced productivity and the potential for spreading illness in cases involving colds, flu and other viruses. Unlike sickness absence, levels of sickness presence are significantly linked to job performance - high levels of presenteeism correlate with low performance assessments, reduced psychological well being, and higher levels of absence.

Presenteeism accounts for 1.5 times more working time lost than absenteeism.

(Sainsbury Centre for Mental Health, 2007)

Presenteeism is a growing problem in the UK - **in 2013, 45% of employees reported at least one day of presenteeism.** There are a number of risk factors for presenteeism: being overweight, having a poor diet, high stress levels, low levels of exercise, and poor relationships with co-workers and management. Presenteeism can also be increased by external factors such as work-related stress and perceived pressure to attend work when ill.

[A report from The Work Foundation and AXA Healthcare](#) states that by only measuring absence levels, companies risk underestimating the cost of poor health to business. According to the [Sainsbury Centre for Mental Health](#), the cost of ill health at work and presenteeism could be just as high or even higher. They estimate that **presenteeism accounts for 1.5 times more working time lost than absenteeism**, with the costs to UK employers of reduced productivity due to mental health problems alone estimated at £15.1 billion per year.



Productivity is usually the clearest indicator of presenteeism. If absence drops, but output doesn't improve, you may have an issue. Matching productivity to absence and health data over time is a good way to begin to benchmark this performance.

The Case for Workplace Health

A [2011 meta-study by BMC Public Health](#) gathered data from studies spanning 20 years and 8 countries to investigate the impact of workplace health promotion programmes on levels of presenteeism. They found **compelling evidence that a properly implemented workplace health strategy can have a positive impact on levels of presenteeism.**

A properly implemented, tailored workplace health strategy can reduce rates of presenteeism.

(BMC Public Health, 2011)

The key factors in successful health interventions included health screening, individually tailored programmes, and a supportive workplace culture.



Ageing Workforce

The Impact on Business

[The Parliamentary Office of Science and Technology](#) published a report in 2011 stating that over the next decade, the changing age profile of the workforce will be the most significant development in the UK labour market, with a third of workers expected to be over the age of 50 by 2020. **Within 20 years, almost a quarter of the workforce will be aged 65 or over.**

1 in 3 workers will be over the age of 50 by 2020.

(Parliamentary Office of Science and Technology, 2011)

An aging workforce carries its own risk factors in regards to workplace health. Older workers are likely to report higher instances of musculoskeletal disorders, and **risk factors such as underlying health conditions or being overweight tend to increase with age.** There is little evidence that older workers have higher rates of sickness absence, but what absence they do have is more likely to be long-term, and workplace accidents have a higher risk of serious injury.

The Case for Workplace Health

Being in employment has both physical and mental benefits for older people, keeping them active and in good mental health for longer - provided the workplace culture is supportive and allows for any specific requirements. A [2008 review by Dame Carol Black](#) concluded that overall, the beneficial effects of work outweighed the risks for older workers.

Employment has physical and mental benefits for older people.

(AARP, 2008)

A [2012 CIPD study](#) concluded that **the aging workforce is an important factor in the business case for investing in employee wellbeing** - employers need to ensure that their absence management policies and practices are effective in both preventing and managing ill health and absence for all employees.



Older employees will generally be more nervous of new technologies like Nudjed, and may need support to use them. However, given the potential impact of a well-supported older worker, it's often a wise investment.

Conclusion

In summary, it is clear that there are numerous ways in which poor health can negatively affect business, and **there is overwhelming evidence that investing in workplace health is beneficial both to employees and to business metrics**. An effective workplace health strategy can have a positive impact on levels of absenteeism and presenteeism, foster engagement and retention, and can make employees happier and more productive.

Dame Carol Black highlights the link between employee wellbeing and performance in her 2008 report '[Working for a Healthier Tomorrow](#)': "A focus on their [employees'] wellbeing can also add value to organisations by promoting better health and increasing motivation and engagement of employees, in turn helping to drive increases in productivity and profitability. In other words, the benefits of health and wellbeing extend far beyond avoiding or reducing the costs of absence or poor performance."

For a workplace health programme to have a positive impact, it must be tailored to the needs of the employees and the organisation.

(BMC, 2011)

In order to see these benefits, however, it is clear that health interventions should be tailored to the specific needs of the organisation. The [2011 BMC meta-study](#) on the effects of workplace health promotion on presenteeism stresses that for a programme to have a positive impact, it must be targeted to suit the needs of the employees.

[A study from AXA and the CIPD](#) states that, "Leaders in the organisation must have a good understanding of the health issues the organisation faces at an early stage in order to introduce appropriate interventions, and evaluate their effectiveness...Understanding how the different elements of a wellbeing strategy affect employee health and happiness is a vital part of

mainstreaming.”

Nudjed Says: Having worked on dozens of major health and wellness initiatives, our biggest observations have been that every workforce is different, and strategies need to adapt over time. If you gather the right information to support this, you will have a good Health & Wellness programme.

Frequently Asked Questions

What health interventions should I invest in?

Workplace health is a broad topic - successful initiatives range from healthy canteen options, to subsidised gym memberships, to office yoga. With so many options, how do you figure out what's right for your business?

[Nudjed Insights](#) is a unique tool specifically designed to answer that question. Our innovative survey covers 7 key areas of health in just 4 minutes, and enables you to learn about your staff's health and what they're interested in improving. You'll receive a report with intelligent suggestions for actions you can take straight away to start building a healthier, happier team.

What if staff don't want to share personal information?

Nudjed Insights is very different to other health surveys - your employees won't need to give us any personal information like weight or BMI. Self-reported health data like this can be seen as intrusive, and is often inaccurate.

Instead, we measure your staff's attitudes towards their own health, the areas they feel need improvement, and what initiatives they'd be willing to take part in in order to improve. All survey responses are anonymous and confidential, with no identifying information required.

How do I get leadership to buy in?

A challenge you may face is convincing senior management to provide a budget for workplace health investment. That's why we've put together materials like this white paper to communicate the clear return on investment of workplace health.

We have a range of targeted internal promotions materials that you can share with the leaders,

finance department, IT team, and with your staff, to explain the benefits of Nudjed and of workplace health in general. If you'd like a copy of any of these materials, just get in touch with us at hello@nudjed.com.

To learn more about how Nudjed can help you to create a more effective, targeting health and wellbeing strategy, visit get.nudjed.com/insights.

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