

# Leading on mental wellbeing

## Transforming the role of line managers:

A blueprint for unlocking employee mental wellbeing and productivity

**Starts with strong leadership.** *Embed wellbeing into organisational culture.* Underpinned by the Workwell Model. **You can't manage what you can't talk about.** Transform line manager wellbeing capability. **Achieve mental health literacy.** Parity of physical and mental health. My line manager signposted me to valuable support. **By business, for business.** *Prioritise soft skills for managers.* **Listen to employee voices.** Asking "how are you?" can make all the difference.

**Empowering line managers for the benefit of people, business and society.**



Business in the Community would like to thank our knowledge partners at the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development, Mind, the Work Foundation and Professor Sir Cary Cooper for their support in developing this report.

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#### Business in the Community Wellbeing Champions Group



# The Workwell Model




Our ambition is to fundamentally transform perceptions about the crucial role and value of line managers in improving employee mental wellbeing and business productivity. This report presents the business and moral case for improving line managers' capabilities to manage their own and others' mental wellbeing in work.

The report is aligned with Business in the Community's Workwell Model and highlights the strategic ways in which employers can take action to improve support for the mental wellbeing of line managers and all employees.

## Business in the Community Workwell Model

Developed by business for business, and based on robust evidence, the Business in the Community Workwell Model provides a strategic framework for embedding wellbeing into organisational culture. Together, the segments of the model cover the actions employers need to take to create an environment where employees can make informed, healthy choices – for the benefit of people, business and society.



-  Business benefits
-  Employee actions recommended by Foresight Mental Capital Report
-  Employer actions recommended by BITC

\* Using 'good work' criteria defined by Coats and Lehki (September 2008)

**Employer actions are covered within five segments within the inner part of the wheel:**

**Working well:** Positioning employee wellbeing as a strategic boardroom issue linked to securing business objectives. Creating a culture of wellbeing where employees feel trusted and respected, with a proactive approach to wellbeing, underpinned by strong governance and reporting arrangements.

**Better physical and psychological health:** Creating a safe work environment that actively supports the physical and mental health behaviours of employees.

**Better work:** Creating a happy, engaging environment of good work, which is underpinned by good job design; autonomy and control, variety, employee voice, talent management, employment security, and a management style and culture that promotes mutual trust and respect.

**Better relationships:** Promoting better communication both inside and outside the workplace, to support the social capital employees need for good mental wellbeing.

**Better specialist support:** Equipping specialist teams and line managers with information and skills to maintain their own health and support others. Ensuring teams manage health issues proactively, facilitating early interventions, active rehabilitation and efficient return to work.

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# The Issues

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Mental ill-health is the leading cause of sickness absence in the UK<sup>1</sup>

It is estimated to cost UK employers £25bn each year<sup>2</sup>

More managers are experiencing stress-related ill-health and symptoms of psychological ill-health<sup>3</sup>

Three in five managers are concerned about the impact of longer working hours on their stress levels

Over half of managers are concerned about the impact of longer working hours on their psychological health

The average manager works an extra 46 days each year

63% of parents who are managers are worried about the impact their working hours have on relationships with their children

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<sup>1</sup> Chief Medical Officer, Annual Report of the Chief Medical Officer 2013, Public Mental Health Priorities: Investing in the Evidence (2013)

<sup>2</sup> Sainsbury's Centre for Mental Health: Mental Health at Work: Developing the business case (2007)

<sup>3</sup> All subsequent statistics referenced are sourced from CMI, Quality of Working Life (2012)

# Section 1:

## Introductions

**Business in the Community's wellbeing campaign promotes a holistic approach to employee wellbeing with a special focus on mental health.**



Two years ago, in 2014, we published **Mental Health: We're Ready to Talk**, which set out the business and moral case for tackling the culture of silence that surrounds mental health. This was against a backdrop of rising challenges and pressures facing the UK population and the rise in common mental health conditions such as stress, anxiety and depression. Our call for action was for employers to commit to tackling mental health stigma at work by signing the **Time to Change organisational pledge**. One year on, businesses had made significant progress in breaking down the culture of silence around mental ill-health at work. Our 2015 report, **Mental Health: We're Ready to Talk – One year on**, showed the quick pace at which our Champion companies had started to promote mental wellbeing within their organisations. The potential impact from taking action is enormous – programmes led by our Wellbeing Champion businesses alone had the potential to impact nearly half a million employees. To reach a much wider footprint of employees across the UK, **our first call to action in this report is a call to business to sign up to the Time to Change Pledge.**

In 2015, our business-led Leadership Team set out its 3-year vision to build on the progress above. They enthusiastically adopted a new work stream to transform the role of line managers so they can unlock employee mental wellbeing and productivity at work. Our ambition is to fundamentally change perceptions about the role and value of line managers in improving employee wellbeing and business productivity, in line with the **Workplace health: management practices** recently issued by the **National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE)**. The good practice shared by businesses featured in this report shows that, in order to achieve this, employers need to take a comprehensive approach to create the capacity for line managers to prioritise their own wellbeing, and that of their people.

We've chosen to launch the report on 4th February as this is **Time to Talk Day**, the national awareness day that encourages people to have open conversations about mental health. It's particularly significant as talking about mental health is exactly what we want line managers to do with their team members. After all, you can't manage what you can't talk about.

So, our second call to action is recommending employers to offer Mental Health First Aid (MHFA) training to managers. Introducing the availability of MHFA training will help to break down the culture of silence surrounding mental ill-health, whilst giving a number of line managers a core understanding and literacy of mental health issues. This is vital in helping them to act confidently in identifying early signs of mental health issues and directing staff towards the right support.

These two calls to action are important in securing a step change in parity of esteem between mental and physical health. However, they are just one piece of the puzzle; wellbeing needs to be embedded into organisational culture. The **remaining recommendations in our call to action** are derived from the five employer-led segments of Business in the Community's Workwell Model, which provide a strategic framework for embedding wellbeing into any organisation, for both business and societal benefits.

Transforming the role of line managers so that wellbeing is core to their role is essential to creating a change in workplace culture where talking about mental health becomes normal. This fundamental transformation will require a significant commitment from senior leaders – but it's vital if we're going to prevent more employees suffering in silence.

We encourage more employers to give line managers the support they need to improve employee wellbeing for the benefit of people, business and society. We hope you can join us in this vital initiative.

**Louise Aston**

**Wellbeing Director, Business in the Community**

**With mental health problems affecting one in six British workers each year<sup>4</sup> and mental ill-health the leading cause of sickness absence in the UK, it is not surprising that employers are looking ever more closely at the crucial role that line managers play in supporting the wellbeing of staff.**



Organisations are recognising that they depend on having a healthy and productive workforce and they know that when employees feel their work is meaningful and they are valued and supported, they tend to have higher wellbeing levels, be more committed to the organisation's goals and perform better. But this takes commitment, prioritisation and support. Of those who have had to take time off due to workplace stress, a staggering 95% cited another reason for their absence,<sup>5</sup> and as the Time to Change Public Attitudes survey indicated in 2014, 49% of people still feel uncomfortable talking to an employer about their mental health.<sup>6</sup>

In light of this, it is encouraging to see an increasing number of organisations taking action to address mental health stigma in the workplace, with a total of 36 Business in the Community member organisations having signed the Time to Change pledge to date. Time to Change is England's biggest programme to challenge mental health stigma and discrimination, and the important next step is to ensure that the increased awareness we are seeing through Time to Change is turned to action, in particular when it comes to investing in the development of line management capabilities.

Recent research shows that good line management is linked with good health, wellbeing and improved performance among staff, whilst poor quality leadership has been linked with stress, burnout and depression.<sup>7</sup> Building healthy relationships at work in order to get the best from staff is often a question of managers taking simple steps to support staff – ensuring they factor in regular catch ups, set clear priorities, celebrate team and individual successes, involve staff in decision making and flex their management style to suit the individual's needs.

Investing in the capabilities of line managers and ensuring they adopt effective approaches is the responsibility of senior staff, who must provide high quality training and development in the soft skills required to successfully manage and support staff. It is also essential to recognise that culture comes from the top, and that training alone will not deliver results if the culture of an organisation is not supportive and empowering. Therefore, the need to prioritise staff wellbeing and invest in these approaches must be established by senior management and then implemented across the whole organisation.

Many of the approaches line managers can take to support staff wellbeing are straightforward and do not have a cost. Developing a management style that is open, approachable and self-aware goes a long way. Asking simple, open and non-judgemental questions about an individual's mental health, giving staff an opportunity to communicate what keeps them well at work, and an ability to reflect on managerial style, will enable relationships and team dynamics to be as healthy as they can be.

There is clearly still work to do when it comes to breaking down stigma and providing the type of open and supportive culture that enables staff to be honest with managers about their mental health, to access support and to enjoy a healthy working life. The crucial place for any organisation to start is with the role of line managers.

**Paul Farmer**  
**Chief Executive, Mind**

<sup>4</sup> CIPD / SimplyHealth, *Absence Management Annual Survey Report* (2012)

<sup>5</sup> Mind, *YouGov survey of 1,251 workers in Britain* (2014)

<sup>6</sup> *Time to Change, Public Attitudes Survey: Public Attitudes to Mental Illness* (2014)

<sup>7</sup> NICE (National Institute of Health and Care Excellence), *Workplace policy and management practices to improve the health and wellbeing of employees* (2015)



# Section 1:

## Introductions



**Businesses of all size have a responsibility to play their part in helping their employees stay happy and healthy at work.**

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Creating an environment that helps employees feel confident in seeking support or discussing challenges openly is essential and we know that line managers are critically important in helping to do this.

Therefore, businesses have a role to play in providing their line managers with support and access to training to help them improve their skills in managing employee wellbeing. They also have a key role to play to ensure that there is strong leadership within the business that highlights wellbeing as a critical boardroom issue. This in turn will reassure managers that wellbeing is a core priority and not just a nice to have.

Providing managers with a comprehensive understanding around common conditions such as stress, depression and anxiety, and an awareness of how they arise and are managed, is essential to help managers feel empowered to make a positive difference in the workplace. Emotional and interpersonal skills are becoming increasingly important for managers to be able to build relationships with their staff and discuss sensitive topics around wellbeing.

There is a real opportunity to do more, not only to support and train new managers, but also to help existing managers to develop and up-skill. Courses such as Mental Health First Aid training are a fantastic example of programmes that can have a huge benefit for line managers – and indeed all employees.

For an organisation to become truly sustainable, it needs to prioritise and create parity of esteem between employee wellbeing alongside business and environmental targets. This is hugely important, both for employees now and for the next generation.

Creating more engaged managers will help us to create more engaged leaders, and will produce a culture where open discussion around wellbeing becomes business as usual. This is something we strive for at Royal Mail, where we recognise the crucial role line managers have in ensuring the wellbeing of a diverse workforce.

We hope you will join us in driving this change.

**Dr Shaun Davis**

**Group Director of Safety, Health, Wellbeing and Sustainability, Royal Mail Group**



## Section 2:

# Executive summary

**Mental ill-health is one of the biggest public health challenges facing society. It is the leading cause of sickness absence in the workplace and can cause immense suffering to those experiencing it – as well as those closest to them.**

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### Overview

There is an overwhelming business and moral case for employers to address this challenge.

Line managers play a crucial role in promoting positive employee wellbeing. As the workplace continues to evolve at a rapid pace, there is increasing pressure on line managers to deliver business objectives at the same time as supporting the wellbeing of employees. It is vital that line managers receive the best possible support to help them manage these responsibilities effectively.

This report highlights the evidence for empowering line managers to make a greater positive impact on employee wellbeing. It contains insight from industry experts, advice on how organisations can take action and features the voices of line managers themselves as well as case studies of effective support programmes.

### Key findings

- Many businesses lack transparency around wellbeing. Senior leaders have a responsibility to create an open organisational culture that helps all employees recognise wellbeing as a critical issue, and which empowers line managers to engage with wellbeing as a vital priority.
- Managers are working long hours and feel under pressure in their roles. This is having an impact on their own wellbeing, particularly their personal and social lives. Ensuring that line managers have what they need to maintain their own wellbeing is paramount in order for them to positively influence the wellbeing and behaviours of others.
- Managers are facing more varied and diverse demands. Good job design is critical in providing them with the autonomy to manage employee wellbeing and create positive working environments, all whilst remaining flexible to individual employee needs and achieving operational goals. Helping line managers to take a proactive approach on wellbeing and address any issues at an early stage is essential if they are to keep employees well.

- Given the prevalence of mental health issues in society, it is vital that all line managers have a core understanding of the topic and feel able to act confidently as the first point of support should they encounter an issue within their team. Strong emotional and interpersonal skills are increasingly important for good management practice as these help managers to build relationships with employees and create an open culture where employees feel more confident seeking support. These skills also need to be prioritised when recruiting or promoting employees to line manager positions.
- Leaders must commit to fundamentally transforming the role of line managers in the UK. A number of ways are identified in this report in which business leaders can take action to develop line managers' skills and capabilities around employee wellbeing, including shifting the promotion of wellbeing to be a central role of the line manager.

### The future

It is time that we provide line managers with the wellbeing support they deserve and take the necessary steps to empower them to promote wellbeing within their teams.

Businesses in the Community is calling on businesses to take the Time to Change organisational pledge and to introduce Mental Health First Aid training to line managers to ensure that they are able and confident in supporting employees who may be experiencing mental health issues in the workplace. Mental Health First Aid training is available through various providers, and is one of the benefits of Business in the Community **wellbeing membership**.

### Business in the Community

February 2016

## Section 3:

# Call to Action

This report demonstrates that the role of line managers is crucial in supporting an organisational culture of wellbeing and strong performance. There is no single solution to achieving this and line managers need leadership and support to drive this change.

In response to this report, there are two key Calls to Action that we are recommending every business leader takes to drive the issue of workplace wellbeing forward:

1. **Sign up to the Time to Change organisational pledge.**
2. **Introduce Mental Health First Aid training for line managers.**

Mental Health First Aid is a licensed training product delivered by accredited trainers including Mental Health First Aid England and Mind. Training courses range from three hours to two days.

Signing the Time to Change pledge and introducing Mental Health First Aid training are proven catalysts for change within organisations, and are most effective when integrated as components of a strategic approach to embedding wellbeing into organisational culture using the Business in the Community Workwell Model.

**We are calling on all business leaders to ensure they are following our recommendations for how to embed wellbeing into organisational culture.**

For further information on how to get involved and act please contact the Business in the Community wellbeing campaign team: [danielle.wolman@bitc.org.uk](mailto:danielle.wolman@bitc.org.uk)



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## How to embed wellbeing into organisational culture

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|---|--|---|
| 1 | Sign up to the <b>Time to Change</b> organisational pledge to tackle mental health stigma. This signals a commitment from the boardroom to promote positive mental wellbeing internally and externally.  | ✓ |
| 2 | Use the <b>'Working Well' segment</b> – which is one strategic element of the Workwell Model – to position mental health as a boardroom issue, on a par with physical health.  | ✓ |
| 3 | Promote and communicate throughout the organisation that <b>wellbeing is a key driver for productivity</b> and maximising performance.   | ✓ |
| 4 | Make <b>employee wellbeing a core part of line manager job responsibilities</b> , and provide line managers with the time, resource and training to support the staff they oversee.  | ✓ |
| 5 | Recruit, promote and support line managers with <b>excellent interpersonal skills</b> , and/or cultivate these skills as part of their ongoing professional development.   | ✓ |
| 6 | <b>Support line managers</b> to maintain their own wellbeing, in order for them to support others and set positive examples for their teams.   | ✓ |
| 7 | Introduce <b>Mental Health First Aid</b> training to line managers. This builds literacy and knowledge around common mental health conditions to ensure that line managers can spot issues and that they feel confident and equipped to address these issues. Training a select number of line managers with this knowledge will benefit their peers, their teams and the wider organisational culture around mental health. | ✓ |
| 8 | Develop and promote <b>clear referral or assistance pathways</b> so line managers can take appropriate action to support employees.  | ✓ |

## Section 4:

# Working Well:

## The central role of leadership and governance in creating a culture of wellbeing

### Working well

Working Well is at the centre of the Workwell Model. It challenges employers to position wellbeing as a strategic boardroom issue, creating a culture of wellbeing where employees feel trusted, respected and engaged. Through better management information on wellbeing and engagement, line managers can be empowered as a key asset of positive organisational wellbeing. Empowering line managers to take action on wellbeing will support efforts to help employees be happier, engaged and committed in their roles.

Line managers' impact on employee wellbeing is as much influenced by the working culture within an organisation as it is by the skills, abilities or motivations of line managers. A major challenge is the culture of silence around mental health in the workplace, which can impact line managers' capacity to support employee wellbeing.

Mental health conditions present a significant challenge to business and society. One in six workers experiences stress, depression or anxiety at any one time<sup>8</sup> and 9.9 million days were lost to these conditions alone across 2014/15.<sup>9</sup> One quarter of employees has considered resigning due to stress and a further one in ten has done so.<sup>10</sup>

Although these challenges remain widespread, there remains a damaging stigma attached to mental health at work. One in five employees is afraid to disclose a mental health related condition to their employer for fear of redundancy<sup>11</sup> and research has found that fewer than one in five employees believe that mental health issues are a valid reason not to go into the office.<sup>12</sup>

This situation is having a significant impact on line managers' ability to support employees. Recent research has found that nearly one quarter (23%) of employees would not tell their line manager the real reason for any kind of mental health related absence, for fear of being judged.<sup>13</sup> If employees do not feel confident or able to discuss their wellbeing – should they wish to do so – then line managers will not be able to help them access support. This means that simple conditions are at risk of becoming more serious.

Business leaders can help to address this by driving a culture of conversation and transparency within an organisation. Managers can't manage what isn't talked about. Research shows there is an opportunity for leaders to do more to champion wellbeing as a critical business issue. Only one third (36%) of UK employees feel that their senior leaders take an interest in their wellbeing,<sup>14</sup> whilst another study has found that poor senior leadership often undermines efforts to foster positive manager behaviours around wellbeing.<sup>15</sup>

The Engage for Success movement has highlighted that 34% of line managers still feel un-empowered in their roles and would welcome any move to increase their independent authority.<sup>16</sup> Furthermore, Business in the Community's gender equality campaign shows that almost 84% of workers believe in an inclusive leader's ability to make them feel more motivated, with four in five reporting that an inclusive leader had improved their performance and productivity.<sup>17</sup> There is a clear opportunity for senior leaders to do more to empower line managers and give them the freedom and endorsement to engage with these issues amongst their teams.

8 Mind, *Taking Care of Business* (2011)

9 Health and Safety Executive, *Work related Stress, Anxiety and Depression statistics in Great Britain* (2015)

10 Mind (2015)

11 CIPD, *Managing and supporting mental health at work: disclosure tools for managers* (2011)

12 Benenden, *Wellbeing or woebeing? The outlook for employee wellbeing in the UK* (2015)

13 Axa, *News release: Two thirds of business managers don't believe mental illness warrants time off work* (2015)

14 CMI, *Management 2020: Leadership to unlock long-term growth*, ref. Towers Watson Global Workforce Study (2012)

The latest line manager guidance from the National Institute of Health and Care Excellence (NICE) highlights the importance of a positive organisational approach to wellbeing in the everyday running of an organisation, arguing that it should become integrated in management performance reviews, organisational goals and objectives.<sup>18</sup>

If wellbeing is positioned as a core driver of how a business operates, leaders and managers will have the remit to drive this forward across the business. Strong organisational leadership is essential to create a culture where managers feel empowered to proactively support employee wellbeing.

### Recommendations for business

- Sign the Time to Change pledge and develop an action plan that includes transforming the capabilities of line managers to support wellbeing.
- Set specific goals related to improving the capacity of your line managers to promote mental wellbeing.
- Develop robust governance and reporting arrangements to ensure your strategy and goals are implemented and monitored.

*“Creating a culture where all employees feel able to talk about their wellbeing, and where managers feel empowered to play a role in helping to support those around them, is vital for a competitive and sustainable business. One of the biggest responsibilities lies with leaders, who have a duty to promote the importance of wellbeing right from the very top and ensure that it is recognised as a critical issue by everyone. At Royal Mail, we understand the importance of giving our managers as much support as possible – not only to look after those around them but to ensure they can also maintain positive wellbeing themselves.”*

**Moya Greene, Chief Executive, Royal Mail**

*“The ability to make a positive impact on employee wellbeing is an essential part of good management. At Anglian Water, it’s vital that our managers are able to spot the signs that someone may be struggling, and feel confident opening a conversation with employees who may need support.*

*“Interpersonal skills are just as important as technical skills, because they help managers build strong and trusting relationships with those around them. As business leaders, we need to encourage all our managers to create healthy workplaces, with an open and transparent culture where people feel comfortable discussing sensitive issues. Showing greater humanity in leadership benefits both the bottom line and the wellbeing of individuals, their families and society.”*

**Peter Simpson, Chief Executive, Anglian Water Group**

<sup>15</sup> CIPD, *Lack of support for managers leads to leadership problems and crisis of organisational culture* (2013)

<sup>16</sup> *Engage for Success, Bringing the line to life* (2013)

<sup>17</sup> *Business in the Community, Inclusive Leadership – From Pioneer to Mainstream: Maximising the potential of your people* (2011)

<sup>18</sup> NICE (National Institute of Health and Care Excellence), *Workplace policy and management practices to improve the health and wellbeing of employees* (2015)

## Section 4:

# Working Well



### Case study: Fit for the Future programme at M&S

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We took a dynamic approach to educating senior leaders around mental health as part of our 'Fit for the Future' programme. This involved providing senior leaders with opportunities to go outside of their normal working environment and work with external organisations, partners and charities to consider approaches to different workplace challenges.

As part of this, 20 senior leaders worked on a challenge entitled 'Inspiring Mental Wellbeing'. They spent time with external charity partners learning more about mental wellbeing, as well as conducting their own research. In addition, they spent time working with M&S' Employee Wellbeing Manager to understand what the business was doing to support its employees and the impacts it had recorded.

This six-week period provided inspiration for changes that could be made by senior leaders to try and encourage a more positive culture of mental wellbeing amongst their individual teams and departments.

The programme saw success in building commitment from senior leaders to support the business's mental wellbeing agenda. Leaders felt passionately about the topic and championed the issue within M&S once they had returned to their day-to-day roles. This included working directly with the employee wellbeing team to provide ideas and insight on new initiatives to trial specific programmes across their own departments.

Leaders then reported back to the wider senior leadership group on their learnings, in turn inspiring peers to raise awareness and consider solutions to overcoming challenges around workplace wellbeing.

As a result of taking part in the programme, senior leaders in the M&S Food Business Team introduced steps to prevent unhealthy working habits such as sending emails during the weekend or late at night, and also encouraged employees to talk with colleagues rather than relying on email. Positive interventions introduced as a result of the programme also included restricted meeting length and better encouragement for employees to plan regular time away from their desks.

**Beth Ryder**  
**Employee Wellbeing Manager**  
**M&S**



## Case study: Investing in and reporting on mental health at BT Group

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At BT, we invest in our people so they can thrive and contribute to our business and the communities in which we work and live, create better products and improve the way we serve our customers. We've been investing in a strategic approach to supporting employee wellbeing for more than 10 years. Our health promotion programme, Workfit supports our people to improve their physical and mental health, which helps us to embed an approach where people understand there is a continuum of mental health and that this can shift regularly – just like our own physical health.

It is important for us to invest in support for our line managers, so that they have the capabilities to look after their own health, whilst supporting those they line manage when they experience a mental health condition. Our managing mental health course and resilience training for people managers is designed to equip line managers to recognise signs of mental health difficulties and take action to support people effectively.

We do not expect our people to act as health professionals, but we do provide all managers with guidance on health and wellbeing support, and this includes specific material for managers of people who are affected by mental health issues. This guidance focuses on re-enforcing overall good line-management practices, preventative and early warning approaches, and how to refer and support those who are in need of specialist support.

We are committed to measuring and reporting on wellbeing, to ensure that our investment is making an impact. We consult regularly with our people, through a range of face-to-face and digital communication channels, including quarterly employee surveys and a range of forums including employee groups, to ensure that we are identifying health and wellbeing issues that may be affecting certain population groups within our wider employee base. Our dedicated Wellbeing, Inclusion, Safety and Health team analyses this data, and works with management to identify any emerging trends, so that we can develop appropriate responses.

Using a range of feedback mechanisms allows us to understand and explore further the merits of our wellbeing approach – ranging from our employee volunteering levels and employee network participation to formal indicators, like our overall Wellbeing Index score, absence rates and work-related ill-health indicators. We're proud that our scores are high and mostly improving, and we will continue to set challenging targets to ensure we are working to improve the experience of our people. We look forward to building on our mental health provision through ongoing engagement with our line managers and the wider BT population.

**Alister Scott**

**Head of Health and Deputy Chief Medical Officer  
BT Group**



## Section 5:

# Better physical and psychological health:

## The business and moral case for employee wellbeing

### Better physical and psychological health

This segment of the Workwell Model calls on employers to create a work environment that promotes healthy physical and mental behaviours. In addition to encouraging a more productive workforce, providing a better working environment will enable employees to lead healthier and happier lives. Line managers have a critical role to play in implementing wellbeing approaches by role modelling good behaviours and ensuring that employees are made aware of wellbeing policies. As part of this, line managers must feel well equipped to look after their own wellbeing first and foremost.

Having happy, engaged and motivated employees is a critical asset for any competitive and sustainable organisation. Companies that create a culture of positive wellbeing will benefit from better engagement, lower staff turnover and increased productivity, with academic research highlighting a strong association between lower happiness and lower productivity.<sup>19</sup>

Improved engagement is estimated to be worth as much as £25 billion to the UK economy and organisations with high employee engagement levels record better shareholder returns and higher annual net income.<sup>20</sup> Conversely, presenteeism – where employees are present but not effectively engaged or productive in their work – is estimated to cost the UK economy around £15 billion per year.<sup>21</sup> Altogether, mental ill-health is estimated to cost UK employers £26 billion per year, which equates to roughly £1,000 per employee.<sup>22</sup>

As gatekeepers between the employee and the organisation as a whole, line managers are critical to helping promote positive employee wellbeing in the workplace. Common mental health conditions present a particular challenge to effective performance at work, because signs often go unnoticed. With the right training and support, line managers can spot signs that employees may be struggling with their mental wellbeing, helping them gain access to support early on.

Line managers can also help to improve employee wellbeing by practising positive behaviours and building personal relationships with their teams, which can help increase employee motivation and loyalty to their organisation.<sup>23</sup> With the right interpersonal skills, line managers can also help to stimulate new ideas and innovation within their teams.<sup>24</sup>

In order for line managers to feel able and empowered to influence the wellbeing of others, the first priority is ensuring that they are able to maintain their own wellbeing. This is a key challenge as line managers are under increasing pressure from above and below. They face expectations to deliver results whilst supporting the needs of individual team members<sup>25</sup> and these competing pressures mean they are working harder – the average manager works 1.5 hours a day over contract, which equates to roughly 46 working days per year.<sup>26</sup>

This pressure can mean that the needs of employees can be overlooked. Over a quarter (28%) of managers face situations where they often must put the interests of the organisation above the wellbeing of their team.<sup>27</sup> This risks setting a dangerous precedent for organisational culture.

19 Andrew Oswald, Eugenio Proto, Daniel Sgroi, *Happiness and Productivity* (2014)

20 *Engage for Success, The Evidence: Employee Engagement Task Force "Nailing the evidence" workgroup* (2012)

21 BITC / Centre for Mental Health, *Managing presenteeism: a discussion paper* (2011)

22 Centre for Mental Health, *Mental health at work: developing the business case* (2007)

23 CIPD, *Disclosure tools for line managers* (2014)

24 National Institute of Health and Care Excellence (NICE), *Workplace health: management practices* (2015)

Most significantly, this pressure is also having a detrimental impact on the wellbeing of line managers themselves. In a recent report, the Chartered Management Institute (CMI) found that 59% of managers are concerned about the effects of working longer hours on their stress levels and 56% are concerned about their psychological health.<sup>28</sup> Managers' experience of physical and psychological symptoms of ill-health has increased and has led to behaviours which include avoiding contact with others, mood swings and a sense of being unable to cope at work.<sup>29</sup> Almost two thirds (63%) of line managers who are parents are also worried that overwork is affecting their relationships with their children.<sup>30</sup>

It is clear that there is not just a business but a moral imperative to empower and support line managers in their ability to support their own and others' wellbeing. Further guidance on specialist support around mental wellbeing is contained in section 8 of this report.

### Recommendations for business

- Provide all line managers with a full induction on their organisation's wellbeing approach and facilities, so they can promote the various channels and resources available to their staff.
- Incentivise line managers to act as role models and ambassadors for organisational wellbeing approaches, and encourage an open culture around mental health through their own practices.

*"Line managers are closer to their team than anyone else and can be one of the most important assets to achieving success for any business. They are the eyes and ears for senior leaders seeking to understand more about the challenges that employees face day-to-day and are a valuable source of feedback. In turn, they are also entrusted with the important responsibility of being the first point of call for employees who are experiencing ill-health and who may need access to confidential advice and support. However, we know that managers often struggle and lack support to take care of their own wellbeing, which can in turn impact their ability to help others. Equipping line managers with the tools and resources to spot the early signs of stress and mental health issues in themselves and in colleagues will help any business to maximise opportunities for sustainable growth and ensure that fewer people suffer in silence. It's not about training managers in psychology, but supporting them to lift their head above the parapet and see how their teams are engaging. With the right support, line managers can be the most powerful wellbeing ambassadors in any business."*

**Patrick Watt, Corporate Director, Bupa**

<sup>25</sup> CIPD, *Real-life leaders: closing the knowledge-doing gap* (2013)

<sup>26</sup> CMI, *Quality of Working Life: Managers' Wellbeing, Motivation and Productivity* (2012)

<sup>27</sup> CIPD 2013c, cited in CIPD, *Leadership – easier said than done* (2014)

<sup>28</sup> Op.cit

<sup>29</sup> CMI, *Quality of Working Life: Managers' Wellbeing, Motivation and Productivity*, (2012)

<sup>30</sup> Ibid

## Section 5:

# Better physical and psychological health



### Expert view

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Line managers lie at the heart of the employment relationship between organisations and their workforce and are crucial to creating a working environment based on trust and mutual respect. We know from our regular Employee Outlook survey that where people trust their managers they are more likely to be engaged and go the extra mile for their organisation and are less likely to be looking for a new job. We also know that employee trust and satisfaction with managers is associated with lower levels of excessive pressure or stress. Some degree of pressure is part and parcel of modern working life and can help motivate and energise people. However, when pressure is relentless and exceeds people's ability to cope, it can have serious negative consequences for people's health and will adversely affect their performance.

Stress is now one of the main causes of long-term absence and is linked to conditions such as anxiety and depression as well as heart disease. Stress also impairs people's cognitive ability – their ability to think and make sound judgements – and the Health and Safety Executive has found it is linked to higher risk of accidents. Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (CIPD) research identifies the behaviours managers need to demonstrate to encourage people to go the extra mile while managing and preventing stress and burnout.<sup>31</sup> These include being open, fair and consistent, being proactive in handling conflict and problems and providing knowledge, clarity and guidance. The other two crucial areas are around using listening and empathy to build meaningful personal interaction with employees and supporting career development and progression.

Managers who exhibit these behaviours are more likely to build trust, which is crucial if the people they manage are to feel confident enough to raise and talk about issues they may have with stress or mental health.

Managers also need to be able to spot the warning signs which might suggest an individual is struggling to cope. These include, for example, an increase in sickness absence or it might be someone working excessive hours or not taking annual leave. Some signs are more subtle, such as a decline in performance or a change in someone's emotional responses such as becoming more argumentative or hot tempered. Line managers should ask the people they manage about their wellbeing and how much pressure they feel under as a matter of course during regular informal one-to-ones as this can then provide an opportunity for employees to be honest and start to talk about any issues that are bothering them and what support might be available, for example, through referral to HR or occupational health.

It is increasingly important that employers equip their line managers with the skills to manage people in a way that supports their wellbeing – including their mental health. There is a strong business case behind doing this but just as importantly it is a key part of employers' duty of care to their staff.

**Peter Cheese**  
**Chief Executive**  
**Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development**

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<sup>31</sup> CIPD, *Managing for sustainable engagement* (2013)

## Case study: Bank Workers Charity & Mind's mental health training pilot for line managers

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Working in partnership, Bank Workers Charity and Mind have developed a blended learning programme for line managers to create mentally healthy workplaces. This is being piloted in four UK banks with evaluation carried out by the CIPD.

The need for the programme was clear: seven in ten managers have had to manage mental health problems in the workplace, yet six out of ten had not received any relevant training, advice or information in the previous twelve months.

The focus of the training programme is for line managers to adopt good management principles to support their team members. The programme aims to create lasting behavioural change to support positive mental wellbeing in the workplace.

A key consideration was to ensure that the training works alongside existing strategies to address mental health within each bank.

Run over the course of a year, the pilot training programme offers a framework to aid understanding on how to support staff, including guidance on having open conversations about mental health and fostering a positive culture around mental wellbeing. The programme includes initial face-to-face training sessions followed by 'bite size' webinars and access to a digital toolkit and resources, with follow-up guidance taking place over 12 months via email.

Interim evaluation of the training assessed the impact it had on managers' observed behaviour and attitudes, job satisfaction, organisational culture and self-reported mental health, as well as performance and absence rates.

Even at the interim stage, results have been really positive; 99% of participants agreed or strongly agreed that their knowledge of mental health had increased as a result of the face-to-face training, and nearly 85% had been able to apply the lessons from the online training in their day-to-day jobs.

Results also showed improvement in managers' awareness and behaviour, with more managers feeling comfortable speaking to employees about managing their mental health in the workplace.

There was a 10% increase in employees who said that they would feel comfortable speaking to their line manager about mental health and there was also an increase in the number of employees across all four banks who felt it was okay to talk openly about mental health.

While the impact of the programme on reducing sickness absence – and specifically mental health related sickness absence – will become more apparent over the longer term, the programme has already seen substantial benefits in terms of improving employee wellbeing.

The final report is expected to be published in spring 2016.

**Jessica Tyrrell**  
**Development Manager**  
**Bank Workers Charity**

**Emma Mamo**  
**Head of Workplace Wellbeing**  
**Mind**

## Section 5:

# Better physical and psychological health

### Case study: Unilever UK & Ireland “One Stop Shop” for Line Managers and “Wellbeing and U” Programme



Unilever is a company with a proud history and a bright future. We have ambitious plans for sustainable growth and an intense sense of social and environmental purpose. In the UK and Ireland, we believe holistic wellbeing empowers each one of us to be the best we can be. Our approach of wanting to ‘win because we care’ ensures that we have both a sustainable workplace and sustainable workforce.

#### Resources for Line Managers

The role of the line manager is critical in our organisation. In 2014, our Human Resources team joined forces with Communications colleagues and our Medical and Occupational Health team to add a wellbeing site to the *One Stop Shop* dedicated to Line Managers. This hosts a comprehensive range of tools and resources to enable line managers to help individuals and teams thrive, ensuring they are the best that they can be, physically, mentally, emotionally and purposefully. We want to empower our leaders with knowledge so they can take on the responsibility of leading and managing the things that influence and support a culture of health and wellbeing in the workplace. A key part of this is an ongoing programme to communicate and embed our wellbeing strategy across our business.

The *One Stop Shop* also includes a variety of online tools and workshops covering themes such as being a talent champion, operational excellence, energising and rewarding teams for success, in addition to mental wellbeing and resilience awareness tools. Our continued drive to support managers has so far resulted in over 50% of our management having been trained in Mental Health First Aid.

#### Resources for Employees

We also provide a variety of resources aimed at all employees through our expanding “Wellbeing and U” programme. These cover topics such as resilience for teams, mindfulness, thriving under pressure, and our team “MOT” assessment. These tools have been developed with leading national partners ensuring they are robust and always up to date with recent research.

We regularly seek feedback from our line managers and employees through surveys and national employee representation forums, which help us to build a reflective and evolving line manager platform, ensuring our teams are equipped to truly be the best that they can be.

#### Tim Munden

**HR Vice President, UK & Ireland**  
**Unilever**

*“Under the Unilever Sustainable Living Plan we want to improve the health and wellbeing of a billion people around the world. A key part of that is the wellbeing of our own people, not only their physical health, but just as importantly their mental health, particularly at times of change and uncertainty. By listening and responding to their emotional needs we give people a much better chance of fulfilling their true potential, which is good for them and good for the company.”*

**Paul Polman, Chief Executive, Unilever**

## Section 6:

# Better work:

## Good job design that supports mental wellbeing

### Better Work

The Better Work segment of the Workwell Model identifies the importance of good job design in creating a healthy working environment. It also recognises the importance of autonomy and control, variety, employee voice and a culture that promotes mutual trust and respect. Line managers are responsible for communicating organisational objectives to staff as well as reporting to senior hierarchies within an organisation. Employers should ensure that there are regular opportunities for managers to seek feedback from their teams and take action if facing challenges. Consultation with employees is vital to ensure that action is taken to give them the best possible support in their roles.

The rise of mental health challenges at work is, to a large extent, due to the changing nature of the world of work. With the rise of mobile technology and in a competitive global economy, employees are reporting that work is becoming a more intense experience, with greater workloads and pressures to meet deadlines and performance targets.<sup>32</sup>

Therefore, good job design, informed by employee consultation, and underpinned by good line management, is essential. Without a focus on wellbeing as an integral part of good job design, employees are at risk of suffering in silence.

Line managers have an important role to play in helping to create a positive and healthy working culture for employees, ensuring that they feel supported to manage the pressures and challenges of their roles. An example of this relates to ensuring good work-life balance. With home and workplace boundaries becoming increasingly blurred, helping employees recognise the work and lifestyle factors that may be having a detrimental impact on their wellbeing is crucial.

Examples of proactive interventions line managers can take is discouraging employees from habits such as responding to emails in the evenings, at weekends or outside of their assigned working hours, and role modelling these behaviours themselves.

Employee expectations around work are changing too. Research has found that 'millennials' cite training, development and flexible working opportunities as preferable to financial incentives at work.<sup>33</sup> Business in the Community has also found that men and women aged between 28 and 40 have a desire to work in organisations that will support them to be productive and engaged through ensuring tailored job design and better acceptance and encouragement of flexible working opportunities.<sup>34</sup>

These trends increase the need to ensure that line managers are able to invest in wellbeing and that they feel empowered to help fit employee roles and responsibilities around their needs. To be an employer of choice, organisations need to consider how their workplace culture impacts wellbeing, and how line managers can be supported to drive this.

### Recommendations for business

- Ensure that job design is informed by employee consultation, and that processes for reviewing job design incorporate employee wellbeing.
- Review the role descriptions for line managers, to ensure that their job design includes wellbeing as a key function.
- Review engagement processes, to ensure line managers are well equipped, but not solely responsible for cascading wellbeing information to employees and feedback to management.

*continued overleaf*

<sup>32</sup> CIPD, *Megatrends: are we working harder than ever?* (2014)

<sup>33</sup> PwC, *Millennials at Work: Reshaping the Workplace* (2011)

<sup>34</sup> *Business in the Community, Project 28-40: The Report* (2014)



## Section 6:

# Better work



**pwc**

### Case study: the role of people managers at PwC

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Our employees work across a diverse variety of teams, projects and client engagements, and so often do not have a consistent 'line manager' in the traditional sense. So we have created a structure of dedicated 'people manager' responsibilities. They are responsible for coaching, performance management and supporting the wellbeing of typically around six to eight employees each, who can be spread across different departments. This investment in people managers provides our employees with valuable and flexible support for their individual wellbeing.

We provide comprehensive training to our people managers. In particular, we help them to recognise the subtle changes in employee behaviours that may indicate a change in wellbeing, and help managers to feel confident having conversations where they feel people may need support. Having the right interpersonal and emotional skills is an important part of this and we ensure that managers have access to the support they need to continually develop in this area.

We also provide very clear guidance on when managers should seek support from professional experts, where they feel someone may be at risk or need specific help.

One of the most important aspects of our support is facilitating peer group learning opportunities for people managers. We have networks across different parts of our business where managers can come together to discuss the different challenges they face in their roles. Because of the varied nature of our business, our people managers often do not work directly face-to-face with their employees. As such, it is also important for us to support managers to invest time in really getting to know their employees, and ensure they keep in regular contact.

In all our support, we try to make learning as interactive as possible and face-to-face development opportunities are crucial. We seek feedback from line managers to help us develop and tailor the support we offer, so it is entirely focused on where our managers' needs are. Creating the right environment for people managers to prioritise employee wellbeing is essential to help make us a responsible and competitive business.

**Sally Evans**

**Diversity & Inclusion and  
Employee Wellbeing Consultant  
PwC**





## Expert view

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Happiness and wellbeing at work is now high up the business agenda in many companies and in many countries. We have the UN's Bhutan Declaration, signed by 79 countries, which states that we should be measuring Gross National Wellbeing as a measure of a country's progress, with GDP only one component of it. We have the Global Agenda Council on mental health as part of the World Economic Forum, which focuses particularly on workplace mental health. We also have the work of Business in the Community and others developing strategies to minimise stress-related sickness absence and presenteeism, which is now the leading cause of poor productivity and ill-health at work.

We have lots of occupational health research which indicates that unmanageable workloads, long hours at work, lack of work-life balance and other factors at work are responsible for sickness absence, presenteeism and lower productivity in UK Plc. Line managers have a critical role in helping to tackle these challenges and in promoting positive wellbeing amongst employees. Helping line managers to develop their social and interpersonal skills in a workplace environment can help them to recognise signs that employees may be struggling and empower them to take the first steps in getting employees the help they need. Line managers also have an important role in helping to create more positive working environments and in helping fit roles and working habits to meet the needs of employees – for example, helping employees work flexibly.

After taking evidence from business leaders, the All Party Parliamentary Commission on the Future of Management 2020 found that the most important skill required for managers over the next decade and beyond will be their 'soft' or social skills. With work being less secure and with people at work managing heavier workloads and longer hours, the need for line managers with greater emotional intelligence and social skills is no longer a 'nice to have' but a 'must have'.

In 1851, John Ruskin proposed three essential factors for a healthy workplace: "they must be fit for it, they must not do too much of it, and they must have a sense of success in it". With better recognition and support for line managers across our organisations, we can help businesses to become better for people and society.

**Professor Sir Cary L. Cooper, CBE**  
**Manchester Business School,**  
**University of Manchester**  
**President of CIPD**

## Section 4:

# Better work

### Expert view



The 'hour glass' UK labour market – bifurcated into 'good' high skill, high wage jobs and 'bad' low skill, low wage jobs – presents challenges for the UK's endeavour towards job quality, engagement and high performing workforces, or what the EU calls 'More and Better Jobs' and the International Labour Organisation (ILO) calls 'Decent Work'. Taylorist principles of fragmentation, reduction in task discretion and management control still underpin the job design of many low skill, low wage jobs in the UK, and these characteristics risk making jobs repetitive, tedious and boring. A lack of variety and autonomy, long been thought to be inherent or even inevitable in many low skill jobs, often act as barriers to job enrichment, high job quality, high performance and the development of an engagement culture. As a consequence, the compatibility between low skill work, job enrichment and employee engagement has been questioned.

Not only did the recession lead to an increase in the number of employees underemployed and working in unfulfilling low skill work, it also led to a change in attitude within some organisations, towards job enrichment and investment into 'Good Work' and employee engagement. Firstly, the labour surplus seen in the UK – or 'employers' market' – on top of the financial constraints which employers imposed on themselves, acted as disincentives for many employers to invest in what some might regard as 'non-urgent' long-term business strategies, such as job quality enrichment and the development of a

culture of engagement. Secondly, many employers may also struggle to envisage how they are able to maintain operational efficiency and cost minimisation – fundamental operating principles behind the design of many low skill jobs – whilst concomitantly providing opportunity for job enrichment and engagement across their workforce. For these employers, tightly controlled and constrained jobs, clear and demanding performance targets and low task discretion appeared to be the core ingredients of productivity growth.

Whilst such an indifference towards job quality and organisational culture may appear to pay off in the short-term – with the negative repercussions of poor job quality and disengagement such as high turnover, high absenteeism and poor performance being suppressed by employee fears of job loss – in the long-term this attitude is likely to have significant consequences when the coin flips (as it now has) and the 'employee's market' returns, potentially leading to low UK productivity, higher withdrawal from the labour market due to poor wellbeing, and increased rates of voluntary turnover. The bottom line is that, as labour market conditions become more benign, line managers will need to rediscover the skills of creative job design which many of them have lost or never had.

**Professor Stephen Bevan**

**Director, Centre for Workforce Effectiveness  
The Work Foundation**



## Section 7:

# Better relationships:

## Developing line managers to promote communication and social connections

### Better relationships

The Workwell Model focuses on Better Relationships in order to help employees recognise the importance of strong social connections both inside and outside of the workplace. A high level of trust between line managers and employees is essential in order for challenges around mental wellbeing to be discussed. It is becoming increasingly important for line managers to possess good interpersonal skills to build a positive and inclusive management style that helps to build trusting and respectful relationships.

### Recruitment and promotion

Any business that recruits or promotes an individual into a managerial role should ensure they can demonstrate the right behaviours and skills needed to have a positive impact on employee wellbeing. The CMI supports this and recommends that managers be recruited on the basis of their personal attitudes and capabilities, with a focus on interpersonal and people management skills. It further recommends that guidance on these skills should inform key preparation for first time managers. This approach is also echoed by organisations such as NICE.<sup>35</sup>

### Professional development

Historically, technical competencies have been prioritised over interpersonal skills when assessing good management practice.<sup>36</sup> CIPD estimates that as nearly half (48%) of organisations have admitted promoting employees into managerial roles based on their performance record rather than people management or leadership skills.<sup>37</sup> Employers should work with newly promoted or recruited line managers to understand where they may benefit from further training to improve

their practice and development of interpersonal skills. Specifically, this should focus on the development of strong communication and interpersonal skills in order for line managers to build stronger relationships with employees. These include behaviours and attributes that may be taken for granted but which are vital for managers to engage with sensitive topics and build trust with those around them, for example, empathy, tolerance and humility.

### Communicating wellbeing

Line managers should ensure that wellbeing is a topic that is discussed as part of regular one-to-one catch ups with employees. An understanding of how to react and respond should employees raise wellbeing concerns will help line managers act with confidence. Some organisations have produced guides to help managers become more confident talking about wellbeing and approaching these conversations in a sensitive and appropriate way. Business in the Community's guide ***Listen up: Let's talk mental health***, produced in partnership with Friends Life, offers suggestions on how to broach the topic, listen and respond to others, and provide support when issues arise. Creating an environment where employees have trust in their line managers will increase the likelihood of any challenges being addressed at an early stage.

*continued overleaf*

<sup>35</sup> NICE, *Workplace health: management practices* (2015)

<sup>36</sup> CMI, *Management 2020: Leadership to unlock long-term growth* (2015)

<sup>37</sup> CIPD, *Lack of support for managers leads to leadership problems and crisis of organisational culture* (2013)

## Section 7:

# Better relationships

### Performance management

Holding regular performance reviews helps to build relationships between employees and managers. Businesses should provide managers with the right support to help communicate to employees where the opportunities for professional development and progression are within their roles. Endorsement from senior leaders is important to ensure that line managers feel empowered to invest time in meeting regularly with employees, which will help to build positive relationships and give managers a sense of their strengths within a team. Line managers should be encouraged to take a leading role in the promotion of wellbeing initiatives, whether individual activities such as challenges or through taking up a more formal supplementary role, such as a wellbeing champion, where they may develop their skills further.

### Recommendations for business

- Recruit and promote line managers with strong interpersonal and communication skills to promote wellbeing.
- Include interpersonal skills as a key component of line manager training, so that line managers can develop an inclusive, approachable manner.
- Line manager appraisals should include a focus on the wellbeing of the people they manage.



## Personal view

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I'm 41 and have suffered from depression for around 25 years, on and off. This hasn't caused me to take time off work, but it sometimes affects me and how I perform. Depression is challenging to manage because it is a silent illness. It's much more acceptable to talk about physical illness like diabetes and it's easier for people to understand how it affects you. Stigma around mental health remains a big challenge.

At National Grid we've done a lot to make it culturally acceptable to talk about mental health openly. Training is available for line managers to give them sufficient awareness of warning signs to look for. It's important that managers aren't expected to be health professionals but that they recognise their capacity to help people through getting them access to expert support, where they feel it might be needed.

In my opinion, there's no substitution for a manager being in tune with where people are generally in their lives, so that they can engage with them in the right way. Ensuring that managers receive training to give them a basic understanding of mental health and how it affects people is of course important – but it's only useful if managers know their employees as people first and foremost. Strong personal relationships between manager and employee are essential.

Through experience I have come to realise my own limits and capabilities in the workplace. My advice for managers – and businesses – is to help employees prioritise what is important to them; there is a real need to listen to employees and assess what works for them as individuals. Having the ambition for your employees to be happy and engaged is important for any manager.

The workplace needs to be an environment where people feel comfortable and supported and line managers can play a vital role in this.

**Mark Lissimore**

**Head of Delivery, Electricity  
Transmission, Construction  
National Grid**

## Section 7:

# Better relationships



### Personal view

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Around three years ago I was going through a difficult time. I had just started getting divorced and this coincided with a particularly strenuous period at work. I was suffering badly from stress and depression, but no-one noticed the pressure I was under. I felt exhausted emotionally, physically and mentally. As a person, I wasn't working.

This all changed when I moved to a new office and met my new manager, Dave. He recognised that I was suffering and how badly I wanted to do my job and get back on track. Most importantly, he listened and took the time to talk to me; being given the opportunity to have a proper, honest conversation was so important. As a result, he was able to give me space and signpost me to the expert support I needed.

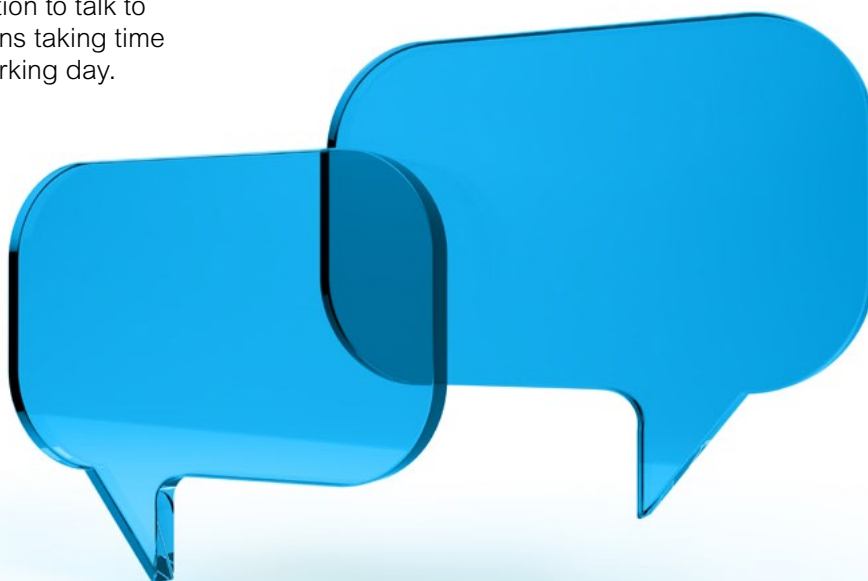
Dave's support gave me the opportunity to move forward and get back into the real world. It gave me my confidence back and I was later asked to join him in helping to manage a new office.

I am a better manager myself as a result: I have been able to support people as a result of recognising signs that they are struggling. For me, one of the most important skills for managers to have is the confidence and discretion to talk to people on their own, even if this means taking time outside of the office or during the working day.

Everyone, no matter who they are, has challenges in their life. There is always someone who needs support, to be cared about – or simply to be noticed. Just having the confidence and ability to take someone aside and ask: "Are you okay?" can be that all important first step to changing their life for the better. Often, a problem can't be seen without having that all important proper face-to-face conversation.

If there was more recognition for managers who have good people skills across different workplaces, then more people could be helped into roles where they have a greater impact. Managers often might see someone with a problem, but lack the time, confidence and skills to help – so it's really important to give them as much support as possible.

**David Tall**  
**Assistant Delivery Manager**  
**Royal Mail**



## Expert view

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The relationship that managers have with their teams is crucial to the positive management of both employees' performance and their mental health while at work. With mental ill-health now the leading cause of sickness absence in the UK<sup>38</sup> it is more important than ever that businesses focus on helping managers to develop a wide range of capabilities that help them to promote positive mental wellbeing in the workplace.

Investing in line manager training can be transformational not only for the confidence and wellbeing of employees but also for their line managers too. To build healthy relationships with a team it is crucial that managers are supported to develop their soft skills, not only in terms of the basics around communication, motivation, teamwork and collaboration, but also around active listening and emotional intelligence too. This will help to ensure that managers are in the best position to address challenges as they arise and create a positive and supportive working environment for employees.

Whilst some line managers are instinctively good at the 'softer' side of management, others may have progressed to management roles as a result of their technical expertise and, as such, may not have had the opportunity to develop these skills. Yet research shows that, with the right training and development, managers can be supported to refine their interpersonal techniques, leading to improved, more trusting relationships with staff.<sup>39</sup>

Providing managers with regular learning and development opportunities, both at induction stage and throughout their careers, will help to ensure that emotional and interpersonal skills become embedded as part of expected management practice. However, it is also important that any investment in line manager training is in conjunction with a consistent organisational approach to wellbeing, where business leaders can effectively communicate its importance and role model healthy behaviours.

There is a range of support available to help organisations develop their line manager support, including consultancy services and courses such as Mental Health First Aid training. These help to increase people's understanding and confidence engaging with the issue and support the creation of positive working environments.

**Emma Mamo**

**Head of Workplace Wellbeing  
Mind**

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<sup>38</sup> CIPD, *Simplyhealth Absence Management survey* (2011)

<sup>39</sup> CIPD, *Using the Head and Heart at Work: A Business Case for Soft Skills*, November (2010)



## Section 7:

# Better relationships



### Expert view

Remote and virtual working is a reality of the modern workplace: more than one third of executives expect over half of their full-time employees will be working remotely by 2020.<sup>40</sup> Managers and leaders are becoming accustomed to the idea that they must learn to effectively support the wellbeing of their employees despite seeing many of their staff infrequently. There are a range of potential benefits for organisations taking advantage of a remote or geographically-dispersed workforce, including improved productivity, cost and time savings, and access to a more diverse set of skills and experience.

There is also enormous potential for remote working to help increase employees' levels of control and autonomy over their workloads: our research has found that 84% of remote workers report improvements to their work-life balance, particularly control over working hours. However, these opportunities are too often impeded by poor working and management practices, including inadequate communication and lack of shared purpose amongst teams. Our research has also found that 88% of remote workers struggle with inconsistent working practices and miscommunication and that 83% of remote workers often feel overwhelmed by over-reliance on email. This lack of face-to-face interaction can also risk employees feeling more prone to loneliness and isolation.

Managers are increasingly conscious of the responsibilities for remote workers, yet most leadership and management practice is not yet fully adjusted to the changes remote working requires. Businesses need to focus on ensuring more deliberate and transparent management, helping managers to build stronger and more trusting relationships with their staff.

Effective management of remote workers requires managers to understand how to communicate with employees effectively and ensuring that they feel supported working in a different and potentially more isolating work environment. One good example of support is ensuring managers can provide remote-workers with access to 'mentors' or networks with other colleagues, to help them feel included.

More comprehensive training and guidance for line managers on managing the wellbeing of remote workers can have significant benefits for all businesses. This can be particularly effective as part of inductions for new managers or as part of ongoing skills development for more experienced managers.

**Kate Cooper**

**Head of Research & Policy  
Institute of Leadership and Management**



40 London Global Leaders' Summit (LBS 2014), cited in *Going remote: leading dispersed teams*

## Section 8:

# Better specialist support:

## Equipping line managers with the skills and knowledge to promote wellbeing

### Better specialist support

Better specialist support is the segment of the Workwell Model dedicated to ensuring that employees are equipped with the skills and knowledge to promote wellbeing effectively across an organisation. Specialist support includes a range of general skills and knowledge around wellbeing, including common mental health problems. It also extends to ensuring that employees understand the support on offer through Employee Assistance and other professional support services, specific to individual employers. Line managers are one of the key groups for specific training around health and wellbeing, both for themselves and to be equipped to undertake their wider responsibilities as a line manager.

### The current skills gap around wellbeing and mental health

The CMI estimates that the UK labour market needs one million new managers by 2020. Yet managers often lack enough support to take on the varied demands of their role.<sup>41</sup> Two-thirds (71%) of employers give either no or inadequate training to new managers<sup>42</sup> and one in three managers say they do not have formal support to help employees with conditions like depression.<sup>43</sup> Most significantly, more than half of managers would like to do more to improve staff wellbeing but don't feel they have the right training or guidance in place to do so.<sup>44</sup> This is not just a UK problem: Harvard Business Review has found that, globally, managers are not receiving the right support to match their evolving job demands.<sup>45</sup> There is a clear opportunity for businesses to offer better support to help line managers adjust to the growing demands placed on them, particularly around supporting employee wellbeing.

### Training on mental health

Just as you would expect managers to support employees with a physical problem at work, line managers should also receive training to feel confident dealing with mental health issues as well. This doesn't mean trying to make every manager an expert, it means encouraging a greater awareness of how people's mental health affects their mood and behaviour, and how their role as a manager can impact this. Guidance on spotting signs of stress, anxiety and depression amongst employees is particularly important. Mental Health First Aid is a leading example of licensed training which provides employees with this base knowledge to help them act if they believe a colleague may need help.

Businesses should also seek to help managers develop the key interpersonal skills that are critical to help line managers build trust within their teams, putting them in better position to broach and react to sensitive topics with confidence. Highlighting the importance of regular conversations with employees is an important aspect of this.

It is also important that line managers understand their role in supporting colleagues on an ongoing basis, for those who may be working remotely or who are taking a leave of absence from work. There are a range of resources available to help businesses consider the range of training available. These are detailed in the resources section of this report.

*continued overleaf*

41 CMI, *Management 2020: Leadership to unlock long-term growth* (2015)

42 CMI, *Management 2020: Leadership to unlock long-term growth* (2015)

43 Target Depression / Ipsos Healthcare *Impact of Depression at Work in Europe Audit Final report* (2012)

44 Mind (2015)

45 Harvard Business Review, *Frontline Managers: Are They Given the Leadership Tools to Succeed?* (2014)

## Section 8:

# Better specialist support

### Mental wellbeing support for line managers

Helping line managers understand and manage the sources of stress within their own roles will create a better understanding of how employees can be supported effectively. It will ensure that managers can role model positive behaviours and build stronger relationships with their employees. Other effective interventions that have been used by leading businesses to help managers manage their wellbeing include mindfulness training and Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT).<sup>46</sup> Those new to line manager positions should be clear on how their role contributes to a company's overall wellbeing strategy and feel reassured to approach it as a priority issue.

### Clear referral pathways

No matter how effective a line manager is in promoting the wellbeing of those around them, there are always times when employees will be in need of more specialist and professional support. Employers can help line managers by ensuring they have a comprehensive understanding of the range of support available to employees – both internally and externally – and that they feel confident advising on how these can be accessed. Having a range of ways for employees to be referred, or self-referred, will help them get the support they require more quickly.

Many employers use external suppliers to supplement or deliver their wellbeing programmes and specific support for employees. Line managers should feel confident signposting expert support where they feel it may be necessary, including providing the routes for making contact with Employee Assistance Programmes, primary care and occupational health teams.

An estimated 13.8 million employees have access to Employee Assistance Programmes – almost half the UK workforce.<sup>47</sup> However, the average use of EAP services – such as telephone or online support – is as low as 10%. Including guidance on the use of EAPs as part of line manager training and inductions will help managers encourage more employees to make use of the services. In addition, many companies work with charitable organisations, benefits providers, and private health providers, and these partnerships may also offer specific support for line managers to help them make their interventions more targeted to support their employees.

### Recommendations for business

- Equip line managers with the skills to look after their own mental wellbeing such as resilience and mindfulness.
- Provide all line managers with basic mental health training, including how to spot the signs of stress, anxiety and depression amongst their staff.
- Develop clear, simple referral pathways for internal and external specialist support, including self-referral options.

<sup>46</sup> BITC case studies.

<sup>47</sup> UK Employee Assistance Professionals Association (UK EAPA), EAP Market Watch Report (2013)

## Expert view

As well as ensuring that explicit mental health policies are implemented, organisations that adopt a person centred approach to their employees' health and wellbeing will reap a number of benefits. Staff will feel more supported and valued by their employer and there will be more positive and trusting relationships between managers and employees. This will lead to better engagement and productivity over the long-term and increase the likelihood of sickness absence rates falling.

It can often be the case when an employee is underperforming or behaving in an uncharacteristic way at work that the underlying cause or contributing factor is a mental health issue, with conditions such as depression and anxiety affecting tens of thousands of employees across the UK workforce. However, the negative impact of these can be significantly reduced with the appropriate training and support for line managers, who play such an important role in helping to support the positive wellbeing of employees.

Mental health training courses, such as Mental Health First Aid, can provide line managers with the key skills to manage mental wellbeing across all kinds of settings. The courses provide guidance on a range of topics, from the importance of conducting regular performance reviews and having day-to-day conversations, to advice on approaching sensitive conversations and spotting the signs that someone may be struggling with their mental

health. The ambition is to equip managers with the knowledge and confidence to provide the first stage of support to employees they feel may need help, ensuring they have access to the appropriate specialist support to get them on a quick road to recovery. By encouraging more transparent conversations around conditions like stress, depression and anxiety, this training can also help to break down stigma and create a culture that welcomes conversations around mental wellbeing.

Training line managers to recognise, respect and respond to staff who are experiencing challenges with their mental health should be regarded as an essential element of an organisation's approach to fostering positive health and wellbeing. It can not only help to save money, but more importantly it could help to save lives.

**Poppy Jaman**

**Chief Executive**

**Mental Health First Aid England**



## Section 8:

# Better specialist support



### Case study: P&G's *Healthy Minds* for Line Managers

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Over the past year we have implemented a number of successful initiatives under our *Healthy Minds* programme, which is our organisational strategy to promote positive mental wellbeing across the business.

The continuation of our internal speaker series, launched in 2014, has seen employees from all levels of the organisation come forward to share and discuss their experiences of mental health, whether individually, as a friend of someone affected or within the workplace. This has resulted in more open conversations around mental wellbeing amongst employees.

We have also launched a '*Healthy Minds* Champions' network of around 15 employees from across the business. All Champions are trained in Mental Health First Aid and offer advice around mental health and resilience. The network is intended as an additional, visible and independent avenue for any employee with questions or concerns in this area, and in its own right is an important statement of commitment.

These initiatives have provided a strong foundation for us to help line managers take a proactive approach to mental wellbeing in their teams, and we are now focusing much of our efforts on empowering line managers in this role.

In early 2016, we will be launching a bespoke half day training session called '*Healthy Minds* for Line Managers'. Its ambition is to help managers build their base knowledge in this area, become confident in discussing this topic and proactively setting the right culture to create the right environment for positive mental wellbeing. It also aims to help managers understand the importance of maintaining their own wellbeing – including causes of stress and relief mechanisms – as a route to influencing positive behaviours in others.

We have created a one page talk sheet for line managers to use as a guide when approaching one-to-one discussions with employees to make the topic more approachable, and enable concrete actions to be identified where necessary. We encourage line managers to regularly consider their own mental wellbeing, as well as those around them, to role model and create a positive culture that encourages transparency and open conversation – to ensure no-one has to suffer in silence.

Through our line manager support programme, we expect to see continued improvements in organisational wellbeing, as part of our wider *Healthy Minds* programme. This is really exciting to see.

**Richard Seville**  
**Senior HR Manager**  
**Northern Europe**  
**P&G**

## Case study: Santander's Positive about Mental Health programme



At Santander, we actively promote the benefits of physical health and psychological wellbeing at work. Our commitment to this is referenced in our integrated Health, Safety and Wellbeing Policy Statement, signed by our CEO, Nathan Bostock. In 2014, our Health Safety and Wellbeing team developed a bespoke course for people managers called 'Positive about Mental Health'. The course is specifically designed to help them understand more about common workplace conditions such as stress and anxiety. It provides guidance on the signs that indicate employees may be struggling and gives advice to managers on how they can open up conversations to discuss these issues in a sensitive and appropriate way. Through the course we make sure that managers are better informed and more confident signposting employees to professional support.

Our ambition is for this course to help people managers feel more empowered to make a positive difference to both individual and organisational wellbeing. More than 150 people managers across our contact centres have received the 'Positive about Mental Health' training. It has been well received and there are clear signs that we are making a difference. Initial feedback has told us that managers feel better equipped to support their team members and create a positive wellbeing environment at work.

**Suzanne Hughes**

**Learning, Talent and Development Director  
Santander**





# Section 9:

## Resources

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### Business in the Community Wellbeing

#### Mental Health: We're Ready to Talk (2014)

<http://wellbeing.bitc.org.uk/all-resources/research-articles/mental-health-were-ready-talk>

#### Mental Health: We're Ready to Talk – One Year On (2015)

<http://wellbeing.bitc.org.uk/all-resources/research-articles/were-ready-talk-one-year>

#### Listen up: Let's talk mental health, a workplace guide

[www.bitc.org.uk/our-resources/report/listen-lets-talk-mental-health-workplace-guide#sthash.vSTnynyM.dpuf](http://www.bitc.org.uk/our-resources/report/listen-lets-talk-mental-health-workplace-guide#sthash.vSTnynyM.dpuf)

#### Bupa Employee Wellbeing Award 2015 case studies

[www.bitc.org.uk/awards/responsible-business-awards/award-stories-2015/bupa-employee-wellbeing-award](http://www.bitc.org.uk/awards/responsible-business-awards/award-stories-2015/bupa-employee-wellbeing-award)

#### Wellbeing campaign resources (some member-only content)

<http://wellbeing.bitc.org.uk/all-resources>

#### Workwell Model

<http://wellbeing.bitc.org.uk/issues/workwell-model>

### Business in the Community

#### Inclusive leaders and managers

<http://gender.bitc.org.uk/issues/inclusive-leaders-and-managers>

#### The Missing Million: Recommendations for action (2015)

[http://age.bitc.org.uk/system/files/research/bitc\\_missing\\_million-rec\\_for\\_action\\_final\\_report\\_22apr2015.pdf](http://age.bitc.org.uk/system/files/research/bitc_missing_million-rec_for_action_final_report_22apr2015.pdf)

#### Race at Work report (2015)

<http://race.bitc.org.uk/all-resources/research-articles/race-work-report>

### Mental Health First Aid

#### About MHFA England

<http://mhfaengland.org>

#### Line Managers' resource (2013)

[http://mhfaengland.org/files/5613/9101/5215/MHFA\\_Line\\_Managers\\_Resource.pdf](http://mhfaengland.org/files/5613/9101/5215/MHFA_Line_Managers_Resource.pdf)

### Mind

#### How to take stock of mental health in your workplace (2013)

[www.mind.org.uk/media/42862/Resource\\_2\\_Take\\_Stock\\_of\\_MH\\_in\\_your\\_workplace\\_final.pdf](http://www.mind.org.uk/media/42862/Resource_2_Take_Stock_of_MH_in_your_workplace_final.pdf)

#### How to promote wellbeing and tackle the causes of work-related mental health problems (2013)

[www.mind.org.uk/media/428496/Resource3\\_HowToPromoteWellBeingFINAL.pdf](http://www.mind.org.uk/media/428496/Resource3_HowToPromoteWellBeingFINAL.pdf)

#### How to support staff who are experiencing a mental health problem (2013)

[www.mind.org.uk/media/550657/resource4.pdf](http://www.mind.org.uk/media/550657/resource4.pdf)

#### Guide to Wellness Action Plans (WAPS) (2013)

<http://www.mind.org.uk/workplace/mental-health-at-work/taking-care-of-your-staff/employer-resources/wellness-action-plan-download>

### CIPD

#### Managing for sustainable employee engagement: Developing a behavioural framework (2012)

[www.cipd.co.uk/publicpolicy/policy-reports/engagement-behavioural-framework.aspx](http://www.cipd.co.uk/publicpolicy/policy-reports/engagement-behavioural-framework.aspx)

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## Time to Change

### Employer pledge step by step

[www.time-to-change.org.uk/employer-pledge-step-by-step](http://www.time-to-change.org.uk/employer-pledge-step-by-step)

### Support resources for line managers

[www.time-to-change.org.uk/your-organisation/support-employers](http://www.time-to-change.org.uk/your-organisation/support-employers)

## Additional resources

### ACAS, Front Line Managers (2014)

[www.acas.org.uk/index.aspx?articleid=802](http://www.acas.org.uk/index.aspx?articleid=802)

### Bank Workers Charity, Bank on your people: The State of the Wellbeing and High Performance

[www.bwcharity.org.uk/sites/default/files/BWC\\_Research\\_Report.PDF](http://www.bwcharity.org.uk/sites/default/files/BWC_Research_Report.PDF)

### Institute of Leadership and Management (ILM), Guidelines for Managing Remote Teams (2014)

[www.i-l-m.com/Insight/Inspire/2014/June/how-to-manage-remote-workforce](http://www.i-l-m.com/Insight/Inspire/2014/June/how-to-manage-remote-workforce)

### Mindful Employer, Line Managers' Resource: A practical guide to supporting staff with a mental health condition (2011)

[www.mindfulemployer.net/files/1714/3764/4224/MINDFUL\\_EMPLOYER\\_Line\\_Managers\\_Resource\\_Revised\\_2014.pdf](http://www.mindfulemployer.net/files/1714/3764/4224/MINDFUL_EMPLOYER_Line_Managers_Resource_Revised_2014.pdf)

### Mindful Employer, Making Work Work: to help support conversations between managers and staff

[www.mindfulemployer.net/files/4014/2692/7677/Making\\_work\\_work.pdf](http://www.mindfulemployer.net/files/4014/2692/7677/Making_work_work.pdf)

## Web resources

### Management Standards for work related stress, Health and Safety Executive (2015)

[www.hse.gov.uk/stress/standards](http://www.hse.gov.uk/stress/standards)

### NICE (National Institute of Health and Care Excellence), Workplace policy and management practices to improve the health and wellbeing of employees (2015)

[www.nice.org.uk/guidance/ng13](http://www.nice.org.uk/guidance/ng13)

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- Business in the Community, *Inclusive Leadership – From Pioneer to Mainstream: Maximising the potential of your people* (2011)
- Business in the Community / Centre for Mental Health, *Managing presenteeism: a discussion paper* (2011)
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- CIPD (Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development) / SimplyHealth, *Absence Management Annual Survey Report* (2012)
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- CIPD, *Disclosure tools for line managers* (2014)
- CIPD, 2013c, cited in CIPD, *Leadership – easier said than done* (2014)

*continued overleaf*

## Section 9:

# Resources

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CIPD, *Employee Outlook Survey* (Spring 2015)

CIPD, *Real-life leaders: closing the knowledge-doing gap* (2013)

CIPD, *Managing and supporting mental health at work: disclosure tools for managers* (2011)

CIPD, *Megatrends: are we working harder than ever?* (2014)

CMI (Chartered Management Institute), *Management 2020: Leadership to unlock long-term growth*, ref. Towers Watson Global Workforce Study (2012)

CMI, *Quality of Working Life: Managers' Wellbeing, Motivation and Productivity* (2012)

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Department for Business, Innovation and Skills, *Leadership and management in the UK – the key to sustainable growth* (2012)

Engage for Success, *Bringing the line to life* (2013)

Engage for Success, *The Evidence: Employee Engagement Task Force "Nailing the evidence" workgroup* (2012)

Harvard Business Review, *Frontline Managers: Are They Given the Leadership Tools to Succeed?* (2014)

Health and Safety Executive, *Work related Stress, Anxiety and Depression statistics in Great Britain* (2015)

HM Gov, *Preventing suicide in England: Two years on* (2015)

NICE (National Institute of Health and Care Excellence), *Workplace policy and management practices to improve the health and wellbeing of employees* (2015)

ONS, *Sickness Absence in the Labour Market* (2014)

Target Depression / Ipsos Healthcare, *Impact of Depression at Work in Europe Audit Final report* (2012)

Time to Change, Public Attitudes Survey: *Public Attitudes to Mental Illness* (2014)

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Mind, *Taking Care of Business* (2011)

Mind, *How to support staff who are experiencing a mental health problem* (2013)

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