



Reducing Stress to Enhance Success: The What, Why & How of Corporate Wellness Programs

Reducing Stress to Enhance Success

The What, Why & How of Corporate Wellness Programs

Introduction

In today's fast-paced corporate world, the health and wellness of employees is more important than ever. There is undisputable evidence to show a well-structured wellness program can transform your workplace, leading to happier, healthier, and more productive employees. However, what exactly do we mean by a wellness program...?

In addition to employee health benefits, are how else can these programs help organisations...?

What help is available to organisations who may wish to implement a program but have no idea where to start..?

The purpose of this guide is to answer the above questions and provide a starting point for relevant persons in your organisation to get the ball rolling as you design and implement your corporate wellness program.

In addition to clarifying what we mean by a 'corporate wellness program' we will explore the obvious employee health benefits; the less understood financial and tax related advantages; as well as what financial support is available and where to find it.

First, let's be clear about what we mean by a corporate wellness program:

What is a Corporate Wellness Program..?

A 'corporate wellness program' is an organised set of health and wellness initiatives, implemented by organisations, tailored to support the physical, mental, and emotional well-being of their employees. Their purpose is primarily to boost employee morale and reduce absenteeism to ultimately enhance productivity and profitability and may include services such as: stress management workshops, healthy eating campaigns, mental health support.

Benefits of Corporate Wellbeing Programs

Let's take a closer look at the key advantages of corporate wellness program for employees and employers:

1. Reduced Absenteeism

Employee wellbeing programs lead to fewer sick days. Healthier employees are less likely to take time off due to illness, stress, or mental health problems. Initiatives focused on preventing burnout, like acupuncture, mindfulness, or fitness classes, contribute to **lower absenteeism rates**.

2. Increased Productivity

Healthier employees are more focused, engaged, and productive. By reducing stress, fatigue, and burnout through wellbeing initiatives, companies can see an increase in output and efficiency.

A well-supported workforce often takes **fewer breaks** and is less prone to distractions, allowing them to remain engaged for longer periods.

3. Improved Employee Retention

Offering wellbeing support shows employees that the company cares about their health and happiness, which can improve loyalty. **Reduced turnover** means lower recruitment and training costs, as employees are more likely to stay with a company that prioritises their mental and physical well-being.

4. Attracting Top Talent

Having a comprehensive wellness program can help companies differentiate themselves in the competitive recruitment market. Companies that invest in wellbeing create an attractive culture, which is appealing to potential hires. Job candidates often look for employers that offer more than just salary – they value work-life balance and support..

5. Enhanced Employee Engagement and Morale

Employees are more likely to feel **valued and supported** when their employer invests in their wellbeing, leading to higher engagement and job satisfaction. Higher morale results in a more motivated workforce that is willing to go the extra mile for the company.

6. Better Mental Health and Reduced Stress

Improved mental health boosts creativity, decision-making, and overall performance. Stress is one of the leading causes of poor performance and absenteeism. By investing in **stress management programs** (like mindfulness, acupressure, massage and mental health support), companies can significantly reduce employee stress levels.

7. Fostering a Positive Workplace Culture

Wellbeing initiatives create a **positive work environment** where employees feel supported and motivated. This encourages teamwork, collaboration, and mutual respect. A positive culture can therefore be a competitive advantage, leading to stronger teamwork and better communication across departments.

8. Lower Healthcare Costs

Healthier employees are less likely to need frequent medical interventions, lowering the company's **healthcare costs**. Preventative measures through wellness programs reduce claims for health insurance. Companies may also benefit from **lower insurance premiums** if they can demonstrate a focus on employee wellbeing.

9. Improved Corporate Image and Brand Reputation

A commitment to employee wellbeing reflects positively on a company's public image. Customers, clients, and business partners are likely to view such a company as ethical, responsible, and forward-thinking. This can lead to **improved business opportunities** and stronger relationships with clients who value social responsibility.

10. Higher Innovation and Creativity

Wellbeing programs that support mental health help unlock the creative potential of employees. A healthy, stress-free work environment allows employees to be more **innovative and creative**. When people aren't overwhelmed by stress or fatigue, they can think more clearly, take on challenges, and offer fresh ideas.

11. Enhanced Employee-Employer Relationship

A better employee-employer relationship reduces conflicts and grievances. Employees who benefit from wellness programs often develop a **stronger connection** with their employer. They tend to trust that the company values their well-being, which enhances overall job satisfaction and performance.

12. Compliance and Legal Protection

Preventative measures can protect businesses from potential legal claims related to stress and burnout. Many workplace regulations encourage or mandate certain health and wellbeing standards. By investing in these areas, companies can ensure they are **compliant** with laws related to employee welfare, such as mental health policies.

Tax Benefits

There are several ways that investing in wellbeing initiatives can provide tax relief or other financial incentives:

1. Tax-Free Benefits for Employees

Certain employee wellbeing initiatives are considered **tax-free**, meaning companies can offer them without employees incurring a benefit-in-kind (BIK) tax. Examples include mental health support services such as counselling or stress management programs.

2. Employee Assistance Programmes (EAPs)

These are employer-funded employee referral schemes which may be tax deductible. Such services include professional support for personal/professional mental health, financial advice, work-related stress, personal crises and general wellbeing guidance.

3. Workplace Gym and Fitness Facilities

If the company provides an on-site gym or sports facilities available to all employees, it is often considered a tax-free benefit. The cost of setting up and maintaining on-site fitness facilities can be deductible as a business expense, meaning companies can reduce their taxable profits.

4. Health Cash Plans

Health plans that cover treatments such as dental care, physiotherapy, or complementary therapies, can also be deducted from taxable income.

5. Training and Development Related to Wellbeing

The cost of training staff to deliver wellbeing programs (e.g., mental health first aiders, workplace wellness ambassadors) is often tax-deductible. If training is directly related to improving employee health and productivity, it can be classified as a business expense. Courses aimed at reducing stress, improving mental health, or providing resilience training are also considered allowable expenses.

6. Research and Development (R&D) Tax Relief

The government encourages businesses to invest in research and development, including projects which focus on improving workplace health and employee wellbeing. Companies that develop innovative solutions e.g., new mental health software or stress management tools, could potentially claim R&D tax relief.

7. VAT Recovery

Depending on the type of wellbeing services offered, companies may be able to recover VAT on costs associated with running wellness programs, purchasing wellbeing materials, or organising workplace fitness activities. E.g. VAT incurred on office gym equipment or wellness-related events may be recoverable, providing financial savings for the business.

8. Capital Allowances

Investments in wellbeing-related equipment, such as creating relaxation areas, purchasing massage chairs, or installing mental health booths, could be eligible for capital allowances. This allows companies to deduct the full cost of these assets from their taxable profits.

Financial Support Available

Here are a few ways businesses can access grants for employee wellbeing:

1. Government Grants

Examples of government-funded initiatives aimed at supporting workplace wellbeing:

Access to Work: A government scheme that provides financial support for workplace adjustments, including mental health support for employees with disabilities or health conditions.

Wellbeing Support Grants (local councils or devolved governments): Sometimes, local authorities or regional health bodies offer grants for mental health and wellbeing programs in the workplace. It's worth checking with your local council for available schemes.

2. Public Health England (PHE) and NHS Support

PHE and the NHS often provide wellbeing grants for organisations looking to implement mental health support, stress management, and other wellness programs for employees. These may be through regional funding initiatives or workplace health campaigns.

3. Charitable Trusts and Foundations

Various charitable organisations provide grants to help businesses improve their employees' wellbeing:

The Wellcome Trust: Sometimes offers funding for projects that aim to improve mental health and wellbeing in the workplace.

Mind (Mental Health Charity): Provides information on wellbeing grants, though direct funding is often available through regional branches or partnerships with businesses.

4. Business and Industry Grants

Specific grants are available for businesses to improve workforce wellbeing, often through industry bodies or business development funds. For example:

Wellness at Work Programmes: Some sectors (like construction, healthcare, and education) have specific grants available to help with employee wellbeing programs, usually provided through industry bodies or associations.

5. European and International Grants

For businesses operating internationally or with EU ties, there may be access to European Union-funded wellbeing initiatives under programs like the European Social Fund (ESF), which supports projects aimed at improving work environments and promoting better health at work.

6. Corporate Wellness Grants (via Health Insurers)

Some corporate health insurance providers offer grants or subsidies to companies that invest in staff wellbeing initiatives, such as mental health support or fitness programs.

How to Apply

Check eligibility: Ensure that your company meets the criteria for the grant, including location, size, and specific aims.

Create a clear wellbeing plan: Include how you intend to use the funding, such as stress management training, acupuncture or yoga classes, wellness consultations, or mental health support.

Consult with experts: Organisations like mental health charities, local councils, or industry bodies can offer guidance on accessing grants.

Many grants are available regionally or through specific sectors, so researching local options and speaking with business advisors is key.

Summary

Corporate wellness programs are activities and services offered by employers which are tailored to the needs of employees. They are designed to improve overall health and wellbeing to promote an overall sense of wellbeing and reduce stress, leading to a healthier more productive work environment. Examples of such services include: stress management workshops, healthy eating campaigns, mental health support.

Investing in employee wellbeing brings companies financial, cultural, and operational advantages. From increased productivity and employee loyalty to better mental health and lower healthcare costs, the returns on wellbeing programs make it a smart business move. Companies also benefit from a stronger brand image, innovation, and a healthier, more engaged workforce.

Investing in employee wellbeing can also provide companies with various tax advantages such as tax-free employee benefits to deductible expenses for wellbeing programs. By incorporating health checks, fitness schemes, and mental health support, companies can improve their staff's wellbeing while reducing their overall tax burden. It's a win-win that enhances both the financial health of the business and the wellbeing of its employees.

Finally, there are many grants available to help companies implement staff wellbeing initiatives. Such providers include: Government Grants, Public Health England (PHE), NHS Support, Charitable Trusts and Foundations, and European and International Grants.

Last Word from Us...

And there you have it.

We've come to the end of our bite-sized guide on what corporate wellness programs are; how they benefit employers and employees as well as where to get advice and financial support...

Please send your thoughts, comments and feedback via our **Contact Us** form on the home page at www.FitterDays.com and consider our services as you design and implement your own bespoke corporate wellness program! 😊

Data Sources

HM Revenue & Customs (HMRC) Guidance

Taxable Employee Benefits: <https://www.gov.uk/employee-benefits>

Health Screening and Check-Ups: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/health-screening-and-check-ups>

Gov.uk (UK Government Portal)

Expenses and Employee Benefits: <https://www.gov.uk/expenses-and-employee-benefits>

VAT on Employee Benefits: <https://www.gov.uk/vat-on-employee-benefits>

Public Health England (PHE)

Health and Work: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/health-and-work>

Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (CIPD)

Wellbeing at Work: <https://www.cipd.co.uk/knowledge/strategy/wellbeing/wellbeing-at-work>

Employee Assistance Programmes:

<https://www.cipd.co.uk/knowledge/strategy/wellbeing/employee-assistance-programmes>

ACAS (Advisory, Conciliation and Arbitration Service)

Health and Wellbeing at Work: <https://www.acas.org.uk/health-and-wellbeing>

Mental Health in the Workplace:

<https://www.acas.org.uk/mental-health>

Wellbeing at Work Events

Wellbeing at Work Events: <https://www.wellbeingatwork.org.uk/>

British Chambers of Commerce (BCC)

Business Support: <https://www.britishchambers.org.uk/business-support>

National Health Service (NHS) Business Services Authority

Health and Wellbeing at Work: <https://www.nhsbsa.nhs.uk/health-and-wellbeing-at-work>

Pensions Advisory Service (TPAS)

Workplace Pensions: <https://www.pensionsadvisoryservice.org.uk/about-pensions/types-of-pension/workplace-pensions>

Institute for Fiscal Studies (IFS)

Tax and Employee Benefits: <https://www.ifs.org.uk/publications/>

Employee Benefits

<https://employeebenefits.co.uk/buyers-guide-to-employee-assistance-programmes/151647.article>

Reducing Stress to Enhance Success

HM Revenue & Customs. (n.d.).

Welfare counselling: General description. In Employment Income Manual (EIM21845). Retrieved from <https://www.gov.uk/hmrc-internal-manuals/employment-income-manual/eim21845>

GOV.UK. (2023). Find government grants.

Retrieved from <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/find-government-grants>

Health and Wellbeing Fund:

Department of Health & Social Care. (2022). Health and Wellbeing Fund 2022 to 2025: application guidance. Retrieved from <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/vcse-health-and-wellbeing-fund-2022-to-2025-womens-reproductive-wellbeing-in-the-workplace>

Tudor Trust - Wellbeing Grants:

Tudor Trust. (2023). Wellbeing grants. Retrieved from <https://www.tudortrust.org.uk/grant-holder-info/wellbeing-grants>