

EMPLOYEE WELLBEING RESEARCH 2019



Compelling workplace causes are driving the rapid adoption of strategies

EXECUTIVE
SUMMARY
ONLY

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**Employee Wellbeing
Research 2019**



Introduction

State of play: there's the will, the way but not the means



The continued fast-paced rise of employee wellbeing up the workplace agenda has not abated since our first 2016 survey with two thirds of our respondents having a strategy in place in 2019, compared to just one third back in 2016.

To us, three overarching themes emerge in this year's results: there is strong board level support for wellbeing, digital and data adoption continues its rapid growth, however budgets and people resources are holding some employers back.

Looking at our first theme, the will is there at board level. Many C-suite directors recognise that the workplaces of today are highly pressurised and often stressful (or as recruitment adverts like to gloss it up, fast-paced) which takes its toll on workforces. Almost three quarters of our respondents say high pressure and high intensity environments are a problem for their organisation. That leads to staff churn, lower productivity, poor motivation and engagement as well as both mental and physical harm. The problem will only be dealt with by a change of culture led from the top and through all managers, with team leaders demonstrating healthy behaviours of leaving work on time, being seen to take proper breaks, managing teams fairly and with respect, as well as linking wellbeing to personal development training and performance reviews.

Business leaders are now far more aware that people work better if they have autonomy, a sense of purpose and achievement. CEOs are under more pressure from their shareholders to make the fundamental changes needed to improve wellbeing in their workforces as a key way to create long-term sustainable businesses filled with productive employees.

Our second theme relates to 'the way'. Technology and data form a two-way channel that can be used to both deliver wellbeing more effectively as well as capture insights to improve and tailor offerings. That, in turn, justifies more investment in wellbeing resources. Use of apps and virtual GP services have tripled since our 2016 survey, with roughly a third of our respondents now offering these to staff. Those holding the purse strings at the top of business often ask for return on investment data before approving bigger budgets, and the anonymised data from these devices can be an important part of an HR report to its board.

But there is a way to go yet, as our third outstanding fact shows us: employers may have the will and the way, but they often do not yet have the means. Despite the improvements in data capture that we've detailed above, metrics and reporting are still apparently thin on the ground across all our respondents. Among those without a wellbeing strategy in place, almost half report lack of in-house expertise and funding as a barrier.

We have clearly seen tremendous strides over recent years and expect these to continue based on this research.

As always, we would like to extend a very big thank you to all our respondents to this survey (full list on pages 68 and 69). Without so many employers taking part we would not be able to present such robust results on what is happening in our market today and over the coming 12 to 24 months.

We would also like to thank our sponsors, AXA PPP healthcare. Their passion for the topic has enabled us to continue to build on this valuable annual survey.



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Comment

Wellbeing's arrival: employers realise that health is key to creating positive cultures



There's a lot to like about the findings of this the fourth annual *REBA Employee Wellbeing Research* report. And, in this the first year of our sponsorship of the report, a lot to learn.

First and foremost, employee wellbeing has arrived both as a concept and as a reality. And it is fundamental for building an open, inclusive workplace culture.

Welcome are the findings that over two thirds of respondents' organisations have introduced a wellbeing strategy and, of those who haven't, nearly half plan to introduce one this year.

But most welcome is the growing realisation how much mental health matters – nearly half of respondents say they have strategies in place specifically to support this. And two thirds agree that mental health is their board's biggest wellbeing concern. The continuing chart-topping popularity of employee assistance programmes – 93.6% of respondents' companies have them – is testament to this concern although the continuing commoditisation of this market means that much of this support is underfunded.

We are, after all, social animals and there's value to be had in viewing the biopsychosocial continuum that underpins our wellness as 'one health' – a notion we're promoting through our own #Headstrong campaign to encourage employers to give equal weighting to supporting employees' physical and psychological wellbeing.

It's an approach that's based on the notion of good work. This entails creating a positive, supportive workplace culture; rewarding and treating people fairly; giving them the training, resources and support they need to do the job; and providing opportunities to grow and develop.

It also means encouraging employees to lead healthy active lives and, if they should become ill or injured, helping them get the right treatment for an early recovery back to health – and back to work.

To learn from the insights and experience of others, I heartily commend the commentaries from experts and practitioners within this report.

Also striking are the findings that wellbeing is becoming techier. Virtual GP services are making their mark, with nearly a third of respondents offering them compared with one in ten in 2016. These valued time-savers put employees in the driving seat for managing their primary care needs and look set to become a standard feature of employers' wellbeing offerings going forward.

Broadly and generally, employers are doing a pretty good job helping their people to lead healthy, active lives. The direction of travel is good. But it's telling that, to help them do better, respondents want benefits providers and insurers to work more effectively together.

What's needed is a more considered approach. One that builds on their experience and know-how to unpack and make sense of the myriad of soft and hard data – from employee engagement scores, turnover and sickness absence to insurance spend on medical care and ill-health early retirement. And that then applies that insight to help employers cut through the complexity and plethora of market offerings to commend an effective plan.

So, let's not rest on our laurels. There's much good work to be done.

Chris Horlick, Distribution Director for AXA PPP healthcare



PPP HEALTHCARE



Contents

Executive Summary	8
Stepping it up: strategies gather force	
Appendix 1: About the survey	14
Appendix 2: Full list of respondents	15
Appendix 3: Who we are	17



To access the full research report please go to: www.reba.global/reports



Wellbeing trends in 2019

How popular are they?

More than two thirds have a defined wellbeing strategy in place 68.4%



The number of employers without a strategy could fall to less than 20% by 2020

What services are being offered?

Employee assistance programmes continue to be the most frequently offered initiative 93.6%



Second most popular are occupational sick pay schemes 87.5%

The mental health agenda

Almost half have a dedicated strategy in place for managing employee mental health 45.9%



This has risen from 15.8% in 2018

Ongoing challenges

Of those employers with no wellbeing strategy in place, key barriers are lack of funding (46.8%) and lack of in-house expertise 46.8%

A lack of internal data is hampering efforts to measure the effectiveness of wellbeing initiatives 58.1%



How much is being spent?

Where employers have a plan in place, median spend per employee is £26 to £50



What are the business concerns around wellbeing?

For boardrooms it is mental health 62%



At organisation level, it is high pressure working environments 72.8%



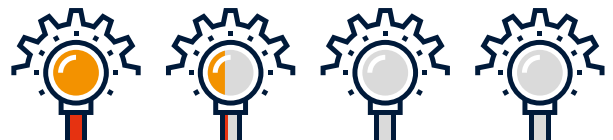
The influence of technology

Almost a third provide access to a smartphone app for wellbeing 30.5%



A similar proportion offer access to virtual GPs 31.5%

Social media is increasingly being used as a communication tool for wellbeing 24.1%





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Executive summary

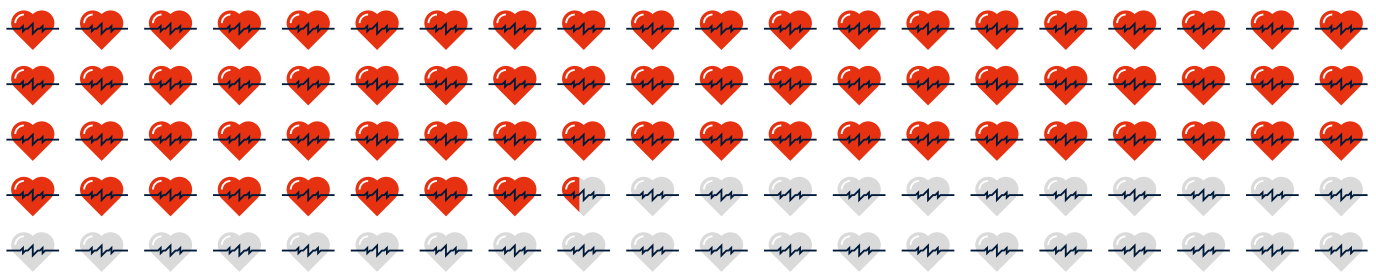
Stepping it up: strategies gather force

As wellbeing schemes continue to thrive they are beginning to adapt and respond to important digital trends. What will fuel progress is more dynamic use of data and greater financial investment.

Wellbeing strategies are booming

More than two thirds of respondents have a strategy in place for managing employee wellbeing.

Have a defined wellbeing strategy in place – 68.4%



This figure has more than doubled since 2016 (29.8%) and is a significant increase from 2018 when 45.2% of organisations had a defined plan in place. Wellbeing strategies are now the norm for UK businesses.

The number of employers without a strategy could fall to less than 20% by 2020

Around half of those who don't have a strategy in place plan to introduce one in 2019.

Plan to introduce a strategy by 2020 – 46.8%

If those who are planning to implement a strategy this year act on their intentions, the number of employers without a wellbeing strategy could be as low as 17% by 2020.



The gap between wellbeing 'haves' and 'have nots' is widening

Almost a quarter of organisations that have a strategy are now spending more than £150 per head per year on employee wellbeing and well over half increased their outlay in 2018. In organisations without a wellbeing strategy, over a quarter are spending nothing at all.

Employers with a strategy spending more than £150 per head per year

22.8%

Employers with a strategy that increased their spend on wellbeing in 2018

54.8%

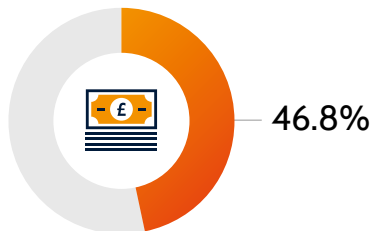
The median spend per employee for organisations with a wellbeing strategy remains consistent with our 2018 findings at £26 to £50. Median spend at employers without a strategy is £1 to £25 per employee, again similar to last year. However, there is now a noticeable disparity between higher and lower spenders which will ultimately affect the breadth and quality of wellbeing programmes.



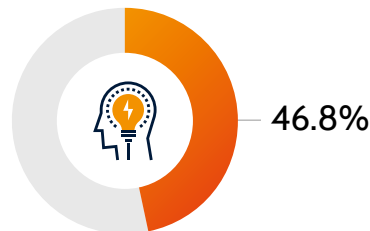
Funding and experience are holding organisations back

Employers say that the main barriers to introducing wellbeing strategies have been a lack of funding or budget and a lack of in-house expertise.

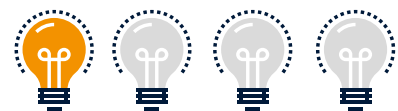
Lack of funding or budget



Lack of in-house expertise



While commitment to wellbeing strategies is clearly gathering steam, financial barriers are still a concern. Only 25.3% cite lack of senior management support as a barrier so for most respondents there is commitment within the organisation to implementing a wellbeing programme. However, the combination of lack of skills and budget may mean employers find it difficult to turn that commitment into positive action.



Most boards support wellbeing but only a handful drive it

Two thirds of respondents say that the board supports their wellbeing agenda but only one in 10 say that it actively drives that agenda across their organisation. This is roughly comparable to 2018, with a small increase in the number of boards driving wellbeing.



It's encouraging to see even a small increase in the number of boards that are driving wellbeing agendas. Engagement at board level ensures that wellbeing becomes an embedded part of company culture, rather than it being viewed as an add-on. However, as we see below, employee involvement is equally important.

Commitment from senior managers other than the board is vital for making wellbeing strategies compelling

Engaged senior managers, employee involvement and wellbeing champions are even more significant factors than support from the board when building a wellbeing culture.



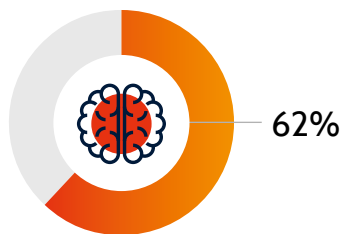
Wellbeing strategies are at their most effective when employees contribute to the programme's development and into the associated cultural change. While board support is still fundamentally important, this shows that wellbeing has got to draw in interest from all layers of an organisation.



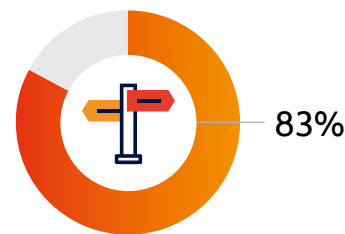
Mental health is number one priority for boardrooms

An overwhelming majority of respondents believe their board's number one wellbeing concern is employee mental health. For the first time, mental health is also the top wellbeing issue being addressed in respondents' strategies.

Mental health is the biggest area of concern for the board



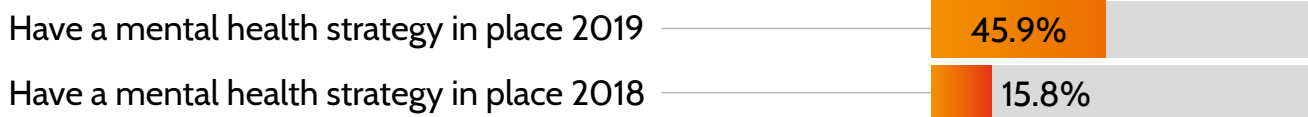
Mental health is addressed in wellbeing strategy



Stevenson and Farmer's *Thriving at work* report (see page 54) and high profile public campaigns such as Heads Together have helped to add impetus to the mental wellbeing agenda. Employers are now responding to those messages, perhaps as the link between productivity and wellbeing becomes clearer.

Big leap in number of employers taking dedicated action on mental health

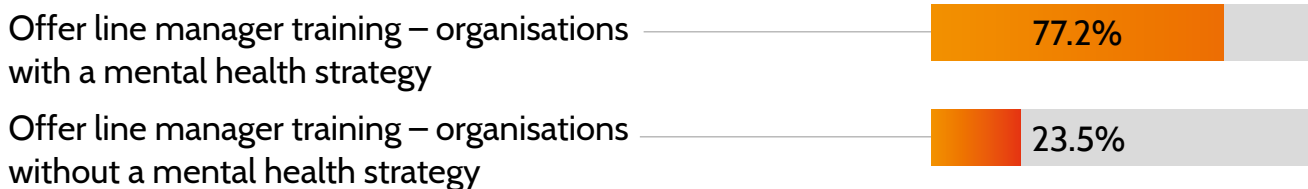
Almost half of respondents now have a strategy in place specifically for managing employee mental health, compared to just 15.8% in 2018.



This is a clear indicator that employers are now much more aware of the effect of poor mental health on employees' wellbeing.

Line manager training is a fundamental part of employers' mental health strategies

Among organisations with a mental health strategy, 77.2% provide line managers with mental health training. However, this falls to less than a quarter where there is no mental health strategy.



Line managers play a pivotal role in workplace mental health, as they are often best placed to detect changes in behaviour or spot other potential concerns among their staff. A positive finding is that among organisations with no strategy, 42.9% plan to introduce line manager training within the next 12 months.





Awareness of recommended mental health standards at work is fairly strong

Nearly two thirds of respondents are aware of the six mental health core standards recommended by Stevenson and Farmer in their 2017 report, *Thriving at work*. However, almost half admit they haven't assessed their approach against the standards.

Aware of *Thriving at work's* six core mental health standards

Thriving at work puts forward a framework for action on mental health, which the report said, "all organisations in the country are capable of implementing quickly". While most are aware of the recommended standards, it seems that a large section of employers are not being persuaded to change their overall approach to supporting mental health.

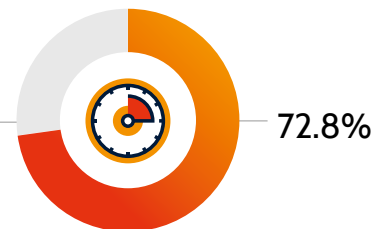


High pressure work environments remain the biggest threat to wellbeing

Almost three quarters of respondents said that a high pressure work environment is the biggest hazard for employee wellbeing – the same figure as in 2018.

High pressure work environment is the biggest threat to employees' wellbeing

While there is more focus on supporting mental health at strategy level, employers continue to be concerned about the amount of pressure that staff are under at work. This would suggest that the root causes of poor mental health at work are not yet being fully addressed.

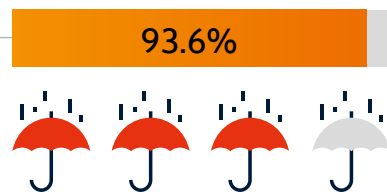


Employee assistance programmes (EAPs) still the most popular initiative

Employee assistance programmes are the most frequently offered benefit, with 93.6% of respondents providing this for employees. Occupational sick pay schemes are the second most frequently offered benefit.

Offer employee assistance programme

Three quarters (75.3%) of respondents said that they use the EAP offered via their insurer, which may in part explain why they are so popular. No doubt they fact they are commonly offered as free additional services helps too.





Measurement focuses on usage and absence rates

Almost three quarters of respondents measure the effectiveness of their wellbeing initiatives. Employee engagement levels, wellbeing programme participation rates and employee absence rates are the most commonly used measures. However, only 18.4% use return on investment as a measure of effectiveness.



The majority of employers are now measuring the effectiveness of their wellbeing programmes, although around a quarter (26.1%) do not assess this at all. Looking behind numbers such as participation rates is important for future development – signing up to a benefit is not the same as using it.



Employers say a lack of data holds them back when measuring effectiveness

Over half of respondents say that limited internal data is one of the main barriers to measuring the effectiveness of their wellbeing initiatives. This is comparable to our 2018 findings.

Limited internal data is a barrier to measuring effectiveness 58.1%



All businesses will have access to data that can help measure the effectiveness of wellbeing so this is a surprising finding but one that employers reported last year too. Rather than the lack of data itself, the challenge may lie in extrapolating insights from multiple different sources of data, or in the variability of data quality from some providers.

There has been a surge in the use of digital tools within wellbeing programmes

Almost a third of respondents now provide access to a smartphone app for wellbeing and a similar proportion offer access to virtual GPs. In 2016, the figures were 8.5% and 11.6% respectively.

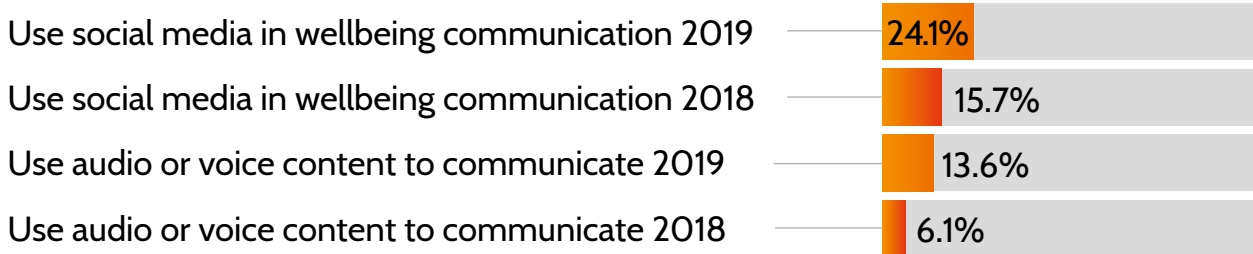


Health apps are now well established in healthcare more generally and access to virtual GPs is becoming more widespread so we would expect these trends to be reflected in the workplace. Many providers are now offering apps as part of their wellbeing or healthcare services, which could also be helping to boost these figures.



Social media is becoming an established part of the communication mix

Around a quarter of respondents now use social media in their wellbeing communication campaigns, an upswing compared to last year. Around one in 10 are using audio and/or video content to communicate – more than double the figure compared to 2018.

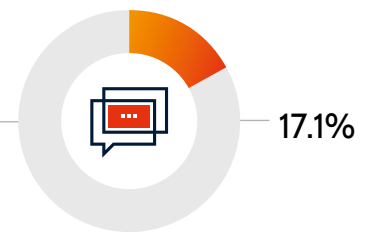


Employers are starting to embrace the use of more varied – and modern – communication tools in which to get their wellbeing messages across. Social media allows both employers and providers to develop richer and more engaging content.

Wellbeing has a low profile in learning and development

Fewer than one in five respondents discuss wellbeing during learning and development meetings with staff.

Discuss wellbeing during learning and development meetings



Making wellbeing a part of learning and development helps reinforce it as an everyday part of business. It is also an opportunity for employers to flag up to staff what's on offer and encourage them to take responsibility for managing their own wellbeing.



Appendix 1: About the Survey

The REBA Employee Wellbeing Survey 2019 was carried out online between February and March 2019. Responses were received from 250 wellbeing, HR and employee benefits specialists working at organisations of various sizes and across a broad range of industry sectors.

Figure 9.1: Respondents by organisation size

Employees	N	%
1-249	39	15.6%
250-999	71	28.4%
1,000-4,999	88	35.2%
5,000-9,999	24	9.6%
10,000-19,999	18	7.2%
20,000+	10	4%
Total	250	100%

Figure 9.2: Respondents by industry sector

Sector	N	%
Public sector	40	16%
Financial services	29	11.6%
Technology	24	9.6%
Professional services (Including legal)	23	9.2%
Not-for-profit sector	22	8.8%
Manufacturing and production	19	7.6%
Health and pharmaceuticals	16	6.4%
Media and telecommunications	15	6%
Engineering and construction	13	5.2%
Food and drink	11	4.4%
Retail and wholesale	10	4%
Transport and logistics	9	3.6%
Leisure and travel (including hotels and hospitality)	7	2.8%
Mining, oil and gas	7	2.8%
Utilities and energy	5	2%
Total	250	100%



Appendix 2: Full list of respondents

ABB Group	British American Tobacco	CooperVision	Havas Media Group
Aberdeen International Airport	Brooke	Coventry Building Society	Healthcare at Home
Abingdon & Witney College	Browne Jacobson LLP	Crown Agents	Herbert Smith Freehills
Accord Housing Association	BSI	Croydon Council	Hotter
Addison Lee	Bury Council	De La Rue	Hymans Robertson
The Adecco Group	BWI Group UK	Del Monte UK	IGD
Advanced Supply Chain Group	Cafcass	Discovery	IHG
Ageas	Cairn Energy	Donnington Grove Veterinary Group	IKEA
Agilent Technologies	Cambridgeshire and Peterborough CCG	Dril-Quip (Europe)	Incisive Business Media
AirTanker	Camphill Village Trust	Durham University	innocent
The AJP Consultancy	Cancer Research UK	Dyson	Intellectual Property Office
Allegis Group	Capco	Edge Hill University	Intuit
AmcoGiffen	Caretech Community Services	Edgewell Personal Care	Jaguar Land Rover
Anglian Water	Carlsberg UK	Eisai Europe	JDA Software
Anthony Nolan	CAYSH	Eli Lilly and Company	JLL
Aramark	CDK Global	Endemol Shine UK	John Lewis Partnership
Arcadis	Central and North West London NHS Foundation Trust	Energy Lab	Johnson & Johnson
Argent Foods Limited	Centrepoint	EnerMech	KCA Deutag
Arm	CH&CO	Environment Agency	Keoghs
Arqiva	Charles Cameron & Associates	Epson Europe BV	KFC
AS Watson	Charles Taylor	Etex Building Performance	Kings Secure Technologies
ASOS	Chemring Countermeasures	Euler Hermes	Knorr-Bremse
Aspen Healthcare	CLS	Expand Executive Search	Leica Geosystems
AstraZeneca	CMS Cameron McKenna Nabarro Olswang LLP	Experian	Lendlease
BACP	Cobham	Expro	Leonardo MW
BAM Nuttall	Coca-Cola	Extern	Leyland Trucks
BGL Group	Codemasters	Feed Communications	Linklaters
Bibby Financial Services	Collins Aerospace	FIS	London Stock Exchange
Birmingham City Council	Companies House	Forest Holidays	Lorica Insurance Brokers
Bouygues Energies & Services	Concentra	Fourfront Group	Lululemon
bpha	Connect Group	FTI Consulting	Macdonald Aviemore Resort
Brambles		Garenne Group	Mace Group
Bristan Group		Getronics	Maersk
		Great Places Housing Group	Manchester Airports Group
			Marie Stopes UK



Mayflower Theatre	Octavia Housing	Severfield	Wells Fargo
McCann Central	Orange Business Services	Shepherds Bush Housing Group	Wigan & Leigh College
McDonald's	Oxfordshire County Council	SJOG Hospitaller Services	William Grant & Sons
Medallia	Pacific Life Re	Skyscanner	Wolseley UK
Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency	Penningtons Manches LLP	Southern Co-op	Worldpay
Mercedes-Benz	PES	Standard Chartered	WorldRemit
Merseyrail	Places for People	Standard Life Aberdeen	Xerox
Mimecast Services	Portakabin	Sunrise Senior Living	XPO Logistics
Mitchells & Butlers	Post Office	Surrey and Sussex Healthcare NHS Trust	Yorkshire Building Society
Mitie	PragmatIC	Tata Chemicals Europe	Youth Justice Board for England and Wales
Mizuho International	Publica Group	Taylor Wessing LLP	Zen Dog Consulting
Molson Coors Brewing Company	QEF	Taylor Wimpey	
Mondelez International	Rathbones	THB Group	
Moody's	Red C	The Co-operative Group	
Mothercare	Red Hat	The Social Element	
Muller UK & Ireland	RES Group	The University of Manchester	
My Home Move	ResMed	The Walt Disney Company	
N2O	RGP	Thomsons Online Benefits	
Nando's	Riverbed Technology	Three	
National Care Group	Riverside	Toronto-Dominion Bank	
National Trust	Ropes & Gray	Translink	
Natixis	Royal Bank of Scotland	TUI UK	
NEST Corporation	Royal Borough of Windsor & Maidenhead	UCB	
NHS 24	Royal Shakespeare Company	UK Power Reserve	
NHS Blood and Transplant	RSM UK	Unilever	
NM Rothschild & Sons	Rydon	Unipart Group	
North Warwickshire and South Leicestershire College	Sage	United Trust Bank	
Northamptonshire Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust	Samsung Electronics (UK)	United Utilities	
Nottingham University Hospitals NHS Trust	Santander	University of Exeter	
NSPCC	SAP UK	Verizon Media	
NTT Data UK	Schlumberger	Victoria Milford	
Nuffield Health	Schneider Electric	Virgin Atlantic	
Ocado	Screwfix	Virgin Media	
	SDL	Waterman Group	
	Seadrill	Waverley Borough Council	
	Sealed Air	Webhelp UK	
	Secure Trust Bank		



Appendix 3: Who we are

About our sponsor: AXA PPP healthcare

Established in 1940, AXA PPP healthcare is one of the UK's largest, most experienced healthcare companies.

We combine our health and wellbeing expertise with your intimate knowledge of your business to devise and introduce strategies that drive awareness and engage workforces in their health – and, crucially, support and intervene when it's most appropriate.

Just like people, businesses need healthy routines. Our programmes encourage a culture of wellbeing that supports employees to live healthy, active lives and bring their best self to work.

And, if they should come to need medical care, they can be confident in the knowledge they'll get the treatment they need quickly, in privacy and comfort, for an early recovery back to health – and back to work.

We take a holistic 'bio-psycho-social' approach to supporting employee wellbeing by supporting its five key drivers: health, fitness, nutrition, lifestyle and mindset.

We're firm believers that insight guides an ever evolving wellbeing strategy, and we apply the data we capture to show the impact on our clients' workforces and inform the development of their strategies.



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For more information please visit:

<https://www.axapphealthcare.co.uk/business/>



About us: Reward & Employee Benefits Association

What REBA does:

REBA is the professional network for reward and benefits practitioners. We make members' working lives easier sharing experience, ideas, data and insight, and organising industry-leading events. We help members pursue best practice, increase professionalism in the industry and prepare for upcoming changes.

Our key functions are:



Connecting members via rebaLINK and live events



Proprietary data and insight from research



Distributing useful content



Curating an industry-wide research library



Helping with the supplier selection and procurement process

Key products:

Digital

- www.reba.global for content, research, events and digital tools
- rebaLINK for member-to-member information sharing and supplier due diligence
- REBA Express, our fortnightly email
- REBA Spotlights, our topic-focused emails

Conferences

- Reward Leaders Forum, April
- Employee Wellbeing Congress, June
- REBA Innovation Day, November

Awards

- Employee Wellbeing Awards, February

Research

- Employee Wellbeing Research
- Reward & Benefits Technology Research
- Financial Wellbeing Research
- Reward & Benefits Strategy Research

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