

# Mind's Workplace Wellbeing Index 2018/19

Key insights



# Contents

Foreword .....	3
Introduction .....	4
Profile .....	5
Wellbeing summary .....	5
Key insights .....	8
The role of the organisation .....	10
The role of the manager .....	14
The employee experience .....	18
Conclusions .....	24
Take action – implementing the Mental Health at work Standards .....	25

# Foreword

We've seen a significant drive towards improving workplace mental health from Government and employers over recent years.

In 2016, we launched our Workplace Wellbeing Index, a benchmarking and measurement tool designed to enable organisations to measure their performance and improve their approach to creating a mentally healthy workplace. In the third year of our Workplace Wellbeing Index we have seen the momentum continue to build as one hundred and six organisations participated, a 43 per cent growth from the previous year. We want to see this awareness continue to increase, and every employer to recognise and respond to any work-related causes of poor mental health among their staff and take proactive steps towards creating mentally healthy workplaces; developing an environment where employees feel valued and supported.

Organisations who focus on improving employee awareness of mental health, increasing the skills and confidence of managers, and encouraging openness and discussion reap the benefits of increased employee engagement. We continue to see the impact of creating a positive culture around mental health, with 52 per cent of employees disclosing their poor mental health to their employer, this has increased by 4 per cent since 2017. Creating a culture of open discussion means employees feel supported by their organisation, and are more likely to access support when they are struggling.

The recent [Deloitte report](#) shows that the cost of poor mental health to employers is up 16 per cent since 2016 to £45 billion per annum. It also highlights the link between prioritising staff wellbeing and improved loyalty and productivity; and decreased sickness absence and resignations. However, it also shows a rise in 'presenteeism' – staff who are unwell spending unproductive hours at work rather than taking time off to recover.

As presenteeism costs three times more than sick leave, we need to look at supporting employers to change the culture so their staff feel able to take time off when they are unwell.

Results from the third year of our Workplace Wellbeing Index also highlight the need for employers to continue to invest in workplace wellbeing as 51 per cent of employees have experienced poor mental health at their current employer, compared to 48 per cent in 2017.

The Mental Health at Work Commitment is a simple framework that was launched in 2019 and is based on the [Thriving at Work](#) standards, pulling from the pledges and standards that are already out there, using up-to-date research, [from UK employers and mental health experts](#). We have designed this report to help employers understand what impacts on employee's mental health but also to provide practical advice on how to implement the Mental Health at Work Commitment standards across all workplaces.

The level of interest in mental health has soared and the challenge now is to ensure that increased awareness is well directed and engagement is turned into action. This drive so far has been wonderful to see, and we applaud all of the organisations who have taken part in our Index and look forward to welcoming more in the years to come. We hope that you join us in our movement to create a lasting change to the wellbeing of your workforce.



**Emma Mamo,**  
Head of Workplace  
Wellbeing

# Introduction

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## About our Workplace Wellbeing Index

How happy are employees at work? How effectively are organisations supporting their mental health? And what can we do to drive change?

Mind's Workplace Wellbeing Index offers essential research to help organisations answer these vital questions.

It's a comprehensive measure of wellbeing covering five major areas from both the employer and employees' perspective.

Our approach provides a holistic view of an organisation's wellbeing. This helps identify what actions support wellbeing in the workplace at individual employee, manager and organisation levels.

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## About this report

This report aims to showcase how different factors are related to employees' wellbeing and mental health.

Using this data we can demonstrate the significant impact work and organisational culture has on everyone's wellbeing.

We'll take a journey from how an organisation can drive positive change for everybody, the role of managers, through to the individual and their behaviour.

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## Take action

We've also included some key recommendations for employers on how to build on their organisational approach to supporting employee mental health.

There are also ways to help line managers better support their teams and ensure everyone feels supported.

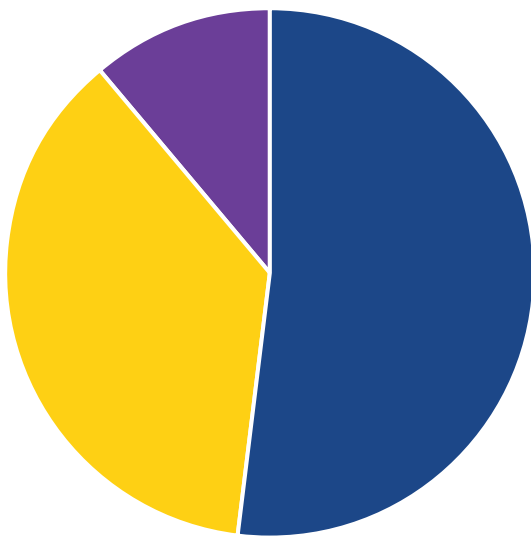
Our recommendations are based on the six Mental Health at Work Commitment standards. Find out more and sign up to the employer movement at [mentalhealthatwork.org.uk/commitment](https://mentalhealthatwork.org.uk/commitment)

# Profile

One hundred and six organisations took part in our 2018/19 Index – 43 per cent more than in 2017/18.

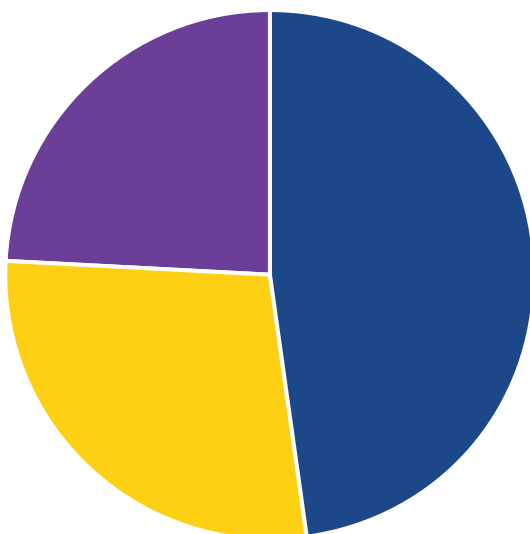
We surveyed 43,838 employees across a range of sectors and roles. Participants ranged from very small voluntary organisations to large private sector companies:

## Organisations by sector



■ Private .....	52%
■ Public .....	37%
■ Third .....	11%

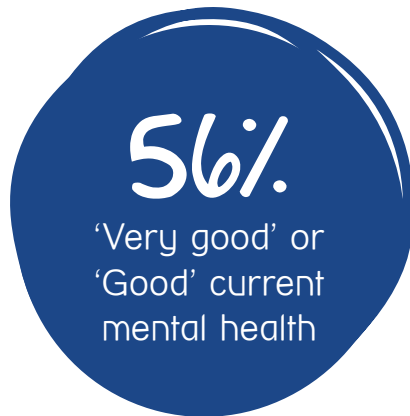
## Organisations by size



■ Small .....	48%
■ Large .....	28%
■ Medium .....	24%

# Wellbeing and mental health

Each year in the Index we ask all staff to rate their current mental health, happiness, and anxiety. These make up our key indicators of wellbeing and mental health in the workplace. The results from all 43,838 staff are shown below.



We also asked about everyone's experience with poor mental health.

71%



Experienced poor  
mental health

52%



Experienced poor  
mental health  
at their current  
employer

52%



Of those disclosed  
poor mental health  
to their employer

# Key insights

Based on the findings in this report, we have created five key areas for organisations to reflect on when considering their approach to supporting the mental health of their staff.

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## 1) Encourage openness and discussion about mental health

An open culture around mental health is key part of employees feeling their mental health is supported (only 9 per cent of staff in organisations without openness and discussion of mental health feel their organisation supports their mental health). A great first step for organisations is to have a senior leader sign the [Mental Health at Work Commitment](#). By having a senior member of staff such as your CEO signing the Commitment, it signals your pledge to changing how employees think and act about mental health in the workplace. Running regular internal communications campaigns is another great way to raise awareness of mental health and challenge stigma.

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## 2) People management is about more than work targets

Employees experiencing poor mental health tend to speak to their line manager first (76 per cent disclosed to their line manager), but a lack of understanding in managers can be a barrier to disclosure – less than half (45 per cent) feel their manager understands their problems. Regular one-to-ones and catch-ups can help maintain good working relationships and build mutual trust. Ensure managers hold one-to-ones with their staff every four to six weeks. It is vital that managers know what support is on offer to staff experiencing poor mental health and are able to advise on how to access it.

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## 3) Be aware of your employees' workload

Not only is this frequently mentioned as a primary source of stress, but those with the highest demands have less time to seek support. Over 1 in 4 employees are working more than 50 hours a week and three-quarters of those with an unmanageable workload had experienced anxiety multiple times in the last month. Employers need to ensure that employees' workloads are manageable by providing extra support if needed, as well as ensuring that job roles match their abilities and experience. Workload reviews and stress-risk assessments should be carried out on an ongoing basis as well as when jobs are being designed. Staff surveys can be an effective tool to capture information about wellbeing. Ensure you ask staff about things like their workload, leadership and management, opportunities for personal development and internal communication.



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#### **4) Ensure employees feel comfortable disclosing poor mental health**

Half of employees don't feel comfortable disclosing poor mental health at work, but the results suggest that employees are more likely to see an improvement in their situation if they do. Managers should be upskilled on how to provide in-work support to staff who are experiencing a mental health problem, including how to handle disclosure, approach a conversation about mental health and explore support measures including reasonable adjustments. Organisations need to create an environment where employees and managers feel supported through the process.

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#### **5) Review and assess mental health and wellbeing support tools**

Ineffective support can make an employee's situation worse and in some cases having no support at all is less detrimental than having ineffective support (17 per cent of those with ineffective support said their situation got worse, compared to 5 per cent of those who had no support at all). Organisations should collect data and report on how often support tools are accessed by employees, as well as requesting this information from suppliers (e.g. your EAP provider). You should also seek feedback from staff as to how easily accessible, effective and well publicised your support tools are through regular employee surveys.

# The role of the organisation

Positive mental health in the workplace begins with a culture where poor mental health is not stigmatised and employees and managers both feel supported to create and maintain positive wellbeing.

In this section we will explore how a supportive culture, encouraging openness and having a role model at senior level can make a positive impact.

**My employer does not engage with me and I am in no way valued beyond being a piece of work resource.**

## The organisation and wellbeing

Our analysis shows that of all factors, organisational support has the biggest impact on mental health outcomes for employees. Of employees who didn't feel supported by their organisation, less than a quarter (23 per cent) felt generally happy at work and three quarters (74 per cent) had felt anxious on multiple occasions in the past month.



Wellbeing and mental health		
	With a supportive organisation	With an unsupportive organisation
Current mental health (Very good or good)	67%	28%
Happiness (Generally happy at work)	77%	23%
Anxiety (Anxious multiple times in past month)	44%	74%

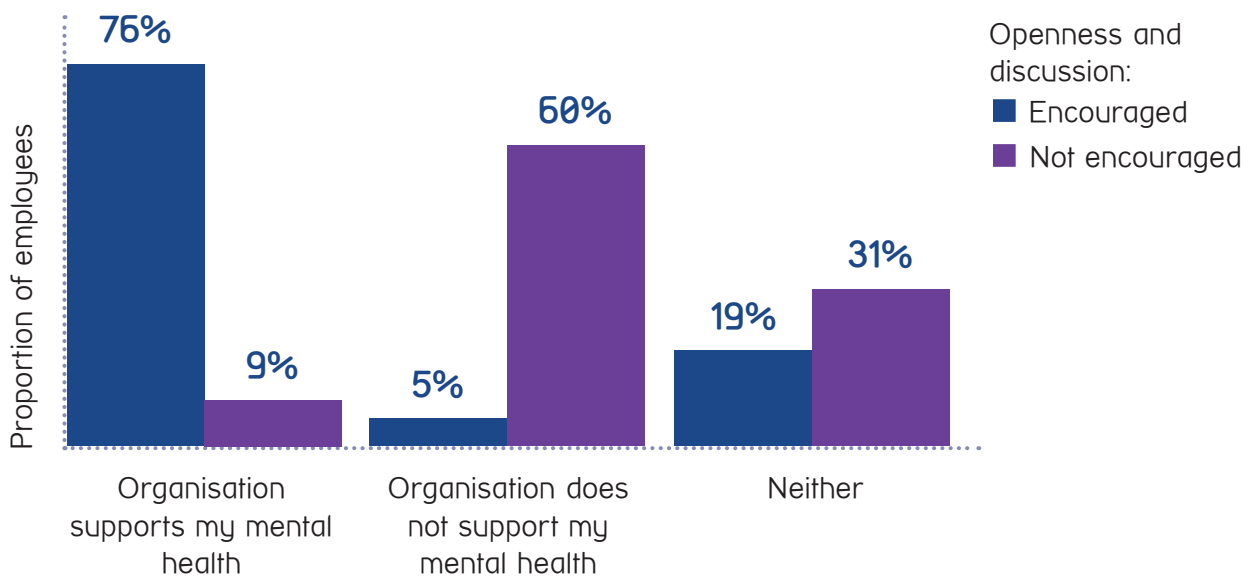
## Openness and discussion

Key to employees feeling that their organisation supports their mental health is a culture of openness and discussion about mental health. This creates an environment where employees at all levels can be more confident discussing and taking action to improve mental health and wellbeing.

Those in organisations where openness and discussion about mental health is encouraged are more likely to feel their organisation supports their mental health. Conversely, less than 1 in 10 (9 per cent) of those in organisations where openness and discussion is not encouraged felt their organisation supported their mental health. While openness and discussion around mental health is not the only factor, it is essential for feeling supported by our organisation.

### Perception of organisational support for mental health

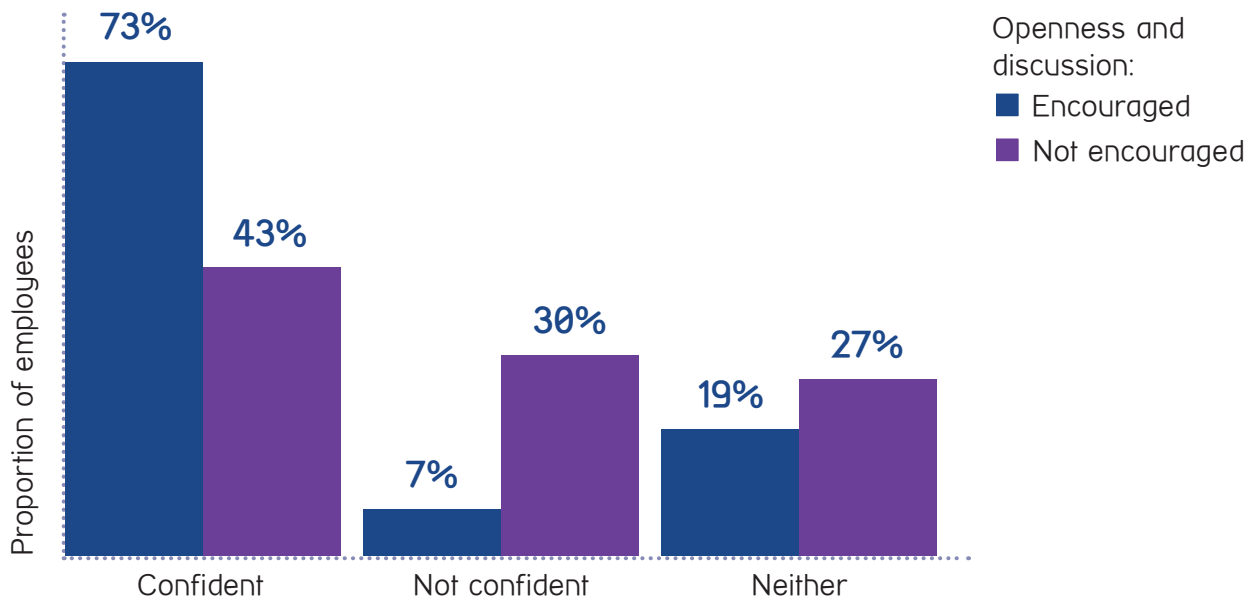
and whether openness and discussion is encouraged



Not only does openness and discussion positively impact on how supported employees feel, it also has a relationship with managers' behaviours around mental health. Managers are more likely to feel confident promoting wellbeing where openness and discussion about mental health is encouraged.

## Confidence promoting wellbeing

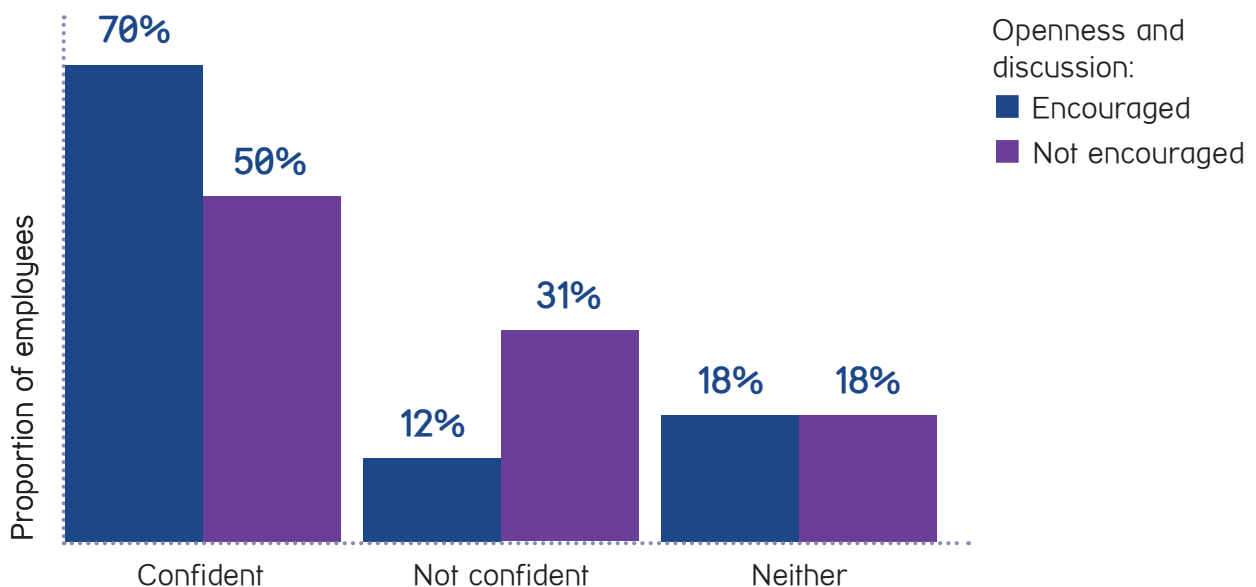
and whether openness and discussion is encouraged



Openness and discussion increases confidence in managers to promote wellbeing and employees are also more confident supporting colleagues who are experiencing poor mental health in these organisations. This means that an organisation that encourages openness and discussion around mental health could see benefits at all levels, including prevention (with managers promoting wellbeing) and intervention (with employees feeling more confident supporting colleagues).

## Confidence supporting a colleague

and whether openness and discussion is encouraged



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## Making a difference

The results show how encouraging openness and discussion can have an impact on how all employees feel about mental health and wellbeing, but what are those organisations doing differently? One noticeable difference was found in senior leaders.

We asked organisations whether they have a senior or high-profile employee with experience of mental health problems who has spoken out about their experiences in order to create a more open culture.

Sixty-seven per cent of staff at organisations with an established senior champion felt their organisation encouraged openness and discussion about mental health. This is compared to 48 per cent in organisations who did not have a senior champion.

Organisations who had a senior champion in place also had a greater proportion of staff that felt their organisation supports their mental health (10% higher than organisations who did not).

Senior leaders therefore have an important role in creating a culture of openness and discussion around mental health. If those in senior positions do not lead by example then this often creates an impression that the organisation is not committed to making a real difference.

# The role of the manager

The previous section showed how the culture of the organisation can impact manager behaviour.

In this section we will look at why managers are so important for employee wellbeing and how simple behaviours like checking in on how we're feeling can help.

**My manager has really supported me through my mental health issues and has always been available to talk to. This has really helped support me and keep me attending work.**

## Impact of managers on employee wellbeing

Effective relationships between managers and employees are underpinned by support – of those who did not feel their manager supports their mental health, only a fifth (22 per cent) described their relationship with their line manager as effective.

In addition, employees who felt unsupported by their manager were significantly less likely to have positive mental health outcomes than those who felt they had a supportive manager.



	Wellbeing and mental health	
	With a supportive manager	With an unsupportive manager
<b>Current mental health</b> (Very good or good)	<b>64%</b>	<b>32%</b>
<b>Happiness</b> (Generally happy at work)	<b>75%</b>	<b>28%</b>
<b>Anxiety</b> (Anxious multiple times in past month)	<b>45%</b>	<b>71%</b>

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## Checking in

**My manager never checks in with us to see if we are okay. We are left to our own devices and it is not until things escalate that any input is given.**

Our relationship with our manager is an integral part of our workplace wellbeing in many ways. They are likely to be involved in key issues that affect our wellbeing such as workload, sickness absence, and reasonable adjustments. They are also the most common person we disclose to when experiencing poor mental health (76 per cent of staff disclose to their line manager).

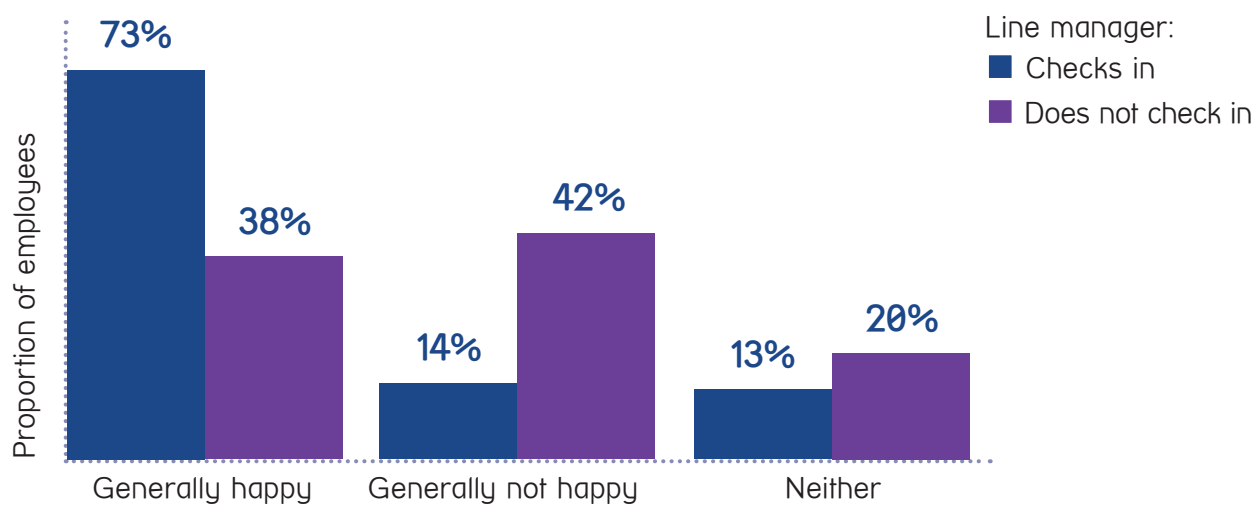
As a manager, supporting employees to look after their mental health and wellbeing doesn't have to be complicated or expensive. It can involve simple actions like being understanding of employees' situations and regularly checking in on how they're feeling.

Checking in on how employees are feeling is just one example of a behaviour that creates a good relationship with staff. It provides an opportunity to discuss issues, demonstrates that someone cares and is there to support them and helps employees feel that they matter. Although it sounds simple, just over half (56 per cent) of employees said their manager does it.

Employees with managers who regularly checked in on how they're feeling were much more likely to feel their manager supported their mental health (79 per cent) compared to those whose manager didn't do so (13 per cent). Managers who regularly checked in on how their staff were feeling were also more likely to have happy staff.

## Happiness at work

and whether our manager regularly checks in on how we're feeling



## Making a difference

While checking in with employees and being generally supportive are key to achieving positive outcomes, however, managers can have an influence on their employees' wellbeing in a variety of ways.

Other examples of how managers can make a difference include understanding the problems their staff are facing and encouraging and role modelling positive wellbeing behaviours such as taking breaks and sick leave when needed.

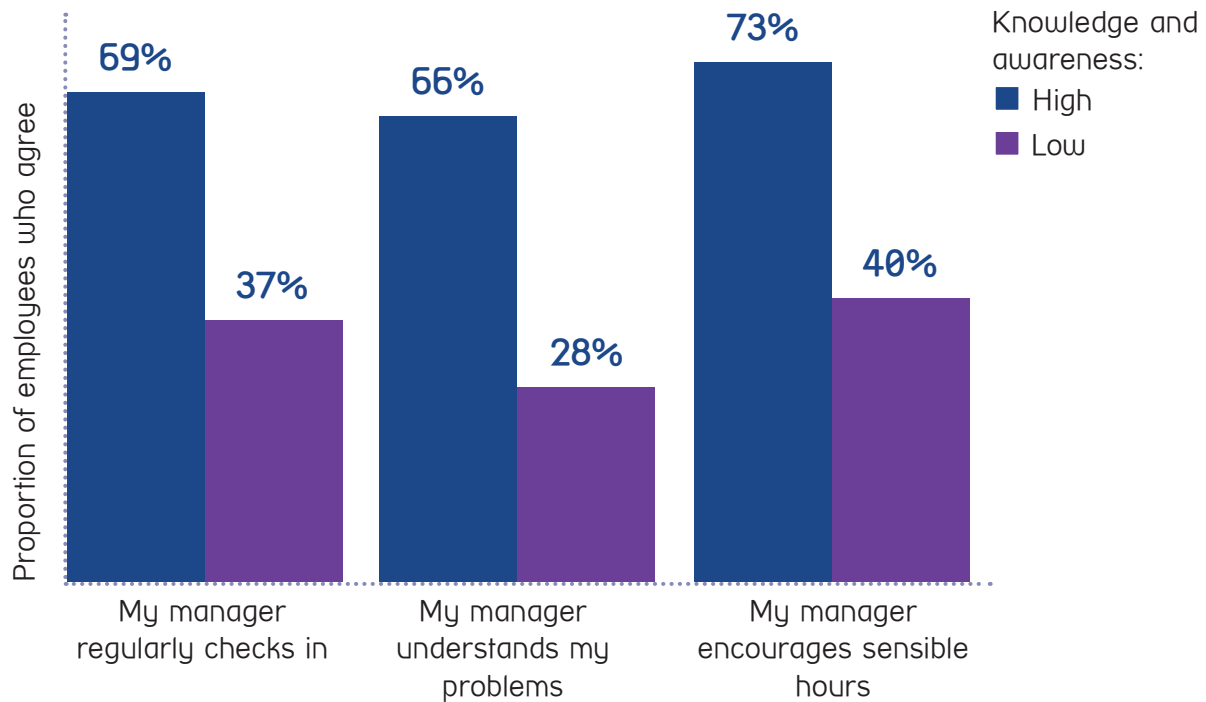
Each of these behaviours can be increased by raising awareness and knowledge of mental health in the workplace. In organisations where mental health knowledge and awareness is rated highly by staff, managers are more likely to:

- **Check in on how staff are feeling**
- **understand and empathise with any problems their staff are experiencing**
- **Encourage positive wellbeing behaviours such as working sensible hours**



## Manager behaviours

By knowledge and awareness of mental health



Good awareness and knowledge of mental health means managers are more likely to take positive action. This means that employees are more likely to feel that their mental health and wellbeing is supported, and also feel more confident looking after their own mental health or supporting others when they need it.

In the next section we will look more closely at the employee experience of work and mental health.

# The employee experience

In the previous section we looked at how managers are important for supporting the wellbeing of their staff.

In this section we will look more closely at when an employee may turn to their manager and how the relationship can make a difference. One of the key ways our work can have an impact on our wellbeing is when our workload becomes unmanageable.

## Workload and wellbeing

**I have an extremely heavy workload and consistently work over my hours every week for no additional pay in order to meet reporting deadlines and to try and keep on top of my impossible workload.**



According to our Index results, having an unmanageable workload can mean people are up to twice as likely to have poor mental health.

More than a quarter (28 per cent) of employees with an unmanageable workload were working in excess of 50 hours a week to keep up.

Wellbeing and mental health		
	With a manageable workload	With an unmanageable workload
Current mental health (Very good or good)	65%	36%
Happiness (Generally happy at work)	74%	35%
Anxiety (Anxious multiple times in past month)	41%	75%

## Disclosing a problem

In the previous section we discussed the importance of the relationship between the employee and the line manager. Disclosing poor mental health is one example where that relationship is important from the employee perspective. Employees with an unmanageable workload that is affecting their mental health should feel comfortable raising the issue with their manager, however only half of respondents in this situation felt comfortable doing so. In fact, just over half (52 per cent) of those experiencing poor mental health for any reason disclosed this to anyone at work.

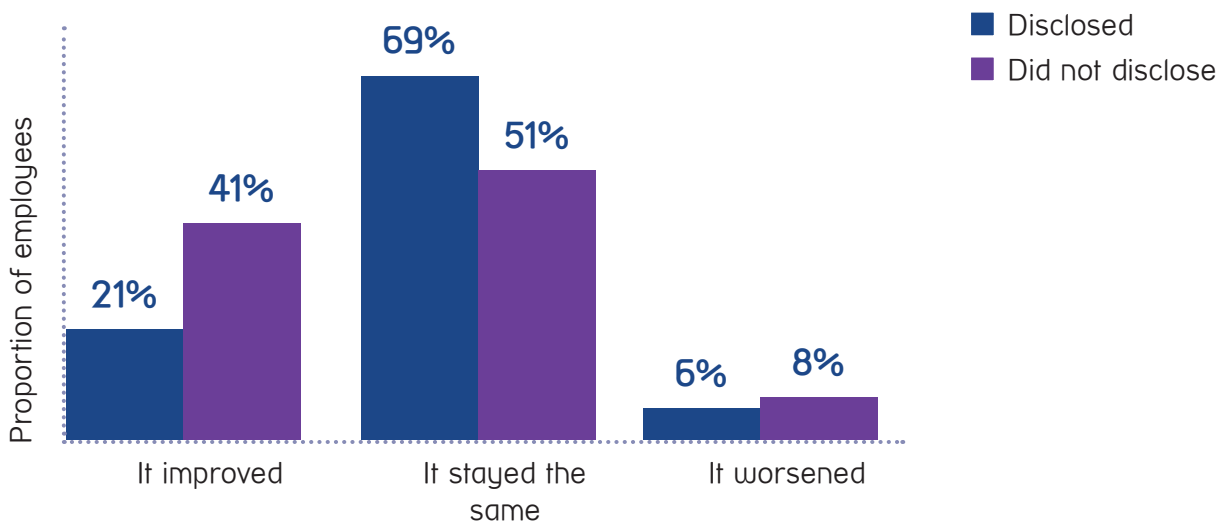
### The top three reasons for not disclosing were:

- not feeling comfortable discussing the issue (mentioned by 57 per cent)
- not wanting sympathy or to be treated as more vulnerable than colleagues (mentioned by 44 per cent)
- being worried their employer would think they couldn't do the job properly (mentioned by 41 per cent).

The stigma around poor mental health means many people do not feel comfortable talking about it and are worried about how they will be treated. However, whether employees have an unmanageable workload or not, disclosing poor mental health is more likely to lead to a positive change in the situation than not disclosing.

### Situation after experiencing poor mental health

For those who did or did not disclose



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## Making a difference

While it is more likely to lead to a positive outcome, employees often do not feel comfortable disclosing poor mental health. This can mean employees hide their problems by using annual leave or flexi leave, or attributing sick leave to something physical instead. This in turn leads to a lack of awareness and understanding of employees' mental health and any issues in the workplace that might be causing it (on average, employees attribute 50% of the cause of poor mental health to problems at work). It can also mean that any drop in performance at work when someone is struggling with their mental health can be mistakenly attributed to lack of effort or ability.

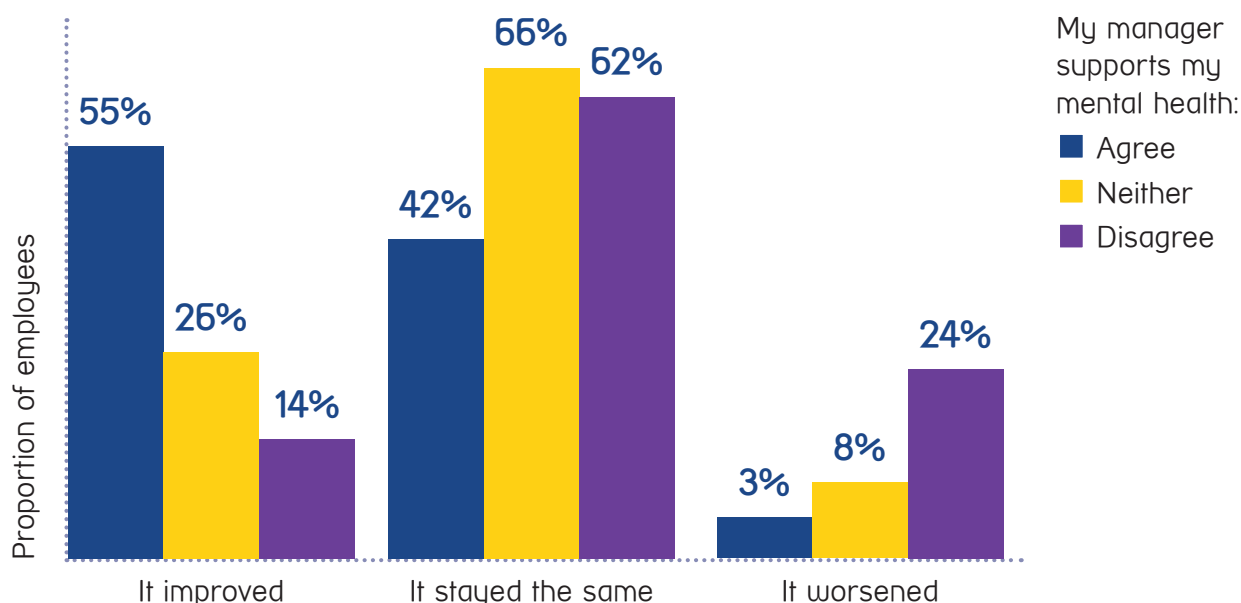
One way to improve employees' comfort in disclosing and confidence in the outcome is to have a supportive and understanding manager. If employees feel a manager supports them, they'll be more likely to talk to them - 63 per cent of employees who feel their manager supports their mental health disclosed compared to 47 per cent who didn't feel supported.

Not only does the support of a manager improve the likelihood of someone disclosing their poor mental health, but it also makes a difference to what happens afterwards, as the graph below shows. Of those whose manager did not support their mental health, a greater proportion reported their situation getting worse than those who said it got better.

Meanwhile, 55 per cent of all employees (and just 35 per cent of employees with an unmanageable workload) said their manager supports their mental health. There is therefore plenty of room to improve supportiveness and understanding towards employees and in turn improve outcomes for employees experiencing poor mental health.

## Situation after disclosing poor mental health

For those who did or did not feel supported by their manager



## Support tools

So far we have discussed how work, management, and the organisational culture can influence the mental health of employees. We have shown how disclosing the issue can lead to an improvement in the situation, how managers can help their staff feel supported, and how the organisation can enable both managers and their staff to create a culture of support.

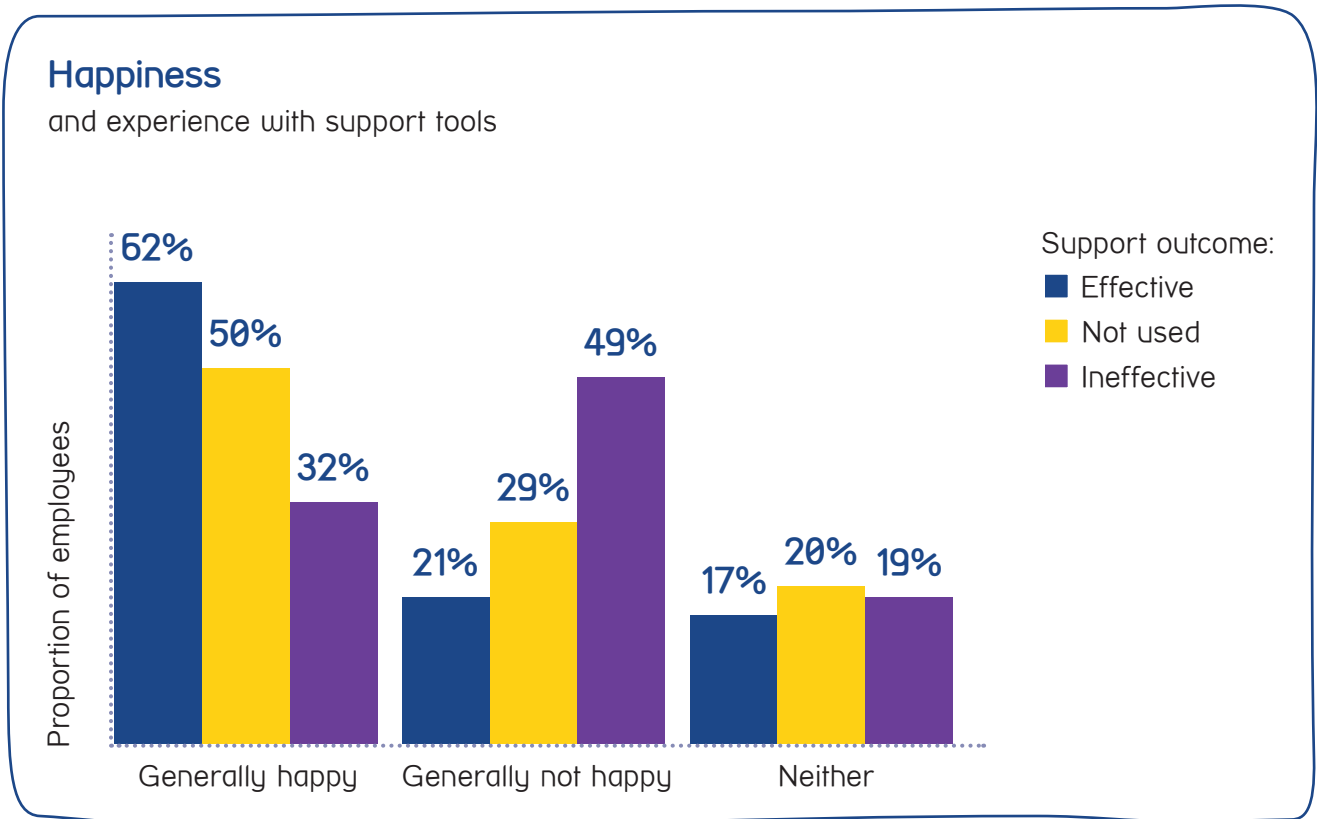
The final section of this report focuses on the tools that are available when employees seek that support (for example: an employee assistance programme, counselling, or employee support network).

### Awareness, usage, and outcomes

Awareness of support tools available was generally high. Around three quarters (73 per cent) of people who experienced poor mental health at their current employer were aware of the support tools available in their organisation. However, of these, usage of the tools was relatively lower (41 per cent used support tools). It is therefore important for organisations to actively promote the support tools available, not only to raise awareness, but to encourage usage.

While promotion of support tools and increasing employees' comfort using them may improve use, another barrier can be the effectiveness of the tools. Less than half (47 per cent) of those who used support tools found them effective. Meanwhile, a fifth (21 per cent) found them not very effective or not at all effective.

Employees who found support effective were more likely to be generally happy at work. Meanwhile ineffective support had the worst outcomes, even more so than not using support at all. Support tools therefore need to be judged on their quality, not just their availability.

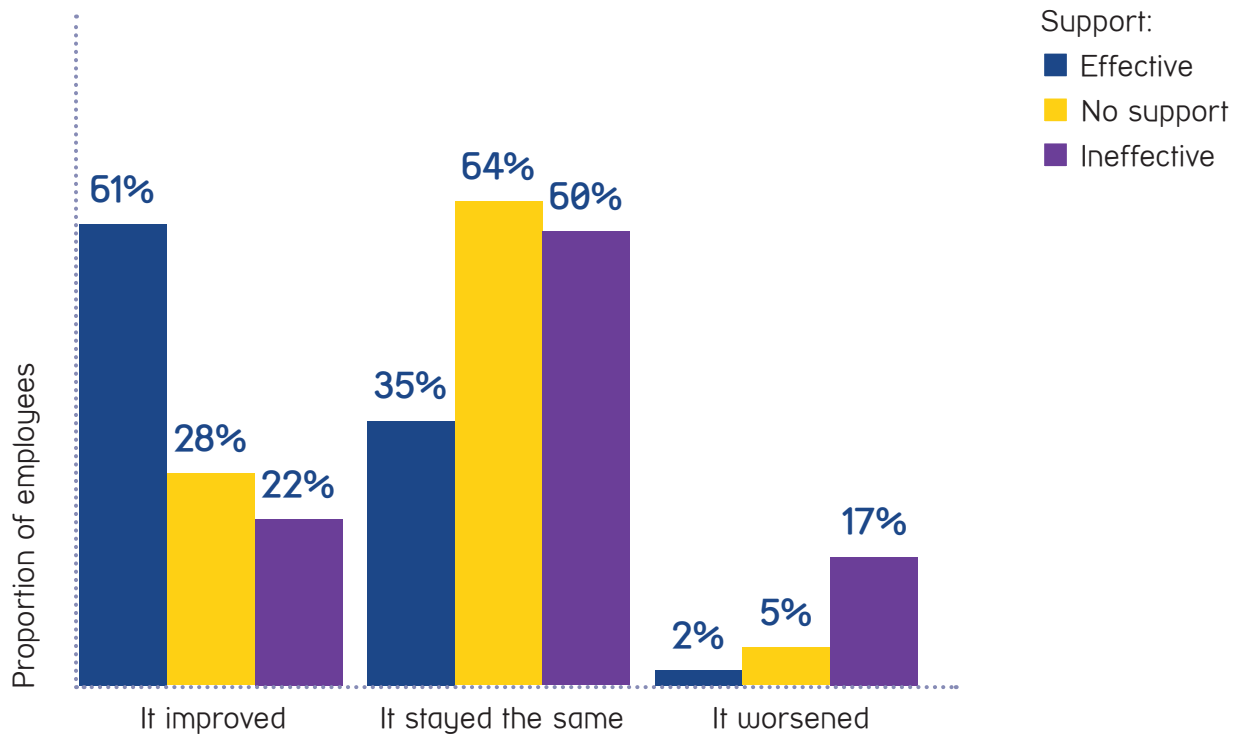


Further evidence supporting the importance of effectiveness of support can be seen in how employees said their situation changed after receiving support. Those who received effective support were much more likely to see their situation improve than those with no support (61 per cent vs. 28 per cent). Although a worsening situation was the least likely outcome for all groups, employees who received ineffective support were more likely to see their situation get worse and less likely to see it improve than even those who didn't use support at all.

This suggests that ineffective support could have a negative impact on people's wellbeing. It may also mean people in worse situations are less likely to find support effective. In either case, it highlights the importance of ensuring effective and continued support.

## Situation after experiencing poor mental health

and experience with support tools



These results show how important it is to evaluate the support tools available. It also shows that organisations should offer a range of options so those who don't see a benefit from one approach can try another.

There is a risk that offering a support tool, and not considering its quality or effectiveness, could actually make people's wellbeing worse if it doesn't work and they can't turn elsewhere for support.

# Conclusions

The results show how wellbeing is affected at every level of the workplace. From our workload to the organisational culture, our work can affect our mental health. However, the results also show how we can improve the experiences of employees.

The Mental Health at Work Commitment sets out six standards for all employers to create a mentally healthy workplace (see further information at the end of this report). These standards and how to achieve them are referenced in the conclusions below.

Employers can create a culture of positive wellbeing through openness and discussion about mental health (Standard Three). This should increase confidence promoting and discussing wellbeing and being supportive when people are experiencing poor mental health.

Managers should check in on how their staff are feeling, attend training to gain knowledge of mental health and wellbeing and understand the problems their staff face (Standard Four). This should increase the confidence employees have in their manager supporting them and understanding them, and is associated with higher employee happiness.

A positive wellbeing culture and improved knowledge and understanding from managers can encourage more disclosure of poor mental health from employees. This should start a process of positive change in the situation, where employees' needs are discussed and the right support is put in place. The impact of workload also needs to be considered and the right support tools taken up when provided. All of these factors are key to achieving Standard Two.

Support tools should be evaluated and a range of support tools should be made available, with ongoing support provided when it is needed (Standard Five).

Developing a comprehensive approach to prioritising and supporting workplace mental health can be achieved through individual actions, however they all need to fit together to create culture change and a positive workplace for all staff (Standard One). Senior leader buy-in is vital, to ensure that mental health is part of 'business as usual', however, the employee voice also needs to be recognised and it is important to ensure that staff have a say in how they do their job.

Mind's Workplace Wellbeing Index is a robust assessment framework which allows employers to track key measures and their progress around supporting employee mental health at work. Organisations that take part are encouraged to share their benchmarking scores and publish their wellbeing data. We also encourage employers to lead by example and consider extending their internal mental health support to other organisations within their supply chain, particularly smaller employers. Taking part sends a powerful message to your employees, your managers and your sector that you support positive mental health. This transparency through external reporting will help you achieve Standard Six.



# Take action - implementing the Mental Health at Work Standards

Below we have outlined the six standards of the Mental Health Commitment and the key actions that they entail. Employers who sign the Mental Health Commitment will lead the way in implementing each standard for their employees. You can find out more about the standards and take the Commitment on the [Mental Health at Work website](#).

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## Standard One – Prioritise mental health in the workplace by developing and delivering a systematic programme of activity

This standard contains four main actions:

1. Produce, implement and communicate a mental health at work plan, drawing from best practice and representing the views of employees across the organisation, specifically exploring feedback from people with mental health problems.

2. Demonstrate senior ownership and drive board-level accountability, underpinned by a clear governance structure for reporting.
3. Routinely monitor employee health and wellbeing using available data.
4. Seek feedback from your employees and create clear opportunities to make improvements based on feedback.

“Staff surveys are reviewed, actioned, and feedback provided (‘you said, we did’).”

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## Standard Two – Proactively ensure work design and organisational culture drive positive mental health outcomes

This standard contains five main actions:

1. Provide employees with good physical workplace conditions
2. Create opportunities for employees to feedback when work design, culture and conditions are driving poor mental health.
3. Address the impact that a range of activities have on employees, including organisational design and redesign, job design, recruitment, working patterns, email, 'always-on' culture, and work-related policies.
4. Give permission to have a work/life balance and to work flexibly and agile.
5. Encourage openness during recruitment and throughout employment so appropriate support can be provided.

**There is a lot in place around supporting mental health i.e. EAP services, wellbeing activities, But there is no clear way of helping people that are overworked or managing workload. Many people regard themselves as overworked.**

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## Standard Three – Creating an open culture around mental health

This standard has three action points:

1. Proactively change the way people think and act about mental health by raising awareness and challenging mental health stigma.
2. Empower employees to champion mental health and positively role model in the workplace.
3. Encourage open two-way conversations about mental health and highlight the support available at all stages of employment.

**I feel there is a very supportive culture here and therefore I would feel alright telling my manager about my mental health.**

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## Standard Four – Increase organisational confidence and capability

This standard has four action points:

1. Increase mental health literacy of all staff and provide opportunities for staff to learn about how to manage their own mental health.
2. Ensure all staff are suitably prepared and educated to have effective conversations about mental health, and where to signpost for support, including in inductions for all new staff.
3. Train line managers in spotting and supporting all aspects of mental health in the workplace, and include regular refresher training.
4. Support managers to think about employee mental health in all aspects of their role including during staff inductions, one-to-one meeting, team meetings and return-to-work meetings.

**I found it helpful that my manager will sit down with me to discuss how I am once I have been off work and what they can do to help me.**

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## Standard five – Provide mental health tools and support

This standard has three action points:

1. Raise awareness of the resources and tools available, including [Mental Health at Work](#).
2. Ensure provision of tailored in-house mental health support and signposting to clinical help, including but not limited to digital support, occupational health, employee assistance programmes, the NHS.

3. Provide targeted support around key contributors of poor mental health, e.g. financial wellbeing.

**Through my employer I received six weeks' free counselling service by phone. I had never believed in counselling before but found it did really help.**

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## Standard Six – Increase transparency and accountability through internal and external reporting

This standard has two action points:

1. Identify and track measures for internal and external reporting, including through the annual reports and accounts.
2. Measure organisational activity and impact using robust external frameworks, e.g. the [Business in the Community Responsible Business Tracker](#) and our [Workplace Wellbeing Index](#).

**Participating in the Mind Workplace Wellbeing Index has proved to be significant in contributing to our strategy to protect, maintain and enhance the overall physical, social and mental wellbeing of our employees.**

We're Mind, the mental health charity. We want to support a million people to stay well and have good mental health at work by 2021.

Be part of our movement for change in workplace mental health.

[work@mind.org.uk](mailto:work@mind.org.uk)  
[mind.org.uk/work](http://mind.org.uk/work)

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