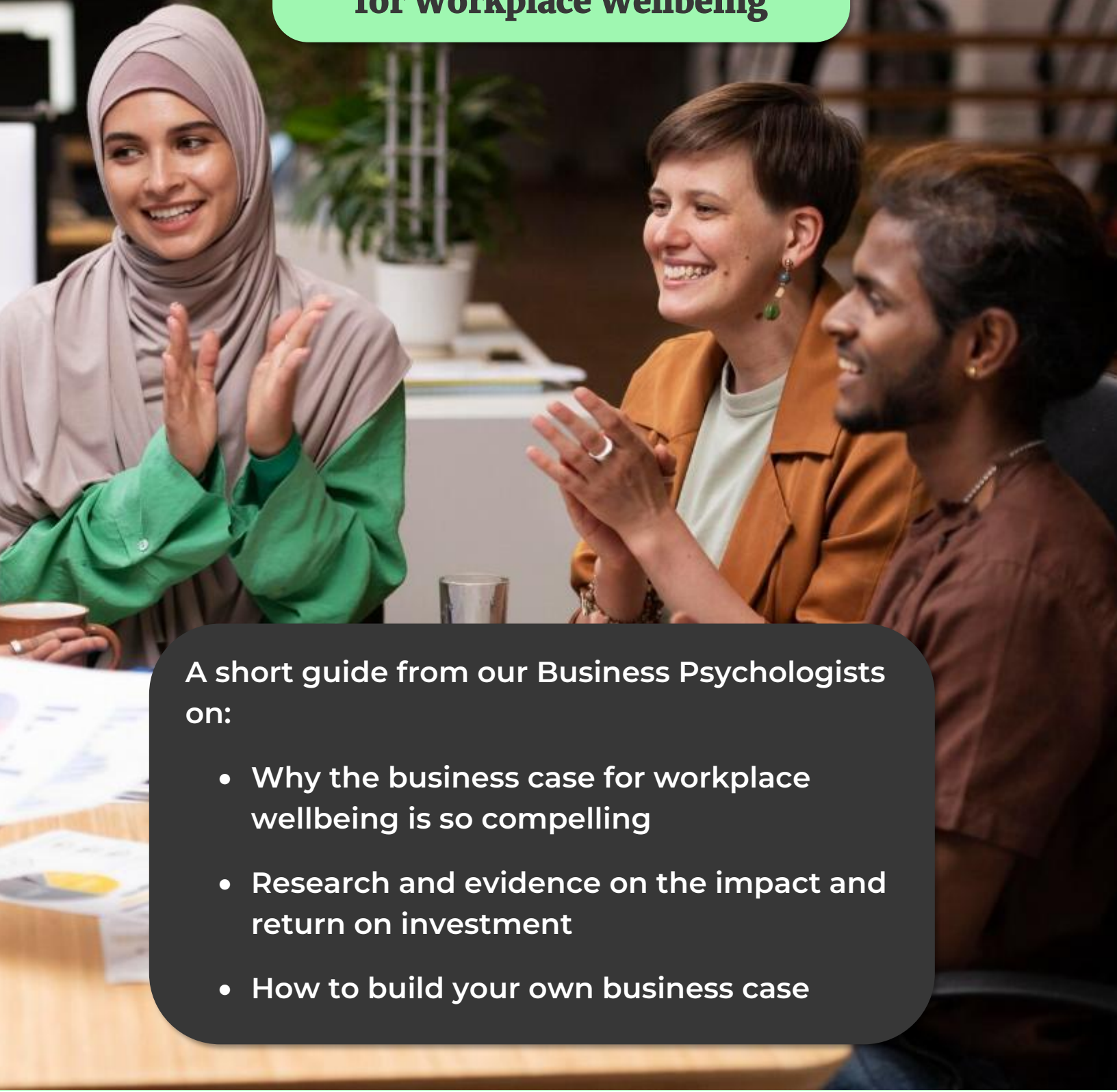




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**Building the Business Case  
for Workplace Wellbeing**



A short guide from our Business Psychologists on:

- Why the business case for workplace wellbeing is so compelling
- Research and evidence on the impact and return on investment
- How to build your own business case

## Why Workplace Wellbeing?

Before we get into the benefits of focusing on wellbeing in the workplace, it's important to consider the why. Understanding the key drivers in your organisation can make it easier to build a business case and an evidence-based wellbeing strategy that works.



- **Problem solving:** Many workplaces are seeking to address challenges and associated costs of rising absence levels, lagging performance and productivity, employee turnover and low engagement, all of which have been shown to be improved when levels of wellbeing are higher.



- **Duty of care:** There are legal requirements that employers must adhere to, to reduce risks and protect the individual rights of employees. Along with physical safety this should also include carrying out both organisational and individual stress risk assessments, looking at the design, organisation and management of work and its impact on all employees.



- **Strategic advantage:** There is compelling evidence that higher levels of employee wellbeing are linked with increased engagement, creativity and productivity for individuals while organisations overall see higher levels of financial performance.



- **Reputation:** Being recognised as an employer with a healthy workplace culture can help attract and retain employees, and appeal to clients and partners.



- **It's the right thing to do:** While there are many business benefits, there is also a strong moral argument for looking after people well in an environment that creates good days at work.

## Where's the evidence?

**Higher levels of wellbeing generally predict higher firm valuations, higher return on assets, higher gross profits.<sup>i</sup>**

*De Neve, J-E., Kaats, M., Ward, G. (2024). Workplace Wellbeing and Firm Performance. University of Oxford Wellbeing Research Centre*

**Data from 1.9 million employees, across 230 organisations, in 49 industries and 73 countries found that higher employee wellbeing was consistently associated with higher productivity and firm performance.<sup>ii</sup>**

*Krekel, C., Ward, G. & De Neve, J-E. (2019) Employee Wellbeing, Productivity and Firm Performance. Centre for Economic Performance.*

**Enhanced employee health and well-being could generate up to \$11.7 trillion in global economic value.<sup>iii</sup>**

*McKinsey Health Institute (2025). Thriving workplaces: How employers can improve productivity and change lives.*

**Improving workplace wellbeing in the UK represents a £130-£370 billion opportunity, made up of the direct costs of poor wellbeing through employee turnover (£12-36bn) and absenteeism (£4bn) and the potential benefits of good wellbeing through reduced presenteeism and improved productivity (£85-288bn), retention (£15-24bn) and attraction (£13bn).<sup>iv</sup>**

*Business in the Community (2023). Prioritise People: Unlock the value of a thriving workforce*

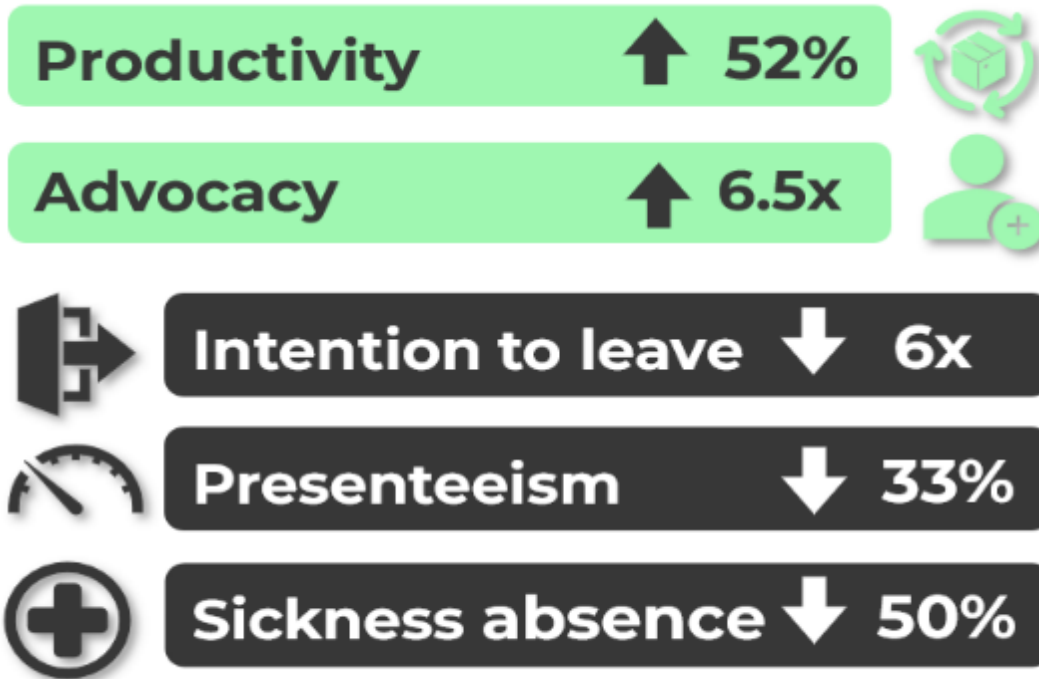
**Higher return on investment can be achieved by early interventions, such as organisation-wide culture change and education.<sup>v</sup>**

*Deloitte (2024). Mental health and employers, The case for employers to invest in supporting working parents and a mentally healthy workplace.*

**Individual level interventions such wellbeing apps or one-off sessions are not shown to provide benefits unless linked to preventative, structural change.<sup>vi</sup>**

*Fleming (2024). Estimating effects of individual-level workplace mental wellbeing interventions: Cross-sectional evidence from the UK*

Our own [Robertson Cooper Good Day at Work 2025 research report<sup>vii</sup>](#), using cross-sectional data from over 70,000 workers, found that employees reporting the highest levels of wellbeing (top 20%) also experienced significantly better business outcomes than those with lowest levels of wellbeing (bottom 20%):



## How to build your own business case?

When it comes to developing a strategic approach to wellbeing, it can be daunting to know where to start. You might need to demonstrate the potential return on investment from your wellbeing activities and that can be tricky to do if you don't have data to show why you are doing what you are doing, how employees are feeling at work and what is driving workplace wellbeing or the other outcomes you are interested in addressing.

**So where do you start? Dr Judith Grant, Senior Psychologist and Wellbeing Strategist, shares her five-step process:**

1

**Board engagement** – identify the organisational priorities and how improving wellbeing may help support. This could be attracting and retaining employees, addressing healthcare costs, supporting performance, or aligning wellbeing with the values of the organisation as part of a proactive approach to corporate social responsibility. The business case for wellbeing, if you need to make it, may differ from company to company and industry to industry depending on the culture, inherent risks or priorities. You may not be able to make the business case in one go – it may be something that builds over time as you gather more evidence. You may need to use external statistics and research first before you gather the information you need internally to make the case. Understanding the legal requirements your organisation has in managing risks to both physical and mental health at work is another important place to start and ensure senior leaders understand their responsibilities.

2

**Measurement** – if you want to be able to quantify and measure progress you need to establish a baseline. What data do you collect in your organisation? What are the metrics that really interest leaders? Are there things you are not measuring currently but need to know in order to really understand wellbeing? So often organisations gravitate to their sickness absence numbers, if these costs are high; but implementing a general wellbeing programme that is not directly linked to the reasons why people are absent will not address these costs – one bad flu season and your absence numbers may go up unrelated to your wellbeing approach. Numbers are important, but words can help bring the challenges and opportunities to life – a mix of quantitative data with qualitative focus group or interview outputs is ideal. And remember correlation does not equal causation, just because two data points are moving in the same direction does not necessarily mean they are related – careful analysis and reporting is needed. It is important to consider what outcomes you want to address and what is driving those outcomes. Our Good Day at Work survey and Six Essentials approach can support with this, and our data analysts love looking for significant patterns in your data!

3

**Review policies, processes and rewards** – once you have the data and understand the different factors that may be driving wellbeing in your workplace you can review your policies, processes and rewards based on your findings. If employees are struggling with flexibility or balancing caring responsibilities or health needs with work, it may be that reviewing your approach to flexibility may help employees work more productively. If stress is a significant issue, what workplace factors may be driving this, and how might your policies and procedures help or hinder action? Looking at what is on offer to employees, such as employee support, rewards and programs in the workplace, and whether they meet needs can be a good way to identify opportunities and efficiencies.

4

**Design interventions, training and communications** – there may be multiple different drivers of wellbeing in an organisation. It is important to be clear on what the drivers are and how they link with the outcomes you are trying to achieve. Developing and designing targeted action plans can ensure drivers are addressed and can be monitored and measured in a structured way. Training at different levels of the organisation (senior-leaders, managers, employees) can ensure that everyone has the confidence and capability to take action. Integrating actions into existing processes, where possible, can ensure these are efficiently managed. This will be an ongoing process – we have supported organisations with interventions for leaders and managers using 1-2-1 coaching, training and our Leadership Impact tool. We also provide a range of Wellbeing Pathways designed to build structural and behavioural change to embed wellbeing into ways of working for greatest effect and lasting impact.

5

**Establish a wellbeing network** – workplace wellbeing is everyone's responsibility in an organisation. Establishing a wellbeing governance group can support the strategic approach to wellbeing and ensure that wellbeing risks are managed in the same strategic way as other organisational risks. Wellbeing champion networks across the organisation can ensure that plans stay on track and engagement remain high. A culture of wellbeing is established as more voices champion wellbeing across the organisation.

Once you have been through each stage of this process, you will have a good baseline for wellbeing. But a strategic approach isn't built from one training course or one intervention. A strategic approach is built from monitoring, reviewing and adjusting the process over time. Once you get to step 5 you may want to go back to step 1 and start again. The information and progress made from each stage will help to enhance the business case and long-term strategic approach. Each time you go through it you will build another layer of data, of progress and engagement.

## How we can help

Our team of experts can support your organisation to take a data-driven, evidence-based approach to workplace wellbeing, shown to create the most value and greatest return on investment.

We can analyse your own data or use our validated Good Day at Work assessment to provide key insight on how your people are feeling, what factors are influencing this, and how this is affecting your organisation.



Whatever the data shows, our range of Pathways and bespoke consultancy services are designed to address key challenges in today's workplace for more Good Days at Work.

**Feel free to get in touch for a chat with our team using the details below**

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<sup>i</sup> De Neve, J-E., Kaats, M., Ward, G. (2024). *Workplace Wellbeing and Firm Performance*. University of Oxford Wellbeing Research Centre Working Paper 2304. doi.org/10.5287/ora-bpkbjayvk

<sup>ii</sup> Krekel, C., Ward, G. & De Neve, J-E. (2019) *Employee Wellbeing, Productivity and Firm Performance*. Centre for Economic Performance. Retrieved from <https://cep.lse.ac.uk/pubs/download/dp1605.pdf>

<sup>iii</sup> McKinsey Health Institute (2025). *Thriving workplaces: How employers can improve productivity and change lives*. Available at: <https://www.mckinsey.com/mhi/our-insights/thriving-workplaces-how-employers-can-improve-productivity-and-change-lives>

<sup>iv</sup> Business in the Community (2023). *Prioritise People: Unlock the value of a thriving workforce*. Available at: <https://www.bitc.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2023/10/bitc-report-wellbeing-prioritise-people-v3-oct23.pdf>

<sup>v</sup> Deloitte (2024). *Mental health and employers, The case for employers to invest in supporting working parents and a mentally healthy workplace*. Available at: <https://www.deloitte.com/content/dam/assets-zone2/uk/en/docs/services/consulting/2024/deloitte-uk-mental-health-report-2024-final-new.pdf>

<sup>vi</sup> Fleming, W. J. (2024). *Employee well-being outcomes from individual-level mental health interventions: Cross-sectional evidence from the United Kingdom*. *Industrial Relations Journal*, 55, 162–182. <https://doi.org/10.1111/irj.12418>

<sup>vii</sup> Robertson Cooper (2025). *Good Day at Work. Insights Report: How high wellbeing drives high performance*. Available at <https://www.robertsoncooper.com/good-day-at-work-insights-report-2025/>

