Cornwall and Isles of Scilly

Health and wellbeing: employer resources appendix

In association with

Public Health England

Protecting and improving the nation’s health
Introduction

Public Health England South West is delighted to showcase the workplace wellbeing case studies from Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly as exemplars of good practice in support of the Business in the Community and Public Health England suite of employer toolkits.

Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly have a long track record of leading the way in supporting local employers to develop approaches that create healthy workplaces which meet the quality mark standards required to receive the prestigious ‘health and wellbeing in the workplace’ award.

Professor Kevin Elliston
Deputy Director Health & Wellbeing
South West, Public Health England

This toolkit provides insight and learnings from a range of employers based in Cornwall about safeguarding employee health and wellbeing along with an extensive list of local support resources for all employers in the region. Topics covered range from mental wellbeing to suicide prevention and musculoskeletal (MSK) health.

This toolkit is an appendix to the existing online suite of interconnected toolkits from Business in the Community and Public Health England, created to help every organisation support the mental and physical health and wellbeing of its employees. It provides local resources and practical case studies on mental health, MSK and suicide prevention for employers based in Cornwall.

These materials are relevant to all employers, irrespective of size, sector or familiarity with the subject. They are designed to help employers take positive actions to build a culture that champions good mental and physical health and provide a greater understanding of how to help those who need more support.

The toolkits can be found online at the Business in the Community website:

- Mental health toolkit for employers
- Musculoskeletal health in the workplace: a toolkit for employers
- Reducing the risk of suicide: a preventative toolkit for employers
- Crisis management in the event of a suicide: a postvention toolkit for employers
Resources
Mental health resources

National resources:

Bipolar UK
Bipolar UK provides advice and information about bipolar with Cornwall support groups in Penzance and Liskeard.
Support Line: 0333 323 3880
www.bipolaruk.org

Carers UK
An expert telephone advice and support service to talk about caring, and online information and support to answer other queries.
Advice Line: 0808 808 7777
www.carersuk.org

FFLAG (Families and Friends of Lesbians and Gays)
FFLAG offers support to local parents’ groups and their contacts, in efforts to help parents and families understand, accept and support their lesbian, gay and bisexual members with love and pride.
Confidential Helpline: 0845 652 0311
www.fflag.org.uk

Mind
Mind provides advice and support to empower anyone experiencing a mental health problem.
Mind info line: 0300 123 3393 or text: 86463
www.mind.org.uk

Rethink Mental Illness
Rethink Mental Illness Advice Service offers general help on living with mental illness, medication, care and treatment.
Telephone: 0300 5000 927
(Monday – Friday, 9.30am – 4pm)
www.rethink.org

Young Minds
The UK’s leading charity committed to improving the wellbeing and mental health of children and young people. Expert advice available via the Parents Helpline.
Parents Helpline: 0808 802 5544
www.youngminds.org.uk

Local resources:

Bodmin Wellbeing Centre
A small but enthusiastic team endeavouring to promote good mental health and wellbeing, empowering people to lead a full life as part of their local community and involving service users in their planning and delivery of services.
Telephone: 01208 892 855
www.restormelmind.org.uk

Carrick Mind Befriending Scheme (Truro)
Was established in 1993 and offers a special relationship of trust and support to anyone in the community who is trying to cope with mental health problems.
Telephone: 01326 617220
www.carrickmind.org.uk

continued overleaf
Mental health resources continued

**Cruse Bereavement Care in Cornwall**
Cruse Bereavement Care provides support, advice and information to children, young people and adults when someone dies. Cruse services are free of charge and support anyone who has been bereaved throughout Cornwall, whenever or however the death occurred.

Telephone: 01726 76100
www.cruse.org.uk/Cornwall-area

**First Light (Formerly Skoodhya and Twelves Company)**
First Light is a Cornwall-based charity established to provide emotional support and practical help to people affected by the actions of others.
www.firstlight.org.uk

**Hearing Voices Cornwall support groups**
Hearing Voices Cornwall offers information, support and understanding to people who hear voices and those who support them.

Bodmin: 01208 815676
(Wednesdays, 2.00 – 3.30pm)

Penzance: 0757 051 0359
(First Friday of every month, 1.30 – 3.30pm)

www.hearing-voices.org

**Kernow Carers Service**
(Formerly Cornwall Carers Service)
Cornwall Carers Service ended on 30th June 2016 as a new service has been contracted by Cornwall Council to deliver support to carers in Cornwall. The new service, Kernow Carers Service provides support for all unpaid Carers of all ages, is being delivered jointly by Action for Children, working with Cornwall Rural Community Charity and Cornwall’s Family Information Service.

All the information is online:
www.supportincornwall.org.uk/carers

**Mental Health Day Services in Cornwall**
Day Resource Centres are about providing people with the help they need to attain personal goals as part of recovery. Day service staff will work with people over the age of 18 who are recovering from a mental illness.

**Contact details:**

**Bodmin,**
Trelil Court:
01208 76899

**Bude,**
01288 355695

**Camborne,**
Boundervean:
01209 613006

**Falmouth,**
Anchor Project:
01326 315822

**Liskeard,**
Caradon:
01579 347651

**Launceston,**
Elfordleigh:
01566 761155

**Newquay,**
Roswyth:
01637 873122

**Penzance,**
Richmond House:
01736 350752

**St Austell,**
Fountain House:
01726 76299

**Truro,**
Stepping Stones:
01872 241783

www.cornwallft.nhs.uk/services/community-mental-health-services/day-services

continued overleaf
Mental health resources continued

Nightlink
Nightlink is Cornwall’s freephone listening service for anyone 18 years or over, who is experiencing or has experienced emotional distress. Nightlink is also available for people supporting those in emotional distress and for anyone who feels they would like to discuss their difficulties in confidence.

Helpline (FREE):
0808 8000 306 (office)

Text Service:
07717 989021 (mobile)

All website enquiries:
www.nightlink.co.uk or
www.re-gain.org.uk

Penta Health and Wellbeing
Penta aims to make a positive difference to people’s lives, through promoting and nurturing mental health and wellbeing and by enabling and empowering everyone experiencing mental health problems to live with, manage and recover from their condition. The organisation has over 30 years’ experience of delivering a wide range of activities to improve mental health and wellbeing in West Cornwall.

Telephone: 01209 697575
www.penta.org.uk

Outlook South West
Outlook South West provides talking therapies for approximately 12,000 NHS patients each year, helping people recover from common mental health problems such as anxiety, stress, depression and trauma, as well as other conditions like OCD.

Telephone: 01208 871905
www.outlooksw.co.uk

The SUsie Project
The SUsie Project is dedicated to providing support to survivors of domestic abuse. The project works with survivors of domestic abuse who no longer live with their abuser. The SUsie Project offers various options to help survivors regain self-esteem and confidence.

Telephone: 01209 699241
www.susieproject.org.uk
Musculoskeletal health resources

ARMA
The Arthritis and Musculoskeletal Alliance (ARMA) is the umbrella body for the arthritis and musculoskeletal community in the UK, and their mission is to transform the quality of life of people with musculoskeletal conditions. They have 40 member organisations ranging from specialised support groups for rare diseases to major research charities and national professional bodies.

Telephone: 020 3856 1978
www.arma.uk.net

Core Health Consultancy
The Core Health Consultancy has experience and knowledge in wellbeing that spans across health, activity and care. They train and teach on all aspects of wellness and health, and deliver workshops to the Care and corporate sectors.

Telephone: 07887688789
www.corehealthconsultancy.com

Cornwall Arthritis
This website offers helpful videos featuring health professionals who work with those experiencing musculoskeletal conditions.
www.cornwallarthritis.org.uk

Physiotherapy teams
There are a number of teams who will work with people to restore movement and function as near to normal as possible if they have been affected by an injury or disability. All physiotherapists are highly experienced Musculoskeletal Specialist Physiotherapists and are available at clinics throughout the whole of Cornwall.

Telephone: 01208 834600
www.cornwallft.nhs.uk/services/physiotherapy

The Musculoskeletal Interface Service
This is a countywide service for people with hip, knee and shoulder conditions where the diagnosis is unclear or who are not ready, willing or able to have surgery.

Telephone: 01209 318095
Email: cpn-tr.MSKInterface@nhs.net
Reducing the risk of suicide resources

**Applied Suicide Intervention Skills Training (ASIST)**
ASIST provides suicide first aid skills to anyone who may come into contact with a person at risk. It gives an introduction to the most widely used Suicide Intervention Model in the world, a model which is applicable in all situations requiring help.

ASIST is a FREE two day course:
www.healthpromcornwall.org/training-programme/item/suicide-first-aid

**Samaritans**
Samaritans are available round the clock, 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. Samaritans offer a safe place to talk any time, about whatever the problem is. People don’t have to be suicidal to call them. Whatever someone is going through, they can call FREE any time, from any phone.

Helpline: 116 123
For advice and information visit:
www.samaritans.org

**PAPYRUS**
PAPYRUS is a national charity dedicated to the prevention of young suicide in the UK.

Helpline: 0800 068 41 41
www.papyrus-uk.org

**The Campaign Against Living Miserably (CALM)**
CALM is dedicated to preventing male suicide, the single biggest killer of men under 45 in the UK.

Telephone: 0800 58 58 58
www.thecalmzone.net
Crisis management in the event of suicide resources

**Penhaligons Friends**
Penhaligons Friends is a Cornish charity supporting bereaved children, young people, parents and carers throughout the county. It offers children and young people the chance to meet others and share their experiences, as well as practical resources for children and parents.

Telephone: 01209 210624  
www.penhaligonsfriends.org.uk

**Suicide Liaison Service**
This is a specialist service developed to support people who have been bereaved by suicide. The NHS in Cornwall has commissioned the service to provide support across the county.

It is a FREE service open to anyone who has been affected by suicide.

Telephone: 01208 871905  
Or referrals can be made by a GP / health professional.

**Survivors of Bereavement by Suicide (SOBS)**
This organisation exists to meet the needs and break the isolation experienced by those bereaved by suicide. It is a self-help organisation aiming to provide a safe, confidential environment in which bereaved people can share their experiences and feelings, so giving and gaining support from each other.

National Helpline: 0300 111 5065  
(9am to 9pm every day)  
www.uk-sobs.org.uk

**Suicide Bereavement Support Group**
A safe space and confidential environment in which bereaved people can share their experiences and feelings.

The group meets on the last Wednesday of the month 7.00-9.00 pm in Carrick.

Telephone: 07952 410637  
www.sbsg-cornwall.uk
Cornwall Council

Natalie Perkes, Assistant Wellbeing Advisor and
Rob Ley, Health, Safety and Wellbeing Operations Manager

For a number of years now, we’ve been working to embed health, safety and wellbeing into all aspects of our organisational agenda at Cornwall Council. We’re working to create a bespoke, lifelong journey for people at every level of the organisation – not just senior staff – so that we can ensure that we generate systems that work from the bottom up with regards to these key areas.

Mental health is a huge area of focus for us. It’s the single biggest cause of absence at work and it’s something we’re working really hard to address.

We’ve implemented a range of different policies and training to address mental health at work. We’ve undertaken extensive work with the Mindful Employer NHS scheme to promote mental health, which has culminated in working with Cornwall Fire and Rescue Service to encourage management to sign up to the Blue Light Time to Change pledge in 2016. Alongside this, our senior Occupational Health practitioner is also a mental health specialist, which has been key for us in driving the agenda forwards.

One of the key aspects of our mental health work has been to implement training courses. We have a Well at Work building resilience course for managers – it’s about training management on how to handle situations where work is impacting on the mental health of employees. It’s a tiered programme for all levels of management, tailored depending on the level of engagement with employees.

We also have employee training. This focuses on how to manage your own manager – how staff can engage with management, the positives of using Occupational Health and reasonable adjustments, and how work can be a positive element of managing mental health. It also looks at signs and symptoms and how to spot them, encouraging people to build their own awareness and resilience around mental health – helping find ways to avoid and prevent people getting to burnout stage.

The final stage of our training programme is an e-learning course, concentrating on what people need to know but don’t know yet – the questions they can’t ask or don’t know the answers to. This will be going live next month, supported by senior management.

In partnership with Macmillan, we’ve also run difficult conversation training. This originally started as training around how to talk about cancer – but we then expanded this to mental health training, open to all employees and managers. It’s been really successful so far and has helped people understand how to start the conversation.

We recognise that sometimes, people need additional support and so we have a comprehensive confidential counselling service. Through this, all employees can access up to six sessions per year and can self-refer. Through our service, people can be seen within 48 hours of referral. We know that the quicker interventions are in place, the better you can support people to remain at work and be well at work. We’ve seen real improvements through this service – and even significant financial benefit. We know, from surveys with those who accessed the service and focus group support with managers who were supporting employees, that access to counselling and psychotherapy meant people were able to return to work and their normal roles sooner. We’ve demonstrated that for every £1 we spend on mental health, there is a £3 indirect saving.
Cornwall Council continued

All of this has contributed to a change in the openness of dialogue around mental health, but there is still a stigma. This stigma still seems to be greater for men than women, and so we decided to do some work around mental health for Men's Health Week last year. We had a senior member of staff, at director level, come forward and write a statement about mental health. This normalisation of mental health at senior level is essential to combating taboos and helping people recognise that it’s OK to talk about mental health.

Our Champions have once again been key to driving our mental health agenda. One simple but really effective measure they’ve implemented in one area has been starting a ‘box of joy’. This is a box of items that everyone in the workplace contributes to – leisure items, things to unwind, things to take your mind off work. Staff then use it to take five minute breaks from work. It offers a complete break from normal working activities, and allows staff to get involved in shaping the culture of the place they work in and take a role in changing the lives of others they work with. Alongside the Champions, we’re looking at how to provide a range of measures to help build resilience and offer alternative routes to help people before it all gets too much. Recently, we’ve had one Champion delivering a yoga and mindfulness programme.

Our mental health strategy doesn’t just stop at what we’ve done so far. We’ve had some real successes, but we know we need to keep moving it on, developing it, and looking at how to constantly improve things so that we do the best for our staff. We’ve started a cultural shift at Cornwall Council and we want to make sure we keep going.
Devon and Cornwall Police Force
DC Catherine Thomas, Wellness Team

I've been a police officer for 17 years and have worked in many areas within the service. I was operational up until last year when I took up my role within the Wellness Team. Part of my role now involves mental health awareness for staff and colleagues in addition to overseeing our Peer Support service.

Peer Support has been developed through our staff group, the Mental Wellbeing Network and is ‘for staff by staff’. It is a fundamental part of our approach to employee mental wellbeing in the police force in Devon and Cornwall – and we're one of the first forces in the UK to implement it. It’s a support service made up of staff and officers who have had lived experience of mental ill-health, either personally or with their friends and family. Our staff and officers have very unique experiences as part of the police force. Having peer supporters available means that they can talk to people about their ‘journey’ who understand their circumstances and may have personal experience of the same. It’s a listening service for those who need it.

Our peer supporters are volunteers who have received a two-day training course from the Institute of Mental Health. This focuses on eight core principles of peer support and allows the individual to consider their experiences and to talk about them. This course was co-designed, but other ones are available. I'd highly recommend other employers to consider setting up peer supporters in their own organisations.

Peer Support is beneficial as it is facilitated by people with lived experience either themselves or with family or friends, so they can be a useful sounding board. It’s not a counselling service – it’s a confidential listening ear which is non-directive but can assist in signposting to another area of support such as a GP or occupational health if this is appropriate.

We have an intranet that staff and officers can access which holds wellbeing and mental health resources. The Peer Support site allows those seeking support to confidentially self-refer, then view a directory of supporters (who have written their own biographies) and select two peer supporters who they’d be comfortable engaging with. Then, depending on availability, they might have a phone conversation, a text chat or a face-to-face talk with one of those peer supporters.

The Peer Support approach came about thanks to our Mental Wellbeing Network which identified this need. The group aims to raise awareness, reduce the stigma of mental health in the workplace and provide support – everyone has mental health. It’s chaired by a Superintendent and is run by staff and for staff which is a really important ethos for us.

We also run other training and promotions relating to mental health – we have had resilience training, training around stress, and our wellness team regularly give presentations to all officers and staff across the organisation. We’re also signed up to the Blue Light Time to Change pledge, part of Mind’s Blue Light campaign supporting mental health in the emergency services.

continued overleaf
Devon and Cornwall Police Force continued

In the 17 years that I've been part of the force I've noticed a real change. I can now see that people are now a lot more willing to talk about mental health – the conversation is gaining momentum in the workplace and in society. We're so proud to be able to provide a service that is making a difference to staff. A crucial aspect of our success is that in our force we have senior management supporting our wellbeing work which is really important – ultimately you need senior support to make positive changes.
LumiraDx Care Solutions is a health technology company with about 50 employees. Although our business has recently become part of a wider group, our approach to employee health and wellbeing has been established for several years and has always been supported by our Care Solutions Senior Management Team.

Last year we achieved ‘Gold’ in the Healthy Workplace Awards. One of the reasons we achieved the award was our work on employee mental wellbeing and stress reduction – we’d held some formal sessions on stress prevention, for all staff and for managers, which were very well received.

This year we’ve taken more specific steps towards mental health awareness. We held two mindfulness sessions with a local expert, where we have been able to teach staff techniques and tools for mindfulness practice with the objective that they can apply these when required in their day-to-day life.

Recently, five members of staff attended a Mental Health First Aid course. The course has provided us with a number of referral points. It also enabled the participants to understand how to recognise the signs that somebody may have experienced a change in mental health, including the confidence to ask the right questions should this be observed.

The training was helpful in understanding the limits of a Mental Health First Aider’s responsibilities. This means there is no uncertainty about how far the support should go – just like a first-aider, you’re there to help at the beginning and then show someone the right places to go for more help.

As a business, we are already doing various simple but effective things to create a positive culture in the workplace. We provide free lunches for staff and have communal areas for people to get away from their desks. We’ve also started to promote walking meetings – in our company newsletter we show local routes and how long it takes to get around them, so if it’s appropriate, staff can get out of the office during meetings.

We have an anonymous kudos cards system – employees acknowledging or celebrating the achievements or actions of others – which we publish in our company newsletter.

We hold a staff survey twice a year to do a temperature check of how people are feeling – we ask questions about people’s stress levels and how they’re finding work. We had a really high engagement score in the last survey – a lot of which was around line manager relationships. As a result, we’ve supported our managers on how to give feedback to the people they manage. The survey was also part of why we promoted mindfulness training.

We have a life coach available to employees – anyone can ask for a session if there’s an area they want to develop. It’s confidential, but we sometimes suggest people might want to work with her – it gives them an opportunity to take advantage of specific one-to-one coaching. The People Development Team has an open-door policy if anyone wants support or advice in this area.

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continued overleaf
LumiraDx continued

We're trying to look after mental wellbeing in all sorts of ways – it overlaps with physical health and so we've offered subsidised rates for employees to a local leisure centre. We're looking at how often people are having performance reviews and encourage managers not to fall behind with those as they're a way to pick up stressors. If someone has been off work unwell for long periods, we have back-to-work interviews with them to make sure we're offering all the support they need.

It's holistic and some of these things are common sense. Ultimately it's about ensuring that all staff are supported; from a great induction where they can be signposted to support and resources when they need it and making our People Development department an open door.
Proper Cornish Group  
Liz Jefferson, HR Manager

We are a Cornish Food Manufacturing Group employing just under 240 colleagues across two sites based in Bodmin and Redruth.

With a large team of colleagues across two sites and all of us spending up to half of our waking hours at work, as a company we wanted to increase engagement, raise awareness, remove barriers and make health and wellbeing activities more accessible for all. The free Healthy Workplace framework provided through the NHS has been an integral part of us achieving this; taking the concept of a healthy workplace embedded as the norm, and making it a reality.

Some of our Health and Wellbeing activities include:

• Health and Wellbeing Team creation
• All colleagues signing up to the company’s Health and Wellbeing Code
• Increased communication channels
• Company sign up to Mindful Employer NHS scheme
• ‘Tuity Fruity’ Tuesdays
• Quarterly BBQs for colleagues, led by Directors

On site yoga
• Health and Wellbeing days with onsite treatments
• Healthy Weight and Eating workshops
• Stress workshops
• Mental Health Awareness training
• Lunch time walks for office colleagues
• Access to a Health Cash Plan for all colleagues
• Recruitment of Active Travel Champions
• Recruitment and training of Mental Health First Aiders

We created the Health and Wellbeing Team to ensure our health and wellbeing activities could be directed and promoted successfully, and the existence of the team and the company’s commitment to health and wellbeing was communicated to everyone, along with the importance of everyone’s own contribution to this initiative to ensure its success. Everyone happily signed up to the company’s Health and Wellbeing Code.

To run alongside our general health and wellbeing activities, for 2017, we chose two specific areas to focus on. The first was Mental Health Awareness, because 1 in 4 people are affected by mental ill health at some point in our lives (according to the Department of Health), and the second musculoskeletal (MSK) health, owing to the physical nature of many of the jobs at Proper Cornish and Furniss (see the Proper Cornish Group MSK case study).

As a company we have signed up to Mindful Employer, a voluntary UK wide organisation run by Workways, part of Devon Partnership NHS Trust. By doing this we have shown our commitment to supporting mental wellbeing in the workplace and now have access to a wealth of information and resources which can provide support for colleagues who experience stress, anxiety, depression or other mental health conditions. Our connection to Mindful Employer is further complimented by our Employee Assistance Programme which colleagues have access to 24/7.

We have also provided Stress workshops in the workplace and Mental Health Awareness training for all line managers – our aims being to remove stigma and raise awareness and levels of support.
Another Mental Health Awareness initiative we have started is the introduction of the Mental Health First Aider. We have well established physical First Aiders in the workplace who are well trained and prepared should anyone experience physical ill health. We also have an open door policy throughout the business and various channels to encourage communication, but we wanted to establish a specific support mechanism to address mental health issues.

We therefore advertised for Mental Health First Aiders and sourced a two day Mental Health First Aider training programme. We have had a great response to the advert and at the time of writing have eight people scheduled to attend the first course of training. The role of the Mental Health First Aider will be to provide immediate assistance should someone experience mental health difficulties, and signpost them to more long term support should that be required.

What really makes our Health and Wellbeing initiative work is the support and commitment of the Senior Managers. Our Directors are fully committed to this initiative and seal the deal with a quarterly BBQ where they set up outside our reception area and serve us all delicious food in our extended paid lunch breaks – a great opportunity for all to eat and mingle with other departments.

This has been a real culture changing initiative for us and the Silver award we achieved through the Healthy Workplace Award has affirmed our approach. Happy as we were to achieve Silver, we aren’t happy to settle for that. Next, we are going for Gold!
St Austell Brewery
Christine Knight, Occupational Health Manager/Trainer

St Austell Brewery is a family run business with around 1,500 employees. Staff work across a range of locations, including the brewery, head office, depots, and managed houses.

We recognise that improving mental health begins with being more open about it. Better mental health policy and support for staff means changing the culture, and making the benefits of a healthy workforce clear to all. As a result, much of what we've tried to do is develop a culture of openness – among the staff and between management at all levels, so we can support staff in the way that they need us to.

We started by establishing an open door policy to Occupational Health (OH). People can drop in to talk to OH staff whenever they need and managers know that they can refer concerns to the Occupational Health manager. OH has also become involved in staff wellbeing – when people are off work for more than a few days, as the OH manager I follow up personally. The trickle down impact of allowing staff to raise concerns about mental health – or any other workplace health concerns – has been really positive. More and more people are approaching OH and far greater numbers of management recognise the importance of acting early including the potential impact on performance if issues are left unaddressed.

One of our key policies has been to sign up Depot and Head Office staff to a corporate health insurance scheme – Westfield Health. Alongside a range of other benefits, this offers staff 24-hour access to an information and advice line with the option for face-to-face counselling sessions. We also fund an additional three face-to-face counselling sessions with a private counsellor for crisis situations. These referrals have been really successful – we know that at least one suicide has been averted through access to a counsellor.

We’ve also implemented a range of training procedures to help inform staff and equip managers – among these are our twice yearly ‘building resilience’ courses, for managers and staff. The course for staff looks at the difference between stress and pressure and helps staff identify strategies for managing stress. The course for management looks at these issues, but also considers how management style can affect an employee. Alongside this, we offer regular training with middle managers and senior managers, as well as management meetings where issues can be discussed or flagged to HR/OH.

Because we work across so many different locations, it’s a challenge to ensure that all staff feel supported. To take action on this we’ve put in place a series of procedures, including six-monthly visits from HR and OH and onsite training across a range of areas including stress management in the depots, so the staff there feel connected to head office and can raise concerns when they need to. We also developed a series of health promotion information posters for the back of toilet doors across all of our sites, which inform and signpost staff to the right services. We’ve found the Men’s Health Forum Toolbox talks really helpful as well – they are a funny and engaging way to look at men’s health issues including mental health.

Our approach has concentrated primarily on changing culture towards mental health openness, then providing training, signposting, and professional counselling. It has had a huge impact on St Austell Brewery – we won a Healthy Workplace Gold award last year and there has been a notable impact on wellbeing.
Trewthen Dairy
Dave Headon, Health and Safety Coordinator

Trewthen Dairy is a family-owned business formed in 1996. The business grew steadily until 2009 when, with the aid of a European funded grant, the site undertook a four-year refurbishment programme leading the business to now employing around 160 people. We are still family-run, and our directors still hold their original family values dear.

The directors recognise the need to look at and support the health and wellbeing of our employees and contractors. For the last few years we have been part of the Health Promotion Service Workplace Health Award scheme, which has directly helped us develop the wellbeing of our staff.

As part of our staff development programme known as ‘train to gain’ a small group of colleagues set up an initiative known as Project HELP, with support from the directors. They looked at the number of days absence at Trewthen over one year and calculated that it equates to a considerable cost to the business. The aim of Project HELP is to reduce that absence by 20 percent resulting in a substantial saving to the business and help to improve colleagues’ general wellbeing. ‘HELP’ is an acronym standing for H – Health, E – Exercise, L – Learn, P – Productivity. We look at mental health, healthy eating and exercise (see the Trewthen musculoskeletal health case study).

The one area identified we could develop more was around mental health. This became very relevant to me after a personal experience – my father was diagnosed with dementia which led to several very difficult years before he passed away. Going through that process was traumatic, and it made me think a lot about mental health.

National statistics state that one in four people have mental health issues and we want to give our management team the tools to help them support our colleagues at times of difficulty. We are investigating training for managers, having at least two mental health first aiders and ways to communicate better with all our colleagues and ensure resources are available if they need help and to reduce the stigma around discussing mental health issues.

Support from a company’s leadership is crucial – though you still have to clearly explain the benefits so they understand the value of what you’re doing. The joy for me is that the directors I talk to are fully supportive of what we want to do. They understand the issue, they’ve experienced it themselves. Unfortunately I think often, until you have personal experience, you don’t fully understand or appreciate why good mental health is so important.

One specific thing we recognised last year is that we have a small road that divides the dairy from the main office block, and this became like a Them and Us divide. We’ve done work to break down this barrier – we have Communication Days where our CEO will have an open question forum in one of our meeting rooms for anyone who wants to go, open to all departments. It has definitely helped.

When you employ 160 people there’ll be a certain number you may not convert. But if you work positively and on the core people, you can bring the majority of people with you. We are really seeing that happen here.
Musculoskeletal health case studies
Musculoskeletal (MSK) issues are the second highest causes of absence at the council. Around 85-90% of our staff are office based, although we do have other personnel – like traffic officers and environmental staff – working in different locations. Consequently, the majority of the MSK issues we see are related to sedentary, office work conditions.

One of the things we have done to address the issue is to bring on board in-house ergonomics experts. They have driven the agenda in terms of looking at how to adapt the workplace to suit staff, not the other way round. In practice, this means involving our ergonomics lead, Juliet, in any change programmes from the very first stages of planning. She and her team also have a role in procurement – involving ergonomics specialists in this process means that goods are sourced which help prevent issues from occurring.

The ergonomics team have also implemented training programmes. All staff at the point of induction have a mandatory e-learning Display Screen Equipment (DSE) training, which has to be refreshed every three years. We also have DSE assessors who are on the ground throughout our offices to be the first port of call if staff have issues with their workstations; some can assess risks and potential issues and make reasonable adjustments to ensure staff are protected. We also provide the same support for people working in different locations: we’ve provided assistance to Civil Enforcement Officers if their workspaces – in their cases, their cars – are causing any issues.

We’ve also got a manual handling lead, aligned to the Association of First Aiders, who runs internal training using the principles of ergonomics linked to manual handling. In addition, we’re a partner organisation of the National Back Exchange – this is a great forum for the learning and sharing of experiences.

A fundamental aspect of our overarching health and wellbeing strategy has been the training of 61 ‘Your Health Champions’ in line with the Royal Society for Public Health programme. Our Champions are instrumental in driving engagement among staff and change across all of our health and wellbeing work. In 2016 we ran a campaign on MSK health, with an awareness drive led by the Champions. We had sessions for staff and information led campaigns via e-comms and physical newsletters which the Champions helped distribute. We’ve also linked into Get Active Challenges through the Champion network – we’ve run step challenges, walking meetings, walking groups, running groups, physical activity sessions – it’s really important to get people moving and the Champions have been essential to this.

Lastly, our Occupational Health team can refer people up to six physiotherapy sessions in more severe cases. Staff have to come and see our clinicians first, who can identify the need, and then sessions can be accessed for them free of charge.

We’ve definitely seen improvements through our MSK policies – although prevention is always better than cure and so it’s sometimes hard to judge the economic savings. That said, there is a business case for investing in employee health – we can demonstrate the number of people we’ve trained, the number of areas they are covering and the resulting incident rates, and show the business case for preventative measures. Investing in employee health and wellbeing always reaps rewards.
Proper Cornish Group
Liz Jefferson, HR Manager

At Proper Cornish and Furniss, we have a robust sickness absence process in place, but we had started to notice an increase in absence due to musculoskeletal (MSK) issues. Those that were absent due to these issues were being supported back into the workplace through a number of reasonable adjustments, but as a company we wanted to become more proactive.

To support this we developed an MSK Systems Reporting Form and process. This form encourages the line manager and individual to look at the tasks being undertaken, the symptoms the individual is experiencing, their working environment, the personal protection equipment (PPE) being used and the risk assessments in place. The MSK form is used as standard in the return to work interview process, but is also used by line managers should they see anyone struggling or showing signs of discomfort. Following a discussion with the colleague an action plan is put in place with the intention of supporting the colleague to keep them in the workplace rather than them having to take sick leave.

All line managers were fully trained to use this form and conduct the meetings to ensure it didn’t become a tick box exercise. The new system is working well and any issues raised are worked on with the support of the H&S Manager and with Occupational Health involvement as required.

The other MSK focus for us has been on job rotation within Production. We have rotation schedules in place for specific departments which detail how and when jobs should be rotated and require a signature from the colleague to confirm the rotation has taken place. For office colleagues we have focused on getting people away from their desks. We have sent around information on useful desk based exercises and a one minute yoga plan which people can do at their work station. We have also encouraged office walks at lunch time by creating maps and routes for people to follow. For those who want to take it a step further, we have a yoga instructor come on site every Thursday and she holds a class in the Boardroom.

To provide relaxation both physically and mentally we have a health and wellbeing day once or twice a year where masseurs, reflexologists, physiotherapists set up in our Boardroom and provide everyone with a 15 minute taster session during the working day – it will be no surprise that this day is pretty popular.
As an active brewery, physical capacity is absolutely essential. We have staff working across brewing, production and distribution – all involving different types of physical activity.

Typically, people suffer from shoulder problems and back problems – so one of the main things we’ve been trying to promote is the right way to lift, to avoid problems occurring in the first place. Within the depots, staff who are trained in manual handling provide regular training sessions for other teammates.

If people do get musculoskeletal (MSK) issues we have a number of procedures in place. I manage the absence database, so as soon as someone is off with something MSK related I’m on the case. We also integrate the support we offer staff with MSK issues. This means we work with their GPs, using the advice given on fit notes, or through the Westfield Health scheme physiotherapists which allow staff to claim back money for physiotherapy appointments.

We had one case of a chef who had sprained her ankle at work. She got a letter from her physio, and we were able to implement a phased return for her – starting with four hours a day and moving to six hours a day when she was able. We always want to support people to come back to work in a way that is suitable for their recovery. Sometimes returning to the original job isn’t possible. We recently had someone who suffered vertebrae compression damage who has been through a capability assessment. This person wasn’t able to return to their original role, but has been moved to a different role. We’re a family run business which cares for staff – we want people to have fulfilling careers here – and we’re lucky to have family members including couples, parents and their adult children working for us.

We have some overall health initiatives which are about promoting a healthy lifestyle – this is also important to maintain MSK health. Our Hops initiative (Health Optimisation and Promotion Scheme) is an umbrella term for all of our wellbeing and benefits, including a range of discounts for sports and gym memberships, walking lunches, running clubs and health assessments. We’ve found this programme of support really helpful and through the health checks have been able to identify people with health concerns. We’ve found lots of people asking for help to stop smoking as well – and we know that better physical capacity promotes greater activity, which in turn helps with MSK health.

One of the ways in which we’ve eased the burden on people when they develop MSK issues and reintegrate through phased return is through our sick pay policy. We offer 12 weeks sick pay to head office and depot staff and phased return hours can be negotiated to incorporate this entitlement.
Musculoskeletal health case studies

Trewthien Dairy
Dave Headon, Health and Safety Coordinator

We started looking more carefully at the physical health of our employees a few years ago, when we did a series of health checks in partnership with the Cornwall NHS – these were several days where everyone could have a free health check. It was really popular, with 60 percent uptake from staff, all of whom were very positive about it. I did it myself – it makes you start thinking seriously about your health and want to look after it.

Following that we now do various things to promote positive physical health for our employees, as part of Project HELP (see the Trewthien Dairy Mental Health case study).

Two months ago we were given authorisation to buy a cycle shelter to encourage people to cycle to work. We're in the middle of nowhere really so for me it's an 18 mile ride – a big task but I will be doing it. Some people live closer so they can achieve it more often and there's a lot of support and enthusiasm.

We don't have an onsite canteen so recently we added a new vending machine to provide some lunch options which are healthier than the existing crisps and chocolate machine. We also now have a running club onsite where people have the opportunity to go out and do a 20 minute jog in their lunch break, and can use newly installed showers onsite when they get back.

A lot of the roles here – 70 percent of people onsite – are very physical, such as manual handling on production lines or repetitive work in packaging. Many of our people work 12 hour shifts, four-days-on then four-days-off. There are also our delivery drivers doing a lot of manual handling – one of our lorries might do 30-40 drops a day. But we manage to avoid having too many musculoskeletal health issues by taking some straightforward steps – for example in the factory we rotate people across different jobs to avoid RSI and we ensure that everyone takes adequate breaks.

We're not perfect – we still have work to do. But while the reality is that it's a very busy business and people have to get their product out the door, there is always the desire to look after our employees.
Suicide prevention case studies
School in North Cornwall
Head of School

I’m the Health and Wellbeing champion for our school, with a responsibility for looking after the wellbeing of our staff. I had been trained for just a couple of weeks when a senior colleague’s son died unexpectedly. Our colleague understandably found it difficult to cope in the workplace and went on longterm sick leave. In that time we kept in close contact, she came in frequently and we did our utmost to support her. We got to a point where she divulged to me that she didn’t want to carry on living. So I needed to ask that question, “Are you talking about suicide?” And she answered “yes”.

Because I’d recently completed health and wellbeing training I had information to hand which helped me to signpost support for her. She wasn’t willing to make contact with anyone directly, so I offered and, with her approval, phoned Samaritans. They phoned her back and she opened up to them. They were able to arrange counselling for her over an extended period and that really helped her – she still has dark days but they set her on a good course and she’s now retired and rebuilt her life.

I put my response at the time wholeheartedly down to the fact that I’d had training. This meant I knew what to say and I knew how to act. Because of what happened I’ve gone on to do a more in-depth mental health first aid (MHFA) course, and now have an even better picture of how to deal with those situations, should one arise again.

Subsequently we have cascaded learning – another member of staff has had health and wellbeing training and a Special Educational Needs Coordinator has had MHFA training. We’re only 35 people here, but everyone has issues in and out of work and we need to be prepared. So we’ve got a team and support network within the school. It’s not a taboo subject – we’re all aware of it.

Would I have asked the question without the training? I might have skirted around the issue. But luckily I knew that “are you thinking of suicide?” was something you had to ask directly – and respond to if it was a yes.

The implications of somebody taking their life are immense – to the wider circle, community, family. The knock-on effect is indescribable. That sense of loss and anger that so many people suffer afterwards is just incredible. We live in a society where there’s a lot more mental illness than people are aware of. The pressures of modern life are extraordinary – people are struggling all the time. And sometimes they just can’t see the wood for the trees, they’re at rock bottom. People hide it very, very well, as they do with physical conditions, and you might not be aware of it until it’s too late.

If any other employer were considering getting health and wellbeing training, I would 100% say get a member of staff onto it, someone who wants to take on that role. You’ve got to have somebody who can either identify that someone’s struggling, or be a person they’re prepared to talk to. It can literally save a life.
We are currently considering having suicide first-aiders on site – first-aiders who have specific training in that area.

We have 14 first aiders and we are likely to offer extra training to any of those who are interested. We wouldn’t force it on anyone because they could obviously find themselves in a very difficult situation, and it’s important that they are ready for that and comfortable with dealing with it. We are also looking at additional mental health training for managers which includes an element on suicide (recognising the signs and knowing what to do).

This is partly a result of a situation not long ago, when a member of staff rang his superior and said he was about to try and kill himself. She dealt with it admirably (she’s had some experience of mental health training) and possibly saved his life – she talked to him and got him the right support. That prompted a lot of conversation within the management team around how we should specifically support the person who had felt suicidal, and how we might deal with that kind of situation in the future.

Up until that point we probably hadn’t considered it because of the speed at which the business developed. It’s an unfortunate thing but quite often it takes something to actually happen before you fully address the potential problem. I feel we are much more aware, as an employer, of the importance of suicide prevention awareness now.
Thank you to the following organisations for contributing to this toolkit:

- Cornwall Council
- Devon and Cornwall Police Force
- LumiraDx
- Proper Cornish Group
- School in North Cornwall
- St Austell Brewery
- Trewithen Dairy
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Resources for employers

Business in the Community and Public Health England have developed a range of toolkits to support employers with employee health and wellbeing:

- Mental health toolkit for employers
- Musculoskeletal health in the workplace: a toolkit for employers
- Reducing the risk of suicide: a preventative toolkit for employers
- Crisis management in the event of a suicide: a postvention toolkit for employers