

Step-by-Step Guide: Next Steps

What the industry can do to improve
wellbeing in hospitality

In conjunction with Walk for Wellbeing



Introduction.

What is Walk for Wellbeing?

Powered by UK hospitality talent partner **mum** and supported by **Caterer.com, Imperial London Hotels, Lifetime Training, Mews and Peoplebank**, Walk for Wellbeing is a fun, flexible annual event all about taking simple steps towards raising vital funds to support individuals and their families in the hospitality sector who are facing challenging times.

To find out more and sign up to walk the walk with us, visit www.walkforwellbeing.org

Hospitality Action

Since its inception, Walk for Wellbeing has raised vital funds for industry charity Hospitality Action, which plays a crucial role in supporting and advocating for the wellbeing of hospitality staff in the UK. It offers a range of practical services including financial aid and a confidential 24-hour helpline.

Since the start of the pandemic, **Hospitality Action has awarded more than £4m to over 12,500 recipients.** At the same time, the charity has **answered 28,000 helpline calls** and **delivered 8,775 counselling sessions.**

More than half of those contacting Hospitality Action for support directly reference mental health issues such as stress, anxiety and depression, often exacerbated by financial concerns.

A large majority seeking support from Hospitality Action are struggling with household debts, with many facing the threat of court action or eviction.

Hospitality is a fast-paced exciting industry where people can build great careers. But it can also be a stressful place with high expectations and the need to work under pressure. Problems at home or work can have a negative impact on performance and, if not addressed, can create discord amongst teams.





Mental health challenges have increased among hospitality workers over the last four years, according to the results of Hospitality Action's 2024 industrywide survey.

The number of workers reporting mental health issues in their careers to the charity in June 2024 was 76%, 12% higher than it was in 2020.

There are complex reasons behind the rise, but the legacy of Covid-19 and the cost-of-living crisis have inevitably exacerbated the issue, with **69% of survey respondents claiming they had experienced mental health challenges since the pandemic** and **49% linking bad mental health to recent financial pressures.**

Work pressures aren't helping. When asked to identify the top three challenges hospitality workers were personally likely to face in the next 12 months, managing a good work/life balance was cited by 60% of respondents with mental health and finances cited by 44% and 42% respectively.

These statistics are highly concerning and employers should take action to address these issues.

Thankfully, lots can be done, and help is available to enable individuals and employers to turn the situation around.

In this guide, we'll look at the support available to both individuals and employers and offer solutions that will help improve wellbeing in hospitality.

Support.

Employee Assistance Programme

One of the ways hospitality employers can support employees is through an **Employee Assistance Programme (EAP)**.

An EAP is a wellbeing framework that provides a range of specialist, independent and confidential support services to employees. It offers them a safe space to discuss problems they might be experiencing at home or work and provides practical advice and signposting to relevant services if needed.

Hospitality Action's EAP has been created by hospitality for hospitality, so is built to tackle the kinds of issues unique to our industry. It can be accessed 24/7 via an app and online, allowing employees access to a range of services, including personal counselling, legal guidance, addiction support and debt and money advice at a time that's convenient to them.

The benefits of giving employees access to impartial, confidential advice outside the business were made clear from the results of Hospitality Action's 2024 survey. While 62% of respondents agreed that their workplace had created a working environment where they could openly discuss mental health within the team, 65% said they would be reticent to do so due to fears it could negatively impact their career progression. In an industry where operational managers play such a pivotal role, Hospitality Action's EAP provides them with a framework to support employees while protecting their own wellbeing.

For more information on Hospitality Action's Employee Assistance Programme visit <https://www.hospitalityaction.org.uk/eap/>



Solution.

Create an internal wellbeing culture

The elements that make hospitality a fun and dynamic place to work, such as the fast pace, and the pursuit of others' happiness, are the same ones that can lead to workers suffering burnout if not kept in check.

While we've overcome the stigma of talking about mental health in recent years and recognise it as an area we need to support, the industry still has a way to go to create an environment where staff wellbeing is made a priority.

Creating an internal wellbeing culture is therefore essential if employers want to shift the dial and reduce mental health issues within the industry.

How to create a wellbeing culture in your business:

Focus on work-life balance.

Managing work-life balance was listed as the top challenge faced by employees with mental health issues responding to Hospitality Action's survey, so should be the primary focus for employers who want to create a nurturing environment. Implementing changes can be straightforward. Find out from team members what external pressures they might be facing. Do they have caring responsibilities? Have they got a difficult commute? Some changes to shift patterns, such as allowing them to start half an hour later, or arranging shifts across a four-day week and providing a proper break by removing double shifts in one day are simple steps that could make a real difference.

Train Mental Health First Aiders.

MHFA England runs accredited courses that give individuals the knowledge, awareness and skills to spot signs of people experiencing poor mental health, be confident to start a conversation and signpost a person to appropriate support. Hospitality Action's two-day MHFA-accredited courses are run in-person and online. Find out details here: <https://www.hospitalityaction.org.uk/advice/training-on-site-trauma-support/mental-health-first-aid/>

Appoint a wellbeing champion.

Task a member of your team with the job of making wellbeing part of your culture. You may need to recruit for this or change an existing employee's job role to incorporate this element. Allow them the time and space to investigate options for better workplace wellbeing, such as training mental health first-aiders (see below) and give them the power to implement changes and monitor progress so the whole process doesn't become a tick-box exercise. With productivity impacted by employee wellbeing, investing in someone to steer this area will have a positive effect on the business overall.

Solution.

Monitor wellbeing

The benefits of improved wellbeing in the workplace are clear and there's an appetite among hospitality employers to implement changes that would alleviate pressures for their staff.

According to the results of Hospitality Action's 2024 survey, **71% of hospitality employers said they would look to change working patterns to help improve work/life balance and reduce stress.**

Additionally, two-thirds (67%) would also signpost employees to an Employee Assistance Programme (EAP), indicating their desire to offer support.

Many businesses already recognise the value of prioritising wellbeing and have empowered managers to make changes to working patterns and offer additional support in a range of ways. Around 200,000 industry professionals currently have access to Hospitality Action's EAP, and many more businesses are putting in place wellbeing policies and frameworks to recognise the importance of this issue.

Change is happening, but as statistics show, pressures also vary, so employers need to be agile in responding to them.

Regular monitoring of employee wellbeing is therefore essential to ensure the organisation and what it offers is keeping pace with the needs of employees.

How to monitor wellbeing:

Encourage regular one-to-ones.

No matter what size your team is and what the role is, everyone should be meeting with their line manager on a regular basis to check on a range of areas, including progress, performance and how they feel about their role. Make it part of the culture and have a process in place to initiate change or signpost people to relevant support if needed.

Gather feedback.

Distribute regular staff satisfaction surveys that employees can complete anonymously for an accurate barometer of wellbeing. Ask for views on changes that have been made and let staff make suggestions for improvements if they are not happy with the status quo.

Keep an eye on your bottom line.

A happy workforce is a productive one. If you're seeing productivity and your profits drop, it may be an indication of discontented employees.

Solution.

Communicate

Many hospitality businesses have or are making changes to their culture to improve work-life balance and give support to their teams.

However, there is still a perception that the industry isn't doing enough to support employee wellbeing. According to the survey undertaken by Hospitality Action, **38% of employees do not feel that their employer has created an environment where their mental health can be openly discussed**, or that they have a good work-life balance. In addition, in businesses with a mental health first-aider, almost half (48%) didn't know who it was.

This view among these workers highlights the need for employers to encourage communication on all sides to ensure everyone feels listened to and supported and is aware of who or where to go for support.

How to improve internal communications:

Make one-to-ones sacred.

As mentioned previously, one-to-ones are essential for monitoring wellbeing and highlighting issues if there are any. Employers should check these are being held regularly and that line managers are able to log and communicate any grievances to the right place.

Find the right platform.

The 'lost third' who felt that they couldn't openly discuss mental health issues and felt they didn't have a good work-life balance tended to be in operational roles and less experienced. Organisations with disenfranchised workers may need to do more legwork to reach them, so find a platform – whether it's an app, a social media group, printed weekly newsletter or verbal meeting – that works best for your workforce.

Make positive communication part of your values.

Prioritising open discussion needs to be a key part of the organisation's culture. As Hospitality Action CEO Mark Lewis says: **“Employers must take the lead by creating a work environment that prioritises a balanced work-life dynamic and which encourages open, honest discussions without fear of negative repercussions.”**

Solution.

The bigger picture

During the process of creating a culture of wellbeing in an organisation, it can be helpful to look at the bigger picture for inspiration while also sharing your experiences with others.

How to get involved in wider wellbeing initiatives:

Support events.

Walk for Wellbeing is one of many events in Hospitality Action's busy calendar designed to improve wellbeing while raising vital funds for the charity. Whether you fancy taking part in a sporting challenge or lending a hand at a fundraising dinner, there are many ways you and your teams can get involved to raise money for Hospitality Action. These types of team activities foster a sense of camaraderie which is proven to increase employee engagement, morale and retention and the more money raised means more funds available to help those in the industry facing challenges and hardship.

Share best practices.

If you're proud of your work on improving workplace wellbeing, shout about it! Once you've published the news internally, tell the world. Publish an update on your website and through your social channels as well as making external stakeholders, such as Hospitality Action and the hospitality trade press aware of your efforts.

Enter awards.

Another way to celebrate success and showcase the work you've done around improving wellbeing in your organisation is by entering relevant awards. Awards include HR in Hospitality's Awards for Excellence in HR, The Caterer's People Awards and Mind's Workplace Wellbeing Awards.

Support checklist.



Hospitality Action Employee Assistance Programme

Mental Health First Aider Training

Hospitality Action Mental Health First Aid Courses

Hospitality Action Events