

hero

The changing world of health and safety

It's more than hard hats and high-vis vests!

WWW.HEROWELLBEING.COM

HELLO@HEROWELLBEING.CO.UK



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OUR SUMMARY

Rounding up...

The wellbeing at work landscape

In this article, we explore the fields of health and safety and health and wellbeing, exploring how these areas can create happier, healthier, and more productive workforces, also providing our five quick wins for making this happen.

Let's face it, the world has changed since the global COVID-19 pandemic and what we thought was the norm, has been replaced by new ways of thinking and working. To this end, health and wellbeing has been propelled into the workplace spotlight but health and wellbeing is broad and doesn't just sit comfortably in the HR team, it has a substantial impact on health and safety.

We hope it's fair to say that those responsible for health and safety at a workplace have not had it plain sailing the past 12 months. Whilst the almost overnight transition to remote working has been great for many of our teams and colleagues it has served up a host of issues, headaches and mountains of extra work for our friends in health and safety.

The risks have now increased and they sit outside the environment you can control and influence. The geographical spread has increased. Previously you might have had one or several offices, now you have individual homes! You need to address how many staff are working remotely and how many are likely to do so in the future? What type of work are they doing? The way you manage health and safety risks will

depend on all these factors; wow, not easy. But we see there are other risks associated with remote and at home working using computers and work equipment but also the health impacts; stress, lone working, physical strains. Your role and assessments need to take account of the specific work environment and needs of each employee. We don't profess to being experts but certainly understand the landscape in which you're operating and we have respect for you - it's not easy.

The demands of a H&S Manager is HUGE. It's your job to not only create and implement global, national and local policy, ensure compliance and manage all the rules and regulations you also need to be open; you need to trust and respect your colleagues are making the right health and safety decisions. Communication plays an important but often overlooked role as you need to get to know vast numbers of colleagues and understand, listen to and respect their thoughts and opinion (and actions). At the same time, you need to work with each person on an individual level and show genuine concern for their safety and wellbeing and if we add in the demands and challenges of working from home - it's not an easy job!

We also recognise that you work very closely with other departments and functions such as occupational health, HR, L&D, legal, comms, marketing... the list goes on.



UNDERSTANDING

Defining wellbeing in a health and safety context

To gauge an employee's state of wellbeing, health and safety professionals have tended to view this as a combination of physical and mental health, as well as an individual's feeling of professional development. That's not wrong, but there's much more to it. What's required is a broader, more holistic approach, as we'll now uncover...

Therefore, a key part of your armoury should be around preventative health and addressing whole person health in this post-pandemic world. It's very easy for a health and safety manager or team to be reactive but to truly make an impact long term, it's about pivoting your strategy to become proactive...





THE BIGGER PICTURE

The four pillars of health and wellbeing

At hero, we believe that a person's overall health and wellbeing comprises four pillars of health: physical, mental, social, and financial. If one or more of these pillars is out of kilter, then the wellbeing of that individual suffers, with implications for their health and safety at work. Some of the key findings from the Health and Wellbeing at Work 2021 report highlight that more needs to be done to support employees across the full wellbeing spectrum:

- Many organisations have stepped up their efforts to promote good mental health and tackle stress. However, there's a **disappointing fall in the number of organisations training line managers to support people with mental ill-health**, while more action is needed to manage the health risks from increased homeworking.
- Only one in 10 organisations haven't experienced any absence due to COVID-19: **Musculoskeletal injuries are the second main cause of both short- and long-term absence**, while **mental ill-health is the top cause of long-term absence**.
- Despite the increased focus on people's mental health, **organisations need to do more to support their employees' financial wellbeing**. While nearly a quarter (23%) report their organisation has increased their focus on financial wellbeing in response to the pandemic, there are only small improvements in activity to promote financial wellbeing other than signposting people to external sources of advice.

Rather than viewing the pillars in isolation, we believe it's important to see them as the four spokes of a wellbeing wheel; all intrinsically linked, impacting one another. For example, a [study](#) shows that there is approximately a 20% to 30% lower risk of depression and dementia for adults participating in daily physical activity. Other links exist between physical health and social health, financial health and mental health... You get the point!

With this in mind, to deliver upon each of these pillars and meet employees' wide array of needs (unique to each company), employers must take a holistic, 360-view of wellbeing and find solutions capable of delivering positive outcomes in conjunction with their health and safety policies.

By adopting a **blended, in-person and digital approach**, employers are able to deliver a holistic wellbeing programme that meets employees where there are, whether that's in the office, at home, or on the go. It's the organisations with a blended strategy, offering support across the broad range of challenges people are facing (including physical, mental, social, and financial health), that will be best placed to truly support the whole-person wellbeing and general safety of their employees.





RESPONSIBILITIES

Changing face of health and safety

The term health and safety has a far broader meaning than ever before. As a health and safety professional you might be responsible for:

- Sleep risks linked to accidents
- Osteo health - linked to not being seated correctly
- Nutrition
- Slip risk
- Physical health risk - linked to cardiovascular diseases
- Nutrition and this links to performance
- Legislation and adherence - health and safety

The key to ensuring you're winning at every turn in this new, incredibly fast-paced world is prevention!





YOUR STRATEGY

Prevention vs cure!

The latest statistics from the [Health and Safety Executive](#) (HSE) show that, in 2019/20, 38.8 million working days were lost due to work-related ill health and injury. Stress, depression or anxiety and musculoskeletal disorders accounted for 17.9 million and 8.9 million of those days, respectively. And, according to [Deloitte](#), poor mental health, in particular, costs UK employers up to £45 billion each year (ouch!)

The good news is, by emphasising workplace wellbeing, employers can take a proactive approach to handling stress in line with HSE's [Management Standards](#), reducing absenteeism and saving their businesses some serious dosh! In fact, [Deloitte](#) suggests that an employer can expect an average return of £5 for every £1 spent on mental health, while another [study](#) found that British business could save up to £8 billion a year

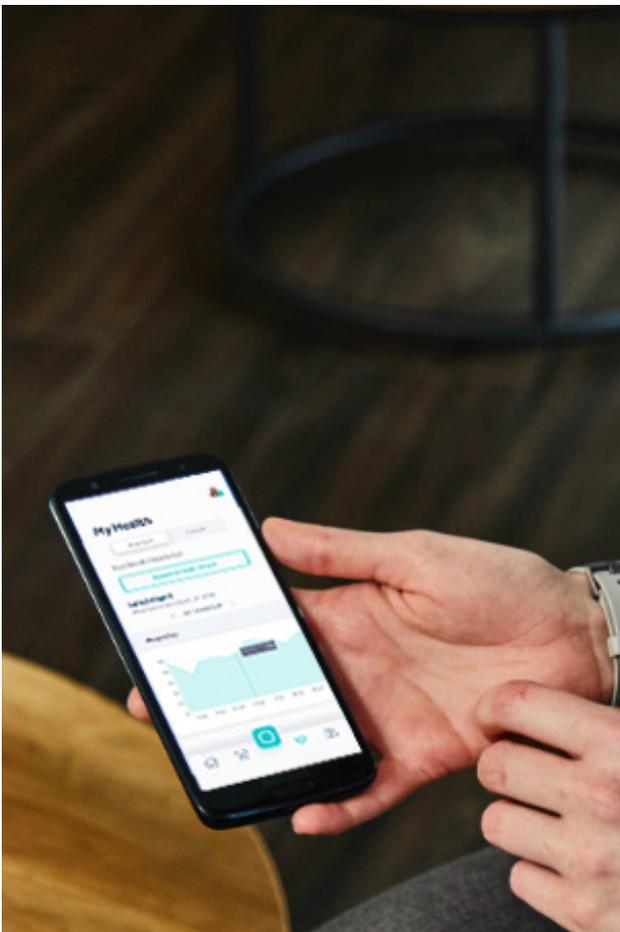
if it managed mental health at work more effectively. Other [research](#) established that participation in a structured workplace health improvement programme was associated with a mean reduction in sickness absence of 0.26-1.6 days per employee per year depending on the length and level of participation in the programme. Those figures may sound small, but they can certainly stack up, especially amongst larger teams!

At [hero](#), preventative health is at the heart of everything we do. Rather than putting plasters over problems, we focus on behaviour-led interventions that enable people to create positive, long-lasting habits. And for you, a health and safety professional, it's the perfect ally to your strategy as it can create and serve up new ideas, education, adherence initiatives plus much more to engage your colleagues.

CONTINUED OVERLEAF >

Prevention vs cure!

With our digital service [Navigator](#), employers have a positive, supportive and trusted way to monitor employees' health remotely and at work, as they can see anonymised and aggregated, real-time data on people's sleep, steps, exercise, nutrition, breathing, activity, habits, and recovery at a headline level. This gives employers and people professionals unique insight into behaviour change across their organisations without breaching any personal data or being too "big brother." For example, employers could compare the mood of employees last week to the mood of employees this week and how this is improving or deteriorating month by month, so appropriate wellbeing/health and safety actions can be taken.



As well as tracking goals, Navigator also provides a plethora of wellbeing inspiration. Information can be downloaded from the Wellness Library, providing credible articles on all aspects of health, including mental, physical and social wellbeing.

Alongside its extensive digital offering, hero also provides GP, personal trainer and nutritionist sessions, delivered by its nationwide team of internationally recognised preventative health and wellbeing specialists. This truly phygital service enables hero's customers to implement high-impact, holistic, blended wellbeing strategies; everything that the modern workplace requires!

And the secret sauce to hero's Navigator is scalability. With a touch of a button you can offer this preventative health and wellbeing, education and management tool to your entire team; whether they are based at home, in the office or working on the other side of the world.



DELVING DEEPER

Communication is key

As with the implementation of any new workplace initiative, communication is key. A more open and collaborative work environment, which involves staff in the construction of wellbeing programmes, leads to greater uptake, engagement and positivity. For businesses moving to a hybrid or remote set-up, it's important to let employees know where things are and what's going to be happening, so they can take back some level of control and make plans. This can really mean a lot to them, even if the news is unwelcome.

Gathering insight on a company by company basis is not only good from an employee engagement perspective, but it's also a vital component of a company's wellbeing strategy, health and safety policy and communications, as the blend of challenges faced by each organisation will be unique based on the sum of all its parts and its people as a whole. This can be achieved through a tailored digital survey, such as a [hero Discovery Survey](#), which provides meaningful insight allowing organisations to build tailored, adaptive strategies to respond to the evolving needs of their employees.



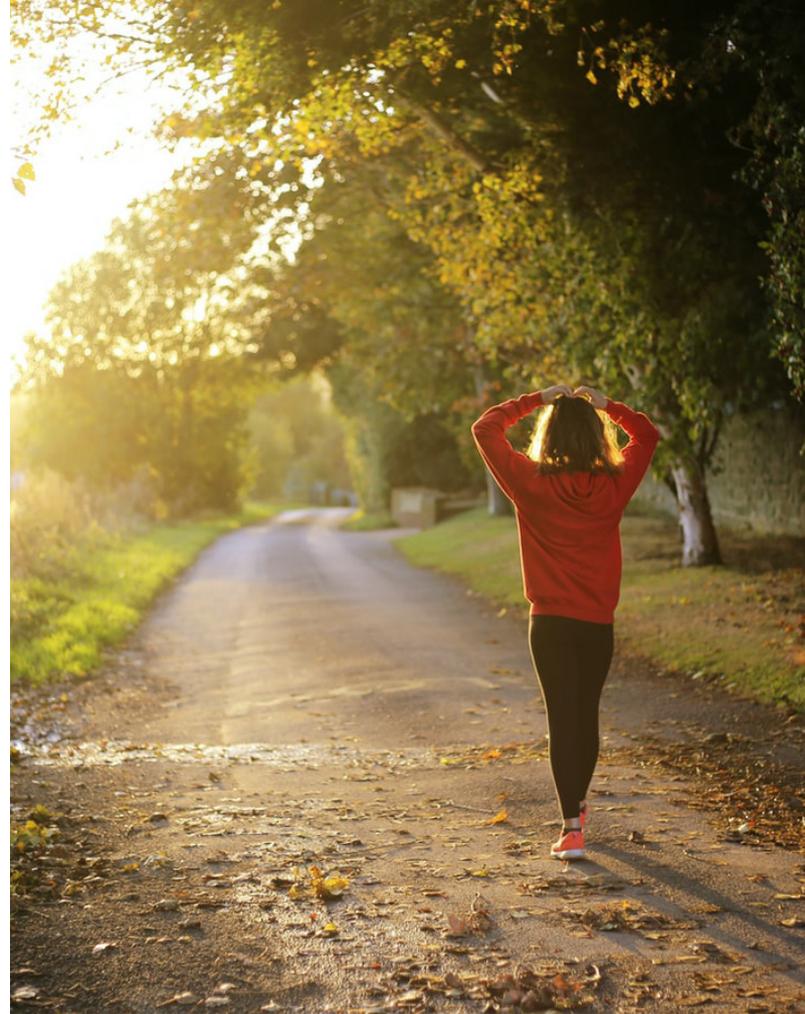
TOP TIPS

Here are our top tips to become an effective health and safety leader in 2021 and beyond



- Challenge the norm. The rule book has been ripped up so look to do something new, different and which could deliver genuine impact.
- Review how your current health and safety practices can be improved and do they integrate health and wellbeing?
- What's changed since the last time you reviewed your policies and practices?
- Look to make improvements based on trends and also employee and colleague demands and needs. Listen to your teams!
- Consult and work in partnership with your colleagues; ask them - "what can we do to solve the problem?"
- Create a vision. After consulting your teams create a 'shared vision' based on the feedback and involve them in planning and decision making.
- Get buy in and support from top level management
- Communication! Ensure everyone knows what they need to do and the impact adherence can have.
- Inspire! Use new tools and techniques to inspire your colleagues to be healthy and safe
- Share your expertise to help workers!





OUR CONCLUSION

In Summary

Covid-19 has thrown workplace wellbeing centre stage, causing employers around the globe to dig a little deeper into their strategies and reassess how they are supporting the whole-person health of their people – their most valuable assets.

Instead of thinking of health and wellbeing and health and safety as two separate entities, people managers are now realising the true value of linking these areas – aligning strategies to create healthier, happier and stronger workforces. Alongside that, organisations are beginning to better understand the multifaceted nature of health and how all the components (physical, mental, social, and financial) work together to create fitter, healthier and more robust teams.

hero's digital services have provided the individuals, teams and businesses it supports, both in the UK and across the world, with blended strategies to enhance their employees' health and wellbeing, aligned with their health and safety policies, enabling them to thrive today and in the future.

Find out more

For more information about hero and its award-winning health-tech and wellbeing solutions, visit:
www.herowellbeing.com