



# Keeping Britain Working

**Healthier, Happier  
Workplaces**



**UK & INTERNATIONAL  
HEALTH COACHING ASSOCIATION**

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## Healthier, Happier Workplaces

Evidence-based strategies for leaders and HR professionals  
to keep people well, productive and engaged

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# Executive Summary

The UK workforce is facing unprecedented health challenges. Rising long-term physical and mental health conditions, coupled with stress and workforce inactivity, are contributing to **high absenteeism, presenteeism, and turnover**, costing employers billions annually.

For boards and senior leaders, workforce health is increasingly viewed through a governance and risk lens, rather than as a discretionary wellbeing initiative.

The *Keep Britain Working Review* (Gov.uk, 2025) highlights the critical role employers play in **early intervention, supportive management, and evidence-based workplace health strategies**. Yet many organisations continue to rely on fragmented wellbeing initiatives that fail to address the underlying health needs of employees.

This White Paper presents a **whole-person health approach**, integrating **health and wellbeing**, supported by **UKIHCA Registered Health Coaches**.

Evidence shows that organisations adopting structured, health-led strategies see:

- Reduced sickness absence
- Improved staff retention and engagement
- Enhanced productivity
- A culture of health and resilience

Employers are invited to **lead the change**, embedding health coaching into workplace strategy, equipping line managers to hold effective health conversations, and adopting professional standards to ensure measurable impact.

Workforce Health in the UK (2025)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• 1 in 5 working-age adults inactive</li><li>• 9.4 average sick days per employee</li><li>• Mental health = leading cause of LT absence</li><li>• Stress-related absence reported by 60% of orgs</li><li>• Economic cost of poor health: £212bn/year</li></ul>

# Introduction: Why Workforce Health Matters

Workforce health challenges are escalating. The UK has a **high proportion of health-related economic inactivity**, rising long-term conditions, and significant stress-related absenteeism.

- *Keep Britain Working Review* (Gov.uk, 2025): **1 in 5 working-age adults inactive**, largely due to ill health
- CIPD *Health & Wellbeing at Work* (2025): **average 9.4 sick days per employee**, with mental health as the leading cause of long-term absence

**Key Insight:** Health and wellbeing are **interdependent**. Addressing wellbeing initiatives alone rarely improves health outcomes. Employers must integrate both to maintain workforce productivity and engagement.

Year	Avg. Sick Days
2019	8.5
2020	8.9
2021	9.2
2022	9.3
2023	9.4

*Trend in Workforce Absence (UK)*

## From ‘Wellbeing’ to Asset Protection: Governance, ESG and Board Relevance

For boards and senior leaders, workforce health is increasingly viewed through a governance and risk lens, rather than as a discretionary wellbeing initiative.

In this context, whole-person health and wellbeing coaching is a governance-aligned mechanism for protecting workforce capacity, sustaining performance, and safeguarding long-term organisational value, directly aligning with ESG (Environmental, Social and Governance) expectations, a framework used by boards, investors, regulators, and insurers to assess how effectively organisations manage non-financial risk and long-term value.

This approach also aligns with Work Health and Safety (WHS) responsibilities, particularly the growing regulatory emphasis on psychosocial risk, by supporting early identification and intervention rather than reactive case management.

Positioning UKIHCA Registered Health Coaches as an asset protection strategy reframes workforce health and wellbeing as a matter of organisational resilience, performance, and return on investment.

Increasingly, professional indemnity insurers and regulators are scrutinising how organisations identify, manage, and mitigate psychosocial and workforce health risks. Insurers are asking for evidence of proactive measures that reduce the likelihood of stress-related claims, long-term absence, and workplace harm. Regulators are similarly focused on how employers discharge their duty of care for mental and physical health at work. In this environment, structured whole-person health strategies and the use of professionally registered health coaches provide demonstrable evidence.

From a legal risk perspective, organisations are increasingly expected to demonstrate that steps have been taken to protect employee health that are reasonable, proportionate, and evidence based. In the context of stress-related claims, discrimination arising from disability, and health-related grievances, the ability for an organisation to be able to point to structured, professionally delivered health support and interventions can be highly material.

Whole-person health strategies supported by professionally registered health coaches help organisations evidence preventative action, show that there was informed decision-making, and that they adhered to their duty-of-care obligations.

## Why Wellbeing Alone Isn't Enough

Workplace wellbeing spending has grown globally, yet outcomes often fail to match investment:

- Over **60% of organisations** report stress-related absence (CIPD, 2025)
- Fragmented wellbeing programs rarely reduce long-term absence (GWI White Paper, 2024)
- Inequitable access leaves staff with chronic conditions unsupported

Wellbeing Initiatives	Whole-Person Health
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Focus: morale, perks, apps</li><li>• Short-term engagement</li><li>• Fragmented</li><li>• Limited measurable impact</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Focus: physical, mental, social</li><li>• Sustainable health outcomes</li><li>• Integrated coaching &amp; support</li><li>• Measurable ROI &amp; workforce health</li></ul>

*Wellbeing vs Whole-Person Health*

# What is Health Coaching?

Health coaching is a **person-centred, evidence-based approach** to behaviour change that empowers individuals to manage their health effectively.

Feature	Health Coaching	Lifestyle Coaching	Executive/Career Coaching
<b>Focus</b>	Whole-person health (physical, mental, social)	Lifestyle habits only	Career development or performance
<b>Evidence base</b>	Behaviour change, self-management, motivational interviewing	General advice	Leadership and performance frameworks
<b>Outcome</b>	Sustainable health, work-readiness, engagement	Habit improvement	Career progression, productivity

*Differences from other coaching types*

**Micro-to-Macro Impact** (UKIHCA, 2025): Health coaching operates at individual, team, organisational, and system levels, creating measurable organisational benefit.



*Health Coaching Micro-to-Macro Flow*

# Why Professional Standards & UKIHCA Registration Matter

Professional standards are increasingly relevant to internal assurance, procurement, and audit processes. Organisations are expected to apply the same scrutiny to workforce health interventions as they do to other professional services, including clarity of scope, ethical governance, supervision, and outcome measurement.

Using UKIHCA-registered practitioners supports consistency, reduces delivery risk, and provides assurance that employee health is being supported by appropriately qualified professionals.

Variation in coaching quality can present risk:

- Mismanaged mental or physical health conversations
- Inconsistent results and ROI
- Potential safeguarding issues

## UKIHCA-Registered Health Coaches:

- Hold recognised **qualifications and CPD commitments**
- Work within a **defined scope of practice**
- Receive **supervision and adhere to professional standards**

Employers benefit from **risk mitigation, consistency, and measurable impact** by using registered practitioners.

UKIHCA Registered Health Coach
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Qualified &amp; CPD certified</li><li>• Adheres to Scope of Practice</li><li>• Supervised &amp; Ethical Practice</li><li>• Measurable ROI &amp; Outcomes</li></ul>

### *Professional Standards Benefits*

This professional governance is increasingly relevant as insurers and regulators look for evidence that organisations use appropriately qualified practitioners when supporting employee health and wellbeing.

# Whole-Person Health at Work

**Practitioner perspectives** (*Viewing Workplace HWB Through a Personal Lens*, KM, JW, AMG, 2025):

- Health interventions must address **physical, mental, and social dimensions**
- Employees want to be seen as **whole humans, not isolated issues**
- Manager capability is essential for **early detection and support**

Many employees delay disclosing health concerns to line managers or HR due to stigma, fear of career impact, or uncertainty about how issues will be handled.

Providing early access to confidential, professionally delivered health coaching enables earlier engagement and preventative support, often before issues escalate into long-term absence, formal HR processes, or serious ill health.

This early, non-escalatory intervention is a *critical* component of effective psychosocial risk management. The intention here is not to bypass managers or HR, but to offer proactive, confidential, professional support as a protective early step, improving outcomes for individuals and reducing downstream risk for organisations.

Physical	Mental	Social
Chronic conditions	Stress & resilience	Relationships & community

*Whole-Person Health Dimensions*

## Integration Examples:

- Embedding health coaching in **occupational health pathways**
- Training line managers to **have supportive conversations**
- Linking workplace whole health to **culture and wellbeing strategy**

# Workforce Inequities: Men, Disabilities, and Underrepresented Groups

Many employees **do not engage** with wellbeing programs due to stigma, accessibility barriers, or workplace culture. Evidence shows:

- **Men:** 67% report health impacts on work but are less likely to access support (*UKIHCA, Men's Health Strategy, 2024*)

- **Employees with disabilities/chronic conditions:** ~38–40% participation in wellbeing programs (UK + US, GWI White Paper, 2024)

Workforce Engagement in Health (UK & US)		
Group	% Engaged	
	UK	US
Men	33%	36%
Women	52%	35%*
Employees with chronic conditions or disability	40%	38%

\*Estimated: Gallup

Engagement Gap Table (UK + US)



Impact of Under-Engagement

### UKIHCA-Registered Health Coach Insight

*“Employees with disabilities or chronic conditions often avoid wellbeing initiatives due to stigma or accessibility issues. Inclusive coaching and manager training are key to bridging this gap.”*

– UKIHCA-RHC

### Strategies for Employers:

- Targeted communications (male-friendly, inclusive messaging)
- Private coaching and check-ins
- Line manager training to normalize health conversations

# The Case for Independent, Registered Health Coaches

Independence removes key barriers to disclosure. Many employees delay or avoid raising health concerns with line managers or HR due to stigma, fear of negative career impact, concerns about confidentiality, or uncertainty about how sensitive information will be used. Access to an independent UKIHCA Registered Health Coach provides a trusted, confidential space, enabling employees to seek support earlier, before issues escalate into absence, presenteeism, or disengagement.

Using independent practitioners offers organisations greater flexibility and cost efficiency. Employers can access high-quality, regulated expertise without the overheads associated with permanent roles, including recruitment costs, employee benefits, and long-term employment liabilities. This approach allows organisations to scale provision up or down in response to workforce need, business cycles, or specific organisational pressures.

Independence enables better matching of expertise to context. Rather than relying on a single in-house role, organisations can draw from a broader, diverse pool of UKIHCA Registered Health Coaches, selecting practitioners with experience aligned to their sector, workforce demographics, cultural context, or specific health challenges. This targeted approach enhances relevance, engagement, and impact in ways that permanent hiring models rarely achieve.

## Benefits for Employers & Employees

Evidence demonstrates:

- Reduced absenteeism and presenteeism
- Improved retention and job satisfaction
- Increased engagement and workforce health literacy

## Case Study: IGPP Post-Conference Example

*“Team A introduced health coaching and manager training; long-term absence dropped by 15% in six months. Staff surveys reported a 25% increase in confidence to discuss health concerns with managers.”*

Outcome	ROI Estimate
Reduces absenteeism	↓ 15%
Increased retention	↑ 15%
Limited measurable impact	↑ 20%

## Leading for Health & Wellbeing

Line managers are **central to workforce health outcomes**:

- Train managers to **lead conversations confidently**
- Embed health coaching into **HR policies and performance management**
- Support early intervention to **prevent escalation of health issues**

Manager Guidance
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Recognise signs of stress or health decline</li><li>• Open safe, private conversation</li><li>• Offer UKIHCA Registered Health Coach support</li><li>• Follow-up &amp; monitor outcomes</li></ul>

## Call to Action for Employers

To protect workforce capacity, meet governance expectations, and support sustainable organisational performance, employers should:

1. Integrate whole-person health coaching into organisational and people strategy
2. Use UKIHCA Registered Health Coaches to ensure professional standards, consistency, and risk mitigation.

3. Train managers and HR in whole-health literate leadership to support early identification and intervention
4. Align workforce health initiatives with policy, regulatory expectations, and evidence-based practice
5. Measure and report outcomes to demonstrate return on investment, workforce impact, and accountability for human capital management

This approach positions workforce health as a core organisational asset, supporting responsible governance, ESG-aligned decision-making, and long-term value creation.

Employer Action Framework
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Strategy Integration</li> <li>2. Professional Coaching</li> <li>3. Manager/HR Capability</li> <li>4. Policy Alignment</li> <li>5. Measurement &amp; Reporting</li> </ol>

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