

Beat the winter blues



Your winter wellbeing guide Introduction

Here's what's included

This series of downloadable resources offers straightforward and accessible guidance to help reduce stress and boost wellbeing both in and outside the workplace.

Each guide will focus on a different theme, helping employees to beat the winter blues and focus on their wellbeing when times get tough. The PDFs feature practical tips to boost both physical and mental health, alongside useful resources and links for your bookmarks bar. The full set of guides can be downloaded at any time from our [Resources page](#).

In this first document, HR and leadership teams can find some quick tips to support your workforce through this uniquely difficult season. You can find a full list of useful links and resources on page 3.

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Intro for HR teams
- Part 2
Winter health and SAD
- Part 3
Stress and mental health
- Part 4
Physical health in winter
- Part 5
Self-care and resilience

A challenging season

The winter months can be a struggle at the best of times. Dark nights, cold weather and the financial stress of Christmas can all have an impact on mental health. While for many the effects are temporary, this year the COVID-19 pandemic is already amplifying existing health issues.

For many businesses, the economic forecast may look precarious. In June 2020, we surveyed HR leaders from across the UK to get their take on the developing situation. Almost 6 in 10 HR leaders anticipated a recession which will negatively impact their organisation. While business leaders consider how best to stay afloat, their teams are bombarded with headlines fuelling stress and insecurity.

We've created a [COVID-19 resource centre](#) which provides information and advice to help you manage employee health during the pandemic. It offers COVID-specific resources which complement these winter wellbeing guides.



By June
72%
of HR teams
had already
reported
wellbeing
issues

Managing change, raising morale

The past year has seen our workplaces reinvented. For many of us, it's been a turbulent time. Just when it feels we've got a handle on the regulations, new safety guidance is released and our plans change again. But as we adapt to new ways of working, there is an opportunity to be proactive.

Back in June 2020, 75% of HR leaders predicted that we will be back to normal by the end of the year. As the months go on, we are facing a very different reality.

In many sectors, the workforce is now spread across new and diverse working environments, each with their own challenges. Even if your employees are working in a central location, social distancing can make it difficult to establish meaningful connections between teams.

Around half of those surveyed felt their organisation hasn't fully understood the implications of changing ways of work. By now many have started to put plans in place, but wellbeing strategies must be increasingly flexible to adapt to wider policy changes. Our free [Wellbeing Toolkit](#) can help you build a proactive approach.



3/4 of organisations will expand their training due to COVID



Fostering employee connections

Sometimes the best way to rebuild trust is to get back to basics. When the workplace is facing uncertainty, it's important to take the time to nurture relationships with colleagues. Here are some simple tips to help reconnect and build confidence:

- Remember to vary your communications and encourage two-way conversation – shared experiences bring teams closer together
- When asked how you are, answer honestly and empower others to do the same
- If employees are offered a choice of working hours or location, reassure them that they won't be judged on the choice they make
- Socially distanced or virtual events can create a sense of normality, but keep them low pressure or they can feel like another obligation
- Enable peer-to-peer support by offering a [Mental Health First Aid](#) course

40%
of HR leaders expect a more fragmented workforce



When to step in

Employees struggling with stress may begin booking short blocks of annual leave at the last minute, taking unofficial 'mental health days' or cancelling meetings. If employee behaviour abruptly changes or seems out of the ordinary, it may be time to check in. Often, those closest to the employee are best placed to do this.

You might consider running an informal session for people managers, where you can highlight potential health concerns and equip your team with the skills to handle issues proactively. Our [health leadership training webinars](#) offer practical advice on topics including emotional resilience and mental health awareness, for all levels of line management.



Health and wellbeing resources

Useful links and advice

[NHS winter health advice](#) – comprehensive advice on staying well this winter

[Mind.org.uk](#) – free online mental health information and support

[Age UK](#) – support for older people who are especially at risk in winter

[The Sleep Council](#) – the national body for sleep health and advice

[HR Grapevine blog](#) – free webinars and insight into HR wellbeing issues

[CIPD wellbeing hub](#) – guides and factsheets to help you support your team

[Acas](#) – free impartial advice on workplace rights and best practice



£150 -
the median
spend on
wellbeing
per employee
per year

Westfield Health resources

[Resources for HR teams](#)

Including the Divided Together report and our Health & Wellbeing Toolkit.

[Active Spaces](#)

An integrated approach to fitness and wellbeing for those returning to the workplace.

[Westfield Health blog](#)

Explore our latest health and wellbeing articles, news and opinions.

[Wellbeing Workshops](#)

Interactive coaching sessions for employees and leadership teams.

[Wellbeing Webinars](#)

Live or pre-recorded webinars on topics including living well and health leadership.

[Mental Health First Aid](#)

Online courses for employees to create a positive culture and promote early intervention.

[Counselling and Advice Line](#)

Available to health cash plan customers 24 hours a day on 0800 092 0987.

[Get in touch](#) to find out how we can help your people to be at their healthy best all year round.

Up next: Winter health and SAD

A seasonal wellbeing guide for employees