

7 March 2016

## **EMPLOYEE WELLNESS STRATEGIES NOW FIRMLY ON THE UK CORPORATE AGENDA**

### ***- REBA and Punter Southall Health & Protection wellness research highlights the growing importance of wellness in the workplace-***

Research<sup>1</sup> conducted by [Reward & Employee Benefits Association](#) (REBA) in conjunction with [Punter Southall Health & Protection](#) has revealed that wellness at work is quickly rising up the corporate agenda. While still a relatively new concept for many organisations – with 80% of wellness strategies being launched in the last three years – the findings reveal that increasing numbers of employers are now recognising the need to support and maintain a fit and healthy workforce.

In 2016 and beyond, we can expect to see growing numbers of organisations implementing wellness strategies for their employees. Of those respondents currently without a strategy, a third (30.5%) plan to introduce a wellness strategy in 2016 and a further third (34.7%) plan to do so in the next few years.

When asked why they offered a wellness strategy, over a third (39.4%) of respondents said this was to increase employee engagement, nearly a quarter (22.5%) did so to improve their organisational culture and more than one in ten (12.7%) used it to retain talented staff.

The research also uncovered that equal numbers of respondents (78.9%) use their wellness strategies to address both physical and mental wellbeing. According to recent CIPD research<sup>2</sup>, mental illness is the third most common cause of long-term absence from work. After lagging behind for many years, it is encouraging to see that employers are now investing in the prevention and treatment of mental health issues.

The findings revealed that the most popular wellness benefits are Employee Assistance Programmes (EAPs) (86.8%), followed by discounted gym membership (72.2%) and mental health support (59%). The three most unusual initiatives offered are Virtual GP access (11.6%), wearable wellness devices (10.3%) and wellness apps (8.5%). While the traditional wellness benefits remain popular, many believe that the convenience offered by wearable devices and online support (such as virtual GPs, online health questionnaires and podcasts) will see these newer wellness initiatives grow in popularity.

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<sup>1</sup> *Employee Wellness Research 2016* conducted amongst 238 wellness, HR and benefits specialists across UK employers

<sup>2</sup> *Absence Management 2015*, CIPD (<https://www.cipd.co.uk/hr-resources/survey-reports/absence-management-2015.aspx>)

When it comes to budgets, the renewed focus upon wellness within the workplace is likely to result in increased investment into wellness strategies. Nearly half of all respondents (46.8%) expect their wellness spending to increase in 2016. The median annual spend amongst respondents with a strategy in place currently stands at between £26 and £50 per employee.

Debi O'Donovan, Director at the Reward & Employee Benefits Association, said: "The role of employee wellness strategies is undergoing a fundamental change. This is being driven by societal, governmental and economic pressures. This includes the rise of the ageing workforce, the impact of the digital age on how and where we work, the demands of Generations Y and Z, a return to the war for talent and the increasing inability for employers to differentiate themselves by their pensions offering due to auto-enrolment.

"This research shows that wellness strategies are being primarily driven by the need for employee engagement and improved culture."

Beate O'Neil, Head of Wellness Consulting at Punter Southall Health & Protection said: "The findings of this research reflect our own experience of the market. We are seeing increasing numbers of employers who are now looking to invest in wellness initiatives for their staff. Wellness at work is moving from simply being a 'nice to have' to a 'must have' for organisations who are looking to retain and recruit talented employees."

"The reason why is simple – a healthy workforce is good for business. Investing in your employees' wellbeing – both physical and mental – can lead to increased employee engagement, greater productivity which in turn can have positive impact on the bottom line."

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### **About Punter Southall Health & Protection Background Information**

Punter Southall Health & Protection - [www.pshp.co.uk](http://www.pshp.co.uk) - has grown considerably since its launch in 2010 to become one of the most innovative and strongest health, protection and wellness advisers in the UK.

It acquired Enrich Reward Limited, the employee benefits consultancy in 2013, and The Private Health Partnership (PHP), the well-established health group with a 25 year successful history, incorporating RedArc and Medical Care Direct, in July 2014.

The company has over 160 employees split over three UK sites in Redhill, Surrey, central London and Baildon, Yorkshire. Recent milestones include:

- February 2013: launch of Gladis, a unique online self-service platform used by companies to reduce the widespread risk and cost issues of managing protection insurances for their employees.
- July 2014: launch of Healthsmart, a service that integrates occupational health, absence management and employee benefits to get employees back to work as soon as possible.

- October 2014: Began distributing Havensrock, unique group life assurance products with bespoke solutions for the professional services sector and pension trustees.
- April 2015: Launch of Havensrock Income Protection, which for the first time joined wellness and group income protection in the same product.

Punter Southall Health & Protection is a subsidiary of Punter Southall Group, one of the biggest, independently owned entities of its kind in the UK. The group provides actuarial advice, pensions' consultancy, administration, risk consultancy, employee benefits, investment services, and healthcare for pension scheme trustees, employers, private clients, Lloyd's insurers and institutions.

### **About the Reward & Employee Benefits Association**

The Reward & Employee Benefits Association (REBA) is a professional networking community for reward and employee benefits practitioners. It is supported by leading reward and employee benefits suppliers and advisers. REBA shares intelligence, experience and ideas to help members save time, money and effort while pursuing best practice and developing their professional careers.

REBA runs regular conferences and networking events and produces regular in-depth benchmarking research and insight reports.

For further information about REBA, please visit our website [www.reba.global](http://www.reba.global)

### **For more information**

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