



Legal & General wellbeing at work barometer: Line managers in SMEs calling for greater recognition and support from employers to better improve their personal and team wellbeing

- **Over a third (37%) of line managers in UK SMEs want to understand how wellbeing fits in with their company's purpose and values**
- **One in three believe signposted support and training on how to have conversations would help them support their teams' wellbeing**
- **Recognition for work well done ranks high for improving line managers' own wellbeing at work**
- **61% of line managers – compared to just 46% of all SME employees – have used the wellbeing benefits available to them at work, highlighting the appetite, need and ability to 'lead from the top'**

Line managers in SMEs, often referred to as the “squeezed middle”, are calling out for greater recognition and support from the top to better improve their own wellbeing at work. At the same time, they are seeking a better understanding of their company's purpose and values, and how these fit with wellbeing, to enable them to support their own teams' wellbeing.

Legal & General Group Protection's 'Wellbeing at Work Barometer'¹ asked almost 500 SME line managers what could help them improve wellbeing support to the people and teams they manage. The top response shared by over a third (37%) was clear direction from the top of the company on purpose and values to better understand how wellbeing fits. A further 34% of line managers would also support wellbeing champions or mental health first-aiders in the workplace and 32% are looking for support and training on how to have conversations and signpost to support services for their teams.

Four out of 10 (40%) line managers would also favour greater joined up thinking across departments to better improve how their organisation implements wellbeing in the workplace, plus:

- A third (32%) want to see simpler wellbeing strategies with less confusing terminology and jargon
- 30% would like to see a standard way to accurately measure the impact on people and business
- 27% would like to see guidance on what “good” wellbeing at work looks like.

Line managers seek support and acknowledgement from the top when it comes to their own wellbeing at work

The Wellbeing at Work Barometer also found that many line managers are seeking both support and acknowledgement from the top when it comes to their own wellbeing at work. When asked what wellbeing means to them, line managers rated job security (31% vs 26%), being paid fairly (31% vs 26%) and good career opportunities (26% vs 19%) more highly compared to the average employee. When it comes to how their own wellbeing could be improved in the workplace, the top response (38%) among all line managers was recognition for work well done, followed by more flexible working (37%) and being listened to by their own manager (35%).

One in three (35%) also want more recognition that managers are employees and have wellbeing needs too, as 32% seek support to remove their own stresses to allow them to focus on their job of managing their teams.

When asked 'How could an employer help with your wellbeing in the workplace?', over a third (36%) of line-managers answered 'Offer me flexible working arrangements', followed by 'Lead from the top when it comes to positive wellbeing practices' (34%) and 'Talk more openly as an organisation about mental health and the need for wellbeing for all' (32%).

In fact, 61% of line managers (compared to just 46% of all SME employees) have used the wellbeing benefits available to them at work, highlighting the appetite, need and ability to 'lead from the top' when it comes to wellbeing.

“Line managers are coming under increasing pressure to take on multiple roles; managing their teams, in addition to acting as chief listener, communicator, sign-poster and motivator, while also getting to grips with shifts in ways of working and increasingly dispersed teams. Our research shows that this squeezed middle want recognition and support – to be listened to, be rewarded in terms of fair pay and career opportunities and to have their employer recognise that they too are employees with their own wellbeing needs.

“To better help them to support the wellbeing of the teams they manage, line managers want to know what the company stands for and where wellbeing fits in to its purpose and aligns with its values, as well as looking for more joined up thinking across departments and a simplified strategy when it comes to wellbeing in the workplace.

“In short, it’s becoming increasingly obvious that employers – and their people – want and need a clear framework for wellbeing; one that incorporates benefits and services, is purpose-led and values-driven. Customised communication is key to achieving this and it’s something that the industry has an opportunity to help with as part of UK building back better goals.”

Jo Elphick, Marketing Director at Legal & General Group protection

With SMEs accounting for 99.9% of the UK business population, employing around 16.8 million employees², Legal & General has launched its Wellbeing at Work Barometer that identifies attitudes and views relating to wellbeing in the workplace among both employees and employers.

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Notes to editors

1. Workplace Wellbeing Barometer - Legal & General’s research was conducted by Opinium among 1,055 employees (middle managers and below) in businesses with 10-249 employees and 1,011 senior managers in business with 10-249 employees, between 13-20 May 2021.

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Notes to editors

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** at 30 June 2021*

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