

The cost of poor mental health, and the return on doing something about it

Poor mental health is one of the largest and least visible costs on a UK employer's balance sheet. It rarely appears as a line item, it shows up as **slower work, quiet absence and people leaving**. The evidence below is drawn from recent reports published by Deloitte, the HSE, the CIPD and AXA.

£51_{bn}

The annual cost of poor mental health to UK employers

Deloitte's 2024 analysis of absence, presenteeism and staff turnover across the UK workforce. Equivalent to approximately **£1,650** for every employee in the country, every year.

WHERE THE £51BN GOES

£23.8bn

Presenteeism

People at their desks but not able to work well. The single largest cost, over three times the cost of absence.

£19.5bn

Staff turnover

Recruiting and replacing people who leave for mental health reasons. Highest among 25–34 year olds.

£7.3bn

Sickness absence

Up 20% since 2020/21, the fastest-rising of the three costs.

THE SCALE OF THE PROBLEM

964,000

workers with work-related stress, depression or anxiety
HSE, 2024/25

22.1m

working days lost to work-related mental ill-health
HSE, 2024/25

52%

of all work-related ill health is a mental health condition
HSE, 2024/25

9.4

average sick days per employee, a decade high
CIPD, 2025

£2,613

cost per employee aged 25–34 with poor mental health
Deloitte, 2024

The real problem isn't provision. It's silence.

Most employers now offer something. The gap is that people won't use it, because they won't speak up inside their own organisation.

84%



would take part in mental health support if it were offered at work, AXA Mind Health Report, 2026

48%



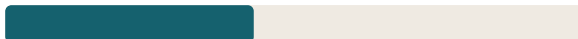
would **not** discuss a mental health challenge in their professional environment, AXA, 2026

44%



felt little or no support from their employer on mental health, Deloitte, 2024

43%



say their company has no dedicated mental health policy at all, AXA, 2026

≈ £413,000

What this means for a 250-person business.

Applying the Deloitte figure of approximately £1,650 per employee per year, poor mental health is plausibly costing a 250-person employer over £400,000 annually, before any of it is ever recorded as a mental health cost.

Indicative calculation based on Deloitte's £51bn estimate across the UK employee workforce; actual cost varies by sector, age profile and region.

Supporting people pays back, and some kinds of support pay back far more



£4.70

Average return for every £1 invested in workplace mental health

Deloitte's 2024 review of 36 return-on-investment findings across 26 published studies. The overwhelming majority of interventions returned more than they cost.

NOT ALL SUPPORT PAYS BACK THE SAME

£6.30



Whole-organisation, early support

open to everyone, before crisis hits

£5.00



Training

spotting and supporting people early

£5.00



Awareness raising

making it normal to talk about mental health

£4.20



Support before things deteriorate

proactive, rather than waiting for crisis

£3.30



Individual therapy, after the event

help once someone is already unwell

Return for every £1 invested. All figures: Deloitte, *Mental health and employers* (2024). Returns across the studies reviewed ranged from a small loss to around £11 back per £1.

The pattern in the evidence

The strongest returns don't come from buying people an app or a course. They come from **an early, visible, organisation-wide presence that makes it normal to talk**, before someone is off sick. Deloitte's own data shows universal, early support returning **£6.30 per £1**, against **£3.30** for individual therapy delivered after the fact. Meanwhile employees say they prefer real support from **people**, not from systems.

WHAT GOOD SUPPORT LOOKS LIKE

The highest returns come from being present **before** a crisis, not only after.

Prevent

EVERYDAY PRESENCE

A visible, trusted presence that makes it normal to talk, and easier to speak up early.

£6.30 per £1 · universal, early support

Support

BEFORE CRISIS

Confidential, one-to-one listening for people under pressure, at work or in life.

£4.20 per £1 · proactive support

Recover

WHEN IT'S NEEDED MOST

Caring support for those struggling, and a reassuring presence as they return to work.

£4.10 per £1 · reactive support

ROI figures by stage of intervention: Deloitte, *Mental health and employers: The case for investment* (2024), Figure 24.

Time to talk. On site, in confidence, for everyone.

Bristol Chaplaincy provides bespoke workplace chaplaincy across Bristol. Our accredited chaplains work as **Employee Wellbeing Advocates**, a trusted, confidential and non-judgemental presence for your employees, whatever challenges they are facing. We will work with you to build a bespoke support solution around what your organisation actually needs.

Find out more about our workplace chaplaincy services

[bristolchaplaincy.co.uk/
workplace-chaplaincy](https://bristolchaplaincy.co.uk/workplace-chaplaincy)

info@bristolchaplaincy.co.uk · 07401 335975