

Health and wellbeing trends 2026

Employer's guide



Help your employees embrace wellness trends

Understanding the latest wellness trends can help boost employee engagement, positively impact wellbeing, increase productivity, and retain your best talent.

Use this guide to learn what's in-store for 2026 and how to embrace each trend for the benefit of your business, and more importantly, your workforce.

From AI-powered health tools to mental fitness and life-stage inclusion, these ideas bring physical, mental, and social health into focus. And we've included practical tips to help you encourage healthy habits and create a culture of wellbeing.





AI-powered wellness

Artificial intelligence and natural remedies

AI is the topic on everyone's lips, and it's stepping into the wellness space. In fact, 5.7% of all UK ChatGPT conversations are about health, fitness, and selfcare.¹ In 2025, 33% of Millennials and 27% of Gen Z are said to be using technology and AI to record sleep, blood pressure, and steps. A trend that's blending wearables with AI to deliver personal self-care regimes.²

And there's healthy potential in the details. People can create tailored wellness plans based on their lifestyle. From meal plans built around dietary requirements and goals, to fitness plans based on work and family life. Even mental health support can be personalised. AI is proving it can provide instant answers and broad guidance in a pinch.

Embracing the trend

Help employees make informed choices by sharing AI's potential and give prompting tips.

Workshops or newsletters can guide safe use. An example prompt could be: "I work from home three days a week and struggle to take breaks. Can you build me a wellness routine to stay focused, move more and reduce stress?" Be mindful to promote AI as a support tool, and not a substitute for medical care.

More ways we can help

With Benenden Health, members can connect with others in our Online Community, ask health questions and support each other's wellbeing. And for any burning medical questions, members can make use of the 24/7 GP Helpline.

1 TDMP - How are people using ChatGPT?

2 Vogue Business - 2025's Hottest trend



Mental fitness

Building a resilient mind

Mental fitness is gaining attention as people look for ways to strengthen their minds, not just their bodies. It goes further than mental wellbeing and feeling good. It's about creating small, sustainable habits that boost adaptability, emotional strength and cognitive health.

One in four adults in the UK experience a mental health problem each year, and 72% of people with mental health conditions say exercise helps them stay in work.³

Mental fitness looks different for everyone. It could mean short meditation sessions, structured breaks to avoid burnout or cognitive exercises to stay sharp. Better eating habits and physical activity also play a role in building resilience and focus.

Embracing the trend

Making mental fitness part of everyday work life can be simple.

Tools like mental health apps, mindfulness sessions, and access to counselling help build healthy habits. It also helps when managers talk openly about mental health and point people to support, so everyone feels encouraged to care for their own wellbeing.

More ways we can help

With Benenden Health, members can access the 24/7 Mental Health Helpline for immediate, confidential advice whenever they need it.



Lifestyle coaching

Getting more from all areas of life

Lifestyle coaching is on the rise, taking a holistic view of wellbeing rather than treating fitness, nutrition, and work-life balance as separate goals.

Progress in one area often fuels another; boosting energy, motivation, and overall happiness. With 85% of people ranking work-life balance as their top priority, this is a trend to watch in 2026.⁴ By helping individuals feel their best, whether that means more focus at work, stronger relationships, or better day-to-day balance – you can empower your people and help strengthen overall workplace culture.

Embracing the trend

Support your workforce by offering access to lifestyle coaching or wellbeing apps that cover fitness, nutrition, and personal organisation.

Encourage employees to set wellbeing goals through workshops or one-to-one sessions. Train managers to check in on life goals and overall balance, focusing conversations on energy and motivation – not just workloads.

More ways we can help

The Benenden Health App alongside My Expert Health Coach, provides personalised support to help employees overcome barriers and thrive.



Social wellness

Connection beyond the desk

Social wellness is emerging as a key trend for 2026, marking a shift towards building stronger connections and bringing more meaning into people's lives. It's more than just team-building, it's about fostering genuine purpose by connecting with communities and each other.

Volunteering is leading the way, with 53% of participants feeling more motivated after volunteering, and many reporting improved mental health as a result. Although 62% of organisations now offer paid volunteering days, millions of hours still go untapped⁵, highlighting the opportunity for businesses to lead the way and empower people to take part. By actively supporting social wellness, employers can help employees build a sense of fulfilment and belonging, which are key to long-term engagement and team spirit.

Embracing the trend

To encourage engagement, make volunteering simple and flexible. You could set a clear schedule of pre-booked volunteering activities that are easy for teams to sign up and commit to.

Leadership should champion these efforts and make sure volunteering fits smoothly into routines and doesn't overwhelm already busy employees. With the right support, social wellness can become a powerful driver of engagement and belonging.



Awareness days

Moments that matter

Awareness days are becoming a popular feature in wellbeing strategies. The trend reflects a growing commitment to inclusion and understanding – using dedicated days to spark conversations that might otherwise feel difficult. From World Mental Health Day to National Cholesterol Month, these moments create space for learning and action, helping build a culture of openness year-round.

For employers, awareness days present a practical way to reinforce your commitment to employee wellbeing. When integrated into your wider health strategy, they move beyond one-off gestures and become meaningful springboards for positive change.

Embracing the trend

Make awareness days meaningful by planning them as launch points for tangible initiatives.

Pair events with ongoing education, staff stories, guest speakers, and new policies. Encourage teams to lead initiatives for the awareness days that matter most to them, making sure the activities are relevant and impactful.

More ways we can help

By pairing these moments with access to Benenden Health's 24/7 GP Helpline, Mental Health Helpline, and Medical Diagnostics service, you can give employees both the awareness and the ongoing support they need to take action and feel their best.



Life-stage inclusion

Thriving at all ages and stages

Life doesn't stand still, and more people are opening up about how their needs change during different stages.

From starting a family or facing baby loss, navigating menopause or caring for loved ones, these conversations are becoming a bigger part of everyday culture. And for good reason – 95% of workers reported their mental health suffered at work when going through divorce.⁶ This shift creates an opportunity to show real empathy for your people, helping them feel supported and continue to thrive.

Eight in ten menopausal women say their workplace offers no basic support⁷, and 71% of carers reduce hours or leave work due to their responsibilities.⁸ But recognising people at all stages of life brings great potential. Visible, inclusive support helps every employee feel understood – whether they're managing family life, health changes or caring responsibilities.

Embracing the trend

Make support and resources for life's milestones clear and easy to access. Like flexible working options so employees can balance personal and professional commitments.

Train managers to have open, empathetic conversations and signpost resources confidently.

More ways we can help

Practical tools matter too – Employee Assistance Programmes and resources like the Benenden Health App, which includes access to the Wellbeing Hub, packed with helpful content on mental health, fitness, and nutrition.

⁶ Education Executive - The impact of divorce on work performance: why support matters

⁷ Fawcett Society - Landmark study: Menopausal women let down by employers and healthcare providers

⁸ Carers Room - Working Carers: The hidden strain of caring for ageing parents



Flexible working

The new standard

Flexibility has shifted from a perk to an expectation, especially as we welcome younger generations into the workforce. The trend sees a growing demand for work models that adapt to their needs without sacrificing performance.

Hybrid schedules, compressed hours and remote options are becoming part of everyday working life, helping people balance personal commitments with professional goals.

80% of employees say flexibility improves quality of life⁹, and three-quarters of UK workers would take a pay cut for a four-day week.¹⁰ These figures highlight how deeply flexibility is now woven into workforce values.

Embracing the trend

No matter your business type, offer practical flexible options. Supporting disabled and neurodivergent staff to set schedules that match their unique requirements.

Consider practical initiatives that reduce commuting strain, like cycle to work schemes or even subsidised transport. And for hourly-paid roles, allow holidays to be taken by the hour, not just by the day, meaning maximum flexibility. By shifting the focus from hours to outcomes, you build a culture of trust rather than micromanagement. And when flexibility is embedded into your approach, it signals a genuine commitment to wellbeing and work-life balance.



Smart watches and wearable tech

The always-on health gadgets

Smart watches have evolved far beyond step counting. Now, they act as personal wellbeing hubs, tracking heart rate, sleep quality and stress signals to help people understand how their bodies respond to daily pressures. This technology is shaping a new era of preventative health – where data drives better decisions and balance.

Wearables now link seamlessly with other wellness trends. They can prompt mindfulness breaks, track progress on fitness goals, and even integrate with AI-powered apps for personalised routines. With 37% of UK adults already using wearables¹¹ and 32% of workplaces introducing plans to spot signs of chronic stress¹², these devices are becoming central to everyday wellbeing conversations.

Embracing the trend

Support your team in making the most of wearables by fostering a culture of learning and openness.

Encourage them to explore how these tools can help track stress and recovery in a way that feels right for them, in an environment that supports taking smart breaks. Offer simple training so people understand what their data means, and remind them that if something doesn't look right, they should speak to a GP.

More ways we can help

Whether it's information, reassurance, or treatment, Benenden Health's 24/7 GP Helpline means employees can book appointments whenever they've got health concerns.

¹¹ Statista - Share of British owning a wearable device as of January 2025, by type of ownership

¹² Mental Health UK - Burnout Report 2025 reveals generational divide in levels of stress and work absence

Benenden Healthcare for Business

We believe private healthcare doesn't have to be expensive or exclusive. With us, it can be a benefit the whole business enjoys, not just the bosses.

From day one of membership, your employees can access:



24/7 GP Helpline



Benenden Health App



24/7 Mental Health Helpline



Rewards and Discounts



Mental Health Support



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Adult Care Advice Service



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Physiotherapy

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