

## Workplace Well-being Trends to Watch for in 2026

Workplace well-being is becoming a business-critical priority for UK organisations. Sickness absence has reached its highest level in more than 15 years, according to a 2025 report by the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development. Poorly managed well-being contributes to reduced productivity, higher turnover, reputational challenges and increased exposure to employment tribunal claims. This article discusses five well-being trends expected to shape 2026 and outlines how employers can respond.

### 1. Holistic Well-being Across Life Stages

Workplace well-being is shifting towards holistic, life-stage strategies, as generic programmes increasingly fail to meet diverse employee needs. Notably, 1 in 10 UK women leave the workforce each year due to menopause symptoms, according to the Fawcett Society.

In 2026, employers should avoid one-size-fits-all approaches and adopt tailored support across key areas, including menopause, caregiving leave, fertility and reproductive health, and family-related needs. Employers can strengthen support by offering:

- Targeted benefits aligned to life stages
- Manager training to identify and respond to employee needs
- Flexible scheduling and supportive leave practices

### 2. Psychological Safety

Psychological safety is becoming an essential component of organisational culture. Employees increasingly expect workplaces where they can raise concerns, share ideas and seek support without fear of negative consequences. Employers can reinforce psychological safety by:

- Encouraging inclusive leadership behaviours
- Communicating openly during organisational changes
- Establishing channels for confidential feedback or reporting

### 3. Burnout Prevention

Burnout continues to affect multiple sectors, driven by workload pressures and prolonged stress. Without intervention, organisations face increased absenteeism and reduced productivity. Practical prevention strategies include:

- Reviewing workloads and role clarity
- Encouraging meaningful breaks and the full use of annual leave
- Training managers to recognise early signs of exhaustion

### 4. Financial Well-Being

Cost-of-living pressures remain a key concern for employees and can affect performance and morale. Employers increasingly view financial support as part of a broader well-being framework. Support options in the year ahead could include:

- Financial education resources and workshops
- Salary sacrifice schemes
- Tools to help employees budget or manage debt

### 5. Managing Hybrid Work and Digital Overload

Hybrid work continues to present ongoing challenges, particularly regarding digital fatigue, blurred work-life boundaries and meeting overload. Employers can address these risks by:

- Setting clear expectations around availability
- Creating meeting-free periods
- Providing guidance on healthy digital work habits

### Regulatory Considerations

Beyond productivity losses and other operational challenges, reviewing employee well-being policies and practices will also be essential from a regulatory perspective in 2026. The forthcoming Employment Rights Bill is expected to introduce significant changes to sick pay, parental leave and flexible working arrangements, underscoring the need for employers to remain prepared.

Contact us today for additional risk management guidance.

# Making the Connection Between Workplace Safety and Sustainability

As expectations around environmental, social and governance (ESG) performance continue to rise, UK organisations are increasingly recognising how sustainability and workplace safety intersect. Poor environmental management can create lasting health risks for employees, heighten liability exposures and undermine operational resilience. As a result, many employers are integrating sustainability considerations into their safety programmes to strengthen workforce protection and reduce long-term risk.

## Environmental Exposures and Worker Health

When organisations emit pollutants or handle hazardous waste improperly, employees may be exposed to harmful substances through air, water or surface contact. These exposures can contribute to a wide range of health issues, including:

- **Respiratory conditions**, such as asthma, bronchitis and chronic lung disease
- **Cardiovascular problems** linked to pollutants and poor air quality
- **Neurological impairment** associated with certain toxins
- **Increased cancer risks** linked to hormone-disrupting chemicals

These risks highlight the importance of incorporating environmental oversight into workplace health and safety decisions.

## Improving Operational Sustainability

Strengthening sustainability practices can support safer working environments while helping organisations meet stakeholder expectations. Key areas for improvement include:

- **Energy efficiency**—Upgrading to energy-efficient machinery, LED lighting, occupancy sensors and

smart thermostats can reduce emissions and create healthier indoor conditions.

- **Pollution reduction**—Modern air and water filtration systems, enhanced ventilation and responsible selection of cleaning chemicals can significantly limit harmful exposures.
- **Hazardous waste management**—Clear procedures for storing, labelling, segregating and disposing of hazardous waste can help prevent leaks, accidental exposure and environmental contamination.
- **Sustainable PPE**—Eco-friendly PPE options, such as biodegradable masks and hard hats formed by plant-based plastics, can reduce environmental impact without compromising protection.

## Strengthening Carbon and Resource Management

Beyond individual equipment or waste improvements, employers can adopt broader practices that help reduce carbon output and support a healthier workplace, such as:

- Streamlining production processes to reduce waste
- Optimising transportation and delivery to lower fuel use
- Investing in renewable energy sources
- Partnering with suppliers who prioritise ethical, sustainable sourcing
- Participating in environmental restoration or carbon-capture projects

By reducing emissions and resource consumption, organisations help minimise pollutant exposure and reinforce long-term safety outcomes.

## Building a Safer and More Sustainable Workforce

As sustainability and safety become more intertwined, employers must recognise that environmental decisions have direct implications for employee health. Proactive sustainability measures not only reduce the likelihood of workplace-related illness but also support compliance, operational continuity and reputational strength.

Contact us today for more occupational safety resources and risk management guidance.