

UK workers demand private healthcare as NHS crisis worsens

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More than half of staff want access to medical insurance as a core benefit

More than half of the UK workforce (51%) want private healthcare insurance at work as concerns around access to healthcare grows, with dental insurance topping the list of asks as access to NHS dentists causes nationwide concerns. That's according to new research by specialist recruitment firm Robert Half.

The firm's 2024 Salary Guide (<https://www.roberthalf.com/us/en/insights/salary-guide>) - which analyses and reports on market salaries, hiring trends, and skills requirements across the UK – highlighted clear concerns from employees as the NHS struggles due to a lack of staff and stubbornly high waiting times. These worries have translated into growing demands for better healthcare benefits, with private dental insurance most sought-after (cited by 62% of workers). This comes at a time when reports suggest a decline in access to NHS dentists has led to a rise in mouth cancer-related deaths.

According to Robert Half's data, a further 57% of staff are interested in Health and Outpatient Insurance, while more than a third (35%) would like mental health resources or Employee Assistance Programmes as workers struggle with burnout and other mental health issues.

Demand for private healthcare high in UK

The data also shows the plight of the UK compared to its European counterparts. While almost two-thirds of UK residents want dental insurance, just 42% of those in Germany indicated a desire for this benefit.

Hospitalisation insurance is also particularly high in demand in the UK, with 59% of workers wanting this in 2024. Across other European destinations, this desire falls, with just 48% of those in France and 46% in Germany indicating that they would like access to this benefit.

Steve Sully, Regional Director at Robert Half, commented:

"The NHS issues and subsequent concerns around access to healthcare treatment is clearly playing on the minds of the UK workforce. This latest data shows a growing trend in people turning to their employers to provide private dental and healthcare benefits. Firms must be mindful of the perks and benefits that resonate with existing and future workers if they are to attract and retain the staff they need.

"We've seen a trend of pay increase demands over the last year due to a combination of the rising costs of living and worker shortages, but this isn't a sustainable means of sourcing staff. Employers are needing to be more creative about benefits packages to compete for top talent and, as the workforce is clearly showing, private healthcare, alongside mental health support, are a priority."

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Notes to editor

About the research

Data referenced in this Salary Guide is based on proprietary Robert Half insights and an online survey developed by Robert Half, conducted by an independent research firm. During June and July 2023 Robert Half commissioned research amongst 1500 respondents using an online data collection methodology. The respondents represent 500 employers and 1000 employees in Finance, HR, Operations/Administration, Marketing and Tech departments. Respondents are drawn from a sample of SME and large organisations from public sector, private and publicly listed businesses across the UK.

About Robert Half

Founded in 1948, Robert Half is the world's first and largest specialised talent solutions consultancy, working to fill professional services roles at all levels within the finance and accounting, banking, technology, HR, marketing and legal sectors. The company has more than 300 staffing locations worldwide and offers hiring and job search services at www.roberthalf.co.uk

Robert Half understands that it takes time and effort to evaluate the best talent strategy for different businesses. For further independent advice to assist with your recruitment and workforce planning efforts, visit www.roberthalf.co.uk/advice