

Mental Health Awareness Week: Desire for Stress Reduction Programmes grows as employee mental wellbeing takes a hit

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Workers are calling for better support as stress levels increase across the UK. That's according to data from specialist recruitment firm, Robert Half.

The company's 2024 Salary Guide (<https://www.roberthalf.com/gb/en/insights/salary-guide>) – which analyses and reports on market salaries, hiring trends, and skills requirements across the UK – revealed that more than half (54%) of employees want access to Stress Reduction Programmes this year as the impact of the economic climate puts pressure on mental wellbeing.

The study also showed a desire from staff for increased access to perks and benefits to boost mental wellbeing, including additional days off and access to facilities to increase physical movement. Almost half (41%) stated they would like access to annual leave purchase schemes while an additional 41% were keen to be offered sabbaticals or unpaid leave.

With more firms encouraging a return to the office, employee requests for access to in-office physical activities such as yoga have increased, with 47% of staff indicating they want this in 2024. A further 48% expressed a desire for gym memberships.

Steve Sully, Regional Director at Robert Half commented:

“The mental wellbeing of the workforce has taken a hit since the pandemic. From the uncertainty and general loneliness that came from the various lockdowns, to a significant shift in what the world of work looks like and, more recently, economic and financial pressures, staff have had a lot to contend with. There's no doubt that the vast majority – if not all – of employers have recognised this and we have seen a greater focus on mental health in boardroom discussions. But the fact that such a large proportion of the UK's labour market are looking for access to Stress Reduction Programmes and other incentives to boost wellbeing suggests that the issue still prevails.

“As the economic outlook begins to show promising signs, businesses will once again face tough competition for talent and risk losing core staff members and potential new recruits to rival brands unless they can provide a robust and holistic employment package. With budgets already stretched, financial incentives such as pay rises and bonuses aren't on the cards for many. But offering additional benefits packages that also have the added bonus of boosting mental wellbeing and, in turn, productivity and morale, makes absolute sense.”

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