

Nearly half of UK workers don't tell their employers about hidden health issue

Submitted by: Definition (formerly Limelight PR)

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More than 40% of UK workers have a hidden health issue they've never disclosed to their employers, with younger employees the most likely to withhold information from their bosses, according to new research.

A survey of 1,000 employees, carried out by the UK's most trusted business healthcare provider, Benenden Health, revealed nearly 42% of respondents have a health issue they have never revealed to their employer.

Some 63% of Generation Z (16-23 years) and 60% of Millennials (24-38 years) surveyed said they haven't told their employers about a health issue, compared to 35% of Generation X (39-54 years) and 18% of Baby Boomer (55-72 years) respondents.

The survey also revealed more than one in ten (11%) workers said they thought they wouldn't be hired if they'd told their employers they had a health issue, with younger workers again more concerned about the impact on their employability, with 12% of Generation Z employees and 18% of Millennials saying this was a concern, compared to just nine per cent of Generation Xers and three per cent of Baby Boomers.

Additionally, nearly a quarter (22%) of respondents said they had to lie to their employer about taking time off for an appointment and nearly 40% of employees don't even feel comfortable talking to their employers about their personal health.

Benenden Health, which also surveyed 1,000 SMEs on their health and wellbeing offering for employees, is calling on business owners to open communication channels with their staff and consider the health needs of their workforce to support a healthy team, increase retention and reduce unexpected absences.

With the provider's research showing SMEs would sooner recruit a 55-year-old than a 24-year-old with the same CV, younger workers are already at risk of being overlooked for roles, without having to worry about their health impacting on their employability.

The data also highlighted the importance of benefit packages in attracting new recruits to a business. When questioned, half of all respondents (50%) said a strong health and wellbeing programme would increase their likelihood to join or stay with a business, with nearly a third (29%) saying they would be willing to take a less well-paid job if it had a strong health and wellbeing package in place.

Yet, despite this, 85% of SMEs don't offer a healthcare package in place for employees above statutory allowances, with 43% of these saying they don't consider a health and wellbeing package valuable in recruiting staff.

Helen Smith, Chief Commercial Officer of Benenden Health, commented: "Our results are fairly shocking in that so many people still feel they can't speak to their employers about health issues that may affect their working life, and at times have had to lie about taking time off for an appointment – with young people the most likely to worry about the impact on their employability. At the same time, so many

businesses are still not offering a strong wellbeing package to support their team, despite the value placed on them by employees.

“Hidden health issues can impact absence rates, productivity and the general wellbeing of staff and so it is vital that workplaces act now to protect their business interests, as well as their workforce’s, especially if they want to attract young talent into their company.

“Benenden Health is calling for businesses to have a clear reporting process for employees to seek support from the senior team, which if supported by a tailored wellbeing programme that recognises the different needs of a multigenerational workforce, can help increase productivity and promote a happier and healthier workforce.”

Benenden Health is a not-for-profit society with a UK-wide membership of over 815,000, founded in 1905 to bring people together to help pay for medical care when they might need it. Today, it has a mission to support businesses by providing affordable healthcare that helps keep employees healthy and valued and businesses thriving.

To download Benenden Health’s guide to managing the needs of a multigenerational workforce, go to: <https://www.benenden.co.uk/health-through-your-life>

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Note to Editors

Research was carried out by Censuswide, the independent survey consultants, in September 2019. It questioned a total of 1000 SME business owners (1-249 company size) including sole traders, and 1,000 employees.

Benenden Health is a not-for-profit organisation, founded in 1905 with the purpose of people joining together to help pay for medical care. It is one of the UK’s longest serving and most respected mutual healthcare societies, offering an affordable alternative to health insurance to more than 815,000 members.

Many UK businesses have also chosen to offer Benenden Health membership as part of their employee benefits package, with the organisation named as the UK’s most trusted provider of corporate healthcare by Moneywise in 2019.