

# employee benefits report

## health & wellbeing

How employee benefits  
are improving employee  
wellbeing

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### introduction

How are businesses and employees using employee benefits to improve their health and wellbeing?

This is what this report aims to highlight, with insights from our Salary Extras employee benefits platform and from our partners and other industry sources.

Research by Employee Benefits shows 46% have increased their organisation's employee health and wellbeing focus since the Covid-19 pandemic began<sup>1</sup>.

This report will help HR and businesses to:

- Improve the physical and mental health of employees through employee benefits
- Achieve a better ROI on employee benefits and engagement
- Become an employer of choice by providing benefits employees need.

There are lots of highly effective and very popular health and wellbeing employee benefits available. This report shows how just a few of these benefits have supported employees and their families in recent times and how they can help make a real difference to the lives of your employees too.

### about caboodle

We're Caboodle Technology, one of the UK's leading independent employee benefits providers. And as our name suggests, we can offer everything you'll need to reward and engage with your staff.

We provide organisations of all sizes and industries with our market leading employee benefits platform, Salary Extras.

We've also got one of the most extensive ranges of employee benefits on the market and we'll even incorporate your existing employee benefits into our Salary Extras platform.

Find out more by heading over to:  
[caboodle-technology.co.uk](https://caboodle-technology.co.uk)



Certificate Number: 14657

Research from the Co-op, in partnership with Mind, SAMH and Inspire, found over a third of people agreed they didn't have the support or tools to deal with the 'ups and downs of life' <sup>(2)</sup>

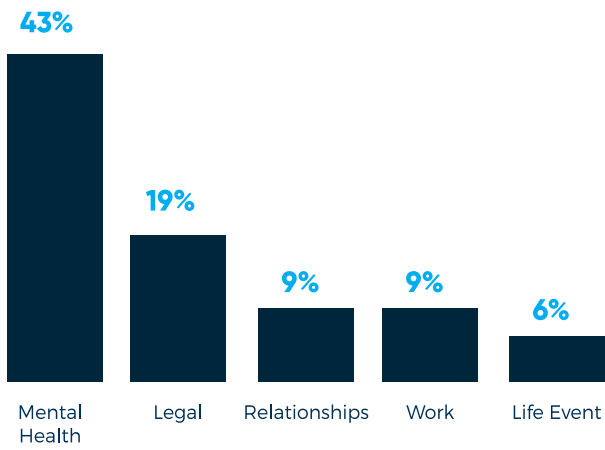


## EAP

Employers have a huge part to play when it comes to employee mental wellbeing.

The Employee Assistance Programme (EAP), a 24/7, completely confidential employee support line, has provided employees with an instantly accessible and vital support channel in recent years and continues to do so today.

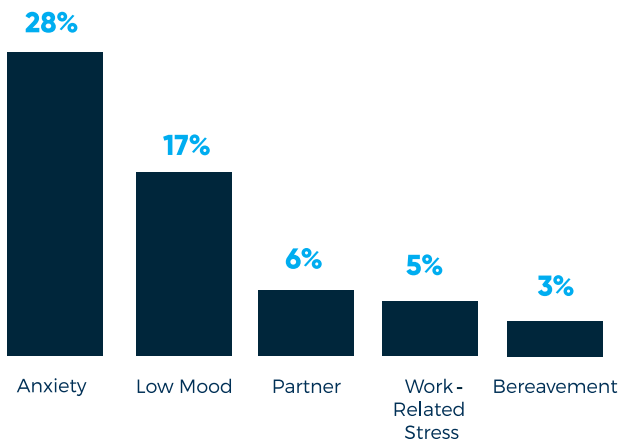
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Source: BHSF, February 2020 to January 2021

### Top 5 EAP helpline calls by category

Data from BHSF shows how employees used the EAP between February 2020 and January 2021. The EAP provides a whole range of support, but as the research by Mind supports, mental health is by far the biggest reason employees use the EAP.



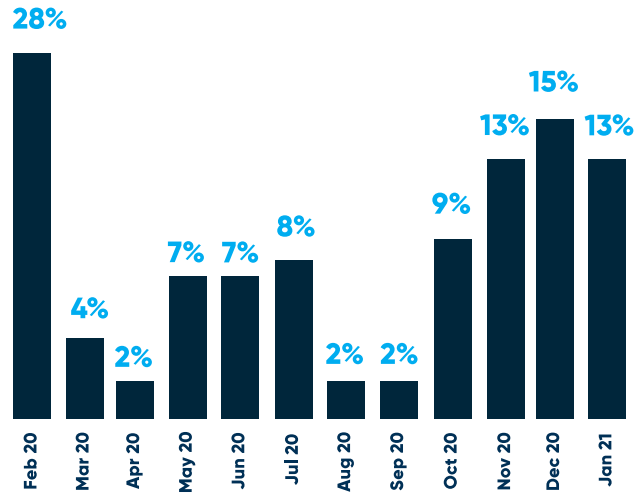
Source: BHSF, Caboodle, February 2020 to January 2021

### Top 5 EAP counselling call categories

A further look into the specific call categories shows that anxiety and low mood were key challenges for employees utilising the EAP during 2020.

Businesses can't always control factors affecting an employee's mental health, such as bereavement, but they can offer the support needed using benefits like the EAP.

There's also lots employers can do to help employees manage, reduce and prevent anxiety, low mood and work-related stress, some of the key reasons employees use the EAP.



Source: BHSF, February 2020 to January 2021

### Mental Health EAP calls by month

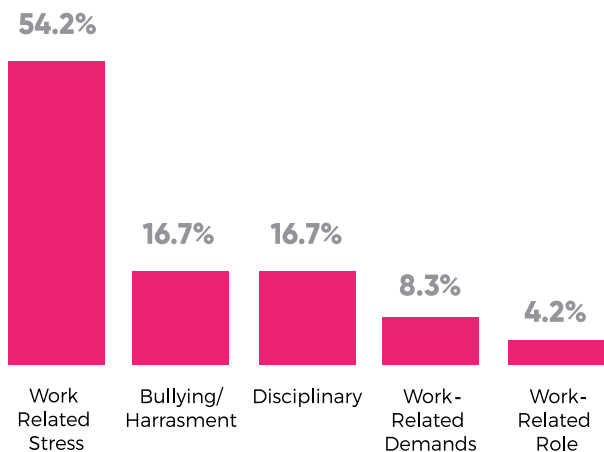
Data from BHSF on Mental Health EAP calls show that even pre-pandemic, mental health related EAP calls made up a higher proportion of calls.

Typically, mental health related EAP calls peak during the late autumn and early winter months.

While year-round support is crucial, this is particularly important for employers to bear in mind when promoting mental health support services to employees.

Businesses must be aware of mental health challenges like **Seasonal Affective Disorder (SAD)** and how this can affect employees.

**According to data from the Labour Force Survey (LFS), the total number of cases of work-related stress, depression or anxiety in 2019/20 was at a prevalence rate of 2,440 per 100,000 workers, the highest figures in at least 20 years<sup>(3)</sup>**



Source: BHSF, Caboodle, February 2020 to January 2021

## Work-related EAP calls by category

Work-related EAP calls are hugely important for HR and businesses, as these are issues that employers can directly influence and make changes to based on the data.

Work-related stress is by far the biggest work-related reason for calling the EAP helpline for staff, which could have been affected by the pandemic and the pressure businesses have come under as a result.

While the EAP can provide support for employees with these issues, the key here is for employers to pin-point the real causes of work-related stress and tackle them head on to prevent the need for such support.

## Results of support provided by BHSF through the EAP

The final statistics show the difference that professional support for employee wellbeing can make and how vital a support channel it can be for employees.

Of course, there's a much bigger and broader picture to consider when it comes to improving employee mental wellbeing, and GAD-7 and PHQ-9 scores don't tell the whole story.

Employee health and wellbeing is complex, but the EAP can help to uncover some of the areas in which employers can do better, in reducing work-related stress for example.

It also helps provide an instantly accessible, professional, free and confidential support channel for employees experiencing mental health challenges outside of the workplace too.

Find out more about the [Employee Assistance Programme](#) here.

In 2019/20, depression or anxiety accounted for 55% of all working days lost due to work-related illness<sup>(3)</sup>

**25.6%**

improvement in GAD-7 scores following structured therapy

**32.9%**

improvement in PHQ-9 scores following structured therapy

Source: BHSF, Caboodle, February 2020 to January 2021

# gym scheme

There's been lots of research to show that exercise helps support both physical and mental health.

Thankfully, the Gym Scheme can help make the gym and leisure centres more affordable and accessible for employees.

The Gym Scheme is a low-cost yet highly beneficial scheme for employees and is very popular too.

So, how did employees use the Gym Scheme through 2020?

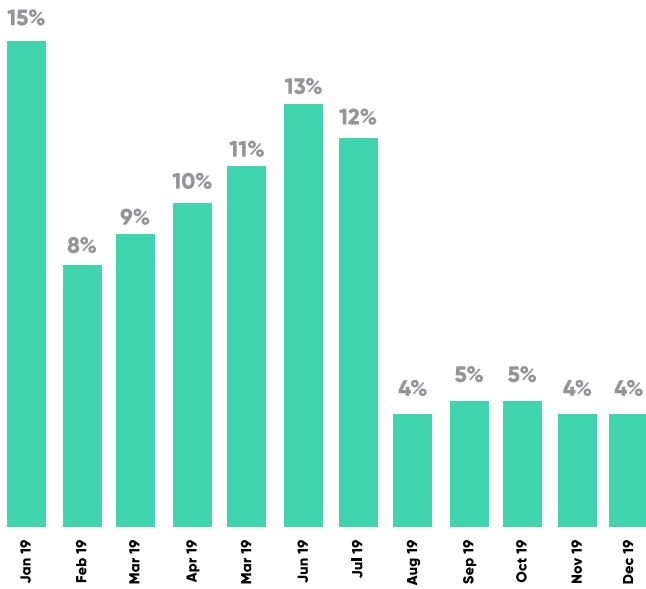
How does it compare to 2019  
- and what does this mean for the future?



**In October 2020,  
600,000 signed a  
petition to prevent  
gyms closing again<sup>4</sup>.**

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# Percentage of Gym Scheme users by month 2019 vs. 2020



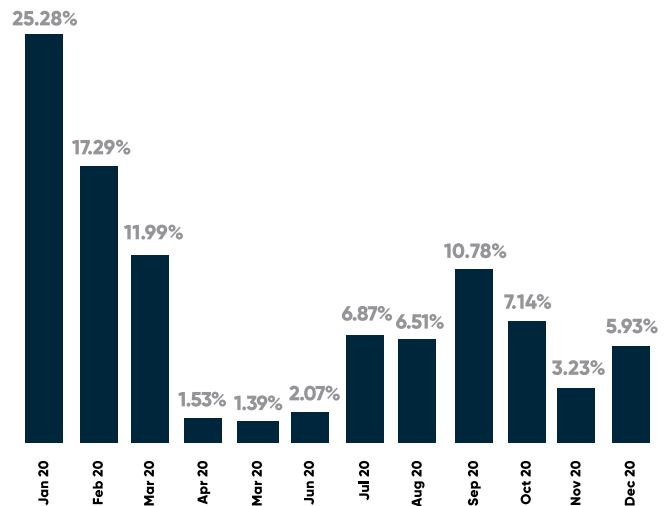
## Percentage of 2019 Gym Scheme users per Month

Source: My Gym Discounts, Caboodle

Gym Scheme data for both 2019 and 2020 shows what a “normal” year might look like and how the pandemic has affected employee use of the scheme.

As you would expect, the scheme was used less during periods of lockdown and restrictions preventing gym and leisure club use.

Once gyms reopened after the first lockdown in July 2020 use of the scheme bounced back.



## Percentage of 2020 Gym Scheme users per Month

Source: My Gym Discounts, Caboodle

While home workouts had become a popular form of exercise throughout the pandemic, gyms and leisure clubs were still sorely missed.

Naturally, January is always a popular month for gym sign-ups. However, you might find now and in future that your employees are starting new gym memberships throughout the year.





**For health clubs,  
gyms and leisure  
centres, there are  
over 10 million  
combined members  
in the UK.**



### **What does this mean for the Gym Scheme?**

The data shows that promoting the scheme in the run up to the New Year is a no-brainer.

However, it also shows that the scheme shouldn't be forgotten and that continual promotion throughout the year is important too, particularly in the summer months.

The popularity of gyms and leisure centres also proves this is a scheme guaranteed to benefit your team.

### **Making the gym more affordable for employees**

Gyms and leisure clubs are great for our overall wellbeing. Physical exercise supports our mental wellbeing and there's the important social side too.

To make exercise a regular part of our lives it must be fun and engaging, as well as accessible, inexpensive and not too time consuming.

Making gyms and leisure clubs more affordable for employees makes them more accessible and can help employees make exercise a more regular part of their lives, helping improve their physical and mental wellbeing.

# holiday trading

The Holiday Trading scheme, where employees can sell and buy annual leave to and from their employer, has always been about giving employees more control over their work-life balance.

Our clients use this salary sacrifice scheme to give employees more options, improve employee wellbeing and make increased NI savings.

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More than 40% of employees are neglecting other aspects of their life because of work



When working long hours, more than a quarter of employees feel depressed (27%) while one third feel anxious (34%)

A study by the World Health Organisation found that in 2016,

**745,000**

died from stroke and heart disease due to longer working hours

## The work-life balance debate

According to the Office for National Statistics (ONS), people working from home during the pandemic put in 6 hours extra unpaid overtime per week, compared to 3.6 hours for those not working from home<sup>(6)</sup>.

As research by the Mental Health Foundation shows, working longer hours does leave employees more susceptible to poorer mental health.

Since the pandemic, the discussion around work-life balance in relation to employee wellbeing has taken off.

In March 2020, Spain became the first country in the world to announce they'd be trialling a 4-day, 32-hour work week over a 3-year period in which employees wouldn't lose out on compensation<sup>(7)</sup>.

Some argue that shortening working weeks and hours only condenses workload into a shorter time frame, thus risking worsening employee mental health, while some are sceptical around the logistics and practicalities of the idea.

However, the research so far does show that longer hours can be detrimental to employee mental health and employers must monitor this carefully.

A fair annual leave allowance is also incredibly important, but the Holiday Trading scheme can help:

- Improve work-life balance further
- Give employees even more flexibility
- Avoid employee burnout
- Improve productivity
- Improve overall mental wellbeing.

## How Holiday Trading can support employees now and in the future

The Holiday Trading scheme affords employees and employers lots of options, helping support employees and their overall wellbeing through improved work-life balance.

### Supporting childcare

With the option to purchase additional annual leave and spread the cost over 12 months, parents can use Holiday Trading to take extra time off or even reduce their working week to 4 days for example, to either support home-schooling or to provide more childcare options during half-term.

### Supporting work-life balance and avoiding burnout

Particularly since the pandemic began, a lot has been asked of many employees and avoiding burnout and ensuring a good work-life balance moving forward will be crucial to supporting employee wellbeing.

Moving forward, employees will no doubt utilise the option to purchase additional annual leave and take a well-earned break.

### A commitment to employee wellbeing

Providing the Holiday Trading scheme as an employee benefit demonstrates a commitment to employee wellbeing.

Employees can reap many benefits from the scheme and what's been a popular benefit in recent years will no doubt continue to be popular into the future.

Find out more about the [Holiday Trading](#) scheme here.

In 2020, the UK  
cycled a total of 5  
billion miles,  
according to the  
Department for  
Transport <sup>(12)</sup>



## bike scheme

In recent years, cycling saw a huge increase in popularity in the UK, particularly at the beginning of the UK's first lockdown of the pandemic.

With gyms and leisure clubs closed and roads quieter, many dusted off their old bikes and even bought new ones and hit the roads and trails.

Along with it came government support, health benefits for many and a surge in popularity for the Bike to Work scheme.

Now, the Bike to Work scheme continues to support employees in achieving their health and fitness goals by making cycling more affordable at a crucial time.

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## The current state of cycling in the UK

Following the UK Government's announced green transport investment to improve cycling infrastructure across the UK, Halfords' share price increased 25% within one day and they later went on to record a 57% increase in cycling-related sales during the pandemic<sup>(13)</sup>.

The UK Government even launched their Fix Your Bike voucher scheme, allowing members of the public to receive a voucher worth up to £50 to repair their bike to help get Brits cycling safely.

Looking forward, the UK Government looks set to provide yet more support for greener modes of transport as it aims to hit targets to reduce emissions by 78% by 2035 compared to 1990 levels.

E-bike technology is continuing to develop, and with the removal of the £1,000 limit to the Bike to Work Scheme to make e-bikes more accessible cycling looks set to remain popular in the UK in the coming years.

## How cycling helps support employee health and wellbeing

Cycling can help reduce the risk of cancer and heart disease which are 2 leading causes of death in the UK.

Cycling also provides all the benefits of exercise in terms of boosting mood and releasing endorphins to help improve mental health, along with improving confidence and self-esteem.

Cycling is also an incredibly sociable sport. Charity events like London 2 Paris, taken part in ourselves at caboodle, are an incredible example of this and events like these leave participants feeling an immense sense of community and achievement.



Employees can save up to 42% on the cost of a new bike with the Bike to Work scheme.



In May 2020, the UK Government announced a £2 billion investment in greener and more active transport.<sup>(8)</sup>



6 in 10 Bike to Work scheme users would drive to work if they didn't use the scheme.



In 2019, the £1,000 limit was removed from the scheme, making higher-tech bikes and accessories more available on the scheme.

## Cycling made more accessible

Of course, cycling isn't everyone's cup of tea and can prove a challenging form of exercise particularly for beginners.

However, e-bikes have helped make cycling more accessible to more people and improved infrastructure, including improved cycle lanes and Low Traffic Neighbourhoods (LTN's), have helped make cycling a more feasible and appealing way to exercise and commute.

Whether employees are working remote, in the workplace or in a hybrid working arrangement, cycling to work gives staff a chance to ditch the car for at least a few days a week, save on fuel, reduce emissions and improve their health and wellbeing too.

Cycling to work also helps employees incorporate exercise into their day more easily, while the Bike to Work scheme makes cycling much safer, easier and more affordable for staff.

## More reliable bikes

Rather than dusting off the old bike out of the shed, the Bike to Work scheme allowed employees to get their hands on a brand-new bike and accessories, which were much more reliable and often had a higher spec.

## More affordable bikes and accessories

With savings of up to 42% available through the Bike to Work scheme, cycling was made more affordable and more bikes and accessories were made available to employees.

With the removal of the £1,000 limit, e-bikes were made more accessible too, opening up cycling to people of all ages and cycling abilities.

## Savings for the employee and the employer

It's not just the employee who saves but the employer too. Savings made on Tax and National Insurance by the employer even made the scheme cost-neutral for many businesses where scheme take-up was high.

Read more on our "Why the cycle to work scheme is now more popular than ever" blog [here](#).

## The future of the Bike to Work scheme

Looking towards the future, hybrid working looks set to cement the Bike to Work scheme as one of the most popular employee benefits available today as employees cycle to work more often.

Where an employee only has to commute to the workplace a few times per week, cycling becomes a great option.

Furthermore, with increased investment in cycling infrastructure and with more options of bikes and accessories available through the scheme, cycling to work will become a much more attractive proposition.

Find out more about the [Bike to Work scheme](#) [here](#).



Cycling on public highways in the UK increased by 45.7% in 2020 compared to 2019, and were the highest levels seen since the 1960s. <sup>(12)</sup>



1 hour on the bike burns between 400 and 1000 calories per hour. <sup>(9)</sup>

**82%**

of those who cycle to work say they feel less stressed. <sup>(11)</sup>

## Summary

# How employees use their employee benefits has changed dramatically in recent times.

Employee benefits have supported staff with their health and wellbeing as well as their finances, in turn supporting businesses by helping employees be happier and healthier in every aspect of their lives.

The way employee benefits have supported employees and businesses in recent years emphasises that employee benefits are an investment and not a cost.

They're an investment in people, and in turn an investment in the business, creating a happier, healthier and more productive team and a better place to work.

The purpose of this report is to highlight how employee benefits can support employee wellbeing and how employers can better use benefits to improve wellbeing.

Of course, it's important to remember that wellbeing is incredibly complex, particularly mental wellbeing and that employee benefits should be used as part of a wider and more comprehensive employee wellbeing plan or strategy.

But employee benefits certainly do play a major part and they have the potential to make a significant difference to the lives of your employees and to the performance of your business.

At caboodle, we provide employee benefits to over 2,000 companies globally, including the health and wellbeing benefits mentioned here.

To find out more, take a look at our employee benefit platform options or get in touch for more information and a free demo.

[Platform Options](#)

[Get in touch](#)

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