

## AT A GLANCE

The Why, What, and How of Wellbeing in a Social Economy Setting (10<sup>th</sup> July 2024, in-person, Birmingham)

Please see below the session summary of notes from the July 2024 Social Economy FORUM meeting focused on 'The Why, What, and How of Wellbeing in a Social Economy Setting'.

**OUR HOSTS** | This session opportunity was kindly hosted by mental health charity [Better Pathways](#) at 201-206 Alcester Street Digbeth Birmingham B12 0NQ.

**OUR EXPERT INSIGHTS** | The invited experts for this Wellbeing session are gratefully acknowledged for their time and contribution:

- [Martin Hogg](#) CEO, [Citizen Coaching CIC](#)
- [Alison Smith](#) CEO, [Roots HR CIC](#)
- [Naseem Taswar](#) Service Delivery Manager, [Better Pathways](#)

**OUR FACILITATOR** | [Sallie Ryan](#) Director, [BSSEC CIC](#)

### INTRODUCTION & CONTEXT

The wellbeing context was explored from a range of perspectives within this session:

- Wellbeing from within our workplace.
- Wellbeing of self.
- Wellbeing of our 'community of benefit' (aka service users or customers).

With the Election having taken place the week prior, the appointment of [James Timpson OBE as the new Minister of Prisons](#) was a timely point of discussion. [Timpsons](#) is a national retail enterprise that employs many ex-offenders and has empowered 'bottom up' management model with wellbeing threaded throughout the enterprise.

Timpsons is an example of social economy aims framed by [Julia Unwin CBE](#) (prev. CEO, [Joseph Rowntree Foundation](#)) in her [Trident Group](#) annual lecture, '[Why we need to build Social Capital in Cities](#)':

- > **Social Value** (outputs)
  - > **Social Impact** (outcomes)
    - > **Social Mobility** (sustainable transformation and improved opportunities)
    - > **Social Capital** (thriving communities and good citizenship)

In the [Social Enterprise UK State of Social Enterprise 2021: West Midlands](#) survey report, evidence shows that the Healthcare sector is the strongest in the region at 13% of social enterprises working and delivering health and wellbeing services.

## AT A GLANCE

The Why, What, and How of Wellbeing in a Social Economy Setting (10<sup>th</sup> July 2024, in-person, Birmingham)

*ENQUIRY: If the social enterprise sector is good at delivering health and wellbeing services, (how) do we also look after our VCSE teams to deliver those great services?*

Researching the broad context and cost to the economy of sickness and absence in the UK, a report from Access People HR '[Sick Leave Report 2024](#)', shows that of 1,775 SMEs surveyed:

- A national increase of 55% in sickness absence rates since 2019.
- Average number of sick leave days taken is up by 6% in 2023 compared to 2022.
- NGOs and charities staff take an additional 14% of sick leave days per annum.
- The number of people Out Of Work due to ill-health soared in 2023 with mental health, cost of living stress, and isolated working practices being indicated as primary causes.

*ENQUIRY: What are the factors of wellbeing when at work?*

Researching this element of wellbeing, [Wellbeing World](#) has a curated [Wellbeing at Work](#) platform that identifies nine key drivers to realising a sense of wellbeing in the workplace for employers to consider:

1. **Wellbeing** a Strategic Priority & Board Imperative
2. **Open** Communication, Listening & Employee Voice
3. **Resilience & Relationships** Inside & Outside of Work
4. **Kindness**, Compassion & Understanding of Needs
5. **Processes** for Psychological & Physical Safety
6. **Leadership** Skills, Development & Accountability
7. **Appreciation** & Recognition of Employee Input
8. **Culture**, Teamwork, Trust & Respect
9. **Environmental** Energy in the Workplace & Hybrid

Positive self-wellbeing comes from slightly differing personal drivers that enable us to have a sense of balance, connection, and place as individuals, these being scientific recognised as:

- |                  |                        |                       |
|------------------|------------------------|-----------------------|
| 1. <b>Work</b>   | 4. <b>Life Balance</b> | 7. <b>Inclusivity</b> |
| 2. <b>Energy</b> | 5. <b>Belief</b>       | 8. <b>Nutrition</b>   |
| 3. <b>Love</b>   | 6. <b>Environment</b>  | 9. <b>Gratitude</b>   |

*ACTIVITY: How bright is your Wellbeing Star (a moment in time).*

*ENQUIRY: If we don't have a sense or actualisation of wellbeing, how can we contribute to our relationships, work, and wider society?*

**Overall, wellbeing can therefore be considered a key underpinning component for (social) economy growth.**

## AT A GLANCE

The Why, What, and How of Wellbeing in a Social Economy Setting (10<sup>th</sup> July 2024, in-person, Birmingham)

### INSIGHTS SPEAKER 1:

**WHY** is wellbeing important within our communities and as a key enabler of a social economy.

Martin Hogg | Citizen Coaching CIC

Our speaker provided context to why wellbeing is essential in the social economy space.

WRENS NEST COMMUNITY CENTRE based in Dudley had attempted regeneration over many years. Principally led by people parachuting in and imposing 'solutions' rather than asking the community what was wanted/needed. Historically, Wrens Nest area had high rates of both school absence and teenage pregnancy, and a sense of 'suspicion' within the community so limited engagement with the community facilities offered. *(An example of low Social Capital.)*

ALL SAINTS ACTION NETWORK (ASAN) in Birmingham examples where local people have been positively engaged with projects and decision-making creating a community that is both sustaining and thriving. *(An example of Social Capital creation.)*

Technology is becoming an enabler to community engagement and delivery of wellbeing services.

Citizen Coaching CIC use a scientifically credited wellbeing assessment tool to reduce barriers of engagement and provide an overview of individual wellbeing at any time within their counselling journey: [WSAS – Work and Social Adjustment Scale](#).

WSAS uses [5 questions with a 0-8 response scale](#) that provides a simple, easy to engage, wellbeing assessment that can be quickly replicated, re-tested, analysed for trending of an individual's wellness journey.

[WEMWBS - Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Wellbeing Scales](#) was also discussed as sometimes a requirement of wellbeing contract delivery. Conversation concluded that this can be a more complex wellbeing tool so use what works best for your delivery organisation if no measurement tool specified by funder/commissioner.

NOTE: Frequency of a wellbeing assessment with customers/service users (if not specified by funder/commissioner) can be conducted on first and last engagement, or repeated with some degree of judgement and/or consistency within the customer/service user journey as appropriate.

NOTE: It is advisable to name the wellbeing assessment tool, ie. WSAS, that is intended/used on tender/contract/reporting.

**The conversation in the room recognised that VCFSEs have a unique relationship within communities, and particularly in [areas of deprivation](#), where wellbeing can be significantly impacted.**

## AT A GLANCE

The Why, What, and How of Wellbeing in a Social Economy Setting (10<sup>th</sup> July 2024, in-person, Birmingham)

### INSIGHTS SPEAKER 2:

**WHAT** is the need, and what can we do, to support our VCFSE frontline team to better wellbeing.

Alison Smith | Roots HR CIC

Wellbeing support for frontline VCFSE teams encompasses physical, social, and mental wellbeing.

Positive approaches to staff wellbeing improves work attendance, team performance, retains talent and internal knowledge-base, and reduces staff attrition and related cost burden.

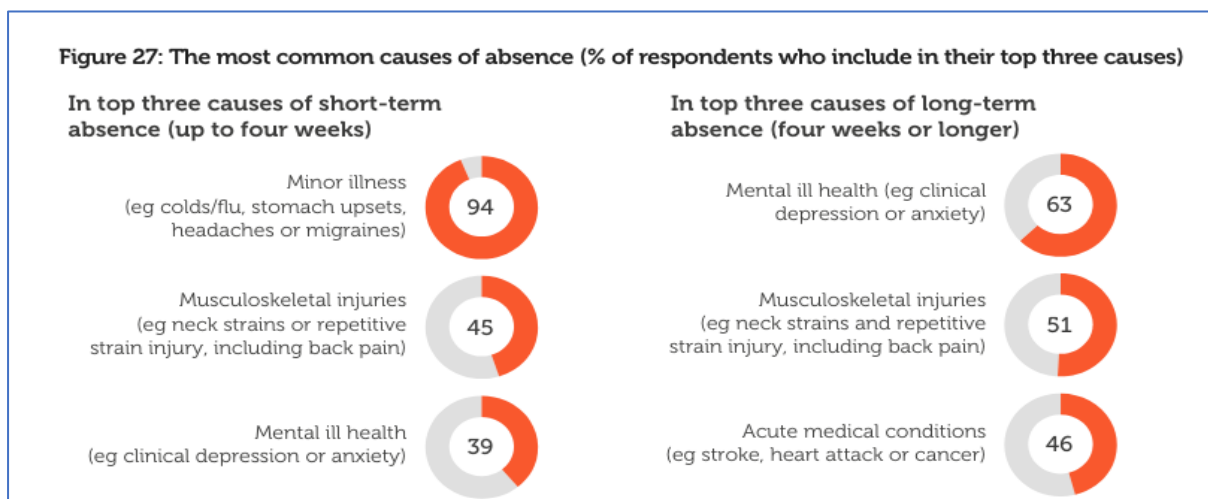
### ABSENCE LEVELS:

[CIPD's 2023 Health & Wellbeing at Work report](#) shows that in 2023, across all sectors the working time lost per employee rose to 3.4% (7.8 days per employee); this is the highest sickness absence rate for over a decade. Up from 5.8 days per employee in October/November 2019, pre-pandemic.

### CAUSE OF ABSENCE:

Organisations report that mental health (and thereby includes wellbeing) is now the 3<sup>rd</sup> highest cause of short-term work absence, and the highest reason for long-term absence of employees.

- 76% of organisations reported some stress, mostly due to increased workloads.
- 8 out of 10 employees now rate mental health as more important than salary.



VCFSE organisations working with Roots HR CIC say their need for human resource support comes from employees wanting:

- Better work-life balance.
- Flexible working hours.
- Remote working options.

## AT A GLANCE

The Why, What, and How of Wellbeing in a Social Economy Setting (10<sup>th</sup> July 2024, in-person, Birmingham)

### RECOMMENDATIONS:

Take a preventative approach by looking at both physical and mental wellbeing. Look at systemic and preventative health and wellbeing strategies.

1. **Workforce planning:** Generating information, analysing it to inform future demand for people and skills, and translating that into a set of actions to meet that demand.  
NOTE: Remote/hybrid workforce management is a different skill set/capability than in-office management. Managers may benefit from training or mentoring in this area of leadership.
2. **Support and skills:** Organisations also need to ensure that people managers are adequately equipped and supported to manage wellbeing and absence alongside the other demands of their role.
3. **Promoting good physical wellbeing steps** (and some quick wins) that could be taken:
  - Flexible working options.
  - Health eating / lifestyle advice (or signposting to).
  - Signposting to stop smoking services.
  - Health cash plans (could be entirely employee funded).
  - Free flu vaccinations.
  - Involvement of occupational health specialists.
4. **Promoting good mental wellbeing** could include:
  - Flexible working options.
  - [EAP - Employee Assistance Programmes](#) – often will include access to counselling.
  - Financial education and support (may be provided by an EAP).
  - [Wellness Action Plans \(MIND\)](#).
  - [Mental health at Work Commitment](#) - *Along with each standard are ideas to get you thinking and tools to get you started.*
  - Staff surveys and/or focus groups to identify causes.
  - Risk assessments/stress audits.
  - Training for line managers to manage stress.
  - [Toolkits](#) from MIND for the Mental Health at Work Commitment

### INSIGHTS SPEAKER 3:

**HOW** do we make ‘wellbeing work’ in practice, what’s the difference it makes and the social impact created.

**Naseem Taswar | Better Pathways**

Better Pathways has mobilised multiple new delivery programmes within the last 6 months with the focus of getting people back to work and improving lives.

Programme design is highly personalised with a ‘one team’ approach meaning that every support service is accessible to every participant regardless of which programme they are registered to.

## AT A GLANCE

The Why, What, and How of Wellbeing in a Social Economy Setting (10<sup>th</sup> July 2024, in-person, Birmingham)

Wellbeing is threaded through all service provision and outcomes engagement for participants, simple interventions such as a daily hot meal for each participant, is an indicator of the holistic, wraparound, delivery that creates high engagement rates.

High engagement leads to positive and sustainable outcomes such as employment, which in turn leads to Social Mobility and Social Capital creation that help grow the social economy.

### RECOMMENDATIONS:

Front-loading of contracts to identify end goal and design/work pathway to achievement.

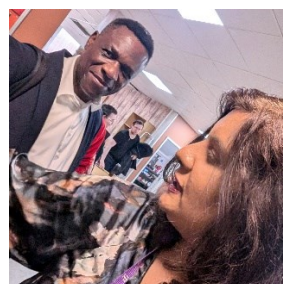
Engage with local companies:

- HS2 seen as disruptive but Better Pathways sort out local HS2 management and now have ongoing conversations and positive engagement with them that generate social impact wellbeing and local social economy outcomes:
  - Better Pathways now providing signage to HS2.
  - Better Pathways Café used by HS2.
  - Better Pathways have HS2 sponsorship of LIVE Programme placements.

**Better Pathways kindly hosted a tour of their social enterprises with short introductions to various team and participant members. This enabled our FORUM attendees to see how ‘wellbeing at work’ in action within a social enterprise and social economy setting.**

### KEY WELLBEING TAKEAWAYS

- **Identify unengaged employees**
  - Take time to understand their reasons for absence.
- **Engage employees**
  - People come to work, and then stay in a job, for different reasons.
- **Analyse retention and identify ways to improve it**
  - Personalise employee benefits where you can.
- **Prompt staff to book holidays**
  - Your team work hard, and staff burnout is considerably more costly to your social business!



## AT A GLANCE

The Why, What, and How of Wellbeing in a Social Economy Setting (10<sup>th</sup> July 2024, in-person, Birmingham)



### RESOURCES & LINKS

- VCFSE Mental Health Collective MEMBERSHIP FORM:  
[https://forms.office.com/pages/responsepage.aspx?id=Ru\\_mi0GWdEGd8RPlolgeznauoi3TJrpEjfeE0hiI5sNUQk1VN0NYOTVYQzFQMDgzSEQyOTE3SU9JT4u](https://forms.office.com/pages/responsepage.aspx?id=Ru_mi0GWdEGd8RPlolgeznauoi3TJrpEjfeE0hiI5sNUQk1VN0NYOTVYQzFQMDgzSEQyOTE3SU9JT4u)
- HR FREE RESOURCES: <https://www.rootshr.org.uk/free-resources>
- <https://www.nhs.uk/oneyou/every-mind-matters/sleep/#what-is>
- <https://www.nhs.uk/live-well/eat-well/food-guidelines-and-food-labels/the-eatwell-guide/>
- <https://www.nhs.uk/live-well/quit-smoking/nhs-stop-smoking-services-help-you-quit/>
- <https://www.jrf.org.uk/cities-the-social-economy-and-inclusive-growth>
- <https://humancityinstitute.wordpress.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/01/human-city-manifesto4.pdf>
- <https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/wellbeing/bulletins/socialcapitalintheuk/2020>
- <https://www.simplypsychology.org/maslow.html>