

PRESS RELEASE

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HEALTH SHIELD ENSURES UK COMPANIES CAN 'DO' MENTAL HEALTH SUPPORT, NOT JUST TALK ABOUT IT

Health Shield today extends the comprehensive mental health services afforded by its Tailored Health Cash Plan with the launch of a clinically effective mental health app. The provider now boasts a full programme of employer and employee support that is not only integrated and bespoke but also tangible.

The mental health app, named Thrive, helps individuals identify, prevent and self-manage common mental health conditions using clinically-proven and evidence-based techniques, such as CBT and mindfulness. By completing fun activities, users build resilience to issues such as stress, anxiety and depression.

This latest move by Health Shield adds to a series of mental health and wellbeing service launches over the last 12 months, aimed at helping employers overcome the difficulties faced in funding, designing and implementing effective programmes.

A recent survey¹ by PricewaterhouseCoopers (PwC) found that nearly a quarter of employees think their employer doesn't take wellbeing seriously, and 54% work for companies that don't offer health benefits such as counselling, health screening and subsidised gym membership. Meanwhile, YouGov² found that just 3 in 10 UK workers feel that their employer provides enough mental health support.

Along with the mental health app, the range of services available via Health Shield's Tailored Health Cash Plan, which is personalised to the employer's budget and needs, can include: a Virtual GP Surgery, Employee Assistance Programme with 24/7 Counselling and Support Helpline, Online Health Assessments, Cancer Screening and up to 8 face-to-face counselling sessions.

In addition, standalone services offered by Health Shield can sit alongside a Health Cash Plan to increase a company's health and wellbeing offering. These include workplace health screening and a range of occupational health services.

Health Shield paid more than 595,000 Health Cash Plan claims in 2017. In addition to this, wellbeing services attract high usage throughout the year. Analysis of the provider's service usage data highlights a strong demand for mental health support. Last year, Health Shield saw an average of more than 500 engagements with its EAP service every week.

Over 12 months the service provided more than 5,500 advice and counselling calls and was used for more than 2,700 face-to-face counselling sessions. Issues with anxiety represented the most common reason to seek support, closely followed by depression, bereavement and work-related stress.

Meanwhile, Health Shield's Virtual GP Surgery saw over 2,000 users last year, effectively saving up to 250 working days for businesses³. The service helps employees receive the right treatment at the right time, thereby preventing both time off for appointments and more longer-term absences. This service also includes the convenience of prescriptions delivered to work or home, the cost of which can be claimed back via the individual's Health Cash Plan.

Debbie Kleiner-Gaines, Head of Workplace Happiness at PES Wellbeing, said: "Often, if an employee is experiencing a mental health problem, their colleagues or line managers can be the first to spot the signs. Signposting to the right support can stop the problem getting worse. This helps to prevent prolonged absence, which is great for the employer.

"Of course, good mental health depends on many things, including physical wellbeing. Employers who provide the kind of rounded support offered as part of an integrated benefits offering are helping to create a positive employee experience. A well-supported employee is often a more productive one."

Courtney Marsh, Commercial Director and Interim CEO at Health Shield, commented: "Pressure is mounting on employers by government, charities and society at large, to provide improved mental health support to employees. There's a huge amount said and written on this subject, but the reality – as we found ourselves through recent roundtables with HR professionals – is that the services currently provided by employers are largely disjointed, poorly communicated and not tailored to needs.

"Meanwhile, gaining Board approval and funding for programmes is notoriously difficult due to problems evidencing return on investment.

“The beauty of providing such services as part of a Tailored Health Cash Plan is that it makes a bespoke programme more affordable. What’s more, cash plans are designed to be used regularly. The evidence bears this out. Indeed, the usage facts and figures we can provide are enough to make any Board member sit up and take notice.”

eBook

An eBook, published last month on Health Shield’s website, helps employers understand their duty of care responsibilities around mental health and provides useful hints and tips on spotting the signs, workplace triggers and key actions that senior managers and line managers must take. To download a free copy of the eBook, go to <https://www.healthshield.co.uk/thrive-ebook/>

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Notes to editors

¹ *One in three UK employees are working with anxiety, depression or stress according to new PwC research (July 2017)* <https://www.pwc.co.uk/press-room/press-releases/One-in-three-UK-employees-are-working-with-anxiety-depression-or-stress-according-to-new-PwC-research.html>

² *Just three in ten workers believe their employer provides sufficient mental health support (Feb 2017)* - <https://yougov.co.uk/news/2017/02/22/just-three-ten-workers-believe-their-employer-prov/>

³ Based on a one hour appointment and an eight hour working day.

About Health Shield

Established in 1877 Health Shield is an award-winning and market-leading provider of Health Cash Plans and health and wellbeing benefits. Health Shield is a non-profit making friendly society without shareholders, operating for the benefit of all our members. We are committed to providing competitively-priced products that are sustainable and affordable, and strive to enhance our award winning reputation in the market. www.healthshield.co.uk