

EMOTIONAL HEALTH AT WORK

**WHY IT MATTERS AND HOW
YOU CAN SUPPORT IT**

**A report by Family Links – the
Centre for Emotional Health,
with the support of IPPR**

March 2018

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Family Links is a national charity dedicated to empowering children, parents, families, schools and workplaces to be emotionally healthy.

Our vision is a world where adults and children live flourishing lives, fulfil their potential and make a positive contribution to their community. Family Links believes that emotional health is a human right and that it is the foundation for achievement and happiness.

We deliver innovative, high quality training in the Nurturing Programme to health and social care services, third sector organisations, schools and universities.

The Nurturing Programme is the approach that underpins all our work and is designed to provide adults and children with the understanding, skills and ability to lead emotionally healthy lives, build resilience, empathy, self-esteem and support positive relationships.

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SUMMARY

This report proposes a new framework for emotional health, which will support employers to consider and improve the mental health, wellbeing and social and emotional competencies of their workforce. Emotional health refers to a set of malleable skills and beliefs which shape our feelings, thoughts and behaviour. The emotional health framework outlines seven social and emotional competencies or 'assets', which can be cultivated within the workplace at an individual and organisational level. The seven assets are:

- self beliefs
- self awareness
- self regulation
- self agency
- beliefs about others
- social awareness
- relationship skills.

While each asset is important in its own right, it is the collective interaction between them which forms our emotional health.

The financial and business costs associated with poor mental health are well-documented (e.g. Deloitte 2017), and, in 2017, the prime minister commissioned an independent review into mental health at work. In this review, the authors, Stevenson and Farmer, outline their ten year goals for mental health support within the workplace. These include:

1. "Every one of us will have the knowledge, tools and confidence, to understand and look after our own mental health and the mental health of those around us."
2. "Employees in all types of employment will have 'good work', which contributes positively to their mental health, our society and our economy."

(Stevenson and Farmer 2017)

An emotional health framework supports both of these goals. Developing the emotional health assets will give employees the skills to support the mental health and wellbeing of themselves and others, developing individual resilience. Similarly, psychosocial aspects of the working environment, including the nature and type of work, ability to maintain a healthy work-life integration, relationships with colleagues, workplace culture and organisational leadership can either promote or undermine the emotional health of employees. A two-pronged approach is needed to support emotional health: Firstly, upskilling individual employees, and second, creating an emotionally healthy environment through workplace policies, practices, culture and leadership. In addition to supporting mental health and wellbeing, developing the assets outlined in the emotional health framework will have wider benefits for individuals and organisations. These include building and maintaining positive relationships, coping with challenges, problem-solving, and being able to self motivate. These translate into workplace outcomes, such as job performance and productivity, staff retention and absence, and team relationships.

KEY FINDINGS

Secondary analysis of the European Social Survey (ESS) was used to examine the current state of emotional health for UK employees. Findings show that across a number of factors, UK employees report lower levels of emotional health compared to other economies across Europe. Key priorities identified for the UK workforce are as follows:

- **supporting self beliefs:** One-fifth of UK employees report low self beliefs
- **developing self regulation:** Only one-third of UK employees feel that they deal very well with important problems in life, while over one-fifth found that after something goes wrong it takes them a long time to get back to normal
- **building workplace relationships and relationship skills:** Half of UK employees report that their working relationships are not supportive.

Findings from the ESS also show there is an association between the emotional health assets and psychosocial aspects of the working environment, such as autonomy, the type of work, and having opportunities for learning and development. However, these findings are correlational and further research is needed to establish a cause-effect relationship.

A review of existing research links the emotional health assets to other key workplace outcomes, including:

- performance (productivity, motivation and engagement)
- staff turnover and reduced short and long-term absence rates
- improved team relationships and reduced conflict
- creativity and innovation.

This suggests that there is a strong business case for cultivating good emotional health within the workplace.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR EMPLOYER PRACTICE

We put forward a number of practice recommendations to support employers to improve the emotional health of their workforce and organisation. A full list of practice recommendations is shown in the full report, both for organisations and for line managers. Support should be targeted at each of the emotional health assets:

- ensuring employees feel valued in their contributions (self beliefs)
- encouraging reflective practice (self awareness)
- supporting healthy self regulation in the workplace (self regulation)
- promoting employee autonomy and involvement (self agency)
- creating a psychologically safe culture (beliefs about others)
- fostering a compassionate workplace (social awareness)
- building positive relationships across all aspects of the organisation (relationship skills).

Employers can support and promote the emotional health of their employees through adopting a whole organisation approach to emotional health which has four key features:

Explicit training and skill development of all employees	Ensuring 'good work' for all employees
Provision should be in place for employees (including leadership) to develop each of the emotional health assets and cultivate their intra and interpersonal skills. This could be through explicit training or through reflection during supervision and target setting during performance reviews.	All employees should have 'good work' which supports each of the emotional health assets. This includes work which is meaningful and allows opportunities for learning and development, fostering positive self beliefs, as well as work which enables choice and autonomy, encouraging self agency.
Creating an emotionally healthy environment	Leadership commitment
<p>Policies and procedures: Workplace policies and procedures support and promote good emotional health for employees (e.g. tackling workplace bullying, flexible working, reward schemes etc).</p> <p>Strategic narrative: Workplaces have a named set of values in place to support an emotionally healthy culture. Employees (including leadership) are clear about the roles they play in creating an emotionally healthy culture and working as part of an emotionally healthy team.</p> <p>Employee voice: There are opportunities for employees to express their feelings and opinions, and contribute to decision-making processes.</p> <p>Culture: Emotionally healthy practices are embedded within the culture and values of the organisation. Day to day interactions should support healthy self beliefs, empower others, and be founded on building positive relationships.</p>	<p>Leadership: Leaders are committed to creating an emotionally healthy workplace and supporting the emotional and mental health of employees. They model emotionally healthy practices, shaping the organisational culture.</p> <p>Ongoing monitoring and reflection: Leadership continually monitor and reflect on emotional health, using employee voice to consider the thoughts and feelings of the workforce.</p>

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR POLICY

Recommendations to enhance the emotional health of individuals and organisations in the UK through policy include:

- To implement the Mental Health Core Standards identified in the Stevenson Farmer Review:** While the core standards identified by Stevenson and Farmer were written from a mental health perspective, many of them relate to emotional health and the importance of a preventative approach. Ensuring 'good work' for all employees, upskilling staff – including line managers and supervisors – and encouraging open conversations, not just about mental health, but about *all* challenges employees encounter, will improve emotional health at both an individual and organisational level.
- Improving the social and emotional competencies of the UK workforce:** Findings from secondary analysis of the ESS suggests that the UK workforce is lacking key skills in relation to self regulation and relationship skills. The development of social emotional competencies and the emotional health assets should begin during compulsory education and should receive higher precedence within the national curriculum. These skills should continue to be cultivated during employment and be an ongoing focus of training, skill development and performance reviews.
- Improving job quality:** The findings in this report underline the importance of the new 'job quality' agenda, which aims to introduce measures of the quality of employment. Jobs which satisfy key criteria relating to quality are more likely to help develop the seven assets, such as self beliefs and self agency, which collectively contribute to the emotional health of individuals and organisations.
- Increasing worker voice and autonomy:** The evidence presented in this report highlights the importance of autonomy, involvement and employee voice. Lawrence and McNeil (2014) recommend that all companies with over 50 employees should have a 'working life forum'. This would help to ensure that employees have sufficient influence over their working lives, and would provide employees with a voice through which to maintain high levels of emotional health at work.

INTRODUCTION

This report proposes a new framework for emotional health, which will support employers to consider and improve the mental health, wellbeing and social and emotional competencies of their workforce. It outlines the benefits of approaching issues in the workplace through the lens of emotional health, alongside existing wellbeing, mental health and emotional intelligence perspectives. A range of evidence is presented, demonstrating that there is a strong business case for supporting emotional health at both an individual and organisation level.

EMOTIONAL HEALTH: A NEW FRAMEWORK

Emotional health is a term which is widely used, and the importance of good emotional health is increasingly recognised. However, there is no accepted definition of emotional health, and the term is often used synonymously with mental health or emotional wellbeing. Family Links: The Centre for Emotional Health has recently proposed a new definition and framework for emotional health (2017). They propose that emotional health refers to a set of malleable skills and beliefs which shape our feelings, thoughts and behaviour, and identify seven components or 'assets' of emotional health. This provides a helpful framework for employers to consider the emotional health of their employees, and how they can support and develop each of these assets, both at an individual and at an organisational level.

SUPPORTING ALL EMPLOYEES TO THRIVE: THE STEVENSON FARMER REVIEW

In their recent review of mental health and employers commissioned by the prime minister, Stevenson and Farmer (2017) identify three levels of support:

- universal support for all employees to thrive, including those with an existing mental health condition
- targeted support for employees who are struggling
- tailored support for employees who have a mental health condition and may be off work.

Emotional health relates to the primary level of support: universal provision to help all employees thrive within the workplace. This will include supporting employees to cultivate each of the emotional health assets, in addition to fostering a culture which enables good emotional health.

While Stevenson and Farmer refer to these support levels in relation to mental health, they can equally apply to wellbeing challenges that employees may face; for example, bereavement, illness of a family member, the experience of trauma, returning to work after a protracted absence etc. In all these instances, and in the case of existing mental health conditions, targeted or tailored support may be necessary. However, universal emotional health support offers a two-pronged approach to boosting individual resilience: improving an employee's own emotional health, and equipping the whole workforce with the necessary skills to provide a supportive, compassionate environment.

Stevenson and Farmer's review (2017) outlines two key aims relating to universal support for good mental health:

1. all employees across all employment sectors will have 'good work'

2. all employees will have the knowledge and skills to look after their own mental health and support good mental health.

The emotional health framework is in a strong position to address both of these aims, outlining the key knowledge and skills that employees need for good mental health and wellbeing, alongside identifying the key features of 'good work'.

Furthermore, in addition to supporting mental health and wellbeing, developing employees' social and emotional skills and ensuring 'good work' will likely have an impact on a range of other organisational outcomes, including:

- performance (productivity, motivation and engagement)
- staff turnover and reduced short and long-term absence rates
- improved team relationships and reduced conflict
- creativity and innovation.

USING AN EMOTIONAL HEALTH FRAMEWORK TO IMPROVE WORKPLACE OUTCOMES

Within current mental health and emotional wellbeing initiatives in the workplace, there are three overarching goals.

1. **A mental health goal:** Supporting good mental health and preventing poor mental health.
2. **An emotional wellbeing goal:** Improving employee wellbeing.
3. **A skill development goal:** Developing employees' social and emotional competencies in order to improve performance.

The following section examines each of the three goals, why they should be priorities for employers, and the benefits of an emotional health framework.

1. A MENTAL HEALTH GOAL: SUPPORTING GOOD MENTAL HEALTH AND PREVENTING POOR MENTAL HEALTH

There is both a business case and a social welfare need for interventions which support mental health in the workplace. Poor mental health continues to affect a growing number of individuals and organisations. Recent figures show that over three-quarters of UK employees have experienced symptoms of poor mental health, with 29 per cent receiving a mental health diagnosis (Business in the Community 2016). As well as posing significant challenges for individuals and their families, mental health problems at work also incur considerable costs to organisations and to the government. In 2016, 15.8 million working days were lost due to mental health issues (such as stress, anxiety and depression), equating to 11.5 per cent of all sickness absence in the UK (ONS 2017). There is further cost to government when people fall out of work due to mental health problems, through out-of-work benefits and lost tax receipts. Mental health conditions account for the largest proportion of new claims for Employment and Support Allowance (ESA); in 2016, almost half (49 per cent) of ESA claimants had a mental health condition, up from almost a third (31 per cent) in 2000 (DWP 2016). There are also significant costs associated with mental health presenteeism, which contributes to a loss in productivity. Research from the Centre for Mental Health (2017) estimates that this costs the economy as much as £21.2 billion per year, over double the costs of sickness absences from mental ill-health.

The high costs of presenteeism for mental ill-health highlights the need for targeted support for employees who are struggling with poor mental health *in work*, as well as universal support which enables **all employees to thrive** (Stevenson and Farmer 2017). In a recent survey by Business in the Community

(2016) 62 per cent of employees stated that their workplace directly contributed to poor mental health. This may be due to demanding workloads, difficult relationships with colleagues, or a lack of autonomy. Furthermore, the stigma surrounding mental health prevents many employees from disclosing difficulties, with only two in five employees stating that they would tell their manager if they were absent due to mental ill health (AXA PPP 2016). Line managers may also lack the skills and confidence to effectively support and discuss mental health issues with employees. A recent survey by Business in the Community (2016) found that 38 per cent of line managers felt they would benefit from further training.

This highlights that, while there is the need for targeted and tailored support for employees with poor mental health (Stevenson and Farmer, 2017), support should also be given at a whole-organisation level. As outlined in the emotional health framework, employees should be supported to develop the intrapersonal assets to support their own mental health, including self awareness and self regulation, and the interpersonal assets, including empathy, compassion and social awareness, to foster supportive relationships and facilitate disclosure of difficulties, both for themselves and for others.

Deloitte (2017) identified that universal mental health support (defined as “early-stage supporting activities”) delivered the biggest return on investment, advocating the importance of preventative rather than reactive mental health support. This includes having “an organisational culture of openness, acceptance and awareness”, and ensuring employees know how to respond “when they or their colleagues experience challenging circumstances” (ibid). Emotional health is therefore a proactive and preventative approach to mental health, rather than a reactive one – supporting the growth of the emotional health assets will directly support good mental health for *all* staff. Similarly, creating an emotionally healthy culture provides a facilitative environment for *everyone*. This may be particularly supportive for employees experiencing specific mental health and wellbeing challenges.

A WELLBEING GOAL: IMPROVING EMPLOYEE WELLBEING

Employee wellbeing has received significant policy and political attention over the last decade. In 2010, David Cameron announced that wellbeing would be a government objective, and would be regularly measured in national statistics. On an organisational level, employee wellbeing is a rising priority, with many workplaces implementing specific wellbeing initiatives, with the aims of improving employee health, reducing staff absences, and increasing retention and productivity. While many interventions falling under the ‘workplace wellbeing’ umbrella are targeted towards physical wellbeing, many are now also specifically targeted at mental or emotional wellbeing.

NICE (2009) adopt the definition of mental wellbeing from the Foresight Mental Capital and Wellbeing Project (2008): “Mental wellbeing is a dynamic **state** in which the individual is able to develop their potential, work productively and creatively, build strong and positive relationships with others and contribute to their community”. Similarly, CIPD (2016) define workplace wellbeing as “creating an environment to promote a **state** of contentment which allows an employee to flourish and achieve their full potential for the benefit of themselves and their organisation”. The key word in both of these definitions is ‘state’.

Ensuring employees are in a positive mental and emotional state is essential at both an individual and organisational level. Employers can and should support the wellbeing of employees by regulating their physical and emotional demands at work and ensuring these are appropriate. They should also facilitate employees to have a healthy work-life integration and make sure

that the nature of their work is conducive to positive wellbeing. However, coinciding with the definitions above, many workplace wellbeing interventions centre on improving the current mental or emotional **state** of employees. They are centred around improving staff morale, or boosting happiness within the workplace. In a podcast about his book, *The Happiness Industry*, William Davies (2015), talks about the potential risks associated with the 'happiness agenda', including the 'commodification' of happiness. He argues that it is not possible to 'happify' a workplace by buying in a free lunch or a massage once a week. In order to have a meaningful impact for businesses, interventions need to go beyond simply improving the current emotional **state** of employees through surface level interventions.

An emotional health framework focuses on improving staff wellbeing by embedding change at a deeper level. Rather than focusing on external initiatives to boost morale or improve happiness, emotional health offers a framework to support employees to develop their social and emotional assets. This will equip them with the skills to support and protect their own wellbeing and the wellbeing of those around them, in alignment with Stevenson and Farmer's recommendations (2017). This includes intrapersonal capacities to self regulate and manage difficult emotions, as well as interpersonal skills to build positive, supportive relationships with colleagues and communicate assertively to make sure their wellbeing needs are met. This will help to foster lasting changes to workplace wellbeing by boosting individual resilience. As Day et al argue: "Resilience is more than an individual trait. It is a capacity which arises through interactions between people within organisational contexts" (2011).

A SKILL DEVELOPMENT GOAL: DEVELOPING SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL COMPETENCIES

Social and emotional skills are associated with a range of workplace outcomes, including performance (O'Boyle et al 2011), team relationships (Schlaerth et al 2013), and improved mental health and wellbeing (Cooper et al 2001; Austin et al 2005). The above not only demonstrates that social and emotional competencies can be improved through training and intervention, but also highlights the widespread benefits of doing so.

Daniel Goleman's work centres on managerial performance and leadership, which is most frequently applied and utilised within workplaces. Since the publication of his book in 1995, *Emotional Intelligence: Why it can matter more than IQ*, emotional intelligence has been the subject of extensive research studies and workplace interventions, and few books have had such a major impact on the way leaders and employees consider their skills, effectiveness, efficiency and productivity. While emotional intelligence training is most often targeted at leadership development, there is a clear case for improving the social and emotional skills of all employees (Kirk et al 2011; Halsell et al 2007).

Unlike emotional intelligence, which is viewed as a set of within-individual characteristics, emotional health is determined by the **interaction** between the organisational context and the individual. Workplaces not only help shape and develop their social and emotional competencies, but will also either enable or disable existing skills from being enacted. For example, a person who has a high level of emotional health but works in an emotionally unhealthy organisation will experience poorer workplace outcomes compared to someone who works in an emotionally healthy organisation. Conversely, an emotionally healthy organisation will provide a supportive environment for someone with low levels of emotional health, enabling them to reach their full potential and develop their social and emotional competencies. Thus, cultivating good emotional health is achieved both through targeted skill development at an individual level and by

embedding supportive practices throughout the culture and daily operations of a workplace. This corresponds to a wide body of literature highlighting the need for interventions to be implemented at both an individual and organisational level. In a recent review of wellbeing interventions, Fenton et al (2014) state that “there is a growing awareness that interventions need to target both individuals, and the organisational environment”.

OVERVIEW OF REPORT

This report introduces a new framework for emotional health, and uses it to explore how organisational practices can improve workplace outcomes. It examines how the emotional health of organisations, created through policies, practices, culture and leadership, in conjunction with the emotional health of individual employees, impacts on mental health and wellbeing; performance, engagement and productivity; staff retention and reduced absence rates; improved team relationships and reduced conflict; and creativity and innovation.

The questions at the heart of this report are as follows.

- **How can an emotional health framework support employers to improve the emotional health of their employees and of their organisation?**
- **What impact is this likely to have on key workplace outcomes?**
- **What does this mean for practice and policy?**

Chapter 1. A new framework for emotional health: In chapter 1, we introduce the new framework for emotional health, asking, ‘**What is emotional health?**’. We examine the concept of emotional health and how it is distinct, yet related, to concepts, such as mental health, emotional wellbeing and emotional intelligence.

Chapter 2. Emotional health among UK employees: In chapter 2, we ask, ‘**What is the current state of emotional health for employees in the UK?**’. In order to understand this within an international context, we examine levels of workplace emotional health in the UK, using new analysis of secondary datasets to draw comparison with other European countries.

Chapter 3. Why emotional health matters: In chapter 3, we ask, ‘**How can emotional health support and improve workplace outcomes?**’. We explore the evidence from existing research studies on how far positive emotional health, both experienced by individuals and embedded through organisations as a whole, is associated with improved workplace outcomes (including reduced staff absence and turnover rates, increased productivity and performance, improved team relationships and increased creativity and innovation).

Chapter 4. Recommendations for practice: In chapter 4, we ask, ‘**How can organisations support and promote good emotional health?**’. We consider the range of factors that contribute to the emotional health of a workplace and what employers can do to support and promote the emotional health of their employees.

Chapter 5. Conclusions and Recommendations: Finally, in chapter 5, we ask, ‘**What are the implications of the report’s findings on emotional health for the wider policy context?**’. We put forward a number of recommendations for how the emotional health of individuals and organisations in the UK can be enhanced, set within the context of wider policy trends.

1. A NEW FRAMEWORK FOR EMOTIONAL HEALTH

1.1 THE DEFINITION OF EMOTIONAL HEALTH

Family Links: The Centre for Emotional Health (2017) defines emotional health as: **“a set of malleable skills and beliefs which impact on our thoughts, feelings and behaviour in relation to our social and emotional functioning.”**

Key features of emotional health include that it is:

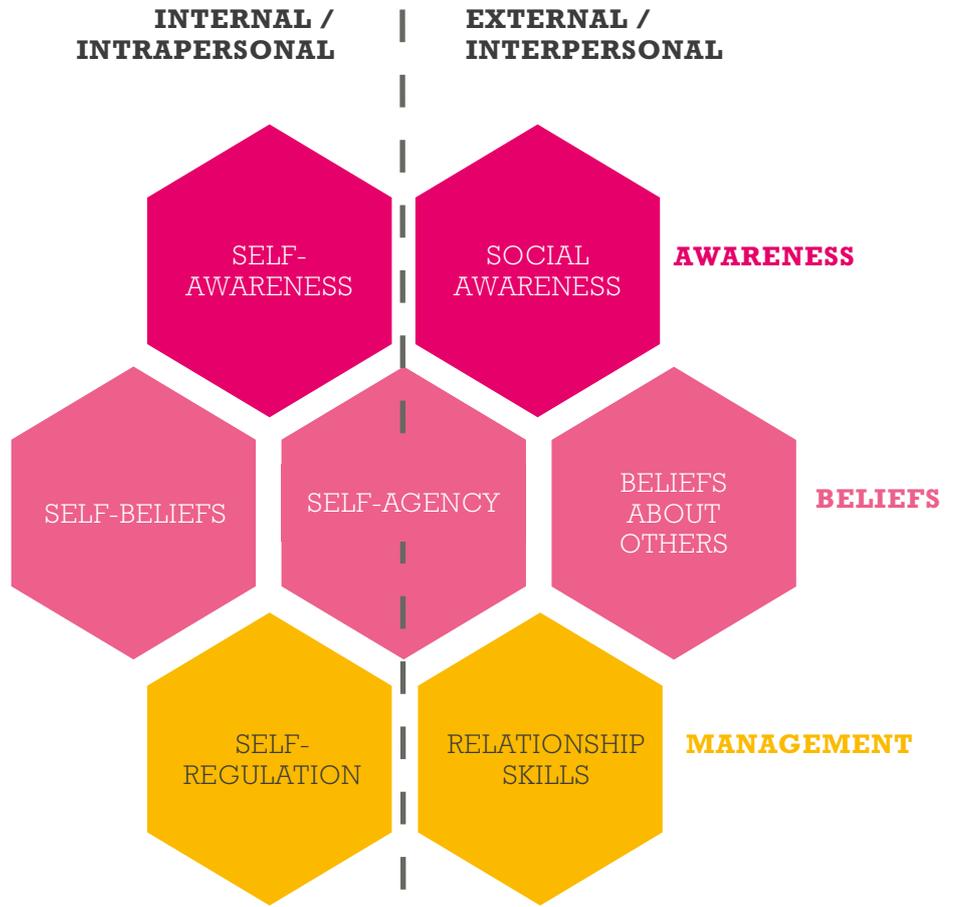
- **a set of interlinked and interweaving assets.** While each of the seven identified assets (set out below) is important in its own right, it is their collective whole and the interplay between them that forms our emotional health; each individual asset supports and influences each of the others
- **a dynamic interaction between an individual and their psychosocial environment.** Emotionally healthy environments (workplaces, schools, families etc.) support and promote the emotional health assets of individuals. An emotionally healthy individual will have a reciprocally positive impact on their social environment
- **continuously shaped and developed.** Our emotional health isn't fixed but develops and changes throughout our lives. Emotional health can be improved through targeted support centred around one or more of the assets. Alternatively, the assets can be developed through individual self growth, particularly within the context of emotionally healthy relationships
- **founded on an asset-based model.** The focus is on growing and developing each of the assets, rather than looking at deficits and what is 'wrong' or absent
- **about developing protective assets to bolster resilience.** Having good emotional health is not about being happy and feeling positive all the time. Instead, it is about being able to navigate challenges when they do arise, pursue positive courses of action, sustain a stable sense of self and maintain healthy relationships.

1.2 THE SEVEN ASSETS OF EMOTIONAL HEALTH

The Centre for Emotional Health (2017) has identified seven assets of emotional health (figure 1.1). These can be grouped according to whether they relate to intrapersonal or interpersonal functioning, and whether they represent implicit beliefs, conscious knowledge and awareness, or behavioural competencies relating to social and emotional management. Detailed definitions of each of these seven assets are shown in table 1.1.

FIGURE 1.1

Diagram showing the seven assets of emotional health



Source: Family Links: The Centre for Emotional Health (2017)

TABLE 1.1**The seven assets of emotional health**

	Emotional health asset	Definition	What an emotionally healthy individual looks like
Beliefs	Self beliefs	The set of beliefs we hold about our self identity, including our skills, abilities, and sense of value and worth.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • a positive self identify • a stable sense of competence • a stable self worth.
	Self agency	The set of beliefs we hold about our capacity to influence our lives and wider environment.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • recognises that they have choices about how to act • is able to self motivate • recognises that they can influence their lives and wider environment.
	Beliefs about others	The set of beliefs we hold about others, including how trustworthy they are and how they will respond to us.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • able to trust others • is accepting of others • believes others will respond positively towards them.
Awareness	Self awareness	Our awareness of our own thoughts, feelings and behaviours.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • aware of their thoughts, feelings and behaviours • able to accurately reflect on their thoughts, feelings and behaviours and the impact they have.
	Social awareness	Our awareness of the thoughts and feelings of others, and the impact our behaviour may have.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • aware of the thoughts and feelings of other people • aware of the impact their behaviour has on others.
Management	Self regulation	Our ability to manage our thoughts, feelings and behaviours.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • able to manage their thoughts, feelings and behaviours in positive and constructive ways.
	Relationship skills	Our ability to form and maintain positive relationships with others.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • able to communicate effectively • can work collaboratively towards shared goals • able to manage and resolve conflict in healthy ways.

Source: Family Links: The Centre for Emotional Health (2017)

1.3 HOW DOES EMOTIONAL HEALTH DIFFER FROM WELLBEING?

Wellbeing refers to a person's emotional state at a given moment in time. Positive hedonic wellbeing correlates with an absence of negative emotions and the presence of positive ones. In contrast, emotional health refers to the underlying set of skills, beliefs and habits of mind that equip an individual to manage the ups and downs of day-to-day life, build positive relationships, and fulfil their potential. These skills are all essential for supporting wellbeing, but do not necessarily ensure positive wellbeing. For example, experiencing the death of someone close will affect a person's emotional wellbeing, but will not necessarily change their

underlying emotional health. Instead, having good emotional health will help an individual recognise and manage the emotions surrounding bereavement.

1.4 WHAT MAKES EMOTIONAL HEALTH DIFFERENT TO MENTAL HEALTH?

Mental health encompasses cognitive and neurological – in addition to social and emotional – functioning. Disorders such as dementia and autism fall under the mental and behavioural category (International Statistical Classification of Diseases and Related Health Problems, 10th Revision; ICD-10), as well as those more closely associated with emotional functioning, such as anxiety and depression. Additionally, the ‘medical model’ of mental health means that the term “mental health” is usually focused on mental illness or mental ill-health. Emotional health refers purely to our social and emotional functioning. Unlike mental health, emotional health adopts an asset-based approach, focusing on the assets that support and develop good emotional health, rather than identification of poor emotional health.

1.5 HOW IS EMOTIONAL HEALTH DIFFERENT FROM EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE?

There are substantial overlaps between the seven assets of emotional health and the five areas identified in Daniel Goleman’s construct of emotional intelligence. However, unlike emotional intelligence, emotional health encompasses implicit beliefs: an individual’s beliefs both about themselves and about others will impact on how the other emotional health assets are enacted. Emotional intelligence also views the five areas as a set of within-individual characteristics, whereas the underlying principle of emotional health is that emotional health is based on the *interaction* between the individual and their social environment(s). An individual’s environmental context will not only help shape and develop their social and emotional competencies, but will also either enable or disable existing assets.

2. EMOTIONAL HEALTH AMONG UK EMPLOYEES

Employees spend a considerable proportion of their waking hours at work, and therefore workplaces can significantly affect employee's emotional health, as well as their mental health and wellbeing. There is evidence to suggest that aspects of work, including the nature of our work, relationships with colleagues and working environment, all impact on our emotional health.

In this chapter, we explore the current state of emotional health for UK employees through secondary analysis of the European Social Survey (ESS), looking at each of the seven assets of emotional health and examining associations with psychosocial aspects of the working environment.

European Social Survey analysis

Emotional health is still emerging as a concept and has therefore not featured on major health and social surveys to date. The ESS is an academically driven cross-national survey series that has been conducted across Europe since 2001. It contains items which can be mapped onto the emotional health assets, while not assessing them directly. Although these items do not capture all of the nuances of each asset, they encapsulate some key aspects of it.

The ESS is conducted biannually via face to face interviews, making the series suitable for monitoring trends over time. The survey is based on a large cross-sectional probability sample of European adults, including approximately 30,000 employees. The survey is cross-sectional (respondents were not followed up) and the analyses presented are prevalence rates and descriptive cross-tabulations. We cannot infer causality from the findings, which would require more complex analysis of longitudinal datasets. It is also worth noting that other factors have not been controlled for in the analyses; for example, it is likely that many of the associations would be affected by other variables, such as socioeconomic status or job type. Additionally, although the analyses relate to the emotional health assets in employees, not all of these items relate specifically to the work context.

The analyses in this report are all based on adult participants who have done paid work in the past seven days, excluding those who were self employed or working directly in a family business. For the international comparisons, employees resident in the UK (England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland) are compared with employees resident in other countries participating in the survey series. Weights have been applied to adjust for survey design and non-response.

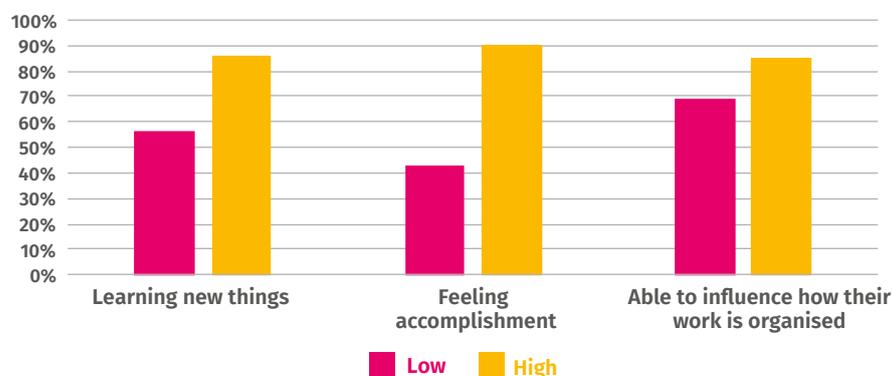
2.1 SELF BELIEFS

Employees with positive self beliefs are more likely to act on their own initiative, take risks and opportunities, inspire confidence in others and focus their attention externally rather than internally.

ESS findings

1. **One-fifth of UK employees reported views of themselves indicative of low self esteem¹**, with negative consequences not only for themselves, but also for their organisations as a whole. This figure is double the number from some other highly advanced economies such as Germany.
2. **Employees with positive self beliefs were more likely to report high levels of job satisfaction:** two-thirds (66 per cent) of employees who strongly agreed that they feel very positive about themselves reported high levels of job satisfaction, compared with about half (47 per cent) of people who strongly disagreed.
3. Employees with positive self beliefs were more likely to:
 - **be learning new things:** 86 per cent of employees who felt they were learning “a great deal” of new things reported feeling positively about themselves, compared to just 56 per cent of employees who were “not learning at all”
 - **be working with greater autonomy:** 85 per cent of employees with “complete control” over how their daily work is organised reported feeling very positive about themselves, while only 69 per cent of employees with no control over their daily work felt this way
 - **feel accomplishment from things they do:** 90 per cent of employees who strongly agreed that they felt accomplishment from the things they do also felt very positive about themselves, compared to 43 per cent of employees who strongly disagreed that they felt a sense of accomplishment.

FIGURE 2.1



Source: Authors' analysis

While we do not know the causal direction of these associations, people with more positive self beliefs, in whatever area of their lives, clearly also feel more capable in their jobs and more positive about what they do. These findings suggest that the nature of work, including the level of autonomy and capacity for learning, may all impact on employee's self beliefs.

2.2 SELF AWARENESS

Employees with high levels of self awareness are more likely to build positive team relationships, regulate their own emotions and behaviour, make informed decisions and learn from past experiences.

¹ Measured by agreement with the item “I feel good about myself”

ESS findings

1. There were limited data on levels of self awareness amongst UK employees, and no ESS questions address this theme directly.
2. Some evidence around awareness of the environment suggests an association with increased levels of autonomy at work. However, in terms of emotional self awareness, little data are available.

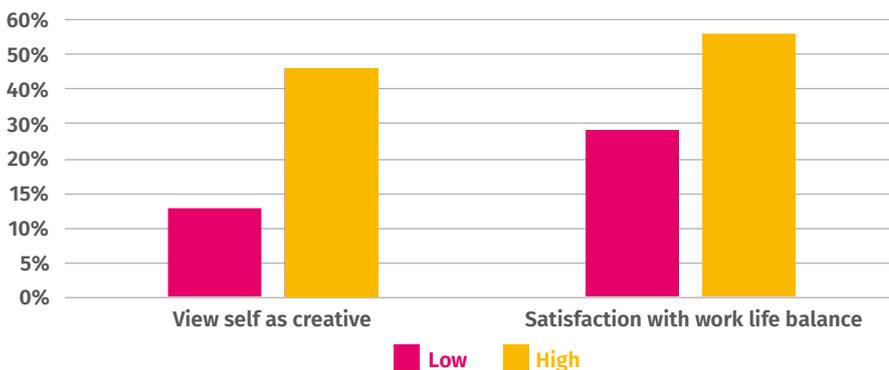
2.3 SELF REGULATION

Employees who have good self regulation are able to manage difficult feelings constructively. This supports them to get back on track quickly after a setback, maintaining relationships and a positive state of emotional wellbeing.

ESS findings

1. Skills in being able to regulate emotions were not directly assessed on ESS. However, various items that related to success in managing difficulties and resilience in coping with set-backs were captured.
2. **Over one-fifth (22 per cent) of UK employees found that after something goes wrong it takes them a long time to get back to normal.** Employees in Nordic countries were least likely to report low resilience in the face of challenge, and Eastern European countries – like Bulgaria (39 per cent) and Ukraine (34 per cent) – were the most. Similarly, **one in three (32 per cent) UK employees feel that they deal very well with important problems in life.**
3. Employees who were able to deal well with problems were more likely to:
 - **view themselves as creative:** Just 13 per cent of employees who do not view themselves as creative report dealing very well with problems, compared with 33 per cent of people who do see themselves as creative
 - **feel happy with their work-life balance:** 38 per cent of employees who are extremely satisfied with their work-life balance report being able to deal well with problems, compared to 24 per cent of employees who are extremely dissatisfied with their work-life balance.

FIGURE 2.2



Source: Authors' analysis

While this is higher than for the majority of employees across Europe, it is still a very clear indication of the challenges faced by 68 per cent of employees, both in their professional and personal lives. Being able to deal with important problems and navigate difficulties are key aspects of a resilient workforce. Employees' abilities to self regulate will have wider impacts across teams and organisations,

impacting on wellbeing, motivation and performance. These findings suggest that promoting a positive work-life balance and enabling employees to be creative may be linked with improved self regulation and problem-solving.

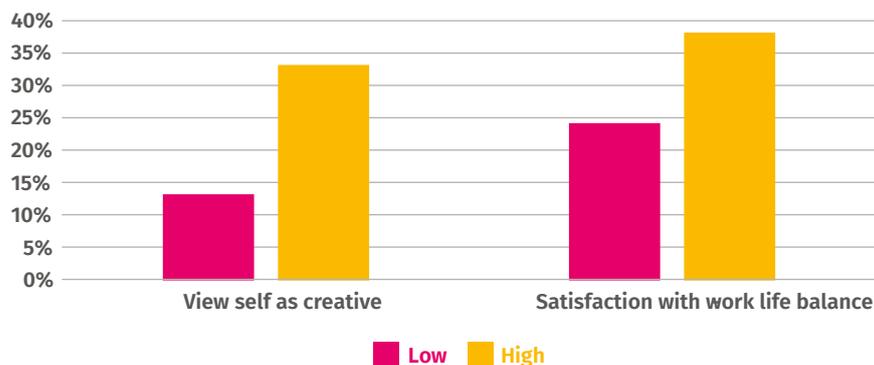
2.4 SELF AGENCY

Employees with high levels of self agency have a strong belief in their ability to influence their environment and achieve goals. They are more likely to act on their own initiative, and demonstrate higher levels of innovation and problem solving.

ESS findings

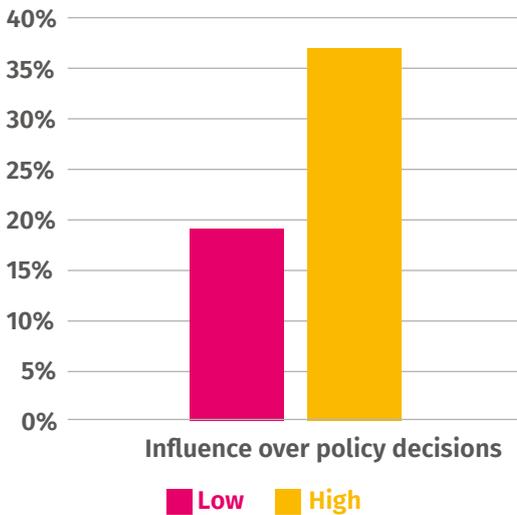
1. While 90 per cent of UK employees reported that they are free to decide how to live their lives, **only 42 per cent feel that they had a strong sense of direction in life**. This is just below the average for European employees and substantially below the 60 per cent found in Nordic countries.
2. Employees with a strong sense of self direction more likely to:
 - **report a strong sense of control over how they organised their day to day work:** of those employees who believed that their sense of self direction was very strong, a majority (60 per cent) also felt that they had a lot of control over how they organised their day to day work. In contrast, among employees who had little or no control over how their work is organised, only four in ten (41 per cent) described their overall sense of direction in life as very strong
 - **Feel enthusiasm for the things they were doing:** three-quarters (73 per cent) of employees who always feel enthusiasm for what they are doing reported having a strong sense of direction. In contrast, just 15 per cent of employees who never feel enthusiasm report having a strong sense of direction
 - **Feel a sense of accomplishment in what they were doing:** while 70 per cent of employees who strongly agreed that they feel accomplishment reported strong self direction, only one-quarter (25 per cent) of employees who strongly disagreed that they felt accomplishment from what they did felt strong self direction
3. **Employees who feel they have some degree of influence over their workplace feel they are better able to deal with problems:** 37 per cent of employees who feel able to influence policy in their workplace report feeling able to deal well with problems, compared to 19 per cent who feel they have no influence in their workplace.

FIGURE 2.3



Source: Authors' analysis

FIGURE 2.4



Source: Authors' analysis

Having a sense of agency within the workplace is associated with having a strong sense of direction in life. These findings suggest the benefits of ensuring that employees have some control over how their day-to-day work is organised and a sense of voice within the workplace. Those with the most self direction are more likely to feel enthusiasm for what they do and a sense of accomplishment from what they achieve. Having some sense of self agency over policy decisions in the workplace may also increase employees' capacities for problem solving.

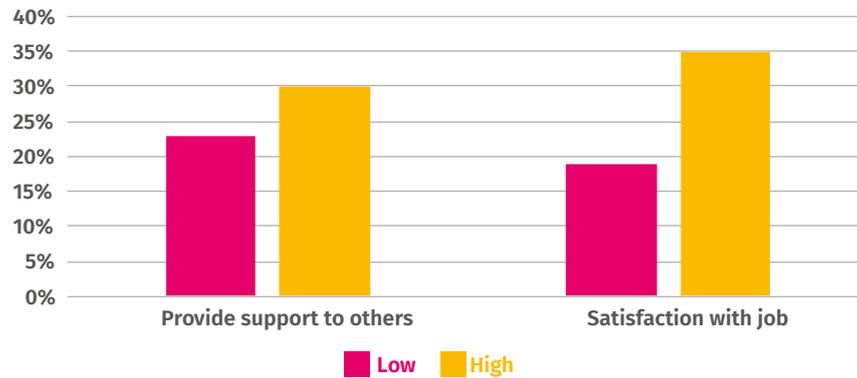
2.5 BELIEFS ABOUT OTHERS

The implicit beliefs that we hold about other people, including whether or not they can be trusted and how they will respond to us, shape our thought and behaviours. Employees with healthy beliefs about others are more likely to perceive their intentions as positive and show a greater willingness to ask for help if needed.

ESS findings

1. Just over one-quarter (27 per cent) of employees feel that other people are helpful rather than looking out for themselves, and less than one-third (31 per cent) regard others as trustworthy.
2. Employees who viewed others as helpful were more likely to:
 - **have higher levels of job satisfaction:** there was a strong association between job satisfaction and perceiving others as helpful. 35 per cent of employees who were very satisfied with their job perceived others as helpful, compared to 19 per cent who were very dissatisfied with their job
 - **provide help to others:** 30 per cent of employees who provide extensive support view others as helpful, compared to 23 per cent of employees who do not provide any support.

FIGURE 2.5



Source: Authors' analysis

The majority of UK employees are wary of trusting others and do not perceive them to be helpful. This will impact on team relationships. It will also affect people's willingness to ask for support when needed, which could limit job performance and decrease wellbeing. There are reciprocal benefits of building trusting, supportive relationships: UK employees who perceive others as trustworthy and helpful are in turn more likely to provide help and support to others. Furthermore, employees who had positive views of others were more likely to report higher levels of job satisfaction. Fostering a sense of belonging in the workplace may improve wellbeing, team relationships and job satisfaction.

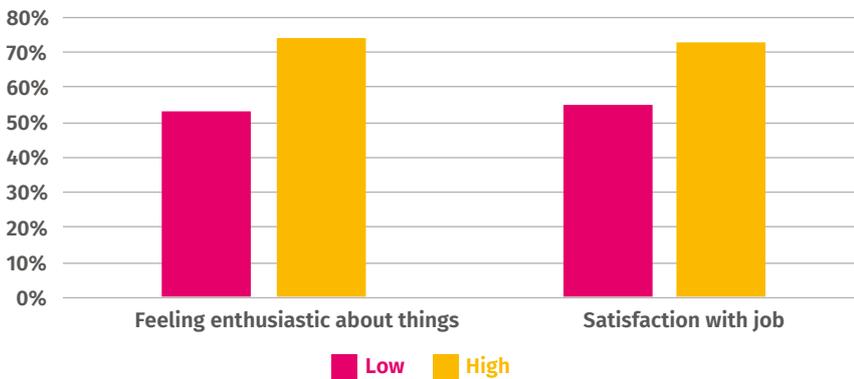
2.6 SOCIAL AWARENESS

Having a good level of social awareness is essential for effective communication and developing meaningful relationships, both within teams and with external agencies, e.g. customers/service users.

ESS findings

- Seven in ten employees (71 per cent) place a high value on understanding the views of people who feel differently to them** – a possible indicator of the perceived importance of empathy and relationships at work.
- Employees who value understanding the views of others were more likely to:
 - feel enthusiasm for what they were doing:** three-quarters (74 per cent) of employees who feel the most enthusiastic rated understanding the views of people who felt differently as important, compared with just half (53 per cent) of employees who never feel enthusiastic about what they are doing. There was also a link between valuing the views of others and feeling appreciated by others, suggesting reciprocity in emotional health
 - feel higher levels of job satisfaction:** about three-quarters (73 per cent) of employees who were extremely satisfied with their job felt the views of different people were important, compared with just over half (55 per cent) of those who were extremely dissatisfied with their job.

FIGURE 2.6



Source: Authors' analysis

UK employees tend to place more value on understanding the viewpoints of others than employees in most other European countries. Positive social awareness – in terms of being open to and understanding people with different views – was associated with higher levels of motivation and positive views of work and the workplace. While we cannot infer causality, one explanation for these associations is that understanding other people's views is important for building and maintaining positive relationships. Developing empathy and compassion within the workplace may therefore be key to improving internal and external relationships, supporting wellbeing and boosting job satisfaction.

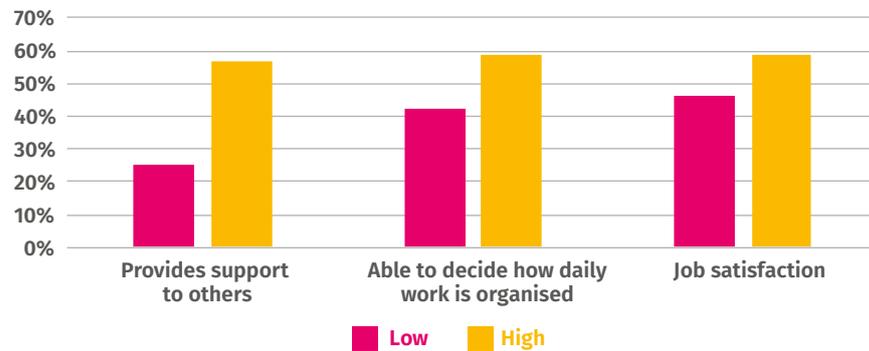
2.7 RELATIONSHIP SKILLS

Employees with good relationship skills will be able to communicate effectively, express themselves assertively and respond to conflict or challenge. Wyatt argues that: "Effective communication is the lifeblood of a successful organisation" (2006). Forming close relationships with colleagues is strongly linked to thriving at work. Interpersonal skills are also essential for many roles and research shows that companies often view them as more important than analytical abilities (Klaus 2010).

ESS findings

1. **Less than half (48 per cent) of employees in the UK feel that they get help and support from their colleagues when needed.**
2. Employees who had at least three people to discuss personal matters with were more likely to:
 - **provide support to others:** only one-quarter (25 per cent) of those who provide no support to others reporting feeling able to discuss personal matters with at least three other people, compared to 57 per cent who report offering extensive support to others
 - **work with greater autonomy:** employees working with greater autonomy (both in terms of influencing policy in their workplace and in terms of being able to decide how to organise their daily work) were more likely to have people to discuss personal matters with (59 per cent compared to 42 per cent)
 - **have higher levels of job satisfaction:** 59 per cent of people who are extremely satisfied with their job reported being close to at least three other people, compared with 46 per cent of people who are extremely dissatisfied with their job.

FIGURE 2.7



Source: Authors' analysis

Developing relationship skills should be a priority for the UK workforce, as there are some indications that these skills may be weaker in the UK than the rest of Europe. The majority of UK employees report that their working relationships are not supportive. These findings pose a significant concern for organisations in terms of fostering collaboration, effective communication and teamwork. Employees who sustain multiple close relationships (be they at work or elsewhere), where they feel able to discuss personal matters, are more likely to be employees who work with autonomy and who are satisfied in their jobs, suggesting the potential benefits of supporting employees to build positive relationships with colleagues.

2.8 CHAPTER SUMMARY: EMOTIONAL HEALTH AMONG UK EMPLOYEES

- Across a number of factors, UK employees report lower levels of emotional health compared to some other economies across Europe.
- ESS findings suggest that key priorities for the UK workforce are:
 - **supporting self beliefs:** one-fifth of UK employees may have low self beliefs. This is likely to have negative consequences not only for the employees themselves but also for the environments where they work and for their organisations as a whole
 - **developing self regulation:** only one-third (32 per cent) of UK employees feel that they deal very well with important problems in life, while over one-fifth (22 per cent) of UK employees found that after something goes wrong it takes them a long time to get back to normal
 - **building workplace relationships and relationship skills:** half of UK employees (52 per cent) report that their working relationships are not supportive. These findings are significant for organisations in terms of supporting wellbeing, effective communication and teamwork.
- Findings from the ESS show there is an association between the emotional health assets and psychosocial aspects of the working environment, such as autonomy, feeling a sense of accomplishment and being able to learn new things. However, it is important to note that these are only correlational and we are unable to make any claims about the causal direction of these relationships. It is most likely that there is a reciprocal relationship between emotional health and the workplace environment. Nevertheless, it suggests that psychosocial aspects of our work can support the emotional health of all employees. These may be key components of 'good work', as recommended by Stevenson and Farmer (2017).

3.

WHY EMOTIONAL HEALTH MATTERS

Cultivating good emotional health supports positive mental health and wellbeing, develops resilience and motivation, and equips individuals with the tools to build and maintain positive relationships. All of the above are essential for ensuring positive outcomes for organisations. Conversely, poor emotional health may limit an individual's capacity for learning and development, inhibit the formation of healthy relationships, and leave them particularly vulnerable during periods of challenge or adversity.

This chapter outlines the business case for supporting emotional health in the workplace, focusing on five overarching workplace outcomes: employee mental health and wellbeing; performance, including engagement, motivation and productivity; staff retention and reduced short and long-term absences; team relationships and reduced staff conflict; and creativity and innovation.

3.1 WHAT DOES AN EMOTIONALLY HEALTHY WORKPLACE LOOK LIKE?

An emotionally healthy workplace will support and cultivate each of the seven emotional health assets.

TABLE 3.1

The emotional health assets within a workplace context

	Emotional health asset	Related concepts	An emotionally healthy workplace	Related workplace practice
INTRAPERSONAL	Self beliefs	Feeling valued	Employees feel valued on both a professional and personal level	Ensuring employees feel valued
		Feeling competent	Day-to-day interactions and performance feedback supports and promotes healthy self beliefs and sense of competence	
	Self awareness	Self reflection	Employees are encouraged and supported to self reflect	Encouraging self reflection
		Reflective Practice	Reflective practice occurs at a team and organisational level.	
	Self regulation	Managing emotions	There is support for employees to manage difficult emotions within the workplace (e.g. stress)	Supporting healthy self regulation
		Cognitive reframing	Employees feel able to openly share how they are feeling with line managers and colleagues. This helps them to gain new perspectives on the situation and/ or their capacity to respond.	
Self agency	Autonomy	Employees are able to self motivate and work autonomously	Enabling choice and autonomy	
	Influence/ Employee voice	Employees feel that they are able to make choices and decisions, and have a degree of influence over their working lives		
INTERPERSONAL	Beliefs about others	Trust	Employees feel able to confide in line managers and ask for support if needed	Creating a psychologically safe culture
		Acceptance	There is a tolerance and acceptance of diversity	
		Belonging	Employees feel a sense of belonging to their team and organisation	
	Social awareness	Empathy	All staff show empathy and compassion towards each other	Fostering compassion
		Compassion	Employees feel supported and understood by colleagues and line managers	
	Relationship skills	Communication	Employees communicate effectively with each other	Developing relationship skills
		Team work	Teams work collaboratively together	
		Conflict resolution	Conflict and differences of opinion are managed and resolved in healthy ways	

Source: Family Links: The Centre for Emotional Health (2017)

Support should be targeted at both an individual and organisational level. The emotional health of individuals will impact on workplace outcomes. However, creating an emotionally healthy workplace is also essential for supporting and developing the emotional health of employees.

FIGURE 3.1

Diagram showing the relationship between the emotional health of an organisation, the emotional health of individual employees, and key workplace outcomes



Source: Family Links: The Centre for Emotional Health (2017)

Interactions between the emotional health assets and workplace outcomes

While each outcome will be considered individually, it is important to be aware of the dynamic and reciprocal interactions between them. For example, employee wellbeing impacts on team relationships, with poor wellbeing and heightened stress increasing workplace conflict. However, at the same time, relationships within the workplace significantly contribute to employee wellbeing: positive relationships with colleagues support good wellbeing, whereas conflict undermines it. It is therefore likely that practices to support good emotional health within the workplace may have a widespread impact across a range of outcomes.

There is a similar relationship with the interaction between the emotional health assets. For example, increasing an individual's self awareness will support their social awareness, self regulation and relationship skills, which will in turn shape and develop the other assets.

3.2 MENTAL HEALTH AND WELLBEING

The business case

For many people, work has a positive influence on their mental health and wellbeing, providing a sense of purpose and motivation, opportunities for learning, and a source of social support. However, high pressures, unmanageable workloads and negative environments can all have a detrimental impact on mental health and wellbeing. In a survey conducted by Business in the Community (2016),

62 per cent of UK employees stated that their work had been either the cause or a contributing factor to periods of poor mental health.

The financial and business costs associated with poor mental health were outlined in the introduction to this report, but can be summarised by Stevenson and Farmer (2017): “Employers are losing billions of pounds because employees are less productive, less effective, or off sick.” Figures from Business in the Community (ibid) show the extent of issue, with 77 per cent of UK employees reporting they have experienced symptoms of poor mental health, and 29 per cent receiving a mental health diagnosis.

Supporting mental health and wellbeing through emotional health

Supporting healthy self regulation (related asset: self regulation): The majority of employees will face difficult emotions within the context of their working environment, particularly those working in high-pressured environments. Employees may also have circumstances in their personal lives which are impacting on their emotional wellbeing. Regulating our emotions within the workplace can be particularly difficult, as we are often constrained by the need to remain ‘professional’ and may have to suppress our true emotions and display a more appropriate response. This emotional dissonance is referred to as ‘emotional labour’ (Hochschild 1983), and, if experienced over a prolonged period, can lead to decreased wellbeing and burnout, and can impair performance (Robbins and Judge 2011). Research has shown the benefits of self regulation practices in reducing emotional exhaustion at work and improving job satisfaction, including mindfulness programmes (Hülshager et al 2013). Ensuring that employees have a forum where they are able to openly share how they are feeling can help support emotional wellbeing and mental health.

Enabling choice and autonomy (related asset: self agency): Several studies have demonstrated that a lack of autonomy in the workplace is linked with poor mental health and wellbeing. Enns et al (2015) found that lower levels of autonomy at work were significantly related to depression in nurses. Lack of job control has also been identified as a key predictor of occupational stress. In contrast, higher levels of involvement in an organisation, including contributing to decision-making processes, were associated with lower stress and fatigue, and higher levels of job satisfaction (Boxall and Macky 2014). Similarly, a review of research on organisational stress management interventions in the UK showed the benefits of participation and autonomy programmes for reducing stress (Giga et al 2003).

Developing interpersonal skills to foster positive relationships (related assets: social awareness and relationship skills): Empathic, supportive relationships with colleagues will not only improve wellbeing in itself, but will also facilitate open communication, helping issues to be dealt with before they escalate. Netterstrom et al (2008) reviewed several studies which show a link between low social support from colleagues and increased risk of depression. Conflict with co-workers is related to an increased risk of depression (Stoetzer et al 2009) and increased stress (Brotheridge and Lee 2002). Increasing employees’ relationship skills, particularly assertive communication and conflict resolution, will give employees the skills to be able to form positive relationships and resolve difficulties.

For employees with poor mental health and wellbeing, positive team relationships provide necessary emotional and practical support. Research suggests that employees feel there is a lack of support around mental health and would be reluctant to confide in colleagues: 45 per cent of employees and 22 per cent of managers state that their organisation offers “no support” for mental health, and only two in five employees would tell their manager if they were absent due to mental ill health (APA PPP 2016). Line managers play an essential role

in supporting employee mental health and wellbeing. For example, Scott et al (2010) found that manager empathy was directly linked to employee wellbeing. Developing the interpersonal skills of line managers should therefore be a key priority for supporting mental health and wellbeing.

Supporting engagement, productivity and motivation through emotional health

Ensuring employees feel valued in their contributions (related asset: self beliefs):

While an appropriate salary and benefits package is important for employees (Siegrist 1996), this is a source of extrinsic motivation and will therefore not sustain long-term influence over employee engagement and productivity (Ryan and Deci 2008). In order for employees to feel engaged, they have to believe that, regardless of their role, their work is meaningful and they make a valuable contribution to the wider organisation. MacLeod and Clarke (2009) identify “strategic narrative” as a key enabler for employee engagement, which they define as: “a strong, transparent and explicit organisational culture which gives employees a line of sight between their job and the vision and aims of the organisation” (2009). Feeling like part of a team increases the meaningfulness of employees’ work, which in turn supports engagement (May et al 2004). This also highlights the importance of fostering positive relationships within teams.

Enabling choice and autonomy (related asset: self agency): Research has consistently demonstrated that there is a link between engagement, productivity and employee autonomy. Flexible working policies are associated with higher levels of employee engagement (Rama Devi 2009; Richmond et al 2008) Similarly, Van den Heuvel et al (2009) found a significant association between productivity and job autonomy, and Jones et al (2010) demonstrated that participatory work environments can improve performance and productivity. This highlights the benefits of supporting self agency in the workplace, by enabling employee autonomy and involvement.

Supporting healthy self regulation (related asset: self regulation): One of the barriers to engagement and productivity may be low levels of physical and emotional wellbeing - people with low physical and emotional energy have reduced capacity to manage the demands of their work. Findings from The Energy Project and Harvard Business Review (2014) found that employees who worked over 55 hours a week were 21 per cent less engaged and 27 per cent less focused than those who worked 40 hours or less. It is therefore important to support staff to develop healthy self regulation strategies so that they are able to manage their own wellbeing. This includes ensuring that employees are able to have a healthy work-life balance. Alongside this, research suggests that when organisations show concern for the welfare and morale of their employees, losses from productivity are reduced (Iverson and Zlatnick 2011).

3.3 STAFF RETENTION AND REDUCED SHORT AND LONG-TERM ABSENCES

The business case

High levels of staff turnover and absence can pose a significant cost to organisations, with recent analytics from the Centre of Economic and Business Research showing that staff absence costs the UK £18 billion in lost productivity every year. There is also growing literature on the topic of sickness presenteeism – a practice which has negative long term impacts – with the majority of studies finding that it is a risk factor for future sickness absence and decreased self rated health (Skagen and Collins 2016).

Psychosocial aspects of work and the working environment are also linked to improved retention and absence rates. As noted in the above section, engaged employees have around half the amount of absence days compared to low

engaged employees (Aon Hewitt 2012), and are less likely to leave an organisation (CLC 2008). Job satisfaction, relationships with colleagues and perceived value to the organisation can also impact on retention and absence.

Supporting staff retention and reducing absence through emotional health

Ensuring employees feel valued (related asset: self beliefs): Employees who feel valued and respected within their organisation are more likely to stay in their organisation and are less likely to be absent: Ausberger et al (2012) found that employees who felt less respected within their workplace were significantly more likely to leave their job. There are several studies showing the link between low organisational based self esteem (OBSE) and increased turnover intentions (e.g. Gardner and Pierce 2001).

Enabling choice and autonomy (related asset: self agency): Linking to the research outlined about self agency and engagement, productivity and wellbeing, increasing staff autonomy has been linked with reduced staff absences. Enns et al (2015) studied a sample of nurses and found that lower levels of autonomy in the workplace, including less control over their working schedules, were significantly related to increased absence rates. Training and innovation within an organisation is effective in reducing staff turnover, which can be attributed in part to increased employee autonomy and involvement (Kesen 2016).

Developing interpersonal competencies to foster positive relationships (related asset: relationship skills): How people get on with each other at work has a significant part to play in individuals' subjective experiences in the workplace. There are significant correlations between staff conflict and turnover intentions. Having positive relationships characterised by good communication and mutual respect are likely to improve staff retention. Smith and Diedericks (2016) cite wide evidence of a link between employee-oriented human resource management strategies, increased performance levels, and employee retention.

3.4 POSITIVE TEAM RELATIONSHIPS AND REDUCED STAFF CONFLICT

The business case

Positive relationships are essential for the success of any organisation, forming the foundations for effective communication and collaboration. While the predominant focus here is on the relationships within an organisation, it is important to remember that all workplaces will have to manage relationships outside of their organisation, whether this is with customers, suppliers, or other external agencies.

Positive relationships are dependent on two key factors. First, the ability to build and maintain a relationship; second, the ability to manage and resolve conflict or differences of opinion. Positive relationships can help to facilitate a constructive approach to conflict resolution (one of the five workplace outcomes) when disagreements do occur. A study by CPP Global (2008) found that the average employee spends nearly two hours each week dealing with conflict. Frequent conflict is linked with reduced performance, including increases in job related errors (Baldwin and Daugherty 2008), increased staff absence and turnover (CPP Global 2008), and decreases in employee wellbeing. However, when managed constructively, conflict can be beneficial, with over three-quarters of employees stating that conflict with a colleague has led to a positive outcome (ibid). This included increased understanding of others, improved relationships and a better resolution to a problem or challenge.

Supporting team relationships and reducing staff conflict through emotional health

Developing interpersonal competencies to foster positive relationships (related asset: relationship skills): Developing the relationship skills of employees – for example, through assertive communication skills or conflict resolution training – can support staff to manage differences and challenges while maintaining positive relationships. In a recent survey by CPP Global (ibid), only 55 per cent of employees in the UK have had any kind of conflict resolution training. Conflict resolution training was associated with positive relationships, and respondents stated that when handled properly, working through differences with colleagues had actually led to improvements in team relationships (ibid).

Encouraging reflective practice (related asset: self awareness): Research has shown that self awareness is significantly associated with the ability to manage conflict and build positive team relationships. Employees with high levels of self awareness show significantly better scores on a number of dimensions than employees with low self awareness. This includes being able to admit when wrong, develop and sustain close relationships with others, being open to others' ideas, and feeding back without being defensive (Srivastava and Yadav 2017). Ongoing reflection at a team level, including the social processes within the team, can also improve how teams work together (Sutton et al 2015).

Supporting healthy self regulation (related asset: self regulation): Emotion regulation strategies in the workplace are most commonly employed as a result of emotions generated from difficult interpersonal encounters, such as a challenging interaction with a customer (Diefendorff et al 2008). Unhealthy self regulation strategies, such as rumination, can lead to passive-aggressive responses. This not only impacts on the relationship, but also can lead to emotional exhaustion (Liu and Roloff 2015). Furthermore, employees who suppress their emotions at work may be less able to form positive relationships with others; when police officers masked their reactions after tragic events, it led to decreased empathy and reduced connection with citizens (Pogrebin and Poole 1995).

3.5 CREATIVITY AND INNOVATION

The business case

Organisations are placing increasingly higher value on entrepreneurial tendencies and creative thinking, with a survey of over 1,500 CEOs identifying creativity as the most important leadership quality (IBM 2010). Creativity and innovation encompass generative thinking (including forming and implementing new ideas) as well as evaluative thinking (i.e. creative problem-solving skills) (Mumford et al 2012). Rank et al (2004) argue that creativity is generally used to denote individual thinking and idea generation, whereas innovation usually refers to implementation of ideas and occurs at a team or organisational level.

While creativity is often considered to be an individual trait, contextual variables within the workplace can enhance creativity and innovation (Raja and Johns 2010; Baer 2010). Employers can take steps to support and nurture creativity among their employees (Anderson et al 2014), and research suggests that the organisational culture is more closely related to innovation than levels of employee creativity (Cekmecelioglu and Gunsul 2013).

Supporting creativity and innovation through emotional health

Enabling choice and autonomy (related asset: self agency): Having a sense of autonomy and feeling able to take action promotes intrinsic motivation and, consequently, innovation. Employees who are more proactive (linked to the emotional health asset of self agency) demonstrate higher levels of creativity (Gong et al 2012). Self agency can be supported through enabling choice and

autonomy within the workplace. Research has shown that employees show higher levels of creativity when they are able to determine how they work on tasks (Madjar and Shalley 2008). Employees also demonstrate higher levels of activity if they have a supervisor who supports autonomous decision-making (Oldham and Cummings 1996).

Encouraging reflective practice (related asset: self awareness): Reflection can be targeted towards task-based activities of the team/organisation or towards social processes. Research has shown that both task and team-oriented reflection enhance creativity (Widmer et al 2009). Reflective practice should be embedded throughout all levels of an organisation, and organisations that practise higher levels of creativity enhance employee's capacity for creativity and innovation (Carmeli et al 2014). Time pressures can be a barrier to reflective practice. Employees working under moderate time pressures reported the highest level of creativity, with creativity showing a marked decrease with increased time pressure (Ohly et al 2006). This was attributed to reduced capacity for reflection.

Creating a psychologically safe culture (related assets: beliefs about others and social awareness): A psychologically safe culture is created when employees feel encouraged to express their ideas and supported to take risks. Fear of taking risks is one of the main barriers prohibiting workplace creativity (Walter 2012). Carmeli et al (2014) identified psychological safety as key for supporting creativity and innovation. Their research found that a psychologically safe workplace not only improved creativity by facilitating idea-sharing, but also by supporting reflection within the organisation, which also increased levels of creativity.

3.6 CHAPTER SUMMARY: WHY EMOTIONAL HEALTH MATTERS

- There is substantial research demonstrating that a variety of the workplace practices founded on the principles of emotional health support a range of key workplace outcomes, including performance and productivity, reduced turnover and absence, improved team relationships and increased creativity and innovation.
- The mental health and wellbeing of staff can be improved by developing staff relationship skills, enabling staff autonomy and ensuring that there is a variety of provisions in place for staff to express and manage difficult feelings constructively. It is particularly important for leaders to have the necessary skills and knowledge to support employees who may be struggling with poor mental health and wellbeing.
- The evidence presented in this chapter indicates that individual social and emotional competencies and psychosocial aspects of work, including the type of work and organisational culture, all impact on workplace outcomes. This aligns with the recommendations outlined in the Stevenson Farmer review, relating to the need to upskill employees (for example, by improving self regulation and developing relationship skills) and about ensuring 'good work' through the type of work and working environment (for example, by enabling autonomy and creating a psychological safe culture).
- While these key workplace outcomes have been considered individually, relationships between each of the outcomes – and between all of the workplace practices – are infinitely more complex and interacting.
- Although the above evidence indicates that supporting emotional health at work can lead to a range of outcomes within the workplace, it is also likely that it will have a positive impact on life outside of the workplace; for example, on family relationships. This in turn may support and promote positive emotional health and wellbeing within the workplace.

4.

PRACTICE RECOMMENDATIONS

HOW CAN ORGANISATIONS SUPPORT AND PROMOTE GOOD EMOTIONAL HEALTH?

The two key aims for universal mental health support outlined by Stevenson and Farmer are: first, ensuring that *all* employees have ‘good work’, and, second, developing the knowledge and skills of *all* employees to support their own mental health and the mental health of others. Emotional health provides a framework for what ‘good work’ is, and what the key skills and attributes are that support good mental health. Alongside supporting mental health and wellbeing, creating ‘good work’ and upskilling employees can have a range of additional benefits, as outlined in chapter 3.

This chapter outlines recommendations for workplace practices which support and promote good emotional health, considering each of the seven assets in turn. Recommendations are at both an individual and organisational level. Enabling features of an organisation for good emotional health are also considered.

Supporting the emotional health assets

4.1 SELF BELIEFS: ENSURING EMPLOYEES FEEL VALUED IN THEIR CONTRIBUTIONS

In an article for the Harvard Business Review, Lai (2017) argues that instead of focusing on employees “doing great work” through a “carrot and stick” approach, employees are best motivated through “feeling great about their work”. Ensuring that employees feel valued within an organisation is key to promoting healthy organisational based self esteem (OBSE) and enhancing motivation. This will improve staff wellbeing and performance, and reduce staff turnover and absence rates.

Employers and line managers can support employees to feel valued in their contributions by ensuring the following.

Employees understand how their role contributes to the goals of the wider organisation, and that their role is understood by others. Engage for Success identify four enablers of employee engagement, one of which is having a clear strategic narrative for the organisation. They state that employees should “have a clear line of sight between their job and the narrative, and understand where their work fits in” (MacLeod and Clarke 2009). This helps employees to recognise that their work matters. It is also important for employees to feel their role is understood by others. In a study of social workers (Graham and Shier, 2014), a lack of understanding of their role by other professionals within a multi-disciplinary team resulted in social workers feeling that their work was not valued.

Employees have a varied workload that is appropriate to their skillset, and have opportunities for continued learning. The type of work that employees undertake is linked with their OBSE. Research has shown that job enrichment, including feeling suitably challenged and being able to utilise a variety of skills, is important to healthy OBSE (Pierce et al 2009). In accordance with the ESS findings presented in chapter 2, opportunities for continued growth, learning and development also help employees feel valued.

Employees feel that they are trusted by their line manager. When employees feel trusted by their supervisors, research shows that their OBSE increases, as does their performance and their collaborative behaviour towards colleagues (Lau et al 2014). Key components of feeling trusted by supervisors relate to two other emotional health assets: autonomy (linked to self agency), and forming a positive relationship (linked to relationship skills). Both having a degree of autonomy over aspects of their work and having positive relationships within the workplace are associated with higher OBSE.

Employees feel sufficiently rewarded, in terms of responsibility and salary, for their work and their position of seniority. Research highlights five areas which are important for respect and recognition: organisational support, fair salary and benefits, fair promotion potential, adequate communications, and contingent rewards (Ausberger et al 2012). Employees need to perceive the above to be fair and appropriate; when this is the case, levels of health and job satisfaction are seen to rise. However, if the balance is perceived to be out of kilter, it can lead to a sustained stress response among employees (Siegrist 1996).

Employees feel that their work is valued and appreciated by those around them. Findings show that recognition is important for employees across all sectors (Wyatt 2002). Gratitude, praise and reward can be effective tools for ensuring employees feel valued. However, it is not just the reward that is important, but the intention and manner in which it is given. Rewards that are personalised, unexpected, personally-given or peer-nominated are particularly valued (Dickson-Swift 2014).

Employees have opportunities to help others in their role. For many employees, feeling that they are directly helping others increases their sense of worth and meaning at work. Conversely, when employees feel that there are organisational barriers in place which prevent them from helping others, they feel a decrease in OBSE and wellbeing. Many organisations, particularly within the corporate sector, implement philanthropy schemes or allow employees to use some of their work time for volunteering.

Employees feel valued on a personal as well as a professional level. Research shows that employees who feel that their individual needs and interests matter to their organisation have higher levels of OBSE (McAllister and Bigley 2002). It is also important for individual's personal attributes and achievements to be recognised, alongside their work-related skills and achievements.

Recommendations for organisations

1. Ensure that there is a clear strategic narrative in place at an organisational level. Employees should have a clear understanding of the goals for their organisation and how their team directly supports these. The roles and contributions of the other teams should also be clearly and regularly communicated.
2. Promote regular practices of praise and appreciation at an organisational level, and help build a culture of gratitude.

3. Offer training for supervisors/line managers in effective use of praise, guiding without criticism, and the importance of trust within supervisory relationships.
4. Ensure that employees' salary and benefits package reflects their experience and skillset, and is on a par with similar positions both inside and outside the organisation.
5. Create opportunities for employees to help others directly if this is not part of their current role. This may be through a philanthropy scheme, volunteering opportunities, running charity/community events etc.

Recommendations for line managers

1. Ensure that there is a clear strategic narrative in place at a team level. Employees should have a clear understanding of the team goals and how their role directly supports these. The roles and contributions of other colleagues within the team should be clearly communicated. This may be particularly important within multi-disciplinary teams.
2. Promote regular practices of praise and appreciation within your team, and help build a culture of gratitude.
3. Help employees feel trusted by allowing them to have autonomy over aspects of their workload and appropriate responsibilities.
4. Ensure that employees' tasks are appropriate for their knowledge and skillset, that there is variety in their workload, and that there are ongoing opportunities for continued learning and development. Using supervision or regular check-ins will help monitor this.
5. Create opportunities to recognise personal achievements and qualities within your team (e.g. sense of humour, baking abilities, kindness), as well as skills and achievements directly related to employees' work.

4.2 SELF AWARENESS: ENCOURAGING REFLECTIVE PRACTICE

While employers place high value on training and experiential learning, the importance of reflective practice in developing skills and improving performance is often overlooked. In a working paper for Harvard Business School, Stefano et al (2014) found that individuals who spent time reflecting demonstrated greater improvements in performance compared to individuals who spent the time gaining additional experience. Reflection is distinct from rumination, as reflection is an active process where we constructively think about a situation, with the specific aims of learning, developing and finding a solution. Rumination, on the other hand, is a passive process, where we become fixated on the problem and the difficult feelings that it provokes. The benefits of reflective practice are well-documented in the literature, and have been linked to enhanced performance, increased creativity and innovation, and improved relationships within teams.

Employers and line managers can support reflective practice through the following measures.

Ensuring employees have the time and space within their workloads for individual reflection. Time is one of the biggest barriers to effective reflection. Linking with the importance of autonomy, enabling employees to create space within their workloads for individual reflection will help ensure they reap the benefits of reflective practice.

Using supervision and/or performance reviews to facilitate employees to reflect. Line managers can also support individual employees to reflect during supervision or performance management reviews. However, a positive relationship is necessary for this to be effective.

Creating opportunities for reflection at both at an organisation and team level.

In addition to individual reflection, reflection is also important at a team level, to ensure teams are working together as effectively as possible. Research has found that active reflection on team processes can lead to increases in performance, and the impact of reflective practice may be particularly marked following lower performance (Schippers et al 2013).

Offering self awareness workshops. Reflective practice and self awareness are skills, and therefore they can be developed through targeted support. Evidence shows that participating in team self awareness workshops may have a range of benefits for employees, including increased understanding of colleagues and greater confidence in working with others (Sutton et al 2015).

Support employees to move from rumination to reflection. It can be easy to fall into the trap of rumination, particularly when things are difficult. However, research suggests that rumination predicts poor mental health, particularly depression, whereas constructive self reflection has positive impacts on mental health. Colleagues and line managers can support employees to move from rumination to reflection by asking solution-focused questions, such as, “What would help?”, “What could you do to improve the situation?” or “How could things work better next time?”.

Recommendations for organisations

1. Promote the importance of reflective practice to ensure it is embedded within the culture of the organisation at all levels: individual, team and leadership.
2. Build in regular opportunities to reflect on the current organisational functioning, and ensure all stakeholders are involved in this process in some way.
3. Consider self awareness/reflective practice training for line managers or for other members of staff who may benefit.

Recommendations for line managers:

1. Ensure there are regular opportunities to reflect as a team. This might be centred on how the team is currently working together, or reflection after the completion of a key project.
2. Enable employees to have the autonomy to build in time for individual reflection within their work.
3. Use supervision or performance reviews to facilitate employees to reflect on their performance, abilities and pathway for growth.
4. Reflection may be particularly important after difficult situations. It may be beneficial to have conversations with employees and support them to move away from ruminating on the difficulties and focus on reflecting on a positive way forward.

4.3 SELF REGULATION: SUPPORTING HEALTHY SELF REGULATION IN THE WORKPLACE

Employees need to be able to self regulate and manage their emotions constructively at work – whether these feelings stem from challenges within the workplace or from personal circumstances outside. As discussed in chapter 3, the need to remain professional often leads us to suppress rather than express difficult emotions. This is known as emotional labour, and, if occurring over a prolonged period of time, can lead to stress, exhaustion and burnout. We can manage our emotions using a combination of emotional, cognitive and behavioural strategies. Employers play a key role in supporting and enabling employees to utilise these self regulation strategies and ensuring there is a forum

for employees to express difficulties rather than internalising them. This will impact on staff wellbeing, performance, and relationships with colleagues.

Employers and line managers can support healthy self regulation in the workplace by undertaking the following.

Offering explicit training for staff to develop their self regulation skills. There are a range of training opportunities available to help support employees develop their self regulation skills, including anger management, coping with stress and mindfulness, amongst many others. Employers can also ensure that employees have appropriate workloads with appropriate physical and emotional demands.

Providing opportunities for staff to openly express how they are feeling. For roles that regularly encounter specific emotional challenges or during/following a particularly difficult event, it may be helpful to provide access to further support; for example, access to supervision, referral to counselling, use of peer support or a buddying scheme.

Developing the skills of line managers so that they are able to support healthy self regulation within their team. Thiel et al (2012) argue that “providing leaders with additional knowledge and skills regarding emotion regulation strategies may be crucial to effective leadership and sustained performance.” Supervisors and line managers can play a central role in supporting employees to self regulate, and being able to openly talk through difficulties is a key strategy for healthy self regulation. Line managers may also include supporting employees to reappraise situations or to think through strategies that may support them. Erez et al (2008) demonstrated that emotion regulation is a key characteristic for effective leadership. If line managers are able to use healthy self regulation strategies themselves, they are more likely to be able to support healthy self regulation within their team.

Ensuring employees have the capacity to implement self regulation strategies. Workplaces should also ensure that employees have the capacity to implement behaviour strategies to self regulate. This might include going for a walk, debriefing with a colleague or supervisor, or just being able to remove themselves from a difficult situation when needed.

Ensuring that employees are able to have a positive work-life integration. Juggling the pressures of work alongside life outside of work is widely recognised as a challenge for employees and employers. Work-life integration typically involves some degree of give and take between employer and employee to the mutual benefit of both. Closely aligned with levels of autonomy over work, the literature highlights that when individuals are given some choice and flexibility over their working arrangements, this is highly valued and can engender loyalty and improve engagement.

Fostering a culture that promotes a healthy work-life balance. Being able to pursue interests and dedicate time to relationships outside of work can have widespread benefits for wellbeing, job performance and job satisfaction. Leadership is essential for modelling this and setting expectations for the workforce; whether people stay late, send emails outside of working hours, can be contacted on days off or during sickness absences, for example.

Recommendations for organisations

1. Offer explicit training for staff around manage difficult emotions; for example, coping with stress, mindfulness, anger-management.

2. Ensure there are opportunities for staff to openly express how they are feeling and talk through any difficulties. This might be through supervision, speaking to a counsellor or therapist, or through a peer support or buddying scheme.
3. Train line managers so that they have knowledge and skills to support their staff to have open conversations and talk through difficulties. Having a positive relationship is essential.
4. Promote work-life integration and ensure that this is modelled by leadership, for example, not regularly staying later than working hours, not sending emails outside of normal office hours etc.

Recommendations for line managers

1. Ensure there are opportunities for staff to openly express how they are feeling and talk through any difficulties. Check in with staff regularly on how things are and work on building a relationship where staff feel able to confide in you if needed.
2. Pre-empt difficulties that may arise and have strategies in place to manage, for example, allowing staff to have a break after a difficult meeting.
3. If you are aware of specific individual circumstances, it may be helpful to create a support plan with the employee so that there are agreed strategies in place.
4. Model maintaining a positive emotionally healthy work-life balance and encourage employees to do the same.

4.4 SELF AGENCY: PROMOTING EMPLOYEE AUTONOMY AND INVOLVEMENT

Autonomy in the workplace is “the condition or quality of being self governing or free from excessive external control” (Jermier and Michaels 2001). As outlined in chapter 3, autonomy is linked with many workplace outcomes, including mental health, wellbeing, performance and productivity.

Employers and line managers can promote self agency and autonomy in the workplace in the following ways.

Ensuring employees have some degree of choice over aspects of their work. A key way to promote autonomy at work is by enabling employees to have some degree of choice over both their working hours and how they manage their workload, within an agreed structure of goals and outputs.

Employee voice. Being involved in decision-making processes and empowered to question how and why choices are being made is another important factor in determining good emotional health at work. A further enabler for employee engagement identified by Engage for Success is employee voice. Key findings from a review of the international evidence relating to mental health and employment (Robinson et al 2013) highlighted the significance of the role played by participatory processes. These are associated with increased perceptions of control amongst the labour force, improved levels of support, and a sense of justice; all of which are important ‘moderator’ dimensions of stress. Employee involvement also ensures that employees understand the reasoning behind and have “bought in” to the decisions that are made.

A positive example of this is a case study from the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (2016) of a company making orthopaedic equipment. A manager described how:

“It would be so easy for me to walk in and say, ‘This is what we’re going to do’, and implement it, but as soon as I walk away, [the supervisor and the team] have to keep that going, and if they’ve had no input into it, they don’t feel as though they own it. That’s where we pass it over to them: ‘Guys, this is what we need. How are you going to get there, how are you going to deliver that?’ That’s where you get the buy-in and that’s where when you walk away from it, it still remains in place.”

Trust and responsibility. Autonomy is strongly linked to feeling trusted; having little or no opportunity to exercise autonomy may lead to employees feeling that they aren’t trusted or perceived as competent by their line managers. Trust has repeatedly been found to relate to many attitudinal and behavioural work consequences including organisational commitment, job satisfaction, and performance (Dirks and Ferrin 2002). Findings from the ESS reported in chapter 2 demonstrated that being trusted and given responsibility to fulfil work tasks independently is associated with higher levels of enthusiasm for what people do.

Leadership style. Although certain contexts may require specific leadership styles, the general picture emerging through research is that a collaborative leadership approach, which enables autonomy and participation, has greater benefits for employee wellbeing and workplace outcomes than directive styles.

Recommendations for organisations

1. Train supervisors and line managers to enable autonomy of their staff within a structure of agreed boundaries.
2. Consider conducting a regular survey/audit assessing how employees are feeling about various aspects of their working life, including their wellbeing, job satisfaction, and extent to which they feel valued and supported. Share findings and act on any feedback.
3. Create opportunities for employee voice and ensure that *all* employees are able to share their thoughts, regardless of their level or role.

Recommendations for line managers

1. Provide employees with choice, within the context of a shared vision and shared goals. This might involve offering choice in *processes*; for example, deciding how a project is completed or the order in which tasks are accomplished.
2. Where possible, enable employees to have some degree of flexibility over their working hours or choice over their working patterns.

4.5 BELIEFS ABOUT OTHERS: CREATING A PSYCHOLOGICALLY SAFE CULTURE

Feeling able to contribute ideas and to be accepted within a team or workplace is essential for ensuring employees feel psychologically safe. When they have a sense of psychological safety, employees are more likely to form close relationships with colleagues, take risks and opportunities and be more engaged (Idris et al 2015; Carmeli et al 2014).

Employers and line managers can create a psychologically safe culture in the workplace in the following ways.

Zero Tolerance and a culture of acceptance. A fundamental way of supporting employees to feel psychologically safe is to ensure there is a zero tolerance approach to workplace bullying, discrimination and harassment. It is important to have clear policies and procedures in place to respond to these issues.

Welcome learning from mistakes and “failures”. Part of a psychologically safe culture is feeling able to share mistakes and things that didn't work honestly, without feeling the need to hide them or be defensive. Linking in with self awareness, mistakes or things not going so well can be powerful opportunities for learning and development if dealt with in the right way. This encourages creativity and risk-taking. Organisations should create a culture where employees are guided and supported to learn from mistakes, rather than being judged or criticised.

Building trusting relationships. Forming trusting relationships with colleagues helps create a supportive culture. The key relationship is between line manager and employee but relationships between colleagues in teams and between teams are also important. If line managers have trusting relationships with their employees, this will support the development of trusting relationships within teams.

Recommendations for organisations

1. Ensure there are clear policies and strategies in place to tackle workplace bullying, discrimination and harassment.
2. Foster a culture of acceptance and support, and ensure this is modelled by all leaders. Prioritise relationship building across the organisation.
3. Train line managers in guiding without criticism to help them create a sense of psychological safety within their team.

Recommendations for line managers

1. Build trusting relationships within your team and with supervisees so that mistakes are not hidden, but shared honestly without fear of criticism or shame. Model a healthy approach to mistakes and ‘failure’, and encourage staff to take risks and stretch themselves.
2. Avoid open criticism and judgement – instead, offer guidance and support.
3. Model acceptance of others and respect differences and mistakes. This will help create a positive culture within your team.

4.6 SOCIAL AWARENESS: CREATING A COMPASSIONATE WORKPLACE

Social awareness, including empathy and compassion, are important for building positive relationships within the workplace and for providing support.

Employers and line managers can create a psychologically safe culture in the workplace by undertaking the following.

Training staff, in particular line managers, on how to use empathy and model empathic communication across the organisation. Goleman (2006) states that empathy is “the foundation skill for all social competencies important for work”. While empathy is important for all employees, it is a critical skill for effective leadership. Line manager empathy has been shown to predict employee wellbeing (Scott et al 2014).

Creating a compassionate workplace by modelling compassion to others. Compassion is defined as a genuine desire to help others founded in empathy. Research has shown the many benefits of compassion in the workplace. For example, staff who perceived a higher level of compassion from colleagues and leadership had higher levels of job satisfaction, improved wellbeing and higher commitment to their workplace. In addition to benefitting others, giving support can improve employees’ emotional wellbeing, and promote friendship and trust with colleagues. Showing compassion can be as simple as making a colleague a hot drink or asking how an important presentation went as well as giving time to listen.

Recommendations for organisations

1. Promote an understanding of the importance of empathy through professional development and staff training.
2. Create a compassionate culture where colleagues are able to confide in and support each other. This can be achieved through leadership modelling.

Recommendations for line managers

1. Model empathy and compassion across interactions with your team.
2. Support staff to be empathic towards other members of their team. This may be a beneficial strategy for resolving differences between staff.

4.7 RELATIONSHIP SKILLS: BUILDING POSITIVE RELATIONSHIPS ACROSS ALL ASPECTS OF THE ORGANISATION

Relationships are central to all aspects of the workplace. This includes relationships within teams, between line managers and supervisees, and with external agencies. In addition to impacting on wellbeing and performance, positive relationships can be essential foundations for managing change and navigating difficulties. Dutton (2006) highlights the importance of high quality relationships with colleagues and thriving at work.

Employers and line managers can foster positive relationships in the workplace in the following ways.

Prioritise building relationships across all aspects of the workplace. Many of the recommendations outlined above are founded on positive relationships; in particular, being able to feel psychologically safe and to show compassion to others is dependent on positive relationships with colleagues. The relationship between line manager and employee is also pivotal to effectively support the emotional health assets, including self awareness, self beliefs and self agency. Organisations should recognise the value of relationships and ensure there is time and space dedicated to building and maintaining relationships, both within and between teams, and between line manager and supervisee.

Provide explicit relationships training for all staff. Klaus (2010) cites evidence which shows that companies are placing increasingly higher value on employees' interpersonal skills, often viewing them as more important than analytical abilities. Explicit training in relationship skills may have a range of benefits for staff. Communication skills, including active listening, assertive communication and conflict resolution are essential skills, and not only help employees to build positive relationships but also impact on performance.

Recommendations for practice

1. Prioritise relationships across all aspects of the workplace: within teams, between line managers and supervisees, and with external agencies.
2. Provide teams with effective and practical strategies for conflict resolution and have these modelled by leadership. Offer all staff training in relationship skills that are relevant to their role.

Recommendations for line managers

1. Prioritise relationships across all aspects of the workplace: within teams, between line managers and supervisees, and with external agencies.
2. Provide teams with effective and practical strategies for conflict resolution and have these modelled by leadership.

Enabling factors for emotional health support

The above practices will directly support good emotional health in the workplace. However, there are a number of enabling factors detailed below which are pivotal in promoting an emotionally healthy culture.

4.8 EFFECTIVE LEADERSHIP

As demonstrated in some of the examples outlined above, leadership plays a pivotal role in creating an emotionally healthy culture and modelling emotionally healthy practices. It also plays a crucial role in creating workplace policies and procedure, and setting boundaries and expectations. It is therefore essential that leaders are committed to supporting emotional health across the organisation and have the required skills and knowledge.

Recommendations for practice

1. Ensure support for the leadership's own emotional health, for example through supervision, as well as opportunities for the leadership team to reflect and support one another. Offer training for all line managers in skills for building positive relationships with and within their teams. Focus on skills such as empathy, managing conflict, effective praise, and guiding without criticism.
2. Ensure line managers are modelling the emotionally healthy practices outlined above, including having a positive work-life integration.

4.9 CULTURE AND VALUES

Broadly speaking, the culture in a workplace is the outward, practical manifestation of organisational values and ethos characterised by how people operate alongside one another on a day-to-day basis. It is likely to be shaped by policies and practice, driven by the leadership team and senior management (whose example will influence the organisation), and embodied in the granularity of how employees work together. Workplace culture is often considered to be the 'black box' which impacts on the wellbeing and emotional health of individuals within an organisation.

Smith and Diedricks (2016) identified a dual approach to human resource management.

- A 'hard' approach which regards individuals as a **resource** and uses measurable metrics, such as performance management and rewards, aligned with business strategies and HR policy and practice to guide employment relationship within a legal framework.
- Human **relations** – described as the 'soft' approach, which holds that organisational culture and relationship building cannot be achieved through prescription. The tools of human relations are surveys and interviews on staff satisfaction; training and development.

This highlights the need for emotional health to be supported both through explicit policies and procedures, and through the culture created through relationships and social interactions. Having a named set of values which are embedded within the ethos of the workplace can be a valuable tool for creating a positive culture.

Recommendations for practice

- Have a set of clear, communicated values for your organisation and for your team.
- Enable employee voice to contribute to the values of the organisation and the extent to which the values are effectively implemented across the organisation.

- Regularly review organisational policies and practices and ensure they support the emotional health assets, as well as supporting good mental health and wellbeing.
- Ensure these values are embedded within culture, policy and practices and modelled by leadership.

4.10 A WHOLE ORGANISATION ORGANISATION APPROACH TO EMOTIONAL HEALTH

On the basis of the findings in the above sections, a ‘whole-organisation approach’ is the best way to improve the emotional health of individuals and organisations. It is the **dynamic interaction** of the different assets of emotional health that produce and influence outcomes. Therefore, to have maximum impact for both individuals and organisations, interventions designed to improve emotional health at work should target *all* the constituent assets, at both an individual and organisational level. Adopting a whole-system approach to emotional health relates to one of the key challenges facing researchers and policy-makers: how to sustain impact. This approach will encourage deeper levels of change within an organisation, including cultural shifts, which are more likely to have lasting impacts.

The evidence and recommendations presented above suggest that an approach of this kind has the following key features.

TABLE 4.1
Principles for a whole-organisation approach

Training and skill development of all employees	Ensuring ‘good work’ for all employees
Provision should be in place for employees (including leadership) to develop each of the emotional health assets and cultivate their intra and interpersonal skills. This could be through explicit training or through reflection during supervision and target setting during performance reviews.	All employees should have “good work” which supports each of the emotional health assets. This includes work which is meaningful and allows opportunities for learning and development, fostering positive self beliefs, as well as work which enables choice and autonomy, encouraging self agency.
Creating an emotionally healthy environment	Leadership commitment
<p>Policies and procedures: Workplace policies and procedures support and promote good emotional health for employees (e.g. tackling workplace bullying, flexible working, reward schemes).</p> <p>Strategic narrative: Workplaces have a named set of values in place to support an emotionally healthy culture. Employees (including leadership) are clear about the roles they play in creating an emotionally healthy culture and working as part of an emotionally healthy team.</p> <p>Employee voice: There are opportunities for employees to express their feelings and opinions, and contribute to decision-making processes.</p> <p>Culture: Emotionally healthy practices are embedded within the culture and values of the organisation. Day to day interactions should support healthy self beliefs, empower others, and be founded on building positive relationships.</p>	<p>Leadership: Leaders are committed to creating an emotionally healthy workplace and supporting the emotional and mental health of employees. They model emotionally healthy practices, shaping the organisational culture.</p> <p>Ongoing monitoring and reflection: Leadership continually monitor and reflect on emotional health, using employee voice to consider the thoughts and feelings of the workforce.</p>

Source: Family Links: The Centre for Emotional Health (2017)

Recommendations for practice

1. Adopt a whole organisation approach to emotional health, ensuring emotional health and wellbeing pervade all aspects of the workplace and are supported across policies, procedures and leadership

There is a need to take an individualised approach to different organisations in order to really listen and hear what the issues are and be able to respond appropriately. Having a positive influence on the emotional health of an organisation will not be possible to achieve by implementing a tick-box approach to a list of interventions, but will be dependent on the specific workplace context and needs.

4.11 CHAPTER SUMMARY: PRACTICE RECOMMENDATIONS

- Recommendations are presented for a range of workplace practices which support each of the seven emotional health assets, at both an individual and organisational level.
- Support should be targeted at each of the emotional health assets:
 - **self beliefs:** ensuring employees feel valued in their contributions
 - **self awareness:** encouraging reflective practice
 - **self regulation:** supporting healthy self regulation in the workplace
 - **self agency:** promoting employee autonomy and involvement
 - **beliefs about others:** creating a psychologically safe culture
 - **social awareness:** fostering a compassionate workplace
 - **relationships:** building positive relationships across all aspects of the organisation.
- While supporting each of the seven assets is important, there are enabling features of an organisation which facilitate good emotional health across an organisation. These include the organisational culture and values, and commitment from leadership.
- It is therefore necessary to adopt a whole organisation approach to emotional health which includes four key features:
 - training and skill development
 - ensuring good work
 - creating an emotionally healthy environment (including through policies, practices and culture)
 - leadership commitment.
- An individualised approach should be taken across different organisations, as emotional health support will be dependent on the specific workplace context and needs.

5.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The overwhelming picture from the evidence presented in this report is that good emotional health can have huge benefits both for individuals and for the organisations they are working in. This suggests that there is a strong business case, for supporting the emotional health of individuals and embedding emotionally healthy policies and practices throughout organisations of different sizes and in different sectors.

Organisations of all sizes and in all sectors are increasingly looking to find ways to support the mental health and wellbeing of their workforces. This is largely due to a desire to enhance workplace outcomes such as productivity and performance, and reduce the costs associated with presenteeism, absence and turnover. While targeted and tailored approaches, such as Mental Health First Aid, are popular and necessary interventions in this space, there is evidence of demand among employees for more training on how to *prevent* the emergence of work-related mental health problems and *promote* positive mental health and wellbeing at work. Findings from Deloitte (2017) suggest that universal mental health support targeted at the whole organisation reaps the greatest return on investment. Supporting emotional health offers a universal, preventative approach to mental health and wellbeing.

Secondary analysis of the European Social Survey revealed several key areas which should be a priority for the UK workforce. Firstly, promoting supportive relationships within the workplace. Secondly, ensuring that workplaces and the nature of employees' work supports, rather than undermines, positive self beliefs. Finally, equipping employees with skills to cope with difficult situations. This could include skills around managing conflict or self regulation strategies.

The existing literature and evidence base suggests a high level of consensus on the extent to which the seven assets of emotional health add value for both individuals and organisations. Repeatedly, across the literature from different disciplines – including meta-analyses and systematic reviews – these concepts chimed with findings of what is important at both an individual and organisational level (Smith and Diedricks 2016; Ausberger et al 2012).

Although the above evidence indicates that supporting emotional health at work can lead to a range of outcomes within the workplace, it is also likely that emotional health support will have a positive impact on life outside of the workplace; for example, within family relationships. This in turn may support and promote positive emotional health and wellbeing in the workplace.

5.1 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ORGANISATIONS

There are a range of practices which support each of the emotional health assets and emotional health as a whole. There are, however, also a number of other important features which will need to be in place in order for training on emotional health to be effective. These include commitment, involvement and direction from senior leadership; high levels of awareness and engagement among employees; and embedding training within wider organisational policies, procedures and systems

(such as line management and responding to sickness absence). Unless it forms one part of a wider, all-encompassing strategy to improve employee mental health and wellbeing (and therefore improve key workplace outcomes), training on emotional health alone is unlikely to achieve lasting change.

Organisations should therefore adopt a whole organisation approach to emotional health, ensuring emotional health and wellbeing pervade all aspects of the workplace and are supported across policies, procedures and leadership. This will be facilitated by the following.

- **Training and skill development:** While the recent Stevenson Farmer report (2017) highlights the role of the employer in supporting good mental health and wellbeing, targeting skills training at an individual employee level (linked to the emotional health assets) can equip them with the necessary skills to manage and promote their own mental health and wellbeing, in addition to providing support for their colleagues. This will help create an organic shift in culture which is likely to result in longer lasting changes.
- **Ensuring good work:** All employees should have ‘good work’ that supports each of the emotional health assets, including fostering positive self beliefs and having a sense of choice and autonomy.
- **Creating an emotionally healthy environment:** The emotional health of employees can be supported through an emotionally healthy environment. This is created through the daily policies, practices and culture of an organisation, including having a clear strategic narrative and opportunities for employee voice.
- **Leadership commitment:** It is essential that leaders and supervisors within an organisation are committed to supporting the emotional health of their organisation. Training leaders in the various emotional health assets will ensure they have the necessary skills to model emotionally healthy practices and nurture the emotional health of their supervisees and team.

TABLE 5.1

Supporting the emotional assets through a whole-organisation approach

Training and skill development	
Self beliefs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Confidence building • Self compassion
Self awareness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Self awareness • Mindfulness
Self regulation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stress management • Managing difficult emotions • Self motivation
Self agency	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Growth mindset • Problem solving and effective decision making
Beliefs about others	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Equality and diversity • Discrimination awareness
Social awareness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Empathy • Equality and diversity; cultural awareness
Relationship skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assertive communication • Conflict resolution • Communication skills
Ensuring ‘good work’	
Self beliefs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Opportunities for learning • Task variety and appropriate level of challenge • Meaningful work • Appropriate rewards/job benefits

Self awareness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Opportunities and space to reflect within day-to-day work
Self regulation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Appropriate physical and emotional demands from work
Self agency	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Autonomy over aspects of work e.g. order of tasks, methods etc.
Beliefs about others	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Feeling safe to take risks and make mistakes
Social awareness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Capacity to form positive relationships and have healthy interactions within role
Relationship skills	
Creating an emotionally healthy environment	
Self beliefs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensuring employees feel valued through culture of gratitude, praise and reward • Clear strategic narrative so employees understand their role
Self awareness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reflective practice embedded across all levels of an organisation
Self regulation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Line managers have skills to discuss and support employees • Specific provisions in place if needed e.g. counselling, support group, peer mentor, buddying scheme etc. • Positive work-life integration encouraged and modelled by leadership
Self agency	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Flexible working arrangements • Opportunities for employee voice • Leadership styles which enable autonomy
Beliefs about others	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Psychologically safe culture, free from bullying or discrimination • Accepting culture – embraces differences • Trusting relationships between line manager and employee and within teams
Social awareness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Compassionate culture • Line managers are highly empathic
Relationship skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Healthy approach to conflict resolution modelled through leadership • Effective communication
Leadership commitment	
Self beliefs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Using effective praise and guidance to motivate employees • Building a culture of gratitude within teams • Ensuring a clear strategic narrative within your team
Self awareness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Supporting staff to reflect during supervision/performance reviews • Building opportunities for team reflection
Self regulation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensuring open communication with staff about difficulties and current mental health/wellbeing • Creating opportunities for staff to use healthy self regulation strategies after difficult situations • Modelling and encouraging healthy work/life integration
Self agency	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Allowing employees to have autonomy over aspects of their workload • Creating opportunities for employee voice and allowing your team to input to key discussions, including input into policies and practices.
Beliefs about others	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Modelling tolerance and acceptance • Ensuring bullying/discrimination is dealt with to create a zero tolerance culture • Guiding without criticism • Listening and being open to different ideas
Social awareness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Modelling empathy • Modelling compassion, particularly during difficult situations
Relationship skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Model healthy communication within teams • Support staff to resolve conflict in healthy ways by using assertive rather than aggressive communication

Source: Family Links: The Centre for Emotional Health (2017)

5.2 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR POLICY

To implement the Mental Health Core Standards identified in the Stevenson

Farmer Review: While the core standards identified by Stevenson and Farmer were written from a mental health perspective, many of them relate to emotional health. Equipping *all* employees, but in particular line managers, with the skills and tools to support their own mental health and that of others, and ensuring ‘good work’ that supports the emotional health assets will improve emotional health at both an individual and organisational level. This is an important preventative approach for mental ill-health. However, in order to achieve this, government should also examine evidence on the effectiveness of preventative forms of training (including training on emotional health) and its potential impact on key workplace outcomes.

Policy direction boosting the social and emotional competencies – and emotional health – of the UK workforce: Findings from secondary analysis of the ESS suggests that the UK workforce is lacking key skills in relation to self regulation and relationship skills. The development of social emotional competencies and the emotional health assets should begin during compulsory education and should receive higher precedence within the national curriculum. These skills should continue to be cultivated during employment and be an ongoing focus of training, skill development and performance reviews.

Policy direction boosting emotional health at work through improving job quality:

The findings in this report underline the importance of the new ‘job quality’ agenda, which aims to introduce measures of the quality, as well as quantity, of employment. Jobs which satisfy key criteria relating to quality are more likely to help develop the seven assets which collectively contribute to the emotional health of individuals and organisations, such as self agency and self belief. To this end, the government should establish a new national mission to boost job quality and workplace performance. The Department for Work and Pensions should move beyond simply reporting on the employment rate, and report also on the quality of work. The promotion and protection of mental health and wellbeing should be a key component in measures of job quality, which should also include task factors, employment factors, and relational and governance factors (Dromey et al 2017).

Policy direction boosting emotional health at work through increased worker voice and autonomy:

The findings in this report reinforce the importance of autonomy and voice in the workplace. However, the UK currently has one of the worst records on workplace participation in Europe, inhibiting the extent to which worker voice can become a central part of the UK economic model. In order to boost worker voice and autonomy, with a view to improving the emotional health of the UK workforce, every company with over 50 employees should have a ‘working life forum’. This would help to ensure that employees have sufficient influence over their working lives, and would provide employees with a voice through which to maintain high levels of emotional health at work. (Lawrence and McNeil 2014).

5.3 LIMITATIONS AND NEXT STEPS

While the research outlined above implicates the importance of supporting emotional health within the workplace, it is also clear that knowledge on how to operationalise these assets into good emotional health for both people and organisations is not yet widespread. We cannot take a tick-box approach to emotional health, and must take into account a multitude of contextual factors, both at an individual and organisational level.

It remains to be seen how an whole organisation approach to emotional health would be implemented across different organisational contexts. However, the evidence described in this report suggests it has the potential to be a measurable,

evidence-based framework to improve employee mental health and wellbeing at work, and impact on outcomes such as productivity and team relationships. This is particularly important within the context of the growing number of wellbeing initiatives targeted at employers, many of which lack a strong foundation in research and robust evidence. Evaluating the impact of emotional health training and support, and assessing return on investment will be an important priority for workplaces implementing emotional health approaches. However, many of the emotional health assets and related skills targeted during training and intervention may be difficult to measure.

In order to continue to expand the evidence-base on emotional health, next steps should be to:

- examine extent to which emotional health can be influenced by intervention, including training for line managers and training for staff
- explore the direction of causality between emotional health of individuals and psychosocial characteristics of the workplace, identifying key features of 'good work'
- identify effective ways to evaluate emotional health in the workplace.

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