

## Key Findings

This report identified various topics as prominently featured in the focus group discussions. Below are the key findings included in this report:

### 1. Recruitment and retention of staff:

- It was found that organisations which had a strategy and supports in place on health and wellbeing found it easier to recruit and retain staff.
- Potential employees consider an organisation's health and wellbeing strategy before joining an organisation.
- It helps SMEs compete better for employees if they have a strong strategy for health and wellbeing.

### 2. Awareness:

- Participants, on average, rated themselves at a 7.3 out of 10 on the importance of health and wellbeing in the workplace.
- 85% of participants were aware of Healthy Ireland and their activities.
- 45% of participants mentioned engaging with a framework or support from another organisation other than Healthy Ireland.

### 3. Age Demographics:

- Age affects the knowledge and engagement of staff. Young employees (less than 35) are more likely to be aware of the importance of Health and Wellbeing and are more likely to engage in conversations within work settings on it.
- Generational differences in views on health and wellbeing mean that different approaches must be taken in dealing with various issues.
- Today's Employees are more open to discussing mental health issues, want to eat more nutritious meals and care more about being mindful than in the past.
- Understanding and addressing the needs of younger employees in the health and wellbeing space is essential to avoid burnout or staff turnover.

### 4. Employee Assistance Programmes:

- Take-up levels on EAP programmes are less than 10%.
- Varying levels of awareness and utilisation of EAPs.
- The emphasis on confidentiality as a critical issue underscores the importance of trust in the workplace. Employees must feel comfortable seeking help without fear of privacy breaches.
- All businesses must clearly outline the confidentiality measures for EAPs to increase the service's trust and usage.
- Smaller companies are less likely to have an EAP programme in place.

#### 5. Training and Supports for Businesses on Health and Wellbeing:

- Adequate training is essential for promoting mental wellbeing at work. Upskilling and retraining further boost job performance and alleviates self-doubt among employees.
- Participants wanted Healthy Ireland to offer a place where employers could read case studies to help them learn more about what they could offer to their employees in this regard.
- The smallest companies spend on health and wellbeing on an ad-hoc basis.

#### 6. Communication and Culture:

- Communication and culture within the organisations were paramount to the success of businesses dealing with health and wellbeing.
- Participants often stressed their difficulty maintaining good communication and wanted to create a better organisational culture.
- Workplace culture suffered during and following the pandemic.

Participants gave the following reasons for this:

1. Remote working leads to less interaction among employees.
2. Employees are working in isolated situations.
3. New staff are not incorporated into employment teams as easily.
4. There is no longer a support structure for new employees to learn in the role.

5. Employees are reporting higher levels of workload and burnout.

- Communication and culture are a top-down approach and requires staff at all levels to participate in initiatives that support a healthy working environment.
- Diverse views were expressed on how to handle various workplace situations. While some preferred involving third-party support for struggling employees, others stressed the importance of direct conversations.
- Participants expressed challenges in dealing with difficult situations and knowing how to support employees. There was also fear from employers regarding overstepping boundaries, such as saying something that may be deemed offensive or which exposed the company to legal action.
- There was a worry that employees didn't trust employers to do things confidentially.
- There is still a stigma surrounding mental health; participants expressed their desire to address these common issues.

7. Further Supports:

- Discuss policies, legislation, costs, and funding related to health and wellbeing initiatives.
- There were suggestions for a national wellbeing hub and training programmes.
- Support is needed around implementing facility changes, accessibility, and employee feedback.
- Participants lacked proper training in utilising survey feedback effectively.

