

# Rising demand for health cover

Grappling with a workforce sickness epidemic and long NHS waiting times

With 2.81 million people in the UK now away from work due to long-term sickness, ensuring employers offer comprehensive health benefits is becoming increasingly critical. This approach is essential for preventing employees from becoming too ill to work, as well as for attracting and retaining staff in a competitive job market. By providing the right health coverage, companies can support their workforce's wellbeing, leading to higher productivity and job satisfaction.

Young employees, mainly those aged 18-34, drive the increasing need for workplace health support. Research indicates that 78% of young workers find health cover crucial, and 64% consider it their most significant benefit, starkly contrasting with the 46% of those over 55 who feel the same<sup>[1]</sup>.

Moreover, 71% of younger workers would hesitate to switch jobs if health coverage wasn't provided, highlighting its importance in career decisions. Additionally, 66% of this demographic believe that having health benefits would reduce sick days by enabling quicker access to healthcare professionals, thus promoting a healthier, more resilient workforce.

## IMPACT ON EMPLOYEE WELLBEING AND PRODUCTIVITY

Including comprehensive health benefits can significantly enhance employee wellbeing and overall productivity. By facilitating easier access to medical care, employees are less likely to experience prolonged periods of illness, allowing them to maintain consistent work attendance and performance.

This support is particularly crucial for younger employees who place high value on health benefits and are more likely to consider these benefits when evaluating job opportunities. Consequently, employers who invest in comprehensive health cover demonstrate their commitment to employee welfare and position themselves as attractive employers in the talent market.

## EXPECTATIONS AND EMPLOYER RESPONSE

Employers are beginning to notice this shift in expectations. Three out of ten firms report that job candidates' expectations for health cover are

rising. When health cover is provided, employers observe a 37% increase in satisfaction and a 33% boost in productivity. The data clearly highlights the significant impact health benefits have on both employee morale and overall business efficiency.

## MENTAL HEALTH A GROWING CONCERN

Mental health has emerged as a crucial element of workplace wellbeing, particularly for younger workers. Research shows that 76% of younger employees believe that health insurance improves their productivity, and 71% have taken time off for mental health reasons, compared to just 32% of older workers. Alarming, 71% of younger UK workers reported experiencing anxiety in the previous year, compared to 32% of those over 55.

## ADDRESSING THE MENTAL HEALTH CHALLENGE

As a result, 33% of employers now see rising mental health days as a major challenge. Younger workers no longer view health benefits as a bonus; instead, they expect them as a standard part of their employment package. This shift in perception underscores the urgent need for comprehensive health benefits in the workplace.

## THE NEED FOR ACCESSIBLE HEALTH COVER

The UK continues to grapple with a workforce sickness epidemic and long NHS waiting times. In this context, providing affordable and accessible health cover at work has never been more important. Employers who wish to attract and retain top talent, maintain a healthy workforce and

enhance business productivity must recognise the importance of offering health cover. ■

## DO YOU WANT TO DISCUSS COMPREHENSIVE HEALTH BENEFITS?

As the landscape of workplace health continues to evolve, employers must adapt by offering comprehensive health benefits. This not only supports employee wellbeing but also drives productivity and satisfaction. If you require further information, please contact us.

### Source data:

[1] Opinion research on behalf of Simplyhealth throughout May and June 2024. The first surveyed 500 HR decision makers across UK businesses, while the second surveyed 2,000 employees with a minimum of 100 respondents across business services, construction, manufacturing, professional education, hospitality and leisure, transport, retail, food and drink, and healthcare. 2.81 million not working due to long-term sickness in the UK in July 2024, according to ONS figures.

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