

Leading benchmark on workplace mental health in UK finds “revealing” gap between leaders and laggards

1 year ago



The publication of the [2024 CCLA Corporate Mental Health Benchmark – UK 100](#), shows just over one in four (24) of the UK’s largest listed employers have improved their tier performance on workplace mental health in the past year – to the implied benefit of a combined one million employees.

Six firms (BT Group, Centrica, Entain, Experian, J Sainsbury, Serco Group) lead the way on workplace mental health by ranking in the top tier of the benchmark. For example, all six leaders provide access to multiple mental health support services, provide mental health training to line managers and publish a CEO commitment on workplace mental health.

Investors and policymakers are increasingly concerned about the cost of mental health issues to the UK economy. An NHS-commissioned study this year estimated annual economic losses due to poor mental health come to around [£110 billion](#) in England alone, while latest [Office for National Statistics](#) figures show a 31% rise in the number of UK workers economically inactive due to mental health illnesses since 2019. In total [54 investors](#), with a combined \$9.4 trillion in assets under management, are supporting engagement efforts on workplace mental health.

Now in its third year the award-winning CCLA Corporate Mental Health Benchmark – UK 100, led by CCLA Investment Management, ranks 101 UK-listed companies, covering 4.9 million workers, on how they manage and report on workplace mental health.

Amy Browne, Stewardship Lead, CCLA and co-author of the benchmark report said: “The significant increase in engagement on this topic since 2023 suggests a growing awareness by companies of poor

mental health as a business risk, with many informally citing talent acquisition and retention as a key driver.

“Importantly, this year’s benchmark demonstrates that the most progressive companies are making concerted efforts to get ahead on mental health. The results show a revealing and widening gap between the leaders and the slow-moving majority. Seven companies made it into tiers 1 and 2 for the first time in 2024, with one in five now ranked in the top two performance tiers. This should be celebrated.

“However, there remains concern about the lack of progress in companies at the bottom of the tier rankings. Employees deserve better from their employers.”

Sarah Hughes, Chief Executive Officer at Mind, said: “With many of us spending so much of our time at work, mentally healthy workplaces are a crucial component to creating a mentally healthy nation. I’m heartened to see workplace mental health remains on the business agenda.

“That’s why the CCLA Mental Health benchmark is such a valuable resource which helps us understand the performance of companies on workplace mental health, and most importantly, allow employers to evaluate their current practices and identify areas for improvement.

“Together we can foster positive and open cultures, role model behaviours, and make an unequivocal commitment to staff. If we get this right, more and more people will be able to thrive at work.”

The 2024 benchmark’s findings this year show both encouraging progress and areas of poor performance among the 101 UK companies analysed.

Areas of encouragement

- Mental health as a business issue: 93% of UK companies acknowledge mental health as important business issue. 96% invest in some level of mental health support services for employees.
- Growing number of leaders: 20 UK companies rank in the top two performance tiers, suggesting 1.5 million employees work for businesses with a mature strategic approach to mental health. This is a rise from 8 companies in 2022. Six companies qualify for the top tier, up from four in 2023.
- Overall progress: 24 companies improved performance on mental health this year to increase their tier ranking.
- Multi-year improvement: ‘Trend’ companies (those 89 companies that have been consistently assessed by the benchmark since 2022) have seen their combined overall average score increase from 35% in 2022 to 42% in 2024. Just over one in four ‘trend’ companies (24 of 89 companies) have improved by 10% points or more since 2022”
- Biggest movers: 24 companies moved up a tier this year with Glencore, Entain, Imperial Brands and BT Group being the top improvers, increasing their individual company scores by over 15 percentage points.
- Financial wellness: 49% of companies published a formal policy explicitly acknowledging the link between financial wellbeing and mental health, up from 26% in 2022. This 23 percentage points increase is the most marked increase across the benchmark’s 27 performance indicators since 2022.

Areas of attention

- Worst performers: 19 companies (19%) are in the bottom ‘Tier 5’ ranking. This means they are at

the start of the journey to adopt a formal approach to workplace mental health management and disclosure.

- Line manager training: Just 44% of companies report on the provision of mental health training to line managers – manager training was identified by the World Health Organization as a key intervention for companies to support worker mental wellbeing. This figure is down from 50% in 2023. More encouragingly, 60% of companies provide training to mental health first aiders or other individuals with dedicated responsibilities for mental health.
- Objectives & targets: Only 35% of companies publish clear mental health-related objectives and targets. Good practice examples include J Sainsbury which publishes a timebound goal to train all line managers in mental health awareness, and Glencore which has a target for all offices to have an employee assistance programme in place to support emotional and psychological wellbeing.

Sector by sector results

- Of the five largest sectors in the UK 100 benchmark, the Financials sector performs the strongest. This sector achieved an overall average score of 53% compared with the benchmark average of 41%.
- The Consumer Discretionary sector (i.e. firms selling products/services that consumers want but, don't necessarily need) is the worst performing sector.
- The average score for firms in the 'Materials' (38%), 'Industrials' (37%) and 'Consumer Discretionary' (32%) sectors are all below the benchmark average (41%).

Remi Fernandez, Manager, Human Rights, Social and Governance Issues, UN Principles for Responsible Investment and member of the expert advisory panel for the CCLA Corporate Mental Health Benchmark UK 100 said: "Poor mental health is thought to cost the economy over **£100 billion** a year in England alone. This benchmark helps investors to see what emerging best practice in workplace mental health looks like, and to see which companies are performing well or require improvements. It's particularly encouraging to see the benchmark itself driving improvements, with just over one in four companies that have been consistently assessed since 2022 improving their performance by 10% points or more since then."

Prerana Issar, Chief People Officer, Sainsbury's, said: "Our colleagues are at the heart of everything we do and we're committed to making sure that they have access to mental, physical and wellbeing support across all aspects of life. We're proud to be the first and only retailer to qualify for the top tier of UK benchmarks for workplace mental health practices this year as we know that having engaged and supported colleagues is critical to the long-term success of our business and delivering on our purpose to make good food joyful, accessible and affordable to all."

Peter Hugh Smith, CCLA's Chief Executive said: "Enlightened investors can increasingly see the value of robust support for workplace mental health, whether that be decreased absenteeism or increased staff retention. The doubling of the number of firms in the top tiers of mental health performance over the last three years is not only good news for workers at those companies but it also clearly shows the power of the investment community to push companies to improve and drive positive change. As we align with the new era of sustainable disclosure regulations, CCLA's Corporate Mental Health Benchmark demonstrates that persistent and consistent investor engagement really can deliver a better world."

The sister benchmark to the UK 100, the Global 100+, will be released on 10 October 2024.