

Only 36% of employees relocating abroad are fully prepared for the new way of living

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In [Towergate Employee Benefits'](#) extensive research across UK companies of all sizes, 79% stated they have relocated employees abroad. Yet the research shows a concerning lack of preparation, with only just over a third (36%) fully prepared for the new way of living.

Sarah Dennis, head of international at Towergate Employee Benefits, says: "Working abroad is very different to taking a holiday, an entirely different level of preparation is required. If things go wrong, the employee's health and wellbeing may suffer, the overseas assignment may fail, and the emotional, physical and financial costs could be huge."

In which aspects employees are most prepared

- 41% of employers feel their employees relocating abroad are fully prepared for the new environment, such as schooling and banking.
- 39% believe employees are fully prepared for the change in culture, such as the different customs, laws and religions they may encounter.
- 36% feel employees are fully prepared for the new way of living, including the potential isolation from friends and family that they may feel.
- 32% believe employees are fully prepared for the climate, including the potential effect on health and wellbeing of living in a hotter or cooler climate.

A lack of preparedness in one area can impact the other areas of working abroad, and employers need to ensure that all aspects of the relocation are covered. While some of the responsibility for being prepared for working abroad could be argued to rest with the employee, the employer has a duty of care and a responsibility towards employees. The research therefore looked at what employers are doing to prepare their employees for overseas assignments:

How employers prepare their employees

- 48% provide training and support for line managers to help them support their staff when relocating from their home country
- 46% deliver in-country training for an employee once they are abroad
- 39% provide support for employees throughout their assignment to help them
- 37% provide one-to-one training for staff before they re-locate

While all of these are positive steps to implement in helping to ensure employees are prepared for working abroad, there is more that can be done.

How employers should prepare employees

Employees need support not just before taking on an overseas assignment but also during and after relocation. Their families may need support too, and this is the case whether they accompany the employee or not.

As with all health and wellbeing support, employers must make sure they are covering all four pillars of wellbeing – physical, mental, social and financial. Indeed, the research shows that employees feel unprepared across all four pillars, with areas lacking preparation covering everything from the physical impact of the climate to the mental challenges of a new culture, and from social issues and isolation to financial worries about schooling and banking. Moreover, employees relocating abroad will need different, and possibly more, support than their colleagues based in the UK.

Prevention rather than cure

There are a huge number of things to consider when an employee takes on an overseas assignment. These can include coping with different cultures and languages as well as different laws and regulations. There will be differences that will impact the employee directly but also those that will impact their employer. The employer will need to make sure that all the relevant health and safety regulations are adhered to, as well as employment laws. These will be different in each country and it is vital that the employer takes expert advice to ensure that they are meeting with all relevant parameters.

Sarah Dennis says: “It is likely to cost significantly less to fully prepare an employee before an assignment starts, than to try to put things right when they are already overseas or if things go wrong. The message is clear: preparation must be prioritised, and it’s never too early to start.”