

Introduction to wellbeing: understand

IOSH guides

This free *Introduction to wellbeing: understand* is part of a series from IOSH aimed at workers, supervisors and managers (including senior managers) and links to the competency framework theme identified on the next page. The series provides general information on a range of important occupational safety and health (OSH) topics, helping the reader to understand better the role they can play in ensuring that OSH risks are well-managed.

For other titles in this Introduction series, search for 'IOSH guides'.

Readers who are IOSH members can access more in-depth information in a parallel set of guides, which include the principles underpinning various topics, with practical examples and case studies. These guides cover all competencies specified in IOSH's competency framework and can be downloaded from our [members' resources page](#).

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The IOSH competency framework

The framework covers all the skills, knowledge and behaviours needed by occupational safety and health professionals. It has 69 competencies, divided into 12 areas which together make up three categories:

- 1 technical
- 2 core
- 3 behavioural.

These guides align with the framework with four levels:

- 1 understand
- 2 implement
- 3 lead
- 4 innovate.

Some guides are aligned to multiple levels. The levels indicate your career stage and your experience as an OSH professional.

[Find out more about the competency framework.](#)

This guide aligns to the following technical competencies:

- occupational health and wellbeing: understand level
- understanding of worker wellbeing: understand level.



Introduction

Wellbeing has become a strategic consideration for organisations that want to improve their reputation, resilience, productivity and finances. Failures in safeguarding people's wellbeing in the workplace are claiming lives and livelihoods. This is costing the world economy trillions in lost productivity.

The role of today's OSH professional has evolved to embrace proactive wellbeing agendas as part of safeguarding workers. Greater collaboration with other disciplines, including human resources and occupational health has been called for to achieve this.

What is wellbeing?

IOSH defines wellbeing as:

“An individual’s holistic state that encompasses both current mental and physical health circumstances based on influential factors.”

This means that an individual’s state of wellbeing is influenced by psychological and physiological conditions and experiences. These will derive from both the workplace and domestic/personal lives.

What influences wellbeing?

There are many factors that can influence an individual's state of wellbeing and, ultimately, an organisational culture (and vice versa).

An individual's wellbeing can be influenced by factors inside and outside the workplace. What may influence one person, may not affect another. Unhealthy and unsafe workplaces, along with domestic/personal influences, can lead to negative wellbeing states and other unfortunate consequences.

Less healthy and less safe workplaces can have organisational, psychological and physiological effects on workers. This can bring in unhealthy values, attitudes, behaviours and practices, with their negative consequences (negative wellbeing and a poor workplace culture).

Managing wellbeing

Figure 1 shows how an organisation can influence (and be influenced by) wellbeing and the effects this can have on other organisations, suppliers, potential recruits and the public.

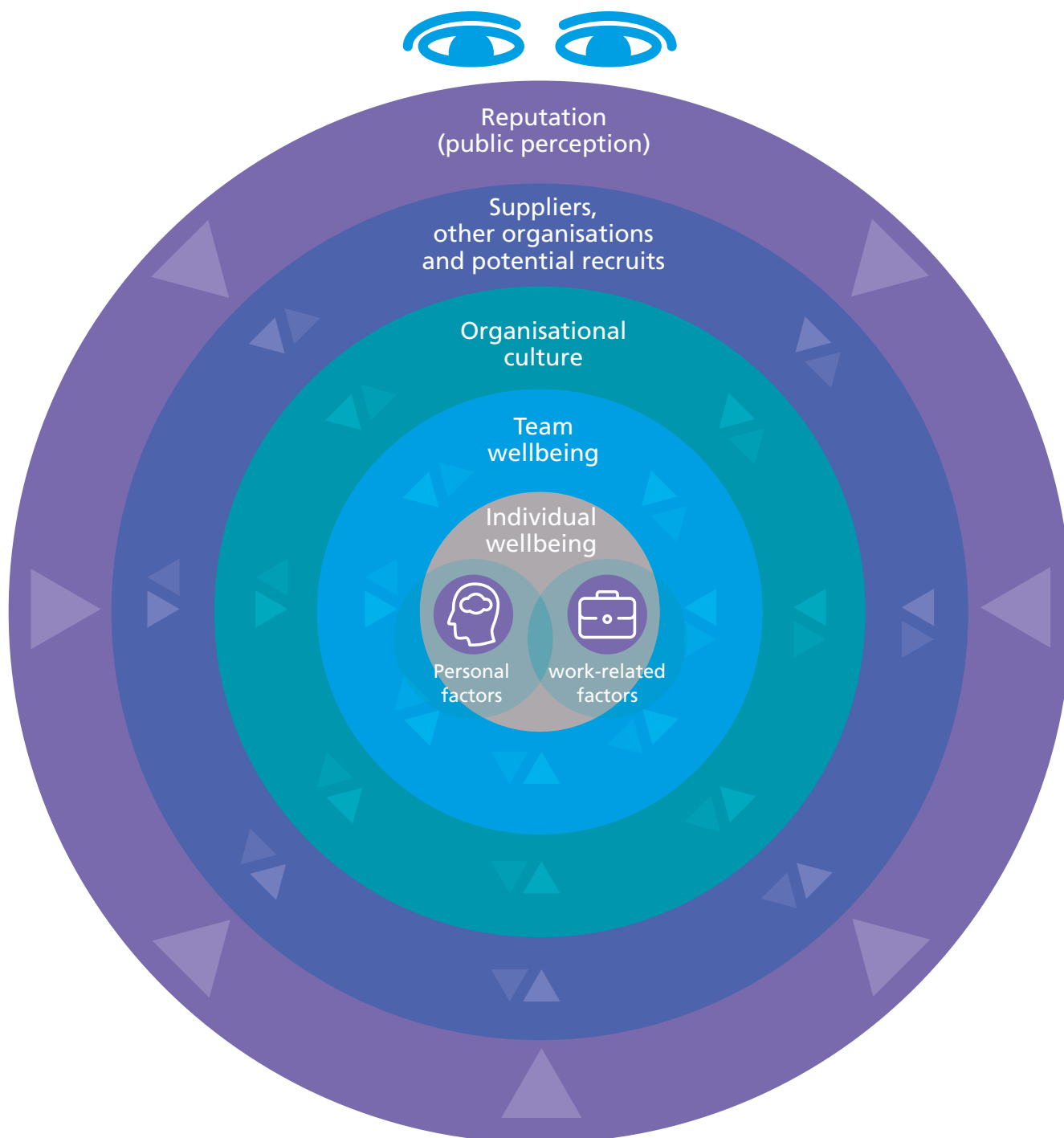


Figure 1: Factors influencing wellbeing in an organisation

Managing wellbeing

- **Individual wellbeing** – affected by domestic/personal and work-related factors.
- **Team wellbeing** – a collective state influenced by the participants' individual states of wellbeing. Team wellbeing can be unpredictable and may require more detailed analysis.
- **Organisational culture** – this can be influenced by a collection of individual and team wellbeing states. The states of wellbeing of both teams and individuals can also be influenced by the culture.
- **Suppliers, other organisations and potential recruits** – these can all be influenced by an organisation's culture (which was first influenced by individual and team wellbeing states).
- **Reputation (public perception)** – beyond the realm of suppliers, other organisations and potential recruits lies the general public's (global) perception of an organisation. The media, social media, business reporting, civil claim reports, performance statistics and word-of-mouth can all have an impact on an organisation's reputation.

It is important for OSH professionals and organisations to realise that all factors stated here can have an impact on an individual's wellbeing.

Strategies for managing wellbeing

To help formulate a suitable wellbeing strategy, start by carrying out an analysis of: what the organisation does now

- what the organisation may need to do
- what the predicted wellbeing gaps and priorities may be (more detail on this will be extrapolated once wellbeing assessments begin)
- which wellbeing process will be the best approach for the organisation. For example, following an OSH management system approach as detailed in Figure 2.

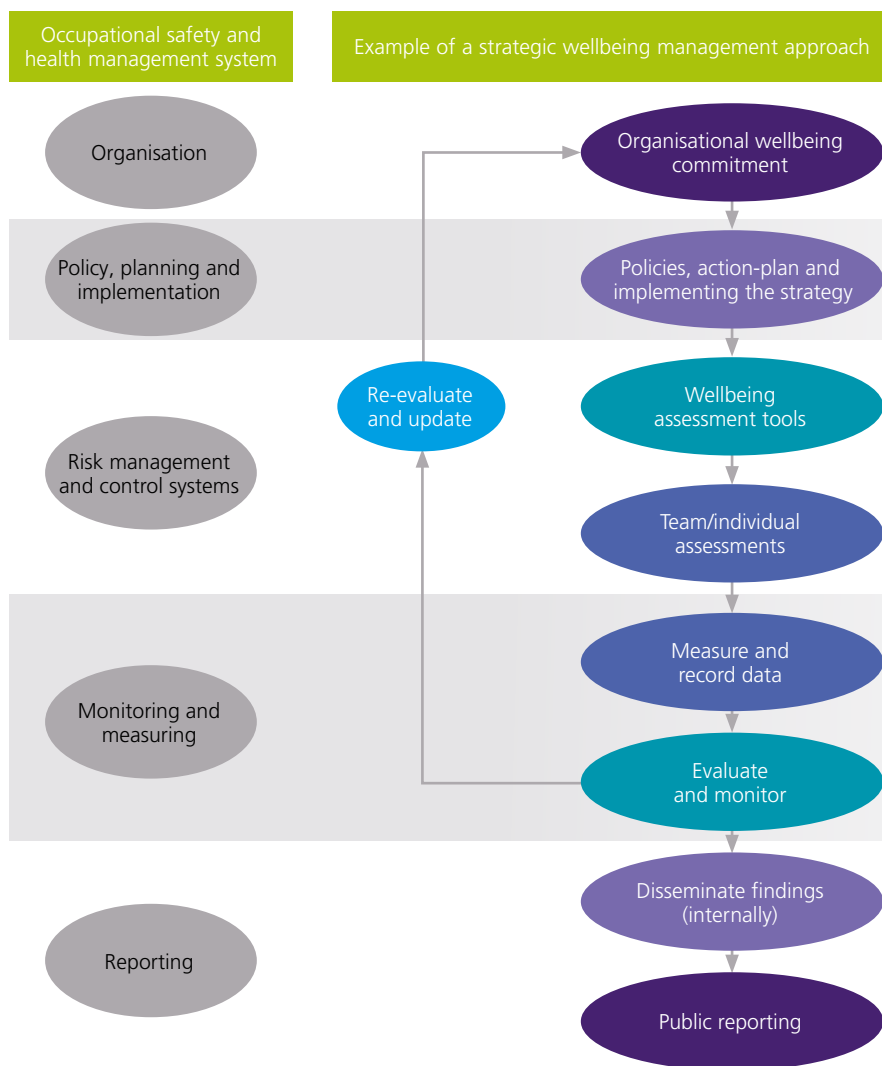


Figure 2: Example of a wellbeing management approach strategy that is mapped against an occupational safety and health management system

Managing wellbeing

Organisational wellbeing commitment

Since wellbeing incorporates all aspects of health (psychological and physiological), it should be a key priority for any organisation (large or small).

By making a commitment to workers' wellbeing, an organisation demonstrates it is considerate and supportive, that workers' health is a key part of their OSH culture and not just a legal requirement.

Policies and action plans

Any policies will need to be reviewed and updated to include wellbeing commitment, strategy and associated actions, such as:

- implementing a schedule of promotional activities and events to raise and/or maintain wellbeing awareness
- including wellbeing information and initiatives in inductions, training and development programmes
- introducing timely, risk-based plans for worker wellbeing assessments
- providing support and ensuring reasonable adjustments are made where required
- reintegrating workers when they return to work after sickness/absence
- recording, reviewing and reporting on wellbeing-related sickness absence.

A wellbeing action plan (WAP) can then be created.

Implementing the wellbeing strategy

Ideally, a dedicated team should be assembled when implementing the strategy, led by a senior manager; the team should include representatives of all the key stakeholders.

Risk management and control systems

Assessing wellbeing risks can be complex because psychological, physiological and environmental factors can all contribute to states of wellbeing. Introducing a wellbeing assessment tool, a wellbeing consultant and wellbeing charity support may all be useful. Record all of your findings.

Monitoring and measuring

Assessment data, trends and other data (such as that related to workplace wellbeing adjustments or illness absence) should be measured and recorded. This will help an organisation to see where changes are having a positive influence on wellbeing and where they may be flawed.

Once measurements and recordings are in place, the results can be evaluated and monitored more accurately on a defined time frequency. This will help present a 'bigger picture' of how the management of wellbeing is advancing.

Reporting

External reporting on wellbeing is considered good practice as it helps to demonstrate commitment to continuous improvement, honesty, transparency and good governance practice. Reports should include annual data on wellbeing, analysis against targets and the coming year's priorities (to demonstrate continuous improvement).






If a wellbeing management process is producing positive results, organisations may also want to share their findings and methods with other internal teams.

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