



Health

Together with



make a difference

## Clifford Chance proactively supports mind health

**Anna Cotgreave, Head of Reward and Benefits, UK, for legal firm Clifford Chance LLP, explains how proactively encouraging employees to talk is supporting the mental health of its multi-generational workforce.**



**Anna Cotgreave,**  
Head of Reward and  
Benefits, UK  
**Clifford Chance LLP**

**There's been openness and honesty about the mental health challenges everyone faces.**

It's no secret that the legal profession is an incredibly demanding sector to work in. Lawyers in particular can be very high-achieving and perfection-seeking individuals, which can make them vulnerable to burnout as they strive to meet client needs. We were also finding that newer generations coming into the workplace are more health literate but bring their own set of challenges and expectations of employers.

At Clifford Chance we wanted to get the balance right between delivering for our clients and supporting the diverse needs of our multi-generational workforce. Despite extensive mentoring and support, some newly-qualified lawyers were still finding it stressful making the jump from being a trainee lawyer into a qualified lawyer role, and more experienced workers face worries about issues ranging from caring responsibilities to managing health concerns.

As AXA Health's UK mind health workplace report<sup>1</sup> shows, the number of employees struggling with a mental health condition is increasing – in fact 53% of people in the UK aren't in a positive state of mind health, so we wanted to create a wellbeing culture that recognised the emotional strain our people might be experiencing. We also wanted to help them recover when things got too much and create a safe environment where they felt able to discuss any challenges and get the support they need to stay healthy.

<sup>1</sup>The AXA Mind Health Study was conducted between 15 October – 15 November 2023 in 16 countries among representative samples of the population aged 18 – 75 in each country (1,000 in each)







Health

Together with



make a difference

## The solution

Critical to creating a caring culture where people can talk about their wellbeing was training Mental Health Champions who could act as a first port of call if someone was experiencing challenges. Although not medically trained, they play a vital role in normalising language around mental health and signposting employees to the support in place, including an Employee Assistance Programme (EAP) and an onsite psychologist.

If an employee needs additional support, they can also utilise their AXA Health healthcare scheme to get a referral into their mental health assessments and support service, including talking therapies. To make sure there was no deterrent to using this, for mental health we waived the excess making it free for the employee to use and we enhanced the cover by lifting the chronic cover restriction.

At the same time, an internal staff engagement storytelling campaign was launched to encourage employees to share their tips for how they cope every day and stories about any struggles. This campaign really moved the dialogue on a range of physical and mental health challenges and contributed to us putting in place additional AXA Health benefits such as its fertility, early parenthood and menopause support service via Peppy, which helped us to become the first Menopause Friendly Accredited law firm.







Health



## The results

Despite the ongoing challenges associated with working in a high-pressure, high-performance environment, we can see progress towards a more psychologically safe workplace where people feel able to ask for support when they need it. Many of our employees thrive under pressure, but when life events put additional strain on them, the talking therapies in place have made a real difference.

There's been more openness and honesty in the workplace about the mental health challenges everyone faces. The mental health assessments and support services provided by AXA Health has enabled employees to talk to a counsellor or psychologist to take them through an assessment, usually within 2 working days, enabling people to get the support they need at the earliest opportunity. Meanwhile, through AXA Health's Neurodiversity Assessment and Support service<sup>2</sup>, neurodivergent employees are able to get both diagnosis and the help they need.

As my colleague Catherine Ritchie explained during the roundtable webinar that AXA Health ran with Make A Difference, honing in on key insights from the UK mind health workplace report, easy access to AXA Health's wide range of health and wellbeing support sends a clear message of care to colleagues. From the point of onboarding, they can have confidence they're joining an organisation that cares about their wellbeing and they are equipped with the tools and support to help them flourish.

<sup>2</sup>Access to the Neurodiversity Assessment and Support service is an additional benefit and availability will depend on the company scheme you belong to.



### Key takeaways for employers

- 1. Storytell:** think about ways to use storytelling initiatives to open up dialogue about mind health
- 2. Signpost:** educate mental health first-aiders and managers on how to signpost people to support services
- 3. Prevent:** focus on prevention, education, and unlocking access to talking therapies to nip issues in the bud

### Download the report



Read **AXA Health's 2024 UK mind health workplace report** for the latest insights on supporting your workforce

[READ NOW](#)

### Watch the roundtable



Listen in to **AXA Health's CEO discussion** with a panel of experts including Catherine Ritchie

[WATCH HERE](#)