



ACS | best practice **Wellbeing**

Growing business through good quality jobs

Informed by evidence from



ACS | the voice of
local shops



What is wellbeing?

One way of understanding wellbeing is how well people can flourish, including within the workplace. Wellbeing is 'how we are doing' as individuals and as groups, and how sustainable this is for the future. The factors that most affect wellbeing will change over time as our lives and relationships change, so we have to think of wellbeing as responsive and dynamic.

Why is wellbeing important for retailers?

A proactive approach to managing wellbeing is good for retailers and employees. It reduces staff turnover and associated recruitment and training costs, as well as absence and sick pay: which costs the average convenience store £4,280 per year¹. A healthy, engaged workforce will be more productive and deliver outstanding customer service to drive loyalty and increased spend.

Supporting colleague wellbeing beyond health and safety concerns not only addresses common staffing issues but creates opportunities and business growth.

Convenience stores operate physically and emotionally at the heart of communities. A good local shop is responsive to community needs and provides quality jobs which are local, flexible and secure.

Wellbeing also matters for business owners

Running a business carries risks and additional responsibilities. 15% of shop owners work more than 60 hours per week and half (49%) took no holiday last year.²

Taking action

- ✓ Stay connected with your peers, including via ACS' events programme and networking opportunities, as well as online groups and social media.
- ✓ Think about how to disconnect: establish your own boundaries and view relaxation as self-investment or recovery time.
- ✓ Assess your own wellbeing and take proactive steps to manage stress - have a look at self-assessment tools such as the [Happiness Pulse](#) and [NHS Every Mind Matters](#).
- ✓ Take time to reflect on your own emotions and thoughts, acknowledging and acting when you are becoming overwhelmed.
- ✓ Practice gratitude - there are many wonderful parts of being a retailer, recognise these and all the positive things in your life and be proud of what you have achieved.
- ✓ Remember that feelings of stress, anxiety and worry are normal reactions to difficult times in our lives.

Resources for you

- GroceryAid: [Health and Wellbeing Support](#)
- Retail Trust: [Wellbeing Workshops](#)

The law

Of course you have legal obligations to your staff and your customers, but operating to good normal standards as a retail business will keep you comfortably on the right side of the law. Focus on the many positive benefits of promoting wellbeing rather than fearing prosecution, because doing the right thing will make you legally compliant anyway.

The Health and Safety at Work Act 1974 contains a general 'duty of care' to ensure the health, safety and welfare of all employees at work. The Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999 add further duties on workplace risk assessments while the

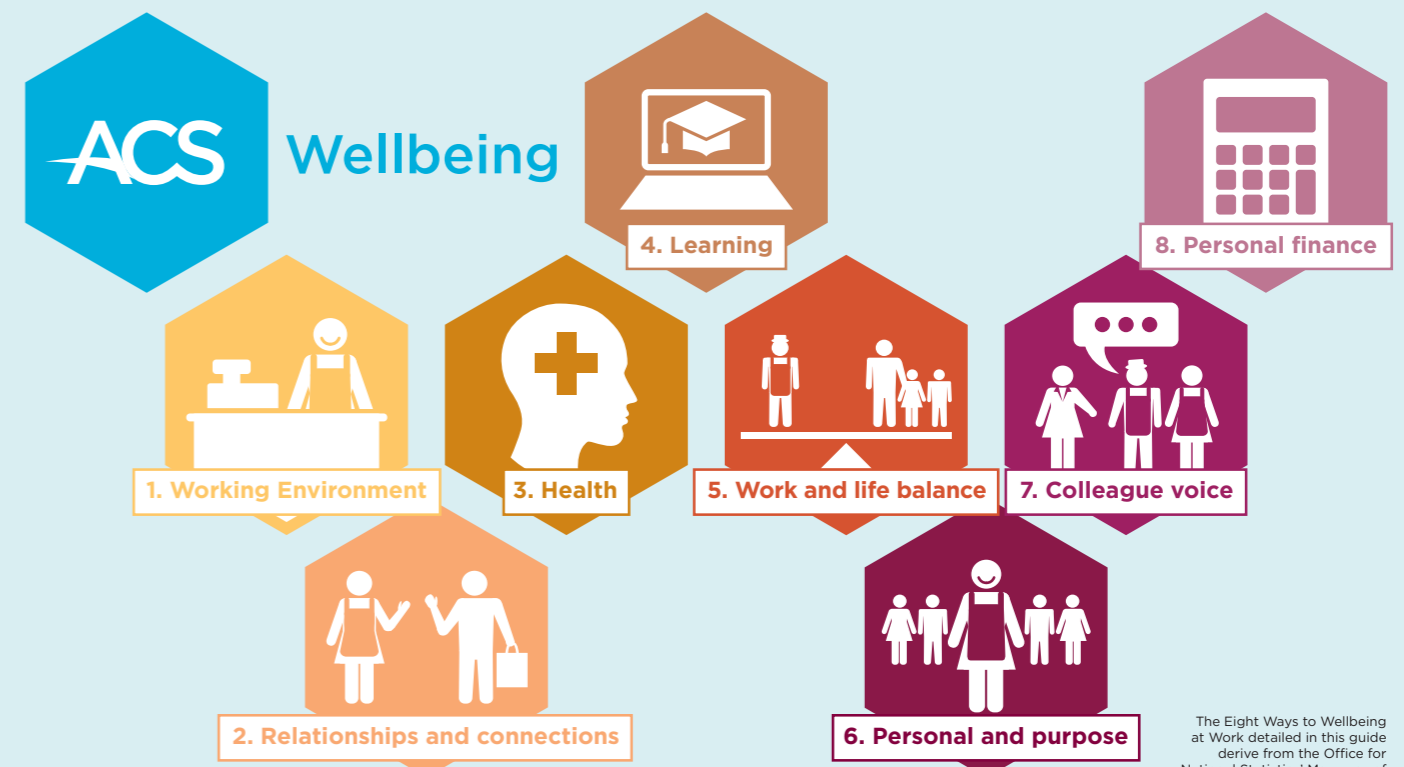
Equality Act 2010 creates a duty to make reasonable adjustments for colleagues with mental health issues, for example depression, anxiety, stress or panic attacks. Mind has produced [guidelines](#) on the Equality Act.

Key to complying with these legislative requirements is whether an employer took reasonable steps to avoid harm caused by the workplace. Mishandling mental health issues in a way which leads to resignation could also lead to constructive dismissal claims. Colleagues are undoubtedly valued by convenience retailers and the law supports action on wellbeing too.

Eight ways to wellbeing at work

The first step to supporting workplace wellbeing is to understand how colleagues are doing. You can do this by taking part in the annual ACS Colleague Survey to benchmark your business in the sector and bringing wellbeing into everyday conversations and reviews. This will help you to identify the areas of work that matter to your colleagues' wellbeing and how to monitor and improve them.

The ACS Colleague Survey provides anonymity to colleagues with individual responses only seen by ACS. The [NHS Wellbeing Conversations Guide](#) provides practical tips on effective wellbeing conversations.



The Eight Ways to Wellbeing at Work detailed in this guide derive from the Office for National Statistics' Measures of National Wellbeing, adapted for the world of work.³



1. Working environment



One of the critical factors that influence employee motivation and happiness, productivity and efficiency, is the working environment. Convenience stores must be friendly and attractive places for customers. A positive working environment also requires taking measures to protect the physical safety of colleagues and adopt safe working practices.

Taking action

- ✓ Conduct regular health and safety risk assessments and bring these to life with staff briefings and training; this isn't just about ticking boxes, it's about making sure you have a safe place for people to work and shop.
- ✓ Consult colleagues on comfortable lighting, ventilation, temperature controls and noise levels. Colleagues should be aware they can suggest changes and it's good business to listen to their practical ideas.
- ✓ Follow ACS' Crime Prevention Guidance to keep colleagues as safe as you can. This includes sharing the guidance with your team and making it clear that everyone in the business has a role to play in keeping each other safe.

Be inspired by: Southern Co-op

The Southern Co-op Protecting Our People programme is dedicated to colleague safety and security, helping colleagues to feel supported and protected at work. A 'safer environment' workstream on the programme trains colleagues in the skills and confidence needed to avoid confrontation and manage situations safely if and when they occur. The training covers a range of scenarios and real-life examples to help colleagues understand how to deal with incidents in the safest way possible. Knowing that this is a focus of the business gives confidence to employees.



Resources for you

- ACS: Crime Report
- Health and Safety Executive: Risk Assessment Templates

2. Relationships and connections



The quality of our relationships and feelings of loneliness significantly impact wellbeing. The New Economics Foundation and Co-op find the annual cost of loneliness is £82 per employee⁴. This includes loneliness-related sick leave, care, productivity loss and increased staff turnover. Workplaces which foster trust and a sociable but inclusive culture are key to higher employee wellbeing.

ACS' Colleague Survey finds that the three 'best things about working in a convenience store' are: interacting with customers, colleagues you work with, and working as part of the community. The same survey finds providing social interaction is viewed by colleagues as the third most important function of the local shop. Loneliness is experienced less by convenience retail colleagues than the average UK worker⁵ and convenience stores are one of the services with the most positive impact on reducing loneliness⁶.

By virtue of their senior positions, line manager behaviour can have particularly strong effects on employee wellbeing. Managers should be aware of the importance of job quality on wellbeing, know what staff see as important for improving the variety and quality of their work, be committed to improving jobs, listen to feedback and act where required. Loneliness at work can be difficult to identify, so you need to be proactive in asking and allowing colleagues to come forward.

Taking action

- ✓ Give this guide to your store managers, area managers and others in positions of trust and authority. Put wellbeing on the agenda for upcoming board, management and store team meetings, using this guide as a template for covering these issues.
- ✓ Instigate shared activities available to all colleagues. These social opportunities should be sustained, not one-off, and do not need to be complex or costly; they could link to local community activity like litter picking, tree planting or other improvements.
- ✓ Make sure every team is inclusive and welcoming. This includes thinking about hiring a diverse team where possible to prevent largely homogenous workforces from allowing any colleagues to feel isolated.
- ✓ Reach out to colleagues who might be bereaved or grieving, by offering a supportive voice while not trying to 'fix' negative emotions and directing to GroceryAid resources.

Be inspired by: Karen Roberts, Shop Manager, St Tudy Village Shop

St Tudy Community Shop and Post Office in Cornwall prides itself on providing a community hub, a place where people can come together, to reduce isolation and strengthen community cohesion. The shop provides home grocery deliveries to isolated people unable to get to the shop as well as café and library facilities to encourage social connections. Karen circulates a welcome pack to new people moving into the village and conducts annual surveys to gain feedback about services offered and meeting local community needs.



Resources for you

- Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport: Employers and Loneliness Guidance
- ACS: Loneliness Guidance



3. Health



We all carry a collective responsibility on public health – this includes physical and mental health. Mental health, like physical health, can fluctuate on a spectrum from good to poor. Investing in mental health returns £5 for every £1 spent⁷ and 91% of managers noticed an increase in mental health concerns amongst colleagues during the Covid-19 pandemic⁸.

50% of retail workers cannot recognise the signs of someone needing emotional support and 25% would not feel confident approaching an upset colleague⁹. This is despite Deloitte also finding that 30% of the UK workforce has been formally diagnosed with a mental health condition at some point in their life¹⁰. It is therefore important that everyone working in a convenience store takes steps to promote positive mental health, recognise the warning signs and support affected colleagues.

If colleagues feel they can talk openly about mental health, problems are less likely to build up. This could lead to less time off for a mental health issue and improved morale in the workplace. Where possible, retailers should be open to discussing the impact of changes to physical health on wellbeing and work too.

Taking action

- ✓ Monitor the signs of poor health, in particular use the resources below to learn how to spot the signs of mental ill health and tailor management styles to individuals.
- ✓ Create a supportive environment via regular one-to-ones with managers and explicitly treating mental and physical health equally.
- ✓ Encourage a culture of acceptance by becoming or supporting a colleague to become a Mental Health Champion to lead on changing attitudes to mental health.
- ✓ Become Disability Smart and understand how to manage workplace adjustments with colleagues, for example amending working tasks or equipment.
- ✓ Maintain colleague contact during any absence caused by mental ill health.
- ✓ Consider using occupational health services, especially when long-term sickness absence or returns occur.

Be inspired by: Co-op Group

The Co-op began its work on wellbeing from almost scratch three years ago and now has wellbeing as a strategic and operational priority. Co-op analysed employee data such as absence rates and benefits take-up to identify its main wellbeing issues. As a first step, the team then reviewed its occupational health offer for colleagues and produced guidance for staff to promote awareness of support ‘on a shoestring’. It has now developed management training for line managers about spotting signs, how to have sensitive conversations, and how to refer people to expert sources of support.



Resources for you

- ACAS Managing Staff Experiencing Mental Ill Health, Using Occupational Health at Work, Menopause at Work
- Business Disability Forum: Learning & Development
- Mind: Introduction to Mentally Healthy Places

4. Learning



People’s self-perception of their skills and education is key to shaping their ‘social identity’ and framing self-understanding and relationships with other people. Individuals with a positive social identity experience increased wellbeing and social trust¹¹.

Learning is good for wellbeing. People who keep learning report greater self-esteem and sense of purpose. Learning can also offer colleagues the space to think about and discuss what is important or problematic in their role. Taking a part-time course for work gives wellbeing benefits equivalent to £1,584 of income per year¹². Training also benefits retailers via more engaged, skilled and productive colleagues.

This underlines the importance of colleagues feeling capable at work with access to training and progression opportunities. ACS’ Colleague Survey finds 30% of colleagues are interested in progressing to a more senior position and 47% feel they can ‘access the right learning and development opportunities’¹³.

Taking action

- ✓ Incentivise and reward quality work.
- ✓ Understand the working and career aspirations of individual colleagues.
- ✓ Understand and act on any barriers to colleague progression, such as skills, ill health or working hours.
- ✓ Promote awareness of informal and formal training opportunities.
- ✓ Test different approaches to delivering training, to understand what is most effective.
- ✓ Continue to monitor wellbeing after changes in the workplace, for example following a promotion which involves a colleague taking on additional responsibilities or workload.
- ✓ Encourage team bonding through skills sharing and using time-bound ‘buddying’ when onboarding new colleagues.

Be inspired by: Sewell On The Go

One Sewell Group motto is ‘we design the menu, you choose your course’. Their ‘Talent Takeaway’ includes inductions and shadowing for starters, online training and task sheets as mains, and a range of ‘extra mile’ responsibilities as desserts for colleagues looking to develop skills formally or informally. Specials include apprenticeships, management training and a year-long leadership programme. Encouraged to grow from within, Sewell only promotes existing team members into store supervisory and management roles. Sewell is one of only 18 businesses to receive the Queen’s Award for Enterprise for Promoting Opportunity and is a Social Mobility Pledge Accredited Employer.



Resources for you

- Wellcome Trust: Buddying at Onboarding
- Future Learn: Free Short Online Courses
- Reed.co.uk: Free Online Courses



5. Work and life balance

The relationship between life at work and outside work can have significant effects on colleague wellbeing, job-related attitudes and job performance. Setting appropriate expectations of working output and adopting flexible working practices can boost productivity, morale and staff retention.

ACS' Colleague Survey finds hours worked fit well around personal commitments for two-thirds (66%) of staff, while 79% have external commitments which restrict their working hours. 21% of convenience retail colleagues are unpaid carers, providing unpaid support for another individual who has a disability, illness or needs support later in life¹⁴.



Taking action

- ✓ Understand what else is happening in colleagues' lives and how the workplace can support flexibility and inclusion.
- ✓ Provide reasonable notice of work rotas to colleagues and responses to holiday requests.
- ✓ Support unpaid carers to balance their caring responsibilities with work and feeling included.
- ✓ Adopt flexible working practices where suitable.

Be inspired by: Lincolnshire Co-op

Lincolnshire Co-op monitors colleague working hours and proactively contacts those working in excess of their contractual hours to understand why. This has led to colleagues being provided with support for domestic abuse and other personal issues. The Society expects that rotas are provided with at least four weeks' notice so that colleagues can best plan their lives outside work. A smartphone app for colleagues promotes work/life balance and hints and tips for using time positively. Colleagues are aware of the support that the Society can offer and who to contact if they are struggling or just need someone to talk to.



Resources for you

- ACS: Unpaid Carers Guidance
- ACAS: Flexible Working Guidance
- Health & Safety Executive: Stress Management Standards

6. Personal and purpose

Personal wellbeing relates to overall life satisfaction – including whether colleagues feel the things they do in their life are worthwhile and their balance of positive and negative emotions. How we feel about where we work fundamentally shapes this.

ACS' Colleague Survey finds that two-thirds (65%) of shop floor colleagues are satisfied with their job and 82% agree their work in a convenience store 'is important to my community'¹⁵. ACS' Community Barometer shows that consumers rank convenience stores as the service with the most positive impact on its local community¹⁶. Community activity has a positive impact on social cohesion, civic participation and individual wellbeing. One-in-five (19%) independent convenience retailers volunteer locally and 80% engaged in community activity over the past year, for example supporting local events, environmental campaigns and food banks¹⁷.



84% of convenience retailers introduced a new benefit or reward due to the exceptional efforts taken by convenience store colleagues as essential workers to keep local communities fed throughout the pandemic¹⁸.

Taking action

- ✓ Be a visible and passionate advocate for your business' positive community impact.
- ✓ Involve colleagues in decisions that impact them, and encourage engagement with the challenges of running the business. This could range from how the rota is organised to informing store planograms to working together to devise community programmes.
- ✓ Consider entering the ACS Raj Aggarwal Award for outstanding community retailing, which is judged partly based on colleague engagement in conceiving and delivering community work.
- ✓ Highlight the positive impact of convenience stores within local communities during staff inductions.
- ✓ Consider how to diversify your community activity to reach different people and demographics.

Be inspired by: Applegreen

Applegreen operates stores across the UK and urges all store managers to lead on community engagement. Individual stores are given flexibility to be involved with what affects their community the most, plan and lead that activity. This good work is collated into a quarterly charity newsletter where Applegreen shares and celebrates the success of this work, providing special recognition to colleagues who have gone above and beyond.



Resources for you

- ACS: Raj Aggarwal Trophy
- ACS: Local Engagement Guide



7. Colleague voice



Involving colleagues in how the business is run positively impacts wellbeing by demonstrating respect and trust. This requires a two-way dialogue in which all colleagues can communicate about and influence the matters that affect them at work. This helps build open and trusting relationships and contribute towards business success, while also boosting job satisfaction.

ACS' Colleague Survey finds that two-thirds (68%) of colleagues feel they are supported well by their immediate manager. 54% rate their employer positively for seeking the views of employees, 48% for responding to employee suggestions and 54% for keeping staff informed of management decisions¹⁹.

Taking action

- ✓ Promote ACS' Colleague Survey to understand and track colleague views on their jobs.
- ✓ Explicitly encourage an 'open door' culture and psychological safety. 'Whistleblowers' should know they can speak up about issues without personal detriment.
- ✓ Involve colleagues in running the business. This could range from how the rota is organised to informing store planograms.
- ✓ Provide opportunities for colleagues to 'have a say' in a supportive setting about how their jobs could be improved.
- ✓ Ensure line managers are committed to improving job quality.
- ✓ Communicate when changes are made for the benefit of colleagues.

Be inspired by: Dee Sedani, Independent Retailer, One Stop CTS Trading

Employees often don't feel confident in speaking up, so managers and employers making the first move to open a dialogue can be key. Our team is like an extended family and we make sure to have regular catch-ups as an opportunity for open and honest conversations about how the workplace is for them. This is especially important when decisions affecting colleagues need to be made. We're big on making sure we know what our staff think and that they know they'll be taken seriously by us. Involving colleagues in running the business where I can helps to grow sales but also boosts all-round engagement.



Resources for you

- CIPD: Employee Voice Factsheet
- WWcW: Job Quality and Wellbeing

8. Personal finance



Personal finance here is best understood as household income and wealth, its distribution and stability. Research suggests that job insecurity – seen as an overall concern about the continued existence of a job into the future – is one of the most distressing aspects of work and can have significant impacts on employee wellbeing.

People are more stressed by money than any other area of life. But it is not the amount people are paid, but what they do with it, that determines financial wellbeing. A continual sense of almost running out of money creates a reduced sense of control and has a negative impact on financial wellbeing. Colleagues with unmanageable debt may be reluctant to share these struggles and not know what support is available.

92% of convenience retail colleagues are on permanent contracts, compared to 78% of the total in-work population²⁰. Two-thirds (68%) are happy with the number of hours they work. 67% of entry level colleagues do not agree that their financial position has improved because of increases to the National Living Wage²¹.

Taking action

- ✓ Provide permanent contracts when possible to colleagues who want them.
- ✓ Minimise over and under employment by understanding how many hours colleagues want to work.
- ✓ Tailor benefits packages to the financial needs of your workforce and understand how they are used.
- ✓ Lead the way by indicating understanding of the importance of financial wellbeing to tackle stigma around the topic.
- ✓ Signpost colleagues towards debt advice services. This could be a rolling promotion or around times of common financial pressure such as the start of the school year and Christmas.

Be inspired by: Bestway Group

Bestway has rewarded its customer-facing colleagues for exceptional hard work and commitment throughout the Covid-19 pandemic via a bonus scheme. However, the Group understand financial well-being is far wider than pay. It's for this reason Bestway now promotes tools for colleagues to take control of their finances and manage debts. This helps reduce colleague stress and anxiety, demonstrates Bestway as a supportive and caring employer, and prevents money worries from distracting from good quality service on the shop floor. Bestway supplies permanent jobs with working hours to meet staff needs. Trust and integrity is at the heart of Bestway culture, allowing the Group to help employees and overcome stigma around finances.



Resources for you

- Salary Finance: The Employer's Guide to Financial Wellbeing
- Money Advice Service: Popular Tools & Calculators, Where to Get Free Debt Advice, Financial Wellbeing in the Workplace
- National Forum for Health & Wellbeing at Work: Financial Wellbeing Guide

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About this guide

This guidance has been produced in collaboration with the What Works Centre for Wellbeing. The What Works Centre for Wellbeing believes that improving people's wellbeing is the ultimate goal of effective policy and community action. The Centre develops and shares robust and accessible wellbeing evidence to improve decision making. For more information, please visit www.whatworkswellbeing.org

ACS Best Practice

ACS best practice guides have been developed by ACS and other stakeholders to provide industry leading information on a range of issues for convenience retailers. The information within these guides is meant as best practice only, and has not been assured as part of the Primary Authority partnership between ACS and Surrey County Council. More information about all of ACS' advice guides is available online at www.acs.org.uk/advice

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