

## **NICE workplace health guidance: expert testimony**

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### **Introduction**

Ipswich Building Society was established in 1849 and we remain an independent mutual to this day. We're run in the best interests of our members, not shareholders, and are here to help members achieve their goals of home ownership and saving for the future with an organisation they can trust.

With nine branches and six agencies in Suffolk, plus one agency in Norfolk, we keep our traditional values at heart but are looking to the future, with plans to grow and retain our independent mutuality. We employ 106 members of staff, with 64 full time staff who work 30 hours or more.

We have built up a strong alignment with Business In The Community:

- Chair of East of England Advisory Board
- Chair of East of England Business Action on Public Health Champions Network
- Appointed HRH Prince of Wales Ambassador for the East of England 2012-2014

### **Organisational culture**

Our vision is "to be the most socially responsible building society in the UK offering straight forward products and accessible services delivered by great people."

As part of our mutual heritage we're here to support our communities. We place a strong emphasis on being a responsible business, and our corporate social responsibility is a strong theme throughout our business activities. This year we've particularly focused on financial education and homelessness, using our knowledge and positioning to try to inform, educate and make a difference to society.

Throughout the years we've always said that staff are our most valuable asset. We believe to have happy staff it goes beyond a remuneration package. We invest in staff development, and 20% of our staff are currently studying towards a qualification. Our volunteer scheme, encouraging each member of staff to spend a half day per month helping a charity or community organisation, has been established for 15 years. Our formalised health and wellbeing programme was implemented in 2008, and is now embedded into everyday business through a bespoke annual programme.

### **Line manager role**

We operate hands on people management, with the benefit of being a small organisation which does not suffer from hierarchical chains of communication – we can speak directly to staff at all levels, and make good use of our informal intranet blog function.

We recognise that line managers need to be engaged and believe in the ethos of the organisation. We've focused on physical health, and now need to better equip line managers to recognise and support employees through mental health issues. This year we'll embark on specialist training.

### **Lead by example**

Our Executive team promote a positive working style that is open and fair. We promote good working conditions and actively work to improve employee health and wellbeing.

It's important that staff see the leadership team taking part in our initiatives. It's also a priority that the Executive team communicate with staff across the Society, both informally and formally, to foster an open culture.

## Implementation

Our health and wellbeing is integrated into our CSR management, and has allocated staff responsibility. On an annual basis a bespoke programme is created, highlighting awareness campaigns, promotions and activities. This has a budget of £1,000.

One of the biggest initiatives we introduced in 2008 was the reward scheme. This encourages staff to build up points by taking part in healthy activities (physical health and relaxation based), which can then be exchanged for time off. We use this scheme to monitor the activities undertaken by staff and how active our workforce is. We frequently operate 'focus months', where bonus points are on offer with the most recent example of this in March based around our Five A Day campaign.

Early this year we launched a Quiet Room within our head office premises. This was formerly used as an office, and has now been dedicated to a peaceful haven for staff relaxation. The room features comfortable chairs and a sofa, magazines and a Kindle Fire tablets. The room has also proved an ideal place for staff to study comfortably and without interruption.

We frequently use our intranet blog function to highlight national campaigns, such as Diabetes Week or National Osteoporosis Month during June. We've equipped our head office and branches with sun cream, toothpaste, held healthy snack events and hosted awareness sessions from charities and health providers. We aim to inform and enable employees to make healthy choices and lead a healthy lifestyle, without enforcing our views or making it compulsory to take part.

Our wider activities such as professional development flexible working and our volunteer scheme all reinforce our attitude to health and wellbeing.

## Providers and networks

We rely on use specialists to help us deliver our health and wellbeing programme. We have strong links with Business In The Community and LiveWell Suffolk, along with specialist charities such as Cancer Campaign in Suffolk. There is a wealth of resource available on the internet which we utilise, having found the British Heart Foundation and DrinkAware sites extremely useful. We also have contracted occupational health providers who we can refer to when needed.

## Business benefits

	2013	2012	Industry Average
Sickness absence	1.4%	1.38%	3.3%
Staff turnover	9.48%	11.88%	14%

	2013 (£m)	2012 (£m)	Increase %
Total Assets	601	576	4
Mortgage Assets	485	463	5
Savings Balances	549	524	5
Profit Before Tax	3.2	2.8	14

## Summary

We believe in a rounded approach to health and wellbeing. It needs to be a consistent, constant focus across all areas of the business and requires little financial investment to achieve great results.