reba insights

Financial Wellbeing Research 2026



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As workforces face challenging times, financial wellbeing schemes come to the fore



Debi O'Donovan

Director of REBA
Reward & Employee Benefits Association (REBA)
www.reba.global

Elevating a financial wellbeing strategy does not require huge budget bids

Financial distress poses a tangible risk to workforce continuity, retention and the broader employer value proposition

Financial wellbeing in the workplace is steadily shifting from its largely peripheral position in most HR and corporate strategies, to being one of the core levers for people risk management, workforce planning and business sustainability.

Too long categorised as either a tick-box compliance requirement, a secondary corporate social responsibility initiative or a suite of underutilised employee perks, REBA's *Financial Wellbeing Research 2026*, in association with WEALTH at work, found that employers are revisiting financial wellbeing programmes to meet challenges raised by cost-of-living pressures, employees not able to retire on adequate pensions and, most notably, the huge impact that financial worries have on mental wellbeing.

Lack of rigour may reduce buy-in

While C-suite interest in financial wellbeing may be heightened in the current climate, buy-in is likely to stall before any implementation, because offerings tend not to be tracked with the same rigour and focus on return on investment as applied to other business operations.

For example, absence and lost productivity are too often managed strictly as health or line-management issues, rather than what they sometimes are – direct symptoms of acute financial strain.

This research indicates that just over one in eight (13%) employers currently measure financial wellbeing-related absences, with only four in 10 (41%) viewing reduction of sickness absence as a core HR objective for their financial wellbeing strategy. However, large organisations are far more likely than the overall respondent sample to connect the dots between C-suite needs and people risk. Nearly two-thirds (65%) of those with more than 10,000 employees rate tracking financial-related absence as very important. They are far more likely to view financial distress as a tangible risk to workforce continuity, retention and the broader employer value proposition.

Unlocking value from existing resources

The positive news emerging from this research is that elevating a financial wellbeing strategy does not require huge budget bids. While nearly a third (29%) are petitioning for larger budgets, most plan to unlock value from employee benefits and services already in hand. Almost all (93%) are actively taking steps to boost awareness and engagement using existing resources rather than purchasing new perks. Eight in 10 (79%) are working to embed financial health directly into their broader, unified wellbeing strategy. Most importantly, six in 10 (60%) are upgrading their data-driven insights to measure genuine business outcomes.

Compared with REBA's 2025 Financial Wellbeing Research, these new 2026 findings show an acceleration in the proportion of employers offering workplace savings benefits, which include pay-as-you-earn saving (increasingly offered via newly enabled payroll savings mechanisms), tax-free wrappers such as ISAs, as well as a variety of medium- and short-term cash options.

Leading employers are seeing the business value of supporting employees to build savings. Of those most actively tackling cost-of-living pressures, four in five (80%) cite people risk as justification for offering savings schemes. This falls to two-thirds (65%) of employers that are not acting in the face of cost-of-living pressures. Employers taking steps on financial health tend to be quicker to recognise the role that savings play in building long-term resilience.

Reliable, data-driven insights that enable informed decisions

REBA's robust, evidence-based methodology is strategically aimed at uncovering clear, actionable future trends and decision-making patterns among employers. The research aims to deliver reliable, data-driven insights that employers can leverage to help them make informed decisions about their own financial wellbeing strategies.

This research was conducted as an online quantitative survey between April and May 2026 among REBA's membership community and wider database of HR professionals. It achieved participation from 186 predominately medium to large organisations, representing an estimated 1.2 million employees.

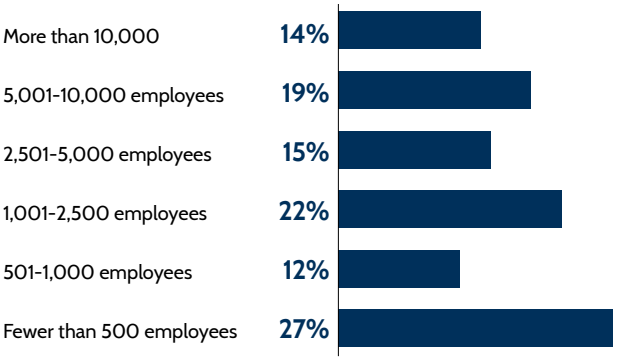
This approach ensured a broad and diverse set of data, reflecting a cross-section of employer sizes and industry sectors in the UK.

186
Employer respondents

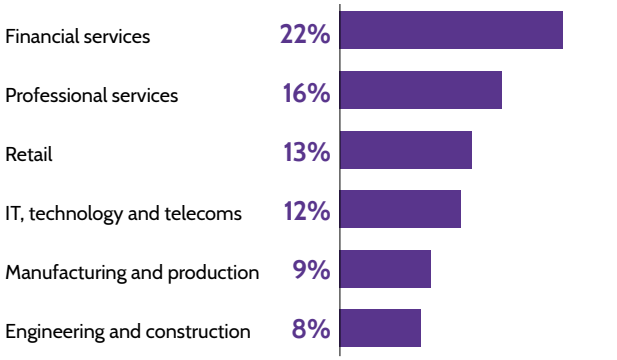
1.2m
Employees represented

112
Respondents have more than 1,000 employees

Company size



Largest industry sectors (full sector breakdown on page 35)



Responding companies

View full list on page 35

Adobe	Co-op	Mars
Airbus	Fidelity International	Mastercard
American Express	GKN Aerospace	McKinsey & Company
Apple	Google	Microsoft
Arm	GSK (GlaxoSmithKline)	National Grid
Aviva	Hilton	Salesforce
Bain & Company	HLB International	SAP
Barclays	Intel	Siemens
Baringa	John Lewis Partnership	Softcat
Bupa	LEGO Group	University of Cambridge
Capital One	Marriott International	Vertex Pharmaceuticals

A more holistic approach to support is replacing standalone benefits



Jonathan Watts-Lay

Director
WEALTH at work

The research paints a positive picture of employers' commitment to financial wellbeing

WEALTH at work
part of the Wealth at Work group

The evolving priorities in workplace financial wellbeing

This year's research highlights the growing importance of financial wellbeing within workforce strategies. From financial resilience and mental wellbeing to retirement readiness, employers increasingly recognise the impact of financial pressures across an employee's lifetime and are responding with a more holistic approach to support.

One of the clearest themes emerging from the research is that financial wellbeing is no longer viewed as a standalone benefit. Instead, it is increasingly recognised as an important contributor to employee wellbeing, engagement, productivity and retention.

Workplace savings are also gaining prominence, as employers look for ways to help employees build accessible savings alongside long-term retirement provision. Options such as a workplace ISA can help employees build short- to medium-term savings and develop positive saving habits.

Retirement adequacy a key concern

Among the long-term challenges identified, retirement preparedness is a significant area of focus, with employers recognising the barriers employees face to achieving the retirement they desire. Competing financial priorities can make it difficult to focus on long-term saving, while pension engagement and understanding often remain low. Consequently, many employees may not fully appreciate whether they are on track for retirement or understand the actions needed to improve future outcomes.

Decisions made throughout an employee's working life can have a significant impact on retirement readiness. Helping employees understand the value of pension saving and engage with long-term financial planning earlier can make a meaningful difference. Equally, services such as pension consolidation, alongside developments such as pensions dashboards, can help employees gain a clearer overall picture of their retirement savings.

Supporting financial decision-making

Employers continue to see value in financial education, helping employees better understand their finances and feel more confident about choices. Financial education increases awareness and engagement and helps employees take practical action.

Many employers are also recognising the value of financial coaching, providing personalised support that helps employees build confidence, navigate challenges and move closer to their financial goals.

For those approaching retirement, financial guidance becomes increasingly important. Recent pension reforms have sought to improve retirement outcomes, including proposals for default retirement pathways. However, retirement is not a one-size-fits-all journey, and defaults cannot reflect an individual's personal circumstances, goals and wider financial position. Access to retirement guidance, and, where appropriate, regulated investment advice, remains essential in helping employees make informed decisions.

Looking ahead

The research paints a positive picture of employers' commitment to financial wellbeing. In fact, many employers now partner with specialist workplace financial wellbeing providers to deliver joined-up solutions at scale within robust frameworks.

The most effective strategies will be those that address both short-term financial resilience and longer-term financial security. In doing so, employers have a real opportunity to help employees feel more in control of their financial future while supporting a more engaged, productive and financially resilient workforce.

Contributors



Lisa Aslam

Principal benefits manager, total rewards
Workday

Lisa has been at Workday for 10 years, working as principal benefits manager. Lisa's responsibilities include leading the strategic design, operational integration and regional compliance of employee benefits and wellbeing programmes across international markets. Most recently, she has been working on optimising early intervention absence management workflows.



Jake Attfield

Head of strategy
Fair4All Finance

Jake is responsible for strategy, impact and market insight at Fair4All Finance and has also led their work with the insurance sector to broaden Fair4All Finance's focus to identify the areas of most need and how dormant assets could be used to help close the protection gap. Jake has been at Fair4All Finance since 2021, before which he worked at The Money & Pensions Service, developing the UK Strategy for Financial Wellbeing.



Paul Craven

Director, total rewards
CloudPay

Paul has been at CloudPay for five years, working as director, total rewards, throughout that time. Paul's responsibilities include the design, development and implementation of all compensation aspects, benefits and related policies. Most recently, he has worked on implementing a harmonised benefit approach across all countries, along with developing and introducing an evolved job architecture approach globally for all areas of the business.



Jason Davenport

Chief executive officer
Chartered Institute of Payroll Professionals

Jason is the CIPP's chief executive officer. Before joining CIPP, he was managing director of Calendar Consulting, and prior to that, chief operating officer of Capita's HR division. Jason has supported the international growth of payroll services businesses, such as NorthgateArinso and LogicaCMG, where he worked in global delivery. Jason has always worked in payroll, beginning his working career in the construction sector.



Rebecca Duckett

Group head of people, total reward, data and technology
Torus

Rebecca has led the social housing provider's total reward, benefits, people data and technology agenda for 11 years, helping to ensure that colleagues are recognised, supported and able to thrive. Rebecca is passionate about financial wellbeing and is currently leading the development of tailored employee value propositions across the group's entities to enhance colleague experience and engagement.



Katharine Gourley

People director (strategy)
Travelodge Hotels

After joining Travelodge in 2018 as head of business partnering, Katharine became people director (operations) in 2022 and people director (strategy) last year, spearheading Travelodge's commitment to accessible career paths and the promise to help every colleague Learn More, Earn More and Belong. She is a vocal champion for social mobility and workplace inclusivity, driving industry-leading flexible working initiatives.

Employers look to financial wellbeing schemes to boost resilience in face of persistent workforce pressures

Mitigating mental stress is number-one objective

Preventing stress or worry is now the main driver behind employer financial wellbeing strategies. The majority (82%) of respondents indicate that improving workforce mental wellbeing is significantly more important than other HR objectives. Building mental resilience and improving motivation and health are all seen as vital to reducing future people risk as mental wellbeing continues to affect engagement, productivity and absence levels.

See page 9

Most important HR objectives for financial wellbeing programmes



82%
Improve workforce mental wellbeing

71%
Improve employee engagement and motivation

65%
Improve workforce health

Financial support services see dramatic growth

Actions aimed at improving financial wellbeing are undergoing a rapid expansion. Although some services are offered by only a minority of employers, this shift indicates a pivot to supporting employees to make their own decisions. Adoption of all financial support services saw a sharp rise between 2025 and 2026, which is set to continue through 2027 and 2028, given cost-of-living rises and future retirement inadequacy.

See page 19

Year-on-year growth in financial wellbeing support services



+92%
Pensions or financial wellbeing champions

+71%
Mid-life financial MOT

+50%
Financial coaching

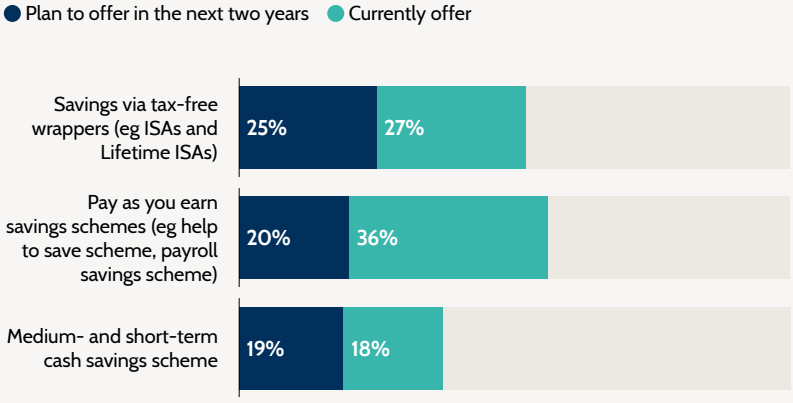
+42%
Financial education provided by an independent specialist

Cost-of-living pressures fuel rise in workplace savings

Employers face increasing workforce challenges linked to the severe toll that compounding financial stress – from housing to care costs – is taking on employee resilience. While workplace savings have existed for decades, there has been a distinct rise in interest in options ranging from payroll deductions for emergency savings or schemes that enable savings for holidays or large-ticket items, through to ISAs and GIAs.

See page 23

Current and emerging employer-led savings benefits

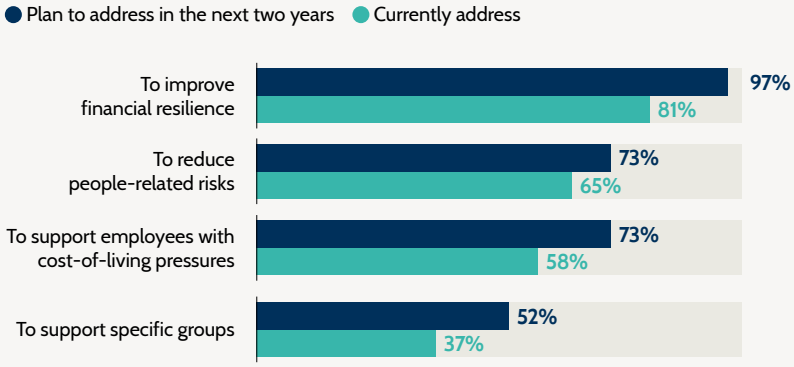


Resilience and inclusion drive workplace savings growth

The drivers behind workplace savings schemes are changing fast, showing a clear divide between established programmes and those launching over the next two years. Where workplace savings were once aimed at engaging and retaining talent, future strategies focus on core business and HR risks. Employers are introducing savings schemes to meet the varying needs and financial stressors of specific cohorts.

See page 25

How employer drivers for workplace savings are changing over the next two years

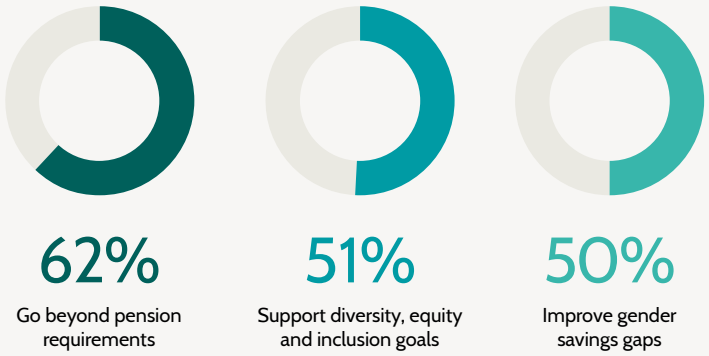


Regulations spark retirement and inclusion strategy change

Objectives linked to current or incoming regulations and legislation top the list of business imperatives for financial wellbeing programmes. Leaders must meet compliance rules or risk fines and brand damage. Forward-thinking employers are also aware of the impact of people risks (such as being unable to afford to retire, or disengagement owing to gender gaps in pay, savings and pensions) on the business.

See page 11

Top business objectives for financial wellbeing programmes



Employers maximise existing financial benefits

Employers are formalising financial wellbeing approaches, including improving employee awareness, making financial wellbeing part of the wider wellbeing strategy and improving data insights. This shift is directly prompted by three persistent workforce pressures – retirement adequacy, gender pay gaps and cost-of-living strain. Rather than potentially costly new benefits, they are turning to better data and engagement.

See page 33

Actions taken or planned to overcome financial wellbeing programme challenges



Significant shift towards a clearly defined strategy



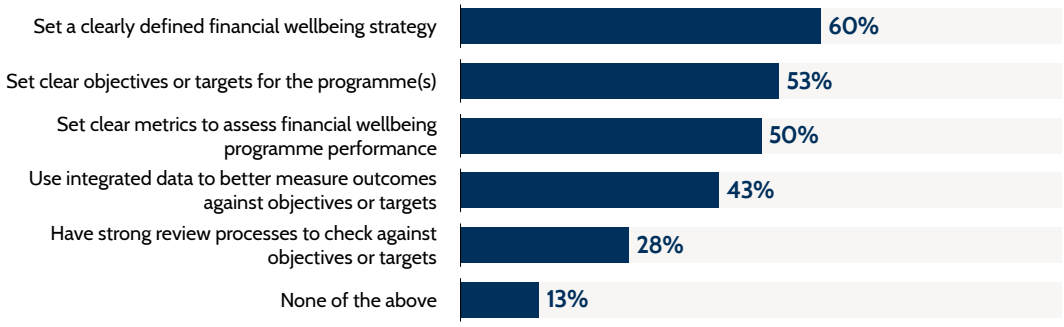
Employers move to include financial wellbeing as a central part of health

Workplace financial wellbeing has begun to hit its stride. For several years, financial wellbeing has been the poor relation to physical and mental health support. Yet, as this year's *Financial Wellbeing Research* findings show, momentum in this space is now rapidly accelerating.

Two years ago, data from REBA's *Financial Wellbeing Research 2024* and *Employee Wellbeing Research 2024* highlighted a stark gap – just 28% of employers offered some form of financial wellbeing strategy, compared with nearly half (44%) that maintained a strategy for mental health. Today, we see a significant shift in the proportion of employers that have set or plan to set a clearly defined financial wellbeing strategy, with employers looking to support this with objectives, targets and data.

Figure 1

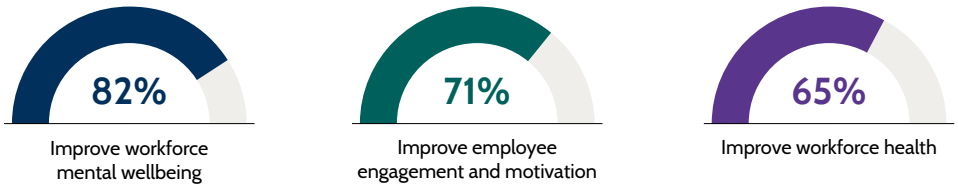
Actions taken or planned in the next two years to improve the governance of financial wellbeing programme(s) (N=151)



By cementing financial wellbeing as a fundamental part of health and wellbeing strategy, employers are recognising the impact it can have on HR and business objectives, moving from reactive support to a more structured, risk-based approach.

Figure 2

Top three very important HR objectives for financial wellbeing programmes (N=185)



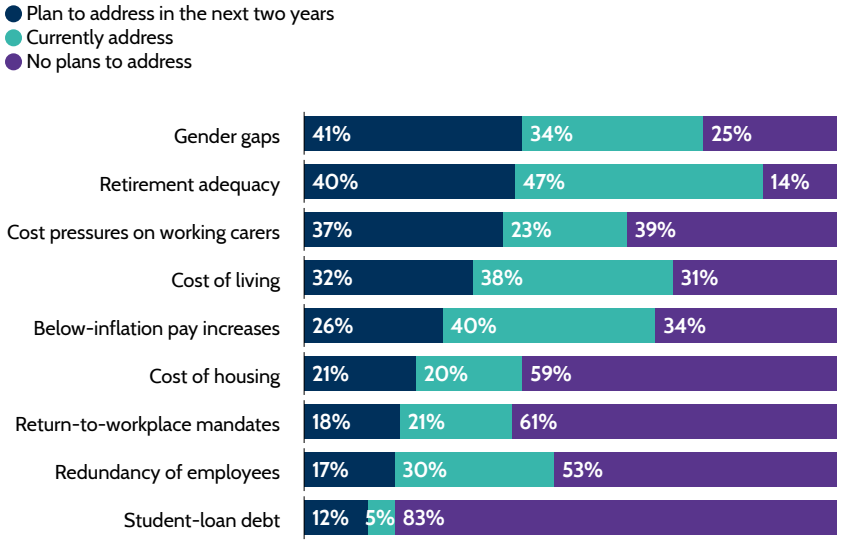
From interest to action as financial resilience risks continue to threaten personal stability as well as performance

REBA has observed increasing interest in financial wellbeing among its members over several years, but only recently has that interest translated into significant action.

This shift is a direct response to several financial resilience risks – the ongoing pressures that threaten both personal stability and workplace performance. Three factors stood out as particularly influential – financial inclusion, retirement adequacy and ongoing cost-of-living pressures.

Figure 3

Financial resilience risks organisations are tackling now or in the future (N=172)



Financial risks meet HR and business objectives

Employers play a vital role in supporting financial inclusion, enabling employees to manage their money, participate fully in the economy and build long-term security. Beyond individual financial health, this support helps organisations comply with gender pay-gap regulations, while advancing broader diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) goals and corporate social responsibility targets (see page 11).

As the UK edges closer to a severe retirement adequacy crisis, legislation and market pressures are creating fundamental shifts in how employers approach long-term financial security. While pensions have long been a core – and costly – component of the benefits package, the widespread transition to defined contribution schemes has shifted the investment risk onto the individual, which risks leaving many employees vulnerable to potential shortfalls.

According to the Department for Work & Pensions' *Analysis of Future Pension Incomes 2025*, more than four in 10 (43%) working-aged adults (equivalent to 14.6 million) are under-saving for retirement. As government policy shifts to address this issue, employers are being compelled to re-evaluate their role in closing the savings gap.

Employer pension contribution expectations have shifted significantly following delayed legislative reform. While previous outlooks anticipated government-mandated rate hikes, the pause ahead of the Pensions Commission's recommendations (see page 28) has left organisations reluctant to pre-empt contribution increases.

REBA's *Future of Pensions Research 2026* found that just one in 10 employer respondents (10%) expect to increase their main auto-enrolment employer contribution over the next two years.

High cost of living – the new norm

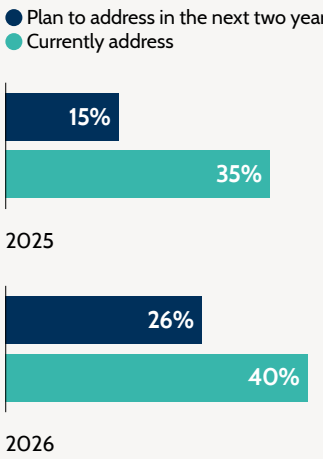
Figure 3 highlights the persistent cost pressures facing employees – from the cost of housing and pay increases that fail to keep up with living expenses, through to student loan repayments and higher commuting costs thanks to return-to-work mandates.

Employers are also managing their own escalating cost pressures, driven by statutory minimum wage increases, higher national insurance contributions and broader operational inflation. As a result, pay budgets have remained tightly constrained. Data from Brightmine shows that median pay awards held at 3.3% for the three months to the end of June 2026. This sits only fractionally ahead of the headline CPI inflation rate of 2.6% over the same period

Because base pay increases are barely outpacing inflation, there's a year-on-year growth in the number of employers stepping in with non-pay support. Organisations are increasingly turning to cost-saving benefits such as everyday retail discounts, health cashplans to offset healthcare costs and financial education to support with budgeting.

Figure 4

Proportion of employers addressing or planning to address below-inflation pay increases: 2025 compared with 2026

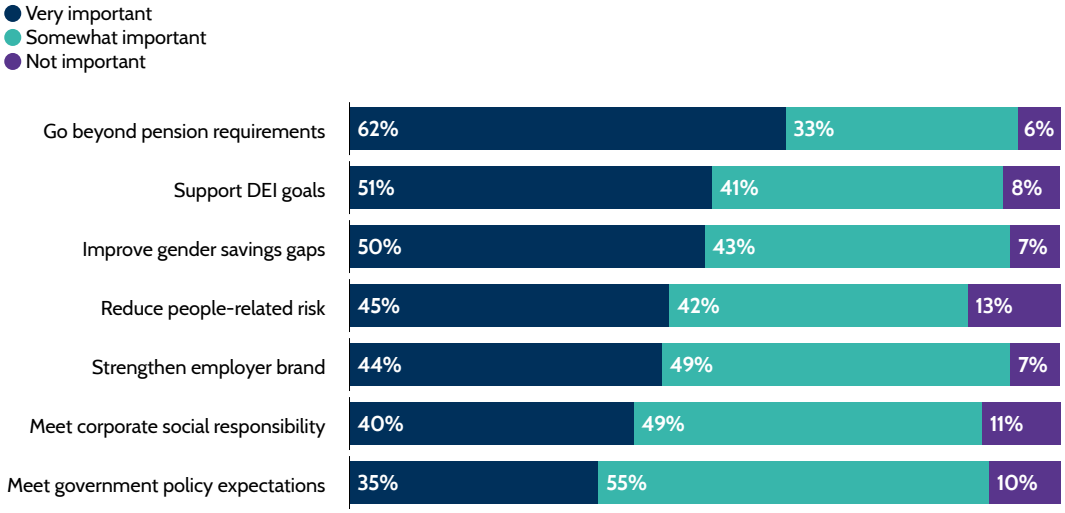


Future key financial risk areas take priority and drive broader business goals

Financial wellbeing programmes are increasingly being used to advance core business priorities by directly mitigating the key financial risks facing employees (see page 10). Over the next two years gender gaps (41%), retirement adequacy (40%) and cost pressures on working carers (37%) will see the highest levels of planned adoption among employers not already addressing these issues.

Aligning support with these specific challenges turns financial wellbeing into a strategic driver for broader business goals, helping to strengthen talent retention and diversity and boost long-term workforce resilience.

Figure 5
Business objectives for financial wellbeing programmes (N=181)



Employers' top priorities align with evolving legislative requirements, including the government's Financial Inclusion Strategy (see page 14) and the Pension Schemes Act 2026, which introduced extensive changes to improve outcomes for savers. However, while supporting employees through specific financial risks is critical, financial wellbeing activity across most organisations remains predominantly driven by regulatory compliance.

Currently, fewer employers view financial wellbeing programmes as 'very important' when it comes to helping to address and support business objectives, such as strengthening employer brand and meeting corporate social responsibility. This gap highlights a major missed opportunity – treating financial resilience purely as a compliance exercise, rather than leveraging it as a strategic tool to drive social impact, strengthen employer value proposition and boost talent retention.

BIG SHIFT

+240%

Increase in employers planning to address student-loan debt

Currently, one in 20 (5%) of employers are tackling student-loan debt. In the next two years, a further 12% plan to address this issue. See page 10.

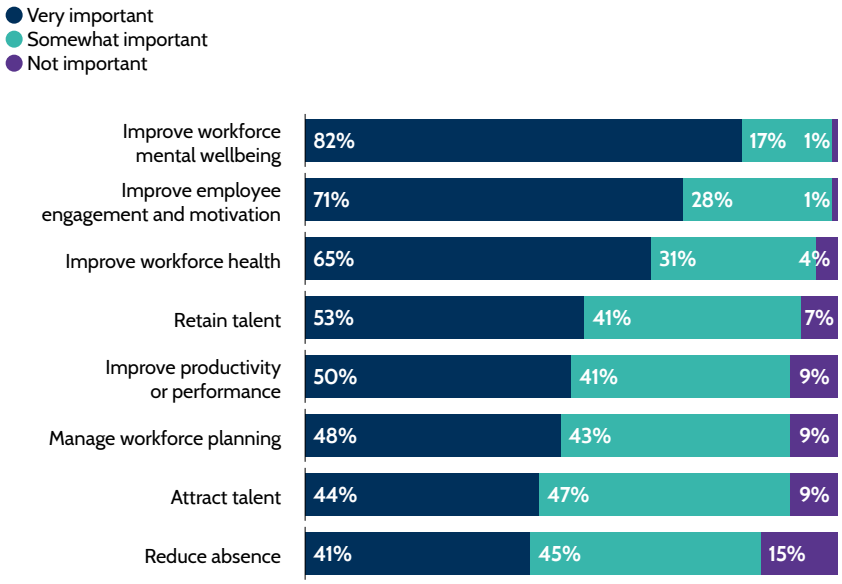
Financial wellbeing moves from passive benefit to core strategy, but scale, capacity and data maturity matter

The link between mental health and financial wellbeing is well established, with REBA's *Health and Wellbeing Research 2026* finding mental wellbeing a primary concern for employers. Because financial stress and low resilience are major drivers of anxiety and poor mental health, supporting financial wellbeing is increasingly treated as a core business strategy rather than a passive benefit.

This mirrors findings from a March 2026 WEALTH at work poll of 2,000 employees, where employees reported that money worries affect their performance at work by causing increased stress levels (36%) and mental exhaustion (34%). This has stark implications for workplace productivity, with the research finding that this led to decreased motivation (23%), along with reduced focus and concentration (20%) and increased sick days (8%).

Figure 6

HR objectives for financial wellbeing programmes (N=185)



While improving engagement and productivity are primary HR objectives for financial wellbeing programmes, fewer employers see the value in linking financial wellbeing programmes with reducing absence, with more than one in 10 (15%) stating that it was not an important HR objective. This highlights a common disconnect – absence is often treated purely as a health or management issue rather than a potential symptom of financial strain.

Although obtaining absence data linked to financial wellbeing is challenging – just 13% of respondents collect absence data to evaluate the performance of their financial wellbeing benefits and initiatives (see page 31) – tracking these metrics can give employers a much clearer picture of the financial pressures affecting their workforce.

Larger organisations appear further ahead in this connection. Organisations with more than 10,000 employees are more likely to rate absence as very important (65%) compared with total respondents (41%). This indicates that scale, data maturity and operational capacity may influence how well employers can identify and act on the relationship between financial stress and absence.

Opportunity for whole-person support as mental health dominates

REBA's *Health and Wellbeing Research 2026* shows just how sharply employer concern around mental health has risen, and how firmly organisations are now acting on this. With stress, anxiety and burnout now seen as the greatest threats to long-term workforce sustainability, employers are shifting their focus from reactive support to prevention and intervention.

This shift signals a move towards creating workplaces where good mental wellbeing and resilience are actively taken care of, rather than addressed only once problems surface. This is where financial wellbeing earns its place. Money worries and mental health challenges reinforce one another, and employers addressing both together can break that cycle. The opportunity for employers is to connect these dots and build wellbeing strategies that support the whole person, not just one part of their life.

How mental health, wellbeing and resilience ranks for impact, sustainability and investment (N=233)

Mental health and wellbeing is the factor most commonly expected to significantly affect workforce health in the next five years



Stress, work-related anxiety and burnout are most commonly expected to affect the long-term sustainability of workforces



Mental health and resilience is the area most commonly prioritised for investment and improvement in the next three years



Source: Health and Wellbeing Research 2026

CASE STUDY

CloudPay opts for proactive preparation rather than reactive assistance



Paul Craven

Director, total rewards
CloudPay

We are ensuring that our employees are informed, resilient and as fully prepared as possible for any financial change ahead

Helping employees to build a security net has also ensured an engaged and stable workforce that boosts the business

Following a period of organisational growth at CloudPay, we are trying to think more holistically about our total reward offering and raise the profile of our benefits. As part of this, we have divided up our benefits offering into health and wellbeing, financial and lifestyle benefits.

Financial wellbeing has been particularly important, given the ongoing high cost of living and inflation, which is hitting both employees and the business.

As a global payroll and payments solutions provider with 300 employees in the UK, and 1,400 worldwide, we recognise that helping our people to navigate ongoing economic pressures requires proactive preparation rather than reactive assistance. A central focus of our strategy is preparing employees for major financial changes.

Legislative changes are driving a requirement for us to have a more detailed financial wellbeing approach. For example, changes to pension salary sacrifice regulations lie ahead in 2029, and we know we must start laying the groundwork well in advance. Rather than letting our 'Cloudees' face unexpected reductions in take-home pay or pension contributions when statutory changes take effect, we intend to build early awareness and financial education, reinforcing that salary sacrifice remains a highly valuable financial tool.

Maximising established benefits

A key principle of our framework is demonstrating how we, as an employer, can effectively use existing benefits to make a meaningful impact without adding significant overhead. Rather than introducing new benefits, we therefore look to maximise our established provisions.

As an example, earlier this year, we hosted a dedicated wellbeing month, split into four distinct focus areas – physical, mental, social and financial wellbeing. During the financial wellbeing week, we partnered with our pension providers to deliver generic financial guidance and educational workshops.

Simultaneously, we actively signposted underused services within our employee assistance programme (EAP). While employees often view an EAP strictly as a counselling tool, we highlighted its capacity to provide confidential support for debt management, legal matters and household budgeting.

More to come

Our wellbeing month proved highly successful, and our approach includes clear plans for future evolution of our support for our Cloudees. Moving forward, we are seeking to develop demographic segmentation and life-stage financial (and also health and wellbeing) education. Our employee population includes a diverse mix of age groups, and therefore it's clear that a generic, one-size-fits-all approach is no longer effective for any benefits. On the financial side, we plan to deliver tailored communications, encouraging early-career staff to build retirement savings, helping young families to maximise tax-efficient benefits using salary sacrifice wherever possible, and guiding older Cloudees on retirement options.

By treating financial wellbeing as a core strategic pillar and fully leveraging existing benefits, we are ensuring that our employees are informed, resilient and as fully prepared as possible for any financial change ahead.

CHAPTER 2: FINANCIAL INCLUSION

Rising vulnerability brings inclusion into sharper focus



Employers increasingly consider the financial needs and outcomes of various workforce groups

Financial inclusion is gaining prominence as routine financial pressures or unexpected costs push growing numbers of people toward problem debt.

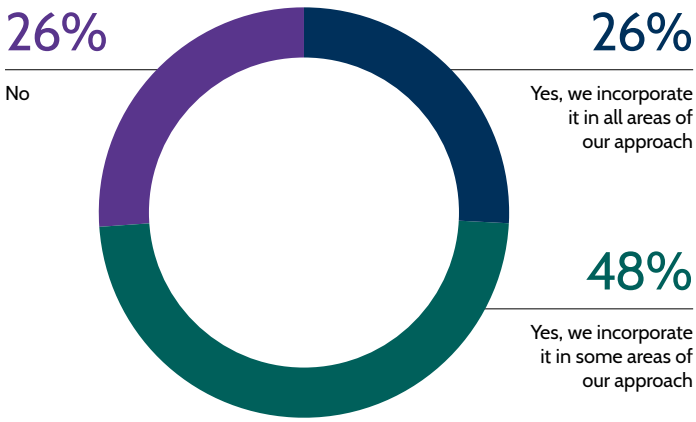
Research from Fair4All Finance shows that in 2024, 20.3 million people were living in financially vulnerable circumstances across the UK, up by 16% from 17.5 million in 2022. The research identified five drivers of financial exclusion: problem debt, resilience, insufficient income, access and financial capability. Within these drivers, there are several groups more susceptible to becoming financially excluded. Key groups include low-income families, younger renters, pre-retirement adults and homeowners who are being squeezed by living costs.

Employers are recognising these challenges within their own workforces. This year's *Financial Wellbeing Research* finds that supporting DEI goals is now one of the top business objectives for financial wellbeing programmes, with an encouragingly high proportion of respondents actively considering the various financial needs and outcomes of different workforce groups, including gender, ethnicity, disability, age, health, socioeconomic background and low-paid workers.

Respondents prioritising supporting DEI goals (see page 11) were more likely to incorporate financial inclusion in all areas of their approach – 42% compared with the overall average of 26%.

Figure 7

Whether financial inclusion is incorporated within financial wellbeing approach (N=171)



The Financial Inclusion Strategy

The UK government launched its Financial Inclusion Strategy in November 2025. It sets out the government's plan to improve the financial inclusion and wellbeing of households across the UK, removing barriers to financial participation and building financial resilience. It focuses on six areas:

1. Digital inclusion and access to banking
2. Savings
3. Insurance
4. Access to credit
5. Tackling problem debt
6. Financial education

There are three main areas where employers are being encouraged and empowered to better support employees – improving everyday money management and financial literacy; supporting understanding of pay, deductions and tax; and signposting support for debt and financial difficulty. Government is also encouraging employers to offer workplace savings to increase financial resilience – see page 23 for more.

As shown, improving financial inclusion can directly affect key business and HR objectives. By aligning with the Financial Inclusion Strategy, government hopes that organisations can protect their long-term sustainability while meeting evolving social and employee expectations.

The importance of demographic nuances in financial wellbeing initiatives

The impact of poor financial wellbeing can be deeply unequal, with different demographic groups experiencing varying levels of economic hardship, mental health strain and systemic barriers.

The government's arms-length body, the Money & Pensions Service (MaPS), has three 'cross-cutting themes' running throughout its UK strategy for financial wellbeing: mental health, ethnicity and gender. Its research into these pillars underscores why employers must consider demographic nuances when designing and delivering financial wellbeing initiatives.

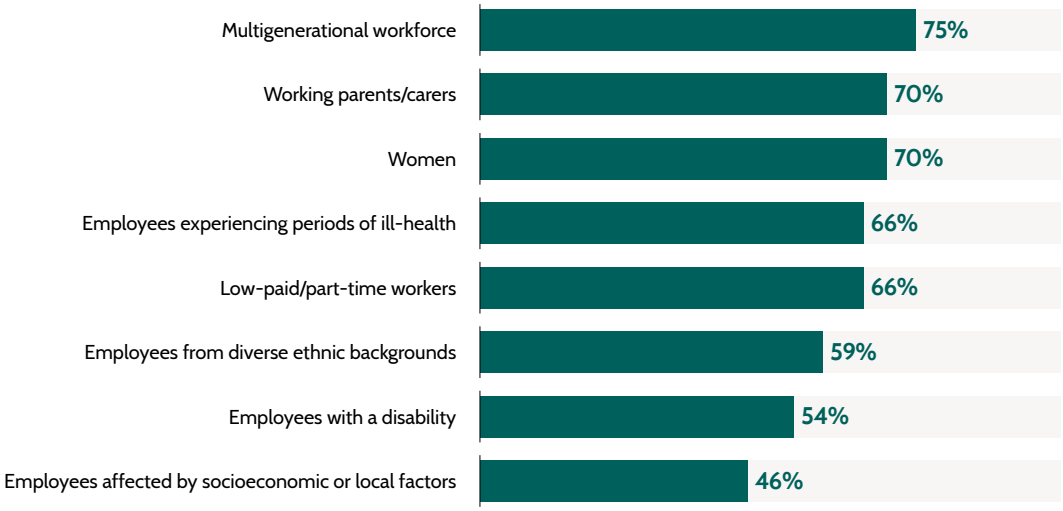
For example, the research into ethnic diversity highlighted a 'double stigma' among many minority communities, where talking openly about either money or mental health is often seen as taboo. This double hurdle can make it even harder to build financial resilience.

Attitudes towards financial wellbeing among men and women also have a role to play. Mintel's *UK Financial Education Consumer Report 2026* finds that women consistently report lower levels of financial understanding, but this often reflects confidence, rather than capability. Meanwhile, 39% of men believe they know more than the average person, despite being more likely to miss financial payments than women and being equally vulnerable to fraud.

REBA's *Financial Wellbeing Research 2026* shows that employers are actively responding to these disparities by aligning their business and HR goals directly with their financial wellbeing strategies. For example, organisations that include women in their financial wellbeing approach are more likely to address gender savings gaps (45%) compared with the total number of responses (34%).

Figure 8

Workforce groups most commonly included in financial wellbeing approaches (N=122)



Mandatory ethnicity and disability pay-gap reporting to follow on from gender focus

In March 2026, the government confirmed that it would introduce mandatory ethnicity and disability pay-gap reporting for large employers (those with 250 or more employees) by 2029. Reporting will follow the same model as gender pay-gap reporting, which has been mandatory for large employers since 2017. However, mandatory pay-gap reporting in the UK has faced criticism, because it only measures overall workforce composition, not whether people are paid equally for equal work, and lacks strong mechanisms to either enforce accuracy or require employers to act.

Because employees from diverse ethnic backgrounds and those with disabilities are currently among the least likely to be catered for in workplace financial wellbeing strategies, mandatory reporting will bring much-needed transparency for these cohorts.

Confront disparities

The aim is to encourage employers to confront these disparities and actively improve support for these underrepresented groups.

Financial inclusion is a win-win-win for individuals, businesses and the economy



Jake Attfield

Head of strategy
Fair4All Finance

Tackling financial exclusion could boost the UK economy by £6.4bn each year

Paying serious attention to employee financial resilience delivers undeniable benefits

At Fair4All Finance we know that delivering financial inclusion is both a moral mission and an important driver of workplace productivity and national growth. Research that we commissioned, conducted by WPI Economics, shows that tackling financial exclusion could boost the UK economy by £6.4bn each year, with £5.9bn being delivered through increased productivity and reduced financial stress.

And we can see in REBA'S *Financial Wellbeing Research 2026* that employers are increasingly recognising this connection. Today, 26% of employers fully incorporate financial inclusion within all areas of their financial wellbeing strategy, with 47% doing so in some parts of it.

Opportunity to close equity gaps

Employers are one of the best and most trusted channels to help underserved groups and people who lack financial resilience, and there is a massive opportunity to close the significant equity gaps that remain. The groups least likely to be included in an employer's financial wellbeing approach are employees from diverse ethnic backgrounds, those with a disability and those with lower socioeconomic backgrounds.

Where employers act, momentum builds quickly. REBA's findings reveal rapid growth in workplace savings schemes, with payroll savings uptake jumping from 14% in 2025 to 36% in 2026, alongside gains in tax-free ISA wrappers and short-term cash savings.

Despite this progress, some employers are still hesitant to engage with financial products – particularly credit – fearing liability or being seen to encourage debt. We must tackle that head-on.

Employers should strive to improve the choices available to their workforce. Paying serious attention to employee financial resilience delivers undeniable benefits in morale, productivity, recruitment and retention. No employer should want their staff to lay awake at night worrying about making ends meet.

Offering responsible buffers

Supporting access to responsible credit, insurance and savings buffers should be a core part of every response to the increased cost of living. When employees face a gap in access to fair credit, employer options such as partnering with responsible lenders, salary streaming or salary sacrifice can also stop workers from being pushed toward high-cost or illegal alternatives.

Employers are uniquely placed to help staff build much-needed buffers to enable them to weather unexpected bumps in the road. Payroll savings partnerships with local credit unions or community finance providers help workers build emergency savings pots before crisis hits.

Leading employers are now reviewing their protection packages too, such as critical illness, life assurance and income protection, to safeguard staff during life's most challenging moments.

There is no doubt that financial inclusion is an economic catalyst. By embedding inclusion across every layer of financial wellbeing, employers can build financially resilient workforces, improve lives and help to unlock the country's £6.4bn growth potential.

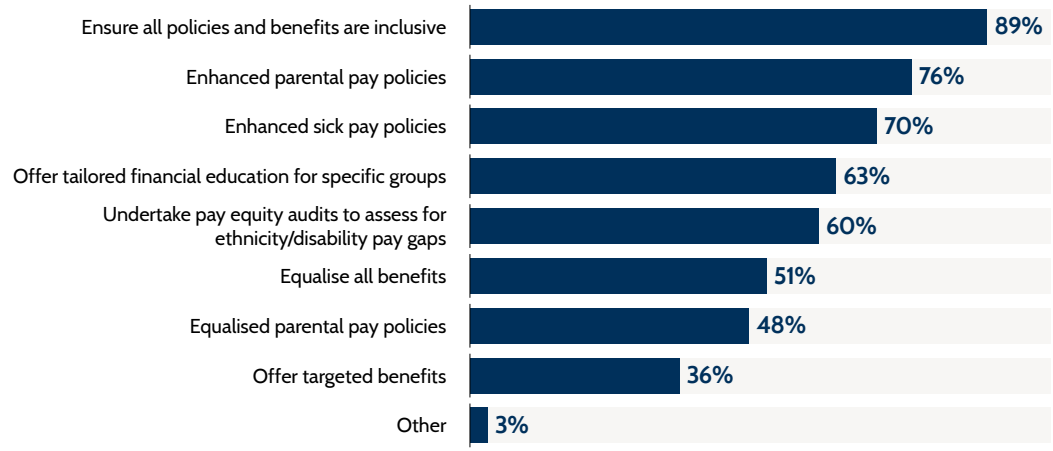
Embedding inclusive approaches while keeping costs down

Creating an inclusive approach to financial wellbeing does not have to be costly. Many employers are already putting strong foundations in place by reviewing policies and benefits to ensure that they are fair and inclusive. Small adjustments, such as using more accessible language or recognising different family structures, can make a meaningful difference to how well support is received by employees.

Enhancing statutory pay across different types of leave, such as sick leave, parental leave and bereavement, is increasingly used as a strategic lever by employers. By providing financial support during periods of absence, organisations can simultaneously improve employee financial wellbeing, protect physical and mental health and strengthen long-term retention

For instance, while statutory reforms extended Statutory Sick Pay (SSP) in April 2026 to apply from the first day of illness, the statutory rate remains low at £123.25 per week. Relying solely on this baseline forces unwell employees to keep working out of financial necessity. By offering enhanced occupational sick pay above the statutory minimum, employers actively combat presenteeism and enable staff to take the time needed to recover fully, preventing long-term burnout or chronic illness, and building a more resilient workforce

Figure 9
Actions used or planned to ensure an inclusive approach to financial wellbeing (N=117)



Despite widespread recognition, inclusion is still inconsistently implemented

When asked specifically about the actions employers are taking to support financial inclusion, a clear divide emerged. Some employers report embedding financial inclusion across all aspects of their financial wellbeing approach, while others only apply it in selected areas. This suggests that, although financial inclusion is widely recognised as important, its implementation is still inconsistent and varies significantly between organisations.

Figure 10
Adoption rate of financial inclusion actions



CASE STUDY

How Torus is using a layered financial wellbeing approach to support with everyday costs



Rebecca Duckett

Group head of people, total reward, data and technology
Torus

While people enter social housing to make a community difference, they ultimately have to live and survive

Financial wellbeing is being leveraged to bolster the employee value proposition

Torus is a social housing provider operating across the North West with nearly 1,800 colleagues. As a not-for-profit group, we set our remuneration at a median pay level and ensure that we pay the Real Living Wage as a minimum. However, tight budgets mean finding creative, proactive ways to bolster our employee value proposition (EVP).

While people enter social housing to make a community difference, they ultimately have to live and survive. We believe financial resilience affects individuals' whole health – if colleagues are financially secure, they can make choices that immediately support their mental and physical wellbeing.

Moving from reactive perks to proactive resilience

Historically, we relied on traditional benefits such as the Local Government Pension Scheme, but its closure to new entrants has forced us to rethink the benefits that support attraction and retention.

Our modern strategy aims to provide upfront financial security. Currently, our framework includes retail discounts and access to a salary sacrifice scheme for household technology. We also provide earned wage access. This empowers colleagues to avoid predatory high-interest loans, while encouraging safer baseline financial options.

To help maximise these offerings, we are keen to improve engagement with our benefits and create behaviour change, so that our people can be proactive about improving their financial resilience.

We hold monthly office-based benefits roadshows, but these rely heavily on physical foot traffic, which leaves remote or hybrid colleagues disconnected. To counter this issue, we are about to begin trialling an AI-integrated financial wellbeing app. We look at this tool as a financial support system right in our colleagues' pockets. Rather than offering abstract education, it targets behaviours and habits by securely linking banking apps with corporate benefits.

Digital tools to bring benefits to life

The app will provide personalised financial prompts, such as alerting an employee to duplicate subscriptions or calculating the long-term impact of a minor routine purchase and how that looks against any long-term/milestone savings plans. Crucially, this tool bridges the gap between everyday spending and corporate rewards.

If a colleague spends money at a supermarket, the app can instantly prompt them with a missed voucher code within our benefits offering, putting real money back into their pockets. Ultimately, we care about our colleagues, and we want to help them with the everyday cost of living, supporting them to improve their financial resilience and achieve their financial goals.

Combined with commitments like the Real Living Pension, which we hope to introduce in the next few months, raising mileage rates, free parking and free electric vehicle charging, we are comprehensively layering our financial wellbeing strategy to support our greatest asset – our people.

Employers explore structured services to ease financial strain



Practical, low-cost initiatives are the most popular option

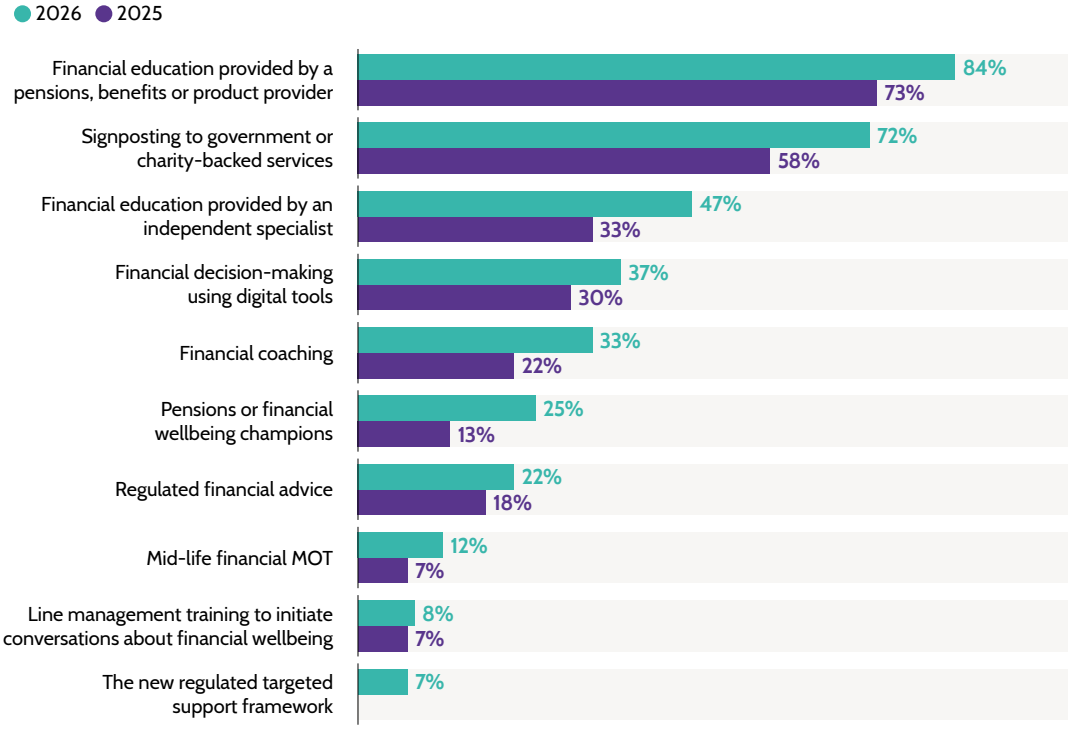
As financial wellbeing risks shift and employees face sustained financial strain, employers are stepping up to expand their support offerings. Year-on-year data from REBA's *Financial Wellbeing Research 2026* shows a significant rise in the proportion of organisations delivering structured financial support services.

The sharpest growth has taken place in practical initiatives, such as introducing financial wellbeing champions (up 92% year-on-year) and introducing mid-life financial MOTs (up 71% year-on-year).

Employers are also making greater use of existing benefits. Nearly all (93%) respondent employers report taking action to improve employee awareness, engagement and take-up of existing financial wellbeing support (see page 33). A key part of this strategy involves leaning into existing partner expertise, with an increasing majority of organisations using financial education provided directly by their pension, benefit, or product providers (rising from 73% in 2025 to 84% in 2026,) although this education may be biased towards their own products and services rather than being fully independent.

Figure 11

Year-on-year growth in financial wellbeing support services (N=162)



Move from passive benefit administration towards proactive, empathetic workplace support

There is also a huge growth across the spectrum of financial support services. The use of digital tools to aid financial decision-making is set to double within the next two years, mirroring a trend REBA has seen over the past two years (see figure 10).

In REBA's *Financial Wellbeing Research 2024*, just one in six employers (16%) offered digital tools to support financial decision-making; today, more than a third (37%) do so. This strong growth has been accelerated by new developments and launches from financial providers, as well as adoption of artificial intelligence (AI) which helps to deliver improved efficiency, enhanced user engagement, as well as a more personalised experience.

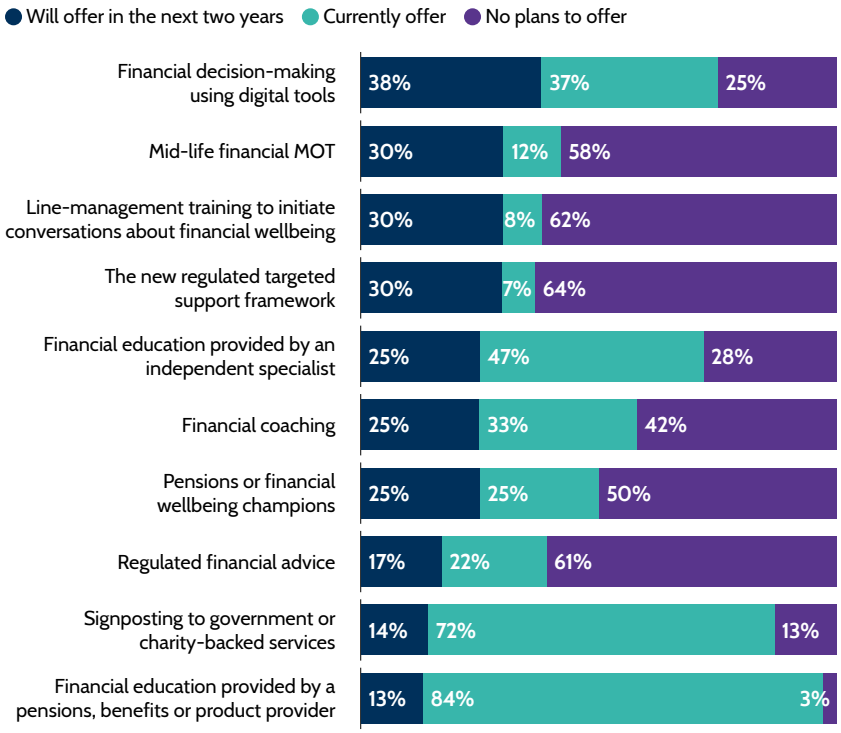
There are also signs that employers are moving to better support retirement adequacy. Offering a mid-life financial MOT is set to grow from just over one in 10 (12%) to more than two-fifths (42%), a 247% increase. This benefit enables employees to review their current financial position and ensure that they are on track to meet their future financial needs.

Historically, money worries have been treated as a workplace taboo. Enabling more open conversations about financial wellbeing through line managers or wellbeing champions serves a dual purpose. It provides immediate support for those in crisis while acting as a powerful preventative measure against future financial strain. By building employees' financial confidence and resilience, employers can support employees, regardless of their life stage or financial circumstances, and develop a sustainable workforce.

The growth in organisations looking to introduce line-manager training to help them discuss financial wellbeing reflects a broader cultural shift, as employers move away from passive benefit administration towards proactive, empathetic workplace support. As financial wellbeing offerings are expanded, line managers will be crucial to identify at-risk employees and to communicate the available support and how to access it.

Figure 12

Financial wellbeing support services planned and offered (N=162)



Regulated targeted support framework

On 6 April 2026, the Financial Conduct Authority (FCA) introduced the regulated targeted support framework. The framework enables authorised institutions such as banks, pension providers and other financial firms to provide suggestions designed for groups of consumers with common characteristics. This aims to help them make important decisions across their pensions.

Filling the gap

The FCA estimates that around 23 million consumers are underserved by the markets for advice and guidance. Targeted support aims to fill the gap between generic guidance and individualised advice, to help consumers access the support they need so that they can make informed financial decisions.

Some pension providers have already been approved to offer targeted support, with more following suit in the months ahead. Financial wellbeing providers can also offer the regulated targeted support framework; however, the services offered by these organisations often already exceeds the FCA provisions.

"Understandably, there are concerns that targeted support could become targeted sales. Defining consumer characteristics and matching them to solutions will be critical and could become a legal minefield. The opportunity must be balanced with careful oversight to protect members," commented Jonathan Watts-Lay, director at WEALTH at work.



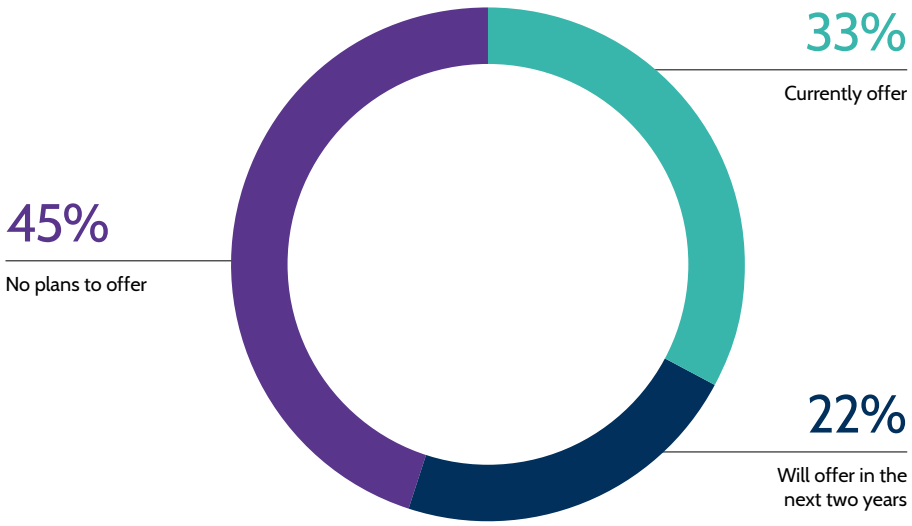
Workplace savings scheme innovations offer more accessible ways to save

Workplace savings are set to be offered by more than half of organisations (55%) in the next two years. This growth is driven by employer concern over financial vulnerability, ongoing cost-of-living pressures and retirement adequacy.

Offering a workplace savings scheme provides a practical way for employees to increase financial resilience, while new innovations in the market are also creating more accessible ways for employees to save. Opt-out savings schemes, for example, operate on similar principles to pensions auto-enrolment and rely on employees' inertia to grow savings.

Figure 13

Currently or plan to offer workplace savings alongside workplace pension (N=159)



Larger organisations leading the way in responding to low financial security

One of the key reasons for an increased focus on workplace savings is the low level of security that many employees face.

The FCA's *Financial Lives* (2024) research found that just under one-quarter (24% or 13.1 million) of people in the UK had low financial resilience. This meant they either had low savings, were heavily burdened by their existing bills and/or credit commitments, or were in financial difficulty.

It also found that one in 10 (10%) had no cash savings at all, and another fifth (21%) had less than £1,000. More than two-fifths (42%) had limited savings, which would not cover living expenses for more than three months if they lost their main source of income.

Providing a financial buffer, often through payroll savings, provides an easy and effective way to improve financial resilience and support employees to build their savings.

While workplace savings remain rare across the broader UK business landscape (just 7%, according to DWP data), larger organisations – those with more than 10,000 employees – are operating differently. Within REBA's respondent group, half (50%) of larger organisations now offer a workplace savings scheme, compared with just under two-fifths (38%) of employers with 1,001-10,000 employees.

CASE STUDY

Financial resilience supports business continuity at Travelodge



Katharine Gourley

People director (strategy)
Travelodge Hotels

A third of our savers are building a financial cushion for the first time in their lives

An app that is boosting savings for employees has also translated to exceptional team stability and morale

At Travelodge, our workforce is the heart of our business. With over 13,000 colleagues across more than 600 hotels in the UK, our team is highly diverse, geographically dispersed and uniquely structured – 86% of our colleagues are paid hourly, and around 70% work part-time to balance other commitments such as caring or studying.

Our 'Better Me' wellbeing strategy has four pillars – emotional, physical, work and financial. We pride ourselves on listening to employees to provide them with the benefits they need.

The role of senior buy-in

To ensure that our financial wellbeing strategy directly reflects the day-to-day realities of our frontline colleagues, we brought senior leadership right into the heart of the conversation. We established a dedicated steering group, currently headed by our chief finance officer and members of our senior leadership team.

In the past, our financial wellbeing strategy focused heavily on traditional mechanisms like pensions and budgeting tools. However, open-ended feedback from our annual colleague survey revealed demand for access to earned pay outside the normal cycle.

The steering group actively listened to our workforce and championed the rollout of the new financial wellbeing benefit that enabled earned wage access outside the normal pay cycle. Colleagues were particularly interested in the savings tool that came with the benefit, leading us to implement the automatic opt-in functionality that prompts colleagues to save as soon as they enrol.

Never assume

The results completely surprised us. While we initially anticipated high demand for flexible pay access, our workforce flipped that assumption. Of the 55% of the workforce enrolled in the app, 70% now maintain active workplace savings accounts, compared with just 50% who use the flexible pay feature. By giving colleagues the ability to round-down shift earnings or automatically set aside small monthly sums, a third of our savers are building a financial cushion for the first time in their lives, with average savings now exceeding £250.

To maintain momentum, we have an ongoing communications strategy to share information about financial issues. We often focus on points in the year that we know are expensive. For example, over the summer we have a big focus on financial literacy and trying to help people with budgeting tools and how to make use of the shopping discounts that we offer. We also remind people of the option to save at times when their income may increase – such as when bonuses are paid, or a pay rise is issued.

The business value of financial resilience

This newfound financial resilience has directly translated into powerful business metrics. Combined with structural commitments, such as alignment of contract hours and providing rotas four weeks in advance, our financial wellbeing tools have helped to drive exceptional team stability and morale. Today, 84% of our workforce have been with us for more than six months, and our labour turnover has significantly dropped, which is great to see in an industry that can be very transient.

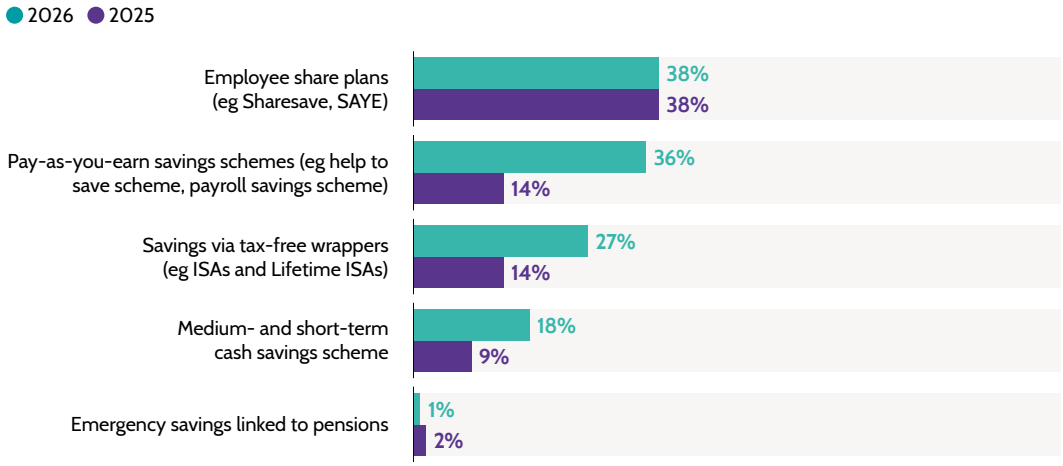
We haven't just helped colleagues build a security net; we have fostered an engaged, stable workforce that is structurally empowered to deliver better service to customers.

Significant increase in employers offering savings benefits

From 2025 to 2026, the proportion of employers offering savings benefits accelerated rapidly. Significant increases were seen for pay-as-you-earn savings schemes, such as payroll savings, which more than doubled from 14% in 2025 to 36% this year - an increase of 157%.

This chimes with the launch of the National Coalition for Workplace Savings in June 2026 – an employer-led initiative aimed at increasing access to workplace savings schemes to help employees build emergency savings and improve financial resilience. The Coalition will encourage employers to implement and increase participation in workplace savings schemes, with early participants including Suez, Travelodge, Next and Wolseley.

Figure 14
Savings benefits currently on offer, 2026 and 2025 (N=87)

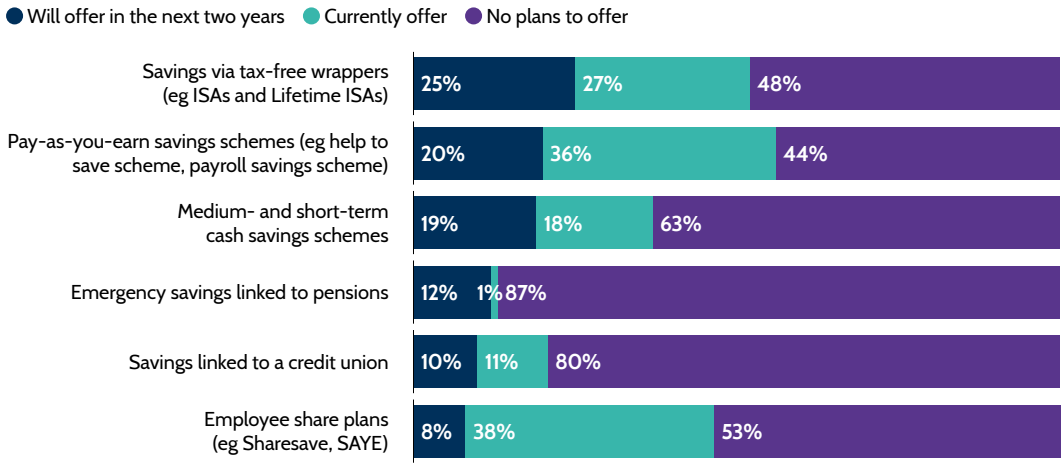


Focus on immediate financial pressures rather than long-term wealth-building

Growth of workplace savings schemes is set to continue. In particular, the proportion of employers offering savings via tax-free wrappers is set to increase by 91% in the next two years, while medium- and short-term cash savings schemes are also expecting growth of 106%.

This demonstrates that employers are focusing on support for financial resilience rather than longer-term wealth-building, such as retirement saving, reflecting a push to help staff with immediate financial pressures.

Figure 15
Current and emerging employer-led savings benefits (N=87)



Low-friction savings routes smooth the way to resilience

Beyond the government's push towards greater use of workplace savings schemes, several key factors are driving their growing popularity.

Accessibility to practical, low-friction ways for employees to save has been crucial. Greater access to earned wages, for example, which is often linked to encouraging employees to save, is making it easier for employees who may in the past have struggled to save to get started.

Open banking is also enabling more sophisticated budgeting tools and clearer visibility of retirement savings (see the case study on page 30). This is helping employees to build a clearer understanding of their finances and how to strengthen their resilience.

Digital adoption is set for rapid growth – while just over one-third (37%) of employers currently use digital tools to support financial decision-making, a further 38% plan to introduce this in the next two years – a 103% increase (see page 20).

However, digital innovation is not replacing human connection. Alongside technology, employers remain strongly committed to specialist financial education. Just under half (47%) currently provide tailored education, with an additional quarter (25%) planning to introduce it (see page 20), highlighting the ongoing importance of face-to-face support.

From a standard perk to a tool for mitigating people-related risk

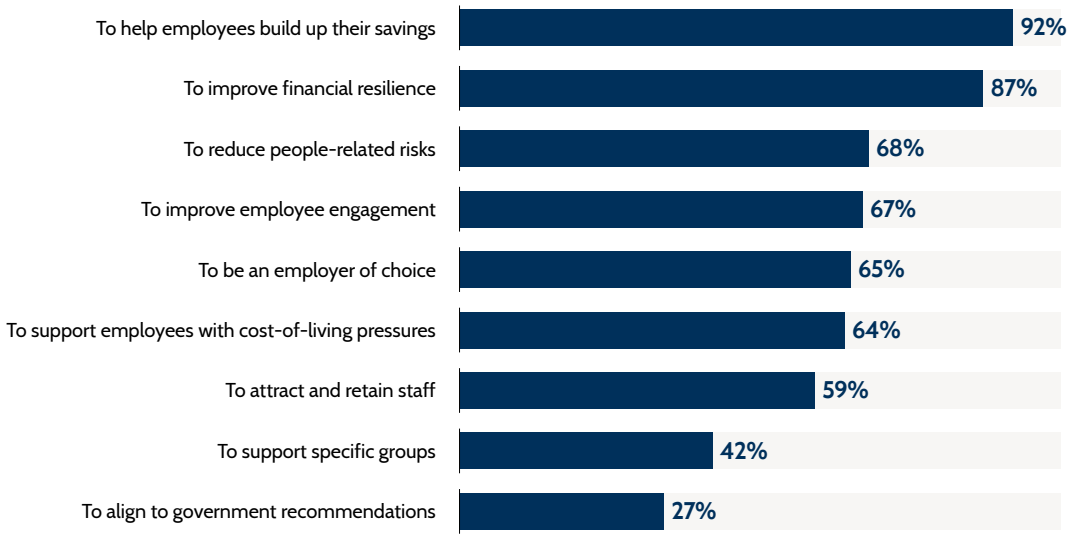
The decision to offer workplace savings schemes is firmly rooted in meeting business and HR objectives, with employers finding clear value in supporting employees to build savings and financial resilience.

Organisations that view financial wellbeing as very important to improve employee engagement (see page 12) were significantly more likely to cite engagement as a reason for offering workplace savings. Three-quarters (75%) did so, compared with under half (42%) of those who felt employee engagement was not a very important HR objective.

Workplace savings schemes are evolving from a standard perk into a tool for mitigating people-related risk. Among organisations actively tackling cost-of-living pressures (see page 10), four in five (80%) cite people risk as a reason for offering or planning a workplace savings scheme. By contrast, this falls to just under two-thirds (65%) of employers yet to act on the cost of living by offering workplace savings schemes, suggesting that employers taking concrete steps on financial health are far quicker to recognise the role that savings play in building long-term resilience.

Figure 16

Reasons for offering/planning to offer workplace savings schemes (N=85)



BIG SHIFT

+76%

Increase in the number of employers planning to offer financial coaching in the next two years

One-third (33%) of employers currently offer financial coaching. In the next two years, a further 25% plan to offer this (see page 20).

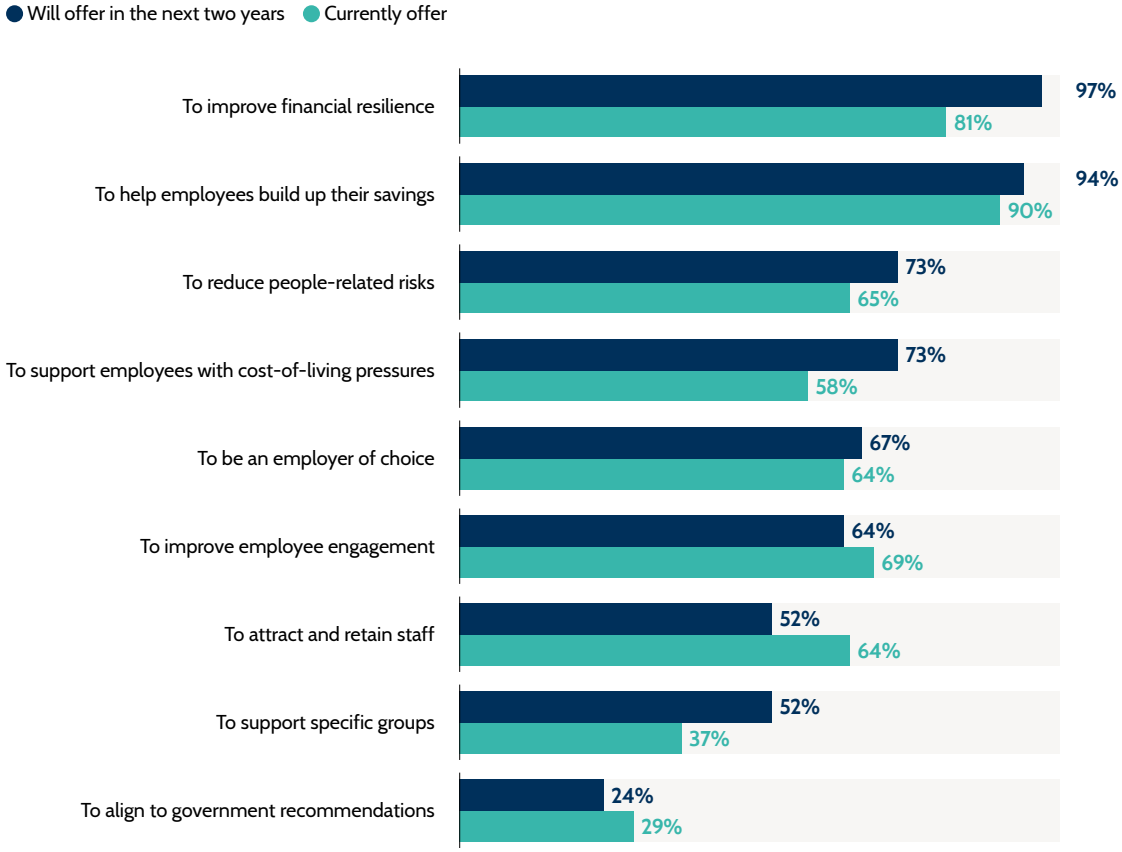
Level of existing provision determines employer motivations for benefits

Employer motivations for offering workplace savings reveal a clear strategic divide between organisations with established provisions and those planning to introduce them in the next two years.

Employers with existing savings schemes are more likely to cite attracting and retaining staff as a key reason for providing this benefit. In contrast, organisations planning to introduce savings schemes are more focused on reducing people-related risks, supporting the cost of living, and improving inclusion.

Figure 17

Reasons for offering workplace savings schemes by current and planned provision (N=85)



The value of workplace savings schemes in helping employees to build financial resilience



Jason Davenport

Chief executive officer
Chartered Institute of Payroll Professionals (CIPP)

Helping employees understand their payslips can be the foundation for much greater financial confidence

Even small amounts make a significant difference when it comes to rainy-day savings

Research from the Personal Finance Research Centre, University of Bristol, Understanding the Role of Savings in Building Longer-Term Financial Security (2025), shows that having access to rainy-day savings improves financial wellbeing. It found that even small amounts of savings matter. Those with just £200-£499 in savings were significantly less likely to face financial hardship (8%) than those with less than this amount (24%).

For employees living payday to payday, money worries can be all-consuming, affecting concentration, productivity and overall wellbeing at work.

Regulatory clarity

The FCA's August 2025 statement on workplace savings schemes has provided helpful regulatory clarity for employers considering introducing a workplace savings scheme. By explaining how employers can support payroll-linked savings without straying into regulated financial advice, it should give organisations greater confidence to introduce these schemes.

The FCA's research found that only 7% of UK employers offer a workplace savings scheme, despite the potential benefits for employees. However, REBA's *Financial Wellbeing Research 2026* indicates that more than 22% of employers plan to introduce one within the next two years (see page 21).

Of all the functions within a business, payroll is the one that interacts with the workforce every single pay period. Pay professionals build trust by ensuring that employees are paid accurately and on time, and that trusted relationship places payroll in a unique position to support workplace savings initiatives.

Back to payslip basics

Payroll professionals have the skills and knowledge to explain how payslips are constructed and what they mean to employees. Helping employees understand their payslips may seem like a small step, but it can be the foundation for much greater financial confidence.

It enables individuals to better understand their pay, including deductions such as tax and national insurance contributions, and can open broader conversations about budgeting and building financial resilience.

Supporting employees to understand their payslips also directly aligns with a core pillar of the government's Financial Inclusion Strategy, which aims to help workers manage their money and build financial capability.

Easy implementation

Looking ahead, the CIPP would welcome continued regulatory support and practical guidance that makes workplace savings schemes easier to implement, helping more employees to build their financial resilience through payroll.

CHAPTER 4: RETIREMENT ADEQUACY

Later life resilience remains the number one priority



Both employers and employees are concerned about retirement prospects

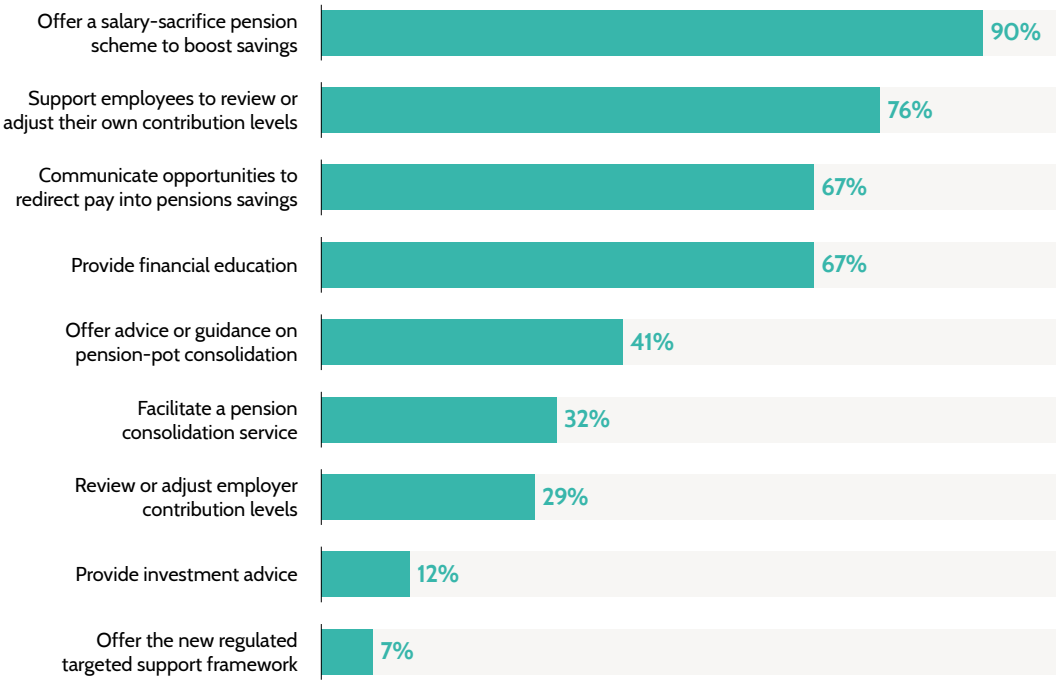
Despite employers' rising interest in workplace savings, retirement adequacy remains the top financial resilience risk factor that employers already, or plan to, address (see page 10). This chimes with the top business objective (see page 11), which is to go beyond pension requirements – nearly two-thirds (62%) stated that this was very important.

Employees are equally concerned about their retirement prospects. More than a third (38%) of UK employees with a defined contribution pension fear that they will never be able to afford to retire because of increased living costs, according to WEALTH at work's 2026 research of 2,000 UK employees. The majority (82%) were also concerned that they will need to work longer to make up a shortfall in pension savings, up from 80% in 2025.

These findings underline the business imperative for supporting retirement adequacy. When employees cannot retire comfortably, they are likely to remain in the workforce longer than planned, creating challenges around potential productivity and workforce planning issues.

Figure 18

Employer initiatives currently in place to support retirement adequacy (N=158)



Employer actions signal a growing commitment to strengthening pension savings

Retirement adequacy has been on employers' agenda for several years. In 2024, nearly three-quarters (71%) of respondents to REBA's *Financial Wellbeing Research 2024* stated that insufficient pension savings was the third highest perceived risk to employees' financial wellbeing. Today, 87% of respondent employers are either addressing retirement adequacy or plan to in the next two years, making it the top financial risk being addressed by employers (see page 10).

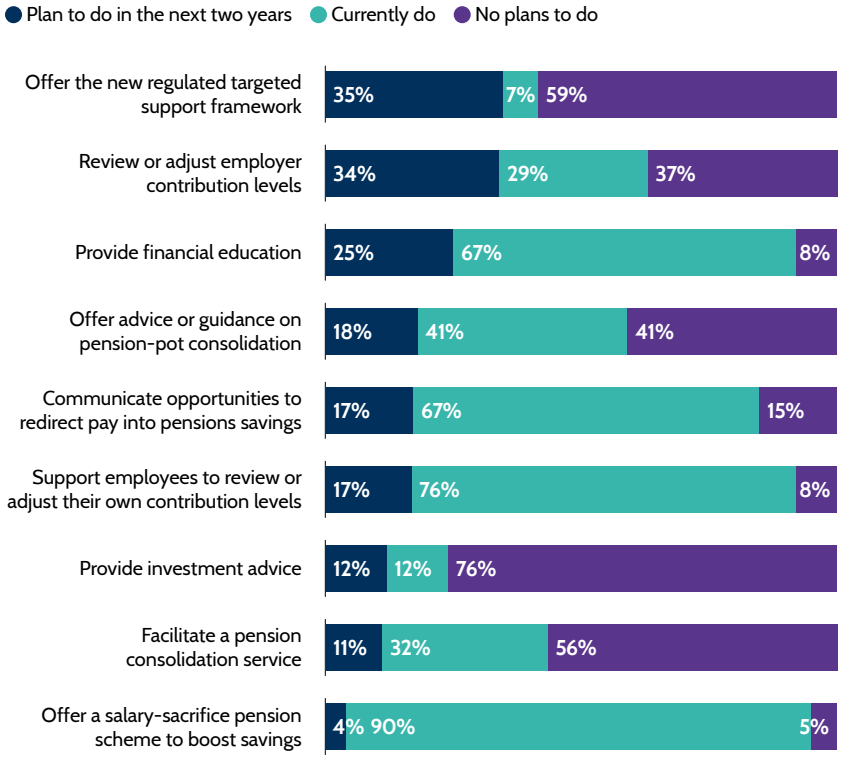
More than a quarter (27%) of employers are planning to take three or more actions to support retirement adequacy in the next two years, signalling a growing commitment to strengthening this area of financial wellbeing.

Much of this activity centres on low-risk actions, such as improving education and communication, not only to raise awareness about retirement adequacy but also to encourage employees to take actions – whether that's increasing contributions, redirecting pay or consolidating pension pots.

Providing investment advice – traditionally an area employers have been cautious of – is expected to double in the next two years. With government placing greater emphasis on informed investment choices, and consumer investment tools becoming more accessible, this growth is unsurprising as employers look to help employees make confident, informed decisions.

Figure 19

Actions used or planned to specifically support retirement adequacy (N=158)



Pensions Commission identifies several areas for improvement

The Pension Schemes Act 2026 has brought in a raft of legislative changes to help further address retirement adequacy. It covers all aspects of pension saving, from how pension providers invest savers' money to the charges imposed and the support savers receive at the point of retirement.

The Pensions Commission has also been brought back into service to understand how the entire UK pensions system can be improved.

Its interim report Pensions 2050: Evidence and Future Priorities identifies several areas that will need consideration:

- An ageing population requires a renewed and sustainable settlement for retirement adequacy
- Pension policy should enable everyone to achieve a decent standard of living in retirement with the non-means-tested state pension as a foundation
- Automatic enrolment has increased workplace pension savings but not enough for low- and middle-earners
- Many people are not saving at all, and the length of working lives is also a driver of adequacy
- Decumulation choices decisively affect people's retirements, and stronger guardrails are needed
- The existing pension provision provides firm foundations but needs strengthening for the long term.

More than one-third (34%) of employers plan to review or adjust pension contributions, while a quarter (25%) plan to provide financial education around retirement adequacy.

Meeting retirement needs will require a multifaceted approach from employees, employers and government. As this report shows, employers are making strong progress in supporting employees to secure their financial futures.

Clear shift towards more active employer involvement

Unsurprisingly, identifying retirement adequacy as an active risk acts as a powerful catalyst for employers. Organisations planning to address retirement adequacy over the next two years are substantially outpacing the wider market in implementing dedicated support measures.

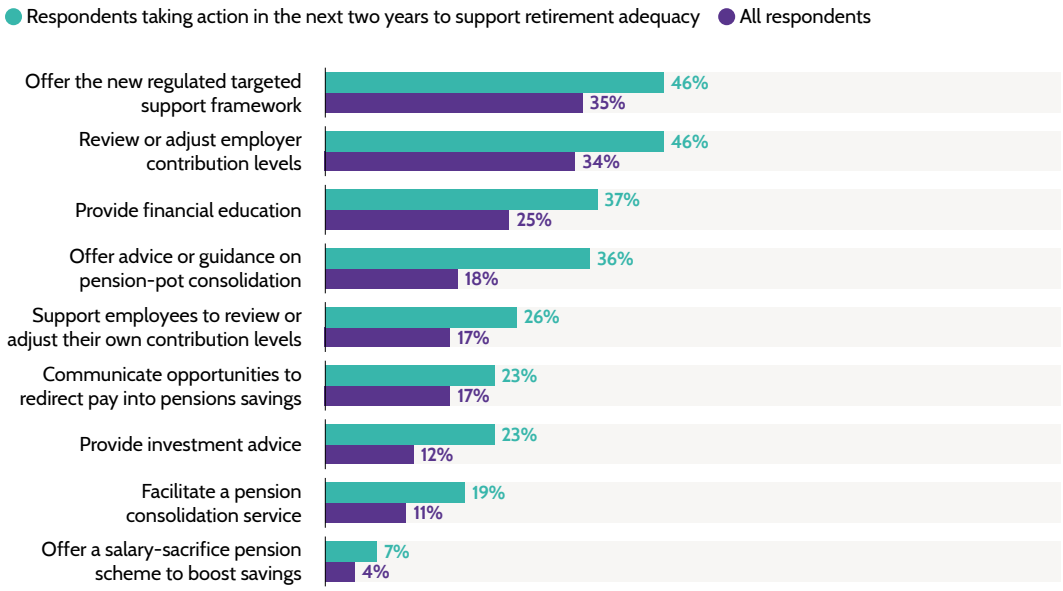
Some of the biggest differences can be seen in this group's interest in offering pension-pot consolidation advice or guidance (36% compared with 18%), reviewing employer contribution levels (46% compared with 34%) and providing financial education (37% compared with 25%). This highlights employers' plans to take a multifaceted approach that incorporates both low-risk initiatives such as financial education, as well as more advanced pension support such as consolidation advice.

The newly launched regulated targeted support framework (see page 20) will also play a large role in this support by providing employers another way to offer retirement support that is more specific to certain groups of employees, going beyond generic guidance.

Overall, there's a clear shift towards more active employer involvement in helping employees build adequate retirement savings, particularly where it is deemed to be a financial resilience risk.

Figure 20

Actions taken by employers planning to support retirement adequacy in the next two years, compared with all respondents (N=169)



Guided Retirement solutions help to simplify retirement income decisions

Guided Retirement requirements have been developed as part of the Pension Schemes Act 2026. The aim is to ensure that workplace pension schemes offer default retirement income solutions that provide a sustainable pension income, without the individual needing to make complex decisions unless they choose to do so.

Navigation aid

The Pensions Policy Institute's (PPI) report, Designing Guided Retirement Solutions: Meeting Member Needs, found that Guided Retirement solutions could play a critical role in improving how individuals navigate retirement income decisions.

Although the requirements focus on the need for pension schemes to have strong and effective governance to develop appropriate default retirement income solutions, employers also have an important role to play in supporting employees to understand their options.

"We have had a lot of interest shown in retirement guidance services as a means of helping individuals to understand their options prior to making any decision. This type of support, alongside digital services and tools, is likely to become best practice as Guided Retirement solutions are launched," said Jonathan Watts-Lay, director at WEALTH at work.

Guided Retirement is expected to be introduced in 2029.

CASE STUDY

Workday moves to make sure its employees are on track for retirement



Lisa Aslam

Principal benefits manager, total rewards
Workday

We're empowering our workmates to take command of their financial futures

By combining digital tools with one-to-one coaching, Workday aims to make retirement savings more transparent

For years, understanding whether you were truly 'on track' for retirement remained a mystery. Despite my career, I couldn't definitively say if my plans were sufficient, until we recently introduced new pension technology to provide an overarching picture of savings.

Workday is a cloud-based software platform that provides HR, payroll and finance systems to multinational organisations. Our UK workforce of 700 employees has benefited from the introduction of auto-enrolment. However, we were concerned that, despite improving pension inclusion, auto-enrolment could lead to complacency.

Employees frequently assume that simply being in an employer's scheme is enough to provide an adequate retirement. And although our pension contribution levels are generous, we only have visibility into contributions made while at Workday; we don't know an employee's wider financial picture.

By introducing our pension provider's new app, employees can access real-time updates on their retirement adequacy position, based on market movements. The technology aggregates employees' pension pots and savings – even allowing couples to set joint goals – and provides the transparency needed to answer the elusive question: "Am I on track?"

The human touch

However, technology alone isn't enough – it's the human element that drives change. This app works in tandem with one-to-one coaching sessions to support employees to bring together all their existing savings. During these sessions, employees are helped to set up the app and create a comprehensive financial plan that integrates retirement goals with other life milestones, such as saving for a property or a significant purchase.

This isn't just about retirement – it's about managing net worth effectively. We want this to become a regular touchpoint for our staff, encouraging proactive engagement rather than a 'set it and forget it' mentality.

A holistic approach

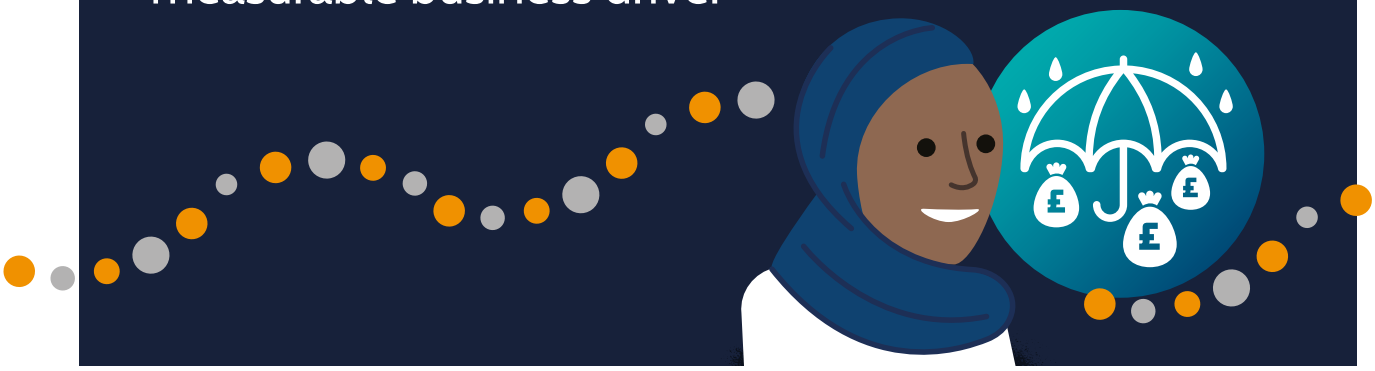
This initiative is a critical pillar of our broader financial wellbeing strategy. We've already seen immense success with our 'Invest at Work' options, where we offer a £50 match on ISAs, GIAs and LISAs, which has helped many of our employees start to save for something meaningful, such as getting onto the property ladder. We also offer a generous employee stock purchase plan (ESPP).

By layering this new pension-tracking and coaching capability over our existing benefits, we're creating a holistic ecosystem of support.

Our goal is tangible – we want to increase engagement and contribution levels and help close the gender pension gap. The new app will provide us with anonymised data, so we can get a better understanding of the retirement adequacy of our workforce. We can then begin communications to different cohorts to encourage action, where needed.

Ultimately, by simplifying pension savings and providing transparent, actionable insights through coaching, we aren't just administering a pension – we're empowering our workmates to take command of their financial futures, ensuring they are truly prepared for the lifestyle they want in retirement.

From unproven cost to measurable business driver



Capturing a true picture of financial wellbeing

Most employers remain in the dark about their employees' financial wellbeing, instead relying on surface-level metrics like engagement rates and benefits usage data.

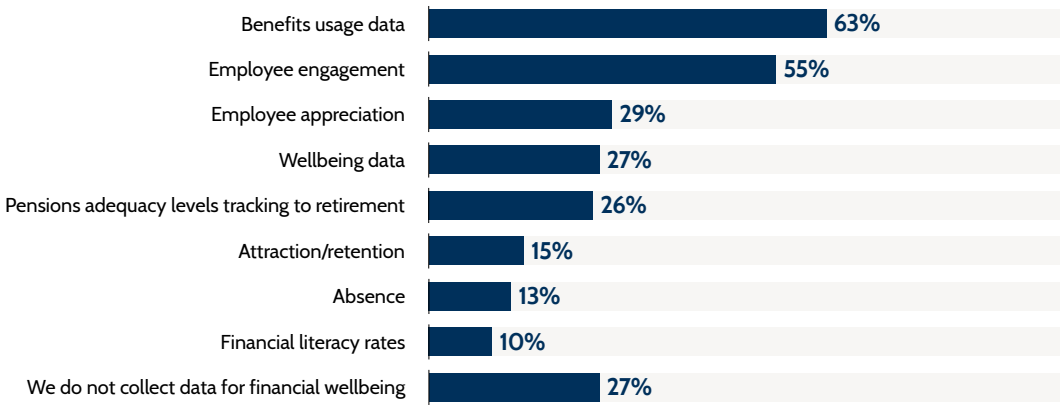
This blindspot is a familiar pattern. REBA's *Health and Wellbeing Research 2026* found that nearly two-thirds (60%) of respondents use claims data to measure return on investment and/or value, while just over half (58%) measure engagement in wellbeing programmes. While these figures track activity, they fall short in capturing the real picture of financial wellbeing.

Proving the return on investment of financial wellbeing benefits is difficult, but setting strategic targets can change the game. Employers linking financial wellbeing to specific HR and business objectives are more disciplined about measuring real outcomes, such as absence and retirement adequacy, to prove return on investment.

For instance, more than one-third (34%) of employers currently addressing retirement adequacy collect pensions adequacy data, compared with one in 20 (5%) that do not plan to address retirement adequacy, helping to transform financial wellbeing from an unproven cost into a measurable, accountable business driver.

Figure 21

Data used to evaluate performance and ROI of financial wellbeing benefits and initiatives



Employers are acutely aware of data blindspots and the need to better understand the financial wellbeing of their employees.

As seen on page 9, a significant proportion are taking action to address this gap. Half (50%) of respondents either currently track or plan to set clear metrics to assess financial wellbeing programme performance, while two-fifths (43%) aim to use integrated data to better measure outcomes against objectives or targets.

Mind the gap: quantifying the cost of lost productivity and absenteeism

The shift towards a more sophisticated financial wellbeing approach is reflected in how employers are leveraging available data.

With just over two-thirds (68%) of employers using data to brief the board and 67% using it to target employee cohorts, financial wellbeing has firmly secured C-suite attention. Yet a major measurement gap remains. To prove the case for investment, employers need to quantify the cost of lost productivity and absenteeism – the two areas where financial stress can hit the bottom line the hardest.

Just 13% of employers currently measure financial wellbeing-related absences, and only two in five employers (41%) view reducing absence as a very important HR objective for their financial wellbeing programmes. Roughly one in six (15%) employers say it is not important (see page 12).

C-suite interest may be high, but, without tracking direct impact metrics such as absence and lost productivity, employers may struggle to turn executive buy-in into a sustained strategy.

Figure 22

How data collected will be used to inform financial wellbeing strategy and actions (N=110)

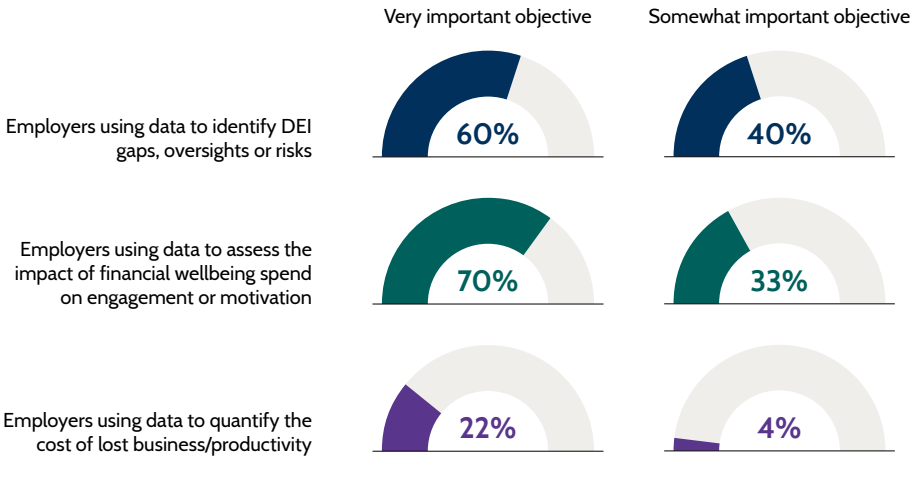


The correlation between setting targets and tracking data

Having clear HR objectives goes hand-in-hand with measuring results. Organisations that set specific targets for financial wellbeing are far more likely to track relevant data and report the impact of the benefits offering. Continuing to close this data gap will be essential for organisations looking to quantify the return on their wellbeing investments.

Figure 23

How employers are matching data with objectives



Employers refuse to let tight budgets stall progress

With pressing financial resilience risk factors – from retirement adequacy challenges, high living costs and the need for greater inclusion – topping employers' agendas (see page 10), maximising the uptake of existing financial wellbeing support has become paramount.

In REBA's *Financial Wellbeing Research 2025*, more than two-thirds (70%) of respondents cited budget constraints as a barrier to improving financial wellbeing support. However, this year's research shows that as financial wellbeing becomes a greater business imperative, employers are refusing to let tight budgets stall progress.

Instead of waiting for extra funding, with only 29% petitioning for larger budgets, employers are actively driving progress through existing resources. Rather than rolling out costly new perks, almost all employers (93%) are taking direct steps to boost awareness and engagement with resources they already have in place.

The repositioning of financial wellbeing as a strategic priority is clearly reflected in employer actions. More than three-quarters (79%) are working to embed it into a broader wellbeing strategy, while nearly two-thirds (60%) are actively improving their data-driven insights.

Figure 24

Action taken or planned to overcome common financial wellbeing programme challenges (N=153)



Removing the fear of crossing regulatory boundaries

In REBA's *Financial Wellbeing Research 2025*, fear of crossing regulatory boundaries was highlighted as a major barrier, with two in five (40%) respondents citing concerns over liability. This year, regulatory updates have provided welcome clarity – including new FCA guidance on operating workplace savings schemes (see page 26).

The introduction of targeted support for groups of individuals with similar financial characteristics – bridging the gap between generic guidance and regulated investment advice – is to be welcomed (see page 20). However, retirement decisions are highly personalised, and advice for those with more complex situations will remain essential. As such, this opportunity must be balanced with careful oversight to protect members.

This year's research shows there is already significant interest in the targeted support framework, with more than two-fifths of respondents (41%) wanting to work with providers to prepare for and implement the new regulated targeted support framework.

Employers are also taking action to ensure they are staying compliant, with more than one in three (35%) working to upskill internal teams or work with providers to ensure that financial wellbeing support is delivered within appropriate regulatory boundaries.

Recommended actions

From WEALTH at work

1 Take a holistic approach to financial wellbeing

Financial wellbeing strategies are evolving beyond a focus on short-term financial challenges. Employers should consider how they support employees at every stage of life – from building day-to-day financial resilience through to preparing for retirement. A joined-up approach can help improve engagement, confidence and overall financial security, while ensuring that support remains relevant as employees' needs change.

2 Help employees build financial resilience

With financial resilience remaining a key concern, employers should review how they support healthy saving habits alongside pension provision. Savings options such as a workplace ISA can help employees build short- to medium-term savings, creating greater resilience to deal with any unexpected costs, while encouraging positive long-term financial behaviours. Supporting employees to build accessible savings can also help to reduce financial stress and improve overall wellbeing.

3 Improve retirement readiness and decision-making

Retirement outcomes are influenced by decisions made throughout an employee's working life. Employers should encourage earlier engagement with pensions and retirement planning, helping employees to understand the value of saving and to review existing arrangements. Services such as pension consolidation can support greater engagement. However, retirement is not a one-size-fits-all journey. Access to retirement guidance and, where appropriate, regulated investment advice can help employees make informed decisions and achieve better outcomes.

4 Turn awareness into action and measure impact

Financial education can improve understanding, but employees often need additional support to make meaningful changes. Combining financial education with personal coaching and guidance can help build confidence and encourage action. Employers should also focus on measuring outcomes and using data to identify where support is needed most. Working with specialist financial wellbeing providers can help organisations deliver robust, scalable programmes and demonstrate tangible value.

About WEALTH at work

WEALTH at work is a leading financial wellbeing, retirement and workplace savings specialist. As part of the Wealth at Work group we help millions of people around the world to improve their financial future.

This is achieved by delivering impactful financial engagement, education and one-to-one guidance, which is delivered on a bespoke basis. Our approach enhances understanding of the rewards and benefits available in the workplace – empowering employees and members to make informed decisions and achieve long-term financial resilience.

Our comprehensive support covers a wide range of financial needs – from general money management and pensions to retirement planning. This includes the implementation of a workplace ISA and digital pension consolidation, as well as a Guided Retirement service.

Following any of our services, for those wishing to understand their personal financial situation, support is provided through our helpline. At this point, we can offer regulated investment advice, as well as direct investment options where appropriate.

For more information, contact:
info@wealthatwork.co.uk
Telephone: 0800 234 6880
Website: wealthatwork.co.uk

WEALTH at work
part of the Wealth at Work group

Employers completing REBA's survey

By organisation size, plus sector breakdown

Respondents by organisation size

50,000+ employees

- BAE Systems
- BT
- Co-op
- John Lewis Partnership

10,001-50,000

- Amey
- Babcock
- Currys
- DHL Supply Chain
- Dunelm
- First Bus
- GKN Aerospace
- Kier Group
- NatWest
- Ocado Group
- OpenText
- Places for People
- Santander
- Sodexo
- Superdrug Stores
- Transport for London
- Travelodge Hotels
- Travis Perkins
- University of Manchester
- Wells Fargo Bank

5,001-10,000

- AECOM
- Bidfood
- Bright Horizons
- E.ON
- Grant Thornton
- Hilton
- L&G
- London Stock Exchange Group (LSEG)
- Müller
- National Highways
- Sopra Steria
- University of Birmingham
- University of Southampton
- Wickes
- Wolseley UK

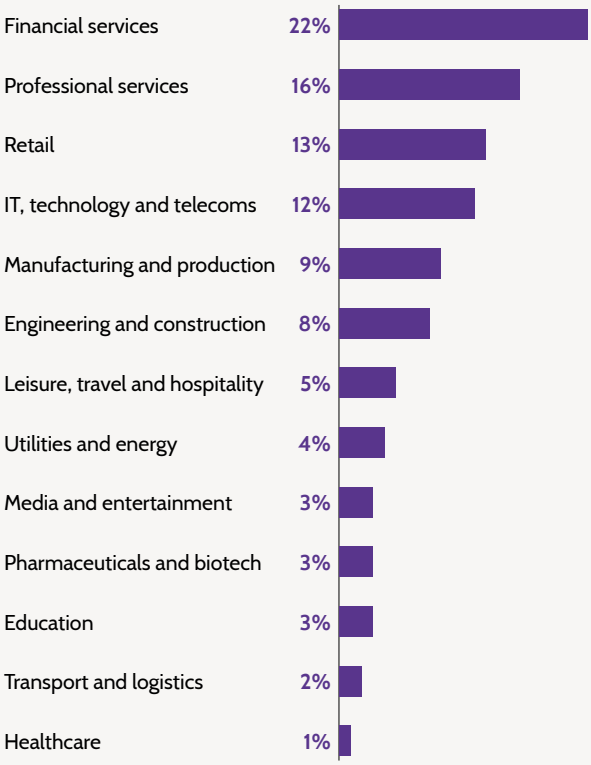
2,501-5,000

- Aegon UK
- British Heart Foundation
- Brunning & Price
- Clyde & Co
- Costain
- Fidelity International
- GE Aerospace
- Halma
- Hastings Direct
- Housing 21
- Informa
- McBride
- National Energy System Operator
- NHS Business Services Authority
- Nottingham Trent University
- Peabody
- Renishaw
- Royal London
- Salesforce
- Selfridges UK
- Skipton Building Society
- Student Loans Company
- Temenos
- Warner Hotels

1,001-2,500

- Adidas (UK)
- Amplius
- Birketts
- Bournemouth University
- Canada Life UK
- Cats Protection
- City & Guilds

Sector breakdown



Employers completing REBA's survey

By organisation size

Convatec
First Central Insurance
FM Conway
Freshfields
General Dynamics
Guardian News & Media
HomeServe
Hyde Housing Association
Itsu
Liverpool Football Club
Macmillan Cancer Support
Marshalls
McLaren Racing
Miller Insurance Services
Moody's
Northern Trust
Notting Hill Genesis
Ofcom
Osborne Clarke
Ralph Lauren
Royal National Institute of Blind People (RNIB)
Seagate Technology
Take-Two Interactive Software
The Crown Estate
The University of Law
Torus
TP ICAP
University of Derby
Utility Warehouse
Womble Bond Dickinson

500-1,000

AB World Foods
Baker McKenzie
Bryan Cave Leighton Paisner
CVC Advisers
Edelman
Farrer & Co
Franklin Templeton
Haskoning
Institute of Chartered Accountants in England and Wales
Land Securities Properties
Lumanity
Macfarlanes
Michelmores
NPSG Europe
Pacific Life
Progress Housing Group
Secure Trust Bank
Trowers & Hamlins
Vertex Pharmaceuticals
Workday

Fewer than 500

Alexander McQueen
Almond Housing Association
Amova Asset Management UK
ATP Media
Aurora Energy Research
Bain Capital
Berry Bros & Rudd
Biomodal
Camellia
CloudPay
Coalition for Epidemic Preparedness Innovations
Corning
Cripps
CSG Systems
Dana Petroleum
eBay
Equans Specialist Contracting UK
Evergreen Garden Care UK
Frontiers Media
Glaisyers ETL
Goodwin
Greenwoods Legal Services
Hg Capital
Holman Fenwick Willan
Intuit
LifeArc
Maples
McDermott
Medallia
Mobius Life
MS Amlin
OneFamily
OSTTRA
Parts Town UK
Pay.UK
Perseus
Pilz Ireland
Posturite
Resmed
Rest Easier
SEMP
Shaftesbury Capital
Sprinklr UK
TalkTalk
Tide
US Embassy
Winckworth Sherwood

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Benchmarking your strategies and benefits offerings is key to buying decisions and future decision-making. Employer professional members and all those working at supplier associate members of REBA get full access to REBA reports. So get ahead and access the data you need.

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The Reward & Employee Benefits Association (REBA) is a thriving community of HR professionals dedicated to pursuing best practice in reward and benefits. Synonymous with excellence, REBA informs and empowers its members to grow their networks, advance their knowledge, source and connect with market-leading vendors, and be prepared for what's coming over the horizon.

REBA's research taps into its diverse network of 4,700+ members and 27,000+ HR contacts to provide objective insights into the reward, benefits and people risk strategies that a broad range of organisations are implementing throughout the UK and internationally. As a result, REBA produces independent reports featuring data-led benchmarking, fresh insights, emerging trends and case studies to identify change and inform better decisions in reward and benefits strategies.

Website: www.reba.global
LinkedIn: Reward & Employee Benefits Association

Contact REBA about research: Jo Gallacher, content director, jo.gallacher@reba.global
Report devised by: Debi O'Donovan and Dawn Lewis
In association with: WEALTH at work
Researcher: Annette Sinclair
Writer: Dawn Lewis
Editor: Jo Gallacher
Sub-editor: Caroline Taylor
Designer: Wendy Webb

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