

# FACTFILE: GCE PROFESSIONAL BUSINESS SERVICES

## UNIT AS 2: EMPLOYEE WELL-BEING



### Learning Outcomes

#### Students should be able to:

- define the term employee well-being;
- demonstrate understanding of why employers should value the concept of employee well-being in their organisations;
- explore methods used to support employee well-being, for example:
  - flexible working hours;
  - workplace counselling;
  - resilience training;
  - stress management training; and
  - workplace wellness programmes;
- explain the causes of low levels of workplace well-being, for example:
  - role overload;
  - shift work;
  - work relationships;
  - limited career development; and
  - redundancies.



### Introduction

Employee well-being, or well-being at work (WAW) is not easily defined and can differ significantly as it is dependent on the 'business context' where various external and internal factors can affect employee well-being. Figure 1. Illustrates how external factors such as political, demographic, technology, economic can affect employee well-being in supermarkets and software businesses. Organisations such as the Health and Safety Executive (HSE), The Advisory, Conciliation and Arbitration Service (ACAS), The Labour Relations Agency (LRA) can offer advice and support to businesses regarding employee well-being. The internal factors that may affect employee well-being include: the type of job; role overload and redundancies.

The type of business and the nature of the employee's work may have an impact on the well-being of the employee. For example, from an external legal perspective, The Health and Safety at Work Act (1974) relates to a range of occupational health and safety matters that businesses must adhere to. Businesses may respond to this Act by producing and implementing health and safety policies, procedures and practices that promote the health and safety of employees. Each business will develop their unique response in relation to employee well-being. For example, in the case of the supermarket, employees placing stock in refrigerators

may be required to wear gloves to protect their hands from frost bite (BFF, 2011; HSE, 2014). In a software business where employees are working at a computer desk, their postural problems could be addressed by adjusting their chair, providing a footrest and / or a document holder (HSE, 2013; nidirect, 2017).

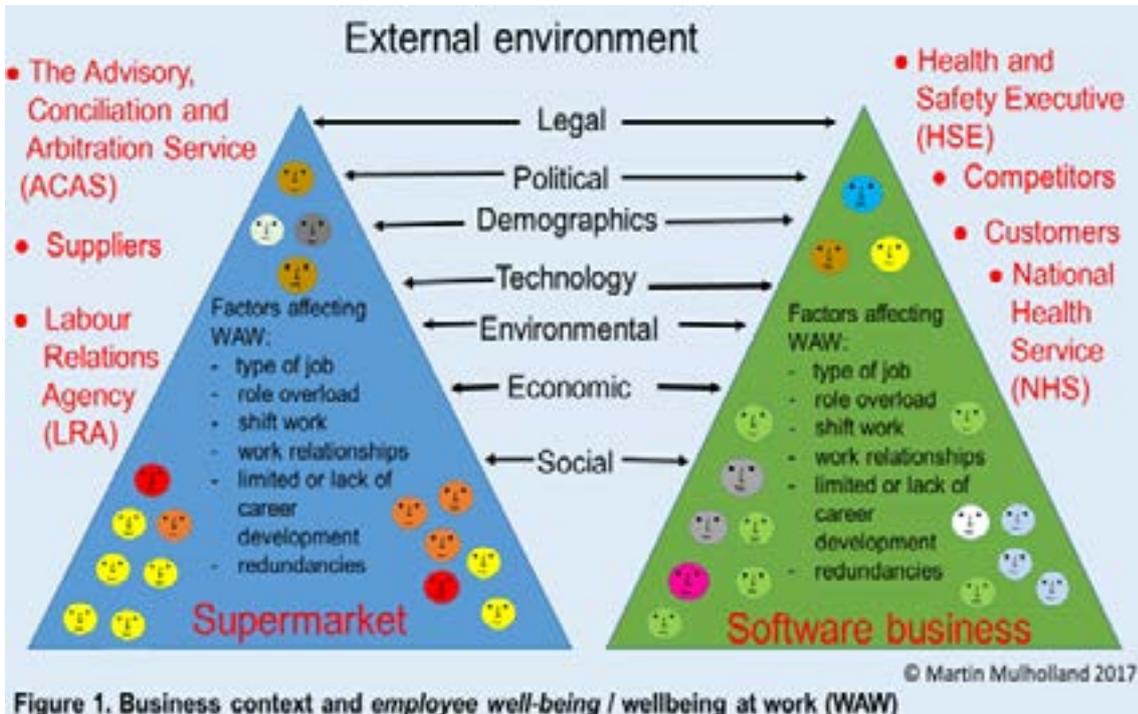


Figure 1. Business context and employee well-being / wellbeing at work (WAW)

## Definitions

An illustration of the variety of WAW definitions is provided by Buffet et al. (2013) where they list how certain organisations and European countries offer their own definitions for WAW.

Tehrani et al. (2007, p.4) note that the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development's (CIPD) define WAW as 'creating an environment to promote a state of contentment which allows an employee to flourish and achieve his/her full potential for the benefit of themselves and their organisation'.

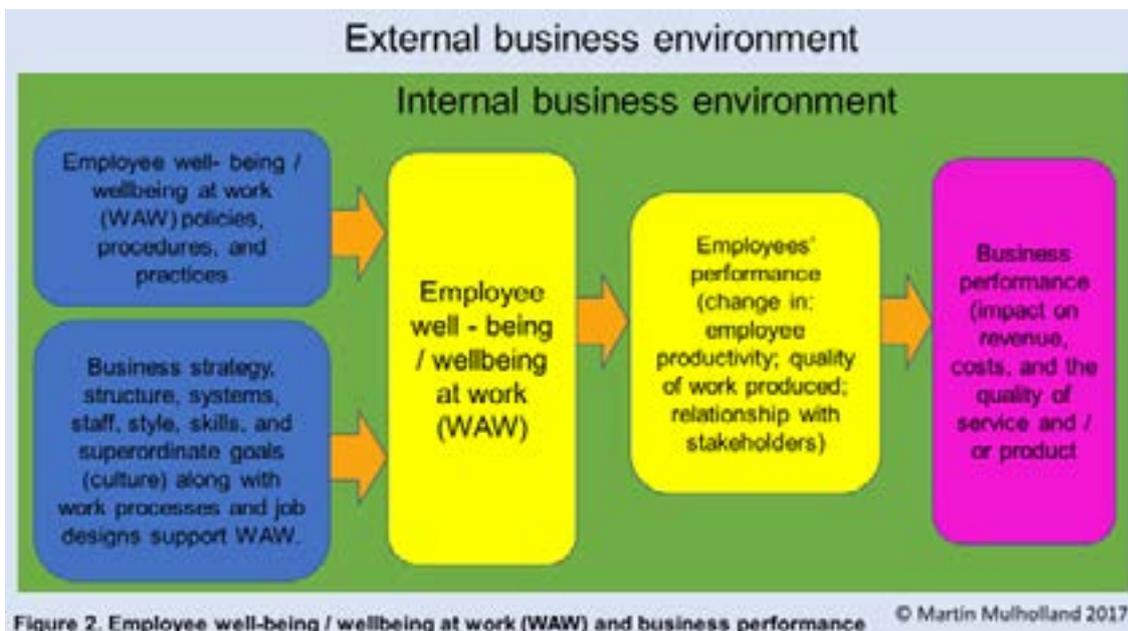


Figure 2. Employee well-being / wellbeing at work (WAW) and business performance

Personnel Today (2011) refers to employee well-being as “that part of an employee’s overall wellbeing that they perceive to be determined primarily by work and can be influenced by workplace interventions”.

### Value of employee well-being to the business

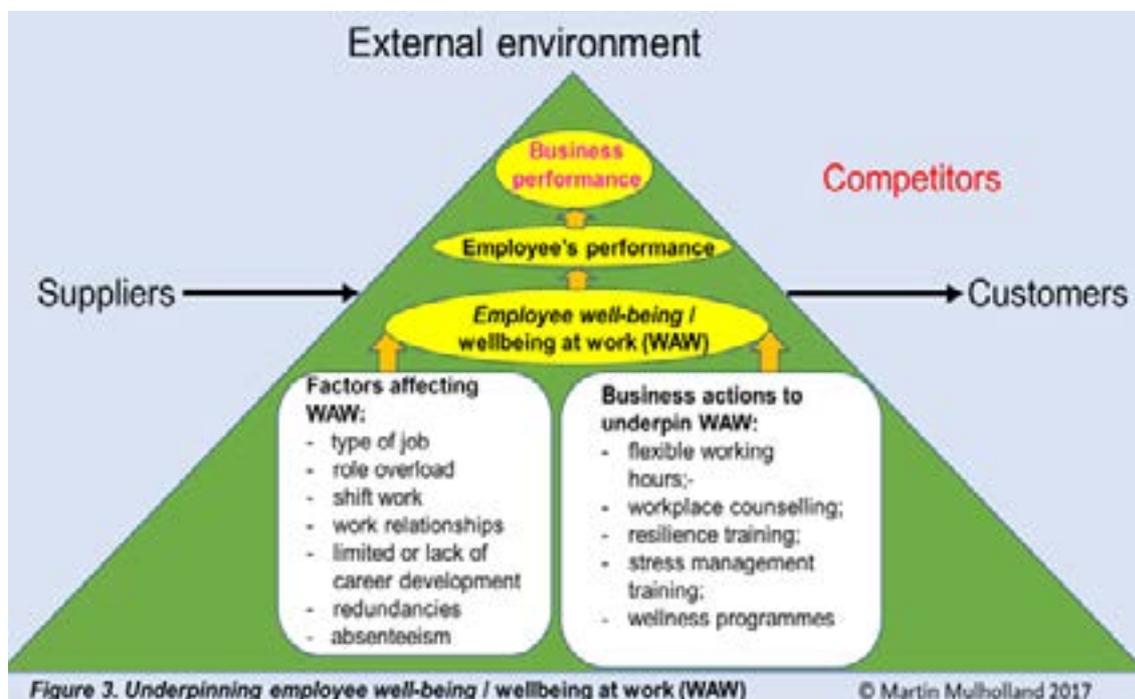
Businesses should value the concept of employee well-being (emotional, physical, and mental health) as this can affect their job performance and productivity. Figure 1. there are numerous factors in and outside a business that may adversely affect the employee’s well-being and consequently their level of job performance. Figure 2. illustrates how well-being policies along with internal factors such as strategy, structure and systems in a business can affect employee well-being (WAW. These can also impact on an employee’s performance. The cumulative performance of employees will affect the performance of the business.

Businesses that value the concept of employee wellbeing may be able to create policies, implement procedures and develop practices in relation to employee well-being that reduce the likelihood of a decline in employee wellbeing and / or improve employee well-being. For example, businesses should ensure that they have health and safety policies, procedures and practices which adhere to Health and Safety legislation (take actions that reduce risks to employees) and also underpin a commitment to employee well-being (introduce measures that enhance the physical, emotional and mental health of employees).

Research (Bryson et al., 2014; Fenton et al., 2014; nef (2014) suggests that employee well-being may cause improved workplace performance (greater profitability, higher labour productivity and better quality of outputs or services) and thus impact on business performance.

### Causes of poor workplace well-being

Figure 3. shows factors that can adversely affect employee well-being and how well-being can affect employee’s performance and subsequently business performance. Figure 3. notes that business can take actions to underpin employee well-being within the workplace.



Clearly businesses need to contend with numerous factors that can cause poor workplace well-being including; role overload; shift work; work relationships; and redundancies. Despite these negative factors businesses can take actions to

enhance employee well-being by introducing initiatives such as: flexible working hours; workplace counselling; resilience training; stress management training; and wellness programmes.

Role overload can occur when an employee cannot complete an amount of work in a specified time or the work is too difficult and they are not capable of undertaking the work (ACAS, 2014). In these instances, the employee may experience stress which then affects their well-being.

Shift work generally occurs outside the usual 9am to 5pm time frame and operates on a schedule. For example, the schedules could be 5.00 pm to 1.00 am and 1.00 am to 9.00 am (HSE, 2006). The HSE (2006) and the IWH (2010) refer to research that shows that shift work may cause employees problems which include: sleep disorders; stomach complaints; and psychological distress. There is also a greater likelihood of workplace injury during night shifts.

### The promotion of employee well-being in the business

Employee well-being can be promoted within businesses via a variety of actions including: flexible working hours; workplace counselling; resilience training; stress management training; and workplace wellness programmes. Flexible working hours (HSE, 2014; CIPD, 2017) can be employed in different ways including: part-time working, flexi-time, staggered hours, job sharing, shift working and homeworking. The benefits of flexible working are that employers can make full use of the time employees are willing to work, reduce absenteeism, sickness and stress, and increase productivity. Employees benefit by choosing work patterns that suit them. For example, employees with caring responsibilities can choose a pattern that enable them to meet their caring needs.

Workplace wellness programmes (iosh, 2015; Harris, 2016) aim to enhance employee health and well-being by addressing risk factors including: excess weight; low levels of physical activity; and smoking. Wellness programmes can take the form of: lifestyle education courses; health assessment programmes; counseling support; and fitness activity classes. Employer benefits include: reduced absenteeism; more productive employees and increased employee morale as the wellness programme indicates to employees that their business is concerned about their health and well-being. The benefits for employees may include: weight loss; improved physical fitness; reduced stress and an increase in self-esteem.



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