

Dr Holly Blake: Remote healthcare options for employees are rapidly expanding

25th June 2020 6:00 am

Britain's employers lose over £81 billion each year to sickness absence, according to Vitality's *Britain's Healthiest Workplace* report, published in April 2019. This can be crippling to businesses in 'normal' times, but the unprecedented spread of Coronavirus has brought this into even greater focus. Coupled with an increase in remote working during lockdown, which has undoubtedly changed the way we work for the long haul, employers need to invest proactively in the [health and wellbeing](#) of their workforce to reduce lost time.

For working adults, getting seen by a GP can be hard, but remote healthcare options are rapidly expanding. Simply informing employees about online health advice can be useful and there are a wide range of options such as NHS Choices, symptom checkers, as well as free services from private providers such as Babylon Health, Boots and the Patient Information Forum.

Employees who want to manage their [health and wellbeing](#) can download games and apps which help track symptoms or change behaviours. These can help people to manage stress and anxiety, exercise more, lose weight and eat more healthily, stop drinking or smoking.

For those who want direct health consultations, employers can signpost to these or buy in private provider services. Telecoaching can support people with lifestyle and health, or it can be used to help people come to terms with illness diagnosis or to live with a long-term condition.

Mental health support at work is essential. Online support and counselling can be delivered remotely by trained professionals, with 24-hour helplines or employee assistance programmes. GP practices and some pharmacies will offer online medical advice and consultations. Some private providers offer instant access to a GP consultation via a smartphone device.

The world is changing and employers need to stay ahead of the game to reduce the financial impact of sickness absence on the bottom line.

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