



**Chambers  
Ireland**  
Advancing business together

# **SME WELLBUSINESS CHARTER**

## **INFORMATION PACK**

In Partnership With

**HEALTHY IRELAND**



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# INTRODUCTION

The World Health Organization recognises workplaces as vital environments for promoting employee health and wellbeing, which in turn benefits businesses through reduced absenteeism, better retention, and a more positive culture.

In 2023, Chambers Ireland conducted national research on behalf of Healthy Ireland, revealing a clear demand among small and medium sized enterprises (SMEs) for accessible guidance, practical resources, and relevant training.

In response, Chambers Ireland has partnered with Healthy Ireland to develop the SME We//Business Charter—a national initiative grounded in the principles of the Healthy Workplace Framework [1]. It is designed to help businesses within the Chamber network create healthier workplaces. While the programme is available to all affiliated Chamber members, it is

specifically designed with SMEs in mind, recognising the unique challenges they often face—such as limited time, resources, and capacity to prioritise wellbeing.

Led nationally by Chambers Ireland and guided by our Healthy Workplace Co-ordinator, the self-guided programme provides a clear, step-by-step approach to integrating wellbeing into everyday business practices. This document provides a high-level overview of the initiative, outlining its purpose, benefits, and how businesses can take the first step toward creating healthier workplaces.



**Ian Talbot**  
***Chief Executive***

# PROGRAMME GOALS

Chambers Ireland is committed to supporting the long-term success and competitiveness of Irish businesses. Central to that success is the recognition that people are an organisation's most valuable asset.

In recent years, workplace health and wellbeing has evolved from a 'nice to have' into a core business strategy. No longer a box-ticking exercise, an effective health and wellbeing strategy is now recognised as essential to driving employee retention, productivity, resilience, and overall performance.

That's why our vision is to make a healthy workplace a strategic business advantage for SMEs. Through the SME We//Business Charter, we're helping SMEs turn that vision into action—creating healthier workplaces that support both people and performance.

## VISION

To make a healthy workplace a strategic business advantage for SMEs.



## MISSION

Support SMEs in creating a healthy workplace through the SME We//Business Charter.

# THE BUSINESS CASE

## The Cost of Inaction

Investing in employee wellbeing is not just the right thing to do, it has a tangible impact on the bottom line. The business case is clear - there is a rising cost in doing nothing and a strong return in taking action. Post-pandemic, stress and burnout have surged, with a 2024 CIPD report revealing that over half of Irish organisations identified excessive workload and poor management support as key drivers of mental health issues [2]. Addressing these can reduce absence, presenteeism and turnover. Deloitte, for example, estimates the average annual cost of poor mental health at £5,379 per employee in the financial services sector—highlighting the tangible impact on business performance [3].

## The Cost of Poor Mental Health in an Organisation

### Example

- 🔦 Finance organisation with 100 employees
- 🔦 63% of people report suffering from symptoms of burnout [3]
- 🔦 Annual cost of poor mental health per employee in finance is £5,379 [3]
- 🔦 **Estimated cost to employer:**

**£338,877**

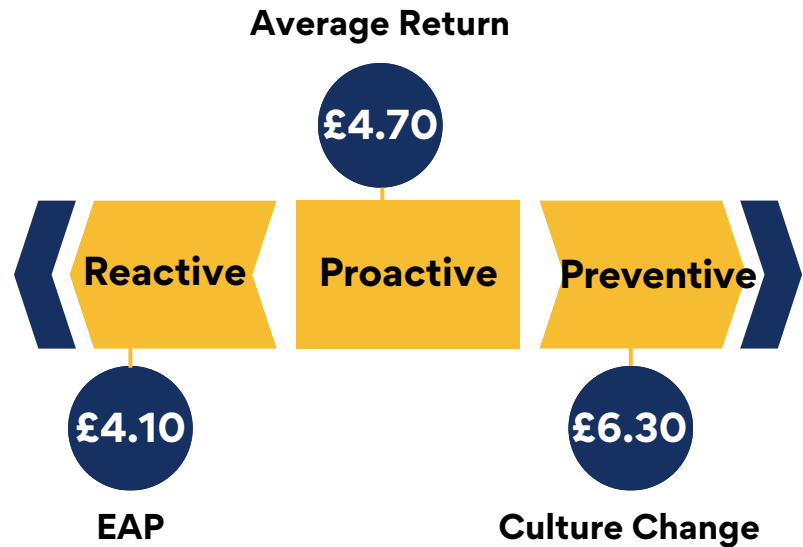


Source: Deloitte via the Financial Times [4]

# THE BUSINESS CASE

## The Return on Investment (ROI)

While inaction carries a cost, investment delivers a strong return. Deloitte found that for every £1 invested in employee mental health, employers gained an average return of £4.70 – thanks to reduced absenteeism, turnover, and presenteeism [3]. Preventative interventions such as culture change and raising mental health awareness yielded the highest ROI, up to £6.30 per £1 invested [3].



## The Value on Investment (VOI)



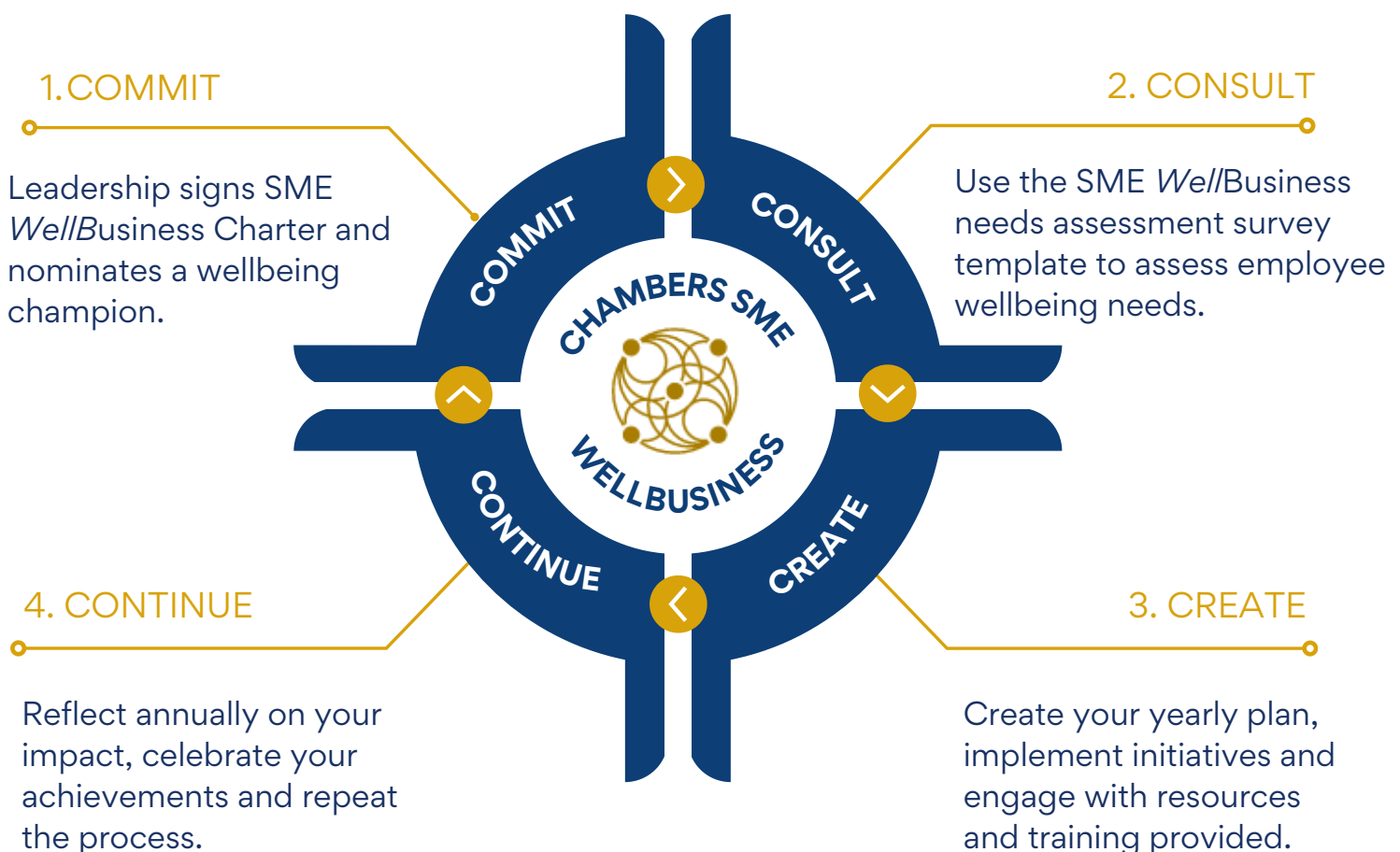
Source: De Neve, Kaats and Ward (2024), via Financial Times [4]

However, the benefits go beyond financial returns as the VOI should also be considered. This is the broader, less tangible outcomes such as improved morale, engagement and productivity. For example a recent study by Oxford University shows that companies with better workplace wellbeing - measured through factors like job satisfaction, happiness and stress - consistently outperformed the market [5].

# SME *WELL*BUSINESS CHARTER

The SME *Well*Business Charter is a free, self-guided programme that businesses commit to that helps them create healthier workplaces. Built on the principles of Healthy Ireland's Healthy Workplace Framework [6], it is free to join for all affiliated Chamber members and provides access to practical guidance, resources and toolkits. It also offers opportunities for engagement through forums, training, events, and shared learning. Through four simple steps — Commit, Consult, Create, and Continue — it supports businesses to take meaningful action that improves staff wellbeing and strengthens workplace culture. The programme can be used as a standalone approach or be integrated into an existing wellbeing strategy, offering flexibility to suit each business's needs.

## How to Adopt the SME *Well*Business Charter



# THE CHARTER PROCESS

## 1. COMMIT

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### **Sign the SME WellBusiness Charter**

- Senior leadership signs the SME WellBusiness Charter and publicly commits to prioritising workplace health and wellbeing (Page 12).
- Appoint a Wellbeing Champion to lead the initiative internally and have the initial planning meeting (Page 13).
- Sign up on the Chambers Ireland website to gain access to portal.
- Communicate the commitment to all employees.

## 2. CONSULT

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### **Assess Wellbeing Needs**

- Identify existing wellbeing activities and supports already in place.
- Use the SME WellBusiness Needs Assessment Template to survey employees directly and gather insights into their wellbeing needs.

## 3. CREATE

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### **Develop and Implement Your Plan**

- Discuss results with leadership and develop a plan, focusing on priority areas across the Charter's four key areas (Page 9).
- Communicate your plan to all staff and encourage their ongoing input and participation.
- Implement initiatives that respond to employee needs and refine them based on ongoing feedback.
- Use SME WellBusiness training and resources to support implementation and build capacity.

## 4. CONTINUE

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### **Reflect, Celebrate and Continue**

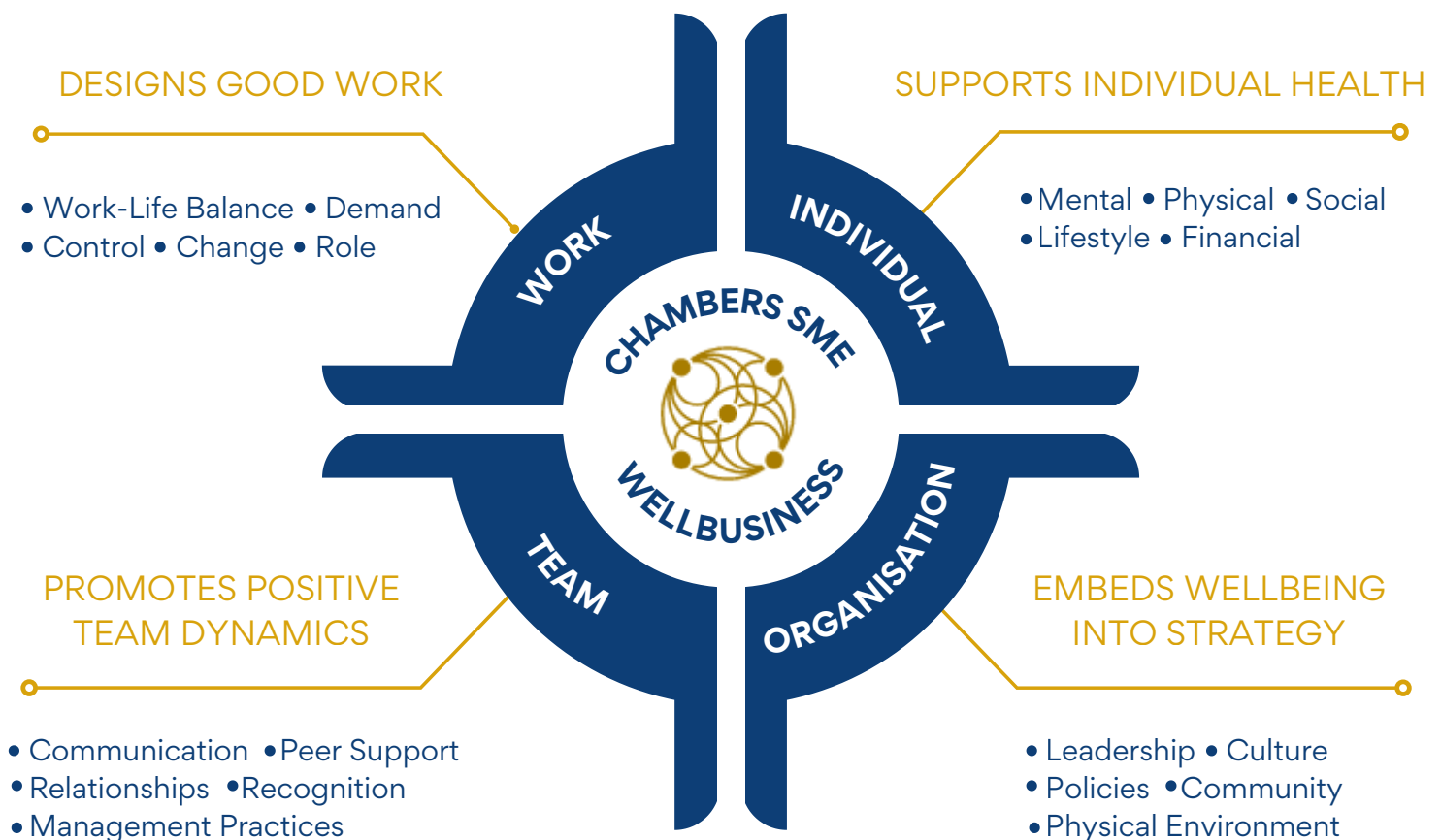
- Review progress annually using formal or informal metrics, refresh your plan, and repeat the process.
- Celebrate successes and share achievements to recognise progress and keep momentum.



# FUNDAMENTALS OF A HEALTHY WORKPLACE

Aligned with the principles of the Healthy Workplace Framework, this programme promotes a healthy workplace culture by focusing on everyday behaviours that impact employee wellbeing. It goes beyond wellbeing perks or one-off initiatives to focus on the broader work environment that shapes employee health. The Charter is structured around conducting an employee-led needs assessment across four areas—supporting individual health, designing good work, promoting positive team dynamics, and embedding wellbeing into business strategy. Activities can then be designed to meet the specific needs of both the business and employees, maximising the strategy’s impact.

## The Four Fundamentals of a Healthy Workplace



*This framework was adapted from the Well Work 360 Indicator Tool ©*

# ELIGIBILITY & PROGRAMME FEATURES

The SME WellBusiness Charter is open to businesses of all sizes in the Chamber Network, but is particularly designed to support SMEs that may face time or resource constraints. It can serve as a starting point for those beginning their wellbeing journey, or complement existing strategies for businesses focused on improving their work environment and culture.



## Practical Resources

Access a wide range of resources, templates, and toolkits in the Chambers Ireland portal to help you start your journey.



## Latest Insights

Receive newsletter and LinkedIn updates filled with the latest news, fresh ideas, and valuable insights to keep you ahead.



## Events & Forums

Join in-person and online events and forums where you can network, learn, ask questions, and explore new ideas.



## Training

Empower your organisation with training programs designed for leaders, managers, wellbeing champions and employees.



## Public Charter & Recognition

Join the charter publicly and showcase your commitment with official recognition and celebration opportunities.



## Peer Support

Opportunities to connect with fellow members to share advice, experiences, and practical support.

# HOW TO GET STARTED



# SME *WELL*BUSINESS CHARTER

## COMMITMENT STATEMENT

As proud members of the Chamber Network, we commit to the principles of the Chambers Ireland SME *Well*Business Charter. We recognise that creating a healthy workplace—and supporting the health and wellbeing of our people and organisation—is fundamental to our ongoing success.

Through our commitment to this Charter, we pledge to:

- ☉ Commit to actively engaging in the four fundamentals of a healthy workplace—designing good work, supporting individual health, promoting positive team dynamics, and embedding wellbeing into business strategy.
- ☉ Appoint a Wellbeing Champion to lead and advocate for wellbeing across our organisation.
- ☉ Complete the SME *Well*Business needs assessment survey to identify our employees' specific needs.
- ☉ Develop and implement an annual wellbeing plan that reflects our workplace priorities and is inclusive of employees' needs.
- ☉ Commit to upskilling our people by completing the programme's training modules for leaders, managers, and employees.
- ☉ Reflect annually on the impact of initiatives, rerun and assess survey results, and set priorities to drive continuous improvement.
- ☉ Lead by example to ensure healthy behaviours are demonstrated and role-modelled throughout the organisation.

By signing this commitment, we affirm our dedication to cultivating a healthy workplace that prioritises the health and wellbeing of our people.

Business Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Leadership Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Title: \_\_\_\_\_

Chamber Affiliation: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_



**Chambers  
Ireland**  
SME *Well*Business Charter

# INITIAL SME *WELL*BUSINESS CHARTER DISCUSSION POINTS

## Rationale for Adopting the SME *We//*Business Charter

- Reasons for joining the programme
- How it supports business's goals
- Desired outcomes

## Business Case and Resources Needed

- Potential benefits
- Time
- Tools
- Budget\*
- How it fits into existing wellbeing initiatives.

\* This is a free programme and most suggested initiatives will not require a cost but you may choose to have a small budget for some activities.

## Leadership and Wellbeing Champion Roles

- Define leadership responsibilities (formal & informal)
- Define wellbeing champion role
- Additional support required

## Steps for Implementation and Communication

- Timeline
- Communication plans - formal vs informal
- Potential challenges - engagement, time pressures

# REFERENCES

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