

spectrum
.life 

The EAP Report 2019.



The effectiveness of EAPs on
Workplace Mental Health
& Organisational Culture



Introduction

An Employee Assistance Programme is a preventative and reactive support service, supplied by an organisation to its employees. The purpose of an EAP is to not only help service users in times of distress, but also to support people prioritising their mental wellbeing. EAPs usually offer access to supports around areas of life that are widely acknowledged as stressors and therefore effect mental wellbeing, such as legal professionals issues, financial difficulties experts and more. This is also why EAP programmes usually provide access to partners and dependent children over 16, as again it is understood if we are concerned about the people closest to us in life this too can affect our mental wellbeing.

The EAP offered by us at Spectrum.Life is the most comprehensive on the market. We offer a range of routes to access the service including live chat and free phone telephone support. From this we offer referral to professional services (legal, professional, mediation, life coaching and more), referral into short term mental health intervention which can be face-to-face, telephone or video counselling sessions, as well as access to hours of evidence-based eLearning content around mental health topics and more. Our team is made up of accredited and experienced mental health professionals who work with our service users daily to overcome whatever challenges they are going through.



In line with our company ethos, to prioritise data driven evidence-based interventions, we run regular audits on the services we provide. Following a recent clinical audit of our EAP service, we are delighted to share with you, some statistics that show the incredible impact our EAP network is having on our client's employees. In summary, those making use have experienced significant improvements and reductions in the level of distress they have been experiencing in relation to their own specific difficulties.

The report also highlights some important statistics around the type of difficulties employees are facing. It's interesting to note that although many difficulties that employees are presenting with are not strictly work-related, they are impacting their ability to concentrate and perform. This emphasises the importance of employers providing holistic mental wellbeing support and guidance through a professional service.



Dr Sarah O'Neill,
Clinical Director,
Spectrum.Life

In this report:

- Who is using EAP
- How are people using EAP
- Issues people are talking to our case managers about
- Improvements in Employee Wellbeing
- What does this data mean for organisations
- What's next for EAP



Who is using EAP?

An analysis of the demographics using EAP shows that women are more likely to reach out for help than men. This coincides with the World Health Organization's (WHO) estimation that men tend to seek help only at a later stage of onset mental health symptoms. This information, combined with the usage demographic data from our audit, should be seriously considered when developing internal communications around mental health and Employee Assistance Programmes. It highlights the importance of encouragement to reach out for help at the earliest sign of any concerns or symptoms.

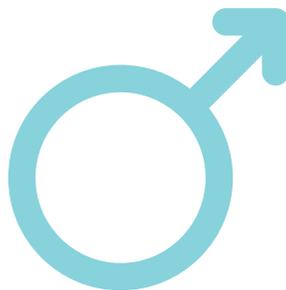
Our demographic analysis also shows that employees using employee assistance services most frequently are between 31 and 35 years of age. It might be assumed that those in their early 30s are perhaps under more pressure and are more prone to distress, or possibly that they are more likely to be comfortable in reaching out for support.

EAP usage by gender:



59.2%

FEMALE



40.8%

MALE

31-35 year olds
are the most
frequent users
of EAP services

How are people using EAP?

Spectrum.Life offers counselling support via phone, video, and face-to-face counselling. From our clinical audit, we can see that face-to-face counselling is the preferred method of engagement, though we know from anecdotal feedback that remote options can help service users overcome some of the barriers to engagement (such as time to travel to sessions.) This highlights a need for organisations to include face-to-face counselling in their Employee Assistance Programme, but to ensure remote engagement is also available.

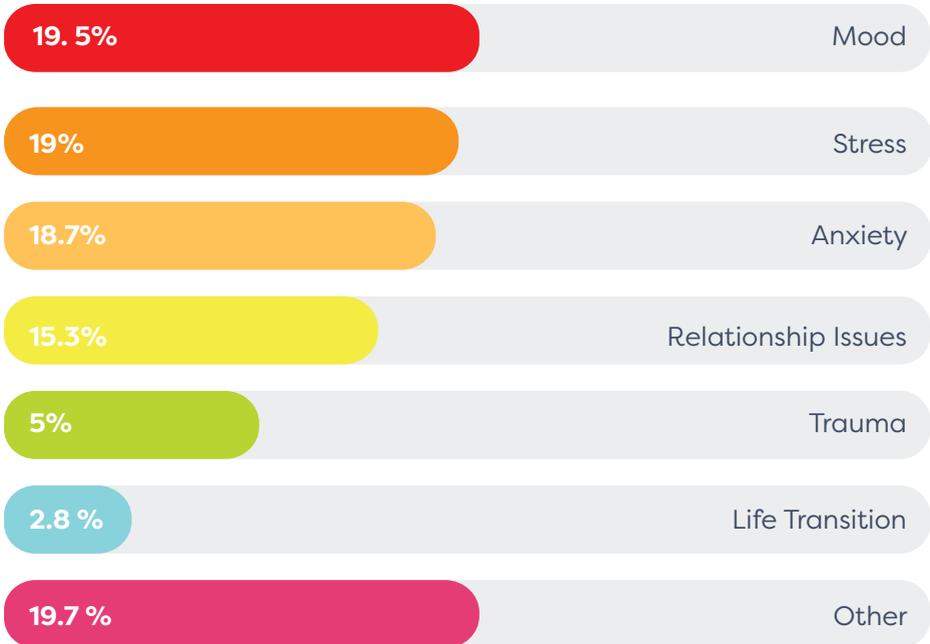
Methods of Counselling Support:



In conjunction with this, we also analysed the most active times for our EAP support line, which is available to employees 24/7. Although the busiest hour of the day for calls to our support line is between 8 and 9pm, 50.1% of the calls are made during traditional working hours, with 11am-12pm being the busiest time in that bracket. This shows us that employees are calling for support in the moment, as opposed to planning time to call. It also reflects that mental health difficulties and stress result in presenteeism, which is defined as the practice of attending work but not being fully productive as a result of external, physical, mental or personal factors. It is estimated that presenteeism costs businesses up to 3 times as much as absences.

What issues are people talking to our case managers about?

Issues employees are facing:



Our EAP case managers took more than 14,000 calls between July 2018 and July 2019, ensuring that each caller was given the best path to deal with the issue they presented with. Of these calls, the highest number (19.5%) of employees presented with mood difficulties. Clinically, mood disorders are characterised by a serious change in mood that causes disruption to life activities. Depression is the most common mood disorder and one of the most common mental health difficulties that affects approximately 1 in 10 people at any given time.

At a less severe level (sub-diagnostic level) everyone is likely to have some degree of low mood at some point during their lives. These episodes may pass on their own but we can often help them pass more quickly by developing an understanding and educating ourselves around mood difficulties. Attending psychotherapy can also help. It's common for mood difficulties to impact our frame of mind and our reactions to stressors, which undoubtedly causes distress during working hours.

19% of those using the service reported high levels of stress, both related to work and home. It should be noted that not all stress is bad or unhelpful. Stress is adaptive and it helps us survive; try crossing the road and having to run out of the way of a car without a stress response. However, our service users are seeking support around stress that is impacting their quality of life or causing distress. If we are experiencing this kind of unhealthy and unsustainable stress it can take us twice or three times longer to complete a task, which impacts productivity.



Improvements in Employee Wellbeing

Spectrum.Life's Employee Assistance Programme has enabled employees to address areas of distress in their lives. There have been significant improvements in the mental wellbeing of those that have made use of the mental health support services provided by our team. We use a standardised method to assess the level of distress service users are encountering as described below:

- Severe psychological distress
- Moderately severe psychological distress
- Moderate psychological distress
- Low level problems
- Healthy

Psychological distress before support:



11.1%

Severe
distress



20%

Moderately
severe



33.8%

Moderate
distress



8.5%

Low level
problems



1.8%

Healthy

Psychological distress after support:



91%

Decrease in
severe category



82%

Decrease in
moderately
severe



71%

Decrease
in moderate
distress



x20

In those
reporting as
healthy

What does this data mean for organisations?

From the report we can see that there are number of benefits of having EAP as part of your overall workplace wellbeing offering for employees including:

- 1. An increase in productivity among employees**
- 2. Reduction in costs due to lower presenteeism and absenteeism**

With a 90% decrease in employees falling within the severe psychological distress category, it's clear to see that the positive impact of EAP is significant. Employees gaining support from qualified psychotherapists is enabling them to address the difficulties they have been experiencing in a healthy and productive way.

Considering also that there has been a significant increase in employees reporting as healthy, it can be said that those experiencing moderately severe to low level problems have also benefited from EAP usage in a significant way.

The reduction in distress levels among employees reduces presenteeism & increases productivity

In relation to how this impacts the workplace, we must revisit the early points relating to presenteeism and how stress influences our ability to complete tasks. Reduced levels of stress and other mental health difficulties will ultimately reduce presenteeism, resulting in notable cost savings for the business, and increase productivity, given that stress increases the time it takes to complete a task.

Ultimately, the improved mental wellbeing of employees can only be a positive result for any company as it creates loyalty, improves atmosphere and has many overall benefits for company culture.

What's next for EAP?

Employee Assistance Programmes should be, and in Spectrum. Life's case are, evolving consistently with new research findings and new demands from modern day workers. It's also important for organisations utilising EAP as part of a wellbeing programme are centralising it's importance.

Promoting usage:

Our report illustrates the positive outcomes associated with using our EAP programme for our service users. Employee communications can be developed to encourage usage not only in times of distress, but also as a regular reminder to employee groups that the service is there for them to support them dealing with distress, emotional difficulties and more.

Employee communication strategies:

We know that worries around life issues can affect mental wellbeing, so prioritising communications around the professional support services EAP's offer is important. Data shows us that males and those over 35 take longer to seek support around mental health, so highlighting messaging to these groups can be a useful strategy. Generally, consistently reminding employees the EAP service is there for them is recommended regardless of demographic.

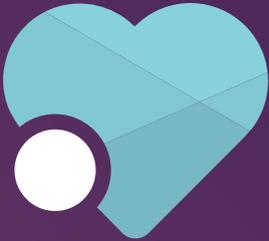
Prevention before treatment:

Encouraging employees to engage with preventative support and services to maintain a healthy state of mental wellbeing will also have notable benefits for the company. An EAP that also enables employees to learn new self-care and mental wellbeing maintenance skills through elearning and access to professional services is an approach that many organisations are taking.

Removing the stigma:

Many businesses are using EAP as part of an overall programme developed with the goal of addressing stigma around mental health difficulties and decreasing the barriers to accessing help when in distress. Combining EAP with a series of other incentives and activities, such as seminars, training and introducing a mental health policy to the workplace will help towards achieving this important goal.





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