

Innovative proactive well-being activity

Roadchef Motorways LTD

Roadchef is one of Britain's leading roadside service area operators, welcoming more than 52 million customers every year. We operate in 30 different locations on the motorway and major trunk roads across the length and breadth of the country. We are the only MSA with IIP Platinum and Best Companies accreditation and are recognised by Transport Focus as the best major operator. We have a diverse workforce, and we are proud to employ 56 different nationalities between the ages of 16 and 83 years of age.

Prior to the pandemic, we recognised that wellbeing was of increasing importance for employees but this became particularly relevant during the pandemic, and in the months as we left the pandemic behind. Whilst we were making strides within this area, we wanted to support employees more.

Our experiences of employee issues has helped us to understand wellbeing better, giving us an insight into what we could do to support them. Our culture is steering us away from focusing on hard business metrics, into a people focused arena, where employee wellbeing is something to be open about and a people strategy to be proud of.

Our view has been to take a holistic approach to wellbeing, and focus on all areas that have a positive impact on employees' mental health. Our objectives are:

- Continue to enhance our wellbeing offering and support for employees, whether it's mental health or financial wellbeing. As an example, providing fully funded compassionate leave to those with terminal illness outside of the normal sickness schemes
- Align our wellbeing activities with our evolving company culture, ensuring people are always at the heart of the business.
- Use our wellbeing activities to support cultural and leadership change within the business.
- Use improved wellbeing support as a way of improving employee engagement and retention within the business.
- Maximise communication avenues to keep employees informed.
- Increase the number of Mental Health First Aiders, ensuring all employees have access to a MHFA, using Heath Management to deliver training.

- Explore / research wider initiatives that would complement activities already in place to enhance our wellbeing offering.
- Drive activities on our employee engagement action plans to improve employee wellbeing, as measured by our “Best Companies to Work For” results.

A wellbeing project team was set up who regularly updated the company progress to the senior management team.

Our approach became more appropriate and necessary at the end of the pandemic, and through the cost of living crisis. We saw an increase in mental health long term sick cases, and employees that were clearly struggling day to day. Our approach focussed on not only supporting employees suffering with mental health, but also what may be causing difficulties for employees. We understand that by enhancing our employees' wellbeing, this also improves mental health.

We have a range of initiatives to support our employees, introduced or relaunched over the last two years that started as projects, but are now part of our everyday culture. To support the initiatives, we introduced a Wellbeing Policy.

Initiatives are:

- Wagestream - a financial wellbeing app employees can use to access their earned wages prior to payday, as well as financial advice and tips.
- HAPI benefits - employees can access a range of discounts and wellbeing resources.
- Employee Assistance Helpline.
- Hospital plan - an optional benefit for employees, to alleviate some of the financial stress bought by a stay in hospital.
- Hardship loans - an interest free employer loan, for employees in financial difficulty. These were introduced in 2020 to support employees through any hardship caused by Covid-19 and we have continued to offer these.
- Community Pantry, an area in each team room where employees can help themselves to grocery goods when needed (funded by the business). The ethos is “take what you need, give what you can.” This is to support wellbeing in the financial crisis.
- Increasing the £1 employee meal to two per shift, to support the cost of living, allowing employees to potentially have a cooked breakfast or cooked meal at the start or end of their shift and allowing one of the meals to be taken home.

- A free breakfast facility with cereal, toast, tea and coffee available in our team rooms.
- Free sanitary products in all female employee toilets.
- Wellbeing Week - an area within the team rooms, containing information to support employees as well as fresh fruit, giving away wellbeing prizes, and a different focus area each day.
- Launched the Hidden Disabilities Sunflower scheme in all sites - which supported our customers, and also our employees who have hidden disabilities themselves. Hidden Disabilities training is now a part of our induction process.
- Introduced the “Ask for Angela” scheme, where a customer can request discreet support for when they are not feeling safe, hereby they “ask for Angela.” This highlights to our team, the importance of their own wellbeing (recognising where they may not be in a safe situation,) and that of our customers.
- Wellbeing booklet issued to every colleague.
- E-learning training modules specifically around mental health and wellbeing to support and educate employees.
- Mental Health First Aider training in every site. We have trained 74 MHFA in the business and continue to train additional managers.
- Fun events on site, such as an ice cream van, with free ice cream for employees, free food events, family fun days, cinema nights and BBQ’s.
- Increased flexibility in terms of the hours and shift patterns we allow employees to work.

We believe that the above initiatives demonstrate how we continue to go above and beyond for our employees in the area of mental health and wellbeing.

The schemes are available to all employees regardless of their role. We communicate them through:

- Wellbeing week
- Annual Toolbox Talk
- Wellbeing booklet (copy attached)
- Employee forum meetings
- Notice boards
- Via our time and attendance system (news section)

We believe that we are ahead of our competitors in some of our initiatives, such as the Community Pantry and Hardship loans. We asked our employees to consider how we could support them better, and listened to their ideas. One employee made the suggestion of the Community Pantry, and she recently won an award for her suggestion. The Community Pantry is now in place in each of our sites, and is frequently used by many employees. Our employees tell us that this significantly supports their wellbeing particularly as we approach payday. We also believe that offering interest free hardship loans prevents our employees from having to use unscrupulous payday lenders, and supports their mental health and wellbeing when money issues become stressful. This is an area which scores highly in our engagement survey, we have a strong ethos at all levels around employee wellbeing and employees are happy to speak up about this and do so regularly.

Our evolving culture and our growing focus on wellbeing can be measured through our Best Companies to Work For employee engagement surveys. In June 2022, engagement of our employees on the wellbeing factor was sitting as a typical 1 star accredited business and in January 2023 this had increased to 3% ahead of a typical 2 star accredited business (and 8% ahead against previous survey). We achieved 4th place on the prestigious Best Big Companies to work for league table, we also achieved 3rd place on the Leisure and Hospitality table for employee satisfaction and workplace engagement. We were also proud that 8 of our individual Motorway Service Areas were placed on regional tables including our Durham site, who achieved 1st place in the North East League table. This was also referenced in our Investors In People Platinum Accreditation Report.

In the 2022 Transport Focus survey, we finished the highest of the main three Motorway Service providers. We believe this shows how satisfied our employees are, as this is reflected in how satisfied our customers are.

Our target audience was the whole business from top down. It is recognised that no matter what level of position you hold within Roadchef, we are one team and therefore everyone has access to the support strategies we put in place.

Employee comments specifically around wellbeing in a recent survey included:

“The messages about mental health from Mark Fox, CEO and HR are refreshing and encouraging”.

“Our team cares about each other and it's ok to say I'm struggling. Information sharing has been amazing in the past 12 months and we are lucky to have Senior Leaders who really care about our wellbeing”.

We have also supported an increased number of employees with flexible working, including those that are not linked to childcare support. We offer a range of shifts that allow not only our employees flexibility, but also enables the business to have the right people in the right place for labour efficiency, this also helps us become a more inclusive workplace.

We also measured the success of the wellbeing strategy in a number of other ways as per the below:

- Wagestream - We have seen an increase of employees accessing Wagestream from 23% to 33% since the introduction of our wellbeing strategy.
- Hardship loans - We have issued 105 employee hardship loans since March 2020.
- Hapi benefits - We have seen an increase in uptake of employees accessing the benefits platform and making use of the offers available. To date employees have saved just under £22,000 by using the discounts available.
- Employee Assistance Programme - We have seen a continued increase in the number of calls to the EAP helpline and employees accessing counselling and other services.
- Training and Development - Over 8,400 training sessions have been completed on the new wellbeing e-learning modules.
- Our attendance rates have reduced and we continue to see a downward trend.
- We are supporting more employees to return to work from long term absences relating to mental health related illnesses. Our employees have felt that their wellbeing and mental health has been supported to come back to work in a safe way.
- We started with 1 Community Pantry in early 2022, and by January 2023, we had 31 (all sites and Support Office.)
- Flexible working, we have evolved from allowing team members to work flexibly, to allowing more senior management to work part time or more flexibly than ever before. Previously, senior management were all full time, however in the past 12-18 months we have agreed on part time flexible roles to support work life balance and wellbeing.

Mental Health and wellbeing continues to be a key business focus and further initiatives are being launched throughout 2023 to build on the progression we have made in the last three years.