

# Health & wellbeing

The issue of wellbeing has received considerable attention post-pandemic. Wellbeing includes physical and mental health, as well as financial wellness and work-life balance.

Employees and their families on international assignments expect wellbeing support from their employers.

## THE NEED FOR WELLBEING SUPPORT

Wellbeing is characterised by happiness, comfort, and security. If employees and their families are to accept and remain on an international assignment, they will expect and require support to ensure access to suitable medical facilities, security to protect them in dangerous situations, appropriate work-life balance, and a reward package that provides appropriate financial recompense.

## MEDICAL FACILITIES

Medical insurance is a pre-requisite for working abroad. Notwithstanding this, host locations may have underdeveloped health care infrastructures. Organisations must have plans in place to ensure that individuals can access healthcare when needed.

If employees and their family members cannot speak the host country language, provision may be needed for translation services to ensure appropriate medical diagnoses and care.

Employers should seek advice from health care specialists to ensure that there are procedures for accessing/reaching medical facilities and that these are communicated effectively to employees.

## SECURITY ISSUES

Employers have a duty of care to their employees and any accompanying family members. The host country may be unsafe due to political instability and/or high crime rates. Security measures should be put in place such as secure housing and the use of guards and drivers.

Emergency evacuation measures should also be planned for as locations that may be deemed safe one day can pose serious threats unexpectedly.

## WORK-LIFE BALANCE

Long hours of work can have a detrimental effect on employees' and their families' mental health. This will affect assignment success.

International assignment policy must address mental wellbeing effectively. International assignments can prove stressful due to longer hours of work than at home. Measures should be put in place to ensure that a good work-life balance is possible so that employees can spend quality time with their families.

Organisations should make provision through appropriate working hours and annual leave arrangements to strike an appropriate work-life balance. Employees should be encouraged to take their full annual leave and not to work excessive hours.

In particularly challenging or remote host locations, rest and relaxation (R & R) periods away from the workplace/host country should be offered. R & R breaks enable employees and their families to de-stress and maintain their wellbeing.

## FINANCIAL WELLBEING

Financial wellbeing is another important issue that affects mental health. Employers need to ensure that their international reward policy maintains employees' requirements such that they are no

worse off as a result of undertaking the assignment. This can prove challenging when one partner in a dual income/career couple is asked to move and there is no opportunity for paid employment for the partner in the host location.

Organisations are not expected to compensate for loss of income if partners give up their jobs, but they can provide support to assist working partners to obtain work visas and help with job applications. Career counselling is another valuable intervention.



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