

Financing and investment



Overview of actions

The wellbeing champion initiative was designed to deliver meaningful impact through a practical, resource-efficient model. Recognising financial pressures across the ICS and social care providers, the programme prioritised affordability, scalability and sustainability – leveraging partnerships, free resources and minimal funding to achieve maximum benefit.

- **Initial funding and onboarding resources** – National retention funds enabled the creation of people partner roles and covered modest onboarding costs. Champions received badges, welcome packs and symbolic items like seed packets – low-cost gestures that reinforced identity and promoted wellbeing.
- **Investment in time, not money** – The greatest resource was staff time during early planning and recruitment. Co-ordination briefly became a full-time responsibility, but as systems matured, management reduced to quarterly virtual meetings and ad hoc communication, requiring only a few hours per month.
- **Leveraging free resources and partnerships** – All wellbeing materials were sourced at no cost, including access to the Staff Psychological Wellbeing Hub, local colleges, financial wellbeing tools, menopause support, and training such as MHFA. Local business partnerships enabled free team-building events, boosting morale without financial burden.
- **Sustainability challenges and future planning** – With national retention funding significantly reduced and ICS roles scaled back, maintaining the initiative is a growing concern. While the Staff Psychological Wellbeing Hub continues to provide support, the programme's future depends on securing a structure that does not rely on temporary funding or overstretched personnel.
- **Proving affordability and impact** – The initiative demonstrated that meaningful change does not require large budgets, only strategic co-ordination, creativity and commitment. By focusing on value over volume, it delivered tangible benefits to staff wellbeing and retention within tight financial constraints.

“We launched with minimal funding – just enough for badges and gifts. Most resources were free or created in-house, proving that meaningful impact doesn’t always require major investment.”

Diane Mellor, ICS People Partner, Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent ICS/ICB





Key decisions

- Allocated a small retention budget for low-cost items to reinforce champion identity and engagement.
- Sourced wellbeing resources and training entirely at no cost, guided by staff feedback for relevance.
- Prioritised sustainability planning early to address risks from reduced funding and scaled-back roles.

Key learning

The financial model demonstrated that affordability and impact can coexist when initiatives are built on collaboration and resource sharing:

- **Central co-ordination multiplies impact** – Co-ordinated oversight reduced duplication and enabled system wide delivery without increasing provider costs.
- **Resourcefulness outweighs budget** – Free resources, partnerships and staff feedback demonstrated that meaningful wellbeing support does not depend on high funding.
- **Sustainability planning is essential** – Early clarity on risks and resource needs helped strengthen long term viability and make the case for future investment.

“National retention funding enabled us to launch, but sustainability is uncertain. We’ve had to adapt as budgets shrink and posts disappear.”

Zara Parrish, ICS People Partner, Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent ICS/ICB