

SFMI Leaders - Wellbeing Forum

Date: 26 Feb 2026

Meeting Summary

1. Workplace Design, Sensors & Measuring Productivity

Partners shared past experience with wellbeing-focused office design, including the use of environmental sensors (air quality, noise). Around 10 years ago, investments were made in this area, but uptake was limited as many clients preferred to develop solutions in-house.

Examples of impacts shared:

- Moving a design team into a quieter space resulted in an estimated ~10% productivity increase.
- Improving airflow reduced headaches and sickness levels, positively impacting productivity.

Context after COVID:

COVID shifted attention away from broader wellbeing aspirations towards hygiene, distancing and infection control. This, coupled with the rise of homeworking, created mixed wellbeing outcomes:

- **Benefits:** Flexibility and reduced commuting for some staff.
- **Challenges:** Loneliness and isolation, particularly for early-career staff, those new to the country, and people without suitable home workspaces.

Ongoing challenges:

- Clients often see the value of technology but do not yet connect it to wellbeing outcomes.
- Measuring productivity is difficult due to:
- Variations in job roles and role-specific metrics
- Confounding factors (seasonal sickness, motivation, personal life)
- Difficulty attributing results directly to environmental design changes

Nigel noted that wellbeing is currently at a similar stage to sustainability a decade ago, organisations questioning ROI despite an emerging evidence base.

2. Operational & Frontline Worker Realities

A strong theme was that office-oriented wellbeing initiatives do not reflect the reality for front-line FM staff, who often work in spaces such as:

- Basements with no daylight
- Hot or noisy plant rooms
- Clinical or custodial environments (hospitals, prisons)
- Night-shift or lone-working situations

These environments are largely dictated by clients, giving FM teams limited control.

Key pain points:

FM staff frequently lack:

- Workspace choice
- Hybrid working options
- Adequate break areas
- Access to well-designed environments
- Despite this, frontline staff often remain highly motivated — but this is not sustainable without improvements.

Nigel referenced research in call centres and similar environments showing the importance of:

- Daylight
- Views out
- Access to breakout areas
- Regular breaks
- Where environmental control is limited, break quality and managerial support become even more critical.

3. Motivation, Culture & Management

A consistent message was that people need to feel cared for to stay motivated. Line managers play a pivotal role in wellbeing and retention.

Key points:

- Many supervisors are promoted for technical expertise rather than people-management skills.
- Lack of management capability is a major driver of attrition.
- Organisations that have invested in training for people managers report reduced turnover.

- Recruiting managers with people-management aptitude is increasingly prioritised.

4. Productivity: Measurement & Evidence

Productivity measurement is highly role-specific and often dictated by the client (e.g., tasks completed for engineers/cleaners). Profitability and wellbeing are interlinked, but hard to quantify.

Challenges:

- Absenteeism is widely used but unreliable due to external factors.
- Psychosocial safety is becoming more recognised within H&S but remains difficult to connect directly to design.
- Studies intended to isolate productivity impacts often encounter confounding circumstances (e.g., flu outbreaks, unrelated organisational changes).

Nigel emphasised that productivity can be measured, but reliable methodologies are time-consuming and complex.

5. Research, Standards & Tools

There is currently no industry-wide minimum standard for measuring wellbeing-linked productivity. Some relevant frameworks include:

- BS ISO 45003 (Psychological health and safety at work)
- WELL v2
- Fitwel

Nigel referenced past IWFM work on a productivity calculator, but:

- The tool is locked and cannot be used.
- The group can read the accompanying papers but cannot use or replicate the methodology.

Implication for the group:

There are useful references and early foundations, but no open, practical methodology currently exists. Developing a usable approach for FM and frontline environments would require a new research project—potentially drawing on existing studies but newly created for the industry.

6. Group Interest & Future Actions

There is strong appetite within the group to:

- Build stronger evidence linking environment → productivity → value for clients
 - Create practical guidance for frontline teams (e.g., break space design, low-cost interventions, management practices)
 - Develop collective communications to raise industry standards
 - Share best practice across organisations to improve wellbeing across the sector
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