

## Key issues

EAPs provide a wide range of services, such as:

- Telephone and face-to-face counselling services
- Legal & financial helplines
- Online support and information
- Risk assessment tools
- Employment law support for employers
- Comprehensive management information
- Managerial coaching

EAPs should help individuals, managers and organisations to:

- Cope with work-related & personal challenges that impact on performance at work
- Improve productivity and efficiency
- Improve staff morale and motivation
- Reduce absenteeism and staff turnover
- Recruit and retain staff
- Position the company as a caring employer

## What is an EAP?

EAPs started life in America in the 1920s, where they were used to help employees with alcohol problems. In the 1980s they emerged in the UK, taking the form of telephone helplines for staff, mostly in the petrochemical and finance sectors. Today, they can encompass a wide range of services for both employees and employers alike.

## Why have an EAP?

Stress is all too common, and although not an illness in itself, stress is associated with anxiety, depression, gastrointestinal illnesses and back pain. According to Health and Safety Executive figures, Britain lost an estimated 9.8 million working days in 2009-10 due to work-related stress, anxiety or depression. Employers are therefore increasingly turning to Employee Assistance Programmes (EAPs) to alleviate the problem.

Employers also have a legal responsibility to their employees under relevant Health and Safety Law, Employment Law and Common Law duty of care. An EAP can help employers to demonstrate that they are fulfilling these duties of care.

While personal health and well-being are ultimately the responsibility of the individual, it is accepted that the employer can, and does, have a legitimate role to play. In fact, 54% of respondents to an Employee Benefits magazine survey earlier in 2009 felt that employers should be responsible for promoting health and well-being to staff.

## How much does an EAP cost?

EAP costs can range from £5 to £25 per employee per year, depending on the size of the organisation and the extent of the services required. Although the largest companies will usually be able to secure the best prices, this should not deter SMEs from investigating their EAP options. Smaller firms won't have the resources of large HR and Occupational Health departments and can therefore benefit most from these schemes.

Compared to the cost of some other employee benefits options, EAPs deliver a highly valued and current benefit at relatively modest cost. The table below illustrates the relative cost of different types of health and welfare benefits.

Benefit Type	Cost per Employee*
Private Medical Insurance	£450
Health Screening <i>Range from £100-£3,000 for detailed screening</i>	£350
Life Assurance <i>Cover of 4 x salary</i>	£70
<b>Employee Assistance Programme</b> <i>For a typical support structure</i>	<b>£12</b>

\*Typical annual cost based on an organisation of 1000 employees and average salary £25,000.

## Management information & ROI

It is difficult to measure Return on Investment (ROI) for an EAP. Many of its outcomes are subjective and it will clearly be valued more highly by employees who have used its services than those who have had no exposure. In fact, employers often admit to having no clear method of calculating ROI for their EAP, but they do observe a positive link between users of the service and increased motivation and performance as well as reduced absence. The growing popularity of EAPs is surely testament to their success and value.