



香港城市精神健康聯盟

City Mental Health  
Alliance HK

# Rethinking Mental Health at Work: The What, Why and How

Moderator



**Sammi Cho**

Chief Executive Officer  
of BNY Mellon Hong  
Kong Branch & CMHA  
HK Board Member

City Mental Health Alliance Hong Kong co-hosted a Mental Health and Wellbeing Leadership Panel as part of the Wellbeing @ Work Summit Asia on 27 April 2022.

The past two years have provided many opportunities for organisations to challenge long-held conventions of how we work and what is prioritised. The panel featured APAC senior leaders across a range of industry sectors, who shared their perspectives on the topic of 'rethinking workplace mental health'. The panel was moderated by **Sammi Cho, Chief Executive Officer of BNY Mellon Hong Kong Branch & City Mental Health Alliance Hong Kong Board Member.**

Panellists



**Ewan Clarkson**

Chief People Officer,  
PwC China

## Workplace mental health as a 'must do' rather than 'nice to have'

Employees are re-assessing their expectations and aspirations both personally and professionally in what they expect from employers, noted **Ewan Clarkson, Chief People Officer at PwC China.** Rather than focusing solely on quick fixes of remuneration and promotion, the workforce is now looking for other relationship factors such as greater support for flexibility and wellbeing including mental health. Clarkson shared that there has been a strong focus on building trust and transparency within PwC to prevent staff attrition and to create an environment which encourages people to thrive.



**Cindy Shek**

Partner at King &  
Wood Mallesons

**Cindy Shek, Partner at King & Wood Mallesons,** noted that mental health has a direct impact on staff performance and quality of work; and that a workforce with good mental wellbeing is not only strategically important for a business but also essential to retain top performers.



**Frances Wang**

Senior Vice President,  
Human Resources at  
HKEX

Keeping employees mentally healthy is a social responsibility for employers, said **Frances Wang, Senior Vice President, Human Resources at Hong Kong Exchanges and Clearing Limited (HKEX).** At HKEX, mental wellbeing has become a central part of the benefits and wellness offering and is no longer a 'nice-to-have'.

# Cultural change: habits and routines of senior leaders

Wang shared that it is not easy to build habits and routines, and that HR leads need to incentivise senior leaders to model positive behaviours by making a business case for prioritising mental wellbeing. At HKEX, senior leaders are encouraged to communicate to employees when they are taking time off for breaks or self-care activities to normalise such behaviours.

Clarkson added that the first question to ask is *“Do we have the right leaders?”*, as qualities that counted towards good leadership in the

past decades may no longer be applicable to current workplace standards. Instead, leading with care and compassion is key. As a professional services firm, PwC is working to ensure that the organisation is able to serve the needs of its own people whilst meeting client demands.

As well as using training and education as tools to build awareness, on a practical level it is important for senior leaders to support mental wellbeing initiatives by allocating and approving budgets to implement and drive change, shared Shek.

## How to embed positive changes

For there to be meaningful and sustainable impact, mental wellbeing needs to be fully integrated in the way we hire, promote and reward, said Clarkson. It is critical to ensure that when things get difficult, the right behaviours come through from senior leaders to embed a lasting cultural shift.

Wang shared that employee wellbeing data plays a key role in making mental wellbeing a boardroom priority, and that manager-level mental health training is a helpful tool to educate leaders and influence change. Senior executives need to demonstrate compassionate leadership and gain employee trust and loyalty through concrete action, added Shek.

## Key takeaways

**“Build trust and transparency by focusing on what’s important to the individual as a whole, rather than just as an employee.”** – Ewan Clarkson, Chief People Officer at PwC China

**“Put the focus on your people – doing that and getting it right will bring you performance results and lasting change.”** – Cindy Shek, Partner at King & Wood Mallesons

**“Think from the employee’s perspective and put them in the centre of strategies, policies and changes. Create a safe environment for employees to be true to themselves.”** – Frances Wang, Senior Vice President, Human Resources at Hong Kong Exchanges and Clearing Limited



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The City Mental Health Alliance Hong Kong is a collaborative venture founded by city businesses. Championed by senior leaders, the Alliance is business led and expert guided and aims to create a culture of good mental health for workers in Hong Kong, share best practice and increase mental health understanding.