



# Impact report 2024

Creating hope, health and happiness for everyone in retail



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# A year of collaboration and innovation

Welcome to our 2024 impact report, which covers the year ending April 2024.

And what a fantastic year it's been for the Retail Trust. We've launched innovative new tools to help people leaders effectively boost colleague wellbeing and improved our existing core offerings that make a massive impact on the lives of so many. Awareness of the Trust has grown as more businesses have joined our retail coalition and we've reached more people, via more avenues, than ever before. With 192 retail clients, 556,690 people have access to our services.

The cost-of-living crisis continued to be acutely felt by many working in the sector. Combined with other factors, such as the increase in abusive customers, there has been a serious

impact on the mental health of employees. At the same time, NHS waiting lists have grown across the UK and more workers are looking to their employers to provide access to the support they need to manage their mental health.

We've worked hard to reduce the stigma surrounding mental health, amplify the importance of wellbeing and demonstrate the link between the success of a business and the health of its people. All of which are making a significant difference within the sector. Retail colleagues have been able to lean on the Retail Trust to provide much-needed support, and we've continued to see high demand for all of our services.

After 16 months in development, we launched our game-changing generative AI powered happiness dashboard which enables retailers to gain actionable insights into the wellbeing needs of their people so

they can deploy their budgets most effectively and deliver targeted campaigns to positively impact the wellbeing of their colleagues.

In May, we celebrated the power of collaboration at Together Fest 2023, our annual wellbeing festival for the retail industry, back for its second year. Bringing to life our mission to improve the hope, health and happiness of the UK's retail workforce, the line-up of wellness champions and celebrities heading up the programme of events included TV personality Dr Alex George, Stuart Pearce MBE and comedian Katherine Ryan. The full day of inspiring talks, masterclasses and interactive sessions for 1,100 people from over 200 retail brands covered everything from preventing burnout and banishing imposter syndrome to laughter yoga and healthy cookery demos.

We were delighted to be recognised by The Sunday Times as one of the



**Alistair McGeorge**  
Chair, Retail Trust

best places to work in the UK, in the medium-sized organisation category. This nationwide workplace survey rates employers across six pillars: reward and recognition, instilling pride, information sharing, empowerment, wellbeing and job satisfaction. This accolade positions us alongside some of Britain's top employers and is testament to our commitment and dedication to improve the health and happiness of the Retail Trust team, as well as those in the sector.

In November, we welcomed 200 people leaders from over 100 of Britain's biggest retailers to our Leaders' Summit event at The Carlton Tower Jumeirah. The Leaders' Summit is a one-day programme of inspiring content designed to bring about positive change in the sector. Session topics on the agenda included customer abuse, mental health support and the four-day week, with speakers including New Look CEO



**Leaders' Summit 2023**



**Volunteering day at the estate Moores House, Liverpool 2023**

Helen Connolly, bestselling author and thought leader Bruce Daisley and broadcaster Kate Garraway.

Our own research revealed attacks on store workers were worsening amidst rising levels of in-store crime. Retailers told us that the shocking wave of assaults and theft was making them feel unsafe, anxious and likely to quit the industry. Our respect retail campaign, backed by major retailers such as Co-op, bp and Ann Summers, called on shoppers to better respect Britain's retail workers in the run up to Christmas trading, traditionally the busiest time of year for the sector.

We're incredibly proud of our new volunteering programme. Working closely with the teams at our supported living estates in Derby, London and Salford we facilitated volunteering days for retail partners including John Lewis, Marks & Spencer and Microsoft. Projects

ranged from improving common areas, hosting social events and providing learning opportunities for residents.

Partnerships grew 13% year on year, with ten new corporate and charity partners joining our coalition and generously supporting our events, content and campaigns. Fundraising income from challenges was 200% up on budget thanks to N Brown who sent a team to compete in a Tough Mudder challenge and FatFace, who raised £26k via their company-wide Bridge the Gap initiative.

The teams on our residential estates have continued to deliver industry-leading support to nearly 450 residents and we secured the funding to begin the redevelopment of the community space at the Hugh Fraser Retirement Estate in Glasgow, which will create a community hub for residents and people across the region, helping to improve quality of life and tackle loneliness.

In 2023/2024 we delivered £90.6 million of social and economic value in total. For every £1 the Retail Trust spent, we created £8.35 of social and economic value. Our wellbeing services, which include our 24-hour helpline, short-term counselling, self-guided therapy, online self-help resources, wellbeing training, financial aid and critical incident support generated £82 million in social and economic value.

This fantastic performance has been driven by honing existing services and the introduction of new ones to best serve colleagues in the current moment. Our unique for-retail-by-retail CPD accredited training sessions are continuously developed to meet the current challenges affecting retail. In the 12 months covered by this report we ran 278 sessions, providing mental health and wellbeing training for 3,747 managers and retail colleagues, an uplift of 62% on the previous year.

We were there for retail colleagues whenever and wherever they needed us via our helpline and digital self-help support. Over 12 months we received 10,190 helpline calls, delivered 11,265 counselling sessions to colleagues for a range of mental health concerns and provided £878,935 in financial aid to people in the sector who are struggling the most.

Our mission, which has been woven into the DNA of the Retail Trust since we were founded in 1832, is to create hope, health and happiness for everyone who works in retail. We will continue to grow our coalition of likeminded partners and roll out new and innovative ways to benefit the wellbeing of everyone who works in the sector. As the second biggest employer after the NHS, there is no limit to the positive impact we can make.

**Alistair McGeorge**  
Chair, Retail Trust

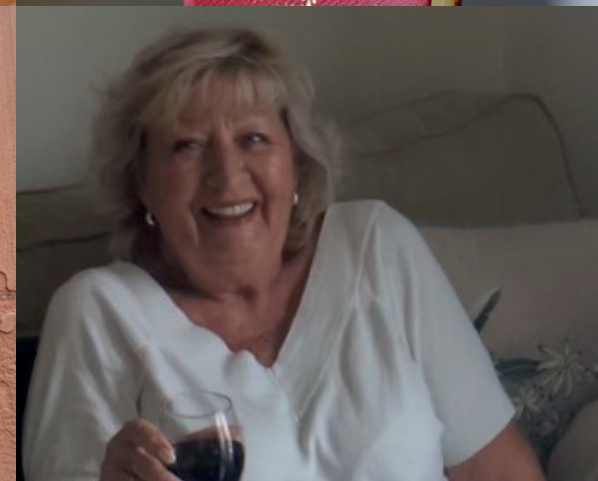
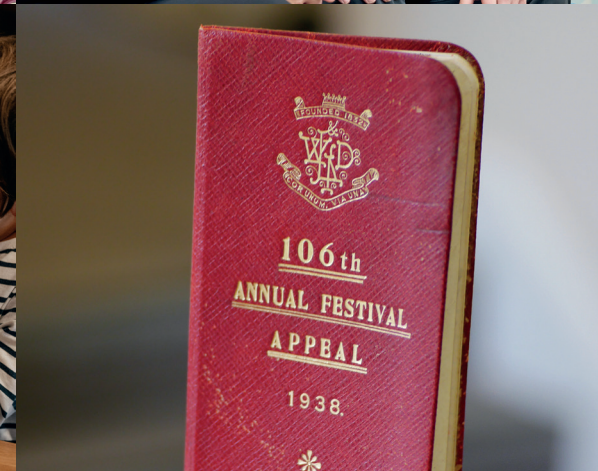
# The methodology explained

Our partner in creating our social and economic value calculations is Loop. Loop is a consultancy that applies HM Treasury Green Book calculations of social value to our activities.

This is the second year we have used new and more accurate measures of social and economic value that conform to the Wellby standard. The Wellby is a measure backed by the Government's Social Impact Task Force that takes as its base a one-point change in life satisfaction for one year.

Using these measures of social and economic value, the Retail Trust delivered £90.6 million of social and economic value to individuals and local communities.

The numbers reflect, in financial terms, the impact we have had on the lives of the colleagues we have supported. The total includes savings to the NHS through improved health and wellbeing benefits, better life opportunities and a reduction in sick pay claims.



# The Retail Trust's purpose

Our cause is to create hope, health and happiness for everyone who works in retail from frontline workers to senior leaders.

This purpose is at the heart of why the Retail Trust exists and has been part of our DNA since we were established in 1832. Whether at the beginning or the end of their retail career, we put our colleagues at the heart of everything we do.

Unfortunately, the cost-of-living crisis continues to have an outsized impact on those that work in the sector. Combined with the increase in customer intolerance and retail crime, which our own research revealed has

left many retail workers feeling unsafe, it's unsurprising that many retail colleagues feel anxious, overwhelmed and looking to quit the industry.

We believe that health and happiness should be accessible to the many, not the few and in order for industry and society to flourish, business must play a pivotal role in tackling health inequality. By helping to set standards and working alongside retailers of all sizes we are building a coalition that champions the notion that happy, healthy people create thriving businesses.

Our wellbeing in retail expertise means we are uniquely placed to make a difference and drive better wellbeing in the sector and beyond. Addressing the causes of poor workplace wellbeing, as opposed to dealing with the symptoms, is a key focus.

We will continue to build tools and expertise to enable colleagues to look after their mental, physical and financial health and empower leaders to better support the health and happiness of their teams.



THE  
LONDON  
COFFEE  
HOUSE



# Our impact in a snapshot.

It's been another strong year for the Retail Trust as we continued our mission to create hope, health and happiness for everyone who works in retail. We supported, inspired and advocated for the industry. These are just some of the numbers that illustrate our impact during the 12 months from 1 May 2023 to 30 April 2024.



We created  
**£90.6 million**  
in social and economic value

For every £1 invested  
we created  
**£8.35**  
in social and economic value



**£878,935**  
given in financial aid

**31,898**

new registered users  
of retailtrust.org.uk

**10,190**

helpline calls

**3,747**

managers and  
retail colleagues  
received mental  
health and  
wellbeing training

We delivered

**11,265**

counselling sessions

**200%**

We doubled  
our fundraising  
goal through  
challenges

We responded  
to 73 critical  
incidents, helping

**590**  
colleagues



# Supporting retail colleagues



We provide access to tools and services to support the mental health and wellbeing of everyone who works in retail.

A significant shift in culture in recent years has reduced the stigma around mental health and elevated its importance. At the same time, access to support via statutory services such as the NHS has become more difficult, with waiting lists having grown in many areas across the UK, resulting in more workers looking to their employers to provide access to the support they need to manage their mental health. Organisations are increasingly understanding the importance of developing happier and healthier workforces when it comes to staff retention.

This is where the Retail Trust comes in. Since we were founded in 1832, our purpose has been to promote the happiness of everyone who works in retail. While retail is constantly changing, it remains a people-first industry and our person-centric approach to wellbeing ensures that those most in need are at the heart of everything we do.

At a time when people in the retail sector continue to face job uncertainty, challenging customer behaviour and rising retail crime in an economy where the cost of everything continues to climb, we provide access to essential tools and vital services that will help to protect and strengthen their mental and financial health. With 192 retail clients, 556,690 people have access to our services.

Through our wellbeing services we connect with colleagues from the shop floor to the boardroom and work in partnership with businesses to better equip and empower colleagues, managers and leaders to take a proactive approach to manage their wellbeing and ultimately live happier, healthier lives by building a coalition of retailers.

We passionately believe that everyone working in retail should have access to the appropriate support to help them manage their wellbeing whenever they need it. Our holistic wellbeing services include a 24-hour helpline, short-term counselling, self-guided therapy, online self-help resources, mental health and wellbeing training courses delivered by our wellbeing in retail experts, financial aid and critical incident support.

Our website provides accessible information, advice and guidance across a wide range of mental, physical and financial wellbeing topics. Where appropriate, we also provide access to evidence-based therapeutic interventions. Our unique expertise in retail, combined with our people-first approach enables us to provide tailored preventative support that makes a real difference.

82,125 colleagues are registered to receive our email communications, 31,898 new people registered to access our website and 404,526 pages of digital resources were viewed on everything from sleep to stress.

### There for colleagues at crisis point

The combined total of in-the-moment helpline support and multiple session brief therapy saw us deliver 11,265 support sessions. The majority of people who got in touch were taking proactive measures to support their wellbeing, with 75% making contact before taking sick leave. However, at the point they got in touch 85% said their home life had already been impacted and 77% said that their productivity at work or the quality of their work had been affected. Of those who were already off sick, 42% contacted us within a week but, worryingly, 26% left it for four weeks or more to get in touch.

In spring 2024 we conducted in-depth quantitative and qualitative research across the retail industry and the findings around presenteeism align with our data, with 71% of retail workers telling us they were occasionally, sometimes, frequently or always present at work but not able to give their best due to their mental health.

### Helping colleagues cope with critical incidents

When the worst happens, our critical incident service is there to help via remote or on-site one-to-one or group support. We provided critical incident support to 590 individuals across 73 critical incidents, the majority of which involved the death or suicide of a colleague or customer (68%). Robbery, theft and assaults on colleagues made up 10% of the critical incidents. An uplift in the need for support following the death of a colleague coming after the pandemic is unsurprising. Many people experienced multiple bereavements in a relatively short space of time, making subsequent bereavements harder to deal with and resulting in the possible need for specialist support.

### Providing financial aid when it's needed most

High living costs persisted, leaving many struggling to afford even the basics. We helped 1,400 people and their families via financial aid, with an average award of £632.89. Assistance with rental payments remained the most common reason people requested financial aid (26%), however requests for support with food leapt from the sixth to the second most common reason for people getting in touch, accounting for 22% of requests, more than three times the previous year (7%). Requests for support with council tax arrears (16%), utilities (12%) and white goods (8%) made up the remaining five most common reasons for people to request financial assistance.



**“Being able to talk  
to someone  
completely unbiased  
was so helpful.”**

When marketing management student Phillip James, 22, started to feel overwhelmed a few weeks into his placement year, he contacted the Retail Trust for support.



**Phillip**  
Retail colleague

# “Now I’m more patient with myself.”



“I’ve always been able to adapt to new situations, moving schools, starting college, going to university. This was different. If I had been dealing with one thing, it would have been ok but putting it all together – getting used to a new job, meeting new people, working out how to exist in an office, my living situation – it was overwhelming. I started to dissociate. I’d go home after work and there would be nothing, I would just sit and dwell.

“Slowly it crept into work. It was like I was on autopilot. I’d be in situations and think, I should be happy, I should be enjoying this right now, and I’m not, and that’s tough.

“I met up with a member of the HR team and she suggested I contact the

Retail Trust. I signed up on the website, called the helpline number and had an initial chat. The next contact was a 45-minute call. The guy was friendly and helpful. After the call they set me up with some counselling sessions which started a week later, via video call. The plan was to do up to six sessions on a weekly basis after work every Tuesday.

“At the start of each session the counsellor asked how I was feeling and I was given a wheel of emotions to choose from so I could pick more distinct and descriptive words. That was really helpful, because I wasn’t able to just say, yeah, I’m good, or I’m fine. We’d have a conversation about why I was feeling the way I was and then it was up to me, was there something specific I wanted to discuss,

or would a more general conversation be more useful.

“We worked through things that triggered the feelings to see if there was a pattern and talked through different resources.

“The most helpful thing was having an hour each week to stop and think about how I was feeling and speak to someone completely unbiased.

## Turning things around

“I still experience moments of dissociation, but now I’m more patient with myself. Rather than panicking, I’m more relaxed and I’m way more comfortable with my situation. That’s not just down to the counselling, growing into the role helped too. But

the counselling helped to prevent things overflowing to the point where they become unmanageable. The counselling also helped turn the ‘sitting and dwelling’ into a more positive opportunity for reflection.

“My experience of the Retail Trust is really positive. It’s important that people know what’s available to them via the Trust and that you don’t have to talk to someone internally first, you can go direct to the Retail Trust yourself.”

# “I could make sure my children were well fed during the school holidays.”

Retail assistant Joanne\* contacted us when the high cost of childcare left her unable to feed her family during the school holidays.

“My financial situation hadn't been good for a while due to the rise in the cost of living, then the school summer holidays hit. After paying for childcare there was little to nothing left to feed my two children, who would usually eat three meals a day at school.

“I requested to drop my hours at work, which was approved, but I had to give a month's notice, leaving me to struggle for one more month. I applied for the council's household support fund but it was declined because of working over the threshold amount of hours.

“Desperate, I contacted Citizens Advice who referred me to apply for food vouchers from the Retail Trust. I was approved and the vouchers were sent to me very quickly. I did an Asda food shop, filling my fridge, freezer and cupboards. I am so grateful for this one-time support from the Trust. It enabled me to feed my children three nutritional meals a day, taking away



the stress of worrying how I was going to feed them.

“Hopefully in a month, when my hours reduce, I will be in a good place again, but this one-off support from the Trust is honestly incredible, I am so, so grateful.”

\*Name has been changed

**44%**

of retail colleagues say that the cost of living has affected their mental health.\*

# Setting up a bespoke fund to guarantee greater support for colleagues

As the cost-of-living crisis deepened, we worked with retailers to create dedicated and targeted solutions to support their staff.

Retail partner Kingfisher plc approached us with a view to setting up a ring-fenced fund to provide financial support to their colleagues experiencing financial pressures due to the cost-of-living crisis.

By setting up a ring-fenced fund that didn't draw on the Retail Trust's existing financial aid, Kingfisher could guarantee a greater level of financial support for their colleagues through increased application acceptance rates.

The team at Kingfisher initially reached out to the Trust to understand what options existed. Given that the Trust was already administering funds for a number of other leading retailers, underpinned by many years' experience of managing its own financial aid provision via a dedicated





# “This has made my life that little bit easier.”

team of case workers and an online application portal, the Trust was well placed to offer a solution.

Following initial discussions to understand possible approaches, Kingfisher senior management signed off on the setting up of the fund and a project team was appointed, with the aim of setting up the fund within eight weeks.

Non-negotiables included a quick turnaround from application to approval and payment, a secure site for applications and the uploading of supporting documents, an

easy-to-navigate customer journey, behind-the-scenes governance, appropriate vetting, a dedicated case worker for each employee and secure payments.

Like the existing Retail Trust financial aid, Kingfisher’s colleague support fund aims to support colleagues experiencing an unexpected and significant reduction in household income due to an unforeseen event resulting in financial crisis. It might include replacing essential household appliances, financial costs as result of leaving an abusive relationship, home repairs, adaptations and

improvements to make life easier for people living with a disability or long-term health condition, or funeral costs.

One colleague said: “Just wanted to drop you a quick email to express my sincere gratitude. The washing machine and cooker both arrived today. I’m honestly in complete disbelief. Thank you so much again for all your help, this has made my life that little bit easier.”

The fund was initially set up to run until 31 October 2023 and was extended until 31 October 2024 due to the level of demand for support.

# Training managers is essential for happy, healthy teams

Line managers are often the first people to spot potential wellbeing problems, as well as the first port of call for colleagues seeking help.

In spring 2024 we conducted in-depth quantitative and qualitative research across the retail industry and found that while 77% of managers feel they have access to all the tools they need to support their team's wellbeing, 84% would value more training to help support their team's wellbeing.

We believe that empathetic and supportive line managers are at the



**Andrea Woodside**  
Retail Trust Training Lead





**Andrea Woodside**  
Retail Trust Training Lead



heart of employee happiness and are ideally placed to play a key role in supporting the wellbeing of colleagues. Upskilling line managers is therefore an investment in the entire workforce and providing effective training is key to equip line managers with the skills and confidence they need to support their teams effectively.

Our research found that many retailers are focussing on training line managers, recognising the impact that line managers can have on colleague wellbeing across their organisations. This is borne out by the number of people who attended one of our CPD-accredited training sessions in the 12 months covered by this report. Across 278 sessions, we provided mental health and wellbeing training for 3,747

managers and retail colleagues, an uplift of 62% on the previous year.

We welcome this manager-first approach and the commitment to the ongoing training of existing line managers as well as recently-promoted colleagues who are managing a team for the first time.

In response, our retail wellbeing experts have developed a 12-month leadership training programme to give leaders the skills, knowledge and competence to manage wellbeing conversations before their teams reach crisis point. Alongside a series of training sessions including our most popular course, taking stock of wellbeing in retail, the programme includes bi-monthly roundtables which provide space for reflection and regular insights.

All our courses are CPD-accredited and, uniquely, have been designed and are delivered by retail wellbeing experts. We continually review course content to ensure that it addresses the current needs and challenges facing the retail industry.

# “The session was engaging and informative.”

“The training feedback has been 100% positive. We recently facilitated a domestic abuse training session for our HR business partner and mental health first aid community, it was truly exceptional. The session was not only engaging and informative but also effectively challenged our preconceived notions and encouraged deep, meaningful discussions.

“Andrea’s expertise and approachable style made it easy for participants to engage and share their thoughts openly.

“This training has significantly improved our understanding and approach to

supporting individuals affected by domestic abuse.

“As a result, we’ve initiated concrete actions to enhance our support systems. I highly recommend the training to any organisation looking to make a real difference in this critical area. The feedback has been 100% positive with one participant commenting, ‘It was easily the best training session I have ever attended’ – we will definitely be running another!”

**Juliette Cavilla**

Group head of wellbeing at WHSmith



## ‘I look forward to making a difference in the lives of those around me’

“Thank you for the amazing training you provided. It was incredibly comprehensive and the knowledge you shared, along with the practical tools have equipped me with a deeper understanding of mental health issues and how to offer meaningful assistance to those in need. I look forward to implementing what I’ve learned and making a difference in the lives of those around me.”

**Wellbeing warriors attendee**

## “The training equipped me to support everyone.”

“I really enjoyed the training, it was a real eye opener and has certainly equipped me to support everyone, from those who need that little pick-me-up chat to those who are suffering in silence and feel lost within themselves.”

**Wellbeing warriors attendee**

## ‘Really great content’

“The session was fantastic. The trainer was so knowledgeable and the delivery kept everyone engaged and interested. Really great content that has already helped me since the session.”

**Taking stock of wellbeing in retail attendee**

# Energising the sector with inspiring events

All-star speaker line-ups and innovative activations brought our mission to life.

In May, more than 1,100 people from over 200 retailers gathered in The Truman Brewery for Together Fest, our one-day event for retail workers.

Back for its second year and double in size and capacity, the festival-style event brings to life our mission to improve the hope, health and happiness of everyone who works in retail. The 2023 programme featured workshops, activations and speakers to energise the mind, relax the body and inspire change.

Headliners included Dr Alex George who talked about building mental fitness, Stuart Pearce MBE who discussed male mental health and Katherine Ryan who celebrated seeing the funny side.



Then in November, we welcomed 200 people leaders from over 100 retailers to The Carlton Tower Jumeirah for our Leaders' Summit event, a one-day programme of talks, panels and workshops designed to bring about positive change in the sector.

Session topics covered customer abuse, mental health support and the four-day week. New Look CEO, Helen Connolly kicked off the day with a rousing keynote speech on the changing nature of leadership, bestselling author and thought leader Bruce Daisley shared ideas for a new path forwards and broadcaster Kate Garraway spoke movingly about supporting your people when they face adversity.



# Launching our happiness dashboard

Our game-changing generative AI powered happiness dashboard enables retailers to gain actionable insights into the wellbeing needs of their people so they can deploy their budgets most effectively and deliver targeted campaigns to positively impact the wellbeing of their colleagues.

After 16 months in development, in March 2024 we launched the happiness dashboard, a generative AI powered platform to help retailers improve staff mental health and prove the value of their wellbeing strategies.

The happiness dashboard, which was built in partnership with a cohort of leading retail employers and technology partners BJSS, Microsoft and WorkL, enables employers to track staff wellbeing trends and improve the effectiveness of support.

The platform works by identifying trends and generating campaign insights to allow our retail partners to improve engagement, reduce levels of absenteeism or presenteeism, and increase staff retention.

It also shows each employer exactly how much initiatives to improve mental health are saving their business and the economy, by calculating the financial value and social impact of fewer staff calling in sick, working while unwell, quitting their jobs or turning to the NHS as a result.

Wellbeing budgets are coming under strain across the retail industry, despite the knock-on effect that this will have on staff sickness and retention, because employers can't show the direct impact to their bottom line.

The dashboard helps employers to prove the tangible financial value and social impact to their business





of investing in their people's mental health, and to more effectively address the causes of poor wellbeing.

Analysis by Deloitte, which we adopted for the happiness dashboard estimates that mental ill health currently costs UK employers up to £56 million a year but measures to support staff wellbeing provide a £5.30 return on every £1 spent.

The dashboard also uses the Wellby standard, a measure backed by the Government's social impact task force, which has found that improving someone's life satisfaction by just one point on a scale of one to ten could be worth £13,000 to the economy. This includes the amount saved for the NHS and by reducing sick pay claims.

The platform identifies data and patterns from colleagues' interactions with Retail Trust services and wellbeing surveys to provide an overall picture of staff mental health and actionable insights, to address specific issues like stress, financial worries or safety concerns at work, and provide the financial value of wellbeing strategies. Employers can also monitor the effectiveness of initiatives to

improve wellbeing in real-time and benchmark their performance against industry standards.

We worked with GoCodeGreen and our partner BJSS to ensure that the platform is a low carbon digital solution as well as positively impacting the wellbeing of people working across the retail sector.

The platform emerged with a software Carbon Intensity score in the top 20% of all products assessed in the not-for-profit sector. As a result, GoCodeGreen's measurement platform has enabled us to deliver an industry-leading, low-carbon digital solution for good.

**Mental ill health costs UK employers up to £56 million.**

# Creating healthy, happy communities for retail retirees

Working in partnership with the retail industry and local authorities, we forged ahead with our plans to renovate central buildings and upgrade older housing stock in order to achieve our goal of providing the best social housing in the UK.

Our five supported living estates in London, Derby, Glasgow, Liverpool and Salford provide safe and secure housing and a happy community for up to 450 residents, who have retired from retail. We have created

communities where the over 55s can thrive, maintain their health and retain their independence, but still have access to support when needed from our outstanding teams of support staff.

The next phase in the evolution of our estates is the renovation of central buildings and upgrading of housing stock to ensure our residents have the best possible quality of life and that the Trust contributes to government targets of enabling older people to live independently for five years longer.

Our smart flats make use of the latest technology, such as automated appointment and medication reminders and voice-controlled and automated lighting and heating.

These innovations help residents to maintain their independence, which has a profound effect on wellbeing levels. Digital communication, including video calling, facilitates seamless social connection, so residents can easily keep in contact with family and friends, as well as support teams on site.

We secured the funding to begin the £1.1 million redevelopment of the community space at the Hugh Fraser Retirement Estate in Glasgow, which will create a new community hub for residents and the wider community across East Renfrewshire. Over a 12-month period of numerous applications and meetings, funding was granted from organisations including East Renfrewshire Place Based Investment Programme, East



## Supported living



Renfrewshire Renewable Energy Fund, East Renfrewshire Get to Zero, the Community Ownership Fund, the Hugh Fraser Foundation, Garfield Weston Foundation, NEXT and Dobbies Garden Centres.

### Creating a welcoming hub

Social engagement is key to maintaining good health, and so the first stage of the renovation will focus on the community centre, café, activity rooms and reception area. We worked closely with our residents and organisations like Voluntary Action, Age Concern and East Renfrewshire council to develop the plans for a modern, accessible and welcoming hub to help tackle social isolation for residents and local people. When complete it will offer a range of activities including exercise classes, craft groups, film nights, quizzes and indoor bowls.

As well as contributing to the funding of the renovation, NEXT have provided their interior designer from the local store to design and dress all the new rooms and the café. They are also providing all the furniture – sofas, tables, chairs – as well as all the paint and wallpaper to transform the shared spaces and offices.

Spending time outside in gardens and green spaces positively contributes to good health and so our plans include the creation of a community garden outside the café. Working in partnership with Dobbies Garden Centres, the garden will feature a replanted and filled pond to encourage wildlife and a space where residents can grow their own fruit and vegetables, allowing residents to connect with nature, tap into their creativity and learn new skills.

As well as the benefit to our residents and local community, the redevelopment will reduce our carbon footprint by an estimated 25% through the installation of energy-efficient glazing and solar panels and replacement of the existing heating system with a heat-recovery system.

The next stage of the redevelopment will be the refurbishment of properties across the estate to create more digitally-enabled homes to support residents with disabilities or dementia. Looking to the future, the Glasgow redevelopment will serve as a pilot project in the transformation of our other estates as we move closer to our goal to provide the best social housing in the UK.

“It has been such a blessing to have a home like this.”

Michael, who is registered blind, moved into his cottage on the Leylands Estate in Derby in August 2020. In 2023 it was converted to a smart home, transforming Michael's life and enabling him to continue living in his own home.

“My eyesight is such a bother to me. Being registered blind, people think you can't see anything, but I can see brightness, shapes and movement. Unfortunately, I'm losing what little I have left of my sight to see movement and I'm reliant on people talking to me to fully recognise who they are. I can keep active as I know my way round the Leylands Estate so it's really safe for me here.

“Before my cottage was converted into a smart home, I had a number of falls. I couldn't see anything when the lights were off and I would trip or fall in the

dark at night. I struggled to find light switches and had to feel along the walls. It was the same for plugs too, having to grab wires and follow them back to the wall socket to switch things on and off.

“Now I can turn my lights on and off just by asking Alexa, even before I'm out of bed. This is extremely useful. I'm at an age where I have to use the bathroom quite a few times in the night and it feels so much safer to have the bedroom and hallway lights on before I set off walking.

“I have a big TV and can't get to the plugs easily. Now I can ask Alexa, 'Turn on TV.' She does it straight away and I'm not risking toppling over trying to reach round and down to the sockets at the back of the TV.

“The doorbell is a brilliant device. I can answer it and speak to [whoever's at the door] from wherever I am. Although I can't see them on the screen, I can hear them. If it's a delivery I can tell them to wait a few minutes for me to get up and get to the door or I can say, 'Just leave it there, I'm on my way.' Then I can get





## Supported living - Michael's story

there safely and not have to rush, which is when I'm at the biggest risk of going over and ending up on the floor.

### A constant companion

"She [Alexa] really is my friend. [At night] I say, 'Goodnight sweetheart, I'll see you in the morning,' and first thing, I say, 'Alexa, good morning,' and she says good morning back to me. If I ask her she'll tell me what time it is or what the weather's like. Every day I ask her to tell me some history that happened on this day, which helps to keep my brain working. It's good company in some ways, when I'm lonely and family can't visit.

"I would recommend anybody to have a home like this, it really has been a blessing, genuinely a godsend. It has helped me to stay in my own home and I think it will keep me out of a nursing home. I would dread having to leave here and go into one of those places."



**Michael**  
Supported living resident

# “The Retail Trust saved me from homelessness.”

When her landlord sold the property she was living in, Chrissy was left in a precarious situation. A Facebook ad led her to the Hugh Fraser Retirement Estate and transformed her life.



**Chrissy**  
Supported living resident

## Supported living - Chrissy's story

"After working in retail for brands like Frasers, Lewis's and Scotch House I changed careers, eventually becoming a mortgage broker and working in a partnership for ten years until the business was dissolved. At the time I was in my 50s and decided to go out on my own. The first year was a great success but in the second year there was a slump and I lost my home and everything I'd worked so hard for.

"I moved into private rented accommodation and started from scratch. I still had contacts in the industry but had to work until I was 70, when I finally retired. Then, the landlord sold the property I was living in, leaving me in a very tenuous position. I didn't qualify for council accommodation and was told I could be sent to a homeless unit anywhere in Glasgow. I was so worried, which had a big impact on my mental health.

"My search for accommodation led me to a Facebook ad for the Hugh Fraser Retirement Estate. I remember saying to my daughter that the chance of me getting anything on the estate was nil because it was such a long time since I'd worked in retail. But I called the number and left a message. Elaine, the estate manager, called me back and made an appointment for me to view the estate and two apartments the next day.

"I was totally astounded by the reception I received. The staff were so cheery and friendly and their willingness to help me was amazing. It felt like I was getting taken care of the minute I arrived.

"Of the two apartments one stood out, it was bright and airy and had a Juliet balcony.

### A home for life

"Over a cup of tea and with help from staff, I completed the application. I was excited but also very nervous and emotional, I didn't want to build my hopes up. Two days later, Elaine called to say the flat was mine. It was amazing to get the keys and know that this was my home for life. I moved in on 3rd May 2021 and I have never looked back.

"Living on the estate has enhanced my life to a degree I didn't think was possible. It has given me peace of mind, safety, security and company. It's such a relief to feel secure in my own home and not be responsible for repairs and upkeep, which can be very expensive, especially given the cost of living just now. The grounds and surroundings are peaceful, well maintained and welcoming. It's a joy to live here, which only adds to my mental wellbeing.



**Chrissy**  
Supported living resident

"Being part of a community and lending a hand to people less able-bodied than myself has helped repair my self-respect and given me back my confidence. Before I hid my worries because I felt that no one wants to know about other people's problems, but since coming here I can talk freely. There's constantly staff on site so there's always someone to listen, and I'm not left to cope alone.

"I'm always telling my story about living on the estate especially when I'm out shopping, as there are so many people who are in the same position I was in but are not aware of what the Retail Trust offers and the benefits available."

# Calling for collective action to protect retail workers

Against a backdrop of worsening customer abuse, we called for urgent action to ensure the safety and wellbeing of customer-facing colleagues.

Building on the narrative of 2022's respect retail campaign, we commissioned research which found that customer abuse – including shouting, abusive language, insults and threats – has worsened amidst rising levels of in-store crime.

The research found that 90% of retail workers have experienced abuse from customers. Shockingly, more than a third of respondents experience abuse on a weekly basis, and for 13% of retail workers it's happening three times a week.

Staff told us that the shocking wave of assaults and theft was making them feel unsafe, anxious and likely to quit the industry.

Our campaign, backed by major retailers such as Co-op, bp and Ann Summers, called on shoppers to better respect Britain's retail staff in the run up to Christmas trading, traditionally the busiest time of year for the sector.

We worked with influencer Holly Laing who created a 60-second video to highlight the key messages of the campaign. The collaboration increased our social media reach by 245,124 with an engagement uplift of 51,530 and a watch time of a massive 1,323 hours. Appearances on BBC Breakfast, Sky News, The Guardian, Evening Standard, BBC Radio 4 and many more, resulted in 725 million media views.



# Launching our volunteering programme

Whether they were getting their hands dirty in the grounds or passing on essential tech skills, our retail partners made their volunteering days count.

We worked closely with our supported living estates in Derby, London and Salford to facilitate volunteering days for retail partners including John Lewis, Marks & Spencer, Microsoft and N Brown.

Across eight days, we welcomed 76 volunteers from six businesses.

Projects ranged from improving common areas to hosting social events and providing learning opportunities.

Garden projects included planting rose and lavender bushes in London and cleaning the pond in Derby. Some volunteers got creative making collages to decorate the community hall at the London estate, while others flexed their social skills by hosting afternoon teas and bingo sessions. Halloween provided opportunities for themed events, with a crafting session in Salford and a party with karaoke in London.

Microsoft hosted a drop-in tech workshop and made house visits for residents at Mill Hill, with questions



ranging from, "How do I send a text?" to "How can I use AI to help me write meeting notes?"

One volunteer said: "A huge thank you from all of us for such a wonderfully warm welcome. We really enjoyed meeting so many residents across the day. We'd love to come back again another time if you'll have us!"

Building on the success of our first year, we have expanded the programme and will have facilitated 75% more volunteering days in the first eight months of our business year than the entire previous year.



# “By being bold and brave we can create lasting change”



**Chris Brook-Carter**  
Chief Executive Officer

It's been a pivotal year for the Retail Trust as we launched our innovative dashboard and continued to refine our world class wellbeing offering.

Every year since I've joined the Retail Trust we've had one big focus, starting with repositioning the brand, then launching our events including the Leaders' Summit and Together Fest. This year, our focus was digital innovation. After 16 months in development, we launched our game-changing generative AI powered dashboard, a new initiative that aims

to make the link between workplace wellbeing and business success easier for employers to prove.

The dashboard uses advanced AI and machine learning to analyse data from our services and wellbeing surveys to provide retailers with live, tangible takeaways. Retailers can see how people are using the Retail Trust's support, get an overall picture of colleague mental health and receive actionable insights to help them address specific issues.

It also reveals how much employers' initiatives to improve mental health are saving the business, by calculating the financial value of reduced absenteeism or presenteeism and increased staff retention, and the economy, by reducing sick pay claims or reliance on the NHS.

## **A legacy of driving social change**

The Retail Trust has a remarkable history of influencing society as a whole. Founded in 1832, we are the



**Chris Brook-Carter**  
Retail Trust's  
Leaders' Summit  
November 2023

# “We have an extraordinary opportunity to set a new standard.”

industry-funded charity in the country. From our inception, we championed the notion that happy, healthy people create thriving businesses, and thriving businesses build a prosperous society. Our founders understood the importance of scale and talked about building a confederacy of good feeling that united leaders to create change.

The foresight of our founders was revolutionary for the time. They believed in empowering individuals to take control of their own lives, giving them access to education, healthcare and the means to improve their lives.

Over the years, the Retail Trust has played a pivotal role in shaping the social contract between employers and employees. From helping to establish the concept of the weekend to building retirement estates long before the welfare state and pensions existed, we

have continually been at the forefront of societal change.

## **A new opportunity to lead**

Today, we find ourselves at another turning point. The pandemic has exposed the fragility of our social systems, particularly in the areas of healthcare and social care and support. The NHS is stretched, and private care options are too expensive for most families.

Retail is the second biggest employer in the UK and we have an extraordinary opportunity to set a new standard for how businesses care for their people, particularly as they age or face mental or financial health challenges.

With our broad reach across the sector, the Retail Trust is uniquely positioned to address the challenges we face,

providing solutions for today and pioneering a new model that could be adopted by other industries.

## **A bold vision for the future**

This is not just an opportunity, it is a moral imperative. Our vision is to create a society where everyone, regardless of their background, has access to the support they need to thrive.

We have set a bold target, which is to support one million people a year. When you include their families and friends, this will give us the data and scale to influence systemic change across society. And based on our current growth trajectory, this ‘moonshot’ target is totally achievable.

## **Seizing the moment**

This is our moment to do something truly great, to leave a legacy that will be felt for generations to come. Our world class services, combined with data and insight, and achieving our desired scale, will make this reality.

As we look ahead, I’m filled with a sense of purpose and urgency. Together we can build the future. Let’s seize this opportunity and create something extraordinary.

**Chris Brook-Carter**  
Chief Executive Officer



[retailtrust.org.uk/impact](https://retailtrust.org.uk/impact)

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