



Impact report 2025

Creating hope, health and happiness for everyone in retail



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A year of significant progress



Alistair McGeorge
Chair, Retail Trust

Welcome to our 2025 impact report, which covers the 12 months to end of April 2025.

This year marked significant progress for the Retail Trust. We launched a new report to equip retail leaders with a strategic tool for transformation, took our Let's Respect Retail campaign to shopping malls across the UK, and provided free training to over a thousand retail workers – giving them the skills to navigate challenging situations. Our events inspired and educated the sector on wellbeing and urgent industry issues, we were honoured with prestigious awards, and proudly announced a new Royal Patron. We also made major strides in upgrading our estates, introduced new tools for retail colleagues, and continued to enhance our existing support. Today, over 200 retail clients enable more than 600,000 people to benefit from our services.

Our research shows that the cost-of-living struggle remains the leading cause of poor mental health among retail workers. Sector-wide redundancies have left remaining staff with heavier workloads, while ongoing reports of store closures and job losses are creating a climate of uncertainty and anxiety. Yet, there are signs of hope. Support targeted at absenteeism and presenteeism – highlighted by our happiness dashboard – is making a measurable difference. Presenteeism has declined, fewer colleagues report missing work due to mental health, and the vast majority of those experiencing a decline in their mental health said it was manageable.

Sadly, the abuse faced by frontline retail workers shows no sign of abating. Our research revealed that attacks on store workers were worsening amidst rising levels of in-store crime. Retailers told us that this alarming surge in assaults and theft was making them feel unsafe, anxious, and more likely to quit the

industry. Two years after launching our Let's Respect Retail campaign, we took it to new heights in October 2024 – bringing it to the country's largest shopping centres and in December to the iconic Piccadilly Circus advertising screen, made possible by the backing of JCDecaux Community Channel and Landsec.

Ahead of the busy Christmas trading period, we offered free online and in-person training to equip in-store colleagues and delivery personnel with practical tools and techniques for handling challenging situations. The overwhelming response – over a thousand retail workers signed up for the masterclasses – underscored how vital and valuable this training is.

We were proud to have our work recognised at the Charity Times Awards, where we were awarded Highly Commended in the Charity of the Year category for organisations with an income more than £10 million. For the second year running, we were named a Sunday Times Best Place

to Work – a testament to the culture we've built together. And we were deeply honoured to welcome HRH The Princess Royal as our Patron, succeeding her mother, The Late Queen Elizabeth II.

We started the year by breaking ground on the £1 million transformation project to create a modern community hub at our Hugh Fraser Retirement Estate in Glasgow. Eight months later – thanks to a number of grants and the generous backing of partners including B&Q, Dobbies, NEXT and bp – we opened the new facilities, which will benefit our residents and the wider East Renfrewshire community. Our ambition is that our estates will become a blueprint for what great eldercare can look like across the UK.

Life on our residential estates has been further enriched by volunteering days from retail partners, local businesses and students, who generously gave their time to refresh indoor and outdoor spaces, and host memorable community events.



Retail People Index



Leaders' Summit



HRH The Princess Royal



Let's Respect Retail at Piccadilly Circus

At Together Fest 2024, our annual festival of wellbeing for the retail industry – back for its third year – we celebrated the power of collaboration. Held at the Truman Brewery, the event brought together 900 attendees from over 180 retail brands for a full day of inspiring talks, panel discussions and interactive sessions. The programme featured wellness champions and well-known voices including Ruby Wax, Spencer Matthews and Vogue Williams, covering topics from grief and anxiety to thriving in mid-life and living fearlessly. The energy and engagement through the day brought our mission to improve the hope, health and happiness of everyone in retail vividly to life.

In October, we welcomed 250 senior people-leaders from 119 organisations to our Leaders' Summit at The Jumeirah Carlton Tower. This one-day programme delivered inspiring content aimed at driving positive change in the sector. Topics ranged from presenteeism and building a culture of belonging, to managing

a multi-generational workforce and navigating personal adversity. Speakers included Lord Mark Price, workplace culture expert Colin D Ellis and broadcaster and entrepreneur Sarah Beeny.

Thousands of colleagues have engaged with our happiness health check since launch. By combining individual level support with powerful aggregated insights, the data provided by our AI-driven happiness dashboard has become a vital tool in understanding and improving colleague wellbeing.

Drawing on this data, in June 2024 we also launched the Retail People Index, a new quarterly report offering retail leaders robust insights into how their teams are really feeling – quantifying flight risk and presenteeism risk. Already it's helping shape healthier, more resilient workplaces across the sector.

Partnerships grew by 62% year on year, generating an incredible

£782,444 across 45 organisations from both corporate and charity sectors. Over £200,000 was raised through new charity partnerships alone, reflecting the strength and potential of our expanding network. We also welcomed four new corporate partners, further reinforcing the growing support for our mission.

In 2024-2025, we created £18 million in business impact across the sector from our services and benefits including our 24-hour helpline, training, events, website, happiness health check, financial aid, online therapy, virtual GP access and retail rewards.

This performance has been driven by continuous improvements to our existing services and the introduction of new innovations. Our CPD-accredited, for-retail-by-retail training continues to evolve to meet the sector's changing needs, with 221 sessions delivered to 2,922 managers and retail workers over the past year.

We were there for retail colleagues whenever and wherever they needed us – through our helpline, digital self-help tools and clinician-guided mental health support. Over the past 12 months we received 15,187 helpline calls, delivered 13,000 counselling sessions and provided £533,210.74 in financial aid to those facing the greatest challenges.

Looking ahead, our focus remains clear, to create hope, health and happiness for everyone working in retail. This mission, embedded in the DNA of the Retail Trust since 1832, continues to guide everything we do. With the sector employing more people than any other industry outside the NHS, the opportunity to make meaningful difference is vast – and we're committed to expanding our reach, deepening our impact, and building a stronger, more supportive retail community together.

Alistair McGeorge
Chair, Retail Trust

The methodology explained

Business impact is determined by calculating the number of colleagues supported by the Retail Trust, the cost of delivering the service they used – be it website, helpline counselling, online therapy, retail rewards, virtual GP, events or training – and the return on investment (ROI) multiplier as determined by the Deloitte mental health and employers report. By using this methodology, we can calculate the financial benefit based on increased productivity through reduced absenteeism, presenteeism and employee attrition.

For example, if one colleague was supported through counselling the business impact would be $1 \times £480 \times £3.4$ (crisis ROI).

ROI multiplier (Deloitte report)
When analysing mental health interventions according to the stage at which they are offered, the Deloitte mental health and employers report found that on average organisation-wide early interventions such as campaigns to raise awareness of mental health issues provide a high ROI (£5.60 for every £1 spent).

Proactive interventions which support employee mental health at an early stage provide a slightly lower ROI (£5 for every £1 spent), while reactive interventions that provide support after deterioration in an employee's mental health has occurred provide the lowest ROI (£3.40 for every £1 spent). Training of targeted groups of people has the highest ROI of £6 for every £1 spent.





The Retail Trust's purpose

At the Retail Trust, our purpose is simple but powerful: to create hope, health and happiness for everyone in retail – from the shopfloor to the boardroom. This commitment has been at the heart of the Retail Trust since 1832. Nearly two centuries on, it matters more than ever.

Today, retail workers are under more pressure than ever before. Rising living costs, abuse on the frontlines, heavy workloads and ongoing uncertainty are taking their toll. Our 2025 research revealed that 71% of retail colleagues have experienced a decline in their mental health – with the rising cost of

living the single biggest contributor for the third year running. And yet, despite the strain, more than half (54%) report feeling content in their roles – a testament to the resilience and passion that defines the sector.

We believe that health and happiness should be available to everybody. For retail – and society – to flourish, business must play a leading role in tackling inequality and supporting wellbeing. That's why we are working alongside retailers of every size to build a coalition that champions the notion that happy, healthy people create thriving businesses.

As the experts in retail wellbeing, we're not just responding to challenges – we're tackling their root causes. By equipping colleagues to care for their mental, physical and financial health, and empowering leaders to support their teams, we are building a future where every retail worker can truly flourish.

Our impact in a snapshot

During the 12 months from 1 May 2024 to 30 April 2025, we stood alongside retail workers when they needed it most – whether that was advocating for safer workplaces, offering free training to help frontline colleagues deal with challenging situations, or providing

direct support in times of crisis. From financial aid and counselling to critical incident response and mental health resources, our efforts have focussed on protecting wellbeing and ensuring no one feels alone. The following statistics reflect the tangible difference we've made together.





We delivered
13,000
counselling sessions

522,000
website views

6,404
colleagues supported
via our helpline

£533,210.74 awarded in
financial aid

15,187
helpline calls



1,020 colleagues made
29,777
online therapy interactions

2,922
colleagues and
managers
trained

We responded
to 55 critical
incidents, helping
532
colleagues

Protecting wellbeing in challenging times

With NHS mental health support increasingly hard to access, the Retail Trust's services have never been more important.

While the stigma around mental health has reduced in recent years, NHS waiting lists continue to grow, leaving many having to wait months to access support. At the same time, retail workers face rising living costs, job insecurity, heavy workloads, retail crime and abuse from customers. Increasingly, colleagues are turning to their employers for help and businesses are realising that happier, healthier teams are key to retaining staff and building resilience.

This is where the Retail Trust comes in. From 1832 onwards, our purpose has been to promote the hope, health and happiness of everyone working in retail. Retail is a people-first industry, and our person-centred approach and retail expertise ensure that not only are we there for colleagues at crisis point but that we increasingly help by providing proactive measures to ensure that hope, health and happiness are genuinely achievable for everyone in the sector.

We passionately believe that every retail colleague should have access to the right support whenever they need it.

That's why we provide a holistic range of wellbeing services designed to protect and strengthen mental, physical and financial

health. They include a 24-hour helpline, short-term counselling, and self-guided therapy; financial aid for colleagues and their families; online self-help resources covering everything from sleep to stress.

We also offer critical incident support for teams facing the worst of situations and training in mental health and wellbeing.

And we equip leaders and managers with the tools to support their teams, helping businesses across the sector take a proactive approach to wellbeing. Together, we are building a coalition of retailers committed to creating happier, healthier workplaces.



We are reaching more colleagues than ever

Our reach continues to grow year on year. With over 200 clients, more than 600,000 colleagues have access to our services. In total, over 522,000 pages of digital resources were viewed – from practical guides on managing stress to expert advice on sleep and financial health.

We are there when colleagues hit crisis point

When colleagues find themselves in crisis, we are there to provide immediate support. In-the-moment helpline calls and multi-session counselling enabled thousands of colleagues to take action to protect their wellbeing. Importantly, 92.5% of those who reached out did so before taking sick leave – showing that support at the right time can prevent problems from escalating.

Yet the impact was already being felt. 23% of callers said their home life had been affected, and 22% reported a decline in their productivity or work quality. Of those already signed off sick, 44% contacted us within a week, but nearly a third waited one to three weeks before contacting us and more than a quarter waited over four weeks before seeking help – a reminder of the importance of making support accessible and stigma-free.

Our own 2025 research found that 64% of retail workers admit to being at work but unable to perform at their best because of their mental health – underlining the need for early intervention.

We help colleagues recover from 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 support to 532 individuals across 55 incidents in the past year. Most were related to the sudden death of a colleague or customer from sudden illness or suicide (53%), while others included support after an armed attack or robbery, support after redundancy and support after regional riots.

Support at the right time can prevent problems from escalating.





We keep families afloat with financial aid

The cost of living continued to soar. Many were unable to afford the basics and life events left those already struggling unable to cover costs. We helped 1,022 people and their families via financial aid, with an average award of £521.73. Just over a third of applications that were paid out went towards rent arrears (34%), while 17% went towards council tax arrears, 14% towards food vouchers, 10% towards utility bill arrears and 7% towards white goods. A quarter of those who were awarded financial aid got in touch due to debt collection. Acute and chronic illness, debt management, bereavement, divorce or separation and domestic violence were among the other most common reasons behind why people got in touch with us to seek assistance.

Looking ahead

We remain committed to ensuring that no one in retail faces life's toughest challenges alone. By expanding our services, strengthening partnerships and addressing the root causes of poor wellbeing, we are building a future where every retail colleague can thrive – in work and in life.

What happens when you call our helpline?

When someone calls our helpline, it's often at one of the hardest moments of their life. Our team of counsellors are there to listen, support and signpost people to the help they need. We talked to one of the team, Amy*, who explained what happens when someone calls the helpline, what's changed in the last 12 months, and why talking really does make all the difference.

Trigger warning: discussion of suicidal thoughts.

*Name has been changed

There really isn't a typical day, as the calls I receive vary widely. I can be speaking to someone struggling with work-related stress and on the next call I'm calming someone down from a severe panic attack. This role requires me to be mentally ready for any type of call. I make sure to take breaks through the day, especially after particularly difficult calls.

We offer in-the-moment support, so we give people time to speak and tell us about what's led them to contact us. The first thing we typically do is gather and confirm the client's personal details, explain confidentiality and the limitations of the support, before they start sharing their difficulties. We also complete an assessment which covers subjects such as suicidal risks and risk of harm to self or others, any support networks, and possible substance misuse issues. It's important to build

trust and weave these questions into conversation rather than dive straight in, otherwise they might be put off from opening up.

Based on what they tell us, after completing the assessment and if brief therapy is deemed suitable, then we arrange for the client to have some regular sessions with a counsellor – the number of sessions depends on the organisation they work for. If brief therapy isn't deemed appropriate, we will signpost them to other services or helpful resources.

People in their thirties are most likely to call. Often, they're calling about feeling overwhelmed by the demands of work and family, such as lack of work-life balance, work-related stress and burnout. A common phrase I hear is, 'I feel like I'm spinning a lot of plates.'

Lots of clients are in their late teens and early twenties, I find that they are more open to asking for help with their mental health. However, we are seeing more clients from the older generations calling in for support. Usually they reach out to our service on their manager's recommendation.

Recently I've spoken to many people experiencing issues around money and debt. Specifically people getting into debt due to not being able to work because of ill health or mental health problems. Calls about relationship breakdowns are also on the increase.

People get stuck in a loop of negative thoughts. It might start with something small which escalates until it becomes an all-consuming ball of worry and anxiety. I encourage people to list and grade their problems in order of priority, then help them explore possible solutions. Sometimes by resolving the most important problem the rest becomes easier to manage.

On the other hand, sometimes people minimise what they're going through.

'My dad's got dementia, my husband's waiting for a cancer diagnosis, my kid's got autism, but I don't know why I'm not coping.' Then my role is to say, it sounds like you've had a tough time lately, remind them to be gentle on themselves, and get some support and rest. My job is not about taking people's problems away, it's about helping them to deal with their problems better.

One call that stays with me is a young man in his twenties.

When he rang he was sobbing uncontrollably, and said he often thought about ending his life on the way to work. As we talked, it became clear that his struggles started after the death of a very important family member. After the loss, he'd thrown himself into work and never really grieved. As he spoke about what his life was like before this loss, it reminded him that he hadn't always felt this way. He remembered that he used to be happy and appreciate all the little things in life. Together we explored how he could bring the joy and purpose he used to feel back into his life. As he had disclosed suicidal thoughts, we created a safety plan together, and I made a call to his GP to arrange for them to speak with him. By the end of the call he said, 'You've given me the hope I needed.'

"I find once people start talking, the floodgates open."

It's unlikely that we speak to the same person twice, but it can happen.

We don't encourage it as we don't want people to be reliant on any one counsellor. Also, I believe that talking to different counsellors can offer different perspectives.

Life happens, we all struggle

sometimes. I find once people start talking, the floodgates open – often it's the first time they have spoken to anyone about their problems. In a lot of cases, people call because they feel stuck and want to get some clarity by talking things through with someone professionally trained. The service gives people a safe, judgement-free and confidential space to talk about what's bothering them as and when they need it. Sometimes talking about problems gives people the space to find a solution.

I can't promise their problems will go away, but I always do my best to make sure each person ends the call feeling better than when they started.

And I always leave them with some useful resources to explore. The call can help them see that change is possible and open the door to getting the support they need.



“I didn’t know where to turn until my manager mentioned Retail Trust.”

Retail worker James* contacted us after his debts spiralled out of control and he had no way to pay essential bills.

“My partner lost her job through ill health two years ago and I became the sole bread winner. Money was tight so I was buying food, petrol and paying the bills on my credit card. In short, I was burying my head in the

sand. I kept thinking things would get better next week, next month, next year, but they didn’t. Then I found myself in arrears on the electricity bill and I couldn’t pay it. I wasn’t sleeping and had zero energy, I didn’t know what to do or where to turn. My manager at work told me about the Retail Trust and so I reached out. The whole process of applying for financial aid was pretty easy, and I got answers very quickly. The Trust helped me to pay the electricity bill and introduced me to a debt management company

who are helping me pay off my other debts. Since contacting the Retail Trust I realised there are people out there who will listen and not judge. If you find yourself in financial difficulties, I would definitely recommend the Retail Trust, but don’t leave it too late before you get in touch.”

*Name has been changed



Posed by model

Stronger managers, stronger teams

Training line managers is at the centre of supporting colleagues. They're often the first to spot when a colleague is struggling and the first people colleagues turn to for support.

Our 2025 research across the retail industry found that managers are better equipped than ever to support colleague wellbeing. A huge 92% of managers told us they know how to help team members get support for their mental health, continuing the steady increase from 85% in 2023. Empathetic, confident managers are at the heart of employee happiness. By equipping them with the right skills, we not only support individual colleagues but strengthen entire teams and organisations. That is why investing in manager training is an investment in the wellbeing of the whole workforce.

Training managers continues to be a priority for retailers and demand for our CPD-accredited mental health and wellbeing training remains high. In the past year alone, we delivered 221 training sessions for 2,922 managers and colleagues. We welcome this manager-first approach, with businesses committing to the ongoing development of existing leaders as well as newly promoted colleagues who are managing teams for the first time.

Our most popular course, taking stock of wellbeing in retail, explores the sector's current wellbeing themes, teaches managers how to avoid becoming an 'accidental counsellor' and shows them how to protect their own wellbeing while supporting others.

All our courses are CPD-accredited and uniquely designed and delivered by retail wellbeing experts. By continually updating content to reflect the latest challenges in the sector, we ensure managers leave our training with practical, relevant tools to support their teams – and themselves – in a rapidly changing retail landscape.



**“Empathetic,
confident managers
are at the heart
of employee
happiness.”**

Our leaders came away with many useful tools

“We offered the taking stock of wellbeing in retail course to our support and management team within our Book Hub. It was fantastic working alongside the team at the Retail Trust, as they aligned the training to reflect the warehouse environment and provided the space to have open discussions as a group.

“Our leaders gave positive feedback on the course; it really resonated with them and gave them many useful tools that allow them to deal with situations sensitively and respectfully. We are exploring further training with the Retail Trust and highly recommend their training to any other retail business.”

Claire Martin

HR Business Partner at Waterstones

The Retail Trust trainers created a safe space

“We commissioned 11 sessions, including a pilot, from the Retail Trust on personal, emotional, and psychological safety, which were offered to our retail colleagues across the network. Working with the Retail Trust was an absolute pleasure – their expertise, professionalism, and deep knowledge truly stood out throughout the programme.

“Feedback from participants was overwhelmingly positive, with many sharing that it was some of the best training they had ever attended. The facilitators delivered each session to an exceptionally high standard, creating a safe and supportive space for colleagues to come together and openly discuss the challenges they regularly face in their shops.

“These sessions not only provided valuable insights and tools but also fostered a sense of connection and solidarity across our network.”

Renee Marchant

Learning & Development
Co-Ordinator at Oxfam

“I am delighted to be part of the wellbeing warriors community. The training was great and full of wisdom.”



Revitalising our estates to create thriving communities

Our five supported living estates in London, Derby, Glasgow, Liverpool and Salford provide safe and secure homes for up to 450 people who have retired from retail.

More than just homes, they are vibrant communities where residents aged 55 and over can maintain their health and retain their independence, but still have access to support from our dedicated teams whenever they need it.

Across our estates, each smart flat is equipped with the latest technology, such as voice-controlled and automated lighting and heating and automated reminders for appointments and medication.

Digital communication, including video calling, enables residents to stay connected with family and friends, as well as support teams on site. These innovations help residents to maintain their independence, which has a profound effect on wellbeing levels.

Each estate combines high-quality private accommodation with shared spaces that encourage social connection and community spirit. Over the past twelve months we have continued to invest in upgrading housing stock and renovating central facilities, ensuring our residents have the best possible quality of life.

This financial year marked a major milestone in our mission to provide the best social housing in the UK. We started the year by breaking ground on the £1 million transformation project at our Hugh Fraser Retirement Estate in Newton Mearns,

Glasgow. Our vision is to better meet the needs of our residents and local community, by creating a modern community hub, to help tackle isolation and support people with long-term health conditions. Eight months later we celebrated the opening of the new facilities, which will provide a blueprint for future redevelopment across our estates throughout the UK. Read more about the Glasgow redevelopment on page 20.

By continuing to upgrade our housing stock and renovating central facilities, the Trust is contributing to government targets for everyone to have five extra years of healthy, independent life.



100

**stories that
defined our year**



In February 2025, HRH The Princess Royal became our Patron, taking over the role from her mother, The Late Queen Elizabeth II.

This marks the continuation of a remarkable decades-long relationship between the Retail Trust and the Royal Family.

1. Welcoming a new Royal Patron

Queen Elizabeth II first became Patron in 1948 and gave steadfast support to the Trust. Throughout her 70-year reign as monarch, she supported fundraising events and met with staff and residents at our supported living estates.

We are deeply honoured that HRH The Princess Royal has chosen to continue this legacy and are very much looking forward to engaging her with the Trust's mission to protect the health and happiness of UK retail workers.



2. Unveiling our game-changing community hub

In May 2024 we broke ground on the £1 million transformation project at our Hugh Fraser Retirement Estate in Newton Mearns, Glasgow.

Our vision was to better meet the needs of our residents and the local community, by creating a modern community hub that would offer a range of activities to help tackle isolation and offer support for people with long-term health needs.

In January 2025 our vision became reality, thanks to the collective effort of retailers, charities, local government and volunteers. The redevelopment is already proving to be a lifeline for residents and local people and is a powerful example of what can be achieved when business, community and local authorities work together.

Tackling isolation and improving wellbeing

Home to over 120 residents, the estate has long been a safe and supportive environment for people retired from the retail sector. But with East Renfrewshire reporting the fourth highest proportion of residents

with long-term health conditions in Scotland, there was a clear need for more support.

The new hub addresses this need head-on. Three disused spaces and the estate café have been fully refurbished, creating a modern, welcoming community café, a multipurpose activities room, a smaller activity and meeting room, and a private dining room. The refurbishment of the hub will enable us to cater for more than 1,000 local people a year.



The power of partnership

We worked closely with residents and organisations like Voluntary Action, Age Concern and East Renfrewshire Council to develop our plans for the new community hub.

The transformation was made possible by generous grants and funding from various sources. The Hugh Fraser Foundation donated £200,000, with other funders including the UK Government's Community Ownership Fund, East Renfrewshire Council and Garfield Weston Foundation.

What truly set the project apart is the hands-on support we received from our retail partners who helped us to transform the space, both indoors and out. NEXT's team took on the interior design of the hub and generously donated the furniture and materials to bring it to life, while Dobbies Garden Centres donated products and staff volunteered time to create a new garden area. This is in addition to the funding that NEXT, the B&Q Foundation, and bp provided to make our plans a reality.

THE HUGH FRASER FOUNDATION



NEXT



A blueprint for the future

The redevelopment was designed with sustainability in mind. Solar panels, installed with funding from East Renfrewshire council's Get to Zero grant and bp, together with a range of other measures, are helping to cut the estate's carbon footprint by up to 18 tonnes a year – reducing energy usage by up to a quarter. Alongside this, upgrades to heating, ventilation, windows and electricity mean the hub is not only fit for today's needs but is protected for future generations.

The feedback from the local community has been overwhelmingly positive, with both the council and other retailers coming forward following the launch to offer more support, because they can already see the impact it's having on people's lives. We hope this project will become a blueprint for tackling social isolation and long-term health needs in the other parts of the UK that are home to our estates.

The redevelopment embodies our mission.

The redevelopment embodies our mission to safeguard the wellbeing of people in retail during their working lives and into retirement, protecting not only the physical health of older people but their sense of community, connection and joy. The Hugh Fraser Retirement Estate is more than just a place to live, it's a place to belong.



Stories that defined our year



Meet the designer behind the stunning interiors



Olivia Pearson, the NEX design consultant behind the stunning interiors at our new look community hub shares the secrets of the transformation

How did you get involved in the project to transform the community hub at the estate?

"It came about after Andrew Jurd, NEX's head of HR for retail, met Lawrence from the Retail Trust and heard about the plans to redevelop Glasgow. Andrew discussed it with colleagues and, as home design consultant for the Glasgow area, I was appointed to head up the transformation project."

It was a massive undertaking, what was your first impression of the space?

"Honestly, it was overwhelming. It was the biggest project I'd worked on. The rooms were huge and empty, the café roof was covered in algae and the carpets were rotten, but I could see the potential. The light was beautiful and with Dobbies Garden Centres transforming the garden and pond, I knew it could be special."

With such a big project, involving multiple spaces, how did you approach the design?

"I wanted it to feel like a home, not a showroom, and for the rooms to flow but also have their own identity. After meeting residents and staff, I focused on creating bright, warm, contemporary spaces with botanical designs and natural colours inspired by the grounds. Comfort, practicality and longevity were key – sofa seating in the café to encourage conversation, wipe-clean fabrics and lightweight furniture that could be moved for activities. Every choice considered how people would actually use the space."

What were the biggest challenges you encountered along the way?

"Time and logistics. I was the go-between for NEX and the Retail Trust, managing deliveries, chasing products, and working around building delays. But once the furniture started going in, it all came together smoothly."



What was the reaction at the opening?

"It was amazing. Residents described it as bright, contemporary, homely and warm. They could picture themselves enjoying game nights, afternoon tea, or simply meeting friends again. That feedback made me really proud – it felt like we'd created something that would genuinely make a difference."

3. Putting our campaign in front of millions of shoppers



In October 2024, we partnered with JCDecaux Community Channel to take our Let's Respect Retail campaign to shopping centres across the country.

Originally launched in 2022 in response to the alarming rise in abuse faced by retail colleagues, the campaign set out to shine a spotlight on the issue and encourage customers to treat retail staff with dignity and respect.

Building on the momentum of the past two years, this latest phase took the campaign to the next level. By partnering

with JCDecaux Community Channel, we brought the message to millions through digital billboards at some of the country's largest shopping centres. The campaign's call to action – urging shoppers to stand 'together against abuse' – could not have been more timely, as incidents continued to increase in both frequency and severity.

The campaign reached its most powerful moment on 3 December 2024, when it lit up the iconic Piccadilly Circus advertising screen thanks to the support of property owner and developer Landsec. By taking our campaign across the country, we hoped to give customers pause for thought as they did their Christmas shopping, and remind them of the humanity of the people behind the counters.



4. Helping retail workers feel safer with free sector-wide training

Ahead of the busy Christmas trading period, we provided free online and in-person training on managing challenging situations.

These masterclasses provided practical tools and techniques to help in-store colleagues and delivery drivers to deal with difficult experiences and behaviour.

More than 1,300 people from over 200 retailers registered for the masterclasses, demonstrating sector-wide need for this support. The training aimed to equip colleagues with strategies to stay safe, protect their wellbeing and reinforced the message that no one should have to face abuse as part of their working day.



5. Stepping up our volunteering programme

Volunteering became an even bigger part of life across our estates

this year, with more people, more partnerships, and more projects transforming shared spaces and lifting spirits.

Teams from retail partners and wellbeing clients – including AlixPartners, B&Q, BRC, N Brown, NEXT, Pets at Home, Sabio, Sky, Storeforce and Wincanton – joined residents and staff for 16 volunteering days across our communities. From junior team members to CEOs,

volunteers rolled up their sleeves to refresh shared areas, build a wildlife pond, and stage community events from VJ Day to Christmas.

Schools also played a big role in community life at our London estate. Once a month, teenagers from Mill Hill School gave up their lunch hour to run activities such as bingo, indoor bowls and quizzes with residents. Pupils from Goodwyn Primary sang Christmas songs to bring festive cheer to residents, while a group of year five pupils from St John's primary visited for a discussion about aging. These intergenerational partnerships help

tackle loneliness, build confidence and foster understanding between the generations.

For residents, the impact is felt far beyond a single day. After the entrance to the Leylands Estate in Derby was refreshed, one resident said: "The entrance is so welcoming and light, it lifts your heart now to feel like you're almost home." Residents also noted how lovely the pergola is following a volunteering day. "It's a joy to walk or be pushed in our wheelchairs to the pergola, with its climbing roses, clematis, honeysuckle and jasmine, and all the butterflies and

bees. The solar lights will make it feel like a winter wonderland walk."

And it's not just the residents who benefit. One volunteer summed up their experience: "It was the best day we've had as a team. We listened intently to the residents, had a lot of laughs and even a few tears (good ones). Most of all, we had fun – and hope the residents feel the same."

With more volunteering days already planned for the year ahead, the programme has become a vital part of community life, creating more vibrant, connected estates.

6. Leading the sector with AI-driven insights



Redefining how the retail sector understands and supports its workforce, the quarterly Retail People Index in partnership with AlixPartners launched in June 2024. The report draws on data provided by our AI-driven happiness dashboard.

Thousands of colleagues have engaged with our happiness health check since the rollout of the happiness dashboard. By combining

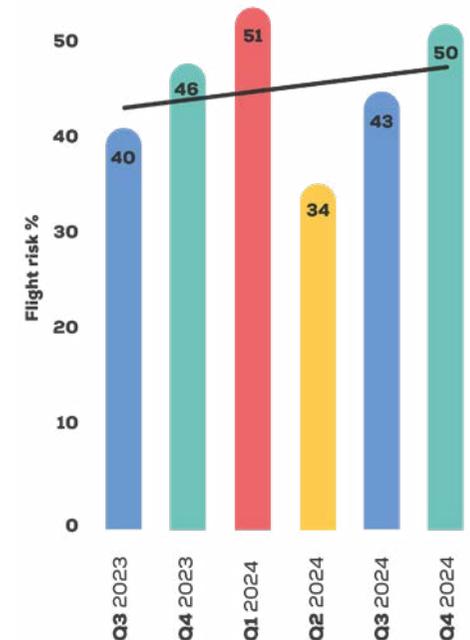
individual-level support with powerful aggregated insights, the data has become a vital tool in understanding and improving colleague wellbeing.

The Retail People Index uses this data to give retailers a real-time pulse on how their people are feeling, where risks are emerging, and what actions will have the greatest impact in reducing churn, absenteeism and presenteeism.

These insights are vital. Presenteeism due to poor mental health accounted for nearly half of all workplace costs in

2022, while replacing a single employee costs an estimated £5,195. By identifying early warning signs, the index empowers organisations to intervene proactively.

More than just a report, this is a strategic tool for transformation. By shining a light on the real issues facing retail workers, the Retail People Index enables leaders to act decisively and build healthier, happier, and more resilient teams for the future.





7. Inspiring retail workers to make meaningful change

In May 2024, to coincide with Mental Health Awareness Week, more than 900 people from over 180 retailers gathered in The Truman Brewery for Together Fest, our one-day, festival-style event for retail workers.

Back for its third year, the event brings to life our mission to boost the hope, health and happiness for everyone who works in retail. The 2024 programme featured talks and panel discussions on topics including anxiety, grief, maximising midlife, setting boundaries, and living fearlessly.

Headliners included husband-and-wife podcasting duo Spencer Matthews and Vogue Williams who talked about wellbeing, working

together and tackling life's curveballs and Ruby Wax, who gave an unforgettable keynote talk based on her critically acclaimed book and tour, *I'm Not As Well As I Thought I Was*.

Feedback was overwhelmingly positive, with one attendee saying, "The event was well run, the topics covered were relevant and suitably varied. I felt very energised afterwards and like I could take lots of ideas back and put them in to practice."

8. Gathering thought-leaders to shape the future of retail

In October 2024, we welcomed 250 senior retail leaders from over 119 organisations to The Jumeirah Carlton Tower for our Leaders' Summit event, a day of insight and connection.

The programme featured inspiring talks and panels on pressing issues for the sector, ranging from workplace happiness and presenteeism, to building cultures of belonging, supporting intergenerational teams, and navigating life's unexpected challenges.

More than a conference, the summit is an annual opportunity for the retail community to unite around a shared vision to bring about positive change in the sector.

Feedback from attendees highlights its impact:

"I took something away from every session and speaker. It could not have come at a better time."

"It was great to interact with like-minded colleagues and listen to thought-provoking sessions. I came away re-energised with ideas to benefit my organisation."

The summit reinforced the power of retail leaders to drive positive change, not just in their own organisations, but across the wider industry.



9. Winning awards that reflect the power of our impact



In May 2024, we were proud to be named a Sunday Times Best Place to Work for the second year running.

This recognition reflects not only our strategy of prioritising wellbeing support, a great benefit package, strong line management and work-life balance – but most of all, the shared purpose to bring

hope, health and happiness to the retail industry and beyond.

In September, we were thrilled to be awarded Highly Commended for Charity of the Year with an income of more than £10 million at the Charity Times Awards 2024.

Together, these awards highlight the strength of our culture and the difference we're making for both our people and the communities we serve.



10. Offering clinician-guided mental health support

In June 2024, we expanded our partnership with digital mental health platform SilverCloud® by Amwell®, to offer clinician-guided mental health support alongside the self-guided programmes we introduced at the end of 2023.

This means that colleagues can now access coaching from trained counsellors, who provide motivation and encouragement throughout the digital behavioural health programme. Available at any time through our website, the platform offers evidence-based cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT) for stress, anxiety, depression and other common mental health conditions.

At a time when retail colleagues are facing rising levels of retail crime, the high cost of living and ongoing

uncertainty, this expanded support ensures that retail workers can take greater control of their wellbeing and seek help in a way that works best for them.

The partnership forms part of our wider package of wellbeing services, which also includes a virtual GP service, financial aid, wellbeing training, and our AI-powered happiness dashboard that provides employers with valuable insights into the overall mental health of their teams.

Derek Richards, head of research for SilverCloud said: “Long hours, frequent schedule changes, challenging customer interactions and lower pay in an economy where the cost of living continues to climb, are taking a toll on the mental health of the retail workforce. We’re proud to partner with the Retail Trust to provide digital therapy tools to help ease these challenges and enhance overall wellbeing.”



Chris Brook-Carter
Chief Executive Officer

“We must create a future where wellbeing is a given, not a luxury”

Last year I shared our aspiration to support one million retail colleagues annually with a best-in-class wellbeing service.

Over the past twelve months, we've made enormous strides towards that ambitious goal.

Our Let's Respect Retail campaign is one of the most exciting projects of my career. An incredible amount of work has gone into building a movement to end abuse towards retail staff, and I felt immense pride seeing it featured on the Piccadilly Lights. There's still a long way to go, but we'll keep advocating for frontline workers to feel safe, respected, and free from daily violence and abuse.

Opening the new community hub at our Hugh Fraser Retirement Estate in Glasgow was another landmark moment. The £1 million project united charities, local government, and retail

partners to transform the space – and it's already making a meaningful difference to people's lives.

We welcomed HRH The Princess Royal as our new Patron, succeeding her mother, The Late Queen Elizabeth II, who served for over 70 years. Her decision to continue The Late Queen's relationship with the Retail Trust speaks volumes about the importance of our work and the centrality of retail in the UK. We're honoured to welcome her into our world.

Using data generated by our game-changing, AI-powered happiness dashboard, we launched the Retail People Index in partnership with AlixPartners. The dashboard and quarterly report provide robust insights into how colleagues are feeling, empowering organisations to make data-driven decisions to improve retention, reduce absenteeism and boost productivity.

These milestones have amplified our message, galvanised our community, and built momentum on our journey to create hope, health and happiness for everyone working in retail.

The Retail Trust has a long legacy of shaping not just the retail industry, but society itself. From advocating for the concept of the weekend to developing retirement communities long before the welfare state existed, we've consistently led the way.

Just as our founders responded to the needs of their time, we must now meet the challenges of ours and set a new benchmark for how businesses support their people, particularly as they navigate the challenges of mental health, financial insecurity, and aging.

With our position at the heart of the sector, the Retail Trust is ideally placed to respond – offering solutions for today and pioneering a new model

of support that could inspire change across other industries.

That's why our ambition to reach one million people is so important. It gives us the scale to influence systemic change and makes us impossible to ignore.

To help us achieve our goal, we've created a three-year plan focussed on five key areas: strategic innovation, campaigning for change, supercharging our digital offering, expanding our confederacy of good feeling, and committing to operational excellence, because nothing is possible without a strong foundation.

Each step forward brings us closer to a future where wellbeing is not a luxury, but a given, accessible to all.

Chris Brook-Carter
Chief Executive Officer



Be part of our future

We want to be there for every single person in retail who needs support, from the moment they join the sector and through every stage of their life.

Over 90% of our income comes from our partners and residential estates, allowing us to deliver vital services today. But it's not enough to meet the growing demand.

Gifts in wills, however large or small, enable us to invest in existing services, and develop new ones, supporting future generations at life-defining moments.

Please consider leaving a gift in your will. It could change – or even save – the life of a future colleague.

Find out more

legacies@retailtrust.org.uk
retailtrust.org.uk/gifts-in-wills



retailtrust.org.uk/impact

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