

## Wellbeing in the Workplace – KIA UK



Gemma Benbow, People & Organisation Director at Surrey-based Kia, offers a perspective from an organisation recognised by Great Place to Work as one of the UK's Best Workplaces (2026) and one of the UK's Best Workplaces for Wellbeing (2025).

As part of Mental Health Awareness Week, Gemma has kindly shared her reflections with us on how Kia has intentionally built and sustained a strong culture of wellbeing, supporting people to thrive at work.

### **1. Kia has been recognised as a 'Great Place to Work' with a strong commitment to staff wellbeing - what does this recognition mean to you and the wider team, and how would you describe Kia's overall approach to wellbeing?**

Being recognised as a Great Place to Work is incredibly meaningful because it's rooted in what our people tell us about their everyday experience at Kia UK. It's a real validation that our focus on wellbeing isn't just well-intentioned, it's being genuinely felt by our colleagues. We were pleased to also see that this was recognised by moving from 57<sup>th</sup> to 18<sup>th</sup> in the Best Large Workplaces for Wellbeing last year.

Our overall aim with wellbeing is to create the conditions for our people to thrive through an approach that is holistic and human-centred. We encourage people bring their whole selves to work, so we focus on supporting physical, mental, emotional, and financial wellbeing in a way that's practical, inclusive, and sustainable. It's not just about one-off initiatives, but about creating an environment where people feel supported, trusted, and able to thrive.

### **2. How has Kia embedded wellbeing into its everyday workplace culture - not just as an initiative, but as part of "how things are done"?**

We've been very intentional about embedding wellbeing into how we lead, how we work, and how we support one another. That starts with leadership, encouraging open conversations, modelling healthy behaviours, and creating psychological safety so people feel comfortable speaking up. Wellbeing is considered in our policies, our ways of working, and our people processes, from flexible working and workload conversations, to how managers check in with their teams. Whilst we now have a quarterly themed Wellbeing Plan, wellbeing is also woven into everyday decision-making and people practices, so it becomes part of the culture rather than a standalone programme.

### **3. This year's Mental Health Awareness Week theme is 'Action'. What everyday actions- big or small- do you think make the biggest impact on staff wellbeing?**

Often, it's the small, consistent actions that make the biggest difference. Simple things like checking in with a colleague, listening without judgement, being mindful of workloads, or encouraging someone to take a break can have a powerful impact. At a leadership level, action also means creating space for learning, having honest conversations (sometimes on challenging topics), responding with empathy, and being prepared to learn and adapt when something isn't working. Wellbeing isn't just about grand gestures, it's about everyday behaviours that show people they're valued, supported, and respected.

***4. Have employees themselves played a role in shaping the wellbeing strategy or suggesting new ideas?***

Absolutely - our people play a vital role in shaping our wellbeing approach. We actively seek employee feedback through engagement surveys, listening groups and informal conversations, and we use those insights to guide our priorities. We also have our Mental Health First Aiders from across the organisation who have helped shape the areas that we focus on.

Many of our initiatives have been influenced directly by employee suggestions and lived experiences which means what we do reflects the real needs of the people it's designed to support.

***5. What indicators or feedback mechanisms does Kia use to measure whether your wellbeing strategy is making a difference?***

We look at a combination of quantitative and qualitative indicators. This includes employee engagement survey results, wellbeing-related feedback, absence trends, benefit provider insights, retention data, and the quality of conversations happening across the business. Just as importantly, we try and listen to the stories behind the data ie. how people describe their experience, how confident they feel raising concerns, and whether they feel supported by their manager and the organisation. Those insights help us understand what's working well and where we need to keep evolving.

***6. If you could share one piece of advice with other leaders aiming to create a healthier, more supportive workplace, what would it be?***

My advice would be to start with listening and lead with empathy. Wellbeing isn't about having all the answers but about being genuinely curious about people's experiences and being willing to learn and act on what you hear. When leaders show they care, create trust, and role-model healthy behaviours, it sends a powerful message and helps to grow a supportive workplace culture.