

CoreNet Global UK and the UK Green Building Council - Delivering Occupier Health & Wellbeing

Thursday 2 February 2017, Standard Chartered, Basinghall Street, London EC2

Moderator: James Pack, CoreNet Global UK Sustainability Community

Speakers: Bill Page, Legal and General IM, Chairman of the Research Committee BCO
Elinor Huggett, UK Green Building Council



The CoreNet Delivering Occupier Health & Wellbeing roundtable event was held in Standard Chartered's magnificent top floor boardroom, with fantastic views across the roofs of the City of London and beyond. Attendees were invited to sit at one of six 'themed' tables, each one with a focus on a different aspect of wellbeing. The 80 attendees had been carefully allocated a table with representatives from owner occupiers, property, design, engineering and construction on each table in order to provide a wide view on the subjects to be discussed, broadening the discussion in a 'real life' occupier environment.

Moderated by the CoreNet UK Chapter's Sustainability Community lead **James Pack** the event was designed to initiate discussion not about the case for health and wellbeing in offices, which has already been established, but about what the viable wellbeing strategies may be for occupiers. Which strategy should we choose from those available and how do we evaluate the impact on cost and productivity gains? To introduce the discussion **Bill Page**, head of Legal & General Investment Management's space research, and **Elinor Huggett** of the UK Green Building Council explained some of the background work which has been carried out to date.





Bill Page, also chair of the BCO's research committee, discussed previous reports on employee wellbeing and plans to collaborate with CoreNet Global UK over the next twelve months on a new project looking at how the real estate investor can improve the health and wellbeing of corporate occupiers. This includes looking at key phases over the life cycle of a new building and typical 15 year lease: Design & Construction, Leasing, and long term Occupation. 'While there is a large amount of literature on the subject it is diffuse and constantly evolving', he said. 'There are lots of different viewpoints and we are trying to cut through to see what the practitioner needs to do'.

Elinor Huggett, introduced the UKGBC's *Health, Wellbeing & Productivity in Offices: a Guide for Occupiers*, which is based on their research with the World Green Building Council in 2014 and ensuing report 'Health, Wellbeing and Productivity in Offices'. The Bitesize Guide outlines the key links between office design and the health and productivity of staff.



Elements for a healthy office, she explained, include ventilation, healthy food and exercise (or a walk at lunchtime), daylight, social spaces, noise management and thermal comfort (neither too hot nor cold). The Offices Framework looks not only at the physical side of an office, but how it is perceived by its occupiers and how environment and experience can influence outcomes.

Following, each table were given three strategies to assess in relation to their subject. Industry participants were requested to assess both the opportunities and barriers to implementing these strategies within their workplaces, or those that they design or run. A brief summary from each table was heard, the results of which will be collated into a comprehensive report. In brief:

- Thermal Comfort - it was noted that whilst it is hard to please everyone, there was a wide discrepancy between large and small companies: big organisations have good data, small organisations don't - so there is a need for sharing data.
- Daylight and Lighting - key points that emerged are: the importance of putting people rather than meeting rooms nearest to the daylight source, using reflectors to improve light penetration, and task rather than blanket lighting.

- Acoustics - it was reported that sound masking needs more research - measurement and subsequent monitoring are of key importance - noting how people feel - as is communication.
- Management Culture and Integrated Design Process - it was thought that there is little cross referencing between the board, HR, and staff (generally represent 90% of any organisation's overheads) so workshops are needed - to be led by the CRE teams?
- Indoor Air Quality - it seems that fresh air is spoilt by people - the occupants of any space pollute each other so effective ventilation is absolutely necessary - and monitoring and management are key.
- Active Design & Biophilia - it was felt that landlords tended to be unhelpful (eg discouraging the use of stairs), but that provision of a dedicated fitness facility while not necessary would be helpful. Planting can improve air quality but needs monitoring of cost and practicality.

In summary, James Pack, who had been monitoring the reports, noted that while the room felt that there was a need for strategies to enhance wellbeing, how often they are considered in design, and how well they are implemented is somewhat less. The need is great for more input in this area.

Plans are now for a white paper based on this morning's findings - keep an eye on this site!

