

Employers' Pack on Well-Being at Work

Tips on how to: Increase staff well-being
Reduce staff turnover
Increase productivity
Have more £/funding

~ The business case for investment in health and well-being of their employees is inadequately understood by employers~

~Promoting good health at work can lead to a maximisation of productivity, increased retention of staff and a reduction in recruitment costs~

Produced as part of Yorkshire and Humber Workplace Health Project, based at Sheffield Occupational Health Advisory Service (SOHAS)

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This pack was designed for any organisation, but how it is used will depend on it's size. It is also aimed at all types of organisation whether private, statutory or voluntary sector. So if your organisation is not for profit the pack will help you make better use of funding which in turn will provide more services. It contains a snap-shot of the major issues faced by employers and employees today, with basic information, websites and organisations to obtain further information, support and advice.

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Introduction

'The annual economic costs of sickness absence and worklessness associated with working age ill-health are estimated to be over 100 billion.'

Dame Carol Black

The figures above do not make comfortable reading. Consequently the Government in 2005 enlisted **Dame Carol Black** to look at health at work and come up with facts and recommendations. Her report, *'Working for a Healthier Tomorrow'* (see website) published in March 2008, gives a comprehensive assessment of the state of the British working life:

- the major causes of work absence are common mental health problems and musculoskeletal disorders
- a new approach to health and well-being at work is needed
- an improvement in work-related support for those who develop health conditions
- it is not necessary to be 100% fit to work, we need to be flexible about what we can and cannot do.
- tackling stigma around ill-health, mental health and disability
- early interventions help to prevent short-term sickness absence from progressing into long-term sickness absence

"A shift in attitudes is necessary to ensure that employers and employees recognise not only the importance of preventing ill-health, but also the key role the workplace can play in promoting health and well-being."

Dame Carol concludes:

"Good health is good business"

~Employees appreciate if there company has invested in them by providing health initiatives. It will lead to higher team moral and reduction in absenteeism~

Managers

The role of the line manager is key. Good line management can lead to good health, well-being and improved performance. Line managers have a responsibility in identifying and supporting people with health conditions

Quality of relationship with managers is a big indicator of health at work

Poor management skills can have a very negative effect on workers health. A Swedish study looked at the health of 3,000 workers over 10 years and found a strong link between the quality of leadership of their managers and the employees' incidence of heart disease.

Good managers scored well in the following:

- their ability to clearly set out goals for their staff
- what they expected from them in their role
- how good they were at communicating and giving feedback
- how successfully they manage change
- how inclusive they were
- how much they delegated
- how approachable they were

Occupational Health, Jan 2009.

Conflict Resolution

If there is conflict in the workplace, organisations that have a robust set of policies and use them are much more likely to resolve the issues 'in-house'.

If an employee does take the organisation to a tribunal and it is judged in the employees favour, the fines levied on the organisation will reflect how much they have followed their own procedures or tried to negotiate a solution.

ACAS

Is a free Government conciliation and arbitration service which aims to improve organisations and working life through better employment relations.

It provides information, advice, training and works with employers and employees to solve problems and improve performance.

The ACAS arbitration scheme is for unfair dismissal and flexible working claims, which would otherwise go to a full tribunal hearing. It is a private, more informal and speedy procedure for resolving these disputes. Parties opt into it voluntarily, by agreement.

www.acas.gov.uk

Health & Safety It's the Law

~Under UK law employers have a 'duty of care' to protect the health, safety and welfare of all employees while at work...~

In 2008 229 people were killed at work and 229,000 had reportable injuries, including 136,000 who suffered injuries such as amputations, burns or fractures.

2.1 million people suffered from an illness they believed to be caused or made worse by work.

34 Million working days were lost because of illness or injury.

HSE figures for year to April 2008.

All employers have legal duties to protect the health of employees. The Health and Safety at Work Act 1974 created the framework for employers' health and safety duties. The Management of Health and Safety at Work Act 1992 sets out what employers need to do to fulfil these duties. Separate regulations cover handling chemicals at work, exposure to noise and vibration, manual handling and other health and safety problems.

The main government enforcement agency, the Health and Safety Executive, and environmental health inspectors working for local authorities, provide advice on good practice and guidance on the law. They also inspect premises. **All businesses should be registered with HSE.**

Employees are entitled to elect safety representatives who have legal rights to carry out inspections, to belong to safety committees and to be informed about health and safety in the workplace.

For all aspects of health and safety at work: the law, hazards and their effects and good practice visit:

www.hse.gov.uk

Musculoskeletal Disorders (MSD's)

MSD's affect muscles, joints and tendons as well as other parts of the musculoskeletal system. **These are the most common form of occupational ill health, with around 1 million workers affected each year and losing 11.6 million work days.** They affect all workplaces, from agriculture, to NHS, offices and construction. Jobs such as bus-driving or nursing are associated with a five-fold difference in reported back pain. Process work and work on computers are strongly associated with upper limb disorder. If caught early enough almost all cases of a work-related musculoskeletal disorder can be treated successfully. If left, it can damage people for life.

The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) have made MSD's a priority because:

- You can prevent or minimise MSD's
- they affect large numbers of people across most industries and occupations
- they can ruin people's lives
- they impose heavy costs on both employers and society

HSE's key message is:

- employers can do something to prevent or minimise MSD's
- prevention measures are cost effective
- early reporting of symptoms, proper treatment & suitable rehabilitation are essential
- Conduct a risk assessment

Areas that can create a risk:

repetitive and heavy lifting
bending and twisting regularly
working too long without breaks
high job demands

uncomfortable working position
exerting too much force
environment too hot or cold
lack of control

Using Computers

More than half of all jobs use computers. Computer workstations or equipment can be associated with neck, shoulder, back or arm pains, fatigue and eye strain. It is vital that workers sit in the correct position, sitting upright, supported back and the spine in an 'S' position. Wrists should be level. It is vital to take regular breaks and leave the computer.

Most common fears at work by employees

Injuries and illnesses resulting from the poor use of display screen equipment had risen from 4th place in 2006 to become the 2nd most common concern of workers, reported by 2 in 5 reps (from a survey of 2,600 safety reps.)

~Simple office hazards, such as spending too much time fixed on a computer screen or sitting on a badly designed chair are often overlooked by employers but they are actually a huge concern to workers and need to be addressed.~ TUC

Eyes and computers

Visual fatigue is highlighted as a principle risk associated with using a screen. Symptoms include sore and tired eyes, blurred vision and headaches. Blink rates reduce at a computer, which is why eyes get sore, especially for contact-lens wearers.

In order to reduce or eradicate these problems the computer screen should be

- positioned at the correct distance
- be adjusted to a suitable brightness and contrast setting
- screen kept clean and free from smears
- screen kept out of glare and reflections
- software fonts should not be smaller than size 12
- exercise eyes regularly
- have regular breaks away from the screen

The HSE have a variety of booklets and information on-line to help employers support their staff in these areas.

www.hse.gov.uk

Mental ill-health

91 million working days are lost each year due to mental health problems.

71% of managers believe the incidence of mental ill health in their workplace is 5% or less. The actual incidence is 30%. 1 in 4 of us will have a significant mental health episode in our life time.

A snapshot poll by MIND (mental health charity) found that nearly 6 in 10 people had been forced to leave a job because of lack of mental health support, while a third had been sacked or forced out after disclosing a mental health problem, and more than a quarter had been demoted.

1 in 4 had even had job offers withdrawn after disclosing a mental health problem, even though this is illegal under the Disability Discrimination Act.

"A work culture where everyone is treated with respect and dignity and where issues such as bullying and harassment are not tolerated will improve the mental well-being of employees." (ACAS)

If you can promote such a culture you will see a reduction in sickness absence, grievance and discrimination claims, complaints and the incidence of mental health problems.

What is Mental Illness?

Depression: Is a serious illness which around 15% of people will suffer from at some stage and should not be confused with 'having a bad patch'. It may be triggered by a negative life experience. It can cause a wide variety of physical, psychological or social symptoms include feeling hopeless, lack of interest, tiredness. It can be improved through anti-depressants, psychological therapies or life-style changes.

Anxiety & Panic attacks (1 in 10) Anxiety is a normal human feeling but if the feelings become too strong or go on for too long they can stop us from doing the things we want to do and can make our lives miserable. Sudden unexpected surges of anxiety are called panic, and result in panic attacks where people can feel they are having a heart attack. These feelings are often accompanied by feelings of depression.

Bipolar Disorder:(1 in 100) This used to be called manic/depressive and is a condition where people swing between being depressed as above, and manic elevated moods which can be very creative. There are prescriptions that can help, or counselling but self-awareness of when things are slipping into an episode can help people control their mood swings.

~In these examples, employees can continue to do well at work, as long as there is an understanding of their condition. Knowing that people care and want to help greatly relieves much of the trauma.~

~The vast majority of people continue or return to work successfully. People with a history of mental illness take less sick leave and demonstrate strong loyalty towards their employer.~

A little bit of information can make a difficult situation much easier.

Mental Health First Aid is a 12 hour training course that provides an overview of common mental health problems, causes, symptoms and treatments and teaches people how to 1. Recognise distress 2. Recognise the difference between therapy and first aid 3. Be confident in administering help in a first-aid situation 4. Provide initial help to guide the person towards appropriate support.

www.mhfa.org.uk

What can employers do?

Employers can do much to support mental health issues in the workforce by learning about mental health and by talking to the employee. Do read [Line Managers' Resource](#) written by HSE/Dept. Health/DWP for guidance in helping staff with mental health problems (website address at end)

Recognition of early signs of mental health problems:

- change in character
- tearful
- taking time off
- reduced performance
- loss of concentration
- headaches, tiredness, worry, stress

What can managers do?

- be sympathetic
- have a confidential chat with worker
- listen and respect

- recommend they see their GP if they have not done so
- consider reducing stress at work for them in the short term
- signpost them to i.e. citizens advice for practical help

How to help an employee reasonably adjust to returning to work after a mental health issue.

Firstly follow the guidelines for absence management (see later).

The following strategies may be useful in complying with the DDA:

- Use voice-mail instead of phone calls
- A quiet workspace, or working from home sometimes
- Changing supervisor
- Reducing any stressful parts for a while, 'front line' work
- Using emails instead of face-to-face
- Flexible hours
- A workstation by a window or with plenty of light
- Permission to take short breaks when needed
- A supporting worker to go to if necessary

(From Mind guide to surviving working life)

For many people, knowing that they do not have to hide their distress, and will be allowed to get on with the job is enough to help them back to work. The Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) applies to physical and mental health issues (see section further on).

~There is often a conspiracy of silence surrounding mental illness in the workplace - to the detriment of both employees and employers~

To download a Line Managers' Resource on supporting people with mental health problems go to www.shift.org.uk.

Other useful websites:

www.mind.org.uk - Lots of useful information about mental health at work

www.hse.gov.uk

www.howsyourbusinessfeeling.org.uk

www.citizensadvice.org.uk

www.direct.gov.uk - information about employment rights and services

www.jobcentreplus.gov.uk

www.acas.org.uk - 1 day course managing stress & mental health in the workplace

www.andreaadamstrust.org -charity to support those bullied. - information, advice, legal advice, further websites.

www.bacp.co.uk - British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy.

How to ward off the blues

- keep physically fit
- eat well
- only drink in moderation
- value yourself and others
- talk about your feelings
- keep in touch with family and friends
- care for others
- get involved, make a contribution
- learn a new skill
- do something creative
- take a break
- ask for help

Most of the above are free or cost very little.

Bullying and Harassment at work

"Employers who fail to tackle bullying are breaking the law" TUC

Every year 18.9 million working days are lost to industry as a direct result of workplace bullying and this massively impacts on productivity, creativity, morale and employee wellbeing. 2 million people at work consider themselves being bullied.

~Workplace bullying is often hard to identify, and even harder to manage. It comes in many forms, occurs at every level, and is often unnoticed and unaddressed until it leads to more devastating consequences. The effects can be long lasting and lead to mental health issues, marital breakdown, a total loss of self worth and career disruption or unemployment.~

Definition of Bullying

"Persistent, offensive, abusive, intimidating or insulting behaviour, abuse of power or unfair penal sanctions which makes the recipient feel upset, threatened, humiliated or vulnerable, which undermines their self-confidence and which may cause them to suffer stress." MSF Union, 1994

~Bullying tends to be an accumulation of many small incidents over a long time. Each incident tends to be trivial on its own and out of context does not constitute an offence or grounds for disciplinary or grievance action.~

Euphemisms

Often bullying is overlooked or excused. It is labelled *harassment, intimidation, aggressive, bad attitude, coercive management, personality clash, poor management style.*

It does not have to be face to face, can be between all types of workers, can be obvious or insidious.

There is a fine line between strong management and bullying:

- Are communications constructive or destructive?
- Are communications about the mistake or about the person?

- Is it designed to make the person aware of their error and to set it right in the future or just to humiliate them?

Who are Bullies?

They are essentially cowards, who hide their own inadequacies, while making out that other people are at fault. The bully may see the other person as more capable, successful, popular or attractive than they are. The targets of bullying are usually above-average performers, more efficient and better at what they do than the bully. This is the most common reason to be targeted. Bullying is a behaviour, and behaviour is choice, therefore bullying is a choice. Either a person knows what they are doing and is responsible for their behaviour and its consequences, or the person is unaware, therefore has diminished responsibility and needs psychiatric help.

Bullies often appear charming and innocent to all others.

3 types of Bullies

- *Accidental* - covers the vast majority of incidents, may feel bad about it, not malicious
- *Career* bullying - 2 different sets of morals, one at home, one at work. They believe that if you bully at work you will succeed.
- *Psychopathic* bullying - Intended, due to personality defect. Rare, but effects are disproportionate to numbers. (1% of population)

The affects are devastating:

- Victims feel paranoia, believing that if they speak out, the bully will pursue them.
- People cannot contribute their best when under fear of harassment, bullying or fear.
- Depression is a common reaction to bullying which may include physical symptoms of headaches, nausea, ulcers, sleeplessness, IBS, high blood pressure

~Unfortunately it is common for the targeted person to take the blame, and this is when the self-doubt develops which often leads to a spiral of deteriorating mental and physical health. (See Stress)~

What can you do if you have been bullied?

Get advice from your union, Occupational health dept, HR dept or H&S reps.

Does your employer have a policy on bullying?

Confront the bully. This is usually enough to stop it, but not easy to do.

Keep a record of all incidents. There is a danger that it will be your word against the bully's, it is often hard to prove incidents.

If you leave then make sure the company knows why.

There are a variety of employment laws which cover bullying. Contact your Trade Union or go to the websites at the end.

How to reduce Bullying

~Employers who fail to tackle bullying can pay a high price in increase sickness levels, low moral, reduced work output, lost resources when workers leave and if taken to an Employment Tribunal or court they could face financial penalties and lost reputation~.

How to measure Bullying in your Organisation

Stage 1 - Gather information:

- Staff survey, have question about bullying
- Look at sickness absence data
- Turnover of staff rates
- Exit questionnaire + interview
- Formal and informal complaints and enquiries
- Bench mark and regular reviews.

Stage 2 - Listen to:

- Personnel Manager
- Counsellors
- Trade Unions
- Occupational Health Department
- 3rd party, i.e. customers (who will pick up bad feeling)

The organisation must equip employees with

"What conduct do we accept in this Organisation?"

Everyone must understand what is acceptable. It's not a blame game, but people must feel confident to stand up when things are not right.

Accessible Help for all: Many of these may be outside your organisation

Personal counselling

Harassment advice

Trade Unions

Coaching

Mediation services (ACAS)

Assertiveness training

Ongoing mental health training

Permanent Changes for Organisations

- Must be at the heart of the well-being strategy
- Change must come at systemic level
- Workers need to be clear about procedures if they complain
- Need to know they will be taken seriously
- Workers should have easy access to support
- Reinforces the values of the organisation
- Keep checking statistics

Good practice

Royal Mail: Employing nearly 1% of the working population there were so many complaints about sexual harassment (a type of bullying) that The Equal Opportunities Commission were considering a formal investigation into work practices. Royal Mail knew it had to do something. It now has significantly fewer complaints and has changed its culture to one where such behaviour is not tolerated. See how on their website.

www.mind.org.uk - leaflet on bullying at work

www.banbullyingatwork.com

www.tuc.org.uk

www.acas.co.uk - free download booklet on bullying

www.crisisprevention.com.uk

Stress At Work.

~.....they also have to assess the risks arising from work including work related stress and to comply with employment laws and your employees' rights at work.~ (Duty of Care 1974 Act)

~Stress has an annual cost to the UK employers is 3.7Bn but less than 1 in 10 companies have a stress policy~ (ACAS)

~Stress is often a symptom of poor employment relations and can seriously affect productivity. Organisations that talk regularly with their employees and have sound systems and procedures in place for dealing with issues like absence and discipline are much more likely to avoid work-related stress and to be able to deal with potentially stressful situations when they arise~ (ACAS)

What Is Stress?

"The adverse reaction people have to excessive pressures or other types of demands made on them". (HSE)

What are the signs and symptoms of poorly managed stress?

Excess stress can manifest itself in a variety of emotional, physical and behavioural ways, and these can vary enormously amongst individuals. Here are some of the most common. It's a long list!!

Common physical symptoms include:

Sleep disturbance	Chest pains
More vulnerable to colds and infections	Excessive sweating
Skin rashes	Headaches
Blurred Vision	Digestive problems
Fatigue	Nausea
Muscle tension	Dizziness
Heart palpitations	Increased blood pressure

Common emotional symptoms include:

Nervousness	Lack of concentration
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Anxiety
Mood changes
Aggressive or tearful outbursts
Crying

Irritability
Feelings of hopelessness
Loss of energy
Loss of enthusiasm

Common behavioural symptoms include:

Overeating or loss of appetite
Eating poor quality food
Excessive use of any drug
Loss of libido

Excessive spending
Teeth grinding
Loss of work performance

Diseases which may be related to stress include

Heart disease
Stroke
Rheumatoid Arthritis

Cancer
Asthma

Stressful jobs have lots of pressure and little control

Practical Ways to reduce stress in the workplace.

Firstly work out what bits are stressful:

HSE Management Standards

The target is for all organisations to match the performance of the top 20% of employers that are successfully minimising work-related stress. So employers need to identify stress factors in their organisation.

It may be useful to consider your own role. Take 5 minutes to perform a 'stress audit' on your job. What are the significant factors that make your job and work-life stressful?

Here are some ideas to consider:

Emotionally or physically demanding, pace too fast, long hours, time pressures, lack of resources, personality conflicts, conflicting demands from different people, lack of clarity about role, too much or too little responsibility, bullying, lack of support, lack of rewards for success, poor communications in company, lack of job security, inflexibility, commuting, competing demands of work and family, restructuring, indispensability,

boredom, cramped work conditions, isolation, no space to take breaks, no breaks, noise, poor light, no lieu time, inadequate holidays, no training, blame culture, shift work.....

These can be placed into categories:

6 Risk factors that can cause work-related stress in employees

(These can be used as a risk assessment tool)

- the **demands** of the job
- Your **control** over your work
- the **support** you receive from managers and colleagues
- Your **relationships** at work
- your **role** in the organisation
- **change** and how it is managed

Risk assessment for stress

- Using the risk factors listed above measure the stress or potential stress in each area. Identify 'hot spots'.
- These can be measured by looking at sickness records (do workers in some departments have much more time off than others?), conducting staff surveys or conducting stress related surveys or focus groups.
- Decide on improvement targets and action plans, in consultation with staff or their representatives.
- Make sure the action plan is implemented.
- Re-measure the stress levels at regular intervals and compare the results.
- Keep working on the issues - improvements will be reflected in lower staff absence, higher moral, higher productivity. It may take time to see improvements but they will be there.

~Getting promoted at work is not as great as people think. Our research finds that the mental health of managers typically deteriorates after a job promotion and in a way that goes beyond merely a short-term change. People given senior positions need to be given the proper support and training to handle the extra responsibility.~ Warwick University

www.healthymindsinyourworkplace.com

www.HSE.co.uk - guidance and framework

Dealing with Negative Attitudes in the workplace

~If your company is negative all the positive people will leave~

10 warning signs of negativity in the organisation:

1. Emphasis on perfection rather than excellence
2. Denial of reality
3. Inability to cope with growth or downsizing
4. Excessive need to control
5. Focus on finger pointing rather than problem solving
6. Either/or approach to problem solving
7. Unwillingness to change
8. Reliance on grapevine communication
9. Lack of consistent management styles
10. Preference for "confidential" communication

Negative thinking = negative outcomes

You set yourself up to fail even if you have the skills, ability and resources to succeed. **Your thoughts become a self-fulfilling prophecy, positive or negative.**

Event = A Belief = B Consequence = C **A+B=C**

You can't change the event, but you can change beliefs and that will change the consequences.

We are all ***different personalities*** which we bring to the workplace.

Workplaces need a variety of types of people who can compliment each other. It is understanding and appreciating the differences that is the key to successful working teams. Everyone must be prepared to adapt a little to understand others, negotiate and influence them, work on our strengths and accept our shortcomings.

Every team needs a mixture of personality types to function best

Coping with Change

Changes in a business situation can create negativity if it is not sensitively handled. It can make workers feel threatened with redundancy, stress by change not explained, changes in pace, and an unknown future.

Stages of learning: We are all reluctant and find it hard to change old habits and that is often a cause of conflict within organisations. When changes are needed:

- define the change process
- be honest
- confide in peers
- be neutral, don't become part of the problem
- be willing to compromise

Establishing a positive work culture

Communicate

Encourage worker participation

Set realistic job expectations

Treat everyone the same

Being negative at work may be due to problems at home, offer counselling

Provide positive feedback and give credit when due

Avoid blaming

Show respect and remember your manners.

~Good leadership is the common touch~

The Qualities of a positive person

- quick attitude turnaround
- instils enthusiasm in others
- is upbeat and focused
- is open to change
- is able to see possibilities

For more information go to:

www.skillspath.co.uk

Alcohol and Work

There have been significant increases in the UK's consumption of alcohol and the economic and social costs associated with it. 40,000 deaths a year and alcohol related problems cost the NHS £2.7bn.

~An estimate of 17 million working days are lost due to alcohol~

Employers are recognising this is an increasing problem in the work place, manifesting as increase absenteeism and workplace accidents, as well as reduced productivity. 31% of employers have dismissed employees with drink problems but only 33% of employers offer training for their managers to deal with alcohol-related issues. Supporting employees with drug and alcohol problems has a high success rate but it must be open enough for workers to feel able to come forward and admit they need help.

Alcohol Policies

Organisations should have a policy to deal with alcohol mis-use. Alcohol Concern (1999) stipulates that any type of policy must:

- Be health based
- Allow staff to come forward
- Have the support of local trade unions
- Explain that employers have a legitimate interest in the welfare of their employees
- Allow for confidentiality to be maintained at all times
- Include processes for managers to follow
- Be openly and regularly publicised
- Allow for referrals to specialist services
- Be regularly reviewed
- Allow for outcomes to be monitored and properly evaluated.
- Does alcohol have to be available at all client/staff meetings/events?

www.al-anonuk.org.uk

www.alcoholics-anonymous.org.uk

Managing Sickness Absence and Job Retention

Absence Rates

Absence rates now stands at 175 million days a year costing the economy £12bn annually.

If someone has been off work for 6 months there is an 50% chance they will never work again. If off for more than 1 year there is only 25% they will ever work again.

Early, regular and sensitive contact with employees during sickness absence can be a key factor enabling an early return. Yet as many as 40% have no sickness management policy at all.

There are 2 issues.

1. If you do not attempt to reduce short term absenteeism you are wasting the companies profits/funding, both in lost worker time and because high absenteeism rates equate to poor company health which will result in poor productivity.
2. If you do not support workers' long term sickness absence you lose workers who never come back. If a company loses a member of staff unnecessarily through ill health, it costs them lost productivity and recruitment and training costs plus more lost productivity to replace them.

The benefits

Whether you are a small or large organisation, high levels of sickness absence can negatively affect your reputation as an employer of choice in your community and certainly affect your profit/loss margin. By effectively managing sickness absence and return to work you can:

- improve the performance of your business
- keep valued employees
- help keep your workplace safe and healthy

Although it is not a legal requirement to have an absence policy it is a good idea as it set out roles, expectations and procedures so that you, your employees and their representatives have a common understanding about what will happen when someone is on sick leave. Line managers have to be properly trained to follow the procedure so there is a fair and consistent approach.

~The earlier you intervene to manage sickness absence the better the chance of a return to work for your employee~

Consideration must be made for the reason for the sickness absence. The ideas below are based on workers being off with musculoskeletal issues. Clearly if the sickness is mental ill-health then a different set of procedures and considerations must used (See mental health chapter). But the principles are the same; managers should show consideration for the employee and support them in returning.

Suggested timeline in absence management

The key is communication

Up to 1 week	Employee notifies company of sick absence Welcome them back, chat about absence. If there is regular short term sick leave, discuss underlying reasons.
2 - 4 weeks	Keep in regular touch with employee If they return within 2 weeks do as above. 3+ weeks, try to explore what is preventing them from returning (if this is not obvious) and how to overcome it. Start discussing a return to work plan . This should be in place by 4 weeks of absence. Use professional advise/services.

~Being mentally and physically inactive at home is often detrimental to recovery. By staying off work too long, people can become isolated and depressed~

Return to work plan includes

- Phased return eg. slowly building up the hours to what they were. This could be working shorter or fewer days.
- If they cannot return to their original job, consider other possible alternatives within your organisation and then put a return to work plan in operation. Alternatives may include from shop floor to office work/driving/customer care if the employee has reduced physical abilities. Make sure suitable training is in place.

If the employee has a disability then 'reasonable adjustments' should be considered when planning their return. (see Disability Discrimination Act).

- Re-negotiate the plan with the employee and departments as necessary.
- Understand the problem in a holistic sense
- Communicate
- Involve whoever is needed to support the individual (physiotherapist, counsellor, osteopath.)

(Taken from HSE short guide)

Presenteeism - Going to work when ill/injured

Health Insurer research found that "40% of workers felt that they were less likely to take time off work during an economic slowdown. Nearly 75% of workers normally struggled into work, despite feeling so ill they could legitimately stay at home. As well as not wanting to let colleagues down, a key reason for this was fear, with 15% worried their sick leave records could be used against them if their employer started making redundancies."

But this sort of presenteeism creates its own array of problems, with workers more likely to pass on germs around the office and struggle to be fully productive, meaning that someone else may later have to pick up the pieces. It may also take them longer to recover than if they had stayed at home." *Occupational Health Dec 2008*

~Managers should be clear that staff should stay away if ill~

For more information on this topic go to

www.nice.org.uk/PH19

Disability Discrimination Act

The DDA defines a disabled person as someone who has a physical or mental impairment that has a substantial and long-term adverse affect on his or her ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities.

- Substantial means neither minor nor trivial
- long term means that the effect of the impairment has lasted or is likely to last at least 12 months
- normal day-to-day activities include everyday things like eating, washing, walking and going shopping
- normal day-to-day activity must affect one of the 'capacities' listed in the act which include mobility, manual dexterity, speech, hearing, seeing and memory.

See their web site for more details

www.direct.gov.uk/en/disabled

Disabled workers share the same general employment rights as other worker, but there are also some provisions for them under the Disability Discrimination Act (DDA). One important aspect of this is the right to reasonable adjustments in the workplace.

Under the DDA it is unlawful for employers to discriminate against disabled people for a reason related to their disability, in all aspects of employment, unless it can be justified. The Act covers things like:

application forms, interview arrangements, proficiency tests, job offers, terms of employment, promotion, training opportunities, work-related benefits, dismissal or redundancy.

Reasonable adjustments to the workplace

Under Job Retention there is a list of practical things a company can do to help someone return to work. Some other changes could be

- making adjustments to the building where they work
- providing modified equipment

The law expects what is reasonably practicable for an organisation, and this will depend on the size. A large company will be expected to make more

changes than a small one. The results for the disabled worker are more to do with the willingness to accommodate a change in circumstances rather than the cost.

Access To Work is a Government initiative under the Dept. of Work & Pensions (DWP) that can help employees if their health or disability affects the way they do their job. It gives you and your employee advice and support with extra costs which may arise because of their needs. They can be contacted via the local Job Centre Disability Employment Advisor or the regional contact centre

For more information:

www.direct.gov.uk

telephone Glasgow support Unit 0141 950 5327 for Yorkshire and Humber region

Diversity

Preventing discrimination is one thing, and is illegal, but promoting diversity is a way of embracing differences in your company, which can have major positive effects on sales/services. For example, having more Asian workers enables you to use their knowledge to sell to an Asian market instead of a mainly white one.

The report 'The Business case for diversity: good practice in the workplace' which interviewed 800 businesses, says that 42% of those questioned said diversity resolved labour shortages and retained high quality staff, 38% said it enhanced a company's reputation and standing in the local community and 26% saw an improvement in their capacity to create and innovate.

The Equality Act becomes law in 2010. It is a broader law than exists at present and will make it illegal to discriminate on the following grounds:

Age	Gender
Religion	Ethnicity
Pregnancy	Sexuality

For more information google 'diversity in business'.

Broader ways to enhance Well-Being at work

1. Plenty of healthy food options in the canteen, which are the same price as other food. Have fruit and natural fruit juice plus non-caffeine drinks available.
2. Fresh air in the workplace and as much natural light as possible
3. Workers should have a different place to go for breaks, away from their work space.
4. Fresh drinking water available to all.
5. Organise team activities/sports for lunchtime or weekends.
6. Organise creative competitions for staff i.e. photography
7. Organise a regular works outing or social
8. Have a 'healthy ideas' competition & raise money for charity by implementing one.
9. Arrange volunteering during work time with a local charity
10. Awareness training sessions on health issues i.e. alcohol, smoking
11. Promote a work/life balance
12. Provide non-alcoholic drinks at social events for clients or staff/use venues that do not sell alcohol
13. Encourage staff not to drive to work
14. Provide gym membership as part of your staff contract
15. Promote well-being through information on notice boards
16. Where possible provide flexible working hours
17. Provide a physiotherapist (always cost effective)
18. Send someone on 'National Certificate in the Management of Health & Well-being at Work' course run by www.nebosh.org.uk

I hope you have found this booklet helpful and are able to make use of it in practical ways. You can order more free copies or email any comments you may have to: sara.selmes@sohas.co.uk

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