

MENTAL HEALTH, WELLBEING AND RETURN ON INVESTMENT

A project was carried out in January 2011 to investigate the economic case for mental health promotion and prevention. The researchers carried out a detailed analysis of the costs and benefits of fifteen different interventions. Detailed estimates were made of costs and payoffs using economic modelling and related techniques. Two of the interventions most relevant to the workplace are described below.

PROMOTING WELLBEING IN THE WORKPLACE

Wellbeing initiatives are not just of value to the employees within an organisation, they can improve an organisations' productivity, image and workplace safety. Wellbeing initiatives can also reduce the risk of employees experiencing common mental health problems.

There are many different aspects to promoting wellbeing in the workplace e.g. stress audits, gym facilities, healthy eating campaigns etc. The researchers in this project, however focused on multi-component health promotion that included: personalised health and wellbeing information, wellness literature/advice, a health screening questionnaire and workshops focused on wellness issues. The cost of such a programme was estimated as being £80 per employee per year. Once again savings were made through significantly reduced stress levels, reduced absenteeism, and reduced presenteeism (compared with a control group).

WORKPLACE SCREENING FOR DEPRESSION AND ANXIETY DISORDERS

Employers experience potentially high economic costs as a result of lost productivity due to depression and anxiety in the workplace. Labour Force Survey data suggests that 11.4 million working days were lost in Britain in 2008/9 due to work related stress, depression or anxiety. This equates to 27.3 days lost per employee.

This project investigated the cost effectiveness of a workplace based intervention for depression and anxiety which consisted of a screening questionnaire (to be completed by the employees) followed by six sessions of 'Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT)' for those who appear to be at risk of developing depression and/or anxiety.

The results showed that the intervention saved costs in the form of a reduction in the level of absenteeism and improved productivity as a result of reducing presenteeism. These savings are likely to be higher in industries where staff turnover is low and skill requirements are higher.

SHORT AND MEDIUM TERM RETURN ON INVESTMENT

Intervention	Short Term	Medium Term
Early diagnosis and treatment of depression in the workplace	£1.96 for every pound spent	£3.07 for every pound spent
Workplace Health Promotion	£9.69 for every pound spent	Data not yet available

*Unfortunately, medium term data is currently unavailable for 'Workplace Health and Promotion' and long term data is currently unavailable for 'Early Diagnosis and Treatment of Depression in the Workplace'.

**The full article can be found in the report published by the Department of Health entitled: Mental Health Promotion and Prevention: The Economic Case. Knapp. M, McDaid. D & Parsonage. M (editors). Jan 2011