

IES 40th Anniversary seminar

Mental health issues at work:
Recent interventions and implications for
employers and policy makers

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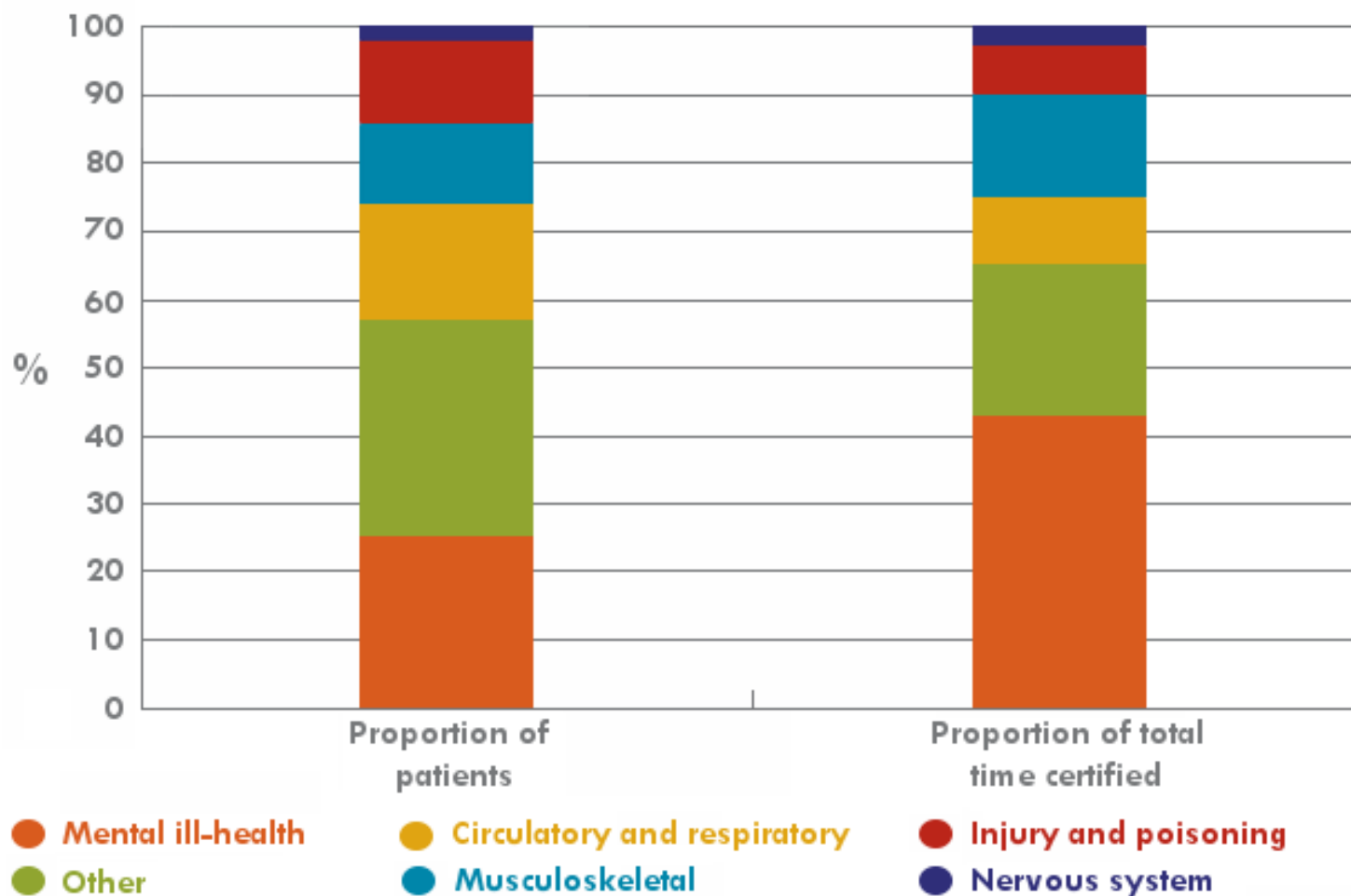
Introduction

- What is the problem?
- Why is this an issue?
- What can be done about it?
 - prevention
 - retention and rehabilitation
- Recent policy developments
- Implications

Mental well-being and work (1)

- Prevalence of MH conditions
- Cost to business
 - sickness absence
 - reduced productivity
 - staff turnover
- Cost to society of worklessness

Mental well-being and work (2)

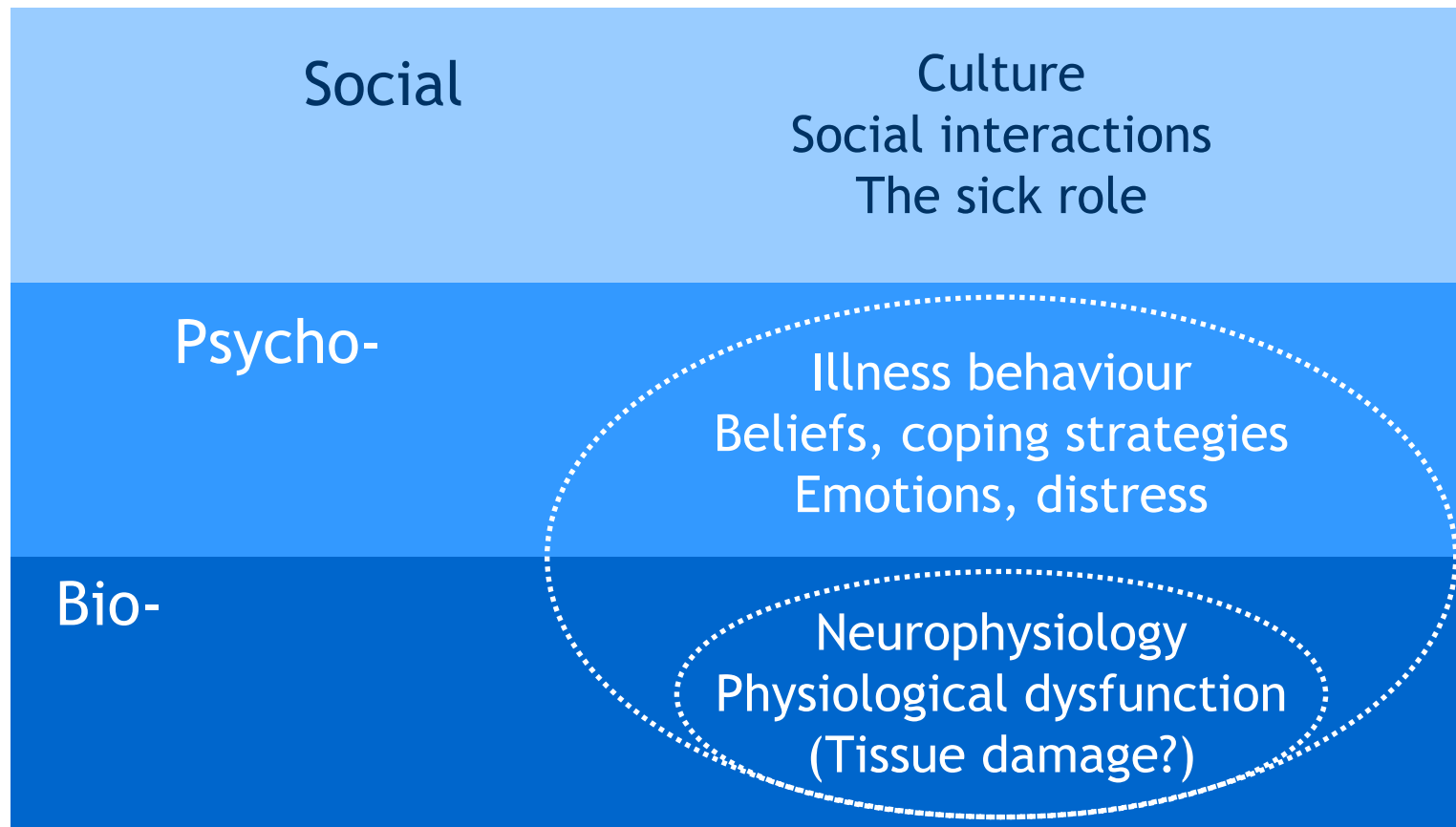


Source: Gabbay and Shiels

Interventions (1)

- Increasing awareness/knowledge
- Promoting mental well-being in general working population
- Enabling return to work of people with MH conditions
- Meeting in-work requirements of people with MH conditions
- Increasing access to medical treatment

Interventions (2)



Interventions (3)

IES has been involved in:

- Review of HSE Management Standards implementation programmes
- DWP Mental Health and Employment
- Evaluation of HSE Workplace Health Connect
- “What Works” review for DWP

HSE Management Standards (1)

- Six stressor areas
- Process of risk assessment to manage the causes of stress
- Organisation-wide approach
- Cyclical “5-Steps” process
- HSE in process of reviewing SIP1 and SIP2 interventions

HSE Management Standards (2)

Introduction

- Homepage
- About the Management Standards

Before you start

- Securing management commitment
- Securing commitment from employees and their representatives
- Stress policies

Step 1: Identify the hazards

- The Management Standards

Step 2: Decide who might be harmed and how

- Identifying problem areas using existing data HSE tools and other surveys

Step 3: Evaluate the risk and take action

- Linking problems to solutions
- Running focus groups
- Ideas for solutions

- Communicating results
- Providing feedback to staff
- Dealing with individual concerns

Step 4: Record your findings

- Developing an action plan

Step 5: Monitor and review

- Monitoring your action plan
- Evaluating effectiveness

Downloads

- Resources to help you do this

Links

- Sources of further information and advice

HSE Management Standards (3)

- IES case studies with organisations
- Support for six stressor areas
- Not all completed a full cycle of the process
- Management buy-in essential
- Other initiatives and priorities

DWP Mental Health and Employment (1)

- Qualitative study involving:
 - randomly-sampled employers (S/M/L)
 - ‘engaged’ employers
 - employees with MH conditions
- Interviews with OH/HR/Line managers:
 - awareness/attitude (recruitment)
 - adjustments
 - access to OH

DWP Mental Health and Employment (2): Awareness

- Large employers usually well-informed
 - experience of a range of conditions
 - good links to Occupational Health
- Smaller employers had more limited knowledge
 - limited access to advice and expertise
 - severe/enduring conditions mentioned more often

DWP Mental Health and Employment (3): Adjustments

- Altered working hours
 - Phased returns
 - Accommodating the side-effects of medication
- Altered pace of working
 - Temporary adjustment of performance targets
 - Slower pace of working to allow for poor concentration
- Changing elements of the job
 - Social/public facing elements
 - Travelling
- Providing informal support
 - Freedom to approach OH at any time
 - Compassionate response from LM to agitation/anxiety

DWP Mental Health and Employment (4): Adjustments

- Wide range of adjustments
- Large employers had greater resources and flexibility
- Informal support arrangements potentially very effective
- Less awareness of options and support sources in small and medium employers
- Difficult to balance needs of employee with needs of other staff

DWP Mental Health and Employment (5): Retention

- Challenges around disclosure
 - employers did not expect to learn of a mental health condition at recruitment
 - usually found out when employee became ill
- Decision to leave taken by
 - employees
 - mutual decisions
- Dismissal a last resort

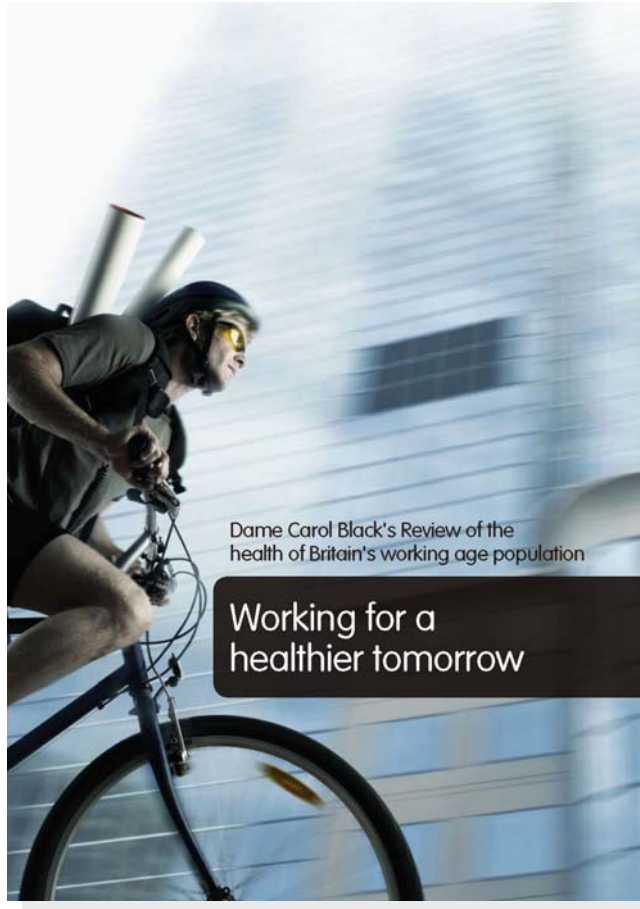
DWP Mental Health and Employment (6): Recommendations

- Awareness raising to increase understanding among smaller employers
- Replicate constructive policies and practice in SMEs
- Training for line managers to
 - identify possible MH conditions
 - increase confidence to respond appropriately
 - show concern/empathy
- Proactive absence management
 - adjustments and flexibility at work
 - extend OH access to SMEs
 - GPs could work more co-operatively with employers to facilitate appropriate returns to work

Evaluating effectiveness of interventions (1)

- Cannot prevent all incidence of stress
- Unclear relationship between stress, MH and sickness absence ... clarify outcome sought
- Difficulty of isolating effects of different initiatives
- Difficulty of applying scientific rigour in work environment
- Barriers explain lack of evidence about “What works”

Evaluating effectiveness of interventions (2)



Government response

- “Working for a Healthier Tomorrow”
- Range of proposals
- Focus on mental health
- Addressing the “sick note culture”

“Working for a Healthier Tomorrow”

- “Wholesale rethink of OH provision and role
 - Fit note
 - Fit for Work service
 - government OH consultancy service
 - enhanced role of Occupational Medicine
- Challenges beliefs about health and work
- Shifts emphasis to what workers can do
- Increased role for GP
- Better communication with employers

Fit note & MH

- Improved management of RTW for mental health
 - Reduction of multiple sick notes
 - Improvement on “stress” as diagnosis
- Less appropriate for mental health?
- Lack of specialist knowledge/resourcing among GPs?
- GP conflict of interest?
- RTW hampered by lack of access to MH specialists in NHS

Summary: Implications for employers

- Need for training/awareness, focus on line manager
- Consider HSE Management Standards approach
- Procedures & policies to enable RTW
- Consider case for OH provision
- Consider role of HR in interventions

Summary: Implications for policymakers

- Consider key outcomes in future initiatives and how to “sell” interventions to employers
- Smaller employers may not be able to adopt a holistic approach to stress/MH, what should they prioritise?
- Recognise the complexity of MH, eg RTW with same employer may not always be best option

Outlook

- HSE Management Standards – IES report
- DWP Review of sickness certification procedures
- Government response to Carol Black's review
- Other initiatives
 - National Strategy for Mental Health and Work
 - Increasing Access to Psychological Therapies
- Other influences
 - Wider society
 - Economic climate

... thank you



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