Are line managers damaging your employees' health?

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Danger – Boss at Work!

- Heroes or Villains?

- How much influence do bosses have?

- Bosses and 'Good Work'

- Where do bosses sit in H&WB Strategy & Practice?

- NICE Guidance

- Humanity and Empathy

Heroes or Villains?

Role of the 'boss' in workplace health (1)

'It took me a while to tell him I had MS. After they sacked me the manager told the tribunal that they'd 'helped' me by giving me a desk by a window'

'My line manager is rubbish, so I just go around him now. I don't bother with him at all. I just go straight to the HR person…It's just him personally. He's just crap, he's a rubbish manager and he's a control freak as well. I prefer to just go to HR now, this is one of my strategies to reduce my stress, so I just go straight to HR, because ultimately they are the ones who will make the recommendations.'

Role of the 'boss' in workplace health (2)

'Part of it I think is because I know that I've worked so hard and my employer - and one particular line manager - knows how hard that I have worked. So from that respect I know that she would always be very tolerant and that I could more or less ask her for anything [in terms of adjustments].'

How much influence do line managers have?

Line managers: the 'squeezed middle'?
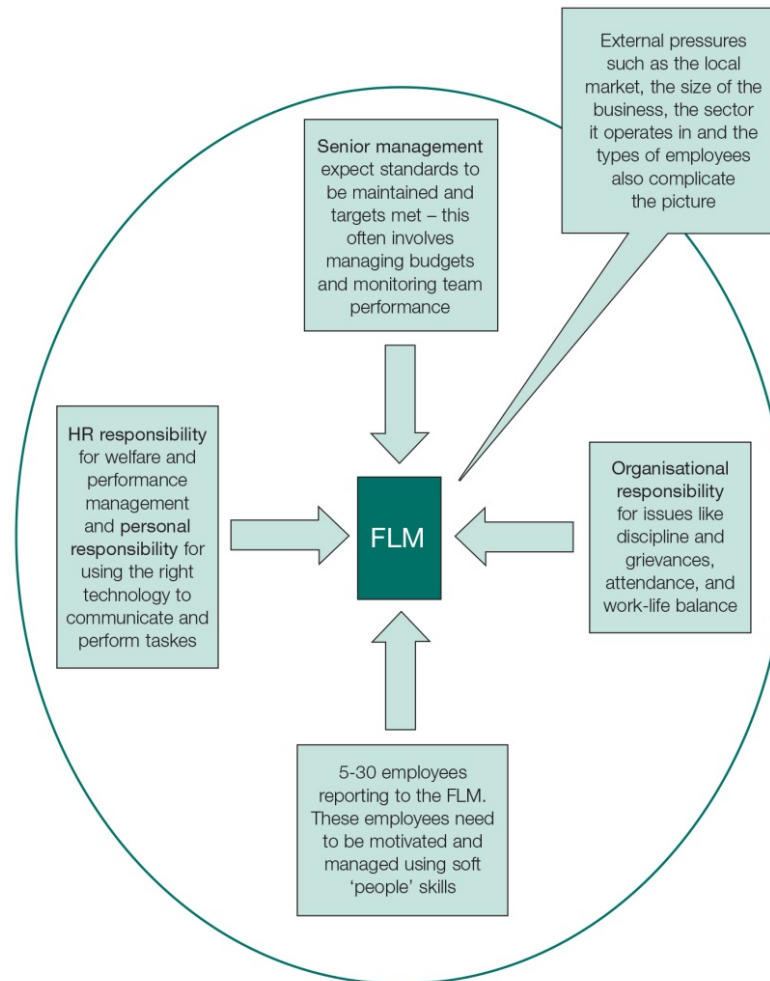
Source: Acas (2014), *Front line managers: booklet*, Acas

Realistic expectations?

- *'People join an organisation but leave a manager'*

- Easy to underestimate how tough the role can be to perform well and how pivotal the job can be to organisational success.

- Investing time and energy in appointing, supporting and developing them is essential.

- How often do we consider the health of line managers themselves?

Some capability and execution gaps?

- Being 'advocates' rather than 'apologists' for organisational policy.

- Giving bad news, difficult feedback and saying 'No'.

- Managing the performance, rewards, development and careers of direct reports.

- Managing and motivating teams.

- Balancing fairness and the need for direction and decisiveness.

- Communication during change – and with bigger spans of control.

Bosses and 'Good Work'

Good Work and 'Meaning'?

'Work is about a search for daily meaning as well as daily bread, for recognition as well as cash, for astonishment rather than torpor: in short, for a sort of life rather than a Monday through Friday sort of dying.'

Studs Terkel in Terkel S (1972), *Working*, Balentine, New York

Is Good Work fun work?

Is Good Work fun work?

In 1940 John Gallo was sacked because he was 'caught in the act of smiling', after having committed an earlier breach of 'laughing with the other fellows', and 'slowing down the line maybe half a minute'

Collinson (2002), 'Managing Humour', *Journal of Management Studies,* Vol. 39, No. 3

When we are at work we ought to be at work. When we are at play we ought to be at play. There is no use trying to mix the two.

Henry Ford

Good Work, engagement and performance

'If you want someone to do a good job, give them a good job to do.'

Frederick Herzberg in Dunham R B (1984), *Organizational Behavior: People and Processes in Management*, Irwin

Good Work and QWL (Cherns, 1975)

- Autonomy is preferable to dependence.

- High levels of skill are preferable to low.

- Learning is good.

- A high degree of self-investment in work is good, provided that the work itself and the work situation offer opportunities for growth and self-realisation.

Cherns A (1975), 'Perspectives on the Quality of Life', *Journal of Occupational Psychology,* Vol. 48

What the research says

'Decent' or 'Good' Work?

- Understandable focus on <u>quantity</u> of jobs but, until recently, less emphasis on <u>quality</u>.

- ILO has a 'Decent Work' campaign – global focus on conditions, social protection, employment rights.

- EWCS (Eurofound) – data on experiences of job demands.

- Institute of Health Equity – good work as 'social determinant' of health.
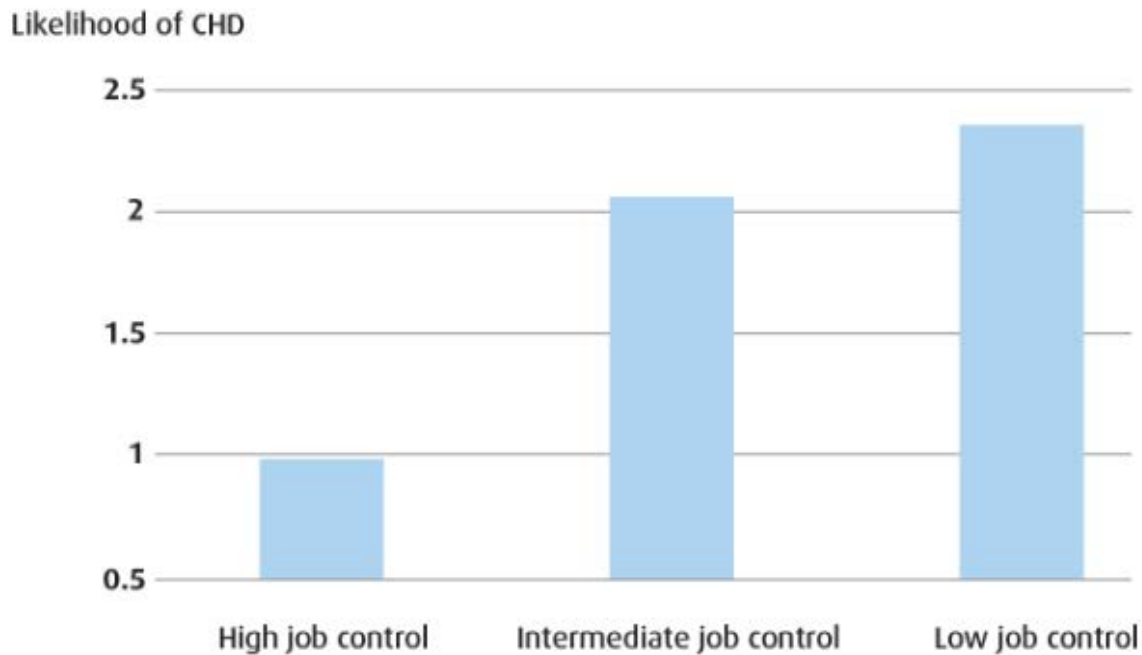
Whitehall II Study

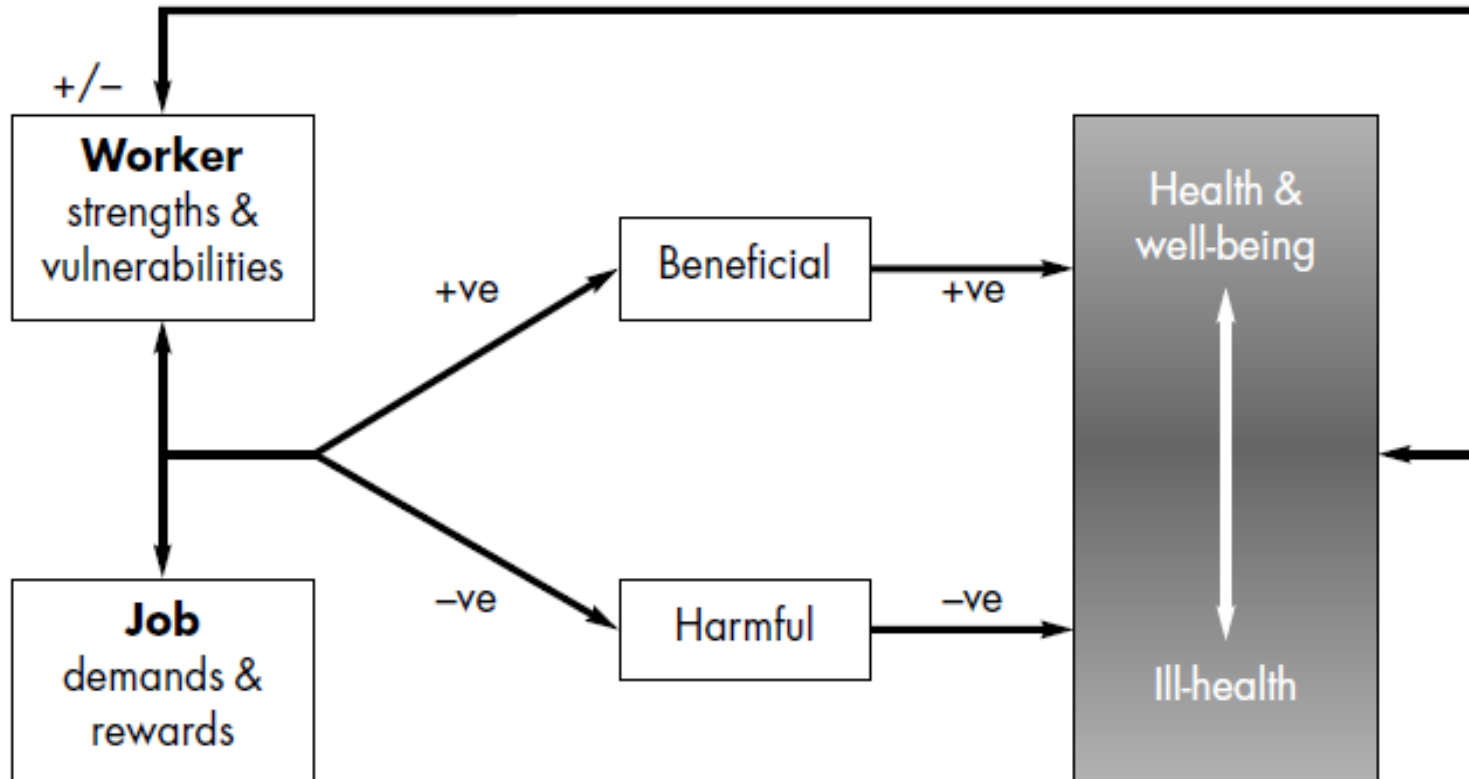Source: Ferrie J E (ed) (2004), *Work, stress and health: the Whitehall II Study*, Cabinet Office

Whitehall II Study

Self-reported job control and coronary heart disease incidence

Likelihood of CHD

Waddell and Burton

Source: Waddell G, Burton A K (2006), *Is work good for your health and well-being?,* Department of Work and Pensions

OECD – Job Quality Index

- Looks at both job demands and the resources individuals have to manage these demands.

- More emphasis on 'psychosocial' risk at work.

- International data on 'job strain'.

- How well do managers understand the influence they have over this?

Job quality in EU and beyond
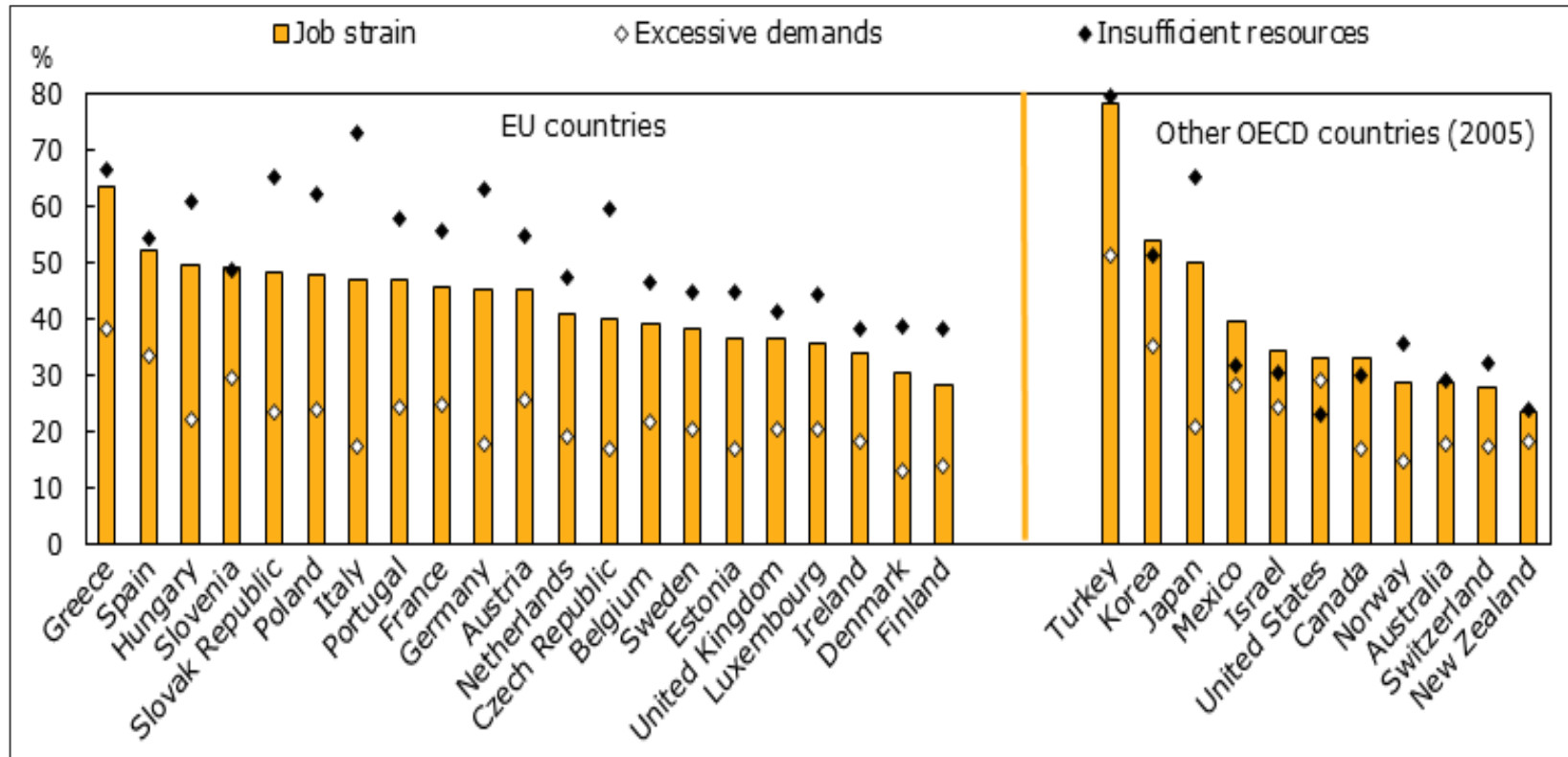
Source: OECD (2016), *How good is your job?*, OECD Publishing

Components of Good Work

Making 'Good Work', work

Good Work Good Practice

- In many ways 'Good Work' principles inform good HR practice, good line management, good communication and good job design.

- Good health, high levels of 'discretionary effort', high performance and good retention rates are all by-products of Good Work.
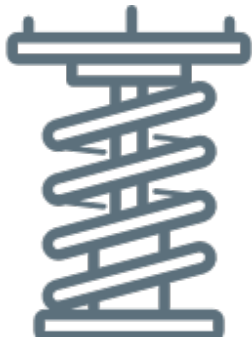
Good Work

- Prevention
- Productivity
- Engagement
- Job design
- Rehabilitation
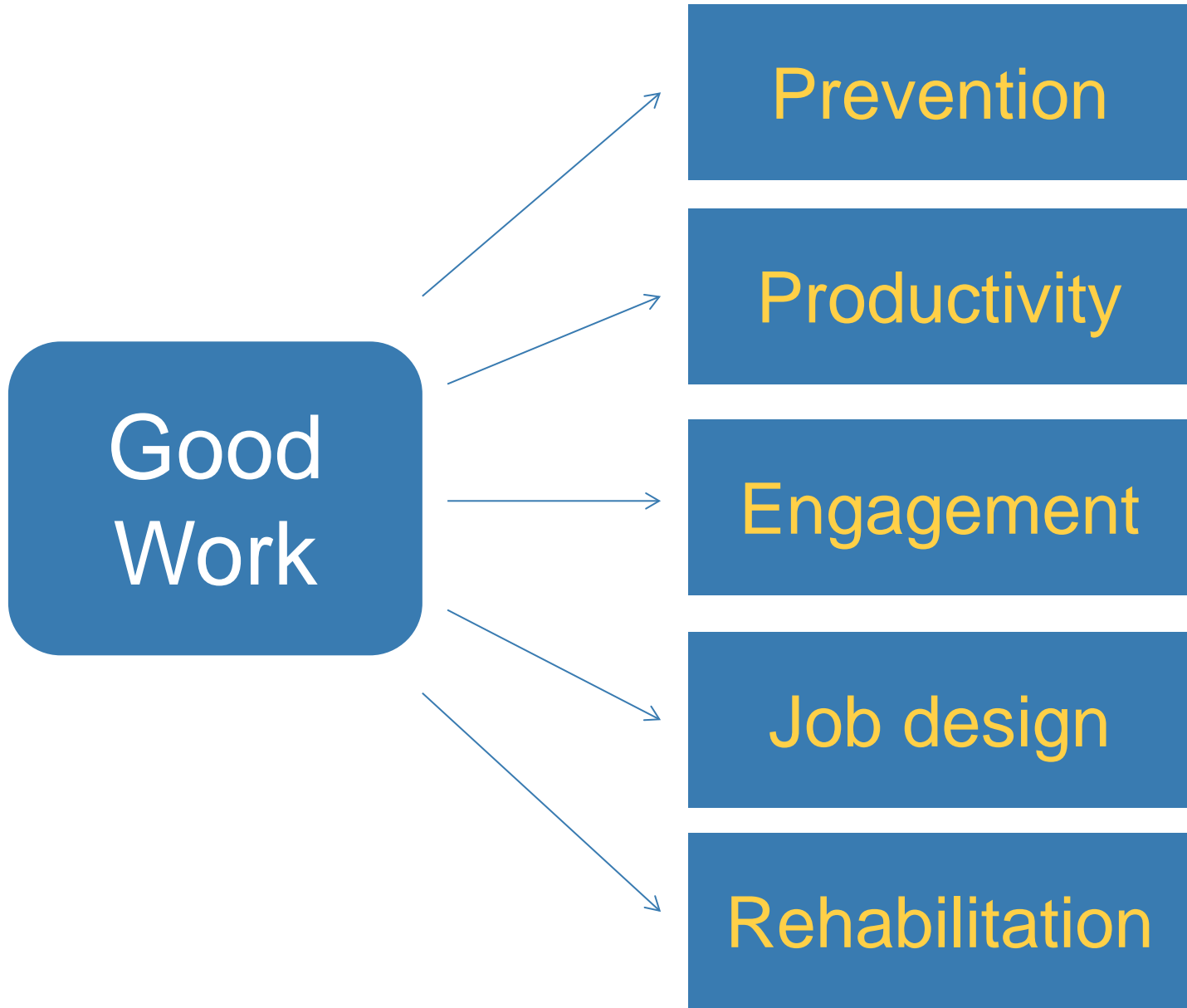
Examples of interventions

Workplace Adjustments

Vocational Rehab

Job design

Early Referral

Line Management

Resilience – two perspectives

'both the capacity to be bent without breaking and the capacity, once bent, to spring back'

Or…

'something which helps inoculate our employees against work pressure, ambiguity, poor management and bullying'

'Detox Your Workplace' – new IES Consortium Research Study

Dangerous or Enabling?

- Line managers are the 'squeezed middle' in many organisations.

- Can make life very difficult if they manage these tensions badly and get no support (or permission) – can also be hugely positive.

- Policy and training will help, but humanity and empathy are crucial too.

- *'Random acts of kindness are allowed.'*

Questions and further information

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