Musculoskeletal health in the workplace

The scale of the problem for employers

1 in 8 of the working population report having a MSK

23% of all working days lost are attributable to MSK

Employment rate for people who report MSK as their main health condition is 59.7%

33% of long-term sickness absence is attributed to MSK in England

£7bn MSK disorders cost the UK an estimated £7 billion a year

The scale of the problem for employees

1 in 5 (20%) of people are worried they won’t be fit enough to continue working in the next year

A third of people (33%) with a long term condition felt their colleagues don’t understand the impact of their condition

39% don’t feel confident discussing their workplace health with their employer

Over 1 in 7 (15%) wouldn’t disclose a long-term health condition such as arthritis or recurrent joint pain to their employer


BUT MSK problems are manageable, and can be prevented

Public Health England
Protecting and improving the nation’s health
Actions for employers for good Musculoskeletal health in the workplace

1. Make a commitment to MSK:
   - Appoint a wellbeing champion
   - Encourage open communication at all levels
   - Engage and consult employees about MSK
   - Co-produce a plan with employees
   - Understand the legal situation
   - Update policies, make plans to improve, and take action
   - Share best practice with other Employers

2. Understanding MSK needs:
   - Understand obligations relating to risk assessment and safety committee regulations
   - Understand the impact of MSK health in the workplace
   - Identify physical capacity and extent of current MSK issues
   - Assess employee needs
   - Assess and minimise risks and hazards

3. Prevention:
   - Optimise physical health and mental health, and recognise links between the two
   - Prevent injuries and accidents
   - Reduce stress linked to work using HSE Stress
   - Embed MSK training into health and wellbeing strategy
   - Encourage healthier choices
   - Provide line manager training

4. Early intervention:
   - Know the support your employees need
   - Encourage dialogue at performance reviews
   - Have a joined up approach (physical, psychological, social and occupational factors)
   - Enable and encourage employees to talk
   - Signpost all information

5. Adjustments in the workplace:
   - Pro-actively tackle the stigma
   - Be ready to make reasonable adjustments if work is causing or exacerbating problems
   - Find adaptive ways to complete tasks to allow employees to continue working within abilities
   - Regularly evaluate your approach

6. Rehabilitation and return to work:
   - Stay in touch with employees on sick leave
   - Support employees back to work by reviewing individual needs
   - Support employee self-management
   - Make reasonable adjustments to help employees to work to their potential
   - Use Fit for Work and Access to Work initiatives
   - Continue to support physical and mental health

Download the full toolkit: http://wellbeing.bitc.org.uk/mskt

(Source: Musculoskeletal health in the workplace toolkit)