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Mental Health at Work 2019 Summary Report: Scotland focus

TIME TO TAKE OWNERSHIP

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FOREWORD
BY LOUISE ASTON

MORE WORKPLACES NEED TO BE PART OF THE SOLUTION TO BETTER MENTAL HEALTH, NOT PART OF THE PROBLEM

In the past couple of years, we've seen growing momentum around the tangible need for mental health improvements from the Government and mental health stakeholders, including employers. In 2017 the Scottish Government launched its Mental Health Strategy 2017-2027 — a 10 year vision for creating a parity of esteem between mental and physical health and improving the mental health of the nation, with a focus on prevention and early intervention — including from employers.

This was followed up in 2018 with Every Life Matters, a suicide prevention action plan that makes suicide prevention everyone's business. The Stevenson / Farmer review has stressed the critical importance of helping employees to thrive at work. We cannot allow this momentum to dissipate — the time is now for employers to act.

While strides have been made in some areas of the workplace, the support for mental health is undermined by working conditions being a cause of mental health issues. The number of employees who have experienced poor mental health due to work, or where work was a contributing factor, in the past year has increased significantly. People who come to work don't expect to be physically injured and also should not expect to be psychologically harmed.

A profound cultural shift is paramount, so that work itself doesn't cause poor mental health. Organisational needs are being prioritised above the wellbeing of people. We won't achieve parity between physical and mental health until more employers take ownership over their role and create workplaces that enhance positive mental health.

Whilst mental health awareness has universally risen, the findings in our national survey show too many employers are tinkering at the edges rather than making the fundamental changes needed to improve wellbeing, retention and productivity. Those who aspire to be employers of choice must tackle the barriers outlined in this report.

I call on leadership to identify what they can own and be accountable for.

In response to this growing need, we've launched Business in the Community (BITC)'s Responsible Business Tracker ®, measurement tool designed to enable organisations to measure their performance as a responsible business. The Tracker is aligned with the United Nation's Global Goals that underpin our Responsible Business Map. The Health and Wellbeing questions are linked to the Workwell Model, BITC's framework to support organisations embed wellbeing into organisational culture.

Business is at its best when people are at their best. Let's ensure people can take their whole selves to work and thrive.

Louise Aston
Wellbeing Director, Business in the Community

FOREWORD
BY TONY WOOD

HEALTH AND WELLBEING ARE KEY STRANDS OF RESPONSIBLE BUSINESS. DOING THE RIGHT THING FOR YOUR EMPLOYEES IS ALSO DOING THE RIGHT THING FOR YOUR BUSINESS

This is our fourth year of assessing mental health in the workplace across the UK, and our second focusing on Scotland. We are seeing some encouraging improvements. But there is still a lot of work ahead.

More employers are talking about mental health issues, supported by the rise of mental health first aid training and employee-based support routes, yet our findings show there is a need for employers to do more. There is no health without mental health. A holistic, integrated approach is essential.

There are often strong health and safety measures to tackle occupational problems like physical injury, but few organisations have similar measures in place for mental health. Managers acknowledge that they need to do more but they are often hampered by other organisational priorities and pressures.

It's been revealing to focus in on some new areas this year. There's an increasing need to understand intersectionality better. Worryingly, a third of UK lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and other (LGBT+) employees reported having hid their sexuality at work for fear of discrimination in the last year.

Nearly a third of UK black, Asian, and minority ethnic (BAME) employees felt they have experienced negative outcomes in the last year due to their ethnicity. Those with a disability fare even worse.

Financial wellbeing continues to be a huge problem. There is a fine line in the disparity between what the employee wants and what the employer offers in the area of support. Employers either aren't offering financial advice or support isn't accessible or visible enough in the workplace. Only 4% of Scottish employees say they receive financial support in the workplace, but whether this is reality or perceived reality due to lack of promotion, is interesting for employers to consider.

In partnership with Business in the Community's Wellbeing Leadership Team, we're helping businesses move from good to great in terms of improving their mental health capability. We're trying to get people engaged on the journey, even if they focus on the basics. And we're going on this journey with a host of organisations to cascade good practice by engaging with their stakeholders and supply chain.

In order to take action, you've got to talk action. Good is good, but it's time to aspire to be great.

Tony Wood
Partner and UK Managing Director, Mercer Marsh Benefits

FOREWORD
BY DR WOLFGANG SEIDL

WE MUST BUILD A CULTURE OF HEALTH THAT PUTS THE WHOLE PERSON AT THE CENTRE

Yet again, we have evidence similar to last year that poor mental health has reached epidemic proportions. And even with a significant increase in awareness and more people coming out to talk about their experiences, we are not even close to tackling the problem.

We need to look closer at the causes and symptom triggers.

Financial worries continue to play a big part. We are also seeing the significant impact of being in more-often-marginalised populations, with women, BAME and LGBT+ employees more likely to suffer discrimination, harassment and bullying. We need to give people the support, confidence and platform to speak up.

Another cause is management. Managers are in a sandwiched position, bearing pressure from above and below. We need to engage more managers in a positive way as interventions are not working fully yet. We see that managers are not adequately trained in mental health.

Interventions are needed that aren't vague or incorrectly recorded. A lunchtime session on how to deal with stress isn't going to create measurable impact.

We need a whole-person approach with a clearly defined employee journey showing where their first port of call should be, where to be referred with warning signs and issues with chronic conditions. This will help de-stigmatise mental health issues and build more trust with employees from all backgrounds.

Companies are pushing managers towards tactical, not strategic solutions. Commissioning mental health training that helps managers recognise poor mental health symptoms is not useful on its own. Instead, managers should be able to relate to troubled colleagues with empathy. Managers should internalise good behaviours, not just list off a load of symptoms, which aren't likely to be useful and are better understood by health professionals.

We urgently need to build inclusive cultures – a culture of health. This culture is built on the basis of psychological safety. Psychological safety isn't about being nice but about giving candid feedback, openly admitting mistakes, and learning from each other. This enables people to be comfortable within themselves in the work environment.

Google conducted a psychological safety experiment, which found that teams with high levels of psychological safety outperformed targets by 17%, whilst those with low levels missed targets by an average of 19%.

A culture of health takes a whole person approach, which breaks down the stigma to entry so that people are comfortable coming forward with mental health issues and not just physical ones.

Work is beneficial to health but only if it's good work. Employers should aim to build a culture based on good work for the whole human being.

Dr Wolfgang Seidl
Partner and Workplace Health Consulting Leader, Mercer Marsh Benefits

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

WE ARE MOVING FORWARD BUT WE MUST DEEPEN OUR COMMITMENT

As we move into the fourth year of conducting our UK mental health at work survey, in collaboration with business and nine national partners, it's great to see progress being made with increased awareness and positive action. And it's extremely useful to shine a light on Scotland's mental health at work.

However, progress is not happening with the scale and speed needed. Unacceptably, some employers are still contributing to the psychological harm experienced by their staff through poor business practices and cultures.

Employers need to stop harming the mental health of their employees through poor business practices and culture.

This report highlights the urgent need for employers to take ownership of the impact their working practices have on the mental health of their employees.

In our latest findings, 2 in 5 (39%) employees living in Scotland have experienced poor mental health due to work, or where work was a contributing factor, in the past year. This figure stood at 36% in 2018; this increase shows movement in the wrong direction.

The three main causes of work-related poor mental health in Scotland are too much pressure, workload impacting on their ability to take leave (leavism) and organisational change that was handled poorly. More can

and should be done by employers to relieve that pressure. Employee mental health is also affected by negative work relationships, and people not feeling able to trust their managers.

Employers must acknowledge and support employees experiencing poor mental health, whatever the cause.

Our findings show that 35% of the Scottish workforce have been formally diagnosed with a mental health condition at some point in their lifetime – yet parity of esteem between physical and mental health has yet to be realised. Employers must take this ambition seriously if positive change in the workplace is to be achieved.

Responsible business needs to be the mission of all employers. Not enough employers are taking full ownership over measures within their organisation to support their staff.

Employers must consider further ways of ensuring people feel comfortable talking to someone at work by creating a safe and open environment.

Where employees are experiencing poor mental health symptoms not related to work, feeling lonely and isolated is the most significant factor (35%). This is particularly true for younger employees (43% of 18-39 year olds, compared to 30% of 40+ year olds). Marital or relationship

35%

of the Scottish workforce have been formally diagnosed with a mental health condition at some point in their lifetime

39%

2 in 5 employees living in Scotland report experiencing poor mental health symptoms related to work in the last year, 24% in the last month. These figures are level with those across the UK workforce

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

problems, family bereavement or long-term illness of family members and financial problems such as debt were also notable causes.

The whole spectrum of mental health has to be acknowledged by employers, including the most severe of experiences. For 14% of those surveyed who had experienced poor mental health symptoms that were not caused by work, one of the root causes was their partner, spouse or family member being abusive. The survey suggests that for around 20% of this group, the abuse sometimes occurred whilst they were at work or travelling to and from the workplace.

Employers need to rapidly provide appropriate support for those affected by poor mental health caused by factors both in and outside the workplace.

As in previous years, there remains a worrying disconnect between what senior leaders believe about the support they provide and the reality of employees' experience. Across the UK, those at CEO and Board level are more likely than those with no managerial responsibility to think their organisation supports its staff – 51% against 38%. Worryingly, the proportion of employees who believe their organisation does well in supporting those with poor mental health fell to 41% from 45% in 2018.

Employers should create workplaces that enhance positive mental health.

Good employee mental health is fundamental to building a successful, sustainable organisation. We know that good work positively enhances wellbeing and there needs to be much greater emphasis on this. Despite this, two out of three (64%) managers in Scotland have had to put the interests of their organisation above staff wellbeing either sometimes, regularly or every day.

Many companies are fostering good mental health at work through innovative policies and approaches, and are reaping the benefits, through improved staff recruitment and retention. However, this is not being seen Scotland-wide.

Only 11% of Scottish managers have attended specific training that focused on mental health. By comparison, a third of UK CEOs or Board personnel have received some form of training about mental health. With mental health issues estimated to cost UK employers around £34.9 billion each year (according to the Centre for Mental Health), providing effective support isn't just the right thing to do – it makes complete business sense.

One size doesn't fit all. There are different risks and concerns for different groups.

Our understanding of the impact of intersectionality continues to grow. Across the UK, LGBT+ employees are especially likely to have experienced a mental health problem where work was a cause or factor (79% of LGBT+ people, compared to 62% who don't identify as LGBT+). A third of LGBT+ employees in the UK workforce reported having hid their identity at work for fear of discrimination in the last year.

51%

of those who experience mental health issues related to work in Scotland say this is due to pressure such as too many priorities or targets

64%

of Scottish managers have had to put the interests of their organisation above staff wellbeing either sometimes, regularly or every day

As many as 30% of UK BAME employees felt they have experienced negative workplace behaviour or outcomes in the last year due to their ethnicity.

Finances are another area to consider, although financial security varies by gender. Twenty percent of employees say that they struggle to make ends meet financially, a number highest among women (22%), compared to 17% of men. More than a third (40%) say that they spend more money when they are feeling down. This again affects women the most, with 47% of women agreeing that they do this compared to just 31% of men.

All employers in Scotland need to commit to improving the wellbeing of their people.

Whilst progressive employers are making a positive impact, the scale of the challenge means we really need to step up our response. It is simply not acceptable for employers to be the cause of mental health issues among staff – they must take ownership and be part of the solution.

We urge every employer to follow our recommendations to help put good work into practice. It's time for employers to be far more ambitious and aspirational. Many organisations can make a faster change than they think.

The time for action is now.

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the inclusion people

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SUMMARY OVERVIEW

EMPLOYERS NEED TO ACKNOWLEDGE THEIR DIRECT IMPACT ON EMPLOYEES

2 in 5

employees (39%) have experienced poor mental health where work was a contributing factor in the last year

2018
39%

64%

of managers in the Scottish workforce faced situations where they put the interests of their organisation above the wellbeing of colleagues

2018
62%

27%

cited bullying and harassment from their manager as a cause of work-related poor mental health

EMPLOYERS IN SCOTLAND SHOULD CREATE GOOD WORK THAT ENHANCES MENTAL HEALTH

75%

of managers in Scotland say there are barriers to them providing mental health support

2018
75%

54%

of managers in Scotland say that their ability to effectively manage staff wellbeing is part of their formal performance assessment

37%

of those who disclosed poor mental health symptoms felt ignored

22%

of managers say how well they do in managing staff wellbeing is not part of how they themselves are assessed

WORKING CONDITIONS IN SCOTLAND MUST BE EVALUATED

51%

of those with an experience of poor mental health due to work cited that it was due to work pressure

41%

mentioned workload as causing poor mental health symptoms

37%

say poorly handled organisational change was a factor in their mental health symptoms

EMPLOYERS MUST ACKNOWLEDGE AND SUPPORT EMPLOYEES EXPERIENCING POOR MENTAL HEALTH, WHATEVER THE CAUSE

52% of employees in Scotland have cited poor mental health due to causes outside of work:

43%
of those aged 18-39 experience loneliness

30%
experience marital or relationship problems

27%
cite financial difficulties (such as debt)

POSITIVE IMPROVEMENTS ARE BEING MADE BUT THERE IS NO ROOM FOR COMPLACENCY

43%
of Scottish employees experiencing poor mental health reported that there had been no resulting changes or actions taken in the workplace

2018
54%

20%
of employees in Scotland say they struggle to make ends meet financially

2018
24%

8%
of those who disclosed a mental health problem in Scotland were dismissed, demoted or disciplined

2018
6%

43%
of Scots would feel comfortable talking to their line manager about their own mental health

2018
45%

RESPECT AND INCLUSION ACROSS THE UK: KEY CONCERNS

79%
of LGBT+ people are likely to have experienced poor mental health where work was a cause or a contributing factor

32%
hid or disguised that they were LGBT+ at work for fear of discrimination in the last year

24%
of LGBT+ employees with disabilities reported being encouraged to hide their sexual orientation by colleagues

compared to

6%
of those without a disability

23%
of those who have suffered abuse said it sometimes occurred whilst they were at work or travelling to and from the workplace

CALLS TO ACTION

BUSINESS LEADERS HAVE THE OPPORTUNITY TO STEP UP AND MAKE DIRECT CHANGES TO THE WAY THEY THINK ABOUT AND TACKLE MENTAL HEALTH ISSUES

We urge employers to implement three calls to action. These are priority actions we believe will have the biggest impact on organisational capability to support better mental health:

1

CREATE GOOD WORK THAT ENHANCES MENTAL HEALTH, FOR EVERYONE

2

ACKNOWLEDGE AND SUPPORT POOR MENTAL HEALTH, WHATEVER THE CAUSE

3

PUBLICLY REPORT YOUR WELLBEING PERFORMANCE

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR LEADERS

We have used the results from the survey along with available best practice to produce a series of guiding principles and key actions for senior leaders on how to radically improve the support provided in the workplace.

These recommendations – which are supported by our nine national partners – will enable organisations of all shapes and sizes to advance the support they offer, wherever they may currently be on their journey. These principles, which complement the Thriving at Work review of mental health, are aimed at all employers. While they are aspirational, they are also achievable.

OWNING RESPONSIBLE LEADERSHIP

Recognise employee mental health as a critical component to being a responsible business.

Actions:

- Consciously role model behaviours that promote good mental health
- Enable an inclusive culture by embedding wellbeing into management accountability and operational policies and tools
- Publicly report on your wellbeing performance in external communications such as annual reports

UNDERSTANDING THE IMPACT OF WORK

Position the enhancement of wellbeing through good work as a priority corporate objective.

Actions:

- Audit the mental health risks as well as the physical ones and develop a plan for minimising them
- Increase management's understanding of the positive and negative impact work can have on employees and hold them accountable for this
- Regularly monitor and report on the working conditions and always include employee feedback

EQUIPPING LINE MANAGERS

Make employee mental health 'business as usual' for all managers.

Actions:

- Embed the promotion of good mental health as a core competency for managers
- Recognise and reward empathy and compassion
- Ensure comprehensive training reaches all managers, and includes the impact of work on mental health and productivity

PROVIDING TAILORED SUPPORT

Take an inclusive and employee-led approach to providing support.

Actions:

- Introduce training for workplace adjustments and modifications, so that support can be tailored
- Build active listening and communication skills and make signposting easy
- Provide and promote access to a diverse range of inclusive mental health services and facilities such as Employee Assistance Programme and Occupational Health

SPOTLIGHT: RESPECT AND INCLUSION

Promote and implement zero-tolerance policies and guidelines:

- Develop awareness of non-inclusive behaviours and define those that are unacceptable
- Support and encourage staff to be responsible bystanders when they witness bullying and harassment
- Join up inclusion and wellbeing activity to enable a whole person approach, and track your progress in both these areas

SPOTLIGHT: FINANCIAL WELLBEING

Embed financial wellbeing into your organisation's wellbeing strategy:

- Review whether there are any work-related causes that could be impacting employees' financial wellbeing, such as pay, contract type, or shift patterns
- Share your commitment to increasing financial wellbeing and breaking the stigma through internal communications and campaigns
- Develop and promote financial education, information and guidance that helps employees get the right support at the right time

DEFINITIONS

METHODOLOGY

Common mental health issues:
Those mental health issues, such as depression and anxiety, that affect more people than others. National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) estimates that common mental health issues affect up to 15% of people at any one time in the UK.

Long-term mental health conditions:
A formally diagnosed mental health condition which has affected someone for a year or longer.

Short-term mental health conditions:
A formally diagnosed condition affecting someone for less than a year.

Mental health diagnosis:
Meaning a doctor has assessed the condition. To diagnose a mental health problem, doctors will look at factors such as the person's experiences (groupings of certain feelings, behaviours and physical symptoms may suggest different diagnoses), how long the experiences have lasted, and the impact it is having on their life.

Parity of esteem:
Valuing mental health equally with physical health. Reflecting both in equal measure in policies and management processes.

For more information and an 'A-Z' of commonly used terms relating to mental health, visit Mind's website.

The National Employee Mental Wellbeing Survey is a comprehensive assessment of workplace mental health in the UK.

It is based on the key findings from a YouGov panel survey of 4,236 full and part-time employees in the UK, including 536 in Scotland. The survey is representative of gender, age, industry sector, region and business size, excluding sole traders and those working alone. The survey explores mental health and wellbeing in the workplace with many questions tailored for managers and those who have a manager.

Fieldwork was undertaken between 14th May and 18th June 2019. The survey was carried out online.

Differences have been drawn between previous years where relevant.

Note – the small base size of transgender respondents to the survey means it was not possible to analyse the results of this group individually. However, transgender respondents are included in the overall LGBT+ statistics.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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All the organisations that contributed their stories of best practice, some of which are featured here and others will be profiled in the coming months.

Louise Aston, Wellbeing Director, Business in the Community

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Kate Hinder, Senior Manager, Communications & Campaigns, Business in the Community Scotland

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- Mental Health First Aid
- Mental Health at Work
- Involve
- Salary Finance
- SOM
- ILM

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