SAMH'S VIEW:
MENTALLY HEALTHY WORKPLACES

SAMH
for Scotland's mental health

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ABOUT THE SAMH'S
VIEW SERIES

SAMH's View
statements set out
SAMH's position on a
particular policy topic.

In developing SAMH's
position, the issues of
equalities, diversity and
human rights are
investigated.

SAMH Views are
produced by the Public
Affairs team.

Context

Stable employment, where the employee has some control over their working conditions and their tasks can be good for our mental health and well-being.[1] The social contact, sense of purpose and financial independence that work brings can all have a positive effect on mental health.[2] In 2018, SAMH joined with Samaritans, Business in the Community Scotland, PwC and Barclays to launch This is Me Scotland, which aims to reduce the stigma of mental ill-health by supporting people to tell their own stories. SAMH also offers workplace training in mental health; while See Me runs an in work programme to tackle mental health stigma and discrimination.

Key points

- Five in ten employees would not feel confident disclosing a mental health problem to their employer.[3]

- Over half a million people experience work-related stress, depression or anxiety;[4] workload and management style are the most common causes.[5]

- Around 300,000 people in the UK with a long-term mental health condition lose their job each year.[6]

- Women in full-time employment are nearly twice as likely to have a common mental health problem as men.[7]

- Over a third of BME workers experience bullying, abuse or discrimination by employers, which affects both work performance and mental health.[8]

- More than 1 in 3 LGBT people have been harassed or bullied at work; more than 1 in 4 hide their sexuality at work; and almost 1 in 3 trans people have had their trans status disclosed at work without their consent.[9]

- The Equality Act 2010 included a provision that made an employer liable when an employee was harassed by a third party – e.g. a customer – and failed to protect them. This provision was removed in 2013.[10]

- Mental health problems at work cost over £2.1bn to Scottish employers per year, through sickness absence, presenteeism and staff turnover.[11] Employee support programmes, mental health training and more support from managers all result in less sickness absence and save money.[12,13,14]

- The Thriving at Work report sets out 6 core and 4 enhanced standards to improve workplace mental health.[15] The UK Government has committed to implementing these standards across the public sector.[16]

- People who work in certain sectors – like construction and care work – are at a higher risk of suicide, with unemployed people also at a higher risk.[17]

SAMH calls for:

- The Scottish Government to continue funding the See Me programme.

- The Scottish Government to fund an in-work support programme for people with mental health problems.

- The Scottish Government to sustainably fund mental health training for all public sector employers, as well as grant funding for mental health training for small businesses and not-for-profit organisations.

- The Scottish Government and all public sector bodies to implement the core and enhanced standards in the Thriving at Work report.

- The UK Government to update the definition of 'first-aid' in the Health and Safety (First Aid) Regulations 1981, so that it is inclusive of support for people who experience psychological distress.

- The UK Government to update the Equality Act 2010 to: better protect people with fluctuating health conditions; reinstate provisions for third party harassment; and allow employment tribunals to direct employers to make improvements in organisational policy and practice, regardless of whether a successful claimant is still an employee.

- The UK Government to increase funding for the Equality and Human Rights Commission, so it can support more people in making workplace discrimination claims and increase its support for employers.

- The UK Government to develop a model of flexible Statutory Sick Pay (SPP) as outlined in the Thriving at Work report, so people on phased returns after ill-health receive wages and SSP on a pro-rata basis.

SAMH calls for employers to:

- Ensure that mental health is listed as a reason for sickness absence in recording procedures.

- Develop and implement annual mental health action plans, which include measures to destigmatise and prevent suicide, consulting employees.

- Provide mental health training for both employees and managers, and train first aiders in mental health as well as physical health conditions.

- Undertake mental health checks in routine staff supervision and regular workplace stress assessments using Health and Safety Executive materials.

- Wherever possible, provide a confidential Employee Support Programme which includes access to confidential counselling services.

Further detail:

STATISTICS	FURTHER READING	ADVICE
● Scottish Government, Labour Market Statistics ● ONS, Sickness absence in the UK labour market	● Thriving at Work: The Stevenson/Farmer review of mental health and employers ● Scottish Government, Mental Health Strategy 2017-2027	● SAMH, Workplace Publications ● SAMH, Workplace Training ● SAMH, Become a Corporate Partner ● See Me in Work Programme ● Citizens Advice Scotland

Notes

[1] Siegrist J, Benach J, McNamara K, et al. Employment arrangements, work conditions and health inequalities. Marmot Review Task Group report, 2010

[2] Waddell and Burton, Is Work Good for You? 2006

[3] CIPD, Employee Outlook: mental health in the workplace, 2016

[4] HSE, Work-related stress, anxiety or depression statistics in Great Britain, 2019

[5] CIPD, Health and Well-being at Work, 2020

[6] Deloitte, Mental Health and Employers: The case for investment, 2017

[7] Stansfeld, S et al., Common mental disorders, in Mental health and wellbeing in England: Adult Psychiatric Morbidity Survey 2014, 2016

[8] TUC, Is racism real? A report about the experiences of Black and minority ethnic workers – polling findings, 2017

[9] TUC, The Cost of Being Out at Work: LGBT+ workers experiences of harassment and discrimination, 2017

[10] TUC, Tackling third-party abuse and harassment, 2019

[11] SAMH, What's it Worth Now, 2011

[12] Deloitte, Mental Health and Employers: The case for investment, 2017

[13] Evans-Lacko and Knapp, Is Manager Support Related to Workplace Productivity for People with Depression, BMJ Open, 2018

[14] Milligan-Saville, Josie S et al., Workplace mental health training for managers and its effect on sick leave in employees: a cluster randomised controlled trial, 2017

[15] Thriving at Work: The Stevenson / Farmer review of mental health and employers, 2017

[16] UK Government, Improving Lives: the future of work, health and disability, 2017

[17] BBC Scotland, The men most at risk form suicide in Scotland, 2019

www.samh.org.uk

SAMH is the Scottish Association for Mental Health. Scottish Charity No. SC008897