

National Highways Road Risk Management Conference

The Society of Occupational Medicine

Professional membership body for occupational health professionals offering:

- e-bulletins, pod casts and blogs
- Guidance e.g. Long Covid/Neurodiversity
- Webinars and Conferences
- legal helpline, peer support, special interest groups & regional group meetings
- The *Occupational Medicine* journal
- indemnity insurance for occupational medicine doctors; appraisal toolkit & access to professional indemnity insurance for occupational health nurses
- career support, job adverts, an annual careers fair etc
- campaigning and advocacy for occupational health & medicine



Special interest groups – examples and outputs

- Construction worker health assessment group [guidance](#)
- HAVS SIG guidance [available here](#).
- Noise Induced Hearing Loss SIG with UKHCA [Position Statement on the implementation of HSE Noise Surveillance Guidance](#)
- Mining SIG - presentation from the Centre for Occupational and Environmental Health Africa [here](#). Health Management in Mining presentation from December 2023 meeting [here](#).
- Nuclear Industry Ionising Radiation Occupational Health Professionals SIG
- Occupational, Health and Work Psychology SIG guide on *Evaluating and supporting Neurodifferences at work* [here](#).
- Occupational Health Technicians SIG [scope of practice of Occupational Health Technicians](#) and [Career Path of OH Technicians](#).
- Skin SIG released this [Managing Skin Health at Work](#) guidance

Other SOM groups meet on issues such as Mental Health, Long COVID, Travel Medicine, Marketing and Leadership.

SOM also hosts wider groups such as [MSK at Work Network](#), Sleep and Work and the independent Academic Forum on work and health

SOM Journal of Occupational Medicine

Occupational
Medicine
JOURNAL OF THE SOCIETY OF OCCUPATIONAL MEDICINE

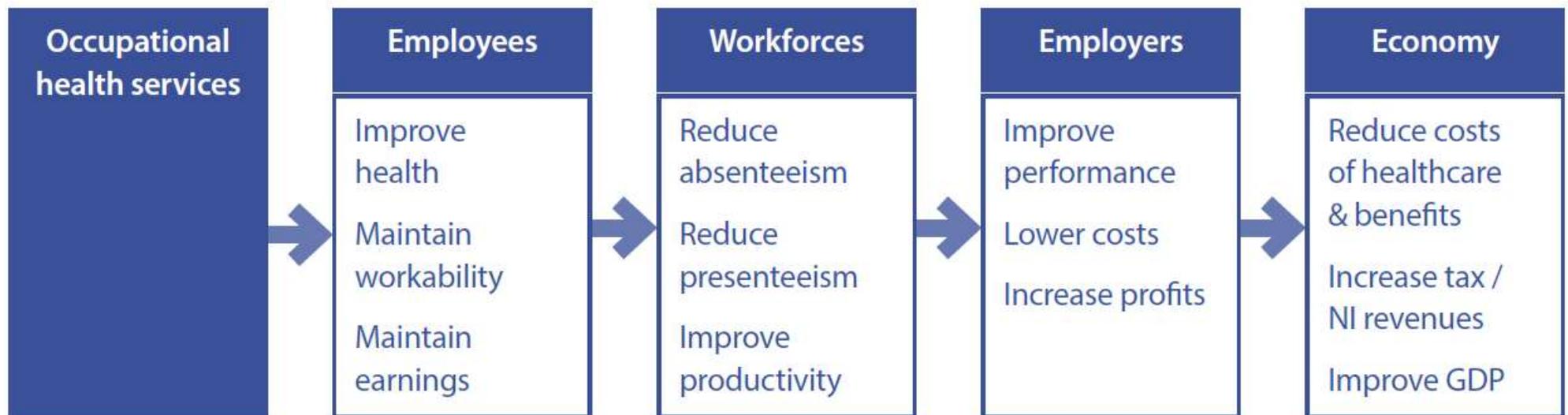
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Key benefits of occupational health



Supporting occupational health
and wellbeing professionals

Occupational Health

- Occupational health helps improve employee health, increase workforce productivity, and organisational performance
- Longer working lives increase the need for access to occupational health
- Many drivers have no access to quality occupational health services. Measures should be taken to improve access
- Sickness absence and presenteeism are significant burdens for organisations and society
- Highly effective companies commit to a culture of health

The business case for occupational health should reflect the three key factors that motivate employers to provide access to occupational health services:

- Legal – to comply with health and safety laws and regulations
- Moral – it is the right / ethical / socially responsible thing to do
- Financial – to reduce costs or add value to the business Occupational health professional

WORK, HEALTH, WELLBEING AND DRIVERS

- The health of drivers is often ignored as a key reason why accidents occur.
- Drivers are sedentary, spend many hours away from their families, and have poor access to decent food, rest, opportunities to exercise and access to a GP.
- Employers of drivers should implement an effective Occupational Health contract, providing pre-emptive support and monitoring of drivers, with targeted interventions to support improved mental and physical health.
- Role of an organisation - paired with managers and leaders changing their corporate health culture this can help reduce sickness absence, presenteeism and accidents.
- OH can support better sleep and managing Obstructive Sleep Apnoea, the cause of 20% of fatal accidents in the HGV industry.

Society of Occupational Medicine / National Highways report

SOM is working with National Highways on their Driver Health Development plans to support improved health and reduction in accidents through the delivery of advice on the management of driver roadworthiness for occupational health professionals.

Aim - Provide workplace health professionals and employers of drivers with the right information and expertise they need to support them with driver health. SOM will be engaging the occupational health (OH) community, to help establish effective solutions and also advise National Highways for:

- What employees and employers need to consider
- upskilling of OH professionals

What is the employer's responsibility?

The law is clear on an employer's responsibility with regards to **mental health**. According to the *Health and Safety at Work Act 1974* and *Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999* these include:

- Making sure the work environment is safe;
- Carrying out risk assessments as set out in regulations, and taking steps to eliminate or control these risks;
- Appointing a 'competent person' responsible for health and safety;
- Treating mental and physical health as equally important.

Employer to make **reasonable adjustments** to adapt the work to the worker, and not to expect the worker to need to adapt to the work. It also states the importance of **risk assessments** and the **need for competent people** to be responsible for health and safety – which includes mental health - within the organisation.

Synthesises the evidence from the scientific and wider literature to demonstrate that there is a rounded business case for investment in occupational health services based on wide-ranging and sometimes intangible factors.

Well-integrated evidence-based workplace health initiatives are associated with improved employee health status and productivity in the workplace.

Research supports the proposition that investments in occupational health add value through reduced costs associated with the prevention of ill health, improved productivity and a range of intangible benefits.

The report aims to define the value proposition of occupational health beyond the mere financial return on investment.



Occupational Health: The Value Proposition

Dr Paul J Nicholson OBE
March 2022

*Occupational health services enhance
employee health, workforce productivity,
business performance and the economy*



OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH: THE LEGAL IMPERATIVE

Employers must appoint one or more competent persons to assist them in meeting their legal duties, taking into account the size of the undertaking and the risks at the workplaces

- Occupational health doctors and nurses are the competent / suitably qualified persons to enquire about work-related symptoms and assess an employee's fitness for work
- Both companies and/or directors can be prosecuted for breaches of health and safety law and face significant fines and potentially imprisonment
- Litigation risks company reputation which can threaten business

OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH: THE MORAL IMPERATIVE

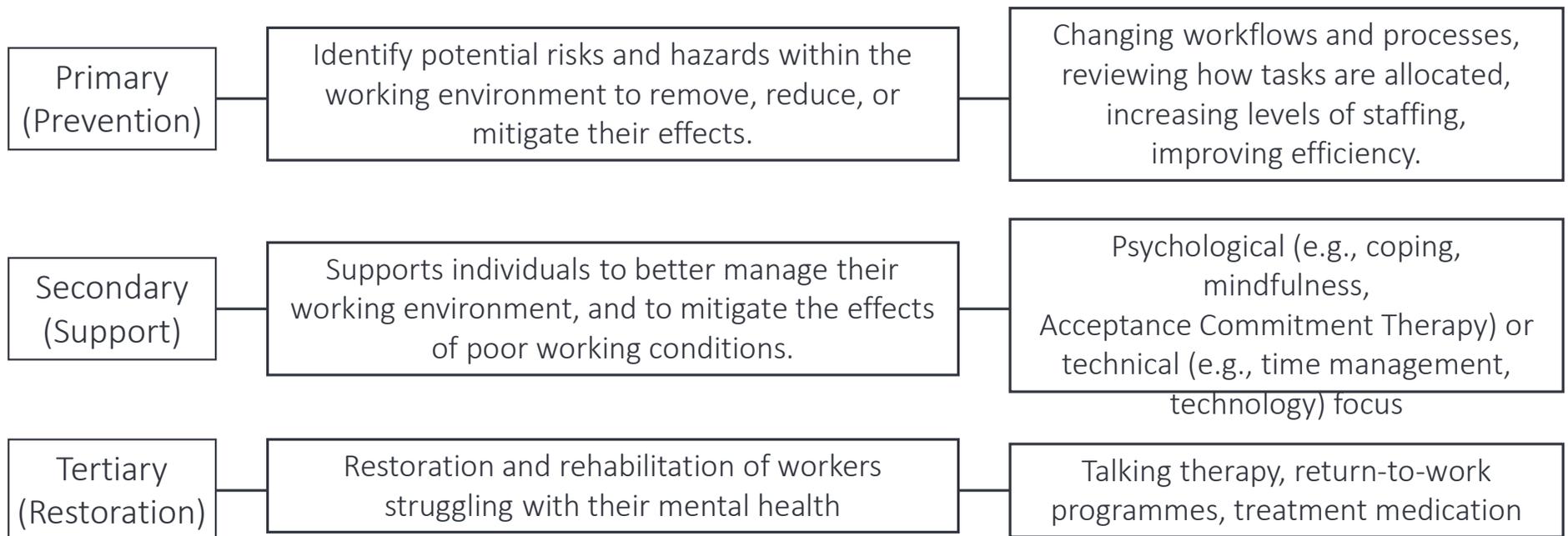
- Protecting and promoting employee health is integral to corporate social responsibility
- Employers use occupational health services to promote employee health mostly because they consider it to be the right thing to do
 - Work-related ill health is a significant cost to individuals, employers and the taxpayer
 - Employer paid interventions may save more money at a societal level (health and social care)
 - Employer expectations for a return on investment may need to be tempered

OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH: THE FINANCIAL IMPERATIVE

Good workplaces, employee engagement, wellbeing and productivity are inter-related

- Poor employee health is associated with significant costs to employers
- Needs assessment based occupational health services can deliver significant savings to a range of employer's direct and indirect costs
- Providing more financial and especially tax incentives could encourage more employers to invest in employee health and wellbeing

A systematic approach



Primary (Prevention) Interventions

Focused on identifying potential risks in the psychosocial work environment, with the aim to eliminate or reduce the identified risks at source

Occupational Health	Human Resources
Health screening; Identification of health issues and patterns; Compliance with regulations and policies; Inputting into organisational strategy.	Ensuring the organisation provides 'good' work' for people to support their health; Developing a health and wellbeing strategy; People management policies and procedures in areas such as reward and recognition; Performance management; Organisation design; Job design. Administering and analysing staff surveys and focus groups; Diversity and inclusion activities; Fostering healthy working relationships; Encouraging voice and recognition schemes; Managing absence and attendance; Managing change.

Secondary (support) Interventions

Aim to modify how a worker manages or responds to potentially harmful work environment factors, and to reverse or delay the progression of health problems caused by these factors

Occupational Health	Human Resources
Improve health and wellbeing awareness; Fit notes and work adjustment plans; Health promotion activities; Ergonomic assessments; Vaccinations and immunisations; Reasonable adjustments due to illness or disability.	Awareness raising and education; Training of managers and staff; Providing health promotion activities; Personal and professional development; Coaching; Wellness tools and resources (e.g., Digital mental wellness platforms); Performance reviews and goal setting.

Tertiary (Restoration) Interventions

Seek to reduce or minimise the negative health effects associated with chronic exposure to psychosocial risks, and to enable a return to normal functioning

Occupational Health	Human Resources
Treatment and rehabilitation; Review and referrals to more specialised support services (e.g., physiotherapy, psychological support); Support return-to-work programmes, individuals, and line managers.	Support return-to-work programmes, individuals, and line managers; Signposting to support services and rehabilitation services; Manage Employee Assistance Programmes.

New Intervention effectiveness

- 143 British organisations and 27,919 workers (Fleming, 2023)
- Workers that took part in individual focused interventions (e.g., mindfulness, resilience training, coaching, and wellbeing apps) were no better off in relation to multiple subjective wellbeing indicators.
- Workplace factors such as being bullied, unrealistic time pressures, discrimination, and strained relationships had more influence and were associated with poorer subjective wellbeing.
- Interventions involving working conditions such as having the right training, choosing break time, being consulted on change, fair pay, fair promotions, flexible work, and good collaboration were all associated with better wellbeing.



Working
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Estimating effects of individual-level workplace mental wellbeing interventions: Cross-sectional evidence from the UK

William Fleming

April 2023

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Key take away points

- Moral, legal and financial reasons to provide Occupational Health
- Most employers believe that investment in occupational safety and health pays off
- There is a link between crashes and human factors
- Potential for OH professionals to influence behaviours especially around impairment, fatigue and medical issues.

Useful blog at: <https://www.som.org.uk/health-drive-digital-driving-health-improvements-haulage-industry>



Join the SOM as a member at
www.som.org.uk

Questions?
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