



Inspiring business

IoD Policy Report March 2017



A little more conversation

Mental health in the changing world of work





KENSINGTON PALACE

Catherine, Harry and I are spearheading the Heads Together campaign to change the conversation on mental health, as it is clear that mental ill health lies at the heart of some of our greatest social challenges.

We all have mental health, and will all face difficulties with our mental health at some point in our lives. Yet, for too many people, the fear of being judged or treated differently stops them talking about it and getting the help they need.

What Catherine, Harry and I want to do is normalise the idea of talking about your mental health; whether with family, friends, colleagues or an appropriate stranger. Mental health should be the same as physical health: if you admit to a problem, you're taking an important step forward to getting the help you need to overcome it. You would not feel shame admitting to a pain in your knee, so why should you feel shame because of an issue in your head?

Britain's employers have a major role to play in this. In recent decades, businesses have ensured their workplaces are safe and physically healthy, with many actively promoting and supporting healthy lifestyles among their staff. But we would like this approach to be broader; to support the mental as well as the physical wellbeing of the 31 million people at work in Britain.

Many companies and organisations are already providing an open, positive approach to this. It is certainly what I have experienced having worked as a pilot for Search and Rescue and now with the Air Ambulance, where all team members are actively encouraged to admit when they are feeling overwhelmed – whatever the reason. This should be the norm for all employees.

Through Heads Together, we want to help change the conversation on mental health. I am delighted that organisations representing large numbers of businesses, such as the Institute of Directors, are starting these conversations and supporting their members, employees, and the wider business community through it.

Please help us change the conversation about mental health.

The author



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Andy Silvester is head of campaigns and deputy director of policy at the Institute of Directors.

His role covers public affairs, regulation and the IoD's ongoing campaigns across the media and within government. He has led the institute's work on tackling modern slavery and published reports into migrant entrepreneurship and the government's industrial strategy.

Andy read American Studies at King's College London and the University of California, Berkeley, achieving a master's in 2011. He was formerly campaign director at the TaxPayers' Alliance.

Introduction

In a hyper-connected world – in which work and ‘life’ aren’t so much balanced as they are increasingly integrated – employers must take a ‘whole life’ approach to their staff’s health.

Since the first health and safety legislation came into force in the UK, business leaders and their staff have worked to make the workplace a safer and more collaborative environment. However, we haven’t made as much progress when it comes to mental health.

The scale of mental health problems in the UK are rarely put in context. One in six UK adults experienced episodes related to a common mental disorder in the past week; that is 10 times the number of people who attend a professional football match every weekend.

IoD members recognise that good mental health is crucial for their business.

- More than 80 per cent of IoD members believe good workplace mental health is very important – fewer than one per cent believe it is unimportant.
- They recognise the consequences are significant, with poor quality of work, poor decision making, conflict between colleagues and higher staff turnover all cited as negative outcomes as a result of poor mental health within an organisation.

More and more of us are afflicted with mental health problems. Some estimates suggest that, at any one time, roughly one in four of us are touched by mental health issues.

- More than half – 54 per cent – have been spoken to about mental health concerns by their staff, including feelings of burnout or stress.
- In many cases, employees are given time off to recover – about half of the time. This number falls significantly for our smallest members, many of whom simply lack the resources to allow an individual to take extended time off.
- If an employee were to raise concerns, the vast majority of IoD members would recommend their staff member simply go to their GP. With

a recent Mind survey emphasising the lack of mental health training given to GPs, and almost half of staff nurses having been offered no formal training in this area at all, it is clear that employees with mental ill health could be offered more tailored support by employers. Only 15 per cent have retained providers such as an employee assistance programme and only four per cent would advise them to consult Mental Health First Aid England – the same number as those saying they simply wouldn’t know what to do.

More needs to be done to ensure that mental health policies and procedures are embedded across organisations. Four in five of our employing members do not offer mental health training for management. Simply put – that needs to change. In those firms with board structures, mental health must be put higher up the agenda.

Employers have a duty of care in physical health, and they should have one in mental health, too. The good thing is that it is easier than people think. Opening up a conversation, and demonstrating a willingness to listen, is the first step. As so often, conversation and prevention are as important as the cure.

Government too has a role to play – in large part by communicating existing schemes, and driving cultural change from the top.

The changing world of work

Technology has changed our expectations of what constitutes 'work' and while you couldn't move in the noughties for a newspaper feature on finding 'work-life balance', the 2010s have been defined by the 'always-on' culture.

It is hard to find anybody in the business world who isn't, in some way or another, on call at any time. The flashing red light of the Blackberry or the vibration of an iPhone has become as much a part of our business life as complaints about the coffee machine. Some have even blamed the mobile phone for the death of the 'proper lunch' in Westminster.¹

The papers are now full of ways to take time out – we've all heard of the digital detox, but what about 'no-email Friday'? Global tech giants offering everything from ping-pong tables to spa sessions are now de rigueur, rather than newsworthy.

We can – and some have – argued about the effect of these changes on people's health and their productivity, but history has shown that progress, whether perceived as a good or a bad thing, is rarely stopped. Technological changes are difficult to reverse – the internet is not about to be uninvented, the frustratingly short battery charge on an iPhone is not about to hit permanent zero, and none of us are going to be able to dodge an email for the rest of the year.

Even when news reports suggest that laws might come in to 'ban' work emails out of hours – with France the notable exemplar – it turns out to be no such thing. The much-discussed 'ban on emails after 6pm' was a complex part of a labour agreement by unions and employers in the high-tech consulting field which made no reference to a 6pm cut-off. It perhaps does not say much for France's reputation as a business-friendly labour market that the story appeared plausible, but the lesson is clear.

This trend isn't going to change. More than half of smartphone users check their phone within 15 minutes of waking.²

For those who once might have avoided the 'weekend ping' – through working in bars, hospitality or minicabs, for instance – the 'gig economy' has changed the way those jobs work, too. The ability to enjoy the flexibility of clocking in or out on platforms like Uber or TaskRabbit means that not being connected could be a surefire way to lose earning opportunities. Ask a teacher if they still have to work on weekends and they'll show you an inbox bursting at the seams with helpful and occasionally not-so-helpful feedback from parents.

This fundamental change in the way we do business and indeed the way the world works is not going to reverse. The horse has bolted.

In practice, this isn't always a bad thing. With the increased use of out-of-hours work comes greater flexibility during in-hours work. With an iPhone and a laptop comes the possibility of taking two hours out of the working day to read in a coffee shop, or to visit a GP without taking an entire day off, and has given new mums and dads the opportunity to work from home through the first (often difficult and invariably expensive) years of raising a family.

So what does that mean for those words dreaded by so many business people – health and safety?

Since the dawn of paid work, good employers have been alive to the need for decent health and safety in the workplace. A manorial roll, originating from 1540, in a rather gruesome passage describes the fate of a millowner who failed to take good care of a member of his staff:

"A yonge childe... standing neere to the whele of a horse myll... was by some mishap come within the swepe or compasse of the cogge whele and therewith was torn in peces and killed. And, upon inquisition taken, it was founde that the whele was the cause of the childes death, whereupon the myll was forthwith defaced and pulled down."³

The Factory Act of 1802 moved things on, ensuring that apprenticed children could only work for a maximum of 12 hours a day. In 1833, the

¹ Harry Cole, *The Spectator*, "Save the boozy lunch", March 2014

² Deloitte, *Mobile Consumer Report*, 2015

³ Manor Roll, 1950, sourced from Verbeek & Slob, *User Behaviour and Technology Development*, 2006,

first factory inspectors were introduced, and during the 1830s and 1840s a series of legal cases began to establish the precedent that an employer has a 'duty of care' to employees; perhaps the most famous being the case of *Priestley v. Fowler*, in which a substandard wagon (owned by butcher Thomas Fowler) buckled in transit and brought, rather unfortunately, a sizable amount of mutton down on his employee, 15-year-old Priestley, resulting in serious injuries. Though that particular case failed to set the precedent, with a judgment in favour of the employee stayed by a higher court, the sheer surprise at the stay of any modern reader reflects the universality of that 'duty of care' principle.

Mercifully, most employers' attitudes to health and safety have moved on since then. In truth, the UK should be exceptionally proud of the way in which regulators, legislators and business leaders have worked together to ensure that, for the vast majority of people, the workplace is, in a physical sense, safe.

That is only likely to continue. For all the discussion around automation and the changing nature of work during the 'fourth industrial revolution', the overwhelming trend in recent decades is from often dangerous jobs to safer ones. The workplace, for most people today and for more tomorrow, no longer looks like an LS Lowry painting.

But physical health is a lot easier to plan and design for than its invisible cousin, mental health.

Case study



Thomas Duncan Bell

Team Tops and Corporate Wardrobe

Thomas Duncan Bell suffers from bipolar disorder, diagnosed in his early 20s. That hasn't stopped his business career: alongside Kevin Patrick, he has built Team Tops into a leading UK supplier in the branded clothing sector, with a UK supply chain worth over £200 million. Bell says:

"I suffer from a form of bipolar disorder that was diagnosed when I was around 20–22 years old. I was initially prescribed medication, but found that this didn't work for me as it was keeping me a bit numb and within the sales field you need to be a bit more on the ball.

"That said, I didn't maintain the medication for more than a month, because I decided to continue my journey without medication to try and achieve more lasting results.

"It's taken a long 10–12 years to fully understand the issue and try to remedy some of the darkness I feel day to day, but I find that writing my blog, *The Bipolar Businessman*, and a for a range of businesses and their magazines, has helped. I've been able to reach around 250,000 people in 2016 with my message.

"I was previously a new business development and commercial consultant, but changed industry back in 2014 to try and enjoy more of what I do day to day.

"I now work for a wide range of hotels, sports clubs and retailers to produce various forms of clothing on every level, while advising clients how they can develop more commercially. This type of business has definitely helped me to evolve emotionally, because I'm able to flex the attributes that stem from all my business experience, and although it's harder to make money, I feel that, three years in, the business is now growing fast and becoming much more stable."

Britain and mental health

Britain is not a place where it is always easy to talk about mental health. We are rightly proud of our fabled 'stiff upper lip' – that natural reserve and determination which seems to come almost preternaturally to those living here. In a tumultuous world, it will no doubt do us some good.

But that reserve – that 'don't make a scene' attitude – is less helpful when it comes to opening up a conversation about mental health. It was, in fact, the man voted the greatest Briton of all time, Sir Winston Churchill, who first popularised the euphemism 'the black dog' to describe depression, as if talking openly and in stark terms about the condition was somehow un-British, and certainly the death knell to a political career.

Mental ill health touches every one of us in one way or another. Whether personally, professionally or through friends and family, the damage that can be caused from out-of-control stress, anxiety, eating disorders, OCD, panic attacks, post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) or depression – a by no means exhaustive list – is never too far away from us.

According to official statistics:⁴

- 17 per cent – one in six – of adults have a currently occurring common mental disorder
- just under one in 10 suffer from anxiety or depression
- just under one in ten adults have severe mental disorder symptoms
- 28 per cent of women aged 16–24 report a common mental disorder
- one in five adults have had suicidal thoughts at some point in their lives, and one in 20 in the past year
- more than six per cent of adults have self-harmed
- just under one in 20 adults are currently suffering from acute PTSD

For context, over the weekend of 4–5 February 2017, some 694,416 people attended professional football matches in England. That is just a tenth of the number of adults who experienced common mental disorders that same week.

It is worth noting that the real figure is certainly higher – the perils of self-reporting are clear, but these figures do not include those who are in hospital, residential mental health facilities or prison.

To give credit to both the current prime minister and her predecessor, mental health has moved up the agenda. In recent years, a minister has been given specific responsibility for mental health, and another for mental health in the workplace. One of Theresa May's most substantial speeches to date has been on the subject of mental health, and she has announced a review – led by Lord Dennis Stevenson and Paul Farmer, chief executive of Mind – into mental health provision in the workplace. More and more people are opening up about their own mental health. But is the message getting through?

⁴ ONS / NHS Digital, Mental Health and Wellbeing in England: Adult Psychiatric Morbidity Survey 2014, 2016

Case study



Catherine Gazzoli

Catherine Gazzoli and her team launched Piccolo in April 2016 nationwide via Waitrose with six products, and the growing baby food company now numbers

eight people. With sales of their organic, Mediterranean-sourced food increasing, and a product range expanding to 30, Piccolo continues to punch above its weight – but Gazzoli is careful to ensure good mental health is embedded throughout the company.

In her former roles as chief executive of Slow Food UK, Cat witnessed first hand the very real consequences of mental health problems that go undetected. Now heading up a company that speaks regularly to new parents, and attracts new parents as staff, she's aware of the adjustment struggles that some parents can have after having children.

She has for many years partnered with the National Childbirth Trust, who this year are heading up a '#BeyondBabyBlues' campaign promoting the importance of mental health specifically around perinatal mental illness which affects about one in 10 women during pregnancy or in the first year following birth.

This is an area Gazzoli is familiar with, as she has seen valuable team members having mental health issues after suffering from 'taboo' subjects such as infant death syndrome and miscarriage. Piccolo supports the NCT's charitable work and was pleased important research around new parents is getting out to the public.

The NCT's latest research found 50 per cent of mothers were still worried about feeling low or depressed when their babies were eight months old and almost three-quarters (73 per cent) of fathers were concerned about their partner's mental health (NCT *Beyond Baby Blues* report 2016). Gazzoli believes it's Piccolo's duty to be on top of mental health issues that can most affect its team and to be proactive about it. She has

invested early in this by setting up a People at Piccolo team in addition to cooking and gathering round for family-style lunches with the staff at least once a week. In a small team it's easier to spot when people are feeling down, but only because they've taken a step outside the day to day of working life to talk over food.

An HR expert also sits down with individuals every two months to 'check the temperature' of each team member; no analysis or KPIs around their role, just a 'feelings' check-in. Gazzoli was also not shy to involve a female investor who has the right touch with the team – a former head of HR at PepsiCo Europe.

And while she readily acknowledges that her background in not-for-profit organisations has made her more aware of the people side of a business, there's a hard-nosed reason for ensuring her staff's mental health too – a happier, healthier workforce is a more productive one too, and staff are less likely to leave. Recruitment costs are, after all, a significant hit on the bottom line. Gazzoli says:

“People are surprised that even as a small team we've put so much into our people, but in truth it's been the secret to our success. Just being able to have that support network around gives staff the space they need to be creative and innovative.

“Prevention is better than cure – that's why we sit around the table so often. In a small team you have to make a conscious effort not to get bogged down in the nuts and bolts of Excel spreadsheets, but once you've started the conversation, and made it 'normal' to talk about how you're feeling with your boss or with a colleague, you're halfway to a resolution. Through my work with both new parents and from previous experience, it's clear that, as a society, we've still got much to do to ensure that we all have the ability to talk openly about mental health.”

Business awareness increases

Unsurprisingly, given the recent uptick in awareness, IoD members are increasingly alert to the dangers poor mental health can pose in the workplace. Some 98 per cent of respondents to a 2016 survey agreed that a workforce's good mental health is important or very important to a business, and the consequences of poor mental health were also well understood – poor quality of work, poor decision making, conflict between colleagues and higher staff turnover are all recognised by a majority of business leaders as potential consequences.

Much, of course, has been written on the subject of boosting British productivity in recent years. Could it be that one of the quickest ways to do it might be for individuals to be in a better frame of mind?

Official statistics suggest that 127 million hours of work were lost in 2015 due to mental health-related absence – the equivalent of around 75,000 individuals losing the entire working year. The number of days taken off work with mental health problems has increased 25 per cent year on year, and stress, depression and anxiety taken together rank as the largest reason for absence in the workplace.

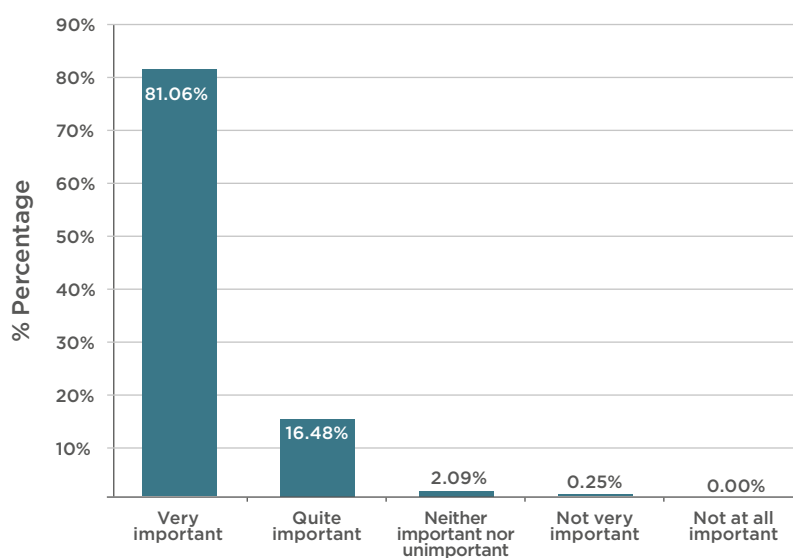
Even when poor mental health isn't forcing individuals to take time off, it's affecting their work. According to the Mental Health Foundation, more than six in 10 of the UK's working population report that they've been kept awake at night by stress, leaving them unable to perform their duties as well as they might.

The OECD estimates that our failure to cope adequately with mental health issues costs the UK some 4.5 per cent of GDP.

In London alone, the wider impacts of mental ill health result in around £26bn each year in total economic and social costs to London⁶. That report is credited as one of the motives behind a \$853m programme, Thrive, rolled out across New York City in 2015. The mayor's office in London is conducting work to begin a similar programme.

How important do you believe a workforce with good mental health is to the performance of a business organisation?⁵

| | TOTAL | PERCENTAGE |
|-----------------------------------|-------|------------|
| Very important | 659 | 81.06% |
| Quite important | 134 | 16.48% |
| Neither important nor unimportant | 17 | 2.09% |
| Not very important | 2 | 0.25% |
| Not at all important | 0 | 0.00% |



“The OECD estimates that our failure to cope adequately with mental health issues costs the UK some 4.5 per cent of GDP”

⁵ Survey of IoD members through online Policy Voice Platform, June 13-27 2016

⁶ Mayor of London / Greater London Authority, *The London Mental Health Report*, January 2014

All of these statistics point to one abundantly obvious fact: mental health is not just a moral issue, but a business issue too. Productivity and agility will increase if we address what many commentators are increasingly describing as a mental health crisis.

Furthermore, if we've established that the scourge of poor mental health is a serious issue for British businesses today, then the outlook for tomorrow is perhaps even more interesting.

Studies abound on the needs of millennials coming into the workplace - an increased focus on work that 'gives back' to society, a desire to be at a firm that works with charities or at-risk groups, even entrepreneurs beginning businesses not to strike out on their own or because they believe they're set for financial reward, but because they want to make a difference in their communities. Among the IoD 99, the IoD's community for young entrepreneurs, playing a part in the local community was the most popular reason for starting a business.⁷

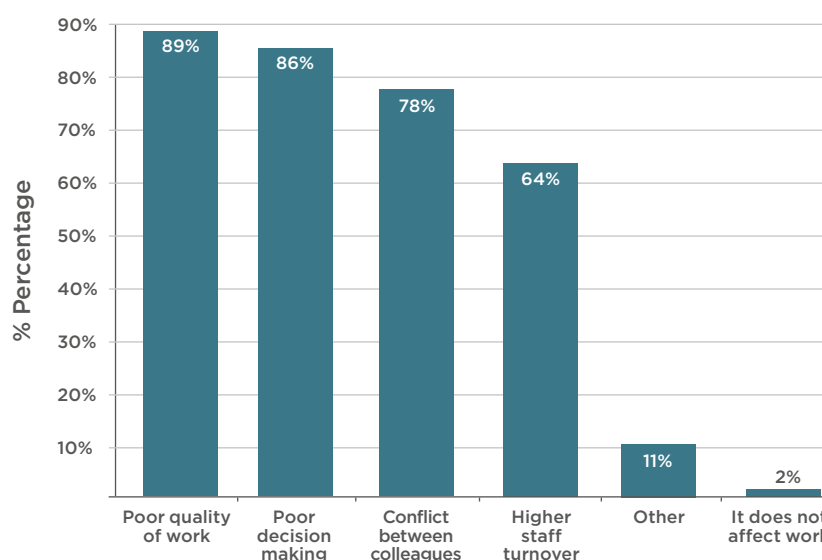
How does that relate to mental health? More than one Deloitte study of millennials has shown job loyalty is declining and young skilled workers are more aware of their opportunities and more willing to switch jobs to further their careers. In short, they believe the perfect job does exist, and are willing to chase it.

That 'perfect job' clearly includes good quality mental health. IoD members continually state that the skills shortage is one of their most significant challenges in the modern workplace, and with adult education still not as good as it might be, many of those skills gaps will have to be filled by young workers. With emerging skills, such as programming, becoming ever more important too, those digital natives will be looking for firms who take their mental health and wellbeing seriously.

And of course, it's also important to reflect on wider trends. The world is a better place to live in 2017 than it was in 2016, or 2010, or 2000 or 1950 or 1900. Life expectancy continues to increase,

What consequences do you foresee if members of an organisation are suffering from poor mental health?

| | TOTAL | PERCENTAGE |
|-----------------------------|-------|------------|
| Poor quality of work | 723 | 88.93% |
| Poor decision making | 699 | 85.98% |
| Conflict between colleagues | 633 | 77.86% |
| Higher staff turnover | 518 | 63.71% |
| Other | 92 | 11.32% |
| It does not affect work | 16 | 1.97% |



⁷ Survey of IoD 99 members, October 2015

food has become more readily available, prosperity has increased in general terms. But whether it's people leading increasingly isolated lives, the rise in social media, political turmoil or myriad other factors, it is clear that large proportions of the public don't feel it is improving for them. If 'rational optimists' are in short supply, to borrow a phrase from the author Matt Ridley, their opposites are not; according to one survey, nearly 70 per cent of people think Britain has become a less happy place than it was just a year ago.⁸

That may or may not be true, but it is beholden to all of us to recognise that the vote to leave the EU will have profound effects on people. Even those who are optimistic about Britain's future outside the EU – a group that includes this author – must recognise that it has thrown the UK and its population into a period of significant uncertainty. Admittedly, an article by clinical psychologist Jay Watts in the *Guardian* six days after the vote talking of a dystopian future and a resulting mental health crisis may have been slightly overdoing things, but there has been an increase in the number of City workers, for instance, utilising the private Nightingale mental health hospital.⁹ Those individuals born in other parts of the EU who, at the time of writing, are still without much-needed clarity on their post-Brexit residential status are of particular note.

Case study



Victoria Walford

Ten years ago, cycling to work in the City, Victoria was hit by a car.

Alongside physical treatment, Victoria was diagnosed with post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD).

In a medical climate that didn't

necessarily understand PTSD beyond prescription drugs, she decided to return to an old passion – psychology.

During this period, Walford also re-examined an old business idea; providing healthy tea-time treats. After winning a grant from London South Bank University for a 'free from' diet bakery, she set up Victorious Baking. The bakery won numerous business and branding awards, and even a Sky TV show that resembled a cross between *Dragons' Den*, *The Apprentice* and a cookery show.

Despite the success of the bakery, and interest from the likes of Selfridges, Walford found herself spending more time helping other start-up entrepreneurs with their own business and personal problems, all the while continuing to gradually overcome her PTSD.

She now runs MySuperSoul, a programme designed to protect professionals from burnout in our ever busier world – excitingly, using many of the tools she used herself while tackling her own PTSD. Walford says:

“By managing our stress proactively, it can become a tool that funnels our energy positively to reach our goals. The work I'm doing now is exciting, confidence building and empowering. You feel calmer, more in control, and experience improved communication.

“This work reveals new opportunity – being calmer opens our outlook physically and mentally, creativity increases and we become problem solvers. No longer fixed in fear (an autonomic stress response), we make and take better decisions acting calmly and confidently.

“A wonderful side benefit of managing mental health is that our physical health also improves.”

⁸ Sky News, Sky Data poll: "Britain more racist and less happy", 3 January 2017

⁹ *Evening Standard*, "Brexit causing surge in stressed-out City workers at mental health hospital", 29 September 2016

Employers' lived experience of mental health in the workplace

More than half of IoD members have been approached by a member of staff wanting to speak about their mental health and levels of stress. In a world in which productivity – or indeed agility, the ability to adapt quickly to a changing technological world – is so vital, such a significant figure cannot be ignored.

Many large organisations have adapted to the challenge. It is difficult to find a large corporation without a wellbeing strategy or formal mental health policy.

Some large companies in particularly high-pressure jobs, often in financial services, now employ in-house therapists and psychologists to allow their staff the time and space they need to 'get their head right'. Those large organisations are also more likely to offer wellbeing perks; giving paid time off for volunteering, spa days, and so forth. Some even offer unlimited paid time off.

Now, while psychologists on staff might be appropriate for large firms, clearly such services are impossible for smaller ones to implement. And that's a problem; small and medium-sized businesses account for some 60 per cent of firms in the UK, and total employment in SMEs in 2015 was 15.6 million, accounting for some 60 per cent of all private sector jobs across the economy. Such businesses often have overstretched HR departments, assuming they haven't outsourced the job altogether or made it the responsibility of an often extremely busy company leader. There are many firms in which human resources simply means navigating the complicated employment regulations that government imposes on small businesses.

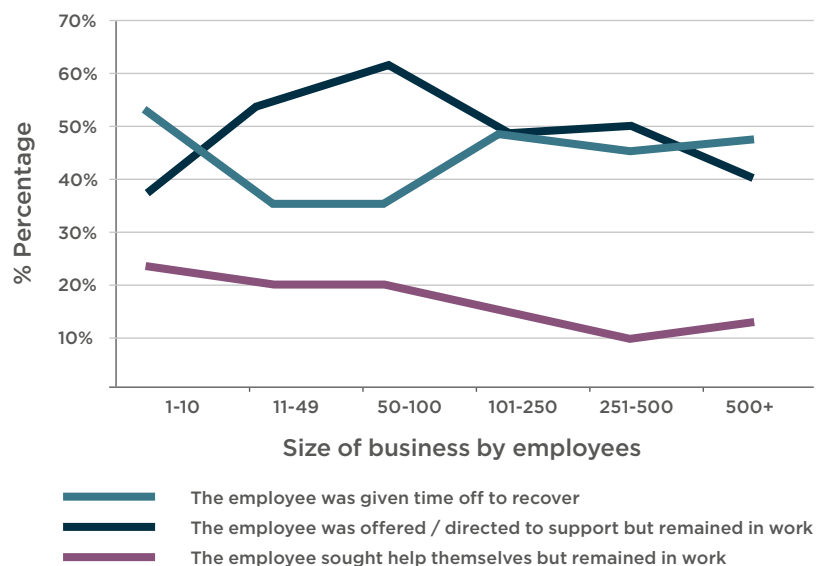
It's therefore not surprising that, when approached by employees with mental health issues, the size of a company will affect not just how a firm deals with it but who it brings alongside to help support the employee.

There are myriad ways to address somebody with mental health problems, but dividing into three – offering or directing support to an

54%
of IoD members have been approached by staff members with mental ill health¹⁰

What course of action did you take?*

- 36%** The employee was given time off to recover
- 48%** The employee was offered / directed to support but remained in work
- 10%** The employee sought help themselves but remained in work



¹⁰ Survey of IoD members through online Policy Voice Platform, 9-23 December 2016

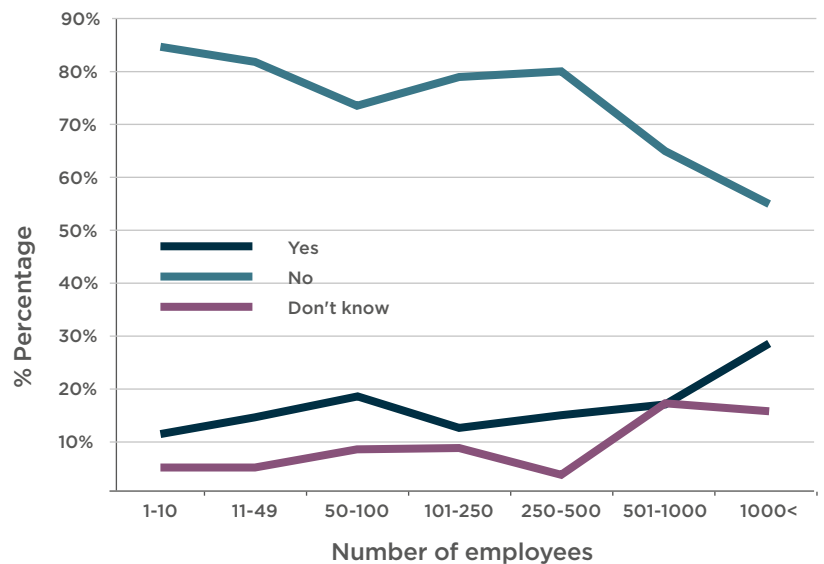
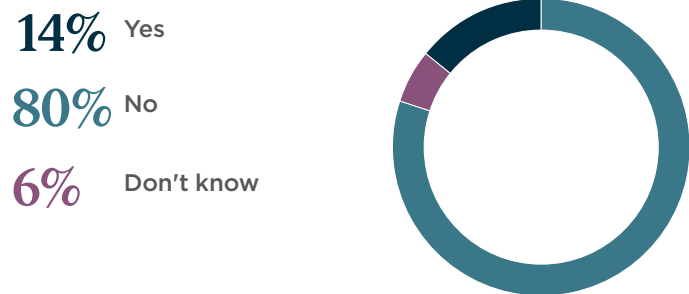
employee who stays in the workplace, giving time off to the employee, or expecting the employee to seek support themselves – offers some interesting results. Across the entire survey, almost half of employers gave employees time off, allowing them to get away from the stresses and pressures of the workplace. But unsurprisingly this overall figure hides some disparities.¹¹

It is notable that the smallest employers, those with fewer than 10 employees and often categorised as ‘micro-businesses’ are the least likely to give an employee time off to deal with mental health issues. This is not necessarily surprising: in a firm of between, say, three and seven employees, the importance of an individual staff member is necessarily higher. Extended time off may be the ideal solution, but not one that a business can afford. It becomes a more realistic option for organisations of 11-49 people, and more realistic still for those between 50-100. But after that size, the figure drops off – and the number of people being offered or directed to support increases. Why?

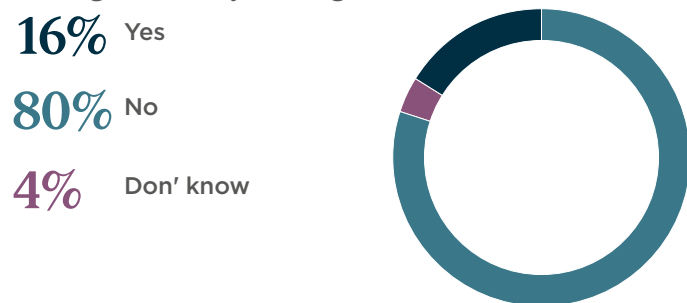
Businesses have for some time been encouraged to deploy formal mental health policies across their organisation. This would typically include details on who to talk to, how to ensure confidentiality, and a guarantee that any discussions around mental health would not impact on a company’s decision to promote or invest in training and development; not dissimilar to disability and diversity policies.

Yet businesses have been slow to respond. Indeed, fewer than one in six IoD members – just 14 per cent – have a formal mental health policy in place. This is a strikingly low number. However, there is relatively little deviation across the vast majority of businesses; only those in large corporate firms of more than 1,000 employees approach even the figure of one in three. Perhaps most strikingly, there are significant numbers of business leaders even inside those large corporate organisations – around one in five – who don’t know whether there is a mental health

Does your organisation have a formal mental health policy in place?¹²



Do you offer mental health training for management in your organisation?¹³



¹¹ Survey of IoD members through online Policy Voice Platform, 9-23 December 2016

¹² Survey of IoD members through online Policy Voice Platform, June 2016

¹³ Survey of IoD members through online Policy Voice Platform, 9-23 December 2016

policy in place at all. This suggests that significant work needs to be done to ensure better internal communication of mental health strategies where they exist. In short, there is little value in having a mental health framework in place if even senior leaders know little about it. It should be noted that ‘wellbeing’ policies are often very different to what a mental health policy might look like.

While mental health remains an occasionally difficult topic to get to grips with, perhaps the most accepted element is the idea that prevention is certainly better than cure. Early warning signs – be they increasingly obvious stress, ‘crabbiness’, absenteeism or increases in smoking or alcohol consumption – may not always signal mental ill health, but often do. As such, many mental health charities encourage employers to offer relevant training throughout their organisation, but specifically to line managers. Do they?

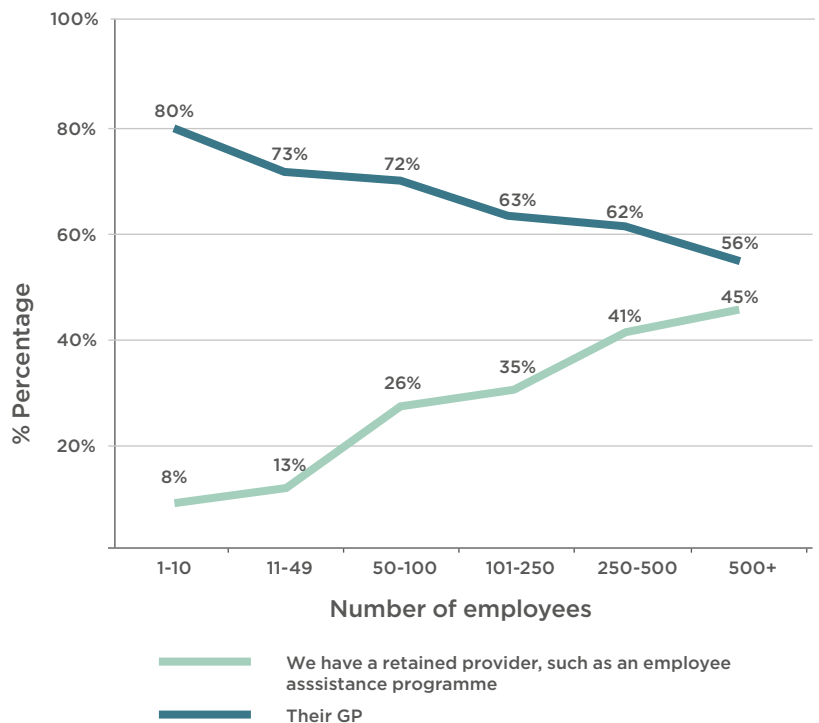
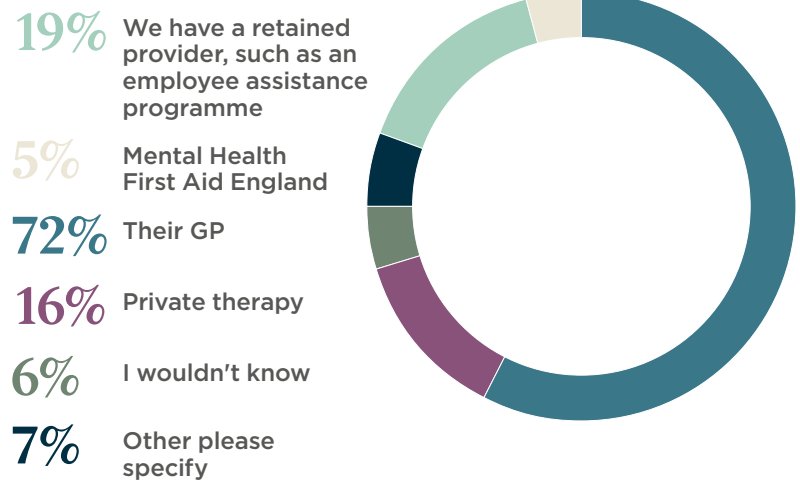
The answer, again, is not enough. Despite the provision of resources from charities and government-backed campaigns, fewer than one in five IoD members lead or work in organisations which provide mental health guidance, advice or training.

The last backstop on mental health provision – what happens when an employee actually talks to an employer and the support suggested to that employee – presents an equally mixed picture. Across IoD members, some three-quarters (72 per cent) would suggest their employee see their GP. Again, though, this hides dramatic differences between companies of different sizes in particular with regards to retained providers.¹⁴

It is perhaps unsurprising that the largest firms are more likely to have retained providers such as an employee assistance programme; such programmes do, after all, come with resource costs. But it is striking how reliant smaller organisations are on GPs as their first port of call.

This matters for mental health because there is a growing body of evidence that GPs are not, in all cases, as effectively trained as they should be in

Where would you refer an employee with mental ill health too?*



¹⁴ Survey of IoD members through online Policy Voice Platform, 9-23 December 2016

understanding mental health. A recent report from Mind, *Better Equipped, Better Care*, revealed that 46 per cent of trainee GPs undertook a training placement in a mental health setting, and *none* of the hours that GPs spend on continued professional development need to have a mental health component. More than two in five practice nurses – 42 per cent – have had no mental health training at all.¹⁵ Mind's report quotes one depression and anxiety disorder sufferer whose experience may, sadly, be all too typical:

"Like lots of people my age, I've moved around a lot, rarely seeing the same GP twice. The best experience I had was a GP who was sympathetic, but referred me on to services that never materialised. But the majority of GPs haven't properly understood me when I've tried to tell them how I'm feeling. As a result, it's taking me many years to get the right diagnoses, help and support. Often I'm told they can't do anything and am turned away. If mental health problems are spotted sooner, they're a lot easier to treat."

In short, while for stretched employers it may be the easiest option, simply referring staff to their GP is not a sufficient response to mental health challenges in the workplace. Central and local government must do much more to ensure GPs are adequately equipped, and do a better job of communicating pre-existing schemes to Britain's employers so they are able to offer more support and better advice to their staff.

The employer/employee disconnect

Even in organisations where mental health training for line management – a kind of early-warning system – is in place, there is still the chance that somebody with mental ill health may go unnoticed. The great problem with mental health remains that its symptoms are often invisible; while nobody would ask somebody with a broken leg in a plastercast to do a coffee round, we can unknowingly give similarly impossible tasks to people who are suffering from mental ill health.

It's crucial therefore that employers make more

of an effort to demonstrate their openness to talking about mental health, no matter their size.

A recent survey by the insurer Legal & General found that less than 10 per cent of employees who have experienced depression, unacceptably high level of pressure or anger feel able to talk to their manager or superior about it.¹⁶ This contrasts with employers – 78 per cent of whom believe their employees would feel comfortable talking to them about their mental health. Another survey of City workers found that seven in 10 believe that asking for help or support would 'look weak' and hurt their career.¹⁷

Clearly, there is a disconnect. Employees' fears that they may be discriminated against if they express concerns about their own mental health clearly plays a part, as does our biggest and particularly British enemy: our desire not to 'make a fuss'. Mental ill health remains arguably the last great taboo in British society and business.

In 2015, Ruby Wax told *The Times*: "You have to lie. If you have someone who is physically ill, they can't fire you. They can't fire you for mental health problems but they'll say it's for another reason." Mental ill health in the workplace is now, she said, "like the situation used to be with gay rights".

Anecdotal evidence from IoD members suggests such statements are distinctly overblown. But there is no doubt that the fear of not being promoted or being thought of differently as a result of discussing mental health in the workplace may mean that individuals don't put their heads above the parapet in the way that they might for physical health.

This is why the lack of mental health policies or training is so worrying. Just as with any entrenched belief – in this case, that admitting mental ill health is bad for your career – to change it individuals must go out of their way to send a clear message that change has come. Employers can no longer be passive players on mental health, waiting for people to come to them.

¹⁵ Mind, *Better equipped, better care*, 2016

¹⁶ *City AM*, "Fewer than 1 in 10 UK employees would discuss mental health with a manager", 20 February 2017

¹⁷ MetLife Employee Benefits Research, "Don't talk about stress in the City", October 2016

Founders themselves

"It's like a man riding a lion. People look at him and think, this guy's really got it together! He's brave! But the man riding the lion is thinking, how the hell did I get on a lion, and how do I keep from getting eaten?"

Toby Thomas, CEO, Ensite Solutions

Building a business from scratch is not easy, and setbacks can be found in every direction. Even the most successful entrepreneurs – those who are "riding the lion" – will have sometimes wondered whether the risk they've taken to start their businesses will pay off.

Such stresses are more common than ever. With bank funding rarely the main source of finance for new firms, many entrepreneurs are piling up personal debt on credit cards or borrowing from friends and family. The pressure of not just financing a firm but ensuring that people close to you don't lose their shirt in the process, bearing in mind that the loan itself is often founded on trust, is significant.

The start-up ecosystem in the United States has been shocked out of its complacency by a string of suicides in recent years. The popular entrepreneur Jody Sherman, the founder and CEO of EcoMom, killed himself in January 2013; the firm had run into financial pressures, though we don't know the cause of his suicide. It was the first of three 'start-up suicides' in the Las Vegas tech hub, Downtown Project, in just a year. It followed the death of Ilya Zhitomirskiy, co-founder of Diaspora, two years earlier. Austin Heinz, founder of successful science firm Cambrian Genetics, killed himself in 2015. This is, regrettably, by no means an exhaustive list.

Perhaps it is no surprise that one of the first studies into mental health and entrepreneurs saw a marked difference between founders and the public at large, with some 49 per cent of the former reporting a mental health condition, compared to just 32 per cent of others, with depression the most common condition.¹⁸ A similar survey in the UK suggests that a quarter of small business owners have taken time away from the office as a result of stress and burnout.¹⁹

As Britain's start-up community continues to thrive and grow, with entrepreneurs founding some 80 businesses an hour in 2016, it is crucially important that we look to the US and attempt to learn the lessons, where we can. The first response of many in the entrepreneurial community has been both the easiest and the most difficult; talking, openly, about problems.

Case study



Mark Atkinson

Clugston Construction is one of the UK's largest privately owned building and civil engineering contractors, based just outside Scunthorpe.

They've a long-standing reputation for being at the forefront of health and safety, and in line with this, Mark Atkinson, health and safety manager for Clugston, has been pushing mental health up the agenda too.

After a meeting of senior management in 2016, Clugston's leadership appointed 'mental health champions' at each of their sites to increase awareness and provide guidance. In addition to putting branded posters around their sites, provided by a number of mental health charities, employees were asked to fill out a short mental health survey. The survey suggested that the company's colleagues had good mental health, but identified a few who felt differently. They were encouraged to talk to their line manager, staff in HR or in health and safety, or an appropriate colleague. Confidentiality was key throughout. Atkinson says:

"In the construction and engineering industry, employees can be even more reluctant to discuss their mental health than in other industries. But we wanted to demonstrate that we were open to talking and having conversations about stress as much as we wanted to ensure health and safety.

"We've asked a postgraduate student to analyse the results of our survey, and we hope it'll give us even greater insight into our staff's welfare. But one thing is clear – while employers have a real duty of care on mental health, there's a business case too. A less stressed, happier workforce is invariably a more productive one."

¹⁸ Michael Freeman, "Are entrepreneurs touched with fire?", 2015

¹⁹ *Simply Business*, "Work-life balance", August 2015

What next?

The IoD of course recognises the huge pressures on employers, especially those running small businesses. It is not easy to balance the need to grow and scale up with personnel challenges. However, as we've said, the world of work has changed. It's more important than ever that employees are encouraged to talk.

Business leaders should institute formal mental health and wellbeing policies

In order to change the culture of silence that still persists around mental health, business leaders must do more to demonstrate that talking about mental health concerns will not hurt an employee's career. While with some legal jiggery-pokery the Equality Act can be made to apply to mental health, with regards to non-discrimination due to disability, good employers of all sizes should go further than the law requires and actively make clear that in their businesses, talking about mental ill health is as normal as talking about the accounts.

Boards should appoint a non-executive director to work with the executive team to ensure mental health openness is culturally installed across an organisation

Where a business has reached a sufficient size that it has a board structure in place, consideration should be given to appointing a specific individual director to monitor the work of the executive team in ensuring that the organisation is open to discussions around mental health. This non-binding responsibility is a key element in ensuring that cultural change is led from the top. Alternative methods which may work for other businesses could mean that 'cultural mental health' is added as a standing point on board meeting agendas.

Government should trial a training scheme for small business owners to develop mental health policies

For many SME leaders, mental health remains a minefield. Some are so scared of using the 'wrong' language that they put mental health in the 'too hard' box. In order to break down these barriers of understanding, central government should fund initiatives in two or three major cities to train SME

leaders in mental health awareness. These schemes should involve light-touch, relatively short awareness training pointing out best practice and trends in workplace mental health, and provide a toolkit for developing greater awareness. These schemes should be run by selected charity organisations, with support from local business champions such as regional directors of the Institute of Directors, the CBI, the Federation of Small Business and the British Chambers of Commerce etc, to ensure the greatest possible buy-in from the business community.

Government should make greater efforts to communicate existing schemes, such as Time to Change, to a wider range of businesses

One of the most arresting statistics gleaned from IoD member surveys was the startling fact that, over a year, only one in five of our members had been made aware of any single initiative led by the then-Department for Business, Innovation and Skills.

This rather suggests why so many well-meaning Whitehall schemes fail to have the transformative effect they might have; simply put, not enough business leaders know about them. And while this is an issue when it comes to tax incentive schemes such as the Seed Enterprise Investment Scheme (which less than a third of IoD members have heard of), it is also a problem when it relates to campaigns like Time to Talk Day, which takes place in February.

As such, the government should work with Companies House and HMRC to deliver a mental health awareness toolkit to every employing business in the country, making it clear that supporting mental health awareness does not have to cost a penny, but does require increased conversation around the topic in the workplace.

Further, the government should work with all organisations which have a significant footprint within the business community to continue this work, cascading mental health advice to members of trade associations and business representative groups.

Institute of Directors

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The Institute of Directors

The IoD has been supporting businesses and the people who run them since 1903. As the UK's longest running and leading business organisation, the IoD is dedicated to supporting its members, encouraging entrepreneurial activity, and promoting responsible business practice for the benefit of the business community and society as a whole.

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