

The facts versus the myths around staff with mental health problems returning to work after sickness absence.

1. What is the most significant cause of long-term absence among non-manual staff?

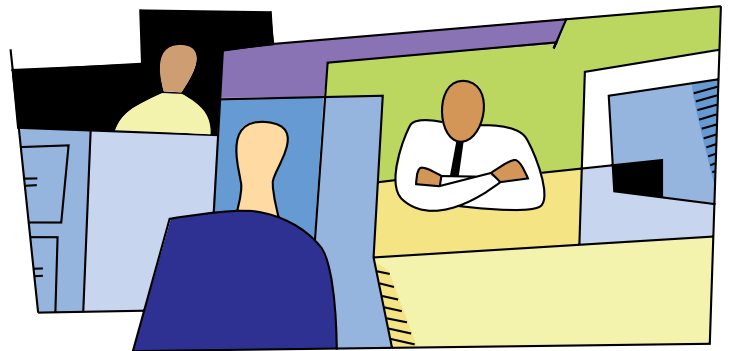
- A. Work-related stress?
- B. Non-work related mental ill health?
- C. Back pain?

2. How many days are lost due to sickness absence related to mental health problems each year in England?

- A. 700,000
- B. 17 million
- C. 70 million

3. How much does this sickness absence cost businesses in the UK each year?

- A. £2.4 million
- B. £19 million
- C. £8.4 billion



4. People with mental health problems returning to work after sickness absence are more likely to;

- A. A) Go off sick again
- B. B) Be demoted or placed under close supervision
- C. C) Do a poorer job than before

5. Approximately, what percentage of people who have distressing psychotic experiences at some time in their lives remain permanently affected by them?

- A. A) 25%
- B. B) 50%
- C. C) 75%

6. What risk do people with mental health problems have of losing their job compared with the general population?

- A. A) Twice the risk
- B. B) Four times the risk
- C. C) The risk is the same

7. Out of those people with mental health problems who have lost their jobs but that do manage to re-turn to work, what percentage have less responsibility, work fewer hours and are paid less than before?

- A. A) 27%
- B. B) 68%
- C. C) 89%

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## Answers

### 1. B.

Non-work related mental ill health, including stress, anxiety and depression, is the most significant cause of long-term absence among non-manual staff, (72%). Among manual staff it was found to be the second strongest factor (63%).

*CBI in association with AXA (2007) CBI/AXA Attending to Absence: Absence and Labour Turnover Survey. London: CBI*

### 2. C.

An estimated 70 million working days are lost every year in sickness absence related to mental health problems – an average of nearly three days for every employee.

*(Sainsbury Centre for Mental Health (2007) Policy Paper 8: Mental Health at Work: Developing the business case. London: Sainsbury Centre for Mental Health)*

### 3. C.

Mental illness costs employers an estimated £26 billion each year; over £8.4 billion a year in sickness absence; £15.1 billion a year in reduced productivity at work; £2.4 billion a year in replacing staff. This is all equivalent to £1,035 for every employee in the UK workforce. It is thought that simple measures could easily save employers about a third of these costs.

*(Sainsbury Centre for Mental Health (2007) Policy Paper 8: Mental Health at Work: Developing the business case. London: Sainsbury Centre for Mental Health)*

### 4. B.

People with mental health problems returning to work after sickness absence are more likely to be demoted or placed under close supervision (*The Royal College of Psychiatrists (2008). Mental Health and Work. London: The Royal College of Psychiatrists*) Contrary to the perception that people with mental health problems will do a poorer job and take a lot of sickness absence, research actually shows that once given the chance, employees take less sick leave than average and demonstrate strong loyalty towards their employer.

### 5. A.

Less than a quarter of people who have distressing psychotic experiences at some time in their lives remain permanently affected by them. (*The British Psychological Society (2000) Recent advances in understanding mental illness and psychotic experiences. Leicester: The British Psychological Society.*) The vast majority of people who have experienced a mental health problem continue or return to work successfully. Just because someone is diagnosed with a mental health problem like Schizophrenia, it does not mean that they cannot work or are unable to work.

### 6. A.

People with mental health problems are at more than twice the risk of losing their jobs compared with the general population.

*(Social Exclusion Unit (2004) Mental Health and Social Exclusion. London: Office of the Deputy Prime Minister)*

### 7. B.

Of those people with mental health problems who have lost their jobs, 55% make unsuccessful attempts to return to work and of those that do return, 68% have less responsibility, work fewer hours and are paid less than before.

*(Mental Health Foundation (2003) Life's Labours Lost: Project Summaries pp2-3. London: Mental Health Foundation)*