

Common mental health problems at work: What we now know about successful interventions. A progress review

Review methodology

Sainsbury Centre has carried out two reviews of the evidence on interventions for working age adults with common mental health problems. This paper sets out the detail of the methodology that was used in the two reviews.

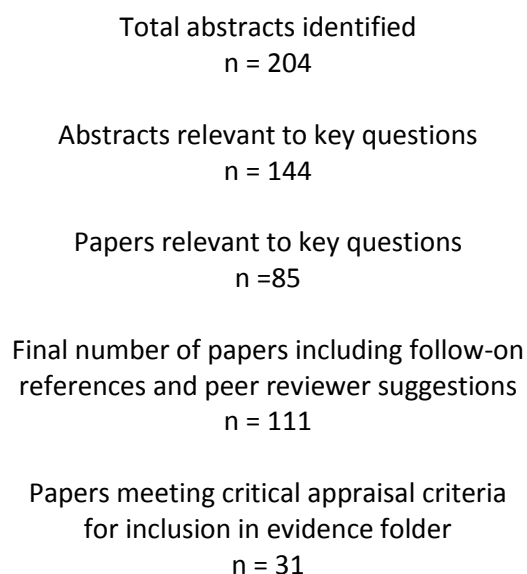
The evidence review 2005

In 2005 we undertook a systematic review of the research literature on workplace interventions for people with common mental health problems (Seymour & Grove, 2005) funded and published by the British Occupational Health Research Foundation (BOHRF). We included experimental studies as well as cohort studies, case studies, participative action research and non-intervention studies.

We searched the international literature published in English between 1980 and 2004 using key databases and a range of search terms (**Appendix A**). We also agreed inclusion and exclusion criteria that were applied to the search process (**Appendix B**).

After the first round of sifting we reduced the 15,000 identified studies to just over 200, and then finally to 111 relevant papers, including some follow-on references from the initial papers. Critical appraisal by a panel of experts resulted in 31 papers meeting the final criteria (**Appendix C**).

Figure 1: Flow chart for study selection 2005

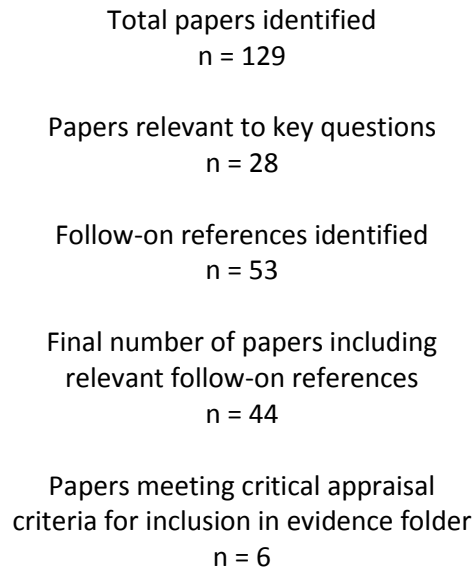


A recognised grading system, the Scottish Intercollegiate Guidelines Network (SIGN), was used to score these papers, and their strength of the evidence was rated using the Royal College of General Practitioners (RCGP) three-star system.

The 2008 progress review

We have now updated the 2005 review, with papers published since 2004 until the end of 2008, using the same databases and search criteria as in the 2005 review. We identified 129 papers that were of possible interest, 28 of which were relevant for the review. An additional 53 references from these studies were singled out for follow-up, and of these 16 were relevant to the progress review.

Figure 2: Flow chart for study selection 2008



Each paper was read and appraised by two reviewers who jointly decided on inclusion, exclusion or referral to a different reviewer (**Appendix C**).

We also approached several academic research groups who were known to be carrying out work in this area, to enquire as to the current status of their research studies. Several groups published the results of their work outside our timeframe after the end of 2008. These research findings informed the progress review discussion (Seymour, 2010).

Appendix A: Data bases and search terms

Databases Searched

PsychInfo, NIOSHTIC, CISDOC, MEDLINE, CINAHL, Sociofile, ASSIA, IBSS, Cochrane, Business Source Premier, Emerald, PubMed and EMBASE

Search Terms Table

Health +	Occupational +/-	Context
"mental health problems"	Work	intervention
"mental ill health"	Employment	management
"mental illness"	Occupati*	rehabilitation
Depression	"sickness absence"	"help(-)seeking"
Anxiety	"job retention"	"case manag**"
Stress	workplace	preventi*
"sickness certification"	"occupational health"	policy
psychological well-being	counselling	risk
mental distress	Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT)	primary care
disability	Employee Assistance Programmes (EAP)	health and safety
Psychiatric disorder	Stress management	mental health policies
Common mental disorder	Psychosocial	Integrated working
Side effects of medication	Job retention services	Audit
Adjustment disorders	Anti-discrimination	Productivity
Coping	Anti-stigma	Cost
Psychological disorder	Workplace adjustments	Pace of change
Mental disorder	Accommodation	Change
Psychological problems	Work readiness	
Restoring function	Work hardening	
	Redeployment	
	Return to work	
	Employee health programme evaluation	
	Capability	
	Employability	
	Workability	
	Job Loss	
	Work Loss	
	Enablement	
	Empowerment	
	Reintegration	

Appendix B: Inclusion and exclusion criteria

Quantitative Studies

Inclusions

English language

1980-2004 (April)

Randomised Controlled Trials (RCTs)

Systematic reviews

Cohort studies

Quasi-experimental studies

Exclusions

Interventions that include *ONLY* pharmacology

Interventions dealing *ONLY* with severe/enduring mental health problems

Interventions dealing *ONLY* with psychotic disorder

Interventions dealing *ONLY* with people with learning disabilities

Studies dealing *ONLY* with substance or alcohol abuse

Editorials

Studies using clear criteria for definition of Mild to Moderate Mental Health Problems (may include questionnaire scores where the defining questionnaire is accepted as valid and reliable)

Intervention evaluation studies

Interventions aimed at individuals

Interventions aimed at management role

Meta analysis studies

Evidence of systematic research process
Sufficient data to assess validity

Interventions based in primary care settings

Interventions based in community settings

Dissertations

Policy documents

Book reviews

Single case studies

Sample sizes <50 (unless strong effect sizes)

Unclear research question

Unclear outcome measures

Data collected at only one point in time

Interventions based in psychiatric settings

Qualitative Evaluations & Studies

Inclusions

All sample sizes

English language

1980-2004 (April)

Evidence of systematic research process

Sufficient data to assess validity

Exclusions

Unclear/unfocused research objectives

Unclear/unfocused outcome reports

Appendix C: Critical appraisal form

Author, Title etc

Study Type (tick all that apply)

Randomised controlled trial

Systematic review

Meta-analysis

Qualitative research

Literature review

Case study

Cohort study

Other

(please describe)

SCREENING QUESTIONS

1. Does the paper have a clearly

focused aim or research question? Yes () No () Can't tell ()

Consider: population studied, interventions delivered, outcomes, relevance of research

2. Is the chosen method appropriate? Yes () No () Can't tell ()

Consider whether: the authors explain their research design, the chosen method addresses the research question

Is it worth continuing? Yes () No ()

PLEASE EXPLAIN

DETAILED QUESTIONS

3. Has the research been conducted rigorously?

Yes () No () Can't tell ()

Consider: search strategy described, inclusions and exclusions, more than one researcher, resolving issues of bias

4. Is it clear how data has been analysed? Yes () No () Can't tell ()

Consider: were study results combined, if so was this reasonable, in-depth description of the analysis process, all participants accounted for, contradictory findings explained

5. Is there a clear statement of findings? Yes () No () Can't tell ()

Consider: sufficient evidence to support conclusions, do findings support the research question, precision of results, all important variables considered

6. How are the results presented?

Consider: are the results presented numerically, i.e. p-value, OR (odds ratio) are the results presented narratively

7. What is the main result?

Consider: how large is the size of the result, how meaningful is the result, how would you sum up the bottom-line result in one sentence

8. Are there limitations to the research? Yes () No () Can't tell ()

Consider: was the sample size large enough, were all important outcomes considered, was the intervention process adequately described, was there any follow-up data, do the authors acknowledge weaknesses

9. Can the results be applied to a UK context? Yes () No () Can't tell ()

Consider: any discussion on how the findings can be used, findings considered in relation to current practice, estimation of benefits and costs

ACCEPT FOR INCLUSION AS EVIDENCE Yes () No () Can't tell ()

REFER FOR FURTHER SCRUTINY Yes () No ()

References

Seymour, L. & Grove, B. (2005) *Workplace Interventions for People with Common Mental Health Problems*. London: British Occupational Health Research Foundation. (www.bohrf.org.uk/downloads/cmh_rev.pdf)

Seymour, L. (2010) *Common Mental Health Problems at Work: What we now know about successful interventions. A progress review*. London: Sainsbury Centre for Mental Health. (www.scmh.org.uk)