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**STRICT EMBARGO: NOT FOR PRINT OR BROADCAST BEFORE 7PM (BST) ON WEDNESDAY 17 JULY 2024**

**Mental health training for line managers linked to better business performance, says new study**

Mental health training for line managers is strongly linked to better business performance, and it could save companies millions of pounds in lost sick days every year, according to new research led by experts at the University of Nottingham, carried out as a part of a larger programme of work on mental health and productivity that is being led by the Enterprise Research Centre.

The results of the study, which are published in *PLOS ONE,* showed a strong association between mental health training for line managers and improved staff recruitment and retention, better customer service, and lower levels of long-term mental health sickness absence.

The study was led by Professor Holly Blake from the School of Health Sciences at the University of Nottingham and Dr Juliet Hassard of Queen’s University Belfast.

Professor Blake said: “Mental ill-health at work is costly to organisations in terms of sickness absence and lost productivity. To our knowledge, this is the first study to show that training line managers in mental health is linked to better business outcomes. This is an important finding that strengthens the business case for why employers should invest in mental health at work.”

In the UK one in six workers experience mental health challenges, with 12.7% of all sick days attributed to mental ill-health. The estimated cost of poor employee mental health to British employers is over £50 billion, annually.

Mental health training for line managers aims to give them the skills to support the mental health of the people they manage. Ongoing research is exploring whether such training increases the knowledge, skills and confidence of managers to support their staff and benefits employees. However, few studies have addressed its potential business value for companies.

To explore the benefits, the group of researchers analysed anonymised survey data from several thousand companies in England collected between 2020 and 2023 by the ERC as a part of a larger programme of research on workplace mental health and productivity funded by the ESRC. The survey included questions about the companies’ mental health and well-being practices, including whether they offered mental health training to line managers. To avoid errors in their analysis, the researchers statistically controlled for the age, sector, and size of the companies.

The results suggest that mental health training for line managers may hold strategic business value for companies. Based on their findings, the researchers recommend that organisations provide mental health training to line managers and institute workplace policies that clarify the line managers’ role in supporting employee mental health.

Meanwhile, the researchers outline the need for further research in this area, including looking into different approaches to delivering mental health training for line managers.

Dr Juliet Hassard from Queen’s Business School at Queen’s Belfast University, and co-author of the study, said: “Encouraging employers to invest in employee mental health can be challenging. Knowing that improving line managers’ knowledge, skills and confidence in managing mental health at work is linked to better business outcomes will help to highlight the strategic value this approach to employers.”

**ENDS**

**Once the embargo lifts – the full study can be found here -** <https://journals.plos.org/plosone/article?id=10.1371/journal.pone.0306065>

**More information** is available from **Professor Holly Blake** in the **School of Health Sciences** at the University of Nottingham at holly.blake@nottingham.ac.uk or **Charlotte Anscombe**, Media Relations Manager in the Press Office at the University of Nottingham, on **+44 (0)115 74 84417**, **charlotte.anscombe@nottingham.ac.uk**

**Notes to editors:**

The study analyses data collected by the Enterprise Research Centre as a part of a larger research programme on mental health and productivity that was initially funded by the Midlands Engine, and then the Economic and Social Research Council. More information about the wider programme is available here - <https://www.enterpriseresearch.ac.uk/esrc-mental-health-well-being-practices-outcomes-productivity-project/>