*Powering Improvement Workshop - Managing Occupational Ill Health*

*19th October 2016*

## Introduction

**Peter McCormick (ENA)**

Peter McCormick provided an overview of the development and implementation of Phase 1 of Powering Improvement 2020 – 2015, which was in part founded on the results of HSL research. The strategy has been driven by partnership working which has led to mature relationships and an aspiration to work collectively for the common good, share experiences and learn together.

Powering Improvement was aligned with the messages of Leadership, Competence and Worker Involvement within the HSE strategy 'Be Part of the Solution'. Powering Improvement Phase 2 (2015 – 2020) now maintains the line of sight with the new GB strategy 'Helping Great Britain Work Well', which features Powering Improvement as a case study in the 'Acting Together' theme. The use of annual themes and Champions continues to be adopted and this has helped maintain momentum and the ambition to continue to drive down incidents in the industry.

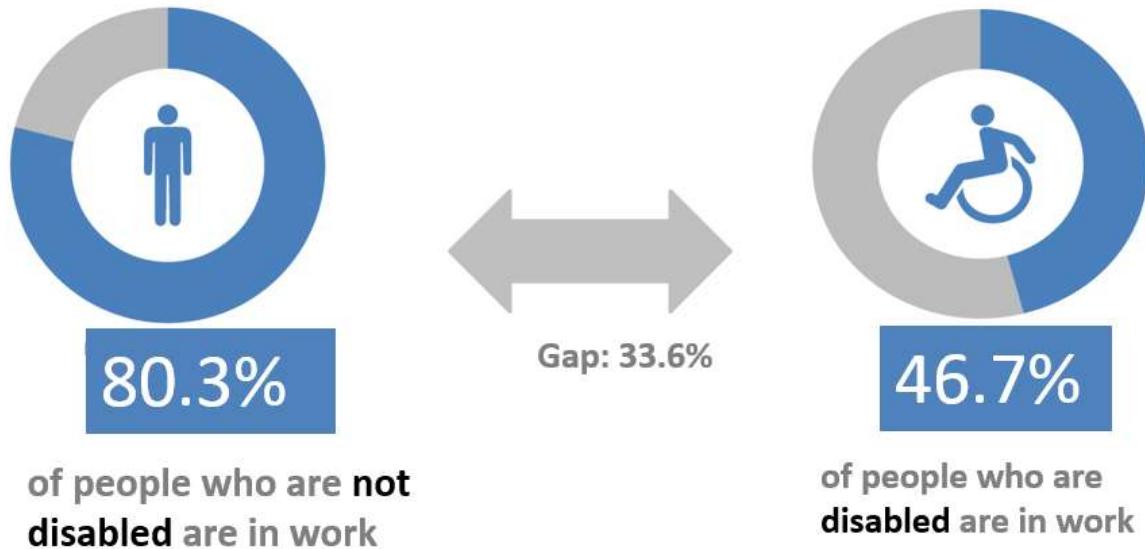## Government view – DWP Health and Work Unit

**Deborah Jamieson (DWP)**

Deborah provided an overview of the new Work & Health Unit, which is an amalgamation of programmes from DWP, Department of Health and the Devolved Administrations. The Government is setting out the 'case for change' to enable all individuals to have the opportunity to work and share in the health benefits that work brings. The aim is to prevent the spiral of ill health and unemployment and provide support and interventions to people at an earlier stage. There is a need to improve health outcomes, embed prevention, integrate systems and encourage proactive engagement by employers.

Available budgets are being provided to fund a Work & Health Innovation Fund, a Mental Health & Employment Social Impact Fund and also Employment Advisers as part of Improving Access to Psychological Therapies (IAPT). This includes working with the NHS and testing interventions and delivery models.

There is a need to engage employers and raise awareness to help them attract and retain staff who have disabilities or pre-existing health conditions. This can involve larger employers, supply chains and SMEs and there are good case studies available. For example E.ON's Headway project and Airbus working in partnership with a mental health trust, and these have resulted in measurable reductions in sickness absence. The Government's Challenge Project is similarly designed to address the issue of long term sickness absence and tackle its negative effects on the individual.

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The DWP Secretary of State announced in May that the Government will publish a Green Paper in 2016 on Work and Health. This will provide a platform to bring together existing work and help shape the policy approach going forward, test trials and interventions and reframe the discussion with disabled people; Deborah invited delegates and companies to provide feedback at the consultation stage.

**80.3%**
of people who are **not disabled** are in work

Gap: 33.6%

**46.7%**
of people who are **disabled** are in work

*Industry wide view*

**Geoff Earl (Northern Powergrid & 2016 Powering Improvement Champion)**

Geoff set out the vision to promote health with a capital 'H' as well as safety with a capital 'S'. There is a need to build the case for occupational health improvement, be ambitious but realistic about what can be achieved and promote the benefits to companies. Businesses have the capacity to introduce and manage health programmes whilst ENA can help facilitate a collaborative approach at national level.

Figures on working days lost to ill health demonstrate that the cost of poor health is significant, and data from both HSE for the electricity industry and the Office of National Statistics for pubic regional data further reinforces this fact.

MSDs and mental ill health issues (anxiety, stress, depression etc.) are typically the top two health risks within the electricity sector, and so Powering Improvement and its national sphere of influence should be used to reach out to all workers and contractors in the industry.

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The original focus in 2011 was on six Commitments covering board level commitment on health, the top three industry health risks, health surveillance, stress, MSDs and approaches to rehabilitation. Now in 2016 the Delivery Plan sets on the means for further collaboration, and routes for reducing incidents of occupational ill health and promoting health and wellbeing. This will be achieved through a series of Outputs and Outcomes and the delivery of a programme of events, training and health promotion activities. The work will lead to the collation of examples of successful member company initiatives and case studies, and the publication of a 'Journey on Health' roadmap.

## *Employer case study*

### Anna Rowland (National Grid)

Anna outlined work within National Grid on a Type 2 diabetes campaign to increase employees' awareness of the issue, thereby both improving the general health of the population and providing support to a targeted group with chronic health conditions.

The case for raising awareness is driven by the projection that 1 in 10 people will be affected by 2040 and that already 4 million people have the condition in the UK. Key risk factors are weight, high blood sugar level and high blood pressure. Notably weight problems can lead to the development of 10 chronic diseases (cancers, heart disease etc.)

The campaign resulted in 1,000 people taking the new Qdiabetes test on National Grid's Wellpoint health check machines with over 600 people having a medium or high relative risk of developing type 2 diabetes. Positive feedback from staff has prompted individual action and this was highlighted via a video case study from one employee, which helped outlined the process from initial diagnosis and the impact on work life through to routes to tackling the issue through diet and activity.

The focus for the future is now on encouraging healthy behaviours, the development of technology, introduction of weight management programmes, promotion of healthy catering and continued education about the disease.

## *Business in the Community (BITC)*

### Stephanie Schreiber (BITC)

Stephanie delivered a presentation setting out the headline results from an extensive National Employee Mental Wellbeing Survey that had been conducted by BITC. This was a collaborative piece of work headed up by the BITC Wellbeing Leadership Team and supported by their sponsors, including National Grid.

The survey covered 3,000 full and part-time employees across all industries, size and UK regions, and was supported by a further 16,000 responses to an open access survey. The focus was on mental health and wellbeing in the workplace looking at the role of line managers, the culture of organisations, training issues and actions that can be taken in response to the issues and the findings.

The overriding message is that there a high percentage of employees experience mental health symptoms and work is often a contributing factor. This is higher for women and for large companies, with 24% individuals reporting an issue in the last month. Unfortunately this is matched by a low level of support from the workplace with just 25% people receiving help from workplace sources. Respondents indicated that they are more likely to receive help form family and friends; employees do not feel confident in or trust their company in this area and there is limited engagement with line managers, colleagues, EAP services or occupational health OH advisers.

A key issue is that managers do not feel equipped to deal with mental health issues with 25% receiving no support, whist also acknowledging the role they can play here. However, only 1 in 5 think there are no barriers to supporting mental health in the workplace and 1 in 3 do not feel confident that they would even recognise the symptoms. There is a low level of training here too; only 9% managers have attended a mental health course, but 81% want to know more, to be trained or receive more support on mental health and wellbeing.

The key findings are that we all have mental health and many of us will experience symptoms related to work. However, there is a disconnect between aspiration and reality particularly on training, and a pervasive culture of silence exists with few feeling confident in raising the issue with their manager. So we need to Talk, Train and Take Action in the workplace.

The full report can be found via the following link:
http://wellbeing.bitc.org.uk/all-resources/research-articles

## HSE view

### Geoff Cox (HSE)

Geoff provided an update from HSE's perspective on work by the regulator in this field. It is important when dealing with health that working relationships and support are reciprocated both ways; from HSE to industry and from industry to HSE. There has been good engagement from stakeholders in the development of the GB H&S Strategy 'Helping Great Britain Work Well', and this needs to be replicated for the HSE Occupational Health Strategy, which will be launched in 2017.

The current timeline of engagement includes a 'Commitments' event on 24th November at which HSE will publish and launch an Action Plan in support of the GB Strategy. An internal consultation by the HSE Board is also underway on the Occupational Health Strategy, which is due to be cleared by 1st December to be followed by a soft launch to stakeholders. HSE is also developing priorities for a Health & Work Strategy which will address mental health, lung diseases and other key health related issues.

As ever there is a real need for partnership here across Government, the Devolved Administrations and industry sectors. It will be industry to take the lead as those who create the risks need to manage the risk, but HSE can offer tangible 'spirit and momentum' to the management of occupational ill health to all organisations who are committed to and are investing in this journey. Increasingly this will require a greater application and use of cross-sector learning to help share experiences and knowledge for the benefit of all.

## *Communicating on Health*

### Powering Improvement partners

Representatives from a number of Trade Unions, Energy UK and ENA member companies provided short overviews of their organisations' commitment to and initiatives on occupational health and wellbeing. This was designed to showcase the variety and extent of work being carried out in this field to improve employees' and contractors' health in the workplace.

The accompanying presentation slides give a snapshot of some of the challenges faced by businesses, and the programmes that have been introduced to both raise awareness of and help tackle the identified health issues. This has resulted in a number of tools, campaigns and communication routes to help raise the profile of health, leading to some novel use of innovation and technology and increased levels of engagement throughout the workforce.

Full details of these initiatives and programmes will be included with the Powering Improvement 2016 Annual Report and SHE Review, which will be published at the ENA SHE Management Conference in May 2017.

"**Communicating on Health**"

## *'Journey on Health'*

Geoff Earl introduced a piece of work being undertaken in support of the 2016 Powering Improvement theme of 'Managing Occupational Ill Health'. One of the main outputs for this year is to develop an industry roadmap illustration on the 'Journey on Health' to extend throughout the lifetime of the Powering Improvement initiative 2015-2020. This is intended to become a living repository for resources and information that people can both access and contribute to for a period of time. This will be incorporated into the existing Powering Improvement website and is being developed as part of the 2016 theme.

The roadmap illustration will be divided into the main categories of occupational health risks and management routes, and currently available tools and resources will be allocated to the appropriate theme to help guide users along a logical road of managing these health risks.

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The six main categories that form part of a Healthy Workplace are:

- Occupational Health Management;

- Physical Wellbeing;

- Mental Wellbeing;

- External engagement;

- Powering Improvement;

- Future health risks.

Delegates divided into groups to discuss some of these categories highlighting the key issues, interventions and control measures that should form part of a mature response to the health risks within the electricity industry. These will be fed into the design of the Journey Roadmap, and further consultation will be conducted via means of a workshop questionnaire that accompanies this report.

### *Future challenges*

**Dr Greg Irons (Occupational Health Advisory Group)**

Greg rounded off the workshop by looking ahead to the future management of occupational health and the challenges that will be faced, not only in terms of emerging health risks to the workforce, but also increasingly the lack of available competent resource to tackle these risks effectively.

There are currently insufficient numbers of occupational health practitioners, which was reflected in the make-up of the workshop audience and, whilst some companies have developed OH services, most companies do not possess this capability. This comes at a time when mental health issues are on the increase, and MSDs will continue to be an issue in any area where automation has not replaced manual activity.

With respect to the health resources a recently published report illustrates the low numbers of qualified staff, but this was originally highlighted by the Faculty of Occupational Health back in 2010 alerting everyone to the significant levels of expertise leaving the industry, but which is not being replaced by current levels of training. Over 500 full time equivalent posts are needed over the next 5-10 years, but in 2014 only 75 training posts were available leading to just 19 practitioners qualifying each year.

The way forward should be based around a policy of developing wider occupational health teams (upskilling), and legal changes that provide nurses with more extensive diagnosis responsibilities. Centralised services have been tried before with limited success and so there should be an emphasis on a greater use of technology and clear contract specifications for the increasing use of outsourced services, which may be solution for many companies.

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