

# The Value of Occupational Health and Human Resources in Supporting Mental Health and Wellbeing in the Workplace

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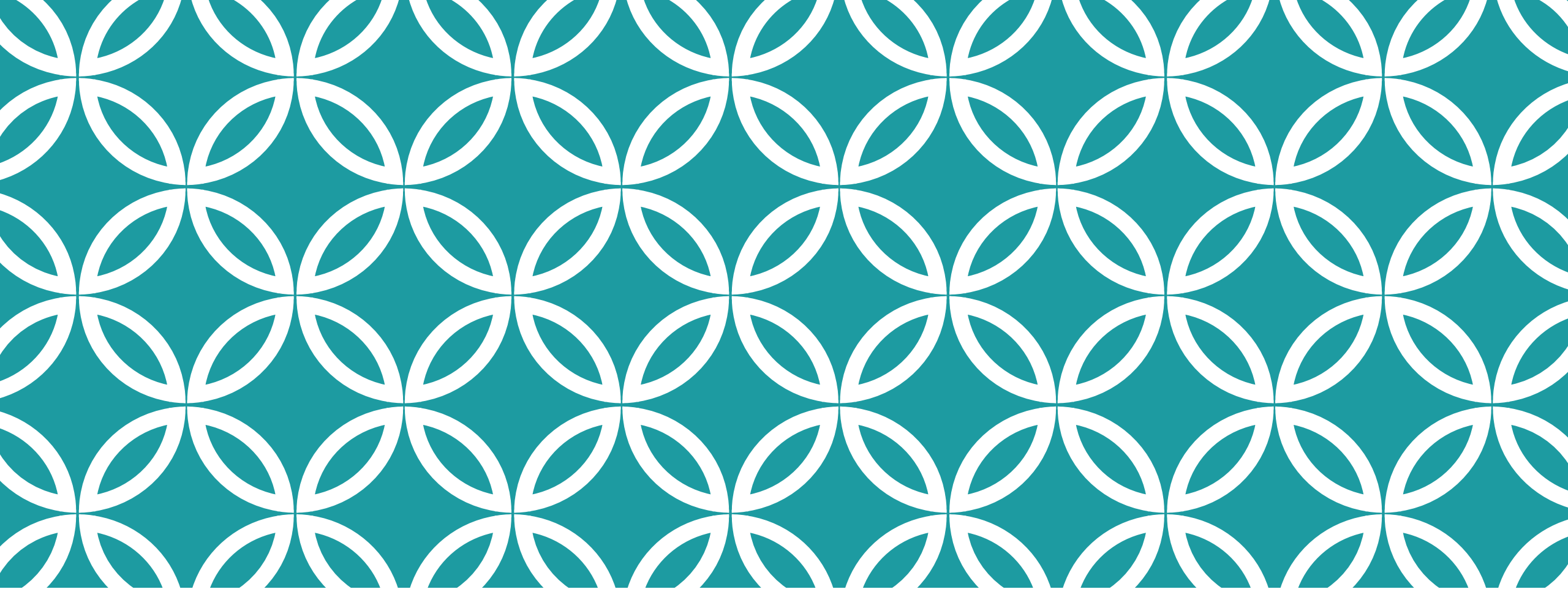
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# STRUCTURE

- Background
- Interventions
- The role of Occupational Health and Human Resources
- Developing synergy and championing
- What can an organisation do?



**BACKGROUND** |

# PREDICTORS OF MENTAL HEALTH AND WELLBEING

<b>Psychosocial factor</b>	<b>Examples</b>
Job content	Lack of variety or short work cycles, fragmented or meaningless work, under use of skills, high uncertainty
Workload and pace	Work overload or underload, machine pacing, high time pressure
Work schedule	Shift work, night work, inflexible work schedules, long hours
Control	Low participation in decision making, lack of control over workload
Environment and equipment	Poor environmental working conditions, inadequate equipment
Organisational culture and function	Poor communication, low levels of support for problem solving and personal development
Interpersonal relationships at work	Social or physical isolation, poor relationships with superiors, interpersonal conflict, lack of social support
Role in organisation	Role ambiguity, role conflict, responsibility for people
Career development	Career stagnation and uncertainty, under or over promotion, etc.
Home-work interface	Conflicting demands of work and home, low support at home

# PREDICTORS OF MENTAL HEALTH AND WELLBEING



What Works Centre for Wellbeing's Drivers of Workplace Wellbeing



Mind's Workplace Wellbeing Index



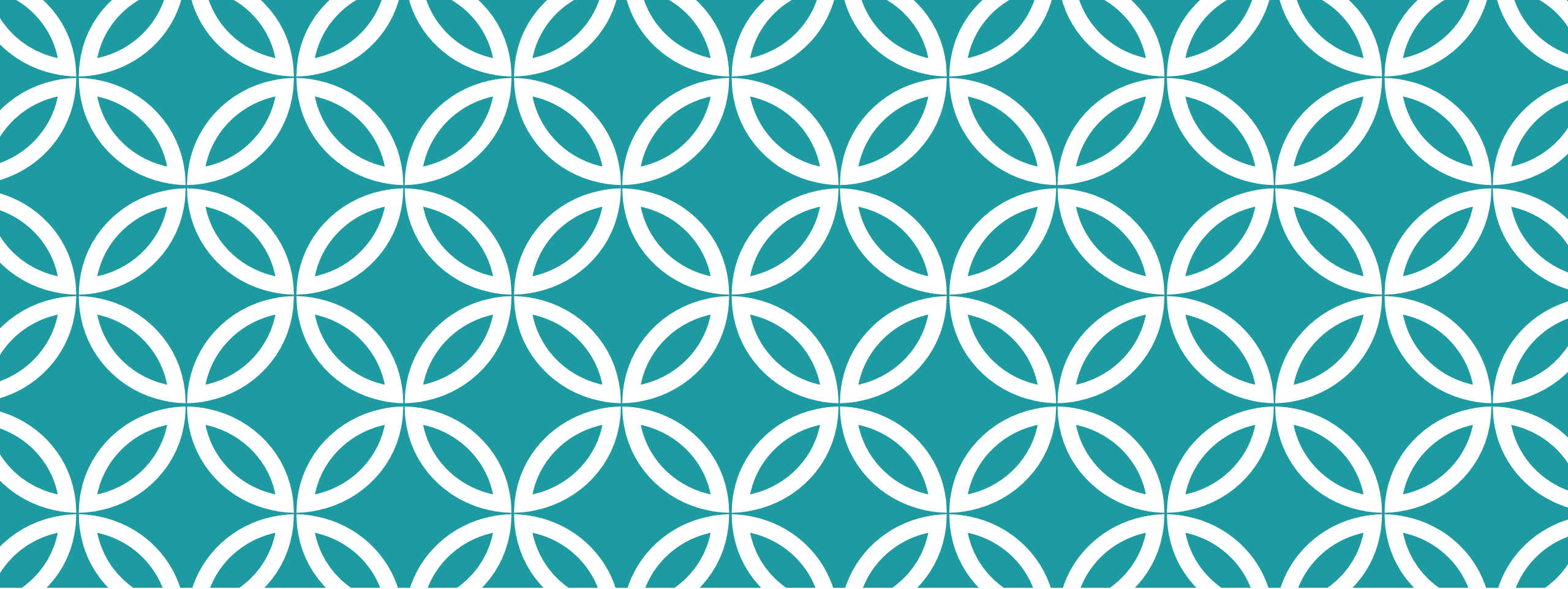
The CIPD's seven key domains of wellbeing

# WHAT IS THE EMPLOYER'S RESPONSIBILITY?

The law is clear on an employer's responsibility with regards to **mental health**. According to the *Health and Safety at Work Act 1974* and *Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999* these include:

- Making sure the work environment is safe;
- Carrying out risk assessments as set out in regulations, and taking steps to eliminate or control these risks;
- Appointing a 'competent person' responsible for health and safety;
- Treating mental and physical health as equally important.

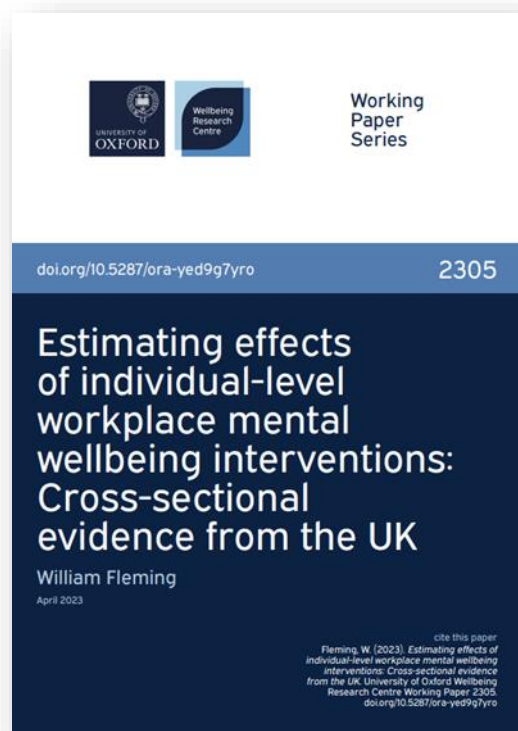
Employer to make **reasonable adjustments** to adapt the work to the worker, and not to expect the worker to need to adapt to the work. It also states the importance of **risk assessments** and the **need for competent people** to be responsible for health and safety — which includes mental health - within the organisation.



# INTERVENTIONS



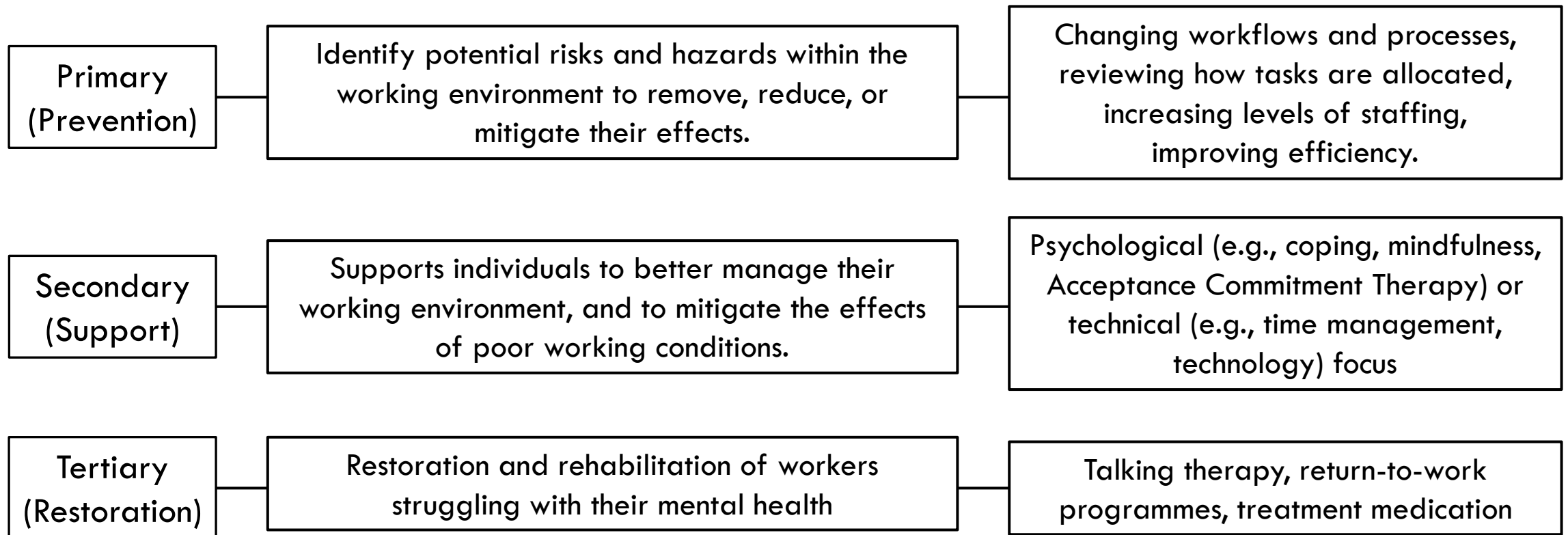
# INTERVENTION EFFECTIVENESS



- 143 British organisations and 27,919 workers (Fleming, 2023)
- Workers that took part in individual focused interventions (e.g., mindfulness, resilience training, coaching, and wellbeing apps) were no better off in relation to multiple subjective wellbeing indicators.
- Workplace factors such as being bullied, unrealistic time pressures, discrimination, and strained relationships had more influence and were associated with poorer subjective wellbeing.
- Interventions involving working conditions such as having the right training, choosing break time, being consulted on change, fair pay, fair promotions, flexible work, and good collaboration were all associated with better wellbeing.



# A SYSTEMATIC APPROACH



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The Mental Health at Work Commitment from the mental health charity MIND, consists of six standards. These are based on the *Thriving at Work* review and draw on existing pledges and standards and the relevant research evidence.



The HSE the Management Standards is based on a strong research evidence base demonstrating the importance of six key areas of work design that, if not properly managed, are associated with poor health, lower productivity and increased accident and sickness absence rates.



ISO 45003 is a global standard giving practical guidance on managing psychological health in the workplace. They support organisations to better promote wellbeing at work and to prevent work-related injury and ill-health.

# PRIMARY (PREVENTION) INTERVENTIONS

Focused on identifying potential risks in the psychosocial work environment, with the aim to eliminate or reduce the identified risks at source

## Occupational Health

Health screening; Identification of health issues and patterns;  
Compliance with regulations and policies; Inputting into organisational strategy.

## Human Resources

Ensuring the organisation provides 'good' work' for people to support their health; Developing a health and wellbeing strategy; People management policies and procedures in areas such as reward and recognition; Performance management; Organisation design; Job design. Administering and analysing staff surveys and focus groups; Diversity and inclusion activities; Fostering healthy working relationships; Encouraging voice and recognition schemes; Managing absence and attendance; Managing change.

# SECONDARY (SUPPORT) INTERVENTIONS

Aim to modify how a worker manages or responds to potentially harmful work environment factors, and to reverse or delay the progression of health problems caused by these factors

## **Occupational Health**

Improve health and wellbeing awareness; Fit notes and work adjustment plans; Health promotion activities; Ergonomic assessments; Vaccinations and immunisations; Reasonable adjustments due to illness or disability.

## **Human Resources**

Awareness raising and education; Training of managers and staff; Providing health promotion activities; Personal and professional development; Coaching; Wellness tools and resources (e.g., Digital mental wellness platforms); Performance reviews and goal setting.

# TERTIARY (RESTORATION) INTERVENTIONS

Seek to reduce or minimise the negative health effects associated with chronic exposure to psychosocial risks, and to enable a return to normal functioning

## **Occupational Health**

Treatment and rehabilitation; Review and referrals to more specialised support services (e.g., physiotherapy, psychological support); Support return-to-work programmes, individuals, and line managers.

## **Human Resources**

Support return-to-work programmes, individuals, and line managers; Signposting to support services and rehabilitation services; Manage Employee Assistance Programmes.

# SYNERGY

Not either/ or, and context varies substantially.



# DEVELOPING SYNERGY BETWEEN OH AND HR

- Carrying out an audit of OH and HR functions, skills, and competence
- Developing strategy, initiatives, and guidance together.
- Identifying key stakeholder groups and individuals within the organisation, and how OH and HR can build relationships with them.
- Championing the strengths of OH and HR.
- Work out barriers that prevent efficient collaboration between HR and OH

# CHAMPIONING OH

- SOM's Value Proposition summarises the business case for investment in occupational health services based on wide-ranging and sometimes intangible factors
- Review what OH services or EAP provision are already in place and how this can be expanded upon to take a more holistic perspective.
- Summarise common themes and issues at a group level.
- Government's OH subsidy pilot to support SMEs in England
- Engage with SOM, Faculty of Occupational Medicine, or the British Occupational Hygiene Society

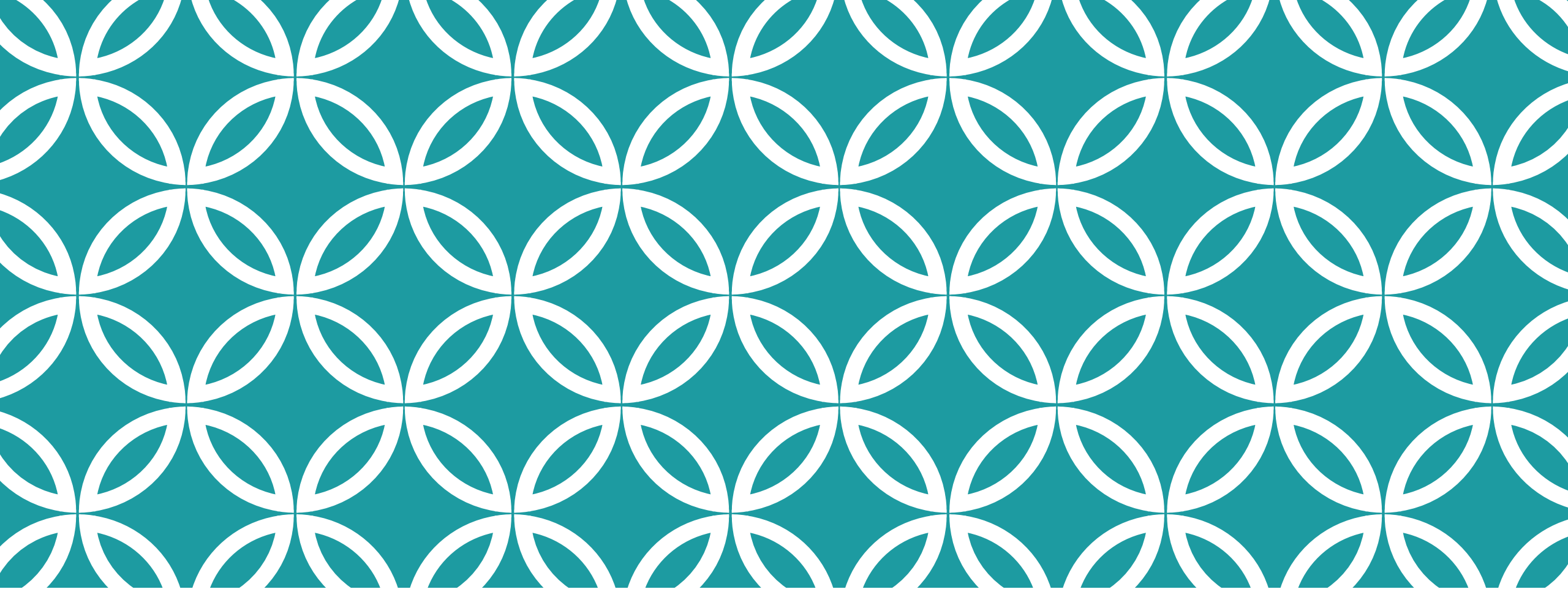


# CHAMPIONING HR

- Challenge the organisation's strategy and purpose, and how the workforce features within this. This provides a starting point to explore how workers are managed, supported, and developed.
- The CIPD offers resources, including on how to make maximum impact as an HR professional in an SME, that can be useful in building up internal HR capacity and resources.
- Encourage involvement in the CIPD, where an initial Foundation membership can be developed into higher levels, with a greater impact on the organisation.

# WHAT CAN AN ORGANISATION DO?

1. What are we looking to address?
2. What are the factors that contributed to this?
3. Can we address these underlying factors?
4. Can we better support our workers with what they do?
5. What is the evidence for the interventions being offered?
6. Who has the expertise to support us with this?
7. How do we know this has or will work?



**WRAPPING UP...**



# IMPLICATIONS FOR HR AND OH PRACTITIONERS:

- Adopt a systematic approach to managing mental health and wellbeing in the workplace, based on ill health prevention and managing the main risks to workers' health.
- Develop effective working relationships, with mutual trust and credibility at its core.
- Recognise the boundaries of their competence in relation to mental health and wellbeing, and to work to increase the resource available to manage workforce mental health and wellbeing..
- Increase the influence within their work practices, to advocate and encourage their potential to input into mental health and wellbeing strategy and initiatives across the primary, secondary, and tertiary level.

# IMPLICATIONS FOR FURTHER STAKEHOLDERS

- Develop and share examples showing how HR and OH can work together.
- Collate and share examples of good practice mental health and wellbeing interventions, especially around the risk assessment, actions taken, and evaluation process.
- Provide more accredited courses and training around managing and supporting mental health and wellbeing in the workplace.
- Consider the need for elements of self-regulation (e.g., common standards, certification) that may help indicate credibility.
- Be aware of the appeal of providers within the wellbeing industry, and to continue challenge them by questioning not only the corresponding evidence base but its relevance to the local organisational context.

# CONCLUSION

- Law and research highlights the need to implement a systematic approach in relation to mental health and wellbeing in the workplace.
  - The need for having competent persons within the organisation to take responsibility for mental health.
- Workplace interventions should form part of an organisational framework and operate across the primary, secondary, and tertiary level.
- Growing wellbeing industry, and rapidly evolving world of work presents new risks, challenges, and issues for workers' health that OH and HR practitioners may struggle to keep up with.
- The report provides seven questions to guide practitioners working in mental health and wellbeing on how to approach this topic, with some additional examples and guidance provided.

**thanks!**  
**ANY**  
**QUESTIONS?**

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