

What cost-effective interventions are there to support people in work and assist people to return to the work force?

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Background

In Wales, there are currently 1.48 million people in employment and 58,300 people who are unemployed. **This equates to an unemployment rate of 3.8% in Wales.**

Aim

This **Rapid Review** builds on the 2019 Wellness in Work report (Edwards et al., 2019), and looks to better understand the **economic impact of well-being within the workplace.**

Key Findings

Some **high-quality** evidence suggests the following interventions can help **alleviate absenteeism and provide business cost savings**, including:



Support for employees at risk of common mental health disorders



Healthy eating and physical activity interventions



Influenza vaccination programmes

Mixed evidence suggests that:

- Interventions for employees with **arthritis or other musculoskeletal conditions are cost-effective compared to 'usual care'**.
- Illicit drug use by employees can be reduced with interventions such as **workplace screening, self-guidance, individual placement support, and workshop support.**

There is **moderate quality** evidence that **standing desks** are a cost-effective way of improving work productivity.



Further Research

Wellbeing and worklessness in older populations

Evidence suggests that worklessness may be detrimental to the well-being of older people.

Women in work

Productivity of women of menopausal age or with conditions such as endometriosis is unclear. More evidence is required here.

Neurodiversity

Severe or specific learning difficulties and autism are the disabilities with the lowest employment rates in Wales. 70% of the population with autism in the UK are not in employment.

Economic Considerations

Compared to other G7 nations, the UK is performing relatively poorly in returning to pre-pandemic employment rates.

This is caused, in part, by long elective surgery waiting lists present in the NHS.

This highlights the circular relationship between health and the economy.

Policy and Practice Implications

Updated policies and procedures to **improve equal employment opportunities**, regardless of age, gender, or disability status are needed.



The full report can be accessed here:

<https://www.medrxiv.org/content/10.1101/2024.01.17.23300197v1>