

Productivity Insights Network

**RSAI-BIS Special Sessions,
17th July 2019, Cambridge**



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Session 1

Productivity, inclusive growth & wellbeing

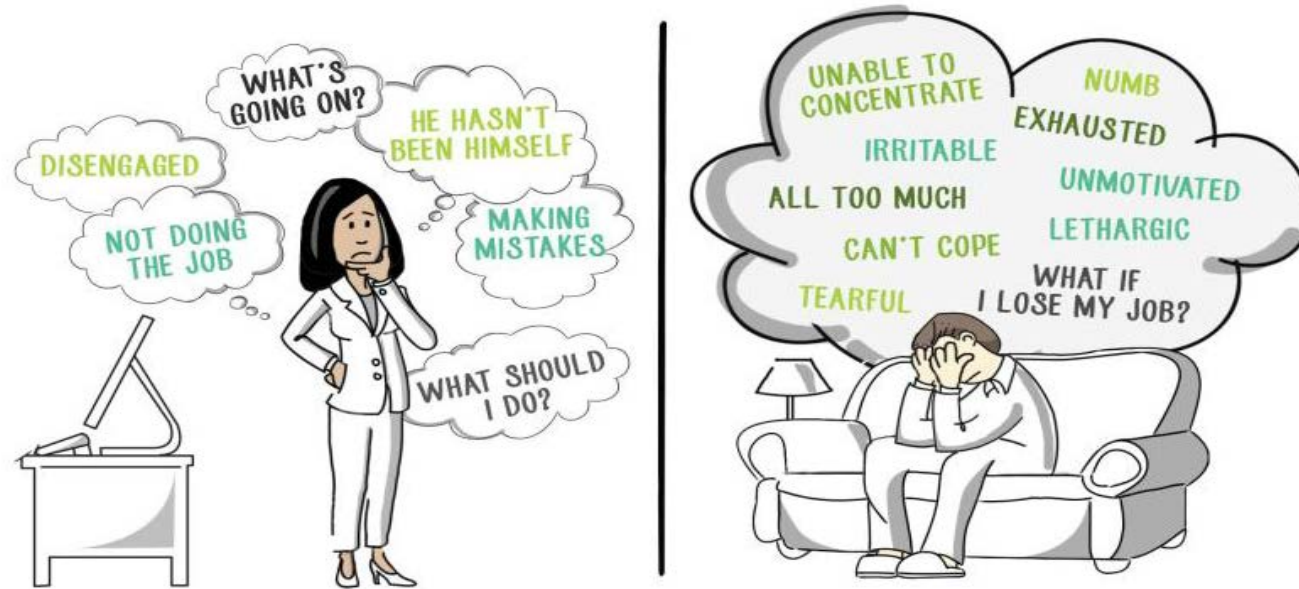
Chair: Professor Vania Sena



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Returning to and thriving at work following mental ill-health absence



Dr Jo Yarker

Prof. Karina Nielsen, Dr Jo Yarker and Hannah Evans

Overview

1. Why return to work following mental ill-health?
2. Our approach
3. Our findings
4. Implications for wellbeing and productivity



1. Why return to work following mental ill-health?

TOO MANY

- 1 in 3 'fit notes' issued for mental disorders (NHS Digital, 2017)
- 57% lost work days is due to stress, anxiety or depression, £5.2bn to Great Britain each year (HSE, 2018)

FOR TOO LONG

- The longer people stay off, the less likely they are to return
- Some figures suggest 20% relapse, 20% exit work (e.g. Norder et al, 2017)

WITH TOO LITTLE SUPPORT

- Managers do not know how to, or can not afford to, make adjustments
- Employees are unsure of what to say, or what to do



2. Our approach

- Interviews with 38 employees and 20 managers at multiple time points over a four month period
- Used our recently developed the IGLOO Framework to explore the resources that help returning workers stay at work (Individual, Group, Leader, Organisational level resources)



3. Our findings

Home		Work
Self-care Clear boundaries between work and leisure	Individual	Creation of structure
Understanding Non-judgmental support	Group	Feedback on tasks from colleagues Help doing challenging tasks Treatment as before not as people with CMD
Consistent point of contact Facilitation of links to external services and treatment	Leader	Agreement of communication to colleagues Continued support and work adjustments Leaders signaling (and being) available but not intrusive
Work-focused counselling and/or advice	Organisation	Flexible working practices and leave policies Accommodating absenteeism policies Work-focused counselling Demonstrating care through support Culture where mental health is not stigmatised
Financially independent Positive media attention	Overarching context	N/A

(Nielsen, Yarker & Evans, 2019)



4. Implications for wellbeing and productivity

“For me it’s about creating that environment where I’m able to work, to function on some level, even if not at full capacity. It’s tricky, because every organisation, every person [is different]. Whether ..we look at sustainability through something formal from a legal perspective or something sustainable from moral stance, I don’t know. But ...

I know what I need to sustain myself. I know what’s important for me that may not fit everybody, people are different, values are different. So that’s really difficult. I think there’s no definitive answer. It’s such an individualised need that people have. (Returned worker 15, month 4)



4. Implications for wellbeing and productivity

We need to:

- Consider resources at all IGLOO levels at home and and work
- Implement multi-level interventions
- Equip the managers with the knowledge, skills and confidence to support the returning employee
- Encourage the returning employee to draw on a range of resources rather than doing it on their own
- Re-orientate our systems to cope with fluctuating conditions (including GP services and fit notes, absence policies, SSP benefits)

And do so in a flexible, individualised way, for the long term.



Thank you for your time.

- To read the full report and guidance visit:
<https://productivityinsightsnetwork.co.uk>
- To read the conceptual paper: Nielsen, K., Yarker, J., Munir, F., & Bültmann, U. (2018). IGLOO: An integrated framework for sustainable return to work in workers with common mental disorders. *Work & Stress*, 32(4), 400-417.
- If you would like to know more about our work or get involved in our research please contact us:
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