

National Occupational Health Policies

In 2000, three important documents were produced, setting out strategies for occupational health.

'Revitalising Health and Safety', Health & Safety Commission, June 2000

'Securing Health Together', Health & Safety Commission, July 2000

'Report and Recommendations on Improving Access to Occupational Health Support' Occupational Health Advisory Committee of Health & Safety Commission, written in 1999 but published in 2000.

These documents complement the previously published public health strategy of 'Saving Lives: Our Healthier Nation', (published in 1998) in which the workplace was identified as a key setting for health promotion.

Since then, 'Choosing Health: Making Healthy Choices'. November 2004, has reaffirmed the important role that workplaces could play in improving the health of the working population. 'Choosing Health' takes a social approach rather than focusing on key diseases, and considers how organisational change could improve health at work.

The occupational health strategy complements other national standards, such as:

Investors In People which ensures that workplaces provide a high quality of training and opportunities for personal development for employees. To achieve the award, the organisation must be able to demonstrate commitment to the implementation of effective planning, communication, training and management systems.

National Service Frameworks on Cancer and on Coronary Heart Disease which aim to cut the toll from these illnesses. Workplaces are identified as having an important part to play in the following ways:

1. Reducing smoking in public places including workplaces
2. Improving Diet and Nutrition
3. Increasing Physical Activity
4. *other points from Ca NSF*

National Service Framework on Mental Health [*see MH part of website*]

This National Service Framework focuses on the mental health needs of working age adults, and how NHS and local authority Social Services will develop services to provide treatment and care.

In the workplace it is now common to find people suffering from stress. Prolonged stress can lead to both mental and physical health problems. Anxiety and depression are the most common mental health problems. They can be treated and most people are able to continue or return to work. Even people with more serious forms of mental illness, such as manic-depression or schizophrenia, can continue to work productively. Severe mental illness is quite rare (affecting only 1%-2% of the population) and the mental health issues which arise in the workplace are usually of a mild or moderate nature.

Local Policy

Manchester City Council is committed to enabling residents of the city to gain and keep employment, as possibly the most important contributor to improvement in quality of life. Although the city centre is vital and fast regenerating, Manchester residents are not all benefiting from this economic success. Poverty levels remain 50% above the national average, and unemployment has not fallen as fast as for the country as a whole. Health is generally poor, and Manchester is one of the worst areas in the country for levels of heart disease, lung cancer and mental ill health and suicide.

NHS organisations in Manchester and the City Council are working together to develop strategies to tackle the poor health of many Manchester residents. Heart disease and mental health are priority areas and the workplace provides an important setting for action.