

Mental Health and Work seminar

17 April 2013, Paris, OECD

Session 3:

Structures to support employers struggling with a worker with a mental health problem: The employer support centres of the Norwegian Labour and Welfare Administration

Mental health-related exclusion from the labour force is usually an enduring process with most people struggling to hold onto their jobs and confronting daily challenges at work before eventually exiting the labour market and seeking social benefits. The working environment, be it the lack of employers' understanding towards mental-ill health or conflict with co-workers, can seriously influence the chances of staying at work (or being dismissed). Evidence shows that employers are often not well-equipped to deal with employees with mental ill-health, while earlier intervention and adequate support measures would be more effective than re-integration measures once people are on long-term sickness absence or lost their job. Some countries like Norway have already established better support services for employers. But such services are not widespread yet and they have to prove themselves in complex workplace situations. How effective are the employer support centres of the Norwegian Labour and Welfare Administration in securing job retention of vulnerable workers? How can early contact of enterprises with the responsible public authority be encouraged in case of problems? Is the benefit/insurance authority well placed to actively intervene at the workplace? Or, is there a risk to increase the number of disability claims by facilitating early contact between employers and the benefit/insurance authority?