

Mental health training for line managers linked to better business performance, says study

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Mental health training for line managers linked to better business performance in England. Credit: Jopwell, Pexels, CC0
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In a study of several thousand companies in England, mental health training for line managers was associated with organizational-level benefits, including lower levels of long-term mental health-related sickness absence and better business performance, customer service, and staff recruitment and retention.

The project was led by Professor Holly Blake of the University of Nottingham and Dr. Juliet Hassard of Queen's University Belfast, UK, who present these findings in the open-access journal *PLOS ONE* on July 17.

Mental health training for line managers aims to equip them with skills to support the mental health of the people they manage. Ongoing research is exploring whether such training increases the knowledge, skills and confidence of managers to support their staff and benefits employees. However, few studies have addressed its potential business value for companies.

To explore organizational-level benefits, Hassard, Blake and colleagues analyzed anonymized [survey data](#) from several thousand companies in England collected between 2020 and 2023 by the Enterprise Research Center at Warwick Business School.

The survey included questions about the companies' mental health and well-being practices, including whether they offered mental health training to line managers. To avoid errors in their analysis, the researchers statistically controlled for the age, sector, and size of the companies.

The analysis showed that mental health training for line managers was associated with significantly better outcomes in terms of business performance, [customer service](#), and staff recruitment and retention. Having line managers trained in mental health was also linked to lower

levels of long-term sick leave due to mental health challenges.

These results suggest that mental health training for line managers may hold strategic business value for companies. On the basis of their findings, the researchers recommend that organizations provide mental health training to line managers and institute workplace policies that clarify line managers' role in supporting employee mental health.

Meanwhile, the researchers outline the need for further research in this area, including analyses based on objective data rather than subjective survey responses, and comparison of the potential benefits of varying approaches to mental health training for line managers.

Blake adds, "In firms of different types, sizes and sectors, we found that training line managers in mental health was related to better staff recruitment and retention, customer service, business performance and lower long-term sickness absence due to mental health. This is the first study to show that [training](#) line managers in [mental health](#) is linked to better [business](#) outcomes."

More information: The relationship between line manager training in mental health and organisational outcomes, *PLoS ONE* (2024). [DOI: 10.1371/journal.pone.0306065](#)

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