

## East of England Mental Health & Employment Survey of Employers

### Regional Mental Health and Employment Team July – September 2008 baseline survey of employers' views in the East of England

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#### 1. Aims:

- To consult and engage with employers;
  - To establish a baseline of employers views in the region against which to compare future survey responses;
  - To compare EoE (East of England) comments with previous related national surveys;
  - To test out using Moodle as a cheap tool for surveys to support the RET (Regional Employment Team).
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#### 2. Method:

- Online survey using NIACE Moodle from July to September 2008. The closing date was extended 3 times in order to try to generate a larger sample size;
- Data protection issues prevented as wide a distribution of the invitation to participants via partner agencies as had originally been envisaged;
- Hard copies distributed at the Employer Engagement event at Chilford Hall in September 2008 and manually entered on Moodle;
- One limitation of using hard copies was that we were unable to 'force' answers to every question, with the result that some participants elected not to answer certain questions, as a result responses rates do not always =100%;
- Most questions based on previously validated questions used by DWP (Department of Work and Pensions) and Shaw Trust National studies. The attitudinal questions about learning and skills were new for this survey;
- Partner agencies invited to influence and approve the questions prior to launching the survey;
- Results exported and analysed, with reference to previous related national employer research/surveys, i.e. The Last Taboo (Shaw Trust, 2006); Employer Survey (DWP, 2001);
- The low response rate/small sample size means that generalisations and comparisons

between sectors, different size organisations and different areas within the region cannot be made with any confidence and so have not been undertaken;

- Headline report (with supporting data);
  - Next steps to be agreed by the RET (10.12.2008).
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### 3. Headline Findings from initial data analysis for discussion:

- 36 responses received. Mainly from statutory agencies and in particular health and social care and local authorities, creating a strong public sector bias in the sample;
- Two respondents commented that the survey was too long. One stated that the questions asking if employers would be more or less likely to employ people with particular disabilities, skills gaps and social histories should not have been asked and went on to cite best practice in terms of judging an individual against the criteria for the post. In an ideal world this respondent would be absolutely correct. However, these questions elicited the most 'negative' attitudes in the whole survey and present stark evidence of the gaps between different groups in accessing employment and inconsistencies in employers overall responses;
- Comparing responses to different questions reveals several such apparent internalised 'contradictions'. Some of the reasons for this phenomena are discussed in detail in The Last Taboo (Future Foundation) and are therefore not revisited here;
- Generally responses are more positive towards employing people who have mental health difficulties compared with the national survey findings reported in The Last Taboo;
- Responses to the additional 'new' attitudinal questions about learning and skills may be of particular interest to the RET. Employers needs/demands for better skills among applicants is not of itself, taken in the context of this particular survey. The findings around employment and learning and skills for people who have mental health, reported in the recent ODI report on Experiences and Expectations of People with Disabilities, may be important in terms of stressing to vocational services/employment services/intermediaries and service users that people's mental health problems may not in fact be the biggest barrier that they face in getting into/returning to work. The good news here is that support services and individuals can change this by acquiring skills either as part of their pathways to employment or (as the responses indicating that employers would employ people if support is available) by acquiring them in work;
- The preponderance of public sector and in particular health and social care organisations may have skewed responses – it should be reasonable to expect a higher level of awareness and understanding among these employers;
- This may be a positive 'finding' in terms of the role of public sector organisations as 'Exemplar Employers' but how this compares is not clear. Do we want to undertake further analysis of the public sector responses against best practice perhaps?
- The small sample size means that all analysis has been undertaken with caution and this caution should be continued in deciding how the findings might best be used;

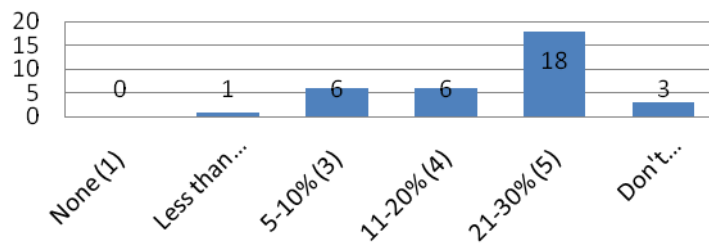
- Follow-up contacts generated for Mindful Employer, Jobcentre Plus and to a much smaller degree Train to Gain;
- Some responses and inconsistencies between responses appear to provide useful information in terms of potential obstacles in getting support to employers. This is consistent with what the Future Foundation study (2006) described as a *'deep-rooted cultural hesitation to discuss problems of this nature [that] still remains, and will continue to be a significant obstacle in the future'*;
- Employers' inconsistencies and stated preferences in EoE for type of support may provide a useful focus for understanding how to market/target support to employers / public sector employers/the employers who responded to the survey . Many are broadly the 'same' as the findings of the Future Foundation study, but some are 'different';
- For example, the employers in this EoE survey mainly estimate correctly the likely prevalence of mental health problems in their workforce (50%) (different);
  - ◊ acknowledge that they have employees who have mental health problems (89%) (different);
  - ◊ report and demonstrate confidence in defining mental health (different);
  - ◊ mainly have formal policies in place (67%) (different);
  - ◊ are confident in talking to applicants (72%) and staff (78%) who have mental health problems (same);
  - ◊ report that they would provide good support to managers dealing with staff (78%) (same) and be flexible in making reasonable adjustments (89%) (same);
- Several admit to being uncertain/ambivalent about the law (69%) and the degree to which managers understand their policies (39%);
- What they say they want is training and practical guidelines for line managers most (70% higher), strategies for enabling the workforce to take more control of their health somewhat less, circa 50%, similar) and have relatively little demand (20% similar) for services that would help them to recruit and retain new staff who have past experience of mental health problems. In addition, one respondent identified review of sickness policies as potentially helpful.

#### 4. Summary of key responses that may be of particular interest:

<p><b>Respondents n=36</b></p> <p><b>Size</b></p> <p>200+ employees = 72% of respondents</p>	<p><b>Number of Employees</b></p> <table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>Employee Range</th> <th>Number of Respondents</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>None, I am a...</td> <td>0</td> </tr> <tr> <td>1-5...</td> <td>1</td> </tr> <tr> <td>6-19...</td> <td>5</td> </tr> <tr> <td>20-49...</td> <td>2</td> </tr> <tr> <td>50-199...</td> <td>2</td> </tr> <tr> <td>200+...</td> <td>26</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Employee Range	Number of Respondents	None, I am a...	0	1-5...	1	6-19...	5	20-49...	2	50-199...	2	200+...	26								
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<p><b>Sectors</b></p> <p>Health &amp; Social Care = 44.4%</p> <p>Other = 50% (mainly local government)</p>	<p><b>Sectors</b></p> <table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>Sector</th> <th>Number of Respondents</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Agriculture...</td> <td>0</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Publishing,...</td> <td>0</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Constructi...</td> <td>1</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Business...</td> <td>0</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Retail...</td> <td>1</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Transport...</td> <td>0</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Hotels,...</td> <td>0</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Health and...</td> <td>16</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Financial...</td> <td>0</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Other...</td> <td>18</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Sector	Number of Respondents	Agriculture...	0	Publishing,...	0	Constructi...	1	Business...	0	Retail...	1	Transport...	0	Hotels,...	0	Health and...	16	Financial...	0	Other...	18
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<p><b>Does your company currently have any employees who you know to have mental health problems?</b></p> <p>32 employers reported currently employing staff who have mental health problems (N= 35).</p> <p>By contrast, The Last Taboo reported that: <i>‘only one in ten senior managers claim that anyone within their organisations currently has a mental health problem.’</i></p>	<p><b>Employees with mental health problems?</b></p> <table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>Response</th> <th>Number of Respondents</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Yes (1)</td> <td>32</td> </tr> <tr> <td>No (2)</td> <td>2</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Don't know (3)</td> <td>0</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Prefer not to answer (4)</td> <td>1</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Response	Number of Respondents	Yes (1)	32	No (2)	2	Don't know (3)	0	Prefer not to answer (4)	1												
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**What percentage of your employees do you think will have a mental health problem at some point during their working lives?**

### **% of your employees likely to develop a mental health problem?**



Findings for the study in the Last Taboo revealed:

*'More than 70% of the organisations surveyed indicated 5% or less suffer from a mental health problem at any point in their working life, while nearly half (45%) suggested that none of their employees would.*

*6% were not able to venture a guess. Based on the expectation that there would be a higher rate of understanding from HR directors, it was surprising only 18% were able to estimate anywhere near the correct figure. In fact, nearly half of the HR directors surveyed suggested 5% or less as the correct figure, grossly underestimating the nature of the problem.'*

## Differences

How likely would you/your company appoint someone who you know has the following personal circumstances or history:

Disabilities/illness

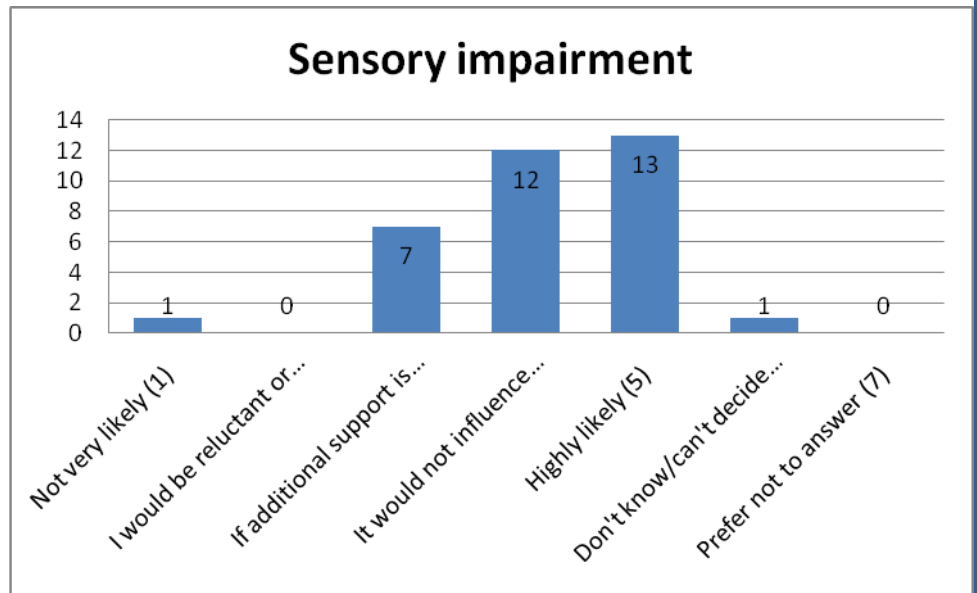
### Sensory impairment

Negative: 3%

With support: 19.5%

Positive: 69%

Undecided: 3%



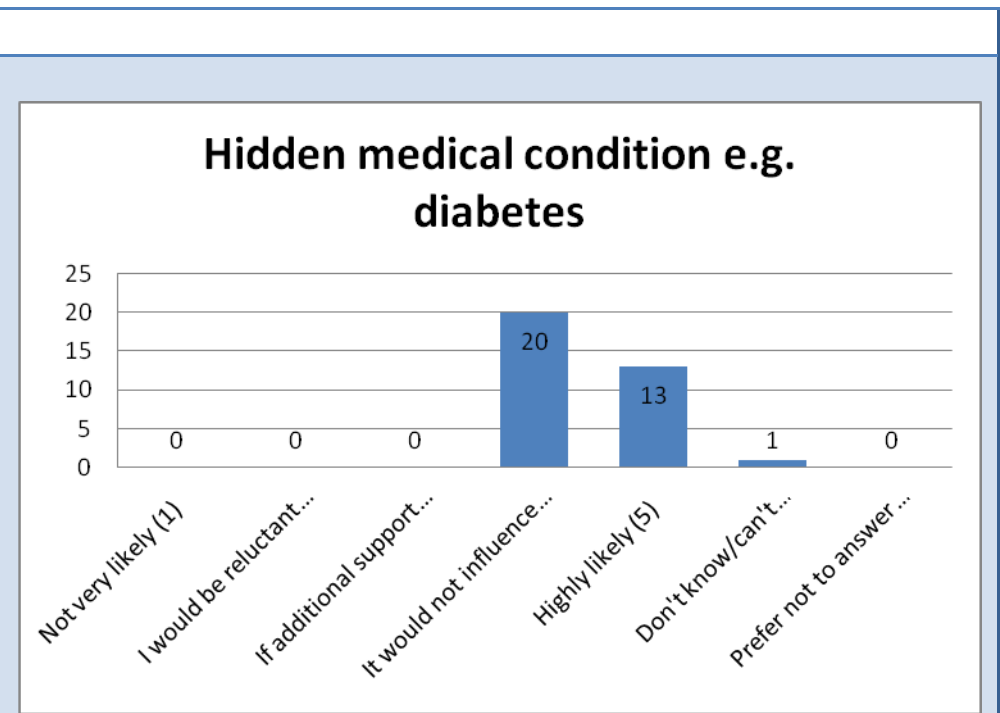
### Hidden medical condition

Negative: 0

With support: 0

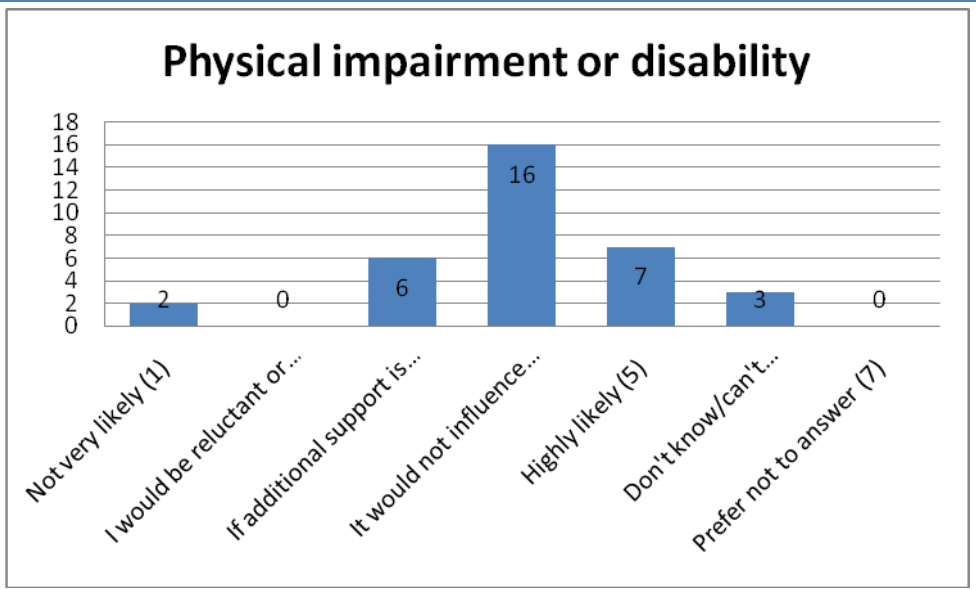
Positive: 92%

Undecided: 3%



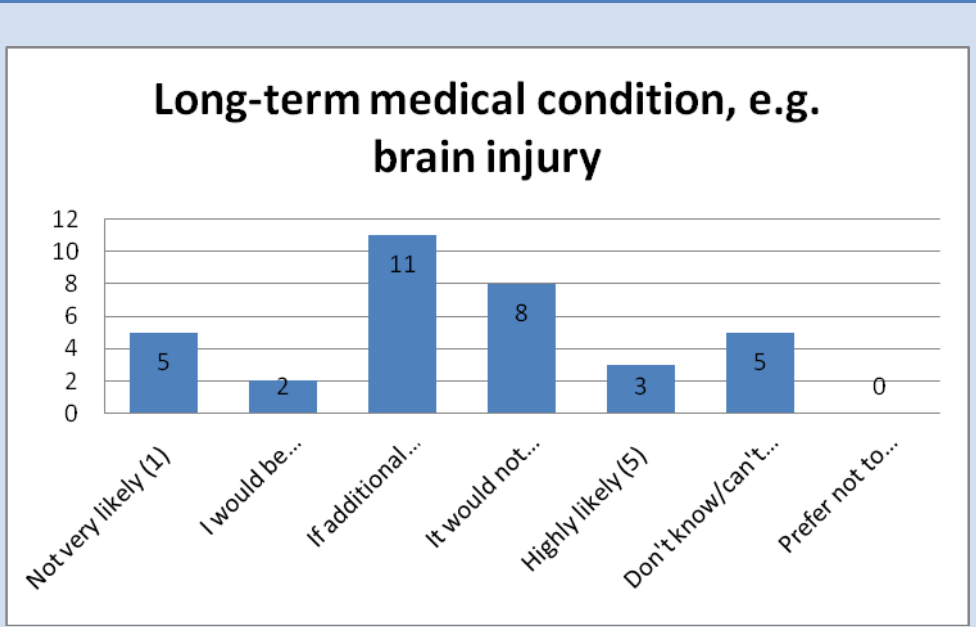
**Physical impairment**

Negative: 6%  
With support: 17%  
Positive: 65%  
Undecided: 8%



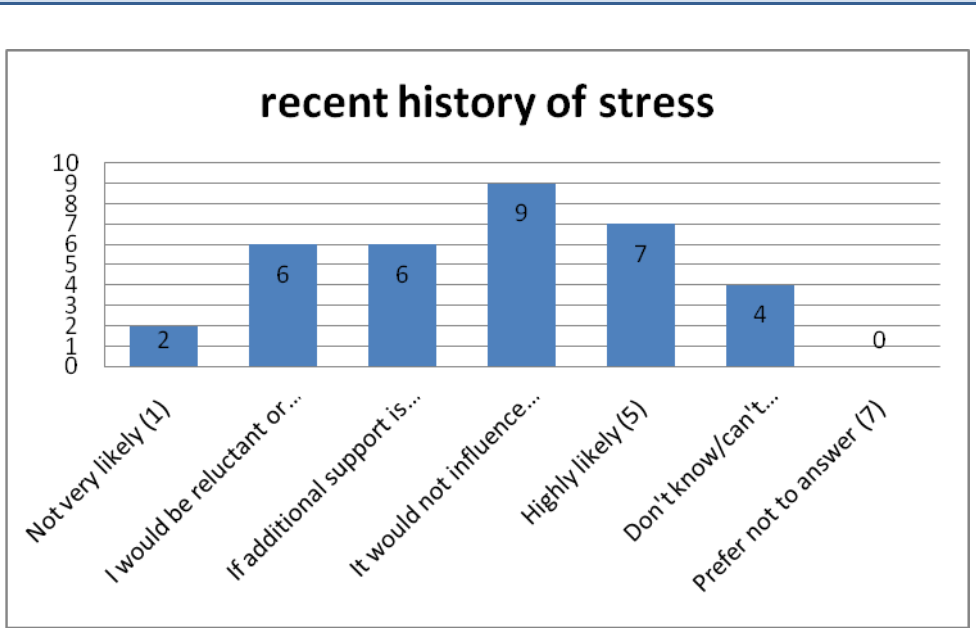
**Long-term medical condition (e.g. brain injury)**

Negative: 19.5%  
With support: 30.5%  
Positive: 30.5%  
Undecided: 14%



**Recent history of stress**

Negative: 23%  
With support: 17%  
Positive: 39.5%  
Undecided: 11%



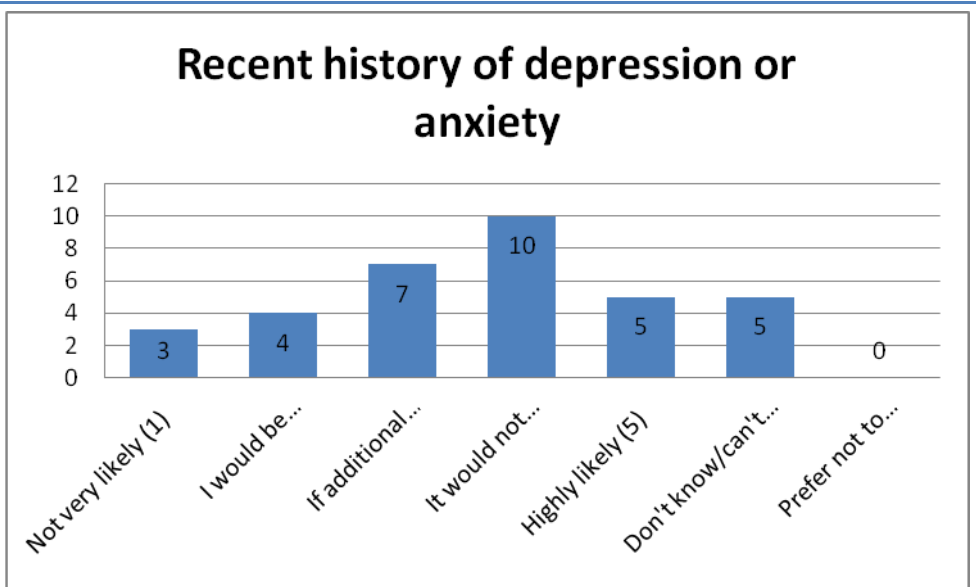
**Recent history of depression or anxiety**

Negative: 19.5%

With support: 19.5%

Positive: 42%

Undecided: 14%



**Has had a serious mental illness in the past**

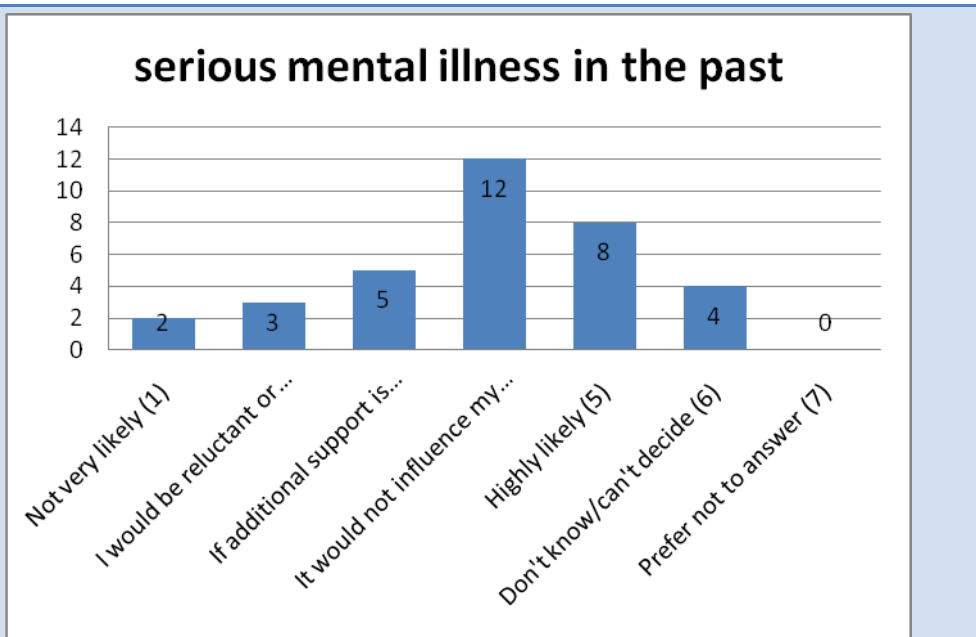
Negative: 14%

With support: 14%

Positive: 55.5%

Undecided: 11%

The Shaw Trust study reported 37% of respondents who would employ someone with mental health problems (compared to 62% of those with physical health problems).



**Lack of skills**

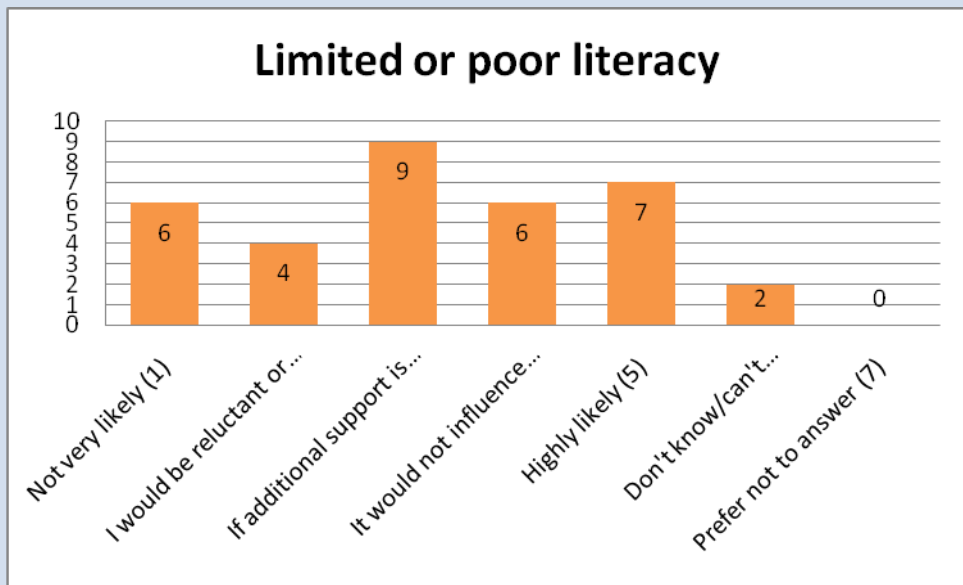
**Poor literacy skills**

Negative: 28%

With support: 25%

Positive: 36%

Undecided: 6%



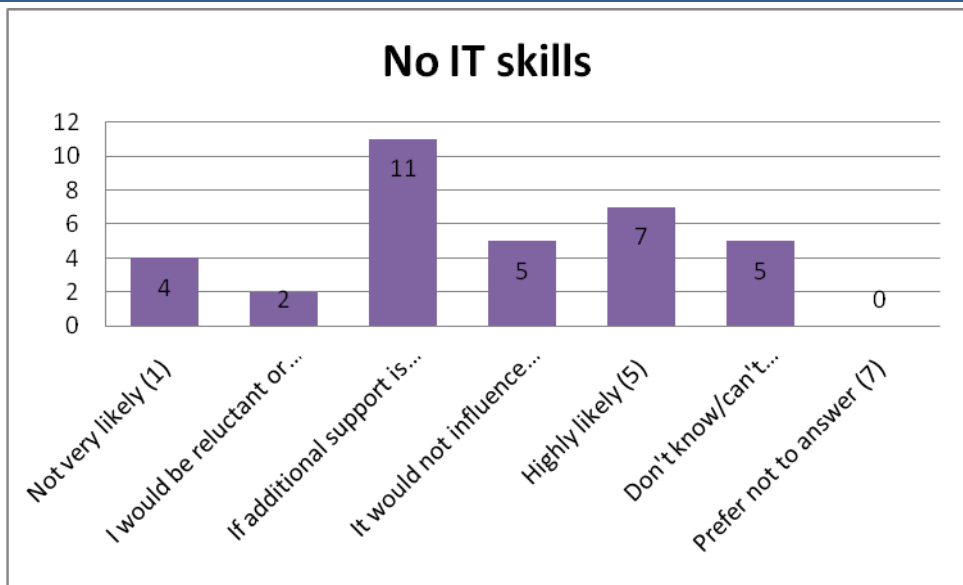
**No IT skills**

Negative: 17%

With support: 31%

Positive: 34%

Undecided: 14%



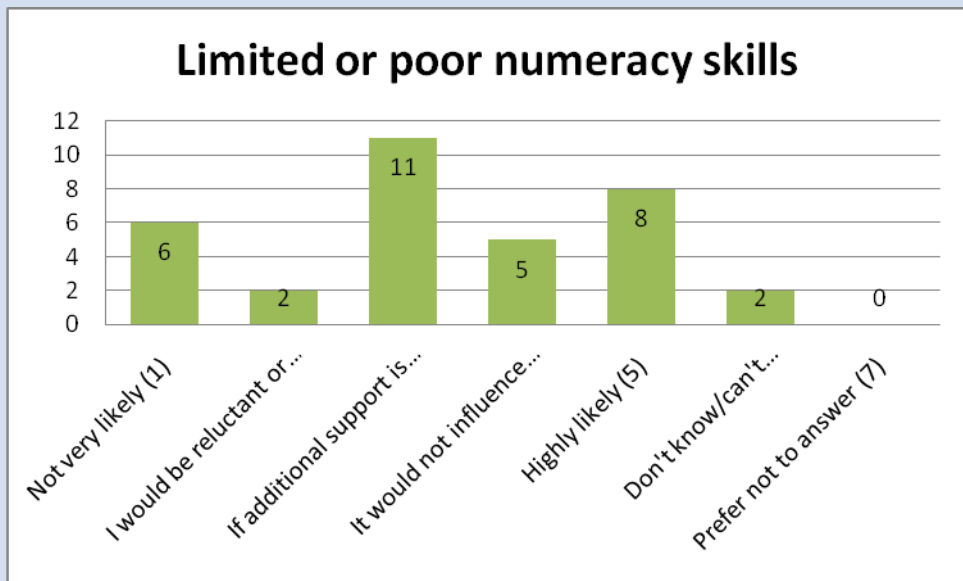
**Poor numeracy skills**

Negative: 23%

With support: 31%

Positive: 36%

Undecided: 6%



## History of offending

**On probation or has a criminal record**

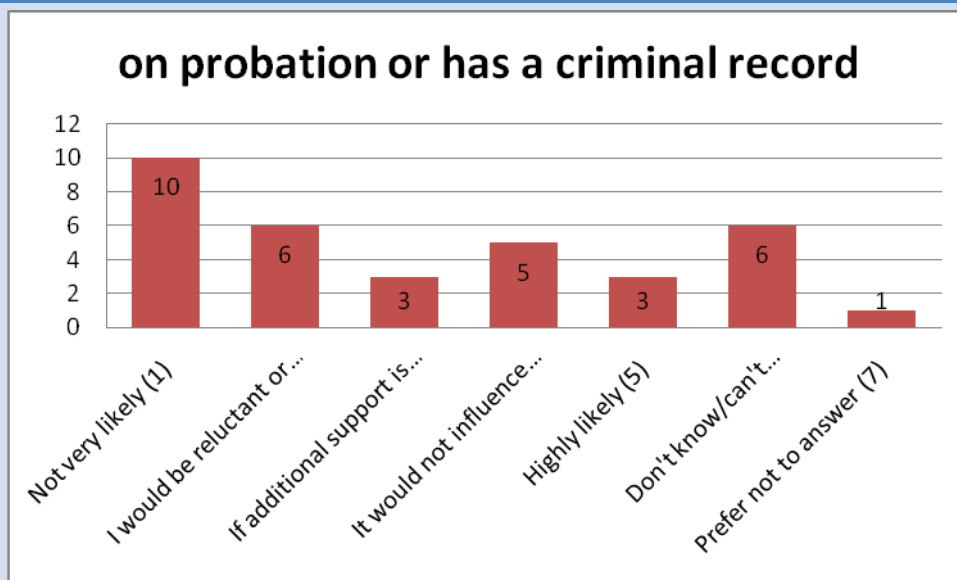
Negative: 45%

With support: 8%

Positive: 22%

Undecided: 17%

Declined: 3%



**About you and your organisation and employees –respondents were asked to agree or disagree with the following statements**

**Employees who have been off work with a mental illness for more than a few weeks are unlikely ever to fully recover**

Agree: 6%  
 Ambivalent: 17%  
 Disagree: 25%  
 Strongly disagree: 47%  
 Undecided: 0

73% of respondents disagreed with this statement. By contrast, The Last Taboo study found that: *'...despite general more positive attitudes, a still-significant portion agreed with the statement that 'those who have been off work with mental illness for more than a few weeks are unlikely ever to fully recover'.*

**I would feel comfortable talking about mental health to job applicants**

Agree: 72%  
 Ambivalent: 11%  
 Disagree: 14%  
 Undecided: 0

**Companies take a significant risk when employing people with mental health problems in public/client facing roles**

Agree: 17%  
 Ambivalent: 28%  
 Disagree: 53%  
 Undecided: 0

The 45% of EoE employers who agree with this statement or are ambivalent compares broadly with the findings of the study reported in the Last Taboo: *'...nearly half of senior managers feel that employing people with mental ill health in public facing roles is a significant risk –despite being prompted that the mental ill health conditions under discussion are the more mild or prevalent conditions, such as anxiety or depression.'*

<p><b>Negative attitudes from co-workers is a major barrier to employing people who have mental health problems</b></p>	<p>Agree: 42% Ambivalent: 28% Disagree: 28% Undecided: 0</p>																		
<p><b>People with mental health problems don't learn new skills as easily as other employees</b></p>	<p>Agree: 3% Ambivalent: 19.5% Disagree: 72% Undecided: 3%</p>																		
<p><b>People with mental health problems are less reliable than other employees</b></p>	<p>Agree: 0 Ambivalent: 19.5% Disagree: 69.5% Undecided: 6%</p>																		
<p><b>I would feel comfortable talking about mental health with my employees</b></p>	<p>No respondents disagreed with this statement or were undecided. 19.5% were ambivalent.</p>																		
<p><b>Managers in this company have a good understanding of mental health issues</b></p>	<p>Agreed: 44.5% Ambivalent: 28% Disagreed: 26%</p> <p>By contrast, the Future Foundation study reported that : <i>'only 16% of employers feel that the managers within their organisation have a good understanding of the policies.'</i></p>																		
<p><b>Does your company have a formal policy on stress and mental health in the workplace?</b></p> <p>4 employers stated that they would like support to develop a policy.</p> <p>By contrast, The Last Taboo reported that: <i>...just 1 in 5 [senior managers] agreed – 80% did not have a policy. Only 16% of those who have a policy feel that it is well understood within their organisation, and 14% claim that it is effective.'</i></p>	<div> <table border="1"> <caption>Chart Data</caption> <thead> <tr> <th>Response</th> <th>Count</th> <th>Percentage</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Yes</td> <td>1</td> <td>67%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>No but I would welcome support to develop one</td> <td>2</td> <td>11%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>No</td> <td>3</td> <td>14%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Don't know</td> <td>4</td> <td>8%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>(Unlabeled)</td> <td>1</td> <td>~10%</td> </tr> </tbody> </table> </div>	Response	Count	Percentage	Yes	1	67%	No but I would welcome support to develop one	2	11%	No	3	14%	Don't know	4	8%	(Unlabeled)	1	~10%
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**The policy is well understood by managers in our company/ organisation**

NB. Several respondents did not answer this question.

Agree: 25%  
 Ambivalent: 28%  
 Disagree: 11%  
 Undecided: 3%

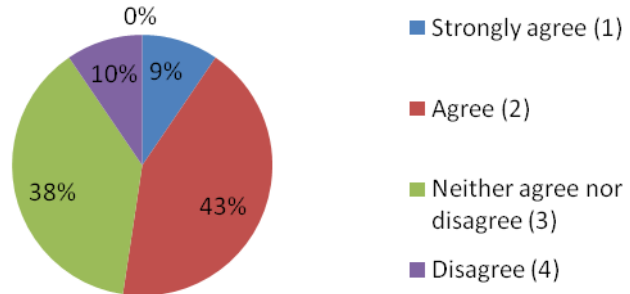
By contrast the Future Foundation found that:

*'...most (70%) senior managers suggest that the managers within their own organisation have a strong understanding of mental health issues. While not directly comparable, however, a nearly equal percentage feel they themselves do not know enough about the law regarding mental ill-health, which could clearly be a point to start understanding processes and what is needed.'*

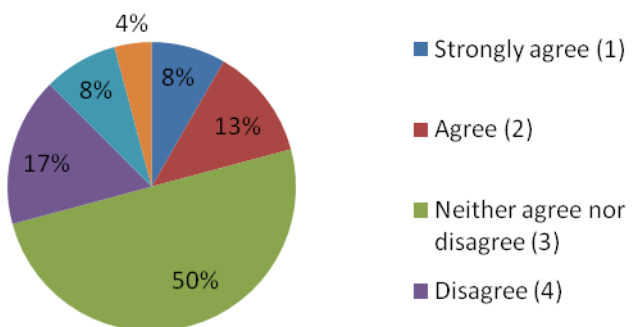
Responses to this same question by EoE employers showed less inconsistency in responses:  
 28% of respondents disagreed said that they know enough about the law  
 33% were ambivalent  
 36% agreed that they do not know enough about the law

**The policy is effective in helping our staff who have mental health problems stay in work**

**The policy is effective in helping people with mental health problems to retain work**



**our policy is understood by employees**



**Which of the following does your company currently use with regard to employee mental health?**

Multiple responses were allowed.

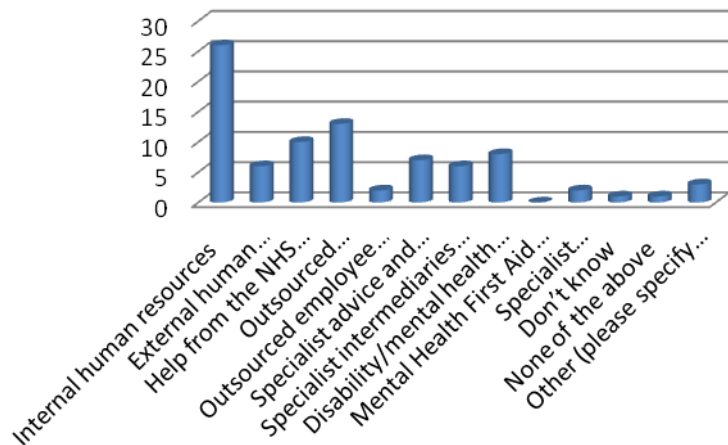
'Other' strategies described were:

- Internal occupational health services
- Internal specialist expertise (e.g. access to vocational services advisors, Worksteps)

By contrast, the Last taboo reports that:

*'...when provided with a list of support mechanisms, ranging from an internal HR department to outsourced employee assistance programmes to help from the NHS, more than 60% said they use 'none of these'.*

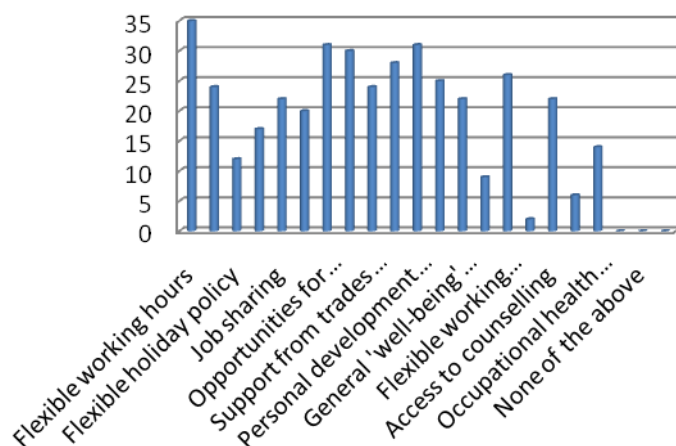
**used to support employee mental health**



**Do your staff have access to**

No 'other' strategies were described by respondents

**staff have access to**



## Getting Support to Employers

### Which of the following services would your company benefit from?

Respondents were able to give multiple responses.

There was particularly strong interest in training and practical guidelines for line managers and slightly less interest (46%) in access to advisors to support line managers/HR to retain staff:

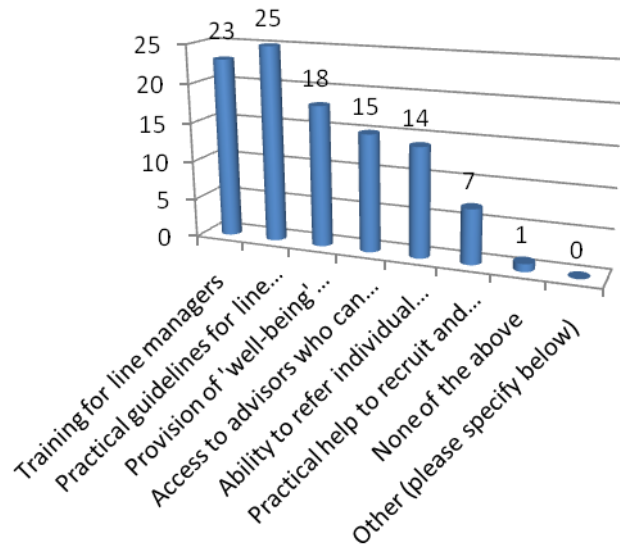
70% would like training for line managers

76% would like practical guidelines for line managers

Around half of respondents expressed positive interest in services (wellbeing activities /referral to condition management) to support the workforce to better manage their own health.

Relatively few (21%) wanted help to recruit and support new employees with past experience of mental health problems.

### Which of these services would your company benefit from?



### Links with Jobcentre Plus

69% advertise vacancies with Jobcentre Plus

3% would like more information

30.5% are part of an LEP

8% would like more information about LEPs

17% access pre-employment support

25% requested more information about pre-employment support

50% (18) access support to recruit staff; 3% (1) requested more information

1 respondent made positive reference to Access to Work in their additional comments

50% use the two Ticks Disability Symbol and 17% requested additional information

### Mindful Employer

8% (3) are Mindful Employers

64% (23) requested more information

17% (6) were undecided

### Train to Gain

39% (14) were registered with Train to Gain

11% (4) requested more information