

# The Good Work and Mental Well-Being Lab

Fresh Thinking Labs and Mindful Employer are delighted to launch the Good Work and Mental Well-Being Lab with Macmillan Cancer Support, Jacobs, TNO, the Institute for Employment Studies and other leading organisations keen to share experiences of creating positive mental health in the workplace.

The Good Work and Mental Well-Being Lab is a closed network of organisations committed to exploring leading edge practice and identifying practical, evidence-based solutions.

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## The Lab

Enables the sharing of good practice and ideas between workplaces.

Builds active relationships with your peers in other organisations.

Creates a forum for collaborative innovation and problem solving.

Bridges the gap between research and practice.

Draws on experience from our network of leading companies from across Europe.

Develops practical tools and resources for workplace change.

Provides access to expert guidance.

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Mental health problems are a huge issue affecting people and business. Statistics tell us that 1 in 4 people will be affected by a mental health problem at some time in their life with the result that 72 million working days are lost each year, at a cost of around £3.4.9bn to UK employers alone<sup>1</sup>.

These figures only paint part of the picture, and recent research has also shown that employees are likely to give different reasons for taking sick leave because of poor mental health.

While there is undoubtedly a myriad of factors contributing to individual mental health, it is clear that the workplace has huge potential either to promote or to undermine mental wellbeing.

Good work supports mental well-being for everyone. Employers increasingly recognise the need to identify and support people with mental health problems but the wider task is to identify and address those workplace practices which build or undermine mental well-being. So, what can employers do to become part of the solution rather than part of the problem?

The Lab is based on a small, closed network of companies, public sector and not-for-profit employers committed to exploring and developing future-focused workplaces that generate positive mental health and well-being for all through productive and engaging work.

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<sup>1</sup> [www.centreformentalhealth.org.uk/News/mental-health-problems-at-work-cost-uk-economy-349bn-last-year-says-centre-for-mental-health](http://www.centreformentalhealth.org.uk/News/mental-health-problems-at-work-cost-uk-economy-349bn-last-year-says-centre-for-mental-health)

## The Programme

Here is our unique programme of opportunities to learn, share and be part of fresh thinking:

2017 - 2018	
<p><b>Opening Symposium</b></p> <p>5<sup>th</sup>-6<sup>th</sup></p> <p>December</p> <p>Nottingham</p>	<p>An evening introduction and orientation to the programme on the 5<sup>th</sup>, followed by a highly interactive event on the 6<sup>th</sup> combining insights and knowledge from leading experts with opportunities for participants to learn about each other and to share practical experience.</p> <p>Expert contributors include:</p> <p><b>Stavroula Leka</b>, Professor of Work, Health &amp; Policy and Director of the Centre for Organisational Health &amp; Development at the University of Nottingham. She is a Chartered Psychologist and her main interests include psychosocial risk management and the promotion of mental health in the workplace. Stavroula is an expert advisor to the European Commission, the WHO, the ILO, the European Agency for Safety &amp; Health at Work and the European Parliament.</p> <p><b>Steven Dhondt</b> (Prof., PhD) has a doctoral degree in social sciences and is currently senior researcher at TNO and visiting professor at the University of Leuven (Belgium). His research lies in the field of work, technology and health, covering various topics such as quality of work, working conditions, technology and work, social innovation, health and well-being. One of his instruments is the WEBA assessment tool which helps to evaluate the quality of jobs and gives practical directions to improve them.</p> <p><b>Stephen Bevan</b>, Head of HR Research Development at the Institute of Employment Studies is an advisor to the government, winner of a special award from GAMIAN-Europe for his contribution to mental health, former Director at the Work Foundation and founding president of the Fit for Work Europe Coalition.</p>
<p><b>Macmillan Cancer Support</b></p> <p>Leeds</p> <p>27<sup>th</sup>-28<sup>th</sup></p> <p>March 2018</p>	<p><b>Macmillan</b> is one of the largest British charities and provides specialist health care, information and financial support to people affected by cancer. Macmillan's wellbeing programme looks to inspire and support health and wellbeing amongst its workforce to help ensure it achieves its goals: "We need to ensure that Macmillan's employees are provided with an environment and opportunities that encourage and enable them to lead healthy lives and make choices that support their wellbeing. Macmillan has developed a range of approaches to address wellbeing in the workplace, drawing on research into wellbeing and based on feedback obtained from the Wellbeing Audit. This has led to the development of a range of initiatives aimed at helping staff improve their wellbeing."</p>
<p><b>University of Exeter</b></p> <p>Exeter</p> <p>13<sup>th</sup> August</p> <p>2018</p>	<p>Join other organisations keen to share experiences of creating positive mental health in the workplace.</p> <p>Review Macmillan Cancer Support's approach to mental health in the workplace.</p> <p>Discover the latest research on management interventions to support mental health – and how it is influencing practice in Cornwall Council.</p> <p>Explore the University of Exeter's approach to mental health in the workplace.</p>
<p><b>Symposium Brighton</b></p> <p>TBA</p>	<p>Fresh Thinking in Innovation – hosted by the <b>Institute for Employment Studies</b> in Brighton, and bringing together experts and experiences from several employers across the UK and other European countries.</p> <p>What are the lessons and how can we translate them into positive mental health in our workplaces?</p>

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or email us at [info@freshthinkinglabs.com](mailto:info@freshthinkinglabs.com)

## How it works

The **Opening Symposium** will bring participants together with leading experts to learn from the evidence and to build a shared framework for positive mental health in the workplace. It will enable Lab members to share their own experiences and to identify common challenges and opportunities that will help share the remainder of the programme.

**Two full-day company-hosted visits** (with dinner on the previous evening), hosted by Macmillan and Jacobs, provide participants with opportunities to learn from the host company's good practices, meet a cross-section of employees and work together as 'critical friends' to address current challenges and dilemmas. Expert contributions and facilitation further enhance each visit. Delegates receive a Case Report after visits.

Continuing dialogue takes place between meetings on the **Fresh Thinking Labs** platform. A closed online Lab will enable participants to reflect on each event, share their own good practices, discuss challenges and dilemmas, and access an evolving resource bank and guide to good practice. **Fresh Thinking Labs** is the international platform dedicated to sharing good practice within the workplace. Participants also benefit from bespoke introductions to other Fresh Thinking Labs member companies with similar interests, online forums, a programme of *Open Events* on a wide range of key workplace topics, and access to a growing body of case studies, tools and articles for practitioners. For more information see [www.freshthinkinglabs.com](http://www.freshthinkinglabs.com).

The second **Symposium** will ask 'what are the lessons?' What have we learned from the Lab to date, and how can we translate our findings into practical ways of building better jobs and workplaces that actively contribute to mental well-being? It will include contributions from other leading edge-practitioners from companies in the UK and elsewhere in Europe, as well as from leading experts.

Following the programme, we will generate a **practical guide and resource pack for positive mental health at work** for Lab participants.

### The Labs will be facilitated by:

Dr Peter Totterdill, is a Founding Director of Workplace Innovation Europe CLG and a Visiting Professor at two universities. A passionate advocate of organisational practices that combine high performance and high quality of working life, Peter's career has focused on building bridges between academic knowledge and practice. He has led successful innovation and change initiatives in a wide range of private and public sector organisations.



Rosemary Exton, is a Founding Director of Workplace Innovation Europe CLG. Building on many years' experience as a clinician, manager and trade unionist in the NHS, Rosemary has provided programme management, leadership and development training and support to several organisations. Rosemary gained an MA in Management and Leadership from the University of Leeds in 2008. She has published articles on workplace innovation and entrepreneurial behaviour and is a regular speaker at international conferences.



Richard Frost, Lead at [Mindful Employer](#), an NHS initiative providing businesses and organisations across the UK with easier access to information and support for staff who experience stress, anxiety, depression or other mental health conditions.



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## Join us!

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### About the *Good Work and Mental Well-Being Lab*

The Lab offers the chance to join a unique journey of knowledge sharing, discovery and fresh thinking. Research evidence will be tested against the reality of busy workplaces with competing priorities, while good practices in host organisations will be examined by ‘critical friends’ to explore their robustness and generalisability.

Based on the above analysis, the Lab’s agenda begins with the following themes, forming the framework for a practical guide to positive mental health at work prepared exclusively for Lab participants. These themes may change in response to ideas, needs and input from organisations participating in the Lab.

#### 1. Raising Awareness

How can we diagnose the current workplace climate and assess the factors that contribute to, or undermine, positive workplace health? How to build the business case and win support for change? And which policies should be put in place?

#### 2. Building a Momentum for Change

Once the right policies are in place, how do we raise awareness of mental health and improve the standard of practice throughout the organisation?

#### 3. Line Managers: Barrier Reef or Mental Health Ambassadors?

Training managers in mental health awareness and fostering appropriate behaviours is often necessary but what does good practice look like – and is it sufficient? How can management roles, processes and behaviours be rethought to support positive mental health *and* high performance simultaneously?

#### 4. Rethinking Job Design and Work Organisation

We know that empowered workers are healthier and perform better – but what does this mean for the redesign of individual jobs, teams and organisational structures?

## 5. Leading People-Centred Change

What is the role of leaders in promoting positive mental health at work? How are they persuaded to become visible champions of change? And how does the definition of leadership itself change?

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# Building Positive Mental Health through Good Work

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