200 words

Delivery and implementation of workplace health programmes in UK contact centres: a qualitative study exploring organisational and cultural factors, and the impact of COVID-19

Contact centres often provide fewer opportunities for promoting health behaviours as compared to other desk-based workplaces which can be attributed to a number of organisational factors. COVID-19 posed further challenges to workplace health in this setting. This study aimed to explore the impact of new and existing organisational and cultural factors on workplace health initiatives within UK contact centres during this time of transition.

15 semi-structured stakeholder interviews were conducted (February-June 2021). Interviews were analysed using a codebook thematic analysis approach, and further discussed using organisational culture theory.

Stakeholders felt that, both pre and (more so) post-pandemic, organisations were taking more responsibility for employee wellbeing than ever before. However, efforts varied by organisation and there was a lack of knowledge on best practice for supporting wellbeing in the context of hybrid working. Organisational factors (such as productivity monitoring) presented barriers to implementation of, and participation in, health initiatives.

There is a need for organisations to gain an increased understanding of cultural and organisational factors prior to and during wellbeing programme implementation to increase effectiveness and sustainability and support positive organisational change. Subsequent studies should address the identified organisational barriers to health initiatives in the context of hybrid working.