



Labour Market – a place free from human exploitation seminar

Workshop One – Mental health and wellbeing in the workplace

The West Midlands Regional Observatory recently published a report on mental health and employment in the region. This can be downloaded from our website:
www.wmro.org > OurResearch > Economicinclusion > Economicinclusionspotlightreports

Mental health problems are widespread and affect people both in work and out of work. In the UK, it is estimated that:

- 1 in 4 people will suffer some form of mental health problem during their lives
- At any given time 1 in 6 working age adults have symptoms associated with mental ill-health (e.g. sleep problems, fatigue, etc) which do not meet the criteria for diagnosis
- A further 1 in 6 working age adults experience diagnosable mental health problems (e.g. depression, anxiety, etc) at any given time
- An estimated 1%-2% of the population (a proportion stable over many years) have severe mental health problems (e.g. schizophrenia, bipolar disorder, etc)¹

The West Midlands

In the year to March 2009 in the West Midlands, only 29% of people with a mental health problem² were in employment in the West Midlands, compared with 61% for all those with health problems, and 72% for the general population³. People with a mental health problem have the lowest rates of employment of any health problem.

Workshop Aims

The workshop will consider the following questions, to feed back to the main conference:

- **What are the key issues?**
- **What could we do locally and regionally?**
- **Recommendations/key messages to policy makers**
- **Best practice examples**

¹ The Royal College of Psychiatrists: Mental Health and Work 2008

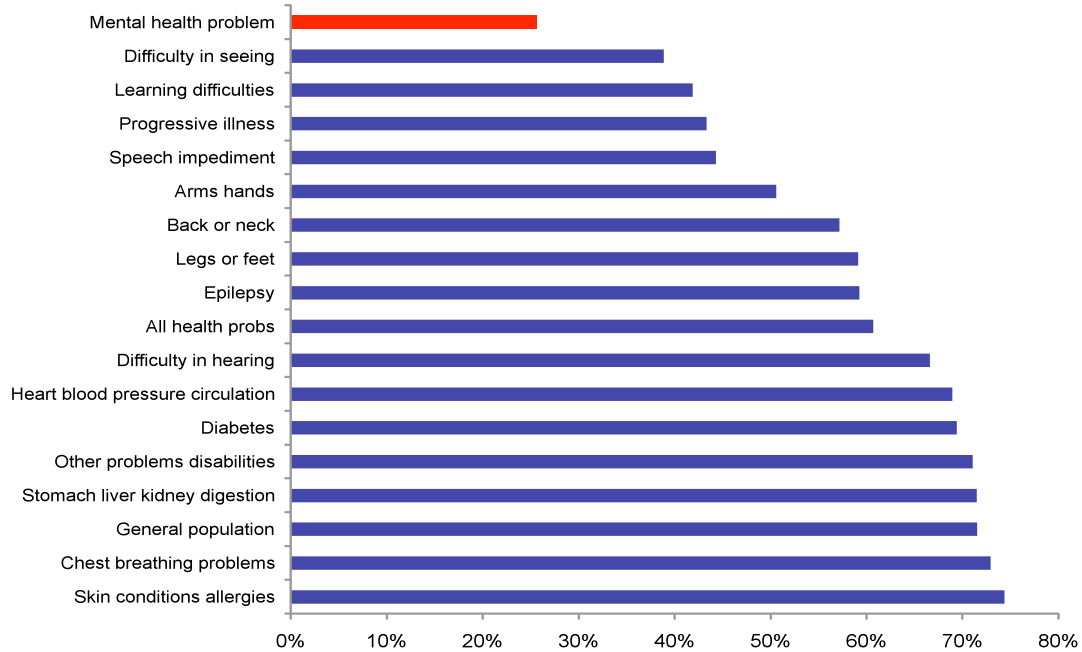
² Self-reported health problems lasting longer than a year. 'Mental health problem' here excludes learning difficulties.

³ Estimates for those with 'severe and enduring' mental health problems indicate even lower rates of employment, although reliable data for the region is not currently available.

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Employment rates of people with health problems in West Midlands



Source: LFS April 08 - March 09 4Q average

Key Facts for the West Midlands Region		Rate (%)
Employment	All health problems	60.7
	Mental health problems	28.9
	General population	71.6
ILO Unemployment	All health problems	9.1
	Mental health problems	24.0
	General population	7.8
Sickness benefit claims	IB claims for mental or behavioural disorders	40% of IB claims – 96,000 people

Source: Labour force Survey April 08-Mar 09 four-quarter average
N.B. Health problems here refer to self-reported health problems lasting longer than a year

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Workshop Two – Responsible downsizing and restructuring

Businesses are currently operating in extremely difficult circumstances facing intense pressure on cash flow as demand for many goods and services dries up, while banks are unable to provide short term funding relief. Redundancy and restructuring, including the closure of operations, are becoming a necessity as some organisations are forced to reduce overheads in order to survive.

The current economic crisis is unusual in the speed and severity of impact, but vital lessons learnt in previous downturns around issues of trust, reputation and organisational knowledge must not be forgotten. This briefing note offers ways to reduce headcount and restructure that minimise the negative impact to individuals and communities, and which ultimately pay dividends to the organisation involved.

These ideas and best practice should provide a timely reminder that organisations do have options over the way that they restructure and downsize, and making changes with care and respect for the individuals and communities involved is an investment that will both protect their business today, and place them in a better position for the future when economic conditions improve.

Good practice requires objectivity, lateral and innovative thinking and, above all, planned and considered communication. Important when times are good, communication is essential when times are bad

Getting the scale of your approach right

The size of an organisation impacts on the number of people affected by redundancy programmes and the community impact, and therefore the scale of response required. In remote areas, where there may be only one major employer, closing down a facility will have a much greater and more negative impact, and means planning and investment is even more critical. But any employer – irrespective of size – can adopt a responsible approach. Values-based decision making applies whether you are cutting one job, or making thousands redundant and closing down an operation.

BITC and a range of organisations are working to provide businesses with flexible and responsive support during the economic downturn. These agencies can provide support in developing the skills and employability of remaining employees and those facing redundancy.

ACAS: www.acas.org.uk

CIPD: www.cipd.co.uk

The Learning & Skills Council: www.lsc.gov.uk

JobCentre Plus: www.jobcentreplus.gov.uk/JCP/Employers/redundancies/index.html

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Workshop Three – Supporting those most vulnerable in the workplace

Background information

The Department of Trade and Industry Policy Statement ***‘Success at Work: Protecting Vulnerable Workers, supporting good employers’*** (March 2006) defined a vulnerable worker as: *‘someone working in an environment where the risk of being denied employment rights is high and who does not have the capacity or means to protect themselves from that abuse. Both factors need to be present. A worker may be susceptible to vulnerability, but that is only significant if an employer exploits that vulnerability.’*

‘Success at Work’ was published at a time when the UK was experiencing a strong and stable economy, the highest employment rate in Europe and reducing unemployment. Government could speak confidently of the progress achieved since 1997 - setting minimum standards in the workplace, introducing family friendly policies, and measures to improve fairness in the workplace - and the prospect of continued progress on all fronts.

The current landscape

Work remains the best route out of poverty and the key means to prevent people from falling into poverty in the future. But since 2006 the UK has entered a recession which has severely impacted the UK economy, with the West Midlands suffering the greatest impact in terms of rising unemployment rates and reducing productivity.

The regional output gap has grown from £10 billion in 2007 to approximately £15 billion in 2009 (against the average output of the remaining 8 English Regions), while the latest Labour Market Statistics (November 2009) confirm that the West Midlands has:

- the highest ILO unemployment rate of any UK region, at 10%, with 270,000 people out of work;
- 186,100 people claiming Jobseekers Allowance (JSA), an increase of 69,900 on September 2008;
- 55,455 Young People claiming JSA, compared to 31,000 in 2008; and
- an employment rate dropping from 72.2% to 70% in the 12 months to September 2009 compared to a national average of 72.5%.

In addition, the Region has the highest proportion of people with no formal skills qualifications, with current projections suggesting there will only be 600,000 jobs **nationally** requiring no qualifications post-recession, compared with 3.5 million before the recession.

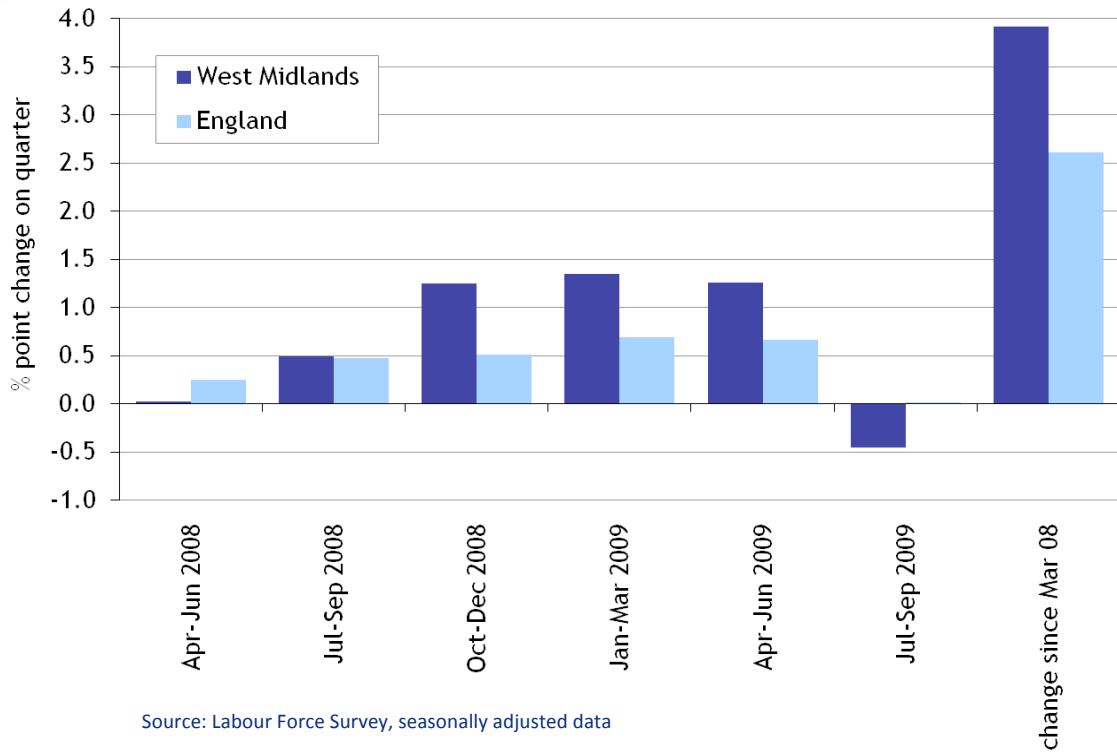
The recession undoubtedly impacts the debate on vulnerable workers and the support they require. It arguably calls into question the definition we ascribe to ‘vulnerable workers’ (as the prospect of further job losses remains) and most certainly increases the challenge of ensuring every worker is offered the opportunity to progress in work and undertake **valued** and **value-added** work

The workshop will therefore look to identify the factors that help to create a workplace free from exploitation of vulnerable workers, the barriers that impede progress and the means to overcome these.

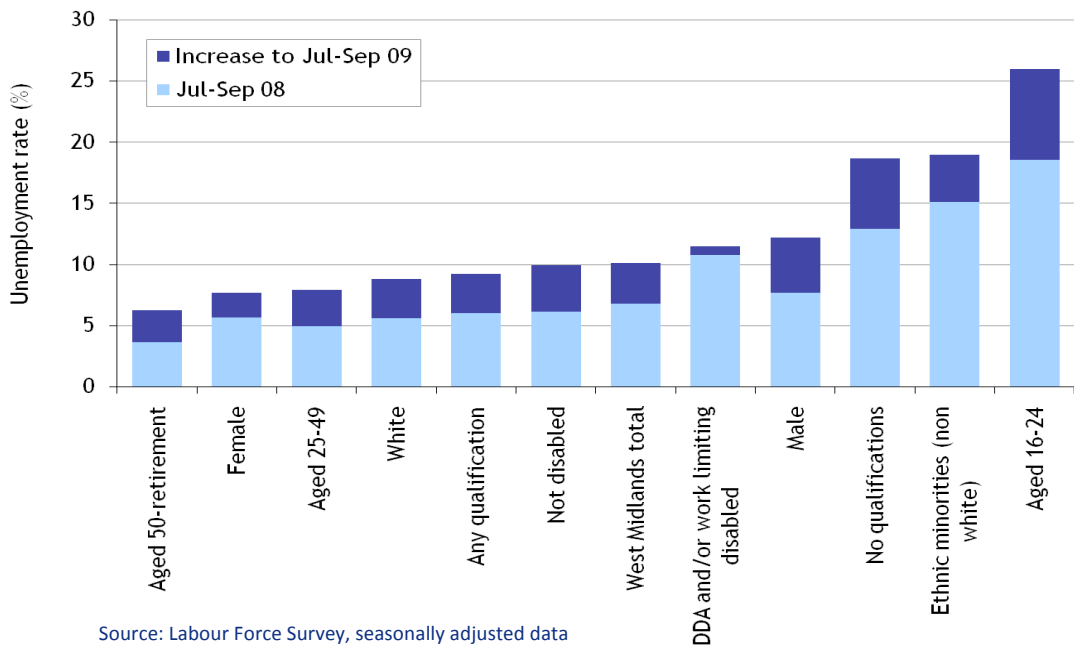
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Quarterly change in unemployment rates



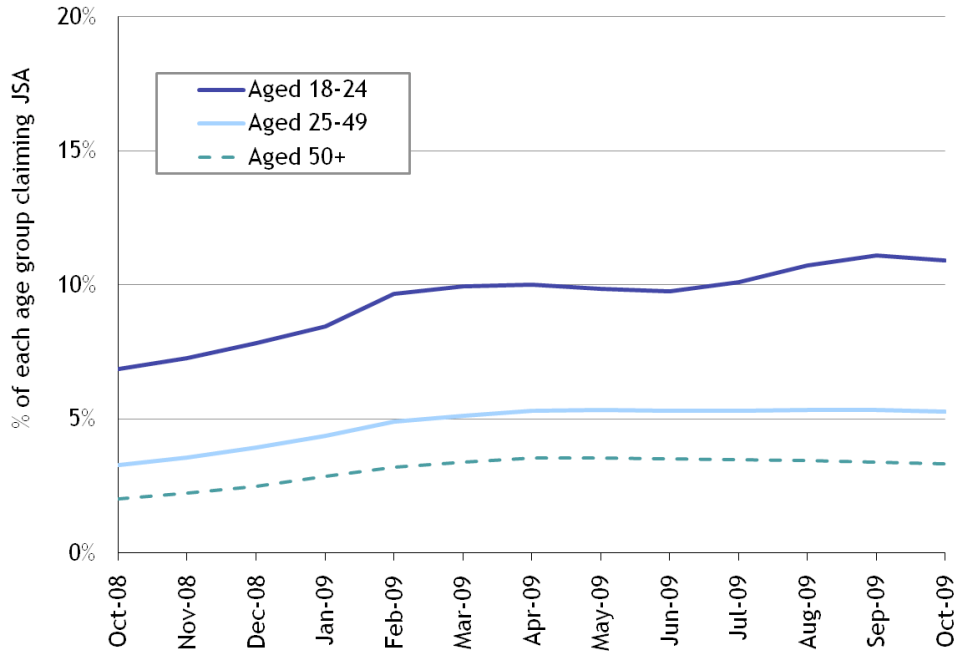
Increase in unemployment rates by demographic group



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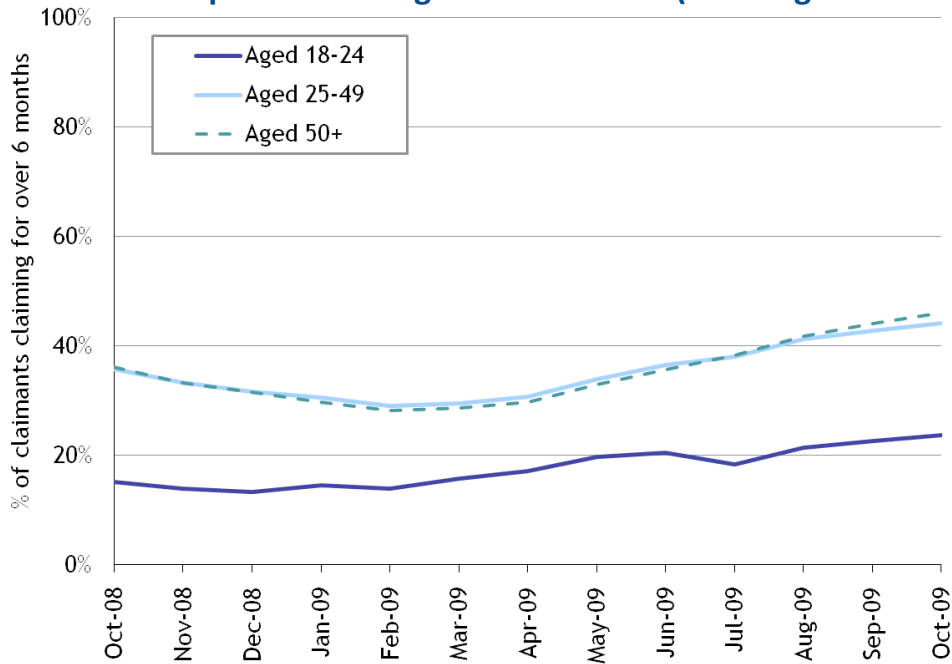


JSA claimant rates by age group



Source: Office for National Statistics (claimant count, non-seasonally adjusted data)

Proportion of long-term claimants (claiming over 6 months)



Source: Office for National Statistics (claimant count, non-seasonally adjusted data)

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