



**Sheffield Occupational Health Advisory Service (SOHAS)**  
*Working to Prevent and Alleviate the Effects of Work on Health*

# Sheffield Occupational Health Advisory Service

# Annual Report

# 2021-2022

## What we do

**We provide Sheffield's job retention services; if you believe that your work is affecting your health, we can provide you with advice to help you stay at work or return to work after a period of sickness absence.**

We are a preventative service. **65% of the people we give advice to are at work, not off sick.** We target people who live and work in the most deprived areas of Sheffield who are vulnerable to the loss of their job. Over the last year, we have provided job retention services for people with mental and physical health issues as well as working carers and cancer patients.

**If you are worried about going back to work or struggling because of workplace ill health we can help you. Either contact your GP and ask to be referred to a SOHAS Adviser, contact us on our website using the "can we help you" tab or ring us on 0114 2755760.**

**The world of work has changed with people making different choices about what work means to them. We have found that many businesses have failed to adapt to this changing work culture, resulting in more people developing diverse workplace health issues.**

We have listened to what people say they want from their employer and carried out research based on the issues they have raised so that we can support people in different and more effective ways. We have developed new partnerships with the voluntary and health sectors and now take referrals from over 15 different organisations as well as GPs, who know the value of our work.

## What are the outcomes of our work?

- **We lower workplace stress**
- **We reduce visits to GPs**
- **We improve people's working conditions**
- **We reduce presenteeism, leaveism and sickness absence at work**

### Case study

Jacob is in his early 30s. He has autism, ADHD, anxiety and depression. He is now in his first full time job as an administrator. He passed his 3-month probation period, but since then his employer has increased his targets. He is feeling stressed, overwhelmed, burnt out and is having panic attacks. He has been off sick for 6 weeks when he came us for advice.

Jacob thinks that his employer is not understanding about his conditions and he has decided that he would rather resign than return to work. However, he feels a financial burden on his family as he was only paid a full salary for the first 4 weeks of his sickness absence because of his short period of service. We made Jacob aware of the benefits to which he may be entitled.

We advised Jacob that he is likely to be protected under the Equality Act and entitled to Reasonable adjustments. These could include reduced caseload or reduced working hours. We advised that it would be helpful to complete a Wellness Action Plan, along with a risk assessment. We also advised a phased return to work because of the length of time he had been off sick and that he should ask his manager to refer him to occupational health. We offered to write to his employer setting out our advice.

Jacob felt that he had been treated unfairly, so we made him aware that, if he wanted to, he had grounds to raise a grievance.

Jacob continued to be unhappy with his role and we asked him if he wanted to be referred to a vocational guidance expert to gain more support with his career options. He has now had an assessment with his occupational health service at work and is waiting for a report. He is also thinking about his options: to stay with his employer or get more support to find another job.

“Our practice has referred patients to SOHAS for a long time. We have found that they provide a comprehensive service that gives our patients practical advice and support to stay in employment. We are seeing that patients are coming to the surgery with more complex workplace health needs and they tell us that the SOHAS adviser is knowledgeable and has a high level of expertise to meet their needs.”

*GP quote*

If we use the CIPD figures for the cost of recruiting new employees, we will have saved businesses approximately **£750,000** over the last year

**92%** of people who used our services, said that the advice reduced their stress levels

All the feedback I've received after referring someone for an appointment with a SOHAS adviser is that it really helped the patient, they were given good support, written information and the knowledge that they could go back and see the adviser if needed.

It's a fantastic service that makes a noticeable difference to patients I've been working with. By having specialist support to manage their work, my patients are better able to engage with treatment.

*Clinician quote*

“If it wasn't for SOHAS and their calm and confident advice, I would not be back at work. They have supported me during a very difficult and complex grievance/workplace bullying issue while I was suffering from severe anxiety. I have only just returned to work but my employment adviser has supported me every step of the way; they remained flexible with their time, always returned my calls or emails, and have always been consistent and supportive. An amazing person. Very impressed.”

*Patient quote*

**80%** of GPs said that their patients' sickness absence reduced after being given advice by SOHAS

John sent this message after we carried out an occupational health assessment for an employee:  
“The Occupational Health Assessment was good and timely. The information in the report was useful and was in a format that I could understand. It was helpful in making reasonable adjustments for the employee and helping us update our risk assessment process.”

*Occupational health assessment quote*

**Employers: We carry out non-medical occupational health assessments that give you practical advice on how to return someone to work after sickness absence. Ring us for more information.**

## How we are run

SOHAS is a registered charity, No. 1085464. The Board of Trustees are responsible for managing the business of the organisation, safeguarding the charity's assets and managing its funds.

The Board is made up of people who bring a range of experience and skills to help the organisation achieve its objectives. The Trustees, who are volunteers, are elected at the Annual General Meeting.

We would like to thank our staff, Trustees, GPs, stakeholders and funders who helped us to deliver our work and health advice.

## Contact details

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We've made it easier to contact us online go to [www.sohas.co.uk](http://www.sohas.co.uk) and use the "can we help you" tab to tell us what sort of help you need.

You can get advice from a SOHAS adviser in person, on the telephone, or online by Teams or Zoom. Go to our website to check whether you have an adviser based at your surgery.



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## Funders

SOHAS received funding from the following organisations:

**vas**  
supporting community action



FUND COMMUNITY

**Sheffield IAPT**  
working together to improve your wellbeing