



# Annual Review

2023/24

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[www.sohas.co.uk](http://www.sohas.co.uk)

# About Us

SOHAS has been operating since 1980 to help and support people who live or work in Sheffield and believe that their work is affecting their health, or their health is affecting their work. In this time, we have given advice to over 65,000 people to help them stay in work.

We are at the forefront of providing a high-quality work and health advice service in the UK. To enable us to do this, we listen to the people we give advice to, talk to businesses and analyse data and reports to ensure that we give the best advice possible.

This is why we were recently described by the Department of Work and Pensions as an “an exemplar organisation that others should aspire to”.





# Our Approach

We are here to understand the impact of work and health issues on people who live or work in the areas of greatest deprivation and inequality, and who have the most insecure jobs in Sheffield.

We know that people living in poverty, those with disabilities or long-term health problems, carers, and people from some minority ethnic groups are more likely to be in insecure and badly designed jobs, which can harm people's health and wellbeing because of physical dangers, low pay, and too few or too many working hours.

Our focus is on prevention. We aim to provide practical advice and support that people can use to improve their workplace health and remain in employment avoiding the need to go to their GP and get a fitnote. We listen closely to the people we advise and use the data we collect to develop our understanding. We engage with academics, researchers and clinicians to make sense of what is the most effective way to give advice.



# Our Values Include

- Confidentiality: we will not disclose information disclosed by patients without consent.
- Research and innovation: work and health issues are continually evolving; we will be at the forefront of carrying out research that will lead to innovative practice so we can provide the best possible service.
- Organisational culture: SOHAS staff work together as a team to ensure that everyone in the organisation receives the right kind of help and support to enable them to work effectively.
- Service delivery: We aim to deliver a service that meets the needs and expectations of people who need advice on work and health issues.

# Our impact

**In contrast to other comparable services we deliver the same or better outcomes with up to ten times less funding.**

## **The impact of our work includes:**

- Reducing sickness absences and the number of employees who attend work when they are ill.
- Reducing visits to GPs and clinicians by keeping employees healthier and in work.
- Improving the mental and physical health of employees.
- Improving employees working conditions.
- Giving employees the confidence to improve their relationship with their manager.
- Supporting employees to manage their health which leads to greater job satisfaction and more effective working.



# Our Services

The Work and Health Service, which is funded by Sheffield City Council, provides advice to anyone who lives or works in Sheffield who believe their health is being affected by their job.

We predominately give advice in GP surgeries, but we also give advice on a face-to-face basis at our office, on Teams or Zoom or over the telephone.

An advice session generally lasts for 45 minutes. We use a holistic approach to give practical and straightforward advice without time limit.

We have expertise across a range of mental and physical health issues from simple to complex and advocate on behalf of people with employers if needed.

# Performance

We gave advice to 1,000 people in 2023-24 (800 were new to our service).



# Patients Voices

Jo\* has worked in the public sector for 3 years. They have had numerous managers over this time. They have struggled with lack of decision making from managers. This has had a negative impact on their work and increased their levels of stress and anxiety.

They have dyslexia and have been newly diagnosed with endometriosis which they have discussed with their HR department along with their other health conditions. The feedback they received was that action to alleviate their stress and anxiety would only be taken if they went 'off sick'. Their other health issues were not addressed. Jo was advised to speak to their TU rep to flag up their concerns that their health issues were being ignored by their latest manager and HR, and to ask for HR to develop an action plan to provide support for their endometriosis and other health issues. The adviser checked whether there was any external support Jo could access while the action plan was put in place.

A suggestion was made to contact the local branch of Mind for help managing their mental health. Jo reported back to the adviser that a plan had been put together and this had helped them to manager their workplace health issues, but they were worried that if their manager left, that they would be back to square one.

## Who Uses Our Services

Women 60% : Men 40%

### Ethnicity Split

White **83%**  
Asian/Black/Other **17%**



### Ages

16-34 **25%**  
35-54 **50%**  
55+ **25%**



### Top 4 Job Sector

Health Service **20%**  
Public Administration **15%**  
Education **12%**  
Retail **9%**



### In Work/Off Sick

In work **65%**  
Off sick **35%**



\*Not their real name.



# Projects and Research

Our most recent project is the Women's Wellbeing and Reproductive Health Project in partnership with Heeley Trust. Our focus is on helping women whose reproductive health is affecting their ability to work or women whose work is having an impact on their reproductive health. We have been giving advice to employees to keep them at work and put together information that employers can use to support their employees concerning endometriosis, IVF, menopause and polycystic ovary syndrome.

Our latest research project is a research partnership with Sheffield University about Autism and employment. The project aims to investigate hiring practices in relation to autistic employees, including establishing the perceived barriers that prevent employers hiring more autistic people.

The project will co-design and pilot a 'behaviour change intervention' that can be used with employers to improve employment rates among autistic individuals.



## Firth Park BAME Engagement

This is a small-scale project that engages with women on a range of work and health issues in Firth Park. The project focus is women who are in employment and who need help and support but maybe reluctant to access SOHAS via their GP, website or telephone.

The aim is to develop more inclusive ways of accessing our advice services.

# Looking Ahead

There are 3 areas that we will focus on over the next year:

- 1.** Continue to improve how we deliver our advice services, driven by what people tell us they need to stay healthy at work
- 2.** Develop several research project funding bids
- 3.** Expand our occupational health assessment business

We are looking closely at the government plans for changes to employment law and their approach to workplace health issues, which include:

- **Modernising health and safety legislation**
- **Increased enforcement and funding**
- **A greater mental health focus**
- **Expanded Worker Protections**

We will be closely following DWP on their approach to getting people into and keeping them at work.

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# Our Structure and contact details

## Chief Executive

Nick Pearson

## Staff

Sarah Cooke

Jon Dale

Debbie Unwin

Jo Cairns

Neesha Ayub

Farah Din

Ryan Woodward

## Volunteer

Helen Goodrum

## Trustees

Adrian Budgen

Anne Giller

Francis Creed

Jan Ellen

Steve Hambleton

Fahiim Osman

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Sheffield Occupational Health Advisory Service (SOHAS) is a voluntary organisation and a registered charity.

## SOHAS resources

our website at [www.sohas.co.uk](http://www.sohas.co.uk)

our blog site at [www.sohasworkplacehealth.com](http://www.sohasworkplacehealth.com)

SOHAS is a registered charity No. 1085464.

Registered No: 2429795 Registered Office: SOHAS, The Circle, 33 Rockingham Lane, Sheffield, S1 4FW

## Contact Us:

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## SOHAS is funded by:

Sheffield City Council,  
Sheffield Town Trust and  
VCSE Health and Wellbeing Fund



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@SOHASHealth



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**Sheffield Occupational Health Advisory Service (SOHAS)**

*Working to Prevent and Alleviate the Effects of Work on Health*