

The integrated DM approach within the Scottish National Health System

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Background: Scotland has historically had one of the highest rates of poor health and corresponding work related absence in the developed world. To address this challenge, the Scottish government formed a specialised unit in 2006, the Scottish Centre for Healthy Working Lives (SCHWL). Functioning as an extension of the government funded National Health System (NHS), SCHWL's principle goal was to engage employers and enable them to protect and improve the health of their employees.

Hypothesis: The establishment of disability management services within the National Health Service would create a primary link between medical/health services and employers/employees, resulting in improved timeframes for return to work and reduced absence rates.

Methods: The SCHWL established three pilot projects to deliver Vocational Rehabilitation Services across Scotland. This included the provision of disability management services to enable workers to return to or remain in work, with the intention of creating a necessary bridge between the health care system and employers/employees. SCHWL determined that specialised training of health professional staff working within the NHS would be a critical requirement for success. In 2009, SCHWL engaged KMG Health Partners to begin delivery of the NIDMAR education programme to a cross section of staff working within the NHS. KMG has now trained over 50 health professionals who have achieved their Certified Disability Management Professional (CDMP) designation and who work with the NHS across Scotland. **Principle Findings:** The CDMP's function as a critical link between the traditional health services accessed at the initial stages of an employee's injury or illness. Their primary role facilitates and supports return to work from the initial onset of medical/health treatment.

Conclusion: The innovative approach implemented by SCHWL has achieved measurable improvements in the communication process between NHS treating health professionals and employers, employer engagement in the return to work process, and reduced employee timeframes for return to work.