

Disability in the Workplace: Assets not Problems

Taking a fresh look at ways of improving the effectiveness of individuals and businesses

The speakers

- Dr Phil Friend OBE FRSA Chair Disability Rights (UK)

- John Gillman LLB (Hons), ACII, FRSA Consultant to the Board of Trustees Disability Rights (UK)

Quick Quiz

1) What proportion of disabled people are born with a disability?

- a) 27% b) 37% c) 17%

2) What percentage of disabled people use a wheelchair?

- a) 29% b) 8% c) 36%

3) What percentage of disabled people are unemployed

- a) 19% b) 43% c) 28%



Background

- ▣ What do we mean by 'disability'
- ▣ Times they are 'a changing for better or for worse!'
- ▣ The importance of work



Workplace Environment

John Gillman

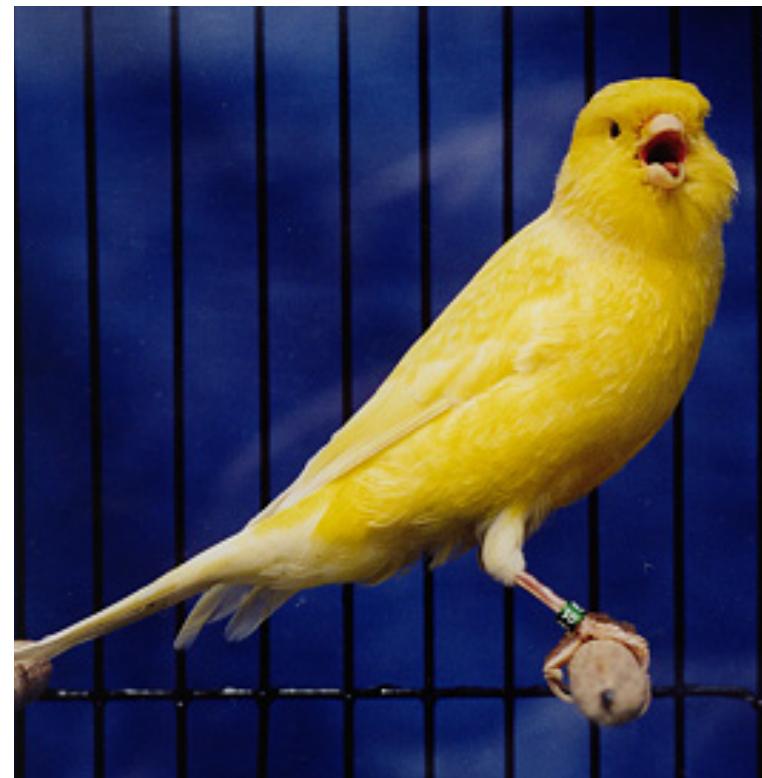
The main components

- ❑ Probabilities
- ❑ The role of employee benefits
- ❑ Barriers to success
- ❑ The role of attitudes
- ❑ The importance of language

Probabilities

- Risk
- Chance
- Likelihood
- and approaches to their management







Benefits

The motivation to provide 'benefits'

- Risk management
- Reward driven
- Engagement driven
- All three
- It's often useful to ask
- what do we do, what does it cost, does it work and how do we know it works?

Reactive health related benefits

- Salary continuation (uninsured)
- Income protection (insured)
- Private medical insurance
- Ill-health early retirement benefits

Pro-active programmes

- ❑ ‘Wellness’
- ❑ Absence tracking
- ❑ Early intervention initiatives
- ❑ Employee Assistance Programmes
- ❑ Occupational Health
- ❑ Management training



Barriers to success

- Diversity of responsibilities
- Shortage of resources
- Lack of actionable data
- Distraction
- Knowing where to go for help
- The human factor



Attitudes to long term absence

- Sympathy
- Impatience
- Annoyance
- Alienation
- Replacement
- Dismissal



Likelihood of return to work

- ❑ After 6 months lower than 50%
- ❑ After 12 months lower than 30%
- ❑ After 24 months lower than 10%
- ❑ Factors include the nature of the condition and the emergence of co-morbid problems
- ❑ The benefits of work and the bio psychosocial model

Changing the way we speak and think about benefits

- ❑ The deferred period
- ❑ Limited benefit payment period

How about

- ❑ The 'getting you back to work period, and
- ❑ The 'removing the barriers' period'

It is important to remember

- ❑ It is possible to be disabled, but not sick and
- ❑ Sick but not disabled
- ❑ Conventional approaches to 'managing absence' can be counter-productive





Disabled employee effectiveness

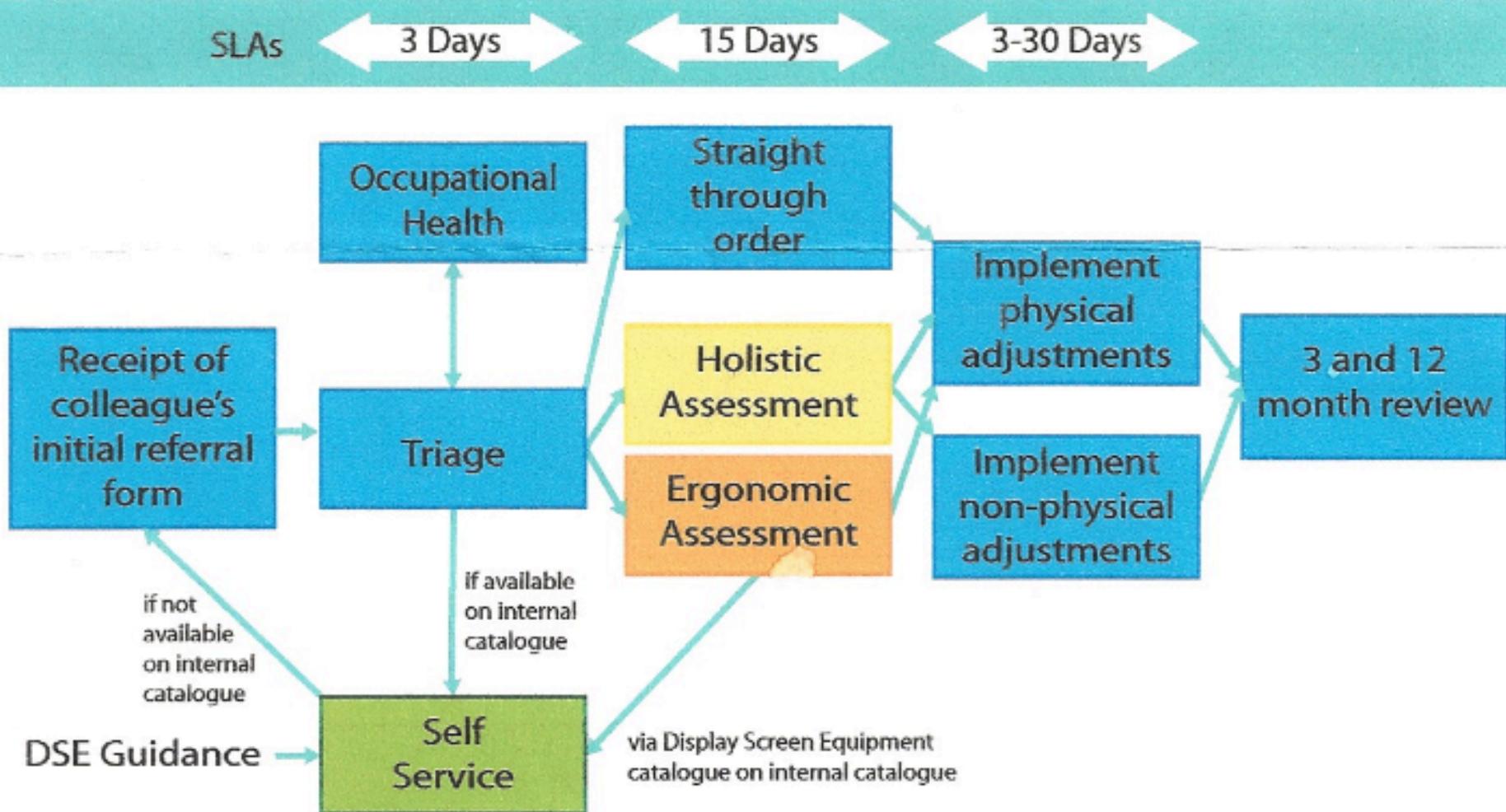
Phil Friend

Typical Challenges with Reasonable Adjustment Process

- ❑ Complexity
- ❑ Line Manager engagement
- ❑ Length of time to implement
- ❑ Engaging with disabled employees
- ❑ Costs



Adjustment Process Map



Lessons we've learned

- Act early don't wait
- Differentiate between managing performance and managing disability
- Recognise the need for 'hard' and 'soft' adjustments
- Recognise that providing adjustments is about effective performance
- Develop advance directives for all
- Non-visible and fluctuating conditions
- Empower the individual
- Train Mental Health First Aiders

Solutions

- Identify a trusted partner
- Keep the process simple
- Centralise funding
- Develop an online assessment process
- Develop a simple speedy ordering process
- Follow up regularly
- Develop line managers reasonable adjustment guide which covers 'hard' and 'soft' adjustments
- Develop workplace adjustment 'passports'

Key things to take away

- ❑ Adjustments are about improving effectiveness
- ❑ Line managers need support to understand their obligations
- ❑ Keep processes simple
- ❑ Engage disabled employees every step of the way.
- ❑ Act quickly
- ❑ Dispel the myths around costs.
- ❑ Provide appropriate training for colleagues
- ❑ Develop processes to manage fluctuating conditions