Reviewer's report

Title: Preventing depression at work: A systematic review and meta-analysis of universal interventions in the workplace

Version: 2
Date: 11 November 2013

Reviewer: Stephen Stansfeld

Reviewer's report:

Minor essential comments

This is an interesting paper on an important subject. The title is a little misleading as it implies entirely primary prevention, whereas in fact many of the studies reviewed involve CBT for depressive symptoms and thus not strictly primary prevention. It might be better to say preventing the development of depression at work or preventing depressive illness at work.

The introduction is well written, clear and comprehensive. The methodology is rigorous and appropriate.

Page 7, line 9-10
Presumably the studies not only had to have an intervention and control group but also had to include random allocation?

Page 7, line 2-3 up
Depression is used a little loosely here. Presumably, largely the outcome measures were of depressive symptoms rather than depressive illness. You might wish to qualify ‘depression’ here.

Page 11
In your flow diagram three studies were excluded due to inadequate data. Could you expand on this a bit? Were these the studies where you attempted to contact the authors but couldn’t make contact?

Page 11, Results
You do briefly describe the interventions in the studies in Table 2. It might be nice also to have a bit of descriptive text in the results on the interventions and what might be common or different between them.

Page 16, line 1
‘As self-report measures were used in all studies some reporting bias may have occurred’ – could you be more explicit about this? Is it that you think that those who had completed the intervention rather than been a control might be more likely to respond positively irrespective of their symptoms? Or is this covered under your fourth point? If they were randomly allocated to either intervention or control surely any general questionnaire response bias is likely to be randomised
across intervention and control groups.

Page 17, line 13-14
Are you able to give some idea of the magnitude of the amount of time involved in these interventions from the studies you looked at? That would be helpful to indicate how practical these interventions were.

Discretionary Revisions

Page 13, para 2
So it may possible that some of the positive effects you are showing are positive effects on anxiety rather than depression?

Quality of written English: Acceptable

Statistical review: Yes, and I have assessed the statistics in my report.

Declaration of competing interests:
I declare I have no competing interests.