

Summary of Seminar 4

The Employee Perspective

The seminar presentations and discussions focussed on employee engagement in the use of their data for examining wellbeing. Issues of trust, participation and clear informed consent were key considerations. There are likely to be different data sources depending on what type of health or wellbeing is being focussed on (e.g., network data – as a social support indicator, sensor data – indicating hours in the office, BMI/heart-rate data – as indicators of physical health). There needs to be a new framework for trying to understand these issues.

Currently there is little evidence directly on the use of Big Data for examining employee wellbeing, but lessons can be learned from other contexts and from approaches to wellbeing currently utilised within organisations. The presentations within the seminar brought different perspectives to this question from the initial framework and questions outlined in Bridgette Wessel's presentation; the participatory design processes used in both Sara Eriksen's and Yvonne Dittrich's research where multiple sources of data were used and solutions were co-designed; the approach to employee wellbeing undertaken within a large University (Andy Dodman and Maureen Howard) and being clear about the underlying ethos/objectives; and the need for understanding and providing guidance on the use of these new data sources, such as social media (Liz Robson's talk).

Discussion within the seminar highlighted several themes.

- 1) Participation and Collaboration – employees need to be involved in setting the agenda for using Big Data progressively. Individuals produce the data through their participation and have a say in how it is used –e.g., what the organisation can have access to and what for. Participation in the collection of data and development of workable wellbeing interventions. However, need to be mindful of complex process of multiple stakeholder involvement when different stakeholders have different priorities. Need a flexible approach.
- 2) Feedback is important – how does the technology communicate with the employee to let them know what is happening? Face to face feedback is often still helpful such as when being fed back individual health data in the context of the organisational average. Important that employees can use their data – not just the organisation.
- 3) Data from multiple sources – depends where draw the line – e.g., travel to work data as well as work itself? Physical health or more subjective indicators? What other data can be used? What are the new indicators of wellbeing that can be indicated in this combined data?
- 4) Need to develop set of questions and frameworks that can evolve with the technology (so doesn't go out of date).
- 5) Big Data doesn't answer everything – it may highlight a particular issue but interpretation and further investigation is still required. But does it always need an expert to do this?
- 6) Balance of Power needs to be watched – do individuals or the big organisations have the power here? Big organisations have the data but also a responsibility to give something back and use it for good.