

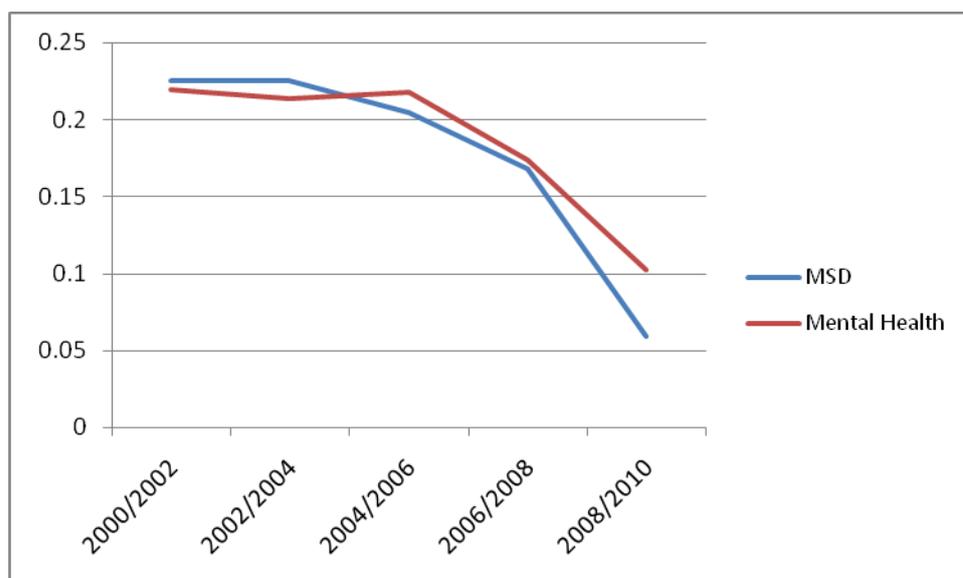
## Occupational health physiotherapy

In 2000 London Underground introduced a physiotherapist to their Occupational Health Team to trial a physiotherapy assessment and treatment service for workers with low back pain. The outcome was a return to work 12 days sooner compared to historical data. Consequently, physiotherapy has become a permanent part of Occupational Health at Transport for London. The Low Back Pain Physiotherapy service includes advice at health fairs, assessment, treatment, pain education class, back fitness group and workplace visits. Early referral is key to recovery so treatment can commence before maladaptive processes take hold. Return to work advice and occupational rehabilitation is integrated into the service.

A study of the 234 patients referred to this service in 2006 showed that 96% returned to work within 1 month, 99.6% by 3 months and that only 15% had any reoccurrence in sickness absence the following year. Further evidence has indicated that early referral to the service (within six weeks) halves the time spent off work. Musculoskeletal medical retirements have seen a 74% reduction in the 10 years since the service began.

The return on investment associated with the reduced sickness absence is estimated to be £10.30 for every £1 spent. However with the high return to work rate and fall in medical retirements it is possible that this is where the greatest savings are.

### Medical Retirements (% of headcount)



Further information on [back problems](#) reduction can be obtained from HSE's web site.