



No one written off: reforming welfare and rewarding responsibility

IOSH response to the DWP Green Paper consultation

Consultation
Response
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About IOSH

Founded in 1945, the Institution of Occupational Safety and Health (IOSH) has around 33,500 individual members, including over 13,000 Chartered Safety and Health Practitioners. IOSH is Europe's largest occupational safety and health (OSH) professional body and has strong OSH links worldwide, with members in over 80 other countries.

Incorporated by Royal Charter, a registered charity and international NGO, IOSH is the guardian of OSH standards of competence in the UK and provider of professional development and awareness training courses. The Institution regulates and steers the profession, maintaining standards and providing impartial, authoritative, free guidance on OSH issues. We are regularly consulted by government departments and other bodies on OSH issues and are founder members of UK, European and International professional body networks, acting as secretariat to the last two organisations. The Institution also has a research and development fund, which is focused on helping establish and develop the evidence-base for OSH policy and practice and on closing knowledge gaps in this area.

IOSH has 29 Branches including in the Caribbean, Middle East, Hong Kong and the Republic of Ireland. We also have 17 special interest groups covering a wide variety of employment sectors and topic areas: aviation and aerospace; communications and media; construction; consultancy; education; environment; fire risk management; food and drink; hazardous industries; healthcare; international; offshore; public services; railways; retail and distribution; rural industries; and safety sciences. IOSH members work at a variety of strategic and operational levels across all employment sectors and our vision is:

“A world of work which is safe, healthy and sustainable”

IOSH was pleased to provide a written response to the DWP Green Paper in April 2006, *A New Deal for Welfare: Empowering People to Work* (see www.iosh.co.uk/files/condocs archive section 2006) and also to Dame Carol Black's recent call for evidence for her Review of the health of Britain's working age population in November 2007 (see www.iosh.co.uk/files/condocs archive section 2007).

We are pleased to have the opportunity to respond to this important latest DWP consultation *No one written off: reforming welfare and rewarding responsibility*. In the response that follows, we make general points about the content and approach and also specific ones addressing, in particular, consultation question 18.

Please direct enquiries about this response to:

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General points

- IOSH welcomes the additional resources that will be provided to pilot the 'Fit for Work' services and the doubling of the budget for 'Access to Work'. However, we would also like to see a commitment to funding a replacement for the Workplace Health Connect initiative (learning lessons from the pilot and other schemes such as Healthy Working Lives – Scotland and Workboost Wales), providing high-quality, free health and safety advice and workplace visits to SMEs.
- We note reference to reassessments using 'Work Capability Assessments (page 14); Work-Focused Health-Related Assessments (page 64); and also extra opportunities for people to talk to medical professionals about back-to-work plans (page 14). As previously stated, we believe it is important that those conducting these assessments and discussions have sufficient occupational health expertise.
- We note that communities will be able to 'choose providers' of their 'Fit for Work' services (page 17). Again we think there needs to be guidelines here on quality control issues and ensuring that services are accredited to an agreed standard.
- In general, we would also like to see more emphasis in the overall strategy on prevention of work-related injury and illness; effective workplace health and safety management; multidisciplinary working, including managers, occupational health and other healthcare professionals, HR professionals and health and safety practitioners; and what constitutes 'good work'.

Specific points

- In answer to consultation question 18 (What are the key features of an action planning approach that would best support employees and employers to take the steps for the employee to make a swifter return to work?). IOSH has recently produced free guidance for health and safety practitioners, employers and others 'A healthy return: a good practice guide to rehabilitating people at work' (www.iosh.co.uk/techguide), which provides a section 'good practice in rehabilitation – a summary' (page 08). This outlines the key actions to be taken, which in brief include:
 - The organisation should have a clear and up-to-date policy on rehabilitation
 - There should be regular contact between the line manager and the absent employee
 - Rehabilitation should be considered once it's clear that absence may be lengthy
 - There should be a co-ordinated, case-management approach, starting with informal discussions between the line manager, employee and HR; this should look at what the organisation can do to help the employee return to work
 - After this initial meeting the employer may arrange for professional advice from an occupational health adviser or ask the employee's GP or specialist for more information, with the employee's consent
 - An assessment should be made about whether medical intervention or treatment could speed up the recovery and medical advice should be taken on this

- Once the employer has medical advice about what the employee can or can't do, they can plan a programme of rehabilitation
- The manager may need to plan and make adjustments to the workplace, working arrangements or work and think about any health and safety issues that might arise, seeking professional advice as required (some examples of reasonable adjustments are provided in the guide)
- The employee and employer should then agree the arrangements for rehabilitation and these should be recorded
- The employee's progress should be monitored regularly and any significant changes to their role agreed with the occupational health adviser

In addition to this guidance, IOSH also provides a free on-line Occupational Health Toolkit (www.oh toolkit.org), providing information on stress, musculoskeletal disorders, inhalation hazards and skin disorders. There is also other information available, for example, CIPD's 'absence management toolkit' and HSE's guide HSG249 – 'managing sickness absence and return to work'. The National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence (NICE) are also intending to bring out guidance on this subject in February 2009.