

## RESPONSE TO THE MAYOR OF LONDON'S 'GOOD WORK STANDARD'

18 September 2017

The Faculty of Occupational Medicine (FOM) is the professional and educational body for occupational medicine in the UK. The Society of Occupational Medicine (SOM) is the UK's membership body for all healthcare professionals working in or with an interest in occupational health. Both organisations exist to ensure the highest standards in the practice of occupational medicine, to stimulate interest and research in the speciality, and to work with government, the healthcare community, health charities and other bodies to promote a healthier workforce.



We welcome the 'Good Work Standard' and the Mayor's commitment to improving working conditions across London; especially the calls for employers to develop and promote "a flexible working culture and other policies that support the workforce in achieving a balance between their work and personal life", as well as "developing a policy around workforce and health and wellbeing, and improving understanding around mental and physical health". We would like to see:

- ***A policy around London workforce health and wellbeing, and improving understanding around mental and physical health.***
- ***investment by NHS London in direct access to specialist services of occupational health for London GPs***
- ***Support by the Mayor for adoption of the London Healthy Workplace Charter. The Charter should include recognition of those employers who have occupational health services that are SEQOHS accredited and signposting to the SOM occupational health value proposition document to employers to support their support their progress towards its goals.***
- ***A London workplace health summit, hosted by the Mayor, to focus attention on the issue with participants from small business, the Health and Safety Executive, NICE, trades unions and the low income workers***
- ***The Mayor consider how to use its new devolved contracts for employment related support to improve work and health issues***

*Finally, it is important liaison occurs with the Government's DWP/DH Work and Health Unit regarding initiatives such as improving the use of the Fit Note, building work as a health outcome within performance monitoring in the NHS and ensuring health professionals in London are trained in the value of good work.*

### ***Re question 1 Are there any other goals we should consider, which are related to work and employment specifically?***

We recommend a goal is set that all London workplaces should have access to occupational health services. According to a recent SOM report, 'Occupational health: the value proposition'<sup>1</sup>, currently "only a minority of the UK workforce can access a comprehensive occupational health service". Occupational health services offer specialist support to workplaces in work and health, contributing to the effective management of the health of workers and workplaces, and supporting employers to meet their legal responsibilities to:

- Provide healthy workplaces and work
- Protect people's health at work
- Provide health surveillance

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.whyoccupationalhealth.co.uk/sites/all/themes/zen/uploads/Occupational%20health%20-%20the%20value%20proposition.pdf>

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- Adjust work for people with health problems or disabilities

Occupational health services support employers to develop a healthy workplace culture and contribute to an organisation's health and performance. Occupational health involvement is also most commonly ranked among organisations' most effective methods for managing long-term sickness absence.

Improving access to occupational health services across the capital would significantly improve the health and wellbeing of London's workforce. For example, consideration should occur for direct access to occupational health services or a specialist in occupational health acting as a clinical lead for London Clinical Commissioning Groups.

The 'Good Work Standard' should therefore include a goal to increase access to occupational health services across London, with a particular emphasis on small and medium-sized businesses, with collaboration within supply chains between employers of different sizes. Consideration should also be made as to how employees in the "gig" economy or on zero hours contracts should have access to occupational health services.

### ***Re question 3: What standards should employers meet to ensure fair treatment and excellent working conditions for their workforce?***

In addition to a specific target regarding access to comprehensive occupational health services, we would encourage London employers to note and follow guidance and standards published by the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) and the Health and Safety Executive (HSE). Key documents include:

- [NICE's recommendations for local authorities and partner organisations](#)<sup>1</sup>
- [NICE guidelines on improving employee mental and physical health and wellbeing](#)<sup>2</sup>
- [HSE 'Management Standards'](#)<sup>3</sup>
- [HSE 'Occupational health standards in the construction industry'](#)<sup>4</sup>

We recommend the London Assembly links employers with NICE and HSE implementation teams to ensure these standards can be made and provide technical resources if necessary to facilitate standards being met.

### ***Re question 5 What other evidence is there that could be used to communicate the business case behind the Good Work Standard's goals to employers?***

We support the assertion that "being a good employer makes good business sense". Employee health and wellbeing contributes to successful business performance and we believe that highly effective and productive companies are those that commit to a culture of health. Poor employee health is associated with significant costs to employers, with 175 million working days lost to sickness absence every year and employers facing an annual sick pay bill of £9 billion<sup>5</sup>. A key benefit of occupational health interventions is avoided sick leave and significant savings to a range of employer's direct and indirect costs

Other evidence that should be used to communicate the business case to employers includes SOM's 2017 report '[Occupational health: the value proposition](#)<sup>6</sup> – which identifies three main reasons why employers provide occupational health services:

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.nice.org.uk/advice/lgb2/chapter/Introduction>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.nice.org.uk/guidance/ph22>

<sup>3</sup> <http://www.hse.gov.uk/stress/standards/>

<sup>4</sup> <http://www.hse.gov.uk/research/rrpdf/rr584.pdf>

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.nice.org.uk/guidance/ph22>

<sup>6</sup> <http://www.whyoccupationalhealth.co.uk/sites/all/themes/zen/uploads/Occupational%20health%20-%20the%20value%20proposition.pdf>

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- Financial – to reduce costs or add value to the business
- Legal – to comply with health and safety laws and regulations
- Moral – it is the right/ethical/socially responsible thing to do

The report was endorsed by organisations such as CIPD, IOSH, Lord Blunkett and the Chair of the All Party Parliamentary Group on occupational health and safety. The report states that “in recent decades workplace wellbeing has risen sharply up the public policy agenda” and highlights a survey by the insurance company Aviva which found that 66% of employees “were more likely to choose an employer who took employee health and wellbeing seriously”<sup>1</sup>. It concludes that:

- Employee health and wellbeing contributes to successful business performance
- Highly effective companies commit to a culture of health
- Wellbeing strategies must extend beyond health to encompass the work environment, culture and interpersonal relationships

Related to this report, leaflets are available for workers, employers and commissioners of occupational health services –

- [Occupational health: A guide for company directors and commissioners of services](#)
- [Occupational health: A guide for line managers and HR professionals](#)
- [Occupational health: A guide for workers and their representatives](#)

Employers should use occupational health services that are SEQOHS accredited. SEQOHS stands for Safe, Effective, and Quality Occupational Health Service and is a set of standards and a voluntary accreditation scheme for occupational health services in the UK and beyond. SEQOHS accreditation is the formal recognition that an occupational health service provider has demonstrated that it has the competence to deliver against the measures in the SEQOHS standards. The scheme is managed by the Royal College of Physicians of London on behalf of the Faculty of Occupational Medicine. SEQOHS is available in Ireland and is endorsed by the Faculty of Occupational Medicine, Royal College of Physicians of Ireland.

### ***Re question 8 What are the most effective measures employers of all types and sizes can take to support the Good Work Standard's goals?***

With specific reference to the 'health and wellbeing' strand of the 'Good Work Standard', employers of all types should be supported in efforts to increase their investment in workplace health promotion, and occupational health services. We would like to see greater collaboration within supply chains between large and small and medium sized businesses. '[Occupational health: the value proposition](#)' summarises three areas as important:

- Safety and health – most employers believe that investment in occupational safety and health is worthwhile (with ergonomic interventions proving most profitable), and that the main benefit of occupational safety and health interventions is avoided sick leave.
- Workplace health promotion – health promotion and prevention programmes are beneficial and low cost but need to be “expertly designed, implemented and evaluated”.
- Occupational health services - occupational health interventions have been shown to be successful and cost-effective eg. “occupational health disability case management interventions that include early contact with workers on leave and specific agreements around work modifications result in faster returns to work and are cost saving”.

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<sup>1</sup> Aviva. The Sixth Health of the Workplace Report. Aviva. Norwich. 2012