

3rd February 2021

Dear Chancellor of the Exchequer Rishi Sunak,

Occupational health's role to facilitate employees back to work and keep safe and healthy.

There is a strong economic case for HM Government to support access to occupational health (OH) for all employers. OH promotes, protects, and restores workplace health.

The Department of Work and Pensions (DWP) and Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC) have not yet responded to the consultation "*Health is everyone's business*" from 2019; We urge HM Treasury to support DHSC and DWP so they can provide logistical, financial, and practical support to enable OH providers without delay to ensure that OH is available to everyone who might need it.

The immediate consequence of not acting are further workplace COVID-19 outbreaks. OH services are key in supporting employees with COVID-19 risks and keeping them in work safely during these challenging times. Long COVID is a current example of a new way OH can help.

Research shows that many returning to work during the COVID-19 crisis will return with depleted mental health. OH services have been proven to enable those on sick leave due to mental health problems to return to work successfully.

Longer term, there is an opportunity now to positively influence the health and wellbeing of the working population and the prosperity of the nation. By investing in OH, the government can support employers to safeguard their workforce and manage risks.

Another issue is the taxation of employees when an employer pays for private sector treatment for a condition that is preventing the employee from a rapid return to work (they arise commonly both in mental health and in orthopaedics and rheumatology specialties). The UK economy and the Exchequer will benefit from this investment to facilitate quicker return to work due to reduced sick pay, increased income tax and productivity. A tax in this area therefore would benefit from a cost/benefit analysis.

Overall, SOM would like to work with HM Treasury to act swiftly in the light of the COVID-19 crisis to ensure the UK population has comprehensive access to OH advice and assessment.

I look forward to hearing from your officials regarding a meeting to discuss these issues further.

Dr Mike Goldsmith

Chair - OH Commercial Providers Leadership Group

Co-signatories include:

Su Chantry, Occupational Health Manager
Williams Performance Health

Pippa Crouch, Clinical Director
Global OHS Team

Dr Alasdair Emslie
Duradiamond

Dr Sarah Holton, Consultant Occupational Health Physician
AXA PPP

Dr P Johnson, Consultant Occupational Physician

Maureen Makanza, Specialist Occupational Health Practitioner
Hive Occupational Health & Wellness Ltd

Dr Melissa McKay

Lyndsey Marchant
Faculty of Occupational Health Nursing

Dr David MJ Mills MFOM FFOMi MBA MSc, Accredited Specialist in Occupational
Medicine

Dr Rikard Moen, Consultant Occupational Health Physician
Optima Health

Dr Munna Roy, Medical Director
Integral OH

Eamonn Swanton, Managing Director
Heales Business Services Ltd

Dr Bernard Yew, Medical Director
PAM group

Dr Gareth Williams, Medical Director
Medigold