



HM Government



July 2019

Health is everyone's business

Lowering the number of people who lose their job because of sickness



Who we are



This booklet is a **consultation**. This means we will give you information and want to ask you questions so we know what you think.



Department
for Work &
Pensions



Department
of Health &
Social Care

This consultation was written by the **Department for Work and Pensions** and the **Department of Health and Social Care**.



We are two **government** departments that have worked together to make this consultation.



The **government** makes the laws for our country.

What the minister says

A **minister** is the head of a government department.



More people are in work than ever before but too many sick or disabled people are losing their jobs.

employee



employer

The government must do more to help **employers** do what's best when their **employees** are sick.

- You are an **employer** if you pay people to work for you.
- You are an **employee** if you are paid to work for a company or person.



Small employers might not have enough information or time to help their sick employees.



The government and employers must work together to **support** employees when they are sick so that they can come back to their job when they are able to do so. **Supporting** someone is to help them.

What this booklet is about

job **no job**



Even though more people are working than ever before, only about half of disabled people are working.



When someone is in a job they like, it can help them feel good and stay healthy.



When someone loses their job because of their health they can often find it hard to get back into work.



When employers spend money on health and wellbeing

- employees will have less time off sick
- good employees will stay for longer
- it can make the work being done even better.

We want to know what you think



This consultation will give you information so that we can ask you what you think.



Here are the 4 main things we will be talking about in this booklet ...



- changing the law to help employers to support employees when they have been away from work due to sickness.



- making it so that employers can get good advice and support so that they know what they should do when an employee is sick.



- changing **statutory sick pay (SSP)** so that it is better at supporting employees when they are sick.



Statutory sick pay is called **SSP** for short. SSP is money that is paid to an employee when they have been sick for a period of time. There are rules about who gets SSP, how much they get, and for how long.



- making **Occupational Health services (OH services)** better. This could be by helping employers to buy services.



Occupational Health services are called **OH services** for short. OH services help and support employers to do what's best for their employees when they are sick or have a disability.



You can tell us what you think in our **Questions Booklet**.

Look out for these blue boxes that tell you when you can answer questions.



How employers can support employees to stay in work



It is best if employees get help from their employer. This could be helping people while they are at work, or as soon as possible when they are sick.



Making changes to the **workplace** can help employees stay in work or come back from sickness faster. The **workplace** is where an employee goes to do their job.



Employees need time off to get better, and need to get sick pay.



Employers should be able to use good OH services to help their employees stay in work.

When an employer has to support their employee



Many employers already support their employees to stay in work or to come back to work after sickness. But not all employers can offer the same type of support.



Small employers say they find it hard to support employees because they do not have enough time or money. Some employers do not know how to support their employees who are sick or disabled.



Some employers do not know that spending time and money on supporting employees can be great for everyone.



For some employers, an employee being sick for a long time does not happen very often. This means some employers do not think about it until they need to and do not act fast enough when someone is sick.



The law for employers



The law must be clear so that all employers know what to do to help their employees.



There are already some laws in place but they might not do enough.



We are thinking about changing some of the laws for

- Workplace modifications
- Statutory Sick Pay (SSP)
- Occupational Health services (OH services).



Changes to work or the workplace



The law says that employers must make **reasonable adjustments** for disabled employees.



Reasonable adjustments are when an employer makes changes to make it easier for people to work there. But this does not cover everyone, for example people who have a temporary disability.



The law could be changed so that these employees can ask for a **workplace modification**. The employer would be able to say yes or no.



Workplace modifications are changes to the sort of work someone does or the place where they work.



Employers supporting employees when they are sick



Early support from an employer can help sick employees come back to work more quickly when they are off.



The government could make sure employers have the right information on how to do this.



If employers help and support employees back to work, not so many employees would lose their job because of sickness.



The help and support an employee gives would need to be fair for both the employee and employer.

Answer **questions 7, 8, 9** and **10** in our **Questions Booklet**



Changing Statutory Sick Pay (SSP)



The government thinks that we should make changes to SSP so that it is better at supporting employees when they are sick.



It is sometimes good if someone who is sick can return to work slowly. They could work a little longer a bit at a time. This is called a **gradual return to work**.



SSP stops as soon as someone goes back to work so it does not work with a gradual return to work.



This means some people could have less money on a gradual return to work than if they stayed off sick. The government wants to change the rules so that someone can have a gradual return to work.



If employers told employees sooner when their SSP will end, it might make them talk to each other about how the employee could come back to work.



The rules about when someone can get SSP can be confusing so the government could make the rules easier to understand.



People who earn less than £118 a week do not get SSP. The government wants to change this so that people who earn less than £118 per week get SSP.



Some employers do not pay SSP when they are meant to. The government wants to make sure employers pay SSP to their employees when they need it.



The government could give smaller employers some money when they pay SSP to their employees. This would only be given when they have shown they have tried to help their employee back to work.



When we looked at how SSP works in other countries, SSP in the UK is lower and is paid for a longer time.



In the UK SSP is a set amount for everyone. In other countries SSP is an amount that changes based on how much money the employee earns.



That means that people who get paid more money for their job would get more SSP.



If the amount of money paid for SSP goes up it could support employees better, but it could also mean employers are less likely to employ disabled people.



At the moment there is no plan to change the length or amount of SSP employees get, but the government would like to know what you think.



Occupational Health services (OH services)



Occupational Health services are called **OH services** for short. OH services help and support employers to do what's best for their employees when they are sick or have a disability.



The government thinks that the changes we have talked about so far in this consultation will mean more employers will want to buy OH services.



We need to make sure employers can buy the best OH services they need and that there are enough good OH services for everyone.



The main reasons that small employers say that they do not use OH services are cost and time.



Making the cost of OH services lower could make more small employers use them.



The government could give smaller businesses **financial help**. **Financial help** means giving money to help people buy things.



This extra financial help could be given to employers only if they buy good quality OH services.



Because more employers would be using OH services, more good quality OH services will be needed. This means that the government might need to help make OH services better.



We need to make sure that the best OH services are available and that OH services are always trying to be better.



The number of nurses and doctors working in OH services is going down.



At the moment there is not one place that keeps information about OH doctors and nurses. This makes it hard for the government to plan for the future. The government could make this better by collecting this information.



The government wants to help more doctors and nurses get jobs in OH services by offering training and apprenticeship programs.

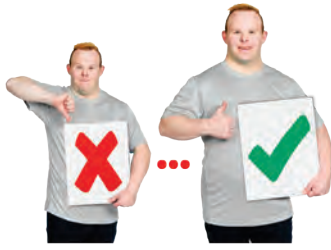


There are lots of different people working in different jobs in OH services. The government could help by using everyone's different skills better.



The **National School of Occupational Health** leads and helps support OH services. The government want to help them lead and support better.

Helping OH services get better faster



People who provide OH services could help in new ways which might make these services better and cheaper.



Some people who provide OH services say that they make less money when working with small employers. This means that small employers do not have as many OH services to choose from.



The government could give money to help make OH services better for smaller employers. They have not said they will give money, but they are interested in what you think.



The government wants to improve the research done into OH services and help share the information found out so it can be better used.



OH services that are good enough could be given a **quality standard**. A **quality standard** is like a certificate showing how good they are. This will mean employers can quickly choose the best OH service for them.



Advice and support for employers



For employers to be able to support their employees as best as they can they need good advice and information.



Employers often do not understand or do not know what they should be doing about disabilities and sickness. Sometimes they are worried about doing the wrong thing.



The information that they can get now can be confusing for employers. This makes it less likely that they will buy OH services.



The government is thinking hard about the best way to talk to small employers.



The government could provide better advice and information, like

- what the law says an employer has to do
- examples of how other employers have dealt with sickness in a good way
- support for helping employees come back to work after being sick
- changes to work or workplace modifications
- where other helpful information can be found.



Small employers might not have **HR departments** to help pick the best OH service for them. **HR departments** look after employees.



Helping small employers to know how and where to buy OH services makes it more likely that they will find the best OH service for them.



Helping small employers know more about OH services will also mean that they will know what to expect from them. This will help to make OH services better and cheaper.



We will tell employers in the UK the benefits of healthy workplaces that include all types of people.



Some employers do not think about sickness until someone is sick. By giving the correct information and support they can make it more likely that their employee comes back after being sick.



At the moment the government does not keep information about when people go off work sick.



The government is thinking about collecting this information by having employers automatically tell them about sickness leave.



This could help the government give the correct information at the right time to help employers.



What happens next



The government wants to make sure employers have skills, confidence and knowledge about health and wellbeing in the workplace.



All the things we have talked about in this consultation are to help lower the number of people who lose their job because of sickness.



The government will listen to what people say, so that they can make sure they are making the right decisions.



This is a great chance for you to tell us what you think. You can help us make decisions that will change the lives of disabled people and people who are sick.

