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HM Government

Keep Britain Working: an Independent Review into the Role of Employers in Health and Disability

Terms of Reference

Summary

Reversing the increase in economic inactivity linked to ill health and disability is a national priority. Over a third of all working age people (aged 16-64) report having a long-term health condition and around a quarter are classed as disabled. Disabled people are nearly three times more likely than non-disabled people to be economically inactive.

This leads to significant adverse impacts for the people affected, for businesses, and for the economy, including the public finances.

Poor health impacts individuals, limiting their life chances and prosperity. Evidence suggests that the longer someone is away from work due to ill-health, the harder it is for them to return. It also imposes a large cost on employers, including lost performance; costs due to absence; loss of valuable experience; and higher recruitment costs. For Government, economic inactivity due to poor health limits growth potential in the economy and is a major factor contributing to the increase in welfare payments.

Successfully tackling this issue is unlikely to be achieved by Government or employers acting alone. Instead, employers have a key role to play in creating inclusive workplaces that protect health and support retention and rehabilitation for employees, including those with disabilities and health conditions, and Government has a responsibility to encourage, champion and support effective practices.

The Government is keen to explore further what role both employers and government could play in preventing more people from falling out of work and in creating new pathways back into work.

The Secretary of State for Work and Pensions and the Secretary of State for Business and Trade have commissioned a non-statutory independent review into the role of UK employers and Government in tackling health related inactivity and creating and maintaining healthy and inclusive workplaces. It will have a particular focus on working together to understand what employers and Government can do to increase the recruitment, retention and return to work of disabled people and people with long-term health conditions, to ensure they have the skills to thrive in work and discover how that is best unlocked and supported.

This review sits alongside steps we are already taking across Government as part of the Plan to Make Work Pay which will help more people to stay in work, improve job security and boost living standards.

The Secretaries of State have appointed Sir Charlie Mayfield to lead the review.

Purpose and Scope

The Keep Britain Working review will have two distinct phases:

1. The first will be a discovery phase, with the aim of understanding the characteristics and drivers of rising levels of inactivity and ill health, the intersection with skill and qualification level, what employers currently do to help employ, train and retain disabled people and those with health conditions and how employers experience this in practice. This phase will aim to identify what is driving economic inactivity and where there is the greatest potential for employers and Government to make a difference. The findings of this phase will be published, including the key questions and areas that are expected to be the focus for the second phase of the review.
2. The discovery phase will be followed by exploring and developing recommendations for practical actions, both for employers and for Government, to address this complex problem including what they could do more of, the support needed, including through the new National Jobs and Careers Service, as well as consideration of the business impacts. In this second phase, the review is expected to consider recruitment, retention, prevention, early intervention, return to work, and skills – all issues that are included in Get Britain Working, the Government's White Paper published on 26 November 2024.

This review will take into account the following factors and principles to maximise its impact:

- The review will aim to engage widely, and will work alongside relevant stakeholders, including business and disability representative groups as well as individuals. Sir Charlie Mayfield, the independent review lead, will convene a small panel to support the review, with the potential to expand the panel and / or to convene expert input as the review progresses.

- The review will aim to identify both short-term and longer-term recommendations. The review will consider what immediate action can be taken to begin addressing any issues identified, and also explore whether any longer-term solutions or structural changes are required.
- The review will consider and evaluate the proportionality of any recommended actions for businesses alongside their existing obligations.
- Tax policy is out of scope of the review.

Sir Charlie and the panel will have the full support and co-operation of the DWP and DBT in completing their independent review, and Sir Charlie as Lead Reviewer will have access to all suitable, appropriate, and necessary government information required to conduct the review.

Timing

The discovery phase is expected to conclude in Spring 2025, with the independent review to report and make recommendations in Autumn 2025.

The review's findings and recommendations must be submitted to the Secretaries of State for Work and Pensions and Business and Trade at a date to be determined, expected to be in Autumn 2025. The content of the report is the sole responsibility of the reviewer appointed to conduct the work, who will have the final say on all key outputs and recommendations. The timing and manner of the publication of the independent report will be determined by the Secretaries of State.