**Improving Lives**

**The Work, Health and Disability Green Paper**

*published October 2016, by the Department for Work and Pensions and the Department of Health*

The NHS OH community is familiar with previous government sponsored reports into working age health - Dame Carol Black’s report in 2008, followed by the Black/Frost independent review of sickness absence in 2011.

This latest publication from DWP and DH is for public consultation rather than information. It hopes to stimulate action rather than a continuation of the status quo. Evidence from previous reviews provides the starting premise that ‘*good work is good for health’.*

The Green Paper notes key opportunities when the right health and care support can make a difference to, and be considered alongside, an individual’s employment needs.

* *The importance of promoting health and recognising that work can make a significant contribution to someone’s health*
* *Ensuring an individual can access health services which consider their employment needs, particularly for common conditions which affects an individual’s ability to work – especially musculoskeletal and mental health conditions*
* *Strengthening the role of occupational health and related professions and services so that people’s health and employment needs are considered together to help them get into and stay in work*

Major themes include:

* The importance of occupational health advice and its’ limited availability. There is an aspiration that OH and work related health advice and treatment should be available to all. Can this be achieved via existing OH services?
* Emphasis on the importance of returning to work, or retaining employment as part of the outcome measures to be expected from good clinical care. Is there scope for NHS OH services to influence the practice of other clinicians in their Trusts?
* The need to bridge the Disability gap in employment. Is it realistic for all disabled people and people with health conditions ‘*to be all they want to be*?’

The Innovation Fund - some money will be available in support of this agenda. It is possible that DWP/DH could support research projects across the NHS occupational health community if a good case could be made.

Public consultation is open until 17.02.2017. FOM and SOM are preparing a joint response. The NHS Health at Work Network is preparing a separate response, with the intention of aligning it as far as possible with the FOM/SOM approach, whilst emphasising the important role of NHS occupational health services.

The Green Paper and our response will be discussed next week at the Network Board meeting. I ask that all Board members canvass colleagues in their region by e-mailing this document to their colleagues and asking them to respond to the consultation questions in the attached so that we can have feedback from across the country before the end of January 2017. If you are pushed for time, in particular I recommend you start by reading Chapter 5 of the Paper.

This is a real opportunity to make a difference. Chances of success are likely to be increased if the OH community can present a united front, convincing the government of the value of our contribution to the national health.

Anne de Bono

Chair. NHS Health at Work Network

30.11.2016

**NHS Health at Work Network – The Work, Health and Disability Green Paper – Consultation Questions**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Your Name |  |
| Your E-Mail Address |  |
| The Name of Your NHS Organisation |  |

We want to hear from you about how to change work and health provision, services and support so that they meet individuals’ needs, including:

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| Consultation Question 1: How can occupational health and related provision be organised so that it is accessible and tailored for all? Is this best delivered at work, through private provision, through the health system, or a combination? |
| Question 1: Your response: |
| Consultation Question 2: What has been your experience of the Fit for Work service, and how should this form integrated provision for the future? |
| Question 2: Your response: |
| Question 3: What kind of service design would deliver a position in which everyone who needs occupational health assessment and advice is referred as a matter of course? |
| Question 3: Your response: |
| Do you have any other comments you would like to make regarding other aspects of the Green Paper?: |

There may be an opportunity to bid for seed funding to develop any existing or new innovative projects you are involved in, or would like to test out. We would like to co-ordinate as far as possible any new innovations to avoid duplication. If you are currently trying out a new way of delivering services perhaps involving technology or closer working with other mainstream clinical NHS services; or have a new concept, innovation or type of service you would like to test out, please outline your innovation below:

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| My innovation is/would be (please describe briefly what it is, how it works and any evaluation that may have been done or that is planned): |