

20th December 2017



Response to the Work & Pensions Committee inquiry into employment support for carers

The Faculty of Occupational Medicine (FOM) & the Society of Occupational Medicine (SOM) welcome the focus this committee brings to carers in the workplace.

Carers should be able to fulfill their employment potential; and have a life of their own alongside their caring responsibilities.

There is a clear relationship between caring and poor health, which becomes starker with the intensity and duration of the caring role. Juggling caring duties with paid employment is difficult and can be associated with mental and physical health issues. Carers who have to give up work are at particular risk and helping them to remain in employment, or to access paid work, makes an important contribution to their health and wellbeing. Occupational Health services can make significant contribution. We note that:

- Poor health in carers is associated with significant costs to employers
- A key benefit of occupational health interventions is avoidance of sick leave and significant savings to a range of employer's direct and indirect costs

Occupational health services need to be part of the Government's carer's strategy - they are cost effective to organisations, and good for business. Occupational health assists with carer health and wellbeing and contributes to successful business performance. We know that highly effective companies commit to a culture of health.

Recommendations:

- The DWP actively promotes measures to assist carers to remain at work including **investment in occupational health services to support carers in employment**, including those **with** long-term/chronic conditions (such as diabetes, cancer and heart disease).
- The **DWP join up approaches across Government** to create a coherent cross-government strategy for supporting carers; e.g. Government should link this activity with the Work, Health and Disability Strategy and the Industrial Strategy
- **DWP promotes best practice by employers** and a cultural shift in attitudes towards carers in employment so that their skills are retained. Education for employers should include clear information and practical guidance on flexible arrangements at times of crisis or in unforeseen circumstances, a carers policy for larger organisations and training for line managers.
- **Training of health professionals** should encourage recognition that positive health benefits follow retention of employment, even alongside caring responsibilities.
- **Improved financial incentives** are in place to encourage employers to invest in workplace health for carers.

We look forward to hearing the conclusions of HMG's cross-government carers strategy and results of pilot evaluations expected in October (of this year - ?2018).

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The Faculty of Occupational Medicine is the professional and educational body for occupational medicine in the United Kingdom. It seeks to ensure the highest standards in the practice of occupational medicine, overseeing the continuing professional development and revalidation of its members. It is also focused on promoting and supporting health at work, with its mission statement being 'to drive improvement in the health of the working age population.'

The Society of Occupational Medicine is the UK organisation for all doctors and other healthcare professionals working in or with an interest in occupational health. It is concerned with the protection of the health of people in the workplace, the prevention of occupational injuries and disease and related environmental issues.