



Department for
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& Industrial Strategy

Lord Prior of Brampton
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Dear Lord Bishop

During our debate on the 8th February on productivity I promised to write to you on your question of what the Government is doing to support employers in promoting well-being and what is being done to lessen the stigma of mental ill health—in particular, encouraging employees to access mental health services that are already available to them.

The Government provides support to employers to help them recruit and retain disabled people and people with health conditions: for example, the Disability Confident campaign, the Access to Work scheme and the Fit for Work service, but we could do more to further drive and support employer action. We intend to lead by example by getting the ‘public sector house’ in order.

You will be aware that the Government published ‘Improving Lives’, the Work, Health and Disability Green Paper, in October 2016, which sets out our intention to remove the long-standing injustices and barriers that stop disabled people and people with health conditions, including on-going mental health conditions, from getting into work and getting on.

The Green Paper explores the role that employers play in creating healthy, inclusive workplaces in which all employees are able to reach their full potential. As part of this, we ask what barriers employers face to recruiting and retaining disabled people and people with health conditions - and what support government could provide to help them do so recognising that there will not be a ‘one size fits all’ answer.

The Green Paper also looks at how we can transform health services so that people are able to access the right support, at the right time, to help them enter or return to work. We are exploring how to improve access to health services, treatment and assessment, including for those with mental health conditions. We ask how we can transform the occupational health landscape to meet the full spectrum of need, and we are also reviewing how the fit note operates.

To truly improve lives and reduce stigma and discrimination, everyone needs to play their part. We are working across systems to join up health, employers and welfare and through the recent consultation we have heard from a wide range of people about what they think would help.

We have conducted a public consultation on the proposals set out in the Green Paper, which closed on 17th February. During this period we have spoken with and listened to a wide range of stakeholders, including employers of all sizes, employees, and people with mental health conditions. We are now taking stock of what we have heard during the consultation to decide upon next steps.

Further to this, in her speech on the 9th January, the Prime Minister announced that more will be done to support mental wellbeing in the workplace. Lord Stevenson, who has campaigned on these issues for many years, and Paul Farmer, CEO of Mind and Chair of the NHS Mental Health Taskforce, have been commissioned to work with leading employers and mental health groups to create a new partnership with and make prevention and breaking the stigma top priorities for employers. The Prime Minister also announced a review of employment discrimination laws against people with mental health conditions in the workplace for employees with mental health problems to ensure they are properly supported.

Government is also investing £115m of funding to develop new models of support to help people into work when they are managing a long term health condition or disability. Over half of that funding is to support people with mental health conditions to improve their employment prospects.

This is being done through a range of voluntary trials that will test a different approach of combined health and employment support. These trials are crucial to enable us to better understand the effectiveness of different interventions and who they most benefit.

In addition, to provide individuals with access to integrated support that addresses both health and work related needs, we are more than doubling the number of employment advisors in Increasing Access to Psychological Therapies (IAPT) services.

I hope you have found this response useful. I will also be placing a copy of this letter in the library.

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'David R.', with a horizontal line underneath.

DAVID PRIOR