

Press release: Millions awarded to help people with health conditions stay in work

People with health conditions will receive further support to manage their health conditions at work, thanks to 19 innovative projects set to receive millions in government funding.

Almost £4 million of funding under the new Work and Health Challenge Fund will be shared between the successful projects. The fund is the latest in a series of government measures which form part of a 10-year strategy to get one million more disabled people in work by 2027.

Projects include a new mobile phone app which aims to ease lower back pain by giving sufferers a personalised self-management plan; and an app to help individuals understand signs of mental ill health, including access to a Vocational Rehabilitation trained advisor.

The successful projects will enable people to stay in work by helping them to manage their conditions themselves and making it easier to access advice and support.

They will also help government and partner organisations develop future policy by providing more personalised feedback on the experience of disabled people in work.

Minister for Disabled People, Health and Work Sarah Newton said:

We want to harness the power of technology to tackle the disability employment gap, and these novel ideas will help us to achieve our goal of seeing one million more disabled people in work.

The Challenge Fund has given experts on the ground the opportunity to come up with ideas on how best to support people to manage their health conditions at work, and the financial backing to take those ideas forward. I congratulate those successful in securing funding and look forward to working with them to develop these innovative ideas.

The Challenge Fund is a joint initiative between the Department for Work and Pensions and the Department of Health and Social Care, and has a focus on mental health and musculoskeletal conditions – some of the most common health conditions in the workplace.

It will ensure that people whose health conditions may have previously held

them back in the workplace or even caused them to drop out of employment can benefit from the latest innovations and tailored support.

Minister for Mental Health and Inequalities Jackie Doyle-Price said:

No one should be held back at work because they are living with mental ill-health or a long-term health condition and this fund marks an important milestone in improving people's quality of life and helping them thrive in the workplace.

Physical and mental health should have parity in the workplace and today's announcement takes us one step closer to achieving our ambition for better mental health for all. I look forward to seeing how this fund transforms people's lives by maximising the benefits technology has to offer.

Dr Nasser Siabi OBE of Microlink, one of the bidders successful in securing funding, said:

Individuals can sometimes face occupational disadvantages due to a disability or health condition, and many of these difficulties are unnecessary. With the right adjustments at the right time, disabled people can bring talent, loyalty and productivity to the workplace.

We are delighted to be granted this funding for the development of this tool which will increase access to the various environmental, technological and interpersonal supports that will make a real difference to disabled people in work.

The initiatives will address one or more of the following four broad areas of focus:

- Self-management support: Providing advice to individuals on how they can self-manage their conditions to enable the individual to retain employment
- Work capacity advice and support: identifying and exploiting opportunities that give people high-quality, actionable advice about their ability to do differing types of work, considering their wider needs and barriers to work
- Adjustments to working environments: Developing new approaches to help individuals and employers identify appropriate workplace solutions, or alternative ways of working that facilitate work participation
- Joining up services: Strengthening communication, liaison, or joint action between those involved in achieving better work-related outcomes for those with mental health and/or MSK conditions

The 19 successful projects are:

- Guy's and St Thomas' NHS Trust (Health Innovation Network)
- The Pluss Organisation CIC – WorkFit
- Southampton City Council – Well@Work
- Microlink PC (UK) Ltd – MiGenius
- Remploy Ltd – MyWellbeing@Work
- Social Finance – The Link
- Keele University – I-SWAP
- Beatson Cancer Charity – We're With You At Work
- Enterprise Mentoring – The Enterprise Mentoring Programme (EMP)
- Bristol City Council – Future Bright: Health and Work
- Tavistock and Portman NHS Foundation Trust – A Whole System Approach to Mental Health for SMEs
- Nottingham City Council – Construction Industry Peer Support (CIPS)
- Institute for Employment Studies – Developing a Work Instability Tool for Depression and Anxiety
- Bath Spa University – HOW (Healthier Outcomes at Work)
- Rail Safety Standards Board – Mental Health in Rail Employment Support Service
- Possability People
- Cardiff University – Back-on-Line
- North West Boroughs Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust – Work Wise
- Royal College of Occupational Therapists – OTVoc clinic

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