

Press release: Strategy seeks one million more disabled people in work by 2027

'Improving lives: the future of work, health and disability' sets out how the government will work with employers, charities, healthcare providers and local authorities to break down employment barriers for disabled people and people with health conditions over the next 10 years. This will be delivered through in-work programmes, personalised financial and employment support, and specialist healthcare services to help more people go as far as their talents will take them.

The UK has near record high employment levels with over 32 million people in work, including 600,000 more disabled people in the last 4 years alone. However, ill health that keeps people out of work costs the economy an estimated £100 billion a year, including £7 billion in costs to the NHS. The government is committed to not only getting people into work, but helping them to remain and progress so they can reap the rewards of having a job.

The government announced today's plans in response to its [Work, health and disability green paper consultation](#) which closed earlier this year and received around 6,000 responses from stakeholders and the public.

Work and Pensions Secretary David Gauke said:

Everyone should be able to go as far as their talents can take them, but for too long disabled people and people with health conditions have been held back from getting on in work.

Today we've set out an ambitious 10-year strategy to end this injustice once and for all. By bringing employers, the welfare system and health services together we're taking significant steps to ensure everyone can reach their potential.

Health Secretary Jeremy Hunt said:

Mental ill health can affect anyone, from any walk of life at any time. For too long society has dictated that people with physical and mental health issues or a disability are a burden. Ensuring that more people with disabilities or long-term health conditions can get into and stay in work would not only enhance their lives, but actually enrich our economy too.

This strategy will help shape the future for hundreds of thousands of people with disabilities and mental health issues as we continue to tackle the stigma that so many people face when trying to get

into and progress in work.

Two new employment trials will also be launched in the West Midlands and Sheffield City Region combined authorities to provide employment support. The government is also investing around £39 million to more than double the number of Employment Advisors in Improving Access to Psychological Therapies services.

Meanwhile, all 40 recommendations of the recent [Stevenson/Farmer review of mental health and employers](#) are to be taken forward by the government. This includes establishing a framework for large employers to voluntarily report on mental health and disability within their organisations. Employers are a central part of plans, and encouragingly over 5,000 companies of all sizes have now signed up to the [Disability Confident](#) scheme to promote disability inclusion.

Sarah Kaiser, Diversity and Inclusion lead at Disability Confident employer Fujitsu, said:

It is fantastic to see the government is committing to seeing more disabled people enter the workplace. Fujitsu has significantly benefited from being Disability Confident, giving us access to untapped pools of talent and enabling us to increase our retention of employees with disabilities.

We have also worked with our employees with disabilities to ensure our products and services become even more accessible, benefitting our customers too. This is not just the right thing for employees, but also significantly helps the employer.

Creating an environment where employees feel comfortable to be completely themselves and tell us if they have a disability allows us to put in place the right adjustments to properly enable them to do their work, whilst providing a working environment that emphasises support. This not only results in increased employee satisfaction but also performance, realising value for the organisation too.

Also announced today are the next steps for the [Fit for Work](#) service. Its assessment services will come to an end in England and Wales on 31 March 2018 and 31 May 2018 in Scotland, following low referral rates.

Employers, employees and GPs will continue to be able to use the same Fit for Work helpline, website and web chat, which offer general health and work advice as well as support on sickness absence. An 'Expert Working Group on Occupational Health' has been appointed to champion, shape and drive a programme of work to take an in-depth look at the sector.

In the last year, the government has taken decisive steps to support people with disabilities and health conditions, including:

- Introduced the Personal Support Package, which includes £330 million of funding over 4 years.

*Ending re-assessments for claimants with the most severe lifelong disabilities, illnesses or health conditions on Employment and Support Allowance (ESA) and Universal Credit.

- Recruiting hundreds of additional Disability Employment Advisers and new Community Partners to bring specialist advice and support into the jobcentres.
- Introducing a new 'Health and Work Conversation' between people on ESA and their work coach, focusing on what they can do rather than what they cannot.
- Launching the Disability Confident Business Leaders Group, which helps to drive continued employer engagement through effective leadership and peer-to-peer support.
- A trial voluntary work experience programme for young people with limited capability for work. This will enable young people to benefit from time in the workplace with a mainstream employer to build their confidence and skills, enhance their CV and demonstrate their ability to perform a job role.
- Extending 'Journey to Employment' job clubs to 71 Jobcentre Plus areas with the highest number of people receiving ESA.

Follow DWP on: