

Over ten million UK workers lack access to workplace health support, new RSPH report calls for universal ‘right to a healthy workplace’

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Nearly half (47%) of the UK workforce is without access to essential health support, such as routine health checks or flu vaccinations. This is the key finding of a [new report published](#) by the [Royal Society for Public Health](#), which is calling for a universal ‘right to a healthy workplace’ for all employees.

It found that people working in lower paid industries like agriculture and hospitality are disproportionately represented in the figures and most likely to miss out on support. This is despite working in sectors that are shown to be least healthy for workers.

The publication of the report comes against the backdrop of the Government’s Employments Right Bill. The Bill is proposing a number of changes to employment law such as the universal introduction of sick pay from day one and making flexible working the default.

Headline recommendations that the report argues would help enshrine the ‘right to a healthy workplace’ include:

- The Government to set a mandatory national Health and Work Standard, setting a minimum level of support which employees should be entitled to.
- Sick pay being available from day one of a person’s employment, with pay from the first day they are off sick, and businesses incentivised to pay a living wage to employees while they are off work.
- HR professionals should be upskilled, with support from occupational health specialists, to ensure that they are able to embed health improvement across their organisations.
- Government should explore ways to incentivise employers, particularly small and medium- sized enterprises (SMEs), to invest in their workforce in the short term, enabling them to reap the long term rewards of higher productivity.
- Government should work with the ONS and business to create standardised data collections on workforce health, allowing the impact of interventions to be properly monitored and evaluated.

The report argues that putting an emphasis on building healthier workplaces will help reduce the economic cost of ill health which is estimated to stand at around £100 billion every year.

William Roberts FRSPH, Chief Executive, Royal Society for Public Health, said:

“We are at a critical time for our nation’s health. Millions of people are leaving the workforce due to ill health. It costs us tens of billions every year. It also puts an additional strain on our health service leaving people languishing on waiting lists.

“The Employments Rights Bill is a big step in the right direction, but we need to go further and quicker. We spend a great deal of our adult lives in and around the workplace. We need to think about how we use our workplaces to build health, keep people well, and prevent people being signed off sick.

“As it stands, our workplaces are exacerbating health inequalities. This means that millions of people that would most benefit from workplace health support are missing out.

“We know that businesses want to do more to build healthy workplaces and support their employees. This report sets out a clear and actionable set of recommendations that will make a real impact if implemented by policymakers.”

Tina Woods, CEO of Business for Health, said:

“Businesses want to be part of the solution to address the twin healthcare and productivity crises facing the UK. By putting in place support to keep employees healthy and in work, we can improve outcomes, reduce waiting lists, and grow the economy. But businesses cannot do this alone – they want to do more, and need support from the Government to do this.

“As we consider the shape of the basic rights all employees should have, it is more important than ever that workplace health is prioritised, rather than treated as a burden on the economy – because we know that the opposite is true.”

In June this year, the Royal Society for Public Health and Business for Health held a [roundtable](#) which brought together leaders from across the business community and public health. This helped inform the recommendations in the report.