

Briefing for ARMA members

Improving Lives: The Future of Work, Health and Disability

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Key MSK related points

This briefing highlights key points of interest related to MSK. It is intended only to highlight these. See the [full paper](#) for wider context and more detail.

Summary

The Government is now targeting getting one Million more disabled people in work, rather than halving the disability employment gap. This has the advantage of making it easier to measure, but with an ageing population there is a risk this could be achieved without the disability employment gap changing.

The paper covers three key areas: Welfare, employers and health.

Health care

There is a strong focus on prevention, including things like social prescribing. Also on raising the profile of work and health with health professionals, including e-learning and increasing the number of health and work champions.

Focus on MSK

It is good to see that the focus on MKS remains, with mental health and MSK being the two areas mentioned the most, although learning disability and autism also receive specific attention. This includes reference to testing new models for mental health and MSK services. This includes testing models of joining up health and employment support.

MSK services

The focus here is still very much on research, rather than on delivering and specific services. Whilst it is good to make sure that what is implemented will be effective, it feels less concrete than some of the other parts of the paper and the concern has to be that MSK services will not move forward as quickly.

There are a number of specific MSK initiatives referenced, including those led by ARMA and our members. However, at least some of these would be happening even without the health and work unit.

- The ARMA/NHSE workforce project to develop a skills and competency framework
- The development of the Right Care 'commissioning for value packs' and pathway

- solutions to improve the quality of care for people with MSK conditions
- The ARMA/NHSE MSK Knowledge hub.
- NHSE work on the design and delivery of new care models for First Contact MSK Physiotherapist for people with MSK conditions.
- Working with Arthritis Research UK (ARUK) to identify opportunities for regular collection of data about the incidence, prevalence of MSK conditions, and clinical activity and outcomes for MSK patients in England.

Fit note

It is welcome to see that exploring changes to issuing of fit notes to enable other practitioners to issue them is included. Also reference to piloting use of the Advisory Fitness for Work report for statutory sick pay – this can already be issued by an AHP.

Challenge Fund

The paper states the intention to launch a Challenge Fund inviting external partners to bid for funding to develop approaches to build evidence in key areas. We hope that this will include a strong focus on MSK and on spreading good practice, rather than merely piloting. Government is currently finalising the scope of this Fund and say they want to engage to ensure they get the scope right.

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