

2019 Healthcare Professionals' Consensus Statement for Action Statement for Health and Work

The relationship between employment and health is enduring, close and complex. Working can give an individual a sense of fulfilment and purpose¹, and can be paid or voluntary. Being in work, staying in work and returning to work are all associated with improved mental and physical health, provided the work has security, realistic demands and a level of personal control – known collectively as ‘good work’. Working in itself can have therapeutic benefits. Conversely, being unemployed can have negative impacts on health and wellbeing.

Working can be considered a health outcome in itself reflecting how well we are supporting individuals to adapt to or recover from their health challenges. The majority of health-related worklessness is not inevitable and with the right advice and support, many individuals can achieve their working potential.

People whose ability to work is at risk, including through ill health or disability, should be helped to remain in work or make a timely return to working. Individuals who have never worked and have the potential to do so should be supported to develop their aspirations and capabilities, so they can gain the health, self-worth and the social and economic benefits good work provides.

We recognise some individuals will be unlikely to achieve paid employment that provides economic independence but they shouldn't be denied the opportunity to contribute and participate through working in some form.

Healthcare professionals can work together with patients, as an integral part of patient care pathways, and with partners, to:

- Create a culture where good work is seen as a benefit to people
- Help promote the aspiration of working in patients
- Promote healthy life choices and lifestyles
- Discuss, where relevant, health risks, hazards and any adaptations in working environments
- Provide support to help patients enter, remain in or return to work when they are ready and able to
- Help patients access high quality sources of specialist support to enter or maintain work
- Contribute to reducing the social discrimination, harassment and victimisation associated with ill health or disability, both physical and mental.

A statement for Action: Four principles for all healthcare professionals

We the undersigned commit to work over the next five years to support healthcare professionals to engage more proactively with, and advance the concept of, ‘good work as a health outcome’ across the health and care sector.

We will work together, as individual organisations and collaboratively, to enable every healthcare professional to:

1. Understand the health benefits of good work, and the long-term effects of avoidable health related worklessness
2. Have the skill to incorporate discussions about working in the context of a health outcome with patients in their care, as appropriate to the health or disability of that individual
3. Feel supported to understand and interact with the wider health and work system employers, occupational health services and other bodies that have a role in assisting individuals who are not working for health-related reasons
4. Recognise their own role to support healthy and safe working environments, looking after their own health and wellbeing and those of their colleagues.

April 2019

¹ M. Marmot, 2010. *Fair Society Healthy Lives, The Marmot Review.*