

HR and Occupational Health Roundtable with SOM/ CIPD and FSB
08 February 2019

1 Welcome Remarks, Nick Pahl

Nick Pahl, CEO of SOM, made opening introductions and welcome remarks to the group.

He noted that SOM had launched a document on [“commissioning an OH service”](#).

2 Using Occupational Health to best effect, Dr. Lucy Wright, Optima Health and on behalf of SOM -slides attached

Dr. Wright gave a talk about what occupational health, its definition and scope. Significant points from her presentation include:

- OH is how work affects health and deals in large part with “common sense” solutions
- Includes health surveillance and health assessments ought to be completed post-offer
- Fitness for task assessments
- Travel advice
- Well-being
- Consulting on health standards

She additionally discussed when OH ought to be involved (advice on return to work, specific adjustments, safety critical issues, termination on medical grounds) and when OH ought not to be involved (when something needs to get done, b/c a manager thinks an employee is lying, etc.).

In order to get the best from OH providers, it’s important to know what an organization needs, who they are and their experience, and to avoid outsourcing.

It was noted by those in attendance that SMEs often do not know what they need or what the specialty offers. Many of the larger OH companies do not service the SME market. A SME guide on OH could be helpful along with a search engine for SMEs.

3 Future Government Policy for OH for SMEs, Richard Cienciala, DWP/DH Work and Health Unit Speaker – slides attached

Richard Cienciala gave a presentation on the government’s proposed future policy on OH.

He noted the following:

- The gov’t takes OH seriously as there is an economic, business, and moral case for OH services
- The gov’t would like to see more disabled people in work and OH can ensure that there are resources available to keep people in work
- There may be a way to increase demand for OH support by incentivizing employers
- The gov’t can take a role in sorting out the legal basis and creating supply-side support

Those in attendance noted that it would be helpful to create awareness among entrepreneurs who are setting up SMEs. Additionally, it would be helpful for the government to strengthen awareness, business need, and buying capacity.

4 Small business, HR Professionals, and Workplace Health, Emelia Quist, FSB

Emelia Quist from the FSB noted that a report on SMEs in the community is soon to be published on 25 February. She discussed issues on the demand side and noted that there is little knowledge around OH. Additionally, it is sector dependent whether OH services are offered (health vs. retail organization e.g.).

FSB supports the idea of larger businesses using their supply chains to implement OH resources.

5 Discussion

Notable points include:

- Short courses could be offered for SMEs and advice could also be given through YouTube channel videos.
- Incentives in the form of tax credits would be helpful. For SMEs cost is a major consideration and this is where government could play a major role through incentives
- Possibly there could be a way to streamline the process since much time is spent on cases. This would make OH more economical, perhaps through templates
- A major challenge is clinicians do not always speak in layperson terms
- Lexxic mentioned that there is not much awareness of tools available about what dyslexia looks like in the workplace. Cost-effective resources include e-learning
- Building local level support with local networks to identify demand will generate appetite for OH
- Employers in SMEs are invested in employees personally. When there is a health incident it has a huge effect on the company. This further supports the use of OH in the SME setting
- CIPD and the Greater Birmingham Chambers of Commerce will be launching a one year pilot in March 2019 to offer up to two days free HR advice Birmingham organisations who employ up to 50 staff, with central funding from the Govt's Business Basics Fund. This follows pilots in Hackney, Stoke and Glasgow. Up to 500 organisations in the Birmingham area are expected to benefit.

Agreed to share e mails