

Britain being overwhelmed by long-term conditions, warns foundation

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The rising tide of people with long-term conditions threatens to overwhelm Britain's economy and the NHS, according to a new report published today by leading think tank, Lancaster University's Work Foundation.

The Work Foundation is calling on the [government](#) to consider the use of [tax rebates](#) and [financial incentives](#) to employers who help support [people](#) with long term [conditions](#) to remain in work. The impact on the economy is already estimated to be well over £100 billion per year and will get significantly worse, unless immediate action is taken by government and the NHS. Employment rates for people with long-term conditions are persistently low, despite work being possible and beneficial for many.

Employers are also called on to do their bit, by ensuring their workplaces are open and supportive environments and that reasonable adjustments are made to help workers with long-term and fluctuating conditions.

Sickness absence costs the UK economy around £22 billion a year with individuals losing out on a collective £4 billion in lost earnings as a result of illness. Mental illness alone was responsible for the loss of 70 million working days in 2007, and days lost to stress, depression and anxiety have risen by 24 per cent since 2009.

The report, developed with the support of Novartis Pharmaceuticals UK Ltd, sets out recommendations for how Government, the NHS and

employers can do more to grow the economy through reducing welfare expenditure, increasing tax receipts and boosting productivity.

Dr Zofia Bajorek, report author and researcher at Lancaster University's Work Foundation, stated:

"Unless immediate action is taken the pressure on the economy and the NHS will become unbearable in the future. That means an even greater portion of our nation's finances will need to be spent on healthcare and welfare than ever before.

"Many people with long-term conditions want to work but there are considerable barriers preventing them accessing or retaining employment. There are solutions to this problem but government, the NHS and employers need to work together to ensure that people with long-term conditions can get back to work. Government needs to incentivise businesses to support people with long-term conditions to remain in work whilst also ensuring that people with long-term conditions are diagnosed and treated sooner, improving the chances that they will remain economically active."

With an ageing population, the pension crisis and the growing burden of chronic disease, The Work Foundation is concerned that the situation will deteriorate without government action. The number of people with at least one long-term condition is estimated to rise to more than 17 million in the coming decades. Furthermore, by 2018, more than 2.9 million people will have multiple long-term health conditions, affecting their ability to work and increasing the cost to the NHS – a double hit on the nation's finances.

More information: The report is available online:
[www.theworkfoundation.com/Repo ... the-wider-UK-economy](http://www.theworkfoundation.com/Repo...the-wider-UK-economy)

Provided by Lancaster University

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