

VODG response | ‘Making Work Pay: Strengthening Statutory Sick Pay’

VODG (Voluntary Organisations Disability Group) is a membership body for disability organisations. We bring together over 100 disability charities and social enterprises around our shared commitment to providing the best support and services for disabled people. Our response is based on insight and experience shared by our members.

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There are 16 million disabled people in the UK. Third sector organisations that are being commissioned to provide essential support to the millions of people with disabilities are committed to providing high quality care. However, it is becoming increasingly difficult to meet the growing demand and costs for delivering our services.

The Employment Rights Bill presents a vital opportunity to improve pay and conditions for our workforce, who are the backbone of the adult social care system. However, the realities of our sector cannot be overlooked. With the state funding a majority of disability services, any increase in employment costs could significantly jeopardise the ability to provide care to those in greatest need if not fully funded by government.

Supporting the health and wellbeing of the workforce is essential to make sure people with care and support needs and their families receive good quality care so they can live as independently as possible.

Whilst there are some roles that have significantly lower than average sickness days per year per employee in the care sector, such as personal assistants (1.4-2.1 days) and registered nurses (3.3 days), other roles such as social workers (9.9 days) and support and outreach workers (9.1 days) have almost double the average across the UK's workforce (5.5 days).ⁱ

It is good to see changes to statutory sick pay with the removal of the lower earnings limit and waiting period; care workers should not have to choose between their health and being able to pay their bills. This was a particular risk during the COVID-19 pandemic for low paid care workers, for example.

70% of third sector organisations already face a funding shortfall for the public services that they deliver because Local Authority rates are not keeping pace with increasing costs.ⁱⁱ The Government cannot ignore the impact of increasing costs on

the sector. If statutory sick pay is strengthened, social care providers must be given sufficient funding to afford the increased costs that brings, as well as support to put in place measures that help to prevent workers becoming sick and to support them back into work effectively after a period of sickness. These measures will increase productivity in the long-run, but they will be an additional expense for already over-stretched organisations.

Any measures that increase the cost of social care without providing sufficient additional funding will be catastrophic for the sector and the disabled people with disabilities that our sector serves.

The Government could provide funding either by extending the reimbursement arrangements for public sector bodies to third sector frontline delivery services or making additional funding available to public sector commissioners, with clear ringfenced arrangements or other protections to ensure funding reaches frontline services. Our preference is the first option as the £600 million of additional funding for social care announced in the Budget will be spread too thinly across local authorities to provide any meaningful offset against increasing staffing costs and money previously allocated to local authorities without a ringfence has not meaningfully found its way to frontline service providers. The third sector bring tremendous value to society, but the Government's current approach to social care provision once again leaves invaluable support at significant risk. As the demand for care services grows, we must be proactive in developing solutions that support both care workers and the individuals who rely on them as well as the viability of care provider organisations.

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ⁱ [The state of the adult social care sector and workforce in England, 2024](#)

ⁱⁱ <https://www.ncvo.org.uk/news-and-insights/news-index/true-cost-of-public-service-delivery/>