

## Written evidence submitted by Business for Health (PHS0435)

This proposal sets out the case for the critical role that employers, businesses and investors play in enhancing population health and supporting healthy communities.

Since its inception in October 2020, Business for Health (B4H) has focused its work on the development of the three-pillar Business Framework for Health, as set out in the *Business Framework for Health: Supporting businesses and employers in their role to enhance and level up health of the nation* launched with the CBI and supported by Chris Whitty CMO in October 2021.

The three pillars of the Framework are 1) Workforce Health 2) Consumer Health and 3) Community Health. B4H has undertaken a significant research exercise to compile the evidence and steer direction for the development of the Framework.

As we manage the ongoing effects of a generation-defining pandemic, and face a crisis in the cost of living, the health and resilience of the UK workforce and society more widely is of central importance. The evidence is fast accumulating on the link between health and wealth, and how economic growth cannot ignore the health of the population.

The CBI states that health-related economic inactivity is costing the UK £180bn a year.<sup>1</sup> In the last decade, long-term sickness has risen from 5.2 million to over 7 million and stands currently at 17%, or 1 in 6, of the entire workforce. The rise in long-term sickness has been largest among 16 to 24-year-olds, with a 50% increase since 2006. Economic participation among 50 to 64-year-olds in work has also declined following the pandemic, resulting in a loss of 650,000 members of the workforce, two-thirds aged 50-64.<sup>2</sup>

Addressing long-term sickness and ‘stemming the flow’ of drop out from the labour market were key themes at the CBI Conference in 2022 which saw the launch of the [Work Health Index](#) (WHI), a key tool co-developed with the CBI and B4H and supported by the NHS to support employers to boost workforce health.

The government review on workforce inactivity is aimed at tackling Britain’s shrinking workforce, and is focused on helping people who are economically inactive back into work and stemming the increase of people who are moving into inactivity in the first place.

B4H will continue its work with the CBI on the iteration of the Work Health Index to help businesses in their role to build up workforce health and resilience. B4H is meanwhile developing evidence and economic arguments to mobilise investor and business pressure to bring ‘Health’ into ESG investment:

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<sup>1</sup> Confederation for British Industry

<sup>2</sup> Andy Haldane, REAL Lecture, Health Foundation

this work will support Missions 7 and 8 of “Levelling up”, inform new reporting tools and develop shared metrics across employer, business, and investor communities.

Meanwhile, obesity continues to be a major driver of poor health and needs to be put back on the priority list for government attention. The National Food Strategy recommendations by Henry Dimbleby need to be re-visited. B4H is in discussion with a number of partners for the co-production of a tool to better benchmark industry and includes incentives to encourage healthier eating and shape food environments through combined business, policy and investor alignment.

Finally, B4H is supporting the Quantum Healthy Longevity Innovation Mission first set out in the Lancet<sup>3</sup> and launched in November 2022 with the National Innovation Centre for Ageing to create the world’s first test bed for health underpinned by growing understanding of the exposome and links between health and climate. The mission is focussed on innovation clusters, enabled by regulatory reform, to drive discovery and research in healthy longevity.

We hope the Health and Social Care Committee will acknowledge and support the vital role of business in preventative health through meaningful collaboration with the NHS and care system and a cross-departmental government approach to policy-making.

Addressing health and productivity in the working age population is essential in the short-term. Incentivising businesses and employers as anchor institutions working with evolving integrated care systems in community health is important in the medium-term. Longer-term preventative health measures form part of an integrated system change approach bringing ‘Health’ into ESG, taking a steer from what has worked successfully in climate to accelerate economic growth.

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<sup>3</sup> Woods T, Palmarini N, Corner L et al. Quantum Healthy Longevity for healthy people, planet, and growth, Lancet, [https://doi.org/10.1016/S2666-7568\(22\)00267-7](https://doi.org/10.1016/S2666-7568(22)00267-7)