UCEA response to: Strengthening Statutory Sick Pay (SSP) - Consultation on the percentage rate for those earning below the current rate of Statutory Sick Pay

Introduction

This is the response from the Universities and Colleges Employers Association (UCEA).

UCEA represents the views of Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) across the UK in their capacity as employers. UCEA is a membership body funded by subscriptions from 169 HEIs in the UK. Our purpose is to support our member Higher Education (HE) employers in delivering excellent and world-leading higher education and research by representing their interests as employers and facilitating their work in delivering effective employment and workforce strategies.

HEIs are independent employers and determine their own employment policies, usually in consultation with recognised trade unions; therefore, there are a variety of HR practices in place in the sector.

Our response is based on views provided by our member HE employers.

Consultation questions

1. Which of the following best describes how you are responding to this consultation. Are you responding….?

a. As a member of the public / employee;
b. As or on behalf of an individual business or employing organisation;
c. **As or on behalf of an employer/ business representative organisation**;
d. As or on behalf of an interested Trade Union, stakeholder, or other representative organisation; or
e. Other (please specify)

2. Thinking about employees earning below the current weekly rate of Statutory Sick Pay (£116.75 per week), what percentage of their average weekly earnings should they receive through the Statutory Sick Pay system? *Number must be between 0-100*

The consensus from the majority of member respondents was that employees should receive 70% - 80% of their average weekly earnings through the Statutory Sick Pay System.

3. Why do you think the percentage rate of earnings should be set to this level? There is no minimum word limit for this question, however we strongly encourage a maximum limit of 500 words. Given the volume of responses expected, submissions exceeding this recommended length may not be read in their entirety.

Generally, the Higher Education sector has a practice of providing contractual sickness absence pay. In response to the specific question in this consultation, the majority of respondents agreed that the rates recommended by government were appropriate. This was

on the basis of ensuring financial sustainability for the lower-paid during periods of illness and that the rates were high enough to provide meaningful support to those who would otherwise fall below the Lower Earnings Limit. There was some support for a rate that was 90% or higher, on the grounds of fairness, the wellbeing of low-paid staff and for the reason that 90% compared directly with the rate for statutory maternity pay; however, there was concern that a rate higher than the recommended rates i.e. a rate higher than 80%, could have the effect of disincentivising the return to work.