

Executive summary

Throughout the OECD, mental ill-health is increasingly recognised as a problem for social and labour market policy; a problem that is creating significant costs for people, employers and the economy at large by lowering employment, raising unemployment and generating productivity losses. The Swedish Government has embarked on various policies and strategies that seek to combat the negative consequences of mental ill-health. Nonetheless, a number of barriers persist, including insufficient resources, lack of awareness and tools to identify and, hence, help those with a mental disorder. Above all, it is important to recognise that problems related to mental ill-health cannot be solved without strong co-ordination between policy areas and institutions. A systematic and sustained effort is required across different government departments (including, Education, Health, Social Insurance and Employment) and workplaces to improve labour market inclusion of people with a mental illness and prevent large social and economic losses incurred by the Swedish society as a whole.

The OECD recommends to Sweden to:

- Increase resources available for school health services to identify and provide support to pupils with mental health problems early on.
- Provide adequate support to early school leavers and NEET with mental health problems to promote their transition into higher education and employment.
- Reform the disability benefit scheme for those aged 19-29 who tend to access the system with a mental illness, with much greater focus on active measures to avoid an early exit from the labour market.
- Provide greater support to small employers to retain workers with mental health problems; to prevent them from moving onto sickness benefits; and to reintegrate sick employees.
- Ensure that adequate employment and health services are given to sickness benefit recipients with mental health problems at an early stage of the sickness spell to facilitate their rapid return to work.
- Develop employment-oriented mental health care and experiment with ways to integrate health and employment services.