



## Press release

6 December 2016  
For immediate release

### Occupational health pay and benefits 2016: part 2

Most occupational health (OH) and hygiene professionals frequently work unpaid overtime, but also receive additional financial and non-financial benefits, [reveals the sixth biennial \*Occupational Health \[at Work\]\* pay and benefits survey](#).

The most common additional benefit was found to be death-in-service cover, with 72% reporting this entitlement. Other additional benefits include paid continuing professional development (62%), access to a confidential employee assistance programme or counselling support (62%), flexible working (56%) and an employer-provided mobile phone (47%).

Most practitioners report frequently working additional hours (mostly unpaid), and generally say that their workload continues to rise. The report found that on average, 5.7 additional hours were worked per week, with 68% of respondents working between one and 10 extra hours. One in seven practitioners (14%) said they were working more than 11 additional hours a week.

A marked difference was reported in terms of annual leave entitlement, based on employment sector. A large majority (92%) of respondents working in the NHS reported being entitled to at least 31 days' holiday a year; compared with 60% of those working for a commercial OH/hygiene provider who receive no more than 25 days' paid annual leave.

Four-fifths (81%) of respondents reported that they were eligible for an occupational pension, compared with 78% in 2014. Employees of commercial OH and hygiene providers were least likely to report being eligible for an occupational pension scheme (76% eligibility), compared with 100% of practitioners working in the public sector (excluding NHS and armed forces).

Other key findings include:

- One-third of female OH and hygiene professionals had taken a career break for childcare – none of the male respondents had taken such a break
- Female OH and hygiene professionals were more likely to work part time than their male counterparts
- One in three respondents was entitled to an additional financial reward, such as paid overtime or bonus payment – but such rewards were most commonly provided to those working for private sector in-house services
- Most additional payments were worth no more than £5,000 a year, but one OH physician, working for a commercial OH provider, reported receiving an annual bonus of £275,000

- The majority of respondents said that career prospects were at least as good as when they first joined the OH or hygiene profession
- When asked for their views on the future of the OH or hygiene professions, the most common themes identified by respondents were a shortage of professionals in the field, an ageing OH workforce and a lack of understanding by employers on the role and value of OH and hygiene.

Dr John Ballard, lead author and editor of *Occupational Health [at Work]* said: 'Our research has previously shown that employment sector is not a major factor determining the basic pay of occupational health and hygiene professionals. However, our latest analysis makes clear that additional benefits do vary considerably between sectors, not least with respect to holiday entitlement where those in the NHS enjoy a far better deal compared, for example, with colleagues working for commercial OH and hygiene providers. Those working for private-sector in-house services are much more likely to receive bonus payments than colleagues in other sectors.

'Perhaps the most striking statistic, however, is that while a third of all female respondents to the survey report having taken a career break for childcare, not one male practitioner had done so. With measures introduced in 2015 allowing parents and adopters to take Shared Parental Leave in the first year, and changing attitudes in society and among employers, younger practitioners and those coming into the professions may have quite different experiences of childcare arrangements. Our future surveys will monitor such developments.'

Data on the annual salaries of occupational health nurses, physicians and hygienists were included in part 1 of the survey, published in the August/September issue of *Occupational Health [at Work]*. The mean average salaries were: OH nurses £43,400; OH physicians £123,100; and occupational hygienists £54,300. Average salaries, particularly for OH nurses, did not vary significantly between employment sectors.

#### **Further information:**

The At Work Partnership: Email: [editorial@atworkpartnership.co.uk](mailto:editorial@atworkpartnership.co.uk)  
Tel: 0345 017 6986 or 020 8344 2328

#### **Notes for editors:**

1. The research is published in the December 2016/January 2017 edition of the journal *Occupational Health [at Work]*. [ohaw.co/OHpay2016-p2](http://ohaw.co/OHpay2016-p2)
2. Suggested citation: Ballard J, Sinclair A. OH pay and benefits 2016. *Occupational Health [at Work]* 2016/17; 13(4): 17–27.
3. The online survey was conducted in June 2016. A total of 310 occupational health (OH) and hygiene professionals responded.
4. *Occupational Health [at Work]* is published by The At Work Partnership, an independent publisher, research and training organisation, specialising in occupational health and disability at work. [atworkpartnership.co.uk](http://atworkpartnership.co.uk)