



# Mental Health and Employment

“Paid work gives people a real sense of their own value, improves their self-esteem and gets them out of their illness.”

## Who is this for?

People affected by mental health problems, all those providing services for people affected by mental health problems, including primary care and voluntary sector staff, employers, Jobcentre Plus staff, supported employment project staff and welfare rights advisers.

## Key facts

- Employment tends to lead to improvements in people’s mental health; inactivity is associated with worsening mental health.
- Only 24 per cent of adults with long-term mental health problems are in work. Although work is not the right solution for everyone, with the right support many more would be able and would like to work.
- Barriers to employment include low confidence, low expectations among staff, employer attitudes, and difficulties moving from benefits to work. There can also be a lack of support to help people retain jobs.



- The number of people on Incapacity Benefit for mental health reasons has grown significantly in recent years (from 475,000 in 1995 to 848,000 in 2004). More people claim Incapacity Benefit and Severe Disablement Allowance for mental health reasons than claim Jobseeker's Allowance.
- Jobcentre Plus has a number of initiatives to help people with disabilities to find work. In October 2003, Jobcentre Plus began piloting its flagship programme, Pathways to Work, to transform Incapacity Benefit.

## Promoting social inclusion

### **EMPLOYMENT SUPPORT, SOUTH WEST LONDON AND ST GEORGE'S MENTAL HEALTH NHS TRUST**

Since 1995, the Trust has successfully increased its employment rate for people with severe and enduring mental health problems, with over 100 people being employed on the same terms and conditions as other staff. Evaluation suggests that each person employed in this way saved the Government £1,900 per year in reduced welfare spending and higher taxes, not including other healthcare savings.

The Trust has developed a Vocational Services Strategy based on the Individual Placement and Support approach (see below). Occupational therapists and borough mental health and employment co-ordinators work within the clinical teams to enable people with severe mental health problems to access open employment and mainstream education. Ongoing support is included in care plans, with a focus on individual choice. In 2003/04 the Trust supported 271 people in open employment, 222 in mainstream education/training and 157 in voluntary work.

The early intervention team includes a part-time vocational specialist to co-ordinate vocational plans with the individual and the clinical team, help people to find and keep jobs and education courses, and provide access to benefits advice. After one year, the employment rate rose from 10 per cent to 40 per cent, and the percentage not engaged in education, training or employment dropped from 55 per cent to 5 per cent.

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## Putting employment on the agenda

One of the barriers to employment can be low expectations. In order to tackle this barrier it is crucial to address the view that employment is an unrealistic aim or even an unnecessary risk. Ways to do this include:

- training on the positive effects of employment on mental health by supported employment providers, people with mental health problems and successful employers;
- job swaps/work shadowing between health and social care and Jobcentre Plus staff to increase understanding about respective roles and the opportunities available;
- identifying vocational leads to take responsibility for addressing employment needs within Trusts and Community Mental Health Teams;
- placing an emphasis on job searching and the building up of useful and preferably accredited skills throughout an individual's engagement with primary and secondary healthcare, eg encouraging people to build up a portfolio of skills and experience while on an acute ward;
- creating greater awareness among GPs of local supported employment options as potential referral routes; and
- implementing the evidence-based Individual Placement and Support model for people with severe mental health problems (see the **Health and Employment chapter** of the Social Exclusion Unit report for more details).

### **THE INDIVIDUAL PLACEMENT AND SUPPORT MODEL**

This approach is evidence-based and is built on six key principles:

- Finding employment in integrated/mainstream settings ('real work')
- Immediate jobsearch, with minimal pre-vocational training
- Support from vocational workers based in clinical teams, with employment an integral part of the overall care plan
- Jobsearch driven by the client's preferences and choice
- Continual assessment of an individual's needs, with support adjusted as necessary and assistance in career progression
- Access to ongoing support on a time-unlimited basis once in work, with appropriate workplace interventions to enable job retention.

### **Making Jobcentre Plus services more accessible**

Accessing Jobcentre Plus services can be intimidating for people with mental health problems. Ways to reduce these fears include:

- open days and a general induction for individuals as to how each local Jobcentre Plus works, the different staff and support options;
- regular meetings between Community Mental Health Team staff and Jobcentre Plus staff in each locality – the staff responsible for maintaining these contacts will need to be identified; and
- outreach – Jobcentre Plus staff providing advice in health settings such as day centres, psychiatric hospitals and GP surgeries.

### **Addressing the concerns and support needs of employers**

A recent survey found that less than four in ten employers would be willing to employ someone with mental health problems. Reducing the stigma around mental health requires the dissemination of accurate information and the provision of targeted support.

Ways to address the concerns of employers include:

- raising awareness of how pressure in the workplace can affect mental health and ensure systems exist to prevent or reduce exposure to work stress factors;
- providing practical examples of the kinds of reasonable adjustments that can help people with mental health problems, eg mediation, home working, flexible hours and ongoing out-of-work support;
- impressing upon employers and their employees their legal responsibilities under the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 (DDA), and encourage them to seek advice about their duties from the Disability Rights Commission (DRC) or other sources of help, such as the Employers' Forum on Disability – often people do not realise that these legal protections apply to people with mental health problems;
- identifying fellow employers willing to outline the business case for a diverse workforce, ie create credible champions. One potential forum for this could be regular working breakfasts with other local employers;
- sharing good personnel policy locally between personnel officers, occupational health and business groups; and
- engaging employers in social enterprise or work placement schemes that give meaningful occupation or work experience to people with complex needs, such as those who may be homeless as well as having mental health problems (eg Business in the Community's Project Compass or Business Action on Homelessness).

### **MENTAL HEALTH AWARENESS TRAINING, CAMBRIDGESHIRE AND PETERBOROUGH MENTAL HEALTH PARTNERSHIP**

The Trust's User Employment Project encourages the recruitment of people into paid work. It offers mental health awareness training not just for people working within the mental health sector but for business, education and the general public. It includes exercises where a person can experience hearing voices while still trying to communicate with another person.

Contact: Ken Kettle on 07775 532243 or  
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## Self-employment and enterprise

For some people, an alternative to trying to compete directly in the job market is to look for opportunities to become self-employed or to run their own business. Practical aspects that can be helpful include periods of safe 'test trading', ongoing support and access to mainstream specialist business support. Various agencies offer support for people considering self-employment/enterprise, including:

**Business Links** – practical advice for anyone wanting to set up in business – from access to funding, an analysis of the viability of a business idea to guidance on marketing and financial planning (for details of local Business Links, telephone 0845 600 9006 or visit: [www.businesslink.org](http://www.businesslink.org));

Jobcentre Plus through the **self-employment options of New Deal and Work-based Learning for Adults** – assistance can include help with business planning and a period of test trading while still receiving unemployment benefits;

**Enterprise Agencies** – target pre-start, start-ups and micro-businesses (details of local agencies are available through the National Federation of Enterprise Agencies, telephone 0124 354055 or visit [www.nfea.com](http://www.nfea.com));

**The Prince's Trust** – available for people up to 30 years old, and offers loans, grants and volunteer mentors for the first three years, complemented by regular advice and support ([www.princes-trust.org.uk](http://www.princes-trust.org.uk)); and

**Shell LiveWIRE** – people aged 16–30 are eligible for this scheme. It provides information and advice to help individuals through the initial stages of setting up in business. It is also linked to a source of local business advice ([www.shell-livewire.org](http://www.shell-livewire.org)).

## Further information

### The health sector

**GPs:** GPs can have a crucial role in promoting job retention through providing advice on an individual's condition, suggesting work adjustments and/or referring someone to a vocational adviser.

**Community Mental Health Teams:** multi-disciplinary teams (eg containing community psychiatric nurses, occupational therapists, approved social workers, psychiatrists, etc) who support people with mental health problems, their carers and families in the community.

**Vocational leads:** individuals with designated responsibility for employment within these multi-disciplinary teams.

**Care Programme Approach:** this is a framework for assessment and care planning to address the needs of people using secondary care services. An individual's employment and training support needs should form part of their care plan.

**Graduate workers:** 1,000 new workers since 2003 who provide support to GPs in their management of patients with mild to moderate mental health conditions.

For more information on the role of different staff and support options see the **Health and Social Care** and **Day Services** fact sheets.

## The employment sector

**Jobcentre Plus:** Jobcentre Plus provides help and advice on jobs and training for people who can work, and provides the right financial help for those who cannot. It represents the result of the integration of the Employment Service and the Benefits Agency, and it is designed to be a more welcoming and user-friendly environment. This includes:

- **Disability Employment Advisers (DEAs):** DEAs provide specialist support to disabled people in finding and retaining a job, including in-work support. They receive additional training on working with disabled people and employers, and on building partnerships with employers and providers.
- **Incapacity Benefit Advisers:** each jobcentre now has a specialist Incapacity Benefit Adviser who works solely with people claiming Incapacity Benefit. They have received additional disability training, including modules specifically on mental health. This is a part of a specific programme of learning in how to work with this customer group by helping them to overcome barriers and matching their skills with the requirements of employers.

- **Job brokers:** available through the New Deal for Disabled People these are specialist agencies who assist people into work and then provide ongoing support and mediation where necessary.

These specialist advisers have access to a range of support both to help someone obtain a job and keep one. These include **Access to Work** to help pay for workplace adjustments, a flexible **Adviser Discretion Fund**, the **Travel to Interview Scheme** and a variety of training options under **Workstep** and **Work-based Learning for Adults**. For more information see the **Employment chapter** of the Social Exclusion Unit report, the glossary and DWP's website ([www.dwp.gov.uk](http://www.dwp.gov.uk)).

**Pathways to Work:** a pilot project in seven Jobcentre Plus districts that provides Incapacity Benefit customers with individual Incapacity Benefit Personal Advisers (IBPA). The IBPA has access to the new Condition Management Programme run jointly with the NHS, a £40 Return to Work credit and additional in-work support (for more information see the Social Exclusion Unit Mental Health and Social Exclusion report).

**Local supported employment services:** funded by the local authority and health services, these agencies can offer individualised routes into open employment and ongoing support for the worker and their employer. For more information on local supported employment opportunities contact the local Jobcentre Plus or Community Mental Health Team.

For information on the different benefit entitlements and how these relate to an individual's ability to undertake paid employment, contact your local Jobcentre Plus, visit DWP's website ([www.dwp.gov.uk](http://www.dwp.gov.uk)) and see the **Benefits** fact sheet. Alternatively, independent advice can be sought from the local Citizens Advice Bureau or independent advice agency.

## THE SOCIAL EXCLUSION UNIT REPORT ACTION POINTS

- **Improving access to employment programmes** through improved training for Jobcentre Plus Incapacity Benefit Personal Advisers, addressing the needs of people with mental health problems within Pathways to Work and improving the Access to Work guidance. (For more details and timings see Action Point 12.)
- **Easing the transition from benefits to work** by improving awareness of the continuing support needs of Disability Living Allowance claimants, reviewing the benefit and employment support publicity materials, and raising awareness of the current arrangements to support people to increase their working hours. (For more details and timings see Action Point 13.)
- **Promoting enterprise and self-employment** by the piloting of measures to improve support for people with mental health problems. (For more details and timings see Action Point 14 of the report.)
- **Supporting and engaging employers and promoting job retention** through the National Institute for Mental Health in England's anti-stigma programme, the Health and Safety Executive's occupational health and safety support pilots, guidance on reducing work-related stress, and managing sickness and return to work and the Department for Work and Pensions/Department of Health's Framework for Vocational Rehabilitation. (For more details and timings see Action Point 15 of the report.)

## Useful Contacts and Resources

For information on the support provided by Jobcentre Plus visit [www.jobcentreplus.gov.uk](http://www.jobcentreplus.gov.uk). Information specifically on the New Deal programmes can be found at [www.newdeal.gov.uk](http://www.newdeal.gov.uk).

The Welfare to Work Handbook (Centre for Economic and Social Inclusion, 2004) – a comprehensive guide to the financial support and employment programmes available for adults of working age.

The Health and Safety Executive's (HSE) *Real Solutions, Real People* action pack for managers on work-related stress (see also [www.hse.gov.uk/stress](http://www.hse.gov.uk/stress)).

HSE, *Managing sickness absence and return to work: An employers and managers guide* (October 2004).

Mindout line manager's guide to reasonable adjustments for people with mental health problems ([www.mhmedia.com](http://www.mhmedia.com)).

Waddell G. and Burton K. *Concepts of rehabilitation for the management of common health problems* (2004) – a recent publication sponsored by DWP which looks at different aspects of rehabilitation.

The Employers' Forum on Disability is a member organisation funded and managed by employers, and it provides guidance, eg via a helpline, on how best to employ people with disabilities ([www.employers-forum.co.uk](http://www.employers-forum.co.uk)).

The Association for Supported Employment (AfSE) is an organisation open to any agency delivering supported employment. It aims to assist agencies to support individuals with disabilities, and to promote best practice and training for the delivery of supported employment. Contact 0772 9356264 or visit [www.afse.org.uk](http://www.afse.org.uk).

Social Firms UK: a Social Firm is a business that has been specifically set up to create paid employment for disabled people. Social Firms UK encourages the development of the sector via the dissemination of good practice, advice, and support and lobbying. Contact 01737 764021 or visit [www.socialfirms.co.uk](http://www.socialfirms.co.uk).

Business in the Community is a network that aims to engage and support business in continually improving its positive impact on society ([www.bitc.org.uk](http://www.bitc.org.uk)).

See the Disability Rights Commission for advice on the duty of employers under the DDA. The Disability Rights Commission's helpline is 08457 622 633 or visit [www.drc-gb.uk](http://www.drc-gb.uk)

For Business Action on Homelessness contact Eva Hamilton on 020 7566 8688.

NIMHE has a Knowledge Community where people can exchange information and experiences relating to mental health. This can be found at [kc.nimhe.org.uk](http://kc.nimhe.org.uk).

Scottish Executive – for information on mental health policy and services in Scotland, contact the National Programme for Improving Mental Health and Well-Being (part of the Scottish Executive). Visit [www.show.scot.nhs.uk](http://www.show.scot.nhs.uk)



[www.socialexclusion.gov.uk](http://www.socialexclusion.gov.uk)

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