



Employment and mental health

Briefing 2

'Mental ill health presents a major challenge to the well-being of our society and the strength of our economy. It blights lives, traps people in poverty and prevents the country harnessing the talents and potential of hundreds of thousands of people. Government is determined to lead the way in meeting this challenge.'

*Working Our Way to Better Mental Health:
a framework for action*

THE GOVERNMENT IS committed to addressing the links between employment and mental health, both for people with mental health conditions who struggle to find and keep employment and for the general population, to improve general well-being and increase employment outcomes.

Work is known to be good for mental health and to aid recovery, even for those with the most severe conditions. Unemployment is known to be bad for mental health and the longer people are out of the workplace, the harder they find it to return and the greater the impact on their health and well-being.

The government's strategy to address mental health and employment is set out in four key documents.

Working Our Way to Better Mental Health: a framework for action

WORKING OUR WAY TO BETTER MENTAL HEALTH aims to:

- improve well-being at work for everyone, and
- help people with mental health conditions find work, stay in work and return to work more quickly following sickness absence.

It sets out what the government Departments of; Health, Work and Pensions, Business, Innovation and Skills, and Children, Schools and Families, the Cabinet Office, the Health and Safety Executive, and the Scottish Government and Welsh Assembly Government should do, jointly and individually, to:

- Change public attitudes to mental health.
- Improve health and well-being in work for the whole population.
- Ensure swift intervention when things go wrong.
- Provide co-ordinated help tailored to individual needs to improve health and well-being in and out of work.
- Build resilience from the early years and throughout people's working lives.
- Coordinate action across government to ensure success.

'A modern economy cannot afford such waste of individual talent nor the high welfare costs.'

Case Study

'My client had been signed off with a stress-related illness for six weeks before being referred to me by the psychological therapy team. He was very agitated, had started to obsess about things and couldn't sleep.

'I arranged a meeting with his employer where we talked about workplace issues and agreed solutions. We also agreed that when he felt ready, my client would have a phased return to work at a different site.

'My client is feeling much happier and is back working full-time hours. I support him with problems as they crop up but I'm reducing contact where possible to encourage him to deal with matters independently. I also worked with his employer to discuss implementing job retention strategies throughout the rest of the company.'

- Jobs in Mind employment support provider, Improving Access to Psychological Therapies service

Realising Ambitions: better employment support for people with a mental health condition

REALISING AMBITIONS IS an independent review commissioned by the Department for Work and Pensions to explore how welfare to work services and mental health services could better meet the employment support needs and aspirations of people with mental health conditions.

It says that:

- many people with mental health conditions can use existing mainstream welfare to work services
- some people with a mental health condition will need specialist support to find and stay in employment
- a large number of people in between these extremes could be helped if there was greater capacity within existing structures to meet their specialist mental health needs.

It calls for government action to improve knowledge and understanding of mental health issues among employers and employees in the workplace in general in order to make employment more accessible and possible for those with a mental health condition.

It also recommends the implementation of Individual Placement and Support (IPS) in Great Britain by placing Employment Specialists in mental health teams and by easing the transition from unemployment to work, by the provision of time-limited internships and by modifying Access to Work.

REALISING AMBITIONS SAYS there should be more effective monitoring of employment rates among people with mental health conditions both by health and social services and the DWP, in order to close the gap in employment rates between the general population and people with mental health conditions.

'People with mental health conditions remain among the most excluded within our society. And nowhere is this exclusion more evident than in the workplace... a combination of prejudice and discrimination, low expectations and failure to provide the necessary support continue to deny many people with mental health conditions the opportunity to work.'

Case Study: Mary's story

'I experienced psychosis when I was a teenager. I self-harmed. For 12 years I was not able to engage in society. Hospital was frightening and nightmarish. Then I started receiving therapy at home from the community mental health team. Eventually I developed the confidence to get back into society. I started volunteering at a mental health centre and eventually got back into employment. It was a horrendous journey. Having a background in business and a supportive family helped me return to work.'

'Service user's problems in returning to work partly come from their own low expectations, as well as service providers' low expectations. But with support you can climb mountains.'



Work, Recovery and Inclusion: employment support for people in contact with secondary mental health services

Work, Recovery and Inclusion sets out guidance on best practice in employment support for people in contact with secondary mental health services. It has cross-government backing from the Department of Health, the Cabinet Office, the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills and the Department for Work and Pensions.

The key messages in Work, Recovery and Inclusion are that:

- Work is good for everyone's mental health and is central to recovery for people with mental health conditions.
- Health and employment services must work together to deliver support to enable people to achieve stable employment.
- Employers should feel confident and supported to employ and maintain people with mental health conditions in the workplace.
- Those working with people with mental health conditions should do more to raise their employment aspirations.
- Employment should be considered within the context of the wider determinants of social exclusion such as housing transport and debt.
- People who use services should be engaged and involved at the heart of policy development at all levels.
- Service developments should be based on evidence and data, and new innovations should be evaluated.
- Services should be tailored to meet the needs of all people with mental health conditions, regardless of age, gender, disability, ethnicity, sexual orientation, religion or belief.

Its long-term goal is to radically increase the number of people in contact with secondary mental health services in employment by 2025 and to narrow the gap between their employment rate and that of disabled people generally.

It sets out what the government and the relevant government departments are already doing and will do to ensure people with serious and severe mental health conditions are supported to find employment. Actions include:

- greater importance to be given to people's employment needs and aspirations within mental health services
- improved specialist mental health employment support programmes and capacity within JCP
- advice and support for employers to improve health and well-being generally in the workplace and special provision for people with mental health conditions, as required by law.

Case Study: Barry's journey

Barry lives with his wife, is highly educated, has a good social network, enjoys composing music and plays in a band. He has been unwell for approximately 10 years with a diagnosis of Dysthymic Disorder, a form of depression.

Barry's mental ill health has often had a negative impact on him being able to sustain employment.

Barry started working with a Jobs in Mind Support Advisor after being referred by his Consultant, who initially requested help to enable Barry to find paid employment and to gain structure in his life. Barry wished to take things at a slow pace initially, drafting a CV, looking for part time employment and a Web Design course. After identifying a vacancy at the local Garden Centre, Barry asked his Support Advisor to meet with the Garden Centre manager prior to interview and talk through his situation. Barry then attended the interview with the support of his worker and did extremely well; he was offered a job there and then and given a start date.

Barry started work at the Garden Centre at the beginning of 2009 and is currently doing very well and enjoying the experience. His Support Advisor continues to offer support and guidance until such time as it is no longer needed, although Barry is able to draw on further support down the line if any difficulties arise and his employer can continue to stay in contact with Jobs in Mind for support. Barry has also started a Web Design course.

New Horizons: a shared vision for mental health

NEW HORIZONS IS a cross-government programme of action for improving mental health and well-being among the population in general, across all ages, including those with mental health conditions in particular. It follows on from the National Service Framework for Mental Health. It sets out the areas of responsibility and actions in place and to be initiated by the various government departments concerned to promote, safeguard and improve mental health and well-being across the whole population and the lifespan.

Employment is one of the key themes addressed under 'Better Mental Health and Well-being in Adulthood'. This highlights the mental and economic benefits of employment for individuals and for the national economy, the risks of mental ill health associated with unemployment, and the role of government, employers and employees in helping people with mental health conditions to find and keep work, particularly at times of economic difficulty.

Together these four reports set out a comprehensive, cross-government package of measures that will both improve employment opportunities and support for people with mental health conditions and improve the mental health and well-being of working age adults.

'Action of employment and mental health must be a long-term commitment. The wider aim of this comprehensive programme for action is to influence future policy development across government departments and throughout the wider public sector, and bring about changes in behaviour in organisations and individuals.... Together we can work our way to better mental health.'

– Working Our Way to Better Mental Health

'New Horizons will help us tackle stigma, personalise services and move forward into a modern, preventive approach to mental health and wellbeing. I want to see those with mental health problems supported to lead active and fulfilling lives, and this means an end to the taboo surrounding this very common health problem.'

– Phil Hope, Minister of State for Care Services

'Our vision is one where having a mental health condition is no longer stigmatising nor a barrier to full and equal participation in our society. We must rethink how we work and challenge negative assumptions about mental health conditions.'

- Work, Recovery and Inclusion



National Mental Health
Development Unit

The National Mental Health Development Unit (NMH DU) is the agency charged with supporting the implementation of mental health policy in England by the Department of Health in collaboration with the NHS, Local Authorities and other major stakeholders.

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