

CASE STUDY: SOCIAL INCLUSION THROUGH EMPLOYMENT SUPPORT FOR ADULTS WITH MENTAL ILLNESS

RESPONDENT PROFILE

The respondents reported experiencing mental health problems for a mean of 13.51 years. 70% had a history of being admitted to psychiatric hospital. Nearly 45% live alone, which could be either a cause or effect of their mental illness, but certainly reflects the importance of social contact.

Whilst this study clearly targets those with more severe mental health issues, the principles of “what works” can be applied to those hundreds of thousands of beneficiaries with mental health issues on Incapacity Benefit. Further, there is a commonality of approach that could be applied to all unemployed adults – including ex-offenders.

KEY FINDINGS

Participants were less likely to move into work:

- The longer they had been out of work
- The more obstacles to work they perceived - especially if they were afraid of being financially worse off.

Perceived obstacle statements	Moved into work (n=24) % agree	Did not move into work (n=76) % agree
I haven't got the skills and experience to find the right work	38	40
I'm unlikely to find a job because of my age	33	41
An employer would be put off by my mental health problems	67	83
I would be worse off financially if I started work	17	42 *
My confidence about working is low	63	66
My mental health makes it hard for me to work	46	65
My family do not like the idea of me working	4	12

Nearness to labour market questions % saying yes.	Moved into work (n=24)	Did not move into work (n=76)
Looked at job adverts in the newspaper?	92	77
Visited a job centre?	71	41 **
Registered with a private employment agency?	22	18
Done any kind of work related training course?	44	45
Applied for a job?	58	59
Looked for work in other ways?	61	45

People were more likely to move into work if they had recently visited a Jobcentre (being proactive and using different sources of networking/job opportunities).

CLIENT AND STAFF PERCEPTIONS OF WHAT WORKS

FEELING SUPPORTED - motivation and encouragement, confidence building, staff being available for support and developing a good relationship.

“[The advisor] made me feel like I could do it, I’m not totally alone.”

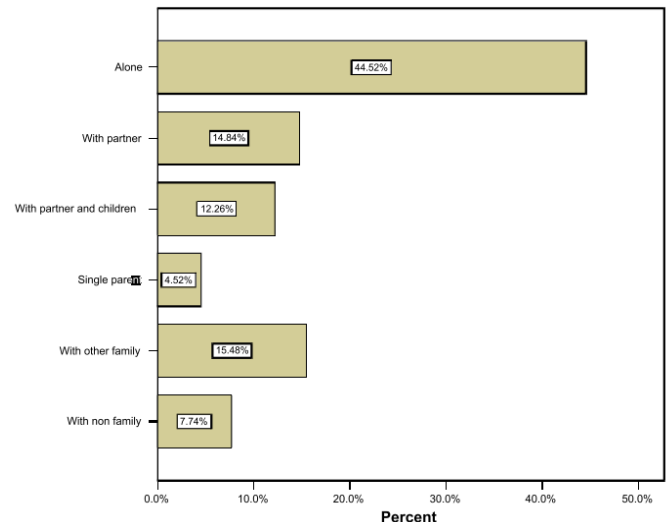
“There’s someone who believes in me.”

“She made me do things I wasn’t confident enough to do on my own.”

“She guided me to help me feel that I’m not useless – that I can do something for someone else.”

“I’m not confident, I want them to tell you the things they value, I need reassurance.”

Figure 5.2 Participants’ living circumstances



Continuity of support worker was seen as important in enabling a supportive relationship to form and thus enabling the Support Worker to understand the client's needs:

*"We've got to know each other, I've got to know what she's best at and she's found out what I'm best at."
"She's quite enthusiastic, gets you motivated and she's been quite helpful in that way."
"I can do CVs but I did need that extra boost and he gave me that - how to set it and organise it."
"[My Support Worker] has always said 'oh you know I can see you in managerial positions in years to come' and actually I can almost see it myself now..."*

PRACTICAL HELP – such as: financial, being accompanied to interviews, being helped with job preparation, job searching and the application and recruitment process:

*"He knows the ins and outs of the job search, what to do, when to do it, and how."
"He explains how Government funding things work, how it all works."
"She gave me paths to follow, you don't think of them yourself."
"I was scared by the thought of interviews – she helped me to work out what to say, not to ramble, what's relevant."
"They did everything they could to prepare me for the interview, helped me to show off my skills."*

A CLIENT CENTRED APPROACH - supporting at the client's pace, appropriate job matching, links with mental health services and mediation with employers.

Knowing someone was there for them was one of the issues most frequently mentioned by clients:

*"He could have got in touch a bit more – a phone call once a week or two weeks to see how I was doing."
"Maybe more calls between meetings just to say 'have you filled that in?', a bit more encouragement."
"The Government are quick to get you on schemes to work, then quick to get you off and let you find your own way.
I felt let down, they were in it for themselves, all quick, rush rush!"*

OTHER KEY POINTS

Many people did not receive follow up support in work and most thought this would have been useful – many re-entrants felt unable to approach their manager about issues without advice and could leave.

Although most people had thought that disclosing mental health problems to a potential employer would be a barrier to work, this did not prove to be the case. Help with framing mental health problems positively to an employer was appreciated.

People described many benefits to working, including helping them to deal with their mental health problems, improving their self-esteem, inspiring optimism about the future and having a steady income.

Clients also felt that the support they received provided a structure to their daily lives and that regular contact encouraged them to focus on work issues and kept them motivated.

On having a job: "I feel satisfied at the end of the day. It gives you something to live for really, doesn't it?"