

How to use this checklist

This checklist aims to tell you whether you do enough to help people who use your services obtain employment, or maintain it if they already have a job.

We recognise that organisations helping people with mental health needs will vary in size and scope, and will have differing aims and objectives. Not all of the checklist questions will be relevant to every service provider.

Research shows that around 80% of people with mental health problems are economically inactive. Yet most people with mental health needs aspire to having a job as a crucial part of the way they want to live their lives. Work offers self - belief, respect, dignity, opportunities for friendship and a regular income.

This checklist provides an audit of your service to see how you fit in with this aspiration, and whether you could usefully do more. It also suggests steps you can take to become more responsive to users' questions about jobs and employment.

| | The Checklist | Y/N | Get Help from: |
|------------------|---|-----|---|
| How you can help | <p>1 Do you have formal written guidance telling staff what to do when people with mental health problems ask about work issues?</p> <p><i>All relevant staff should be able to respond to questions from people with mental health problems about jobs and employment. This doesn't necessarily mean having all the answers, but they should know who can best help the person.</i></p> | | Your personnel colleagues; organisations who specifically offer employment training and advice |
| | <p>2 If you undertake assessments of people with mental health needs, does that assessment include work issues?</p> <p><i>The most helpful assessments are wide-ranging, involving not just a person's mental health but, for example, their work aspirations, housing needs and benefits entitlement. You should ask about the person's previous work experience, which may have contributed to their mental health problems.</i></p> | | Organisations with assessment tools eg The Sainsbury Centre for Mental Health, Pavilion Publishing or Mind |
| | <p>3 In offering advice on work, do you take into account the range of employment and educational opportunities available?</p> <p><i>Opportunities for work can vary considerably between full - time, part-time, voluntary work and further education. People with mental health problems need to be aware of the possible options, to decide which might suit them best.</i></p> | | Local Employment Service office, colleges of further education, employment agencies and newspaper job vacancy pages |
| | <p>4 Do you offer advice on careers, which tailors a person's talents and abilities to the potential job market?</p> <p><i>Be positive but realistic in your advice. Raising someone's self-confidence can be rewarding and helpful. But unduly raising expectations may lead to failure and disappointment</i></p> | | Carers; friends and family; the users' care team; career guidance specialists in local authority |
| | <p>5 Do you offer support and advice on coping with interviews?</p> <p><i>Interviews can be daunting, especially for someone with a mental health problem. Providing interview practice can be useful.</i></p> | | Your personnel colleagues; your local library |
| | <p>6 Do you offer advice on writing a CV?</p> <p><i>A well-presented CV can be a powerful tool for someone looking for work, but there is a skill to writing one.</i></p> | | Your personnel colleagues; your local library |

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|--------------------------------|--|------------|--|
| How you can help (cont) | <p>7 Can you put someone who is seeking work in touch with advocacy support?</p> <p><i>Many people find it helpful to have an advocate to help them in their search for employment. This might be family or friend, or another qualified person, but in some circumstances they may want you to act as their advocate.</i></p> | | Local voluntary organisations and advocacy groups |
| | <p>8 Are you able to offer advice on how benefits might be affected by work opportunities?</p> <p><i>Many people are worried that taking up work will mean they lose their benefits. This deters them from looking for a job.</i></p> | | Your local Benefits Agency or Employment Service Office; the local Citizen's Advice Bureau (CAB) |
| | <p>9 Do you make it known that you can offer advice on work?</p> <p><i>People with mental health problems who use your services need to know that they can ask you about work and employment issues</i></p> | | Your information and publications colleagues |
| User Involvement | <p>10 Do you invite other people with mental health problems to talk to users of your services about their own successful work experiences?</p> <p><i>Hearing from others with mental health problems who have sought for work can build confidence and allow people to anticipate and prepare for difficulties they might face, such as stress.</i></p> | | Local user groups; Other mental health organisations |
| | <p>11 Do you ask at an early stage for people's work aspirations and their views about what they need?</p> <p><i>It is essential that the help you offer is based on people's own stated aspirations and expectations</i></p> | | Users of your services |
| | <p>12 Do you involve users of your services in assessing your procedures for advising on work issues?</p> <p><i>Asking service users to help audit your procedures can give you a real insight into how useful they are, and whether they are what people really want.</i></p> | | Users of your services |
| External Contacts | <p>13 Do you involve people's carers, friends and family in discussions about work opportunities?</p> <p><i>Carers, friends and family can often provide useful information about someone's capacity to undertake work; individuals themselves may not always have a realistic perspective on what they can achieve.</i></p> | | Carers, friends and family |
| | <p>14 Do you keep a list of outside employment contacts that you can pass to your users?</p> <p><i>To ensure consistency of advice, it would be useful to have an accurate local contact list for organisations that could help people with their work queries.</i></p> | | Employment Service and Benefits Agency offices; local employment agencies; CAB; voluntary organisations; self-help and advocacy groups |
| | <p>15 Do you have any contacts with local employers and Employment Service staff?</p> <p><i>Individual employers and ES staff should be able to advise you on the sort of work opportunities which arise in a local area. It may strengthen your links with them if they know they can ask you for advice on mental health issues when the need arises.</i></p> | | Local employers; Trade associations; the Employment Service |
| | <p>16 Do you remain available for support and advice after a person has started work?</p> <p><i>Once someone with a mental health problem has got a job, there may still be a great deal of work required to support that person in a possibly stressful post and to ensure the job is a success.</i></p> | | The employer |