

People seeking work who have mental health problems: Are you ready for work?

How to use this checklist

You may wish to talk through each item of the list with someone. Tick the item if you are clear about it and need little help.

If you are clearly some way from where you would like to be on a particular question, approach a local agency to find out if they can supply information or training. You can find the local agencies by telephoning the national headquarters (see back page).

If you are unsure about more than three or four points you may not be ready for work, or your efforts to find it could disappoint you. Talk it through with friends, other individuals in your position, or local agencies, including your community mental health team.

Why not obtain and read written material from the organisations that are listed overleaf?

		The Checklist	Y/ N	Get help from:
Knowing yourself	1	Have you thought clearly about your reasons for wanting work? <i>A job with interest and variety will increase your self esteem, provide more independence and help you to maintain your recovery.</i>		Community Mental Health Team; Local mental health charities
	2	Have you taken advice on career choices? <i>Your previous job may or may not be suitable for your new situation, or you may need to develop new skills.</i>		Community Mental Health Team; the Local Employment Service's Disability Service Team; Local Colleges
	3	Have you decided what special arrangements you may need at work? <i>Many employers now have a duty under the Disability Discrimination Act to make reasonable adjustments for disabled people, including those with mental health problems, but they have to know from you what you need.</i>		Community Mental Health Team; Local Employment Service Office
	4	How will you present your condition? <i>Not everyone at work needs to know the whole story but being honest with the employer makes it more likely you will get support, and could avoid problems later on.</i>		Community Mental Health Team; Local user groups
Preparing	5	Can you write a CV? <i>This is not easy, but it is your opportunity to put yourself in the best light and to state and back up your abilities with evidence.</i>		Local library; Advocacy or employment support project
	6	Have you got references ready? <i>Employers will value these - get them well in advance. They can be from social workers, doctors, colleges or schools as well as past employers. Ask their permission in advance.</i>		Advocacy group or mental health group; People you have previously worked with
	7	Should you continue your education? <i>There are lots of opportunities to develop new skills and education can itself be good preparation for surviving in a work place.</i>		Local colleges
	8	Have you experience of being interviewed and of writing applications? <i>First impressions matter a lot. Moreover, If you can handle the stress of an interview well, you are likely to be able to survive in work. It is very helpful to do practice interviews.</i>		Local employment support project Family and friends
	9	Have you learned from other people's experiences? <i>There is no better guidance than that from other people in your position who have succeeded. Even failures will teach you something.</i>		Local employment support project; Local mental health groups and newsletters

Applying for jobs	10	Do you know how to find opportunities? <i>A good supply of opportunities is essential. Do not expect instant success and be ready to alter your plan, and to keep trying, in the light of your progress.</i>	The internet; Local newspapers; Advocacy or self help group Job Centre and local Employment Service offices.
	11	How will you ensure the employer is right for you? <i>Although it may be tempting to consider whatever is available you need to know if the employer will support you in times of difficulty. Ask around.</i>	Your community mental health team; The employer; Advocacy or employment support project
	12	Is support available to help you apply? <i>An independent view from a friend or adviser will often help you target the right sort of work, and if you get a lot of rejections you may need a friend to talk to.</i>	Family and friends; Advocacy or employment support project
Money	13	Are you clear about the effect on your benefits? <i>It is super to move into work and out of benefits but the stress of losing benefits by accident is a different matter. Take advice, especially on housing benefit. Don't forget that some benefits apply only if you are in work!</i>	Citizens Advice Bureau; Benefits Agency office; Mental health or disability information service
	14	Are therapeutic earnings appropriate? <i>With your GP's support you can enter work in a limited way, with the possibility of reducing hours when you need to, and without loss of incapacity or severe disablement benefit. But this needs to be carefully planned and agreed by the Benefits Agency.</i>	Your GP; Benefits Agency; Citizens' Advice Bureau; Your community mental health team; Other users or survivors
	15	Do you understand the Job Seekers Allowance (JSA)? <i>Looking for work is not any easier than holding down a job, and if you are claiming JSA you may need support to cope with the requirements of 'actively seeking work'.</i>	Local Job Centre; Citizens Advice Bureau; Mental health or disability information service
	16	Are you realistic about pay? <i>Maximising your income may not be the first priority. You need enough to replace any benefits you are losing, but you also need to start in a safe way. However, don't sell yourself short, and do ensure you get paid the National Minimum Wage.</i>	Friends; Other users/survivors; Local mental health groups
On the job Support	17	Are you prepared for stress at work? <i>Almost everyone finds work stressful at times. People's prejudices may make this worse for you. Success and openness can help to change other people's attitudes.</i>	Friends; Other users/survivors; Local mental health groups
	18	Do you know where to find outside support? <i>It may be too late to find support if you wait until you need it. Don't consider it a failure to recognise your needs even if this reveals your condition to others.</i>	Community Mental Health team; Friends; Other users/survivors; Local mental health groups
	19	Does the potential employer offer good support? <i>More and more, employers are taking steps to provide support for employees with mental health problems. Ask around to find out if this is so for any employer you consider seriously.</i>	The employer; Other users/survivors; Local mental health groups
	20	Do you understand your rights? <i>As well as ordinary employment rights, ensure that you know how the Disability Discrimination Act may affect you.</i>	National mental health information services; Disability Rights Commission and Helpline; Citizens Advice Bureau