



## Developing Centres of Excellence in IPS:

bridging the gap between what we know and what we do

Sainsbury Centre believes that evidence-based supported employment should be available to everyone who uses mental health services. People in contact with mental health services in the UK have the lowest employment rate, but the highest 'want to work' rate, of any group of disabled people (Perkins, 2009).

In February 2009, we published a briefing paper, *Doing what Works* (Sainsbury Centre, 2008), to set out the evidence base for the extensively researched Individual Placement and Support approach (IPS). We tested a set of key performance indicators for employment services and showed that IPS was both affordable and cost-effective. But there was still no evidence of sustained implementation across the country.

### Setting up the Centres of Excellence

Therefore, in May 2009 we put out a call for applications to join with Sainsbury Centre to disseminate the evidence-base and speed up the pace of implementation across the country by ensuring that Individual Placement and Support was a reality that people could see, study, and emulate in more places.

We sought out mental health and employment partnerships in England who were committed to developing the IPS approach and whose services could be funded, driven and 'owned' by the local partnerships. We received 24 applications, representing almost a third of all mental health trusts, which enabled us to get a picture of current service coverage across the country.

The lack of implementation was, to a large extent, confirmed. Many of the applications highlighted the

### The importance of employment in recovery

*"Work and employment remain the primary means through which people connect with their communities and build their lives. Finding you have 'something to give', as well as needing help, is central to building a positive sense of self-esteem and this is at the heart of recovery."*

(Sainsbury Centre, 2009)

perceived challenges to implementing IPS, which included:

- Lack of integration between mental health and employment services teams
- A culture of low expectations for the prospects of service users gaining competitive employment
- A lack of knowledge about the evidence base for employment and IPS
- Lack of training or skills on the part of staff to deliver fully evidence-based practice

However, there was a marked difference between the experiences of services, as others had already gone a long way towards overcoming many of these barriers.

One of the features of implementation in a UK context is the variety of organisational, structural and contractual arrangements that govern the delivery of employment support here. Our partners reflect this situation: in one site, the employment support is provided by a local third sector

organisation. In another, the employment support is supplied by the local authority. The others, while mainly NHS Trust run, have employed a 'mixed bag' of funding arrangements to ensure employment support is available to clients, including service level agreements with third sector agencies, secondments from the voluntary sector and other management arrangements with outside agencies. Regular contact with JobCentre Plus is also one of the hallmarks of a high-functioning IPS service.

## The Centres of Excellence

Of those we interviewed and took on in the first wave of the initiative, five partnerships already had established IPS-based services and growing provision.

They were already well positioned to help disseminate the knowledge about best practice and inform others. We invited these services to be full partners in the Centres of Excellence initiative.

These partners are in:

- South West London
- Central and North West London
- Essex
- Shropshire
- Somerset

Alongside these sites, another four 'emerging centres' were invited into the programme. They are in:

- Sussex
- Leeds
- Devon
- Nottinghamshire

## How we work with the Centres

Sainsbury Centre offered our partners fidelity reviews (which aim to capture a 'snapshot' of the current practices of an IPS service, to measure progress), a learning network, individual problem-solving and training for front-line staff.

They in turn agreed to work with us to disseminate knowledge about best practice based on the research evidence by hosting at least one visit by groups from elsewhere in the country who wished to understand more about it. Most sites have in fact exceeded our expectations in this respect. Central and North West London alone has hosted or completed 18 visits or speaking engagements, 8 of which were prompted by their involvement in the Centres of Excellence programme.

## International collaboration

Sainsbury Centre is committed to developing and sustaining international collaboration on evidence-based supported employment and we continue to build on partnerships with colleagues in Australia, New Zealand, Canada and the USA.

During the course of this initiative we have been grateful for the generous support of Bob Drake and Debbie Becker and colleagues at Dartmouth Medical School, New England, from where much of the research into supported employment and its implementation has come. Such collaboration ensures that we learn from international experiences and we, in turn, can share our learning with other countries.

In January 2010, we sent a delegation of eight people from the Centres of Excellence out to Dartmouth to participate in an intensive two-day training course. Aimed at people in clinical and vocational leadership positions, this course equipped participants with the skills, knowledge and resources to support all phases of implementation from organisational change to supervision of managers and employment specialists.

Hearing first hand how the approach had been developed and how it has been refined in the US aided understanding of the approach as it needs to be applied here. The participants really valued the time away and the opportunity to question and discuss the finer points of the fidelity scale and implementing the principles with experts in the field. Despite the cultural differences, it is clear that what we are working with is an internationally-applicable approach to improving mental health and employment services.

*“thank you for an inspiring and motivating week in America, I’m still buzzing with ideas and possibilities!”*

*“Just wanted to say a big thanks to Sainsbury Centre for giving us the opportunity to go to the US last week. I think we all got so much out of having the chance to spend time together, and hearing about how the model works in practice in the US. Have come back full of ideas and enthusiasm.”*

Feedback from participants in the learning visit to Dartmouth

## What we are learning about implementing IPS

When it comes to employment support for people with mental health conditions, much of the challenge lies in ‘bridging the gap between what we know and what we do’ (Satcher, 2009). What has become evident from the Centres of Excellence initiative so far is that getting supported employment based on the principles of IPS up and running in a local area is complex but possible.

Some partnerships in the Centres of Excellence had been delivering very advanced services before joining the initiative. They are run by leading figures in the field who themselves are contributing to the published literature on what is required for the implementation of IPS (Rinaldi, Perkins *et al.*, 2008).

The Centres of Excellence initiative has also already proved valuable in a number of ways for our partners. Partnering emerging centres with more established ones has increased the exposure of these centres to the collected experiences of making IPS work in practice in the UK context for a number of years. It has facilitated access for our partners to each other, to national and international experts

## Collaborating on key development issues

Our work with our partners in the Centres of Excellence initiative has highlighted a number of key development issues which Sainsbury Centre and its partners will continue to work on.

- The fidelity reviewing process is an important development tool for services. We are working to build capacity in this country to deliver these reviews.
- The diversity of the funding structures available to support evidence-based supported employment represents both opportunities and challenges. We will continue to work to influence national and local policy making to support the commissioning of evidence-based services.
- Local and national information systems need to be improved to ensure adequate data is collected about employment services and their performance. We will continue to work with commissioners to influence monitoring and outcomes measurement.
- New research and best practice evidence on working practices in the delivery of evidence-based supported employment are emerging here and abroad. We will continue to maintain a learning network that keeps our partners and others tapped into these ‘emerging practices’ to advance service provision.

and the latest research. It has served to reinforce commitment and cement evidence-based practice within local priorities. By raising the national profile through speaking engagements, media coverage and visits by other services to the sites, the momentum and enthusiasm for implementing IPS has been increased and sustained during the year.

## Next steps

In their recent article, Rinaldi, Miller and Perkins (2010) draw on the three phases of 'implementation science' identified in a British Journal of Psychiatry editorial (Tansella & Thornicroft, 2009) and apply these to the implementation of IPS as an evidence-based practice within mental health services.

The three phases are noted as being 'adoption in principle', 'early implementation' and 'persistence of implementation'. Their descriptions of the phases of implementation, as they relate to their own experiences over a period of years, are extremely valuable as they describe what has been important and necessary (and, helpfully, what has been insufficient) in the development of evidence-based services through to the 'persistence of implementation' phase.

Looking at the facilitators and barriers that Tansella and Thornicroft identify, we might suggest that nationally we are somewhere between 'adoption in principle' and 'early implementation'. Crossing the gap and moving into the third and most desirable phase will be the focus of the work of Sainsbury Centre and its partners in future years.

Our plans for the next phase of the initiative include the development of a network of locally funded 'regional trainers' supported and mentored by Sainsbury Centre to oversee and accelerate the delivery of evidence-based supported employment across local areas. We will also be offering independent fidelity reviews for teams working towards excellence in IPS and regular updates on the latest evidence as it is published.

## To learn more

For more information about our work on IPS and the Centres of Excellence, contact Jenni Bacon on 020 7827 8302 or email [jenni.bacon@scmh.org.uk](mailto:jenni.bacon@scmh.org.uk).

There is also more information on our website at [www.scmh.org.uk/employment](http://www.scmh.org.uk/employment).

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