



Effective Employment Advisory Services in Primary Care

Helen Lockett
Associate Director
Employment Programme

Presentation outline

SAINSBURY CENTRE
for MENTAL HEALTH
removing barriers achieving change



1. What characterises an effective job retention service
 - ❑ 'Turning the Tide' - research study in Cambridgeshire
2. What knowledge and skills to do these specialist workers need:
 - ❑ Delphi 'Expert' Survey
3. Implications for policy, research and practice

Turning the Tide

SAINSBURY CENTRE
for MENTAL HEALTH
removing barriers achieving change



- ❑ To identify the processes which influence the effectiveness of the Employment Advisors (EA)
- ❑ Four EAs employed by the Richmond Fellowship, working across a number of GP surgeries
- ❑ Supporting people with mental health problems into work (REGAIN) or to maintain their current job (RETAIN)
- ❑ Mixed methods exploratory study:
 - Analysis of routine data kept on all clients (n=229)
 - In depth interviews with clients (n=22) and health professionals (n=4)
 - Focus group with EAs (n=4)
- ❑ Data collected from Oct 2007 to Oct 2008

Findings



- Concur with existing evidence, particularly the review of vocational rehabilitation carried out by Waddell *et al* (2008)
- Highlight the specific characteristics of job retention support which differentiate it from job placement

The importance of early intervention

SAINSBURY CENTRE
for MENTAL HEALTH
removing barriers achieving change



- ❑ 82% of the individuals referred to the EAs who were in work or off sick retained their jobs
- ❑ It is easier to help someone keep a job than help a person into a new job
- ❑ Timing of referral is crucial (2-6 weeks)
- ❑ Relationships with GPs and other health professionals facilitate speed of referral
- ❑ Referrals whilst someone is in work could be even more effective

The characteristics of effective job retention

SAINSBURY CENTRE
for MENTAL HEALTH
removing barriers achieving change



Relatively short, intense and focused

- ❑ 2-4 sessions with an EA (average one hour)
- ❑ Over just a few weeks/month
- ❑ Compare this with the level and intensity of support to help someone into work: Approx 30 contacts over 6 months

The type of support which was most effective

SAINSBURY CENTRE
for MENTAL HEALTH
removing barriers achieving change



- ❑ Strongly associated with employment outcomes
- ❑ Workplace focused
 - Negotiating job retention – *nearly five times more likely to lead to a positive employment outcome (4.7)*
 - Negotiating reasonable adjustments (5.5)
 - Support attending meeting with employer (1.85)

Conclusions



- EAs in primary care can effectively enable individuals to retain their jobs:
 - The importance of the relationship developed with primary care staff
 - The person's employment status should drive the level and intensity of employment support
 - This is a different type of employment support than job placement and will need specialist workers
 - Support should be workplace focused, involving the employer where ever possible
 - Requires effective liaison with professionals who deliver health interventions

Specialist Worker?

SAINSBURY CENTRE
for MENTAL HEALTH
removing barriers achieving change



- So what are we looking for in a job retention specialist?

A Delphi Survey

SAINSBURY CENTRE
for MENTAL HEALTH
removing barriers achieving change



A structured process for collecting opinion and feedback; conduct a series of surveys

- ❑ This survey – ‘to identify what helps people who are experiencing mental health problems stay in their jobs’
- ❑ Reviewed literature and based questionnaire on the current knowledge base
- ❑ Sainsbury Centre networks used to distribute questionnaires
- ❑ Individuals self selected and identified their expertise
- ❑ Asked to rate each statement from low to high priority and to indicate omissions
- ❑ Two survey rounds, 80 experts (personal and professional)

Characteristics of an excellent job retention specialist

SAINSBURY CENTRE
for MENTAL HEALTH
removing barriers achieving change



The knowledge and skills set:

- ❑ Provides a starting point for anyone commissioning, providing, recruiting staff for job retention services
- ❑ Covers the full range of health conditions
- ❑ Gives suggestions on how these can be assessed and developed in individuals
- ❑ Recognises that returning to a job that helped precipitate the health problems may not be feasible or desirable

SAINSBURY CENTRE
for MENTAL HEALTH
removing barriers achieving change

Delivering job retention services

A knowledge and skills set for employment advisory services located in primary care settings

Helping people remain in work

Over the past few years there has been increased recognition - notably in the Black Review of the health of the working age population - that much long-term unemployment can be averted if the right steps are taken when employees' health conditions are first identified at work. It makes sense to help people remain in work whenever possible, rather than wait for them to become completely detached from the workplace, and the problems that detachment brings with it.

Specialist skills for job retention

Responding to the need for early support and intervention will require not only a range of services which, as yet, are not available on any scale in the UK, but also large numbers of front line workers with the knowledge and skills to undertake the work. People from many different professional backgrounds have acquired some of the skills and knowledge that are needed. But this is specialist work that crosses traditional professional boundaries and, in addition, requires communication and negotiation skills that do not appear routinely in professional training courses, particularly with regard to the interface between health and work.

Increasing demand

There is, as yet, no established training or accreditation for people wanting to work in employment retention but the demand for such people will increase dramatically with the advent of large scale initiatives such as the Fit for Work teams, Jobcentre Plus Pathways Advisory Services and Improving Access to Psychological Therapy.

Characteristics of an excellent job retention worker

The list that follows is derived from that survey as well as current evidence in the field and is offered as a starting point for anyone commissioning, providing and recruiting staff for employment retention services. In compiling the list we were aware that it covers working with the full range of health conditions, i.e. not only mental health conditions. However, as a large proportion of the caseload of anyone working in this field will be comprised of people with mental health conditions, we have taken care to ensure that the particular skills and knowledge required to work with people with these conditions are in the list. Much of the list could also apply to job placement, as well as to job retention. However, the purpose of this document is to specify the characteristics of an excellent job retention worker, recognising that these are different jobs that should not be done by the same person at the same time.

One further point to note - our experts agree that, for some people, return to the job that helped precipitate their problems may not be possible or desirable. Retention services should therefore be flexible enough to accommodate diverse outcomes. In some cases it will be better to change jobs than to risk becoming unemployed by planning a return to the original job and this principle is reflected in the list.

Knowledge – staff demonstrate understanding of...

SAINSBURY CENTRE
for MENTAL HEALTH
removing barriers achieving change



- ❑ A wide range of jobs, organisations and work environments
- ❑ The practical implications of current health and safety legislation, employment law and the DDA
- ❑ Roles of occupational health, human resources, healthcare practitioners and demonstrate the ability to work with all the above
- ❑ The full range of potential adjustments in the workplace
- ❑ The need for early interventions and the complex issues individuals might be facing

Skills – staff are able to...

SAINSBURY CENTRE
for MENTAL HEALTH
removing barriers achieving change



- ❑ Conduct a comprehensive workplace assessment
- ❑ Work in collaboration with the individual and their manager to plan return to work or apply adjustments
- ❑ Talk confidently and authoritatively to the full range of stakeholders
- ❑ Intervene to utilise relationships in the workplace to support individuals e.g. mentoring, buddying

Skills continued...

SAINSBURY CENTRE
for MENTAL HEALTH
removing barriers achieving change



- ❑ Facilitate access to expert financial advice on welfare benefits, income protection and 'Access to Work' resources
- ❑ Foster the individual's optimism and self-confidence
- ❑ Co-ordinate the simultaneous contribution of different agencies
- ❑ Mediate in cases where there is actual or potential conflict

Implications



- Make the distinction at a policy, commissioning and practice level between job retention and job placement
- Utilise this emerging research to design, deliver and monitor job retention services
- Further research on job retention should focus on exploratory randomised controlled trials



Thank you

Helen Lockett

helen.lockett@scmh.org.uk

www.scmh.org.uk