

POLICY

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removing barriers achieving change



Securing employment for offenders with mental health problems

Towards a better way

Chiara Samele, Jo Keil
and Stuart Thomas

a **better** way



Summary

Enabling a person with a history of offending to get and keep a job is probably the most effective intervention anyone can make to prevent reoffending and improve their chances of leading a better life. Yet less than one-third of released prisoners have a job or a place in training or education to which to go.

This policy paper examines how to improve the employment prospects of offenders with mental health problems and is based on a review of published literature.

Recent years have seen a series of policy changes to increase the employability of offenders. Most government schemes emphasise improving offenders' learning and skills as a means to increasing their chances of finding employment. Simply improving skills and learning is, however, not enough to secure employment.

The most effective existing UK and US schemes to help offenders into employment include the following characteristics:

- Direct links with employers, to facilitate rapid job-search and overcome any prejudices among employers;
- Support that continues 'through the gates' between prison and the community;
- In-work support once a person starts a job;
- Input from ex-offenders;
- Addressing multiple needs.

Little policy or research illustrates the employment pathways or support required for offenders with mental health problems. It is likely that they are routinely excluded from vocational rehabilitation, often on the basis that they are 'not ready'.

By contrast, mental health services have developed a method of employment support called Individual Placement and Support (or IPS). It emphasises rapid placement in paid employment, based on individuals' preferences, and ongoing support once people get jobs. This IPS model and its core principles, with adaptations to their practical application, could be used to achieve much better results for people in the criminal justice system.

From our review of the literature, effective employment support for offenders with mental

health problems is likely to include the following key features:

1. No-exclusions: working with offenders who are willing to find work, regardless of any mental health problems they may have.
2. Direct links with employers: with an aim of placement within paid competitive employment within a 1-3 month period after release.
3. Support 'through the gates': e.g. in the form of a dedicated employment support worker, working flexibly between prison and the community.
4. In-work support: continued help following job placement for as long as required.
5. Integrated working with relevant agencies as needed including housing, mental health, drug treatment, benefits and probation services etc.
6. Input from ex-offenders, for example as peer support workers.

Introduction

Enabling a person with a history of offending to get and keep a job is probably the most effective intervention anyone can make to prevent reoffending and improve their chances of leading a better life. The evidence that enabling people to get into employment reduces reoffending is unequivocal (Lipsey, 1995). Yet the criminal justice system in England and Wales has yet to find ways of achieving this for all but a tiny minority of offenders (Centre for Social Justice, 2009).

Employment is also highly beneficial for people with mental health problems, even for those with serious mental illnesses. It not only helps with recovery from mental ill health but provides a route out of the poverty, isolation and exclusion that too many still experience (Sainsbury Centre, 2009; Waddell & Burton, 2006).

A large number of people fall into both categories. One prisoner in ten has a severe mental illness, while the vast majority of prisoners and at least half of those on community sentences have one or more significant mental health problems. Most of these are out of work both before and after spending time in prison. The cost to those

individuals, their families, their communities and the taxpayer of keeping them unemployed is massive.

This paper focuses on how to improve the prospects of offenders with mental health problems in the labour market. It is based on a review of published UK and US literature about how to support offenders into employment.

Why employment matters

Employment is one of the most effective ways to reduce reoffending. One review examining 400 studies (from 1950 to 1990) on what leads to reduced reoffending for young people found employment to be the most significant, reducing it by 37% (Lipsey, 1995). A recent Ministry of Justice report showed that having a paid job to go to on release from prison led to a reconviction rate within 12 months of 45%, compared to 62% of those looking for work and 72% for those not seeking work (May *et al.*, 2008).

In addition to reducing reoffending, employment also has a positive impact on mental health. There is strong evidence that work promotes recovery from mental illness, leads to better health, minimises the harmful effects of long-term sickness absence, improves quality of life and wellbeing and reduces social exclusion and poverty (Waddell & Burton, 2006).

Prior to the recession unemployment rates among newly sentenced prisoners were high at 51% and even higher for young offenders at 63% (Stewart, 2008). A similar picture emerges for offenders supervised by probation, of whom only 21% were in employment compared to 60% of the general population (Mair & May, 1997). The employment rate of released prisoners is even lower. Niven and Stewart (2005), for example, reported only 30% of 591 prisoners had employment, training or education on release from prison.

Coupled with the prospect of being unemployed, offenders also have elevated rates of mental health problems which far exceed those of the general population. Nearly half of prisoners experience depression or anxiety (Singleton *et al.*, 1998). Severe mental health problems, including psychosis, affect at least 10% of recently sentenced male prisoners and as many

as 18% of women in prison (Stewart, 2008). This is more than ten times the rate in the general adult population (Singleton, *et al.*, 2000).

Few examples of employment support for offenders with mental health problems exist. One specialist employment scheme for offenders with severe and enduring mental health problems was a pilot initiative at HMP Liverpool, Mentor2Work. Funded by the European Social Fund for one year the project employed peer mentors as employment advisors to aid prisoners with mental health problems gain employment on release (Mentor2work, 2005).

The barriers to employment

The barriers to employment are different for each individual. But what they share is having to face widespread stigma and discrimination among employers and the public at large, systemic barriers which do not prioritise employment and, for most, the unavailability of evidence-based services which support them to find and remain in employment. These key issues are the focus of this paper.

Despite the huge benefits of employment, offenders are at a distinct disadvantage when accessing job and training opportunities. Personal and social barriers, such as the lack of accommodation, confidence, mental health and substance misuse problems and relevant skills and qualifications make gaining employment much harder (Social Exclusion Unit, 2002).

The issue about whether to disclose a history of offending coupled with a mental health problem poses a dilemma for someone seeking work. Tschopp *et al.*, (2007) reported that stigma surrounding mental health and a criminal background was a problem when trying to place offenders in employment. Employers have mixed views on employing offenders depending on the offence they were convicted for. Haslewood-Pocsik, Brown and Spencer (2008) reported that 71% of employers said they would never consider employing someone with a conviction for arson and 70% would not consider someone with a sex offence conviction.

Under the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act (1974), ex-offenders who have served their sentence and who have not been convicted again during

a specified period are not required to disclose their criminal convictions when applying for most job vacancies. Certain convictions, however, take some time before they are 'spent'. For example, a conviction which results in a prison sentence of six months or less takes seven years to become spent, which leads to further disadvantage and discrimination for offenders seeking work.

The barriers to employment extend into the very services that aim to help prisoners and other offenders to get jobs. In a series of visits across various sectors providing education, training and employment (ETE) support for offenders, Sainsbury Centre found several examples of institutional practice that work against employment outcomes and that staff members are powerless to change, even when they are aware of them (forthcoming paper). Those barriers include:

- Training workshops which give a 'taster' of a trade, such as the building industry, but which have neither the capacity nor the mechanisms to get people work.
- Schemes that have no capacity to support prisoners 'through the gate' to help them make a successful transition to life outside.
- The apparent near total exclusion of prisoners with mental health problems from vocational rehabilitation, often on the basis that they are 'not ready'.

Other barriers include the constraints placed upon services operating within prisons, for example staff shortages or security procedures, which mean that prisoners can miss training sessions, and which can have a negative impact on their concentration and motivation (Webster *et al.*, 2001).

A recent review found that ETE support for prisoners was not always easily accessible (Hartfree, Dearden & Pound, 2008). This was especially the case for short-term prisoners, who believed courses were longer than their sentence or that the prison system was too slow in providing training opportunities. The review also noted that the most common means by which ex-prisoners found work was through friends, family and acquaintances. Many ex-offenders came into contact with Jobcentre Plus, the main formal employment support provider, but this was largely for the purposes of claiming benefits following release.

Female offenders, on release from prison, will often prioritise finding accommodation and organising child care, even if they are motivated to improve education, skills and employment (Gelsthorpe, Sharpe & Roberts, 2007). Women who aspire to be in work will want the opportunity to have other individual needs met, such as improving life skills, building confidence and self-esteem (Corston, 2007). It is important that employment support is offered at an appropriate time that fits in with the commitments and needs of female offenders who wish to work.

Current initiatives in England

The past five years have witnessed a series of policy changes to increase the employability of offenders. The National Offender Management Service (NOMS) was created to bring together the prison and probation services to manage offenders more effectively during the course of their sentence and reduce the possibility of reoffending. In 2004 the Home Office produced an action plan listing seven pathways covering the key factors that lead to reoffending:

- Health, including mental health;
- Drugs and alcohol;
- Accommodation;
- Finance, benefit and debt;
- Education, training and employment;
- Children and families;
- Attitudes, thinking and behaviour.

NOMS was tasked with ensuring that services were commissioned and delivered across each of the above seven pathways. To deliver this action plan the Government, in a subsequent publication (HM Government, 2006) sought to:

1. Build on the Offenders' Learning and Skills Service (OLASS); which was established across England in 2006, and is responsible for assessing offenders' learning needs, and developing a curriculum through 21 contractors (OLASS, 2007).
2. Engage employers through the Corporate Alliance: the umbrella under which the Government is promoting the employment of offenders.
3. Reinforce the emphasis on skills and jobs in prisons and probation, through the use of prison industry, prison work and training workshops that work with the private sector.

As a result of this approach, most government schemes emphasise improving offenders' learning and skills as a means to increasing their chances of finding employment. In addition to these policies, Public Service Agreements have been established to aid the delivery of various government priorities, and to provide a structure of accountability to ensure their delivery. In 2007 PSA 16 was published. This focuses on socially excluded adults, including offenders on probation, and aims to improve their prospects for ETE and settled accommodation (HM Government, 2007).

Education, training and employment (ETE) support schemes that have been evaluated to date include:

From Dependency to Work (D2W)

This programme sought to offer integrated support for offenders with a combination of drug, alcohol, mental health, employment and literacy needs and ran from 1999 to 2004. During the scheme's final year 26 different agencies provided services but the success of the scheme was limited (McSweeney & Hough, 2006). Some of the weaknesses of the programme included professional resistance to generic assessments, lack of clarity regarding sequencing and co-ordination of interventions, concerns about whether the timescales of the interventions were adequate to enable offenders to become 'job ready', and a problem with meeting performance targets (McSweeney & Hough, 2006).

Exit to Work

In 2006 Working Ventures UK, sponsored by the Department for Work and Pensions, developed an initiative to move offenders into employment. The project maintains an information and vacancy website which includes the CVs of ex-offenders and a network of job developers who encourage, recruit and support employers to employ offenders. A mid-term evaluation report shows that the role of the job developer is valuable and can bridge a gap that matches skills to the needs of the labour market, develop prison workshops and reduce employers' concerns about employing offenders (Chenery & Laycock, 2007). The report also found that ex-offenders referred to the programme were often under-prepared and not 'job-ready'. This indicates the importance of assisting and supporting offenders to acquire 'soft' skills such

as CV preparation and interview skills alongside job searching activities.

Progress2Work

This is a Jobcentre Plus initiative, rolled out between 2002 and 2003, to support people with a history of drugs misuse to find employment. Progress2Work Link-Up is a similar initiative for people who are homeless, have an offending background or a problem with alcohol. Providers typically work closely with additional external agencies to compile client support packages that can include mentoring, housing support, advice on debt and money management, advice on the declaration of convictions, basic skills and vocational training, work experience, job search support, and in-work support.

Over a third of Progress2Work providers report sustained employment for at least 13 weeks for over 60% of their caseload. This was attributed to the provision of co-ordinators who monitored the performance of services; to dividing payment so that 75% was paid at the outset and 25% was paid on outcomes; to a one-to-one support worker assigned to every client for the life of their engagement with the project; to working in partnership to address barriers; and to the voluntary nature of the programme (Dorsett, Hudson & McKinnon, 2007). The main elements of this programme – the one-to-one support and partnership working – closely resemble the core features of the individual placement and support approach.

Individual placement and support

As with the criminal justice system today, mental health services have a long history of providing work activities that appear to benefit participants but which do not result in them obtaining paid, competitive employment. These have included sheltered workshops, vocational and social skills training programmes, sheltered businesses and the like. All share the basic assumption that first you train a person to function in a work environment and then, when they are considered employable, you place them in a job. These 'train and place' schemes were often popular with participants and staff but did not deliver employment outcomes.

In the 1990s practitioners in the mental health field in the US – building on the ‘job coach’ model from the learning disability field – developed an entirely different way of working, reversing the order of the interventions to ‘place and train’. Their place and train methodology was called Individual Placement and Support (or IPS) and it has been extensively tested in the US and elsewhere in the world with striking success. The principles of IPS could, with adaptations to their practical application, be used to achieve much better results for people in the criminal justice system. The key principles of IPS are shown in Box 1.

Box 1: Principles of IPS

1. Competitive employment is the primary goal;
2. Everyone who wants it is eligible for employment support;
3. Job search is consistent with individual preferences;
4. Job search is rapid; usually starting within one month;
5. Employment specialists and clinical teams work and are located together;
6. Support is time-unlimited and individualised to both the employer and the employee;
7. Welfare benefits counselling supports the service user through the transition from benefits to work.

(Adapted from Bond *et al.*, 2008)

The research evidence for IPS is compelling. Numerous studies have shown that this model of supported employment is highly effective in assisting people with severe and enduring mental health problems to gain and sustain competitive employment (Drake *et al.*, 1999; Bond, *et al.*, 2008).

A review of eleven randomised control trial (RCT) studies found rates for competitive employment of 61% for those receiving IPS compared with 23% for other approaches. Those receiving IPS were also quicker in obtaining their first

competitive job (138 days versus 206) and worked for more hours in a week (Bond *et al.*, 2008). Another study found that two-thirds of people who obtained employment through IPS were still in paid work a decade later (Becker *et al.*, 2007).

A randomised control trial in six European countries (including the UK) found that 55% of people assigned to IPS worked for at least one day a week compared to 28% assigned to traditional vocational services. Those assigned to traditional services were also three times more likely to drop out of the service and were 50% more likely to be readmitted to hospital (Burns *et al.*, 2007).

Towards a better way

Research literature on the employment of offenders shows that, although there have been numerous evaluations of some large scale (and expensive) schemes both in the UK and the US, there is no equivalent research evidence base to that which is available for IPS. But there are indications that those programmes which work best share some of the characteristics of IPS, particularly in the way participants are introduced to their future employer at an early stage – some while they were finishing their sentence – and in the quality and duration of post placement support.

This section examines some of the key features of schemes that appear to increase the employment opportunities of offenders, with examples taken from published literature and from our visits to employment schemes across the UK.

1. Links with employers

Some prisons liaise directly with employers to secure employment for offenders on release. In some instances this is done through holding a job fair in the prison where prisoners can meet with potential employers. Employers are also invited into the prison to conduct interviews with prisoners prior to release. Some provide paid work experience with prisoners on release on temporary licence (ROTL).

Centre for Employment Opportunities

The Centre for Employment Opportunities (CEO) in New York City offers a 4-day Life Skills class focusing on job readiness, workplace behaviour,

job search skills and decision-making, after which each participant is placed in a transitional job, working a 4-day week at a minimum state wage. It also offers extensive post-placement services, including workplace counselling.

The CEO programme had the greatest impact on those placed onto it within three months of release from prison. Two-thirds of these, compared with a quarter of those not allocated to CEO, found employment. This 40% difference declined to 25% for those taken into the programme 3-6 months after release and 6% for those entering the programme 6-9 months after release (Bloom *et al.*, 2007).

In 2005 an adapted version of the CEO programme, WorkOut, was launched in the UK by PECAN, a charity focused on getting disadvantaged people into work. Securing contracts to enable the offer of transitional work proved difficult under EU regulations so transitional work was replaced by voluntary placements. Of the 391 people who took part in the programme, 272 (70%) completed it, 138 (51%) gained employment and 97 (36%) went into further training or education (Squirrel, 2008).

America Works

America Works is a for-profit, welfare to work business. It uses a supported placement model, placing participants directly with private employers who have job vacancies. It provides an intensive, one week work readiness training programme and intensive support services for both the employee and employer to ensure job retention (Eimicke & Cohen, 2002). The programme earns its income through performance payments from government agencies, tied to the length of job retention of the clients. The programme receives \$1,000 for the initial job placement, a further \$1,000 when the placement lasts 30 days, \$1,000 for 90 days and \$1,500 for 180 days. The programme estimates that each ex-offender placed in employment saves the US taxpayer \$30,000 annually.

The programme in its first year of operation received 891 referrals, of which 501 completed the first day of orientation. Three-quarters of those were placed in work, following which 173 held their job for at least 90 days and 90 held their jobs for over six months (Eimicke & Cohen, 2002).

2. Support ‘through the gates’

To adapt IPS to the criminal justice system, it is vital that any scheme that begins in prison is able to maintain momentum once people are released.

Project RIO (Re-Integration of Offenders)

Based in Texas, Project RIO offers services at pre- and post-release which involves completing an Individual Employment Plan with the offender to identify a career path in the context of their local labour market. On release, ex-prisoners attend workshops on structured job searches and job preparation. The most important feature of Project RIO is employment as soon as possible after release. Support for the offender and the employer is ongoing: advisors phone employers at monthly intervals to check whether there have been any problems (Finn, 1998). Incentives for employers, including tax and insurance benefits, are also provided (Illinois Department of Employment Security, 2008).

In an early evaluation of Project RIO, 69% of RIO participants had found work within a year, compared with 36% who had not been involved with the scheme (Finn, 1998). Recidivism rates were also reduced, particularly for high-risk offenders with 48% in the RIO group being rearrested compared to 57% of non-RIO high-risk participants (Menon *et al.*, 1992).

3. Support once in employment

Some voluntary agencies and employers provide support to an offender once they are in work. This can be practical support, for example reimbursing travel expenses in the first month of work, or more informal support from a mentor based at the offender’s place of work. Some schemes allow offenders to re-refer themselves to the scheme in the future if they lose their job and need support in finding a new one.

Ready4Work

The Ready4Work programme has served approximately 5,000 ex-prisoners in 17 sites in the US. The programme draws on partnerships between local faith, justice, business and social service organisations, and provides a comprehensive case management service (including referrals for housing, health care and drug treatment). The promising features of Ready4Work include its initial work in prison, a strong mentoring component, and a system of

training, placement and follow-up support for both the employer and the employee (Jucovy, 2007).

Fifty-six percent of Ready4Work's participants held a job for at least one month. And more than 60% of these remained employed for three consecutive months and a third of them for six months or more (Farley & McClanahan, 2007).

4. Input from ex-offenders

A few schemes are run by, or have the involvement of, ex-offenders, working as life coaches or providing support to offenders in work. This means they have knowledge of the criminal justice system and can provide support to offenders based on their own experiences.

One example is the Peer Advisor project conducted by St Giles Trust. Prisoners are offered the opportunity to enhance their skills and employability through working towards an NVQ (National Vocational Qualification) combined with work experience on release from custody. St Giles Trust provides support to find longer-term, secure employment and help with writing CVs and letters to potential employers. Support starts with an initial 3-month period of voluntary work in which newly released prisoners are met 'at the gate' by a peer advisor and given practical advice such as applying for benefits. Of the 120 staff employed by St Giles approximately 35% are ex-offenders.

Drawing on interviews with 28 prisoner peer advisors, Hunter and Boyce (2009) found without exception that the interviewees perceived their 'peer' status to be an advantage to doing their job well. The job of peer advisor was also considered far more interesting than many of the 'dead end' jobs available in prison. For many this scheme opened up other employment options and the development of new skills.

5. Addressing complex and multiple needs

The capacity of employment to reduce reoffending is not straight forward. For many offenders securing employment is often only one of many problems they may face; many have multi-layered problems that make them far from 'job ready'. Considering the multiple and complex problems that ex-offenders face, Webster, Hedderman, Turnbull and May (2001) argue that the best employment interventions are unlikely to succeed if other

needs are not addressed. The most important of these needs relate to accommodation and health, particularly for those leaving prison. It is imperative that employment schemes for offenders work alongside the relevant services to provide a holistic approach. Adopting a multi-agency or integrated approach is likely to be effective but can prove difficult if not co-ordinated well, as the Dependency to Work (D2W) initiative showed (McSweeney & Hough, 2006).

Discussion

British government initiatives have to date invested heavily in increasing offenders' employability through learning and skills training. Evaluations of these initiatives have been limited in their rigour making it difficult to gauge their real impact. But very often this training bears little resemblance to the type of support needed to ensure successful employment outcomes for offenders or to the needs of the labour market. Many training schemes in male prisons focus on construction work, such as brick laying, plumbing and plastering, yet jobs that require these skills usually lack any lasting security and can be relatively short lived.

IPS is a potentially effective way of helping people with a history of offending and of mental health problems to find and sustain paid employment. Many of the best employment schemes for offenders to date, particularly US schemes such as Project RIO, Ready4Work and America Works, share some of the core characteristics of IPS.

Some advances are being made. More prisons are now working more closely with employers. But these serve only a select few prisoners who are able to gain Release on Temporary Licence (ROTL) or are deemed to be very low 'risk' and highly motivated to find work (see Box 2).

A vast chasm, however, still remains for the majority between efforts to increase learning and skills and securing employment. Prisons, for example, are restrained from providing follow-up employment support for prisoners on release because it is not in their remit to do so. Follow-up support generally is provided by the probation services, but only for those prisoners who have received a sentence longer than 12

Box 2: Release on temporary licence (ROTL)

Some groups of prisoners are eligible for release on temporary licence which is either given for compassionate reasons or enables them to address resettlement needs which cannot be met within the prison estate. Two out of four types of licence are relevant to those prisoners seeking employment opportunities in the community: these are the resettlement day release licence and resettlement overnight release licence.

Before being released on ROTL prisoners have to go through a thorough risk assessment which includes looking at offence history, the whereabouts of any victims, and the prisoner's behaviour in custody.

Certain groups of prisoners are ineligible for resettlement day and overnight release, including category A and B prisoners.

ROTL is important in allowing prisoners the opportunity to engage in voluntary placements and paid employment in the community prior to release.

months, as defined by current policy. This leaves a big gap in relation to offenders who have served less than one year.

This represents a serious failing within existing government provision to increase employment rates among offenders. A change in emphasis is now needed to make better use of existing resources and to underline the importance of placing people in jobs first and then provide training as required, not vice versa.

Existing mainstream employment services for offenders are failing on another level. They take little account of the mental health needs of offenders seeking work. The very high levels of mental health problems among the offender population mean that initiatives to assist offenders find and sustain employment simply cannot ignore mental health issues. Yet it appears offenders with known mental health problems are regularly being excluded from prison and community-based employment schemes.

Targeting mental health issues as part of a package to support offenders into employment is essential. But the search for employment should not become a lesser priority if a person has significant mental health problems or becomes very unwell. Support for mental health problems should be managed well but should not detract from finding work thereafter, particularly in view of the enormous benefits employment brings. More importantly, offenders with severe mental health problems should not be excluded from training and employment opportunities.

Conclusions

There are clear lessons from mental health services about what does and does not work in achieving employment outcomes. These could usefully be applied in the criminal justice system. Applying the core IPS principles, together with some features of successful employment schemes for offenders, implies a model of supported employment for offenders with mental health problems. Such a model is likely to include the following key essentials:

1. No-exclusions: working with offenders who are willing to find work, including those who require additional input to help increase their motivation, confidence or self-esteem, regardless of any mental health problems they may have.
2. Direct links with employers: with an aim of placement within paid competitive employment within a 1-3 month period after release and the provision of training where appropriate thereafter.
3. Support 'through the gates': this could be in the form of a dedicated employment support worker, working flexibly between prison and the community.
4. In-work support: continued help following job placement for as long as required.
5. Integrated working with relevant agencies as needed including housing, mental health, drug use, benefits and probation services etc.
6. Input from ex-offenders, for example as peer support workers/advisors.

There are already a few examples of successful practice on a small scale which appear to be

consistent with the IPS evidence base. These successful schemes should be enabled to share their experiences with each other and begin the process of developing testable principles for wider application and evaluation of their impact.

Where ineffective schemes exist they should be phased out and the resources used to build on the learning from successful schemes that lead to employment. And steps should be taken to address the discrimination within the system that perpetuates the myth that people have to be completely well before they can consider work.

Recommendations

We recommend:

1. **Establishing employment schemes in keeping with IPS:** Enhancing existing employment schemes for offenders so that they provide continued support, in a *time-unlimited* way once an offender is placed in employment; are integrated with other relevant services to address multiple and complex needs; and are rapid in assisting people into work.
2. **Securing employment:** A change in emphasis is now needed for current government employment initiatives – whether prison or community-based – to lead directly to paid employment rather than simply offering training or job preparation alone.
3. **Mainstreaming a dedicated employment support worker:** A specialist employment support worker to work across prison and the community as required to ensure continuity of support. This worker should have a dual focus to assist offenders both to find employment and sustain it over a long-term period. Peer mentors or ex-offender life coaches have a very important role to play in assisting offenders to turn their lives around. Employment schemes should involve peer mentors as either advisors or support workers.
4. **Inclusive practice:** Offenders with mental health problems should be given equal opportunities for finding and keeping work and given appropriate support to do so. Where necessary the employment support worker should work closely with mental

health inreach and/or community mental health services, to enable the offender to find employment and then provide continued support thereafter.

5. **Methodologically rigorous evaluations:** Many employment schemes for offenders know little about their impact. We recommend that schemes are evaluated to establish outcomes relating to quality of life, improved health/mental health and reduced reoffending. Where possible evaluations should include a comparison group and follow-ups of 6, 12 and 24 months.

Enabling a person with a history of offending to get and keep a job is probably the most effective intervention anyone can make to prevent reoffending and improve their chances of leading a better life.

Next steps

Our employment of offenders project will develop and evaluate service models, based on both current evidence and best practice to support offenders with mental health needs find and remain in work. In doing so, we will work collaboratively with the National Offender Management Service to explore what works well for offenders with mental health problems.

We will select partners to work with who have an interest in developing practice to create a shared agenda for transforming employment services for offenders to include the core principles of IPS – continuity, speed and integration. We will also aim to establish a learning network of agencies which would meet to identify shared areas of concern and develop a research and development programme supported by Sainsbury Centre.

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Towards a better way

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SAINSBURY CENTRE for MENTAL HEALTH

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Sainsbury Centre for Mental Health
134-138 Borough High Street, London SE1 1LB

T 020 7827 8300

F 020 7827 8369

www.scmh.org.uk

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