

Top tips for talking about work on an ongoing basis

Remember that you don't work for the DWP!! You are asking about work because you know it can improve a person's physical and mental wellbeing whether or not they are experiencing symptoms, taking drugs or drinking alcohol to excess and that an historical culture of low expectations may mean a client needs help from you to consider whether work may be an option for them.

Preferences: ask what their dream job would be, what they wanted to be when they were at school, what type of job they may want to do?

History: ask about work history, did they have a favourite job- why was it good? A least favourite job? Who was your favourite boss? Why?

Friends/ family: do they know others who are working? What do they do? Would this be something they might like to try?

Future: ask the person to describe their life 5 years from now. Where will they be living? What relationships will they have in their life? What will they be doing with their time?

You may wish to use the attached worksheet which is designed to help you and your clients begin some meaningful discussions about employment. Before you use it you may want to consider the following strategies that other clinicians have found helpful:

1. Try not to encourage the person in one direction or the other. In other words don't tell the person they have to work **or** that they shouldn't think about work at the moment. Try to just be curious about the person's feelings & thoughts about work.
2. Take your time, you don't have to complete the worksheet in one meeting. Use open ended questions so the person shares all of their ideas, you may ask 'what else?' after an answer to a question.
3. If someone says they will lose their benefits and be worse off if they work, ask how they know this. Explain employment specialists can do 'better off calculations' and that it is very rare a person is worse off financially if they work.
4. When using the rating scales ask the person why they chose a particular point and not more or less than that
5. Design a next step. For example
 - Arrange a meeting with an employment specialist to learn how they can help a person return to work
 - Show the person some example 'better off' calculations
 - Plan to have more discussions about work
 - Introduce the person to someone else who has gone back to work
 - Help with barriers identified, for example help find options for childcare.