

Foreword

Health and Wellbeing Boards

Why do mental health and employment matter to Health and Wellbeing Boards?

“Mental health is a state of wellbeing in which every individual realises his or her own potential, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively and fruitfully, and is able to make a contribution to her or his community.” *World Health Organisation.*

Effective action on employment and mental health issues is critical to supporting successful delivery of Health and Wellbeing Boards’ (HWBs) responsibilities for population health and wellbeing. The boards are responsible for providing leadership and coordination to ensure there is local action on the determinants of health and wellbeing, and a clear focus on reducing health inequalities. Good jobs and a living income are a key determinant of health, and have a wider impact on the wellbeing of local families and communities as well as contributing to a vibrant local economy. People living with mental illness experience poorer health outcomes and are more likely to be further impacted through exclusion from work. Local benefits of action on mental health and employment include:

- supporting the wellbeing and recovery of patients and facilitating their ability to contribute to their local communities
- increased staff productivity and engagement in the efficient delivery of business and service outcomes to the local population
- reduction in both the costs of sickness absence and staff turnover to employers
- reduced health and economic costs of long-term mental illness and unemployment
- promotion of wellbeing and resilience at both individual and community levels and facilitating more efficient and effective use of health and social care services
- delivering public health, NHS and social care outcomes related to mental health and employment and supporting delivery of national policies on welfare and work

What can HWBs do to promote mental health and employment?

“The NHS and wider public services are changing rapidly, however they will continue to have the responsibility to support the most vulnerable in society. It is crucial in this transitional phase and after, that commissioners do not forget the important role that services that support mental and emotional wellbeing have on the health of individuals and families. Prioritising such services – alongside the promotion of healthy workplaces – really can produce vibrant local economies.”

Marie Gabriel, Chair of NHS North East London & The City.

HWBs will be well placed to play a pivotal role in supporting individuals to recover from mental illness, reducing local unemployment rates, and achieving savings for the local health economy at the same time. Board members will include key local employers as well as a range of partners with potential to promote population wellbeing through action on the economic and social determinants of health. Among the wide range of areas in which boards can achieve positive change for local communities, initial priorities include organisational and collective action to:

- embed comprehensive consideration of mental health and employment issues in Joint Strategic Needs Assessments and local investment plans

- invest in effective joint programmes to promote mental health and employment, including those aimed at meeting the complex needs of people with long-term illness and unemployment
- enhance collaboration with the prime contractors delivering the work programme and their supply chains to optimise the outcomes from local provision
- provide healthy workplaces for their staff and volunteers, promote early action on workplace stress, and support the employment of individuals with mental illness
- support other local employers to recognise and respond to mental ill health and take effective action to promote staff wellbeing
- recognise and promote the role of community groups and voluntary sector organisations in championing wellbeing and meeting the needs of diverse communities

How do we find out more?

The accompanying 'Work, mental health and welfare' document sets out the case for action, summarising the business case for investing, and the evidence base for effective interventions. It draws on a wide range of research and real-life experience from a range of settings, and provides a full reference list for those wanting more detail. In addition to HWBs, the document has been developed to support Clinical Commissioning Groups, large employers and small to medium enterprises as employers. There are numerous resources available to support you to take effective action, many of which are listed in the document, and those likely to be of particular relevance to HWBs include the following:

Comprehensive resource including reports and guides on work and health for both employers and health professionals

<http://www.dwp.gov.uk/health-work-and-well-being/>

Mental health and employment advice, support and guidance for employers

<http://www.mind.org.uk/workplace>

<http://www.centreformentalhealth.org.uk/employment/index.aspx>

London Health Programmes information on mental health and work, including a practical guide to employer engagement, and information on Improving Access to Psychological Therapies

<http://www.londonhnp.nhs.uk/services/mental-health/social-inclusionemployment/>

Information on many London IAPT services including self-referral details where available locally and translated self-help materials

<http://www.workingforwellness.org.uk/resources/general-information/search-map/>

Easy to use guidance on what individuals can do for their own wellbeing, based on detailed evidence

<http://www.neweconomics.org/projects/five-ways-well-being>

Health and work information and advice for local government

<http://www.lge.gov.uk/lge/core/page.do?pagelid=119837>

Healthy workplace advice for NHS employers

<http://www.nhsemployers.org/HealthyWorkplaces/Pages/Home-Healthy.aspx>

Health and wellbeing advice for HR professionals

<http://www.cipd.co.uk/hr-topics/health-safety-well-being.aspx>

Health and safety guide for employers

<http://www.hse.gov.uk/simple-health-safety/index.htm>

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