



### MERSEY CARE NHS TRUST - NETWORK EMPLOYMENT

# SUPPORTING PEOPLE WITH SEVERE MENTAL ILL-HEALTH INTO JOBS ON MERSEYSIDE

#### SUMMARY

Network Employment was set up in 1996 by North Mersey Community NHS Trust (became Mersey Care NHS Trust in 2001) to provide individual support to people with experience of mental ill health, to help them to gain employment. This was based on the recognised health benefits gained through employment. The service was originally for people with learning difficulties with additional challenging behaviour but within one year became a mental health service.

The people accessing this support are referred into the service and at the start of the project were mainly long term 'treatment resistant' inpatients or nursing home residents. People now come from a wide variety of backgrounds and most are community patients. The only referral criteria is that they want paid work and that they are working with secondary MH practitioners in Community MH Teams in Liverpool. The service also worked in partnership with the prison service to establish a peer mentoring scheme to offenders with mental health problems and included support to gain employment on release using the supported employment model.

Working with health professionals and having built up key relationships with employers the service has been

extremely successful in generating external funding to expand its client base and in achieving positive outcomes for the people it has supported. Over the past 12 months, 53 individuals have been successful in making progress towards employment with 21 obtaining paid employment in competitive jobs.

The service currently faces funding challenges but is positive about both its successes and continuing its future work on Merseyside.

#### KEY OUTCOMES

- Evidence from a number of events led to people with a history of mental ill health identifying their desire to gain employment and the need for support to do this – a 'bridge to employment'
- Recurrent core funding for the service since 1999 supplemented by a range of additional income including Single Generation Funding, SRB, Health action Zone, MH Grant, and more

recently Lottery/ESF funding, and a grant to develop Individual Placement Support has enabled its level of success

- Over the last 12 months the service has achieved the following outcomes:

21 people into paid competitive jobs

25 people into voluntary work as a route towards employment

7 people engaging with the service user and care group for which they are paid by the Trust





# GOOD PRACTICE CASE STUDY

## BACKGROUND

Mersey Care NHS Trust was established on 1 April 2001 to provide specialist mental health and learning disability services for the people of Liverpool, Sefton, and Kirkby. Its headquarters is in Princes Dock Liverpool and it is currently applying to achieve Foundation Trust equivalent status.

Mersey Care's purpose is to enable people with learning disabilities and mental health difficulties and their carers to optimise their health, life experience and citizenship.

Mersey Care is one of only three trusts of its kind in the country providing the entire range of specialist mental health services. Mersey Care NHS Trust:

- Makes contact with over 284,000 people either as service users or carers; providing direct care to 21,200 people per year
- Employs around 4,700 staff
- Is dispersed across some 34 sites both of its own and premises rented from others
- Has around 700 in-patient beds on 13 sites
- Makes 45,000 outpatient attendances and contacts
- 18,000 day hospital attendances
- Serves a population of one million for Liverpool, Sefton and Kirkby for community and secondary care, but wider for specialist secure services



- The Trust also provides medium secure services for Merseyside and Cheshire and high secure services for the North of England and Wales.

The specialist services within the Rebuild Clinical Business Unit include Learning Disabilities, Brain Injuries, Rehabilitation, Community Residential Services (CRS), Dispersed Intensive Supported Housing (DISH) and **Network Employment**.

In 1995 a study was undertaken looking at the postcodes of all Mersey Care patients aged between 16 and 65 with a history of mental illness. This was then compared with a map of socially deprived areas in Liverpool where there were particularly high levels of unemployment and deprivation. The result showed almost a perfect match making the link between unemployment, deprivation and mental ill health. Following this powerful evidence, in April 1996 the project was set up by the Trust and Network Employment was established with a dedicated team of 4 advisors.

## PURPOSE

- To get people with a history of mental health problems into paid employment
- By supporting people along the journey to employment, contribute to their recovery and wellbeing
- To help people see how far they have come on their road to recovery by utilising the 'Recovery Star' tool.
- Not to exclude anyone from the support programme if they say they are ready
- To actively find jobs that meet the needs of clients by working closely with employers in both public and private sectors



## KEY STAGES OF SET-UP

- The Trust recognised the significant health gain that employment made to people with experience of mental ill health, and in 1996 funded the establishment of Network Employment within their Rebuild Clinical Business Unit
- Colin Goodwin became Supported Employment Specialist, leading a team of 4 advisors
- The team took CPN referrals and provided individual support to help them obtain paid employment
- Following an organisational restructuring in 1998/99 referrals increased as Community Psychiatric Nurses (CPNs) were relocated and recommended the service to other health practitioners. External funding bids enabled the team of employment advisors to increase from 4 to 24 and they were able to support many more people into work and expand activities
- A partnership was developed with Expanding Horizons, an industrial providence society, to expand their work with people who were homeless/dual diagnosis to help them into employment. This service was later extended to support people with acquired head injury/neurological conditions and people with Aspergers Syndrome
- A partnership with the Prison Service (Impact) led to a peer mentoring programme for prisoners with a mental health problem to help them prepare for work on their release.



# GOOD PRACTICE CASE STUDY



North West

## HOW IT WORKS

### Network Employment Service

#### Employers We Can Help You

- Find the right person
  - Train the individuals and teams
- With DDA requirements and reasonable adjustments
- In-work support for people

#### If You are Thinking of Moving into Work

- We will help you decide what is right for you
- We will help you get a job
- We will support you in your post
- We will do a benefits health check to see if you will be better off

#### Getting to know you

- Employment advice
- Finding the right job for you

#### Benefits Health Check

- Are you getting the right benefits
- Will you be better off by working

#### Whatever it Takes

The service is based at Mossley Hill Hospital in Liverpool, as part of Mersey Care NHS Trust and takes referrals from CPNs when individuals feel they are ready to work towards employment.

The employment advisors offer high level one-to-one support and offer job searches, on-the-job training and employment support in the workplace. Many leading employers on Merseyside now work in partnership with Network Employment and speak highly of the service they receive.

A local employer comments on the service provided by Network Employment:

**"I write in support of the Network Employment Service. We found Rob's particular skills in supporting our employee were his knowledge of mental health and its impact in the workplace which was very useful to me in my role as HR Manager, his sensitivity, honesty and his clear and pragmatic approach. At all times,**

**Rob's commitment and engagement emphasised the importance of his role in supporting both employee and employer in seeking to find a positive outcome. ... As an employer, we feel this is an invaluable service which if discontinued, would severely restrict the rehabilitation of employees facing mental health issues."**

Following referral the service includes the following stages:

- **Getting to know you**  
Finding out about the person, their skills, ability, life, and building communication and trust. Use of tools to help their development including the Recovery Star and Vocational Plan - in a variety of places, doing a variety of things.
- **Benefits check**  
Working with Job Centre Plus help is provided to assess how much they need to earn to be better off than on benefit and to understand the benefits they are being paid.
- **Job Notion**  
A facilitated meeting for the individual and the advisory team with the family and mental health clinician to consider what would be suitable employment for them
- **Job Search**  
The employment advisor contacts employers and sometimes accompanies the individual to Job Centre Plus to look at what jobs are being advertised
- **Job Analysis**  
The employment advisor will talk to the employer about an identified job to see if they would consider a 'no interview' situation or adapt the job if necessary. If the individual was successful then they receive support into the job which could include teaching them necessary skills and providing moral support
- **Natural support**  
The advisor will look for key people in the workplace who are willing to support the person in their new role in a 'buddying' type relationship.  
The Advisor will continue to support and encourage the individual until they are settled into the job. They also evaluate the

positive changes to their mental wellbeing using the Recovery Star.

Quotes from individuals who have been supported by Network Employment:

**"I first found out about Network Employment through my Job Centre Advisor. Although I didn't initially follow it up as my advisor informed me there was a six month waiting list. Having been out of work for a while, and not having enough skills or relative experience for any job I found myself being pushed from pillar to post by a lot of different employment services and still not succeeding in finding any kind of work. I began thinking I was completely unemployable and must have gone through seven different employment services before I finally signed up to Network. I also thought having mental health problems that I would never get the right support. When I registered I was given a lovely advisor called Pauline who helped me evaluate my skills and address which areas of work I was aiming for. She told me that she would mentor me in the workplace so that I had the support I needed while getting used to the job. We considered a whole range of fields of employment before settling on a few to pursue. Pauline would go out around the shops and other places giving my CV out. She also knew I was interested in the arts. That's when we decided to try for the theatres. She also set up a voluntary placement with support. We looked at a few options and decided to try for Everton Football Club. Pauline arranged for me to meet the staff at Everton in the Community which is a voluntary organisation set up for people wanting to get involved in the club and give something back to the community. They started me in the admin office where I am currently training on the telephones and database. I am also pleased to say I now have a training placement at the Everyman and Playhouse theatres training as an usherette. I now feel a lot more positive about the future and would like to say a big thank-you to Pauline and all of the staff at Network Employment for helping me gain new skills and find the type of work I love doing."** Lynsey





# GOOD PRACTICE CASE STUDY



North West

**'I am a disabled person (wheelchair user), this happened to me in 2007. Since then I have a very low mobility, this also resulted into mental depression. I was introduced to Network through the School for Social Entrepreneurs (SSE Liverpool) in 2010 for mental health support. Since I have started getting support from Network things have been improving step by step. Through emotional support counselling by my mentor, together with the support of my Employment Advisor, the impossible started turning to possibility and most of barriers as a physically disabled person, things that seemed to be a big test have been turned into testimonies. I will recommend the team behind Network as a support service for anyone suffering from mental health issues and physical disability.'** Ayo

## RESOURCES

**What resources/ funding was acquired and from who/where?**

- Various grants have been made over the 16 years that Network employment has been operating but core funding for the Network Employment Team comes from Mersey Care NHS Trust
- £75K was allocated in 2010 from NHSNW to develop Individual Placement Support (IPS)
- Lottery/ESF monies of £300K were allocated over 3 years ending in August 2011

The loss of external funding for the project will mean that the service will potentially have to downsize. This would result in a continuation of the project within a limited budget and would necessitate a redesign of the current service offered.

Alternative income generation projects are being considered and the development of an important arm of the service 'supporting people in work'.

More and more referrals are coming in to the service relating to people who are in work but off sick due to mental health problems. The individuals are anxious about their future and need

someone to negotiate with the employer regarding their return to work. At a time of recession and economic challenges this service is on the increase and provides a much needed resource for employers and individuals.

## KEY CHALLENGES

- Sustainable funding to continue to develop the service
- Individuals have often lost confidence in themselves, are worried about a loss of their benefits and may not have work experience
- Current economic climate in Liverpool is making it more difficult to find suitable jobs
- The fear of stigma as clients may have had previous experience of it

## KEY LEARNING

- The advisors have learnt not to 'sell' mental health to the employers – they 'sell' the people
- Never make assumptions when supporting people into jobs
- A history of mental illness is not necessary an indication of their level of success in work. There is no direct correlation
- What matters is how an individual sees themselves – their confidence and self belief
- Evidence using the Recovery Star shows that employment makes a real difference to mental wellbeing

## SUSTAINABILITY

Network Employment has now been running for over 16 years and is a core service provided by this mental health Trust in Liverpool. Relationships, partnerships and experience built up over the years provide the necessary expertise, support and employment opportunities to support this group of people who want to gain paid employment. Employers across Merseyside have worked with the service to provide jobs and have had

very positive experiences of their recruits. Mental health professionals continue to recognise the value of employment in the recovery and rehabilitation of clients and make the referrals on an on-going basis.

## NEXT STEPS

- Redesign of the service to continue providing a service within core funding if external grants are not made available
- Looking to extend the income generation opportunities brought about by supporting people in work with mental ill health
- Publicise the success of the project

## SUPPORTING MATERIAL

The following resources are available as an appendix to this case study

- 2010/2011 job outcomes and types of opportunities accessed



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