



WaMH in PC Wales Mental Health in Primary Care

Information Sheet

A Briefing Note for GPs and Primary Care Practitioners Improving Mental Health Outcomes Through Sustained Employment

This briefing note highlights the importance of sustained employment in order to achieve good mental health and wellbeing outcomes for patients. It reinforces the key messages contained within the 2009 GB Work and Mental Health Strategy and 'Realising Ambition' Dr Rachel Perkins' 2009 review of employment support for people with a mental health condition.

It draws upon recent evidence to support the connection between work and health.

Retaining or regaining employment provides better long term health outcomes for patients and their families. If positive steps are taken across the practice population this should lead to reduced prescribing and a reduction in practice attendance.

Background and Evidence

There is growing evidence that health, work and wellbeing are closely and powerfully linked and need to be addressed together

- Work is usually good for people's health.
- People in work are generally healthier.
- Being in work can help people with a health condition to get better.
- Returning to work from unemployment improves health.
- These positive effects apply to all age groups.

Conversely

- Being unemployed leads to a loss of fitness and a two to three times increased risk of poor health.
- Unemployment leads to social exclusion and poverty.

Implications for Mental Health

- Being out of work is associated with poor mental health, increased likelihood of anxiety and depression, and increased use of medication.
- Two fifths of sickness absence in the UK is caused by anxiety and depression.
- One million people in the UK live on incapacity benefits due to mental health problems.
- 30% of the 280 million consultations undertaken by GPs each year have a mental health component.
- Unemployed people are two to three times more likely to be psychologically distressed and at increased risk of suicide and mortality with 20% excess deaths.
- Being in work generally leads to good mental health and well being generally improves.
- When people return to work their mental health and well being generally improves.
- Although work can pose a risk to mental health, the positive effects far outweigh the risks.
- People with mental health problems attach a high priority to work, and work has the potential to be part of the recovery process.

'People are twice as likely to become psychologically distressed after going from work to unemployment'

'People who are long-term unemployed or who have never worked are between two and three times more likely to have poorer health than those in work'.

'30% of the 280 million consultations undertaken by GPs each year have a mental health component'.

Implications for Families

- Have a higher prevalence of recurrent health conditions and lower wellbeing
- Suffer a higher rate of psychiatric disorders
- Are more likely to experience worklessness themselves during adult life

These findings led a number of health care professional groups including the BMA and the RCGP to sign up to The Healthcare Professionals' Consensus Statement, and Statement of Action.

Later in 2010 WaMH in PC shall supplement this briefing with a resource and practice advice note for primary care teams

Dear Colleague

I hope that you find this Briefing Note useful and that you may want to explore the issue of 'Improving Mental Health Outcomes Through Sustained Employment' in greater depth by following the hyperlinks suggested within this document.

Later this year WaMH in PC shall be sending you a DVD about equality of care and following that we shall be rolling out courses on a range of topics.

Visit our website at www.wamhipc.org.uk for further information about this programme and also forthcoming conferences and events.

Kind Regards



Dr Huw Lloyd
(Chair of WaMH in PC)

References

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"Is work good for your health and well-being?" Waddell & Burton (2006)

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"Avoiding long-term incapacity for work: Developing an early intervention in primary care Peninsula Medical School (2007)

Acknowledgements



WaMH in PC is working to improve primary care mental health by nurturing:
trust • good communication • person centredness

WaMH in PC

Wales Mental Health in Primary Care

Regus House, Falcon Drive, Cardiff Bay, Cardiff CF10 4RU

T: 029 2050 4516 F: 029 2050 4300 E: wamhipc@rcgp.org.uk www.wamhipc.org.uk