

Individual Placement Support Service

Shaping employment support for people with mental health difficulties



July 2021

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Healthwatch Wakefield 2021

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Executive Summary

A new 'Individual Placement Support' (IPS) service will be introduced by Wakefield Mental Health Alliance later this year. This new service will help people with mental health difficulties to find and keep the right employment for them.

Wakefield Mental Health Alliance want to make sure that the new IPS service provides the help that people need. They asked Healthwatch Wakefield to help them to find out what kind of support people might find helpful when looking for or keeping employment. To do this, Healthwatch Wakefield put together an online survey and organised two focus group discussions.

Overall, people were very enthusiastic about the proposed new IPS service and the model it will follow. People talked about the type of things that had previously helped them and the support that they would find useful now. There was also a lot of discussion around how important it is to offer support to people who are already in employment to allow them to continue in their role.



Recommendations

The following recommendations are made.

1. Ensure that the new IPS service includes support in the eight areas identified through the survey and focus group discussions:
 - Ongoing encouragement and support.
 - Interview practice.
 - General help to find a job or placement.
 - Help with CV and application forms.
 - Managing condition at work and support to stay in work.
 - Help with financial matters.
 - Goal setting.
 - Help with furthering education.
2. Focus on support within current employment as well as support into employment.
3. Work with the person as an individual, including support with any additional needs they may have in addition to their mental health condition.
4. Provide regular and consistent 1:1 support for people without pressure.
5. Ensure that there are a variety of options for people to meet with their employment specialist both in person or over the telephone / internet call.
6. Ensure that the new service is promoted through a variety of means as identified by survey and focus group respondents.

Background

In February 2020 preparation for a new Individual Placement Support service (IPS) was prioritised to form part of the Wakefield Mental Health Provider Alliance work programme for 2020/21.

IPS is an evidenced-based employment approach that is internationally considered as the most effective approach to supporting people with mental health problems to find and keep the right work opportunity.

IPS aims to help people find paid jobs within just weeks of being referred to the service. Then it continues to work with both employer and employee to sustain the job placement for as long as possible, or to help the client into a different job. (ipsgrow.org.uk)

IPS support follows eight key principles:

1. It aims to get people into competitive employment.
2. It is open to all those who want to work.
3. It tries to find jobs consistent with people's preferences.
4. It works quickly.
5. It brings employment specialists into clinical teams.
6. Employment specialists develop relationships with employers based upon a person's work preferences.
7. It provides time unlimited, individualised support for the person and their employer.
8. Benefits counselling is included.

There is a wealth of evidence supporting IPS, the NHS Long Term Plan summarise this by saying:

“Based on over 20 years of research, the Individual Placement and Support (IPS) employment model is internationally recognised as the most effective way to support people with mental health problems to gain and keep paid employment. On average, people who receive IPS show employment rates of 30-40% compared to rates in the control group of 10-12%... Follow-up studies over 8-12 years confirm these better outcomes are maintained over the longer term. These schemes have also been shown to be cost-effective”

NHS Long Term Plan, Version 1.2, August 2019

Wakefield Mental Health Alliance recognise that there are already organisations across the district providing employment support.

They recently carried out a mapping exercise to find out what help is already available in Wakefield. This will help them to make sure that the new IPS service is well informed and will work together with existing services.

Healthwatch Wakefield were asked by the Mental Health Alliance to talk to people about their experience of finding employment, what has and hasn't worked well for them in the past and what support they think would be most useful.

Methodology

Survey

The Mental Health Provider Alliance and Healthwatch Wakefield Research Officer put together some survey questions which aimed to find out what experience people had of support into employment, what had worked well and what could have been improved.

This survey ran for six weeks from 17 May to 25 June 2021.

The survey was emailed to service users by the Mental Health Alliance Care Coordinators. It was also sent to people on the Healthwatch Wakefield mailing list and promoted on their website and through various other contacts and groups.

The email that was sent out with the survey link let people know that telephone support was available if needed and that the survey could be translated if required.

Focus Groups

One of the survey questions asked if people would be willing to take part in a focus group discussion later to discuss the issues in more detail. This resulted in two focus groups taking place including eight people in total.

Demographics summary

Age

Most people who answered this question were aged between 26 and 65 years old.

Gender

Most people who answered this question said they were female.

Ethnic Group

41 people responded to the question asking their ethnic group. Most said their ethnic group was 'white'.

Other information

16 people told us that they were currently being supported by a mental health service.

39 people considered themselves to have a disability. 28 of these considered themselves to have a mental health condition.

16 people said they look after or give help or support to a family member, friend or neighbour because of a long-term physical disability, mental ill health, or problems related to old age.

Where people live

There was a reasonable spread of respondents from across Wakefield District, however a large proportion, 27% (11 people), came from WF1.

Full demographic charts can be found at the end of this report.

Survey and Focus Group Findings

Survey Responses

In total **70** people completed some questions on the survey.

Respondents didn't necessarily answer every question and some questions allowed more than one response per person, therefore number of responses for each question varies.

Personal experience of mental health problems or mental distress

55 respondents told us that they had personal experience of mental health problems or mental distress.

This is how people described their experience:

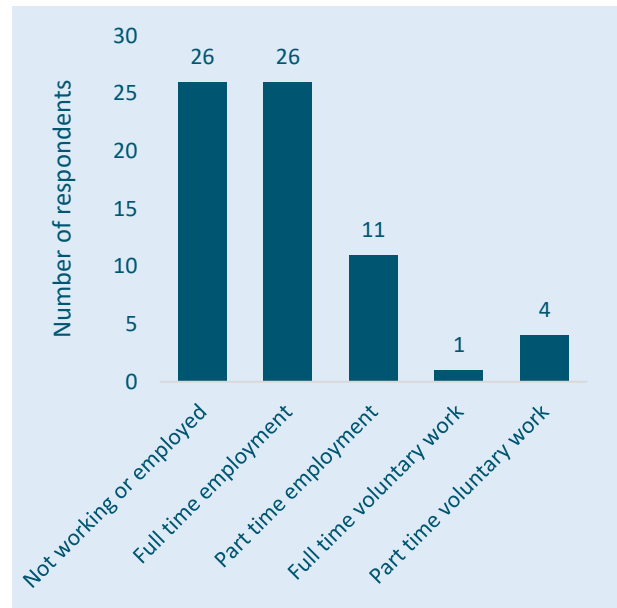
Mental health problem or distress

A word cloud containing the following terms: Anxiety, Depression, PTSD / CPTSD, Suicidal thoughts, Schizophrenia, Bipolar, OCD, Paranoia, and Personality disorder. The words are arranged in a roughly circular pattern, with 'Anxiety' and 'Depression' being the largest.

Current Employment Status

Of the **26** people who told us they were working full time, six said they were on long term sick and a further one person told us they were on long term disability.

Are you currently working or employed?



Would you like support to find or keep employment at the moment?

44 people told us that they would like some support to find or keep employment.

21 of those said that they would like help to find paid or voluntary work and a further **14** wanted support to access training.

Nine people said that they would like support to keep their current employment.

What support would help people most?

65 suggestions were made by 40 people as to what support they would most like to help them to find or keep employment. These suggestions largely fell into the eight categories below:

Support needed	Number
Someone to talk to and offer ongoing encouragement and support	15
Interview practice	14
General help to find a job / placement	11
Help with CV and application forms	10
Managing condition at work / workplace rights / support to stay in work	9
Help with financial matters	3
Goal setting	2
Help with furthering education	1

The first two categories of having ongoing support and encouragement from somebody and help with interview practice are strongly intertwined.

Several people talked about how they had lost confidence and would appreciate some ongoing support and encouragement to help rebuild this.

“I get very anxious about work now and feel that I’m no longer good enough.”

Low confidence also has a big effect on performance in interviews and people talked about how this can become a vicious cycle:

“The draw back with interviews is the person who went for the interview doesn't get the job that really does dent the confidence.... they start asking what's wrong with me...then the mental health rapidly declines.”

Several people also mentioned that a large gap in employment has affected their confidence and that they would also like advice on how to talk about these gaps in employment and how to address this on their CV / application form. The support needed is very much a mixture of practical and emotional.

“How to write a ‘good’ CV what to put when you have big gaps in your employment history.”

“Someone to talk to about the fear of going back to work or starting training after such a long period.”

Support to remain in Employment

Nine people talked about needing support in the workplace with regards to employers having an understanding and awareness of mental health issues, how to manage their own condition in the workplace and knowing their rights.

“As a minimum, awareness training for employers. Ideally, mental health ‘first aid’ for employers, or a mental health ‘champion’ (one individual within a team who has undergone awareness training, ‘how to support’ training and/or crisis management training.”

Support to remain in employment proved to be a big discussion point in the focus groups.

One participant told us about their experience of being diagnosed with a mental health disorder and initially being supported by their employer to return to work after a long period of sickness absence. Although they were supported to return to work, ultimately their employer didn't put anything in place to support them in the longer term and they have now resigned. Several other focus group members had very similar experiences.

“I had no support whatsoever, in fact they piled more work on me because I was good at my job. The manager didn't help me at all and I ended up resigning.”

“I was so ill, I was so depressed and vulnerable and weak, I didn't have any support from anywhere and I couldn't fight for myself.”

Help with financial matters

Financial support was identified both in focus group discussions and through the survey. People talked about needing help to understand how getting a job would affect their benefits, particularly if this was a voluntary role. Again, there is also the practical financial matters such as how to pay for things such as travel costs and interview clothes.

Wider Support

A discussion in one of the focus groups was around the need to look wider than a person's mental health problem. The group talked about it being likely that people seeking support may have additional needs such as

autism or dyslexia and this needs to be taken into account.

Previous support to find employment

18 people said that they had previously had support to find employment. The help that these people had received was from various sources including: the job centre; Back in Touch, the Richmond Fellowship and Right Steps. Most people couldn't remember, or didn't specify, the type of support that they had previously received. A couple of people mentioned that they had received help with creating a CV and interview skills.

“I had when I lived in Chester some help from Remploy and here from the Shaw Trust and Kirklees careers none of it was successful they didn't give the right kind of support not like what you're planning to do.”

Nine people said that they had been happy with the support that they had previously received, three had been 'somewhat' happy and five people had not been happy.

Things that worked well with previous support to find employment

A variety of answers were given around what had previously worked for the **16** people who responded to this question. A theme was around having regular 1:1 support with encouragement and no pressure.

“Some support was 1-2-1 some in groups, enjoyed both as it felt it was not just me that had the issues, counselling helped with rejection and built up my emotional resilience.”

Similar themes of help to look, complete CV and application forms and help to organise finances also emerged again.

“Some of the advisors were great and went above and beyond to help me, addressing any questions I had. They were very efficient in helping me with forms. Also they helped me with the financial side of things, working out whether or not I’d be better off.”

Lack of support with finances was also mentioned as an area that could have been improved.

Suggested improvements that could have been made were around making sure that the placements were appropriate:

“I found some advisors quite condescending and they would want to throw me on work placement schemes which were suited to people with no experience.”

On the other side somebody mentioned that they would have liked to have been able to access more courses and to have more opportunities to learn about different jobs and to have a go.

A focus group member talked about how they are currently able to access one to two hours of coaching sessions a week which makes a huge difference to them. The coach is able to liaise between them and their manager which enables the person to feel secure in their role and that any problems are not going to spiral out of control.

Preferred way to contact the employment specialist

44 people told us about their preferred way to have contact with an employment specialist.

The order of preference was:

1. Face to Face meeting at an office location.
2. Over the telephone.
3. Over the internet (e.g., Zoom or Skype meeting).
4. Face to face meeting at a community location (e.g., park or café).
5. Face to face meeting in own home.

Two people added that they prefer written communication to verbal and would like to have an option of email or messaging alongside the above.

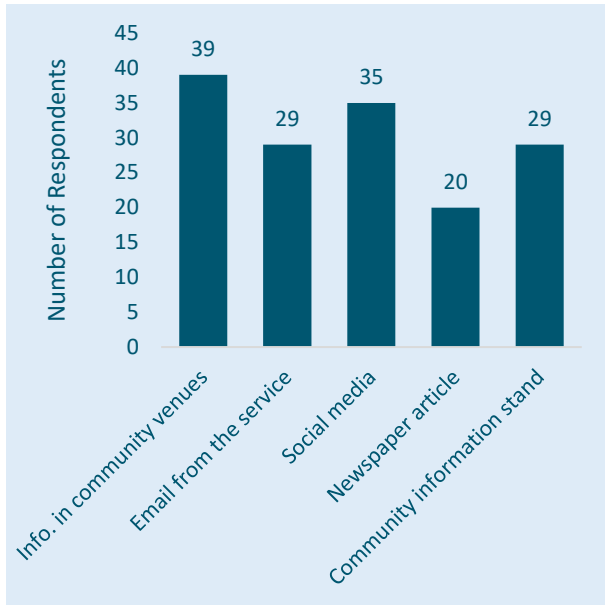
“I think being able to offer a variety of ways is best depending on the person's needs and preferences.”

“I think that unless you have social anxiety it's best to get people out of their homes as your home is not like your interview and work environment.”

“Building up a personal relationship with the person is essential as it increases trust and confidence.”

Best way to advertise the new IPS service

44 people responded to this question, with most choosing a variety of options.



Other suggestions were to advertise through: all mental health services and support groups; job centre; Wakefield Council; Live Well Wakefield; Citizens Advice.

When the Wakefield IPS service is up and running, might you be interested in accessing the service to help you to find employment?

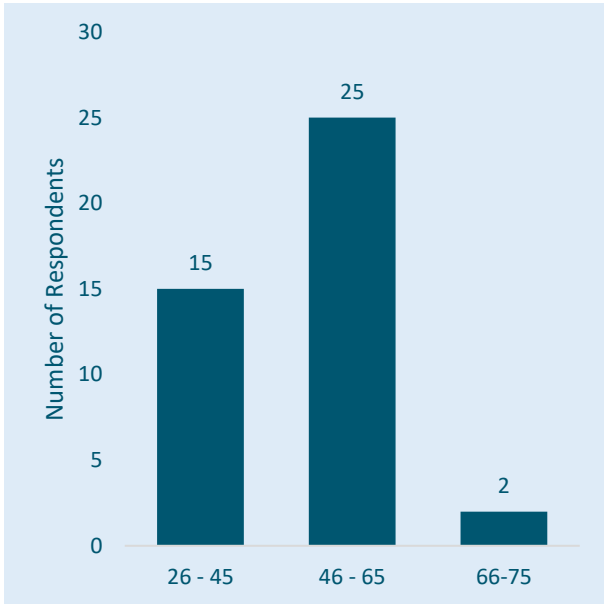
32 people said that they would, or may be, interested in accessing the new IPS service.

A further 22 people said that they would be interested in being further involved in shaping the new service and giving further feedback in the future.

Where names and contact details were given, these have been shared with the Mental Health Alliance.

Demographic charts

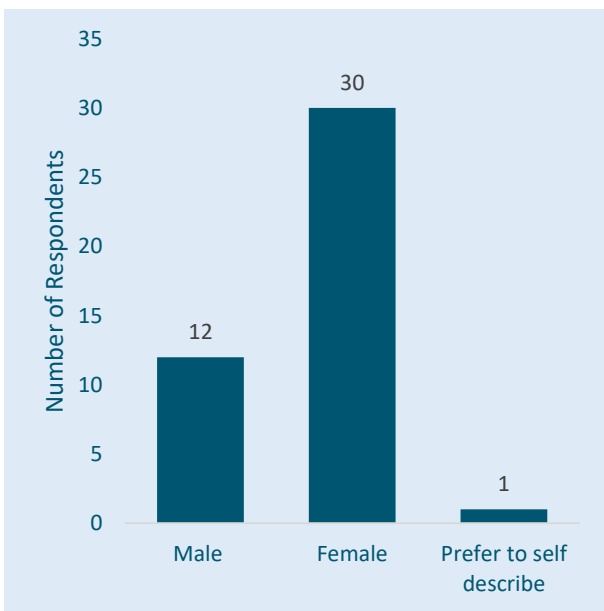
Age



Ethnic Group

Ethnic group	Number
White: English / Welsh / Scottish / Northern Irish / British	35
Black: African, Caribbean, or Black British: English / Welsh / Scottish / Northern Irish / British	4
Mixed or Multiple Ethnic Groups: White and Asian	1
Other	1

Gender



About Healthwatch

Healthwatch Wakefield is your local health and social care champion. From Overton to Knottingley and everywhere in between, we make sure NHS leaders and other decision makers hear your voice and use your feedback to improve care.

If you use GPs and hospitals, dentists, pharmacies, care homes or other support services in your area, we want to hear about your experiences. As an independent statutory body, we have the power to make sure NHS leaders and other decision makers listen to local feedback and improve standards of care. We can also help you to find reliable and trustworthy information and advice. Last year, the Healthwatch network helped nearly a million people like you to have your say and get the support you need.

Healthwatch Wakefield is part of a network of over 150 local Healthwatch across the country. We're here to listen to the issues that really matter to people in Wakefield District and to hear about your experiences of using local health and social care services. We're entirely independent and impartial, and anything you share with us is confidential.

Healthwatch uses your feedback to better understand the challenges facing the NHS and other care providers and we make sure your experiences improve health and care for everyone – locally and nationally. We can also help you to get the information and advice you need to make the right decisions for you and to get the support you deserve.

It's really important that you share your experiences – whether good or bad, happy or sad. If you've had a negative experience, it's easy to think there's no point in complaining, and that 'nothing ever changes'. Or, if you've had a great experience, that you 'wish you could say thank you'. Remember, your feedback is helping to improve people's lives. So, if you need advice, or you're ready to tell your story – we're here to listen.



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