

## **Workshop:**

### **Making Employment within Mental Health Services a Reality for People who Have Themselves Experienced Mental Health Problems**

**Workshop facilitator: Rachel Perkins**

#### **Summary of workshop**

The purpose of this workshop will be to explore the practicalities of employing people with mental health problems in mental health services. The challenges faced, and lessons learned, in setting up a programme to recruit people with mental health problems in statutory mental health services in South West London, UK, will be described. Throughout questions and discussion will be encouraged and participants invited to consider the challenges they might face in employing people with mental health problems in their own services and ways in which they might address these.

The workshop will begin with a talk accompanied by a PowerPoint Presentation that will address:

- The presentation will begin with a brief recapitulation of the:
  - The benefits of employing people with mental health problems in mental health services from the point of view of services (slide 2)
  - The benefits of employing people with mental health problems in mental health services from the point of view of the person with the mental health problems (slide 3)
  - The hurdles to employing people with mental health problems that we encountered in South West London mental health services and other organisations within the UK (slide 4)
- The lessons learned in the process of setting up the South West London User Employment programme will then be outlined:
  - Lessons learned about the type of support needed and the ways in which people were assisted to manage their mental health problems at work (slides 5 – 10)
  - Reference will be made (slides 6-7) to a guide developed for helping individuals and their managers to manage mental health problems in the work place (*Surviving and Thriving at Work. Guide for Developing a Work Health and Well-being Plan*) a copy of which has been provided.

This guide has already been used in a number of work settings – both within and outside mental health services.

It will be emphasised that the maintenance of health and well-being at work is relevant to all staff – not only those with mental health problems. Staff with and without mental health problems and their managers have found this approach helpful in maintaining health and well-being at work and minimising the negative consequences of a stressful work environment.

- Lessons learned about implementing the programme will then be addressed (slide 11) and the importance of support at a national level in sustaining the initiative and extending it to other health service organisations, both within the mental health arena and more broadly (slide 12).

This will be illustrated by the recent launch of a programme by NHS Employers - 'Open Your Mind' (slide 13). NHS Employers is the umbrella organisation assisting UK NHS organisations in employee recruitment and workforce issues.

The aim of this initiative is to create a better working environment that maintains the mental health and well being of all staff AND improve employment rates for people with mild, moderate and severe mental health conditions within UK MHS services (across both mental and physical health services).

A range of materials have been produced to assist NHS employers in these endeavours including a DVD with people of all grades in the NHS (from a Chief Executive to Healthcare Assistant) who have experienced mental health problems talking about their own experiences and offering advice to NHS employers on the employment of people with mental health problems.

A copy of this DVD has been sent by post – if at all possible it will be shown in the workshop.

- The presentation will end with a description of the types of objections raised by staff and managers in South West London to the employment of people with mental health problems when the User Employment Programme was initiated.

The remainder of the workshop will involve:

- Inviting participants to consider how they might respond to the objections to employing people with mental health problems raised by staff in South West London Mental Health Services.

- Think about other objections that might be raised by staff in their own services, and ways in which they might respond to these.
  - Discuss other challenges to employing people with mental health problems in their own mental health services and ways in which these challenges might be addressed.
- (Worksheets have been provided for these exercises).

Rachel Perkins  
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