



The importance of sustainable, competitive employment for people with mental health problems?

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Director, Employment Programme

A Starting Point

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“Even the most severe mental illness is comparatively short lived in its acute form. Mental health services have become better and better at getting and keeping people out of hospital. We have however made little or no progress in dealing with the most damaging and long lasting consequences of mental illness – the journey to social exclusion and disability. The longer you are out of work – the harder to get back ”

Bob Grove 2005

Mental ill health and Employment in the UK

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- ❑ Common mental health problems – anxiety, depression - are common in the general population and in the workforce.
- ❑ Severe mental health problems – schizophrenia, bipolar disorder etc – are uncommon in the general population (2%) and very uncommon in the workforce (less than 1%)
- ❑ At least 90% of people with severe mental health problems are unemployed
- ❑ One million people with mental health problems are on disability benefits out of a total of 2.7 million for all disabilities.

Why employment?

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- For most people work is good for mental health and well being including people with severe and enduring illness
- Unemployment is very bad for mental health
- Most people with mental health problems want paid employment (but not necessarily full time)
- A competitive job is the most effective treatment and its positive effects increase with time
- The effects are not as great nor do they last over time if people are limited to (paid) sheltered employment

Why employment?

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“as a researcher I’m convinced that this is one of the only effective treatments and clearly the most effective treatment that we have for serious mental illness.

It’s totally clear to me that there’s nothing about medications or psychotherapies or rehabilitation programs or case management programs or any of the other things that we study that helps people to recover in the same way that supported employment does”.

Professor Bob Drake (London 2008)

Why Competitive Employment?

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“Gary Bond has shown very clearly that it’s not supported employment *per se* but being in a job that helps people to improve their self esteem and their lot in life in many ways - in terms of how they learn to manage their mental illness, in terms of how they think about quality and life satisfaction in their lives.

These gains accrue over time the longer that people stay in competitive employment and it’s very clear that the same gains do not accrue for people who stay in sheltered employment for similar amounts of time, even if they earn similar amounts of money...the clients somehow perceive a difference, they know that a real job is a real job and a sheltered job is not. ”

Professor Bob Drake (London 2008)

What works?

Predicting who will be able to return to work

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- ❑ Diagnosis, severity of illness, social skills when out of work are poor predictors of work outcomes
- ❑ ...there is some recent evidence to suggest that “self-efficacy” - work adjustment, attitudes, motivation, self belief - is the most significant predictor of work outcomes
- ❑ Self efficacy improves with being in work

What works?

for people with mental health problems
who are long term unemployed

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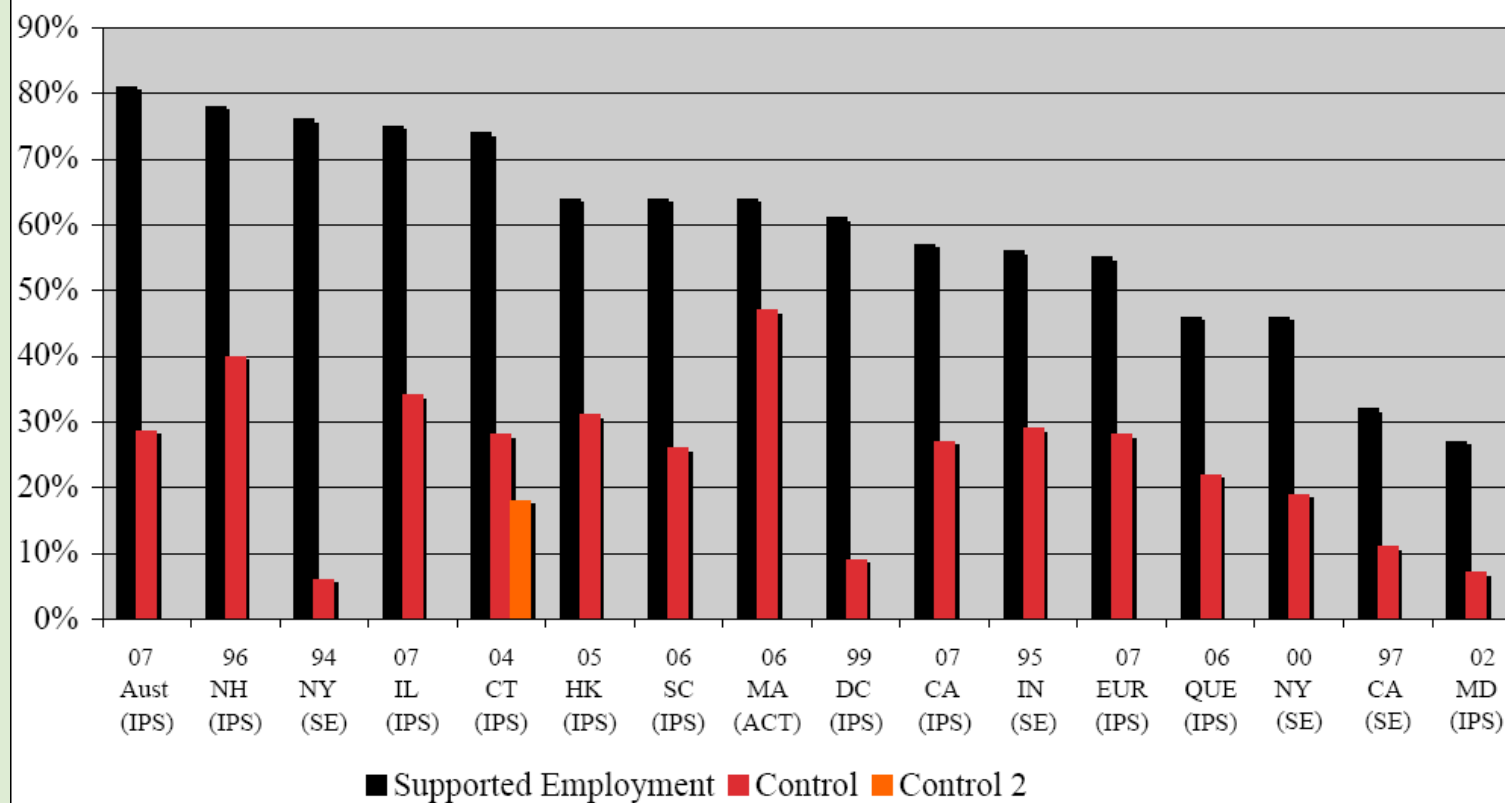
- ❑ No exclusions – anyone who wants to work should be offered the chance
- ❑ Agency approach plays a significant part in work outcomes
- ❑ Strong evidence in favour of supported employment - especially Individual Placement and Support (IPS)
- ❑ Effective in different countries
- ❑ Effective for all age groups

What do we mean by strong evidence?

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Figure 1. Competitive Employment Rates in 16 Randomized Controlled Trials of Supported Employment



What works?

Programme features that
achieve success

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- ❑ Goal of competitive employment in integrated settings
- ❑ Client control of timing and pace
- ❑ Rapid job search and minimal prevocational training
- ❑ Integration of clinical treatment & vocational rehabilitation – team approach
- ❑ Job matching based on user preferences
- ❑ Initial assessment/adjustment – time unlimited support
- ❑ Individual benefits advice

Becker IPS Fidelity scale 2008

Social Firms – are they competitive employment?

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□ Factors to consider

- Pay
- Terms and conditions
- Relationship to market
- Relationship to other businesses
- Permeability to labour market
- Ratio of disabled workers
- The “psychiatric imprint”

Well – are they competitive employment?

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- The closer the social firm is to an ordinary competitive business the greater are likely to be the benefits to the people who work there
- It is important to reflect on this question on a regular basis to combat “institutionalization”

Further reading

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- “The Future of Supported Employment” (2008) Bob Drake
Professor of Psychiatry and Family and Community Medicine,
Dartmouth Medical School, New Hampshire, USA

[http://www.scmh.org.uk/pdfs/
BobDrake_FutureOfSupportedEmployment_Transcript.pdf](http://www.scmh.org.uk/pdfs/BobDrake_FutureOfSupportedEmployment_Transcript.pdf)

- “New Thinking about Mental Health and Employment” Grove,
B., Secker, J. & Seebohm, P. (2005) London, Radcliffe

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Thank you