

How can we support people who use mental health services to access meaningful occupation, including employment, training and education?

Workshop engagement report June 2018

In June 2018, we held a workshop and evening drop-in event to give people an opportunity to share their views on how we can support people who use mental health services to access meaningful occupation, including employment, training and education.

We invited people who use services, those who care for them, those who deliver the services and the wider public to attend these events, and 17 people attended:

- Four people who use services, carers and members of the public
- Thirteen professionals/providers of mental health services

Summary

Attendees were given an overview of the community mental health services review, including a summary of the scope of the services that are being considered within the programme, as well as information about what people have told us works well and what people would like to see change.

A sub-group focusing specifically on meaningful occupation for people who use mental health services, considered a number of questions:

1. What do we mean by meaningful occupation?
2. What can we learn from the 'Thriving at Work' report?
3. What are the outcomes that we think we have and that people who use existing services want? What are the similarities between these outcomes?
4. What examples of good practice are available to us, how could we learn from these? What are the respective roles of work and volunteering?
5. What do people want to support them in accessing meaningful occupation?

What people told us

1. What do we mean by meaningful occupation?

“Meaningful occupation” encompasses the full spectrum of activities including volunteering, helping people into work, training and support at work.

- “In work” training, development and support.
- The introduction of Universal Credit in Bath & North East Somerset is a significant change impacting on this issue.

There are many thriving projects, organisations and initiatives working to help people in this area helping to do this.

2. What can we learn from the ‘Thriving at Work’ report?

Key Findings of the report:

- ...300,000 people with a long-term mental health problem lose their jobs each year and at a much higher rate than those with physical health conditions.
- ...around 15% of people at work have symptoms of an existing mental health condition.
- *“Everyone is somewhere on the mental health spectrum, so this is a business productivity issue which should be dealt with alongside other health and safety considerations. Creating a positive environment for mental health demonstrably costs less than failing to do so.”*
- Recommends “Mental Health core standards” for employers.

3. What are the outcomes that we think we have and that people who use existing services want?

The group considered the outcomes that each organisation has for those that use its services, as defined by them. Outcomes were shared by B&NES Council Employment Hub (in draft form), the Department for Work and Pensions and Clean Slate.

The group discussed the similarities and differences between the outcomes. Key points were:



4. What examples of good practice are available to us, how could we learn from these? What are the respective roles of work and volunteering?

Kate Starks talked to the group about the Employment Hub website which is being developed to enable all those looking for work to find out about employment opportunities, related careers, training and qualifications requirements.

Key discussion points were:

Employers will put filters on jobs to demonstrate training requirements	Advice for employers on uploading opportunities	People can save their profile on the hub
Jobs can be filtered according to people's personal profile and show eligible training opportunities	Advertising space on the site	How can people with mental health problems benefit from the Hub?
What support is there for people to complete a profile? A support worker can help	Can career pathways be included to encourage improved occupation development?	Action - all to share ideas with Kate: kate_starks@bathnes.gov.uk

Mike Prows talked to the group about the work done by B&NES Volunteer Services. The group discussed the importance of volunteering as part of meaningful occupation

Key points noted were:

Volunteer opportunities tend to be weighted towards Bath city centre	Volunteer pass - including DBS check, references, training	Drop in and ad hoc volunteering as a means to remove barriers to occupation
Reimbursing travel costs and/or paying for lunch in order to remove barriers	Volunteer charter?	People who can't give attendance needed for employment might find opportunity in volunteering
Volunteering as a key component in the recovery journey	Volunteers training as peer mentors for other volunteers	Prevention is key - need mental health first aiders

5. What do people want to support them in accessing meaningful occupation?

Recovery team could suggest volunteering and arrange initial visit at home

Peer mentoring has huge benefits

Volunteering that offers great training and support helps people to progress personally

Supported volunteer peer mentors to use life experience to support others improve their confidence and wellbeing

Getting people passed set backs - baby steps!

Engaging in any activities/learning improves well being, having a mentor to enable people to accept this removes anxiety about going

Peer Mentor volunteers with lived experience of mental health are trained and supported to support others to improve wellbeing

Lack of self-belief or confidence can stop people entering volunteering or work - training and good support improves this

There is a place for digital and online services, but face-to-face contact builds trust and support

Employers could provide apprenticeships for volunteers to progress into

I worry that online training encourages people to stay at home and remain isolated - groups encourage people to make connections

Face-to-face services to build trust

Actions and next steps

The key conclusions reached from this engagement, include:

There is great work going on in B&NES already

Learning from each other - including DWP, Virgin Care, Clean Slate and B&NES Council

Learning from development of Virtual Employment Hub and Volunteer Services

Need to join up all the good work

To seek shared outcomes across all partners

Peer mentoring is really important to people

Volunteering is a valued way to gain confidence and skills

Online support can be a useful tool but face-to-face is needed too