

Curriculum for Career Counsellors

Unit E: What can be done to facilitate access



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Content:



Brainstorming: Thoughts and experiences – what could work?




Lecture: What do we know is needed?



Buzzgroups and classroom discussion: how does your experience tally with the state of research?





To begin with – what are your thoughts and experiences?

- **What did help in your own experience**
- **What could help, given what we know about problems in accessing the labour market**
- **Pin it on the board and explain in a few words**

For the discussion: How much can we do – and how much is up to other professionals, stakeholders, institutions etc.?

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We will revisit the board later on: how do our experiences and ideas tally with research?



Early intervention

Mental health problems can set on early in adolescence and young adulthood.

Undiagnosed and untreated they can lead to dropping out from school, vocational training, university or the first job.

Therefore early recognition and support is vital. This means, in the first instance, access to psycho therapy. But it is also important to integrate career counselling early on to deal with disruptions of the educational and vocational biographies.



Mental health awareness

Mental health awareness in the population can counteract stigmatisation. It can also contribute to picking up on early warning signs and offering support. Further it can contribute to make educational institutions and workplaces less likely to contribute to mental health problems (prevention) and more apt to accommodate for the needs of people with mental health conditions (inclusion)



Easy access support

Mental health conditions can impact on motivation, orientation, planning etc. It is therefore important that support services (psychological, social, employment, housing etc.) are easy to find, easy to access. They need to be user-friendly (and friendly on a human level) so that frustrations that could discourage further contact are avoided.



Involvement of personal networks

People who have lived through disruptive experiences as they are often associated with mental illness can benefit from being supported by a person of trust (an informal carer) and by being surrounded by supportive people. If they are comfortable with it, those informal carers and other members of a personal network should be involved in the journey towards vocational training and/or employment.



Material support matters

Even without a mental health condition, finding your way through school, vocational training, university and into employment is nearly impossible if you constantly have to worry about being able to pay your bills.

Homelessness is a real threat to many with mental health issues. It is therefore crucial that information and support is provided for claiming benefits, education grants, social housing .



State-of-the-art career counselling

Often people with disabilities receive a reduced form of career counselling informed mainly by the availability of specialist training places and by low expectations. Young people with mental health conditions need a full career counselling – including narrative exploration of biographical trajectories and dreams, analysis of potentials, real alternatives within and beyond the system of disability support. What counts as good professional counselling in general must also apply to this group.



Capability approach

In assessing the implications of a psychiatric condition, the focus often is on functional deficits. This deficit approach is partly justified to avoid inadequate stress in the short term – but in the long run it is counter-productive as it is de-motivating and de-stabilising. The focus must be on capabilities, including those abilities that can be developed over time. Even if not achievable immediately, they are important orientation points to define intermediate targets.



Matching

It has been shown that it is very important to get the matching between person and job right. Note that it is equally important to avoid under-challenging jobs as it is to avoid to stressful jobs. Also it is important to find meaningful employment. This does not only apply to the overall career envisaged but also to jobs (e.g. if it is deemed helpful to get work experience to get used to work routines in general it is still important that this job corresponds to the young persons system of meaning)



An integrated approach

Support must not stop once a place for training or work is found. It must be ensured that necessary accommodations to work schedules and task profiles are made (and if necessary, funded). Where necessary, on-site psycho-social support should be available (e.g. a job coach). Support for crises needs to be available “on call”. Educators, employers, social services, therapists and career services all need to be in the game.



A client-centred approach

Professionalism is all about the client's autonomy. Wherever possible, decisions should be made, in the end, by the young person with mental health condition themselves. This can be challenging, depending on nature and severity of the condition – but even when choices are limited it is essential that real alternatives are available to the client to choose from.



The gold standard: Individual Placement and Support (IPS)

It has been shown that the best approach to workplace inclusion of people with more severe mental health conditions is a comprehensive form of supported employment in which finding the right workplace or educational path for the individual is prioritised over adjusting the person to a (limited) choice of places. The process of adjustment then is a mutual one, in which with professional support, workplace and worker mutually adjust. Inclusion is into regular settings of work and training rather than into specialised training centres or sheltered employment.



Discuss: What can be done?

- **What is already being done?**
- **Which of the items could you (partly or fully) implement in your own practice**
- **Which ones will be difficult? What would have to change so they can be put into practice?**
- **How does this compare to the points identified at the beginning of the session?**


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Present one of the chosen items to class - others to respond with their own view

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Talk to your neighbour to identify two items you would like to discuss





Check out the
Toolkit on the
Work4Psy Model
(part B, chapter 1)



Thank you for
your attention.
Any questions?

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