

An Introduction to Mental Health Issues: Guides For Advisers and Others

What are the advice-resources Guides on Mental Health Issues?

The three advice-resources Mental Health Awareness guides are designed to help advisers, their clients and others to best support people who have mental health issues in the field of work and learning. The first is a reference guide for advisers and there are two complementary guides: one for adults with mental health problems, and the other for managers of information, advice and guidance (IAG) services. This summary primarily focuses on the core guide, Mental Health Issues: Guide for Advisers, whilst briefly describing the other two guides.

Mental Health Issues: Guide for Advisers - Who is this guide for?

This guide is for those advising adults with mental health problems. Advisers include nextstep advisers, Career Advice Service, advice and guidance practitioners in higher and further education, Jobcentre Plus advisers and advisers working with adults in the broad information, advice and guidance (IAG) field. The guides have been designed to be user friendly and contain activities to support continuing professional development.

What is the purpose of the guide for advisers?

Mental health is an important matter that can have a detrimental impact on employment, Bird argues:

'People with depression, anxiety or severe mental illness are more likely to be unemployed or economically inactive than the wider population. Less than 25% of people with long-term mental illness have a job, compared to 75% of the general working age population. Motivation is not the problem: people with mental health problems want to work. In fact, they have the highest "want to work" rate of any disability group. Barriers to opportunities to work come from a benefits system that is inflexible, negative attitudes of employers and a widespread culture (including the NHS) that equates mental ill-health with hopelessness... unemployment due to depression and chronic anxiety costs the taxpayer £7 billion a year. In addition, overall productivity decreases when people do not work... the loss of output attributed to mental illness is estimated at £12 billion per year, or one per cent of total national income.' (Bird, 2006)¹

The guide for advisers is a practical reference tool, providing up-to-date information, with examples and ideas to aid advisers in supporting their clients who have mental health problems. It enables advisers to develop:

- Knowledge of mental health issues
- Understanding of how mental health problems can affect adults looking for opportunities in work, volunteering and learning
- Information on support organisations, useful publications and acronyms
- Their own professional skills and practices in working with people with mental health problems.

¹ Bird, A .(2006). *We Need to Talk: The Case for Psychological Therapy on the NHS*. [online] London: Mental Health Foundation Available from:: www.mentalhealthshop.org/products/rethink_publications/we_need_to_talk.html [Accessed 25 May 2007].

What does the guide cover? An overview.

- **Mental health problems.** This includes background information to mental health problems, information on common and severe mental health illness and approaches in mental health work
- **The relationship between learning, work and mental health and how mental health impacts on people's access to and use of IAG services.** These sections are concerned with the overall context of mental health, learning and work, and in particular the impact of mental health on the individual and on society in general. It also explores barriers to access to work, learning, advice and support, and some of the issues related to full access to IAG services by adults with mental health problems
- **The policy context and welfare benefits** sections describe the legislative framework, the National Service Framework and the benefits trap, and provides an overview of the relevant benefits and changes in the benefit system
- **Working with clients who have mental health problems.** This section focuses on ways in which advisers can work most effectively with people who experience mental health problems. It includes good practice guidelines for advisers and some special issues – confidentiality, crises, disclosure, Disability Discrimination Act (DDA). Complementing this is the section, **continuing professional development (CPD) in mental health issues for advisers** which gives a template for an outline action plan for advisers
- **Client groups with differing needs.** This part of the guide explores the needs of different groups including black and minority ethnic clients, women, offenders and others
- **Signposting, contacts and referrals.** The key matters in this section are: the potential support network available to clients, making contact with potential support services, why, when and how should advisers refer clients
- **Learning and working opportunities.** This section of the guide briefly examines the learning and working opportunities, including 'models' of employment, available to clients with mental health problems to help them gain employment
- **Case studies** – these include opportunities for advisers to develop their skills
- **Other guide sections include a glossary of terms and jargon buster, further reading and information and references**

The information in the guide

The content of the guide has been informed by many individuals and expert organisations. It contains references to the information given and has been checked for accuracy. However, some information is liable to change quickly – for instance, web addresses – and if you find any errors, you should inform advice-resources at ca-advice-resources@lsc.gov.uk (**Last updated October 2007**)

Your Guide: For people who are thinking about work, learning, training and volunteering while maintaining good mental health

This guide is designed to be used by clients, either with the support of their adviser or on their own. It contains some of the sections from the adviser guide and it also has some questions which people can work through to consider what may be the best approaches to exploring work and learning opportunities for them. (**Last updated October 2007**)

Mental Health Issues: Guide for Managers

The manager's guide aims to support those who are leading and managing IAG teams to plan and develop services to support clients with mental health problems. It includes sections on relevant promotion of IAG services, work with employers and continual professional development and support for staff. (**Last updated July 2007**)

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