

Workshop 7 Notes

What Does Pathways To Work Hold For Social Firms?

Facilitators: Brenda Williams (Independent Consultant), Robert McKay (Jobcentre Plus)

Robert McKay explained that Pathways To Work is a flagship programme. It has some mandatory elements but they do not want to coerce. There are 2.7 million people on IB (Incapacity Benefit); it's reckoned that 30-40% of these could move into employment.

Over 2.5 years they've trained more than 200 advisers to work better with people on IB. They want to skill people up so they can compete effectively with others equally in the job market. New advisers deliver work-focussed interviews in the first 6 months. Screening tools and exemption criteria are used to filter out those who are unable to work.

Condition management is an important element, run by the NHS.

Key barriers to returning to work:

- financial responsibilities
- perception that people will be worse off
- so if someone goes to work for >16 hrs/week and earns <£15k/year, Pathways To Work pays out £40/week for the first year.

Average stay on IB is 8-9 years. It is better to catch people in their first 12 months on IB.

In work support for first 6 months – mentoring or acting as an advocate and possible financial support.

In Glasgow they've support 5,500 people back into work through Pathways To Work.

The remaining roll-out Dec07 to March08; first round of announcements due 6/7/07. Money is committed until 2011.

Brenda Williams talked about Condition Management (CM) as part of the 'Choices' programme. The principle is helping people to 'manage' their health, not to 'get well' or intervene with treatment.

The most common issues are communication and self-esteem (see Brenda's slides for principles). CM is operated differently depending on local and regional differences. CM should be educative, a menu of support, holistic approach to using CBT; people need to be at a certain place to benefit from CBT.

Pathways To Work is interesting for Social Firms in terms of offering work experience for people. The private and voluntary sectors have been involved in the commissioning of the condition management work.

Under Pathways they work with someone up to 13 weeks and then they are expected to take up work. Extensions have to be requested from JC+.

A question was asked of the Glasgow results. 60,000 people were worked with, of whom the 5,500 moved into work; of these, 74% were still in employment after 6 months.

12% who went onto the programme have gone into work UK-wide.

Someone in the audience had asked for condition management and wondered how quickly it would kick in. The response was that it should begin at 2 months (with

comment that most people move off benefits within 8 weeks so there was no point offering it earlier than that).

Someone else asked about the role of the GP. Response was that it was an interesting and challenging process. Awareness needs to be raised, they are keen to make it part of GP training and also getting into medical councils. Having employment advisers in GP surgeries was piloted with limited success.

A question was raised about people who have been unemployed for longer and whether condition management would be available for them. Response was that condition management was not always going to help people get into work when they've been unemployed for a long time. Other support is available for more severe problems.

The question was asked about how Pathways To Work links to Welfare Reform. The answer was that the employment and support allowance will have a higher level for people who have been very unwell; the split was explained to delegates.

Group tasks

Two groups were formed to look at opportunities behind Pathways To Work for Social Firms:

- set up social enterprises to deliver part of PtW;
- JCP to act as a referral to source to Social Firms;
- Need a PR campaign from Social Firms UK with JCP and locally
- Social Firms and social enterprise can provide good and successful ways of working with people who have a track record;
- Get in touch with your external relations manager and build the links!
- Opportunity to raise awareness of what Social Firms are with government departments and JCP;
- Get contract with local JCP and build relationships;
- Tender to deliver part of PtW and condition management (it was acknowledged that with tendering at such a high regional level we are unlikely to be successful at a local level).