

Individual Placement Support: NTW's new employment support service

What do we do?

We help people who want to work, find the right work for them.

There is no accurate measure of work readiness. The best predictors of someone being successful at a job are them wanting a job and believing they can do it. As such the NTW IPS service will work with any service user interested in paid employment, irrespective of perceived job readiness, risk, diagnosis, employment history or qualifications. We empower people to explore paid work and access as much or as little support in-post as they need.

We help anyone who expresses a desire to work, regardless of job readiness factors, substance abuse, symptoms, history, cognition impairment, treatment non-adherence and/or personal presentation and rapidly help people into good quality, paid jobs instead of requiring extensive pre-employment assessment and training.

Who are we?

Our service is made up of twelve Band 5 Employment Specialists and two Band 6 Team Leaders working across NTW. Staff are permanently embedded within clinical teams in secondary care mental health services like Community Treatment Teams and Early Intervention in Psychosis Teams. Our Employment Specialists will have an understanding of mental health difficulties and the skills to enable people to find the right work for them.

What is IPS?

Individual Placement Support (IPS) is an evidence based supported employment model - a proven way of helping people with a serious mental illness into employment.

Eligibility is based on service user choice and attention to their preferences. The service focuses on individualised planning, rapid job search and extensive employment engagement. Outcomes from randomised control trials reveals the model can help up to 60% of service users into long term work.

Evidence highlights that service users view IPS services and employment as central to their recovery, and shows that more people using IPS remain in work in the long term. Best practice suggests that a service user ideally is supported on CPA or with community mental health services while receiving the IPS intervention, acknowledging that returning to work is a major life event and requires shared care and support to maximise the success.

How to refer

Please speak to your local NTW IPS Employment Specialist to discuss a referral or arrange a meeting with a service user. We will also accept self referrals from service users and welcome enquires from anyone to our central email address: ips@ntw.nhs.uk

We do not have specific referral criteria. We will accept any patient accessing secondary care mental health services within NTW, as long as they expresses an interest in paid employment. If people are uncertain, we can meet them for a chat and provide no-pressure advice and guidance.

How we deliver?

We work intensively with service users, clinical staff and employers, carrying caseloads of approximately 20 people and rapidly supporting people into good quality employment on their terms.

Our aim is to build strong therapeutic relationships with service users, identify their strengths and aspirations, as well as any relevant health considerations they may have, then rapidly develop an action plan that supports them to access good quality paid employment.

We will always provide benefits counselling, always discuss the pros and cons of disclosure and always seek to tailor employment opportunities to a service user's preferences and experience.

As we are embedded in clinical teams we will always share our employment strategy and expertise to support clinical interventions and care planning. We know that clinical staff play an important role in both encouraging and empowering people to explore work opportunities and increase confidence and self-belief and want to work collaboratively to empower service users to enjoy a better quality of life.

How to contact us?

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Frequently Asked Question?

- **How do you know when people are ready for work?**

When people want to be able to drive a car, we don't expect them to sit around and talk about driving for months and months and then suddenly jump into a car and begin driving. We support them to learn and practice by actually driving in a real car on real roads! IPS does exactly that! We support people into paid jobs in the real world and provide support and advice while they are in post.

There is no accurate measure of work readiness but the best predictors of someone being successful at a job are them wanting a job and believing they can do it. The NTW IPS service will work with anyone interested in paid employment, irrespective of perceived job readiness, empowering them to explore paid work and access as much or as little support as they need.

- **Isn't it dangerous and risky for people with mental health problems to be working?**

No! Good quality work is not risky and actually improves health and lowers risk; it helps people feel purposeful, respected, connected to others, earn money, gain confidence and develop new skills. Unemployment and bad quality work can be incredibly harmful; damaging mental and physical health and making people feel powerless, isolated, purposeless and deskilled. As such unemployment can often be much more risky than good employment.

The NTW IPS service will make use of the health benefits of good employment to support service users to enhance their health and quality of life. We are employment experts who specialise in mental health and we'll work collaboratively with service users, carers and healthcare professionals to take positive risks that empower people and ultimately improve their health and quality of life.

- **What is 'zero exclusion criteria'**

The only referral requirement to access our service is that someone is open to Secondary Care Mental Health Services (a Community Treatment Team or Early Intervention in Psychosis Team) and that they are interested in paid employment.

We will not decline referrals based on perceived risk, employment history, diagnoses or any other factors that typically limit eligibility.

- **Is IPS mandatory?**

No, IPS is not mandatory. Service Users choose whether they would like to work with the IPS service and there is no obligation to engage or stay engaged. People can decide to stop working with their Employment Specialist at any time and it will not affect their entitlement to services.

- **Are you part of the Job Centre or DWP?**

No. The NTW IPS service was funded using a grant from NHS England specifically focused on supporting people suffering from serious mental illness into paid employment. While we do have contact with local DWP offices, it is only to share general information about NTW and our IPS service, we are not funded by DWP, have no targets related to the DWP and do not share any patient identifiable information with DWP.

- **What about volunteering? What about training? What about education?**

The IPS Service will only focus on paid employment but we will facilitate signposting and referral into more appropriate services in the community that specifically focus on volunteering or training or education.

- **It says IPS is 'time unlimited'. That's not realistic!**

It is unusual but not unrealistic! We offer ongoing, time-unlimited support that reacts to the service user and context that they are in. That means as long as a service user wants help with regard to their employment - we'll provide it. This ensures we give people the best possible chance of excelling in their work place and increase the likelihood they stay in employment. Generally as people grow in confidence and skill, they naturally disengage and require less support.

- **Should I only refer people close to discharge?**

No! We would like to be involved from the very beginning of someones journey and know that good quality employment can be a key factor in recovery.

Our Employment Specialists are not able to act as Lead Professionals or Care Coordinators, so we are excited to work alongside mental health professionals and compliment existing CPA practice.

- **Will this increase my discharge rate?**

That is not the intention of the IPS service but we are confident that good quality employment will support people to make better use of services and naturally become more resilient, purposeful and likely reduce re-presentation and need to access services.

Our staff will only be measured on engagement, not number of discharges they support, that gives us freedom to work with people appropriately for as long as they require support whilst they are in receipt of services.

- **What if my service users have 'unrealistic expectations' about jobs they could do?**

NTW IPS staff work collaboratively with service users, giving them the power to choose what they would like to do. We know the therapeutic power of hope, optimism and goal setting, so will support any service user interested in paid employment to take steps towards their dream job, even if others think it may be unrealistic.

- **Won't paid work have a massive impact benefits entitlement?**

Generally people can be in receipt of benefits and still earn a wage, sometimes even working full-time. However, with the introduction of Universal Credit, careful consideration on a case by case basis is needed to ensure people are empowered to explore paid employment without being put at financial risk. NTW IPS Employment Specialists are able to offer tailored welfare advice to ensure service users know the impact that paid work could have on their finances. We're also able to liaise with specialist services for more in-depth information or support applying for bespoke packages of welfare entitlement.

- **Are IPS staff Lead Professionals?**

No, we do not care coordinate or act as Lead Professionals and staff will be working to a strict remit of supporting people into paid employment so will not be absorbing clinical responsibilities that are unrelated to IPS. We will always be keen to support wellness in work planning and safe return to work protocols and participate in medication reviews, CPA reviews and discharge planning.

- **Are IPS staff part of our clinical team or part of an IPS team**

Both! While the Employment Specialist will physically be in your clinical team working with your service users and staff, they will be supervised by the IPS Team Lead and have weekly meetings with the rest of the IPS service alongside ongoing professional training.

- **What about people who have criminal records?**

We will happily work with people with forensic or criminal records as long as they are receiving care from CTT or EIP and are interested in paid employment. Our Employment Specialists will handle disclosure (of criminal records) on a case by case basis and will support service users to make informed decisions that are in their best interests.

- **What is the evidence base for IPS?**

Several international randomised control trials have demonstrated that IPS is the most successful method of supported employment, enabling service users to be more than twice as likely to find and retain good quality paid jobs when compared with other supported employment methods.

For more information please view the guidance on the ipsgrow.org.uk website.

- **Where is the money for this service coming from?**

The service is funded by NHS England in addition to existing budgets, meaning money is not being diverted from other critical mental health services to fund this. NHS England is committed to supporting more people with serious mental illness (SMI) into paid employment using IPS services.

- **What banding are your roles and why?**

The IPS Employment Specialists are Band 5 staff who will carry their own caseloads and manage their own diaries, juggling a range of commitments including clinical team integration, employer engagement and building therapeutic partnerships with service users.

- **What are your targets?**

We do not have specific employment targets, instead our emphasis is on engaging with people and supporting them to achieve their employment aims and job-related aspirations.

- **What is co-production and what's its benefit?**

We wish to work towards the following definition of co-production with service users and carers:

"Co-production is not just a word, it's not just a concept, it is a meeting of minds coming together to find a shared solution. In practice, it involves people who use services being consulted, included and working together from the start to the end of any project that affects them."

- **How could I get involved in IPS (team champions, training, events etc)**

We would love to support people to learn more or become involved with our service. If you would like to know more or be involved, please speak with your local NTW IPS Employment Specialist or feel free to email ips@ntw.nhs.uk

- **What is the place and train model?**

We will place people into good quality jobs that are matched to their skills and interests and then provide appropriate training to them whilst in post. It's a sensible and efficient method of helping people into paid work without the need for lots of generic training.

- **Is this service and its staff temporary?**

No, we are all permanent members of staff, employed by NTW.

- **Do IPS staff have access to clinical record systems (like RIO)?**

Yes, all staff have RIO access and are able to contribute to progress notes and IPS-relevant documentation.

- **How will IPS work with regard to the MDT structure?**

We are fully integrated with clinical teams (EIPs and CTTs), physically sitting in the teams, attending their meetings, seeking referrals from their team members and contributing to employment resources, welfare advice and third sector signposting/referring.