

WELFARE REFORM COMMITTEE

THE FUTURE DELIVERY OF SOCIAL SECURITY IN SCOTLAND

ADDITIONAL WRITTEN SUBMISSION FROM SAMH CONCERNING EMPLOYABILITY SUPPORT

Summary and recommendations from SAMH

SAMH is Scotland's largest mental health charity and is dedicated to mental health and well-being for all. To provide some context, SAMH provides employability support in a range of programmes; we are a tier three specialist provider for a small number of Work Programme clients; we are a Work Choice subcontractor; funded by the NHS, we provide IPS services to individuals with severe and enduring mental health problems through some Community Mental Health Teams; and we are funded by some local authorities to provide employability support services, especially in terms of horticulture therapy. As a service provider and campaigning organisation, we also advocate with those who are too unwell to work, recently highlighting the interaction between poverty, deprivation and mental health[1].

We welcome the opportunity to contribute to this consultation, and we look forward to ongoing discussions with the Scottish Government and colleagues across the various employability, health and social care and third sectors ahead of the devolution of the employability programmes in 2017. With the forthcoming devolution of Work Programme and Work Choice, this is a moment in time for employment support. 79% of people with severe and enduring mental health are not in employment, and this statistic has been static for decades. Individuals with disabilities are underemployed; current statistics show only 43.8% of individuals with disabilities in Scotland are employed[1]. Individuals with disabilities have been poorly served by the DWP programmes, and a Scottish Approach is needed, one which empowers those looking for work and ensures they can achieve their potential. The new programmes must treat individuals with respect and dignity, and deliver co-produced support within a framework of human rights. Too often, the health of jobseekers has been neglected, despite it being the main barrier to employment. This must change.

50% of individuals on Employment and Support Allowance in Scotland have a mental health problem as their primary condition. Many others, both on ESA and on JSA, will experience poor mental health as they seek work. Ensuring that the employment programmes which will be contracted in Scotland have mental health and well-being at their core, and a humane and supportive approach, will improve everyone's health and well-being but also tackle the root cause of their unemployment; lead to reduced pressure on health and public service spending, increased tax income for the state through employment, and reduced spend on welfare budgets. It is in all of our interests to help people with mental health problems into appropriate, sustainable jobs, when they are ready to take this step.

“Well, last year my psychiatrist was reducing my medication when I got this letter from the DWP, so I had to stop that and increase my medication again... Suicidal thoughts are massively increased. Urges for self-harm massively increased. Basically, when it comes to getting reassessed every other part of my life kind of shuts down because it just has a really bad effect on me. It’s almost as if they were to design a process to make it as difficult as possible to stay alive, this is exactly how they would do it.”[2]

The Scottish Government must ensure that there is a smooth transition for individuals on the Work Programme and Work Choice when they take over these contracted programmes in April 2017. In this, the impact of the UK Government’s Welfare Reform and Work Bill, and the potential reductions in Scottish and social security budgets in the forthcoming UK Government’s Comprehensive Spending Review in November 2015, must also be considered. From April 2016, individuals in receipt of JSA, ESA (WRAG), Housing Benefit and Income Support will see these benefits frozen until 2020. Tax credits will be reduced. Many individuals in receipt of ESA (WRAG) could find themselves with a significant reduction in their benefit, despite requiring this additional support as a result of their illness. The Scottish Government and local authorities must take urgent steps to alleviate these cuts, and ensure that the most vulnerable people in society do not slip further into poverty and ill health. These are many of the individuals who will be supported by the employability programmes being devolved to Scotland, so care must be taken to ensure that they are not further disadvantaged by the transfer and delivery of support. There will be other individuals who have been receiving support, but due to the ongoing reforms to DLA and the rollout of PIP, may be left with less or no support. These individuals too must be supported.

Further ahead, there should be higher ambitions on employability, as these systems bed in. By 2020, we need strong commitments from the Scottish Government to integrate employability across government, with well-being and fairness at its centre. To do so, referral pathways between health and social care, especially from General Practice, and the employment programmes should be created, with a focus on good employment as a means towards recovery; there must be greater educational and training support for jobseekers; also required will be improved transport links, especially in rural areas, and affordable childcare provision; support for volunteering and social enterprise; and ongoing work with employers to break down barriers of stigma and discrimination, with improved and continuing support for well-being in the workplace. All of these factors will play a part in improving the well-being of individuals and support them towards sustainable and good quality employment.

In preparing our response, SAMH has consulted widely amongst staff and the individuals we support on our employability programmes, about the type of help they feel they need to improve their well-being and attain work – quotes from our clients are included in this response. We have participated in consultation events with our colleagues at Disability Agenda Scotland, SCVO, Open Doors with NHS Health

Scotland, BASE-SUSE and ERSA. We have spoken to colleagues in the mental health sector and with colleagues at the Health and Social Care Alliance, drawing on our links through the Alliance/GPs at the Deep End Linkworker Project.

There is much to improve on the current programmes of support. From a social justice perspective, more must be done to help those furthest from the workplace. To do so, the programmes must be significantly reformed to meet the needs of all individuals with disabilities; the current cap on individuals who can access Work Choice should be ended. Greater flexibility and fluidity is required to allow for swift transfer of individuals from one programme to another. The Key Performance Indicators should be reviewed within Work Choice, especially in terms of employment outcomes for individuals' mental health problems, and progression towards work should be measured and valued, rather than the 'harder' outcomes of simply getting a job. Urgent action is required to reverse or at least mitigate the punitive and unfair approach of sanctioning vulnerable individuals.

The recommendations from SAMH are as follows.

Delivery of contracted employability programmes within Scotland

- 1. Recommendation:** SAMH does not support calls for one employability programme. One size does not fit all. There should remain a specialised programme of support for individuals with disabilities, providing personalised and intensive support based on individual need. People with mental health problems who require employment support should, by default, be referred to Work Choice, not the Work Programme.
- 2. Recommendation:** The funding should be more appropriately split between the Work Choice and Work Programmes, based on the numbers to be supported and the cost of supporting them, to ensure that everyone gets better quality support, tailored to their needs. The current cap on the number of individuals who can access Work Choice should end.
- 3. Recommendation:** Transfer between employability programmes, if individuals are found to require more or less specialist support, should be smooth and the data gathered should be provided from one support organisation to another. The employability support provided to that point should be recognised and the supporting organisation should be remunerated for their work, possibly by the organisation which is taking over the contract with the individual.
- 4. Recommendation:** The Payment by Results model has been shown to be less effective when supporting individuals with disabilities towards employment, and either a higher attachment fee (as currently exists with Work Choice), or a flat service provision fee (as currently exists with IPS), should be considered for this cohort.

5. **Recommendation:** The Scottish Government should investigate the evidence-base for personalised budgets within employability, and consider running pilot schemes to determine whether this could be an effective use of funds.
6. **Recommendation:** Greater transparency is required from providers about the support they provide to individuals on the Work Programme, to ensure a human rights- based approach in keeping with the Scottish Government's social justice intentions.
7. **Recommendation:** The Scottish Government should require greater transparency and accountability on spending on employability support, both in terms of the contracted employability programmes from 2017, and in existing programmes delivered by local authorities.

Design, data and outcomes

1. **Recommendation:** There should be a national contracting agency for the employability programmes.
2. **Recommendation:** The design of the new programmes must require better collection of data about the effective support for individuals with disabilities, especially mental health problems, to continue to build the evidence base of the most effective support. There must be built in mechanisms to share, where appropriate, this data between agencies, compliant with data protection legislation. The 'black box approach' must end.
3. **Recommendation:** The Scottish Government should commit to an exercise to specify the data collection of the mental health conditions of claimants on the contracted employability programmes, and providers must be required to fulfil this obligation as part of their contract.
4. **Recommendation:** Progression towards work must be seen as a positive outcome within the new programmes. Moving someone into education, training, volunteering or work placement schemes should be a paid outcome for the employability provider.
5. **Recommendation:** Individuals with disabilities, including mental health conditions, should be involved in the next stages of the design of the contracted employability services.
6. **Recommendation:** Health outcomes should be included within the employment framework, such that providers must ensure that the health of individuals does not deteriorate as a result of their employability support; and allow for integrated support across Government departments. The Scottish Government should commit to future joint strategic outcomes within both the NHS and employment programmes to further join up this approach.

Individual Placement and Support

1. **Recommendation:** SAMH calls for the Scottish Government to incorporate Individual Placement and Support within the specialist disability employment programme as the most effective programme to support individuals with severe and enduring mental health conditions.
2. **Recommendation:** Individual Placement and Support, which has been demonstrated as the most effective programme to help individuals with severe and enduring mental health problems, should be embedded within all Community Mental Health Teams, to encourage a joined-up culture of health and work, and ensure individuals with severe and enduring mental health problems receive the most appropriate support.
3. **Recommendation:** IPS principles should be incorporated in a more flexible way – ‘IPS-lite’ - within the specialist disability employment programme to support individuals, so that a more effective approach can be delivered without requiring the situation of the programme within Community Mental Health Teams.
4. **Recommendation:** Based on the experience of Work Choice, which achieves 33% job outcomes for individuals with mental health problems, the KPI conversion to employment rate for individuals with mental health problems should be targeted at a maximum of 40%, due to the higher challenges they currently face in terms of their condition and societal barriers. This increased ambition is subject to a more specialised and effective employability approach, such as Individual Placement and Support.

Employability and the Statutory Sector

1. **Recommendation:** SAMH recommends that an audit of local authority employability spending, range of support services and outcomes to such support is undertaken, to determine best practice, effectiveness and value for money.
2. **Recommendation:** Employability should become a key priority for the NHS, with an ongoing measurement of the number of individuals in employment in contact with community mental health services built into the next strategic plan, with outcomes focused on helping these individuals to retain or find employment.
3. **Recommendation:** The Scottish Government should create, expand and improve referral pathways from General Practice to employability support programmes and job clubs with the use of Links Workers and Peer Supported social prescribing and self-development/self-management programmes.
4. **Recommendation:** As part of the Scottish Government’s commitment through the 2020 vision towards an assets-based approach and a more preventative health service, funding should be provided by the integrated health and social care

boards for community engagement support to improve well-being and self-management of individuals, with employability a key outcome.

5. **Recommendation:** The findings of the recent review of Healthy Working Lives should be implemented.

6. **Recommendation:** The See Me in Work campaign should be supported by all employers in Scotland, in terms of support for people returning for work following ill health and an equal and fair recruiting process for those seeking employment. The Public Sector should lead the way in this regard.

7. **Recommendation:** The Fair Work convention should ensure that public service commissioned contracts are resourced to enable those external providers to pay the living wage and ensure ongoing high quality support.

Employability and relationship with UK Government Welfare Reforms

1. **Recommendation:** The Scottish Government should lobby for significant changes to the Work Capability Assessment process in order to correctly identify individuals for each employment programme once these are devolved; otherwise, individuals will continue to be wrongly assigned by DWP to programmes which will be administered in Scotland, if the terms are not sufficiently changed.

2. **Recommendation:** There should be a recognition that if someone has previously claimed DLA, but does not qualify for PIP, they should be assessed to see if they require specialist disability employability support, rather than provided with generic support.

3. **Recommendation:** As the default option, individuals in receipt of Employment and Support Allowance should be directed towards the specialist disability employability support service for an initial assessment, rather than being placed on the more general support programme.

4. **Recommendation:** Sanctions should not be applied to vulnerable clients who have an underlying health condition or disability which is impacting on their participation in the employability programme. There should be better training and guidance for employability support workers to explore underlying reasons for non-compliance. The claimant commitment should be reviewed on a regular basis to ensure that expectations of compliance are fair and appropriate.

5. **Recommendation:** All employability support workers should undergo mental health awareness and suicide prevention training. The Scottish Government should also promote such training in their work with DWP for staff at Jobcentre Plus, and amongst the business community and trade unions.

6. **Recommendation:** The Scottish Governments should continue to commit resources to tackle stigma against people with mental health problems, with a

particular focus on employers as well as addressing stigma among front line staff in public services, including Jobcentre Plus.

7. **Recommendation:** All individuals on the contracted employability programmes should be given clear information about their rights to information, advocacy, support and ongoing review of their claimant commitments as part of the programme.

8. **Recommendation:** The Scottish Government should publicise information signposting people to support organisations and welfare rights advice, and ensure that such organisations are funded to meet demand.

9. **Recommendation:** Access to Work must be devolved alongside the contracted employability programmes, to ensure joined up support for individuals with disabilities as they move into work. The funding for Access to Work should be significantly expanded by the Scottish Government, and the programme should be amended to all for agreement for funding to take place before a job is secured, packages of support to be portable between jobs (without recourse to a new assessment), and additional support for mental health within the Access to Work provision.