

LEARNING POINT 32

integrating health and employment services in tackling employability issues: the *EQUAL* Access Development Partnership

What next?

Integration of services is about practice, not just a concept. Policy makers and senior managers should promote the concept to practitioners. They should offer practitioners the time and resources to put the idea into practice.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

If you would like more information about any of the issues mentioned in this learning point, please contact:

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EQUAL Access Development Partnership and projects it has supported:
www.equal-access-scotland.org.uk

Compass project (SCR Profiles):
www.scr.communitiescotland.gov.uk

Pathways to Work Programme:
www.dwp.gov.uk/welfarereform/pathways.asp

Other formats

You can request this publication in large print, Braille or on audio cassette, and we can provide translations into other languages. Please contact Janette Campbell on 0131 479 5162 or email translations@communitiescotland.gsi.gov.uk

The Scottish Centre for Regeneration is part of Communities Scotland, the Scottish Government's housing and regeneration agency.



What are learning points?

Learning points share what people have learned from their experience in regeneration – from people working or talking together, or from research into issues and evaluation of what is happening. Learning points can help people and organisations to improve their practice through identifying what works and what doesn't.

What is this learning point about?

People with health and other problems can have difficulty finding work. To help them, a range of health, social care and employment agencies need to work closely together. Providing the right service at the right time can help people in these circumstances make progress towards and into work.

The views expressed in learning points are those of participants at various events and are not necessarily shared by their employers, SCR or Communities Scotland.

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This learning point is about the work of the EQUAL Access Development Partnership which brings together policy makers, practitioners and academics with a common interest in the labour market and social inclusion.

The partnership has been testing new ways of joint working between employment and health services to help people improve their chances of finding work when they face barriers such as ill health, disability and caring responsibilities.

This is one of three learning points about the partnership's work. The other two are: Case Management (LP 33) and Service User Involvement (LP 31).

What do we mean by integration of services?

Integration of services means providing and managing services in a flexible way, focused on the needs and interests of the client. This involves a range of agencies working together to support people towards employment.

An integrated service lets users access many types of support through one contact point. For service providers it creates many points of engagement with all their target groups.

Services generally provide support for only one problem at a time. But clients with more problems can also be referred to other agencies who may be able to help.

Integrated services can include:

- A referring network: for example, doctors or other health professionals who pass on information to a patient about local services that can support them when they are ready to go back to work.
- A presence in each other's premises: for example, the UK national Pathways to Work programme where NHS health professionals called Condition Managers are based in Jobcentres.
- A shared venue in a community: for example, the Compass project in Glasgow where



employability staff work alongside an occupational therapist to offer a combined service to unemployed people on incapacity benefit.

- Co-location of different services in an integrated service centre: for example, in Finland, health and employment services each allocate staff to work in a team where they jointly own or lease the same building and use case management approaches.

What are the important issues?

Services are for the convenience of the client, not the provider.

Integrating different services can provide benefits for those who use them. Agencies can monitor and track a user's progress better and share assessment tools and general management information. But they also need to provide evidence of the benefits that can come from this approach.

There are pivotal points of change for the service user such as when their needs are being assessed, and referral to or moving on to another agency service.

National or strategic level support for joined up services or service integration is valuable, but it

still needs to be developed and implemented locally.

Mutually-agreed aims and objectives make for better integration of services. Assessment tools focusing on the needs of the individual as a whole should be used so that different services provide support at the right time.

What has been learned?

- Organisations need to work together and adopt flexible approaches centred on the people who use their services.
- Organisations need to provide seamless services for people facing multiple barriers to work, especially where a client is being referred between services.
- Integration of services among employability agencies is as important as it is between employment and health agencies.

For policy makers

- A set of national standards about performance management, aims and objectives should be developed to encourage integrated services.
- When deciding funding levels and setting national targets, policy makers should recognise that counselling and support services are most effective when they work with a small number of clients.

The main features of projects that successfully help clients into employment are that they:

- are voluntary rather than compulsory;
- provide a friendly environment;
- work at a pace which suits the client;
- combine health expertise with employment support; and
- provide a single point of contact for people who use the services.

For local partnerships

- Agencies need to work together on strategic goals, organisational values and work processes to help integrate services
- Integration isn't the same as co-location of services. But services close to each other can

help and make it easier to integrate.

- Employability organisations need to help health professionals understand what a client goes through to find work so they can be referred to the appropriate partners.
- Senior managers should invest time to promote the benefits of service integration to front-line staff and train them accordingly.
- Agencies need to share client information better and avoid clients having to re-tell the same story to each of them.
- Agencies should be careful not to introduce too much bureaucracy when developing inter-agency protocols and always keep client interests paramount.

For practitioners

- A case management process (where a case manager ensures inter-agency support and co-operation) works better than an 'assembly line' process for people with significant health problems which make it difficult for them to find work.
- Agencies need to find a balance between health and employability as the basis for joint working.
- Health professionals are wary of jeopardising their patients' welfare benefits. They will respond better to messages such as helping someone find meaningful activity in their community as a stage towards finding work.
- Assessment based upon the individual as a whole is important. Employability partners should let the referring health professional know about a client's progress and final outcomes.

