

LEARNING POINT 33

a case management approach in tackling employability issues: the *EQUAL* Access Development Partnership

For practitioners

- Knowledge of services – case managers must have sound knowledge of the services that are available to their clients. They should use this to develop effective partnership working and networking opportunities.
- Referral processes – An effective referral process between partner organisations is critical for case management. The process requires clearly defined objectives and enough background information to support the service user's needs.
- Tracking system – Case managers will monitor the service user's progress with an action plan that forms part of the referral process.

What next?

Case management is a relatively new role that requires more development and investment. This needs three things to happen:

- explaining the role and its benefits to policymakers, agencies and academics;
- agreeing the standards; and
- developing, co-ordinating and providing training to ensure agencies adopt the approach.

The greatest impact will be where case management is part of a local integrated service network. Policymakers and senior managers have a role to promote and develop a culture of joint working.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

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

Scottish Centre for Regeneration

Communities Scotland
Festival Business Centre
150 Brand Street, Glasgow G51 1DH
telephone 0141 419 1690
email: scr@communitiescotland.gsi.gov.uk
www.scr.communitiescotland.gov.uk

Useful contacts:

For more about the work of the EQUAL Access Partnership and the projects it has supported:
www.equal-access-scotland.org.uk

Other formats

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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.

January 2008

This learning point is about the work of the EQUAL Access Development Partnership which brings together policymakers, 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 that can help individuals facing barriers such as ill health, disability and caring responsibilities improve their chances of finding work.

This is one of three learning points produced to share lessons from the partnership's work. The other two are: Service User Involvement (LP 31) and, Integrating health and employment services (LP 32).

What is case management?

The UK Institute of Case Managers describes case management as “a collaborative process which assesses plans, implements, co-ordinates, monitors and evaluates the options and services required to meet an individual’s health, care, educational and employment needs, using communication and available resources to promote quality cost effective outcomes.”

Case management is most commonly used to help service users with multiple or complex problems achieve their goals. The EQUAL Access Partnership was interested in using this approach to help service users get into or return to work.

The barriers people face in returning to work are often best addressed if the organisations that provide services for them work together. And because services are developed independently, an organisation’s clients need motivation and knowledge to access the support they need. But service providers believe this can be an unrealistic thing to expect of their clients, so a case manager can help bring about better co-operation between agencies to help service users.



It is important to distinguish between ‘case management’ and ‘case management systems’, which support the role and help service integration and partnership working.

Case management is a five-step process that involves:

- 1 engaging and selecting customers;
- 2 assessing customers’ needs;
- 3 planning and managing support;
- 4 follow-up of the service aims/ongoing assessment; and
- 5 adapting the action plan as required.

Each step requires different types of support and relies on case management systems to deliver it effectively. Case managers may also be known as ‘personal advisers’, ‘employment officers’, ‘training and employment consultants’ or even ‘researchers’. The type and depth of support will vary according to need.

Case management systems generally include:

- information technology systems;
- service level agreements; and
- referral procedures with external agencies and services.

Systems are particularly important where there is no integrated service for service users. Case management emphasises co-operation and

follow-up. Service level agreements let agencies explain their roles and responsibilities; ensure that referrals are appropriate; and agree how agencies will share information about how they support service users, and how cases are progressing. IT systems help case managers exchange information and monitor their work. There are, however, few examples of fully-integrated data systems due to the restrictions of the Data Protection Act, and the cost and maintenance of such systems.

What are the important issues?

Used effectively, case management is a practical solution with values that will improve the lives of service users.

There are several benefits of case management:

- The experience will appear seamless for the service user.
- The case manager seeks to empower the service user, moving their involvement from a passive to more active role.
- It is a client-centred process where the support of the case manager continues until an agreed time and does not automatically stop when the service user finds a job.

Case management works best through a local, co-ordinated, integrated, service network with a varied range of services. Organisations can make joint agreements about the services they provide to reduce overlap and release resources. It requires that resources are available to develop case management systems and support the development of case managers.

Agencies need to set out clearly the role of case managers and case management systems. This includes identifying each agency’s role and deciding who takes the lead role at different stages of the service user’s path into work.

Case manager competencies:

- help the service user; and
- coordinate the services being accessed.

Agencies employing case managers should build training and development opportunities for them into their wider organisational development plans.

What has been learned?

- Case management is important to help integrate services more effectively for the benefit of service users.
- Case management provides an opportunity to minimise duplication of services.
- The role of case manager is relatively new in employability. It is therefore important that it is clearly identified and that standards for training and professional development are established.

For policymakers

If using case managers as a core part of their service in a particular location or for a specific target group, agencies should clarify and agree:

- the reasons for implementing this system;
- the responsibilities and tasks they will take on;
- that resources are available to support this;
- the range of services and organisations which can be drawn on;
- which referral methods they will use; and
- how they will set up a comprehensive system to record their different contributions.

