

**A guide to health
and employability in
South Lanarkshire**

**equally
well**

Introduction

The aim of this guide is to help organisations better understand the link between health and employability and to outline the benefits for front line staff in making a commitment to Equally Well participation.

There is considerable evidence that work has a positive impact on wellbeing and health. In studies conducted by Glasgow University in 2008 for the Glasgow Centre for Population Health which followed the progress of people with health problems moving into employment, research found:

- 90% had improved general health;
- 81% felt better emotionally;
- 79% had improved mental health;
- 77% had improved physical health;
- 66% had improved vitality

As the impact of Welfare Reform and widening of responsibilities for health improvement bring more non-employability services under the umbrella of “holistic support” for participants - front line staff across all organisations will find themselves with an increasing role to play in assisting the return to work of people who have overcome illness or experienced a mild to moderate health condition. Raising the awareness of front line staff across all agencies to local health and employability support is vital in this situation and core to Equally Well activity in South Lanarkshire. By committing to the health and employability agenda, services can further contribute to reducing health inequalities, poverty and deprivation which are the key drivers for Equally Well.

Of those who had
entered employment:

90 % had
**improved
general health**

Source:
Glasgow University (2008)

What is Equally Well?

Equally Well started in Autumn 2008 as a report by the Scottish Government's Ministerial Task Force on health inequalities, which concluded that:

'Scotland's health is improving rapidly but it is not improving fast enough for the poorest sections of our society. Health inequalities remain our major challenge.'

The Equally Well report contains a whole series of initiatives to tackle poverty, and helping people into work is seen as a major way to improve a person's financial position, and their health.

As part of The Equally Well Implementation Plan eight test sites have been established each with a different theme linked to reducing health inequalities by:

- improving local service design within existing resources:
- collaborating between public sector agencies and others: and
- "doing different things and doing things differently."

Further information:

www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/Health/health/Inequalities/inequalitiestaskforce

Of those who had
entered employment:

81 % felt better
emotionally

Source:
Glasgow University (2008)

The Lanarkshire Test Site

The principal focus of the Lanarkshire Equally Well Test Site is on raising employability potential as a vehicle to alleviate poverty and improve health by “promoting people’s chances of sustained employment in Lanarkshire”.

The local Test Site works with partner services not traditionally engaged with employability needs of participants such as NHS, Social Work and Housing with a view to developing onward referrals to support participants claiming Incapacity Benefit (IB)/Employment Support Allowance (ESA) or at risk of claiming IB/ESA to enter or remain in the labour market.

It has been estimated that around 11,700 people in South Lanarkshire are likely to fall within the Equally Well target group and to support them the Test Site has established a referral pathway for participants of NHS Lanarkshire, Social Work Resources and Housing and Technical Resources of South Lanarkshire Council (SLC) and North Lanarkshire Council (NLC) to existing local employment services where participants receive customised support to help them overcome barriers on their journey back to work.

A key feature of the Test Site is in developing the skills, confidence and competencies of ‘non-employability’ front line staff in health, Social Work Resources and Housing and Technical Resources. This includes on-site training sessions that raise awareness of the benefits of work to health, visibility of the referral pathway and how the local Equally Well Test Site can help support the health and employability needs of participants.

Of those who had
entered employment:

79 % had
**improved
mental health**

Source:
Glasgow University (2008)

Why does Equally Well Service matter?

Tackling worklessness is a key policy goal for both the UK and Scottish Government. Employability is central to government activity to tackle poverty and disadvantage and this has been driven by strong evidence that employment can be beneficial for people and is one of the routes to improve the health of the population “... work is generally good for physical and mental health and well-being. Worklessness is associated with poorer physical and mental health and well-being” (Waddell and Burton, 2008).

It is important to remember most people who have returned to work after a period of unemployment say they wish someone had talked to them earlier about the support that is available.

An outcome of the review of the Healthy Working Lives Strategy, Health Works (December 2009), is that the NHS include work as part of patient care plans. The review also identifies the need for effective linkages between health and employability services locally to help support people with health barriers to remain in or return to work. One of the actions will be to “*promote the adoption of good practice and learning from the Lanarkshire Employability Test Site to NHS Boards and local authorities in the rest of Scotland*”.

Of those who had
entered employment:

77

% had
improved
physical health

Source:
Glasgow University (2008)

What conditions benefit from linking health and employability?

Many participants on health related benefits can go for long periods without contact with employability services, and without encouragement to think about the possibility of moving into work (Training and Employment Research Unit, University of Glasgow, 2010). Failure to consider the employability potential of participants could mean that they miss out on the benefits that work can provide including:

- improved self-esteem
- improved general and mental health

Groups and organisations including disability groups, employers, and unions believe that where the health condition permits, sick and disabled people should be encouraged and supported to remain in, or to re-enter work as soon as possible because it:

- is therapeutic;
- helps to promote recovery and rehabilitation;
- leads to better health outcomes;
- minimises the harmful physical, mental and social effects of:
 - long term sickness absence;
- reduces the risk of long-term incapacity;
- promotes full participation in society, independence and human rights;
- reduces poverty;
- improves quality of life and well-being.

Of those who had
entered employment:

66 % had
**improved
vitality**

Source:
Glasgow University (2008)

Making referral easy

All you have to do is telephone the Equally Well free phone service on 0800 141 2865.

What happens next?

Incoming calls are connected to one of the Healthy Working Lives team at Salus Occupational Health and Safety where some brief information is recorded and, if appropriate, the participant will be provided with health related work advice along with generic guidance regarding returning to the workplace following an illness/ health condition via one of the team's Occupational Health Nurses.

Participants will be offered the option of being connected to an appropriate local Employment Service to support them to explore the possibility of returning to work, further education, training or volunteering through a variety of support channels.

Participants progress

Part of the activities of the local Test Site is to track participants progress towards the world of work. Milestones achieved as part of the participants journey towards becoming job ready can be feedback through local evaluation to each referring organisation.

Appendix 1

Sonia's story

Sonia has overcome her barriers of returning to work with the support of Routes to Work South and would encourage others to seek support from local employment agencies to consider what options are available for them.

“I panicked and thought I've not worked for many years and I just thought I couldn't even go to an interview. I had been seeing a woman from Salus because my confidence was very low. It does help a lot just to know somebody's behind you, it shows you just a different way to your life from what you've been doing. It makes you a bit more ambitious as well it makes you think I want to do this and this is the route I want to go down. It opens the doors for you and makes your realise that even if this doesn't work out, there's other ways to go as well. It does help a lot just to know somebody's behind you, it shows you just a different way to your life from what you've been doing. It is good for you to be out there and doing something, proving yourself to yourself more than to anyone else, just giving you self worth.”

To hear more about Sonia's story visit: <http://bit.ly/ggoUvr>

**“ . . . it opens
the doors for
you . . . ”**

Useful information sources

Awareness/training for front line staff

For details of awareness and training sessions or further information about the local Test Site please contact Lesley MacKay on: phone (01698) 454726 or email: lesley.mackay@southlanarkshire.gov.uk

Toolkits

Frontline workers toolkit for non-employability staff can be accessed at: www.employabilityinscotland.com/frontlineworkerstoolkitfornon-employabilityst.aspx (Toolkit developed by Glasgow University's Training and Employment Research Unit)

Health and Employability Training Pack (NHS Scotland)

The aim of the training is to raise awareness of the links between health and employability and to explore with healthcare staff ways of incorporating this into practice for the benefit of their patients/clients and to promote employability as a health improvement topic. For further information contact NHS Education Scotland. The pack is available to download at: www.employabilityinscotland.com/employabilitytrainingforhealthprofessionals.aspx

Evaluation

For further information on the local evaluation contact David Wharrie on: phone 08452 300323 or email david.wharrie@lanarkshire.scot.nhs.uk

Community of Practice listing of local Employability Agencies

Scottish Group: Employability in South Lanarkshire visit: www.communities.idea.gov.uk/welcome.do

Support your participants health and employability needs by calling 0800 141 2865

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For more information or if you want this information in a different format or language, please contact the South Lanarkshire Works 4 U team on 01698 454726 or email lesley.mackay@southlanarkshire.gov.uk