

## **Work and recovery**

**Facilitated by Caroline Bamford, John Blanchard, Roy Bell and Peter Donachie, workers and service users from Leeds Mental Health Employment Consortium.**

An interactive workshop discussing what we mean by work, why it is so important and how it can promote recovery. The session will include discussion around best practice, barriers to work and interventions to reduce these.

The workshop focused on identifying key barriers in moving to employment and on steps that can be taken to overcome these barriers.

- **Barriers**
  - Financial implications of moving from benefits to employment. Comment made that working tax credits have helped in this respect. One of the difficulties is the uncertainty of employment – how long will it last?
  - Stigma and discrimination. Worries about disclosing mental health issues to an employer. However if this is not disclosed how will an employee be able to get the right kind of support? The effect a diagnosis or label can have on a person's confidence – which may make it harder to move towards employment. The effect of unsuccessful applications on confidence
  - Problems of dealing with the social side of being at work
  - Problems relating to sleep patterns and the need to get up and arrive at the right time for work
  - Not enough support once in employment. People not aware of what support may be available
  - Fluctuating health and expectations of employers
  - The impact of sickness absence policies
  - Not enough volunteering and work experience places available. Can be too big a step to go straight into employment.
  
- **Overcoming barriers**
  - Building confidence e.g. through assertiveness courses
  - Provision of mental health awareness training for employers and employees
  - Ensuring the right kind of support is available e.g. through the Leeds STEP project. Helping people to get “job-ready”
  - Ensuring the approach is person-centred and that there is a clear pathway to employment
  - Getting more employers on board – e.g. through initiatives such as the “Mindful Employer” [www.mindfulemployer.net](http://www.mindfulemployer.net)

- Provision of training on benefits and debt issues for mental health staff
- New website will be available from April [www.employmentleeds.org.uk](http://www.employmentleeds.org.uk) which will provide information on 150 organisations providing relevant services
- “Shift” Government anti-stigma campaign
- Useful leaflets on “Permitted Work” and “Access to Work” available from Job Centres.