

Wellways practice framework: Employment

People with mental health issues want to work. Employment offers a valued social role, provides social and economic benefits, and is a potent enabler of recovery. However, few people with mental health issues, particularly those with a psychotic disorder, are engaged in paid work. The Survey of High Impact Psychosis reported that only 21.5% of people with psychotic disorders were in paid employment, with most in part-time or casual roles¹. We know that serious mental illness impacts on people's educational and vocational opportunities, and that stigma held by employers, health professionals and the community contributes to low employment rates.

1.1 Wellways employment principles

Wellways believes all people with mental health issues can work when provided with the right support in finding and keeping a job. Helping people identify and realise their employment aspirations is a key component of all our programs. We focus on:

- helping people find work that is fairly paid and reflects their interest and skills
- assisting people in developing skills and supportive networks to help them keep their job
- engaging employers, families and friends in supporting people with mental health issues in work

1.2 Evidence base for Wellways employment approach

There is a well-established evidence base supporting the Individual Placement and Support (IPS) model as the most effective approach to helping people find and keep a job².

This model:

- aims to assist people into competitive employment
- is open to all those who want to work
- tries to find jobs consistent with people's preferences
- works quickly
- brings employment specialists into clinical teams
- sees employment specialists develop relationships with employers based upon a person's work preferences
- provides time unlimited, individualised support for the person and their employer
- includes benefits counseling³.

There is evidence that employment outcomes, particularly tenure, are improved when natural supports are engaged to assist the person to find and keep a job, and supported education is provided to support and build job skills^{4,5}.

¹ Morgan, VA, et al. (2011). People living with psychotic illness 2010: Report on the second national survey. Australian Government.

² Bond, GR, et al. (2008). An update on randomised controlled trials of evidence based Supported Employment. *Psychiatric Rehabilitation*, 31, pp.280-290.

³ <http://www.dartmouth.edu/~ips/page29/page31/page31.html>

⁴ Roberts, MM, et al. (2010). A study on the impact of social support development on job acquisition and retention among people with psychiatric disabilities. *Journal of Vocational rehabilitation*, 33, pp.203-207.

⁵ Murphy, AA, et al. (2005). Enhancing Individual Placement and Support: Promoting job tenure by integrating natural supports and supported education. *American Journal of Psychiatric Rehabilitation*, 8, pp37-61.

1.3 Features of the Wellways employment approach

Wellways works with people to:

- identify work aspirations
- identify and activate social networks that will help the person secure and keep a job
- engage with employment services that utilise the IPS model and can help in finding work
- support people in career progression.

As peer-led strategies are particularly effective in supporting recovery, they will be used to assist people to develop, plan for, and realise their employment aspirations.

Wellways works with employers to provide education about mental health issues creating a supportive workplace.

Wellways provides education and assistance for families and supports to enable them to be positive contributors to their loved one's working life.

Community Recovery Model

People affected by mental health issues have the right to create a good life by making a home, engaging in meaningful work or learning, and building good relationships with friends, family and people in their community.

The Wellway's Community Recovery Model recognises that real and lasting recovery does not occur in isolation, and can be best achieved by working at three levels to:

- promote recovery and positive change for people with mental health issues
- assist families and friends in building resilience
- create welcoming communities.

