

REPORT ON THE COMPARISON OF THE AVAILABLE STRATEGIES FOR PROFESSIONAL INTEGRATION AND REINTEGRATION OF PERSONS WITH CHRONIC DISEASES AND MENTAL HEALTH ISSUES

BASED ON FIVE CATEGORIES OF SOCIAL WELFARE MODELS IN EUROPE

United Kingdom: country report

Main legislative frameworks on chronic diseases, mental health and employment

The legislation on employment activation and support cover persons with (chronic) illnesses and disabilities if these conditions affect the ability to work. Different rules apply in the Northern Ireland.

Main legislative frameworks on disability and employment

- Equality Act 2010
- UNCRPD ratified on 8 June 2009

Policy provisions on mainstream and specialist employment programmes

Jobcentre Plus is a PES run by the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) that provides mainstream employment support to jobseekers. DWP has the Universal Jobmatch portal for vacancies www.jobsearch.direct.gov.uk and Jobcentre job coaches can provide information about available services and integration programmes. There is also a possibility to join Work Clubs (run by local organisations like employers and community groups), which allow unemployed persons to share knowledge, experience in job search etc.

For jobseekers with limited work capacity, assistance can be given by Disability Employment Advisers who can refer them to different specialised employment schemes and services run by private firms, social enterprises or NGOs. Such services include assistance in job search, career planning, vocational guidance, assessment of qualifications,

In order to facilitate the job search process for persons with impaired work capacities, a system has been put in place to label disability-friendly employers. Job announcements posted by companies

who are committed to employing persons with disabilities are marked with a “positive about disabled people” symbol (with 2 ticks).

Policy provisions on access to employment support

Under the Equality Act 2010, a person has a disability if she/he has a physical impairment or a mental health problem, and if the condition has a substantial and long-term (12 months and more) adverse impact on her/his ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities. Persons diagnosed with cancer or multiple sclerosis automatically meet the disability definition. Special rules also apply for impairments with recurring and fluctuating effects (e.g. rheumatoid arthritis, epilepsy, mental health conditions such as schizophrenia, bipolar affective disorder, and certain types of depression).

The focus of the assessment is not disability but the work capability. Work capability assessment is needed for determining eligibility for employment and support allowance (ESA). The assessment procedure is initiated by claimants following a self-declaring of a limitation in the capability to work. The DWP officers look at the information provided by the claimant and if it finds evidence of limitations in work capability, they send a questionnaire to the claimant to fill in. The questionnaire includes questions about the ability to complete different tasks. Following this, a face-to-face assessment can be required by a healthcare professional working for the Health Assessment Advisory Service, which is operated by an organisation delivering the assessment on behalf of the DWP. The assessment consists of two parts:

- 1) Limited capability for work assessment – evaluates the capability to carry out a range of activities (physical, mental, intellectual activities). A confirmed limited capability means that a person can receive the ESA.
- 2) Limited capability for work-related activity assessment – evaluates whether a claimant should undertake work-related activities to continue receiving the ESA. Based on this assessment, you can be placed in one of 2 groups:
 - Work-related activity group, where persons have regular work-focused interviews with an adviser and are required to comply with strict work-related conditions in order to continue receiving the benefit in full.
 - Support group, where there are no interviews with an adviser and no requirements to undertake work-related activities; the rate of ESA is higher in this case.

Policy provisions promoting stakeholder cooperation and integration of services

In the UK, Jobcentre Plus combines the tasks concerning employment services and benefits payments, thus reinforcing the coordination between benefits and work. In addition, the assessment of the working co-capacity involves different stakeholders: users (through self-declaration of limitations in work), healthcare professionals, and the Department of Work and Pensions. Services to employers are seen as important, but provisions on services to employers are less consistent and strong at national level. Service providers do work businesses and try to have a certain number of key accounts with whom they can work on strategic basis and on special programmes.

Policy provisions promoting persons-centred approach and individualised service provision

In the UK, individual responsibility is emphasized with regard to unemployment. Thus, the focus is made on the making effort towards an active participation in employment programmes and a quick return to work. Employment services are also individually tailored to the needs of (potential) employees and employers. Support is personalised at targeted at various barrier individuals face (barriers related to health conditions, perceptions of users and employers, secondary mental conditions, environmental barriers.)

Policy provisions on localised and accessible employment service provision

Jobcentre Plus, which is overseen by the DWP, delivers the functions of the PES in the UK and manages a network of local Job Centres that help unemployed people, including disabled people, to find jobs. Jobcentre Plus represents a centralised system of employment activation, but there has been a shift towards greater decentralisation through the granting of more freedom to local offices. Through local branches, Jobcentre Plus can provide services that are more suitable for local needs.

Example: Residential training for unemployed adults with disabilities can be delivered who do not have locally available training courses that suit their needs and can help them get a job, gain experience or become self-employed. There are 9 providers of residential training in England.

The UK has been actively engaged in the marketization of employment activation services. As mentioned earlier, high priority has given to the development of social enterprises that operated on competitive and financially sustainable basis. In addition, in 2015, a large employment service, Remploy, exited from government ownership and entered the private sector. As a private entity, Remploy provides services to state employment service Jobcentre Plus or to local authorities. This

has lessened the control of the government over employment services to persons with support needs and gave a competitive feature to the sector.

Employment support in the open labour market

Different programmes are available for supporting employment in the open labour market:

- **Work Programme** provides mainstream employment scheme that provides support, work experience and training for up to 2 years to help people find and stay in work.
- **Work Choice Programme** is a specialised employment support aimed at helping:
 - Persons with a recognised disability under the Equality Act 2010 to get or keep a job though individually tailored supports that can include training and skills development, interview coaching, confidence building.
 - Employers to hire or keep a disabled person who requires special support.

Work Choice is delivered by various organisations from the public, private and non-profit sectors. These providers are tasked to develop a package of support specially tailored for businesses and the individuals with the aim of developing their skills (e.g. Remploy, which delivers Work Choice nationally, and national charity Shaw Trust).

- **Access to Work grant** - can be used for paying for practical support for persons with a disability, health or mental health condition in starting to work, staying in work or moving into self-employment or entrepreneurship. It can be used for adaptations to equipment, special equipment, travel arrangement, a support worker or job coach, a support service per persons with a mental health issues, disability awareness training for staff, a communicator at a job interview, and the cost of moving equipment. As of October 2015, the Access to Work grants are capped at GBP 40,800 per year.
- **Sector-based work academies** provide training and internships for up to 6 weeks in a particular industry or area of work. Such academies may offer a guaranteed interview for a job or an apprenticeship.

Protection and privileges:

The dismissal is considered fair if the employee cannot do their job due to a long-term illness because there are no reasonable adjustments that can be made, even if the employee is disabled.

Flexible labour market in recruitment and dismissal is a characteristic of the UK system.

Employment support through Social enterprises or social cooperatives

The social enterprise sector is very diverse in the UK and its development has been high on the national agenda. Social enterprises take various forms but the main focus of such businesses should be put on social purposes and a reinvestment of profits into the social objective of the business and the benefit of the community.

UK social enterprises focus on different sectors and social purposes, including the purpose of integrating vulnerable groups and persons with disabilities into the labour market. One example is social firms. These are businesses that provide jobs or training opportunities for people at risk of labour market discrimination. Social firms can be focused on employment (creating real jobs), on employability (providing work experience, training, or coaching) or both. For example, PLUSS (www.pluss.org.uk), one of the largest social firms in the UK, directly employs persons with disabilities and long-term health conditions, and runs employment operations that provide in job seeking to persons with special needs.

The UK Government has introduced the Social investment tax relief to encourage financing and support to social enterprises. Individuals who make eligible investments in social enterprises can have 30% of the cost of the investment deducted from the income tax liability (the investment must be held for a minimum period of 3 years for the relief to be retained).

In addition, an independent financial institution, Big Society Capital, has been created to make social investment available for social enterprises.

Employment support through sheltered work

In 2012, the UK Government withdrew funding from segregated sheltered workshops in favour of developing social enterprises instead. Many sheltered workshops that were run by then-government agency Remploy were closed down or taken over by other entities focused on social entrepreneurship.

Incentives for persons with NCDs to participate in activation programmes

Jobseeker's Allowance can be paid to persons to help them when they look for a job. In order to receive the benefit, a person has to go to an interview at a local Jobcentre Plus office and fulfil the agreement to look for a job.

Persons (employed, self-employed, unemployed or student on Disability Living Allowance) with an illness or disability that affects their ability to work can apply for the ESA. The allowance is not paid if a Work Capability Assessment finds that a person is capable of doing some work.

The ESA can be compatible with so-called “permitted work,” i.e. a work that generates income not exceeding GBP 20 a week or a work for less than 16 hours a week and income of up to GBP 115.50 a week, for 52 weeks or less (or for any length of time if a person is in the support group). In addition the ESA can be compatible with “supported permitted work,” which is a work, with an income of up to GBP 115.50 a week, that is part of a treatment programme, or supervised by someone from a local council or voluntary organisation whose job it is to arrange work for disabled people.

Financial incentives for employers to recruit/retain persons with NCDs

UK employers do not receive direct financial incentives in a form of wage subsidies or tax reductions for hiring persons with disabilities.

According an official of employment service provider Remploy, wage subsidies can be harmful as they send a wider message that persons with disabilities are not capable of working and therefore an additional compensation needs to be paid to incentivise employers. For this reason, money would be better spent on supports for employment.

Non-financial incentives for employers to recruit/retain persons with NCDs

Disability Confident Campaign is a government-backed initiative, through which employers can commit to become Disability Confident. Becoming Disability Confident entails hiring and retaining people with disabilities or with health conditions for their skills and talent. The aim of the campaign is to challenge stigma against disability in employment, raise awareness and remove barriers in employment.

With the absence of financial incentives for employers to hire persons with impaired working capacity, agencies handling the work placement of these groups rather rely on making a “business case” when dealing with employers, in other words, they provide business arguments in order to encourage employers to recruitment their clients. For example, some of arguments used by Remploy are:

- Reduced staff turnover as persons with impaired work capacity tend to stay longer and prefer greater stability;

- Access to a big pool of disability talent;
- Having a diverse workforce that reflects the community they serve (persons with user experience can help businesses better meet disabled customer's needs and thus expand the customer base).

Duties of persons with NCDs

- Jobseeker's Allowance is conditional on participation in job activation measures.
- ESA is conditional on participation in job activation measures when persons are required to participate in work-related activities following a Work capability assessment.

Duties of employers

There is no quota system.

General and specialised employment services for persons with NCDs

- Under the Work Choice Programme, persons with long-term health conditions who are looking for a job or are trying to keep one can get support for training and development of skills. The services are contracted from private, public or non-profit sectors.
- Sector-based work academies provide training and internships for up to 6 weeks in a particular industry or area of work. Such academies may offer a guaranteed interview for a job or an apprenticeship.
- Fit for Work provides the services of occupational health professionals to employers in England and Wales who have employees that have been, or are likely to be, off work due to sickness for four weeks or more. Following the referral to Fit for Work by an employer and a consent from an employee, the employee is contacted by an occupational health professional for an in-depth consultation that looks into health-related, work-related and personal issues that might be preventing a return to work. After that, a personalised Return to Work Plan can be developed. This service allows small and medium companies that do not have occupational health professionals to fill in this gap.

Mental health:

- Rethink Mental Illness provides employment and training services to people with severe mental conditions with an aim of accessing/retain jobs, regaining self-confidence and

independence. The organisation is part of a partnership implementing IPS services to persons with disabilities.

Cancer:

Shaw Trust provides work support for persons with cancer through a service model that is based on three levels: 1) providing basic information, 2) assessing the patient and 3) implementing a personalised plan. The service is based on cooperation between stakeholders involved in the care process (health centres, employers, employment services, local authorities and families). Specialised services include advice on careers and dealing with colleagues, specialised guidance to manage a condition, training for employers and families, advice on employment rights and adjustments to work, assistance with return-to-work plans and mediation of disagreement.