

Introduction to Working with Customers with a Mental Health Condition

Topic 04 – Roles & Responsibilities

May 2014

Time

Approximately 1 hour.

Objectives

At the end of this topic learners will be able to:

- state the responsibilities of their job role when working with a customer with a mental health condition
- outline the roles of the Work Psychologists and the DEA
- state their responsibilities under the Equality Act 2010; and
- state the rules around disclosure.

Learning Points

This event will cover the following learning points:

- Responsibilities of Jobcentre Plus staff
- Colleagues who can offer support
- The Equality Act 2010
- Disclosure.

Support Material

- Handout 04.01 – The Equality Act 2010.

Validation

This topic will be validated through question and answer, discussion and group activities.

Method of Delivery

This topic is facilitator led. It also uses discussion.

Introduction

We all have responsibilities to Jobcentre Plus, to the customers and to ourselves. In this topic we will be considering the responsibilities of your role and the roles of others who can help you when working with customers with a mental health condition.

Your Responsibilities



Ask the group to work individually for this activity. They need to consider the responsibilities of their job role.

Have two flips prepared, one entitled “It is your responsibility to”, the other “It is not your responsibility to”

Ask the group to write on post-it notes two or three things that are their responsibility when working with people with a mental health condition, and two or three things that are not their responsibility. They should then put their post-its on the relevant flip.

Remind learners we are looking for the ‘what’ here, ie what you should do, not how you should do it. We will be looking at the ‘how’ later in this event.

Allow 15 - 20 minutes for this activity, including time for the learners to read each other’s post-it notes.



When the activity is completed, bring the group back together and discuss what is written on each of the post-its and whether it is on the right flip.



Responses should include:

It is your responsibility to:

- carry out your job role effectively (i.e. apply the rules around availability, actively seeking etc.)
- provide the best possible service to the customer
- signpost the customer to websites, groups and/or organisations which can support them, where appropriate
- maintain a professional distance
- listen to what the customer tells you – they are the expert on their condition and circumstances
- if necessary, consult others, for example the DEA or Work Psychologist in your district for advice; and
- respect the customer's wishes on disclosure.



It is not your responsibility to:

- try to 'diagnose' the condition
- assume knowledge of the condition – even if you know someone personally with that condition, it may affect each individual differently
- make assumptions about what the customer can and cannot do; or
- try to solve or get too wrapped up in the customer's problems.

You have responsibilities to the customer and to Jobcentre Plus, but you also have a responsibility to yourself.

You must remember you are not a social worker or a medical expert – becoming too wrapped up in the customer's problems and difficulties can cause you stress and distress.

You have to maintain a sympathetic and professional distance simply to protect yourself.

Work Psychologists

Within Jobcentre Plus, Work Psychologists work with both customers and staff. They help customers who have a health condition or disability to find and keep work through the use of psychological interventions.

They also support Work Coaches and their managers in how to engage with customers and help those customers who have complex needs to help them identify progression.

Disability Employment Advisers (DEA)

Disability Employment Advisers provide specialist support to a diverse range of customers who may need help finding work, because of the severity or complexity of their disability,

They also offer assistance to employers and employees to enable people with disabilities who may be at risk of losing their job.

Mental Health & Well-being Partnership Managers

This role has been introduced to strengthen the support for JSA claimants with mental health conditions, and in particular, those customers leaving ESA to claim JSA.

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There is a Mental Health & Well-being Partnership Manager in each district. Their role:

- directly supports the work of Work Coaches to place unemployed claimants with mental health conditions into work
- ensures Work Coaches are knowledgeable about the local support available to claimants with a mental health condition; and
- improves the flow of mental health support information to and from Jobcentre Plus.



The learners should talk to their line manager about how the Work Psychologist and Mental Health & Well-being Partnership Manager can support them locally, how to contact them etc.

They should note this on their Action Plan.

The Equality Act 2010

The Equality Act 2010 (EA) replaces the Disability Discrimination Act 1995, which introduced certain rights for disabled people both in employment and in the provision of goods and services.

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All Jobcentre Plus staff have a duty to comply with the legal requirements of the Equality Act 2010 and have a duty not to discriminate against disabled people.

That means they must have equal access to all the services Jobcentre Plus provides and, where necessary, reasonable adjustments must be made to ensure that this is the case.

A person is protected under the EA if they meet the Act's definition of disability.

The Act says that a person has a disability if they have a physical or mental impairment which has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on their ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities.

For the purposes of the definition:

- 'substantial' means more than trivial or minor ; and
- 'long term' means that the effect of the impairment has lasted for at least 12 months; is likely to last for at least 12 months; or is likely to last for the rest of the person's life.



Issue Handout 04.01 – The Equality Act.

Disclosure

In some circumstances, the question may arise as to whether you should disclose details of a medical or mental health condition to a third party, such as a prospective employer.



Does anyone know what the guidance is around disclosure?



You must not disclose any medical information to third party, such as an employer, without the customer's permission.

Staff must always be honest and straightforward when contacting an employer.

However, if you wish to introduce the health condition or disability to a potential employer you need the customer's permission to do so.



The learners should note on their Action Plan to check with their manager about local guidelines on obtaining permission from customers.

The customer needs to clearly understand the advantages and disadvantages of disclosure and non-disclosure. They should not be made to feel that they will be forced to disclose information.

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Deciding whether to tell a potential employer about a health condition or disability and when and how to do so is a complex issue.

The customer needs to be aware of their rights under relevant legislation, particularly the Equality Act, and to make an informed decision about disclosure.



Why might a customer choose not to disclose their mental health condition?



They may:

- feel their health condition or disability is not relevant to the job
- fear issues relating to their health condition or disability may form part of the employer's initial assessment
- feel that disclosure will mean that the employer will focus on this rather than their abilities
- fear employers have unrealistic perceptions of people with a health condition or disability (particularly health and safety issues)
- not want to be unfairly stereotyped.

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Make sure the customer knows that if at any stage in the selection process they are asked an appropriate direct question about a health condition or disability they must answer honestly.



What might be the advantages of disclosing details of a mental health condition?



- The skills developed as a result of overcoming the impact of a health condition or disability can demonstrate a customer's determination and suitability for the job
- The evidence the customer provides can demonstrate their skills and may dispel the misconception that their condition is potentially problematic
- The employer would already be aware of the health condition or disability and the interview can concentrate on the customer's skills for the job
- If support is required at an interview this can be provided so that the customer can perform at their full potential during the interview.

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However, where the employer is positive about employing people with a disability or where the health condition or disability is put into perspective for the employer, they are less likely to see the health condition as a barrier.

Summary

In this topic we have:

- discussed our responsibilities when working with a customer who has a mental health condition
- learned about the Equality Act
- discussed the rules around disclosure; and
- explained why the customer may choose to disclose or not to disclose a mental health condition to a potential employer.



Ask the learners if they have any questions before moving on to the next topic.

End of Topic