
DISABILITY EMPLOYMENT SERVICES MODEL

ORYGEN SUBMISSION



ABOUT THIS SUBMISSION

Orygen is the world's leading research and knowledge translation organisation focusing on mental ill-health in young people. At Orygen, our leadership and staff work to deliver cutting-edge research, policy development, innovative clinical services, and evidence-based training and education to ensure that there is continuous improvement in the treatments and care provided to young people experiencing mental ill-health.

Orygen conducts clinical research, runs clinical services (five headspace centres), supports the professional development of the youth mental health workforce and provides policy advice relating to young people's mental health. Our current research strengths include: early psychosis, mood disorders, personality disorders, functional recovery, suicide prevention, online interventions, neurobiology and health economics.

Orygen welcomes the development of a new Disability Employment Services model, particularly where this new model provides an opportunity to improve employment outcomes for young people experiencing mental ill-health.

This submission continues Orygen's engagement with the development and improvement of policy initiatives to support improved employment outcomes for young people with mental ill-health. In addition to this high level response to the discussion topics identified in the consultation paper, Orygen can provide further detail to department staff and ministerial advisers on request.

OVERVIEW

Compared to their peers, young people with mental illness are nearly twice as likely not to be in education, employment or training (NEET). (O'Dea, Glozier et al. 2014) For young job seekers experiencing mental ill-health there are a number of barriers that make finding work more difficult. Many are reluctant to disclose their illness and they may have lower levels of educational attainment and interrupted work histories.

Employment services for young people experiencing mental illness can be difficult to access and they are rarely coordinated with or integrated into mental health service delivery. They may be provided through: a) disability employment services and programs (however young people may not identify their mental ill-health as a disability); or b) employment services targeted at the general community which apply a generic approach to employment support and are not able to tailor supports to young people with specific needs related to their mental health. The means many of these young people will miss out on services and assistance to support them into and during employment.

The long-term success of employment support services for young people experiencing mental ill-health is dependent on the investment in a young person's own capacity to find employment and their employment related skills. Effective employment services include accessing training and education, connecting young people to broader psychosocial support and developing job ready skills. This person-centred approach recognises that developing a young person's skills and preparing them for employment is the foundation for finding employment and building career success. A suite of support services is required to meet the different contexts individual young people will experience. While disability may be one aspect of a young person's individual context they will have a range of other

REVOLUTION IN MIND

strengths, qualities, needs and goals that will determine the make-up of the support services they would benefit from.

Individual Placement and Support (IPS) is an evidence-based model for supporting young people experiencing mental ill-health into employment.(Orygen 2021) The IPS model recognises the diversity among young people and the need to tailor support. This model provides a new approach for disability employment services for young people.

YOUNG PEOPLE

There are existing programs and roles that provide appropriate and effective support a successful transition from education into work. This support requirement is specific to young people. Providing specific youth employment services would also enable support to be tailored to the transition from education to employment. For example, IPS services embedded in youth mental health services are provided to 25 years of age. Youth mental health service models (e.g. headspace) are people aged between 12 and 25 years because a majority of lifetime mental ill-health has its onset within this period.(Kessler, Amminger et al. 2007)

With additional time, Orygen could engage young people to provide insights into their experiences of employment service providers, including young people participating in IPS programs. Irrespective of the implementation timeframes for the new Disability Employment Services model, input from young people's experience would inform program evaluation and enable a dynamic, iterative approach to continuous improvement. Partnership with young people and the insights they can provide would support the trialling of new initiatives for youth employment services identified in this submission.

WHO SHOULD HAVE ACCESS

All young people should have access to employment services if they think they need them. Employment services need to be equipped to meet a range of support needs and provide training and employment opportunities suited to a young person's strengths, aptitudes and interest. Access to employment services should not be limited or restricted.

Within a disability employment services model a consistent definition of disability is required that recognises the breadth of young people's possible context. Consideration also needs to be given to the barrier the term 'disability' in service branding and awareness materials might be for young people. Young people experiencing mental ill-health may not identify with this term and potentially find it stigmatising.

The type and severity of disability a young person lives with should not be a barrier to access. For example, young people experiencing mild-moderate mental ill-health should have the option of accessing disability employment services if they think this would be the best support option for them. However, to enable access employment services need to be acceptable to young people and not contribute to perceptions of stigmatisation.

SIMPLIFYING ENTRY

A youth employment service model in which disability support services were one component would simplify entry for young people. Providing qualified career practitioners experienced in supporting young people with disability within a broader youth service would remove barriers related to stigma and centre support to the common needs of young people rather than limiting entry and service focus. Alternatively, disability employment service funding could include expanded IPS services within youth mental health services.

Young people can find it 'stressful or difficult' to disclose mental ill-health to disability employment service assessors.(Boston Consulting Group 2020) Entry for young people experiencing mental ill-

health would be simplified by enabling a young person's clinical team to complete employment service assessments. This would save a young person having to (re)explain their situation.

While it has been recommended that assessment guidelines be extended to include specificity for mental health,(Boston Consulting Group 2020) having assessments completed by mental health services would provide access to specific knowledge and expertise. If a young person is not engaged with mental health services, the option to have a mental health service complete their assessment should be an option. To enable this option collaborative partnerships should be established between employment services and community-based primary and specialist mental health services.

MOST HELPFUL SUPPORT

The most helpful support with finding employment is one which is tailored to the young person. One-size-fits-all employment services programs cannot align with a young person's 'individual talents, strengths, needs and goals.'(Thies, Warr et al. 2021) In most cases, a young person would likely benefit from a personalised mix of services, something that few employment services have the size or scope to provide. The most helpful service model is one that provides an integrated service experience.

There are working examples of employment services and roles that can help young people find suitable employment and career progression. Specific programs and roles include IPS programs and roles for lived experience vocational peer workers and qualified career practitioners with experience and training in providing support to young people experiencing mental ill-health. Additional options for include social enterprises with employment programs, integrated service models and work-like activities.

INDIVIDUAL PLACEMENT AND SUPPORT

The IPS model supports young people to find an appropriate placement for their context and career goals, supporting them to find appropriate, meaningful employment not just a job. The IPS model does not exclude anyone, considers a participant's preferences and provides time-unlimited, individualised support. The model incorporates rapid job searching within the competitive employment market and systematic job development for the participant.(Drake, Becker et al. 2019)

YOUTH VOCATIONAL PEER WORKERS

Young people seeking help to find employment can benefit from support from other young people, including those with a similar lived experience supports their engagement with support services. Youth vocational peer workers work collaboratively with employment service staff, such as career practitioners to support a young person's emotional and practical engagement with a program. Along with increased service engagement, peer support has been found to increase a young person's sense of hope.(Orygen 2021)

SOCIAL ENTERPRISES

The smaller, focused activities of social enterprises with employment service components are able to provide more bespoke support for young people. For example, a social enterprise café can provide training and work-like activities for young people interested in employment in the hospitality field. Small scale operations also enable closer working relationships between young people, other staff and management that can add to the quality of experience.

INTEGRATED SERVICES

An integrated service delivery approach enables a suite of services to be available to young people to support their employment objectives. How this support is structured can differ. Few employment services are large enough to provide psychosocial and welfare support in-house, an integrated service

approach enables these options to be available. This may include co-locating employment services with broader services (i.e. mental health, psychosocial, housing) to address employment barriers. Integrating complimentary social supports into employment programs for young people with disability and supporting interagency collaboration are both on the Brotherhood of St Laurence's list of the top ten strategies for improving employment outcomes.(Thies, Warr et al. 2021) To benefit from co-location and partnerships employment service staff will need training and support to navigate these systems and identifying who they should be contacting and appropriate programs and services.

WORK-LIKE ACTIVITIES

Work-like activities can develop work readiness skills and provide employment pathways for a young person. Activities the new Disability Employment Services model should consider including are: volunteering, work experience, pre-employment and job readiness training and education. The following activities should **not** be included: informal job clubs, CV and application letter writing groups, work for the dole, or time spent with employment services staff.

MEASURING SUCCESS

A focus on program delivery rather than individual performance is a more constructive approach to measuring service quality and informing funding decisions. An external fidelity review process monitors the implementation of a program rather than the compliance activities of individual staff, young people and employers. A fidelity focus recognises that the success of a program is reliant on providing a structure for achieving intended outcomes for young people and supporting staff in performing their roles. A program based review process also frees employment services staff (and participants) of onerous compliance activities, providing more time to focus on their core service delivery role.

As government's trial new initiatives to improve employment services for young people evaluations will be an important component to measure outcomes and inform future service models. Both the successes and shortcomings of past and existing approaches provide an evidence base for the new disability employment service model to be rolled out in 2022. Trialling new initiatives, such as an IPS informed approach for young people within the new model will provide a dynamism that will contribute to a continuous process of improvement.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

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