

Individual placement and support (IPS) employment service



“ Go for it – if you want to work, work! The employment specialist can help you achieve that. ”

“ I would recommend the IPS service to anyone. It may sound scary, but it really isn't. ”



Recovery stories

With **all of us** in mind.

As part of South West Yorkshire Partnership Foundation NHS Trust, our mission is to help people reach their potential and live well in their community. To fulfil this mission, alongside our Trust values and strategy, we strive to reach the highest possible standards in delivering compassionate, innovative and recovery-focused interventions.

Within the Trust, our individual placement and support (IPS) services believe that anyone can work, if the right kind of job and work environment can be found and the right support is provided. Our services across Calderdale, Kirklees and Wakefield support individuals who have experienced mental ill-health to find and sustain competitive paid employment. Our dedicated employment specialists help individuals who want to work to find jobs based on their preferences, offering individualised support for both the person and their employer.

Foreword

It is with great pleasure that I am able to introduce our individual placement and support service. Our Trust has a clear mission to help people reach their potential and live well in their community, and employment and occupation is a key part of this for many people who use our services. I am very proud that we are taking a lead role in providing individual placement and support within mental health in Wakefield, Kirklees and Calderdale districts, and that we are working in close partnership with South Yorkshire Housing Association who provide services in Barnsley.

Our individual placement and support services do everything they can to provide opportunities for work. They help people who are in contact with secondary mental health services to gain meaningful employment, stay in work and support those in work through times of distress. The stories in this booklet bring to life the fantastic work of the individual placement and support service and the difference it makes to people.

Finally, I would like to say a huge personal thank you to all those who have so generously shared their stories in this booklet. I am confident that in doing so you will inspire hope in others and give them ambition to move forward on their own journeys.

Darryl Thompson

Chief nurse / director of quality and professions

Research shows that getting back into employment can play a pivotal role in the recovery journey – providing purpose and structure, access to social networks as well improved mental wellbeing, self-esteem, and financial independence. For those who want it, paid employment in “good work” positively contributes to wellbeing, with the Royal College of Psychiatrists confirming that “supporting individuals to work, wherever possible, can positively contribute to the recovery of individuals who have mental health conditions”.

The stories in this booklet showcase how those accessing individual placement and support have rebuilt their lives despite facing various barriers, and recognise what has helped them in their return-to-work journey. Each is a personal account and expression of their journey and what employment means for them. Their recovery journey has been supported by their clinical team, their IPS employment specialist, their employers and with support along the way from family, friends and carers. Individuals accessing mental health services consistently tell us that they see getting a job as the key element to their recovery, improving wellbeing, and enhancing future opportunities in life.

Within IPS, we recognise the value and impact of enabling those accessing the service to share lived experiences and hope that these stories serve as a testament to the value of meaningful employment. Whether someone is at the beginning of their employment journey or facing a setback, hearing a recovery story from someone in a similar situation can promote hope and optimism regarding their future. Similarly, these stories highlight the hard work, commitment and dedication the individuals have demonstrated, which they can be proud to share with friends, family, carers and employers.

We would like to take this opportunity to say a big thank you to the people who have taken the time to share their stories, which we hope will be an inspiration to many others.

This booklet provides a summary of the personal experiences of individuals who have accessed South West Yorkshire Partnership NHS Foundation Trust individual placement and support services. Within the accounts, the individual's names have been changed to protect their identity.



Individual placement and support (IPS) aims to support people find competitive paid employment in line with their preferences. It uses a strength-based approach, personalised to each individual's needs, with time-unlimited follow-along support for both employee and their employer to help sustain this.

Individual placement and support is based on eight key principles set out below. The stories that follow highlight the value of each principle and how they complement one another to help people achieve their employment goals and aspirations.

Our support is delivered using eight core principles



We aim to get people into competitive employment



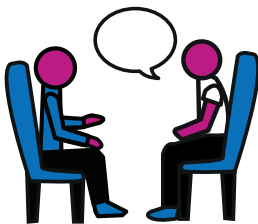
We are open to all those who want to work



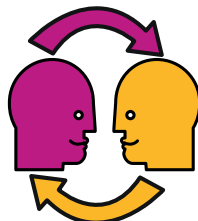
We try to find jobs consistent with people's preferences



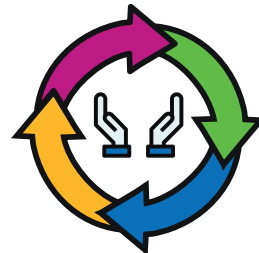
We work quickly - job search starts within four week



We bring employment specialists into clinical teams



Employment specialists develop relationships with employers based on a person's work preferences



We provide ongoing support for the person and their employer



Benefits counselling is included, so no one is worse off by participating

It aims to support people to find and sustain competitive employment

Hi, I like to be called Naz, I am 52-years-old and was referred to the IPS service by my psychiatric nurse. I meet with my nurse regularly and attend for a medication treatment. I informed my nurse that I had just been made redundant.

I first met with the employment specialist after I had been unemployed for a few weeks. The employment specialist explored my career history. I have had a lot of experience in a variety of areas such as kitchens, hotel work, hospital portering and care work and was looking for full-time roles.

Together we reviewed and updated my CV and uploaded the new version to my existing job search website account. The employment specialist provided support with online applications and any online assessments that were part of the recruitment process. As well as making online applications, the employment specialist circulated my CV and engaged with suitable employers to secure interviews and followed up any submitted applications.

The employment specialist had regular meetings with the local Job Centre Plus, where I was put forward for a Sector-Based Work Academy Programme (SWAP) at the local hospital in the catering and the domestics department. Whilst the SWAP was progressing, I also applied for a cleaning role at a care home.

The employment specialist supported me with preparing for an interview with a mock interview and interview tips. After receiving all the support, I attended the interview and was offered the cleaning role. I completed my induction, and was able to shadow another colleague before working independently. I am really looking forward with my recovery now and I hope this will allow me to continue to develop my self-esteem.

The employment specialist hasn't stopped supporting me now I am in work; we are now focussing on an Access to Work application for assistance with travel costs associated with my mental health condition and my travel to the role for my Sunday shifts.



It is open to all those who want to work

Emma, aged 44, has been diagnosed with bipolar affective disorder and is a survivor of domestic abuse. Currently, she experiences disruptive high and low moods, which have the capacity to change how she presents herself, from withdrawn and unresponsive through to overly active and energetic. She manages her condition using medication and is supported in continuing to manage this effectively by consultants within the community mental health team (CMHT). She has three grown children and has accepted intermittent support from various CMHTs since 2006.

Emma has worked in a variety of roles since leaving school, beginning her career in 1999 as an accounts assistant. Between 2000 and 2016, she bounced between roles in accounting and corporate finance, taking periodic breaks from employment that coincided with the birth of her children and relocation to Yorkshire. These breaks also came about as a result of the exhaustive impact of trying to maintain her mental wellbeing without a full understanding of her condition - which she found troublesome without a firm diagnosis or medication plan.

This would change in 2006 after the birth of her youngest daughter. Emma struggled to recover from a particularly difficult low period and received care from inpatient services, during which time she was diagnosed with post-natal psychosis. Recurring low mood and anxiety continued to trouble Emma for the following decade, exacerbated by housing troubles and substance use. She experienced a turbulent divorce that divided her three children and saw them briefly subject to a care order, and in 2014 a domestic dispute resulted in her taking an overdose.

Emma reconsidered her priorities in life constantly during this period, feeling lost and unable to find stability, taking on a wide variety of short-term jobs mainly through employment agencies. While she found a lot of these roles unfulfilling, she had fond

memories of her time as a support worker operating across three residential care homes, where she assisted service users with mental health issues, dementia, and learning or behavioural disorders.

Emma's fluctuating mental health problems peaked in August 2022 when, having recently fled a domestic abuse situation, she took up residence in temporary accommodation. Emma had acknowledged her problems with substances and had sought help to overcome withdrawals from heroin and cocaine use. However, the disruption to her routines and the trauma of her recent ordeal appeared to services to have caused a relapse in her mental health. Emma was admitted as an inpatient under the Mental Health Act.

Reflecting on how she felt when she was at her lowest point, Emma said "I felt like I was going to die while I was in seclusion. I was having lots of weird thoughts, and I remember literally feeling like I had died. I thought I was going to spend longer than I did in hospital; I was so poorly I couldn't possibly see a way out. I never thought I was going to get better."

After receiving support from a social worker embedded within her CMHT, Emma managed to begin addressing a whole host of housing and debt-related concerns, and this support extended to securing help in making applications for PIP and Universal Credit with Limited Capability for Work. Discussions around her income and expenses also prompted Emma's care coordinator to ask whether she felt ready to consider employment, and after reflecting on the successes she had previously enjoyed while in work, Emma consented to a referral to the IPS service. Her employment specialist made an introductory call on and scheduled her first vocational profiling appointment to take place at a local café where Emma felt comfortable.



Over the subsequent months, Emma and her employment specialist worked together to consider her work history, her key transferrable skills and how she would like to frame her mental health journey to her next employer. Emma was quick to identify her desire to work in a role where she could make a difference in people's lives and settled on a firm job goal of working within the care industry, specifically with people with mental health conditions. Emma's own lived experiences made this an issue very close to her heart, and this gave her the resolve to throw herself into making regular applications. She also found the courage to introduce herself to prospective employers and demonstrate through her curiosity and proactivity just how invested she was in their vacancies.

This determination to succeed paid off when Emma was invited to attend an interview for a position at a specialist mental health hospital, taking place the following day. Emma informed her employment specialist, and time was set aside the morning before she was due to meet with the recruiter for rapid interview preparation work, including training on situation-based questions, and effective journey planning. Emma attended her interview and was offered a position immediately.

Comprehensive pre-employment checks were required for the role, including DBS and references. Emma's employment specialist supported her in chasing references from past employers, and conducted a fresh "better off calculation" to determine her average household income with her proposed salary taken into consideration.

With all pre-employment checks completed, Emma began her induction at the hospital. She consistently reported being thrilled with being back in the workplace, and the process of learning new skills and procedures gave her a positive outlet for the excesses of energy she sometimes experiences as a result of her high periods. Emma made a partial disclosure of her mental health issues during her application and interview process, but during her training, she also made use of a more comprehensive disclosure statement prepared alongside her employment specialist to make some reasonable

adjustment recommendations to her HR team; specifically relating to balancing her medication needs and resultant fatigue against her work schedule. Managers and HR reps at the hospital have shown impressive respect for this disclosure and promised to work alongside Emma to find positive ways to balance her rota against her personal needs.

Considering what she believes to be her most impressive achievement so far, Emma said: "I think it is my whole journey really. Overcoming addiction and having the courage to get back out to work. Being able to manage on a daily basis with my bipolar and being able to recognise those triggers. I can now communicate these and express how I am feeling. I used to be really cagey about sharing this with people, but I feel like I've come a really long way."

Even now, Emma sometimes struggles to contemplate the enormity of what she has achieved and is surprised when others comment on the changes they have observed: "Just the other day, my doctor at my GP surgery talked to me about how far I have come and congratulated me!"

Emma continues to liaise with her employment specialist on a weekly basis to take part in a comprehensive follow-on support plan. As a result, she has been able to take advantage of additional support in arranging contact with the clinical team – specifically liaising with consultants within the CMHT to arrange medication reviews that take her new working commitments into consideration. She has also received signposting support to manage personal challenges presented by her need to offer support to her adult son, who is reporting mental wellbeing difficulties of his own.

When asked what she is most looking forward to for the future, Emma was quick to identify her long-term job goals: "I'm hoping to get funding through my employer to continue my career and train to become a mental health nurse." However, she was also mindful of the impact her journey to date has had on her personal life, allowing her to frame it in a much more positive way: "What I'm looking forward to most is really living, and not just existing."

It tries to find jobs consistent with people's preferences

Paul has a history of contact with mental health services and has had admissions to hospital in the past. He was referred to the IPS employment specialist by his health care professional.

He had previously spent over a year applying for various roles, attending job interviews but not being successful. This was having a detrimental effect on his mental health, and he identified this as a key stressor impacting on his wellbeing, confidence and loss of hope around employment.

The employment specialist focused on areas of paid employment that matched Paul's skills and preferences to identify more specific job roles. At times Paul struggled to remain hopeful, especially when an interview was postponed, expressing the view that he would never gain employment.

With support, coaching and encouragement around applications and job interviews, he was successful in being offered a support worker post which he was very happy with, allowing him the opportunity to work with individuals to maintain their independence through activity. Around the same time, Paul was also offered a position at a local university to undertake training to become a qualified nurse, which was his long-term career aspiration. His role as a support worker was just the beginning, as he was confident that this would provide him with positive work experience in preparation for starting university.

The employment specialist worked with Paul to help him prepare for his first days and weeks in the new post and offered ongoing support during this transition into work.

Paul continues to pursue his career goals and is now nearing the end of his nurse training, with confirmation of a qualified position at a local hospital.

Paul said: "When I first met the employment specialist, they filled me with optimism, that I can do and achieve my goals. I have worked with them, and they have supported

me, even in times where things have not gone the way I wanted and not helped my mental health, making me feel low. But the employment specialist has continued to work with me even when I felt that there was no light at the end of the tunnel. Now, I am due complete my nurse training in the next few months as well as continuing to work as a support worker. Throughout this I have continued to gain experiences and skills of caring for others and myself. The employment specialist was there every step of the way, and I am now coming out of the tunnel into the light and can see that there are plenty of opportunities for me out in the world, which is having a positive impact on my health.

"The service has given me the opportunity to develop relationships with others that offer a positive way to move forward with my life and being able to manage my health better – particularly knowing that the support is there now and continuing into my new career".



It works quickly

I'm Leena and I was referred to the employment specialist two months ago by my mental health professional with the community mental health team. My last role was in customer service, but I left this post in 2020 and had not worked since then.

The employment specialist helped me recognise that I had many transferrable skills and preferences, which led to us reviewing my CV. The employment specialist gave lots of feedback around how to highlight my skills and experiences, and areas for improvement including my personal statement, which needed to be a bit more concise. We created a cover letter to enhance my CV further, which gave me an opportunity to highlight my strengths to potential employers.

Throughout, the employment specialist was in constant contact with me. They advised me what they had seen in the job market, and who they had approached on my behalf, as I found out through the employment specialist that not all jobs are advertised online. The employment specialist was out speaking to and linking in with local employers to promote the IPS service, finding out about their business needs and identifying hidden vacancies that would match my transferable skills and experience. After a few weeks, my confidence was increasing after applying for roles independently.

I was offered a telephone interview with a well-known company that had a site in the local area. The employment specialist supported me through the application process and began sharing guidance around how to conduct myself in an interview and the sorts of questions I may get asked, with support on how to answer these. I completed the telephone interview and then received a further invite to an interview at the site itself with the manager.



We explored how going into the role would impact me financially. The employment specialist completed a calculation with me to show me that going into work would impact my benefits, but that loss would be picked up again with the money that I would be earning.

Before I went to the face-to-face interview, we explored sharing my mental health condition again. I had a lot of reservations about sharing this information with any employer. The employment specialist and I looked into the pros and cons of sharing this, and I was not made to feel that I had to share it – it was always my decision. It was helpful looking at the benefits of sharing even if it was just with the manager or the occupational health team. Although I found this difficult, we did find that the benefits were there and that sharing information may help with any reasonable adjustments that I may need, especially after being out of work for two years.

I attended the interview and was offered the role that day! Within three weeks, I had met with the employment specialist, they supported me when I needed it and got a job offer and a job start date all in such a short period of time.

Recently, our meetings have covered information about Access to Work and discussing how this could help provide support for my mental health condition within the workplace. We are also going to be focusing on what in-work support I may need. I know I will continue to have regular appointments with the employment specialist where I can discuss my experiences in my new job role. This will include discussions of any further help I feel I may need to ensure that I remain in employment. They can even support me with a toolkit called 'Surviving and thriving' which looks great and will help open more meaningful dialogue with my employer if I want to.

The employment specialist has given me "the kick up the bum" I needed on my journey back into paid employment.

Integrating employment specialists into clinical teams

My name is Andrew. I had recently returned to work following a period of absence due to my mental ill-health. Although my employer was supportive, I was interested in finding alternative employment due to a lack of job satisfaction with my current role.

The employment specialist contacted me the following day after my nurse discussed and made the referral. I met with the employment specialist to complete an initial appointment within that week and we discussed the support that they would provide. We had a few appointments, which focused on identifying my skills, experience, preferences, interests, and any potential support I may require. Collaboratively, we identified that I wanted to pursue a role that provided a sense of purpose due to finding my current work mundane. Despite knowing I wanted something different, I had not really thought about what this may be.

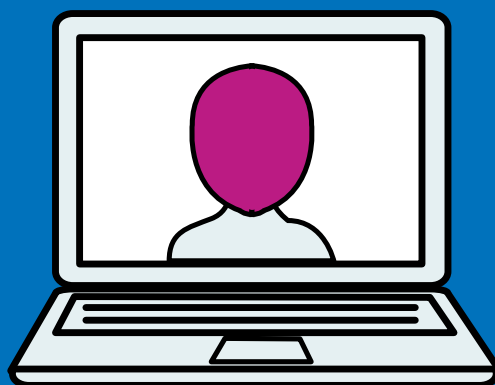
When covering what qualifications I had achieved, I shared that some of my qualifications had been obtained whilst in prison. I remembered whilst working towards some of my qualifications, a placement I completed linked to engineering, something I thoroughly enjoyed at the time. Together we reflected on my skills and qualifications, the time enjoyed working on placement, and recent experiences of a renovation project. It became clear; I had a passion for engineering.

We started job searching and the employment specialist found a position as an apprentice fabricator and welder. We discussed the possibility of the employment specialist approaching the employer to find out more. After speaking with the organisation, the employment specialist was able to explore the recruitment structure, query items relating to the person specification in relation to the skills and experience I have, and promote me as the perfect candidate for the position. The employment specialist was also able to share information about their role and the support

available in relation to recruitment and retention if I was to apply for the role and be successful in securing a job with them.

Given my offending history, discussions about sharing this information with the employer were understandably met with reluctance and anxiety and initially this was a deterrent for me pursuing such opportunities previously. I was worried about how I might be perceived by others. The employment specialist utilised his specialist skills, with resources available from NACRO, to help educate me around my rights, how to share information regarding my offending history and the benefits of sharing personal information regarding my mental health.

The employment specialist supported me to make a more informed decision and together, we prepared a positive disclosure statement for sharing this personal information. This was included in my application and closely linked to the company values about being open and honest.



Once the application was submitted, I was invited for an initial video interview however I had trouble accessing this. I was resigned to thinking "This is just not working out", possibly due to my own self-beliefs and reduced self-esteem. However, the employment specialist liaised with recruitment to advocate for me with my consent and the issue was addressed. The employment specialist adapted their support focussing on interview preparation and job coaching.

I completed the video interview and found out that I was successful with the initial interview and had progressed to a face-to-face interview which recently took place. We are currently waiting for the outcome with our fingers crossed. If I am not successful, I know now that I have the confidence in being able to share my past with people and that this is what makes me unique and an ideal candidate for any role that I do.

Feedback from the care coordinator: "The employment specialist kept me involved every step of the way, providing updates and attending the team meetings. The referral process and access to support was quick and easy. The employment specialist highlighted the individual's qualifications and picked up on his interests which led to the focus on the job he has applied for. I believe without the IPS support to build his confidence and prepare for work; he would not have gone for this job in the first place".

*This story was written jointly by Andrew and his employment specialist.



Employment specialists develop relationships with employers based upon a person's work preferences

Hello, I'm Jenny. After recovering from difficulties with depression and substance use related symptoms, I needed support in getting back on track and improving my quality of life.

At this point I was very confused and had no idea where to begin. My nurse told me about the IPS service, and I agreed to meet with the employment specialist to discuss what support they could offer me. Coming out from hospital made me aware of how difficult it was getting back into employment and getting on with my daily routine. The employment specialist met with me in my local area, in places ranging from local coffee shops to the library, where they sat with me and helped draw up an action plan of what I wanted to do.

We would meet up to plan out what my next steps would be. I was offered a full range of support with building up a good CV, composing cover letters, filling in application forms and even with mock interviews. I was out of work for over 10 years and needed support in approaching employers. The employment specialist accompanied me as I

handed CVs out to local employers. Meeting with these employers face-to-face really helped me feel comfortable in approaching people. I continued to build confidence and took up a course that interested me. I started to feel that my life had some normality again. The employment specialist offered support and guidance to local employers to help break down any barriers to enable me to return to work.

I was able to travel and meet new people on my own which really made me proud. The employment specialist helped in finding current vacancies, both those that were advertised on websites and also those that employers did not advertise which we would apply for together. I was offered all the help I could use and felt that the support I received really helped me gain my confidence back and helped me successfully find employment.

Currently I am employed and feel I could not have come this far without the support and encouragement I received from the employment specialist.



It provides time-unlimited, individualised support for the person and their employer

I'm Helen, I have autism and an eating disorder. Whilst waiting for some support to start, I contacted my mental health team and explained that I needed support sooner and that my current work situation was having a negative impact on my mental health. They advised me that there was an IPS service who could help me find another job if I wanted to. I was referred to the IPS service and the employment specialist contacted me within a few hours of me speaking to the referrer.

I was shocked how quickly the employment specialist had contacted me and what support was on offer. They explained that the service supports people regardless of any diagnosis, and that the support would be tailored to me and my choices.

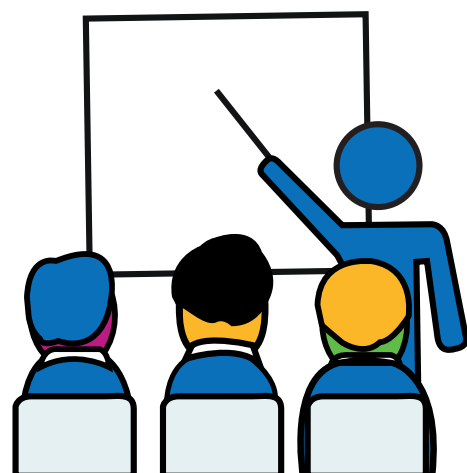
Throughout the process I felt in control, and the employment specialist was there to offer me the support that I needed when I needed it. Yes, there were times when I thought "What's the point?" but with the empathy and compassion shown by the employment specialist, I learned that I am worth something and I can achieve my goals.

I started in my new role supporting the local authority with creating resources for those in education who need aids and assistance to enable them to achieve their goals. The employment specialist supported my employer in understanding my needs and arranging reasonable adjustments for me to enable me to effectively manage my time.

The employment specialist has supported me in work for over a year now. Throughout this time, we have been working together to manage my expectations and to help me become more and more independent. Also, in this time I have moved out from my parents' home into my own property. I now manage my own finances and have become more resilient when things happen that I cannot control, especially within the work setting. I have also recently had a discussion with psychology that I may not need their support.

I would like to say thank you, from the first day that the employment specialist started to support me to find alternative employment they have given me the confidence to go and achieve my dreams. Today I found out that I have been accepted onto a local university PGCE course with a placement at a local art school. Without the employment specialist's determination and understanding of my mental health condition and autism, I would not have managed and stayed in work. Many people would have just given up on me and passed me onto someone else. The employment specialist did not and has supported me from seeking work, to starting work with a new organisation, working with the local authority to accommodate my requests for adjustment to my working patterns. Even when there was notification of redundancies, they stuck by me and continued to support me offering me guidance and being available to talk through my concerns. Throughout this, the employment specialist always remained positive even when I was always finding the negatives.

Today I have achieved my dream and now look forward to starting and completing my course to become a teacher for adults who lack confidence and have either a physical or mental health condition, so that I can encourage them to achieve their full potential just as my employment specialist did for me.



Benefits counselling is included

Hi, my name is Sonya. I was referred to the IPS service after discussing with my psychologist that I would like to find work. The employment specialist contacted me straight away and we arranged our first meeting at my local Job Centre. At this appointment, we reviewed my previous work history and my current situation as I have a child who attends school. I was seeking a role where I could work in the local area and ideally during school hours.

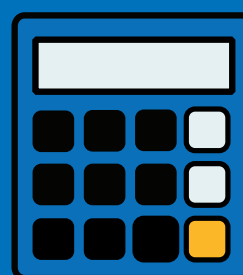
During our meeting the employment specialist advised me that they had recently met with a local employer which matched with my preferences and involved working in a care home. We discussed the organisation and agreed that we would arrange a suitable time for me and the employment specialist to go and meet the employer together. Whilst this was being arranged, we focused on creating a new CV for me to demonstrate my skills and qualities regarding potential career choices.

Once the employment specialist had arranged for us all to meet, I was taken to meet the employer, where I had a brief discussion with manager regarding the role, the organisation, and potential hours that I may be requested to work. The manager gave me an application form and requested that I complete this.

At my next appointment with the employment specialist, I informed them that I was apprehensive about applying for the role due how this would have an impact on my benefits as I was claiming Universal Credit with additional housing and support elements to my claim.

The Employment Specialist supported me to carry out a better-off calculation. We completed three calculations. We looked at my current situation and checked whether I was receiving the correct entitlement, and we also explored if I was to work 12 hours and 24 hours per week. I was pleasantly surprised with these results and the detail of

information available. Working 12 hours per week I would lose £82.50 from my Universal Credit but I would be earning £400 more due to working those 12 hours. I was advised by the employment specialist to be mindful that these were just a guide. Once I had this information and the knowledge of how going into work would have an impact on my benefits (but on a more positive note how much more money I could have in my pocket), we worked on the application form, occupational health form and diversity information for the care home.



I was offered an interview with the employer. I informed the employment specialist, and we arranged an appointment that day where we discussed travel plans to the interview, and arrangements for my dad to pick up my daughter from school. The employment specialist discussed interview techniques and possible questions, and emailed me interview preparation questions as well as the service's hints and tips leaflets for me to read in my own time. I felt nervous but was given positive affirmations that I provided excellent answers with little support or hesitation.

I attended the interview. It went really well and I was offered the job straight away. I met with the employment specialist to have a debrief on the interview and how I discussed sharing my personal information. I was happy to share and discussed my situation in the interview, having already stated it on the health questionnaire. The manager encouraged me to keep communication open if struggling so they can support me appropriately. We discussed the option

of taking an extra break with a hot drink in the manager's office if ever required. The employment specialist supported me to inform the Department for Work and Pensions via my Universal Credit journal that I have been offered a job. We also had discussions around pre-settled/settled status and carried out some research on this.

I was encouraged to contact the local Citizens Advice Bureau regarding further information around pre-settled/settled status. I was supported to access the Job Centre where a job coach helped with my existing benefits claim. At this time, I was also informed by my psychologist that I was at the end of my treatment with mental health services. This caused me a lot of concern. The employment specialist spoke with the psychologist, and they agreed to arrange for the mental health team to continue supporting me alongside the employment specialist.

I started with the organisation, initially shadowing other staff undertaking the role to get a better understanding of what the role entailed and the expectations of the organisation and their residents who I was supporting. The employment specialist checked in on how I was finding the work-life balance. Honestly, I was finding that I was more productive with my time and sleeping much better of a night. I had agreed with my manager that I would aim to work on Tuesdays and Saturdays, which was easier to manage for me.

I then had a meeting with Citizens Advice Bureau with support from the employment specialist and got all the information that I need. I now know my status and the next steps moving forward. I was also starting to prepare for Christmas and had received my first pay for the hours that I had worked over the last month or so.

I updated my Universal Credit journal to check how this would affect my next Universal Credit payment. I was really surprised that the calculation that I had completed with the employment specialist was very close, in fact they didn't take as much as we had initially thought. I had also been told by my employer recently that my hourly rate was going to increase so we again completed a better-off calculation to show me how much this would affect any benefit payment.

We have recently discussed the upskilling opportunities for care workers, and this has led onto a discussion around apprenticeships in the NHS as I have recognised that I want to develop my skills and experiences further. I know that the employment specialist will support me when I am ready to consider an NHS support worker apprenticeship, not just with applying for the role but looking at how any roles will also have an impact on me financially. With the additional money I am earning, I am having regular driving lessons and preparing to take my driving theory test.



For more information, contact your local team:



Calderdale

CalderdaleIPSService@swyt.nhs.uk



Kirklees

KirkleesIPSService@swyt.nhs.uk



Wakefield

WakefieldIPSService@swyt.nhs.uk

We would like to thank all the individuals who shared their personal journey in this booklet. We would also like to thank our local employers for their support in enabling our service users to achieve their goals and aspirations.



**South West Yorkshire Partnership NHS Foundation
Trust – Kirklees IPS Service**

Yorkshire

If you require a copy of this information in any other format or language please contact your healthcare worker at the Trust.