

Taking the first step

A guidebook for jobseekers
with mental health issues.



LEAP

Like Minds Employment
Advocacy Project

Published November 2008 by Kites Trust, Wellington

First Published February 2005 by LEAP (Like Minds Employment Advocacy Project)

LEAP is a Wellington-based employment rights initiative, run with and for people who have experienced mental health issues. LEAP members who have contributed to this publication are Judith Ball, Suzie Balmforth, Andrea Bates, Katie Chalmers, Eileen McAtee, Sarah O'Connor, Nikki Porteous, Felicity Stacey-Clark Robert Rapson and Sue Rostron

Further copies of this guidebook can be obtained by contacting:

Kites Trust
Kites Trust
admin@kites.org.nz
Tel: (04) 384-3303
PO Box 9392
Marion Square
Wellington 6011

The cover design and illustrations are by Massey Design School graduate Katie Chalmers. Katie specialises in design and advertising in the social marketing field. Ph 04 977 0911
katie_chalmers@hotmail.com

The artwork that appears in this booklet may not be copied or otherwise reproduced without express written permission of the artist.

Kites Trust have made every effort to ensure the information in this booklet is correct. Things change, however, so it may not be up to date for very long! Kites Trust cannot accept any responsibility for errors, omissions or out-of-date information. We strongly encourage users to check the information for themselves and seek further detail from the relevant organisation(s).

CONTENTS

Introduction

What this guidebook is about 3

1 Recovery and Employment

You don't need to wait until you are completely well 4

2 What kind of job?

Choosing a job 6

Getting help with careers advice 6

Voluntary work 7

Part-time, casual & temporary work 8

Work programmes & transitional employment 8

Self-employment 9

Training & education 11

Apprenticeships 12

3 Employer subsidies

Work & Income Transition to Work 13

Workbridge Job Support 13

Mainstream programme 13

4 The job search

Building confidence 14

Job-finding tricks & tips 14

Keeping motivated 15

Job clubs 16

CV & covering letter 17

The interview 17

5 Disclosure: “Should I tell or not?”

Do I have to tell? 18

Pros & Cons of telling an employer about your mental health issue 18

How & when to disclose 21

How to talk about time out of the workforce 21

Where to find mental health & mental illness information 22

6 Employment support services for people with mental illness

Supported Employment Agencies 23

7	Income support & benefit rights	
	Some tips for dealing with Work & Income	25
	Benefit advocacy services	26
	Work & Income Initiatives	26
	Frequently Asked Questions	28
	• Will I be better off if I get a part-time job?	28
	• What if I become unwell - will I have problems getting back on a benefit?	29
	• Can I get extra assistance to start work?	29
8	Discrimination & your rights	
	The Human Rights Act	30
	Reasonable Accommodations	31
	The Privacy Act	32
	Employment Rights	32
	Free legal advice	33
9	Living well	
	Staying well in a new job	34
	Recovery	34
	Keeping a Job	35
	Consumer-run advocacy & support organisations	36
10	Frequently Asked Questions	
	Should I look at further education or training?	37
	How can my health professional assist me?	37
	Is employment a realistic goal for everyone?	37
	Will work be too stressful & make me unwell?	37
11	Other helpful information & contacts	
	For Maori	38
	For refugees & migrants	38
	For people with disabilities	39
	For women	39
	General	40
12	Taking the first step...	
	Jobseeking action plan	43
	Advice from people who have been there	44
12	Index of helpful organisations	45
	Acknowledgements	49

"The most important thing is, everyone can work. Part-time, full-time - it doesn't matter as long as people feel included in society. Employment for people with experience of mental illness needs to be seen as the norm, not the exception"
Brenda, 50, Consumer Consultant

What this guidebook is about

- The aim of this booklet is to provide information & contacts that might be helpful for overcoming some of the challenges involved in finding a job
- Helpful organisations & resources are out there, but people don't always know about them
- This guidebook has been written with jobseekers & for jobseekers in the Wellington Region. It may also contain helpful information for advocates, employment consultants, employers and staff of health, welfare & community services
- More than one in five jobseekers have experienced a mental health issue at some time in their lives. Emotional, psychological and stress-related problems are really common and can affect anyone
- Everyone has skills & abilities that make them valuable to employers, regardless of age, gender, race, religion, disability, sexuality or mental health status
- The fact that a person has (or had) a mental health issue says nothing about their ability to do a particular job. Look at John Kirwan, Winston Churchill, Mahinarangi Tocker, Buzz Aldrin, Mike Chunn, and thousands of others who have had a mental illness, and have also achieved great success & respect in their working lives
- If you are a jobseeker with experience of mental health issues, there might be some extra challenges along the way, but with determination & support, you can achieve your own goals at your own pace

*Ma mahi ka ora
Work brings health
(Maori proverb)*

1. Recovery and Employment

“Work is about daily meaning as well as daily bread” - Studs Terkel, long-time ABC Television commentator.

People value employment as an important way for everyone to contribute to society, to become more financially independent, and to have a meaningful role in the community.

People with mental health issues, who have succeeded in employment say how important work is for their recovery.

“Working has helped my recovery in so many ways. It has built my self-esteem, given me financial stability, introduced me to a network of friends, given me something else to focus on besides my mental illness and provided me with opportunities I never thought I was capable of. I would recommend it to everyone.”¹

YOU DON'T NEED TO WAIT UNTIL YOU ARE COMPLETELY WELL AND CONFIDENT

Research shows, that when asked, as many as 7 out of 10 consumers say they want to find a job.

Getting help is important, but remember that work is healing in itself - research shows that having a job is good for your mental health & wellbeing. So you don't need to wait until you are 100% “work-ready” and well before thinking about work - getting a job might be just what you need to help you feel more on top of things.

Remember you are not alone. One in five people of all ages, backgrounds and walks of life experience mental health issues. Chances are that wherever you end up working, there will be other people there who have experienced mental health

As well as the knowledge and skills you had before your mental health setback, the experience of mental illness may have given you many qualities that are valuable to employers, for example, creativity, empathy, inner strength or lateral thinking.

¹ Waghorn, G., Harris, M., Cleary, C., King, J. & Lloyd, C. *Building a career of your choice*. Canberra: Australian Government Department of Health and Ageing, 2008.

"I've found that the right type of work can help improve how I'm feeling - work that is meaningful or poorly paid can hinder recovery" Philip, 38, Policy Analyst with experience of mental health issues

Some people's ability to work is not affected by their mental health issue: only their confidence is affected. Others have ongoing impairments (often side-effects of medication, rather than illness itself) that have to be considered when choosing a job. Remember to focus on your strengths and abilities - concentrate on what you CAN do, not what you can't. Everyone has abilities that are useful in the workplace.

Those companies that do hire and retain employees with serious mental disorders often find a payoff: Many workers with such illnesses have shown the strength to overcome great barriers and have acquired impressive credentials in the process." Wall St Journal Online

If you often have thoughts, feelings or behaviours that could seriously affect your ability to 'fit in' in the workplace or do the job adequately, you might want to get help with those issues. You don't have to put up with mental health issues like anxiety, depression, stress, panic-attacks, eating disorders, addictions (including gambling), paranoia, mood-swings and psychosis - there are ways of reducing or getting rid of these issues.

"Before I had bipolar disorder, I was an electrical engineer. Manic depression did not take that away from me - I still have that knowledge, those skills, and that experience." Bob, 35, Engineer

To find out about options for help, call Warmline - a helpline run by people who have experienced mental illness themselves (Freephone 0800 200 207), DHB mental health services, the Citizens Advice Bureau, your local consumer group (see section 9) or talk to your GP or Primary Health Organisation. The Women's Health Collective in Wellington and the Lower Hutt Women's Centre also have health information and run support groups.

"If you're struggling to keep jobs, challenge what is making it hard before you work. Utilise all Government-funded help before you start work. Clean up your past before starting your future" George, 40, mental health support worker with experience of mental health issues

2. What kind of job?

CHOOSING A JOB

There are lots of books (FREE to borrow from the library), websites and organisations that can help you decide what job you want and what you are best at. It's all about finding a job that's right for you. The book "What color is your parachute?" by Dick Bolles is particularly helpful, as is his website www.jobhuntersbible.com



Aim high, but be realistic. You may have to compromise between your ideal job and one that is currently available and manageable. There may be several steps between where you are now and where you aim to be in, say, two years.

"Don't overwork yourself by taking on too much. Do things slowly and at a pace that is suitable for you. Start with a few hours and gradually build up as you and your body get used to changes" Marama, 47, Consumer Consultant

GETTING HELP WITH CAREERS ADVICE

FREE career information and guidance is available over the phone, on the internet or in person. As well as the organisations listed below, Supported Employment Agencies (section 6) can help you decide what kind of work you want to look for.

The Career Centre - Wellington Office Ph 801 5429 Freephone 0800 222 733
Level 3, CMC Centre, 89 Courteney Place
Free services to people with a Community Services Card. Services include: setting career, job and training goals; planning steps to achieve goals; CV preparation; interview skills; job search strategies and coaching; up-to-date information on

jobs and labour market trends, information on education providers, courses and training opportunities.

Advice line (Careerservices) (0800 222 733) provides free careers information & advice over the phone to help all people living in New Zealand make informed career and training decisions. Calls can be anonymous if you wish.

Kiwi Careers www.kiwicareers.govt.nz is a website containing New Zealand job, industry and training information, and links to relevant websites.

Worksite/Paemahi www.worksite.govt.nz Contains useful information & links on everything to do with employment and training in NZ

workINSIGHT www.workinsight.govt.nz is the Department of Labour's six-monthly skills report. It is written for professionals who advise people about their study and career options, but it's also a great resource for anyone wanting to keep up to date with the latest job market news, research and trends.

"I found the Career Centre really helpful. Before I went there, getting a job just seemed like a nice idea, but they helped me fine-tune exactly what I wanted to do, and work out the actual steps I needed to take to reach my goal. They were very practical & encouraging." Sandy, 35, jobseeker with experience of mental health issues

Full-time is not the only option!

Remember that full-time work in the open job market is not the only option - you may want to try volunteer work, part-time, casual or temporary work at first, especially if you've been out of the workforce for a while, or haven't had a job before. There are also transitional work programmes, and training and education opportunities for people re-entering the workforce. The rest of this section looks at these various options, including self employment & apprenticeships.

VOLUNTARY WORK

You gain a lot by giving your time & talents voluntarily. As well as being rewarding and flexible, volunteer work gives you current work experience, enables you to learn new skills, and shows potential employers you are able and willing to work.

Contributing in a working environment is good for motivation and confidence, and extends your networks. Volunteering is worthwhile for its own sake, but also increases your chances of getting paid employment (possibly with the organisation you have been volunteering for). Volunteer Wellington can help to match you with suitable volunteering opportunities:

Volunteer Wellington - www.volunteerwellington.org.nz

Level 3, Press House, 84 Willis St, Wellington

Ph: 499 4570

E-mail: vw@volunteerwellington.org.nz

Hutt Office

Level 2 ISP Centre, 14 Laings Rd, Lower Hutt

Ph: 566 6786

E-mail: lhutt@volunteerwellington.org.nz

Porirua Office

Level 2, Pember House, 16 Hagley St

Ph: 237 5355

E-mail: porirua@volunteerwellington.org.nz



PART-TIME, CASUAL & TEMPORARY WORK

The benefits of part-time, casual or temporary work are similar to volunteer work except you also get paid! Available through all the usual outlets - see employment agencies, ask at Work and Income, supported employment agencies (P.24), look up temping agencies in the Yellow Pages (under “employment agencies”), or search the internet or newspapers for part-time, casual and temporary vacancies.

Wellington has a temping agency especially for people with experience of mental health issues called **“Temp Solutions”**. This is a specialist “one-stop shop” recruitment and temping agency placing people with experience of mental illness in short-term and casual employment within the mental health and Community sectors.

Manager@tempsolutions.co.nz

Ph: 384 3303

Level 6 West Wing, Education House, 178 Willis Street, Wellington

www.tempsolutions.co.nz

WORK PROGRAMMES & TRANSITIONAL EMPLOYMENT

These are work opportunities, usually in commercial businesses, for jobseekers with experience of mental health issues who want more flexibility & support and less pressure than in open employment.

Earthlink Inc. - Hutt Valley. For work opportunities alongside other mental health consumers in gardening & lawnmowing teams, and in a recycling to retail enterprise Ph: 527 9900 E-mail adminearthlink@xtra.co.nz

Valley Transitionz - Hutt Valley. This is a transitional employment scheme providing a gentle introduction (or re-introduction) to the workforce. Workers usually start by volunteering in-house, then move on to paid work in mainstream employment when they are ready.

Ph: 560 3164

E-mail: valtran@xtra.co.nz

The Clean Green Team -, Wellington. Commercial cleaning lawn-mowing and gardening business employing people with experience of mental illness

Ph: 976 3852

Email: christ_os@paradise.net.nz

Te Roopu Pookai Taniwhaniwha- Matahauriki, Porirua. Lawnmowing & gardening business providing work experience for tangata whaiora who belong to the roopu.

Ph: 237 9350

Whitford Brown - Titahi Bay Community Trust for people with disabilities, community participation and vocational training

Ph: 236 8944

Email: whitfordbrown@xtra.co.nz

Second Chance Enterprises - Porirua - Furniture restoration & retail shop, and Zoo Doo -manure composting, bagging & selling. Both businesses provide employment opportunities for people with long-term mental health issues

Website: www.secondchance.org.nz

Ph: 237 9987

E-mail: info@secondchance.org.nz

Mana Community Enterprises - Trash Palace & Vailima, Porirua. Provide training, volunteer work and paid contract work for people with mental health issues

Ph: 237 5454

SELF EMPLOYMENT

Working for yourself can be a flexible option and has good income potential, but it can be stressful starting your own business. You may want to get help from some of these agencies:

Work and Income-Enterprise Allowance and Grant

The Enterprise Allowance and Grant can help with the costs of starting your own business. It is paid to help with your cash-flows while you get your business off the ground, for example buying the first lot of stock and your weekly expenses. It can also be used to help with essential start-up costs. The maximum amount that can be paid on an Enterprise Allowance Grant is \$5,000 (incl gst) per person, per project.

Ask your case manager, check out the Work and Income website or call 0800 559 009 for further details.

www.workandincome.govt.nz/find-a-job/enterprise-allowance.html

NZ Trade & Enterprise

Enterprise development grants are available to enhance business capacity for start-up or existing businesses.

www.nzte.govt.nz

0800 555 888

Other helpful websites for people wanting to be self-employed:

- **Maori Business Facilitation Service**

www.tpk.govt.nz

- **Pacific Business Trust, Porirua**

Ph: 238 0050

www.pacificbusiness.co.nz

- **Biz Info**

Information to help you start up and run your business better.

www.biz.org.nz

0800 424 946

- **The Wellington City Library** has a website with links to all kinds of information about small businesses.

www.wcl.govt.nz/popular/businesssmall.html

- It is also possible to make a living buying and selling over the internet through sites such as Trademe www.trademe.co.nz, or by selling unique products at local markets.

Art Workshops

Another way of working for yourself is making and selling your own artwork. It's unlikely to make you rich, but you will be richly rewarded in other ways! Wellington is blessed with a number of art spaces with FREE tuition available.

Te Whare Marama: 212 Knights Rd, Lower Hutt. Ph: 569 3162

Vincent's Art Workshop: Level 4, 84 Willis St, Wellington. Ph: 499 1030

Pablo's Art Studio: Level 1, 250 Cuba street, Wellington. Ph: 382 8885

ROAR Gallery is committed to exhibiting 'outsider art'. To enquire about exhibiting your work, please call to make an appointment.

Ph: 385 7602

TRAINING & EDUCATION

Whether you are in the education system for the first time round or returning to study later in life, there are support services available to help you succeed in mainstream education settings (e.g. university, polytechnic). There are also specialist training providers, if you would prefer to learn alongside other people who have experienced mental health issues. You may be eligible for a Training Incentive Allowance from Work and Income if you are on the DPB, Widow's or Invalid's Benefits and you want to up-skill for work. Ask your Work and Income case manager for more details.

Disability support services on campus

All major tertiary institutions have a "disability support service" to meet the special needs of students with disabilities. They have a broad understanding of "disability" that includes people with mental health issues, as well as sensory & physical disabilities & long-term health issues.

- Victoria University – Mental Health Co-ordinator, Ph 463 5310
Disability Support Services, Ph: 463 6070
- Massey University - Wellington Campus Disability Support Services,
Ph: 801 5799 ext. 6811
- Weltec — Disability resources Ph: 920 2476
- Whitireia Polytechnic — Disability coordinator Ph: 237 3100 ext. 3749

The Learning Shop

7 Selby Place, Porirua
Ph: 237 7422

This is a one-stop shop for information to help people enter tertiary education, and learn new skills. Their services are FREE and include helping to write CVs career advice, and a youth transition programme

Whai Kahurangi (Atareira)

Level 1, 274 Taranaki Street, Wellington
Ph: 499 1047

Whai Kahurangi supports people with experience of mental illness to identify and achieve their own education, employment and recreation goals. Services include FREE job-seeker workshops and a variety of computer-based learning opportunities.

Te Wananga o Aotearoa - Mahi Ora Course

www.mahiora.co.nz
Ph: 0800 MahiOra
Ph: 0800 624 4672

Mahi Ora is a FREE part-time 12-month home-based correspondence programme. It is a kaupapa Maori programme that helps you to gain a greater understanding and purpose for your life direction and build self-confidence in searching for employment and re-entering the workforce. The Mahi Ora programme is designed for Maori but is open to any New Zealand citizen over 20 years of age.

The Open Polytechnic of New Zealand - LifeWorks Course

www.lifeworks.ac.nz

Ph: 0508 543 396

This FREE course is based on the successful Mahi Ora programme, and is available to all New Zealand citizens aged 18 or over.

"I decided to do LifeWorks because my life was turned upside down and I was no longer in control of it. LifeWorks has given me the courage to take it back, by asking for help. I have asked complete strangers to help me, I would never have done that 6 months ago. It has helped me to express myself in ways I have never done before. It has helped me focus on the future and has given me the courage to go on. Take back your life, take control and do it, not for anyone else but for yourself." Anne, LifeWorks Student, Wellington

Whitireia Polytechnic - New Directions Course

Porirua Campus, Wineera Drive, Porirua

This full-year course is available to people who have a disability (including mental illness) and are keen to learn and willing to give new things a go.

For further details, contact a tutor on 237-3103 ext. 3756 or e-mail fedhsec@whitireia.ac.nz

APPRENTICESHIPS

Earn while you learn! New Zealand currently has a shortage of skilled trades-people, so it's a good time to think about taking up an apprenticeship. To find out more, contact Apprenticeship Training New Zealand: www.atnz.org.nz
Ph: 0800 I made it (0800 462 3348)



3. Employer subsidies.

Work & Income –Transition to Work

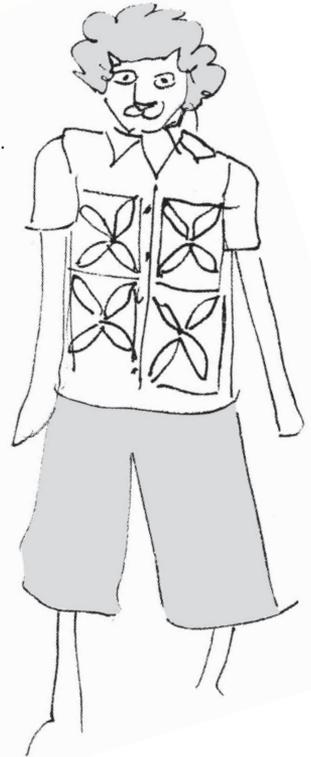
Transition to Work is an employment programme to help you get a job by providing a wage subsidy to employers. If you lack skills, qualifications, work experience or knowledge of the local labour market then contact your Work and Income case manager to see if you qualify for Transition to Work.

Workbridge - Job Support

Job Support is a flexible scheme to help people with disabilities move into work. Services include job-coaching, where a support person stays alongside a new employee for some time; disability awareness training for colleagues; and wage subsidies (temporary or ongoing) to make up for lower productivity rates or the need for greater supervision/support. Contact Workbridge for further details.

Mainstream programme

Mainstream is a State Services Commission programme that facilitates two-year placements within the state sector for people with disabilities. A job is created by a state sector employer for a two-year period & the Mainstream participant is trained on the job. Mainstream provides a 100% salary subsidy for year one, and 50% for year two, and monitors & supports each placement. Pay rates match those of anyone else performing similar duties, and hours range from five per week to full time. Mainstream can be accessed via supported employment agencies e.g.: Workbridge, Worklink, Emerge, WorkFirst Workmates, ACEmployment and X-act Personnel



"I was unemployed for three years due to a mental illness before I found work through ACEmployment & the Mainstream programme. It was a very slow process getting to the point where I actually began working, but I found Mainstream very supportive throughout. I've been working for about 10 months now and I enjoy my job even more than I thought I would. I look forward to going every day." Roger, 60, Policy Analyst

4. The job search.

BUILDING CONFIDENCE

Most people feel a bit lacking in confidence when they have been out of the workforce for a while, no matter what the reason - parenthood, mental health issues or whatever. So if you're feeling hesitant about looking for work, don't worry - it's normal! Sometimes summing up the courage to give it a go can be much harder than the job-search itself.

"It took about six months to build up my confidence. Once I started looking, it only took one week to find a job." Rosa, 26, Health Programme Coordinator with experience of mental health issues

JOB-FINDING TRICKS AND TIPS

It pays to put your time and energy into job-finding strategies that work, and it is best to use two or three different strategies. Research shows that supported employment services and the use of personal contacts & networks have high success rates for people with experience of mental health issues. Also try approaching employers you would like to work for and asking if they have any vacancies.



People don't often find a job by mailing their CVs to employers "cold", or posting CVs on the internet. Answering job ads in the newspaper is also a less successful strategy than you might think, mainly because many jobs are never advertised, and there is a lot of competition for those that are.

Supported employment services

Supported Employment Services guide you right through the job-seeking process, and can continue to provide support once you're in a job. See section 6 for listings.

Networking: "It's not what you know, it's who you know"

Personal contacts are the most effective way of getting work. Tell everyone you know that you are looking for a job and the kind of work you're looking for. Ask for their suggestions. You might be surprised how willing people are to help. This

is where the value of voluntary work, hobbies & community involvement pays off - the more people you know, the more eyes & ears will be out there helping you find work!

Research

Use your contacts, the library, Work & Income and the internet to find out as much as you can about organisations you might want to work for. You may wish to look at their aims, clients, locality and size. What are their main services or products and markets? This will a) help you decide whether you want to work for them and b) help you come across to the potential employer as well-informed.

KEEPING MOTIVATED

Staying enthusiastic & hopeful is probably the hardest thing about job hunting, especially if you have been looking for a long time. Remember, job hunting goes like this:

No, **yes!**

Every 'no' you get is bringing you closer to that final 'yes!' from an employer who wants to hire you. Your task is to find the employer who is going to say 'yes' - he or she is out there! - forget about the others.

Remember that employers are looking for the best match between the applicant and the role. If you are unsuccessful in a job application, it just means someone else was a better match for that particular job - don't take it as a personal rejection. Sooner or later there will be a great fit between what you have to offer and what the employer needs, and BINGO... you will have a job!

"I wish I had known how well things were going to work out, and how many opportunities and awesome experiences were in front of me" Rosa, 26, Health Programme Coordinator with experience of mental health issues

Sometimes the big goal (e.g. getting a job) can be overwhelming, but each small step that will eventually get you to that goal (e.g. phoning a supported employment agency to make an appointment) is a step in the right direction. Focus on the small steps, and you will get there in the end.

"If we did all the things we are capable of, we would literally astound ourselves"
Thomas Edison, inventor

Some tips for keeping motivated:

- Congratulate yourself every day for the efforts you are making & give yourself rewards for perseverance!
- When you are feeling positive, write down all the reasons why you want to work. Write down the good things that working can bring into your life
- Write down all your positive qualities, your valuable skills & abilities. Get people who believe in you to write positive lists about you too - often we take our own positive qualities for granted
- When you are feeling low, remind yourself of the positives by reading what you've written down
- Break down big goals into small steps - write the steps down in order, and tick them off as you achieve them
- Develop a "working routine". For example you could schedule chores and appointments in the morning to help you get used to an early start
- Read or watch videos about people who have succeeded against the odds

"Inspiring people are like vitamins for the soul." Sark, writer.

- Spend time with people who have jobs
- Dress & groom as if you have got the job already
- Ask someone to be your job-hunting mentor and contact you once a week to encourage you
- Talk to anyone & everyone about your goals - you'll be surprised how many people will be supportive & try to help!

"Have really positive people around you that believe you can do it"

Brenda, 50, Consumer Consultant

JOB CLUBS

Job clubs are one way of getting & giving support & encouragement and improving job-search skills in a group environment with other job seekers.

"I found my own work, but the Job Club made the difference. The Job Club made my success easier to find" Dave, 37, jobseeker

ACEmployment job clubs

ACEmployment run job clubs or job seeker groups in Wellington, Hutt Valley & Porirua. Any organisation or group can request this FREE flexible eight-week programme - all you need is three or more enthusiastic job seekers with experience of mental illness who want some extra help & motivation. Contact the Job Club co-ordinator on 04 385 7302

CV & COVERING LETTER

Many organisations provide FREE help with writing your CV and covering letter and advice about job interviews. The covering letter is the most important part of your application and is your chance to show how your skills match up with a particular job. For help to get started, ask Work & Income, The Career Centre, a Supported Employment Agency, or look on the internet or at the library for advice.

THE INTERVIEW

The job interview is where your skills and preparation come together. Most people get nervous before an interview and that is OK. It is a good idea to practice any answers you are not sure of at home before the interview so that you can speak with more confidence when you get there. Be prepared to talk about yourself and your previous work - paid and unpaid. This might include a disclosure of your illness or it may not.

Some employers may be willing to let you demonstrate your skills through 'work experience' for a few hours rather than conducting a formal job interview. If job interviews are very anxiety-provoking for you, it might be worth suggesting to your potential employer: "I'm more of a do-er than a talker. How about I work for you for a day, and then you can decide whether or not you want to hire me?" This is most likely to work for practical jobs.

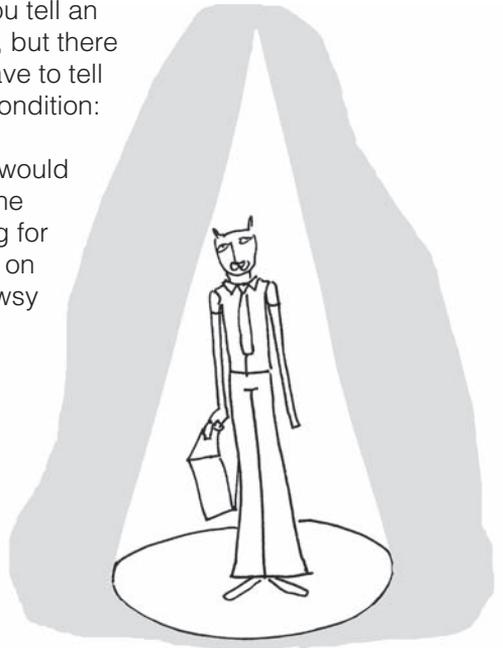


5. Disclosure: "Should I tell or not?"

DO I HAVE TO TELL?

Generally, it is up to you whether or not you tell an employer about your mental health issue, but there are two situations in which, by law, you have to tell an employer about a disability or health condition:

1. If your disability or health condition would pose a risk to yourself or others in the workplace (e.g. if you were applying for a job as a truck driver but you were on medication that made you very drowsy making it unsafe for you to drive)
2. If your disability or health condition meant you would not be able to satisfactorily perform the tasks required in the job AND would be unreasonable to accommodate (e.g. if you were applying for a job in sales with lots of customer contact, but you had social phobia & couldn't talk to strangers)



If either of these applies, you need to ask yourself: "Is this the right job for me?" There are probably other jobs where there is a better match between the work requirements and your particular skills & strengths.

A third situation in which you would have to disclose, is if you need workplace accommodations for a psychiatric disability (see 7.2 for more information about accommodations and examples.) In this case, disclosure is not a legal requirement, but if you're asking for an accommodation you will probably need to explain why you need it.

PROs & CONs OF TELLING AN EMPLOYER ABOUT YOUR MENTAL HEALTH ISSUE

There are advantages & disadvantages of telling an employer (or potential employer) that you have a mental illness. A lot depends on the attitude & understanding of the employer.

People have different opinions and ideas about disclosure. Here are some comments from people who have 'been there'. Some people prefer to be up-front about their mental health issues:

"I didn't disclose for my first job - at a shop. But when I was more confident I applied for a job at (a mental health provider) and my illness was recognised as a strength. This was very empowering, so when I applied for (an overseas opportunity) I was open about everything and still got accepted" Rosa, 26, Health Programme Coordinator

"Yes, I disclosed on application and at interview. I was asked if it would affect my work, and I said 'No, I am on medication to stabilise me'. This was not a problem" Cromax, 35, Customer Service, Fast Food Industry

"I allude to it in my CV and also brought it up in my interview and it would be no different if I was applying for a non-mental health related position. While it's hard to be honest about having been affected by mental illness, sometimes it's easier to be up-front about it because you can arrange reasonable accommodation and your employer is likely to be more understanding should problems arise. It also means that when you do find a job, you know that you have got it in a completely transparent way and that you don't have to fear people 'finding out'." Sione, Health Sector Manager

Other people never disclose, or have experienced discrimination when they disclosed their mental illness:

"I have never felt I could bring it to the attention of potential employers. I am in a senior management role at present, and have been for some time. The question 'do you have any prior conditions that may affect your ability to perform this role' has always been very intimidating to me and implies that the employer believes I would not be able to do a job if I answer honestly" from Respect Costs Nothing, Mental Health Foundation (2004)

"I disclosed once and got asked to leave." Michelle, 43, Kitchen-hand

"I got along well with the interviewer on the phone, during the start of the interview everything was fine. As soon as I mentioned I was on medication I could tell by their reaction that I was not going to get the job" from Respect Costs Nothing, Mental Health Foundation (2004)

Here are some of the things you might want to think about before deciding whether or not to tell your employer or potential employer about your mental health issue. There are both advantages & disadvantages of telling:

Advantages of disclosure

- Can gain extra support in the workplace
- Employer obliged to make reasonable accommodations
- Education about mental illness is possible for other staff, employer
- Honesty from the start
Reduces stress of secrecy & fear of being found out
- Makes it easier to plan with the employer how to cope with periods of unwellness.
- Get employers that are understanding
- Access to funding/subsidies
- Feelings of acceptance and belonging
- Increased tolerance, breaks down stigma
- Support from workmates, solidarity with other consumers, respect

Disadvantages of disclosure

- Discrimination & stigma
- Risk of not getting interview/job
- May limit opportunities & advancement
- May be perceived as less competent, undervalued
- May be treated differently
- Vulnerability, embarrassment, feeling different, isolated
- Employer may blame any negative situation on your illness
- Scape-goating, bullying
- Stereotypes & preconceived ideas may be a barrier
- More pressure to prove yourself
- Possible double standards - you may come under closer scrutiny than other employees or have to work harder to gain the same respect.

There are also advantages and disadvantages to NOT telling:

Advantages of NON-disclosure

- More job opportunities
- No discrimination
- Personal rights/choice/privacy

Disadvantages of NON-disclosure

- You can't get subsidies, support or 'reasonable accommodation'
- Angry employer (and possible job loss) if found out later
- Potential for being "outed" & anxiety and stress that goes with that
- Ethical issues with not being open & honest

HOW & WHEN TO DISCLOSE

Normally it is up to you when (if ever) to disclose. You can decide whether you tell your employer yourself, or ask your employment consultant (if you have one) to talk to your employer.

- Find out as much as you can about the employer to get a sense of how accepting they might be.
- Are they an EEO (Equal Employment Opportunities) employer?
- Do they have other employees with disabilities?
- Go with your gut feeling - some people feel safe to mention their mental health issue right at the start, others feel more comfortable after they have proved themselves in the job & the employer has gotten to know them as a person.
- Some people only disclose if they become unwell.

We've had some people who've got into work, undisclosed, then a little bit of hoo hah's gone down and then they go "Aw well yeah... can you come and talk to my boss and tell him I'm a nutter?" sort of thing, and that's actually worked! It's like they have got their foot in the door. We've not had a boss throw up his hands and say "take them out of here" Kevin, Supported Employment Consultant (from 'Work in Practice' published 2004 by Platform)

If and when you do decide to disclose, be positive, honest & specific. Tell your employer how your mental health problem affects your work (if at all) & what you need to avoid or solve any potential problems. Keep the conversation short, and don't go into lengthy detail about your diagnosis or history - instead talk about how the illness manifests in your work-life, and how you manage it.

For example:

"I am recovering from a stress-related issue, but I've had treatment & learned how to manage it, so it won't affect my ability to do the job. I occasionally get anxious when there's a lot of noise or people hanging around my desk, but I find that a short walk gets me re-focused."

HOW TO TALK ABOUT TIME OUT OF THE WORKFORCE

If you choose not to disclose your mental health issues, you may be left with the problem of noticeable gaps on your CV. Some suggestions from those who have been there:

- Volunteering is one way of giving yourself some experience on your CV

- Say: “I was recuperating from an illness but I am better now” or “I took some time out of the workforce to concentrate on self-development/ travel/family commitments”. Avoid outright lies - you will be more convincing (& ethical) if you tell the truth... creatively & positively.
- You can base your CV on your skills rather than work experience. List your skills and how you have demonstrated them rather than providing a chronological work history with dates you started and finished particular jobs.
- In an interview, if asked about gaps, give your answer briefly & confidently - your tone of voice & body language can say: “This is a non-issue. Let’s move on to the next question”. Avoid getting defensive, or giving a long-winded or hesitant answer - these responses may make an employer think that you have something to hide
- This is the type of tricky question you may wish to practice with a friend before the interview

WHERE TO FIND MENTAL HEALTH INFORMATION

If you or your employer want information leaflets or fact-sheets about mental health & mental illness, contact:

- Like Minds Wellington Regional Co-ordinator
Case Consulting Ltd
Ph 385 2103
Ruth@caseconsulting.co.nz
wwlikeminds.org.nz
- Mental Health Foundation - National Resource & Information Service
E-mail: resource@mentalhealth.org.nz website:
www.mentalhealth.org.nz
Ph: 09 300 7030



6. Employment support services for people with mental illness.

SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT AGENCIES

Supported Employment Agencies help people to get jobs in the open market - "real jobs for real pay". They are different from ordinary employment agencies because they can help you to

- Identify your employment goals.
- Plan how to manage your personal information.
- Identify your work skills and job preferences.
- help with writing a CV,
- job-seeking skills
- interview techniques,
- ongoing support once you have found a job.
- They may also provide opportunities to meet other job seekers for mutual support.



ASENZ is the Association of Supported Employment in NZ - they have a great website with helpful info, links and a nationwide list of accredited employment services: www.asenz.org.nz

"My advice for others who are thinking of looking for work - join a Supported Employment Agency and believe in yourself. Sometimes it takes time, so believe you can do it." Michelle, 43, Kitchen-hand with experience of mental health issues

How to access employment services:

- Self refer- phone a supported employment agency directly and make an appointment
- Ask your work and income case manager or health provider to refer you

Your employment consultant will help you through all aspects of gaining and retaining employment. Once you commence employment, help can be provided at work or outside the workplace.

Each organisation is different, so please call them for details. Some are only for people who have had mental health issues, while others have clients with all kinds of disabilities.

One of the most helpful things an employment consultant can do is to contact employers on your behalf and arrange a job tryout.

- ACEmployment
111 Brougham St, Mt Victoria,
Wellington
Ph: 385 7302
E-mail: ace.emp@xtra.co.nz
www.wgtnaftercare.org.nz/ACEmploy/
index.html
- Emerge Supported Employment Trust
Level 3, 203 Willis Street
Ph: 384 7456
- Earthlink Inc
Unit 1, 26 Goodshed Rd, Upper Hutt
Email:earthlink@xtra.co.nz
Ph: 527 9900
- Temp Solutions
6th Floor, Education House,
178 Willis St, Wellington
manager@tempsolutions.co.nz
Ph: 384 3303
- Valley Transitionz
Lower Hutt
Ph: 560 3164
E-mail valtran@xtra.co.nz
- Workbridge
330 High St, Lower Hutt
Ph: 913 6400
- Workfirst (for people receiving
treatment from some of capital &
Coast DHB's community mental
health services)
PO Box 1729
Wellington 6140
Ph: 494 9166
E-mail workfirstnz@hotmail.com
- Worklink (Wellink Trust)
203-209 Willis St, Wellington
Ph: 801 8500
- 14 Laings Rd, Lower Hutt
Ph: 560 3165
- Workmates
Level 4, Northcity Plaza, Porirua
Ph: 237 7141
- Level 1, Coastlands, Paraparaumu
Ph: 297 1950
- XACT Personnel (Q'nique Ltd)
Cnr Cornwall & Kings Cres (old
Professionals Building), Lower Hutt
Ph 570 2320

Frederick Frese's story: Thirty years ago, he was locked up in a mental hospital, dazed and delusional, with paranoid schizophrenia. Twelve years later, he had become the chief psychologist for the very mental hospital system that had confined him. "As I often say, in my 30 years with schizophrenia, there's never been a better time to be a person with serious mental illness. There's more hope than ever before." www.schizophrenia.com

7. Income support + benefit rights

While you are finding a job, you will probably need income support.

Work and Income are there to help people into work and to get the financial assistance they are entitled to. Work & Income offer a range of FREE services & support. For details ask your Work and Income case manager, call 0800 559 009 or see www.workandincome.govt.nz

SOME TIPS FOR DEALING WITH WORK AND INCOME

- Give Work & Income as much information as possible about your circumstances and ensure the information you give is correct. You may be entitled to other types of assistance, such as the Disability Allowance, Accommodation Supplement or Special Benefit.
- It pays to ask your Work & Income case manager about the different types of financial support available, and do your own research on what you may be able to get.

"If you don't ask, you don't get" Mahatma Gandhi, political leader

- Keep a written record of your dealings with Work and Income, including the date, name of the person you talked to and what was talked about.
- You have some basic rights when dealing with Work and Income, including the right to see your records, the right to make an application, the right to get a decision in writing, and the right to review and appeal if you disagree with a decision.
- You may take someone along with you to meetings with Work and Income - a friend, family member, advocate or support worker for instance.
- There are free advocacy services available to help you if you run into difficulties (see listings to follow).

BENEFIT ADVOCACY SERVICES

These organisations are experts on the benefits system and can help you work out what benefits you are entitled to, what your rights are, and how to make sure you receive your full entitlement.

Wellington

- Wellington People's Centre
Benefit Rights Service
Lukes Lane, Wellington
Ph: 385 8596

Hutt Valley

- Benefit Education Service Trust (BEST)
Suzanne Aubert Centre
3 Perry St, Heretaunga, Upper Hutt
Ph: 529 8108
- Te Huinga o te Whanau - Petone Free Advocacy Service
8/193 Jackson Street, Petone
Ph 971 7713

Porirua

- Whitireia Community Law Centre
3rd Floor, Pember House
16 Hagley Street, Porirua
Ph 237 6811

A list of advocacy groups nationwide from the Wellington People's Centre Benefit Fact File is posted on-line at www.dcm.org.nz/advocacy/advocacygroups.pdf

WORK AND INCOME INITIATIVES

Work and Income have supports and incentives for people on an Invalid's or Sickness Benefit who want to return to work. These are:

- **PATHS**

“Providing Access to Health Solutions” is a joint Work and Income, Capital and Coast District Health Board and Inner City Project initiative to help people with mental or physical health issues get back into work, for instance you may be able to get additional free treatment to help you overcome your health issue. So if you get a Sickness or Invalid's Benefit, want to return to work, and you live in the Capital and Coast District Health Board area, talk with your Work and Income case manager, GP or community provider about PATHS.

Contact details:

Sharon Mackie, PATHS Health Co-ordinator
Ph (04) 380-2470 or (027) 283-0451
Sharon.mackie@ccdhb.org.nz

Janet Collier, PATHS Health Co-ordinator
Ph (04) 380-2414 or (027) 522-1227
Janet.collier@ccdhb.org.nz

Val Little, PATHS Community Co-ordinator
Ph (04) 380-2436 or (027) 629-9807
Val.paths@innercityproject.org.nz

Nimue Cavanagh, PATHS Work and Income Co-ordinator
Ph (04) 913-8204
Nimue.Cavanagh001@msd.govt.nz

Lenore Duffy, PATHS Administrator
Ph (04) 380-2415
Lenore.duffy@ccdhb.org.nz

PATHS Hutt Valley
Jo Bracefield, PATHS Work and Income Co-ordinator
Phone (04) 913 6732
jo.bracefield002@msd.govt.nz

Employment Trial for Invalids Beneficiaries

If you're getting an Invalid's Benefit and want to work 15 hours or more a week, you may be able to take part in an Employment Trial for up to six months to help you move into work or increase your hours without losing any of your benefit. If the job doesn't work out you can keep your Invalid's Benefit. Talk with your Work and Income case manager to find out more.

Health and Disability Services Innovation Fund

A new fund to help disabled people and people with ill-health return to work. Work and Income staff can assist with co-ordinating services from the Ministry of Health, District Health Boards and ACC

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Benefit entitlements are complicated, so please take these answers as a guide only.

Will I be better off if I get a part-time job?

Usually, yes. You can earn up to \$80 a week (before tax) before your Unemployment or Sickness Benefit is affected, or \$100 if you are on an invalids benefit or domestic purposes Benefit but any money *you earn* may affect any additional support payments you may be receiving, such as the Disability Allowance or Special Benefit.

If you have dependant children 18 years or younger, you may qualify for **Working for Families Tax Credits** from Inland Revenue. How much you get depends on your level of income, the number of children you have, their ages and custody arrangements. To find out more about working for Families Tax Credits call Inland Revenue on 0800 227 773 or visit www.ird.govt.nz

You may still be entitled to an **Accommodation Supplement** if you are working. The **Childcare Subsidy** helps pay childcare costs for children under 5. You can get up to 50 hours a week if you are working, on an approved training course or ill. The **Oscar Subsidy** is for children between 5 and 13 years old. It helps towards the costs of before and after school care. You can calculate an estimate of the amount of childcare Assistance or Accommodation Supplement you may be entitled to by using the online calculator at www.workingforfamilies.govt.nz

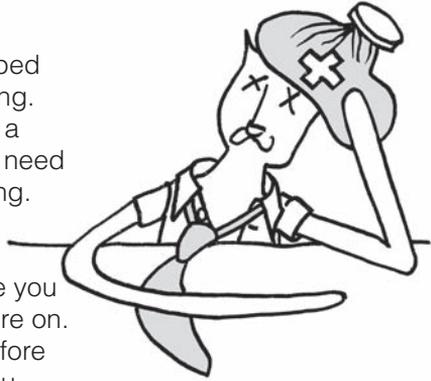
You need to tell Work and Income about any income you earn - so they can assess whether you're getting your full and correct entitlement . You also need to think about other payments that are based on your income that might be affected, for example student loan repayments and Child Support contributions.

Research shows that people who are working are happier and healthier than people receiving the same income from a benefit. And you could be financially better off too. Ask your Work and Income case manager or a benefit advocate (listed above) to help you work out how much better off you could be by working.

“Don’t be afraid that you will be worse off financially because of having your benefit docked. Generally you are better off and it feels good not to be so dependent on the benefit.” Marama 50, Consumer Consultant

If I have to leave my job because I become unwell, will I have problems getting back on a benefit?

- If the job is short-term your benefit can be stopped temporarily and restarted when you finish working. But if you've been regularly working full time for a while and you become unwell again, then you'll need to re-apply for the benefit when you stop working.
- How quickly you can get back on the benefit depends on how much you were earning before you became unwell and what kind of benefit you were on. In many cases there won't be a stand-down before you can go back on a benefit, for instance if you were on a low income and working for less than 26 weeks.
- When re-applying for a Sickness Benefit, you won't have a stand-down if you have a chronic recurring illness confirmed by a doctor and you're re-applying for the same type of Sickness Benefit.
- When re-applying for an Invalid's Benefit, you won't have a stand-down if you're suffering from an injury or disability from an accident or congenital defect. Like the Sickness Benefit, you'd need to be re-applying for the same type of Invalid's Benefit due to the same medical condition.



Can I get extra assistance to start work?

Yes! If you have a job interview, or start a new job that's for 15 hours or more a week, a Work Start Grant can help pay for essential things you need until you get your first pay. The Work Start Grant can be used to help with transport costs to interviews, costs of new clothing, safety equipment or moving house, and other cost of finding and starting a new job.

Pathways payment is a lump sum payment for parents who are stopping their benefit to start work. It is paid to help meet your costs while you wait for your first pay. To get this, you or your partner need to have been on a main benefit for at least a year and your children have to be dependent on you.

What if I need some time off for a health related issue?

Contact your case manager who could organise for a workbroker from Work and Income to advocate on your behalf to keep your job open.

8. Discrimination + your rights

In the job market, people should be judged on their skills and abilities, not their mental health status.

THE HUMAN RIGHTS ACT

Under the Human Rights Act (1993) it is unlawful for an employer to discriminate against a person on the basis of disability, including psychiatric disability.



- Employers may not include questions on application forms that indicate that the employer intends to discriminate on prohibited grounds (e.g. “Have you ever had a nervous breakdown or mental illness?”)
- Employers can lawfully ask about health problems or disabilities that may affect the applicant’s ability to satisfactorily carry out the duties of the job, or may pose a risk of harm to the applicant or others. You don’t necessarily have to disclose - see section 4.1 ‘Do I have to tell?’
- Under the Human Rights Act, employers are obliged to provide ‘reasonable accommodations’ for employees with disabilities (see the following page for more information)
- If you believe that an organisation is breaching the Human Rights Act, you can make a complaint to the Human Rights Commission. By making a complaint, you are saying “no!” to discrimination, and helping to make New Zealand a fairer place

For more information about the Human Rights Act or to lodge a complaint, see www.hrc.co.nz or call the Human Rights Infoline 0800 496 877.

REASONABLE ACCOMMODATIONS

At some stage, most employees need some adjustment at work that helps them to perform at their best. A parent who works full time may need a day off to get a sick child from school, an office worker with lower back pain may need adjustments to their workstation. Both employees have the necessary skills to do what's required if these adjustments are made.

For people who have a psychiatric disability, some of the adjustments might be different, but they accomplish the same result - allowing a qualified employee to do the best job they can. These strategies are often just good business practices.

Reasonable accommodations are those adjustments within a workplace or work conditions that allow an otherwise qualified employee with a disability to perform the tasks required. Under the Human Rights Act, employers are obliged by law to make accommodations for disabled employees unless it would be "unreasonable" for them to do so.

Examples of accommodations that might work for someone with mental health issues are:

- Adjusting work schedules so that employees can take time off for therapy appointments
- Providing flexible hours of work, for example, allowing a person to start later because they are sleepy in the morning due to medication
- Setting up a work-station so that an employee is not easily distracted
- Adjustments to how instructions are given and supervision is provided
- Providing parking places close to the workplace to help manage panic attacks
- Adjustments to duties of the position or work allocation amongst staff
- Providing relevant training for supervisory staff
- Having a job coach

Employers are used to making provision for the family responsibilities and physical health issues of their staff - accommodating for mental health issues is not that different. Accommodations are usually easy and inexpensive to implement. In some cases Workbridge can cover the cost of workplace accommodations.

It is important to note that the law does not mean that employers have to lower the standards of performance or change the qualifications needed to gain entry into a job. What is expected are changes in the ways that those standards are met.

It is best to talk to your employer about reasonable accommodations either when you first disclose your mental health issue, or after they have offered you the job

and you are negotiating your other employment conditions. Don't assume that every employer knows about reasonable accommodations - you may need to raise the issue yourself or with a support person, and make suggestions about the conditions you need to be able to perform at your best. Once you and your employer have agreed on any accommodations, they should be written into your employment agreement and reviewed regularly.

Further information for employers and employees about workplace accommodations is available on www.asenz.org.nz (see FAQs) or www.bu.edu/cpr/reasaccom/ or the Human Rights Infoline 0800 496 877

THE PRIVACY ACT

Under The Privacy Act (1991) employers may only collect information they need - it is unlawful for them to collect irrelevant information on job application forms. Employers also have to tell applicants why they are collecting the information and what they will use it for.

You can complain to the Privacy Commissioner about any action that seems to be an interference with your privacy. For more information see www.privacy.org.nz or call the Office of the Privacy Commissioner on 0800 803 909.

EMPLOYMENT RIGHTS

There are laws that govern employment conditions and protect employees from discrimination, such as unfair dismissal. All employees in New Zealand have basic rights in relation to minimum pay rates, holidays, and standards of health and safety.

All Employment Agreements must be in writing and should include: the names of the employer and employee, a description of the work to be performed, an indication of the place and hours of work, the wages or salary payable, an explanation of the services available for resolving employment relationship problems, and public holiday entitlements. Any special conditions you negotiate in order to accommodate your mental health issue or other impairment(s) should also be written into your employment agreement.

To find out more about employment rights see:

- Council of Trade Unions (CTU)
www.union.org.nz
Ph 04 385 1334
- www.worksite.govt.nz for anything to do with work, including workers' rights

- The Citizens Advice Bureau: www.cab.org.nz/lowdown/index.html for info on all kinds of rights
- The Workers Rights Service at the Wellington People's Centre (Ph: 385 8596) for free advocacy and advice
- The Employment Relations Infoline 0800 800 863 www.ers.govt.nz for free information about employment rights

Case study: Successful anti-discrimination case won in Employment Court

Auckland car salesman Mark Roberts experienced a panic attack at work one day - brought on largely, he says, by the way he was being treated at work. The discrimination he then experienced led to further mental health problems, and more discrimination.

Until his first experience of mental health problems, Mark was a general manager running three dealerships. "I was a salaried manager-commission salesman, and they took away my salary." Then came after that there was a series of unexplained downgradings of his position - "I was demoted and demoted and demoted." Mark took a case to the Employment Court, who found that he/Mark had been discriminated against and awarded him \$24,000. The more people complain about this sort of unfair treatment, the more employers are going to have to account for their actions. This ruling sends a message loud and clear that it is illegal to discriminate.

Like Minds Newsletter, Issue 18, July 2003

FREE LEGAL ADVICE

The following organisations provide free initial legal advice to individuals, including advice on discrimination issues, legal rights & employment law:

- Wellington Community Law Centre
Level 2, Press House, 84 Willis St, Wellington
Ph: 499 2928
- Whitireia Community Law Centre
Pember House, 16 Hagley St, Porirua
Ph: 237 6811
- Hutt Valley Community Law Centre
2nd Floor Apex House, Cnr Queens Drive & Laings Rd, Lower Hutt
Ph: 566 0315
- Te Ratonga Ture Maori Community Law Centre
Level 5, 139, Featherston Street, Wellington
Ph: 473 1249

9. Living well

STAYING WELL IN A NEW JOB

Congratulations, you got the job!

First - throw yourself a party to celebrate your success! Now, here are a few tips about settling into the new job...

Big life changes (including positive ones) take some adjusting to, so make sure you get extra sleep and give yourself some space to get used to your new lifestyle.

Many organisations can provide free advice about coping with stress: check out www.worksite.govt.nz and www.mentalhealth.org.nz for a start.

Here's some advice from people who have returned to work after time out of the workforce due to mental health issues:

"Sometimes you just need someone to offload to. Find a peer - perhaps in a similar type of role, not necessarily with the same organisation - who you can have coffee with and just talk over your issues at work" Sione, Health Sector Manager

"It can be really scary and you can hit the wall at, say, 3 three months, but it's not because of your illness, it's because you aren't used to working full-time. You are tired, not unwell." Brenda, 50, Consumer Consultant

"Look after your relationships at work. They are so important. Don't put up with bullies - bosses or co-workers." Rosa, 26, Programme Coordinator

"In my job stress is part of the territory so I need to manage this by ensuring I get enough sleep and lead a balanced life and eat well" Ani, 35, Project Manager

RECOVERY

Recovery means living well in the presence or absence of your mental illness.

"We lead our own recovery supported by services, whanau & communities, through:

- experiencing hope and optimism and making sense of our experience
- accessing and using information and managing our mental health
- knowing how to get the best service



- advocating for our rights & inclusion at all life stages
- belonging to the culture & lifestyle we identify with
- fulfilling our goals, roles & responsibilities
- maintaining our personal relationships and contributing to healthy whanau”

(from *Our Lives in 2014: A Recovery Vision from People with Experience of Mental Illness*, published by the Mental Health Commission)

KEEPING A JOB

Plan to stay in your job. This means thinking ahead. It means eating well, sleeping well, having fun ...anything that works to keep you as well as possible.

Strategies other people have used include:

- Tucking a small card into your wallet with things to do if you are feeling panicky.
- Doing a weekly timetable of all the things you need to do to get ready for work can also be helpful if you're finding it hard to get organised.
- Remind yourself of all the things you are doing well, and
- Remember to check in with your support people before things feel really bad.

It's helpful to do a WRAP plan and or advance directive around what you want to happen if you feel you are beginning to get unwell or are feeling stressed.

A Wellness Recovery Action Plan (WRAP) is a wellness tool developed by Mary Ellen Copeland, it provides a structured system for helping people with mental illness to monitor uncomfortable and distressing symptoms.

A WRAP plan can help you stay well in your job and enables you to develop a plan for what to do if you become unwell. A WRAP plan includes:

- a daily maintenance plan.
- triggers.
- early warning signs.
- symptoms
- A crisis plan.
- post crisis planning.

More information about the WRAP and help to use this system is available at: www.mentalhealthrecovery.com and at <http://www.cequick.com/copeland> Information about Advance directives information is available from the mental health commissions website http://www.mhc.govt.nz/documents/0000/0000/0083/MENTALHEALTH_HDC_BROCH.PDF

Once you start work

- Keep an eye on your energy and fatigue balance. You may want to talk to your health professional or supported employment consultant about this.
- You will not enjoy the job if you are working more hours than you can sustain in the long term.
- plan your days off and annual leave soon after starting in a new job.

“It can be really tiring when you first start work but it’s not because of your illness, it’s because you aren’t used to working. This is normal and it gets easier as your body gets used to it.”¹

CONSUMER-RUN ADVOCACY & SUPPORT ORGANISATIONS

The following organisations are run by mental health consumers/tangata whaiora and provide information, support and advocacy for individuals with experience of mental health issues. They can tell you about support groups and other helpful services and organisations, but perhaps more importantly, they can provide moral support from others who have ‘been there’.

Wellington Mental Health Consumers Union

Level 2, 84 Willis St, Wellington Ph: 473 4433

Oasis Network

14 Laings Rd, Lower Hutt Ph: 566 1601

Kapiti Choices

19b Milne Drive, Paraparaumu Ph: 905 2110

Te Roopu Pookai Taaniwhaniwha

Matahauriki, 213 Bedford St, Porirua Ph: 237 9608 or 237 9350

Warmline

Volunteer telephone counselling service supported by Wellink
Freephone 0800 200 207

Buddies

Ph 385 2104 Buddies.wn@paradise.net.nz

¹ Waghorn, G., Harris, M., Cleary, C., King, J. & Lloyd, C. *Building a career of your choice*. Canberra: Australian Government Department of Health and Ageing, 2008.

10. Frequently asked questions

Should I look at further education or training?

If your education has been interrupted by mental health issues you may want to consider further education or training. Qualifications can lead to a more satisfying and better paid career.

How can my health professional assist me?

If you keep any health professionals that you are in touch with informed about your jobseeking plan they may be able to assist in the following ways:

- Valuing your employment goals and believing in the possibility of success in employment.
- Encouraging and supporting you to take reasonable risks by seeking appropriate assistance when trying a new job.
- Helping you to identify performance challenges at work and considering whether any changes to your treatment could further improve work performance.
- With your consent they can communicate with your employer to help you keep your job if you need to take some time off.

Is employment a realistic goal for everyone?

Research over the past 15 years has shown that almost everyone with a mental illness who attempts employment, with the appropriate assistance, can succeed. Research shows that the strongest predictor of success is not diagnosis¹

Will work be too stressful and make me unwell?

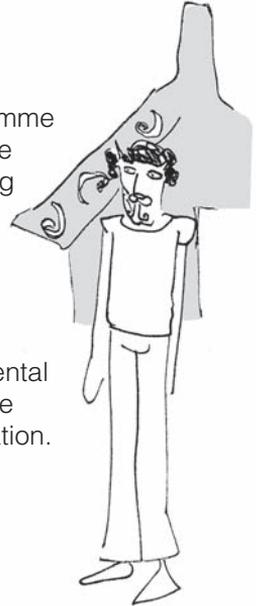
Any changes in your life can be stressful at first. The right job and assistance, if needed, can help you manage your symptoms and increase your wellness. Tell your support people when you are about to start work so that they can help when needed.

¹ Waghorn, G., Chant, D., & Whiteford, H. (2002). Clinical and non-clinical predictors of vocational recovery for Australians with psychotic disorders. *The Journal of Rehabilitation*, 68(4), 40-51.

11. Other helpful information + contacts

FOR MAORI

- Te Wananga o Aotearoa - Mahi Ora Course
Mahi Ora is a FREE part-time 12-month home-based correspondence programme. It is a kaupapa Maori programme that helps you to gain a greater understanding and purpose for your life direction and build self-confidence in searching for employment and re-entering the workforce.
www.mahiora.co.nz
Ph: 0800 MahiOra (0800 624 4672)
- Te Paepae Arahi
Te Paepae Arahi is a community-based kaupapa Maori mental health service, covering Petone to Upper Hutt. They provide support to help Rangatahi (aged 15-19) into work or education.
25 Peterkin Street
Wingate, Hutt Valley
Ph: 902 0696



FOR REFUGEES & MIGRANTS

- MCLaSS, Multicultural Learning and Support Services
Experienced staff members provide job search support to migrant and refugee job seekers whose first language is not English. Support includes contacting employers, coaching and research with the client.
Level 1, 61 - 63 Taranaki Street, Wellington
Ph: 384-3694
E-mail: mclass@xtra.co.nz
- Job Mentoring Service
Job mentors provide one-to-one support for skilled migrant job seekers from non-English speaking backgrounds who are looking for work, or starting a new job. This service is coordinated by the Wellington Home Tutor service:
61-63 Taranaki St
Ph: 04 384 1992
E-mail: jobmentor@esolht.org.nz
- Wellington Refugees as Survivors - (RAS)
Mental health service for refugees
Ph: 384 7279



FOR PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES

- WEKA - What Everybody Keeps Asking about Disability Information
www.weka.net.nz
A disability information website with listings of support services by area & heaps of other info & links
- Wellington Disability Information Centre
5th Floor National CCS Building, 86-90 Vivian St, Wellington
Ph: 803 3773
0800 693 342
- Kapiti Disability Information Service Centre
15A Ngahina St, Paraparaumu
Ph: 0800 434 746
- Deaf Mental Health Service
Provide intensive community service for deaf people who have psychological or emotional concerns, to help them meet their needs in relation to community living.
Fax: 802 5438
E-mail: enquiries@dmhs.org.nz
- Deaf Association of NZ
32 Marion St, Wellington
Ph 801 8965
Fax 801 8964
TTY 801 8905
www.deaf.co.nz

FOR WOMEN

- Dress for Success
9am-2pm Monday-Thursday
Ph 04 473 2940

A not-for-profit organisation that provides professional clothing for low-income women to assist their job-seeking activities. An outfit is available to wear to interviews and another outfit when a job is secured. Referrals are through organisations such as Work and Income and Supported Employment Services (see section 5.1).

- Wellington Women's Health Collective
provide health information and have a 'hot & cold' GP file with women's comments about doctors they felt were particularly supportive/helpful or not.
Level 4, 84 Willis Street, Wellington
Ph: 499 7709
- Through Blue
Support group for women with experience of depression
Run by two trained facilitators,
Ph 499 7709
throughblue@hotmail.com
- Lower Hutt Women's Centre
186 Knights Road, Lower Hutt
Ph: 569 2711
- Kapiti Women's Centre
7 Ngahina St, Paraparaumu
Ph: 902 6222
- Postnatal and Antenatal Distress Group Inc
C/- Wellington Women's Health Collective
P.O. Box 57198
Mana, Porirua
Support line : 472 3135

GENERAL

- Accident Compensation Corporation
ACC may cover mental stress if it is related to a sexual abuse claim or is the result of physical injury.
0800 101 996
www.acc.co.nz
- Citizens Advice Bureau
The Citizens Advice Bureau is a voluntary organisation providing free, confidential information and advice to anyone about any query or problem, whether you are looking for a counsellor, child-care, budget advice or a support group
0800 367 222
www.cab.org.nz

- **Downtown Community Ministry (DCM)**
Gives down to earth support to individuals & families. Their “Survival Guide to Wellington” is a great source of information for people living on a low income and is available online:
www.dcm.org.nz
Ph 384 7699
- **Equal Employment Opportunities Trust (EEO)**
Helps workplaces adapt to and embrace the diversity of the workforce through the use of EEO principles and best practice.
www.eeotrust.org.nz
- **Kites Directory for Mental Health & Addiction Services , Wellington Region**
A directory of services in Wellington for mental health consumers, produced by Kites Trust
available online www.kites.org.nz
for a hard copy contact admin@kites.org.nz or Ph: 384 3303
- **Managers Guide: A best practice approach to working with disabled employees**
produced by the Employers forum on disability in the UK and available in NZ through Workbridge phone toll free on 0508 858 858
- **Mental Health Foundation**
For information about mental health & mental illness, including information about workplace depression & stress, ‘Working Well’ etc
www.mentalhealth.org.nz
Ph: 384 4002
- **Working Well**
Working Well’s key objective is to support employers and managers to create more mentally healthy workplaces in New Zealand.
There is a Working Well ‘toolkit’ available and a seminar series for employers about mental health and mental illness in the workplace.
www.workingwell.co.nz
Ph: 0800 496 754



Further reading

Return to Work: Returning to work after experiencing mental illness and other mental health issues, published by the Mental Health Foundation of New Zealand (2007) available online from:<http://www.mentalhealth.org.nz/resources/Returning-To-Work.pdf>

Older workers, issues, expectations and looking to the future published by the Mental health foundation of NZ (2007) available online from <http://www.mentalhealth.org.nz/resources/Older-Workers.pdf>

I haven't told them, they haven't asked: The employment experiences of people with experience of mental Illness, Written for the Mental Health Foundation of New Zealand by Debbie Peterson (2007)

12. Taking the first step

“Go for it. At first it’s a matter of getting back on the horse. It might just be something easy, but it will lead to greater things” Rosa, 26, Health Programme Coordinator

What is the first step you need to take, to bring you closer to having a job? (A phone call? A list? A trip to the library? A chat with an encouraging friend?) Whatever it is...DO IT NOW! Then give yourself a pat on the back for doing it. The secret to achieving any goal, no matter how big, is to chunk it down into small bite-size tasks, and tick them off one at a time.

JOBSEEKING ACTION PLAN

GOAL - What do I want?

(e.g. to build my confidence/to get a job in an office/to find a training course that will help me become a builder...)

What do I need to do to get there?

By when?

Step 1 _____

Step 2 _____

Step 3 _____

Step 4 _____

“Whatever you can do, or dream you can, begin it. Boldness has genius, power and magic in it” Goethe, philosopher

ADVICE FROM PEOPLE WHO HAVE BEEN THERE

Here are some final words of encouragement from people who have experienced mental health issues, and have successfully found work...

“The money is good, but also just the fact that you can say “I do this” rather than “I am on a benefit”. It makes you feel as if you are part of the community and contributing to it”

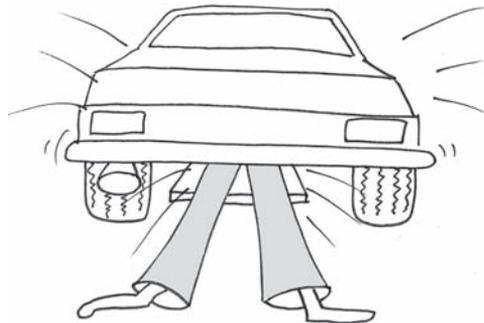
“Don’t let a mental health issue make you think you can’t do things. You can be just as successful if not more so than the next person. Don’t let it get you down”

“Also remember always that failure is not a bad thing. It is just failure, not the end of the world. Get up again and look them in the eye”

“When you have a job, you don’t exist - you live”

“Keep trying”

“Never give up”



Index of helpful organisations

ACC (Accident Compensation Corporation)	0800 101 996	p.40	A
ACEmployment - job clubs	(04) 385 7302	p.24	
Apprenticeship Training New Zealand	0800 462 3348	p.16	
Benefit Education Service Trust (BEST)	(04) 529 8108	p.27	B
Biz Info	0800 424 946	p.10	
Buddies	(04) 529 2109	p.34	
Career Centre - Wellington Office	(04) 801 5429	p.6	C
Advice line Career Services	0800 222 733	p.7	
Citizens Advice Bureau	0800 367 222	p.33,40	
Clean Green Team -	(04) 976 3852	p.9	
Council of Trade Unions (CTU)	(04) 385 1334	p.32	
Deaf Association of NZ	0800 332 322	p.39	D
Deaf Mental Health Service Fax	(04) 802 5438	p.39	
Downtown Community Ministry	(04) 384 7699	p.41	
Dress for Success	(04) 473 2940	p.39	
Earthlink Inc - Hutt Valley	(04) 527 9900	p.8,24	E
Emerge Supported Employment Trust	(04) 384 7456	p.24	
Employment Relations Infoline	0800 800 863	p.33	
Equal Employment Opportunities Trust (EEO)	(09) 525 3023	p.41	
ESOL Home Tutor Service (+Job mentors for migrants)	(04) 384 1992	p.38	
Home Tutor Service (ESOL)	(04) 384 1992	p.38	H
Human Rights Infoline	0800 496 877	p.30,32	
Hutt Valley Community Law Centre	(04) 566 0315	p.33	
Interpreting Services	(04) 384 2265	p.38	I
Kapiti Choices	(04) 905 2110	p.36	K
Kapiti Disability Information and Equipment Centre	0800 693342	p.39	
Kapiti Women's Centre	(04) 902 6222	p.39	
Kites - directory of mental health and addiction services	(04) 384 3303	p.41	

L	Learning Shop (The)	(04) 237 7422	p.11
	Lower Hutt Women's Centre	(04) 569 2711	p.40
	Like minds - Wellington Region	(04) 385 2103	p.22
M	Mainstream Programme	(04) 495 6726	p.13
	Mana Community Enterprises - Trash Palace & Vailima	(04) 237 5454	p.9
	Maori Business Facilitation Service (Te Puni Kōkiri)	0800 94 99 97	p.10
	Massey University		
	- Wellington Campus Disability Support Services	(04) 801 5799 x6811	p.11
	Mental Health Foundation - Wellington Office	(04) 384 4002	p.22
	Mental Health Foundation		
	- National Resource & Info Service	(09) 300 7030	p.22
Multicultural Learning & Support Services (McLASS)	(04) 383 3694	p.38	
N	NZ Trade & Enterprise	0800 555 888	p.10
O	Oasis Network	(04) 566 1601	p.36
	Open Polytech of New Zealand	0508 543 396	p.12
P	PATHS- Wellington	(04) 380 2436	p.27
	PATHS Lower Hutt	(04) 913 6732	p.27
	Pablo's Art Studio	(04) 382 8885	p.10
	Pacific Business Trust, Porirua	(04) 238 0050	p.10
	Post natal & Antenatal Distress Group - support line	(04) 472 3135	p.40
	Privacy Commissioner (Office of)	0800 803 909	p.32
	Platform Trust	(04) 385 0385	p.49
R	Refugees as Survivors Centre (RAS)	(04) 384 7279	p.38
	Roar Gallery	(04) 385 7602	p.10
S	Second Chance Enterprises - Porirua	(04) 237 9987	p.9
T	Te Huinga o te Whanau Petone Free Advocacy Service	(04) 971 7713	p.26
	Te Papae Arahi	(04) 902 0696	p.38
	Te Ratonga Ture Maori Community Law Centre	(04) 473 1249	p.33
	Te Roopu Pookai Taniwhaniwha	(04) 237 9350 or (04) 237 9608	p.36
	Te Wananga o Aotearoa - Mahi Ora Course	0800 624 4672	p.12,38
	Te Whare Marama	(04) 569 3162	p.10
	Temporary Solutions	(04) 384 3303	p.8,24
Through Blue (Depression Support Group)	(04) 499 7709	p.40	

Vakaola - Pacific Community Health	(04) 237 7751		V
Valley Transitionz	(04) 560 3164	p.8,24	
Victoria University - Disability Support Services	(04) 463 6070	p.11	
Vincent's Art Workshop	(04) 499 1030	p.10	
Volunteer Hutt	(04) 566 6786	p.8	
Volunteer Porirua	(04) 237 5355	p.8	
Volunteer Wellington	(04) 499 4570	p.8	
Warmline	0800 200 207	p.36	W
Wellington City Library	(04) 801 4040		
Wellington Community Law Centre	(04) 499 2928	p.33	
Wellington Disability Information Centre	(04) 568 9788	p.39	
Wellington Mental Health Consumers Union	(04) 473 4433	p.36	
Wellington People's Centre	(04) 385 8596	p.26	
Wellington Women's Health Collective	(04) 499 7709	p.40	
Weltec - Disability Resources	(04) 920 2476	p.11	
Whitford Brown	(04) 236 8944	p.9	
Whai Kahurangi (Atareira)	(04) 499 1047	p.11	
Whitireia Community Law Centre	(04) 237 6811	p.33	
Whitireia Polytechnic- Disability co-ordinator	(04) 237 3100 x3749	p.11	
Whitireia Polytechnic - New Directions Course	(04) 237 3103 x3756	p.12	
Women's Health Collective Wellington	(04) 499 7709	p.13,25-29	
Work & Income	0800 559 009	p.13,24	
Workbridge	(04) 913 6400	p.33	
Workers Rights Service (Wgtn People's Centre)	(04) 385 8596	p.24	
Workfirst	(04) 494 9166	p.24	
Worklink - Hutt	(04) 560 3164	p.24	
Worklink - Wgtn	(04) 801 8500	p.24	
Workmates -Paraparaumu	(04) 297 1950	p.24	
Workmates -Porirua	(04) 237 7141	p.24	
XACT Personnel	(04) 570 2320	p.24	X

Canterbury version of Taking the First Step
Copies can be obtained from:
Mental health Education resource Centre (MHERC)
2nd Floor- Securities House
221 Gloucester street? PO Box 13-167, Christchurch
Phone 0800424 399
Email mherc@xtra.co.nz

Taranaki version of Taking the First Step

Copies can be obtained from:
Like Minds Taranaki
3rd Floor, BNZ Building
Devon Street West
PO Box 5015, New Plymouth
mental.health@xtra.co.nz

Australian resource inspired by Taking the First Step
Building a career of your choice.
Canberra: Australian Government Department of Health and Ageing, 2008.
Waghorn, G., Harris, M., Cleary, C., King, J. & Lloyd, C

Acknowledgements

LEAP would like to acknowledge the support and input of the many individuals and organisations who have shared their knowledge and ideas in order to create this guidebook. In particular we would like to thank everyone who answered the 'Employment Stories' questionnaire, and provided the inspirational quotes that appear throughout this booklet. We also want to thank everyone who attended consultation meetings and gave feedback on earlier drafts. Experts from the Wellington People's Centre, the Ministry of Social Development, the Human Rights Commission, the Department of Labour, Work & Income and many other organisations helped us get our facts right, and their input was much appreciated.

Sincere thanks also go to Hutt Valley District Health Board and Regional Public Health who funded the development and production of this guidebook, including this reprint.

We would also like to acknowledge and recommend three recent publications which have been particularly helpful resources:

"Work in practice: best practice employment support services for people with mental illness" published by Platform (2004)

"Respect costs nothing: A survey of discrimination faced by people with experience of mental illness in Aotearoa New Zealand" published by the Mental Health Foundation (2004)

"Our lives in 2014: A recovery vision from people with experience of mental illness", published by the Mental Health Commission (2004)



LIKE MINDS, LIKE MINE
Whakaitia te Whakawhiu i te Tangata

Regional Public Health
Better Health For The Greater Wellington Region

