



**Review of the health of
Britain's working age
population:
Call for evidence**

**A response from WorkDirections UK -
a member of the Ingeus Group of Companies**

Background

The Ingeus Group, of which WorkDirections UK is a subsidiary, has over 18 years' experience of delivering vocational rehabilitation and welfare-to-work contracts to those excluded from work by illness, injury or disability. Since 2004, we have assisted over 2,400 Incapacity Benefits customers in the UK to secure employment through our New Deal for Disabled People (NDDP) programme in Birmingham and Solihull, our Incapacity Benefit Outreach Project (IBOP) in Lambeth, Southwark and Wandsworth, and our Incapacity Benefit Employment Programme (IBEP) in Brent. In December 2007 we launch operations in six Pathways to Work Districts, working with Incapacity Benefits claimants in London, Nottinghamshire, Birmingham and Solihull and Edinburgh, Lothian and Borders.

We also deliver services to long-term unemployed people and lone parents through four Employment Zones and two Private Sector Led New Deal programmes in the UK. As Ingeus, we deliver welfare-to-work programmes in France and Germany, and have an 18-year history of operating in Australia. This diverse delivery background has provided us with first-hand experience of best practice in this field as well as the opportunity to understand better how and where effectiveness (of both process and performance) could be improved.

WorkDirections UK recognises the potential of every individual and seeks to empower each one so that they can build a better future through suitable, long-lasting employment. Whether our individuals are long-term unemployed, single parents, people with health-related concerns or a combination of these, we treat everyone as an individual, each with a unique set of circumstances, skills and potential. In partnership with every person who joins one of our programmes, we discover their best route to a suitable, lasting job, and support them to move towards an independent, sustainable future.

Our approach to this review

WorkDirections UK is engaged in policy development as part of our commitment to continue to improve services delivered to all stakeholders - individuals, government, employers and staff. We are delighted to have the opportunity to submit this response to the consultation on health, work and wellbeing. Through our NDDP and Pathways to Work operations we have direct experience of delivering condition management alongside job brokerage support. We advocate embedding health support within employment programmes and improving co-ordination between health and employment services. We would welcome further integration at a delivery as well as a strategic level and further movement towards truly joined-up service provision.

Our response to the call for evidence is informed by both our experience on the ground and our previous policy responses including [Establishing a framework for vocational rehabilitation](#) and [Improving the life chances of disabled people](#). We focus on two of the eight key questions most relevant to our background as a welfare-to-work provider:

- How can people best be helped to remain in or quickly return to work when they develop **health conditions** including **chronic disease or disabilities**?
- What constitutes **effective occupational health provision** and how can it be made available to all?

We also consider the future of vocational rehabilitation, how the Government should procure effective services and what a successful rehabilitation service should look like. Our aim is to look beyond the current provision framework and provide information and ideas for Dame Carol Black's review, contributing to the formation of future policy and strategy.

How can people best be helped to remain in or quickly return to work when they develop health conditions including chronic disease or disabilities?

With at least one third of people coming onto Incapacity Benefits from work¹, WorkDirections' experience of delivering welfare-to-work services to benefit recipients is vital to shaping policy in the area of job retention and restoration. We believe that for many people work provides the key to managing a health condition, and therefore effective rehabilitation support has a positive impact on the country's health, as well as employment rates. Joined-up working through an efficient partnership between the departments of Health and Work and Pensions would facilitate more effective procurement and management of this rehabilitation provision.

It is now recognised by health and welfare specialists that early intervention is the best course of action once someone falls out of work². A frequently cited figure is that if you have a claim for Incapacity Benefits for more than two years you are more likely to die or retire than return to work. Intervention within the first two years of a claim is therefore more likely to succeed in increasing the number of people moving off benefits and into sustainable work. This would benefit the individual, and positively impact on government finances both in terms of benefit payments saved and tax and National Insurance contributions received once individuals are working again.

Recent research forms an evidence base demonstrating that while unemployment is detrimental to both your health and future work prospects, and those of your children, working in itself boosts self-esteem, health and wellbeing.³ When someone moves from benefits into work the Government makes savings in benefit payments; in addition, on the premise that work can be beneficial to managing a health condition, early intervention that increases job outcomes may save the Government money in health-related payments. Work matters; effective, accessible occupational health provision is vital to the future health and employment levels of the UK.

Early access to flexible, personalised support once somebody opens a benefits claim is imperative to assisting them quickly back into employment. NDDP and Pathways to Work services allow individuals immediate access to back-to-work support on a voluntary basis. In addition to voluntary engagement some claimants will be mandated to attend five Work Focused Interviews, in which they discuss their employment needs and are

¹ HM Government *Health, work and well-being - Caring for our future*, 2005

² BSRM Working Party report *Vocational Rehabilitation The Way Forward*, revised December 2003

³ Waddell and Burton *Is Work Good for Your Health and Well-being?*, 2006

encouraged to take further steps towards labour market participation. If they do not attend, their benefit may be sanctioned.

This conditionality on what has traditionally been an 'inactive' benefit is welcomed by WorkDirections. We recognise the danger that increasing conditionality may exacerbate social exclusion where it results in sanctions or people choosing to leave benefits. However, this needs to be weighed against the chronic levels of disengagement experienced by many in these groups. Mandatory activity is not intended to isolate, rather the opposite. It can provide a valuable stepping stone towards engagement, job-focused activity, and the future employment prospects of the individual.

"This was my new life. Here, they were making me feel I had some worth. It's almost like they were saying, 'Well, we've got confidence in you, you can do it.' So I was making myself come here. And it was a goal, wasn't it? They were all working for me. So I had to get in there, and show them."

WorkDirections client, Birmingham NDDP programme, 2007

From [Work in progress: 10 people's stories about finding employment](#)

We recognise that someone may not want to or be capable of an immediate return to their previous job. Someone who has developed a health condition or disability which prevents them from returning to their previous place of work should have ready access to careers guidance. Job brokerage services must cater for individuals wanting to research, train or otherwise make steps towards a new employment industry. This may require extra resources and advisor capacity, but is crucial to achieving a personalised and empowering service.

A successful career change is facilitated by a jobs market that supplies a range of flexible and accessible jobs to meet demand. Flexible opportunities must be a central tenet of the Government's Jobs Pledge, including provisions for part-time work, job share, flexi-time or tapered hours. This initiative runs the risk of being ineffective in supporting jobseekers with health conditions and/or disabilities if it does not do this. Local Employment Partnerships represent a great opportunity to work with employers to develop strategies that enable people from these vulnerable groups to get and keep a job with hours that meet their needs.

What constitutes effective occupational health provision and how can it be made available to all?

WorkDirections UK's NDDP and Pathways to Work programmes offer vocational rehabilitation, rather than occupational rehabilitation, in that support is provided to individuals who are claiming out-of-work benefits, rather than those on long-term and statutory sick pay with their current place of work. In Australia, we delivered occupational rehabilitation through the company Inergise, whose aim was to maintain workers in suitable employment. Our experience in both countries informs the content and direction of this response. The essential features of successful examples are similar.

Effective provision is underpinned by both a clear work focus and flexibility in delivery, recognising the nebulous nature of 'incapacity'. We also advocate a continuing focus on outcomes over process as reflected in the new Pathways to Work funding model.

Our approach to effective vocational health provision can be outlined under four headings:

- Programme structure
- Assessment of need
- Activity and transition
- Managing the return to work and sustainability

Programme structure

A holistic approach to an individual's social exclusion is more efficient than a sequential process⁴. GPs, other health professionals, employers and employment services need to be integrated effectively to ensure the greatest benefit to the individual. A sequential process that considers employment rehabilitation after completion of health-orientated treatment is less effective than simultaneous delivery; a concurrent approach focuses treatment of the whole person rather than separate aspects of the person. This is even more effective when services are not only simultaneous but integrated. Health services, where appropriate, should focus on 'health at work' while at the same time job brokerage services take into account health-related occupational constraints.

The model of NDDP enhanced provision reflects the value of integration. Employment outreach surgeries are offered within a health setting, and GPs are able to refer their patients directly to job brokerage support. Our Birmingham NDDP delivery model reflects this in that we have close local links with GPs and PCTs. We also offer an in-house condition management programme alongside back to work support. Individuals have access to an

⁴ Waddell and Burton *Concepts of Rehabilitation for the Management of Common Health Problems*, 2004

on-site physiotherapist and psychologist who deliver group as well as individual sessions including cognitive behaviour therapist support. In this way all barriers to employment can be addressed and a good, lasting fit with a job can be facilitated. Partnership and under-one-roof models can achieve a successful programme structure.

Assessment of need

Individuals with a disability and/or health issues are a heterogeneous group with varying levels of skills, qualifications and experience who require support that is both personalised and flexible. Personal Capability Assessments provide an initial assessment of vocational capacity, functional capacity, psychosocial and personal circumstances. WorkDirections welcomes next autumn's transition to an assessment that looks at capacity rather than incapacity; the new Work Capability Assessment. Further investigation will lead to concrete conclusions about how effective this change is to achieving more personalised support for benefit claimants.

As well as initial assessment, ongoing assessment is also necessary to ensure individuals' needs continue to be met, and fluctuation in 'incapacity' is recognised. A successful employment service must support people with a wide range of needs, as well as individuals whose needs change over time. Focused action planning can aid this process; individuals accessing our Pathways to Work contracts will formulate an Action Plan during their first Work Focused Interview (WFI) at the Jobcentre, to be reviewed at each of their five subsequent WFIs. Key to the success of this process is that the individual feeds into decisions about the right help, support and advice they require.

Activity and transition

Goal-orientated, solution-focused activity is central to a successful service model, but if the procurer prescribes the level or type of activity required it can be counter-productive. Our case management approach sees multi-skilled advisors providing one-to-one job brokerage support, and using their initiative and creative intelligence to find individual solutions in every personal circumstance, utilising complementary support including condition management as appropriate. Again, active participation of the individual is key. Effective rehabilitation *facilitates* the individual to manage their health condition to return to, and sustain in, suitable work. We are encouraged by the Department of Work and Pension's recent consultations on contracting arrangements for Flexible New Deal that will reduce red tape and encourage provider innovation.

Managing the return to work and sustainability

The approach of an employment programme from the start is crucial in managing the return to work, and ensuring this work is sustainable. As well as facilitating an individual's move into employment, a thorough service will also equip that person with the skills they need to navigate the labour

market in the future independently of further support. It is about empowering people to command their own futures.

Sustained employment may not mean a single job with an individual employer. Individuals may sustain work through linking a number of different opportunities. Key to sustainability is a good match at job placement. Outcomes are, however, also improved through the provision of effective aftercare services.

Once an individual has moved into work rehabilitation should not stop. The first few months are a vital transition period during which people benefit from continued access to services; our NDDP and Pathways to Work contracts provide Graduate Commitment to individuals for 26 weeks once in work. This entitles them to continued access to both fiscal and human resources should they require them.

Long-term objectives

Below we consider and make recommendations on the most effective way that vocational rehabilitation can be delivered in the future, the way it is procured by the Government, and the way it is delivered.

Procurement of services

Current procurement could be enhanced through:

- More joined-up working between the Departments of Health and Work and Pensions
- Service timing that recognises the importance of early intervention
- Contracts focused on job outcomes and job retention, which is reflected in the funding model
- Contracts outsourced to the private and voluntary sectors, where this transfers financial risk and encourages innovation
- Contracts of sufficient size and length to allow for economies of scale and long-term partnership planning
- Procurement with a work-first emphasis; building on the premise that working is good for you and increased employment and health rates are the end goals.

Delivery of services

Delivery, and therefore outcomes, could be improved by:

- Partnership of services at the delivery level
- Enhanced integration of relevant health services into mainstream employment provision
- Services that are responsive to the fluctuating nature of 'incapacity'
- Employers engaging in delivery in terms of the design of employability training, provision of work trials, and exploration of schemes such as work 'conditioning' programmes for individuals to increase the frequency and length of work gradually over an agreed period of time.

WorkDirections UK and the Ingeus Group

WorkDirections UK is a member of the international Ingeus Group of companies which provides effective, accountable welfare-to-work services. The Group, which has been operating since 1989, delivers services in the UK, France and Germany.

WorkDirections UK produces original research, responses to government consultations and business development activity in the countries in which we operate.

- Launched in the UK in November 2002, WorkDirections UK supports socially excluded and disadvantaged individuals to find suitable and sustainable employment.
- Our welfare-to-work operations assist people who have become long-term unemployed, as well as single parents, and those who are not working as a result of health issues.
- WorkDirections UK is delivering six three-year **Pathways to Work** programmes from December 2007 which will allow us to support over 98,000 Incapacity Benefit claimants in the London, Birmingham, Nottinghamshire and Edinburgh areas. In Birmingham, the Pathways to Work programme replaced our **New Deal for Disabled People** programme which we ran for over three years.
- We also deliver **Private Sector Led New Deal** programmes in Central and West London, and **Employment Zones** in Nottingham, Birmingham, Brent, Haringey and Southwark.

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