



The Right Prescription Back to Work

Tomorrow's People
working in GP surgeries
and health centres



Introducing the GP model

In the familiar environment of the surgery, Tomorrow's People provides access to a specialist Employment Adviser for patients suffering health problems arising from long-term unemployment



In 2001 Tomorrow's People launched an innovative and ground breaking partnership with the James Wigg Practice in London to establish a specialist employment outreach clinic at the health centre.

This innovation was developed in response to the fact that many people receiving Incapacity Benefit and Disability Allowance are willing and able to work. However, some need extra help navigating their way back into employment, because of related mental and physical problems, such as chronic back pain, depression and stress.

GPs at the health centre had long recognised that many of their patients would benefit from receiving employment advice, but they lacked the resources and expertise to refer patients to appropriate support. The partnership with Tomorrow's People was the solution to this problem. Now patients who suffer ill health, either as a result of unemployment or whose health condition caused unemployment in the first place, can receive advice and support to help them find a route back to work and to better health.

The James Wigg model – now a national success story

Following the success of the pilot project at the James Wigg Practice, Tomorrow's People has rolled out similar employment outreach programmes to support patients in more than 80 surgeries, health centres and specialist clinics around the country.

The Tomorrow's People Employment Adviser works as a member of the primary healthcare team, offering professional employment advice and guidance to patients in the trusted and comfortable surroundings of the surgery. He or she attends the health centre for one day each week, meeting patients, who are either referred by medical staff, or who approach him direct.

An independent evaluation of the James Wigg Practice pilot was carried out in 2005 to measure the efficiency and return on investment benefits that it delivered. Please see page four for more information.

Counting the cost of Incapacity Benefit

“Whitehall is so impressed it plans to set up a pilot scheme in imitation. But officials will face the conundrum government always encounters; transferring the principles from the voluntary sector to the public sector without destroying the flexibility that makes it work.”

The Financial Times, January 2005

“These projects have been quoted as an example of effective good practice by the Prime Minister’s Strategy Unit. The government has described Tomorrow’s People’s projects as an inspiration for a new pilot it hopes to introduce, also placing employment advisers within GPs’ surgeries.”

Health Management, December 2005

Counting the cost of Incapacity Benefit

There are 2.7 million people claiming Incapacity Benefit in the UK, costing the State around £6.8 billion each year.

Research carried out on behalf of the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) has indicated that the longer someone is off work, the less likely they are to return. Evidence suggests that if someone is on Incapacity Benefit for one year, they could remain on it for up to eight years; for many this could mean retiring or dying on benefit.

However, three-quarters of new Incapacity Benefit claimants have more manageable conditions, such as back pain, depression and mild circulatory diseases. Current medical evidence suggests that for these conditions a return to work can be a positive outcome, contributing to the chances of a long-term recovery.

Encouragingly, the DWP’s research also provides evidence that around half the people claiming Incapacity Benefit say they would like to work, if they were given sufficient help and support.

Source: Five-Year Strategy, Department for Work and Pensions, February 2005.

Caroline’s story

When 22-year-old Caroline first came into contact with Tomorrow’s People she was depressed, having problems sleeping and taking strong medication to alleviate the symptoms. She had lost her full-time job and, unable to find a new one, had become entrenched in a cycle of appointments with the doctor and counsellors, and unwanted dependency on Incapacity Benefit. Her life had lost direction and some days she even struggled to get out of bed.

However, Caroline’s life turned around after a visit to her doctor. She is a patient at the James Wigg Practice in Kentish Town, North London. Her GP, recognising that she needed more than just medical advice, suggested she visit the on-site Tomorrow’s People Employment Adviser, who offers specialist health and welfare advice to patients at the surgery, aimed at getting them back to work.

Initially, Caroline’s weekly sessions with the Adviser focused on restoring her confidence and removing barriers to work. When she was ready to re-enter the job market, they worked together to update her CV and to improve interview techniques.

In a very short time Caroline felt confident enough to apply for a job as a hairdresser’s receptionist in her area. Despite facing fierce competition, she got the job. More than a year later, Caroline is still in work and looking forward to a bright and happy future.

Evaluating the success of the GP initiative

Powerful results from the pilot project

In 2005 Tomorrow's People commissioned an independent evaluation† of the outcomes arising from the pilot project at the James Wigg Practice. The pilot ran between September 2001 and December 2004. The findings are as follows:

Summary data

200 individuals were seen by our adviser during the pilot. 61 individuals from this group registered for the full employment support service; the rest sought adhoc advice as required.

The group was comprised as follows:

- 59% were women
- 41% were men
- 44% were from black and minority ethnic communities
- 85% were long-term unemployed
- 46% were on a combination of Incapacity Benefits
- 26% were on Job Seekers Allowance
- 28% were economically inactive, but not claiming benefits
- 19% were registered disabled / not producing certificates
- 48% were below NVQ2 at registration.

Outcomes at the end of the pilot

- 8 clients were still receiving support
- 36% of completes had employment as their last recorded outcome
- 80% of these were still in employment 12 months later
- 55% of completes achieved other outcomes (e.g. training / voluntary work).

Health outcomes after registration

- 20% reduction in GP consultations
- 74% reduction in referrals to Practice counsellors
- 19% reduction in anti-depressant prescriptions (after 18 months being registered with their GP)
- 15% reduction in anti-depressant prescriptions (after 12 months being registered with their GP).

† The independent evaluation was carried out by Elizabeth Rawson and further analysed by Nick Boys-Smith of NBS Consulting. Both are consultants specialising in regeneration.

Return on investment

“Dr Roy Macgregor believes the weekly arrival of a specialist Employment Adviser is a natural and important extension of what GPs do. As the support network that used to exist elsewhere falls away, he thinks surgeries need to fill the gap.”

The Financial Times, January 2005

The cost to serve each registered patient was only £720, compared to £1,101 (in 2003) for the New Deal for Disabled People.

The social return on investment (SRI) was calculated* as:

	£
Cost to serve per job	-2,385
GP savings	423
Savings in Income Support or other benefits	6,086
Tax and indirect savings	9,150
In-work benefit costs	-3,000
Total benefits arising per job:	10,274

The cost per job achieved of £2,385 is significantly better than comparable programmes.

* The SRI model to evaluate return on investment is applied to all new contracts before they start to ensure that rigorous targets are set at the outset, and that efficiency and value for money outcomes will be met over the life cycle of the project. The SRI model has been tailored for Tomorrow's People by Oxford Economic Forecasting and NBS Consulting.

John's story

John had built a successful career, which included management positions in the catering industry and in banking.

However, his bank role did not work out and he left the job confident that finding suitable employment would not be difficult. But he was to be proved wrong and weeks spent looking for the right job turned into years. Not surprisingly, as his debts started to mount and his work opportunities seemed to be disappearing, he became a victim of deep depression.

For John the route back to a positive life and to work came after he was persuaded to visit the Tomorrow's People's Employment Adviser at the James Wigg Practice.

There, with support from the Adviser, John was able to take steps to rebuild his confidence and to determine what sort of jobs would fulfil him.

After due consideration he decided to use skills learned in his family shoe business to secure a job as a specialist cutter. He is now working in London and building a new life for himself and partner.

Establishing a GP Employment Adviser Service in your area

Integrate an Employment Advisory Service into your patient care team

Tomorrow's People is keen to launch similar projects throughout the country and welcomes enquiries from GP surgeries, health centres and other specialist clinics that want to find out more about how an Employment Advisory Service can be integrated into patient services.

The benefits we deliver

Tomorrow's People has extensive experience of addressing health and disability-related barriers to work.

In recognition of the large number of people with health-related problems who are outside the labour market, we have pioneered a number of specialist approaches to help this vulnerable client group in environments where they feel safe and secure. All of these programmes, without exception, are delivering remarkable results and benefiting individuals, health professionals and the community as a whole in a variety of ways, including:

Patients

- Individuals and their families benefit from a return to work in financial, emotional and health terms. Medical evidence shows that for some patients with health problems, a return to work will contribute to long-term recovery.

Health professionals

- Every patient who regains their health by a return to work saves the time of doctors and other health professionals, which can then be focused on other patients. This may also lead to cost savings within the GP practice or specialist clinic.

Community

- Society as a whole benefits from the cost savings that result from individuals becoming economically independent rather than benefit dependent.
- Local communities also benefit from any increase in the numbers of people who are economically active and contributing to local life.

GP Employment Adviser Service

“GPs at the health centre are excited about the scheme and its achievements so far. They say that it has helped save about five GP consultations per patient involved, saving the practice thousands of pounds. Patients prefer to visit an independent expert here without any fear of the stigma that can sometimes be attached to visiting a job centre or a more formal service that they might find threatening.”

General Practitioner, August 2004

How the service operates

Each surgery or health centre situation is different, so the Employment Service can be structured in a way that suits the requirements of an individual surgery and its patients. Typically, it works as follows:

If a doctor judges that a patient could return to work and, as such, may benefit from independent advice, they suggest to the patient that they make an appointment with the Tomorrow's People Employment Adviser. Many patients also become aware of the service through promotional literature available in the waiting area and choose to self refer.

Once an appointment is agreed, the patient can see the Adviser weekly (or less frequently depending on the patient's requirements) for as long as they require support. An Adviser will spend between 45 minutes and an hour with a patient at each meeting.

Emphasis is on providing support, mentoring and information for the long-term.

Where it is not possible to offer an on-site service, Tomorrow's People provides patients with off-site employment support via GP referrals.

Why the service works

A number of factors contribute to the success of the service, including:

- **Independence** – patients tell us that they are wary of speaking to 'authority figures' and the independence of Tomorrow's People from government makes it easier to win their confidence.
- **Trusted environment** – experience shows that particularly vulnerable or fragile people are more successfully engaged with when they are in an environment where they feel secure and where a trusted intermediary has endorsed the service.
- **Emphasis on long-term support** – a dual emphasis is placed on getting people back into work and helping them stay there through sustained support.
- **Length of sessions** – a Tomorrow's People Employment Adviser will spend 45 – 60 minutes with a patient per meeting, compared to 14 minutes at JobCentre Plus, or 12 minutes per consultation with a GP.

Who Are Tomorrow's People

Making Life Work for over 20 years

Tomorrow's People is a specialist employment charity that has helped change the lives of thousands across the UK.

We help break the cycle of unemployment so that people can take positive control of their lives and build a brighter future.

Tomorrow's People was founded in 1984 and in that time, we have helped over 400,000 long-term unemployed people on their journey back to work. 90% of the people we help find a job are still in employment 3 months later; 76% are still working 12 months later.

We work with the hardest to reach groups directly in their communities, offering training and advice, confidence building, jobsearch support, CV writing, and interview skills. Most importantly, once someone gets a job, we stick with them and their employer over the long term to make sure that success is permanent.

The impact of getting back to work literally transforms lives. When people who haven't been able to work find a job, it puts them and their families on a secure financial footing and enables them to move forward with their lives.

We are now looking to expand the GP Employment Adviser programme throughout the UK and are keen to:

- Meet with representatives of local GP practices, health centres and clinics to discuss how the service might be established in new local areas
- Secure funding from public and private sources to enable Tomorrow's People to build the infrastructure necessary for nationwide delivery of GP Employment Adviser Services

To discuss how we might develop, fund and deliver a similar project in your area, please contact:

Steve Swan, National Sales and Development Manager on 023 8089 9915 or sswan@tomorrows-people.co.uk or visit us on the web at www.tomorrows-people.co.uk

