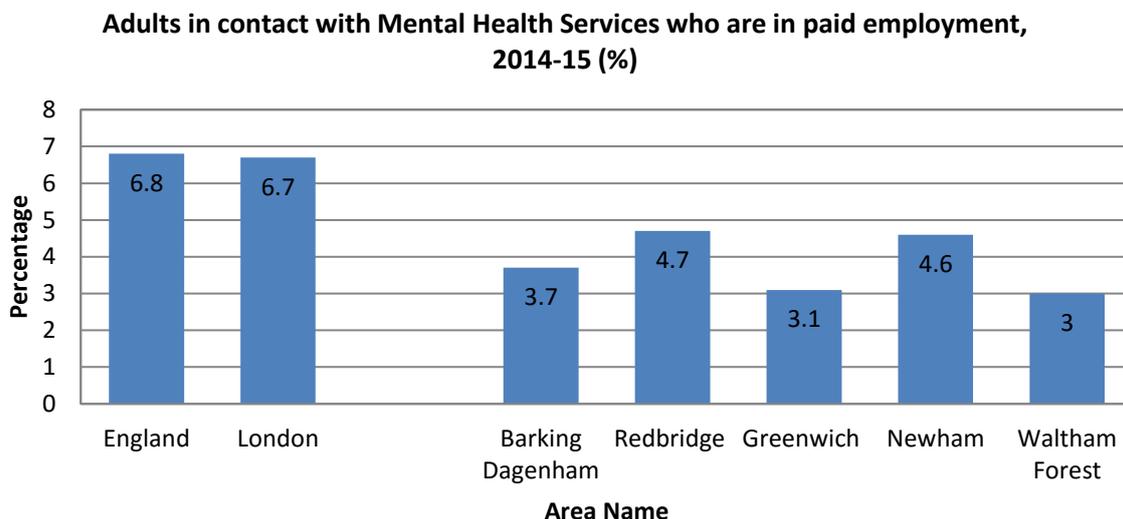


4.4 Current Employment Support and Peer Support Provision

The stigma of mental health need not be a barrier to a person's inclusion in society or the job market. Supported employment helps people with mental health difficulties to live, work, study, volunteer, and follow leisure pursuits. It is estimated that 65% of people with learning disabilities or severe mental health conditions, nationally, want to work, although employment figures are low and on a downward trend nationally.

Throughout 2014/15 3.7% of adults in Barking & Dagenham, who receive secondary mental health services, were in paid employment when they had their most recent care planning meeting¹. This is relatively low compared to the London (6.7%) and England (6.8%) averages.

Figure 1 Adults in contact with Mental Health Services who are in Paid Employment, 2014-15



The prevalence of mental ill health is growing in the borough. In August 2015 the borough had 8,090 residents claiming Employment and Support Allowance (ESA) benefit with around 43% of these claiming on the basis of mental health or behavioural related disorders.

There is a distinct need for specialist mental health employment support provision in the borough. Not only does employment lead to increased confidence and a more fulfilling life there are also cost benefits to be had. A study by Pure Innovations in Kent showed that the best on average annual savings of £1290 could be made to the council and over £3500 to the taxpayer for every person in work². The study considered changes to welfare benefit entitlements, the cost of services received and tax and national insurance payments before and after employment.

Jobcentre Plus provides specialist Disability Employment Advisors based at the Job centres in Barking & Dagenham to support people with mental health needs. They offer advice and assistance about returning to the workplace, as well as help with work preparation, recruitment, interview coaching and confidence building.

They will carry out a work assessment to assess the strengths and abilities of the person and look at what kind of work that the person might be suited to, and then develop an action plan with the person to assist them with their job search.

Jobcentre Plus has also worked with employers to develop the 'Positive about Disabled People' two tick employer scheme for people with disabilities including mental health. This symbol is awarded by Jobcentre Plus to employers who have made commitments to employ, retain and develop the abilities of disabled staff. Employers on the scheme will guarantee an interview to disabled people meeting the minimum criteria.

The Job Shop Service now has a specialist disability-focused job broker, where they are able to provide access to computers for job searching, provide better off in work calculations and in work benefits advice, identify training needs and signpost to relevant services.

Shaw Trust has recently been commissioned through funding from the Big Lottery to deliver services placing people with common mental health needs into employment.

Current Employment Support and Peer Support Provision

The Council currently oversee a contract, which is jointly funded with the Barking and Dagenham Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) held by the Richmond Fellowship for the provision of mental health employment and vocational support. The contract commenced on the 1st April 2012 and is due to expire in September 2016. There is a provision in the contract to extend for a period of up to one year at the discretion of the Council and it is proposed that the contract be extended for up to one year.

The Richmond Fellowship is currently delivering three different types of service, employment support, community links and peer support. The employment support section of the service helps service users look for and retain paid employment positions. This may include: Work preparation, links to local employers, CV writing and interview skills, as well as mentoring and supporting people to understand and exercise their rights in the workplace. Community links is the element of the service which helps people into education/ training and also to find voluntary employment. The peer support element helps service users to access social activities such as the allotment club, coffee mornings, coping through football, etc. In 2015/16 Richmond Fellowship supported 5 people into full-time employment and 9 people into part-time employment. They also supported 14 people to stay in work and helped 28 people to enter college or further education.

Richmond Fellowship and the Job Shop Service are now joint working and making referrals of job ready clients to the Job Shop. Advisors are making use of Job Shop computers and facilities and working alongside their clients. So far around five clients have registered with the Job Shop service via this referral route but numerous other clients are attending events or supported IT usage with their Richmond Fellowship advisor.

Review of current service provision

The Better Care Fund is a programme which was introduced in 2013 which results in Social Care and the NHS working together with a pooled budget to work on projects to improve the lives of some of the most vulnerable people in our society, placing them at the centre of their care and support, and providing them with 'wraparound' fully integrated health and social care, resulting in an improved experience and better quality of life.

One of the actions included in the Borough's 2016/17 BCF plan is for the current contract that supports people with mental ill health into employment to be re-modelled and re-tendered.

There is to be a re-modelling and re-tendering of our current mental health related employment and vocational support contract, with an aim of increasing the numbers of people with mental ill health securing long term competitive employment . This is to be in the shape of an Individual Placement Support (IPS) model, meaning anyone with a secure and enduring mental health need who wants to work will be eligible for employment and will gain the support to do so. There will be an integrated approach to recovery from mental ill- health to the final destination of sustained employment.

As an interim, it is intended that the current contract is extended in September 2016 and that improvements be made by the provider, prior to a new commissioning and procurement tender process.

Improving the numbers of people with mental health problems in paid employment is also a key feature of the Borough's new Mental Health Strategy. This will be going to the Health and Wellbeing Board for sign-off in Autumn 2016.

Recommendations for Commissioners

The current service delivery model for employment and vocational support for people with mental health problems in the borough is to be thoroughly reviewed and re-modelled as part of the Council's BCF work.

Services should be aligned with mainstream employment such as Job Shops, Work Programme, Access to Work, etc) provision especially that of the Work Programme and future Health and Work Programme post October 2017. Where specialist employment support is commissioned the objectives should be clearly aligned with mainstream provision.

There is a need to ensure effective links between the Work Programme contractors, mental health provision and specialist employment support. Co-location of provision should be explored with local employment services.

There is a need to involve people with mental health problems in service design and delivery and encourage peer group support.

Commissioners need to consider the opportunities for paid employment, job carving, volunteering, job coaches etc within commissioning strategies. In particular there needs to be a focus on tackling employment opportunists for young people and people claiming benefits due to mental ill-health.

Raise individual and stakeholders awareness of the value of employment, training and education for people with mental health needs.

Better support for local employers to ensure that they can better support the employment and retention of people with mental health problems.

1 <http://ascof.hscic.gov.uk/Outcome/716/1F>

2 http://base-uk.org/sites/base-uk.org/files/document-archive/3684The%20Cost/Benefit%20Argument/costed_case_studies_from_pure_innovations.pdf