

The difference Employ-Ability makes and the role of the Employment Specialist

Our client was referred to our Individual Placement and Support (IPS) Service as, initially, a Job Retention case: a teacher in their late thirties with a diagnosis of bi polar disorder. They had been teaching for 15 years and in their current post for 6 years. The client previously had episodes of sickness/ absence followed by a period of being supported back into work, but only as a relief in a performance-related zero hour's arrangement.

Our Employment Specialist attended a series of Occupational Health, Union and Head Teacher's/ employer meetings. They identified that the client's recovery would be helped by a specific focus to prevent a further deterioration in their mental health. Our Employment Specialist facilitated the client's introduction to a charity that provides art therapy, which encouraged the client to engage in two informal art courses, naturally using their teaching skills to assist other students.

In the interim, Employ-Ability supported the individual to reach a settlement with their employer as they began to acknowledge that they could be happy again. Initially the Employment Specialist met with the client once a week for 3 months and in addition supported them to attend GP appointments, CPA reviews and liaison with mental health practitioners.

The arts charity acknowledged their contribution and in a more nurturing and supportive environment the client was offered, and accepted, paid part-time for work with the charity. However, the change in their circumstances left the client unable to bridge a gap in their finances. As recovery progressed, the client realised that they were not fulfilling their full potential and considered a return to teaching, and resumed job searching. They were initially unsuccessful, but with the support and encouragement of the Employment Specialist, the client was offered 5 interviews out of six applications.

This level of activity induced a period of intense anxiety, but with the Employment Specialist providing interview skills, coaching and self-affirmation, the client was able to attend the interviews and secured a job offer with a local school on a part time basis.

As a direct result, the client has not been lost to the teaching profession, which is currently struggling to retain and recruit quality staff. Approximate costs for training and supporting newly qualified teachers are in the region of £50,000 to £60,000, whereas Employ-Ability costs are in the region of £600 per successful outcome. Most importantly, the impact on the client is that they report as being happy, recovering and resuming a professional life once again, debt free and in a better place to manage their own mental health needs with our support if and when required.

Employ-Ability also learned on the way, as there are available a range of education-orientated benevolent funds that could have assisted our client should our return to work plan not succeeded this time.