

ICAN Work

Impact Report

Programme delivered
2019–2023



Presented by
RCS Wales
2023

Project Summary



In 2019, RCS was a key partner in the development and delivery of a pioneering new service across North Wales aimed at helping people with mental health needs into employment in order to improve wellbeing and support recovery. The ICAN Work Service was led by Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board and funded by DWP through Welsh Government. It was delivered by RCS in Anglesey, Conwy and Denbighshire and by Adferiad in Gwynedd, Wrexham and Flintshire.

The service tested a local approach to delivery of an Individual Placement and Support (IPS) employment programme, recognised as one of the leading models to help people with poor mental health into work. This was the first time the IPS approach was tested on a large scale in Wales.

IPS is characterised by:

- Integration of employment and health support
- Promotion of employment as a health outcome
- Competitive employment as the primary goal
- Rapid and intensive job search, not determined by work-readiness or illness
- Personalised planning/counselling
- Zero exclusion – with eligibility based on patient choice
- Job search based on individual preferences
- Systematic job development
- Time-unlimited support

RCS delivered ICAN Work in a close working partnership with Adferiad. Each organisation employed a team of Employment Specialists, who worked side by side to engage and support clients, and to promote the service across key health and community settings.

The initial pilot successfully met its targets despite the onset of the Covid-19 pandemic and received a further two year's continuation funding from DWP to March 2023.

Employment support

The need



“ ——— |
It’s the best move I have ever made, I really love the role ——— |”

People approached the service for help with finding a job where they might feel supported and understood, in roles which aligned with their skills and their health needs. Many clients had left previous roles because of the negative impact of the workplace on their health. All were looking to return to work as soon as possible, in the right role.

- I’d like colleagues I can get on with. People I can turn to for help. People who work together as a community, a tribe.
- I want to work with people who have the right attitude to my mental health.
- I’d like to find an employer who understands I have an illness and is sympathetic towards it.
- I’m looking for a reasonably comfortable working environment, friendly people to work with, a decent day’s wage for a decent day’s work.
- I need a stress-free environment, with someone that understands me easily.

Our team of Employment Specialists provided empathetic, one to one support for service clients. They helped clients to explore their aspirations and goals, identify their strengths, and work with their barriers. They helped them evaluate choices around benefits and finances, and coached them in job-search and interview skills. They also helped to ensure the right workplace support was in place, and supported clients to decide whether to disclose their health condition to an employer. When clients moved into work, the Employment Specialists would stay in touch for as long as needed.

In total, RCS worked with 680 people, and supported 285 of these (36.4%) into work across a wide range of sectors including hospitality, care, health, construction, leisure services, administration, horticulture and education. Roles included care worker, retail assistant, customer services officer, housing advisor, climate change officer, taxi driver, administrator, construction worker, caterer, project worker, tattoo artist, teaching assistant, production operative, commissioning officer, employment mentor and independent living assistant. Employers included Denbighshire County Council, Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board, Cartrefi Conwy, Barnados, Tesco, Age Cymru, BT, Eirias High School and the National Trust, as well as numerous SME businesses and third sector organisations.

Employment support What people said



I was so nervous in the interview but somehow I pulled it off and got the job. I felt so proud of myself and this wouldn't have happened without the help [of my Employment Specialist].

After my first day in my new job, driving home I felt such joy - a feeling I had not felt in a long time.

[My Employment Specialist] has truly given me skills that I will never forget in battling my mental health, but also in the work sector when applying and getting interviews for work. I cannot put into words how grateful I am.

With the intervention of ICW I have finally become more financially stable, much more independent and have managed to secure a role to boot! My mental health is the best it's ever been in years and I am enjoying a newfound confidence and independence.



Mental Health

“—
This is the best my mental health has been in a very long time —”

The need

- People were living with mental health conditions that were affecting their day-to-day lives and in many cases their ability to hold down a job.
- Health conditions were far-ranging, and included anxiety, depression, PTSD, grief, social anxiety, bi-polar disorder, psychosis and stress. A number of clients had suicidal tendencies. A fifth of clients considered themselves to have a disability.
- Most people presenting to the service were not receiving any support from health services. For those that were, this was mainly in the form of medication.
- The Covid pandemic had a major and long-lasting impact on people's health and wellbeing, leaving many people feeling more isolated and anxious.

Our response

We found that many clients registering with our service were not receiving support for their mental health. This often left them unable to engage fully with the employability support that was on offer. To address this need, we initially provided informal support through regular welfare calls via phone or video call. This was of particular benefit during the Covid-19 lockdowns, which saw a worsening of people's health conditions, with isolation leading to social anxiety and depression.

In the second phase of the project, we organised more formal counselling support, provided by Masters counselling students through our long-established partnership with Bangor University. Adferiad also provided employment counselling for service clients, helping them to address barriers and progress towards work goals.

We designed and delivered a series of webinars on a range of employability and wellbeing topics. These helped clients to build confidence and skills, working in a safe space with others and benefitting from peer support.

Mental Health

What people said



I can't believe how supportive you are! In my 10 years of mental health support nobody has listened like you have

I feel like I am changing for the better and understanding my mental health better. Because I have opened up and told people, they can see the real me.

I feel I can rely on you to get me through the struggles that I'm experiencing at the moment

I feel after many years I am working with the right people at the right time.

Good to try new things as I have not used zoom before and not done a workshop in a long time



Working with Stakeholders

The need

- Health workers may not know which services can provide their patients with employability support
- Health workers are well placed to understand the impact of work on a client's wellbeing
- Integrated health and employment support can provide an effective, joined-up offer for patients

Our response

The service was branded in alignment with BCUHB Mental Health Division's ICAN programme, a community-based programme which included the development of support hubs. This 'in-house' branding helped to raise awareness of the service across health settings.

An intensive programme of communication and engagement across a range of health and community settings helped to raise the profile of the service and generate referrals. Engagement work was carried out by our team of Employment Specialists, initially face-to-face and then moving on-line with the onset of Covid-19. There were high levels of buy-in into the service, with referrals coming from wide-ranging sources, including GPs, occupational therapists, community mental health teams, Mind, social workers and DWP work coaches. People also self-referred to the service.

What people said

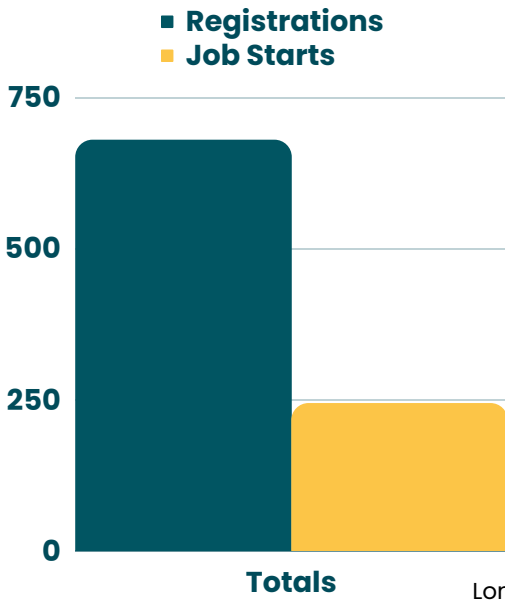
[We referred patients] who had significant mental health problems and could have addictions such as alcoholism. Through RCS's support I have witnessed clients flourish and turn their lives around.

Statistics

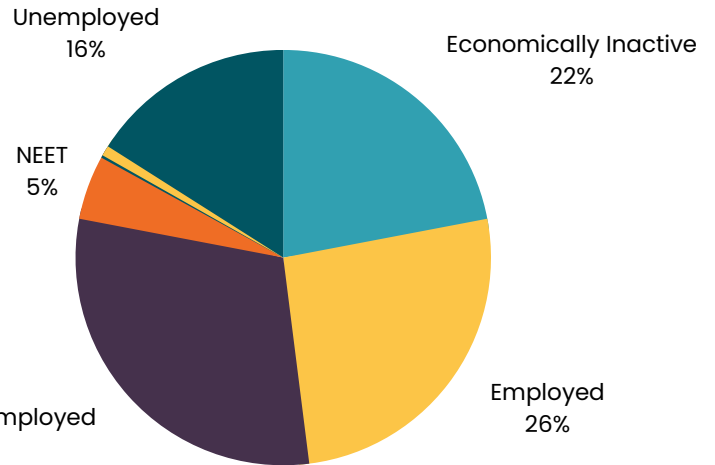
Gender



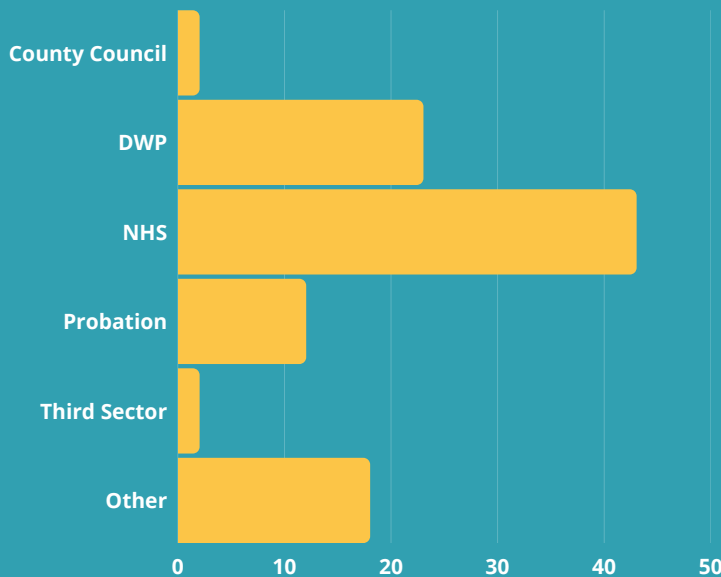
Male 51% Female 49%



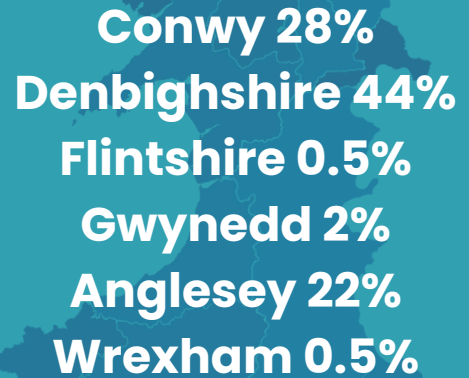
Participant Status on Entry



How our clients heard about us



Client Counties



Between July 2019 and March 2023

1261 individuals registered across North Wales.

RCS supported **680** clients in Conwy, Denbighshire and Anglesey.

Adferiad supported **581** in Gwynedd, Flintshire and Wrexham.

36.39% of RCS clients (285) were supported into work.

Client Stories

Luca



When Luca contacted ICAN Work, he was feeling very low, anxious, and lacking in self-belief and confidence. He felt a failure having recently left a teacher training programme which he felt was not right for him.

We made a plan to increase his confidence and lessen his anxiety, alongside practical support with seeking the right job. Luca said our meetings gave him a focus and reason to get up and out on time. Initially accompanied by his mother, Luca soon felt safe and confident enough to attend on his own.

At the sessions, we introduced specific interventions and techniques to build his confidence. He worked on these between sessions and was always delighted at the results. We also worked on his CV and identified his key transferable skills. Gradually, Luca developed the confidence to put himself forward for jobs, and eventually applied for his dream role – a post with the National Trust at Bodnant Gardens in the Conwy valley.

With the techniques Luca had learnt, he was successful at interview and started in his new role two weeks later. Luca said "This is the best my mental health has been in a very long time".



Client Stories

Daniel



Daniel, a 27 year old trained chef from Prestatyn, experienced anxiety and low mood from spending five months out of work, after bullying in a previous job affected his mental health. Following referral by his workcoach, I Can Work helped him to find work with the catering team at Glan Clwyd Hospital.

Daniel said: “My confidence and anxiety were shot after receiving a number of knock backs and I felt like giving up. But my I CAN Work employment specialist was amazing and helped to boost my self-esteem by sending me on a confidence boosting course. She was very proactive and understood what type of work would suit me, rather than pushing me towards any old job.

Daniel took on the role working on the Covid-19 wards in March 2020 just before lockdown. It wasn't long before he contracted the infection himself. But after the “worst weeks” of his life fighting the illness, he returned to work because he said it “gives him purpose.”

“The programme has helped to give me a more positive outlook on life. I've joined the gym and started to love and care for myself again. I believe I CAN Work can help you no matter what your issues are.”



Client Stories

Melanie



57 year old care assistant Melanie was referred to ICAN Work by her community mental health team. She was experiencing high anxiety levels, having returned to work following an episode of depression. She felt she needed to find new employment in order for her wellbeing to improve, but was struggling with on-line job search and applications.

Her Employment Specialist helped her to refresh and update her CV and to upload it to Indeed. She was soon contacted by a number of employers offering her interviews, and before long, was offered a role as a support worker in the Conwy area.

6 months on Melanie said "It's the best move I have ever made, I really love the role. I would certainly recommend ICAN work to anyone wanting to get back into work but worried that certain barriers will stop them applying for and securing a new role".

