

GM Working Well Early Help: Stakeholder Engagement/Co-Design Summary

Co-designing a Working Well Early Help Service

Who did we talk to?

- Experts by Experience
- GPs and Primary Care
- Employers
- Academic Partners
- Voluntary Organisations
- Job Centre Plus
- Education and Housing providers
- Healthcare providers and commissioners

44 Presentations and discussions held across GM.



13 workshops tailored to a range of audiences



1000 experts by experience participated in surveys.

A survey of employers in GM



A Roundtable event with national experts



What did Experts by Experience tell us?

Dealing with a health condition is **not a one-time event**; it is an ongoing and **evolving challenge**.

Encouraging **flexibility** and making **small practical adjustments** can make a huge difference in supporting people to remain in work.

A significant number of people **aged 55 and over**, **'struggle on'** at work, taking no days off despite their health condition causing difficulties at work.

People are finding it **challenging** to talk to their employers about their **struggle to remain in work** with a health condition.

Self employed people feel **isolated** and require better support.



"I think a lot of us are going to work being really brave and dismissing a lot of very nasty symptoms."

"They didn't offer me any support at all so I had to cut my hours down, which I didn't want to do."

"I'd be wary about telling them. It gives you that impression that they would push you out in case you started taking sick days or being ill."

What did GPs tell us?

There is a **pressure** to give a **fit note** and refusing this can **impact the doctor-patient relationship**.

The **presenting issue** may be a **symptom** of another ongoing problem such as **debt**, **housing issues** or **relationship problems**.

This service needs to be **easy to access**.

This service would be helpful as a **mediator** between the **patient/GP** and the **employer**.

GPs felt that **Occupational Health advice** would be a useful part of the service as they have limited / no training in this area.



“There's no doubt that 'fit notes' provide a challenge, and are a difficult part of our job.”

“We're not trained as Occupational Physicians.”

“It would be useful to have access to an independent service.”

What did Employers tell us?

Most **small businesses** don't have access to, or knowledge of, **Occupational Health** services.

There is a lack of **independent advice** available to employers.

Employers felt they had a **lack of knowledge** about health issues, especially **mental health** and how to best **support** employees.

The aim should be to **keep someone in work** but also to recognise that in some cases **exit may be the best outcome** for all parties.

There needs to be **clear** guidance and information regarding **eligibility for referrals** into this service and employers would like to be able to refer into the service.



"We would like awareness training on mental health issues."

"In a small business we can't afford a HR Manager"

"GPs need to distinguish, with specific illnesses, what a person returning to work can do while 'healing.'"

What else did we hear?

Mental and physical health are closely linked but there is **rarely mental health support** for people who present with a physical illness/impairment.

Peer support / peer mentoring is effective for both employees and employers who are managing staff with health issues.

Any service needs to be **impartial/ independent**.

Both **healthcare** and **social** factors need to be considered in order to best support individuals.

People wanted **evening and weekend** access to the service.

The service needs to work closely with other **local** services and **community** groups in order to support individuals **socially** within their local area.

Referrals need to be **simple** with **clear criteria**.

What happens next?

- This feedback has been presented in detailed form to the GM Health & Employment Board.
- The feedback is being used to develop a detailed service model. There will also be a clear evaluation plan to help us understand how effective the new model is.
- Stakeholders will be involved in the procurement process – please get in touch if you are interested.



Thank you



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