

## Work, Education & Training if you have a serious mental illness

### **What is a serious mental illness?**

Serious mental illness includes schizophrenia, bipolar disorder and other diagnoses which typically involve psychosis (losing touch with reality or experiencing delusions) or high levels of care, and which may require hospital treatment.

### **How many people have one?**

1 in 100 will experience bipolar, 1 in 100 will schizophrenia and along with other diagnoses this means about 1 in 30 will experience a serious mental illness sometime in their life.

### **Does this mean that people who have a serious mental illness cannot work or access education or training?**

Not at all: many people living with a serious mental illness have productive careers in a wide range of occupations from medicine to social care; from factory work to customer services; and many people are employed in education and training organisations.

An individual's mental illness may be known to their colleagues - or not - depending on the wishes of the individual but it is likely that we all know or work with people with serious mental illness.

If a member of staff has or develops a serious mental illness with a supportive approach from their managers they are likely to be able to return to work; some may need a staggered return but the time and energy spent on such plans are usually much less costly than recruiting a new member of staff.

Additionally, a serious mental illness will typically be a qualifying disability under the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 so not only is there a moral imperative to support staff; the law is often on their side so they must be treated fairly.

### **As an employer, how do we address this issue?**

Hafal's Regional Employment Officers can give you further advice and basic training and our accredited Learning Centre provides training to employers on the management of mental health in the workplace.

The priority is to have a supportive, transparent process for managing such matters; in small organisations in particular it is difficult when staff are away from work but understanding how to help them return to work will reduce the duration of the absence and hopefully prevent future absences.

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