Evaluation of Employ-Able

Final report by

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Executive summary

1   Introduction

The Employ-Able programme was introduced in November 2012 and by the end of March 2015 had had 162 referrals. It is specifically aimed at veterans who are having difficulty adjusting to civilian life because of mental health conditions and who need help to find or sustain employment. The programme is funded by Poppyscotland and is delivered by SAMH Employability Advisors. Both parties actively participate and engage in the promotion of the service. This evaluation was conducted between May 2014 and April 2015.

2   Objectives

The evaluation objectives were to:

1. Report on the effectiveness of the Employ-Able Programme in terms of improving the employment prospects of veterans with mental health conditions.
2. Identify and report on the three key additional tangible outcomes from the support veterans have received from SAMH to date.
3. Report on the perceptions of the Employ-Able team at SAMH as to the key barriers experienced by participants who fail to achieve satisfactory employment outcomes prior to participating in the programme.
4. Report on the perceptions of the programme amongst specified providers of employment services in the veterans sector and Job Centre Plus.
5. Report on the key factors that participants, partners and stakeholders consider would improve the programme and/or improve its uptake amongst veterans.
6. Make recommendations for the future effectiveness of the programme.

3   Methods

To achieve these objectives, a mixed method research design was used:

* A brief review of background and contextual information from a variety of sources
* Operational data capture
* Stakeholder consultation through qualitative in-depth interviews
* Client consultation through semi-structured interviews at various stages of engagement
* A facilitated internal stakeholder workshop to discuss emerging findings and implications

4   Key findings

There is a group of veterans who find access to employment difficult, for a variety of reasons relating to or exacerbated by their mental health. These individuals are not well supported by mainstream employability initiatives and often find it difficult to acknowledge their difficulties and to engage with support services.

Client facing internal stakeholders recognise a range of barriers to satisfactory employment outcomes that clients entering the Employ-Able programme face. Mental health is key, but is commonly compounded by a range (often more than one per client) of additional challenges: most common are wider welfare issues such as:

- Housing problems
- Debt
- Social isolation
- Alcohol dependency
- Convictions
- Unrealistic expectations as to the type of employment or salary they can achieve

Employ-Able is effectively providing support to this group of clients. Over half of those who were referred to the service in its first two years have achieved a positive employment, training, volunteering or other meaningful activity outcome and have been supported to maintain it.

Jason's experience

Jason came to Employ-Able in February 2014. He was referred by Veteran's First Point, where he had been getting support for 18 months and was also involved with the Job Centre Plus work programme. He had ambitions to set up his own business and had had some help to write a business plan, but felt that there was a lot of negativity, which affected his confidence in himself. At Employ-Able, he found the opposite. His Employability advisor was encouraging and supportive. He says:

> *''The main thing is she helps me with my confidence. She listens to what you are saying and tries to find ways to help you. She arranges things, she has contacts and she gives me motivation. She is willing to work **with** me and she goes the extra mile.''*

Jason was very apprehensive because of the way he was feeling about himself at the time. He feels he isn't good at meeting new people. But he was put at ease straight away. Now he is doing things for himself, he has set up his business and it is going really well. He is even looking at employing someone else and is continuing to get help from his Advisor at Employ-Able, for instance in working out how to arrange Health and Safety courses.

> *''I'm motivated, focussed and excited about the future. I've got a better view of what I can achieve and a better understanding of how I can do it - and if I keep going I'll be able to achieve my goals.''*

All clients have shown an improvement in softer outcome measures (confidence, self-esteem, community, relationships and purpose) during their engagement with the programme.

Clients are exceptionally and unanimously complimentary about the support they have received, with advisors described as friendly, non-judgemental, willing to go the extra mile to help, very supportive, and offering individual, non time-constrained, practical help with a wide range of barriers to employment.

All clients feel they have achieved a sense of focus and direction and are more optimistic about their future. They report improved awareness of their barriers to employment and all have worked on an individualised action plan to address barriers and progress towards employment. The three most frequently self-reported additional tangible outcomes from the support veterans have received from Employ-Able are:

- Increased self confidence/self belief
- A positive personal outlook for the future
- A feeling of having reliable, non-judgemental support

External stakeholders who were able to comment were also very complimentary and recognise Employ-Able as a unique approach with a clear and complementary place in the landscape of available support for this client group. They too value Employ-Able as non-judgemental, not time constrained or pressured, flexible and person centred.

> *''It's about meaningful activity, support, individual, long term moving forward in recovery, to promote self esteem, confidence building and eventually moving forward to some form of work-related purpose.''*
>
> *External stakeholder*

The service has unique strengths including:

- A simple, straightforward and smooth referral process
- Advisors are experienced mental health workers, with employability expertise
- The support provided is tailored to the individual's needs
- The support is not time-limited meaning that clients establish successful relationships with their Advisor
- The support of Poppyscotland in accessing additional funding for specific employment or training related activities
- Advisors are very effective at engaging with potential referral partners through visits and presentations and a recent networking event

Key challenges for the continued development of Employ-able were identified. These include:

- Clients are much further from employment-ready when they enter the programme than originally anticipated, facing a variety of barriers such as alcohol abuse, driving bans, convictions, low self-confidence levels, difficulty in dealing with appointments, managing daily life, etc. Some still do not feel ready for work after many months of support
- Early engagement could be speedier with more information – clients can take time to

disclose all their barriers/issues

- Engaging clients in group sessions has proved more difficult than anticipated
- Some clients have unrealistic expectations as to the type of work and level of pay they are capable of achieving. Support involves managing these expectations and encouraging wider searches and willingness to consider lower paid or voluntary roles
- A small number of clients 'over-stay', developing a dependency with no continuing progress and are reluctant to exit the programme
- Awareness of Employ-Able is low amongst some potential referral partners – it can get 'lost' in what some perceive as a cluttered landscape of support services for veterans
- Employ-Able is not understood fully by all potential referral partners and some do not differentiate it clearly from other programmes
- Advisors lack sufficient time to devote to networking and developing relationships with referral partners
- The geographic availability of the service is limited by resource and logistics

5   Recommendations

1. Update internal documentation to better reflect the programme as it has evolved, including the role of *Tools for Living™* and a wider focus on meaningful activity.

2. Renew efforts to involve all clients in some group activity as early as possible (this could be introduced initially through social activities) and ultimately aim to deliver more *Tools for Living™* modules.

3. Continue to work to develop new relationships with external partners and referral sources, including Services (transition) and civilian routes, particularly health (relevant practitioner networks) and employment services.

4. Work in partnership with other veterans organisations to develop a more seamless and co-ordinated approach to providing information on/access to the support that is available for veterans. Perhaps a small practitioner/marketing working group could be established to identify options for achieving this?

5. Continue efforts to widen the geographical availability of Employ-Able, using delivery partners and other approaches. Could remote support be offered through Skype or teleconferencing, for instance?

6. Improve the referral form to ensure better information is gathered about mental health condition and goals for each client, whilst ensuring that confidentiality is maintained/consent is sought.

7. Review and formalise feedback mechanisms so that referral partners consistently receive brief updates on the progress of clients they refer to Employ-Able.

8. Develop a client information/welcome pack that includes expectations and responsibilities and a clear description of what clients can expect to achieve from the programme.

9. Review and strengthen procedures for exit to ensure that clients are expected and encouraged to progress and/or to move on from Employ-Able at an appropriate point.

10. Develop an Employ-Able marketing strategy and refresh marketing materials to ensure messages reflect key strengths, purpose/objectives and client impacts.

11. Develop a unique logo and/or strapline.

12. Promotion and marketing should convey a wider focus on meaningful activity as well as employment and provide clear messages about the aims of the service and the type of client it is designed to support.

13. Initiate/build on relationships with appropriate voluntary organisations, social enterprises, etc to provide suitable work placements and examine sources of funding/incentive.

14. Explore merits of developing a relationship with resettlement services.

15. Build on the successful speed-networking event and other approaches to practitioner networking.

16. Explore options for resourcing a marketing/development support role to follow up and maintain contacts, provide information and develop relationships.

17. Re-convene a workshop or similar opportunity for all internal stakeholders to reflect, take stock and plan or a regular basis (perhaps annually).

Chapter 1 Introduction

1.1   Evaluation approach

In May 2014, Poppyscotland commissioned Janet Biggar and Lorraine Simpson to undertake an independent evaluation of the employment support programme, Employ-Able. This service is for veterans with mental health conditions who struggle to access civilian employment. The evaluation will inform the future development of the programme so that it effectively meets the needs of clients and is accessible to as many of those who will benefit as possible.

The evaluation objectives were to:

1. Report on the effectiveness of the Employ-Able Programme in terms of improving the employment prospects of veterans with mental health conditions.

2. Identify and report on the three key additional tangible outcomes from the support veterans have received from SAMH to date.

3. Report on the perceptions of the Employ-Able team at SAMH as to the key barriers experienced by participants who fail to achieve satisfactory employment outcomes prior to participating in the programme.

4. Report on the perceptions of the programme amongst specified providers of employment services in the veterans sector and Job Centre Plus.

5. Report on the key factors that participants, partners and stakeholders consider would improve the programme and/or improve its uptake amongst veterans.

6. Make recommendations for the future effectiveness of the programme.

The proposed research methodology included:

*   Operational data capture
*   Stakeholder consultation
*   Client interviews

Early and interim review of the approach led to two additions to the methodology:

1. A brief review of background and contextual information from a variety of sources

2. A facilitated internal stakeholder workshop to discuss emerging findings and implications

1.2   Report structure

The following Chapter 2 outlines the relevant background and evaluation methodology employed. Chapters 3 to 6 present the key findings. The final chapter presents conclusions, makes recommendations for the future effectiveness of the programme and presents the action plan developed as part of the evaluation.

Chapter 2 Background and methodology

This chapter provides a brief background to the Employ-Able programme, along with an outline of the evaluation methodology.

2.1   Background

The Employ-Able programme was introduced in November 2012 and at 31st March 2015 has had 162 referrals, with 91 veterans currently participating in the programme. It is specifically aimed at veterans who are having difficulty adjusting to civilian life because of mental health conditions and who need help to find or sustain employment. It is open to veterans who are engaged in the on-going DWP employment programmes and to veterans who do not have a defined health barrier to accessing work but nonetheless require support. The programme is funded by Poppyscotland and is delivered by SAMH Employability Advisors. Both parties actively participate and engage in the promotion of the service.

The model uses mental health support workers who provide employment advice, access to a range of pre-employment options, including volunteering and work placements and on-going support while engaged in these activities. Before commencement, clients have an initial one-to-one session with their Advisor to establish a realistic and achievable personal plan and talk about the support they will need. Key features of this service include:

One to one support

One to one support helps clients to identify needs, set goals, overcome barriers and engage with mainstream services or enter into group activities, such as appropriate elements of the *Tools for Living™* programme, followed by additional support as needed.

Access to SAMH *Tools for Living*^{TM} modular programme

This consists of 21 modules (outlined in Figure 1 below) and provides structured support in a time-limited manner with specific objectives and outcomes. The programme, delivered on a sessional basis over a number of weeks, is aimed at engaging people in entry-level activities. The activities are conducted in a safe relaxed atmosphere with the aim of assisting people to develop self-confidence to overcome social anxieties in preparation for accessing mainstream opportunities. Underpinning the activities, there is support to develop self-awareness, social skills, skill development and coping strategies.

Signposting

Individuals with effective support networks, ideas about what they want to do and the direction they wish to take are supported into a pre-work option or directly into employment and supported to maintain these.

Figure 1:   The *Tools for Living™* Programme

One to One Support (4-8 weeks)	Tools for Living (10-16 weeks)	One to One Support (4-8 weeks)

• Engagement
• Holistic strength based assessment
• Vocational assessment
• Barrier removal
• Identification of T4L modules
• Signposting to other services
	• Tools for Living module attendance
	  ○ Personal Development
	  ○ Personal Resilience
	  ○ Personal Progression
	• One to one support (as required)
		• Review of Tools for Living learning
		• Job searching / job clubs
		• Job pre-employment support
		• In work support
		• SAMH Services
		• Referral to other services

Intended client outcomes contained in the original Employ-Able proposal are as follows:

- Improved awareness of their barriers to employment
- Individualised action plan in place to address barriers and progress towards employment
- Certificates attained for all *Tools for Living™* modules completed
- Improved employment prospects
- Either employment or referral onto another employment-related agency
- Maintaining employment through in work support (where appropriate)

2.2   Methodology

The evaluation was designed to gather data from a variety of sources and perspectives in order to paint a robust picture of the effectiveness of Employ-Able and to meet the evaluation objectives:

- Clients
- Internal stakeholders in funding and delivery partner organisations
- External stakeholders (referral partners and others serving similar client groups)
- Monitoring and reporting data
- Background papers and relevant external documents

An interim reporting stage ensured that reflection on formative findings informed on-going development of the programme and led to the inclusion of an internal stakeholder workshop in in the methodology. The methodological approaches used are outlined in the following sub-sections.

Context review

The following documents were included in the background and context review:

- Employ-Able background papers, proposal, minutes of review meetings, etc.
- Correspondence and other information provided by Poppyscotland relating to similar initiatives
- SAMH Position Statement: Employment (2011)
- SAMH What Works? Supporting mental health in the workplace (2012)
- Employment Support Needs of Veterans in Scotland, Poppyscotland and The Lines Between, 2015 – Final report
- The Veterans' Transition Review[1]
- The Forces in Mind Trust's Transition Mapping Study Report[2]
- Armed Forces Basic Skills Longitudinal Study[3]
- UK Armed Forces mental health: Annual Summary & Trends Over Time, 2007/08 - 2013/14 [4]
- DWP Work Programme: how is it performing?[5]
- Better pathways into Mental (and other) Health services for Veterans in NHS Greater Glasgow & Clyde, Paper to Partnership Directors, February 2012

Operational data capture

The evaluation included review of key monitoring and operational data and reports produced by the partnership organisations during the delivery period. These are:

- A full set of client narratives
- Quarterly reports
- 18 month and 2-year progress reports
- Mental health matrix

Stakeholder consultation

Qualitative interviews were conducted with nine internal and sixteen external stakeholders. A list of all stakeholders is at Table 1

Interviews were conducted between July 2014 and February 2015 using a mix of face-to-face and telephone approaches, depending on the preference, convenience and availability of the respondent. Interviews were between 20 and 60 minutes in length and all were audio recorded

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[1] http://www.veteranstransition.co.uk/vtrreport.pdf
[2] http://www.fim-trust.org/news/21-news/64-transition-mapping-study-report
[3] https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/32285/12-886-armed-forces-basic-skills-executive-summary.pdf
[4] https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/338212/20140729_Annual_Mental_Health_report_2013_14.pdf
[5] http://www.cesi.org.uk/responses/dwp-work-programme-how-it-performing-1

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with the respondent's consent, for analysis purposes. The sample is provided below and the topic guide used is included at appendix 1.

Table 1:   Stakeholder sample

	Organisation	Role
	SAMH	5 x Employability Advisors
	SAMH	Employability Service Manager
	SAMH	Business Development Manager
	Poppyscotland	Employment Services Coordinator
	Poppyscotland	Head of Welfare Services
Internal Stakeholders	**TOTAL**	**9**
	Routes to Work	Training Co-ordinator
	Scottish Veterans Residences	Support Officer
	Thistle Foundation	Outreach Co-ordinator
	Job Centre Plus	4 Local Armed Forces Champions
	SSAFA	Branch Secretary
	V1P	2 Peer Support Workers
	The Poppy Factory	Employability Manager
	Combat Stress	Regional Welfare Officer
	Regular Forces Employment Association	2 Employment Consultants
	Glasgow's Helping Heroes	Project Manager
	Combat Stress	Community Outreach Manager
External Stakeholders	**TOTAL**	**16**

Client interviews

Twenty-two Employ-Able clients were recruited and 19 (18 male and 1 female) took part in the research. They each completed an initial semi-structured interview, either face-to-face or by telephone according to their preference. These interviews lasted between 10 and 40 minutes and were conducted between August and September 2014. All respondents agreed to a follow-up interview in February and 8 of these interviews were achieved. The lower response rate was due in part to exit from the programme and in part simply to the difficulties and sensitivities in

maintaining engagement with this client group. The client sample was designed to include a range of clients at various stages of involvement with the programme at the time of initial interview (from first appointment to 14 months).

Clients were contacted and invited to participate through their SAMH Employability Advisor. The table below provides an outline of the sample profile achieved.

Table 2: **Client sample**

Length of engagement @ 1st interview	1 interview	2 interviews	TOTAL
1 month or less	2	1	**3**
2-5 months	4	3	**7**
6-9 months	5	1	**6**
>9 months	1	3	**4**
TOTAL	**12**	**8**	**20**

Internal stakeholder workshop

An interim report and presentation in October 2014 included formative findings and initial recommendations relating to the development and marketing of Employ-Able and it was agreed that it would be beneficial to further develop this thinking through a facilitated internal stakeholder workshop. This event was convened in January 2015 and included all internal stakeholders in both partner organisations (Poppyscotland and SAMH). An adapted appreciative enquiry approach was used to structure the day and a detailed action plan was developed following the event.

Chapter 3   Context Review

3.1   Mental health services and employment

The role of mental health services in improving the lives of individuals in Scotland is increasingly recognised. Efforts are underway to tackle attitudes and stigmas and greater numbers are accessing treatment. Also, new interventions and delivery models are being developed to extend the effectiveness and reach of services across the general public and specific hard to reach groups.

The Scottish Government has made it a priority to close the 'treatment gap', which can lead to people either not receiving treatment or experiencing long delays before they do. In recent years, hospital re-admissions, suicide rates, and waiting times for many mental health services have shown improvements.[6] While this is an encouraging development, mental health conditions still have a number of wider impacts for individuals and families and a key issue is difficulty in accessing or maintaining employment, caused by factors that include low motivation, self-esteem, confidence and mood. Paid employment, or lack of it, impacts in turn on the wellbeing, resources, and health of the entire family.

3.2   The veterans experience

Like the population at large, veterans lives are impacted by mental health conditions that affect their capacity to find and keep employment, which in turn affects their families. However veterans needs and circumstances can be very specific; for example a higher incidence of Post Traumatic Stress Disorder and reluctance in coming forward to access support services. Their difficulties can be exacerbated by problems adjusting to civilian life and work after Service. Some have very complex or multiple issues with wide ranging effects on their family, finances and wellbeing.

Given the size of the veteran population, effective and specific employability support for veterans with mental health conditions is important not only in terms in terms of the wellbeing of veterans and their families but also the wider Scottish economy.

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[6]   http://www.gov.scot/Publications/2012/08/9714

3.3   Impact of transition and support experiences

There is growing awareness, evidenced by many support providers, of the challenges experienced by veterans and their families during transition, including:

- Poor support for families post service
- The short term nature of life skills support/training
- Difficulties navigating the complex array of organisations involved in support
- Limited awareness of support
- Poor co-ordination within and across some third sector and local government agencies
- A lack of a simple pathway to access support

Lord Ashcroft's recent Veterans' Transition Review[7] (2014), a key reference tool for the MOD, the UK and Scottish Government concludes that over 80% of service leavers find employment within six months (many earlier) and that unemployment and economic inactivity rates are consistently each below 10%. Despite this positive finding about the general population of ex-service personnel his central conclusions and recommendations included: an observation that '*the service leavers most likely to struggle get the least help'.*

The Review is at pains to point out that the rate of PTSD, homelessness, suicide and prison are no higher amongst ex-servicemen and women than they are the rest of the population and that perceptions of ex service people can be as much a barrier to employment as these sorts of difficulties. However, mental health issues can be compounded by other factors (such as financial, housing, welfare) that many veterans struggle with and the Veterans and Reserves Mental Health Programme (to which veterans are encouraged to apply for support, assessment and advice) is under used. Ashcroft found that:

> *''The common mental health problems presenting were depression and anxiety, matching the general population experiences. There was a reported increased risk of alcohol misuse and associated mental health problems, predominantly in younger male veterans – notably from lower ranks or those who left the Service early.''*

The Review also recognises that:

> *''For a minority of cases the adjustment reaction may extend over time or impact on normal functioning and may develop into formal psychiatric disorders. Usually these will be apparent within a few weeks or months of return, but it can take months or years before individuals recognise and are willing, or can be persuaded to seek help and reap the benefits of evidence-based treatment.''*

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[7]   http://www.veteranstransition.co.uk/vtrreport.pdf

The Forces in Mind Trust's Transition Mapping Study Report[8] (2013) identifies a range of factors prior to resettlement that are associated with those most at risk of an unsuccessful resettlement. These include those with low educational achievement, learning difficulties or mental health conditions: for example, those who felt they had no other employment option other than the Forces.
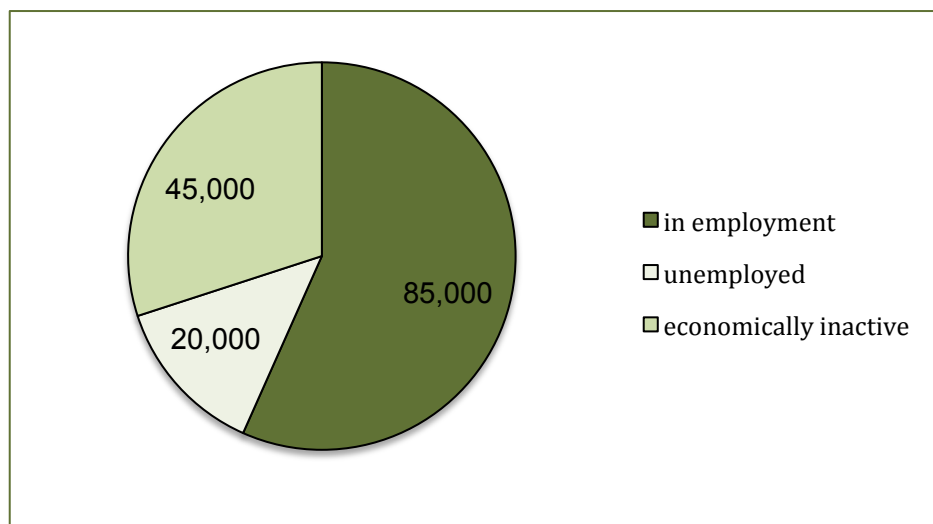
At the resettlement stage risk factors are:

- Little time to prepare
- Minimum transition support
- Not psychologically engaging with transition
- Passive engagement with resettlement
- Low awareness of process
- Low educational base and minimal support

Early service leavers are more at risk of difficulties in transition, struggling in the civilian labour market and consequently (sometimes years later) with drug/alcohol and mental health problems.

3.4   Veterans' skills, employment and mental health

Recently published data from Poppyscotland[9] provides estimates that the working age ex-services community (age 16-64) amounts to some 150,000 people; around 85,000 of whom are in work, 20,000 unemployed and 45,000 economically inactive (Figure 2).

Figure 2:   Economic activity estimates for working age veterans

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8   http://www.fim-trust.org/news/21- news/64-transition-mapping-study-report
9   http://poppyscotland.org.uk/docs/Poppyscotland%20household%20survey%20report%20FINAL.pdf

Furthermore:

- One in five members of Scotland's working age ex-Service community report an employment- related problem, equivalent to around 35,000 people.
- Those in Scotland are less likely to be degree educated, or to be able to use their skills and past experience, than their peers nationally.
- A comparison of Scotland's ex-Service community members of a working age to the general civilian working age population shows that the former are less likely to be in employment and more likely to be unemployed or economically inactive.

A recent UK Household Survey of the ex-Service community carried out by the Royal British Legion[10] highlighted that ex-Service community members of a working age are more likely than members of the general population to be out of work, have unpaid caring responsibilities, report health conditions that limit their daily activity or report being depressed.

- Armed Forces statistics suggest that numbers and rates of treatment for mental health disorders requiring care while in service are increasing slightly (the most recent figure is 30 per 1,000 having been between 15-28 between 2007-12). However, it should be noted that a more rigorous approach to gathering this data has been implemented.
- There is higher prevalence in the Army and RAF than Royal Marines, among females (probably reflecting higher likelihood to report) and lower ranks/SEG/educational attainment level. About 200 individuals are medically discharged each year for mental health or behavioural conditions that preclude further uniformed Service.

A comparison of Scottish survey data in 2014 and 2008[11] shows an increase in the percentage of self-reported issues experienced by veterans across all categories and specifically:

- 9% increase in social isolation
- 9% increase problems with drug or alcohol misuse
- 8% increase in mental health difficulties
- 6% increase in problems with anger management

Many of those with physical/mental health support needs reached a point of crisis several years (often more than a decade) after having left the military. Several described experiencing multiple issues that compounded their difficulties; family breakdown, chaotic employment record, financial problems and poor health.

Stakeholders interviewed for the same study suggested that there is scope for more support in terms of mental health services for non-PTSD issues such as depression and stress. This study concluded:

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10   http://www.britishlegion.org.uk/media/4093841/2014householdsurveyreport.pdf
11   Employment Support Needs of Veterans in Scotland, Poppyscotland and The Lines Between, 2015 – Final report

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"In many cases Forces-related illness and injuries do not affect employment until several years after transition. The types of issues experienced by veterans differ; 32% had experienced an illness or injury in the Forces that affected their ability to get work and there was a broad split, within this group, of those who described their condition as pertaining to a physical or mental health issue.

There are different employment challenges for distinct groups of veterans - associated with age, gender, type of service and years since leaving the Armed Forces. Some of the veterans with employment support needs face a myriad of complex and interrelated social, employment and health challenges. Some of these personal challenges impact upon their ability to sustain employment in the longer term."

Those with mental health issues have struggled with the assessment process introduced as part of recent changes to the welfare system. People with a disability are the least successful in getting a job through the Work Programme and jobs for ESA claimants remains significantly below expectations, indicating the Work Programme is not effectively supporting veterans with disabilities to overcome their barriers to employment[12]

[12]   http://www.cesi.org.uk/responses/dwp-work-programme-how-it-performing-1

Chapter 4 Findings based on programme monitoring data

Employ-Able progress reports were reviewed. Key findings of note are as follows:

- The rate of new referrals has increased steadily since the programme was launched and the target for number of people receiving help has been exceeded well ahead of time; the original project plan anticipated there being 55 referrals in the first 2 years and double that number was achieved (111). There have been consistently over 15 referrals a quarter during the second year.
- As Figure 3 shows, the majority of referrals have come from veterans organisations (61%, 20% from Veteran's 1st Point), but a quarter overall are from non-veteran agencies or organisations including Routes to Work (9%) and Job Centre Plus (8%). Fourteen per cent are self-referrals. Most clients are male and referrals have been received from 18 local authority areas, predominantly in the central belt.

Figure 3:   Source of referrals
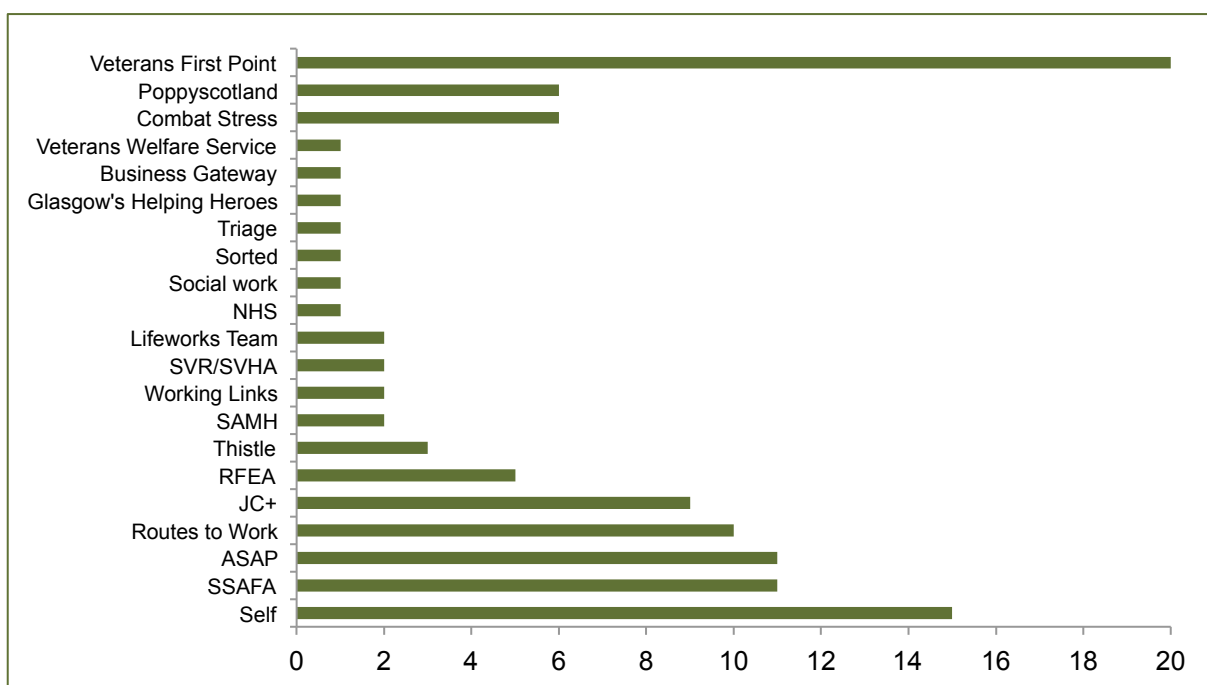
- Employ-Able has now supported 77 veterans through 556 hours of one-to-one input. The nature of the support has varied considerably: as would be expected, the largest amount of time (68%) has been spent providing support related to employment, training/education or volunteering. Fifteen per cent of overall one-to-one support time was devoted to direct mental health support and 19% to wider welfare issues such as housing, benefits and convictions support.
- One-to-one support, rather than *Tools for Living*™ group work, makes up the majority of the service that SAMH advisors deliver. In total, 15 group sessions have been delivered.

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- Almost all (74) of those supported were seeking support with finding employment (55) or volunteering (10) or training opportunities (9). Forty-one were seeking help with their mental health and 28 with anxiety, motivation or confidence issues. Support with financial issues was important to 32 (see Figure 4).

Figure 4: Desired outcomes
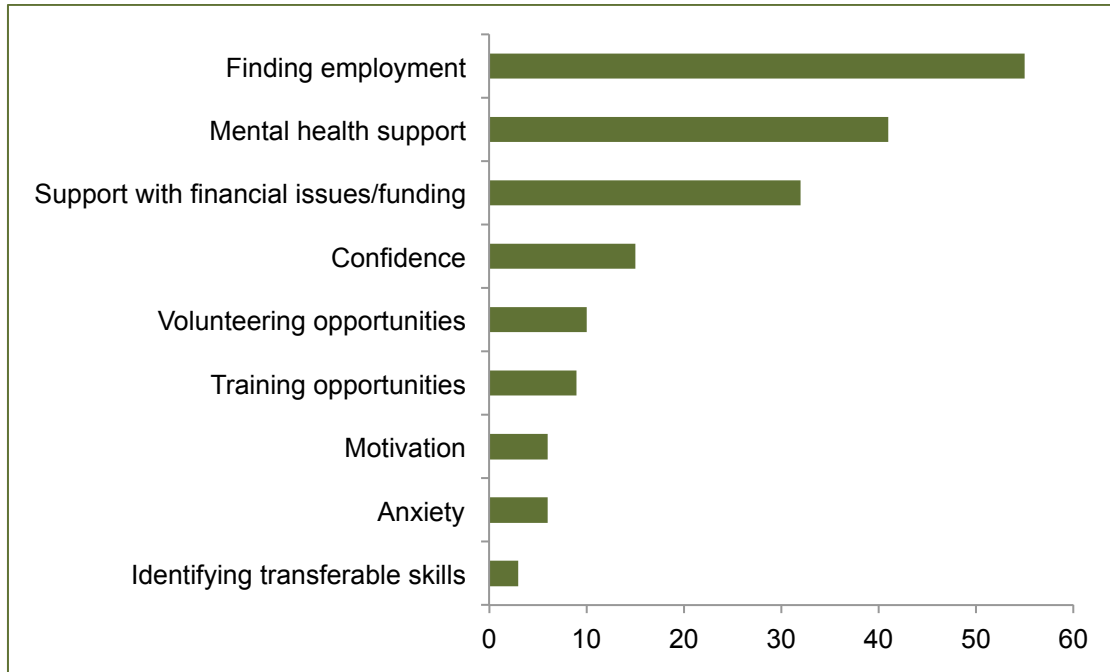
- In terms of mental health and other barriers to employment or employment-related activity, 15 of the 41 Employ-Able clients for whom data is available have depression or anxiety illnesses, 10 suffer from PTSD, 8 have disclosed suicidal thoughts, 6 have another mental health problem or disorder or a learning difficulty and 4 have problems with anger (see Figure 5).

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Figure 5:   Barriers by client

Client	PTSD	Psychiatrist	CPN	Depression Anxiety	Bi-Polar	Personality Disorder	OCD	Suicide Risk	Anger	Alcohol	Autism	Conviction
1		X						X				X
2						Borderline						
3								X				
4								X				
5									X			X
6								X				
7				X								
8				X								
9				X								X
10	X											
11	X								X			
12												
13												X
14	X											
15	X											X
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24								X				
25			X	X								
26	X			X								
27		X		X								X
28				X				X				
29						Borderline						
30			X	X								
31	X			X								
32				X					X			X
33	X											X
34											X	
35				X				X				
36					Borderline							
37		X				X	X					
38					X							
39				X				X				
40				X							X	

PTSD – client diagnosed and has/is engaged with Combat Stress   Psychiatrist – client currently supported by a psychiatrist
CPN - client is currently being supported by a CPN   Alcohol – client is in recovery from alcohol dependency
Suicide risk – client has divulged to Advisor that they have considered suicide

- Of the 40 clients who had exited the programme, 18 stopped engaging, a further 4 felt they weren't ready or no longer needed the service, 12 went into employment and the remainder either were referred to another source of support or had conflicting arrangements and could no longer attend.
- Of the 111 referrals in the first two years, 22 were supported into training or education, 20 into employment and 13 into a volunteering role – 50% of all referrals in total (Figure 6).

Figure 6:   Hard outcomes
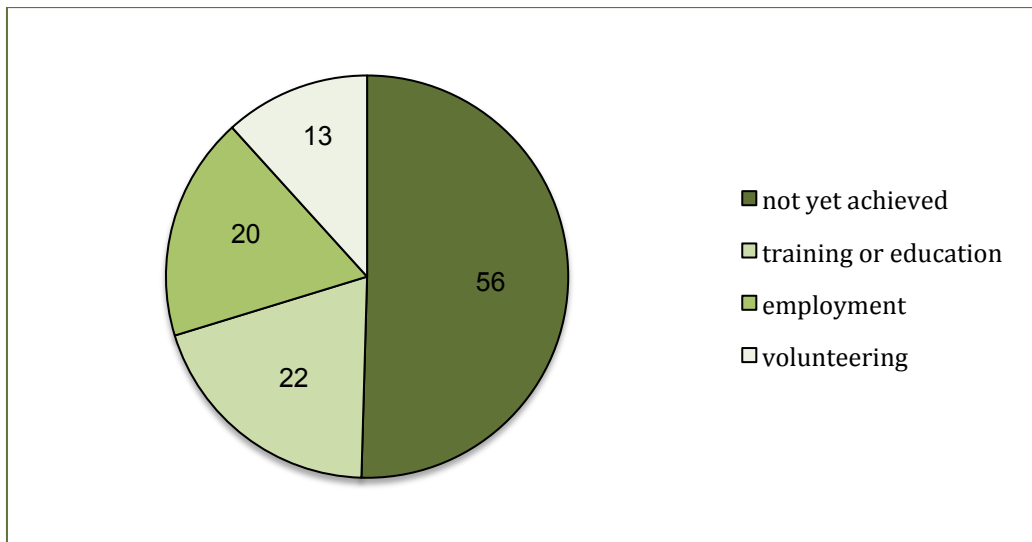
- Softer outcomes (confidence, self-esteem, community, relationships and purpose) are measured regularly for those clients wishing to do so, using the SAMH My Outcomes tool (see Figure 7 for an example). Individuals discuss their feelings about each of these areas and rate themselves on a scale of 1 to 7 each time. The higher the score, the more positive the individual feels about that area of their life. All clients using this tool have shown an improvement in these measures during their engagement with the programme. The client interview element of this evaluation also addresses these outcomes (see Chapter 5).

Figure 7:   My Outcomes output example
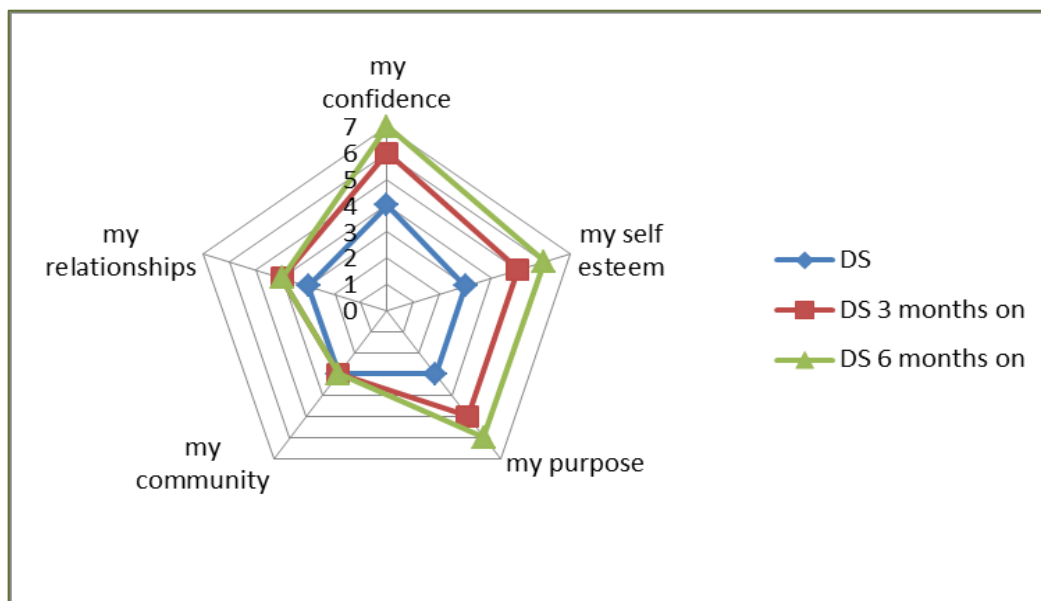
Employability Advisors keep notes of every client interaction and these are compiled to provide a client narrative for reporting purposes. Client narratives have been reviewed as part of this evaluation. Key findings are:

- Clients often take a considerable length of time (several months) to fully engage with the service, needing to establish a relationship of trust with their Employability Advisor in order to move forward. Some do not disclose relevant information for quite some time after initially engaging with the service.
- Clients often miss appointments for a variety of reasons and poor engagement is the main reason for exit.
- At the other extreme, some of those who engage well in terms of keeping appointments rely heavily on interaction with their Advisor as the main reason for getting out on a regular basis.
- Many clients are much further from employment-ready when they enter the programme than originally anticipated, facing a variety of barriers such as alcohol abuse, driving bans, other convictions, low confidence levels, difficulty in dealing with appointments, managing daily life, etc. Some still do not feel ready for work after many months of support.
- Clients may also have wider welfare-related barriers to employability and most require help to address these issues before progress towards employment can be made.
- Some clients have unrealistic expectations as to the type of work and level of pay they are capable of achieving. Support involves managing these expectations and encouraging wider searches and willingness to consider lower paid or voluntary roles.
- The level of support most clients are receiving is very tailored and personal and they need to build confidence to feel comfortable with the idea of working in a group. Those who commented on this in the client interviews describe themselves as 'not good at' groups of people.

Evaluation of Employ-Able

Chapter 5   Client interviews

Findings from the client interviews were extremely consistent, both across clients and between first and second interviews. They are therefore reported here without breakdown, since there were no appreciable differences over time or between sub-groups.

5.1   Referral and previous experiences

Half of those who participated in the research (9) were referred through another veteran specific service – one of these heard about Employ-Able from another client and made an approach to the organisation to ask for a referral. Five were referred through Routes to Work, 2 via a CPN, one via a CAB and local authority and one self-referred. One could not remember how his referral came about.

The referral process is experienced as simple and straightforward: within a week there is an initial phone call from Poppyscotland to explain more about the programme and refer to a SAMH advisor.

> *''It was brilliant, very smooth.''*

> *''So straightforward it was unbelievable.''*

> *''I got a meeting the same day.''*

Of twelve clients who had been encouraged to consider Employ-Able by a referral organisation those who had enquired proactively about employability support had done so for a variety of reasons:

- One was at a presentation delivered by one of the Advisors and took a leaflet
- One ''because I was getting bored and wanted something to do with my life''
- One because he wanted help to start his own business
- One because his ex partner saw something from Poppyscotland on Facebook and thought it would help him

Only three had tried any other employment support programmes and none had found this helpful.

> *''I'm still on it. I can't get off because they get money from the Government and you stay on their books for two years. They helped me do a business plan, but I don't like their negativity…. that's the main difference from Employ-Able. Employ-Able is encouraging me and keeps me motivated and focused.''*

5.2   Experience of programme

Initial engagement

Getting involved initially with Employ-Able was difficult for many and some were very apprehensive before their first appointment. However, most described feeling at ease very quickly once they engaged. Three had no qualms, saying they take any help they can get or never turn opportunities down. One ''would give anything a go as long as I get some employment at the end of the day''.

> ''I was apprehensive – I'm not good at meeting other people.''
>
> ''I'm a very proud man, but I have to accept that I need help.''
>
> ''I was a bit apprehensive because I'm not usually a person to talk about my problems, but at the same time, I know I need to build my confidence and move forward.''
>
> ''I was a bit apprehensive, but I went to the first one and found it OK. She puts you at ease, sitting down and working with you.''
>
> ''Dead, dead nervous and it took me three or four times to get the courage to go, but perfect after the first meeting.''

Expectations at this stage varied widely, though all had positive work-related aspirations. Some mentioned confidence and social isolation as issues they wanted help with and a few had very specific desires for help with getting a qualification, such as an HGV licence, working with vulnerable adults, or practical help with using computers or writing a CV. Other aspirations included setting up a business, finding full time work or a more interesting or better-paid job.

> ''A full time job, but still a bit of follow-up to make sure you're all right.''
>
> "Help me back into work and socialise – I cut myself off from the rest of the world.''
>
> "Getting myself back on track in life - In the past I've not been one for sticking at things.''
>
> ''Not to be stuck in a dead end job for the rest of my life.''
>
> ''Build up my confidence to get back into full time employment. Obviously, I have to deal with the agoraphobia.''
>
> ''It's not all about getting into work, its coming here, confidence, being involved in other things, communicating better with other people.''

One respondent summed up his view of what a successful outcome would be as follows:

> ''I would like to smile and do part time work in advocacy. I want to give something back because people have helped me. I want to say thanks.''

On-going involvement

All respondents rated each element of support they have received to date very highly (4 or 5 out of 5), and this remained constant over time for those who took part in a second interview. Those activities and support that respondents mentioned and rated included:

- CV writing and job searching
- Finding volunteering opportunities
- Business planning
- Help with funding applications to gain vocational qualifications

Mental health support mentioned included:

- General mental health issues
- Specific health referrals
- Coping with medication
- Getting involved in social activities
- Confidence and anger management

Wider welfare support/signposting mentioned included:

- Debt/bankruptcy
- Convictions
- Housing issues
- Literacy
- Army pension review
- Benefits help

Many described getting help to access support form other organisations that they had previously been unaware of or had not realised they would be entitled to.

Clients are universally extremely complimentary about the service they have received: with advisors described as friendly, non-judgemental, bending over backwards to help, very supportive, and offering individual, non time constrained, practical help with a wide range of barriers to employment.

> *"She offers 100% support. She goes out the way to give you that wee bit more than her job is there for."*

> *"She's like a counsellor, more than a counsellor, absolutely better."*

> *"She's really an asset in finding the right choice of career, building confidence and communications."*

> *"It's like* [advisor] *pushing me …that's what I need – a kick up the arse. Well encouragement is a better word. She's really easy to talk to."*

''I wouldn't have done any of it without her help, because I'm rubbish at paperwork. I tried this myself in the past and given up.''

''She offered to contact the doctor if I needed her to.''

''She attends appointments with you – everything.''

In terms of less measurable aspects of the service, there is clear and resounding endorsement of the way it is delivered and the feeling of support that clients derive. They feel understood; find their advisor approachable and reliable and supported to find structure and purpose in their lives.

''She's been there for me and if she says she's going to do something she does it.''

''She's like a lifejacket keeping me afloat just now, but I don't want to be afloat, I want to be on dry land.''

''She understands what I'm going through.''

''I went to counselling for years, but she's the easiest one to speak to that I've had.''

''She's helped me with everything I needed to know, regardless of what I've asked her.''

''I have no qualms whatsoever. The whole service is just great.''

''It's been very good for me so far. I needed someone to try and put structure back in my life after my breakdown.''

''I've been steered in the right direction.''

Outcomes

Although many clients are receiving support with a range of issues, all reported a sense of focus and direction and an end goal, generally volunteering, training or employment-related, which they felt was achievable. For those with longer-term engagement, softer outcomes such as improved self-esteem, confidence, sense of purpose, feeling better able to cope with anger, feeling less isolated, etc. also emerge as key outcomes. A set of attitude statements was used to rate outcomes and the results are presented in Figure 8 overleaf.

Figure 8:   Attitude statements ''This services has…''

Statement	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither	Disagree	Strongly disagree	n/a/too early
helped me feel more confident about my future	6	11	1	1		1
not made a big difference to me yet		3		12	2	2
helped me to work out what I want to achieve	6	7	1	1		4
improved my chances of achieving the things I want	4	11				4
helped me sort out things that were getting in the way of me moving forward in my life	4	8	2	1	3	
not led to any improvement for me		1		16	1	
helped me find a sense of purpose in my life	3	11		2		3
made no difference to how I feel about myself		2		14		2
given me a clearer understanding of my ability to achieve employment or voluntary work	2	14				3
helped me to understand what I need to do to achieve employment or voluntary work	4	9	1	2		4
improved my chances of getting into employment or voluntary work	2	8				9
helped me into employment or voluntary work	2	3				13
supported me to stay in employment or voluntary work	1	2				15

■ Strongly agree ■ Agree ◪ Neither ▨ Disagree ■ Strongly disagree ▨ n/a/too early

A clear pattern of agreement with the positive and disagreement with the negative statements of progress can be seen, with most agreeing that they feel more confident, have a stronger sense of purpose and a clearer understanding of their aspirations and of what they need to do to achieve their goals. Whist over half (10) agree that their engagement with Employ-Able has improved their chances of achieving employment or voluntary work, for most, this has not (yet) actually been achieved. However, it must be noted that this sample consists solely of clients who are still involved with the programme. We know from monitoring information (see Chapter 4) that over half do achieve this aim by the time they exit the service.

Only three respondents feel that the service has not made a big difference to them yet, two that it has made no difference to how they feel about themselves and one that it has not led to any improvement for him. These respondents qualified their answers by saying that either this was because of their specific condition/circumstances rather than a reflection of the quality of the support they are receiving - or simply that they were working on it, but it will take longer.

For respondents who took part in a second interview, these questions were repeated to gauge movement. All continued to disagree with the negative statements of progress and were more likely to agree or to agree more strongly with the positive statements. Table 3 below shows the numbers agreeing with each statement at first and second interview for the 7 clients who completed the statements at both interviews.[13]

Table 3:   Attitude statements first and second interview comparison

This service has….	First interview		Second interview	
	Strongly agree	Agree	Strongly agree	Agree
helped me to feel more confident about my future	3	4	6	1
helped me to work out what I want to achieve	3	4	4	3
improved my chances of achieving the things I want	2	2	5	2
helped sort out things that were getting in the way of me moving forward in life	1	4	3	4
helped me find a sense of purpose in my life	1	6	3	2
given me a clearer understanding of my ability	1	6	4	3
helped me to understand what I need to do to achieve employment or voluntary work		6	2	3
improved my chances of getting into employment or voluntary work	1	3	3	2
helped me into employment or voluntary work	1	1	2	2
Supported me to stay in employment or voluntary work	1	1	1	4
TOTAL 'score'	**14**	**37**	**33**	**26**

All respondents bar one said they feel more optimistic about the future since starting Employ-Able. That one exception said he felt about the same about the future, because:

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[13]   NB One of the 8 respondents interviewed a second time was not able to answer this set of questions

''It's still early and I've got a lot of things to talk about first.''

When asked why they felt more optimistic about the future, typical responses related to goal-setting and a sense of direction:

''She's given me a direction to go in. Before, I didn't have anything to strive for. It might be a long tunnel to get there, but we will get there.''

''I've got a plan written down now, so I've something to follow – now I've got an understanding of all that I do.''

"Because I can see the right path now."

''It's very supportive and it's herding me forward.''

Others talked about feeling more confident and about their advisor having confidence in them and about feeling listened to, or about increased awareness or belief in the possibilities.

''I've opened up to her. Before, I just kept getting knocked back.''

''My self-confidence was way too low and I just didn't feel confident to do anything at all and now I do.''

''I didn't realise all these [opportunities] *were in place.''*

''There was a job with positive futures on my doorstep, but I didn't know it. She found it.''

''I'm doing my bit and when me and [advisor] *get together we collaborate – she comes up with different sides of it than I do.''*

These top 'take-outs' were reflected in responses in the second interview when clients were asked to identify the three main benefits or outcomes of the service for themselves. The most mentioned outcomes were confidence/self-confidence/self awareness, having clearer goals or purpose and having the support of someone who is on their side and believes in them. Several described their Advisor as a friend. Other benefits/outcomes mentioned included being challenged, ''*making me think differently*" and realisation that there is ''*light at the end of the tunnel.''*

However, two of those completing a second interview were less positive: one because he simply wanted to be found a job and so believes the programme has not been effective for him (he has been involved for 17 months) and; the other (involved for 20 months) feels pressurised now to make progress or exit the programme. These examples perhaps illustrate the small core of clients whose difficulties mean they are extremely difficult to help and who may never be able to achieve and sustain employment or meaningful activity. Internal stakeholders recognise that there is a difficulty with a small number of clients who can become 'stuck' and are reluctant to exit the programme (further discussion of this issue in Chapter 6.)

For the rest, there was evidence of an increased sense of self-responsibility and developing self-confidence and resilience in some of their descriptions of the outcomes they feel they have achieved.

> *''I didn't think it would be so rewarding starting to do things for yourself.''*

> *"She's a good advisor. She helps me to decide what I want to do. She doesn't decide it for me.''*

> *"She makes me help myself.''*

> *''Since I've been coming to see her, my confidence has increased a lot. I've been trying to do this business idea and not had the confidence. Now I've been focussed on it and she helps, arranges, has the contacts, gives me motivation.''*

> *''She's really helped me. It took me a while to admit that I have a problem. That was a big step for me. She helps me fix problems and calms me down. She knows I have a problem and asks me before I know.''*

> *''Last time I had my appointment it was the best feeling I've had for ages. I was so confident with her.''*

Two who had been extremely ill and suicidal, quite literally think the support has saved their lives.

> *''I wouldn't be here if it wasn't for that lassie.''*

> *''I was in a really dark, bad place when I first came. I really don't think I would be here…it helped so much.''*

Respondents had very little to say about possible improvements to the service. All were very grateful for the support they have received, viewed the programme very positively and considered it to be effective (with the exception of one who thought it would be better if it was more like an agency matching people to available jobs). Most commented that they '*'couldn't fault it''*, *''wouldn't change it'' ''don't think it could be better''* or similar. It could only be improved by being more widely known and open to more people. Several had been recommending Employ-Able to other veterans.

> *''I've already said to a few of the boys – the help they gave me was unbelievable and my way of thinking has changed.''*

> *''I tell veterans on the streets where to go for help and I mention it to them.''*

> *''I tell them it's the best thing I've done since my illness. I just didn't feel I could do anything when I came out of hospital and now I feel good about things.''*

Chapter 6   Stakeholder interviews

Stakeholders provided a wealth of information on their experiences of and perceptions of the Employ-Able programme and its effectiveness. Their views are summarised in the following sections, using verbatim quotes to illustrate the main findings.

6.1   Profile

Potential referral partners signpost veterans to a range of organisations often without a clear understanding of the differences between services. For some stakeholders, although they were aware of Employ-Able, they had not referred to it because they felt there was an alternative programme that they were more familiar with.

The profile of Employ-Able outside veteran specific organisations was also discussed by some stakeholders.

> *''It probably has a reasonably high profile in military organisations. This should be diluted - it shouldn't be promoted as military - it should be sold as helping individuals meet the challenges of civvy life and should be promoted through civilian organisations too.''*

> *External stakeholder*

One Job Centre Plus Veterans Champion described her initial awareness and explained that she receives regular update emails on the services that are available and has taken responsibility for passing on information to other advisors.

> *''I first heard about it just through being at meetings as Veterans Champion. Plus I inherited leaflets and info from the person who previously did my job. Employ-Able is one of the main ones.''*

> *External stakeholder*

> *''One of the challenges is a) getting staff to ask individuals if they are veterans and b) getting veterans to highlight any mental health issues. It's very possible that a sizeable number of potential referrals are slipping through the net.''*

> *External stakeholder*

6.2   Positioning Employ-Able within the veterans sector - perceptions

Those who refer clients frequently have a good understanding of the Employ-Able offer and are able to articulate its unique approach.

> "It's a unique offering - a structured, straightforward approach which has good funding, commitment from Poppyscotland and a flexible programme. One of the key things is the capacity to direct funding where needed for example if a veteran needs to go on a course, funding can be made available - it's a great resource."
>
> *External stakeholder*

These more active external stakeholders can also describe the differences between Employ-Able and other available support that they are also familiar with.

> ''The Employ-Able project gives us another offering, from staff that understand their needs and can communicate….and they can top up a DWP programme such as Work Choice - that's great because many projects will either let you do one or the other - not both.''
>
> *External stakeholder*

> ''It's clear from the feedback we overhear in coffee breaks that those who have engaged with Employ-Able are recommending it to others and speak positively about their experiences.''
>
> *External stakeholder*

Internal stakeholders are very clear themselves about how Employ-Able is differentiated from other services, commenting on the lack of restrictions, e.g. Employ-Able can work in parallel or alongside existing DWP programmes such as Work Choice, adding value to what they are trying to do. The unique partnership between Poppyscotland and SAMH is seen as a key strength (because it supports a service that combines an understanding of the needs of veterans with expertise in mental health support) along with the flexibility that Poppyscotland as a funding partner allows (in providing access to funds for specific purposes that would otherwise not be available to clients).

> ''For other services, if a client is having a bad day and misses an appointment - that is one of their 3 strikes gone – the client comes to think 'the service doesn't believe in me and therefore can't help'. They may not have disclosed their mental health issues.''
>
> *Internal stakeholder*

Evaluation of Employ-Able

"Time is an issue as well in other services - clients may not have one dedicated advisor, short appointments, can't form a relationship and feel comfy enough to disclose what's going on in their life. These clients are challenging. We see this as a challenge, for other services, its too much hassle."

Internal stakeholder

"Often clients are in total meltdown; SAMH staff are not phased by this. Their staff know how to deal with a crisis text at 1am - not many other agencies are familiar with this way of working."

Internal stakeholder

Employ-Able was designed to fill a specific recognised gap in the provision of support available to veterans with mental health needs. However, not all stakeholders have a clear understanding of either the environment or of Employ-Able's position within it.

"The difficulty for us that there is no central pathway, if we have an individual who we have supported and is recovered and wants to go back to work - we're in a position where we can say - have you registered with Employ-Able? Have you registered with RFEA? But there isn't a single easy pathway or fixed point of contact or place where you can find out about job opportunities. What we would like is a number that we can ring and say "I've got this guy here, can you take him on and help him with work?" - That's where things are not quite joined up yet."

External stakeholder

Several external stakeholders commented on this perceived lack of coordination across the many organisations and services providing support to veterans in general. Employ-able is not clearly differentiated and is seen as one of several similar options. In the absence of either a full understanding of the services available or a simple way to identify and access the most relevant, referrers tend to continue to use the provider or service they are familiar with. The result is that veterans may not always be directed to the most appropriate service and Employ-Able is not as accessible as it might be to some veterans who would benefit.

This issue is recognised internally as stakeholders talked about how the current level of policy focus on supporting veterans has encouraged many new entrants to the market, which possibly makes the arena quite cluttered. They also suspect that some organisations simply do not understand the offer.

"It's hard to know if our partners are describing the service accurately or promoting it to clients in a way that we would want them to."

Internal stakeholder

This is reflected in the views of some external stakeholders, notably those who refer less frequently or not at all. Several displayed a lack of awareness of the distinction between Employ-

Able and other employment related provision for veterans. In Glasgow in particular (where there is a partnership between the local authority, NHS and Glasgow's Helping Heroes) this leads to a perception that there is an over-supply problem in the marketplace.

> ''I think that Remploy, SSAFA and Glasgow's Helping Heroes possibly do the same things?''
>
> *External stakeholder*

> ''There are many providers offering to support to veterans in Glasgow - it's possible you might consider that there is too much provision.''
>
> *External stakeholder*

One obvious distinction, which is regularly overlooked, is that the Employ-Able advisor is a trained mental health support worker *and* employability advisor.

6.3   Branding

Some believe that the name 'Employ-Able' may be off-putting, since many of those who could benefit from the support are a very long way from being ready for employment. However, Employ-Able's key aim is to assist veterans into work, training, volunteering or other meaningful activity wherever possible.

> ''The name can be off-putting. A lot of these men shy away from employment - they are not ready yet - they worry it will affect their benefits, war pension, etc.''
>
> *External stakeholder*

Others commented that the SAMH branding may put some clients off because they do not necessarily recognise that they have a mental health problem. However, others find that if they explain carefully, this can be overcome. The Poppyscotland association is also helpful in providing reassurance that this is a service that will understand the needs of veterans.

> ''Veterans are not necessarily open about their mental health - and also if they served a long time ago, they may not be perceived as a veteran.''
>
> *Internal stakeholder*

> ''Any time I ever mention it to clients there is a bit of any eyebrow raise that it's a programme delivered by SAMH… however once we explain what it involves, using the leaflets they developed, it settles the guys, they feel cool with it - I've never had anyone shy away with it because it's delivered by SAMH.''
>
> *External stakeholder*

"There is a challenge in explaining the project in a way that's engaging and doesn't put people off. I don't often use the words "mental health" when I'm talking with a potential client."

Internal stakeholder

"The Poppyscotland banner helps, that gives veterans confidence that it's a service for them funded by an organisation that understands their needs."

External stakeholder

6.4   Promotion

Where there is good awareness this is largely a result of existing personal connections and efforts from Poppyscotland and SAMH managers, or presentations given by the SAMH Advisors. All stakeholders agree the profile of Employ-Able should be higher and several had initially received some promotional materials, but have had nothing since and so do not have a consistent supply of promotional materials to give to potential clients.

"Going by the presentation, I think it's a very good service, but we need fliers about it - and feedback from a client that's done it."

External stakeholder

External stakeholders had a number of suggestions about promotion, including advertising in places where veterans might congregate, such as ex services clubs, veterans' magazines, direct contact from services to veterans. Also mentioned were doctor's surgeries, tapping into health practitioners' networks and making more use of social media, since younger veterans in particular use smartphones extensively.

Internal stakeholders had given a great deal of thought to more effective promotion and had a range of ideas about reaching more veterans, particularly those who may not be engaged with veterans organisations or communities or recognise their mental health condition.

6.5   Referral

The referral process works very well and no one who had used it to refer a client had any improvement suggestions. The process is simple and straightforward.

"It's really good - just a phone call and nine times out of ten the phone is answered straight away and if not they do phone you back. You aren't left waiting and there is an appointment within a week."

External stakeholder

Evaluation of Employ-Able

The pro-active and sensitive approach taken by Poppyscotland is effective and well handled. Referral partners, who recognise how important these features are in establishing engagement with this client group, appreciate this.

> *''If we identify someone who wants to take part then* [Poppyscotland] *is the first point of call who are good at making the assessment and identifying if SAMH is appropriate or perhaps one of their other programmes or grants.''*
>
> *External stakeholder*

> *"You can phone while you have someone in front of you and usually speak to* [Poppyscotland] *there and then to arrange an appointment while you have the momentum and they are willing to engage. Then give them the leaflet away …then there is on-going communication between the provider, me and the client.''*
>
> *External stakeholder*

Most stakeholders have not referred many clients to Employ-Able and several feel it is likely that those who could benefit from this support slip through the net for a variety of reasons, including reluctance to admit a mental health problem and referrer's low awareness of the service, or knowledge that clients are ex-services. Several Jobcentre Plus stakeholders mentioned the ''planned'' introduction of a marker on the JC+ system that will identify veterans and their circumstances, though it is notable that these stakeholders were not aware that this marker has, in fact already been introduced (in April 2014).

Others simply have very few suitable candidates or are constrained by their perception that Employ-Able is about matching people to jobs or work placements.

> *''We refer a very small number to the Employ-Able programme - and that's not because it's not a good programme, it's because simply the numbers at that recovery stage is very small. Less than 10% of our clients are looking for work or in a position to secure employment - they have a long term recovery need.''*
>
> *External stakeholder*

Referrers commented on the level of feedback they receive on how the clients they refer are doing, one remarking that there is good follow-up.

> *''It's not just let it go and you don't know - you do get good feedback."*
>
> *External stakeholder*

6.6   Perceptions

Internal stakeholders are very clear about what they are trying to achieve and how. Those involved in delivery of Employ-Able see it as clearly different from mainstream offers in terms of its flexibility, lack of time limit, no pressure to push clients into work, ability to spend more time with clients and to address all their barriers in a holistic manner.

> *''It is flexible, individualised, person centred, about improving awareness of barriers, promoting trust, relationship building - relationships is what makes the service a success. We are honest and realistic, don't set them up to fail, go the extra mile, don't give up on people - there's no 3 strikes and you're out attitude.''*
>
> *Internal stakeholder*

> *''It helps ex services people to find employment or training or volunteering, but not just that - things like housing and finance too. It's friendly, trustworthy, flexible - a good service - worthwhile, breaks down barriers and helps people to goal-set.''*
>
> *Internal stakeholder*

External stakeholders who are familiar with the programme concur and even those who have low levels of knowledge and awareness perceive the programme very positively. Those who felt they could comment see Employ-Able as an early stage (pre-employability programme) intervention to help clients move towards being ready for employment or volunteering. It is described as non-judgemental, low pressure, tailored to individual needs, sensitive and flexible.

> *''A great starter for people with an issue - to get them to a place where they may be in a position to move towards getting them job ready - early stages intervention.''*
>
> *External stakeholder*

> *''It's very effective, for veterans with mental health issues…to assist them to come to terms with and overcome barriers that they've faced, someone who doesn't judge to talk to, not trying to push you into a job, what the client needs''*
>
> *External stakeholder*

For those with less knowledge of the programme, the employment focus of the project's title discourages them from referring veterans who are not ready for work whereas individuals in one potential referral organisation described Employ-Able more as a job brokering service for organisations. A few stakeholders view Employ-Able as having access to supported employment opportunities within organisations: believing that staff can match a client to a specific job opportunity, rather than support clients do develop their employment related skills and job search capabilities. Clearly some potential referral partners have very little understanding of the Employ-able programme or its aims. For example:

"It is for those in recovery from lower level mental health issues to gain employment. I see it as I have the client with mental health issues, who is on the recovery pathway out of mental health problems - and he needs something that's employment-related, with a sympathetic employer who can adjust workplace conditions and so on, then Employ-Able is the organisation that can tell us where those job opportunities are… they have relationships with sympathetic employers. That's where I see their work.''

External stakeholder

Others, even in the same organisations as those quoted above, have a more accurate view of what the programme delivers. Some of misperceptions may have their origins in the original ideas that seeded the Employ-Able programme, before the level of support that many clients need was fully appreciated. Internal stakeholders readily acknowledge that many clients are very much further from being employment ready than was initially anticipated and aims have widened to become more focussed on meaningful activity; including volunteering, training and work placements.

''It's about meaningful activity, support, individual, long term moving forward in recovery, to promote self esteem, confidence building and eventually moving forward to some form of work-related purpose.''

External stakeholder

"It is an opportunity to work with people to get support to access work - people who will recognise transferrable skills in a way that JC+ can't appreciate. It helps clients analyse where they are at in terms of seeking employment."

External stakeholder

6.7   Delivery

There were mixed views on the benefits of the solely one-to-one approach that has applied to most Employ-Able clients. Some felt that this could encourage dependency and hinder progress, others that it is crucial to engagement.

''Sometimes if you do a lot of one-to-one first then suggest a group it will be very difficult to get the client to step away from that nice safe one-to-one relationship.'

External stakeholder

''It's one-to-one support, which is really hard to get, especially for veterans who might struggle to go out or meet people. A lot of these things are groups and the veterans struggle to deal with groups.''

External stakeholder

When Employ-Able was developed, the intention was that the predominant approach to delivering support would be through group work, using the *Tools for Living™* modules as a basis for this. Internal stakeholders comment that it has been very difficult to persuade many clients to engage in group sessions, although those that have done so have benefitted. Advisors are currently considering approaches to encourage clients to engage with each other in a social setting initially with the aim of helping them to feel more comfortable with the idea of group personal development sessions.

In the meantime, internal stakeholders recognise that the predominantly one-to-one approach is very resource intensive and not always helpful for clients. It can become too 'comfortable' not providing enough challenge for clients who find it difficult t take responsibility for themselves, or to move on; for some can create a dependency. However, there is also real concern that too rigid an approach to length or type of engagement will be detrimental to some clients who genuinely need longer and more intense support to progress towards independence and meaningful activity. A balance needs to be struck that allows Advisors to exercise professional judgement about the intensity of support required, but provides them with the framework and processes they need to move towards exit where clients are not progressing or are not using the service appropriately.

Geographical coverage has remained very focused on the central belt, although recent discussions with potential delivery partners may lead to some provision in Inverness. As mentioned previously some stakeholders feel there is an over-supply of similar services for veterans in Glasgow in particular. Employ-Able faces human and location resource constraints that limit accessibility, compounded by the geographical distribution of veterans. Veterans who live in more remote areas, even within the central belt can find accessing the programme difficult. Providing a service in areas where the veteran population is scattered has logistical and efficiency challenges. This issue is recognised and internal stakeholders would like to provide a more widely accessible service. Considerable effort and thought is currently being devoted to finding solutions to this problem.

6.8   Outcomes

Key client outcomes that stakeholders can identify mainly relate to moving people a little way along the pathway towards employment, perhaps helping them to get to a stage where they are ready for a pre-employment programme, dealing with other non-employment related barriers, the advisors' knowledge of and ability to access funding for training and voluntary opportunities that other programmes cannot.

> *"Staff are good at identifying needs and helping people to address them - and they are realistic about what can be achieved, with a sensitive approach to supporting veterans."*
>
> *External stakeholder*

''Their staff have that expertise and also have a really good attitude - keen to work with other services and build relationships with referral agencies, really good manner with veterans and good at putting people at ease.''

External stakeholder

"We're big fans of Employ-Able - we really believe it makes a difference."

Eternal stakeholder

''It's fantastic. The client who has been doing it for a while and is fully engaged is doing fantastic, looking at volunteering and now getting out and about.''

Eternal stakeholder

''They have a great approach to dealing with the client group - Whatever they are doing, they are doing it right.''

External stakeholder

Softer outcomes frequently mentioned by internal and external stakeholders include improved self-esteem or confidence.

''It's too early to comment about outcomes, but that client was "buzzing" that he was getting the help - he is "blown away" that they are even interested. Again it's the 1:1 nature of it that is so good.''

External stakeholder

''We understand that veterans may not make linear progression and there is scope within the programme to adapt to that. Sometimes the real issues take a while to emerge. Veterans require a safety net and may have issues with trust.''

Internal stakeholder

''It works by looking at what they want to do, not just what's available - soft outcomes that make a real difference. There's no timescale - they are all working at their own rate and they are not exited from the service - there are no hard targets so staff can work with a person centred approach. Other programmes might find people work, but they have negative experiences and won't sustain it - then that knocks confidence and you are 10 steps back.''

Internal stakeholder

"Because it's one-to-one they can really find out what the barriers are for this client and get to the nitty-gritty, doing all the trial and error - try something and if it doesn't work try something else - that's what you have to be able to do. They are there for them and they get appropriate help."

External stakeholder

"If self esteem and confidence and financial health are all poor, mental health will remain poor. It's about putting people on the road to recovery - giving focus and hope, help towards meaningful activity - early nurturing and building confidence."

External stakeholder

Some external stakeholders who had made referrals to Employ-Able felt that they didn't get sufficient feedback or on-going engagement to be able to comment on the outcomes for those clients. Some did not feel they need feedback, being content to 'pass' clients on to Employ-Able for the help that they need. Others would like to receive updates so that as the client continues to or subsequently re-engages with their own organisation, they have some understanding of the progress they have made and an up-to-date picture of their needs. Undoubtedly, some level of feedback would help many referral partners to better understand what Employ-able can deliver and, it could be argued is a useful promotion tool to encourage more and more appropriate referrals.

"To be honest I don't really have an answer to that because we've not had much feedback - probably because we only made a handful of referrals - maybe even single numbers - maybe 6. And we lose contact with them - there's all sorts of issues with confidentiality of client information between agencies - and once they've left us so unless they make an effort to stay in touch we won't know."

External stakeholder

Others had maintained contact with clients they had referred and mentioned anecdotal feedback from them suggesting a number of outcomes including:

- Moving them in the right direction
- Placements with voluntary sector
- Successful job interviews
- Some getting involved in further education
- Trying things out and expanding horizons

For some, the key outcome is simply that clients are engaging, where previously they have had difficulty engaging with support services.

"The main bit of feedback is the ease at which they engage with SAMH - they feel non judged, which is a big thing for guys that feel like they are a failure or have a reinforced sense of failure or negative reflections on their Army career."

External stakeholder

Evaluation of Employ-Able

Chapter 8 Conclusions and recommendations

This chapter presents conclusions on each of the evaluation objectives and provides recommendations for the future development and delivery of Employ-Able.

8.1   Conclusions

The evaluation evidence suggests that the Employ-Able programme is effectively improving the employment prospects of veterans with mental health conditions. Operational information confirms that half of those supported have successfully achieved employment, training, volunteering or other 'meaningful activity' related outcomes. Client interviews support this and confirm that the majority of clients still actively engaged with the programme feel they are making progress towards meaningful activity. All are optimistic that their future will be better as a result of the support they have received from Employ-Able. External stakeholders who felt able to comment concur that Employ-Able achieves positive progress towards meaningful activity.

The three most frequently self-reported additional tangible outcomes from the support veterans have received from SAMH to date are:

- Increased self confidence/self belief
- A positive personal outlook for the future
- A feeling of having reliable, non-judgemental support

Client facing internal stakeholders recognise a range of barriers to satisfactory employment outcomes that clients entering the Employ-Able programme face. Mental health is key, but is commonly compounded by a range (often more than one per client) of additional challenges: most common are wider welfare issues such as:

- Housing problems
- Debt
- Social isolation
- Alcohol dependency
- Convictions
- Unrealistic expectations as to the type of employment or salary they can achieve

Employ-Able is highly regarded by stakeholders in other veterans and mainstream employment services. It is viewed as an effective and supportive service for a client group whose needs are not met by other provision. It has additional recognised benefits derived from the unique partnership between Poppyscotland and SAMH that provides access to additional funding for clients and allows for a very tailored and un-pressured approach to supporting them with both mental health and employability needs. However, the programme is not well understood by

stakeholders who are less familiar with it, and for these people it is not effectively differentiated from other provision, such as RFEA, Glasgow's Helping Heroes and others.

Improvement suggestions relate largely to the marketing of the programme: many believe it not as widely known or understood as it should be and that this can limit referrals. Improvements could be made on differentiation from other services, profile and awareness raising, particularly amongst potential mainstream referral partners, but also in co-ordination/partnership working with other veterans organisations.

Some feel that the SAMH branding for people who do not recognise their mental health problem, and the name Employ-Able may not effectively reflect the nature of the programme as it has evolved. Improvement suggestions relating to delivery of the programme include wider geographical availability and perhaps clearer ground rules or criteria for exit for clients who may become dependant and 'stuck'.

Employ-Able has evolved from the original intention to use a *Tools for Living*™ based approach to a predominantly one-to-one approach. Whilst it is recognised that the client group are difficult to engage in group work and there are mixed views about the focus on one-to-one support it is also evident that both internal and external stakeholders believe is it important to challenge this reluctance and work towards getting clients involved in at least some group activity.

It is clear that the Employ-Able programme as it has been implemented and evolved to meet need has a slightly different emphasis than originally proposed. It became apparent very early on that most clients were further from being employed than anticipated and that many had additional barriers over and above their mental health that needed to be addressed before real progress could be made. As a result, the journey is a longer one for many and the support they need is wider than just employability support.

In terms of the intended client outcomes contained in the original Employ-Able proposal, the evaluation evidence suggests that they are largely being achieved. Clients report improved awareness of their barriers to employment and all have worked on an individualised action plan to address barriers and progress towards employment. Indeed they report a great deal of progress in this direction, though for many this takes longer than originally anticipated at the programme design stage.

There is no doubt that fewer clients have completed *Tools for Living*™ modules than was intended and this is largely due to client reluctance and belief that they are not ''good at'' group activities. Most clients and stakeholders agree that employment (or other meaningful activity) prospects are improved through involvement in Employ-Able and this is demonstrated by actual activity levels as well as by clients' attitudes to and hopes for their futures.

8.2 Recommendations

1. Update internal documentation to better reflect the programme as it has evolved, including the role of *Tools for Living™* and a wider focus on meaningful activity.

2. Renew efforts to involve all clients in some group activity as early as possible (this could be introduced initially through social activities) and ultimately aim to deliver more *Tools for Living™* modules.

3. Continue to work to develop new relationships with external partners and referral sources, including Services (transition) and civilian routes, particularly health (relevant practitioner networks) and employment services.

4. Work in partnership with other veterans organisations to develop a more seamless and co-ordinated approach to providing information on/access to the support that is available for veterans. Perhaps a small practitioner/marketing working group could be established to identify options for achieving this?

5. Continue efforts to widen the geographical availability of Employ-Able, using delivery partners and other approaches. Could remote support be offered through Skype or teleconferencing, for instance?

6. Improve the referral form to ensure better information is gathered about mental health condition and goals for each client, whilst ensuring that confidentiality is maintained/consent is sought.

7. Review and formalise feedback mechanisms so that referral partners consistently receive brief updates on the progress of clients they refer to Employ-Able.

8. Develop a client information/welcome pack that includes expectations and responsibilities and a clear description of what clients can expect to achieve from the programme.

9. Review and strengthen procedures for exit to ensure that clients are expected and encouraged to progress and/or to move on from Employ-Able at an appropriate point.

10. Develop Employ-Able marketing strategy and refresh marketing materials to ensure messages reflect key strengths, purpose/objectives and client impacts.

11. Develop a unique logo and/or strapline.

12. Promotion and marketing should convey a wider focus on meaningful activity as well as employment and provide clear messages about the aims of the service and the type of client it is designed to support.

13. Initiate/build on relationships with appropriate voluntary organisations, social enterprises, etc to provide suitable work placements and examine sources of funding/incentive.

14. Explore merits of developing a relationship with resettlement services.

15. Build on the successful speed-networking event and other approaches to practitioner networking.

16. Explore options for resourcing a marketing/development support role to follow up and maintain contacts, provide information and develop relationships.

17. Re-convene a workshop or similar opportunity for all internal stakeholders to reflect, take stock and plan or a regular basis (perhaps annually).

Appendix 1   Internal stakeholder workshop

The internal workshop considered emerging findings from the evaluation in a structured way, with a focus on exploring implications for the future development and delivery of Employ-Able. Topics included review of the programme objectives, promotion, branding, marketing materials, delivery approaches, partnerships and external relationships and resourcing. Participants considered the key strengths of Employ-Able and developed and discussed ideas about how best to build on these.

Following the workshop, an action plan was developed and agreed, reflecting the discussions and ideas generated and identifying lead individuals for each action. The key action areas are summarised below.

Purpose and objectives

> Update internal documentation to better reflect the programme as it has evolved, including: the role of *Tools for Living™* and/or more appropriate way to introduce group work; wider focus on employment-related activity including volunteering, education and training; and clearer internal articulation of policy and process for exit, particularly for those who disengage.

Marketing and promotion

> Refresh marketing materials to: ensure messages reflect key strengths, refined purpose/objectives and client impacts; include illustrative 'client journey' case studies; add a unique logo and/or strapline; develop a client information/welcome pack that includes responsibilities and expectations; and include client progress reporting to referral partners.

External Relationships

> Initiate/build on: relationships with appropriate voluntary organisations, social enterprises, etc to provide suitable work placements; relationship with resettlement services; successful speed-networking event; and other approaches to practitioner networking.

Delivery

> Improve: referral form to ensure better information is gathered about mental health condition and goals; and group work approaches, introducing an element of this as early as possible: approach to exit, particularly for clients becoming 'stuck' or dependant.

Resources

> Explore options for resourcing: marketing/development support role; and group activities

Participants found the workshop a helpful approach and valued the opportunity to take time to reflect together on progress and to discuss ideas for future development and direction of Employ-Able. It was agreed a regular event to review and update the action plan would be helpful.

Appendix 2: research tools

Stakeholder topic guide

Introduction

I am carrying out research for Poppyscotland as part of an evaluation of Poppyscotland's Employ-Able service and part of that work is to interview a range of stakeholders who are involved in employment related services and support for veterans.

Employ-Able is a programme of employability support for veterans with additional needs related to mental health conditions. It is delivered for Poppyscotland by SAMH, using trained mental health advisors. You may not feel able to comment on all of these areas; feel free to 'pass' on any question you are unable to answer and we'll move onto the next.

Please feel assured that your views are treated in the strictest confidence. The report will highlight general findings based on the interviews across everyone who has taken part in this study. Quotes used to illustrate key points will be anonymised.

You do not have to answer a question if you do not want to and you can end the interview at any time.

Would you mind if I record the interview? This is solely so I can fill in gaps in the notes I'll take as we speak. The recording will not be shared with anyone and will be destroyed following the study.

Interview questions

1. What is your job title and what does your role entail? How long have you had this position and more generally how long have you worked in the field of employment?

2. (If relevant) please provide an overview of the role of your organisation and how it relates to employment support/supported employment or to veterans specifically

3. How did you first hear of Employ-Able?

4. What is your knowledge of and experience of Employ-Able? How does it contribute to your work or how have you used it?

5. How much do you feel you know about Employ-Able? Have you referred clients to it? Does the referral process work effectively? Why and what could be improved?

6. Does Employ-Able have a sufficiently high profile? Are all potential referral partners aware of it? Could it be better 'marketed'? How?

7. How would you describe Employ-Able to someone who didn't know about it?

8. *Probes:* what words would you use? What would you says its aims are? What does it cover/aim to help with?

9. What do you think of the programme? Probe fully for perceptions in relation to effectiveness wrt outcomes (improving employability for veterans with mental health or learning difficulties), quality of content, effectiveness of delivery, flexibility, accessibility,

10. How does Employ-able compare to other available services? Is it different? In what ways?

11. What can Employ-Able achieve that other services do not? Where other services have failed, why is this?

12. What are the key benefits and main outcomes for clients? Are there missed opportunities for greater benefits? What could enhance the programme?

13. *If not already stated* What, if any, is the added value of Employ-Able? Does it provide something that other services do not? Are there areas of overlap with other services? *Probe for details*.

14. Suggestions for improvements – what would make Employ-Able better? What would encourage wider take-up? Are there barriers? Enablers?

First Interview only

Length of engagement

1   I believe you have been working with Leann/Jenna for <mark>about ☐ months</mark>. Is that right?

2   How have you found it so far?

Background and referral

3   Did you try any other employment support programmes before you did this?

PROMPTS: JC+/DWP Work Programme (also referred to as routes to work, working links, INGEUS)

Access to work scheme

Supported employment/permitted work

DWP Work Choice

Others – write in

Experiences and views

4   What's different about this compared to other services you've tried?

5   In what ways is it better?

6   In what ways is it not so good?

7   SAMH tell me you were <mark>referre</mark>d by   /referred yourself

IF REFERRED BY ANOTHER SERVICE

7a   Did you ask about this kind of support or were you encouraged to think about it by

       IF THE LATTER

7b   How did you feel about giving it a try when they suggested it to you?

IF SELF REFERRED /ASKED

7c   How did you find out about this support? What made you look into it?

       ALL

8   How was the process of getting involved with this support? Were there any difficulties or
       problems? What would make the referral process better?

Expectations

9   What were you/are you hoping working with Jenna/Leann will do for you?

10   What will you consider a successful outcome at the end of the day?

Core Questions – all interviews

11   So Leann/Jenna has been working on a few different things with you. I'm going to ask you about each in turn and how much difference you think it has made to you personally up to now.

11a   Firstly, she has been helping you with X/ you have been involved in Y. On a scale of 1-5 where 1 is no difference and 5 is a big difference, how much difference has that made to you so far? Why do you say that?

REPEAT/UPDATE FOR EACH ACTIVITY FROM NARRATIVE/ PREVIOUS INTERVIEW THEN COMPLETE FOR ANY ADDITIONAL ACTIVITIES/SERVICES MENTIONED

11b   Is there anything else that I haven't mentioned that Leann/Jenna has been helping you with?

Activity/support	Score	Reasons

Attitude statements

12   Now I'm going to read out some statements that may or may not apply to you. For each one can you please tell me whether you strongly agree, agree, neither agree nor disagree, disagree or strongly disagree?

So, the first is **XXX** Do you agree or disagree with that and how strongly?

	This service has….	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither	Disagree	Strongly disagree
A	…helped me feel more confident about my future					
B	….not made a big difference to me yet					
C	…helped me to work out what I want to achieve					
D	…improved my chances of achieving the things I want					
E	…helped sort out things that were getting in the way of me moving forward in life					
F	…not led to any improvement for me					
G	…helped me find a sense of purpose in my life					
H	…made no difference to how I feel about myself					
I	…given me a clearer understanding of my ability to achieve employment or voluntary work					
J	…helped me to understand what I need to do to be successful in finding and keeping employment or voluntary work					
K	….improved my chances of getting into employment or voluntary work					
L	….helped me into employment or voluntary work					
M	….supported me to stay in employment or voluntary work					

13a   Since starting Employ-Able, do you feel

More optimistic about the future   ☐

About the same about the future   ☐

Less optimistic about the future   ☐

13b   Why do you say that?

Permission to re-contact – a lot of the questions will be the same – it's to help us see how things change over time

Final Interview only

14   What would you say are the 3 main benefits or outcomes of your involvement in Employ-Able (the service you have been getting form Leann/Jenna)?

15   What would you be doing now if you hadn't used Employ-Able?

16   If you were trying to persuade another ex-services person to sign up for this support service, what would you say?

17   What would make Employ-Able better? If you were in charge, what, if anything would you change about it?

If completed engagement with Employ-Able

18   When did you finish your involvement?

19   What has happened since?

If in work or been in work

20   Did you receive in-work support from your advisor? How helpful or otherwise was that? What difference did it make?

Sentence completion

21   So this programme of sport you've been receiving from Jenna/Leann is called Employ-Able. Just to finish up, can you complete two sentences for me?

21a   Employ-Able is effective because…..

21b   Employ-Able would be better if…..