

Steps into Work – A Report by Mental Health Reform

The report published by Mental Health Reform, entitled [Steps into Work](#), has shown that people with severe mental health difficulties can get work in the open labour market when provided with integrated supports.

The report detailed the results of a two-year pilot project aimed at securing employment in the open labour market for people with mental health difficulties across four sites in Ireland. The project piloted a model of evidence-based supported employment, known as Individual Placement and Support (IPS).

Many individuals who participated in the project had little or no job experience and relatively poor expectations of ever gaining a job. Almost all were on a disability social welfare payment. Still, 36% of participants successfully obtained at least one paid competitive job placement. Moreover, many participants had downward adjustments in their social welfare payments. Employers too were very satisfied with their new employees and with the support they received from the team.

Finding a job was hugely beneficial for participants, and employers noticed improvements not just in their work performances over time, but in the participants' self-esteem and behaviour. The participants themselves reported feeling happier and healthier, requiring less support from their mental health team and generally feeling more independent.

People with mental health difficulties want to work, yet they face significant barriers into the labour force. Traditionally, work environments and the social welfare system have been inflexible to their needs. There is also the fear of stigma and discrimination.

Through this pilot project, IPS has proved that with the right types of supports, people with a mental health difficulty can not only find work, they can thrive in employment and contribute in a significant way to their local communities and to the national economy.

For more information on this project and Mental Health Reform's wider role in promoting a better mental health system, see www.mentalhealthreform.ie