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*Person-Centred Employment Support
Guidebook for Professionals*

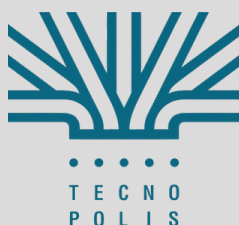


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Enhancing Job Quality for People with Mental Health Conditions
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CHAPTER

01

Introduction



Enhancing Job Quality
for People
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1. Introduction

How to use this chapter: Use this chapter to understand the Guidebook's purpose, target users, definition of quality employment and methodological foundations.

This Guidebook has been developed as a practice-oriented resource for professionals supporting people with mental health conditions (MHC) throughout their employment pathways. It is grounded in the Thriving Jobs project's understanding of quality employment as an individualised and sustainable pathway rather than a single job placement, and it responds to the need for applicable guidance on job access, stability and career development.

It provides a common basis for assessing needs, planning tailored pathways and supporting workplace inclusion, with attention to the fit between the person, the work environment and the wider support system.

1.1 Purpose of the Guidebook

The purpose of this Guidebook is to strengthen professional practice across the main stages of employment support: assessment, individualised planning, implementation, workplace inclusion, follow-up and long-term sustainability.

More specifically, it aims to equip professionals with a better understanding of the factors that influence employment quality and sustainability, and to translate that understanding into more effective support strategies. This includes identifying needs, strengths, preferences, and support requirements; designing realistic and person-centred pathways; improving the alignment between the person and the work environment; and working with employers and other relevant actors to promote inclusive and sustainable employment conditions. It is conceived both as a training resource and as a practical working tool, intended to support not only access to employment, but also continuity, well-being, and development over time.

1.2 Target Users

The Guidebook has been developed for professionals working across employment services, mental health and social services, training, education, employers' associations and workplace inclusion. Because support involves several services working together, it does not assume a single professional perspective. Instead, it provides a shared and accessible reference that users can adapt to their role, context and working methods. Its purpose is not to offer abstract reflection, but to support concrete decision-making in daily practice.

Target readers include employment counsellors, job placement officers, social workers, psychologists, occupational therapists, educators, trainers, professionals from employers' associations, and other practitioners helping people prepare for, enter, remain in, or progress within employment. It may also be relevant to professionals working in

organisations, training centres, public services, and community settings where employment support forms part of a wider process of recovery, inclusion, and personal development.

It is intended to support HR professionals as well, workplace inclusion staff, and job and welfare experts within employers' organisations. These actors can promote awareness among companies, encourage inclusive employment practices, and contribute to regional discussions and public policies on labour inclusion and mental health at work.

Although mainly addressed to professionals in support roles, the content encourages shared understanding across different fields. As users' responsibilities and contexts vary, the Guidebook does not propose a rigid intervention model. Instead, it offers a common framework, practical guidance, and adaptable tools to support person-centred and sustainable employment pathways while recognising the importance of collaboration among all actors involved.

1.3 Definition of Quality Employment

A central concept throughout this Guidebook is quality employment. Within the Thriving Jobs framework, quality employment means more than obtaining a good or stable job. It refers to an employment pathway that is professionally and emotionally sustainable, responsive to the person's needs and capacities, and supportive of well-being, stability, and development. This requires moving beyond job access alone and considering the conditions that help a person remain employed, feel supported, and, where possible, continue to develop.

Quality employment is not seen as a fixed outcome, but an individualised pathway. What is sustainable or meaningful may differ according to each person's circumstances, values, support needs, and life situation. This Guidebook consequently adopts a person-centred approach focused on realistic, appropriate, and tailored guidance rather than generic solutions.

Quality employment includes both **objective** and **subjective** dimensions. Objective dimensions refer to observable employment conditions, such as continuity, working conditions, access to support, and opportunities for development. Subjective dimensions concern how the person experiences and sustains employment, including feeling respected and included, finding the work meaningful, and maintaining a healthy balance between work and mental health.

Quality Employment



Objective and Subjective Dimensions



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When reviewing an employment situation, professionals can use the questions below to check whether the job matches the person's needs and circumstances, rather than considering placement alone.



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Dimension	Questions for professional practice
* Contractual stability	Is the employment predictable enough to support continuity and planning?
* Working conditions	Are workload, pace, schedule, and environment manageable for this person?
* Professional development	Are there realistic opportunities to learn, consolidate skills, or progress over time?
* Job retention	What factors may put continuity at risk in the short or medium term?
* Job satisfaction	Does the person experience the work as meaningful, useful, or worthwhile?
* Perception of inclusion	Does the person feel accepted, respected, and part of the workplace?
* Well-being at work	Is the job contributing to balance and stability, or creating significant distress?
* Adaptation to individual needs	Are reasonable adjustments and support adequate, useful and experienced as helpful by the person?

This broader understanding is important for professional practice because it helps **avoid reducing employment support just to placement**. It encourages professionals to look at employment more **holistically**, considering both the person and the context in which work takes place. In this way, quality employment becomes a useful reference for assessing situations, planning support, identifying risks to sustainability, and promoting pathways that are not only accessible, but also viable and meaningful over time.

1.4 Methodological Foundations

The Guidebook is based on four connected methodological foundations: person-centred support, shared responsibility with employers, value-based and empowerment-oriented practice, and the ACIP approach.

Person-Centred Employment Support

Employment support professionals help the person clarify realistic goals, identify barriers and move forwards through manageable and meaningful steps. Support should be adapted across preparation, job entry and follow-up. Early validation reinforced the need for flexible support that responds to individual differences and changing circumstances. **Advice:** Revisit goals at key transitions, such as before job entry, during the first weeks of employment, and whenever the person's circumstances or support needs change.



Employer Involvement and Duties

Employment inclusion is a shared responsibility. Employers, services and institutions must help create fair and adaptable conditions, while the person remains actively involved in decisions about their pathway. Across Europe, this responsibility is supported by anti-discrimination law, reasonable accommodation duties and active labour market measures. The legal and practical responsibilities of employers are developed in Chapter 5.

Value-Based and Empowerment-Oriented Practice

Employment support should reflect the person's priorities, capacities and conditions for long-term sustainability, not only labour market demands.

Professionals should help the person understand options, reflect on previous experiences, identify risks or stress factors, and develop strategies to manage workplace demands more actively. **The aim is not to eliminate all difficulties**, but to **strengthen** the person's agency and capacity to participate in decisions that affect their employment continuity and development.

Support should therefore be close, flexible and non-paternalistic, helping the person develop their own strategies without transferring all responsibility to them.

The ACIP Approach as a Methodological Contribution

A key methodological reference for this Guidebook is the ACIP model, based on the Spanish term Atención Centrada en lo Importante para la Persona, or Attention Centred on What Is Important for the Person, developed by Dr Carlos Salgado. ACIP is a constructive, person-centred approach focused on what gives meaning, direction and value to a person's life. In employment support, this means addressing work as one possible part of a meaningful and coherent life pathway, rather than as an isolated objective.

ACIP is grounded in principles that are particularly relevant to this Guidebook: depathologisation, dignity, shared vulnerability, construction, real empowerment and social connection. These principles help professionals move beyond diagnosis or limitation and support the person as the main decision-maker in their own pathway.

A professional does not simply decide what is best but helps the person identify what is important to them, translate it into meaningful goals, and move towards those goals through concrete and realistic steps. Within employment support, ACIP encourages professionals to connect assessment and planning not only to employability, but also to motivation, identity, and the kind of work the person can recognise as coherent with their own life.

The Employment Pathway Logic

Taken together, these methodological principles support an employment pathway logic that runs through the guidebook. It begins with **understanding the person's situation** and the barriers affecting labour inclusion, moves into **holistic assessment** and **individualised**

planning, and continues through **implementation**, **employer engagement**, and long-term **monitoring**.

Employment Pathway Logic

A person-centred process for quality employment



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Assessment informs planning, **planning** informs intervention, **intervention** requires collaboration with the workplace, and **sustainability** depends on **follow-up**, review, and adjustment over time. The process is therefore continuous rather than fixed, and it must remain **responsive to changes** in the person's circumstances, support needs, and work environment.

CHAPTER

02

Understanding Employment Pathways for People with MHC



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2. Understanding Employment Pathways for People with MHC

How to use this chapter: Use this chapter to identify the structural, relational and institutional factors that may affect access to employment and the quality of work.

2.1 Structural barriers and challenges to the employment of people with mental health conditions

People with MHC face barriers to employment that are not merely individual but deeply structural: they relate to the way work is organised today, labour market trends, active

People with severe mental health conditions face a much higher risk of unemployment



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labour market policies and welfare systems, and, even now, the way society views them. In Europe, over 84 million people live with a mental health diagnosis, with a direct impact on employment rates, quality of work and social participation. The European Commission, through its '[A comprehensive approach to mental health](https://commission.europa.eu/topics/public-health/european-health-union/comprehensive-approach-mental-health_en)'¹ of 2023 and its initiatives on 'Mental Health and Work', emphasises that access to decent and inclusive work is both an individual right and a key driver of economic growth and social cohesion from a collective perspective, and of personal recovery from a personal health perspective². Eurostat 2024 data show that people with severe

disabilities, including those with MHC, are much more likely to be outside the labour market (neither in employment nor seeking work).

The figure for people without MHC stands at 21.8% of the working-age population; in contrast with people with a mental health diagnosis, the figure rises to 67.7%, three times higher. Besides, this is predominantly long-term unemployment; in fact, 45% of people with MHC have been unemployed for over 12 months. Based on these and other figures, people

¹ https://commission.europa.eu/topics/public-health/european-health-union/comprehensive-approach-mental-health_en

² "High level Conference on Mental Health and Work" - 30–31/01/2024, Brussels.

with severe mental health conditions are considered one of the groups at highest risk of exclusion from the labour market in EU policies on mental health and work³.

Current Limitations, Obstacles and Future Prospects

From an organisational perspective, many workplaces are not designed to respond to needs associated with mental health conditions. Common barriers include rigid schedules, excessive workloads, limited autonomy, expectations of constant availability, frequent changes in tasks and performance-driven cultures.

Employment support services are also often fragmented, short-term, and poorly coordinated with mental health services. They may not always rely on evidence-based approaches, although Individual Placement and Support (IPS) is a notable exception recognised at European level.

Many employers and HR professionals still lack practical tools to address potential, rights, reasonable adjustments and psychosocial risks. As a result, attention is often concentrated on screening candidates during recruitment rather than creating the conditions for successful inclusion and retention. Future developments are expected to focus on three linked areas:

1. Stronger requirements for psychosocial risk prevention.

There are plans to include factors such as work-related stress, burnout, harassment, excessive cognitive workload and isolation in mandatory workplace risk assessments, and to introduce minimum European indicators for monitoring mental well-being in the workplace.

2. Clearer use of reasonable adjustments.

People with MHC may need reasonable adjustments at work when their condition affects daily functioning. These can include flexible hours, extra breaks, adapted tasks, or support in managing symptoms.

The EU is working towards clearer rules so that employers consider these adjustments properly and explain any refusal. There is also growing support for linking workplace adjustments with supported employment programmes.

3. Better coordination between employment, health and social inclusion.
 - **Work:** active labour market policies, training, recruitment incentives, supported employment.
 - **Health:** services involved in the design of work pathways.
 - **Social inclusion:** housing support, income support, community support, and combating stigma.

This represents a move beyond fragmented systems that require people with MHC to navigate separate services that do not communicate with one another.

³ Bruxelles Conference 2024 - [Tracking framework for the implementation of the Commission Communication on a comprehensive approach to mental health](#)

Factors Leading to Exclusion from the Labour Market

Several factors are leading to exclusion from the labour market and can be divided into the following categories:

- **Individual factors:** symptoms, fluctuations in functioning, side effects of medication, periods of hospitalisation or crises can lead to irregular attendance at work.
- **Relational factors:** working relationships based on mistrust, control and poor communication can increase the risk of conflict, isolation and leaving the workplace.
- **Structural factors:** welfare systems that discourage a return to work for fear of losing benefits; a lack of employment support services (job coaching, employer support, inclusive school-to-work transition programmes); labour market segmentation that pushes people with MHC into precarious, poorly protected and low-skilled jobs.
- **Institutional factors:** active labour market policies that are not always accessible or adequate; standardised selection criteria that penalise discontinuous training or employment histories; insufficient recognition of non-formal skills and experience of volunteering or community participation.

These factors require coordinated responses from professionals with different areas of expertise. One lead service or professional should be identified to organise the overall pathway, clarify responsibilities and avoid duplication. The organisation taking this role will depend on the national, regional or local service system.

Practical scenario: Laura has a mental health condition and has experienced several periods of sick leave. Medication side effects and changes in well-being sometimes affect her concentration and punctuality. At work, limited communication with her supervisor and close monitoring have increased her anxiety and mistrust. She is also concerned that accepting more hours could affect her benefits, while gaps in her employment history and skills gained through volunteering are not fully recognised during recruitment. Her situation shows how several exclusion factors can interact:

- **Individual:** changes in well-being, concentration difficulties, and medication side effects.
- **Relational:** mistrust, excessive control, and poor communication at work.
- **Structural:** fear of losing benefits and limited access to job coaching.
- **Institutional:** recruitment processes that penalise employment gaps and overlook non-formal experience.

Tips for Professional Practice

- Explore all four areas rather than focusing only on the person's MHC.
- Agree on one lead professional to coordinate employment, health, and social support.
- Help the person understand how employment may affect benefits before making decisions.
- Work with the employer on clear communication, appropriate adjustments, and regular follow-up.

- Include volunteering, community participation, and other non-formal experience when presenting the person's skills.

FACTORS LEADING TO EXCLUSION FROM THE LABOUR MARKET

Multiple and interrelated factors can hinder the participation of people with mental health conditions.



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Stigma and Systemic Barriers

The stigma associated with mental health remains one of the main obstacles to accessing and retaining employment. Stigma manifests itself in three dimensions: **ignorance** (understood as a lack of knowledge), **prejudice**, and **discrimination** in practical procedures (recruitment, task allocation, promotions, absence management). People with MHC are often perceived as less reliable, less productive or 'difficult to manage', with direct effects on recruitment and career decisions. This leads many workers to conceal their condition, thereby foregoing potential adjustments and support.

- **Organisational cultures** that reward only consistent performance and total availability.
- **Absence of explicit** anti-stigma and management policies.
- **Lack of training** for managers and colleagues.
- **Unstructured return-to-work** procedures following periods of absence due to mental health issues.

Labour Legislation and Policies for People with Mental Health Conditions

The European framework combines binding rules with policy guidance. EU health and safety law requires employers to assess and manage workplace risks, including psychosocial risks. The UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities also protects the right of people with psychosocial disabilities to work without discrimination and to receive reasonable adjustments when needed. Recent EU policies focus on three main areas:

- Equal access to employment, training, and career opportunities.
- Fair working conditions, including psychosocial risk prevention and work-life balance.
- Social protection that supports employment without increasing vulnerability.

For people with mental health conditions, this means clearer national policies, practical guidance for employers and services, and stable support for measures such as Individual Placement and Support (IPS), supported internships, and social cooperatives.

2.2 Objective and subjective dimensions of job quality

Objective Dimensions: Stability, Working Conditions and Development

The European Working Conditions Survey 2024 identifies seven key dimensions of job quality: **Compensation, career prospects, skills and training, perceived degree of autonomy, management of working time, work intensity and workload and social and physical environment**

Job quality is closely linked to well-being, motivation and retention. For people with MHC, contractual stability, predictable working hours and manageable workloads can reduce stress, prolonged absence and early exit from employment.



- **Job security** acts as a protective factor: precarious or intermittent contracts increase stress, financial insecurity and difficulties in managing symptoms.
- Working conditions, such as **workload, autonomy and management support** are equally crucial: high-pressure environments, limited discretion and cultures focused on continuous performance are associated with increased psychosocial risks, as recognised by the new European approach to mental health and the EU Strategic Framework on Health and Safety 2021–2027.



The European Working Conditions Survey 2024 identifies **seven key dimensions** of job quality:



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- **Pay levels** are not merely an economic indicator, but a matter of dignity and inclusion: insufficient or below-average pay for equivalent work fuels discrimination and internalised stigma.



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- **Career development**, often denied to people with MHC, is an essential factor in empowerment: the opportunity to progress, change roles and take on increasing responsibilities.
- **Continuous training** is a cornerstone of job quality: up-to-date skills, upskilling and reskilling pathways, and access to in-house or funded courses enable workers to remain competitive and navigate career transitions without being penalised. European policies emphasise the need to make training accessible to workers with psychosocial vulnerabilities, integrating it with personalised support.

Subjective Dimensions: Inclusion, Well-being and Sustainability

Alongside objective indicators, job quality includes subjective dimensions that affect mental health and the ability to remain in employment. A sense of belonging, supportive relationships and perceived well-being can strongly influence motivation, engagement and sustainability over time.

A sense of inclusion and belonging arises when a person feels recognised, respected and an integral part of the work team. It reduces internalised stigma, promotes job continuity and supports recovery. The perception of well-being and personal growth stems from the opportunity to learn, experiment, receive constructive feedback and see one's progress recognised. European mental health policies emphasise that **work must be an environment that 'empowers' rather than restricts**: a place where individuals can develop skills, autonomy and a sense of efficacy.

Positive relationships with colleagues and supervisors are one of the most effective safeguards against stress, burnout and isolation. A supportive social environment reduces the risk of conflict, makes it easier to cope with difficult times and allows people to ask for help without fear of judgement.

In summary, the subjective quality of work is not an 'afterthought', but an essential condition for the sustainability of employment. Without a sense of belonging, positive relationships and perceived well-being, even a formally stable job risks becoming unsustainable.

2.3 From Job Access to Sustainable Employment

Employment as Part of a Life Project

Sustainable employment develops through four connected stages: access, adaptation, empowerment and longer-term continuity. Each stage reflects changes in the person's relationship with work and the social environment.

Stage	Description
Access	Entry into employment through placement or supported hiring.
Adaptation	Ongoing adjustment to tasks, relationships and changes in well-being.
Empowerment	Development of autonomy, skills, and self-efficacy within the workplace.
Sustainability	Stable, meaningful employment is integrated into the person's wider life plan.

Towards the company	Towards the employee
Feedback management: develop a tailored monitoring and review programme	Continuous support and coaching , ensuring that assistance does not end with hiring but evolves with the person's needs.
Crisis management tools and methods: flexible work arrangements, adaptation to health fluctuations and personal circumstances.	Collaborative partnerships : mental health services, social networks, the natural social circle.
Personalised professional development plan , with a career mentor	Skills development , learning opportunities, experiences for personal growth.
Care for the work team and colleagues	

The practical responsibilities of companies, professionals and support services at these stages are developed in **Chapters 5 and Chapter 6**.



CHAPTER

03

Holistic assessment and personalised planning



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3. Holistic assessment and personalised planning

How to use this chapter: Use this chapter to carry out a holistic assessment, respect professional boundaries and turn the findings into a personalised employment support plan.

This chapter applies the person-centred and value-based principles introduced in Chapter 1 to assessment and planning. The ACIP approach is used as a non-clinical support framework. Its purpose is to understand the beneficiary's resources, aspirations, context and support needs and translate them into a realistic employment pathway. It involves:

- Acceptance of lived experience without pathologisation.
- Commitment to a meaningful life plan.
- Development of personal and professional identity.
- Active participation in social and working life.

3.1 Principles of holistic assessment

Beyond abilities and limitations: identifying support needs, strengths, values, interests and motivations

Holistic assessment does not reduce the beneficiary to technical skills or functional limitations. It considers the following areas:

- Going beyond symptoms. A diagnosis may explain some aspects of the beneficiary's experience, but it does not show who they are or what they can contribute. Assessment should therefore explore life history, significant roles, work and non-work experience, formal and informal skills, interests and support networks.
- Identifying support needs and reasonable adjustments. Instead of asking only what the beneficiary cannot do, the assessment asks what conditions or support would help them carry out meaningful work. This may include flexible hours, breaks, task adaptation, a workplace mentor, a job coach, clear procedures or structured feedback.
- Focusing on strengths, values and interests. Explore which activities make the beneficiary feel competent, which settings support their well-being and which values they wish to express through work, such as helping others, precision, creativity, stability or learning.
- Recognising dignity and lived experience. The beneficiary is not someone to be "fixed". Assessment should identify how employment can coexist with ongoing difficulties by reducing avoidable stressors and strengthening existing resources.
- Joint working the employment support plan. Agree realistic and meaningful objectives, interim steps, responsibilities and review arrangements with the beneficiary.

This approach helps the beneficiary recognise their resources, communicate their needs and define the role that work may play in their life. It also gives services and employers a practical basis for planning support.



**Going beyond
diagnosis and deficits**



**Identifying support needs
and reasonable adjustments,
not 'disabilities'**



**Focusing on strengths,
values and interests**



**Recognising intrinsic dignity
and the subjectivity of
experience**



**Co-creating the
integration plan**

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The employment support professional explores functional needs, workplace barriers and work-related support. They do not diagnose, assess clinical stability, interpret symptoms, recommend treatment or advise on medication. These responsibilities belong to qualified healthcare professionals. When health-related concerns affect the employment pathway, the employment support professional should:

- Discuss the situation with the beneficiary.



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- Focus on its practical impact on work.
- Encourage contact with an appropriate healthcare professional when needed.
- Coordinate with health services only with the beneficiary's free, informed and specific consent.
- Adapt goals, timing, support or working conditions without replacing clinical intervention.

Laura in practice: Laura reports increasing difficulty concentrating during job search activities. The employment support professional explores when the difficulty occurs, adapts the pace and task format, and encourages Laura to discuss the health-related change with her healthcare professional. The professional does not interpret the change clinically or advise on treatment.

3.2 Analysis of What Is Important to the Beneficiary

Meaning, identity, life direction

This process explores who the beneficiary is, what gives meaning to their life and how work might fit with their identity and values. It helps prevent placements that appear suitable on paper but conflict with the beneficiary's priorities, well-being or wider life situation.



Consistency between values and professional goals

Consistency between personal values and professional goals supports motivation and job retention. The aim is not to define an ideal profile, but to build a workable alignment between values, needs, skills and opportunities.

- What do you wish to express through your work?
- What values must be present for a job to be ‘right for you’?
- What conditions allow you to feel respected, secure and recognised?
- What professional goals are realistic and meaningful within your life plan?

A process that supports dignity and participation

Holistic assessment should recognise the beneficiary as an active partner, not a passive recipient of support. Professionals should involve them in identifying what matters, defining goals, choosing suitable options and deciding what information may be shared with employers or other services. In practice, this means:

- using respectful and non-stigmatising language.
- discussing strengths and possibilities.
- developing the employment plan together with the person.
- reviewing decisions regularly and allowing goals to change.
- avoiding placements that conflict with the person’s values, identity, or well-being.

Practical tip: Before agreeing on an action, ask: *“Does this reflect what the person wants, and have they had a genuine role in deciding it?”*

3.3 Drawing up a personalised employment support plan

The personalised employment support plan begins with an assessment of the beneficiary’s circumstances, carried out jointly by the employment support professional and the beneficiary. It considers three connected areas:

- their relationship with the **task**.
- their relationship with **themselves**.
- their relationship with their **environment**.

Purpose and Framework of the Assessment

The beneficiary’s relationship with the task, themselves and the environment is explored through observable areas such as social skills, motivation, work values and adaptability. The assessment follows three stages:

- Collection and observation of personal and contextual factors.
- Integrated analysis and interpretation of data.
- Feedback and definition of the employability profile.

First stage: Collection and observation of personal and contextual factors

Relationship with the task

This area considers how the beneficiary approaches work-related activities, including concentration, time management, independence, tolerance of frustration and ability to complete a task. Assessment may combine:

- structured interviews.
- observations in protected or simulated settings.
- practical tests (short tasks, problem-solving exercises, manual or digital activities).

The aim is to understand not only the current level, but also the potential for learning and the ability to adapt to new tasks.

Social skills and relationships with others

Social skills are central to employment: communication, assertiveness, conflict management, asking for help and understanding workplace expectations. Assessment may include:

- group observation.
- role-playing.
- analysis of past relational dynamics.
- assessment of the ability to recognise and regulate emotions.

For some beneficiaries, relational demands may create more difficulty than the technical task itself. The professional should therefore pay attention to work-related social stress, avoidance, rigidity or excessive adaptation to others' expectations.

Relationship with oneself: identity, self-esteem and self-awareness

This area explores how the beneficiary sees themselves in relation to work and whether their expectations are realistic and supportive. The following may be explored:

- self-esteem and self-efficacy.
- awareness of one's own limitations and strengths.
- ability to tolerate error.
- personal narrative of one's own journey.

This part is crucial because motivation and job stability often depend on the consistency between personal identity and professional role.

Work motivation and professional values

Work motivation includes the needs, values, expectations and meanings that the beneficiary associates with employment. Useful questions include: "What am I looking for in a job?" and "What helps or hinders my well-being at work?" The assessment may explore:

- extrinsic motivations (income, stability, routine).
- intrinsic motivations (fulfilment, usefulness, growth).
- work values (order, creativity, autonomy, security, relationships).
- conditions that promote or hinder well-being.

Relationship with the environment and adaptability

This area explores how the beneficiary responds to organisational demands such as pace, rules, physical spaces, sensory stimuli and social expectations.

- sensitivity to noise, crowds, stimuli.
- preference for structured or flexible contexts.
- ability to manage change and the unexpected.
- work-life balance.

Work-related impact of health and available support

The employment support professional should explore only how health-related factors affect work-related functioning. The focus is on the beneficiary's own experience, existing coping strategies, support preferences and situations in which additional help may be needed. The professional should not assess treatment adherence, clinical stability or medication. Relevant areas include:

- Work-related changes in energy, concentration, attendance or communication.
- Coping strategies and supports that already help.
- Self-identified early signs that should prompt a review.
- Work-related stressors to avoid or manage.

Available professional, therapeutic and social support

With the beneficiary's consent, identify the services and informal supports that may contribute to the pathway and agree how coordination will take place. Only information that is necessary for employment support should be shared.

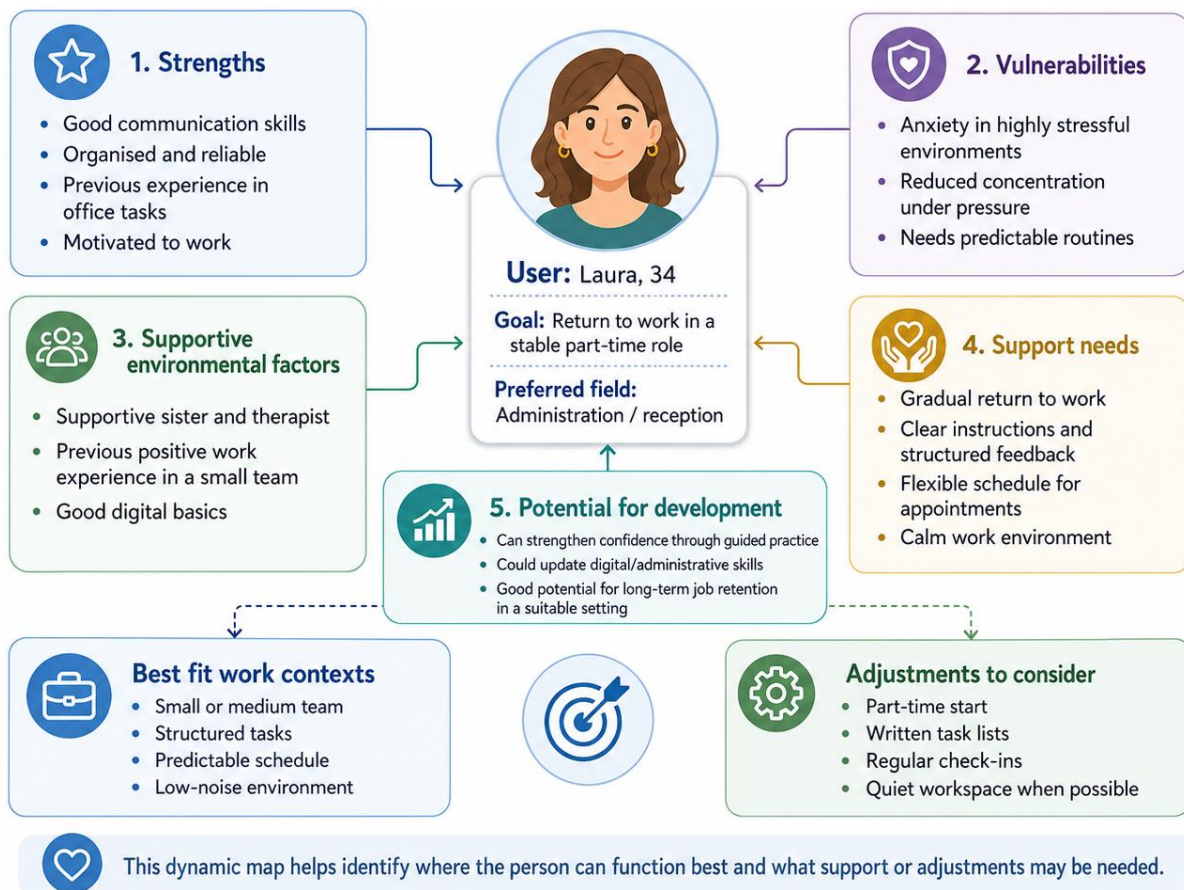
Specific skills and professional competencies

This area reviews experience, practical abilities, transferable skills, qualifications and other evidence of competence:

- knowledge (what you know).
- skills (what you can do).
- know-how (what you can do thanks to experience).
- competences (knowing how to use all of this to achieve results).

Second stage: Integrated analysis and profile development

Once the information has been collected, the professional and the person develop a multidimensional summary of strengths, vulnerabilities, supportive environmental factors, support needs and potential for development. A dynamic map can show where the person is likely to function well, and which adjustments may be helpful.



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Third stage: Feedback and definition of the employment pathway

The assessment concludes with a shared feedback session in which the person takes an active role. Feedback should be clear, non-technical, future-oriented and focused on possibilities. The professional and the person should agree realistic goals, conditions that protect well-being, support strategies, suitable work contexts and any relevant training or pre-employment activity.

Outcome: the employability profile

The employability profile brings together the main findings and can be used to:

- Provide guidance to the person.
- Guide the job coach or employment support professional.
- Support communication with employers, where consent has been given.
- Plan a sustainable placement.
- Monitor progress over time.

Information from the employability profile may be shared with an employer only with the person's free, specific, informed and revocable consent. The person should decide what is shared, with whom and for what purpose, and the information should be limited to what is necessary for workplace support.

The profile is a working document that changes with experience, context and personal development. It translates holistic assessment into a concrete pathway co-created with the person and based on dignity, self-determination and a positive view of their capabilities.

Transforming Assessment Results into a Structured Plan

Holistic assessment provides information on values, interests, strengths, support needs, favourable working conditions, risks to manage and career aspirations. Planning organises this information into a clear, realistic and shared pathway. The plan should include:

- Changes in the context.
- **Personal and professional goals**, expressed in the person's own words.
- **Conditions necessary** for well-being and sustainability (work patterns, hours, environment, relationships, support).
- **Reasonable adjustments** required.
- Available **resources and support** (job coach, workplace mentor, local services, informal networks).
- **Action steps**, with timelines, responsibilities and monitoring procedures.
- Dignity and freedom of choice.

Setting Realistic and Meaningful Goals with the Person

Goal-setting is a shared process. The professional and the person formulate goals together, review them over time and adapt them when circumstances change. Goals should:

- Respect the person's values and identity.
- Reflect current resources and vulnerabilities.
- Be achievable with the available support.
- Contribute to a meaningful life, not only to obtaining formal employment.

Linking Employment Goals to Long-Term Sustainability

Employment is sustainable when the person can develop at work while protecting well-being and the wider life plan. Each professional goal should therefore be connected to:

- **Psychological well-being**: reduction of stress factors, availability of support, opportunities for breaks and self-regulation.
- **Stability and predictability**: clear working hours, defined tasks, transparent communication.
- **Positive relationships**: presence of a mentor, inclusive corporate culture, an informed and non-stigmatising team.
- **Personal growth**: learning opportunities, skills development, prospects for advancement.
- **Work-life balance**: compatibility with healthcare appointments, personal commitments and lifestyle.



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CHAPTER

04

Implementing Employment Pathways



Enhancing Job Quality
for People
with Mental Health Conditions

4. Implementing Employment Pathways

How to use this chapter: Use this chapter to select practical support actions, develop priority skills and review progress before and during the move into employment.

After assessment and planning, the focus shifts to concrete support actions. This chapter explains how to identify priority skills, select suitable support formats, address work-related emotional demands and organise a pathway that can be reviewed and adjusted.

4.1 Skills Development and Pre-Employment Support

Using the assessment results and the agreed employment goal, the professional and the person should identify which competences, supports and conditions need to be strengthened for the next realistic step.

See ANNEX 1 for practical questions and scripts linked to skills development and pre-employment support.

Identifying Skills Gaps from Assessment Results and Employment Goals

The first task is to identify the skills most likely to affect the next step. These may relate to job access, such as interviews, communication or digital tasks, or to workplace adaptation, such as routines, feedback, emotional regulation or teamwork. The professional should prioritise only the areas that are relevant to the agreed goal and choose a support format that suits the person's needs and stage of readiness.

- Structured workshops: Useful for areas such as communication, digital competence, or job search.
- Individual coaching: appropriate when support needs are specific or when confidence or motivation require focused support.
- Simulated work environments: These are helpful to rehearse routines and responsibilities in a lower-pressure setting.
- External training: Can be relevant when the pathway requires a particular preparation or training.

Competence-Building Aligned with Labour Market Demands

Not every difficulty needs to be resolved before placement. Some competences may need to be strengthened in advance, while others can continue to develop through supported practice and workplace experience. The professional should review whether each action is reducing a real barrier or strengthening a skill required for the next step.

Developing Technical and Transversal Skills

Skills development should reflect both labour market demands and the person's realistic employment goal. Technical skills relate to the specific tasks of a role. Transversal skills support functioning across roles and include time management, communication, assertiveness, problem-solving and adapting to instructions or routines. The professional

should identify which combination is relevant now rather than attempting to address every possible skill.

Technical skills are the knowledge and practical abilities required for a particular role. The professional should identify the essential tasks, assess the person's starting point and agree how the necessary skills will be practised or developed.

Transversal skills are personal, social and practical abilities used across different jobs. They influence job access, workplace adaptation, relationships, autonomy and longer-term sustainability. The following areas are linked to practical tools in the annexes.

Time management

Organising tasks by day, week or month can provide enough structure to support functioning and well-being without filling every available hour. The focus should be on a small number of realistic priorities, regular breaks and review of what was completed.

→ **ANNEX 5:** resources and tools to practise these skills.

1 KEY IDEAS

-  **Routine**
Repeat key daily steps
-  **Schedule**
Plan the day ahead
-  **Priorities**
Focus on what matters most
-  **Breaks**
Rest helps productivity

2 WATCH OUT FOR

-  **Starting late**
-  **Forgetting tasks**
-  **Overplanning**
-  **No time to rest**

3 QUICK TIPS

-  **Start small**
-  **Use reminders**
-  **Plan 1–3 tasks**
-  **Review the day**

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Emotional intelligence

The ability to recognise, understand and manage emotions in ways that support daily functioning and relationships. At work, this can support communication, self-regulation and responses to stress or insecurity.

→ **ANNEX 6:** resources and tools.

1.



Understand Your Own Emotions

- Recognise what you are feeling
- Identify triggers and patterns
- Notice how emotions affect your reactions

2.



Manage Emotions Constructively

- Pause before reacting
- Use strategies to reduce stress and tension
- Express emotions in an assertive and respectful way

3.



Practice Empathy

- Listen actively to others
- Consider different perspectives
- Respond with respect and understanding

4.

Why It Matters



Personal life

Better self-awareness and relationships



Professional life

Stronger teamwork, communication, and conflict management



Health and well-being

Lower stress and greater emotional balance



Work-life balance

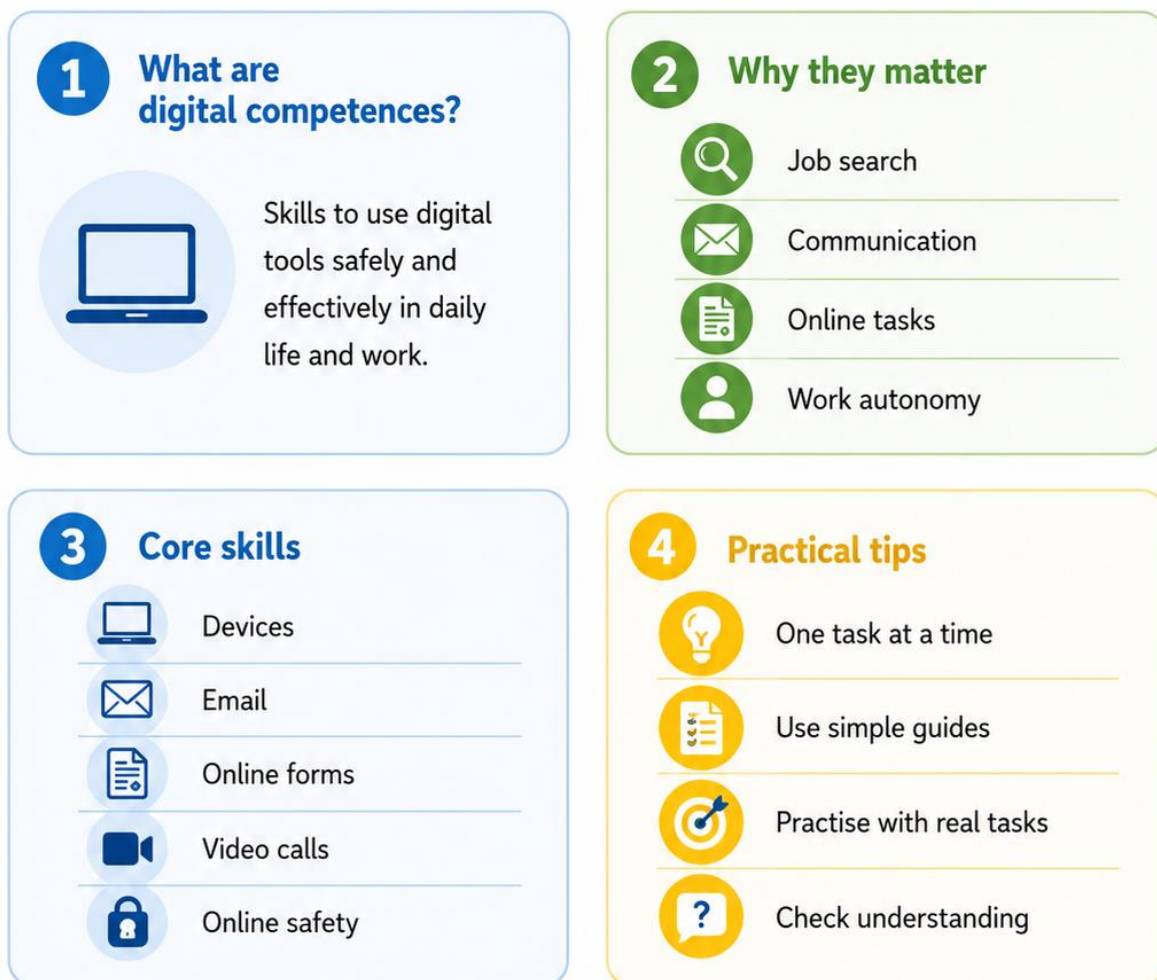
Healthier boundaries and reduced risk of burnout

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Digital competences

The knowledge and skills needed to use digital tools safely and practically, including phones, computers, email, online services, job search platforms and workplace systems.

→ **ANNEX 7:** resources and tools.



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Communication skills

The ability to express information clearly, understand others and respond appropriately. These practical skills affect job access, workplace adaptation, teamwork and retention.

→ **ANNEX 8:** resources and tools.



1) What are communication skills?

They help people express themselves clearly, understand others, and interact effectively at work.

2) 4 Core communication skills



Listening



Clarity



Asking for clarification



Assertiveness

3) Why it matters



Job search



Workplace relationships



Understanding tasks



Job sustainability

4) Key ideas



Communication can be practised



Clear communication prevents problems



Stress can affect communication



Assertiveness is part of communication

5) Common difficulties



Fear of judgement



Low confidence



Anxiety in social situations



Difficulty setting limits

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Assertiveness

Expressing needs, limits and opinions clearly, calmly and respectfully without withdrawing or becoming aggressive. Assertiveness supports communication during job search, workplace adaptation and job retention.

- **Passive:** avoids expressing needs, agrees even when uncomfortable.
- **Aggressive:** communicates with blame, hostility, or pressure.
- **Assertive:** clear and respectful, while respecting others too.

→ **ANNEX 9:** resources and training tools, including the assertiveness techniques infographic.

1 What is assertiveness?



Assertiveness means communicating clearly and respectfully without passivity or aggression.

2 Why it matters at work



-  Ask for help
-  Set limits
-  Respond to feedback
-  Prevent misunderstandings

3 Assertive communication looks like...



-  Using calm and clear words
-  Saying what you need
-  Respecting others
-  Speaking with confidence

4 Practice examples



- “I need a bit more time to finish this task.”
- “I do not understand this part. Could you explain it again?”
- “I cannot take on another task right now.”
- “I appreciate the feedback. I will work on it.”

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In summary, the professional and the person should clarify the employment objective, identify the main skills and support needs linked to it, prioritise the most relevant areas, choose suitable support formats and review progress regularly. Annexes 5 to 9 provide practical resources for the transversal skills described above.

Questions such as the following ones can help keep the intervention focused and useful.

What does the person need to take the next realistic step?

Which difficulties are most likely to affect job access or adaptation?

What does the person themselves identify as important right now?

Laura in practice: Laura wants an administrative role and can use email confidently, but she becomes overwhelmed when several requests arrive at once. The professional agrees a two-week practice activity using written priorities and simulated requests, then reviews whether the strategy improves task completion.

4.2 Emotional Support in Employment Processes

Employment pathways involve emotional demands linked to change, uncertainty and adaptation. Employment support professionals can help the person prepare for work-related stress, remain engaged with agreed goals and recognise when the pathway, workplace conditions or level of support needs to change. They do not provide clinical treatment unless this falls within their professional qualifications and role. See ANNEX 2 for practical guidance and activities.

With the person's agreement, family members or other trusted supporters may provide encouragement, practical help and everyday stability. Their involvement should strengthen confidence and autonomy rather than create overprotection, pressure or control.

Managing insecurity and anxiety

Fear of failure, concern about performance, discomfort in social situations or uncertainty about new expectations can affect participation before job entry and during early adaptation. The professional should help the person identify the specific work-related situation causing distress, its practical impact and the support that may help.

Useful actions include preparing for a stressful situation in advance, rehearsing a difficult interaction, breaking a task into smaller steps, reviewing strategies that have helped before and identifying signs that the pace or support needs to be adjusted. When distress requires clinical assessment or treatment, the professional should encourage contact with an appropriate healthcare professional.

Laura in practice: Before an interview, Laura reports strong anxiety about forgetting her answers. The professional rehearses the arrival, two likely questions and how Laura can ask for a moment to think. If the anxiety requires clinical support, Laura is encouraged to contact her healthcare professional.

Supporting progress despite discomfort

The person does not need to feel fully ready before acting. Professionals can help them distinguish between difficulties that require adjustment and manageable discomfort, using gradual steps, flexible support and regular review while keeping the person's experience and priorities in view.

Peer-to-peer support

Peer support can complement professional support by offering shared understanding, encouragement and practical learning. Participation should always be voluntary and based on the person's preferences.

Advantages of peer-to-peer support for people with MHC

- Reduces isolation and increases understanding: contact with someone who has lived through similar difficulties can help the person feel less alone and more readily understood.
- Strengthens hope, motivation and self-confidence: seeing how others have managed difficulties can make progress feel more realistic and support confidence in one's own abilities.
- Facilitates practical learning: peers can exchange strategies for routines, communication, stress, disclosure and difficult workplace situations.
- Supports autonomy, adjustment and belonging good peer support can encourage decision-making, workplace participation and a stronger sense of social connection.

Peer support complements rather than replaces professional support. It may reduce isolation and make progress feel more achievable, but comparison can also create pressure or self-criticism. Professionals should review whether the peer relationship is strengthening participation and confidence and adjust or stop it if it is not helpful.

Self-care and Coordination with Healthcare Professionals

Employment may interact with sleep, routines, healthcare appointments, treatment side effects or other aspects of self-care. The employment support professional may explore how these factors affect work-related functioning and help the person plan practical routines or request appropriate adjustments. They should not monitor treatment adherence, advise on medication or make continued employment conditional on clinical decisions.

Coordination with healthcare professionals may be useful when health-related changes affect the pathway. It should take place only with the person's free, informed and specific consent, use the minimum necessary information and keep clinical assessment and treatment within the healthcare professional's role.

Where relevant, the person and the employment support professional can agree work-related signs that should prompt an early review, such as persistent fatigue, difficulty concentrating or changes in attendance. These signs should be used to review support and encourage appropriate help, not to interpret the person's condition clinically.

Emotional support should remain linked to the real demands of employment and the person's wider life context. The questions below can guide review:

What situations related to employment are generating most fear or stress?

Are there signs of disengagement or loss of balance?

Is the person avoiding action because of discomfort or because more support is needed?

4.3 Structured Intervention Pathways

Once needs and priorities have been identified, the intervention should be organised into a clear sequence of actions that can be reviewed and adjusted. ANNEX 3 provides practical tools for structuring this pathway.

From Assessment to Action

The structured pathway begins with the personalised employment support plan. The professional and the person should define the actions to be implemented, the purpose of each action, the support format required and how progress will be reviewed. Possible actions include:

- Individual support sessions.
- structured workshops.
- emotional support activities.
- pre-employment tasks.
- real-life practice opportunities.
- external training.
- coordination with services.
- employer-related actions.
- follow-up measures linked to adaptation and continuity.

Each action should connect directly to the person's priorities and the agreed employment goal. A well-organised intervention requires the professional to:

- define the main lines of work based on assessment and employment objectives.
- connect each action to a concrete purpose.
- establish a realistic sequence of steps.
- identify who needs to be involved.
- clarify what support format is required in each phase.
- keep the person actively involved in understanding and shaping the pathway.

Monitoring and Adjustment

Because progress may fluctuate, review the pathway regularly and adjust the pace, level of support or priorities when the person's situation or context changes.

Monitoring should consider both what has been done and whether it is producing meaningful change, such as stronger routines, clearer goals, improved work-related skills, increased confidence or better job matching. If progress is limited, review whether the intervention needs to be adapted, simplified, reinforced or redirected. The professional should:

- review progress periodically with the person.
- identify what is helping and what is not.
- observe changes in stability, motivation, confidence, routines, and work-related functioning.
- document actions and outcomes consistently.
- adjust the pathway when the context or the person's situation changes.
- keep the focus on continuity and sustainability rather than speed alone.

The pathway should remain clear enough to guide action and flexible enough to evolve. The following questions can support review:

What are the current priorities?

Is the current pace realistic for this person and this context?

Are the actions producing meaningful progress?

What needs to be maintained, adapted, reinforced, or stopped?

From assessment to action



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CHAPTER

05

Working with Employers and Creating Inclusive Environments



Enhancing Job Quality
for People
with Mental Health Conditions

5. Working with Employers and Creating Inclusive Environments

How to use this chapter: Use this chapter to engage employers, agree reasonable adjustments and organise early workplace follow-up while protecting consent and confidentiality.

EU employment equality law requires equal treatment and reasonable accommodation for people with disabilities, including psychosocial disabilities. In this Guidebook, the practical measures used to meet this obligation are referred to as reasonable adjustments. This chapter translates the legal and policy framework into employer engagement, workplace adaptation and post-placement support.

The focus is on concrete workplace decisions, consent-based communication and shared responsibility for sustainable employment.

5.1 Employer Engagement Strategies

Employer engagement means helping companies move from general willingness to concrete, workable inclusion. Before employment begins, professionals should focus on the person's skills, the actual job demands and the conditions that support performance rather than on diagnostic assumptions.

Health information, personal warning signs and support needs may be shared with an employer only with the person's free, specific, informed and revocable consent. The person decides what is shared, with whom and for what purpose. Consent may be withdrawn at any time, and only information necessary for workplace support should be disclosed.

Company Outreach and Mediation

Many employers are unsure what MHC may mean in practice, which legal obligations apply and which adjustments are feasible. Engagement is most effective when it begins early, remains non-stigmatising and focuses on concrete workplace decisions rather than awareness-raising alone.

Inclusive practices can improve clarity, well-being and performance across the workforce. Before approaching an employer, the professional should understand concerns such as:

- Productivity and performance.
- Reliability and attendance.
- Team dynamics and workplace culture.
- Legal liability.
- Cost of adjustments.
- Managing difficulties if they arise.

Employers often respond more constructively when the conversation focuses on job demands, performance conditions, predictability, retention, team functioning and

manageable risk. This does not mean concealing difficulty. It means describing the situation in a way that leads to a practical solution.

Supportive language centres the person's experience and dignity, while business language explains the operational effect for the organisation. Both can be used together. For example, instead of saying "this person needs special treatment", explain that "this candidate is more likely to perform well when instructions are clear, priorities are written down and one supervisor is identified as the main contact".

Dimension	Supportive language	Business language
Primary focus	The person's lived experience	Organisational outcomes
Names...	Emotions, well-being, dignity	Risks, costs, performance
Frames need as...	A human right or support requirement	A manageable operational variable
Tone	Empathic, person-centred	Practical, solution-oriented
Risk if overused	May trigger paternalism or pity	May erase the human context
Best used with...	Colleagues, HR, occupational health	Managers, senior leadership

Supportive language	Business language
Scenario 1 — Medical appointments	
<i>"This employee manages a health condition and may need flexibility for appointments. Understanding and compassion support their well-being and sense of belonging."</i>	<i>"Occasional absences are predictable and manageable with a simple prior-notice protocol. This minimises unplanned disruption and keeps team coverage visible."</i>
Scenario 2 — Sensory or environmental needs	
<i>"This employee is sensitive to overstimulation. Access to a quieter space or noise-cancelling headphones helps them feel comfortable and contribute fully."</i>	<i>"Focus and output improve significantly in quieter conditions. A low-cost adjustment, a designated desk or headphones removes a preventable barrier to performance."</i>
Scenario 3 — Communication and instructions	

Supportive language	Business language
<i>"Sudden changes without explanation create unnecessary stress. A brief heads-up and clear expectations make a meaningful difference to this person's daily well-being."</i>	<i>"Clear written instructions and advance notice of changes reduce errors and rework. A structured briefing process prevents quality drops at no significant cost."</i>
Scenario 4 — Risk of burnout	
<i>"This employee is highly motivated but struggles to set limits. Supporting them to recognise their capacity and normalising saying no protects their long-term health."</i>	<i>"Without active workload monitoring, this employee is at elevated risk of burnout a significant and preventable retention and absenteeism risk. Periodic supervisor check-ins reduce that exposure."</i>
Scenario 5 — Need for a single point of contact	
<i>"Having one consistent supervisor helps this employee feel secure and reduces anxiety. It builds the trust needed for them to raise concerns early."</i>	<i>"Assigning a single main supervisor reduces miscommunication and role confusion. It creates a clear escalation path and improves response time when issues arise."</i>

Effective communication briefly acknowledges the person's experience and then explains the practical workplace response. This keeps the human context visible while giving the employer a clear action to consider.

Building Collaborative Partnerships

Start by identifying employers with realistic inclusion potential, such as organisations that allow some flexibility in scheduling, supervision, task allocation or communication. Before meeting the employer, review the role, its essential tasks and the adjustments that may be relevant.

Discuss concrete workplace elements such as the onboarding pace, task clarification, supervision, workload, communication, flexibility and the named workplace contact. Any response plan should focus on agreed, observable work-related changes and should be developed with the person's consent. The employer should not be asked to interpret symptoms or monitor the person's mental health.

Employers need short guidance they can apply immediately. A brief meeting, a simple adjustment plan, a named workplace contact and scheduled follow-up are often more useful than general messages about inclusion.

Practical takeaway for professionals: "Our role is to help make the match sustainable for both the person and the company. We can clarify tasks, identify feasible adjustments and remain available during the first phase so that difficulties are addressed early."

Employer Engagement: Quick Operational Procedure

Use this sequence as a working checklist when preparing and maintaining contact with an employer. Company-facing materials can provide shorter guidance for managers, while the employment support professional coordinates the full process with the person and keeps consent, responsibilities and follow-up clear.

- 1. Prepare with the person:** clarify the employment objective, strengths, support needs and what information, if any, the person agrees may be shared with the employer. Do not assume that disclosure of a diagnosis is necessary.
- 2. Analyse the role and workplace:** review the essential tasks, working hours, pace, supervision, communication, physical or sensory environment and any foreseeable barriers or supports.
- 3. Open the employer conversation:** focus first on the role, the person's contribution and the practical conditions that support performance. Explore the employer's questions without presenting the person through a diagnostic lens.
- 4. Agree concrete workplace measures:** define any reasonable adjustments, onboarding arrangements, communication routines, the named workplace contact and how ordinary difficulties will be handled.
- 5. Record responsibilities and consent boundaries:** make clear who will do what, what information can be exchanged, with whom and for what purpose. Keep information sharing limited to what has been specifically agreed and is necessary for employment support.
- 6. Set the first review point:** agree when the employee, employer and employment support professional will review how the arrangement is working, and bring the review forward if the role, workplace or support needs change.

Minimum practical output: an agreed workplace contact, any reasonable adjustments or support arrangements, clear consent boundaries, responsibilities for each actor and a first review date.

Named Workplace Contact

Where appropriate, identify a named person within the company to act as the workplace contact. This may be a direct supervisor, HR representative, disability manager where that role exists, or another authorised employee. The contact does not need clinical expertise, but should be able to clarify day-to-day expectations, implement agreed adjustments and communicate through the agreed channels.

With the person's consent, prepare the contact by explaining the candidate's or employee's strengths, the conditions that support performance and the practical adjustments that have been agreed. Do not share a diagnosis or other health information unless the person has specifically authorised it and it is necessary for the agreed purpose.

The workplace contact should focus on observable work-related changes, such as missed deadlines, repeated misunderstandings or changes in attendance, and should ask the

employee directly what support is needed. They should not interpret behaviour clinically or attempt to decide whether a mental health condition is worsening.

Agree the frequency and purpose of contact in advance. Early check-ins may be more frequent and can reduce as the placement becomes established. Information shared with the employment support professional must remain limited to the agreed work-related purpose.

The aim is to build the employee's autonomy and the workplace's capacity to manage ordinary day-to-day issues, while keeping a clear route for support when an agreed concern or transition arises.

Laura in practice: Laura starts a part-time administrative role. With her specific consent, the employer is told only that written task lists, one named supervisor and predictable breaks support her performance. Her diagnosis is not shared. The arrangement is reviewed with Laura and the employer after two weeks.

5.2 Workplace Adaptation and Reasonable Adjustments

Once employment begins, the focus moves to the fit between the employee, the role and the work environment. Reasonable adjustments can make participation and performance realistic and sustainable.

Matching the Employee and the Environment

The professional should examine both the employee's work-related profile and the actual characteristics of the role, including workload, pace, task complexity, predictability, social demands, communication, supervision and flexibility. Useful questions include:

- What are the essential demands of the role?
- Which aspects of the environment may support or hinder performance?
- What type of structure, communication or pacing helps the employee work effectively?
- Which difficulties are related to skills, and which are related to context?
- What adjustments could reduce risk without distorting the role itself?

Clear communication, well-spaced tasks, accessible meetings and appropriate autonomy can reduce avoidable friction without removing the essential demands of the role.

Identifying Reasonable Adjustments

Reasonable adjustments are practical changes that help an employee work under fair and manageable conditions. They may include task breakdown, written instructions, predictable routines, gradual entry into the role, clearer supervision, quieter spaces, flexible scheduling, remote or hybrid work where feasible, or agreed ways of raising difficulties. Many of these practices can also benefit the wider team.

The purpose is not to remove essential expectations or create overprotection, but to reduce barriers that are not essential to the job. Professionals should distinguish between:

- Core demands of the role that must be maintained.
- Contextual barriers that can be changed.
- Temporary support needed during adaptation or transition.
- Longer-term adjustments required for sustainable performance.



Possible Workplace Adjustments and Adaptations



5.2 Workplace Adaptation and Reasonable Adjustments

1 Communication



- Clear instructions
- Repeat key information
- Check understanding

2 Work pace



- Break tasks into steps
- Realistic workload
- Gradual adaptation

3 Time and schedule



- Predictable routines
- Flexible timing
- Regular breaks

4 Environment and support



- Quieter space
- Supportive supervisor
- Respectful communication

5 Follow-up



- Regular check-ins
- Review what works
- Adjust support early

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Promoting Inclusive Practices

Inclusion also depends on broader workplace practices. An inclusive environment can accommodate different work rhythms, support needs and communication styles without stigma, hostility or unnecessary disclosure.

For the employment support professional, promoting inclusive practice may involve:

- clarifying expectations with the employer from the beginning.

- Helping supervisors communicate clearly and consistently.
- Supporting teams to respond without overprotection or stigma, including through brief awareness activities where useful.
- encouraging early problem-solving rather than waiting for conflict or disengagement.
- Reinforce the idea that inclusion supports workplace stability, not only the individual employee.

At this stage, the professional acts as a bridge between the employee and the workplace. Their role is to translate agreed needs into practical adjustments, facilitate communication and review whether the measures are helping. In practice, they should:

- explore the actual demands of the job.
- identify where adjustment may be needed.
- Discuss feasible reasonable adjustments with the employer.
- Provide information on relevant workshops or specialist support where appropriate.
- Support the employee in expressing needs and preferences.
- monitor whether the fit remains adequate over time.
- review adjustments if early difficulties appear.

5.3 Retention and Ongoing Support

The initial phase of employment is a sensitive period in which expectations, routines and coping resources are tested in real conditions. Close, structured follow-up helps identify difficulties early and address them before they lead to disengagement or job loss.

The professional should remain accessible to the employee and, where relevant and consented, to the employer. Follow-up should focus on task understanding, work pace, routines, relationships, communication, agreed adjustments and work-related well-being without reducing every difficulty to mental health.

In some cases, support may also include brief workshops, awareness sessions, or practical guidance activities directed at supervisors, managers, or teams. These may cover workplace techniques, digital or economic routines, and transversal competences such as communication, assertiveness, or time management, where these are relevant to the success of the placement.

Structured Follow-Up during the Initial Phase

Structured follow-up should begin during the first days or weeks of employment and continue at an agreed frequency. It may include:

- regular check-ins with the employee.
- brief contact with the employer or supervisor.
- review of how tasks are being understood and carried out.
- Review of work-related well-being and agreed indicators of overload.
- review of punctuality, routines, energy, and concentration.



- Exploration of how the employee is relating to colleagues and workplace expectations.

Addressing Early Challenges in the Workplace

Early difficulties are common and should not automatically be interpreted as failure. In many cases, they reflect the normal challenge of adapting to a new role and new social dynamics. What makes the difference is whether these challenges are identified and worked through in time. Common examples of early work challenges:

- anxiety about making mistakes.
- fear of being judged or evaluated negatively.
- difficulty asking for clarification.
- slower adaptation to routines or multitasking.
- difficulty managing criticism.
- misunderstandings with supervisors or colleagues.
- insecurity in social or team situations.
- concentration or memory difficulties.
- emotional exhaustion after the first days or weeks.
- fear of disclosure or stigma.
- overexertion to “perform normally”.
- withdrawal, silence, or avoidance when discomfort appears.

Differences in work pace, attention, memory, confidence or communication should be explored in context. The professional should first check whether the issue relates to the task, the environment, a relationship or a health-related change that requires additional support.

Responding to Distress or Crisis in the Workplace

An employee may experience a period of marked distress that affects workplace functioning. Where relevant, the employee, employer and employment support professional should agree in advance how to respond, who may be contacted and what information may be shared. Any plan must protect safety, privacy and dignity and remain within the employer’s non-clinical role.

Responses should be based on the employee’s agreed preferences and observable workplace needs, not on assumptions about a diagnosis. People with the same condition may have very different experiences and support needs.

Operational Procedure for Workplace Distress or Crisis

This procedure is intended for employment support professionals coordinating with the employee and workplace. It does not replace clinical assessment or the organisation’s emergency procedures. The response should remain proportionate, consent-based and focused on observable workplace needs.

- 1. Prepare before a difficulty occurs:** where relevant, agree with the employee what work-related changes they would like the workplace to respond to, what usually helps,

who may be contacted and what information may be shared. The plan should not require disclosure of a diagnosis.

- 2. Notice and check privately:** respond to observable changes rather than interpreting behaviour clinically. A simple question such as “Would it help to pause, move somewhere quieter or contact the agreed person?” is usually more useful than asking what diagnosis or symptom is involved.
- 3. Reduce immediate pressure:** pause non-essential demands where possible, use clear and calm communication, reduce unnecessary stimulation and avoid confrontation, ridicule, moralising responses or arguments about the employee’s perceptions.
- 4. Activate the agreed support route:** contact the named workplace contact, employment support professional or other agreed support only within the consent arrangements already established. If there is an immediate safety concern, follow the workplace emergency procedure and appropriate local emergency arrangements.
- 5. Protect confidentiality and record only what is necessary:** document observable work-related facts, the action taken and any agreed follow-up. Avoid diagnostic speculation and do not share personal or health information beyond what is necessary and authorised.
- 6. Review after the situation:** when the employee is ready, discuss what helped, what did not and whether tasks, reasonable adjustments, communication arrangements or the response plan should change. Agree a specific follow-up date.

For the professional record: note the work context, observable difficulty, action taken, any contact made under the agreed consent, adjustments agreed and the next review date. Company-facing materials can use a shorter “what to do” version, while this fuller record supports professional coordination and continuity.

Coordinating Communication between Employee and Employer

Post-placement support should help communication remain clear, respectful and workable between the employee and the employer. The professional may support communication by:

- helping the employee prepare how to express a difficulty or need.
- helping the employer communicate expectations more clearly.
- clarifying misunderstandings before they escalate.
- translating abstract concerns into concrete and manageable issues.
- reinforcing bilateral communication rather than assumptions.
- mediating when tension or confusion emerges.

The aim is not to replace either side, but to support a functional exchange that protects the employee’s dignity and job performance.

Ongoing Specialised Guidance

Where continued guidance is needed, professionals can apply the emotional, organisational and skills-based support described in Chapter 4 to the employee’s real workplace experience, coordinating with other services only where relevant and consented.



Preventing Early Drop-Out

Early drop-out often results from several interacting factors. Prevention should connect the emotional support described in Chapter 4 with the employer communication, workplace adaptation and follow-up procedures set out in this chapter.

Personal factors

Personal factors such as anxiety, low confidence, unrealistic self-demands or difficulty tolerating uncertainty should be addressed through the graded, practical emotional-support strategies described in *Section 4.2*.

Social factors

Social risks such as misunderstanding, stigma or isolation should be addressed through the workplace contact, clear communication and inclusive practices described in *Sections 5.1 and 5.2*.

Health-related factors

Health-related changes may affect energy, concentration, sleep or stress tolerance. Employment support professionals should focus on the functional impact at work, encourage the employee to contact an appropriate healthcare professional where needed and coordinate with services only when relevant and consented.



CHAPTER

06

Sustainability, retention and professional development



Enhancing Job Quality
for People
with Mental Health Conditions

6. Sustainability, retention and professional development

How to use this chapter: Use this chapter to review job quality over time, support career development and plan flexible transitions when employment circumstances change.

Once the employee is established in work, the focus shifts from initial adaptation to periodic review of job quality, continuity and professional development.

6.1 Monitoring the quality of employment over time

Long-term monitoring turns a one-off placement into an employment pathway by checking whether the job remains suitable, whether agreed adjustments still work and what changes may be needed.

Assessing Stability and Career Progression

Review stability by checking whether the employee can maintain attendance, complete the essential tasks, manage the work pattern and use the agreed support without unacceptable effects on well-being. Career progression may involve small changes, such as learning a new task, increasing autonomy or taking on an additional responsibility.

Employment Sustainability Dashboard

Use this dashboard as a flexible review tool rather than a clinical assessment. The employee's own experience should be the main reference point. Employer or service input should be included only where it is relevant to employment support and consistent with the employee's consent. Frequencies are indicative and should be adapted to the person, role and level of support required.

Suggested rhythm: during the initial employment phase, use the relevant items alongside the follow-up described in Chapter 5 every 2–4 weeks. Once the employment situation is stable, a fuller review every three months is usually sufficient, with additional reviews whenever there is a significant change in role, contract, supervision, workplace conditions or support needs.

Monitoring stability and career progression should include:



1 Job tenure

Duration of contracts, continuity with the same employer, and transition from precarious contracts to more stable forms of employment.



2 Mutual commitment

It is not simply about “keeping the person in a job”, but about building a relationship of trust between the worker, the employer and support services, in which the company recognises the person’s value and invests in their development.



3 Growth pathways

Opportunities to change roles, take on greater responsibilities and access training and promotions aligned with the values and interests identified during the assessment phase.

Developed by the Thriving Jobs partnership with AI-assisted support.

The review should therefore consider both continuity in the current role and realistic opportunities for development.

Area	What to monitor	Suggested frequency	Status / agreed action
Employment stability	Attendance and continuity; ability to sustain agreed hours and essential tasks; significant changes in absence patterns.	Every 2–4 weeks initially; quarterly when stable; after significant absence or contract change.	Stable / Review / Action needed Agreed action: Review date:
Workload and task fit	Manageability of pace and workload; clarity of tasks; fit between responsibilities, skills and current support needs.	2–4 weeks after starting or changing tasks; then quarterly.	Stable / Review / Action needed Agreed action: Review date:
Work-related well-being	Employee's view of stress, energy, overload and whether work is contributing to overall balance rather than creating persistent distress.	At each planned review; sooner if the employee requests support or a clear change occurs.	Stable / Review / Action needed Agreed action: Review date:
Relationships and inclusion	Communication with supervisors and colleagues; sense of respect and belonging; unresolved conflict, stigma or isolation.	Monthly during early adaptation; quarterly once stable; whenever a relational difficulty emerges.	Stable / Review / Action needed Agreed action: Review date:
Reasonable adjustments and workplace support	Whether agreed adjustments are in place, useful and proportionate; whether the named workplace contact and communication arrangements are working.	2–4 weeks after an adjustment is introduced or changed; then quarterly.	Stable / Review / Action needed Agreed action: Review date:
Job satisfaction and meaning	Whether the employee experiences the role as worthwhile, acceptable and consistent with their current priorities and employment goals.	Quarterly.	Stable / Review / Action needed Agreed action: Review date:
Support and coordination	Whether agreed employment support remains accessible; whether communication between relevant actors is clear and limited to what is necessary and consented.	Monthly while support is active; quarterly once stable; at transitions.	Stable / Review / Action needed Agreed action: Review date:

Area	What to monitor	Suggested frequency	Status / agreed action
Learning and development	Skills to consolidate; access to training or mentoring; interest in new responsibilities, internal mobility or progression.	Every 3–6 months.	Stable / Review / Action needed Agreed action: Review date:
Employment conditions	Contract continuity, working hours, pay, role changes and other objective conditions affecting sustainability.	At every contract or role change and at least every 6 months.	Stable / Review / Action needed Agreed action: Review date:

Suggested status guide: Stable = maintain the current plan; Review = discuss the issue with the employee and monitor more closely; Action needed = agree a specific workplace adjustment, support action or referral and set a review date. A safety concern should always be handled immediately through the relevant workplace procedure.

Practical use: the dashboard should end with no more than three priority actions, each with a responsible person and a review date. This keeps monitoring focused on decisions rather than turning it into an administrative exercise.

Identifying Risks Affecting Sustainability

Long-term difficulties are often preceded by changes in employee well-being, workplace relationships, job demands or coordination between services. Periodic review should consider employee, organisational and service–work factors and agree a clear response to any emerging risk.

Job loss or premature termination of employment is often preceded by **recognisable signs**:



Increased
perceived stress



Conflicts with
colleagues or
superiors



Reduced
motivation



Frequent
absences



**Marked decline
in well-being**



Monitoring aims to detect these signs at an early stage,
working on three levels:



EMPLOYEE LEVEL

- Changes in perceived well-being, self-management and sense of efficacy
- Difficulty in maintaining work rhythms or managing new demands



ORGANISATIONAL LEVEL

- Changes in working conditions (new managers, reorganisations, increased workloads)
- A decline in social support
- The emergence of stigmatising dynamics



SERVICE-WORK INTERFACE LEVEL

- Reduced contact with the job coach or services
- Communication difficulties between stakeholders
- Lack of review of workplace adjustments

Developed by the Thriving Jobs partnership with AI-assisted support.

Assessing Satisfaction and Well-Being

Long-term review should include the employee's satisfaction, sense of meaning, workplace relationships and balance between work, self-care and other areas of life.

- feeling recognised and respected;
- perceiving work as consistent with one's own values;
- having positive relationships and support in the workplace;

- maintaining a sustainable balance between work, self-care and other areas of life.

The review should invite the employee to reflect on:

- what aspects of their work make them feel good or bad;
- what changes would be necessary to improve the quality of their experience;
- whether and how their work continues to contribute to their life plan.

Laura in practice: After three months, Laura is performing consistently but finds the role repetitive. The review confirms that the current adjustments still work and identifies an interest in learning payroll tasks. A short training goal and a review date are added to her development plan.

6.2 Supporting Career Development

Upskilling and Internal Mobility

The changing labour market requires ongoing development of technical, transversal and interpersonal skills. Access to learning can support professional growth, confidence and job satisfaction.

Employment support services can help the employee identify relevant skills and access training that matches their interests, role and professional goals. Options may include courses, mentoring, on-the-job support and informal learning.

Within an organisation, internal mobility may allow the employee to try different tasks, take on new responsibilities or move towards a role that better matches their skills, motivations and support needs.

Long-Term Growth Pathways

Long-term support should include periodic discussion of the employee's professional future. The professional can help identify strengths to develop, opportunities within the workplace and realistic next steps.

Career goals should be realistic but not unnecessarily limited by assumptions about MHC. Development may be gradual and should remain consistent with the employee's priorities and well-being.

Employment Continuity during Temporary Health-Related Absence

A period of poorer mental or physical health may require temporary absence from work. The aim is not only to manage the absence, but also to protect the employee's employment relationship and support a safe return where possible.



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With the employee's agreement, the employee, employer and relevant support services should plan how contact will be maintained, what information may be shared and how the return will be reviewed. Health information remains confidential unless the employee gives specific consent or disclosure is otherwise required by law.

Useful strategies may include a gradual return, temporary task changes, revised objectives and scheduled review. A temporary absence should not automatically be treated as the end of the employment pathway.

6.3 Alternative and Flexible Employment Pathways

When Conventional Employment Is Not the Only Option

Competitive employment is an important goal for many people, but it may not be the most suitable option at every stage. Gradual pathways, flexible arrangements or intermediate experiences may help develop skills, build confidence or balance health and work needs.

The quality and meaning of an activity may be more important than whether it follows a traditional employment model. A role that enables participation, learning and contribution can support well-being and social inclusion.

Exploring Adjusted, Diversified and Alternative Work Options

Employment support services should help the person explore traditional employment and more flexible or personalised options, including:

- part-time or flexible-hour jobs;
- remote work or hybrid arrangements;
- work-based training and internships;
- self-employment or micro-entrepreneurship;
- occasional or project-based collaborations;
- social enterprises, cooperatives, and inclusive work environments;
- structured volunteer activities aimed at developing skills and social participation.

An alternative pathway should not be treated as a less valuable outcome. It may support participation, skills development, autonomy and future opportunities.

The person should participate actively in deciding which option is appropriate, with a clear understanding of its benefits, limitations and implications.

Ageing: Transition from Work to Retirement, Reduced Work or Disability Status

Ageing and changes in health may lead to reduced working hours, early retirement, retirement or disability-related status. These transitions can affect identity, relationships, daily structure and income and therefore require careful planning.

Work may provide belonging, social recognition, routine, relationships and personal fulfilment. Reducing or ending employment can therefore involve mixed feelings that deserve attention and support.

Services can help the person identify new sources of meaning and participation, such as volunteering, associations, learning, cultural activities, mentoring or other community roles that match their circumstances and interests.

Where disability status or other support measures are involved, the aim should include both economic protection and continued opportunities for active citizenship, relationships and meaningful participation.

The end or transformation of employment is not necessarily the end of inclusion. It can be treated as a new stage of the person's life plan and supported with the same attention to choice, dignity and personal resources as earlier stages.

When conventional employment is not the only option



Developed by the Thriving Jobs partnership with AI-assisted support.

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Person-Centred Employment Support

ANNEXES

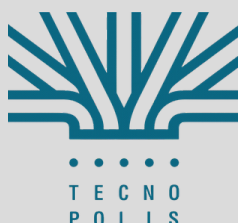


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Practical Tools and Resources

ANNEX 1. Skills Development and Pre-Employment Support

Quality of Life and Satisfaction Map: This initial tool helps the beneficiary identify wider life areas that may support or affect the employment pathway.

Purpose: An overall screening tool which will help us explore areas of the beneficiary's life that may support the employment pathway, and to identify practical actions where additional support may be useful.

How to use: Review each area below. Ask them to rate their current level of satisfaction from 0 to 9, where **0 = completely dissatisfied and 9 = fully satisfied**. Then identify which areas are most important to them at this moment.



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Life area	What to explore	Satisfaction 0–9	How important is it to me?	Possible support
1. Physical health	Sleep quality, physical activity, nutrition and everyday routines that may affect energy and functioning.	___ / 9	Low / Medium / High	
2. Mental and emotional well-being	Self-esteem and self-acceptance; stress and emotional management; time for oneself; hobbies and interests.	___ / 9	Low / Medium / High	
3. Relationships and social life	Relationships with family, friends or partners; available support network; sense of balance and participation at home and within the community.	___ / 9	Low / Medium / High	
4. Professional and financial situation	Employment aspirations; balance between work and personal time; financial security and management of available resources.	___ / 9	Low / Medium / High	
5. Values and sense of purpose	Values, beliefs, priorities and other aspects that give direction or meaning to everyday life and future decisions.	___ / 9	Low / Medium / High	

Reflection questions

1. How much time and attention do you currently dedicate to the areas that matter most to you?
2. Which area would you most like to strengthen at this stage?
3. What small and realistic action could improve your satisfaction in that area?
4. Could any of these areas affect your employment pathway positively or negatively? If so, how?

Practical tip: This tool is not intended to assess whether someone is “ready for work”. Use it as a conversation aid to identify aspects of the person’s wider life that may need consideration or support so that the employment pathway remains realistic and sustainable. The professional should focus on employment-related implications and refer or coordinate with other appropriate services when needs fall outside their professional role.

Tool 1

Prioritizing Support Needs

Helping the person identify what needs to be addressed first.

Purpose	Identify which areas require attention before starting or deepening employment support.	
How to Use	Ask the person to review the following areas and choose: one they feel confident in, one they find difficult, and one they consider most important for their next step. ▸ Communication ▸ Emotional management ▸ Routines and punctuality ▸ Autonomy ▸ Confidence in work situations ▸ Digital skills ▸ Interview preparation ▸ Teamwork ▸ Problem-solving ▸ Managing feedback	Practice Tip Use this tool to define priorities. It is usually more effective to work on two or three relevant areas than to try to address everything at once.



Tool 2

Routine and Readiness Map

Exploring whether the person's daily organization supports employment.

Purpose	Assess whether the person's current daily structure is compatible with the demands of employment.	
How to Use	Ask the person to describe a typical weekday, covering: ▸ Wake-up time ▸ Meals ▸ Medication or treatment routines ▸ Time outside home ▸ Responsibilities ▸ Rest ▸ Energy levels during the day	Professional Use Useful for pre-employment support, especially when routines, autonomy, or time management are relevant areas for the individual.
	Reflection Questions: ▸ Which parts of your day already support a work routine? ▸ Which parts could make employment more difficult? ▸ What would need to change to manage a morning shift? An afternoon shift?	



Tool 3

Strengths in Action

Identifying existing strengths and connecting them to employment.

Purpose	Reconnect the person with capacities already present in their daily life and translate them into work-relevant strengths.	
How to Use	Ask the person the following questions, then translate answers into work-related strengths: ▸ What are three things you do well in daily life? ▸ When have you handled something difficult successfully? ▸ What personal quality helped you in that moment?	Practice Tip Especially useful when the person describes themselves mainly through difficulties or deficits. Helps reconnect the pathway with capacities already present.
	Examples: ▸ "I help a family member with appointments" → <u>responsibility, planning</u> ▸ "I manage my own transport" → <u>autonomy, routine</u> ▸ "I stay calm with children" → <u>patience, emotional regulation</u>	



Tool 4

From Employment Goal to Action

Moving from a broad work goal into a realistic next step.

Purpose	Break down a broad employment aspiration into a concrete and achievable short-term action.	
How to Use	Guide the person through three structured questions: ▸ What kind of job or work environment would make sense for you right now? ▸ What may make that difficult at this moment? ▸ What is one realistic step you could take in the next two weeks?	Reflection If the person cannot define a next step, the employment objective may still be too broad and may need to be clarified further. This is consistent with targeted and individualized strategies.
	Example: ▸ Goal: Work in retail ▸ Main difficulty: Anxiety when interacting with unfamiliar people ▸ Next step: Practice a short self-introduction and role-play common customer interactions	

Applied Situation

Defining a Starting Point

Scenario	A person says they want to work but does not know what kind of job would suit them and feels they “lack many skills.”
Professional Response	▸ Clarify the next realistic employment objective ▸ Identify one or two priority areas for support ▸ Connect existing strengths to possible job roles ▸ Agree on one concrete action for the following week
Reflection	This type of situation often requires reducing vagueness and creating a more concrete starting point before moving into broader intervention.



ANNEX 2. Emotional Support in Employment Processes

Tool 1 Anticipating Difficult Situations Preparing for emotionally demanding situations.		
Purpose	Help the person move from an automatic emotional reaction to a planned, more helpful response in real or likely work situations.	
How to Use	Ask the person to complete the following three prompts: ▸ A situation that may be difficult for me at work is... ▸ When this happens, I usually... ▸ A more helpful response could be...	Practice Tip This tool works best when linked to a real or likely work situation, not only to general emotional discomfort. It helps the person move from automatic reaction to planned response.
	Examples: ▸ “If I feel overwhelmed by several tasks at once...” ▸ “If I think a colleague is upset with me...” ▸ “If I receive feedback and feel blocked...”	

Tool 2 Small Exposure Plan Supporting progress when anxiety or avoidance is blocking action.		
Purpose	Build a short, graded plan that allows the person to approach anxiety-provoking situations gradually, rather than avoiding them entirely.	
How to Use	Build a short, graded plan with 4–5 steps, moving from less demanding to more demanding situations: 1. Talk about a possible work environment 2. Visit the area where the company is located 3. Enter a workplace-related setting for a few minutes 4. Simulate a short interaction 5. Attend a real interview or information meeting	Reflection The aim is not to make discomfort disappear, but to help the person move forward despite discomfort.

Tool 3

Emotional Check-In

Monitoring emotional demands throughout the pathway and doing an emotional follow-up.

Purpose	Track the person's emotional experience across sessions and work-related events to prevent disengagement and support continuity.	
How to Use	At the end of a session, workshop, or work-related experience, ask: ▸ What felt manageable today? ▸ What felt difficult? ▸ What helped you continue? ▸ What should we prepare differently next time?	Practice Tip Use this tool regularly, not only when a crisis appears. Early emotional review can help prevent disengagement and support continuity.

Applied Situation

Avoidance Before an Interview

Scenario	A person has the skills for a job interview but begins to avoid appointments because they feel increasingly anxious and convinced, they will fail.
Professional Response	▸ Validate the emotional reaction ▸ Identify what is generating fear ▸ Break the situation into smaller steps ▸ Rehearse the interview in a supportive setting ▸ Agree on one coping strategy for the different factors that may play a role
Reflection	In situations like this, emotional support and practical preparation usually need to work together rather than separately.



ANNEX 3. Structured Intervention Pathways

Tool 1

Intervention Review Checkpoint

Reviewing and verifying that the pathway is producing meaningful progress.

Purpose

Ensure the pathway remains responsive and effective through structured, periodic review of progress and support strategies.

Questions

Every few weeks, ask the person:

- What has improved since we started?
- What remains difficult?
- What support has been most useful?
- What has not helped enough?
- What should we keep, change, or add?

Practice Tip

Useful for maintaining flexibility. It helps professionals avoid treating the pathway in a fixed manner and supports ongoing adjustment.



Tool 2

Matching Actions to Objectives

Keeping support actions clearly linked to the employment plan.

Purpose

Ensure every support action is visibly connected to a clear employment objective, with a defined review point to assess its effectiveness.

How to Use

Complete the following table together with the person:

Employment Objective	Current Barrier	Support Action	Review Point
Prepare for a job interview	Low confidence and anxiety	Role-play + interview preparation	Review after 2 weeks
Improve punctuality	Irregular morning routine	Morning structure plan	Review after 1 week
Prepare for onboarding	Anxiety about new environments	Workplace visit + emotional check-in	Review after first visit
...			

Reflection

A support action should always answer a clear question: What is this helping the person move towards?

Tool 3

Pathway Adjustment Prompt

Supporting professional reflection when progress stalls.

Purpose

Shift the focus from evaluating the person's progress to evaluating whether the intervention itself needs adjustment.

How to Use	Questions for the professional: ▸ Are the current actions realistic for this person? ▸ Are too many areas being addressed at once? ▸ Does the pace need to be reduced or increased? ▸ Are support needs changing? ▸ Does the person still recognise this pathway as meaningful?	Practice Tip This prompt can help shift the focus from “Why is the person not progressing?” to “Does the intervention need adjustment?”
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Applied Situation Limited Movement Despite Regular Support	
Scenario	A person has completed several workshops and individual sessions, but there is little movement towards job placement. They attend regularly, but motivation seems lower and the employment goal remains vague.
Professional Response	▸ Review whether the employment objective is still realistic and meaningful ▸ Reassess current priorities ▸ Simplify the support plan ▸ Identify one concrete short-term objective ▸ Consider whether a different support format or more coordination is needed
Reflection	Regular attendance does not always mean that the pathway is advancing. Structured review is necessary to identify whether support remains relevant and effective.

ANNEX 4. Case Example. *From Assessment to Sustainable Employment*

Maria is 32 years old and lives with a diagnosis of bipolar disorder. After many years of intermittent employment and an extended period of clinical stability, she expresses a desire to return to work. She is referred to a supported employment programme that follows the three-stage assessment model presented in this Guidebook.

First stage: Collection and observation of personal and contextual factors

During the initial interviews, Maria demonstrates strong concentration and organisational skills, although she has limited tolerance for frustration when tasks become repetitive. Observation in a simulated office environment confirms that she can work independently and solve problems effectively.

Group activities highlight her empathy and communication skills. However, she tends to withdraw when conflict arises. During the self-reflection process, Maria describes herself as “capable, but afraid of losing control.” Together, Maria and the professional explore her self-esteem, awareness of her limits, and previous employment experiences. This helps her recognise that maintaining stability depends on balanced routines, clear boundaries, and appropriate support.

Maria’s motivation is mainly intrinsic. She values creativity, meaningful contribution, and the opportunity to feel useful through her work. She also identifies teamwork and flexible working hours as important conditions for her well-being.

Her adaptability is explored through exposure to different environments. Maria functions best in structured workplaces with moderate sensory stimulation. She finds high-pressure situations more difficult and identifies fear of relapse as one of her main concerns.

Her relationship with her condition and treatment is also considered. Maria demonstrates good adherence to treatment and can recognise early signs of fatigue. Her coping strategies include taking brief pauses and seeking peer support when necessary.

Finally, a review of her previous employment experience confirms that she has solid administrative skills and good digital competence, although these could be strengthened through short refresher courses.

Second stage: Integrated analysis and profile development

The multidisciplinary team brings together the information collected during the assessment and develops a multidimensional profile of Maria’s situation. The profile identifies:

- **Strengths:** organisation, concentration, empathy, communication, independence, problem-solving, administrative experience, and digital competence.
- **Vulnerabilities:** stress under pressure, limited tolerance for repetitive tasks, withdrawal during conflict, and fear of relapse.

- **Supportive conditions:** structured environments, moderate sensory stimulation, balanced routines, clear boundaries, teamwork, and flexible hours.
- **Support needs:** flexible scheduling, mentoring, regular breaks, task variety, and continued coordination with her mental health service.

Based on this analysis, administrative support and communication-related positions within small organisations are identified as potentially compatible options. The team also considers reasonable adjustments, including task rotation, scheduled breaks, and a gradual increase in responsibilities.

The purpose is to create a realistic match between Maria's abilities, support needs, employment goals, and the conditions of the workplace, rather than expecting her to adapt to a rigid environment without support.

Third stage: Feedback and definition of the integration pathway

During the feedback meeting, the assessment findings are discussed with Maria in a clear and accessible way. She actively participates in defining her employment goals: regaining her professional identity and financial independence while protecting her stability.

Together with the coach, she agrees on a six-month integration plan that includes:

- Beginning with part-time employment
- Attending weekly coaching sessions
- Maintaining coordination with her mental health service
- Establishing a crisis-management protocol
- Introducing responsibilities gradually
- Completing short refresher training where needed

The agreed pathway connects Maria's employment objectives with the conditions she considers necessary for her well-being and long-term participation in employment.

Outcome: Employability profile and initial follow-up

Maria's employability profile becomes a shared reference document for her, the job coach, and the employer. It guides job matching, identifies the support and adjustments required, and provides a framework for monitoring progress and reviewing the pathway over time.

After three months, Maria reports greater confidence and satisfaction in her work. The workplace mentor highlights her reliability and the positive contribution she makes to team dynamics.

This case illustrates how a holistic and participatory assessment can transform the intention to return to work into a structured, individualised, and potentially sustainable employment pathway. The assessment does not focus only on Maria's diagnosis or difficulties, but also on her strengths, values, experience, support needs, and the workplace conditions that enable her to perform and develop.

ANNEX 5-9. Practical Tools and Resources for Transversal Skills

ANNEX 5 - Time Management

To plan in a more informed and effective way, it is useful to start by exploring the person's habits and daily routines, especially when time management appears to be an area requiring support. The second activity is designed to work jointly on daily routines and structured planning, focusing on how these can be transferred into work-related routines.

Question	My answer
What time do I usually wake up?	
What is the first thing I need to do in the morning?	
What is one important task for today?	
What time do I need to leave home if I have somewhere to be?	
When will I take a short break?	
What can I prepare today for tomorrow?	

Step 1 Activity audit — what am I doing with my time?

Activity / task	Time spent	Result produced	Important for work / training / job search?	Supports well-being?	Keep, reduce, change or stop?
Example Checking job offers online	1 hour per day	Find possible jobs, but don't always apply	Yes	Sometimes stressful	Change: limit time and apply to selected offers

Step 2 High-impact actions — what should I focus on?

High-impact action	Why is this action useful?	What goal does it support?	How often?	What support do I need?
Example Preparing my week every Monday morning	Helps me know what to do and reduces stress	Better organisation and confidence	Once a week	Help from my professional to define priorities

Step 3 Priority actions — my commitment this week

Priority action	First small step	When will I do it?	Possible difficulty	Strategy to manage it
Example Improve punctuality	Prepare clothes and documents the night before	Every evening before work / training	I may forget	Set a phone reminder

Step 4 Reflection — what have I learned?

Reflection question	My notes
Which activities take a lot of time but bring few useful results?	
Which activities help me make real progress?	
Which tasks increase stress or confusion?	
Which small change could improve my organisation this week?	
What support would help me maintain this change?	

ANNEX 6 - Emotional Management

When you can recognize emotions early, you have time to choose your response and properly deal with them. When you understand what you need and what others need, you can communicate effectively and navigate workplace and personal challenges without being overwhelmed.

Naming & Recognition (Tools 1-3) Learn to identify what you feel in your body, thoughts, and behaviour.

Connection & Perspective (Tools 4-5) Understand emotions in context and develop empathy for others.

Regulation & Choice (Tools 6-9) Develop practical strategies to pause, calm down, and choose responses.

Complete each tool by thinking about **real or recent situations** relevant to your life or employment.

Instructions: Think about a recent situation that triggered any emotion. Complete the table below by describing the situation.

TOOL 1: Naming What I Feel	
The situation was:	
What happened:	
What I felt:	
What I did:	
What I needed:	
Tip: Start with 'comfortable or uncomfortable?' if emotions are hard to name.	

Instructions: Complete the sentence 'When I feel ____, I usually ____' to identify your automatic reaction to different emotions. Then think of one different response you could try instead.

TOOL 2: What My Emotion Made Me Do	
When I feel ____, I usually ____:	
A different response I could try:	
Tip: Explore reactions without judgment. Open new choices.	

Instructions: Ask yourself: 'How do I notice that I am starting to feel overwhelmed?' Describe the physical sensations, thoughts, and behaviours you experience when stress or anxiety is increasing.

TOOL 3: Early Signs of Emotional Overload	
In my body I notice:	
In my thoughts I notice:	
In my behaviour I notice:	
Tip: Recognize activation early, before situations become harder to manage.	

Instructions: Think of a real interaction with a colleague, trainer, or employer. Describe what happened and what needs that person might have had. Then think of a helpful response you could offer.

TOOL 4: What Might the Other Person Need?	
The other person was:	
What they said/did:	
They may have needed:	
A helpful response from me:	
Tip: Link empathy to action. Not just 'how do they feel?' but 'what could help?'	

Instructions: Work together. First the beneficiary or professional speaks for one minute about a difficult work or daily situation. The listener listens without interrupting. Then the listener reflects what they heard and the emotions they noticed. Switch roles.

TOOL 5: Listening Without Interrupting	
Situation shared:	
What I understood:	
Emotions I heard:	
Tip: One person speaks for 1 minute. Listener reflects back without interrupting.	

Instructions: Learn this three-step sequence: **Pause** (stop for a moment), **Breathe** (take one or two slow breaths), **Choose** (ask: 'What do I want to do next?'). Practice by thinking of a difficult situation and what you could choose to do if you paused first.

TOOL 6: Pause, Breathe, Choose	
The difficult situation:	
My automatic reaction:	
If I pause, I could:	
Tip: Create a small space between emotion and action. Aim for simple, not perfect.	

Instructions: Complete: 'When I feel stressed or emotionally blocked, what helps me most?' Sort your coping strategies into three groups: what helps, what sometimes helps, and what does not help. Focus on strategies that are realistic in work settings.

TOOL 7: What Helps Me Calm Down		
Helps me	Sometimes helps	Does not help
Tip: Focus on strategies realistic in work/training contexts, not just at home.		

Instructions: Think of one recurring situation that usually triggers emotional discomfort (e.g., being corrected, waiting for feedback, feeling pressure). Describe the situation, what you usually feel and do, what you could try next time, and what support you might need.

TOOL 8: A Difficult Situation, A Better Plan

The difficult situation:	
What I usually feel:	
What I usually do:	
What I could try next time:	
Support I may need:	
Tip: Link to real upcoming situations, not only past ones.	

Instructions: Choose or create one sentence you can say to yourself when you feel insecure, blocked, or frustrated. It should feel believable and helpful to you. Write it in the space below.

TOOL 9: My Support Sentence

When I feel blocked/frustrated, I can say to myself:	
Tip: Choose a sentence that feels believable and useful. Avoid artificial positivity.	

Which situations trigger stronger emotional reactions?

Does the person mainly need support with: recognising emotions / understanding others / managing reactions?

Which coping strategies are realistic in employment situations?

What type of follow-up could help transfer learning into real practice?

For professionals: This worksheet supports professionals working with beneficiaries with MHC. It covers five pillars of emotional intelligence: **self-awareness, emotion management, empathy, professional relationships, and wellbeing balance**. Each step combines brief psychoeducation with a practical or reflective activity. Activities can be completed in any order and adapted freely to the individual's readiness and pace.

What is emotional intelligence?

Step 1

Emotional intelligence (EI) is the ability to recognise, understand, and manage your own emotions, and to recognise and respond to the emotions of others.

Read the five components below. Circle or underline the one that feels most relevant to you.

1 Self-awareness	2 Self-regulation	3 Motivation	4 Empathy	5 Social skills
Recognising your own emotions, thoughts, and how they influence your behaviour and decisions at work and in daily life.	Managing disruptive emotions and impulses. Pausing before reacting. Adapting to change and taking responsibility.	Being driven by internal goals rather than external rewards. Staying optimistic and persistent when facing setbacks.	Understanding and sharing the feelings of others. Considering their perspective when communicating and making decisions.	Building relationships, communicating clearly, managing conflict, and working effectively as part of a team.

Understanding my emotions

Step 2

Self-awareness is the foundation of emotional intelligence. Before we can manage our emotions, we need to be able to name and notice them.

2A. Emotion vocabulary reference - Use these words throughout the worksheet

Refer to this reference when completing the activities below. Add your own words in the margins if yours are not listed here.

Joy & engagement	Anxiety & worry	Frustration & anger	Sadness & low mood	Shame & self-doubt	Calm & connection
Excited Enthusiastic Proud Grateful Hopeful Confident Motivated	Nervous Overwhelmed Worried Tense Apprehensive Uneasy Panicked	Irritated Frustrated Resentful Annoyed Indignant Impatient	Disappointed Discouraged Lonely Hopeless Low Empty Grief	Embarrassed Ashamed Guilty Inadequate Self-conscious Humiliated	Peaceful Content Safe Supported Caring Accepted Warm



2B. My emotions at work

Think about how you typically feel in each workplace situation. Use the vocabulary above. There are no wrong answers.

Workplace situation	Emotion(s) I usually feel (use the reference above)	Where I feel it in my body	What it makes me do or avoid doing
Before a job interview or assessment			
When I receive feedback or criticism			
When I feel I have made a mistake at work			
When I am given a new or unfamiliar task			
When a colleague or manager seems unhappy			
When I disagree with a decision or instruction			
At the end of a difficult working day			
When I feel I have done something well			



Step 3**Managing my emotions**

Self-regulation means choosing how to respond to emotions, rather than being driven by them. It is a learnable skill that grows with practice and self-compassion.

3A. My current strategies

Tick which strategies you already use and which you would like to try. Use the notes column for questions or thoughts.

Emotion management strategy	✓ I do this	○ I want to try this	Notes / thoughts
I take a few slow, deep breaths when I notice strong emotions rising	☐	☐	
I step away from the situation briefly before responding	☐	☐	
I name the emotion I am feeling to myself ("I am feeling anxious")	☐	☐	
I notice physical sensations in my body as early warning signs	☐	☐	
I write down or talk through what I am feeling	☐	☐	
I break the situation into smaller, manageable steps	☐	☐	
I remind myself that emotions are temporary and will pass	☐	☐	
I use grounding techniques (e.g. 5 senses, cold water, brief walk)	☐	☐	
I ask for support from a trusted person when I feel overwhelmed	☐	☐	
I plan for situations I know will trigger strong emotions	☐	☐	
I distinguish between what I can and cannot control	☐	☐	
I give myself time before making important decisions when emotional	☐	☐	



3B. The STOP technique. A tool for managing strong emotions in the moment

Practise this technique in the session. Together, identify one or two real workplace situations where it would be most useful.

S Stop	T Take a breath	O Observe	P Proceed mindfully
Pause. Do not react immediately. Give yourself a moment before you speak, act, or respond.	Breathe in slowly for 4 counts, hold for 2, breathe out for 6. Repeat twice. This activates the body's calming system.	Notice what you are feeling and thinking. Name the emotion. Where do you feel it in your body? What is the story you are telling yourself?	Choose how to respond rather than simply reacting. Ask yourself: what response would I be proud of? What would be most helpful right now?

3C. Learning from experience

Think of real situations where emotions played a role. Honest reflection even on difficult moments is one of the most powerful ways to build self-regulation.

#	What happened?	What did I feel and do?	What was the impact?	What would I do differently or do again?
1	A situation where I reacted emotionally and later wished I had responded differently			
2	A situation where I managed my emotions well and felt good about how I handled it			
3	A situation that is coming up that I feel anxious or uncertain about			

Step 4

Empathy in the workplace

Empathy means understanding and sharing the feelings of another person. In the workplace, it is the foundation of trust, effective communication, and collaborative teamwork.

4A. Empathy vs sympathy

Understanding the difference helps us respond to others in ways that build connection rather than distance.

Discuss jointly which column feels more natural to you.

Sympathy — feeling for someone	Empathy — feeling with someone
• "That sounds really hard." • "At least it wasn't worse." • Offering advice or a solution immediately. • Feeling sorry from a distance without engaging. • "I know exactly how you feel."	• "That sounds really hard. Tell me more." • Sitting with the other person's discomfort without trying to fix it. • "I don't know what to say, but I'm here with you." • "What would be most helpful for you right now?" • Listening without judging or comparing their experience to yours.

4B. Empathy in practice - Workplace scenarios

Read each situation and complete the table. Use the emotion hints as a starting point. You can role-play your empathetic responses with your counsellor.

#	Workplace situation	They might be feeling...	An empathetic response I could give	What I might find difficult and why
1	A colleague has been quieter than usual and seems distracted. They mention they didn't sleep well.	Tired • Worried • Withdrawn • Overwhelmed _____	_____	_____
2	A team member makes a mistake on a shared task. They look embarrassed and apologise repeatedly.	Ashamed • Anxious • Afraid of judgment • Frustrated with themselves _____	_____	_____
3	A new colleague seems hesitant to ask questions and avoids the group during breaks.	Nervous • Self-conscious • Unsure • Lonely • Eager to fit in _____	_____	_____



4	Your manager gives you brief, direct feedback. They seem under pressure and do not explain their reasoning.	Stressed • Distracted • Pressured • Frustrated		

Emotions, health and wellbeing

Step 5

Our emotional state affects every area of life — how we sleep, work, relate to others, and take care of ourselves. Noticing these connections is the first step to greater balance.

5A. How emotions affect different areas of my life

Complete each row honestly. This is not about getting it right it is about noticing patterns and identifying what already supports you.

Life area	How my current emotional state affects this	What helps me when emotions are difficult	One thing I want to change or protect here
Work performance Concentration, motivation, making decisions, managing workload			
Professional relationships How I relate to colleagues, managers, and clients			
Physical health Sleep, energy, appetite, physical tension, illness			
Mental health Mood, self-esteem, anxiety levels, ability to cope			
Personal relationships How I relate to family and friends outside work			



Daily routines Organisation, punctuality, self-care, appointments			
Leisure and rest Ability to switch off, enjoyment, relaxation, hobbies			
Sense of purpose Feeling motivated, connected to goals, hopeful about the future			

5B. My warning signs and recovery plan

Knowing your early warning signs allows you to act before emotions become overwhelming. Complete this section together with your counsellor.

My personal warning signs when my emotional load is too high	My recovery and support plan
Physical signs (e.g. tension, poor sleep, low energy)	What I can do on my own
Behavioural signs (e.g. withdrawing, avoiding tasks)	Who I can turn to for support
Emotional signs (e.g. irritability, feeling numb)	What I want to ask my counsellor to help me with



Step 6**My emotional intelligence goal**

Choose one EI skill to focus on between now and your next session. Use the table to plan concretely how you will practise it in a real context.

Review this goal at the start of your next session and update it as you make progress.

The EI skill I most want to develop	e.g. Recognising my emotions earlier • Managing anxiety at work • Responding with more empathy • Building better workplace relationships...
Why this matters for my employment pathway	e.g. It will help me stay calm in interviews • Improve my relationship with my manager • Help me feel less drained after work...
A real situation where I will practise this	e.g. The next time I receive feedback • During my next team meeting • When I notice tension with a colleague...
One small, concrete action I will take	e.g. Use the STOP technique before responding • Name my emotion aloud to myself • Ask a colleague how they are feeling...
What might get in the way	e.g. Forgetting in the moment • Feeling too anxious • Not recognising the emotion until it is already strong...
How I will manage that difficulty	e.g. Put a reminder on my phone • Practise with my counsellor first • Reflect after each interaction rather than in the moment...
How I will know I have made progress	e.g. I feel calmer in that situation • I respond rather than react • My colleague or counsellor notices a difference...



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Professional's notes	
Key emotional patterns observed 	EI strengths to build on
Areas for further exploration 	Date / session number

ANNEX 7 - Digital Competences

Digital competences are essential for both everyday life and professional development. In the workplace, they support routine tasks such as using computers, mobile phones, online platforms, communication tools, or digital clock-in systems. The following activities are designed to help professionals assess and strengthen digital skills progressively, from basic device use to more complex workplace-related tasks.

For professionals: This worksheet supports employment counsellors working with beneficiaries who have mental health conditions. It helps participants assess their current digital skills, practice key tasks across devices, banking, and communication tools, and build a personal digital learning plan. Adapt each activity to the individual's pace and digital starting point.



Step 1

My digital skills today

Tick the column that best describes your current level for each skill. Be honest this is a starting point, not a test.

Work through the list with your counsellor. You do not need to know all of these already.

Digital skill	☐ I have never tried this	☐ I have tried but need support	☐ I can do this on my own	☐ I want to improve this
Using a computer or laptop Computer	☐	☐	☐	☐
Using a smartphone (calls, apps, messages) Phone	☐	☐	☐	☐
Using a tablet Tablet	☐	☐	☐	☐
Sending and receiving emails Communication	☐	☐	☐	☐
Searching for information online Internet	☐	☐	☐	☐
Filling in online forms (e.g. job applications) Forms	☐	☐	☐	☐
Making video calls (Zoom, Teams, WhatsApp) Video	☐	☐	☐	☐
Managing files and documents digitally Documents	☐	☐	☐	☐
Using a calendar or reminder app Organisation	☐	☐	☐	☐
Online banking — checking balance and history Banking	☐	☐	☐	☐
Online banking — making transfers or payments Banking	☐	☐	☐	☐
Setting up or managing direct debits Banking	☐	☐	☐	☐

Digital payments (contactless, PayPal, apps) Payments	☐	☐	☐	☐
Online job searching and applying Employment	☐	☐	☐	☐
Joining online meetings or training sessions Training	☐	☐	☐	☐
Creating or updating a password safely Safety	☐	☐	☐	☐
Recognising suspicious emails or scam messages Safety	☐	☐	☐	☐

Step 2

Getting to know your devices

Different digital tasks are easier on different devices. Reflect on which device you would use and how familiar you already feel.

Write the device you would use (Computer / Phone / Tablet / Any) and a note about your experience in the last column.

#	Task	Device I would use (Computer / Phone / Tablet / Any)	My experience with this task
1	Sending a formal email to a potential employer		
2	Making a video call for a job interview		
3	Checking your online bank account		
4	Setting a reminder for a medical or counselling appointment		



5	Searching and applying for a job online		
6	Downloading and completing an application form		
7	Joining an online training session		
8	Making a contactless or digital payment		
9	Taking a photo of a document to send		
10	Reading and responding to a work message or notification		

Step 3

Digital communication

Email and video calls are essential in today's employment pathway. These activities help you practise both skills in a real-world context.

3A. Email practice: plan and draft a professional email

For each situation, use the middle column to note the key points you want to include, then write your subject line and opening sentence on the right.

#	Situation	Key points to include (planning space)	My draft subject line and opening sentence
1	You have just had a job interview. You want to thank the interviewer and confirm your continued interest in the role.		

	► Subject line, greeting, brief thank you, one sentence about your interest, closing.		
2	You cannot attend a training session you are enrolled in. You need to let the organiser know in advance and ask if you can reschedule. ► Be clear about the date, apologise briefly, ask a direct question, keep it short.		
3	You have applied for a job two weeks ago and have not heard back. You want to follow up politely to ask about the status of your application. ► Reference the job title and date you applied, keep a positive tone, do not apologise for asking.		

3B. Video call readiness

Tick each item to check how prepared you are for a professional video call. Use the notes column to write questions or things to practise.

Video call skill	✓ Ready	○ I need to practise	Notes / questions
I know how to download and open the video call app (Zoom, Teams, WhatsApp, etc.)	☐	☐	
I know how to join a meeting using a link or meeting code	☐	☐	
I have tested my camera and microphone before the call	☐	☐	
I know how to mute and unmute myself	☐	☐	
I know how to turn my camera on and off	☐	☐	
I have chosen a quiet, well-lit location for the call	☐	☐	
I know how to use the chat or "raise hand" function	☐	☐	



I have a note of the meeting time, link, and any passcode	☐	☐	
I know what to do if I lose connection during a call	☐	☐	
I have dressed appropriately for the type of call (interview, training, etc.)	☐	☐	

Digital banking and payments

Step 4

Managing money digitally is an essential life and work skill. This section explains key banking tasks and helps you track which ones you feel confident with.

Read each banking task and its description. Tick the third column if you have done it before and use the last column for any questions.

Banking task	What it means / how to do it	☐ I have done this	My question or note
Logging in to online banking	Using a username and password (or app with fingerprint/face ID) to access your bank account securely on a computer or phone.	☐	
Checking your account balance	Viewing how much money is currently in your account and seeing recent transactions.	☐	
Reading a bank statement	Understanding a list of all payments in and out of your account over a period of time. Useful for budgeting and for benefit or job application checks.	☐	
Making a bank transfer	Sending money to another person or organisation by entering their sort code and account number online.	☐	
Setting up a direct debit	Giving a company permission to automatically take a regular payment from your account (e.g. rent, phone bill, utilities).	☐	
Paying a bill online	Using your bank's website or app to pay a one-off bill by entering the reference and amount.	☐	



Using contactless payment	Tapping your card or phone on a card reader to pay for goods without entering a PIN (usually for amounts under £100).	☐	
Using a payment app (PayPal, Apple Pay, etc.)	Paying for things online or in person using a digital wallet connected to your bank card or account.	☐	
Reporting a suspicious transaction	Contacting your bank immediately (via app, phone or online chat) if you notice a payment, you do not recognise.	☐	
Using the banking app on your phone	Most banks have a free app that lets you check your balance, transfer money, and manage your account without using a computer.	☐	

Staying safe online

Step 5

Knowing how to protect your personal information and recognise scams is a core digital competence in the workplace and in daily life.

Complete the safety habit checklist, then review the scam awareness reference below with your counsellor.

Online safety habit	✓ I do this	○ I want to start	Notes / questions
I use a different password for my email, bank, and other important accounts	☐	☐	
My passwords are at least 8 characters and include numbers and symbols	☐	☐	
I do not share my passwords or PINs with anyone	☐	☐	
I lock my phone or computer when I am not using it	☐	☐	
I only download apps from official stores (App Store, Google Play)	☐	☐	
I check the sender's email address before clicking any link	☐	☐	
I know that my bank will never ask for my full password by email or phone	☐	☐	



I do not click on links in unexpected text messages about prizes or deliveries	☐	☐	
I use secure (private) Wi-Fi when doing banking or entering personal details	☐	☐	

Step 6

My digital learning plan

Choose one digital skill to focus on between now and your next session. Use the table below to plan how you will practise it.

Complete this table together with your counsellor. Keep it as a reference and review it at the start of the next session

The digital skill I most want to develop	e.g. Online banking, filling in forms, using email, video calls...
Why this skill matters for my employment pathway	e.g. I need to complete a job application online / use Zoom for remote interviews...
The first small step I will take	e.g. Watch a 5-minute tutorial / ask a family member to show me / practise with a counsellor...
When and where I will practice	e.g. Tuesday afternoon on my phone / at the library on Wednesday...
What might get in the way	e.g. Forgetting / anxiety about making mistakes / not having internet access...
How I will manage that difficulty	e.g. Set a phone reminder / remind myself mistakes are part of learning / use the library Wi-Fi...

Scam awareness — reference card

Spot the warning signs. Common signs of a scam message	What to do instead
• Urgency: "Act now or your account will be closed!" • Too good to be true: "You've won £1,000!" • Requests for personal details: passwords, PINs, full card number • Unexpected links or attachments from unknown senders • Spelling mistakes and unprofessional layout	• Do not click any link — go directly to the official website instead • Call your bank directly using the number on the back of your card • Forward suspicious emails to report@phishing.gov.uk • Forward suspicious texts to 7726 (free on most UK networks) • When in doubt: stop, do not engage, ask someone you trust

Counsellor's notes	
Starting digital skill level observed 	Priority skills to address in next session
Referrals or additional resources recommended 	Date / session number

ANNEX 8 - Communication Skills

Developing communication skills can support clearer interactions, reduce misunderstandings, and strengthen confidence in professional and social contexts. The following activities are designed to help the person practise communication and provide useful tools with a focus on everyday work-related situations.

Tool	Main Objective	Useful Sentence Starters / Examples	Practice Tip & Deliverables
1. Asking for Clarification	Practice requesting clear explanations when instructions are unclear or ambiguous	• "Could you explain that again, please?" • "Which document should I do first?" • "I want to make sure I understood correctly."	Asking for clarification is a professional work skill. It prevents mistakes and reduces stress. Shows confidence and responsibility.
2. Listening and Repeating Back	Confirm understanding by restating key information in your own words	• "What I understood is..." • "So tomorrow I need to..." • "The important thing is..."	Trains listening, attention, and confidence simultaneously. Helps verify that you've understood correctly before acting.
3. Choosing the Best Response	Recognize the difference between passive, assertive, and aggressive communication styles	Recognize respectful responses like: • "Could you repeat that more slowly, please? I want to make sure I understood."	Helps develop assertive communication, neither withdrawn nor aggressive. Key deliverable: ability to choose respectful, effective responses.
4. Expressing a Need Clearly	Communicate your work preferences and needs in a direct, respectful way	• "I work better when instructions are clear." • "I work better when I can ask questions." • "I work better when I know the steps in advance."	Keep sentences short, direct, and respectful. Empowers self-advocacy and helps colleagues understand how to support you effectively.
5. Starting a Conversation	Build confidence in initiating workplace interactions	• "Good morning, how are you?" • "Can I ask you something?" • "I wanted to check if this is correct."	Practice with role-play. Especially useful when you feel blocked or anxious at the start of interactions. Reduces hesitation.
6. Responding to Feedback	Receive feedback calmly and professionally without defensiveness or withdrawal	• "Okay, thank you. I'll do that next time." • "I understand. Could you show me once more?"	Develops resilience and professionalism. Key deliverable: calm, simple responses that show you're open to improvement.

7. Non-Verbal Communication Check	Understand how body language, tone, and eye contact shape your message	Compare: Looking away and speaking quietly vs. facing the person and speaking clearly when saying "I understand."	Visual exercise showing impact of posture, tone, and eye contact. Builds awareness of how non-verbal cues affect how others perceive you.
8. Summarizing What Someone Said	Demonstrate active listening and verify understanding	• "So, what you mean is..." • "If I understood correctly..." • "The main point is..."	Strengthens active listening and shows engagement. Helps catch misunderstandings early. Improves confidence in conversations.
9. Asking for Help	Develop comfort in requesting assistance without shame or avoidance	• "Could you help me with this part?" • "I'm not sure how to continue." • "Can you show me the next step?"	Normalizes help-seeking as a workplace skill, not a sign of failure. Key deliverable: ability to ask for support confidently.
10. Checking an Appointment or Task	Confirm practical details to prevent errors and build autonomy	• "Can I confirm the time of the appointment?" • "Is this the correct document?" • "Should I bring anything else?"	Improves clarity and reduces uncertainty. Strengthens independence and responsibility. Shows professionalism and attention to detail.

For professionals: This worksheet supports employment counsellors working with people with MHC. It helps beneficiaries explore how they communicate in the workplace, identify strengths, and build confidence in challenging situations. Each step combines psychoeducation with a short reflective or practical activity.

Step 1

My communication style

Think about how you typically communicate in each workplace situation. Fill in the table honestly there are no right or wrong answers. This is a starting point for reflection.

Situation	How I usually communicate	What works well for me	What I find difficult
During a job interview			
When talking to my manager or supervisor			
In a team meeting or group setting			
When I do not understand an instruction			
When I receive feedback or criticism			
When I feel anxious or overwhelmed at work			

Step 2

Types of communication

There are three main types of communication. Read the descriptions below, then complete the activity table.

Verbal

What we say — words, tone of voice, speed, and clarity of speech. Used in interviews, conversations with managers, phone calls, and meetings.

Non-verbal

What our body communicates — eye contact, posture, facial expressions, gestures, and personal space. Often sends a stronger message than our words.

Written

What we put in writing — emails, text messages, CVs, cover letters, and reports. Tone and clarity matter greatly because there is no body language to support the message.



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Activity: for each situation below, identify the main type of communication involved and note anything you observe about your own approach.

#	Workplace situation	Type of communication (Verbal / Non-verbal / Written)	What I notice about my own approach
1	Sending an email to your manager to request a day off	_____	_____
2	Noticing that a colleague seems upset even though they say "I'm fine"	_____	_____
3	Introducing yourself confidently at the start of a job interview	_____	_____
4	Writing your CV or a cover letter for a job application	_____	_____
5	Leaving a voicemail to confirm a meeting time	_____	_____
6	Keeping good posture and eye contact when receiving feedback	_____	_____

Step 3**Active listening**

Good communication is not just about speaking-listening well is equally important at work. Tick the column that best reflects where you are now, then write one small action you could take to practise each skill.

Listening skill	✓ Already a strength	○ I want to develop this	One thing I can do to practise
I maintain comfortable eye contact when someone is speaking to me	☐	☐	_____
I avoid interrupting the other person before they have finished	☐	☐	_____
I give small signals that I am listening (nodding, saying "yes", "I see")	☐	☐	_____
I ask questions to check I have understood correctly	☐	☐	_____
I can summarise what someone has said in my own words	☐	☐	_____
I try to understand the other person's point of view, even if I disagree	☐	☐	_____
I manage distractions (phone, wandering thoughts) when listening	☐	☐	_____
I notice the other person's tone and body language, not just their words	☐	☐	_____

Step 4**Communicating in challenging situations**

Read each workplace situation. In the second column, write what you would usually do or say. In the third column, write a clearer, more confident response you can use the assertiveness techniques from the previous worksheet.

#	Situation	What I would usually do or say	A clearer, more confident response
1	Your manager gives you a new task, but you are not sure what is expected. You feel anxious about asking for clarification.	_____	_____



2	A colleague makes a comment about your work that feels unfair or hurtful. You feel upset.		
3	You need to ask your employer for a reasonable adjustment (e.g. flexible hours, a quieter workspace, more frequent check-ins).		
4	You are in a group meeting and want to share your idea but feel nervous about speaking up.		

Step 5

My communication goal this week

Choose one communication skill you would like to work on. Complete the goal-setting table to plan how you will practise it before your next session.

The communication skill I want to practise	e.g. Active listening, asking for clarification, speaking up in meetings...
Where / when I will practise it	e.g. At work on Wednesday afternoon, during my next team meeting...
What I will do differently	e.g. I will ask one clarifying question before starting a task...
How I will know it went well	e.g. I will feel less anxious; the other person will understand me...



Support I might need	e.g. A reminder from my counsellor, a script I can refer to...
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Counsellor's notes	
Strengths observed today 	Areas to explore in next session
Overall progress note 	Date / session number

ANNEX 9 – Assertiveness

The ability to express needs, opinions, limits, and feelings in a clear and respectful way. In employment contexts it is essential as it helps the person communicate more effectively. The following activities are designed to help practise assertiveness in a practical and work-related way. Identify together in the following situations **Passive**, **Aggressive**, and **Assertive** responses.



Situation	Passive Response	Aggressive Response	Assertive Response	Professional Reflection
A colleague regularly asks you to do part of their tasks. You are tired of this and want to set a limit.	I'm quite busy right now, but if you really can't do it, I can help you.	Forget it. You never do your own work. You treat me like a slave.	Lately you keep asking me to help with tasks that are your responsibility. I'm finding this difficult because it adds extra work for me. I'd prefer that you try to do them yourself first and only ask for help if you really need clarification.	
Your supervisor explains a task quickly and you are not sure what to do.	Okay... I think I got it.	You never explain things properly.	I want to make sure I do this properly. Could you explain again what you'd like me to do first?	
A colleague criticizes your pace and says: "You're too slow."	You're right, I'm useless at this.	Well, at least I do things better than you.	I understand that pace is important. I'm trying to do the task carefully. If there is something specific, I should improve, I'm willing to listen.	
A colleague asks you to stay late and cover part of their work, but you cannot.	Okay, fine.	No. That's your problem, not mine.	Thanks for asking me, but I can't stay today. I already have another commitment.	

Reflection Guide:

- Which response do I typically use in similar situations?
- What patterns do I notice in my own communication style?
- What barriers prevent me from responding assertively?
- How can I model assertive communication for my beneficiary?

Building an assertive sentence:

Step 1: Describe the situation — "When this happens..."

Step 2: Say how it affects you — "I feel..." or "I find it difficult when..."

Step 3: Say clearly what you need — "I would prefer..." or "I need..." or "Could we...?"

Example

The situation is:	I get nervous when I do not understand instructions
What I usually do is:	Stay quiet and pretend I understood
What I would like to say is:	That I need the task explained more clearly
Assertive sentence:	"I want to do this correctly, so I need you to explain the steps again more slowly."

Assertive Sentence Worksheet: Think about a **real work situation** and complete the following scenarios.

The situation is:	
What I usually do is:	
What I would like to say is:	
My assertive sentence is:	

Role-Play Exercise: Practice speaking assertively by role-playing the situation from above.

Round 1: Your Usual Response

What I would **normally** say in this situation:

Round 2: Assertive Response

Using my **assertive** sentence from above:

Which version felt more natural?

Which version would help more in a real-life situation?

What would make it easier to speak this way at work?

In which work situations is it hardest for you to be assertive?

Do you usually stay quiet, react strongly, or find a middle point?

What sentence from today could be useful for you in real life?

Assertiveness Techniques: **The following techniques are described in the Assertiveness Techniques Summary-sheet in **Annex 10**.*

Exercise 1

Spot the assertive response

Read each situation and the three possible responses. Circle or underline the assertive one, then write why in the last column.

#	Situation	Three possible responses circle or underline the assertive one	Which is assertive, and why?
1	Your manager asks you to stay late tonight, but you have a medical appointment you cannot miss.	A) "OK... I suppose I could try to reschedule my appointment, if it really can't wait." B) "I understand the urgency. I have a medical appointment I can't miss — can we find another solution together?" C) "That's not my problem. I'm leaving at 5 and that's final."	
2	A colleague keeps interrupting you every time you speak during team meetings.	A) You say nothing and wait but never manage to finish your point. B) "Would you please let me finish? I want to make sure my point is heard." C) "You're always interrupting me — it's incredibly rude and I'm sick of it!"	
3	Your employer asks you to take on a new project, but your workload is already full.	A) "Yes, of course! I'll find a way to fit it in somehow." B) "I'd like to help. My tasks are currently at full capacity — could we review priorities together?" C) "Why do you keep piling things on me? I already have too much work."	

Exercise 2

Name the technique

Read each exchange. Write the assertiveness technique being used in the last column.

#	Exchange	Technique used (Sandwich · Broken record · Negative assertion · Fogging)
1	"Thanks for thinking of me, but I won't be able to cover that shift. I hope you find someone — we could swap another time!"	

	Tip: positive + refusal + positive	
2	"I understand it's important to you, but I'm still not going to take on that extra project." [said calmly, for the third time] Tip: repeat the refusal with empathy, however many times needed	
3	Colleague: "Your report was full of errors!" You: "You're right, I missed a few figures. I'll review it more carefully from now on." Tip: acknowledge the mistake calmly, without feeling attacked	
4	Colleague: "That's such an odd way to organise your desk!" You: "I keep the most-used items on the left." Tip: respond to the topic, not the criticism itself	

Exercise 3

Build your own assertive response

Read the situation below. Use the 4-step framework to write your own assertive response.

Situation: Your line manager gives you critical feedback about your work in front of the whole team. You feel embarrassed and upset.

Step	What to say	Write your response here
1	Express how you feel "When [situation], I feel..."	
2	Show you understand "I understand that you..."	
3	Say what you would prefer "I would appreciate it if..."	



4	Thank them for listening	
	"Thank you for..."	

Counsellor's notes	
Strengths observed today	Areas to practise further
Next session goal	Date / session number



ANNEX 10. Microlearning Summary Sheets

Transversal Skills Summary-sheets



Time Management for Daily Functioning and Employment



1 Core Concepts			
Concept / Area	What it means	Why it matters in employment	Practical tips
1 Routine	Repeating basic daily actions in a similar order	Supports predictability, punctuality, and stability	Keep wake-up and morning steps consistent
2 Schedule	A plan for what needs to happen during the day or week	Helps prepare, remember tasks, and reduce stress	Use a daily or weekly planner and check it every morning
3 Time awareness	Knowing what time it is and how long tasks take	Helps with punctuality, task completion, and realistic planning	Use alarms, clocks, timers, and reminders
4 Priorities	Deciding what is most important to do first	Reduces confusion and overload	Choose 1–3 main tasks per day
5 Pacing	Doing things at a manageable speed	Prevents exhaustion and frustration	Break tasks into steps and pause between activities
6 Transitions	Moving from one activity or place to another	Supports adaptation and reduces stress	Prepare in advance and allow buffer time
7 Planning ahead	Thinking in advance about what is needed later	Improves reliability and lowers last-minute stress	Prepare clothes, transport, or documents the day before
8 Breaks and rest	Including time to pause and recover	Supports concentration, emotional regulation, and stamina	Schedule short breaks and protect sleep routines

2 Key Ideas to Remember	
Structure helps reduce stress	A clear plan can make the day feel more manageable
Routine supports stability	Repeating basic habits helps the person start and continue the day
Not everything has to be done today	Good time management also means choosing what can wait
Small steps work better than big plans	Short, realistic actions are easier to maintain
Breaks are part of productivity	Rest supports continuity and concentration
The best schedule is one the person can actually follow	A realistic plan is more useful than a perfect one

3 Signs That More Support May Be Needed	
Trouble starting the day	Waking up late, missing appointments, feeling disorganised from the morning
Difficulty estimating time	Thinking a task will take 10 minutes when it actually takes 40
Forgetting commitments	Missing interviews, sessions, training, or medication times
Overloading the day	Planning too much and then feeling blocked or frustrated
Difficulty with transitions	Struggling to move from home to work or from one task to another
Poor balance between activity and recovery	Doing too much without rest or avoiding all demands due to overwhelm

4 Practical Tips for Professionals			
Build one simple routine first	Start with a consistent wake-up time and morning sequence	Make timing concrete	Replace "later" with a specific time
Use visual supports	Weekly planner, colour-coded schedule, checklist, phone reminders	Review what works	Ask: "Was this plan realistic for you this week?"
Focus on one change at a time	First punctuality, then planning, then pacing	Normalise adjustments	Time management improves through practice, not perfection

Emotional Intelligence at the Workspace

Practical tools for professionals supporting people with Mental Health Conditions (MHC) in work placement.



Why it matters

Emotional intelligence helps build safe relationships, reduce stress, prevent conflicts and strengthen motivation and resilience—key ingredients for successful and sustainable work experiences.



Better relationships



Less stress, more resilience



Greater motivation



More sustainable placements

The 4 core areas of emotional intelligence

1. Understand your own emotions



- Recognize what you feel and why.
- Name the emotion: anger, anxiety, sadness, frustration, joy...
- Notice body signals and thoughts linked to emotions.



Practical technique

Check-in with yourself (1 min)

Pause and ask:

- What am I feeling right now?
- What triggered it?
- What do I need?
- What is within my control?

2. Manage your emotions



- Regulate intense emotions.
- Stay calm and focused, especially in stressful situations.
- Choose constructive responses.



Practical techniques



STOP technique

(When emotions run high)

- **S** – Stop
- **T** – Take a breath
- **O** – Observe: body, thoughts, emotions
- **P** – Proceed: choose the best response



6-second breathing

(Quick reset)

Inhale through your nose for 3 sec → Exhale slowly for 3 sec. Repeat. Use before responding.

3. Show empathy for others



- Try to understand the other person's perspective.
- Listen actively without judgment.
- Validate emotions and experiences.



Practical techniques



Active listening (SOLER method)

- **S** – Sit squarely
- **O** – Open posture
- **L** – Lean slightly forward
- **E** – Eye contact
- **R** – Relax



Validation phrase

Use simple, genuine phrases:

- "I can see this is difficult."
- "It makes sense that you feel that way."
- "Thank you for sharing that."

4. Understand impact & adapt



- Be aware of how your emotions and reactions affect others.
- Adapt communication and behavior to each situation.
- Support a positive and respectful work climate.



Practical techniques



Impact check

(After an interaction)

- What was my intention?
- What impact did it have?
- What can I do differently next time?



Adapt your style

Adjust tone, pace and language to the person, context and moment. Flexibility builds trust.



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Digital Competences

Using digital tools in a practical, safe and functional way



1. What are digital competences?

Digital competences are the practical skills needed to use digital tools confidently, safely, and effectively in daily life, training, and employment situations.



2. Why they matter in employment

- 1 Online job search
- 2 Email and communication
- 3 Digital forms and procedures
- 4 Online training and meetings
- 5 Workplace tools and autonomy

3. Core digital skills



Using devices



Email



Searching information



Online forms



Digital documents



Video calls



Reminders / calendars



Basic online safety



4. Warning signs that support may be needed



Difficulty completing online tasks



Fear of making mistakes



Forgetting digital appointments



Avoiding digital communication



5. Practical tips

- 1 Practise one task at a time
- 2 Use simple step-by-step guides
- 3 Combine phone and paper reminders
- 4 Check understanding after practice
- 5 Start with real-life tasks



6. Mini reflection



What digital task is most important for my employment pathway right now?



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Communication Skills – Quick Recap

Microlearning sheet for employment support practice



1) What are communication skills?

Communication skills help a person express themselves clearly, understand others, ask for what they need, and respond appropriately in different situations. In employment pathways, they support job access, workplace relationships, adaptation, and job retention.

2) Why communication matters

Area	Why it matters
 Job search	Helps the person present themselves, answer questions, and participate in interviews
 Understanding tasks	Supports asking for clarification and following instructions correctly
 Workplace relationships	Helps build respectful relationships with colleagues and supervisors
 Emotional regulation	Supports expressing discomfort, disagreement, or stress in a functional way
 Self-advocacy	Helps the person communicate needs, limits, or support requirements
 Job sustainability	Reduces misunderstandings, tension, and early disengagement

3) Core communication skills

Skill	What it means
 Listening	Paying attention to what the other person is saying
 Clarity	Speaking in a simple and understandable way
 Asking for clarification	Requesting more information when something is not clear
 Assertiveness	Expressing needs or limits clearly and respectfully
 Non-verbal communication	Using tone, posture, and facial expression appropriately
 Responding to feedback	Listening to comments without shutting down or reacting aggressively
 Turn-taking	Knowing when to speak and when to listen
 Checking understanding	Making sure the message has been understood

4) Key ideas to remember

These skills improve through practice, feedback, and real situations.

 Communication is a work skill	 It is not only about speaking well	 Stress can affect communication	 Clear communication prevents problems	 Assertiveness is part of communication	 Communication can be practised
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5) Common difficulties

Difficulty	What it may look like
 Fear of judgement	Staying silent even when something is unclear
 Low confidence	Apologising excessively or avoiding interaction
 Anxiety in social situations	Speaking too little, too fast, or not asking for help
 Difficulty setting limits	Saying yes to everything and later feeling overwhelmed
 Defensive reactions	Responding to feedback with anger or withdrawal
 Misreading situations	Assuming negative intentions without checking



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● How to turn down a request **Assertiveness Key Ideas**

Technique	What to do	Example phrase
Open refusal	State your refusal clearly and directly, without justifying it.	<i>"I hadn't planned on going out, so I'll stay home."</i>
Sandwich technique	Say something positive + refuse + say something positive again.	<i>"Thanks for thinking of me, but I won't be going out — though we could meet another day!"</i>
Broken record	Show empathy + calmly repeat your refusal every time the person insists.	<i>"I understand you'd like company, but I'm staying home tonight."</i>
Reaffirm & set limits	Restate your decision + tell the person how you'd like them to behave.	<i>"I've already said no. I'd appreciate it if you respected my decision and didn't insist."</i>

● How to respond to criticism

Type of criticism	Technique	What to do	Example phrase
Constructive / partly true	Negative assertion	Acknowledge your mistake calmly, without feeling attacked. Apologise if your error affected others.	<i>"You're right, I did arrive late — sorry about that."</i>
Malicious / unfair	Fogging	Reply with a neutral comment related to the subject of the criticism, without engaging with the attack itself.	<i>"What a horrible watch!" → "The strap is metal."</i>

● How to express yourself respectfully — step-by-step scripts

Situation	#	What to say
Something bothers me or I disagree	1	Express how you are feeling.
	2	Show the other person that you understand them.
	3	Say how you would like them to behave.
	4	Thank them for listening.
Someone disrespects me or raises their voice	1	Ask the other person to respect you.
	2	Say how their behaviour makes you feel.
	3	Express how you would like to be treated.
Someone suggests something I don't want to do	1	Thank the other person for the invitation.
	2	Tell them you don't want to do it.
	3	Suggest an alternative plan.

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