

How did IPS roles come about?

Based on over 20 years of research, the Individual Placement & Support (IPS) employment model is internationally recognised as the most effective way to support people with mental health conditions, to gain and keep paid employment.

Getting into employment can be a vital part of a recovery journey and the IPS model is where an Employment Specialist (ES) works in a mental health team alongside e.g. psychiatric nurses, social workers and psychologists to help individuals get into work. The ES uses their contacts, initiative and skills to find employment opportunities, some of which are not advertised, and communicates with their colleagues to ensure clients can obtain and retain work effectively, whilst staying in good health.

Currently, 90% of people with severe mental illness want to work but currently, only 8% are in work. NHS England has made a commitment to change this by leading a major expansion of employment services using the IPS evidence-based model of helping people into a job of their choosing.

Where are there IPS Services?

IPS service providers work across most Mental Health NHS Trusts in England.

Where can you find out about IPS Jobs? How do you apply?

If you are looking for information on current IPS vacancies, we recommend taking a look at the IPS Grow website which hosts IPS vacancies across the UK:

<http://ipsgrow.org.uk/careers/current-vacancies>.

We also recommend taking a look at the following websites:

- [NHS Jobs](#)
- [Third Sector Jobs](#)
- [Charity Job](#)
- [British Association of Supported Employment \(BASE\)](#)
- [Vocational Rehabilitation Association \(VRA\)](#)

Local NHS Trust and local jobs website are also valuable resources.

You should be able to apply directly to the Service Provider. All vacancies will have an application link or contact email. Usually, you will have to complete a short application form online and attach your CV and cover letter. The application form shouldn't take longer than 30 minutes to complete.

How do you know that IPS is the best way to help people with their employment goals?

IPS is the leading model to help people with severe mental health symptoms secure a paid role of their choosing. Decades of research, including 22 randomised control trials, shows

that IPS is the most effective way of successfully getting people into work. As the name suggests, it is about working closely with an individual to support them into a job they want. IPS is successful with 30-40% of people compared with other methods of supported employment which only work for 10-12% of people.

IPS is also a more successful method for helping people move on to increase their earnings and sustain their employment. Studies show that IPS clients will often have fewer and shorter hospital admissions for mental illness, in subsequent years, compared to those supported into work through other methods.

What does a day in the life of an Employment Specialist look like?

The role of an Employment Specialist is incredibly dynamic and diverse. One moment you'll be working closely with IPS clients to set goals, refining their CVs, or practicing interview techniques. The next, you'll be out in the local community approaching potential employers and discussing roles and job flexibility. Then you may end the day sitting with your colleagues in the clinical team in a review meeting. Our Employment Specialists often report that they never have the same day twice! If you are passionate, creative, and solution-oriented, good at building hopeful relationships and growing trust, and believe that anyone can work, a career as an IPS Employment Specialist could be a varied and rewarding role for you.

An IPS Employment Specialist sounds similar to a traditional employment service consultant. What is the difference?

The model is built around the client's motivation to work. Individuals hoping to get back into work can be introduced directly by their doctor or another mental health professional and can also self-refer. Working as an IPS Employment Specialist is about helping the person to decide what kind of work they want and supporting them into a job they feel suits them, not just any job

Do I need to have previous experience working within mental health?

No. An interest and some insight into mental health is desirable, but not essential. We've found that it's your personality and attitude which is more important – a genuine belief that someone with a history of poor mental health, can find sustainable employment and a passion to make a positive difference and build hopeful relationships, outweighs specific mental health experience. See our [infographic](#) of what makes a good Employment Specialist here.

I don't have previous employment services experience, can I still apply?

Yes - We like to obtain a diverse pool of talent to join our team. Our in-depth training and support, means you don't need to have previous employment service experience to excel as an IPS ES. However, we have found that the experience of partnership working, networking and negotiating skills often gained through such employment is advantageous. This said, there are many other careers which develop these skills too. The right attitude, values and a passion to help people with mental illness reach their potential are the most important skills, so if you think ES is the route for you, do apply.

What is the selection process like for an Employment Specialist role?

Our selection process has been designed to help us both assess if we fit together and whether you're likely to succeed as an ES. There are 6 steps to complete before we welcome you on board.

1. **Search for job opportunities within IPS providers.** Jobs are listed on IPS Grow website and individually within each provider, here you'll find detailed information about specific requirements in the job descriptions.
2. **Apply online.** The candidate profile and application form takes about 30 minutes to complete. If you wish to be considered for more than one location, please state this clearly on your application form.
3. **Telephone interview.** You will have a short telephone interview with the hiring manager to discuss your application and interest in the position
4. **Face to face interview.** To prepare for your interview, think about what you want to tell us about yourself, relevant work and life experience. We want to get to know you as an individual and discover your strengths and attributes. Be prepared to interview us about the scope of the role, our expectations and how we could work together. Part of the assessment process will include a role play but there is no preparation required beforehand.
5. **Review our offer.** If you successfully complete the interview and selection process, we'll make you a formal offer in writing. You'll have the opportunity to ask any questions, and if you're happy with the offer, we'll looking forward to receiving your confirmation and welcoming you on board.

How would I be supported as an IPS Employment Specialist?

IPS roles offer a fantastic training and support plan. You'll be given full training in the Individual Placement and Support (IPS) model, along with ongoing support from a Team Leader who will review cases with you and offer guidance and support. Whilst the role will be mainly autonomous where you'll be working with your individual caseload of clients, you'll be an integral part of the community clinical team, working collaboratively with them throughout the client's recovery journey through securing employment.

How will I be trained and developed within the role?

Along with your mentorship and support from the Team Leader, there is an [IPS E-learning course](#) which is 7 weeks long and free to use. We recommended for all Employment Specialists to complete (you can complete it now to see if a career in IPS is for you!) The modules include:

- An introduction to IPS for practitioners
- Integration into a clinical team – why it's important and how to do it
- Building a relationship with your client and how to identify their strengths and find a suitable job match
- Learning how to build relationships with employers and why this is important
- Supporting a client to prepare for an interview
- Understanding how to effectively support clients and employers so that client's employment and mental being is sustained
- An understanding into what fidelity is, why it's important and how to achieve it.

How am I evaluated as an ES?

As an ES you'll report into a Team Leader who will often double up as your mentor and trainer. Evaluation is through monthly one to one meetings, comparing your practice with the standards of IPS described in the 'fidelity scale'. See more about this on the IPS Grow website. Your one to one meetings will monitor the number of employers you've contacted, the number of clients you've supported into employment and the number of clients who have sustained their employment. It will also focus on any training you've completed and further professional development needs.

Why choose a career as an ES?

If you're looking for a rewarding role where you're making a difference to the lives of individuals with mental health conditions, this is the role for you! We've spoken to some ES to see why they enjoy their job:

"Every day is so different"

"I feel lucky, I love getting up in the morning. It's the variety, the conversations and hearing about people's backgrounds"

"We haven't just met a target – we have changed someone's life"

"Think about what you would do if the client was a family member. You would stop at nothing to get them a job. You would be speaking to all your contacts and reaching out to your network, going into shops on the high street etc and leaving no stone unturned in helping them secure employment"

What background do most Employment Specialists come from?

We have successfully recruited for IPS Employment Specialist positions from a range of backgrounds – many ES's and TL's have previously had a career as:

- Occupational Therapist
- Private Recruitment Consultant
- Teacher
- Nurse
- Army
- Service User
- Store Worker
- Psychology Graduate
- Police Officer
- Civil Service Worker
- Social worker
- Carer
- Mental Health Act Worker
- Painter/Decorator

The above list isn't exhaustive, and we are proud of our diverse workforce background – we believe that everyone brings a different set of expertise and experiences which creates a varied and skilled workforce. If you're unsure whether your background/work experience is suitable, see our infographic of 'what makes a good Employment Specialist' and if you feel that the qualities listed resonate with you – then apply! Infographic can be found [here](#)

How does an IPS Employment Specialist impact the clinical team?

“Having ES in the clinical team doesn't just give service users a sense of hope, it gives the whole clinical team a sense of hope”.

Consultant Psychiatrist CMHT

“I would just like to comment that the Employment Services embedded in the community teams are a real asset. I have seen the impact of the service with various patients in their recovery journey. The service is accessible and very positive about the real possibility of a return to the workplace, in a meaningful way, and I have seen the rewards in self-esteem and self-confidence for the patients that I work with. They have a can-do attitude and the advantage of being embedded in the team means that they have developed a very good understanding of the challenges of the individuals that we work with.”

**Consultant Psychiatrist, South Westminster
Community Mental Health Team**

What does it mean to be a Team Leader?

As a Team Leader you'll be responsible for the day to day management of service contracts and effectively manage a team of typically 2-5 Employment Specialists. You will help the team to plan and problem solve employment issues with their clients. You'll hold one to one meetings with your team members, discuss difficulties with their client work and link them to wider networks of peer support. As a Team Leader you'll regularly liaise with service commissioners and clinical partners, providing data reports of progress and activity, as well as actively network with local employers and voluntary organisations to help find paid work opportunities.

How am I evaluated as a Team Leader?

Your line-manager will be a more senior manager within the organisation who employs you. You will be held accountable for the performance of the ESs which you manage and support, and for the development and success of IPS in your area. For more information on how success is measured see the information on IPS fidelity reviews on the IPS Grow website.

What does a day in the life of a Team Leader look like?

Similar to the role of Employment Specialist, each day is diverse and varied. A typical day may involve, holding a one to one meeting with one of the Employment Specialists in the morning and discussing their cases and suggesting some plans of action. Following this, you may go out into the local community and reach out to potential employers to network and help find paid work opportunities. You may then go back to the office to complete some data

reports for the commissioners, before following up with another Employment Specialist in your team to provide training on employer engagement.