

Psychological Aspects of Return to Work

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Psychological difficulties and return to work

- Cognitive & communication
 - general & executive
- Behavioural
- Emotional

- Other associated difficulties

Cognitive difficulties e.g:

- Attention & speed information processing
 - variable concentration, slow speed, frequent errors
- Memory and learning
 - difficulties recalling information / learning new skills (? old information skills) – needing repetition & reminders
- Language
 - quality of expression / comprehension > misunderstandings
 - marked dysphasia > significant communication difficulties
- Perceptual / spatial / constructional difficulties
 - driving, reduced speed or accuracy of work + H&S issues

Cognitive difficulties – Executive e.g:

- Reduced awareness, monitoring / management of work performance and behaviour in the workplace
- Difficulty in adapting coping strategies developed in rehabilitation within the workplace
- Difficulty in planning, prioritising & organising work to achieve objectives and meet deadlines
- Difficulty in improving work skills / behaviour in response to feedback / supervision

..... cont.

Behavioural difficulties e.g:

- **Behavioural difficulties** (e.g. irritability, frustration, aggression, impulsivity, disinhibition etc.)
 - difficulties with consistency of work performance (e.g. loss of control / erratic behaviour / errors)
 - Health & Safety concerns / restrictions
 - difficulties in relationships with colleagues / disputes with managers + ? disciplinary action
- **Other behavioural change** (e.g. attitudes & opinions, ill-judged humour, insensitivity, emotional expression)
 - may affect quality of work relationships

Emotional difficulties e.g:

- **Emotional difficulties** (e.g. volatility, mood swings + low mood, anxiety, confidence, adjustment difficulties)
 - fluctuations in work performance with mood
 - difficulties in coping with pressure (e.g. increased demands, deadlines, staff management issues)
 - external stress / adjustment issues impinging disproportionately on the workplace **BUT ALSO**
 - difficulties making/maintaining positive & balanced work relationships with manager and colleagues

Other vocational difficulties – early

- Premature/unsupported early return to previous job
 - fatigue, anxiety, confidence > off sick / ? job loss
- Environmental barriers (travel, access, equipment)
 - access to work and/or completion of duties
- Build up fatigue/anxiety/loss of confidence due to:
 - need for prolonged compensatory effort
 - increasing hours/duties to previous level
- Cognitive overload due to, for example
 - the accumulation of new information and/or
 - introduction of new duties, policies or procedures

Other vocational difficulties – late

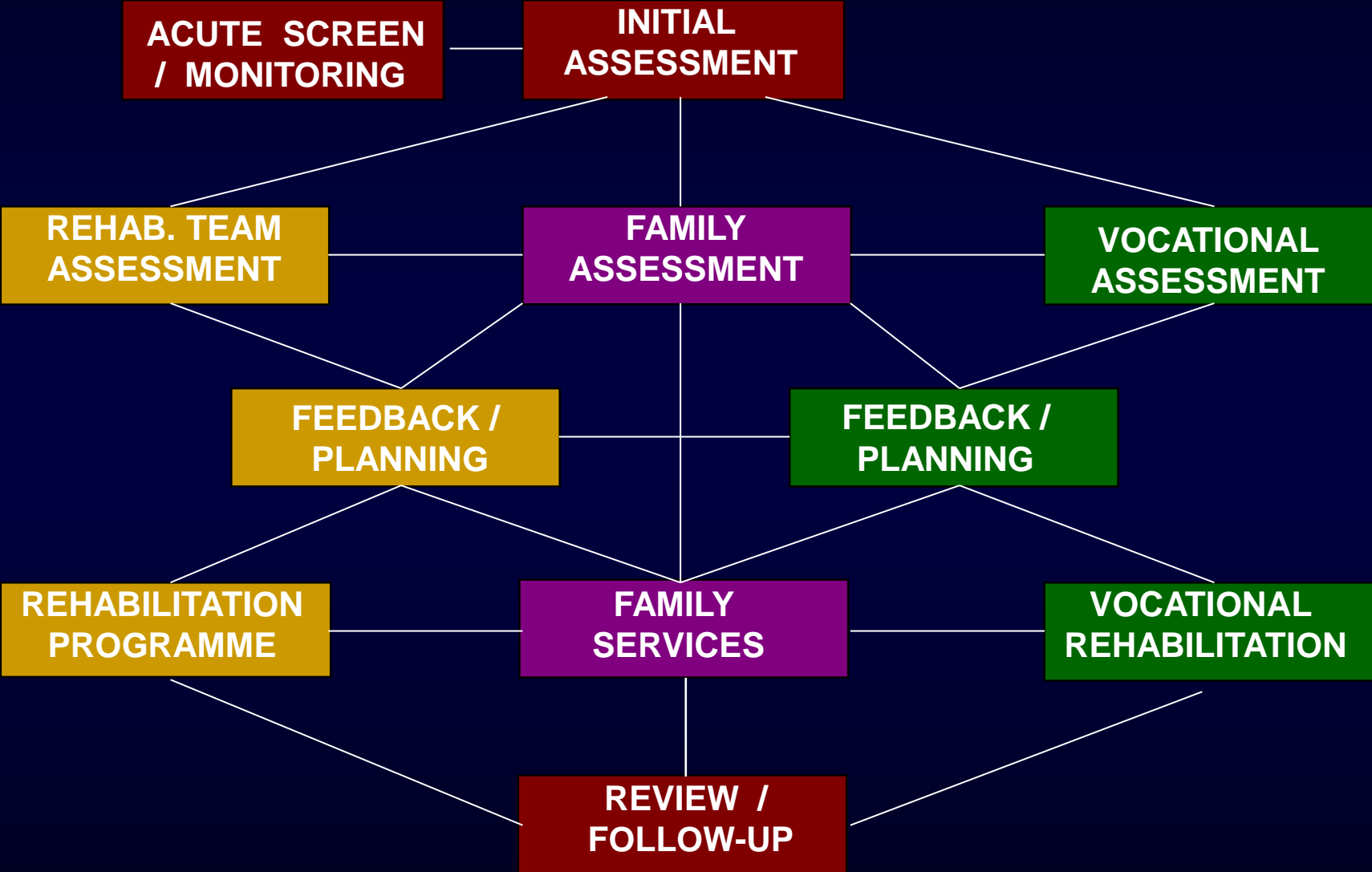
- Employers'/colleagues' expectations
 - typically of unrealistically rapid and/or full recovery.
- Departure of key staff (i.e. colleague, supervisor / manager)
 - loss of vital understanding and support
- Career progression
 - higher demands/responsibilities (eg management)
- Redundancy or redeployment (unrelated to condition)
 - difficulty in securing / coping with new job

Other vocational difficulties – new job

For those seeking alternative work:

- Difficulty with job selection (e.g. previous jobs) - not taking into account or underestimating restrictions
- Difficulty in structuring and/or judging content of job applications
- Difficulties with job interviews (e.g. communication, tangential speech, ill-judged comment etc.)
- Difficulty in adapting previously developed coping strategies in the new job
- Repeating pattern of unsuccessful applications / jobs

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Working Out Project (1992-97):

A joint Department of Health / Employment Service
Traumatic Brain Injury Vocational Rehabilitation Project

Programme phases:

- Vocational assessment (1-3 weeks)
- Work preparation programme (12 wks +)
- Voluntary work trial (12 wks +)
- Supported work placement (6 mons. +)

Working Out Programme Aims

- To assess vocational impact, needs and potential.
- To provide specialist rehabilitation programmes to enhance vocational potential.
- To set up and evaluate voluntary work trials to prepare persons for a return to productive occupation.
- To find, set up and support suitable long-term work placements.
- To provide specialist job retention interventions for people in work, education or training.

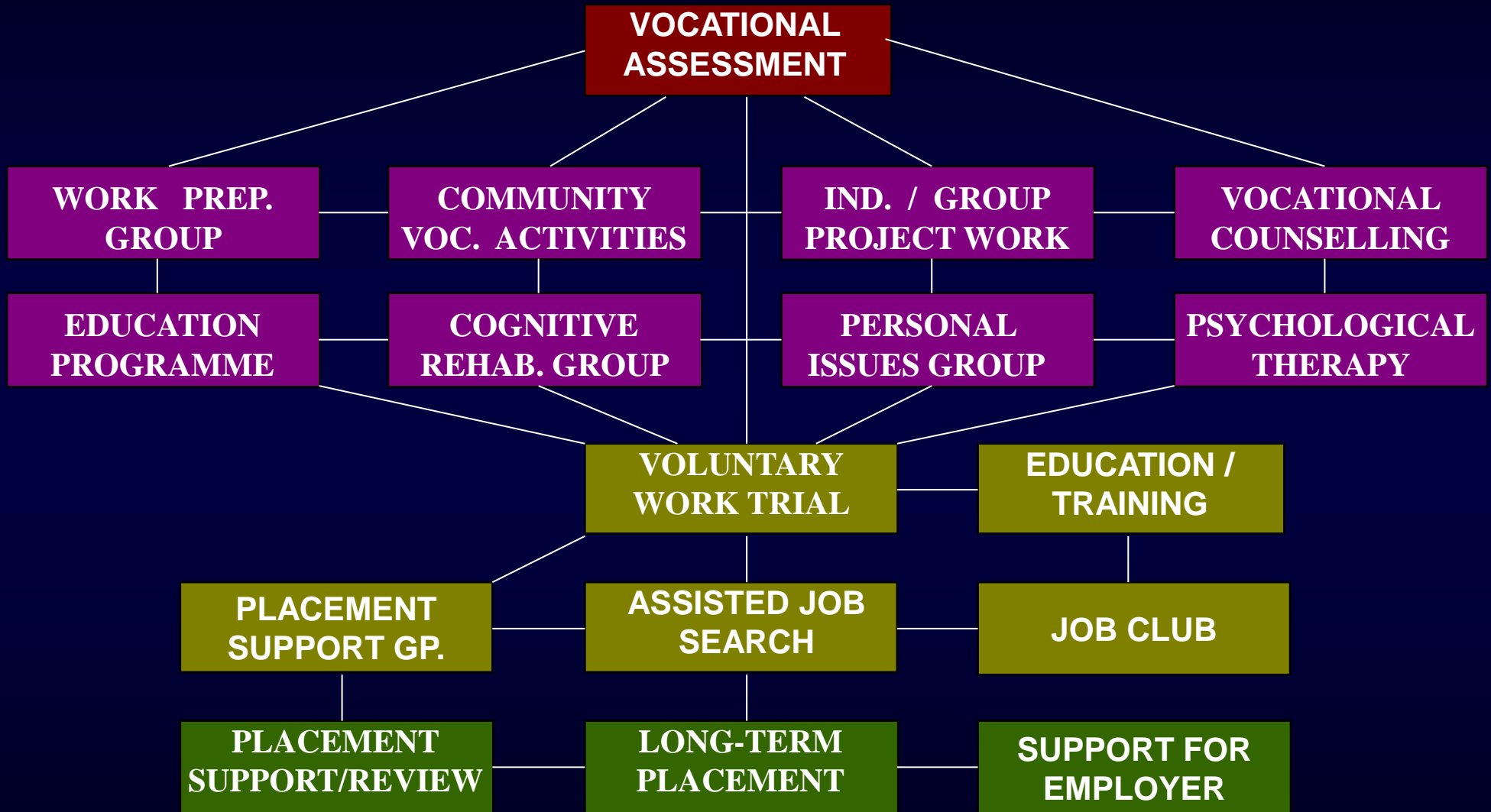
Working Out: Vocational assessment 1

- Initial assessment (client & relative)
 - Personal, family, social & work history
 - Clinical history & rehabilitation
 - Current problems (self & relative)
 - Self-concept, anxiety / depression
- Formal assessments
 - Neuropsychological Assessment
 - Occupational Therapy Assessment
 - Other assessment (i.e. medical, physiotherapy & speech & language), as required

Working Out: vocational assessment 2

- Practical assessments
 - Worksite observation / feedback - employers
 - Feedback from previous jobs / placements
 - Work preparation group
 - Community vocational rehabilitation activities
 - Individual project work and/or
- Vocational rating scales (self & staff):
 - Functional Assessment Inventory
 - Work Personality Profile
- Vocational guidance assessment

CHIS Working Out Programme (2010)



Brain injury education programme

(15 X 2 hr. sessions)

- To increase awareness and understanding of nature and effects of traumatic and other forms of acquired brain injury:
 1. Brain function/ brain injury
 2. Physical disability
 3. Sensory deficits
 4. Cognitive difficulties – general
 5. Cognitive – executive
 6. Communication difficulties
 7. Behavioural difficulties
 8. Emotional difficulties
 9. Personal adjustment
 10. Vocational adjustment
 - 11 Leisure & social difficulties
 12. Family adjustment
 - 13/14 Videotape case examples
 15. Brain injury services

Cognitive rehabilitation group

(10 X weekly 2 hr. sessions)

- To educate clients about their cognitive difficulties and how to manage them:
 - attention, memory, executive skills, communication
- To provide a supportive environment in which clients can:
 - share coping strategies
 - practice and improve group communication skills
- To highlight long-term rehabilitation needs

Personal issues group

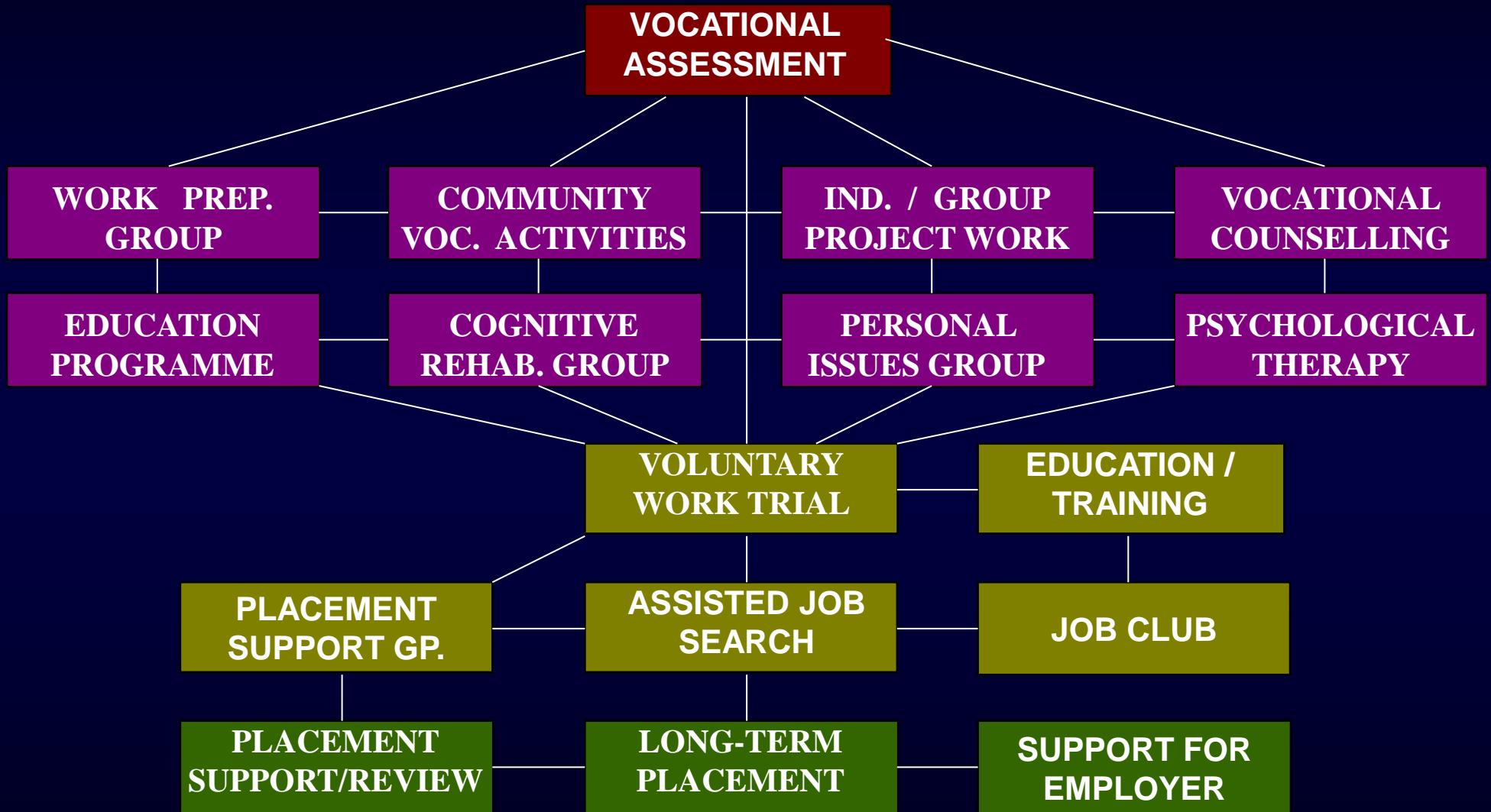
(Open ended - weekly 1 hour sessions)

- To facilitate and support group members in understanding and coping with behavioural and emotional changes after brain injury.
 - some set issues, others generated by group members
- To provide an opportunity for group members to express their feelings, frustrations and worries about brain injury and its effects
 - on themselves and/or their family and friends.

ABI: Psychological therapy

- Neuropsychological counselling : e.g.
 - Education, advice & support
 - Awareness, understanding & coping strategies
- Specific psychological treatment : e.g.
 - Anxiety, anger or pain management
 - Managing mood & behaviour difficulties
- Neuropsychotherapy : e.g.
 - Exploring/reconciling changes in self & life
 - Re-constructing 'new' self & plans post-injury

CHIS Working Out Programme (2010)

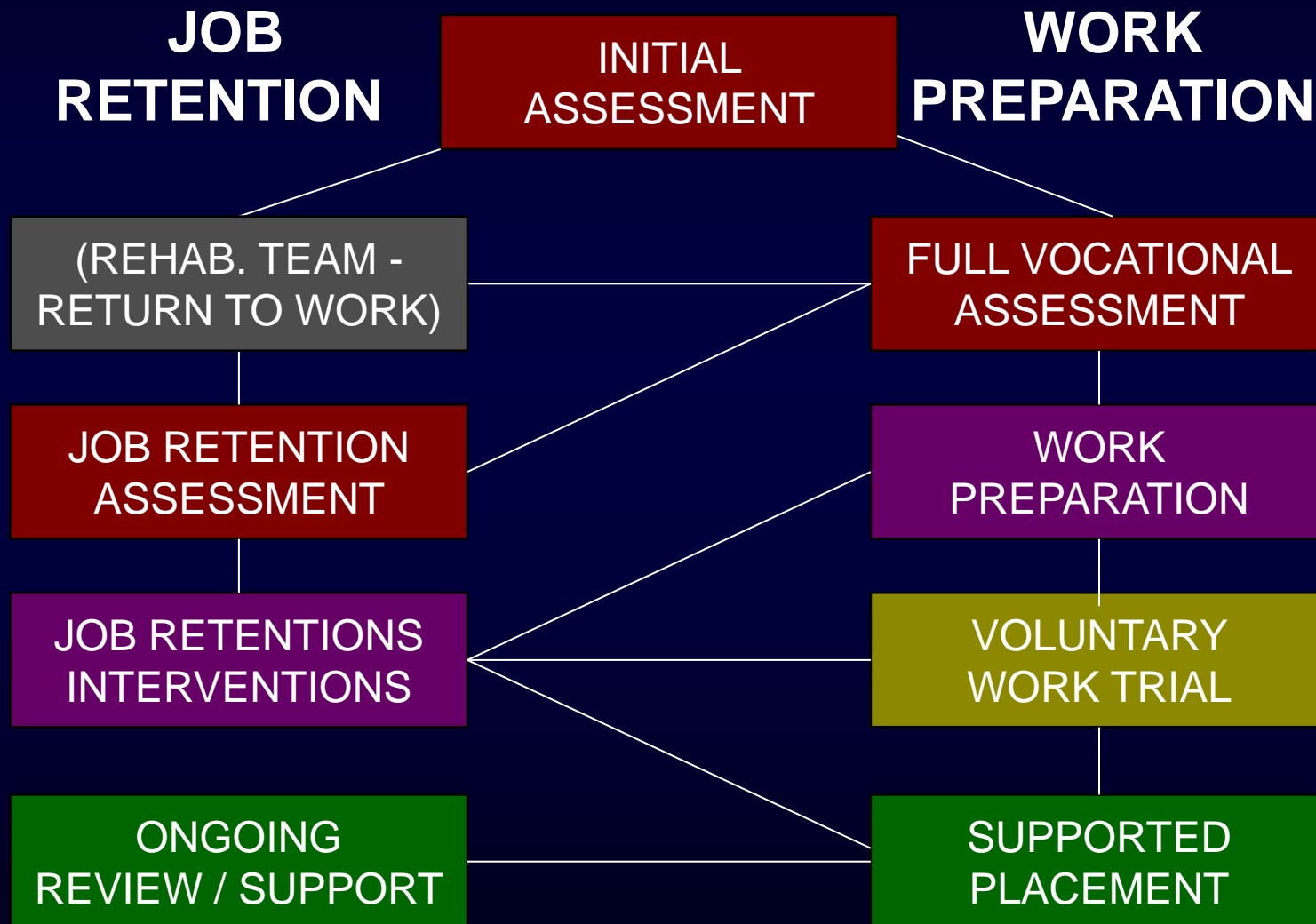


WO - Voc. Rehab. Outcomes (Aug. 09)

Voc. Rehab. Outcomes	(n=132)	%
Full-time employment	28 %	
Part-time employment	23 %	
Supported employment	3 %	
Vocational training	6 %	61 %
Permitted work	9 %	
Voluntary work	11 %	
Adult education	2 %	
Housewife	1 %	23 %
Further rehabilitation	6 %	
Disengaged	8 %	
No occupation	2 %	16 %

Working Out Programme (2010)

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Rehabilitation for return to work

- Development of skills/behaviour necessary for work
- Work-related routines (time-keeping, travel etc.)
- Build up attention, work tolerance & stamina
- Extend coping strategies for the workplace
- Work on material relevant to or drawn from work
- Explicit advice to person/family + GP (& Occ. Health)
- + Liaison with DEA (& Occ.H) re. workplace support
- Development of joint return to work plan

Job retention – assessment

Evaluation of the job

- Job profiling – person (job description / person specification)
- Worksite visit with supervisor/manager and/or
- Consultation with other employers / careers / trainers etc.

Evaluation of the person in the job

- Perceptions of person & relative
- Review of performance against duties in job description
- Feedback from work supervisor/manager & colleagues
- Direct observation / co-working (performance/behaviour)
- Formal assessments (tests and/or practical)

Job retention – key interventions

- General support + advice on other support (legal, Union etc.)
- Feedback to person (& relative) / identification of key issues
- Problem solving with client on potential work adjustments
- Feedback to employer (+ HR) & recommend adjustments eg:
 - Changes to hours and/or work duties / practices
 - Aids, adaptations & management / coping strategies
 - Training / supervision / support (e.g. colleague / mentor)
 - Education / support of supervisors, managers & colleagues
- If agreed: assist implementation work adjustments / strategies
- Ongoing guidance, monitoring & support
- Review with person (& relative), supervisor/manager + HR

Feedback comments – A

“ It’s a dual thing though because, whilst the Working Out programme makes me aware and gives ways of getting around the problems (like diarising things, making notes and such and looking at different ways of doing tasks), it also allows you to talk to the people who are working around you and say, ‘Look, these are the problems that may crop up, these are the things I may do when I’m working, look out for them’. And if you have got the right kind of people around with you they start to work with you, so you are not just helping yourself they are helping you as well.....”

Feedback comments – A

“ After a while I remember somebody saying ‘Since you have been here a while, I think you’re getting better’. You know you’re not getting better, it’s just the situation is getting better. The thing is they don’t realise that they are slotting into you ...it’s like a jigsaw ... it’s their half that fits in with your half as much as the other way round....before it was just a game of catch-up where you were just struggling to keep up with things but now.....you can set things up so that they work for you rather than you run around trying to make them work”.

UK TBI vocational rehabilitation references:

BSRM/Jobcentre Plus/RCP (2004). Vocational assessment and rehabilitation after acquired brain injury: inter-agency guidelines. (eds. Tyerman & Meehan). London: British Society of Rehabilitation Medicine; Jobcentre Plus, Royal College of Physicians.

Tyerman A & King NS (eds.) (2008). Psychological Approaches to Rehabilitation after Traumatic Brain Injury: Oxford: BPS Blackwell:

14. Return to previous employment (Johnson & Stoten)
15. Vocational rehab. programmes (Tyerman, Tyerman & Viney)
16. Supported employment & job coaching (Carew & Collumb)