

True or False?

Before answering these questions you will need to view the film called *The Interview* which is located at: www.shift.org.uk/employers

This section will explore;

- Recruiting people with mental health problems.
- What to do if someone discloses that they have a mental health problem in an interview



To help you find the answers to these questions and/or address other questions you may have on recruiting people with mental health problems, see the Shift Line Managers' Resource (LMR) at www.shift.org.uk/employers

1. Tom, who was the interviewee, was the best candidate for the job. Which of the following statements are True / False?

- A.** Bernie was right in not wanting to employ Tom as Tom's mental health problem would mean that he would not be as good at meeting the job demands as someone without a mental health problem. **TRUE or FALSE**
- B.** Knowing that Tom has a mental health problem, Bernie would be right to assume that Tom will be more vulnerable to workplace stress than other employees. **TRUE or FALSE**
- C.** If Bernie doesn't recruit Tom because of his depression he will be breaking the law. **TRUE or FALSE**
- D.** Due to the fact that Tom suffers from a mental health problem he will face more stigma and discrimination than if he had a physical problem. **TRUE or FALSE**

2. Tom has been out of work for some time now and really wants to get the job.

Which of the following statements are True / False?

Being in employment and maintaining social contacts;

- A.** Improves mental health. **TRUE or FALSE**
- B.** Prevents suicide. **TRUE or FALSE**
- C.** Reduces demands on health services. **TRUE or FALSE**
- D.** Has been shown to result in people drinking more alcohol. **TRUE or FALSE**

Visit shift.org.uk/employers for more information.

3. The following are good predictors of whether someone with a mental health problem can successfully undertake work requirements. True or False?

- A.** Their diagnosis **TRUE or FALSE**
- B.** Severity of symptoms **TRUE or FALSE**
- C.** A strong desire to work **TRUE or FALSE**
- D.** Work history **TRUE or FALSE**

4. Since Tom did raise the issue of his mental health problem in the interview, Bernie should have then done the following. True or False?

- A.** Bernie should have asked Tom if he would require any kind of adjustments or additional support in order to do the job, should he get it. **TRUE or FALSE**
- B.** Asked Tom about the history of his illness, treatment and other information surrounding his mental health. **TRUE or FALSE**
- C.** Outlined what the demands of the job would be, the working culture such as shift patterns and deadlines so that Tom could understand exactly what would be expected of him. **TRUE or FALSE**
- D.** Treated the disclosure sensitively and reassure Tom that this information would not be used as part of the selection criteria. **TRUE or FALSE**

Answers

1a. False. Just because Tom has a mental health problem does not mean that he cannot do a good job. In fact he may be more proficient than someone who does not have a mental health problem. Dwelling on definitions and diagnosis, rather than the skills and experience needed for the job, is unlikely to be helpful for finding the right person for the position. Judging someone according to a diagnostic 'label' leads to negative preconceptions of what a person can or cannot do. As with any candidate the most productive approach would be to obtain a clear understanding of what Tom can do and make a judgement on the basis of his capabilities, not his condition.

1b. False. It would be wrong to assume that someone with a mental health problem will be more vulnerable to workplace stress than other employees. How anyone reacts can differ according to time and circumstances. What may be too much pressure for one person at a specific time may not be for another or even that same person at a different time. Their experience, in some circumstances, may actually help some one who has experienced poor mental health to cope better in a stressful situation.

1c. True. It is against the law to discriminate against candidates on grounds of disability. This includes people who suffer with mental ill health. Even though Tom has a mental health problem he does fulfill all of the selection criteria which means that his disability should not be a barrier. Having a mental health condition should never be a reason for treating someone differently than other applicants.

1d. True. Even though they want to, and are capable of work as others, people with mental health problems face more stigma and discrimination than those with physical problems (other than HIV/AIDS). *Roeloffs, C., Sherbourne, C., Unutzer, J., Fink, A., Tang, L., & Wells, K.B. (2003). Stigma and depression among primary care patients. General Hospital Psychiatry 25, 311-5.* This can adversely influence recruitment practice and treatment in the workplace.

2a-2c. All True. Research has shown that being in employment and maintaining social contacts improves mental health, prevents suicide and reduces reliance on health services. This leads to better outcomes for the economy, society and most of all the individuals concerned. *(Social Exclusion Unit (2004) Mental Health and Social Exclusion. London: Office of the Deputy Prime Minister)*

2d. False. Although this may be true for some, it will be the reverse for many others. There is no conclusive evidence to suggest that being in employment and maintaining social contacts causes people to drink more or less alcohol.

3a-3b. False. Neither diagnosis or severity of symptoms are good predictors of ability to undertake work requirements or likely employment outcomes.

3c-3d. True. Work history and length of time unemployed are better indicators of current employability compared to someone's diagnosis but the most important, indeed overriding, factor for successfully obtaining or sustaining employment is having a strong desire to work. *(Grove, B. & Membrey, H. (2005) Sheep and Goats: New thinking about employability. In: Grove, B., Secker, J. & Seebohm, P. (eds) New Thinking about Mental Health and Employment. Abingdon: Radcliffe.)*

4a. True. Since Tom did raise the issue of his mental health problem, it would be appropriate for Bernie to ask him if he would require any kind of adjustment or additional support to undertake the job tasks, other than taking time off for this therapeutic session which he had mentioned.

4b. False. If it is not relevant to the work situation then Bernie should avoid asking Tom for information about the history of his illness and his treatment. He could ask Tom about any gaps in his employment history but Tom is not legally obliged at interview to tell him if he does not wish to.

4c. True. It would have been good practice for Bernie to have ensured that Tom understood both the particular demands of the job and the working culture of the organisation, such as shift patterns, the cyclical nature of the business etc. This would help Tom identify if any adjustments or support might be appropriate. A current stress risk assessment for the job, based on the HSE management standards would have been helpful.

4d. True. Unlike in the video clip, Bernie should have treated Tom's disclosure sensitively and reassured him that the information would not be used as part of the selection criteria. Tom should be assessed on the grounds of his skills, aptitudes, experience and his capability to do the job, taking into account reasonable adjustments.

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