



## **What is Vocational Rehabilitation?**

As rehabilitation providers, Rehabilitation Network Limited (RNL) would want you to think of using rehabilitation in many circumstances. We think helping people to get better, and helping them to stay in work, needs no justification. The British Society of Rehabilitation Medicine and the Vocational Rehabilitation Association might well agree.

The ABI reports that “Our poor occupational health is caused in part by insufficient rehabilitation being provided to victims of injuries and illnesses. Evidence from around the world and from case studies and pilots in this country demonstrate how more and better rehabilitation would improve occupational health”<sup>1</sup>

The Rehabilitation Code of Best Practice, points to the importance of Rehabilitation: “the insurer is under a ... duty to consider whether a claimant may benefit from further medical treatment, early intervention or rehabilitation”

The most recent DWP and Department of Health<sup>2</sup> report confirms good practice guidelines:

- Use Employment Specialists in liaison with Clinical Specialists
- Assess and make use of the desire to work
- Provide rapid job search rather than lengthy preparation and training
- Provide individually tailored support
- Facilitate support from colleagues in the workplace

## **So how can you decide which Service Provider to chose?**

Vocational Rehabilitation providers need to be able to cover the problems of going to work and staying active as well as medical matters. Just getting as well as possible often isn't enough.

The expert Vocational Rehabilitation provider offers a secure return to work to the claimant and savings to the insurer. They should work closely with you to achieve this, and to understand your needs including the financial and policy implications of a claim. They should provide detailed reports and management information to assist with the claims management process, working within agreed timeframes and quality standards, and responding to your queries.

Overseas accreditation guidelines list criteria such as:

- *a focus on return to work as the principle goal*
- *recognition of injured clients' rights and responsibilities*
- *qualified staff*
- *staff training and supervision*
- *a multi-disciplinary approach*
- *systems for referral and management*
- *case load management systems*
- *regular plan reviews*
- *consultation with the client, employer, medical practitioner, insurer*
- *a system for program completion and case closure.*

## **Which claims would benefit and when to start Rehabilitation?**

The simple answer is – whenever you think there is a benefit from improved recovery. Where the loss of earnings or employment is a factor, a vocational rehabilitation provider will be skilled at identifying the barriers to working, and can prepare a practical return to work plan to help the client on the way.

Early intervention increases the chances of a successful return to work. The ABI, quoting the Department of Work and Pensions, says “Those remaining on Incapacity Benefit for longer than two years are more likely to retire or die than go back to work”<sup>3</sup> Late intervention can be inefficient: more expensive, less likely to succeed.<sup>4</sup>

<b>Vocational Rehabilitation Themes</b>	<b>Key Claims Aspects</b>
Helping people to get better after illness or injury	Reducing pain and suffering
Helping people to continue working and earning	Reducing loss of earnings
Helping people to enjoy as much of their life as possible	Reducing the loss of facility or enjoyment

Whenever you think there might be a benefit for the claimant or for the insurance position it would be sensible to consult an appropriate provider about a rehabilitation assessment.

If there seems to be some doubt whether a minor injury will develop into a long-term problem it is worth calling a Rehabilitation provider for guidance.

Where the loss of earnings or employment is a factor, a vocational rehabilitation consultant will be skilled at identifying the barriers to working, and can prepare a practical return to work plan to help the claimant on the way.

### **Case study**

*In 1987 a claimant received a settlement of £80,000 for injuries received in the course of work, and was not expected to return to employment. He had no Rehabilitation Assessment. His average income over the whole time, assuming he spent none of his capital, was £555 per month. Had he returned to work and earned £555 per month in 1987, average wage inflation would by now have made that up to £1,442 per month or £17,000 per annum. Instead he is actually living on less than £500 since interest rates are so low. Rehabilitation could have helped him back to work and improved his standard of living today.*

## **What can you expect from Vocational Rehabilitation?**

Vocational Rehabilitation begins with an Assessment and report under the Rehabilitation Code published by the International Underwriting Association. The APIL Best practice guide<sup>5</sup> has good advice for claims managers and on active rehabilitation:

- Pro-active involvement, identifying appropriate actions
- Communicating at an early stage
- Making contact with appropriate rehabilitation providers
- Considering Immediate Needs Assessment

The Better Regulation Task Force<sup>6</sup> found that “rehabilitation” includes combinations of

- A range of medical and psychological treatments and specialized therapies
- Accurate early assessment and diagnosis
- Ergonomic support
- Graduated return to work
- Retraining
- Counselling e.g. for stress
- Work placement

## **Selecting an appropriate rehabilitation consultant**

Effective Vocational Rehabilitation professionals identify the shortest and lowest risk way back in to work. They will be skilled at assessing claimant motivation, functional tolerances and barriers for a return to work. They are able to use a wide range of rehabilitation strategies and clinical and vocational resources and can provide case management

*Core skills of Vocational Rehabilitation Professionals include:*

- *Assessment of work potential*
- *Identification of barriers to a return to work*
- *Selection of appropriate rehabilitation activities*
- *Active case management of goal orientated, individual programs*
- *Matching functional, psychological and physical tolerance against the job*
- *Communication, active listening and problem solving skills*
- *Access to local knowledge of clinical, vocational, community public and private resources*
- *Vocational counseling*
- *Psychometric testing*
- *Transferable or occupational skills analysis*
- *Worksite assessment*
- *Graded return to work planning*

## So what can Rehabilitation Network Limited offer?

RNL self evaluation against best practice and research evidence

Referral Types	Evidence	RNL
Claimant expresses some motivation to RTW	Long standing contracts & working arrangements with insurers specializing in RTW rehabilitation & job retention claims	✓
Claims Management	On-going customer referrals for TPD claims, TSA's, ADL Assessments	✓
<b>Organisation Structure</b>		
Focus on RTW outcomes	High return to work outcomes for cases assessed as benefiting from vocational rehabilitation input	✓
Rights & responsibilities	Permission given for report / rehab plan / progress report to be given to claimant	✓
Qualified staff	All staff professionally qualified and most holding degree, masters or PHD qualification	✓
Training & supervision	Online training facility, individual mentoring,	✓
Multi-disciplinary approach	Multi-disciplinary team including – Occupational Therapists, Nurses, Physiotherapists, Social Workers, Psychologists, Counsellors	✓
Acceptance & management of referrals	Management information systems in place. Online and hard copy referral forms, allocation system in place. Standards to acknowledge referral acceptance and visit date	✓
Case load management	Consultant guidance on recommended case load size. Acceptance based on capacity	✓
Rehab Plan reviews	3 monthly review mechanism in place	✓
Regular consultation	Number of weekly contacts recorded. Monthly progress reports for case managed claimants	✓
Assistance to identify alternative work	Access to vocational counsellors within the team	✓
Program closure	Program closure format and standard letter	✓
<b>Consultant Skills</b>		
Assess work potential	Online training module 1, case discussion	✓
Barriers to RTW	Online training module 2, report review	✓
Rehabilitation strategies	Online training module 2, rehab plan review	✓
Rehabilitation planning	Online training module 3, monitor case progress	✓
Local knowledge	Online training module 4, national representation	✓
Job matching	Online training module 5, vocational mentoring	✓
Communication	Online training modules 5 & 6, GRTW review	✓

<sup>1</sup> ABI 'Care and Good Health – Improving Health in the Workplace, December 2005

<sup>2</sup> 'Vocational services for people with severe mental health problems: Commissioning guidance' DWP and the Department of Health February 2006 – identifies good practice in rehabilitation generally

<sup>3</sup> ABI 'Care and Good Health – Improving Health in the Workplace, December 2005

<sup>4</sup> Prime Minister's Strategy Unit 2005

<sup>5</sup> Association of Personal Injury Lawyers Best Practice Guide on Rehabilitation 2004

<sup>6</sup> Edited from Better Regulation Taskforce, Better Routes to Redress, May 2004