

**Press Release**

**For immediate release**

**10 June, 2010**



**Anxiety UK secures Big Lottery funding to help people back into work**

**Despite numerous government initiatives many individuals on long term sickness benefits are still out of work. Anxiety UK has found a creative way to reduce this problem, by supporting those on sickness benefits for anxiety and depression to help others get back into work through a peer mentoring scheme.**

Recent evidence suggests that work can be good for health, reversing the harmful effects of long-term unemployment and prolonged sickness absence. Yet much of the current approach to the treatment of people of working age, including the sickness certification process, reflects an assumption that illness is incompatible with being in work.

The Confederation of British Industry estimates that 33% of working days lost due to sickness are accounted for by long-term sickness absence, costing £3.8 billion a year. Staying off work can lead to long-term absence and job loss, alongside a loss of confidence, de-skilling, social exclusion and mental health issues.

It is known that volunteering provides a positive first step in a person's recovery and journey back into long term employment. Anxiety UK, the UK's leading anxiety charity, has found that 65% of individuals that volunteered with the organisation last year managed to secure paid work. On the basis of this the charity has recently secured funding of £151,828 from the Big Lottery Fund to launch a peer mentoring employment project. The project will pair individuals with anxiety and depression with someone who is further into their journey towards recovery. In supporting one another peer mentors and mentees will identify personal goals around training and work which will be worked towards through a programme of coaching and mentoring.

Catherine O'Neill, Anxiety UK Service Manager, said: "We have had contact from a range of individuals who have felt pressurised by existing employment projects to move forward at a pace that is not suitable for them. This has caused such individuals immense distress and has often been the trigger for relapse. Feedback that we have had from our volunteer team over the years has been that volunteers derive immense benefit in terms of their own mental health through being able to support others through their volunteering activities at Anxiety UK."

Jo is a volunteer with Anxiety UK. She said:

*“Volunteering has helped me to put my coping skills into practice whilst making me feel like I am contributing to society. It has also helped to reduce the stigma around being unemployed. In volunteering at Anxiety UK I have been able to go at my own pace which has allowed me to develop coping skills. Employment organisations often have their own agenda and timescale about getting people back to work and don’t take into account that when there is a mental health problem involved any pressure put on individuals, for example, signing up to interviews etc can make anxiety symptoms worse.”*

## **Ends**

## **Contact**

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**Please let me know if you cover this story, as we are a small charity unable to afford media monitoring.**

**Images/ Case studies/ Interviews with spokespeople available.**

## **Notes to Editors**

### **Anxiety UK**

Anxiety UK is a national registered charity formed in 1970 by a sufferer of agoraphobia for those affected by anxiety disorders, and today is the leading authority on anxiety disorders and phobias in the UK. We are still a user-led organisation, run by sufferers and ex-sufferers of anxiety disorders.

Anxiety disorders are common and treatable, and Anxiety UK works to relieve and support those living with these conditions by providing information, support and understanding via an extensive range of services, including fast access to reduced cost 1:1 therapy services. The Anxiety UK helpline alone receives over 16,000 calls a year from people suffering from phobias and anxiety disorders.

We provide support to people with any anxiety condition, or specific phobia such as fear of spiders, blushing, vomiting, being alone, public speaking, heights - in fact, any fear that stops people from living their lives to the full.

### **Big Lottery Fund (BIG)**

- **The money awarded to Anxiety UK is from BIG’s Reaching Communities funding programme**
- Under Reaching Communities, the Big Lottery Fund awards grants between £10,000 and £500,000 to projects that offer people better life chances, build stronger communities, develop improved rural and urban environments and improve health and well being.
- The Big Lottery Fund (BIG), the largest distributor of National Lottery good cause funding, is responsible for giving out half the money raised for good causes by the National Lottery.
- BIG is committed to bringing real improvements to communities and the lives of people most in need and has been rolling out grants to health, education,

environment and charitable causes across the UK since June 2004. The Fund was formally established by Parliament on 1 December 2006.

- Since the National Lottery began in 1994, 28p from every pound spent by the public has gone to good causes. As a result, over £24 billion has now been raised and more than 330,000 grants awarded across arts, sport, heritage, charities, health, education and the environment.



## **Ends**

## **Contact**

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## **Example case study**