

**The concept of ‘rehabilitation potential’: What is it? How do we use it? And what do we need to further understand to consider this accurately in mental health practice?**

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‘Rehab potential’ (RP) is a term that is frequently used within mental health (MH) services when discussing a particular service user’s potential response to rehabilitation-focussed interventions. This can often be used quite freely as means to deny somebody access to a particular MH service or a specific type of intervention within a service – “this person lacks rehab potential”. Although this term can be used often, our understanding within the context of MH practice can be considered vague.

When accurate predictions are made regarding an individual’s perceived RP, it can have the potential to not only enhance their rehabilitation process, but also set them on course for a fulfilling life, where they can live as independently as possible. However, inaccurately predicting a person’s RP can have devastating consequences. This can include being denied access to much needed rehabilitation services, condemning individuals to long-term care services that lack a rehabilitation focus and may actually not be necessary as well as subsequently de-skilling individuals further. Obviously this will also bear personal consequences to these individuals such as a reduced feelings of control, autonomy, well-being and potentially, quality of life.

In other areas of healthcare, thoughts have already started to emerge around what factors specifically contribute to an individual’s RP. This must now be the case in MH. The aim of this poster is to further raise awareness of this issue and to consider the steps that need to be taken in order to clarify this concept with specific consideration to mental health practice.