



Performance & Outcomes Framework for SMI IPS Services

Contents

1. Summary	1
2. Introduction	2
3. Recommended Key Performance Indicators for IPS	2
4. Key Clarifications	3
4.1 Access vs Vocational Profile Start	3
4.2 Individuals whose IPS support spans multiple reporting periods	4
4.3 Employed at Referral	5
4.4 People returning to the service – IPS Grow Reporting Tool	6
5. Metrics, Definitions, and Guidance	7
6. IPS Grow Reporting Tool mandatory metrics and definitions	9

1. Summary

This guide outlines Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) recommended for IPS services and provides some clarifying messages about metrics used by NHS England and IPS Grow.

Recommended KPIs for established Employment Specialists:

- 40 Vocational Profile (VP) starts per year.
- 40% of unemployed people who start a VP move into employment.
- 65% of unemployed people who start a VP and move into employment, sustain that employment for 13 weeks or more.

IPS access measured through the Mental Health Services Data Set:

- There is no 'carry over' of access in MHSDS from one financial year to another (e.g. from March to April).
- Access is counted once in a 12-month period unless the person is discharged, re-referred and accesses again in that timeframe.
- Access is counted again if someone receives support for more than 12 months (e.g. a new 12-month period).

IPS Grow Reporting Tool VP starts:

- VP starts in the IPS Grow Reporting Tool count each individual only once. This means the same person is not counted more than once across financial years.
- To provide the fairest and most accurate benchmark of how effectively IPS services help people into work, job starts and sustainment outcomes for people who are accessing support in a new financial year are still included in employment rate calculations and performance monitoring.
- People who are re-referred for IPS support are only counted as a new referral and VP start where there has been a defined break in engagement.

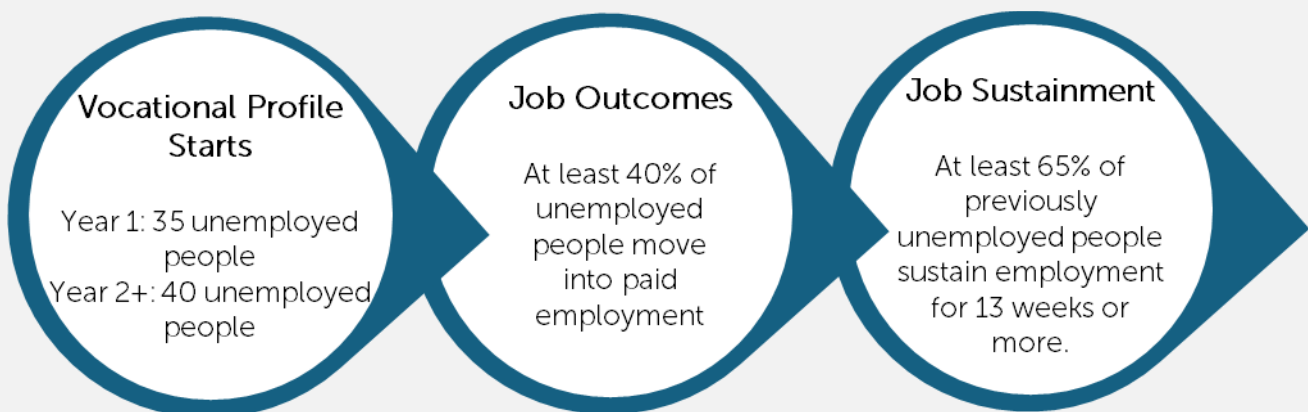
2. Introduction

This guide has been created in partnership with high-fidelity IPS services to provide comprehensive guidance on key performance indicators (KPIs) and targets for both new and established services. It acts to also define key IPS metrics that underpin a continued focus on quality service provision.

This guide is intended for a broad range of audiences involved in IPS delivery and oversight. That includes Service Leads and Managers, Employment Specialists and Team Leads, data, quality and performance staff, and commissioners or system partners seeking clarity on IPS metrics.

The KPIs that are set out in this guidance relate to people who enter the IPS service as unemployed. Established full time Employment Specialists - those in post for 12 months or more - should support a minimum of 40 unemployed clients annually, with the objective of helping a minimum of 40% secure employment (pro-rated for part-time staff). While Employment Specialists may also assist people who enter the service employed (employment retention clients), these clients do not count towards the unemployed client targets or employment outcome goals. This ensures a primary focus on assisting unemployed individuals in finding employment, while still recognising the critical role of employment retention services, thereby creating a comprehensive approach to employment support. Employment retention outcomes are monitored separately in addition to the targets laid out below. Please see our [Employment Retention Guidance](#) for more information.

3. Recommended Key Performance Indicators for IPS



4. Key Clarifications

Before setting out the detailed definitions and guidance below, this section addresses clarification for a number of key IPS metrics. These clarifications are intended to support accurate interpretation of the KPIs and provide shared understanding where metrics interact. Readers are encouraged to review this section before referring to the detailed metric definitions.

4.1 Access vs Vocational Profile Start

Access and Vocational Profile (VP) starts serve distinct but complementary purposes within IPS.

As part of His Majesty's Treasury (HMT) funding for the expansion of IPS services, NHS England (NHSE) is monitoring access to IPS services through the Mental Health Services Data Set (MHSDS). The metric used for this is MHS116 - 'Number of referrals that accessed Individual Placement Support (IPS) in the reporting period'. This metric counts referrals to an IPS service who also have a 'clinical contact' with an IPS service in the 12 months up to the end of the reporting period. The referral can be made at any time and does not need to have been made in the 12-month reporting period.

A qualifying 'clinical contact' must be more than an administrative activity. For example, booking an appointment is an administrative activity and would not count towards access. A clinical contact must involve meaningful engagement. For example, if a person is at the start of their IPS journey, this could be a meeting to begin a VP or action plan. If a person has started working, it could be a meeting to provide in-work support. Contacts must be delivered face-to-face, by telephone, or via video consultation, and recorded as attended in line with [IPS guidance for submitting data to MHSDS](#).

Access is counted once in the 12-month reporting period. Further contacts within the same 12-month reporting period do not generate additional access. However, if an individual is discharged and subsequently re-referred and seen again within the same 12-month period, this will count as a new access.

MHSDS is an official statistic selected by HM Treasury to measure engagement with IPS. IPS Grow's metric of a new engagement on IPS is a referral followed by a VP start. VP starts are used internationally as a consistent, shared measurement enabling fair benchmarking across services and cohorts. Measuring employment rates as a proportion of VP starts – the people an IPS service

meaningfully engages – is a fairer benchmark of how effective an IPS service is at supporting unemployed people into work. Measuring employment rates on the basis of MHSDS access could artificially deflate employment rates, making it appear IPS services are less effective at supporting people into work than they truly are (e.g. by including people in employment rate calculations who accessed IPS but did not go on to meaningfully engage in the service).

NHSE has set national ambitions for the number of people with severe mental illness (SMI) who access IPS each year, as outlined in the [Medium Term Planning Framework](#). IPS Grow can support ICBs to translate the national ambition into local IPS access targets and model workforce requirements to meet targets. IPS Access Targets for each ICB can be found [here](#).

Additional guidance and information on the MHSDS IPS access metric is available via:

- NHS England [Infographic](#) explaining IPS Access metric.
- NHS England quick [guide](#) to submitting IPS MHSDS data.
- NHS England [IPS dashboard](#) (on NHS Futures).
- NHS England [Mental Health Core Data Pack](#) (on NHS Futures).

4.2 Individuals whose IPS support spans multiple reporting periods

3.2.1 Access (MHSDS)

Consistent with other programmes, NHSE has moved from a year-to-date (financial year) IPS access metric, to a 12-month rolling metric for IPS access. This means there is no ‘carry-over’ from one financial year to the next.

MHSDS counts IPS referrals who have a ‘clinical contact’ within the reporting period. For the MHSDS access metric, the reporting period is a 12-month rolling period ending in the reporting month (e.g. the reporting period March 2026 covers the time period April 2025 to March 2026). Access is counted again if they receive support for over 12 months as this contact would be in a new distinct 12-month reporting period.

For example:

A person is referred and had a clinical contact in January 2025. They would be counted as ‘access’ in MHSDS in the reporting period month ending January 2025 (e.g. Feb 2024 to January 2025). This person continued to have clinical contacts with the IPS service throughout 2025 and into January

2026 (and had not been discharged or re-referred at any point). They would be counted as access again in the reporting period month ending January 2026. (e.g. Feb 2025 to January 2026).

3.2.2 VP starts (IPS Grow Reporting Tool)

VP starts in the IPS Grow Reporting Tool count each individual only once. This means the same person is not counted more than once across financial years, unless they are discharged and re-referred after a specific period time (See 3.4). However, to provide the fairest and most accurate benchmark of how effectively IPS services help people into work, job starts and sustainment outcomes for people who are accessing support in a new financial year are still included in employment rate calculations and performance monitoring.

For example:

A person starts a VP on 1st March 2025 (Q4 24/25) but does not secure employment until 1st August 2025 (Q2 25/26) and remains in their employment.

Metrics that are counted:

- The VP start would be counted in Q4 24/25. It **would not** be carried over and counted in Q1 (25/26).
- The job start **would be** counted in Q2 25/26.
- The job sustainment **would be** counted at 13 weeks (Q3 25/26) and 26 weeks (Q4 25/26).

Financial year carry-over is captured on the IPS Grow Reporting Tool for provider reference and caseload management purposes (e.g. 'for local use'). While they do not feed into performance metrics, they provide important context for managing workload and reflecting time unlimited support for those accessing IPS support.

4.3 Employed at Referral

An employed referral includes anyone who is already in paid employment at the point of referral for IPS support, regardless of whether their goal is employment retention, job change, or job progression.

[NHS England guidance](#) outlines that up to 25% of those accessing IPS support can be employed when referred. However, people who were employed at the point of accessing IPS are in addition to the VP targets set within this guide.

4.4 People returning to the service – IPS Grow Reporting Tool

To ensure consistent and accurate reporting, people who are re-referred for IPS support are only counted as a new referral and VP start where there has been a defined break in engagement. This reflects the start of a new period of IPS support rather than a continuation of existing work.

For SMI service providers, a person is counted as a new referral if the new referral date is more than three months since their discharge date (12 weeks, 85 days or more). To ensure a new VP start is captured by the IPS Grow Tool the IPS team should:

1. Create a new row within the IPS Grow Reporting Tool spreadsheet.
2. Retain the same client ID from the initial referral in the new row.
3. Change the referral date to reflect the date of re-referral.

If IPS teams want to have a count of the number of unique individuals, they can do this by counting the unique values in their 'local system client ID' column on their spreadsheets.

5. Metrics, Definitions, and Guidance

Metric and data source	Definition	Metric guidance & Target
Access (MHSDS)	This metric counts the number of referrals to an IPS service (made at any time, that have not been discharged) that have a 'clinical contact' in the 12 months up to the end of the reporting month.	<p>Regional and ICB level access targets have been published by NHS England: IPS Expansion Indicative Trajectories and Funding Final - NHS England National Adult and Older Adult Mental Health Programme - Futures</p>
Vocational Profile Starts (IPS Grow Reporting Tool)	<p>This is the date the Vocational Profile is started.</p> <p>This metric indicates the point at which meaningful IPS employment support begins. The aim of the Vocational Profile is to explore and identify the persons job goals.</p>	<p>Year 1 – a minimum of 35 unemployed people (new Employment Specialist or new service).</p> <p>Year 2 – a minimum of 40 unemployed people.</p> <p>For ESs or services in their first year, pro-rata based on ES/service start date.</p> <p>The first three months of the ES role should focus on training, building caseloads, and building proficiency in employer engagement which is reflected in the reduction of year 1 VP starts.</p> <p>The above figures do not include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • people who are employed when they are referred to an IPS service • People whose support is carried over from the previous financial year.

Job Start Date (IPS Grow Reporting Tool)	This is the date the person began their first paid competitive job since joining the IPS service (and their second, third, fourth, or fifth job if applicable)	<p>A job start can only be recorded once the person has completed at least four hours of paid work.</p> <p>For people who are self-employed or working zero hour contracts, take the average weekly hours over the first month of work. Hours worked per week can be calculated and updated over time.</p> <p>A person is self-employed if they are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Registered as a sole trader with HMRC Registered as a company <p>Paid work placements and apprenticeships are included.</p>
Job outcomes (IPS Grow Reporting Tool)	This is the number of unemployed people who have moved into work following a VP start.	<p>At least 40% of unemployed people move into paid employment.</p> <p>Where an ES supports a minimum of 40 unemployed people per year, this equates to 16 people starting work.</p> <p>Note: Employment rate calculations do not include multiple jobs for the same person.</p> <p><i>Employment rate = No. of unemployed users into work / no. of unemployed people who have start a Vocational Profile.</i></p>
Job end date (IPS Grow Reporting Tool)	This is the date that the person left employment, e.g. their last working day.	To support accurate automatic calculation of sustainment outcomes, ensure a job end date is recorded for each job.
13 and 26 week sustainment	This is the number of weeks that an individual has sustained paid	At least 65% of previously unemployed people who enter paid employment sustain employment beyond 13 weeks.

(IPS Grow Reporting Tool)	employment following their job start date.	<p>Please use the IPS Grow Data Tool for automatic sustainment calculations.</p> <p>Sustained employment is measured over the same job or multiple jobs.</p> <p>Breaks in employment for people with multiple jobs must be less than 6 weeks. If a gap of more than 6 weeks occurs, the clock will reset, and sustainment will be calculated from the start date of the subsequent job.</p> <p>We recommend only counting one sustainment outcome per person for each milestone (13 or 26 weeks).</p>
Caseload Size (IPS Grow Reporting Tool)	This is the number of active people on caseload.	<p>It is recommended that established ESs maintain an active caseload of 20-25.</p> <p>An active person is defined as someone who has been in contact with the service during the last four weeks and is engaged in their Vocational Action Plan.</p>

6. IPS Grow Reporting Tool mandatory metrics and definitions

Metric	Definition and guidance
Local system unique client ID	<p>This is a unique client ID that will help identify duplicate entries. This cannot be their NHS or National Insurance number.</p> <p>The duplicate client ID cell will turn red if there is another client with the same local system client ID. Duplicate IDs are only permitted where the same client has been re-referred more than once. Please see note on re-referrals on p.6.</p>
Ethnicity	This is the persons ethnicity which aligns with UK census categories.

Employment Specialist (ES) initials	<p>Initials of the ES who received the referral and/or will be working with the person.</p> <p>For ESs with the same initials - please include the initials of their middle name to differentiate between the two.</p> <p>When there is a change in ES – all relevant information must be passed to the ES now actively supporting the person. This includes retaining the original referral, VP, and job start dates. This ensures continuity of support and avoids duplicating activity.</p>
Referral date	This is the date the referral is received by the ES.
Employment Status upon referral	This refers to whether the person was in paid employment at the time of referral. All people receiving employment retention support should be assigned to the 'Employed' status, even if they are seeking a new job and/or are currently off sick.
Date of first face to face employer contact	This is the date of the first face to face contact with an employer, either by the person receiving IPS support or by the ES on behalf of the person.
Discharge date	<p>This is the date the person was discharged from the ESs caseload. This should only be used for people who have a VP start date. Closed referrals do not need a discharge date.</p> <p>Sustainment figures continue to be calculated past the discharge date. If you are no longer in regular contact with the person and can no longer confirm that they are in a job that you know they have started, please enter your last date of contact with them under the "job end date" column for that job.</p>
Number of people on caseload	This is the number of active people on caseload. An active person is defined as someone who has been in contact with the service during the last four weeks and is engaged in their Vocational Action Plan or In-Work Support Plan.

IPS Grow Reporting Tool active caseload definitions can be found [here](#).

Social Finance

3rd Floor, Colechurch House, London Bridge Walk,
London SE1 2SX

Telephone: +44 (0)20 7770 6836

Email: support@ipsgrow.org.uk

ipsgrow.org.uk