# ReCONNECT podcast transcript: Episode 2 – Understanding financial services

## 9 November 2018

**Host, Josh:** Hi there and welcome to our ReturnToWorkSA podcast. My name is Josh Penley Churchill and I'm the Program Coordinator for Scheme Support at ReturnToWorkSA.

In today's episode we're unpacking our ReCONNECT product a little more by exploring financial support services.

So, we know that the ReCONNECT product can help facilitate connection and conversations between ReCONNECT participants and the financial support services that they offer. But what does that actually mean and what do these different organisations do.

I'm joined again by Darren Smith; he's one of our ReCONNECT advisors who's going to help explain things in a bit more detail for us. Darren, thanks for coming in again and chatting with us.

**Darren:** Hello Josh, glad to be here.

**Josh:** So Darren, I'm a ReCONNECT client and you're helping me out with a few different things and you've suggested hooking me up with financial support services. What are you talking about when you say financial support services?

**Darren:** Sure, so Josh, financial support services is really a bit of an umbrella term for a range of services and products that are available to people, and that ranges from financial counselling which, as the name suggests, is really one-on-one support where people sit down with a financial counsellor and talk through the issues they have with a view to perhaps putting a plan in place to help them through the situation they're in through the people accessing resources that are freely and openly available on the internet. That could be a range of products that help them put together a budget or plan for a retirement and see how much superannuation they've got and whether that'll carry them through to their intended retirement age.

**Josh:** So, ReCONNECT doesn't offer these financial services directly do they? All you're doing is pointing people in the right direction and facilitating that contact.

**Darren:** That's right Josh, ReCONNECT doesn't provide financial support or counselling directly, you're quite right. We actually are responsible for helping people link up or make contact with the relevant support agencies which have all the relevant expertise in order to be able to help people out with their circumstances.

**Josh:** So, what's the difference then between financial advisor and a financial counsellor because they're not the same thing are they?

**Darren:** You're right Josh, they're not the same thing. In very broad terms you could say that a financial advisor, generally speaking, helps people grow their money, whereas a financial counsellor typically will help people who are experiencing some financial hardship and work with them to try and organise their finances, work out what the best options are, and plan out some sort of approach to managing their current circumstances with the view to hopefully getting on top of them at some time into the future.

**Josh:** Cool, so ReCONNECT as I understand it, you only work with counsellors, right? You don't work with advisors.

**Darren:** Generally speaking yes. You can probably appreciate Josh there the majority of our clients are referred to or come to ReCONNECT when their entitlements on the work injury insurance scheme cease. So, take for example when people's income supports is about to end. Naturally, finances is an issue that they will most likely need to address so we're typically working with people who either are or probably likely to experience a degree of financial hardship. Most commonly we will talk to people about potentially accessing financial counselling services, amongst other things.

**Josh:** Cool, so that's a free service? Free, independent, confidential, and it's more about discussing the management of your finances as opposed to giving you money?

**Darren:** Absolutely. That's an important point, Josh. The financial counselling is really, as you've suggested, about discussing where a person's at and what options are available to them to help manage what's happening with their finances at that point of time. It's not really about giving money as such, and certainly ReCONNECT aren’t in a position to fund things and financial counselling services aren't either. It's really about helping with management.

**Josh:** Cool, so who or what are some of the organisations that you work with?

**Darren:** Commonly people interested in accessing financial counselling will, as a first port of call, refer to the national debt hotline and they actually have interpreting services available to people as well. So, when people make the call to them they'll actually get speak to a financial counsellor in the first instance, and that's usually people's first call or port of call. And I guess there's a couple of things that can happen after that. Not uncommonly, people may find that the person they speak to over the phone will then look to hook them up with another meeting with a local financial counsellor within their area. So, people can often find themselves being set up with another appointment to go in to speak to someone locally and discuss what's going on.

**Josh:** And are there other organisations or resources that you can recommend or point out?

**Darren:** Sure. So, if you take a step back then from the actual direct counselling approach, which we've just discussed, there’s the MoneySmart website and that has a whole stream of articles, tools and resources that let people go in and say set up a budget. There's articles about retirement planning and superannuation, and it's really I guess a bit of a go to for getting unbiased and impartial information about financial issues as such.

Equally too, Centrelink. Centrelink actually have financial seminars as well and they're available for any member in the community to go along and learn more about preparing for a retirement and superannuation issues and stuff like that. So, people can certainly go to the Centrelink website and type in ‘financial information services’ and see where they’re available.

Equally too, Concessions SA is another organisation that people can contact and have a chat to them about what sort of concessions they might be entitled to as well and they're available online by typing in ‘Concessions SA’ into Google or a search engine to find contact details for them.

**Josh:** So there are a few different options out there. Can you work with more than one of these organisations at one time or am I restricted to only partnering with one?

**Darren:** I can't see why not Josh. I mean, I guess like most things the more information you can gather from a variety of sources the better off you are in the better place you are to make decisions about your future. Naturally, if you're working with a particular financial counsellor it's probably a courtesy to just mention if you’re going to talk to someone else. But I don't think there are really any restrictions as such it's really about trying to get as much information as you can to help you make good decisions for the circumstances you're confronted with.

**Josh:** So, if financial management is all about learning to use and manage the finances that I have, I understand that. But what if I'm in dire straits? What if I have no finances to manage, what are my options there?

**Darren:** So, naturally Josh for some people unfortunately they will be literally at the end of the road where some people unfortunately don't have any money to perhaps buy just milk, bread and butter, the basics and that, and not really sure when their next meal’s coming. They can certainly approach a financial through the national debt hotline and ask for emergency relief. Commonly, a lot of the local charity organisations such some of those church based ones and that also offer emergency relief services as well. They do have some criteria obviously because they want to make sure that they're providing services to people that are really in need of it. They, at times, can help out with just emergency packs of food and perhaps a bus ticket or something like that, but you know these really are targeted for people that quite literally have perhaps no money in the bank and no access to money and they perhaps haven't eaten for a few days.

**Josh:** So, from a day-to-day point of view how do you interact with financial counsellors?

**Darren:** So, ReCONNECT doesn't interact with financial counsellors directly. Usually the issue about financial counsellors and finance in general will come through as part of a general conversation a ReCONNECT Advisor will have with one of their clients. And as we've discussed previously on the other podcast, we can do that either over the phone or through a face-to-face meeting. So, typically a financial counsellor will provide them with a number for financial counselling and the client then is in a position to be able to go and contact them directly.

So ReCONNECT doesn't actually provide the financial counselling advice as we discussed previously and equally it's always recommended the client actually contacts the organisation as well because they're the experts in their own life and they're the best placed people to be able to respond to any of the questions that the council will have about their particular finances and circumstances.

**Josh:** So where to from here if I want to know more? Who can I contact?

**Darren:** So, certainly you could chat to your ReCONNECT advisor or the ReCONNECT team themselves and our direct number is 8238 5959 or you can email the ReCONNECT team at reconnect@rtwsa.com. As always people can have a chat to their case manager as well and ask about referral to ReCONNECT services. Case managers are able to refer people to us. Alternatively as well as people want if they have access to the internet there's nothing stopping them from typing into search engines such as Google ‘emergency relief’, ‘Centrelink financial information services’, the ‘national debt helpline’ or even ‘money smart’ as well. I think if you use those search terms the search engine will return the most relevant items front-up.

**Josh:** Thanks for your insight today Darren. That does bring us to the end of our podcast today, a nice and short one. If anyone is interested in learning more you can contact Darren and his team via the details he's just provided. Their phone number again is 8238 5959 and their email is reconnect@rtwsa.com. Thanks for your time and till next time, have a great day.