



# **Increasing the numbers of people with learning disabilities in employment**

*The evidence base – best practice guidance for  
local commissioners*

**Increasing the numbers of people with learning disabilities in employment: The evidence base –best practice guidance for local commissioners**

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# Increasing the numbers of people with learning disabilities in employment

*The evidence base – best practice guidance for local commissioners*

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# Introduction

This document sets out a set of principles to guide the way people with learning disabilities are supported in relation to employment. In particular, it considers the provision or commissioning of employment services by local authorities, and sets out the business case for investment as supported employment will save money.

## Policy Context

There has been significant development of policy and in the profile of employment as a mainstream life option for people with learning disabilities since 2001 with *Valuing People* (DH, 2001) and *Valuing People Now* (DH, 2009). The vision as set out in both documents, is “that all people with a learning disability are people first with the right to lead their lives like any others, with the same opportunities and responsibilities, and to be treated with the same dignity and respect. They and their families and carers are entitled to the same aspirations and life chances as other citizens.”

People with learning disabilities want to lead ordinary lives and do the things that most people take for granted, and this includes having a job. However, despite developments in policy, employment levels for people with learning disabilities remain low, with less than 10% of people known to services in paid work and very few of them working more than a few hours a week.

Employment is not the responsibility of any single service or department. The employment rates of people with learning disabilities will only improve if there is a shared expectation that more people with learning disabilities can and will work, and if the adjustments are made in the way services work together to achieve this. This includes local authorities who have a key role to play.

The Coalition Government has endorsed *Valuing People Now* and has stated that employment remains a significant priority for future action. In addition, the Government’s vision for Adult Social Care, as set out in *A Vision for Adult Social Care: Capable Communities and Active Citizens* (DH, 2010), actively encourages the use of personal budgets for employment.

As local authorities review their services in response to fiscal tightening, there is an opportunity to examine what employment support is provided locally and to reallocate funding on effective employment support from day services and education budgets. Local authorities in England spend approximately £660m on day services at a cost of £291 per adult per week<sup>1</sup>. This document sets out the evidence base to support the refocusing of that investment into supported employment.

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<sup>1</sup> *Valuing Employment Now: real jobs for people with learning disabilities*. HMG (June 2009)

# The problems for people with learning disabilities in gaining employment

## Higher levels of unemployment

There are varying estimates available that demonstrate that people with learning disabilities are severely under-represented in the workplace:

- An estimate of 17% of people with learning disabilities in work was made in an English National Survey in 2003/04<sup>2</sup>
- The latest figures from NI 146 shows an overall employment rate for people “known to social services” of 6.4%<sup>3</sup>. This is likely to be closer to 12% for those who are known to social services but have not been assessed or reviewed in the financial year.
- The Labour Force Survey puts the overall employment rate for disabled people at 46%, but the average employment rate for people with severe or specific learning difficulties (a broader category than those receiving social services) over the past two years at 15%<sup>4</sup>

These figures compare with 78% employment for the general population and 46% for the disabled population<sup>5</sup>. Overall, the employment rate for disabled people has been rising, but this has not been the case for the population of people with learning disabilities. As highlighted in the *State of the nation report: poverty, worklessness and welfare dependency in the UK* (Cabinet Office, June 2010), people with learning disabilities have a significantly lower employment rate. There is, therefore, a considerable disadvantage to be overcome if people with learning disabilities are to be more equitably included in the workforce.

## Difficulty learning a job

People with learning disabilities have impairments that are likely to disadvantage them in finding, learning and keeping a job. The majority of people will have problems with speech and language, memory and cognitive processing. It is estimated that between 20% and 33% of adults with learning disabilities known to Councils with Social Services Responsibilities also have autism<sup>6</sup>. Mental ill health is common in people with learning disabilities, and several epidemiological studies have shown higher rates of psychiatric disorder in people with learning disabilities compared with the population as a whole<sup>7</sup>. In addition, people with severe learning disabilities are more likely to experience additional sensory and physical impairments such as poor vision, measurable hearing loss and also epilepsy.

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<sup>2</sup> Commission for Social Care Inspection 2007/08

<sup>3</sup> “Employed” includes people working as an employee or self-employed. “Known to social services” includes people aged 18-64 who were assessed and/or reviewed in the financial year

<sup>4</sup> This average is taken over the last eight quarters of data available from the quarterly Labour Force Survey

<sup>5</sup> Labour Force Survey

<sup>6</sup> Emerson, E. and Baines, S. (2010) *The estimated prevalence of autism amount adults with learning disability in England*. Improving Health and Lives: Learning Disabilities Observatory.

<sup>7</sup> Azam, K. Sinai, A. and Hassiotis, A. (October 2009). Mental ill-health in adults with learning disabilities. *Psychiatry*, Vol 8, 10, 376-381.

While these are barriers to work, evidence shows that this group can be employed with the right, often time-limited, support. The difficulties people face in the key aspects of getting, learning and keeping a paid job include:

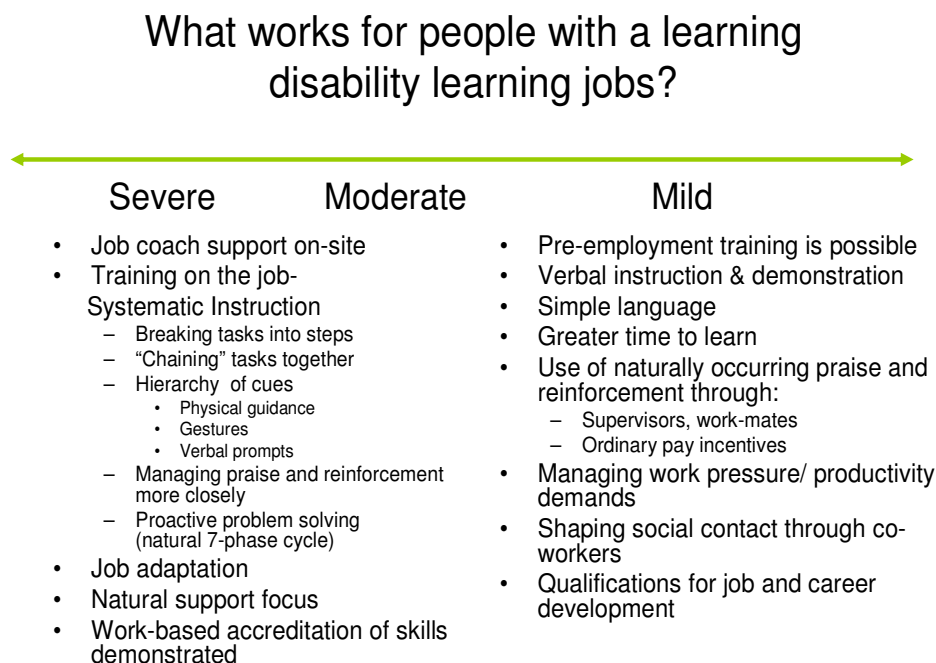
- Ability to understand verbal instruction and to provide information
- A dependency on cues that make it hard to transfer tasks and skills from a training environment to a real workplace
- Need for support to manage changes in the workplace, including work machinery, work materials, co-workers and work role.

These can be overcome with the right model of vocational support offered to meet individual need.

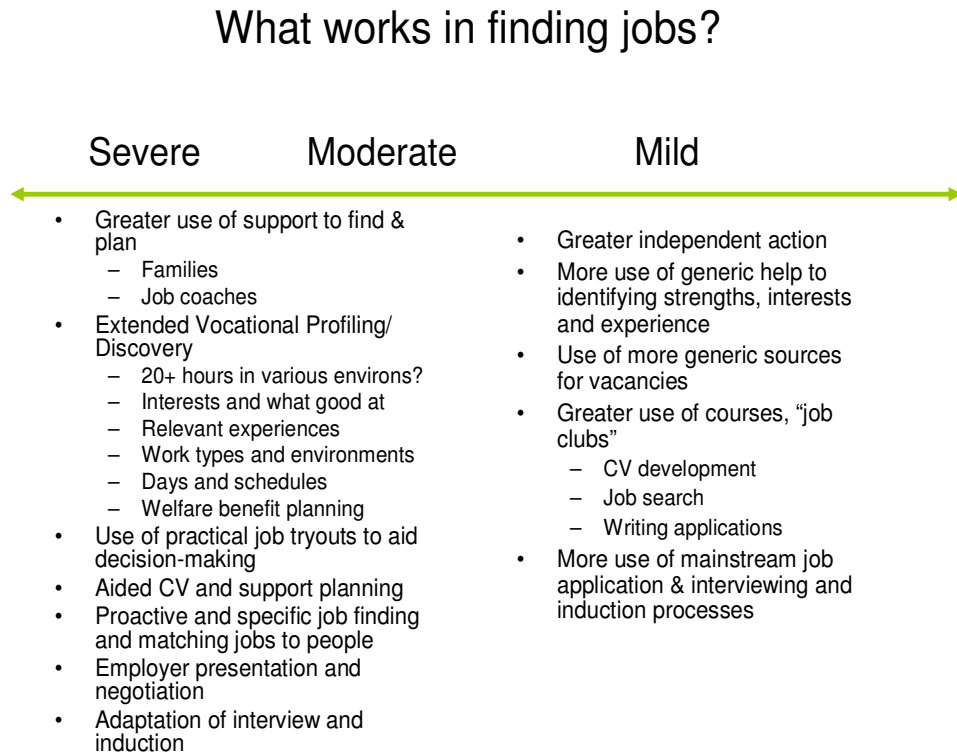
### Shifting the balance

People with learning disabilities need approaches to support them into and in work that reflect their individual needs. Where people have mild levels of learning disabilities, they can learn through effective pre-vocational training offered through some mainstream welfare to work programmes. However, as levels of learning disability increase, pre-vocational and qualifications-based training will become less effective and supported employment strategies will be needed. For the majority of social services registered clients it is likely that a supported employment approach will be needed. The shift required for people with significant levels of cognitive impairment in learning a paid job is summarised in Figure 1. For getting a paid job, this is summarised in Figure 2.

**Figure 1: Implications of a cognitive impairment for people with learning disability learning a paid job**



**Figure 2: Implications of cognitive impairment for people with learning disability finding and keeping a paid job**



For more people with learning disabilities to move into employment, local authorities will need to ensure that the employment support they commission, and the approaches taken to employment within day services, suit the needs of the individual. A shift and reallocation of resources towards supported employment may be required.

## Supported employment

For people with learning disabilities to be able to meet the standard expected by an employer and for the pay rate for the job, the support they receive must reflect the difficulties that the individual faces. Research shows that supported employment is effective for people with learning disabilities because it addresses the real difficulties, outlined above, that many face.

Research going back to the 1970s has shown that people with significant levels of learning disability can be taught complex and sometimes dangerous tasks using effective task training techniques such as “systematic instruction”<sup>8</sup>. The approach starts by getting to know an individual, often referred to as ‘vocational profiling’, ‘person-centred employment planning’ or ‘discovery’. It is a non-traditional, holistic and person-centred approach to assessment,

<sup>8</sup> Beyer, S. and Robinson C. (2009) *A Review of the Research Literature on Supported Employment: A Report for the cross-Government learning disability employment strategy team*. London: Department of Health.

undertaken in partnership, to understand a person's aspirations, skills, needs, abilities, talents, experiences, preferences, and informal supports and connections. This information is used to match individuals to workplaces through analysing jobs that employers can offer to meet their business needs. This approach looks for positive matches between jobs and people and rejects general assessment of whether people can or cannot work, as this question is dependent on the job that is found and the support that is given.

Only when a suitable job match has been found is training given, and it is given on-the-job in that specific workplace to overcome the difficulties people will have in transferring skills. Skilled training and general support are often provided at the workplace by a job coach to ensure the job is performed to the employers' standards. This would include systematic instruction for those who need it. Alternatively or as well, a job coach may assist the employer and their staff to carry out training and support that is effective for the person (known as natural support). Problems that arise at the workplace are tackled there, the onus being on the job coach (or the employer with their help) to resolve the problem, rather than the person.

The success of the model for people with significant learning disabilities has been shown in the US academic and government evaluations since the 1980s, and more recently in the UK and European studies<sup>9</sup>. It is reflected in the guidance on supported employment which has been written and published as part of the employment resources for Valuing People Now (see *Supported Employment and Job Coaching – best practice guidelines – annex 1*).

## Importance of welfare benefits advice

Fear of loss of welfare benefit is a major reported reason that people with learning disabilities and families do not pursue paid employment. A recent study showed that people with learning disabilities known to social services were 95% better off in paid employment than when receiving welfare benefits alone<sup>10</sup>. The average hours worked by people with learning disabilities was 24.2 hours with 94% working over 16 hours or more, with virtually no cross-over between employment and day service attendance. The increased income was due to blending non-means tested welfare benefits with tax credits and pay, and was substantially dependent on the person working 16 hours per week or more.

Local authorities will need to ensure that adequate welfare benefits advice is available to people with learning disabilities and their families to underpin any decision to pursue paid employment. It is important that this advice is based on maximising paid income with welfare benefits and tax credits against the number of hours worked, and that the focus is on the family's situation and not just the person with a learning disability. Calculation of whether a person, and a family, are likely to be better off if the person with a learning disability is in employment is a key element of informed discussion of this as a life choice.

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<sup>9</sup> Beyer, S. and Robinson C. (2009) *A Review of the Research Literature on Supported Employment: A Report for the cross-Government learning disability employment strategy team*. London: Department of Health.

<sup>10</sup> Beyer, S. (2008) *An evaluation of the outcomes of supported employment in North Lanarkshire (2007)*.

Motherwell: North Lanarkshire Social Work Service.

<http://www.valuingpeoplenow.dh.gov.uk/sites/dhvpnweb.rroom.net/files/webfm/Getting%20a%20job%20pages/Publication%20file%20420%20north%20lanarkshire%20supported%20employment%20evaluation.pdf>

## How can supported employment help make financial savings?

Recent studies have been carried out in North Lanarkshire<sup>11</sup> and in Kent<sup>12</sup>. These studies looked at the financial flow-backs when people were supported into work, and whether these outweighed the costs of delivering supported employment. These flow-backs included increases in tax revenue, reductions in welfare benefits and decreased dependency on social care support. There were consistent findings between the North Lanarkshire and Kent studies, and both have demonstrated that investment into supported employment, a relatively small service area, can produce significant savings at the local authority and taxpayer levels.

The studies found that the cost of supported employment was lower than for an equivalent day services place. In the North Lanarkshire Supported Employment service, supported employment cost £7,216 per annum per job compared to £14,998 for a day service place. In Kent, the Kent Supported Employment service cost £9,910 per annum per job compared to £11,200 for a day service place. There are savings of £7,782 and £1,290 respectively. Ongoing costs to maintain a person in employment are considerably lower as additional assistance is only provided to adapt to change at work or for continued career development, and savings increase as more people are supported into work. The savings are much greater when it is taken into account that someone is likely to need a day service place for approximately 50 years.

The studies found that there were additional savings from a taxpayer perspective with the flow-backs. In North Lanarkshire, there was a net saving of £6,894 per person per year; and in Kent, there was a net saving of £3,564 per person per year. If this is looked at for 50 people per year placed in employment, this is a saving of £344,700 and £178,200 respectively.

The differences in cost between day services and supported employment only turn into cost efficiencies if a strategy to help people into paid employment is linked to a reform strategy for day services and other vocational or work training provision.

**It is suggested that Local Authorities should be looking at this research when considering their reductions in budgets, as linking supported employment development to wider reform strategies can generate considerable savings as well as delivering better outcomes for those who are reliant upon social care services.**

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<sup>11</sup> Beyer, S. (2008) *An evaluation of the outcomes in supported employment in North Lanarkshire*. North Lanarkshire Social Work Service

<sup>12</sup> Kilsby, M and Beyer S. (2010) *A financial cost: benefit analysis of Kent Supported Employment: establishing a framework for analysis – interim report*. Kent Social Services

# Issues for local authorities and commissioners to consider

## **The importance of transition from school and joint working between children and adult services**

When young people are at school, their motivation and expectations for future employment can be significantly improved if they have access to information, vocational placement experiences and discussions and plans about future work. Partnership working, between adult and children's social services and education, needs to be effective in order to support young people with learning disabilities and their families in their vocational decision-making. Assessment and planning for adult social care should include consideration of employment, and build on any vocational training and work experience carried out while young people are in school.

People with learning disabilities are often excluded from work experience while at school or restricted in what work experience they can do. Partnership working between education and supported employment providers can help to promote work experience, with support for people with learning disabilities in ordinary workplaces as a prime strategy. Pursuing evening and weekend jobs while young people are still at school, with appropriate support, can be an important way to help them believe work is possible for them and explore the work they might wish to do. Local authorities should explore with other partners how job coaching support might be made available through employment services to assist young people follow the natural course of early employment experiences.

Research shows that on-the-job learning is more effective than classroom-based learning in securing jobs for people with learning disabilities.<sup>13</sup> As found in the Getting a Life demonstration project, people with learning disabilities and their families are often guided towards out-of-area residential colleges and further education courses in year 10, which do not lead to employment.

Further education that includes supported employment approaches such as job coaching, training in systematic instruction and work-based learning in the curriculum can significantly increase employment outcomes, particularly if they have a strong partnership with a supported employment service. The Special Educational Needs and Disabilities Green Paper will build on learning from Getting A Life, Project Search and other demonstration projects as it explores how we might set up a supported internship model to help young people with SEN and disabilities secure employment

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<sup>13</sup> Beyer, S. and Robinson, C. (2009) *A Review of the Research Literature on Supported Employment: A Report for the cross-Government learning disability employment strategy team*. London: Department of Health.

## Work experience

There is a solid evidence base for work experience contributing to subsequent employment.<sup>14</sup><sup>15</sup> Work experience has been found to help identify the workplace supports that young people with learning disabilities need in later employment.<sup>16</sup> Research also suggests that a number of elements of work experience programmes help ensure quality outcomes, and local authorities promoting work experience for people with learning disabilities should ensure that it is designed in line with good practice:

- Work experience projects in schools and colleges, and for adults with learning disabilities should have clear programme goals
- There should be clear roles and responsibilities for worksite staff
- People undergoing work experience should have clear, individualised training plans
- There should be good links between learners, schools and employers where work experience is undertaken as part of transition
- Learning should be on-the-job
- A range of work-based learning opportunities should be offered
- Mentoring should be made available in the workplace
- The person with a learning disability, their family and supporters should have clear expectations of what the work experience is for, and there should be feedback given on achievement of these goals
- There should be assessments to identify the skills, interests and support needs of the person.

Local authorities, supported employment providers and employers should ensure that work experience is time limited, has clear goals, and is directed towards a paid job as the ultimate outcome. Work experience should not continue for months without the aim moving towards a paid job.

## Volunteering

A volunteer is defined by the Department for Work and Pensions as a person who: receives no money, apart from expenses; is not legally obliged to volunteer; is doing something for a not-for-profit organisation; or for someone who is not a family member. It is important that local authorities shape volunteering opportunities in line with these criteria.

Volunteering is an activity in its own right with its own culture and goals. People can achieve many positive outcomes for themselves and society as a volunteer, and there are many good examples of people with learning disabilities volunteering.

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<sup>14</sup> Colley, D., & Jamison, D. (1988). Post school results for youth with disabilities: key indicators and policy implications. *Career Development for Exceptional Individuals*, 21(2), 145-160.

<sup>15</sup> Luecking, R., & Fabian, E. (2000). Paid internships and employment success for youth in transition. *Career Development for Exceptional Children*, 23(2), 205 – 221.

<sup>16</sup> Hughes, C., & Carter E. (2000). *The transition handbook: strategie that high school teachers use that work*. Baltimore: Paul H. Brookes Publishing Company.

Volunteering is often regarded as a useful stepping-stone to a paid job, as it can: provide relevant work experience; help people to practice key work routines and behaviours (i.e. turning up on time, having appropriate dress sense, coping with the social demands of the workplace); identify tasks that they like to do and may be good at; and build a CV. However, the benefits of volunteering in terms of progressing towards paid employment will only be achieved if the placement is set up correctly to deliver them. In fact, if volunteering is not set up to achieve employment at the end, it can reduce people's prospects of employment, taking away valuable time for effective job searching.

If local authorities are pursuing volunteering as an approach, they should ensure that similar clarity is achieved as for work experience, namely: that the type of tasks involved in volunteering is relevant to the person's career path; that goals of the placement are clear and relate to furthering employment prospects; that it is time limited; that appropriate support is available to help the person to learn the volunteering tasks (job coaching may be needed); that information is gathered on the person's emerging employment preferences, preferred learning style and support needs; and that experiences are capitalised upon through the development of a clear CV and provision of references. Use of digital images of people demonstrating work competencies can play a part in creating an effective CV.

People with learning disabilities can be encouraged to volunteer outside of their paid job in their spare time, just as many non-disabled people do. Volunteering should not be presented as an alternative to paid job, but rather as an addition or a pathway to it.

## Supported employment

Supported employment is the model and approach that will deliver the greatest number of employment outcomes for people with a learning disability in receipt of a social service. The Department of Work and Pensions' Work Choice programme provides supported employment, but the Government would not expect this to be the only funding source of supported employment. Supported employment funded by local authorities should complement other vocational approaches funded by a range of agencies. Where other provision does not meet the needs of people with learning disabilities, local authorities should work strategically with their partners such as Jobcentre Plus and Work Choice providers.

## Micro-enterprise and self-employment

Self-employment is emerging as an additional option for people with learning disabilities. The model is based on an individual assessment of the wishes and interests of the person with a learning disability that are then used to design a profit-making venture. A micro-enterprise is a small business created around one person.<sup>17</sup> The primary benefits of a micro-enterprise model are that it:

- Builds on the capacity and assets of people with learning disabilities

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<sup>17</sup> Hogg, J. (2005) *Micro-Enterprises South West: A report on the viability of the US micro-enterprise model and possible implementation across the South West region for the Valuing People Team.*

- Concentrates on people's interests and strengths, and can provide a more flexible employment option than community employment
- Addresses a gap in the self-employed sector of the labour market, where people with a learning disability are not generally present
- Enables people to be more active in their communities through using their earned income from the micro-enterprise
- Is a way of gaining income from a hobby or an interest
- Promotes people with a learning disability as citizens.

Where person-centred plans identify self-employment as a goal, local authorities should consider this as a serious option. Advice and expertise is available through a variety of networks.<sup>18</sup>

## Social enterprise/social firms

Social Firms have as their goal the employment of people who find it hardest to obtain employment, and as such, they need to be considered by local authorities as part of any employment strategy for people with learning disabilities. Local authority social care investment in social firms needs careful consideration. It should not be at the expense of investment into supported employment. Research indicates that supported employment will deliver higher numbers of job outcomes than social firms<sup>19</sup>; and the cost per job outcome can be considerably higher.

First and foremost, a social enterprise/social firm needs to be a business that trades effectively, employs people on good wages, terms and conditions, and has equality of treatment of all staff. Where they are involved in the development of social enterprise/social firms, local authorities should ensure that they meet the core quality criteria as promoted by Social Firms UK, notably.<sup>20</sup>

- At least 50% of the firms turnover is earned through sales of goods and/or services
- That the firm has appropriate legal status
- That it has guiding principles that reflect its employment objectives for people severely disadvantaged in the labour market
- More than 25% of employees are people severely disadvantaged in the labour market (including people with learning disabilities)
- All employees have a contract of employment and market wage at or above the national minimum wage
- Trainees, work experience candidates and volunteers have different programmes and responsibilities to those of employees

## Links to economic regeneration

<sup>18</sup> For example: Foundation for People with Learning Disabilities (2010) *In Business Programme*; and <http://www.mienterprise.org.uk>.

<sup>19</sup> Beyer, S. and Robinson, C. (2009) *A Review of the Research Literature on Supported Employment*

<sup>20</sup> Social Firms UK (2007) *Values Based Checklist as at March 2007*. <http://socialfirmsuk.co.uk/resources/library/balues-based-checklist-version>

Self-employment and micro-enterprise and social enterprise/social firm development are areas that will contribute to driving forward new economic growth in local areas. It is important that these activities are supported by the appropriate part of the local authority that has responsibility for Regeneration and has links to Local Enterprise Partnerships.

## **Partnerships**

Given that employment is not the responsibility of any single service or department, local authorities should adapt a multi-agency approach. Local authorities should actively engage with Jobcentre Plus, Welfare to Work providers, supported employment agencies, schools and colleges, employers and Connexions. In addition, the demonstration sites have shown the importance of involving families and people with learning disabilities. Leadership programmes can help to ensure that people with learning disabilities and family carers are central to identifying what is and is not working, and what needs to change.

## **Personalisation and self-directed support**

The Government's vision for adult social care as set out in *A Vision for Adult Social Care: Capable Communities and Active Citizens* (DH, 2010), actively encourages the use of personal budgets for employment. Local authorities should ensure that employment is prioritised in personal budgets and support planning, and employment is considered before all other life goals. One way of doing this is for local authorities to consider making it a policy that support plans are not signed off if they do not address employment as a priority life goal, and consider employment goals when other life choices are made.

Local authorities should also consider actively encouraging co-funding that allows people to pool funding from their social care budget with additional funding streams such as Access to Work and Work Choice, alongside education budgets (such as Additional Learning Support) for those still in education. There is a need for increased awareness of the different funding streams available to people with learning disabilities to pay for their employment support. The document *Jobs First briefing on funding supported employment with individual budgets*<sup>21</sup> presents the range of funding streams that might comprise an individual budget to pay for employment support.

Local authority commissioners should also consider whether supported employment as presented in the best practice guidelines is available in the market, and has the ability to take personal and individual budgets. There may be a need for commissioners to stimulate the market so that there is choice. In addition, where supported employment is block-contracted, commissioners may need to consider how to move this to fit with Self Directed Support.

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<sup>21</sup> Part of the Valuing People Now employment resource hub

# Annex: Supported Employment and Job Coaching – best practice guidelines

## Introduction

Employment is a priority for people with a learning disability as set out in Valuing People Now. Supported employment is a well-evidenced<sup>22</sup> personalised approach to working with people with significant disabilities, including people with learning disabilities and autism, to access and retain open employment, with support. The Government published a draft definition of supported employment in March 2010 (*Job Coaching or Supported Employment – approach and progress in developing standards*).

A range of stakeholders (including people with learning disabilities, family carers, providers of supported employment and employers) were consulted on the draft definition. The Government would like to thank all who commented and contributed on the draft and on this final document. The full list can be seen in Annex A.

The process has led to a consensus that the terminology that should be used to describe high quality personalised support into and in employment, for people with significant disabilities should be “supported employment”, and a job coach is one of the job titles used to describe people who provide this support.

This document is primarily aimed at supported employment practitioners and commissioners to ensure that more people with significant impairments get and keep jobs. It is also important employers understand that supported employment provides them with a way of realizing the positive benefits of diversity, such as drawing on a wider pool of talent, positively motivating all employees and meeting the needs of a wider customer base.

Although the supported employment and job coaching best practice guidelines have been written as part of the work of Valuing People Now, they apply to all disabled people in supported employment.

## What is supported employment?

Supported employment is an evidence-based and personalised approach to support people with significant disabilities into real jobs, where they can fulfil their employment aspirations, and achieve social and economic inclusion. It should start from age 14 so that people can have meaningful work experience and Saturday jobs, as part of a person-centred employment pathway. Supported employment should achieve the following outcomes:

- real jobs where people have the opportunity to earn equitable wages and other employment-related benefits
- development of new skills

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<sup>22</sup> A Review of the Research Literature on Supported Employment, Steve Beyer and Carol Robinson (2009)

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- social and economic inclusion
- promotion of self-determination, choice and independence
- enhanced self-esteem
- increased consumer empowerment
- increased quality of life where people are treated fairly and with respect.
- Real jobs are those where: wages are paid at the going rate for the job, with the same terms and conditions as all other employees
- the job helps the person to meet their life goals and aspirations
- the role is valued by managers and colleagues
- the job has similar hours and times at work as other employees, with safe working conditions.

Real jobs are provided by different types of employers across the private, public and third sectors. It also includes self-employment, where a disabled individual may need access to specialist support for advice on business start-up, help to spot commercial opportunities and to test and refine the proposition, help to launch the venture and help to grow the business.

The overarching guiding principle of supported employment is that it is designed to support individuals who do not necessarily meet traditional criteria for 'job readiness' or 'employability'. Fundamental to supported employment is that everyone can work, with the right job and the right support. Supported employment agencies should be able to offer a nil rejection policy, as everyone should have the opportunity to work and contribute to society.

The other guiding principles of supported employment are:

- Choice and control – people are presented with a variety of experiences, options and support to achieve their career aspirations. Support is built around an individual, promoting choice. People choose and regulate their own employment support to promote career satisfaction. All options assume that the disabled person can and will be employed.
- Partnership – there is genuine partnership between the person, their family carers, employers, community supports and the provider of supported employment.
- Full inclusion – people are supported to be full and active members of their workforces and wider communities, both socially and economically.
- Rapid job search – intensity of support is provided as appropriate, to ensure that the supported employment effort results in successful jobs in months rather than years.
- Customisation – when the demands of the open jobs market create a barrier, the employment relationship is negotiated to meet the specific needs of employers and job seekers (for example, if no job is likely to be advertised that would provide a good match for the jobseeker)
- Careers – people are supported to enhance their skills, providing opportunities for greater responsibility, compensation and challenge, as part of ongoing career progression and development.

- ‘Natural supports’ – employment support is as unintrusive as possible and fades over time. It builds on, and uses as much as possible, community supports or social capital.
- Long-term support – long-term support is available to employees, employers, family carers and community supports, to ensure people maintain employment stability and achieve career growth.
- Assistive technology – creative solutions are found using assistive technology to increase choice, control and independence.
- Continuous quality improvement – people who receive supported employment are actively involved in developing and evaluating services.
- Right to work in a safe workplace – everyone is supported to work safely,
- underpinned by good risk assessment taking into account the workplace, and an individual’s skills, awareness and capacity.
- Protection of human rights and freedom from abuse – support is provided which prevents discrimination, abuse and neglect and upholds a person’s legal and human rights.

### **Who provides supported employment?**

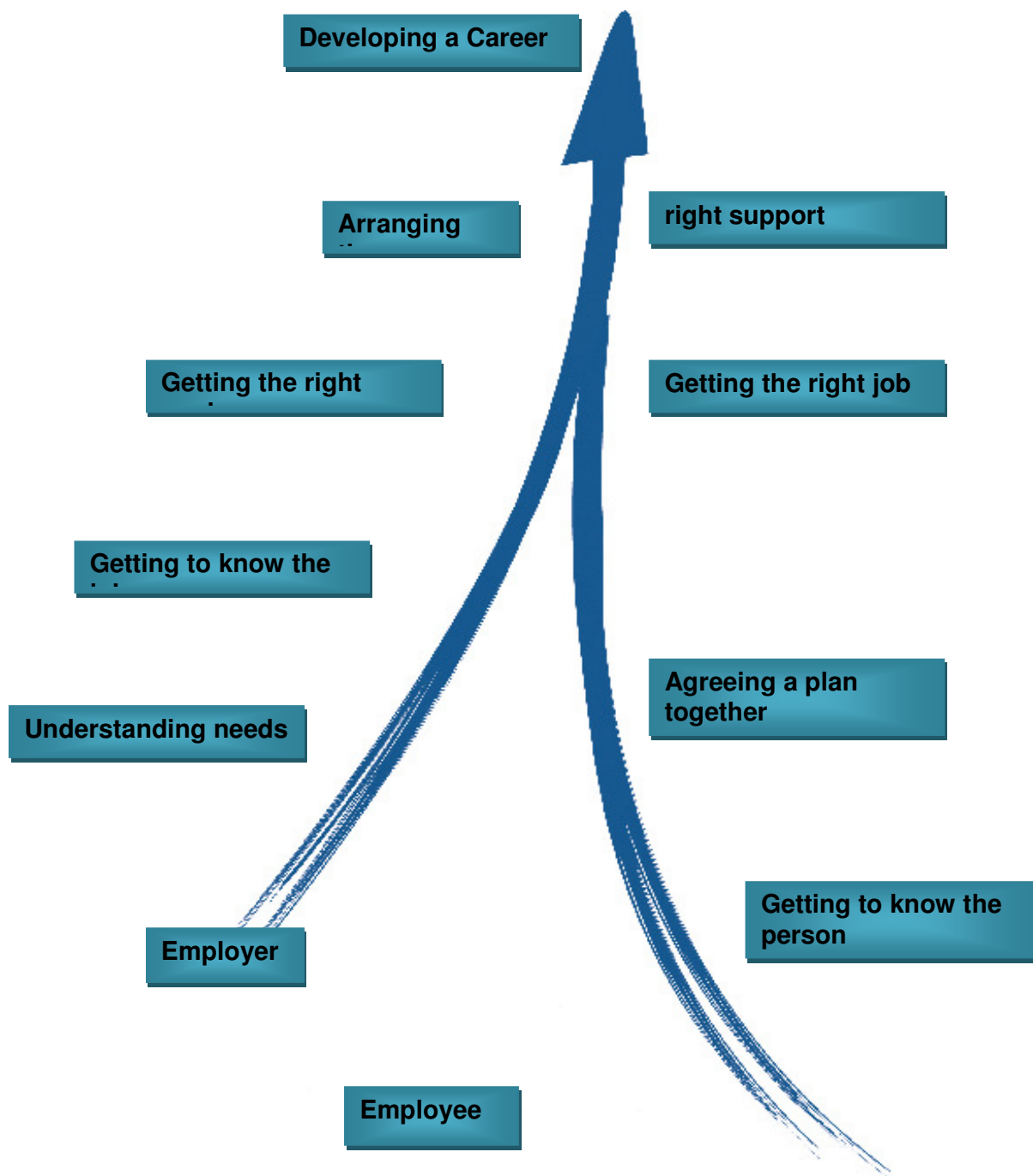
People aged 14 upwards can benefit from supported employment. It can support smooth and seamless transitions from education into employment and, if required, in employment on an ongoing basis. Support can also be provided in work experience as well as in evening and weekend jobs. Support can be provided in whole or in part by schools, further education providers, Adult and Community Learning, Connexions, providers of supported employment, welfare-to-work providers, Jobcentre Plus providers, family carers, day services and community supports.

The people who provide support tend to have a variety of job titles such as job coaches, employment advisers, employment consultants and employment support officers. Jobcentre Plus staff and Disability Employment Advisors are often a key referral route onto supported employment. Support can also be provided by a person’s line manager and colleagues in the work place, which is sometimes called ‘natural supports’.

It is important that everyone involved in providing supported employment is appropriately trained to understand and implement the evidence-based approach set out in these guidelines. There need to be clear protocols in place, to ensure that all information from the supported employment process follows the person (as they will be leading the process), regardless of whom is providing the support.

## Key stages

Supported employment can best be illustrated as follows<sup>23</sup>:



<sup>23</sup> Diagram provided courtesy of British Association for Supported Employment

## The Supported Employment Model

| Work with the employer   | Work with the job seeker/employee  |
|--|--|
| <p><b>Employer engagement</b></p> <p>This starts with researching the local job market and contacting employers that best match the skills and interests of the individual job seeker. It requires a professional approach to promote and sell the business case of a diverse workforce to employers, and secure their commitment to participate fully in the supported employment process.</p>  | <p><b>Job seeker engagement</b></p> <p>This involves identifying those people with learning or other disabilities who aspire to work, preferably in jobs of at least 16 hours per week, (recognising that some people may need to work less than 16 hours or may need to build up their hours over time). Support is gained and provided from family carers and community supports, ensuring all believe that their employment aspirations are achievable. Accessible information is provided to job seekers to develop self-determination and to make informed decisions. It is important that the impact on benefits is discussed from the outset and that solutions are found. This stage should ensure that the job seeker is a full and active participant in the process from the outset and is supported to maintain high levels of motivation to work.</p> |
| <p><b>Understanding needs and identifying vacancies</b></p> <p>An employer’s needs are understood so that they can be good employers of disabled people. It also identifies an employer’s unmet needs and opportunities for customising or developing jobs (jobs that will add value to the employer’s business) for an individual job seeker. The recruitment and retention policies of an employer also need to be understood. A recruitment strategy is agreed that complements existing policies or supports the development of what exists to a more inclusive and beneficial policy for the employer to attract, recruit and retain a diverse workforce.</p> | <p><b>Getting to know you</b></p> <p>This is often referred to as vocational profiling, person-centred employment planning or discovery. It is a non-traditional, holistic and person-centred approach to assessment, undertaken in partnership, to understand a person’s aspirations, skills, needs, abilities, talents, experiences, preferences, and informal supports and connections. Information on benefit income is gathered to ensure a better-off calculation is undertaken. The process is led by the job seeker, to get to know them well enough that the information will lead to a job and an effective support strategy.</p>  |

|   |   |
|---|---|
| <p><b>Getting to know the job</b></p> <p>A job analysis is carried out to understand all aspects of the job, together with the workplace culture and environment. It also involves identifying potential natural supports and begins to build on these.</p> | <p><b>Agreeing a plan together</b></p> <p>A plan is agreed in partnership to find and keep a job that matches a person’s skills, interests and all information gleaned during the ‘getting to know you’ process. It also looks at making sure that people will be financially better off in work. This process identifies each person’s unique pathway into employment, which is led by the job seeker.</p> |
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**Job match**

Employers get the right worker and job seekers get the right job! This may involve developing, designing or customising jobs. This will require negotiation with the employer to agree the reasonable adjustments that are needed for the individual to do the job. It also requires risk assessment to address equality and diversity, health and safety, and safeguarding issues. Both the employer and employee, together with their family carers and community supports, need to be involved in the process so their respective needs are met.

**Arranging the right support**

A person-centred plan is agreed with employee and employer in conjunction with family carers and community supports, which is properly considered and justified to make sure the most ‘natural’ ways of providing support are used. It makes sure that people will get the right support to become valued employees and maintains their health and wellbeing. It makes sure that employers understand how to create workplaces that are supportive of disabled people. Support to employee and employer may include systematic training or structured training (on-the-job training that maximises peoples potential to acquire skills and independence); travel training; advocacy; disability awareness; job re-adjustments; job adaptations; support to be included at work socially; ongoing problem solving; and ongoing development of natural supports.

**Developing a career**

Career development, enhancement opportunities and career progression are agreed with the employee and employer to the benefit of both. Support is provided for employees to benefit from training opportunities and, where appropriate, to work towards qualifications.



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