



WHAT WORKS? – Good practice in transition to employment for young people with learning disabilities

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WHAT WORKS IN TRANSITION TO EMPLOYMENT?

Shaw Trust is a national charity and the largest voluntary sector provider of employment services to disabled and disadvantaged people. Shaw Trust operates a number of services that provide support to young people with and without disabilities to help them explore and improve their chances of getting employment. Together with the Welsh Centre for Learning Disabilities, Shaw Trust successfully approached the Big Lottery in 2004 with a proposal for research. The research work began in July 2004 and ended in October 2007. The main impetus of the project was to look at 'what works' in helping young people with learning disabilities transition from school or college to employment.



More information can be found from the main report (see the resources section). This report provides a summary of the lessons from the study for good practice.

Having a job

Having a job can be very important because it is one of the most common things we do. It provides money to live, brings structure to our days, is a source of social contact and sometimes friendship. It helps us to develop and mature as individuals and, if we are lucky, it can give us fulfilment and satisfaction. The government sees access to a job as a rights issue, having included fair access to employment in the Disability Discrimination Act, and promoted it in all their recent learning disability policies. Most importantly, many people with learning disabilities want to work, and their families want this for them. In our study, a third of people with learning disabilities and half the families we talked to wanted a job as their next step after school or college.

A job is not the only way positive things can be achieved, but for too long it has been an opportunity denied to people with learning disabilities. Currently only 17% of people with learning disabilities have a job in the UK. Many go on to college after school to gain experience and to attempt qualifications. This is positive, but some go because there is no alternative after school. Sadly, too few go on to get a job after college and much positive work at college seems to be wasted.^{1,2}

Some may say that this is to be expected...that people with learning disabilities cannot work. We are learning that this is not true. We have evidence that some people can work with minimal support, more than we once thought. Many more people can work with the right support, and do a good job for their employer. The problem is not about the person, but in the way we often prepare young people with learning disabilities for work at school and college; about the experiences we provide for them to build understanding and confidence; about the support we have available to help them find, learn and keep a job; and how we help employers to support a diverse workforce.

Success is also about how we manage welfare benefits and how we work with families to get the positive results they and the young person want. In short, problems in getting a job are more about us than about people's capacity to do a good job.



The problems to overcome

Our research provided a good overview of the problems that young people and their families face in getting a job, and what can happen if these are overcome. Many concern our perceptions of what people can do, and our lack of aspirations on their behalf. Others concern our understanding of what abilities people need to be employed, what support is needed, and the nature of jobs and workplaces. Many are myths:

- **'People with learning disabilities are unable to do a job that someone will pay them for.'** Clearly this is untrue. Over 30% of people in the government's WORKSTEP programme are people with a learning disability.
- **'People with learning disabilities haven't the stamina to work the hours an employer will need.'** Some people can have mobility and physical problems due to specific conditions. Others can have short attention spans. These can be solved by good job matching. Many more are unfit, not used to applying themselves for long periods of time, and keep hours that are incompatible with work. Strategies exist to address these, and people get fitter with safe work, which can be a bonus of employment.
- **'Young people are too immature to hold down a job.'** This is often said about young people who are sent to college to mature before looking for a job. In our study people were still said to be 'too immature to work' leaving college. How long do we wait? What we are promoting is an individualised approach, where each person's characteristics are taken into account and support is provided accordingly. Maturity doesn't always happen by chance. We need to meet immaturity head on and if well planned and supported, a workplace can be the mechanism to help people mature, and not a place that can only be approached when maturity is achieved.
- **'These days people need qualifications to get a job, and people with learning disabilities are not capable of getting these.'** Clearly having qualifications gives people more scope for getting a wider range of jobs. There is much emphasis placed on young people achieving National Vocational Qualification at level 2 as a stepping stone to work, and people with learning disabilities generally fail to achieve this level. However, with the proper matching of job and person and with support to find, learn and keep a job, young people with learning disabilities can enter paid employment irrespective of their qualifications.

WHAT WORKS IN TRANSITION TO EMPLOYMENT?



- **'There are no jobs out there to get.'** Unemployment levels vary considerably across the country and it will be more difficult to get jobs in some areas, particularly rural areas. However, if employment opportunities are tight, then there should be fewer people with learning disabilities employed, not none. Discrimination laws are there to ensure a level playing field. Many supported employment agencies report that it is more often a lack of people willing to take up a job that is the problem, not finding the jobs.
- **'The jobs that people can do are boring and exploitative.'** Many of the jobs people with learning disabilities can get are 'entry level' requiring no qualifications. They can be low paid, but many people do them. The key to success is to match the person's interests as well as their talents to the right job. National Minimum Wage or above are required by law, and success means that people are happy, better off financially, and fulfilled in their work. Placing people in jobs that make them miserable is in nobody's interests.
- **'People will get bullied.'** People can be bullied, but the evidence suggests that in the vast majority of cases they do not. People without learning disabilities sometimes get bullied at work. In our system, people have the added security of an organisation monitoring their progress and empowered to advocate on their behalf.
- **'People will hurt themselves or be vulnerable to abuse.'** You cannot protect people entirely from risk at all times, and in all places. To try will close down all opportunity for personal growth and independence. If good practice in the way support is organised described here is followed, then the person will be found a job that matches their talents. With good risk assessment and effective training of a specific job, opportunity can be maximised and risk minimised. Most cases of abuse have been in services, where abusers can work outside of the public eye, and not in ordinary workplaces. Colleagues and supervisors can become strong allies and friends of their team member with a disability. This can make the person safer than they would have been without a job.
- **'People will lose their welfare benefits and be worse off.'** If badly advised, people can be worse off. However, with expert advice and a 'better off' calculation prior to employment, no one should be encouraged to take a job that will leave them worse off. Changes have occurred that can provide entitlement to return to benefit if a job doesn't work out, and tax credits can top up earnings. Wider evidence from one of our research sites shows that adults with learning disabilities who were willing to work over 16 hours per week were on average over 100% better off before tax. However, individual circumstances matter and expert advice on the benefit implications of a job is always needed.

OVERVIEW OF THE GUIDE

The guide is organised into key stages in the transition process relating to employment

- **Transition planning** – The process of transition planning, and roles and responsibilities are well developed through Codes of Practice. However, this section suggests how employment can be highlighted to a greater extent than is generally the case now, and the role Person Centred Planning and person centred employment assessment approaches can play.
- **Preparation for employment at school or college** – This is where aspirations for employment can be developed, an awareness of the reality of work fostered, key skills delivered and career choices made. This section suggests key curriculum content and draws on previous work to reinforce the framework under which vocational preparation needs to be developed.
- **The importance of work experience** – Our study suggests that work experience while at school or a college, and if organised well, can play a major role in helping those who want to, enter paid employment on leaving. This section suggests good practice in selecting, organising, supporting and learning from work experience at this time.
- **Supported Employment** – This is a structured approach to finding, learning and developing in the right job for a young person when they leave school or college. This section outlines good practice in Supported Employment as it relates to young people that can be shared by agencies, families and young people when they are looking for the right support most likely to secure them a job.
- **Partnership working** – Partnership working across agencies is needed for successful transition. Our study identified common problems in the way agencies sometimes work around employment, and this section suggests strategic good practice that can underpin front-line work.
- **Links and resources** – This document can only be a summary of good practice. This section highlights documents, websites and organisations that can provide more detail.



TRANSITION PLANNING AND EMPLOYMENT

Transition planning is part of a statutory framework of special needs provision, governed by a Code of Practice, and Transition Plans are part of the system of reviewing Statements of Special Educational Need. These reviews take place annually and deal also with the arrangements for what the person will do after leaving school. This is drawn up into a Transition Plan in the year 9 review and is itself reviewed and updated in subsequent years. The relevant Careers Service, and Social Services are invited to post-year 9 meetings and Health is made aware of discussions. The review meeting should enable options for continuing education, careers and occupational training to be given serious consideration.



The Transition Plan allows for information from other agencies to be taken into account and while the school retains control over the plan and its dissemination, the relevant Careers Service has the lead role in ensuring the delivery of the elements of the plan that relate to the young person's transition into further learning or employment.

Even if a young person with special needs has no Statement of Special Educational Need, the Code of Practice suggests that schools should work with careers services, and involve other providers, to ensure that they too have an appropriate plan and services in place to ensure a successful transition to appropriate adult options.

Person Centred Planning and employment

In good practice terms, the review meeting is only as good as the information and insights that go into it. This often requires work before the meeting. Person Centred Planning (PCP) has been widely recognised as a way to think creatively about young people's next steps. The National Service Framework for Children requires relevant agencies to focus on the hopes, dreams and the potential of young people in transition, to 'maximise education, training and employment' and stresses a person centred approach. Policies across the UK have promoted Person Centred Planning as key to individualising services. There are a number of different formats for PCP (e.g. Essential Lifestyle Planning, PATH, Maps, and Personal Futures Planning). However, there are good practice elements in each:

- Person Centred Planning sets out to discover and act on what is important to the person, and so the young person must be at the centre of discussions, irrespective of their level of disability
- Families and people who are close to the person should be involved, as they usually know the person best
- Together they can help people to work out what the young person wants in their lives
- They can identify the supports needed for people to pursue their goals
- Together they can work to remove any barriers to attaining these goals

- They can help services to better align their efforts with the person's own wishes and aspirations.

Relevant questions often asked in PCPs include³:

- Who am I?
- Who is in my immediate and wider social network?
- What are my hopes, dreams and fears?
- What are my capacities (rather than incapacities)?
- How do I communicate my wishes?
- Things and routines that are important to me
- The support I need from my network, community and services
- My needs to keep healthy and safe.

What information do we need to help someone on the employment pathway?

PCP is holistic and clearly can look at all aspects of the person's life. However, if we are to pursue employment as an option, many factors such as hopes and dreams,



communication, and capacities need to be factored in to help identify and support a good job match. We must ensure that, in relation to employment, a PCP considers the:

- Interests of the young person that can help identify potential work tasks or a job
- Skills and talents of the young person that we can build on to find the right job
- Physical and social environments at work that the person will need
- Young person's learning style that will help us teach them a job
- Wider supports they will need to:
 - Learn or adapt job tasks
 - Learn to understand and navigate workplaces
 - Work safely
 - Engage in a socially appropriate way in work and at breaks (or finding workplaces where it doesn't matter so much)
 - Travel to and from work
 - Manage any personal care issues
- Individual's and a family's welfare benefits and how they will be affected by getting a job
- Overall situation and how the person will be better off in work with a wage, non-contributory welfare benefits and any tax credits they can claim.

Some of this information can come from the person themselves and their family. More information can be gathered from work experiences structured to generate it, or from services that are expert in employment. It is important to note that, it will be difficult for those involved in a person centred plan to do more than highlight the employment needs of the person. By involving experts in employment it is possible to carry out more detailed work, including 'Vocational Profiling' to ensure all the right questions are answered in full.

TRANSITION PLANNING AND EMPLOYMENT

Who should be involved?

Good PCP can be linked to transition planning, and the plan for marshalling resources to deliver relevant training, supported work experiences and ultimately employment. As in transition planning itself, developing a strong employment pathway for a young person will require input from a number of sources from year 9 onwards. Each has a particular role to play:

- Careers Service (Careers Wales, Connexions, Careers Scotland) should assist the young person and their parents to identify the most appropriate post-16 provision, provide counselling and support, and have continuing oversight of, and information on, the young person's choices
- The school can provide vocational guidance and contribute this to the Review
- Social Services Departments are required to arrange a multi-disciplinary assessment and provide care plans for children and adults with significant special needs. This might include planning the provision of employment support from any adult employment services they may offer
- Employment support agencies (such as Shaw Trust) should be part of the post-16 provision in an area and can provide more specific advice on what work experience might suit the young person, on jobs and forms of support
- Health will advise on any services likely to be required and they should discuss arrangements for transfer to adult secondary health care services with the young person, families and GPs. This could include how employment might contribute to positive health gain for the young person or health risks managed in the workplace.

What information do families need to make employment decisions?

In our study, families wanted to know more information on the options for exploring employment while at school. They also need to know about post-school and college options for training and employment. In particular, they need to know about the specific support arrangements that are available within options to address inevitable concerns they have over: potential problems of safety; exploitation and abuse; appropriateness of jobs for the young person's interests and abilities; travel; and whether help and monitoring would be on-hand or at arms length. Families also wanted a single, trusted, source of information and guidance so they could make sense of this complicated time (e.g. a keyworker or transition worker).

Where young people are offered work experiences, families wanted more information about arrangements for work placements and feedback on what has happened during them. Information on new things the young person has done, what they have learned and achieved, how they were viewed by employers all help shape families decision about employment and the next steps. They need to know about the welfare benefit implications of employment, not in general terms, but in their particular circumstances.

How should employment fit into transition planning?

Work for the first Transition Plan and its subsequent review should begin in year 8 or before the Review meeting in year 9. The family and young person should receive basic advice at this point on employment, what it entails, what prospects their son or daughter may have for supported employment, and what the implications might be for income blending welfare benefits, tax credits and earned income. Experienced employment providers should be involved in these briefings, with the consent of the person and family. Assessment, or PCP materials used in the lead up to the Transition Plan or its review, should include questions, prompts and consideration of employment. In particular it should consider what the person might be able to achieve with on-the-job support and specific job training. Notions of a person needing to be 'job ready' should not apply. PCP formats with employment in mind should include:



- Who am I? (including talents, interests and experiences that are relevant to getting a job)
- What are my hopes and dreams? (including discussion of whether the person wants a job)
- How do I communicate my wishes and the help I need to do so? (important in understanding a person's job choice and job training)
- Things and routines that are important to me (and that will need to be accommodated in a job)
- My needs to keep healthy and safe (and how a job might contribute to healthy lifestyle and be reflected in any Health Action Plan)
- School-based goals that relate to vocational skill development and developing choice in career:
 - New things to learn about work, what it entails, and key work skills
 - How might visits to see jobs be arranged?
 - How might work experience be arranged to meet and expand understanding of job possibilities and aid career decision-making?
 - How might it be supported and funded?
 - How might travel to work experience or other work related experiences be managed, including travel training?

- The support I need from my network, community and services:
 - Will I need a job coach or other help to find, learn and keep a job? How will it be provided?
 - Can Direct Payments or Individualised Budgets be used to support my employment choices?
 - What welfare benefits will I and my family receive? How might this change under different employment assumptions?
 - How might friendships be sustained if I went into a job and did not go on to college or day services where friends might be?
 - How might future housing options interact with having a job?

When the plan is discussed, the option of employment should be raised, the interactions with these factors discussed, and ways of taking employment forward identified. Advice and planning are likely to be more specific if expert employment providers take part in transition planning and the Review. Any employment themes and action should be included in the Careers Service's Assessment Planning Implementation and Review system.

PREPARATION FOR EMPLOYMENT AT SCHOOL OR COLLEGE

Our research found that young people who had received more hours of vocational input from schools and colleges, particularly in structured courses linked to qualifications and the efforts of external employment agencies to find placements, were more likely to get a paid job when they left. Vocational input from schools and colleges varied widely in the amount of time given over to it, the content of courses, the availability of work experience to young people, and the extent to which work experience is offered in ordinary workplace or within the school or college.



Our findings suggest that a successful employment pathway will offer young people a consistent number of hours of vocational input, covering a core set of course inputs ideally linked into a qualification structure, linked to supported work experience outside the school or college.

The goal of preparation

The goal of schools and colleges should be to prepare the young person with a learning disability to develop:

- An awareness of what jobs are and what behaviours and tasks they require
- Key general work skills such as time keeping, receiving instructions and feedback, and organising one's tasks

- Young people's ideas and aspirations on what type of job they might want
- An ability to make informed choices
- Social skills that are needed in doing a job, and interacting with colleagues in a workplace
- Confidence in their ability and motivation to do a paid job.

Not all people with learning disabilities are able to benefit from training of a full range of skills before they enter a job. The more people's cognitive abilities are impaired, the less likely they are to be able to learn key skills in the classroom and then apply what they have learned in a different set of circumstances. **This does not mean that they cannot be employed.** It means that they are more likely to need a skilled person to help them find, learn and keep a job.

The approach

We need to move from a 'one size fits all' model of vocational training to a curriculum that has some flexibility to meet individual needs. DfES/NIACE have proposed within an educational context that there should be a person-centred learning plan for the person that helps people to work out what they want, what support they require, and how to get it.⁷ They have also applied this to the vocational training context and use a five point structure for helping young people to explore employment:⁸

- Who am I? (How do I learn best and how will it be supported in the workplace? What am I interested in and what's import in a job match)

- What job do I want to do?
- How am I going to get there? (How can we match learning to the goals of getting a job?)
- How am I doing? (What's working well in learning and work experience, what needs to change?)
- What next? (What will I need for full transition into a job and who will provide it?)

Curriculum

In our study we found people using direct teaching of vocational material and experiences. Good practice would suggest that the following elements are needed in any comprehensive vocational curriculum:

- Understanding one's own strengths, weaknesses and preferences in respect of employment
- Finding out about local work environments so that learning and work experience can be linked to real opportunities
- Finding out what job opportunities these workplaces offer
- Setting goals for future employment, in terms of job preference
- Linking these to work experience, and the learning from it (see next section)
- Understanding and developing relevant work skills (time keeping, dress, giving and taking feedback etc.)
- Building awareness of health and safety at work
- Developing a CV
- Developing an understanding of work-based roles and responsibilities
- Developing an understanding of team work
- Understanding, and practicing, the personal and team social skills needed at work
- Completing an application form
- Writing a letter of application
- Preparing for and practicing interviews.



COURSES

In our study a number of schools and colleges used nationally available systems to explore and accredit learning in the areas above. Most notable were:

ASDAN Bronze Award

World of Work and the Workright programme
www.asdan.org.uk/bronze_silver.php
www.asdan.org.uk/workright.php

OCR Entry Level Certificates in Job-seeking Skills and Preparation for Employment

www.ocr.org.uk/qualifications/entrylevel/preparation_for_employment_entry_3/

City and Guilds Entry Level Certificate in Preparing for Employment

www.city-and-guilds.co.uk/cps/rde/xchg/SID-0AC0478D-826EEC41/cgonline/hs.xsl/11707.html



THE IMPORTANCE OF WORK EXPERIENCE

In our research we found that taking part in supported work experience was an important factor in helping people enter employment when they left school or college. People whose families said they wanted to go on to work, and those who eventually got a job, had received more hours of work experience than those who hadn't. Time spent by employment agencies based outside school and college in finding work experience placements for a person was related to their eventually entering paid employment.

Outside agencies generally offered supported work experience as the major part of their vocational input to school and colleges, more commonly in ordinary community jobs than schools and colleges which made more use of their own facilities. Feedback from work experiences appeared to be important to some parents in shaping their support for the decision that a young person should get a job when they left school or college.

The importance of work experience

It is important to offer young people with learning disabilities work experience that suits their individual needs, is based in ordinary community jobs, has an appropriate level of support, and is structured to generate the information needed by all parties to help them move on to employment if they wish. If work experience is to be individualised and to provide all the outcomes we would want, we require skilled organisation, negotiation and support from people who know, and have good contacts with, local employers. It requires people who can have high aspirations for the work performance of the young person, who can understand their strengths and weaknesses, and match these to job placements. If young people with more severe disabilities are to be included, and offered work experience, we need the possibility of skilled one-to-one support in the workplace. Families and young people want detailed advice and information on work experience from people with credibility in organising it. Above all successful work experience needs people with the time and expertise to arrange it well.

Teachers, and tutors find it difficult to do all this given their commitments and distance from the jobs market. Organisations that provide work experience for



non-disabled young people as part of the school's curriculum responsibilities often have difficulty finding jobs that meet the individual needs of young people with learning disabilities, and struggle to provide on-the-job support. This is why partnership between schools and colleges with supported employment agencies has been recognised as successful.¹



The purpose of work experience

Work experience is usually unpaid, without an employment contract, and temporary. The government suggest that 'temporary' should be from 10-15 days to 1 year. Less time is needed to find out whether a young person likes the particular job setting and tasks, usually between 1 day and 2 weeks. The placement should be designed for the benefit of the young person and not the company alone.^{4,5} Some young people were found part-time paid jobs outside school and college hours, with a contract, as part of a process of developing a work history and as a stepping stone to a job when they left education. This is another way of generating information on job skills and helping vocational decision-making.

The benefits for young people with learning disabilities of work experience are:

- To learn specific work skills
- To learn general skills such as work dress code, turning up on time, keeping to break times, receiving instructions, supervision and feedback
- To learn social skills
- To gain independence and confidence
- To explore the type of jobs that exist and whether they like and are suited to them
- To see how a work routine mixes with their other social routines.

Finding placements

It is important to find enthusiastic employers as there may be a need for thought and planning on their part to identify the right tasks for the person to do, and to

think about the support arrangements needed. The placement should reflect the interests of the young person, and ideally flow from their PCP. However, if there is no PCP an employment agency may spend time understanding the young person's interests, talents, and support requirements to identify the right circumstances needed in a work experience placement. Supported employment agencies call this 'vocational profiling,' the key being to understand what support is needed to achieve successful employment, not to assess whether or not a person can work. The placement may involve interview practice and an interview for the placement as part of learning, depending on the abilities of the young person.

The benefits are not all one way. Employers can gain insight into diversity and disability and what it takes to support good disabled workers. It is a practical way to demonstrate social responsibility, and to get a new perspective on their organisation and how it works from an outsider's perspective.

They can get good workers for a short period. There is, therefore, a strong case to be made to employers to take part. It is important not to confuse work experience with a paid job in the mind of the employer. Employers must not be made to think that unpaid placements are all that are needed or possible – paid jobs are the ultimate goal. However, in our study the success of the young person during their placement was sometimes enough for their employment agency to negotiate it into a paid job as the person left school.

THE IMPORTANCE OF WORK EXPERIENCE

Individualising the placement

Good practice suggests that all placements should have some form of agreement underpinning it which details roles and responsibilities. This needs some enhancement for people with learning disabilities, and should contain:

- Start and finish date
- Hours of work, break timings
- Tasks of the job, and any speed and quality requirements, along with any reasonable adjustments that have been negotiated to accommodate the individual, including work that should not be done
- Dress code
- Personal objectives of the young person while in the placement
- Who will supervise the placement on behalf of employer and school/college
- Disciplinary and grievance procedures
- Induction arrangements (this could involve an adaptation, easy read materials, or facilitation from a job coach)
- Any personal care or medical issues that need to be acknowledged and arrangements for dealing with them, including emergency procedures and contacts
- Arrangements for disclosure of any disabilities and confidentiality
- Health and Safety requirements of job and workplace and arrangements for suitable risk assessment and strategies to overcome potential issues (this needs to be based on the particular young person rather than a general risk assessment for all workers)
- Training required and who will provide it (this could again involve adaptations and different sorts of training approaches than normally used, and use of a job coach)
- Arrangement for initial and on-going support and who will provide this (it could be split between a job coach and a company mentor or supervisor)
- Arrangements for assessment of performance and feedback. This could involve self-monitoring through checklists or more regular sessions to feedback on task, personal and social performance and help with improvement if needed. Job coaches can play an important role here, although direct feedback from the employer shapes appropriate performance and is important
- Exit strategies – There should be arrangements for obtaining testimonials and references from the employer or, where timing and the match between the person and the job are right, any arrangements made for future paid employment with the company.

In addition there should be clear arrangements in place for travel to and from work, who will support this, and arrangements with home over ensuring that the young person is ready on time, with appropriate clothing and anything s/he needs for the day (e.g. lunch, money).

Providing support and training

For many people with learning disabilities just providing the opportunity to learn work tasks, verbal instruction and a chance to practice with feedback can be enough. For some people who find it more difficult to learn, more powerful techniques are required. Trainers will need to be able to:

- Plan on how they will instruct the young person based on what is known about how they learn best from vocational profiling or PCP
- Present tasks in flexible ways (consider using verbal explanation, modelling tasks, help the young person try a task for themselves with advice, pictures, and printed instructions if young people can read well)
- Use a powerful enough prompt to get a successful outcome, ranging from physically guiding the person through the task, to verbal and then gestural prompts
- Break tasks down into small steps if people have difficulty learning all of them in one go and to teach one element at a time

- Give people adequate time to practice
- Allow repetition of the task, or parts of the task, so that the young person can learn it better
- Teach the task in the place it needs to be done, to overcome problems many people will have in transferring tasks learned in one place to another
- As they become familiar with the task, allow young people to make mistakes and to correct it themselves with a prompt if they need it
- Reduce their input to the young person, progressively reducing the power of prompting to allow them to become more and more independent in doing the task.

Exit strategies

In workplace reviews, and certainly at the end of a placement, the team involved should summarise learning from the experience with the young person. It will be relevant to think about:

- What the young person liked and disliked about the work
- What skills were needed to do this work
- What the young person was good, and not so good, at
- How well they got on with work colleagues
- How they learned best
- What tasks the young person would now like to do, and in what type of work environment
- Any ideas for jobs and companies that might meet these criteria
- Any support arrangements the person must have in place in any subsequent placement or paid job.



Throughout the placement, the person should be helped to keep a personal record of their experience, including their learning and how they have met their objectives, to help them contribute to future planning. This may need to be simplified, or use made of photos, pictures or symbols to make it accessible, depending on the abilities of the young person.

It is important that this information is integrated into their PCP if they have one, is included in the person's Transition Plan, and informs subsequent action. It is valuable information to guide subsequent job finding, if this is agreed to be the goal for the young person after school or college.

USING SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT FOR PERMANENT, PAID JOBS

Our study found that, where employment agencies involved had a method for placing people in work experience, it was most commonly part of their 'supported employment' approach. Also, many young people with a learning disability who want a job when they leave school or college still need help to find, learn and keep a job, even if they have training, qualifications and work experience under their belt. The most effective system for providing this help to young people with a wide range of abilities has been found to be supported employment.



In the UK it has mainly been offered through the voluntary sector and Social Services rather than central government and it is not available in all areas, and to all people, irrespective of eligibility criteria.

The reason supported employment can be effective in helping a wide range of people with disabilities get permanent paid jobs is that it can provide intensive support in all areas of finding, learning and keeping a job. It starts from the assumption that anyone can be employed, if we can figure out the right job and circumstances for them and if we can provide the right learning and support to them in the job. For people with learning disabilities, this often means spending significant time finding out about them, to get the right job to match their needs; approaching employers directly to find the right combination of tasks and workplace; providing one-to-one support to teach people the job on-the-job, thereby cutting out the need for a great deal of generalised knowledge that people

find hard to transfer from simulated to real workplaces; being there for the young person and the employer to help them solve any problems that arise over time.

It is important to acknowledge what supported employment offers to make it effective- not everything that is called 'supported employment' offers this, and therefore not all agencies named 'supported employment' are effective at getting people with learning disabilities permanent paid jobs. While not every young person with a learning disability needs the whole package, an agency that can help young people with the full range of support needs will be able to deliver the whole package if needed.

Elements of Supported Employment needed to secure the right permanent, paid job include:

Knowledge of the person and their potential (Vocational Profiling)

The main aim of vocational profiling is to discover their work preferences and skills, so that staff involved can find a job that matches the person well. Profile formats vary but should present the information in a positive way and cover the following broad areas:

- What type of job the young person wants
- Things the person can do in their non-working life (e.g. things people are able to do at home, what they can do in the community, the way they communicate, might help in finding the person the right job)
- The work skills people have, including any work experiences, references and testimonials

- The work environment and situation preferences people have (e.g. to work inside, the pace of jobs, noise levels, and how many people work with them etc.)
- In what way people will need support at work (e.g. to learn tasks or routines, take instructions, with time and scheduling tasks and breaks)
- How people's welfare benefits may be affected
- Any other factors that need to be taken into account to achieve an effective job match (e.g. any personal habits that are difficult to change, physical abilities, health issues, or behavioural challenges). This may help identify any working practices that may need to be avoided, changed or treated flexibly, to avoid poor performance or negative behaviour. This information is used to design solutions, not as a reason to exclude a person from employment
- Any useful information on educational attainment or academic skills (e.g. functional ability in reading, writing, maths, qualifications, relevant skills accredited).

At the end of the Vocational Profiling process, a summary is needed of the findings, particularly covering:

- A description of the type of job required, including tasks and environment
- Any support needs identified

- What action will be taken to seek the required job
- Who will do what to find the right job
- Any additional learning or personal development needs identified.

Hopefully, much of this work will have already been done during school or college, including information from work experiences, making this stage much easier. If there has been little work experience, then supported employment agencies should be able to offer time-limited, supported, work tasters to inform and help people make decisions.

Professional job finding and job analysis

A supported employment agency will be able to find jobs that match each person's work preferences and abilities to do a job, rather than just find jobs that people are fitted into. This requires a good knowledge of the local labour market and staff that can approach potential employers, find potential job matches, and initiate the first steps to obtaining a job. They also need to find out as much about the job as the person to ensure a good match. There are a number of key steps and competencies that good practice would suggest are important in this activity:

- Identifying the type of jobs available in the local jobs market
- Finding potential employment opportunities, including 'job carving' where tasks within a company are identified and negotiated into a valued paid job to meet a young person's specific requirements



SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT



- Analysing the job to ensure it meets the young person's requirements, meets health and safety requirements, and plans for any risks
- Refining the search and job matching to identify the jobs that meet the description of the person's interests and requirements
- Effective marketing of the young person to the employer- making a positive case on behalf of the potential worker and promoting the skills and interests they have. The support offered by the supported employment agency to the employer is also a positive factor
- Harnessing employer 'natural support.' Better outcomes are achieved if the employer takes as much responsibility for the person's success as possible, with advice from the agency, from the beginning
- Having a clear placement plan, agreed by all parties, that includes the tasks of the job, start and finish dates, support to be provided by the main parties, any reasonable adjustments needed for the person to do the job, pay and conditions, and contractual agreements.

Training people with learning disabilities on the job

Good supported employment agencies will be able to put skilled job coaches into the workplace if necessary, to train and support, with a view to fading their input over time, and leaving the person independent, or inter-dependent with work colleagues. Advising an

employer to train and support through a co-worker (sometimes called natural support), is the least intrusive way of a young person learning a job, and leaves the employer with skills to employ others. However, if effective natural support is not available, or the person with learning disabilities needs more intensive training, then direct help from a job coach must be available. The young person must be able to do the job as the employer requires it done. An outline of the approaches needed when teaching in the workplace is given in the 'Work Experience' section earlier.



Helping young people keep their permanent, paid jobs long-term

Having a job does not mean that the person with a learning disability will never need help again. Some young people will need additional assistance in the future, to adapt to changes in their work or to develop their career. Hopefully, they will receive help from colleagues at work and employers, but supported employment needs to be available to the young person as an adult to monitor their situation at an agreed frequency, and help them to progress or solve problems.

Other activities that help

In our study, families and young people reported that a number of other activities had helped them in building their confidence in dealing with the outside world, helped them to explore their strengths and weaknesses, and to make decisions on what to do next. These activities included:

- **Job shadowing** – spending a short amount of time next to a working person in a job seeing what it entailed as a contribution to deciding on future work experiences or jobs.
- **Confidence building events** (e.g. working with fire fighters in simulated rescue situations, such as re-enactments of extracting victims from a collision following car crime and joyriding; working in a record studio to make a CD; having opportunities to try trades such as brick-laying or plumbing with a local trades training organisation).

Other sources of help

There are other direct sources of assistance in moving into employment, other than supported employment agencies, depending on the abilities and degree of independence of the young person concerned:

- **Jobcentre Plus** – This can provide a number of sources of information and help. Disability Employment Advisors can provide assessment, identify employers (some who subscribe to the 'double tick' scheme and are disability friendly), and can route people into post-16 vocational training programmes and to WORKSTEP providers. They can also provide assistance through the Access to Work programme.
- **The WORKSTEP programme** – This is delivered through a number of local provider agencies, and can offer help with finding a job, can pay for support up to and including on-the-job support, and can offer employers tangible financial support for things such as additional training for the new employee, additional time for a colleague to act as a mentor, or perhaps specific forms of support. They are, however, most likely to provide help for people who have explored other options. They are likely to look for

people to work over 16 hours per week, and although some WORKSTEP providers can offer on-the-job support, they commonly do not, and those needing high levels of support in the initial stages of the job will need to discuss with the agency whether the correct level of support can be made available within their levels of funding.

- **Access to Work** – This is a flexible funding scheme that can pay for things like taxis to work, personal work aids and workplace adaptations, and job coach support for some of the period of a person's job start. There are eligibility criteria, and again people will normally be expected to work for 16 hours per week or more, unless a credible plan for extending hours from less can be negotiated.
- **The New Deal for Disabled People** – This is delivered through a network of 'Job Brokers' from a range of organisations. Each Job Broker offers different services, which can be tailored to a person's individual needs. Job Brokers can help people review their skills and abilities; identify suitable job opportunities; help with the application process; and source training. Again the issue is how much support they can give, particularly in the workplace, if needed.
- **Pathways to Employment** – This is a new scheme to help people with disabilities back to work by linking people in to some form of health service assessment and support. Although primarily targeted at people who receive Invalidity Benefit, the scheme is a potential help to young people with learning disabilities leaving school. The scheme is still in development as we write, but information can be obtained from Jobcentre Plus.⁶ It is worth noting that, again, the scheme will attempt to bring people into employment over 16 hours per week, and the levels of funding provided are unlikely to provide support at the level of intensity needed to provide job coaching and on-the-job training.

PARTNERSHIP WORKING

Our research showed that there remain difficulties in joint working at a strategic level around employment. There was little consensus on what the aim of transition was, and whether employment was a key aim. There are still places where there are no joint agreements in place on multi-disciplinary working in transition. However, people agreed that such agreements were desirable and that close relationships with employment agencies were critical to an effective delivery of transition.



It appeared to be beneficial to outcomes when outside agencies were given the opportunity to contribute to the vocational teaching in school or college. However, respondents told us there was a lack of core funding for external employment agencies to fulfil such responsibilities.

For many reasons we have rehearsed previously, there is a need to strengthen the 'employment pathway' both for transition from school or college to better balance the 'further education pathway.' Figure 1 (page 23) compares the current steps underpinning the further education pathway with what could be put in place as an employment pathway. Without a

rebalancing of resources, there will remain little in the way of employment options for people with learning disabilities leaving college after their studies.

Protocols are needed for secure partnerships and seamless provision in transition. Such protocols should be developed by Children and Young People's Strategic Partnership Boards and Learning Disability Partnership Boards, and good practice guidance suggests that they set out: the legislative basis on which statutory agencies and their agents contribute to transition planning; stages in the transition process; the roles these organisations play at each stage; information they will share about young people in transition; permissions and agreements for information sharing; provision of information on transition and future options in appropriate form to families and young people; how Person Centred Planning will be integrated with statutory arrangements and vocational profiling or individual job planning; arrangements for advice and advocacy; and how implementation of plans will be handled.

While they have no formal role in legislation, we recommend that such agreements should encompass employment providers in the local area, identify the role they can play at each stage in the transition process; and set out as an aim the development of a comprehensive employment pathway. Employment providers should be included in multi-disciplinary strategic groups. Any strategic plans should address the delivery of the following:

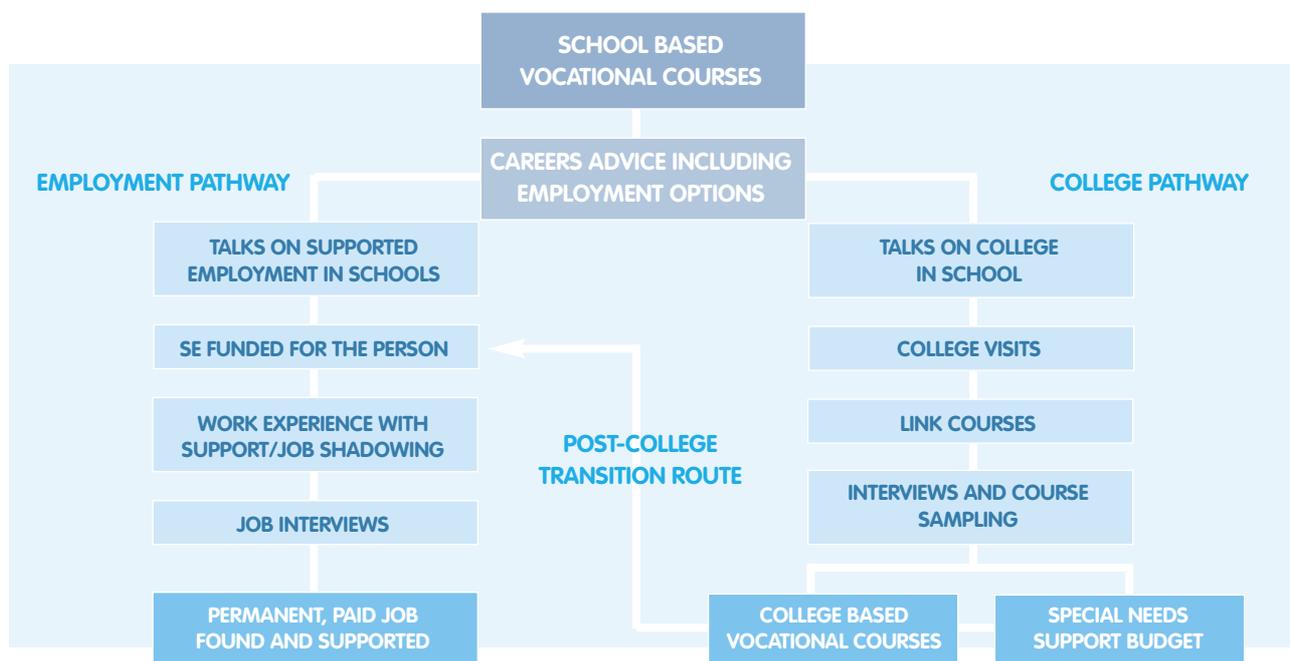


Figure 1: Preferred model of learning and employment pathways

- From year 9 onwards – Advice on supported employment and jobs from experienced sources
- Information on transition that includes detailed information on employment support options for both work experience and ultimate permanent, paid employment
- From year 10 onwards – Access to individualised advice on welfare benefits and how to blend income from employment and benefit, and the implications of going for a job over 16 hours per week
- Availability of supported employment (as described here) to provide input of advice and information to transition planning, support for individual work experience placements for young people with specific support needs, and to provide assistance with finding permanent paid jobs on leaving school or college. This must provide enough resources to allow for skilled on-the-job support where needed
- Review of existing eligibility criteria for employment support provision and identification of changes needed to enable access by young people with learning disabilities
- Consistent vocational input, of appropriate duration, on employment in schools and colleges
- Reduce overlap in what is learned through school, and what through college to ensure progression of learning and that overall learning becomes more consistent for all young people
- Provision of mechanisms for feedback on supported work experience to families on:
 - What has been learned about the young person’s work preferences
 - How they best learn tasks and social rules
 - Tasks and jobs that might suit them as a job after school or college
 - What support they may need to find, get, learn and keep a paid job
 - Learning while still at school or college that might improve their options and choices
- Provide statistics on the number of young people who go on to paid employment after transition to monitor the success of any employment pathway
- Include feedback on employment outcomes in any monitoring of successes and issues in transition.

More information on our study can be found in:

Beyer, S., Kaehne, A., Grey, J., Sheppard, K. and Meek, A. (2008) *WHAT WORKS? – Transition to employment for young people with learning disabilities*. Chippenham: Shaw Trust.

The Shaw Trust enables people with disabilities and mental health problems to maximise their potential in work opportunities. We work in partnership with over 2,000 companies to support people with disabilities in employment.

References

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- 2 OFSTED (2007) *Current provision and outcomes for 16- to 18-year-old learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities in colleges*.
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- 3 See the 'Listen to me' booklet for an idea of how information can be collected.
www.valuingpeople.gov.uk/dynamic/valuingpeople139.jsp
- 4 Bates, P. (2005) *Unpaid work experience – getting it right*. Ipswich: National Development Team.
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- 5 The National Council for Work Experience – www.work-experience.org/
- 6 http://www.jobcentreplus.gov.uk/jcp/Customers/Programmesandservices/Pathways_to_Work/
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- 8 DfES (2006) *Person-Centred Approaches and Adults with Learning Difficulties*. London: DfES.
<http://excellence.qia.org.uk/pdf/Person-centred%20approaches%20and%20adults%20with%20learning%20%20%20%20%20difficulties.pdf>

Guides for families and professionals

Advocacy Resource Exchange 'Sounds Good Project' – *Growing up, Speaking Out: A guide to advocacy for young learning disabled people in transition (14-25 years)*. This guide is about community-based advocacy for young learning disabled people in transition and gives useful information on detail on most aspects of providing advocacy for this age group.

http://advocacyresource.net/artman/publish/growing_up.pdf

Dept. for Children, Schools and Families, Dept. of Health – *A transition guide for all services*. A comprehensive good practice guide to good practice guidance on the roles, responsibilities and duties for all service providers working with disabled young people (including those with complex health needs) through their transition.

http://www.everychildmatters.gov.uk/_files/TransitionGuide.pdf

Foundation for People with Learning Disabilities (ongoing) *What kind of future: leading meaningful lives after school and college*. A project trying to improve social inclusion of people after school.
www.learningdisabilities.org.uk/our-work/children-and-young-people/what-kind-of-future/

NIACE (The National Institute of Adult Continuing Education) – Provide a series called Moving into Work for all involved in transition.
www.niace.org.uk/research/HDE/documents.htm

SEN Regional Partnership (SW) – *Transition Planning 13 to 19: Guidelines to assist teamwork with young people who have complex disabilities*. Provides an overview of good practice in the transition process for young people with complex needs.
www.sw-special.co.uk/documents/transition/

Valuing People Support Team – A series of documents about good practice in transition including advice on developing multi-agency protocols and employment resources, including Valued in Public, a guide for public sector employers.
<http://valuingpeople.gov.uk/dynamic/valuingpeople120.jsp>

Guides for young people

Enquire – *Getting ready to leave school*. A series of school guides to help young people find the information they need to decide what you want to do next after school.
www.enquire.org.uk/youngpeople/downloads.html

MacIntyre – A series of workbooks to support young people with learning disabilities through transition, covering collecting information on yourself, learning and further education, work, leisure, families and relationships, independent travel and leaving home.
www.macintyrecharity.org/transition/transition.html

Moving on Up – A website designed to be used by young people, and provides advice on learning and working, free-time, health and wellbeing, money, housing, culture and news and events.
www.movingonup.info

Partnership for Developing Quality – *The Big Picture: Your guide to transition*. Provides accessible information about the transition process.
<http://valuingpeople.gov.uk/dynamic/valuingpeople103.jsp>

Valuing People Support Team – A series of easy read documents helping people to think about, and find paid employment.
<http://valuingpeople.gov.uk/dynamic/valuingpeople120.jsp>

Organisations offering employment support

Transition Information Network (TIN) – www.transitioninfonetwork.org.uk

TIN is an alliance of organisations and individuals who come together with a common aim: to improve the experience of disabled young people's transition to adulthood. TIN is a source of information and good practice for disabled young people, families and professionals. They provide this information through their website, magazine, e-newsletter and seminars.

MENCAP – www.mencap.org.uk

Provides advice and employment services for people with learning disabilities and their families, and has a number of resources on employment.

NIACE (The National Institute of Adult Continuing Education) – www.niace.org.uk

Encourages more and different adults to engage in learning of all kinds, including people with learning disabilities. It has resources, research and guidance on learning for, and about, employment.

SKILL (National Bureau for Disabled Students) – www.skill.org.uk

Promotes opportunities for young people and adults with any kind of disability in post-16 education, training and employment across the UK. SKILL provides information on the telephone, in books, booklets, information leaflets, and DVDs.

A number of representative organisations provide a source for information on supported employment, and for contact details of local agencies that may help, primarily in the UK.

- **British Association for Supported Employment (BASE) primarily in England** – www.afse.org.uk
- **Wales Association for Supported Employment Agencies (ASEA)** – www.learningdisabilitywales.org.uk/supported-employment-networks.php
- **Scottish Union of Supported Employment (SUSE)** – www.suse.org.uk
- **Northern Ireland Union of Supported Employment (NIUSE)** – www.niuse.org.uk





The pictures of young people shown in this report are of young people involved with Shaw Trust services and not those involved in this study.