

Our Reference:

Your Reference:

This matter is being dealt with by:

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National Employment Strategy
Call for evidence – the questions

I am writing with the response to the call for evidence from Newcastle Learning Disabilities Partnership Board. About 40 people took part in and event as well as others responding by post. This comprised a wide range of stakeholders: professionals, carers and a strong contingent of self advocates - both regular members and guests. For that reason we have not responded to the full questionnaire but used the easy read questions

I hope this of some help.

Yours sincerely

Bill Norman

Valuing People Development Worker

Please provide your contact information below.

This will be treated in confidence and is only for the purpose of following up on responses.

Your full name

Bill Norman

Your organisation

Newcastle Learning Disabilities Partnership Board

Your phone number

0191 284 9113

Your email address

william.norman@newcastle.gov.uk

Please return the completed questionnaire to LDemploymentstrategy@dh.gsi.gov.uk by Wednesday 18th March 2009.

Many thanks for your contribution.

Data protection declaration

Please read carefully and sign the declaration at the bottom of the page. (N.B. This can be an e-mail signature as long as it is clear that it is from the person completing the questionnaire).

The Department of Health (DH) is collecting this information for the development of a cross-government strategy to increase the number of people with learning disabilities in paid employment.

The information you provide will be used to inform both this strategy and, potentially, the evaluation of methods of finding employment for people with learning disabilities which will underpin it. The information may be shared between colleagues within DH and the other Government Departments that are working together to develop policy for this strategy and in respect of Public Service Agreement (PSA) 16.

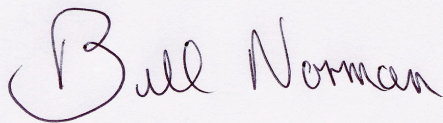
PSA 16 aims to increase the proportion of four vulnerable groups, including adults with moderate to severe learning disabilities, in employment and in settled accommodation.

Your declaration

I understand and agree that:

- the information I have provided will be used to inform the employment strategy which will be published in Spring 2009; and
- information I have provided about particular individuals does not include their name or any other details which could be used to identify them, unless I already have the individual's explicit consent to include these details.

Your signature

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Bill Norman". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, looped initial "B".

Your name

Date



1. Can you tell us about any projects or other things that have helped people get real paid jobs?

A number of groups said that getting a common definition of what a real paid job is would be useful

Services that help

- Work First
- Capability's (local adult service training and employment facility - catering and printing)
- Workstep and associated initiatives as long as there is shared information and open communication through partnership working
- Skills for People (local voluntary sector /self advocacy organisation)
- Disability Employment Advisor (at Job Centre)
- Remploy
- ID , Learning First , Connexions
- Project Search – an American initiative that is similar to job carving. Meabh Bradley from Remploy can provide more information on this if needed <http://www.cincinnatichildrens.org/svc/alpha/p/search/>
- Train to Gain –helps sustainability, progression, and support. Helps training providers (partnership working). Enables employers to draw down £2000 “ golden handshake”
- Correct benefits advice/support to access benefits

Conditions that help

People being paid an hourly rate

Projects/approaches that are worth noting

- Employability project at local Percy Hedley school
- Newcastle LDPB has created nine Champions jobs. These people will be employed by local advocacy organisation Your Voice Counts and will serve as member of the Board. Each will champion a theme of the local three year strategy to make Valuing People Now happen - Citizens First
- Look at the business models and development approaches of successful drama groups locally such as the Twisting Ducks and Lawnmowers
- Unison Newcastle branch's successful work in making joining a union accessible to people with learning disabilities resulting in Work Words dictionary and having two shop stewards with learning disabilities

- Look at what makes employer successful and see if it can be applied to other sectors /avenues, in particular using a job carve methodology. Locally a successful employer is MacDonalDs. There are for instance a number of elements here
 - High staff turnover
 - Broken down tasks
 - Tasks physically demonstrated and learned - on the job training
 - Tasks created and designed for people who don't use English - e.g. using symbols also can be useful for people with learning disabilities
- Supporting community centres to learn skills e.g. computer
- The Partnership Board Learning and Employment theme group has good membership and bringing a common understanding and is therefore leading to a greater awareness of pathways to employment This is at an early stage but initial information is promising
- Byker Bridge project



2. Not many people with a learning disability have a paid job. Why do you think this is?

People with learning disabilities

The following is a specific response from Xceed UK

- Very little careers guidance during education
- Very low level qualifications
- Very few academic or employment related qualifications
- Low levels of confidence
- Low levels of job seeking knowledge
- Poor or no literacy/numeracy skills
- Unrealistic job aspirations
- No CVs or experience of job application processes
- No transport – people unable or frightened to use public transport
- Often very isolated in sheltered accommodation
- Often still dealing with conditions and impairments

However

- All want to work
- Mainly seeking part time work around benefits

People's Use of Public Services

The following is a specific response from Xceed UK

- Very little knowledge or use of public employment services

- Once used often a poor view of employment related public services
- Many unable to access services due to a lack of confidence and knowledge
- Poor understanding and worries about benefits
- Many excellent schemes – i.e. Real Lives Real Choices Durham

People's Work Experience

The following is a specific response from Xceed UK

- Lack of work experience - most have done almost no real paid work
- Mainly jobs on schemes and sheltered employment – most have really loved and benefited from this experience
- Some report persistent bullying in the workplace
- Some report not trusted by colleagues
- Some bad experiences reported

Information

Lack of information about jobs

Benefits

- Benefits - permitted work entitlement
- People not knowing the system
- Restrictions because of benefits
- Reluctance on the part of the person – concern about their benefits
- Benefits advice and information needed. Clarification needed don how much you can earn before it affects your benefits
- Not much incentive if people are getting high benefits

System

System is complicated people don't know where to go for advice

Potential Employers

Here, we started with the following question - There is reluctance on the part of employers to employ people with a learning disability why?

- Risk aversion by employers
- Ignorance of peoples abilities
- Employers worried about the extra costs of sickness /support
- Not enough support for employers to employ.
- Some employers do not know what skills people have. More specifically , one group noted that ignorance on part of employers not recognising the added value and specialist skills that applicants with learning difficulties - need to educate employers now that support is there (Work step and Access to work funds)
- Related to this point is employers may not understand the benefits of employing people with a learning disability to their company e.g. how this might improve other workers' efficiency
- Some employers do not realise people with learning disabilities want a job

- Education pathways have prevented access to qualifications recognised by employers
- Employers fear of the unknown
- Employers not providing enough flexible and voluntary opportunities - fear of exploitation - misinterpretation
- Prejudice –“ employers say they are into equal opportunities but only they can look good ”
- People may get bullied by other employees who don't understand them or their needs and abilities. This was a point made by a number of discussion groups
- People with learning disabilities often have particular communication issues /problems and employers may get worried about this - not taking the time to listen
- Employers would rather give a job to someone else because the person with a learning disability will be “too much hassle”

Employers

The following is a specific response from Xceed UK

- 7 out of 10 just say no – especially SMEs
- Very limited understanding of many conditions and impairments
- Some willing to listen and respond – mainly large public sector and social enterprise
- Good uptake at peak periods like Xmas – mainly shops
- Only offer entry level positions
- Huge slow down currently
- Very few HR processes for keeping people in work – especially small employers

Economic

Gaps in jobs market too technical and skilled

Transport

Lack of appropriate transport (this point was also emphasised in the response from Xceed UK)

Moving on from voluntary work

A reiteration of a point made for Q1

Easier to get unpaid job e.g. voluntary/charity but more difficult to move onto paid work

Carers

- Staff/carers don't always support people to get jobs
- A number of groups stressed that Carers worry they might lose benefits
- More specifically, one group added that there may also be Peer Pressure and family financial fears especially re potential loss of benefits

- One group also highlighted the real fears Carers have about the vulnerability of the person with a Learning Disability, both in the work place and in the wider community. They felt these fears and concerns and the lack of support/information to address them, could also contribute to a possible reluctance for Carers to see work as a viable option. Also it will often be the Carer who will support the person preparing for work, dealing with day to day concerns etc. Therefore the Carer needs to be supported in their own right.

Support

Lack of mentors or support to work and who should that be?
 People worried about "red tape" risks insurance and liability
 Lack of support /knowledge of how to access support especially if applicant has child care difficulties or are carers themselves

Accessing mainstream support

"Cant just go into a job centre and there probably wont have any jobs for us anyway "

Self advocates 'own issues

Confidence and self esteem may be a bigger barrier



3. How can we help more people believe that getting a job is a good idea?

General

Expectations that people will have a job should be there from a young age before 14+
 Not everybody wants to go out to work and this too needs to be recognised.
 Should we be encouraging them to do so?

Training potential employers – start early with them too!

Set "Diversity of Workforce" ethic as part of business studies students curriculum

Financial

It's too easy for people to stay on benefits because they are not given /shown the information they need to move off benefits

To know that the person with a learning disability will be better off financially from work i.e. not lose benefits

Sell the success stories

A number of discussion groups highlighted this suggestion

More specifically groups noted

Get people who have a job to talk to other people with a learning disability and to give examples of all the benefits that a job can bring

Trying out jobs

More opportunities to try out "taster" jobs and so make both employee and potential employer see having a job is achievable

More specifically groups noted that

- Experiencing different work settings would be beneficial
- People should have a chance to try out opportunities before they leave school
- Placement options should be wider

Training

More disability training of other employees in organisations

Legislation

Better legislation to make employers more welcoming to the idea and realise they have to do it

Building peoples self confidence self belief self worth

Start early

Being told from an early age that individuals are able would benefits and would benefit from working (schools)

Better person centred planning before people leave school

Get people who have jobs to go into schools



4. What changes need to be made that would help more people get jobs?

Developing the range of Job Choices

Xceed UK did an analysis of current users of their services finding the following

- Retail and shops 13
- Office work 8
- Warehousing 6

- Care 5
- Security guarding 5
- Driving and Transport 3
- Others 7

This builds upon other points made by the Board's Learning and Employment theme Group as a whole that the range of opportunities needs to be widened for people

Stakeholder Ownership and commitment

Get unions on board to allow room for more flexibility and redefined job roles (both sides of discrimination)

Carers

Convince parents and carers that it's good for the person to get out more, socialise and make friends

Promotion

Create more pilots for "job carving" with individual employers and use them to promote how it works (and how an employer's productivity increases)

Telling people how progressing can lead to more independence - that people don't have to be dependent on benefits

Sharing good case studies where real people tell each other about their story
More specifically here one group suggested that the use of drama groups can be very powerful - Get a drama group to show what skills people with learning disabilities have

Locally, it was suggested that people in jobs who are successful should help produce a newsletter, written by themselves, their managers and customers, to all the major employers in the City.

Stepping stones

Again a point stressed in answers to other questions - Recognise voluntary work as a genuine and credible step into paid work

More specifically, once group noted that

Volunteering is important and undervalued. It is good to do if you have a choice

Acknowledge such opportunities as valuable stepping stones

Information and advice

Information sent out in benefits assessments to provide people with information about what service they can access to help them into paid work

More information about jobs

Information about how paid work does and doesn't affect benefits

Easy access website with job information – something we are trying to work towards in Newcastle

Family arrangement/benefit advice to show "better off" plans. Protected benefits. More flexible arrangements.

Another group noted on this point - Change perceptions that people will not be better off - information from benefits

Locally, access to the local about to be commissioned LDPB pathways website to help people access information and services

Stimulating new opportunities

There needs to be explicit linking of personalization to employment, spelling out potential models through the commissioning of pilots

Providing opportunities to people coming off benefits

More projects that can be kick started through Council initiatives

Employers could visit day centres /schools /college to talk to people with learning disabilities

Incentives for employers and employees

Change employers' minds to employ people with no experience

Keep making contact with local employers. Locally this will mean our self advocate Learning and Employment Champion actively meeting with local employers/Chamber of Commerce/Business in Community

Widen concept of Job carve e.g. one group said locally with school caretakers – and encourage person to be involved in the school's recycling work. In fact the whole "green jobs" agenda was thought to be a rich vein worth exploring by several groups. We are aware of the downturn and the stockpiling of recycling etc but recycling will not be the only opportunity e.g. Green Gyms Asda – we are aware they look to employ people with physical and sensory disabilities – we need to think about these and other employers where inroads have already been made with other disabilities and think about how this could be extended to people with learning disabilities

Sharing of vacancies (if not employer contacts) for jobs

We could use aforesaid website to have a vacancy page in that all organisations could post unfilled vacancies? No need to give details of the employer etc if not wanted but will help fill vacancies across the board and further partnership working (Remploy will include partner in weekly HTML releases of job vacancies)

Learning to prepare people

Person centred planning

Who gives the message is important - must be collective

Informed choice to the person and carer to discuss and make a decision

Confidence building - Voluntary agencies' placements to clearly demonstrate what individuals are capable of and the wide support that is available = partnership working

More flexible post 16 education - flexible funding for creative solutions

More courses about what it means to have a job and the recruitment process

Using tried and tested approaches

Job carving – we need to find a less "threatening" word for this

Tasks need to be broken down and broken into plain tasks

Employers' needs

Identifying what employers really want - it is not always qualifications but things like work ethics

Literacy skills are often linked to gaining qualifications e.g. food hygiene - different ways need to be exploited to address this

Training

There needs to be more recognised on the job training

Nature of further /enhanced support needed

Supporting people to identify what they could do – i.e. their skills and talents

Supporting people to think about what they could earn and what they could do with the money they earn

Specialist skills and training to support people in employment e.g. signing, communication strategies etc

Flexible support

Help with interviews

Support while people are at work

Support travel to/from work

Support in the post to help maintain job – a number o groups emphasised this point

Transport

Good reliable transport

Once a person is in a job

Put on an induction programme for people with learning disabilities. This could include getting to know you visits getting familiar with environment etc
Emphasis in training and support upon the meaning and importance of team working

Accessible building and information e.g. about job roles