



# Learning from Research about Best Practice in Supporting People with Learning Disabilities in Real Jobs

## **Information for Commissioners**

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## CONTENTS

	Page No
<b>ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS</b>	
<b>GLOSSARY OF TERMS USED</b>	
<b>SECTION ONE: CONTEXT</b>	<b>1</b>
Introduction	1
Report Outline	1
National Policy Context	2
Defining the Focus Population	3
Employment and People with Learning Disabilities	4
Importance of the Supported Employment Model	5
Overlapping Concerns?	7
<b>SECTION TWO: STATEMENT OF PRINCIPLES</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>SECTION THREE: BEST PRACTICE AT STRATEGIC LEVEL</b>	<b>11</b>
Introduction	11
Strategic (or Partnership) Approach	11
Ensuring Financial Gain	12
Presumption of Employability	14
Social Inclusion	15
Young Disabled School Leavers	17
Complex Disabilities Including ASD	18
Self-Employment Opportunities	20
<b>SECTION FOUR: BEST PRACTICE AT SERVICE/PROJECT LEVEL</b>	<b>21</b>
Introduction	21
Personalised or Individualised Approach	21
Business-like Approach	23
Long term and Post Employment support	23
Skilled and Qualified Staff	24
Enabling Approach	25
Using Natural Supports	26
<b>SECTION FIVE: QUESTIONS COMMISSIONERS SHOULD ASK</b>	<b>28</b>
<b>REFERENCES</b>	<b>31</b>
<b>APPENDICES</b>	
Appendix 1: Profile of Services	35

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## *GLOSSARY OF TERMS USED*

**Autism or Autistic Spectrum Disorders (ASD)** - A lifelong developmental disability that affects the way a person communicates and relates to people around them and can affect people with learning disabilities as well as people of average or above average intelligence. Autistic Spectrum Disorders or ASD is the term used to encompass this wide range.

**Employment support** – includes a range of work opportunities such as open employment, work placements, work preparation, voluntary work, Training for Work, ‘permitted work’, unpaid jobs, sheltered or non-open employment, ‘supported employment’, co-operatives, and social firms. The support provided includes providing job opportunities, sustaining and maintaining people in employment and supporting career development. Given this broad definition, a distinction is made between ‘supported employment’ (defined below) and other types of employment support.

**Job Carving** - This is where a job is divided into its component parts and the job carved up into two or more separate jobs that are then performed by more than one person.

**Learning disabilities** – This is defined as a significant, lifelong condition that starts before adulthood, affects people’s development, and means that they need help to understand information, learn skills and cope independently. (Scottish Executive, 2000)

**Social inclusion/integration** – has two main components – physical integration and social integration. Physical integration is about presence in the community and relates to disabled people sharing ordinary places and activities of community life including employment the same as others. Social integration or community participation is about assisting individuals to form and maintain the variety of ties and connections that make up community life.

**‘Supported Employment’** - The Policy Consortium for Supported Employment (O’Byrne et al, 2000) define supported employment as:

*“A way of enabling people who need additional assistance to succeed in work.”*

Although there is no consensus, writers in both the UK and USA have agreed on three essential elements:

- (a) Supported employment offers paid employment or ‘real jobs’;
  - (b) That jobs are offered in integrated settings or with community employers; and
  - (c) That there is ongoing ‘support’
- *‘Real work’* – supported employment is paid work and would normally be done by a typical member of the workforce, although this could include a job created by ‘job carving’.
  - *Jobs in ‘integrated settings’* – supported employment means jobs with ordinary, mainstream or competitive employers where there are no more people with disabilities present in the workforce than would be expected to be present in the general population (approximately 6%).

- *'Ongoing support'* - support is flexible, individualised and tailored to each person, and, importantly, is not time limited.

**Unpaid work** – While not considered best practice, unpaid work opportunities were found to be used by employment support providers in Scotland supporting people with learning disabilities and/or ASD. This is where the person with learning disabilities receives no payment for their work. While sometimes referred to as 'voluntary work', it is different from voluntary work because it is work for commercial or mainstream employers not charitable bodies.

**Work tasters** – are frequently used to overcome a lack of previous experience in a work environment. Work tasters tend to be very short (i.e. no longer than 6 weeks) and are experimental work opportunities (often unpaid) allowing an individual to try out a job or task. It is usually supported by a job coach and feeds into the vocational profiling stage to assist vocational choice.

**Work experience placements** – while this term is sometimes used interchangeably with 'work tasters', there are some important differences. A work experience placement is a real work opportunity with an ordinary or community employer that is time limited but may go on for up to 12 weeks. It can be either paid or unpaid and provides a longer period to try out work once the vocational choice is more defined.

**Vocational profile** – is a process which focuses on the individual as the centre of any job development strategy. It is not an assessment tool for assessing potential for obtaining employment. The process involves understanding the individual's life in a holistic way, their likes and dislikes, interests, hobbies, motivations, current life goals etc. These are brought together to identify the elements of a viable job for the individual.

**Voluntary work** – is unpaid work for a voluntary sector or charitable organisation where it is normal for others to be similarly involved as unpaid volunteers.

## *SECTION ONE: CONTEXT*

### **Introduction**

The purpose of this document is to provide information to people involved in commissioning services to support people with learning disabilities and/or Autistic Spectrum Disorders (ASD) in real paid jobs. The authors refer to key findings from the recent Scottish Executive study – ‘Go for it! Supporting people with learning disabilities and/or autistic spectrum disorders in employment, 2005 - as well as to a wider body of research on best practice in supported employment.<sup>1</sup>

New information drawn from a few examples of best practice in Scotland has been used to illustrate the key elements of best practice identified by research. The projects and supported employment services consulted were aspiring to meet these best practice principles, even though they did not necessarily meet them all. Further information about these services/projects can be found in the appendices.

### **Report Outline**

This document has been written to support the use of research and practice based evidence in commissioning and service provision. It is in no way a ‘how to do it’ manual for commissioners. Nor does it replace other advice and information about standards and performance indicators<sup>2</sup>. What it aims to do is to encourage people involved in commissioning to take research evidence into account when assessing financial applications for employment services or when considering what new services to commission to meet local needs.

As such, this document draws together principles to underpin practice from existing research and literature (Section Two), which are used to inform questions commissioners should be asking when considering which services to support. These questions are also based upon what is known from research about best practice dimensions (Section Five). Best practice is explored at two levels: at a strategic level (Section Three) and at service/project level (Section Four). At a strategic level the following key dimensions are discussed:

- Adopting a strategic or partnership approach
- Ensuring people are better off in work
- Presuming employability and aspiring to jobs of 16 hours or more
- Promoting social inclusion through work
- Raising the aspirations of young disabled school leavers
- Including people with complex disabilities such as those with ASD in work
- Supporting self employment

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<sup>1</sup> Ridley, J., Hunter, S., Infusion Cooperative, (2005) *Go for it! Supporting People with Learning Disabilities and/or Autistic Spectrum Disorders in Employment*, Social Research Report, Edinburgh: Scottish Executive.

<sup>2</sup> EUSE, 2005; SUSE, 2006

At an individual project/service level six key dimensions are explored:

- Adopting personalised or individualised approaches
- Adopting a business like approach and the need to understand employers' needs
- Providing long term and post employment support to maintain people in jobs and support career development
- Employing skilled and appropriately trained staff
- Adopting an enabling approach that promotes self-determination
- Using natural supports and promoting work patterns that are typical.

The report appendices provide more information on individual best practice projects/services. Key terms are discussed in the glossary at the beginning of the document.

This should be read in conjunction with guidelines on commissioning services for people with learning disabilities such as those produced for the Joint Improvement Team<sup>3</sup> to support the use of research evidence in commissioning; the European Union of Supported Employment Quality Standards Framework for Supported Employment Providers<sup>4</sup>; and the Scottish Union of Supported Employment's recent policy statement.<sup>5</sup>

## **National Policy Context**

Supporting real jobs for people with learning disabilities needs to be commissioned within the wider national context of the equalities and social inclusion agenda<sup>6</sup> and the 'welfare to work' agenda<sup>7</sup>. The equality and social inclusion agenda, using a social model of disability, argues from a rights-based perspective that disabled people should have opportunities to fulfil their individual potential and enjoy the same life opportunities as others. This agenda proposes tackling the systemic barriers preventing disabled people from participating fully in employment.<sup>8</sup>

Welfare to Work policies primarily focus on the notion of employability for all, individualisation or personalisation, the importance of personal support, the benefits of work, developing employers' understanding of 'workless groups', and streamlining and simplifying systems to address disincentives to work.

Both these main policy strands clearly contribute to a climate in which supported employment for people with learning disabilities could grow given some of the similarities between national agendas and supported employment as presented later.

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<sup>3</sup> Joint Improvement Team, (2006), *Draft Guidelines to Support Use of Evidence in Commissioning Services for Individuals with Learning Disabilities*, drafted by Dr Martin Campbell for the Joint Improvement Team.

<sup>4</sup> EUSE, (2005), *Information Booklet and Quality Standards*

<sup>5</sup> SUSE, (2006), *A Blueprint for Supported Employment in Scotland*, Galashiels: Reivers Press Ltd.

<sup>6</sup> Draft report of the Equal Opportunities Committee to Scottish Parliament, 2006; Disability Equality Duty 2006; Equality Act 2000; Disability Discrimination Act 1995

<sup>7</sup> 'Freud Report', 2007; WorkforcePlus, *Employability Framework for Scotland 2005; A New Deal for Welfare* Green Paper, 2006.

<sup>8</sup> Draft report of the Equal Opportunities Committee to Scottish Parliament, 2006; Prime Minister's Strategy Unit Report, 2005, page 54.

At the same time, these policy initiatives rarely address the specific needs of people with learning disabilities and/or ASD and there continues to be a need for targeted measures to ensure that people with learning disabilities and/or ASD are supported to enter the labour market (see page 7). In this respect, building on the expertise and track record of those involved in supported employment will be important<sup>9</sup>.

## Defining the Focus Population

This report focuses on real jobs for people with learning disabilities and /or autistic spectrum disorders (ASD). For definitions see glossary of terms at the start of this document.

People with learning disabilities and/or ASD have individual support needs and may need help to understand information, learn skills and to cope independently<sup>10</sup>. They may need occasional or short-term support, limited support during periods of change or crisis, regular long-term support or they may need constant and highly intensive support if they have complex needs or profound disabilities. In most cases, standard solutions are therefore unhelpful.

There is a literature about the prevalence of learning disabilities and/or ASD in the population. With reference to prevalence studies, it has been estimated there are around 120,000 people with learning disabilities in Scotland (Scottish Executive, 2000)<sup>11</sup>. It was further estimated that only 30,000 people are in regular contact with local authorities or the health service in Scotland, while others may have occasional or short term contacts.

Research further suggests that the number of people with learning disabilities, including those with more complex needs, will continue to grow by over 1% annually over the next 10 years, which means more people with learning disabilities will be present in the work-age group of the population.

No reliable figures exist for the number of adults with ASD in Scotland. The National Autistic Society website ([www.autism.org.uk](http://www.autism.org.uk)) concludes that figures cannot be precisely fixed but that a prevalence of around 1 in 100 is a best estimate of prevalence of ASD in children. However, no prevalence studies have been carried out with adults. What we do know is that there is a reported increase in the number of people with ASD, which is unrelated to improved diagnosis, which means there will also be more people with ASD requiring support in the workplace in the future.

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<sup>9</sup> SUSE, (2006), *A Blueprint for Supported Employment in Scotland*, Galashiels: Reivers Press Ltd.

<sup>10</sup> Scottish Executive, 2000, *The same as you? A review of services for people with learning disabilities*, Edinburgh: Scottish Executive.

<sup>11</sup> Scottish Executive, 2000, *The same as you? A review of services for people with learning disabilities*, Edinburgh: Scottish Executive. page 5

## Employment and People with Learning Disabilities

Helping people with learning disabilities to obtain employment has been considered a fundamental element, indeed an integral part of an 'ordinary life' since the 1970s, and various initiatives have pursued this goal as a right for people with learning disabilities and as a way of achieving better social inclusion. In policy terms, there has been a major shift from institutional and group care to individualised support to live in the community, often referred to as 'independent living' or 'supported living', which together with the civil rights movement, 'normalisation' and the self-advocacy movement, have progressed the employment agenda.

The benefits of real jobs to people with learning disabilities and/or ASD are now undisputed. These include:

- Having meaningful and valued options in life
- Having an income/wage
- A purpose or structure to daily life
- Social links with the community
- Meaningful choices and opportunities
- A sense of personal future

Recognising these benefits, the Scottish Executive's review of services for people with learning disabilities and/or ASD advocated:

- Including people with learning disabilities in ordinary work settings
- Helping people find jobs which offer the same pay, terms and conditions as employees doing the same kind of work
- Offering people the necessary support to be able to work on their own, with appropriate risk assessment and management
- Helping those with complex needs to find work and provide ongoing support where necessary<sup>12</sup>

A short-life working group (Scottish Executive, 2003) focusing on employment identified that only one in 20 people with learning disabilities were in any form of paid work<sup>13</sup>. Research<sup>14</sup> commissioned to update this position gathered information about employment support services for people with learning disabilities and/or ASD across Scotland, and about the jobs and individuals currently supported. Key findings included:

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<sup>12</sup> Scottish Executive, 2000, *The same as you? A review of services for people with learning disabilities*, Edinburgh: Scottish Executive.

<sup>13</sup> Scottish Executive, (2003), *Working for a change? The same as you? National Implementation Group Report of the short life working group on employment*, Edinburgh: Scottish Executive, page 60.

<sup>14</sup> Ridley, J., Hunter, S., Infusion Cooperative, (2005) *Go for it! Supporting People with Learning Disabilities and/or Autistic Spectrum Disorders in Employment*, Social Research Report, Edinburgh: Scottish Executive.

### Key Findings of 'Go for It!' Report

- Positive individual outcomes such as being financially better off in work and having friends from work, were reported where there was evidence of good practice in supported employment
  - Over 3,000 supported jobs were reported by 69 agencies providing a range of employment support including work preparation as well as supported employment
  - Many people with learning disabilities who were supported in work were in unpaid or voluntary work and some had been in these jobs for several years
  - Those in unpaid jobs were in the main work experience placements but a significant minority (14%) of these were jobs lasting for 4 years or more
  - Half of all those in paid jobs were working for under 10 hours per week, some for as little as 1-2 hours per week, which hadn't substantially change their lives
  - Several of the full time jobs (over 16 hours per week) were in sheltered employment or in jobs managed under the Workstep programme
  - While 4 out of 5 people were getting the national minimum wage, many people were working more hours than they were paid for
  - Many of those receiving below the national minimum wage were working for under 10 hours per week
  - The jobs found were of variable quality and generally in a restricted range of occupations except where the agency had taken a more individualised approach
  - Men with learning disabilities were more likely to be in paid jobs but both men and women with learning disabilities were found in unpaid and voluntary work
  - The vast majority of adults with learning disabilities in work were aged 25-49 years
- (See original research report and published articles for more detailed findings<sup>15</sup>)

### Importance of the 'Supported Employment' Model

'Supported employment', which developed out of progressive movements in the field of disability during the 1980s, has provided an effective model, when implemented well, for helping people with learning disabilities and/or ASD find and keep real jobs. This represents a radical shift in thinking from getting people 'ready' for employment to focusing on what support people need to achieve their goals and aspirations.

Supported employment is not a new idea. As is stated in SUSE (2006), there is 'ample evidence' for its effectiveness, particularly in the field of learning disabilities. It grew out of dissatisfaction with sheltered workshops and training centres and their poor job outcomes,

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<sup>15</sup> Ridley, J., Hunter, S., Infusion Cooperative, (2005) *Go for it! Supporting People with Learning Disabilities and/or Autistic Spectrum Disorders in Employment*, Social Research Report, Edinburgh: Scottish Executive; Hunter, S., Ridley, J. (2007), *Supported employment in Scotland: some issues from research and implications*, Tizard Learning Disability Review; Ridley, J. and Hunter, S (2006) *The development of supported employment in Scotland*, Journal of Vocational Rehabilitation, 25, 1, pp57-68.

and, importantly, was founded on new evidence about the learning capacity of people with severe disabilities to learn skills once considered too difficult or complex. American Marc Gold pioneered a practical hands-on program of task analysis, making employment a realisable goal for thousands of people with disabilities. 'Training in Systematic Instruction' or TSI, was, and remains the technical base for the model.

The model migrated to Western Europe during the 1980s, and was mainly used with people with learning disabilities. Since then, it has been successfully applied to other groups including people with mental health problems and people with ASD.

While supported employment in the United States emerged as a nationwide initiative defined in law, and supported by a system of federal and state funding, in a European context, it has mainly been defined in terms of the process of individualised vocational profiling, job search and marketing, job analysis, and on the job training and support<sup>16</sup>. The following definition has recently been endorsed by a number of national organisations in Europe:

*"Providing support to people with disabilities or other disadvantaged groups to secure and maintain paid employment in the open labour market." EUSE (2005) page 13*

This definition however differs from that adopted in the US as well as from that advocated by some supported employment providers in Scotland<sup>17</sup>. While no overall consensus of definition exists, writers do tend to agree on three essential elements:

#### **Key Elements of Supported Employment**

- (a) It should offer paid employment or 'real jobs';
- (b) Jobs should be in integrated settings or with community employers; and
- (c) There is ongoing, flexible 'support'.

Contentious or ongoing debates continue around whether or not very part time jobs of two to five hours should be counted as supported employment; whether or not there is any place for work experience within supported employment; whether individuals need to be financially better off or if the intrinsic benefits of working are enough in themselves. In relation to the development of supported employment in a Scottish context, recent research found:

#### **Key Findings<sup>18</sup>**

- There are few dedicated supported employment services in Scotland
- Less than half of those responding to the survey were supporting jobs that would meet an international definition of supported employment
- Widespread implementation of supported employment in real paid jobs of 16 hours or more, which arguably provides maximum benefits, was not much in evidence

<sup>16</sup> Leach, S. (2002), *A Supported Employment Workbook. Individual Profiling and Job Matching*, London: JKP; EUSE (2005)

<sup>17</sup> Ridley et al., 2005, see page 7, pp15-16

<sup>18</sup> Ridley et al, 2005

- Contrary to what is often claimed for supported employment, unless individuals were working 16 hours or more, jobs provided only modest or marginal increased earnings
- While there is room for different strategies to find and place people in jobs, the fact that so many were in very part time jobs and have been so for years, questions many of the claims made about the benefits of employment.

**Overlapping Concerns?**

Despite general claims that supported employment ‘fits within a wider national context’<sup>19</sup>, and the apparent synergy between the main thrust of national policy and supported employment, there are some important differences of emphasis and philosophy. These need to be acknowledged as they will have a bearing on how effective national policies will be at creating opportunities for real paid jobs for people with learning disabilities and/or ASD.

The main similarities and differences between mainstream agendas and supported employment can be summarised as:

<b>Main Similarities Between Equalities and Welfare to Work Agendas and Supported Employment</b>	<b>Outstanding Differences Between Equalities and Welfare to Work Agendas and Supported Employment</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Promoting real jobs in integrated settings</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> All assume provision of some kind of support in work</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Focus is on increasing people’s well being and fulfilling their potential – intrinsic benefits of work</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> The personalisation agenda is central to national agendas and a key aspect of supported employment</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Focus on removing disincentives to work inherent in the system is a common theme to all</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> All promote partnership working between employers and support agencies and others</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> There is very low key mention of learning disabilities and/or ASD in mainstream agendas</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Aspects of assessment and preparation within mainstream agendas do not fit well with supported employment</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Mainstream proposals pose specific risks to people with learning disabilities and/or ASD in terms of Benefits unless support costs can be separated from housing costs. While relatively straightforward in supported living, it is problematic for those with high support needs in supported accommodation.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Proposed ‘outcome’ focus of new contracting arrangements is problematic if numbers are the required ‘outcome’. People with severe disabilities will never be a priority because of the intensity and time required to support them.</li> </ul>

A draft report to Scottish Parliament<sup>20</sup> importantly identifies ‘a gap in provision for those disabled people who may require extra support to get into employment or to maintain employment’. The Committee concludes that many mainstream initiatives and proposals do not go far enough in meeting the support needs of disabled people, especially those with severe or complex needs who may be ‘furthest from the labour market’.

<sup>19</sup> SUSE, 2006  
<sup>20</sup> Equal Opportunities Committee draft report to Scottish Parliament (2006)

They suggest an additional approach is required until mainstream provision has the capacity to assist all disabled people. A national framework for supported employment is proposed as 'the only way' forward. This was supported by the recent research evidence focusing on people with learning disabilities and/or ASD<sup>21</sup> which found that despite some notable examples of practice innovation, supported employment remains on the margins. Together with other strategy documents<sup>22</sup>, the research identified the need for better and more secure financial infrastructure for supported employment, including more mainstream funding and greater investment in rural areas as well as for people with more severe disabilities and people with ASD.

In short, if policy initiatives are to be serious about bringing into the labour market people with severe learning disabilities and/or ASD who require ongoing support, there will need to be ring fenced initiatives and commissioning of specialised supported employment services at least in the short to medium term.

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<sup>21</sup> Ridley et al, 2005

<sup>22</sup> EUSE, 2005.

## *SECTION TWO: STATEMENT OF PRINCIPLES*

Clear principles emerge from the increasing body of international research into supported employment and the recent provider statements about quality standards<sup>23</sup>. These principles come from research which has included services users' and others' views about best practice and quality in supported employment. An early draft statement of principles was discussed with the services consulted in writing this document, and was subsequently amended.

These principles offer a defining framework for considering how best to support people with learning disabilities and/or ASD to access and sustain real paid jobs. We return to these principles later on in posing questions for those commissioning services (Section Five).

**Real jobs/valued roles** – there should be a clear focus from the outset on securing the outcome of real paid jobs, providing valued roles for people with learning disabilities in their communities. As an employee, individuals should be paid the going rate for the job and have the same workplace terms and conditions as other employees

**A presumption of employability** – everyone who wants to work should be assumed to be employable with the right support. Employment should be actively considered an option for people with learning disabilities and/or ASD

**Learn about work on the job** – individuals with learning disabilities and/or ASD should be trained on the job rather than preparing for future employment

**Flexible support** - people with learning disabilities and/or ASD should receive flexible, individualised support that is not time limited and is tailored to meet their individual needs. Follow-on support, and support to develop, progress in or move onto other jobs should be a feature

**Promote early participation in employment** – access to employment support should be at the earliest stage possible e.g. at school leaving age. If employment is on the curriculum for disabled pupils, progression to employment will increasingly become more of a natural assumption for everyone

**Equality of access** – support to access employment should be accessible for everyone interested in working regardless of label, support need or perceived level of functioning, including those with more severe learning disabilities and/or ASD

**Personalisation** – people with learning disabilities and/or ASD should be treated as individuals and support should be customised for each person. The emphasis should be on finding out what each person wants to do and where his/her skills and aspirations lie and using these in the job finding and development process

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<sup>23</sup> SUSE, 2006; EUSE, 2005

**Participation and involvement** – individuals with learning disabilities and/or ASD should be fully involved in all aspects of the process, and have the information and support necessary to enable them to participate

**Self-determination and choice** – people with learning disabilities and/or ASD should be asked about the support they need, be encouraged to express individual choice and be involved in deciding what they want. They should be helped to understand their opportunities fully so they can make informed choices

**Social inclusion** – people with learning disabilities and/or ASD should be offered real jobs with ordinary or mainstream employers and have the opportunity to work alongside non-disabled co-workers.

## *SECTION THREE: BEST PRACTICE AT STRATEGIC LEVEL*

### **Introduction**

The literature about best practice in supported employment can be subdivided into best practice at a strategic level and at an individual project/service level. Seven key strategic level dimensions are outlined:

- The importance of adopting a strategic (or partnership) approach
- Ensuring financial gain from having a real job
- Presuming that everyone is employable
- Maximising social inclusion opportunities at work
- Focusing on young disabled school leavers
- Providing employment opportunities for people with complex disabilities including ASD
- Promoting supported self-employment opportunities

For further progress to be made, it is widely accepted that a strategic approach is required, which involves a range of agencies at policy level and targeted intervention along key dimensions. In providing a brief outline of these key dimensions, we make reference to relevant literature, research findings and provide illustrations from current practice wherever possible.

### **Adopting a Strategic or Partnership Approach**

The consensus from the literature is that specific systems and structures, including developing a national framework for supported employment in Scotland and adopting a strategic and partnership approach, are vital to the development of effective employment support services<sup>24</sup>. The need for joined up planning and service delivery is a key theme for enhancing the performance of mainstream employment initiatives identified by Workforce Plus<sup>25</sup>. This recognises that 'local services need to be more cohesive, with joined up funding and procurement approaches, common assessment processes, clear referral procedures and a sharper focus on employment outcomes'<sup>26</sup>.

Developing supported employment services in isolation rather than as part of an overall strategic framework has led to duplication, fragmentation and fragility of the sector<sup>27</sup>. Internationally it has been identified that strategic redesign issues are generally not being addressed locally or nationally<sup>28</sup>. Such redesign requires commitment at the top level, explicit partnership agreements with employers, trade unions, local businesses, training and welfare services, dedicated monies from a range of sources connecting for instance,

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<sup>24</sup> E.g. Equal Opportunities Committee Scottish Parliament, Draft Report, 2006; SUSE, 2006; Ridley et al, 2005

<sup>25</sup> Workforce Plus, (2006), *an Employability Framework for Scotland*, Edinburgh: Scottish Executive.

<sup>26</sup> Workforce Plus, (2006) p24.

<sup>27</sup> O'Bryan, A, Simons, K., Beyer, S., Grove, B. (2000), *A framework for supported employment*, Policy Consortium of Supported Employment, York: York Publishing Services

<sup>28</sup> Ritchie, P, (1999), *Changeover: Experiences of Day Centre Conversion and User Empowerment* in Stile, K (ed) 'Beyond Borders: Global Supported Employment and People with Disabilities', USA: TRN Inc.

supported employment, economic development and training agencies and mechanisms for involving people with disabilities themselves<sup>29</sup>.

### Practice Examples

**North Lanarkshire Council** has adopted a strong policy leadership and coordinated approach to supported employment, as described by O'Bryan<sup>30</sup>:

*"In 1998 they began a supported employment strategy as part of a broader Social Inclusion focus led by key advocates in their Social Work Department. The strategy embraced all existing employment efforts including the local sheltered workshop and a Partnership project. The leaders pulled together a steering group within the Department at the same time as they started up a supported employment service for people attending one-day centre..."*

*"The group adopted an approach that featured partnership-working, employment for everyone with people with learning disabilities having priority and individual decision-making..."*

*In 1999 the Social Work Department expanded its strategy group to include the chief executives and nominated officers of the wider Council, the Benefits Agency, the Employment Service, the Health Board, the Primary Care Trust, the local Scottish Enterprise group, and one of the largest local private sector employers. This group developed and maintains a strategic overview, keeping up to date on the achievements and issues of North Lanarkshire supported employment development. Members also advise each other on their own organisations' initiatives, policy and practice as they develop and effect supported employment. They identify existing resources individually and jointly."*

**A Glasgow Partnership** brings together the local Council, NHS Board, Jobcentre Plus, Scottish Enterprise, Careers Scotland, Further Education colleges, LECs and ENABLE Scotland and has produced a plan as to how agencies in the area should work together under a common vision (*Equal Access to Employment Strategy*). The partnership identified the need for strong, strategic leadership within the City as a key issue. The document articulates the vision, principles objective and targets of the Equal Access to Employment strategy, outlines the management structure and work plan for implementing the strategy.

### Ensuring Financial Gain

An important outcome from real jobs for anyone is receiving a wage or salary and an increase in financial power. This is no less important for those with learning disabilities and/or ASD. Many people are able to become consumers for the first time the same as other people in society. The literature in relation to disabled people frequently refers to the difficulties in matching earned income with UK Welfare Benefit levels as a reason for not seeking employment beyond 'permitted' levels. Individuals and their families express anxiety

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<sup>29</sup> Smyth K, Maynard Cambell, S. (1997), (1997) *"Disabled People into Employment: the Report of a UK wide survey of good practice in projects with disabled people and employment informing ideas for the development of a strategic framework for action"*, Nottingham City Council, Greater Nottingham TEC, The Employment Service.

<sup>30</sup> O'Bryan, A, (2002) *"Moving the Goal Posts: How a vision of complete integration refocuses the quality evaluation of supported employment"*, paper for Salamanca University.  
pp9-10

about relinquishing Benefits, inability to sustain jobs and subsequent ineligibility for previous benefits and/or long waiting periods for reinstatement<sup>31</sup>.

The recently published Freud Report<sup>32</sup> has a number of proposals for streamlining the current system and tackling the disincentives to employment in general. An important disincentive to paid employment for people with learning disabilities is the high cost of support packages especially in registered accommodation. A systemic solution is required for this long-term<sup>33</sup> but some local authorities such as North Lanarkshire have demonstrated that it is possible to find a means of separating out housing and support costs so that taking on a job becomes financially viable.

While UK research has generally reported less impressive findings in relation to the financial outcomes from supported employment compared to the US, the picture emerging from recent research<sup>34</sup> is more optimistic. The case studies below demonstrate not only the increases obtained through employment, but also the gains made through skilled benefit review and income maximisation prior to employment<sup>35</sup>.

While the first example provides evidence of the potentially significant financial gains for people with learning disabilities and/or ASD in real jobs (£162 per week in this case), the second shows there are still gains to be had from employment, albeit more modest (£20 per week), for those with more severe disabilities working fewer than 16 hours per week initially. The significance of even modest gains from employment to individuals should not be underestimated.

*David*

*David is 24 years old - lives with relatives, and has autism and learning disabilities. Was previously unemployed. From 1994 – 1999 he had a job delivering the local newspapers to households. In April 2004 David started work in a full-time permanent post of Litter Picker with North Lanarkshire Council. He works 37 hours per week. (Quoted in Ridley et al, 2005)*

Income maximised prior to employment		Income in employment	
Income Support	£11.55	Earnings	£193.10
IB/SDA	£55.00	Tax Credits	£48.34
DLA (Care)	£38.30	DLA (Care)	£39.35
DLA (Mobility)	£15.15	DLA (Mobility)	£15.55
Other	£	Other	£
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>£120.00</b>	<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>£296.34</b>
Less housing costs	£	Less housing costs	£
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>£120.00</b>	<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>£296.34</b>
		<b>DIFFERENCE IN INCOME</b>	<b>£162.09</b>

<sup>31</sup> E.g. O’Bryan et al, 2000; Simons, K. (1998) “Home, work and inclusion. The social policy implications of supported living and employment for people with learning disabilities”, York: York Publishing Services for the Joseph Rowntree Foundation.

<sup>32</sup> Freud, D (2007), Reducing Dependency, Increasing Opportunity: Options for the future of welfare to work, London: DWP.

<sup>33</sup> O’Bryan et al, 2000

<sup>34</sup> Ridley et al, 2005; O’Bryan, 2002.

<sup>35</sup> O’Bryan, 2002

## Case Example provided by SOLWAY Project

Mr X has learning disabilities and Aspergers syndrome. Because of the severity of his disabilities and his high support needs the project initially supported him in a job for under 10 hours per week. This has slowly increased and he is currently now supported to work 10 hours per week under 'permitted work' rules. Although this still isn't full-time by DWP standards (ie 16 hours or more), the calculation below shows that he is still financially better off in work.

		<b>Income in employment</b>	
Income maximised prior to employment		Earnings	£53.50
Pension	£21.82	Pension	£21.82
Personal Allowance	£54.65	Personal Allowance	£21.15
IB/SDA	£42.95	IB/SDA	£42.95
Disability premium	£23.30	Disability premium	£23.30
DLA (Care) high rate	£62.25	DLA (Care) high rate	£62.25
Enhanced disability premium	£11.40	Enhanced disability premium	£11.40
DLA (Mobility)	£16.50	DLA (Mobility)	£16.50
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>£232.87</b>	<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>£252.87</b>
Less housing costs		Less housing costs	
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>£232.87</b>	<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>£252.87</b>
		<b>DIFFERENCE IN INCOME</b>	<b>£20</b>

## Presumption of Employability

Presuming everyone who wants to work is employable with the right support, means that people with learning disabilities and/or ASD, regardless of the severity of their disabilities or support needs, should have opportunities to be in real jobs. This is an important underpinning principle of best practice identified by research and is in line with Workforce Plus's Employability Framework for Scotland<sup>36</sup>. It also means having an expectation that people with learning disabilities and/or ASD are capable of full time (i.e. 16 hours or more) work. Workforce Plus emphasise that the procurement of services should be driven by a clear focus on employment outcomes.

In the US, legislation sets the standard for supported employment jobs at 20 hours per week. In the UK, there is no equivalent. In the absence of an agreed 'gold standard', the Department of Work and Pensions' definition of 'full time work' as work of 16 hours or more is frequently adopted. Not only does this equate to jobs offering better financial gains, (sometimes very substantial), but opportunities to develop friendships at work, and to be engaged in typical work patterns and tasks, are better<sup>37</sup>.

<sup>36</sup> Workforce Plus 2006

<sup>37</sup> Numerous studies by Beyer and Kilsby at Welsh Centre for Learning Disabilities; studies by Mank, USA.

For a number of historical and other reasons, the UK has only a few examples of projects achieving this. Justification for supporting people in jobs of just a few hours per week usually refer to income reduction through loss of benefits and/or individuals' physical stamina to undertake the job. However, the key issue highlighted by recent research<sup>38</sup>, is an emerging trend for placing and maintaining people with learning disabilities in jobs of just a few hours a week. Very few projects appeared to be consistently working towards supporting people in real jobs of 16 hours or more. Half of the 60% who were supported in paid work, only worked for just 2-5 hrs a week and only a fifth were supported in jobs for more than 16hrs.

In 2006, a draft report to Scottish Parliament<sup>39</sup> took the view that commissioners should expect services to be supporting disabled people in jobs of 16 hours or more and where this proved problematic, services needed to show commissioners how they intend to address the issues/barriers to achieving this goal. It remains to be seen how the recommendations from this draft report will be implemented.

A leading writer and practitioner in supported employment commenting on this thorny issue posed the question:

*“Can or should offering people with disabilities work experience using therapeutic earnings (now known as permitted work) long term (over six months) or wage disregard using external job coaches to complete the job tasks, with little or no chance of development into sustainable employment, be called supported employment? It is in effect, an off-site day service provision that will not lead to independence or self-determination...if you do not get real jobs at real rates of pay you are not providing an effective, inclusive supported employment service.”<sup>40</sup>*

Whether finding people jobs of 16 hours or more is a stated objective of the service, as it is for the Opening Project in Glasgow and North Lanarkshire Supported Employment Service, this 'gold standard' is one that at the very least should be an aspiration of good supported employment services. Commissioners should look for evidence that projects are looking for ways to overcome barriers to full time work and at how they can help individuals increase their weekly hours when they are in jobs under 10 hours per week.

## **Social Inclusion**

Supporting real jobs ensures that people with learning disabilities and/or ASD are not only present in the community but that they are participating in meaningful activities alongside other people. This actively promotes social inclusion, a central aim of Scottish Executive government policy in respect of people with learning disabilities and/or ASD<sup>41</sup>. Research shows that individuals with learning disabilities themselves place a high value on the relationships they make through work, for example:

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<sup>38</sup> Ridley et al, 2005

<sup>39</sup> Equal Opportunities Committee Scottish Parliament, Draft Report, 2006

<sup>40</sup> Leach, (2002), *A Supported Employment Workbook*, London: JKP, p21

<sup>41</sup> Scottish Executive, 2000

*Richard said that a good job means 'having something real to do and having people to work with who you get on with'. Richard sometimes goes to the pub with people from work after a shift to watch football.<sup>42</sup>*

While there may be differing views among researchers about what constitutes social integration, it is generally believed that social relationships made at work can be a key factor in people keeping their jobs. However, having a job doesn't automatically lead to broadening of social relationships beyond work, and disappointing social integration outcomes are associated with jobs that are isolated or are atypical of the workplace<sup>43</sup>. It is therefore important that services identify those workplaces most conducive to social inclusion and that they use intentional strategies to support it<sup>44</sup>.

As reliable opportunities for social integration rely on a regular presence in the work place, it follows that promoting real jobs of 16 hours or more becomes an important consideration. Further, it is more likely that someone working 16 hours or more will not be attending a segregated day service for part of the week, which means potentially having a job has a more significant impact on the person's life.

### **A Project Addressing Social Inclusion for People with ASD**

Moving Intowork, a voluntary sector project assisting people with ASD to find and keep real jobs, has found that work is not necessarily resulting in significant changes in social inclusion and felt that their service alone was incomplete. To provide further support to become more socially integrated, they set up a partnership with Autism Initiatives (AI), a national organisation specialising in ASD. The project states, "this has met a real need". AI is an English based company that supports people with autism with high support needs, funded by the Scottish Executive to run leisure facilities, befriending, helping people with social skills, and outreach.

AC is a young woman who has a diagnosis of Asperger syndrome who is supported by Moving Intowork to help her find employment. A has severe anxiety relating to her disability and has had bad experiences of bullying. Although her confidence was improving through the support she was receiving from Moving Intowork, it was felt she would benefit from an introduction to Number 6, an autism resource centre in Edinburgh run by AI that aims to assist people on the autistic spectrum to become less isolated. This has been described as 'an amazing experience' for A who became heavily involved in Number 6 and started to attend a weekly women's group. She met a friend there who she now regularly goes to the theatre with and meets for lunch, and recently she had her friend over to stay the night. Prior to this, A had few friends and few opportunities to meet new people.

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<sup>42</sup> Ridley et al, 2005, p74

<sup>43</sup> Bass, M. and Drewett, R. (1997) *"Real Work: Supported Employment for People with Learning Difficulties"* Social Service Monographs. Sheffield: Joint Unit for Social Services Research, Sheffield University and Community Care

Ridley, J. (2001), "Supported Employment and Learning Disability: A Life-Changing Experience?" in Clark C (ed) *"Adult Day Services and Social Inclusion. Better Days"*, Research Highlights in Social Work No 39, London: Jessica Kingsley Publishers.

<sup>44</sup> Beyer, S. (2001) *"How does agency organisation impact on employment outcomes?"*, Paper presented at 5<sup>th</sup> EUSE Conference, March 2001, Edinburgh.

## Young disabled school leavers

Commissioners need to consider how services will address the needs of young people with learning disabilities and/or ASD especially young school leavers. Government 'employability' policy identifies that it is important to tackle the barriers to employment experienced by young people. A key policy focus of the Scottish Executive is young people aged between 16-19 who are not in education, employment or training, otherwise known as the NEET group<sup>45</sup>. While this is particularly aimed at young people who are cared for, those who are lone parents, and those who have low qualifications, 'young people with physical and mental health problems' are also identified as requiring targeted interventions.

In England and Wales, attention has been drawn specifically to the barriers young people with learning disabilities face in moving into the adult world and in particular into the world of work<sup>46</sup>. This issue has attracted a lower profile in Scotland but a recent report emphasises this issue and makes some suggestions<sup>47</sup>. The report stresses that options for school leavers needs to be as varied as people's needs and aspirations and should include paid work, gap year opportunities, participation in leadership courses such as the Princes' Trust and Fairbridge, mainstream training for work, volunteering opportunities and integrated college courses.

Any strategic intervention aiming to increase participation in the labour market needs not only to offer employment opportunities to those already in day centres, but also to create alternative options and choices for young people with learning disabilities and/or ASD who are about to leave school. When published later this year, research by the Welsh Centre for Learning Disabilities will spotlight models of transition planning that best promote employment outcomes for school leavers.

### **An Example of a Systemic Approach to Encouraging School Leavers into Employment**

In 2000 North Lanarkshire Social Work Department began a project involving young people in their last years of special school. Using their developments in supported employment, supported living and person centred planning they are working with the schools and colleges to expand expectations of and options for fulfilling adult lives.<sup>48</sup>

Strategic developments to address the barriers to employment facing young people with learning disabilities have resulted in the planned closure of day centres in North Lanarkshire and the reconfiguration of daytime support. Planning for young people with learning disabilities is part of an overall strategy to reduce dependence on traditional day centres. They have achieved this by creating new locality teams with locality support staff who will support people with a wide range of needs to pursue individual options including employment.

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<sup>45</sup> Workforce Plus, 2006

<sup>46</sup> Prime Minister's Strategy Unit though its report, *Improving the Life Chances of Disabled People* (2005) and *Valuing People* (2001) with its programme, Connexions

<sup>47</sup> Scottish Executive, (2006), *Changing childhoods? Report of the Children's Sub Group*, Edinburgh: Scottish Executive.

<sup>48</sup> O'Bryan, 2002

Although many services do target activities at school leavers by delivering presentations about supported employment within schools for example, few have the resources to implement the strategic approach adopted by North Lanarkshire Council. For example, Moving Intowork, which has active links with schools, states:

*“We do as much as we can to foster links with schools and colleges. We’re invited along to review meetings/ future needs assessment meetings. We have given presentations at parents’ evenings and developed a pack along with the Scottish Society for Autism using materials from the National Autistic Society, which is distributed to secondary schools in Lothian. We did have Social Inclusion Partnership money for one year to address transition issues but this is one of the biggest challenges for our service as we’re not funded to do this.”*

Another provider, the Opening Project, aims to tackle ‘inaccurate assumptions about the ability of disabled young people to enter the mainstream world’ of Further and Higher Education and raise awareness among professionals of the support mechanisms available. The service operates an ‘Early Intervention Strategy’, which works in partnership with Careers Scotland, in order to target short term unemployed school leavers.<sup>49</sup>

## **Complex disabilities including ASD**

Given prevailing policy is to promote employability and ensure everyone has an opportunity to participate in real jobs, approaches are needed to ensure this opportunity is also available to people with more complex or severe disabilities, as well as those with ASD. Ironically, research has repeatedly shown that they tend to be underrepresented in supported employment, placed in poorer quality jobs with lower wage and integration outcomes, and are served by relatively few agencies in the UK despite the origins of the model<sup>50</sup>.

However, positive outcomes for people with severe disabilities have been found through supported employment<sup>51</sup>. Research<sup>52</sup> has identified a range of successful strategies which include:

- Diversifying the support model for example, support co-worker; job share; self employed; professional partnership
- Close attention is paid to both individuals’ and employers’ needs
- Recruitment practices are adapted to allow individuals to perform at their best
- There is a good ‘job match’ of the person and the work environment
- As many aspects as possible are ‘typical’ for the workplace, especially in terms of inclusion in the workforce
- Co-workers are trained by supported employment personnel

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<sup>49</sup> Opening Project Business Plan 2006-2009

<sup>50</sup> Weston, J. (2002) “Choosing, Getting and keeping a job: a study of supported employment for people with complex needs”, Edinburgh: Scottish Human Services;  
Bass, M. (2000) “Supported Employment for People with Learning Difficulties”, York: Joseph Rowntree Foundation;  
Mank, D., Cioffi, A. and Yovanoff, P. (1998b) “Employment Outcomes for People with Severe Disabilities: Opportunities for Improvement”, *Mental Retardation*, Vol 36, No 3, pp205-216.

<sup>51</sup> Mank, D., O’Neil, C. T. and Jensen, R. (1998a) “Quality in supported employment: A new demonstration of the capabilities of people with severe disabilities”, *Journal-of-Vocational-Rehabilitation*, Vol 11(1), pp83-95.

<sup>52</sup> Weston, 2002; Beyer, 2001; Mank et al, 1998b

- The use of adaptations and on-site training using systematic instruction is critical
- It is important to build up the hours worked gradually, to hold regular reviews, and for support workers to understand individuals' methods of communication
- There is good communication between everyone involved so that any problems are resolved early on.

Commissioners are key players in setting the expectation that employment opportunities will be offered to people with severe disabilities or high support needs and in funding projects in order to do this, particularly with regard to long-term job support. The Policy Consortium for Supported Employment<sup>53</sup> recommended premiums to services for assisting people with higher support needs.

There is little published information relating to adults with ASD and employment and what there is, focuses primarily on strategies with adults with Aspergers syndrome. A report by the National Autistic Society<sup>54</sup> identified employment as the single biggest issue facing adults with ASD. Supported employment and person centred planning can be the key to facilitating real jobs for people with ASD<sup>55</sup>. Successful transitions into jobs and careers for people with ASD can be achieved through:

- Gradual transitions – work started for short periods while the person is still in school
- Jobs that have a well-defined goal or endpoint
- Capitalising on the person's work not personality, and making a portfolio of work
- Supportive employers who recognise the person's social limitations
- Having mentors – people who have common interests with the person with ASD
- Educating employers and employees about ASD
- Undertaking freelance or self-employed work.<sup>56</sup>

### **Supporting People with ASD in Real Jobs**

Moving Intowork is a supported employment service operating in Edinburgh to assist people with ASD and acquired brain injury (ABI) to take up employment opportunities, whether that be work experience, placements or real jobs. The main goal is always to place people in real jobs with the emphasis being on fulfilment of potential, aspirations, and progression.

A is a young woman who has a diagnosis of Aspergers Syndrome, she has been with the service for a few years. A has severe anxiety and misreads social situations – this causes her great distress and limits her ability to socially interact with her peers. A has worked very closely with her employment worker developing an individual action plan and time line of the areas she would like to progress in. This has been very positive for A as she has been in control from the beginning and setting her own pace and development. By taking each step slowly she has increased her confidence and has recently moved into part time employment of 20 hours per week. At 25 years, this is the first paid job A has had in many years. A still receives a high level of support but continues to grow as an individual.

<sup>53</sup> O'Bryan et al, 2000

<sup>54</sup> Barnard, J., Harvey, V., Potter, D. and Prior, A. (2001) *"Ignored or ineligible. The reality for adults with autism spectrum disorders"*, London: National Autistic Society.

<sup>55</sup> Leach, 2002

<sup>56</sup> Grandin, T. (1999) "Choosing the Right Job for People with Autism or Aspergers Syndrome", Website for the Center for the Study of Autism ([www.autism.org/temple/jobs](http://www.autism.org/temple/jobs))

## Self Employment Opportunities

Although in the minority, some services are now exploring how they can support people with learning disabilities to be self-employed. Any service offering individualised options should be prepared to consider how it might support someone who expresses an interest in self-employment. It has been called the 'logical next step' in the evolution of supported employment<sup>57</sup>, offering the advantages of flexibility for someone who doesn't fit standard job descriptions; in scheduling the working day to accommodate personal productivity levels and concentration; and of self-reliance and control that appeals to some.

There are some challenges, not least of which is that individuals and employment specialist need to know how to access business training, business plan development, specialist financial advice etc and being self employed isn't everyone's choice. European money has been made available through programmes such as *Potential to Help*, which helps disabled people start their own businesses. Recent research found supported self-employment in Scotland was rare but the following example provides detail of one person's situation:

### **Example of Supported Self Employment**

*Jenny has Asperger's syndrome and lives in the Highlands of Scotland. She has been a self-employed garden specialist/horticulturalist for just over two years. What is now her business began as an engraving hobby. She works from a plot of land on her parents' farm. She grows plants for people to order and bedding plants, herbs and perennials for sale from home and at the outlet provided by a local shop. She's more recently started to do a weeding and planting service. She's learnt that she has to pace herself and to avoid burn out only does one weeding and planting session of two hours in any day. Jenny, who is 23, works seven days per week, totalling about 40 hours in the week. She has Direct Payments: her team of three personal assistants help her with her work, as does her mum. However, Jenny is clear that she has the knowledge and that she is the manager of the team, but they do all work as a team. There are many reasons why Jenny is happy in her job. She likes seeing the final results, everything flowering and looking good. She likes that people come to her for advice. She likes helping people (she has given a week's work experience to someone with special needs, when no one else would give her a chance). She likes doing the actual work, a lot of which she can do easily, with music playing in the background. She is proud that she can stick at a task sometimes better than other people as she gets obsessed with it. She also takes pride in improving what she does each year, by taking notes of what works and what doesn't. She's pleased with the money she's earning as the business is growing each year and her plan is to come off tax credits etc altogether. Jenny thinks that what makes a good job is "being happy with your work."<sup>58</sup>*

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<sup>57</sup> Griffin, C. and Hammis, D. (2003) *"Making Self Employment Work for People with Disabilities"*, Baltimore: Paul Brookes Publishing Co.

<sup>58</sup> Ridley et al, 2005, pp70-71.

## *SECTION FOUR: BEST PRACTICE AT SERVICE OR PROJECT LEVEL*

### **Introduction**

In this next Section, six key aspects of best practice at an individual service or project level are briefly outlined. These relate mainly to the practice ethos and approach of a service, the quality of the staff they employ, and how they relate to employers. The six main areas highlighted with reference to relevant literature, research findings and illustrations from practice are:

- The need to adopt a personalised or individualised approach
- The importance of providers adopting a business-like approach
- Importance of long term and post employment support
- The need for skilled and qualified staff
- Adopting an enabling approach in the way providers work with disabled people
- Last but not least, the importance of using natural support mechanisms in the workplace and fostering typical work patterns

### **Personalised or Individualised Approaches**

An important aspect of best practice is that services must adopt a person centred or individualised approach. Commissioners will need to be clear about how services are or will put individuals at the centre, focusing on their abilities, dreams and aspirations. In large part this evidence will come from the service's approach to the process of finding out about the individual and the kinds of job they would like or 'vocational profiling', job development and providing flexible support, as well as evidence of achieving a variety of individualised outcomes.

Addressing broader employability concerns, Workforce Plus identifies six performance themes as being important, one of which is client-focussed interventions, and recommends developing 'flexible routes and customised holistic approaches, especially for those who face multiple/complex barriers'. This is reflected in a person centred or individualised approach, repeatedly identified in the literature as a key feature of good supported employment<sup>59</sup>.

Research shows that personalised or person centred approaches achieve better outcomes: e.g. job seekers invest more in the process; employer contacts are broader in scope and are more creative; the individual is more motivated to succeed and keep the job; jobs are more specifically tailored to the individual; and social integration outcomes are better<sup>60</sup>.

Since the 1990s and the advent of 'person centred planning', supported employment has become 'increasingly characterised by the idea of people with disabilities having ownership of their own job requirements and increased user participation'<sup>61</sup>. However although this

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<sup>59</sup> Rogan, P., Banks, B., and Howard, M. (2000) "Workplace Support in Practice: As Little as Possible As Much As Necessary", *Focus on Autism & Other Developmental Disabilities*, Vol 15 (1), pp2-11.

<sup>60</sup> Hagner, D. C. and DiLeo, D. (1993) "Working Together: Workplace Culture, Supported Employment and Persons with Disabilities", Cambridge USA: Brookline Books Publishing Co.

<sup>61</sup> EUSE, 2005, p11

ideal is well supported by the research literature, it is not always achieved in practice, which suggests a need to actively evaluate individual outcomes achieved.

People's needs and wants change over time so building relationships is a key element of the work. This enables the service to gain the best understanding of an individual's strengths and weaknesses, his/her aspirations and work goals and to support individuals to change jobs or move onto better jobs if that is what he/she wants. The literature contains several helpful examples of how to achieve individualised career choices<sup>62</sup>.

### **Implementing A Personalised Approach**

Opening was set up as a social enterprise firm in 1999 by a consortium of user-led disability organisations to provide a personalised employment service run by and for disabled people to promote social and economic inclusion via employment. It aims to widen the employment choices available to disabled people, whilst assisting each individual to develop personalised strategies to tackle the range of barriers that prevent them from entering and sustaining real jobs.

Uniquely, Opening has employed many disabled people in the delivery of the project. The reasons for this are fourfold: to maximise the benefits of peer support; to provide positive role models for clients; to help preserve the user-led philosophy of the project; and to lead by example.

Opening begins its contact with each client by an in-depth assessment of the individual's interests, abilities and aspirations. This is done in partnership with the individual and will assist them in identifying any specific barriers to employment as well as possible solutions or options. About this the Project Manager says:

*“Our ethos and approach are to increase people’s self-determination and control – this is inherent in all the ways that we work. We call people participants rather than clients. I know this can sound corny, but we do this by listening to folk. We do not number crunch. We spend a lot of time at the ‘front end’ – at the start of the process. It can take three and a half months to get someone into work.*

*“We spend around six weeks in getting to know someone well – their different aspects. I believe that it is this holistic approach that ensures our 80% success rate. This is what enables staff to match the person with the job and vice versa. We consider a range of needs and influences – including the nature of the work; salary matters; personal fulfilment; the culture of the workplace; gender balance and other cultural issues. We encourage people to think about their ‘dream job’ and try and match people’s options as far as is possible to this. We aim to help our participants find something that motivates them.”*

(Sources include *Opening Business Plan 2006-2009; Interview with Project Manager*)

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<sup>62</sup> Ridley et al, 2005

## **A Business-like Approach**

Engaging with employers and understanding their needs and putting the 'business case' for employing disabled people, is widely recognised as a key element of best practice. It would be useful for commissioners to know how services intend to do this as it is widely felt that some services need to market their services better to employers<sup>63</sup>. Workforce Plus (2006) argue that employers need 'simple, effective, and appealing ways of benefiting from the skills and commitment of these potential recruits'. Evidence from interviews with employers in Scotland found that they would like to hear more about success stories from other employers, and that good supported employment has a lot to offer employers in terms of job profiling, job coaching and on-going support.<sup>64</sup>

A review of the literature<sup>65</sup> shows that negotiations focusing on the needs of the company and the employer's plans are more effective, especially in getting employers to create jobs when no position is open. Finding the right job then relies not only on a thorough understanding of the individual's interests, preferences and goals, but also on understanding the needs of employers. Recent research in the US has suggested that this can sometimes best be achieved by separating the roles of job developer and job coach, as these require different sets of skills<sup>66</sup>. There is not a consensus of opinion on this and it can be hard to achieve within small projects/services.

## **Long term and post employment support**

The provision of support to gain and sustain employment, is one of six key themes identified within Workforce Plus's Employability Framework for Scotland (2006). 'Extended services' or ongoing support has been identified as a 'unique features' of supported employment, contributing to its success with individuals with severe disabilities<sup>67</sup>.

Some adults with learning disabilities and/or ASD will require short to medium term support in employment while others, especially those with more severe disabilities may require ongoing, long term support, which may include continuous on-site support. Services should make clear to commissioners how they intend to provide flexible, ongoing and post employment support, and state any limits on the support they provide.

Providing such support is not without its challenges, as staff from one service report:

*It would be great to have a worker to work in the longer term developing people's careers. This is an area of work that doesn't seem to exist. Developing people's careers is a gap... Support is there to help people get into a job but not afterwards to develop further jobs. If you equate this support with support for ordinary living, it*

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<sup>63</sup> Luecking, R., Fabian, E. S. and Tilson, G. P. (2004) "Working Relationships. Creating Career Opportunities for Job Seekers with Disabilities Through Employer Partnerships", Baltimore: Paul Brookes Publishing Co.

<sup>64</sup> Ridley et al, 2005

<sup>65</sup> Ridley et al, 2005, pp14-30.

<sup>66</sup> Mank, 1998a

<sup>67</sup> West, M., Wehman, P. and Revell, G. (2002) "Extended Services in Supported Employment: What are providers doing? Are customer satisfied?" in Kregel, J., Dean, D. H. and Wehman, P. "Achievements and Challenges in Employment Services for People with Disabilities: The Longitudinal Impact of Workplace Supports", Virginia: Virginia Commonwealth University.

*follows that some people will always require some level of support to maintain or develop their career path.*

Services are adapting to be able to provide longer term support. In one local authority, a requirement for ongoing support is reflected in the care package. Practically, trained Locality Workers, or dispersed Adult Resource Centre staff, provide the ongoing support required in the workplace<sup>68</sup>.

Similarly, a supported employment project in Edinburgh, Real Jobs, when unable to support those with higher support needs who needed permanent support in the workplace, had worked closely with Housing Support staff from its parent organisation, the Action Group and its Welfare Rights Team, to ensure that those who required such ongoing support still had the opportunity for paid work. Long-term support of a few hours per week is provided by other staff within this agency and they are trained by specialist employment staff from Real Jobs.

### **SOLWAY - Providing Ongoing Support**

An independent/supported living scheme in the voluntary sector in North Lanarkshire, turned to the supported employment model to help it meet the aspirations of people with learning disabilities and high support needs. In addition to other support staff, the project employs two specialist employment staff, a Supported Employment Coordinator and a Job Coach to support people within the project who are interested in work and have high support needs. The project has recently been successfully in gaining a sizeable Big Lottery grant to extend its employment service to more of its clients.

A significant feature of SOLWAY is that Support Workers provide on-site employment support in the longer term so that support can be provided 'without time constraints'. Support Workers are trained and supported by specialist employment staff. The project insists support for employment is included within the care package to ensure ongoing support is built in. Post employment support is provided by Job Coaches.

### **Skilled and Qualified Staff**

Ensuring services are staffed by appropriately qualified and skilled staff is a key consideration for those promoting best practice. Research in the UK and US has shown that having skilled and trained employment specialists positively affects the quality of supported employment outcomes.<sup>69</sup> Such training has included Training in Systematic Instruction (TSI) techniques, Diplomas and other qualifications in supported employment etc. Better financial outcomes have been found for supported employees in services with dedicated job finders and staff with qualifications.<sup>70</sup>

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<sup>68</sup> North Lanarkshire Social Work Committee Report 2006

<sup>69</sup> E.g. Beyer, 2001

<sup>70</sup> Beyer, 2001

As the role of employment support staff continues to evolve, the importance of recruiting and retaining qualified employment specialist staff and providing them with improved training has been identified as a key component of quality services<sup>71</sup>.

### **Skilled and experienced staff**

The staff team at Moving Intowork in Edinburgh, a project supporting people with ASD and ABI, come from diverse backgrounds including counselling as well as supported employment and have a range of skills. All its staff have been trained in supported employment techniques with QUEST, an exemplar project in South Wales. Moving Intowork has a dedicated employment staff team who have evolved experience and trained in appropriate areas as necessary for instance, working with people with ASD. They source training on particular issues as needed. The team has a wealth of experience in supported employment and disability. The Senior Employment Development Officer has gained the Diploma in Supported Employment and is described by the Client Service Manager as the 'lynchpin of this service...If we lost their experience, that would be difficult to replace'.

### **An Enabling Approach**

The importance of ensuring 'clients gain a clear sense of control and input into services' is recognised by Workforce Plus's Framework (2006) and there is strong research evidence to support the central involvement of disabled people in determining job development and support strategies. Services should be clear about how they will ask people with learning disabilities and/or ASD about the support they need, and how they will involve individuals in all aspects of the employment process including job development. Commissioners need to know what methods will be used to ensure people are helped to make informed choices.

In reality, while supported employment has expanded employment options and the quality of work life for many disabled people, some authors argue that employment specialists could do more to advance the self-determination of people with disabilities. Several writers have emphasised both the importance of a consumer-led perspective and of individuals controlling their vocational destinies through self-determination and self-advocacy.<sup>72</sup>

The key components of a consumer-led approach have been summarised as<sup>73</sup>:

- The disabled person as a customer selecting the supported employment service best suited to meet his or her needs
- Creating a 'customer profile' of what each individual wants to achieve through supported employment, identifying personal strengths, concerns, desires, and anticipated outcomes
- The individual becomes an active participant in marketing and career development
- Service providers involve their customers in every aspect of the employment match process including employment selection

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<sup>71</sup> SUSE, 2006

<sup>72</sup> Wehman, P. and Kregel, J. (1998) *More than a Job: Securing satisfying careers for people with disabilities*, Baltimore MD: Derek H Brookes Publishing Co.

<sup>73</sup> Barcus, M. (1999) "A Customer-Driven Approach to Supported Employment" in Stiles, K. (ed) (1999) *Beyond Borders: Global Supported Employment and People with Disabilities*, USA: Training Resource Network Inc.

- Service providers must use existing technology and best practices extensively described in the literature and involve the customer in all the decisions regarding his or her training
- Determine individualised strategies for providing support that will assist career development for the customer and employer
- The individual is in charge of the process and the role of the professional is to assist, facilitate and support.

A service that has adopted a more enabling approach, would use person centred planning approaches, emphasise choice and adopt a career-based approach to job development and support. Professionals would work alongside people with learning disabilities and/or ASD in partnership, and would facilitate rather than direct.

## Using natural supports

‘Natural supports’ refers to support that is from direct co-worker or colleagues rather than from external job coaches, and includes tapping into any natural structures and mechanisms for training and support that exist for all employees within particular workplaces. Although there are differences of opinion about what natural supports actually means, and some argue there is little supporting evidence for using natural supports<sup>74</sup>, other research shows conclusively that there are better outcomes when employers and co-workers are involved in the support process from the start.<sup>75</sup>

While in the words of one service ‘it can’t be forced and it very much depends’ on the workplace culture, services need to be aware of the importance of using natural supports and to develop strategies for individual workplaces. Each workplace is different. Using natural supports has evolved as best practice from the experience that external support from job coaches has proved to be both intrusive and an obstacle to good social inclusion outcomes, as it can deter co-workers from developing relationships with the supported employee. The presence of an outside job coach can mark the employee out as different and make others more wary.

Research looking at effective strategies in supporting people with complex needs in employment showed natural supports could overcome employers’ fears<sup>76</sup>. Also when job coaches trained co-workers at the workplace to provide ongoing support, supervisors were more satisfied with accuracy and levels of productivity.

What research is clear about is that if employment is ‘typical’, outcomes such as wages, hours worked, and the degree of integration and interaction are better. There are always exceptions but UK research<sup>77</sup> has found outcomes such as higher wages for supported employees whose jobs were similar to others in the same workplace, and where they had similar terms and conditions.

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<sup>74</sup> Test, D. W. and Wood, W. M. (1996) “Natural Supports in the Workplace: The Jury is Still Out”, Winter, *The Journal of the Association for Persons with Severe Handicaps*, Vol. 21, No 4, pp155-173.

<sup>75</sup> Mank et al, 2003

<sup>76</sup> Weston, 2002

<sup>77</sup> Beyer, 2001

The following extract is from recent research<sup>78</sup> and illustrates natural supports working well from an individual's perspective.

### **Natural Supports Work Well for Andy**

*Andy is 25 years old and lives with his parents and brother. Andy is on his third job working in the retail sector. He works on the checkout at Sainsbury's. He sometimes works at the kiosk or the petrol station. He works 3 shifts a week.. He thinks Sainsburys are a good company to work for because of the way they treat him: "Their attitude; the way they treat you. When I started I made a lot of mistakes; they weren't angry". The personnel manager got someone to go over things again with him. The longer he has been there the better he has got at the job. He has his 6 monthly discussion of how he's doing, like all the staff. The store trainer helps staff learn how to use things like new tills. Andy thinks he couldn't have any better help. Andy has developed his skills with customers, chatting to them and keeping eye contact. The company gave him a voucher after a customer wrote in saying what a good service they had had from him. He's had a lot of praise for his work.*

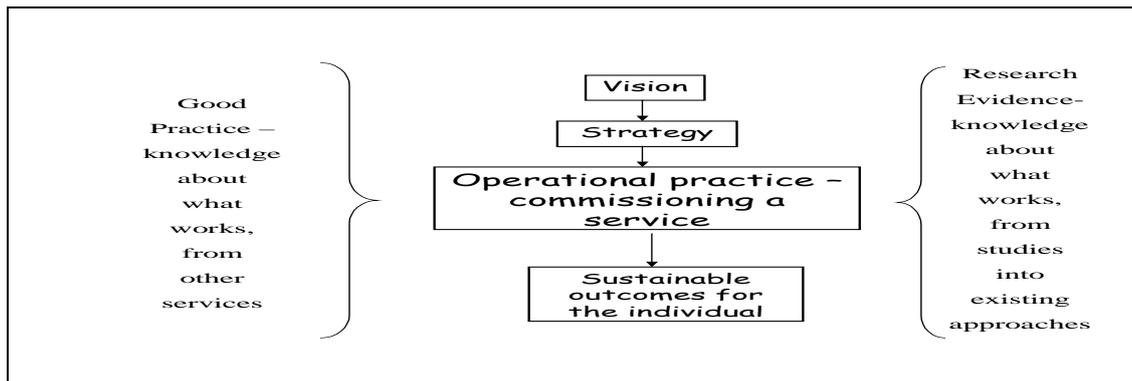
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<sup>78</sup> Ridley et al, 2005

## SECTION FIVE: QUESTIONS COMMISSIONERS SHOULD ASK

Recent guidelines drafted for people involved in commissioning services for people with learning disabilities in Scotland<sup>79</sup> identified knowledge about what works gained either from experience of other services or research, as important to consider when determining which services should be funded. This was summarised in the following diagram:

**Figure 1 From Vision to Outcomes**



(Campbell, 2006)

So far this document has used evidence about what works from research to outline key dimensions of best practice. This Section now sets out a series of questions that can be referred to by people commissioning services supporting people with learning disabilities and/or ASD in real jobs. Adopting the 'Campbell model' above, the questions are derived from the preceding discussion of key dimensions of best practice at strategic and individual service level from the research and other literature (Sections Three and Four), and the statement of principles presented in Section Two.

The questions can be used to check if the service/project contains some or all of the essential elements of best practice as evidenced by research and practice literature.

### Adopting a Strategic Approach

- What evidence is there that the service will adopt an approach that presumes employability and aspires to find real jobs for those who want to work?
- Can you identify any ways in which the service will work in partnership with relevant agencies or services including Job Centre Plus, Careers Scotland, Health and Social Work, other local authority departments etc?
- Is there any evidence that this service is or will be part of an overall strategic direction e.g. for promoting social inclusion, employability etc?
- Is there a dedicated strategy for promoting employment options and choices for young people with learning disabilities and/or ASD leaving school or college?

<sup>79</sup> JIT, 2006

- Does the service place emphasis on adopting a business like approach and aim to work in partnership with employers to better understand their needs? How will it do this?

### **Fair Access**

- Is it clear how the service will aim to meet a range of individual needs?
- Will the service specifically support people with ASD in real jobs?
- Can the service detail concrete ways in which they will meet a range of support needs, in particular the needs of those with severe disabilities or high support needs?

### **Support**

- Will support for real jobs be provided on-site using job coaches or equivalent rather than training and preparation for work?
- Is the service planning to provide flexible support in real jobs? If so, do they set any time limits on the support and how ongoing support will be implemented?
- What plans does the service have to meet the support needs of those who require long term or permanent on the job support?
- Does the service identify how it will provide post-employment support to maintain people in jobs?
- Does the service envisage providing further support to individuals to allow for changes in jobs or career direction?
- Will the service include supported self-employment in the range of support options?
- How will the service ensure that the natural support mechanisms within workplaces are accessed and patterns of work are typical for that workplace from the start?
- Is there any evidence of pro-active strategies for identifying and involving co-workers in the support plans of individuals?

### **Outcomes Orientated**

- Is the emphasis of the service on providing support in real paid jobs with ordinary employers for going rates of pay for the job?
- Will the service aim to show that individuals are better off through employment and/or through income maximisation?
- What strategies will the service use, for example, natural supports, to promote the best social inclusion outcomes possible?
- How does the service intend to monitor its effectiveness in achieving real paid jobs?
- What evidence will there be that individual aspirations have translated into diverse employment outcomes, in particular beyond typical entry level jobs?

### **Personalisation and Self Determination**

- How will the service find out what each individual wants to do, where his/her skills and aspirations lie, and what they see as their support needs?
- How will the service make all its information accessible to people with learning disabilities including those with more complex communication needs?
- Will the service's approach to undertaking vocational profiling involve meeting with the individual in different settings and talking to the people who know that person well over a period of time?

- Is there any evidence that the process of vocational profiling will include asking the individual who they wish to involve in the planning process?
- Is the service intending making a copy of the vocational profile available to each individual?

## **Staff**

- Do, or will, staff have clear job descriptions, which emphasise supporting people in real jobs and adopting enabling/facilitative roles?
- Will staff be expected to have specialist qualifications or experience such as in working with people with autism?
- Will staff have relevant benefit/income maximisation skills or do formal agreements exist with specialist workers for routine checks?
- Will the staff team be expected to be skilled and experienced in dealing with employers and businesses as well as in working with disabled people?
- Is there a policy of providing ongoing training for staff together with a training budget?

## **User Involvement in Developing the Service**

- Will the service develop an involvement policy or statement to show how it will involve service users in the organisation's development?
- How will service users be involved in the running and development of this service?
- Are there or will there be opportunities for user involvement on the management committee or board?

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## *APPENDIX 1 – SERVICE PROFILES*

### **PROFILE OF NORTH LANARKSHIRE SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT SERVICE**

**Type of service:** A dedicated Supported Employment Service

**Managed by:** Local authority in a mixed urban/rural area

**Purpose of service–** To ensure people with disabilities who want to work receive appropriate supports and opportunities to access real jobs for real wages

**Criteria for inclusion:**

People with learning disabilities, mental health issues or acquired brain injury who:

- Reside in North Lanarkshire
- Want to work in a paid job of 16 hours or more (an in-work Benefits Calculator is available for workers to provide the levels of income in work which are appropriate to the individual's circumstances)
- Where supported employment has been identified for the individual
- Are aware of information sharing protocols and have completed the necessary consent form

**Size:** 31 staff including 6 full-time equivalent administrative staff, 18 job coaches, 2 Senior Supported Employment Officers and a Service Coordinator.

**Budget:** £635,288

**When service started:** 1999

**Jobs:** Currently 81 out of 90 of those with learning disabilities supported by this service were in paid jobs of 16 hours or more.

**Description of service:** supports people with disabilities into real 16hr jobs using process of supported employment involving in-depth vocational profile, job matching and assisting person to find a job, providing job coach support at work, ongoing support (including long-term support from others in the care package)

**Examples of jobs:** Clerical Assistant, Chambermaid, Kitchen Assistant, Cleaners, Trolley Porter, Shelf Stacker, Bakery Assistant, Production Line Operative, Nursery Support Assistant, Social Work Assistant, Apprentice Joiner, Road Sweeper, Handyman, Usher, Stage Crew Assistant, Community Development Worker, Fabricator, After School Carer, Van Assistant, Assistant Gardener.

## PROFILE OF MOVING INTOWORK, EDINBURGH

**Type of service:** Part of a broader service.

**Managed by:** Voluntary sector organisation in a mixed urban/rural area

**Purpose of service:** To provide person-centred, flexible support services to enable people with autistic spectrum disorder (ASD) or acquired brain injury (ABI) to achieve their employment potential. We work in partnership with a wide range of employers, support organisations and other agencies. Our mission is to create equality of opportunity, to enhance the lives of our service users and support them to progress towards employment, social and economic inclusion.

**Criteria for inclusion:** Clients should have an ASD (either diagnosed or reliably reported). Clients should live in the Edinburgh & Lothians area, be motivated towards paid work in the area and be able to self-travel to access the service.

**Size:** There is a project staff team of 8, three of whom specifically work with clients with ASD, including an ASD Senior Employment Adviser and two ASD Employment Advisers. There are also 3 ABI staff, an Administrator and Client Services Manager.

**Budget:** Costs for year ending 31/3/06 were £211,899. This is for the ASD and ABI services. The ASD service on its own would be slightly more than half of the total as staff hours are slightly higher.

**When service started:** 2000

**Jobs:** All jobs are real paid jobs but not all are for 16 hours or more. Out of 28 people with ASD supported in work, 23 jobs were for 16 hours or more.

**Description of service:** A service based on broadly accepted definition of supported employment. Intowork assists people with autism and ABI to take up employment opportunities. The main goal is always to place people in real jobs with the emphasis on fulfilment of potential and aspirations, and progression. People with autism require a lot of help with social skills, interacting with people. Many people with ASD suffer low self esteem and have had negative experiences of work. Before coming to Moving Intowork, their jobs have often failed because of the social demands rather than technical aspects of the job. Much of our time is therefore spent supporting people to re-build their self esteem and develop their confidence so that their next employment experience is positive and sustainable.

**Examples of jobs:** Construction - Cad Operator RMJM, Apprentice Joiner Margaret Blackwood Housing Assoc: Engineering - Engineering Apprentice BAE Systems, Bookbinding Apprentice Hunter & Foulish: Legal, Banking & Finance – Finance Assistant National Library of Scotland, Accounts Assistant Rosslyn Associates, Filing Clerk Biggart Baillie Solicitors, Customer Service Associate Level A Royal Bank of Scotland, Accounts Assistant Belmont Vauxhall: Public Sector - Grounds Maintenance CEC, Sales Assistant WRVS, Gardener CEC, Administrator NHS Lothian, Library Assistant National Archives, Mail Sorter Parcelforce, Data Input Scottish Gas, Data Input NHS: Retail Hospitality - Stock Replenishment Asda, Tesco, Warehouse Assistant Tiso, Maintenance Assistant, Smart City Hostel, Guesthouse Assistant: Miscellaneous - Dental Technician Sayegh Dental Lab, Accounts Officer Salvation Army, Delivery Driver Pizzahut, Administrator Tipereth.

## PROFILE OF THE OPENING PROJECT

**Type of service:** A broad employment support service

**Managed by:** Opening is a social enterprise firm within the voluntary sector

**Purpose of service:** To support any unemployed disabled person within the City of Glasgow to gain and sustain the employment of their choice of 16 hours per week or more.

**Criteria for inclusion:** Must have a disability, health problem or impairment, live in Glasgow and be unemployed and wish to work for 16 hours + per week.

**Size:** Opening has 9 staff including cleaning and web design positions: 5 are full time, 4 part time, with 7 of these staff working with people with learning disabilities and/or ASD. Six of the nine staff are people with impairments. Four of the staff are Job Access Workers and there is a Project Manager and administrative support staff team.

**Budget:** £242,000

**When service started:** 1999

**Jobs:** All of those supported in jobs are in jobs of 16 hours or more.

**Description of service:** Opening was set up as a social enterprise firm by a consortium of user-led disability organisations to provide a personalised service by and for disabled people to promote social and economic inclusion via employment. It offers a person-centred, 'integrated employment' service via one-to-one support and by raising disability rights issues with individuals and employers. It is aimed at disabled people who want to access real employment opportunities within the mainstream labour market. The work of Opening is designed to widen the employment choices available to disabled people, whilst assisting each individual to develop personalised strategies to tackle the range of barriers that prevent disabled people from entering and remaining in employment. The project offers flexible provision including help with motivational skills and personal development as well as job finding and support.

**Examples of jobs:** Office administration, retail, production, gardening.

## PROFILE OF SOLWAY, NORTH LANARKSHIRE

**Type of service:** Part of a broader independent/supported living scheme, Support for Ordinary Living or SOL in North Lanarkshire. The employment scheme began to meet the aspirations of the people being supported by SOL for real jobs.

**Managed by:** The service is managed by a voluntary organisation that provides holistic support to people with a range of needs in an urban area.

**Purpose of service:** The main aims of SOLWAY are to support adults with learning disabilities into employment.

**Criteria for inclusion:** The individual must express a desire to work.

**Size:** The project has two job coaches who do job finding, matching, training, monitoring and 'better off' calculations.

**Budget:** £67,926. Funded by local authority and the Coalfields Regeneration Trust. Recently successful with the Big Lottery.

**When service started:** 2004

**Jobs:** Since the onset of the project, 33 people have been supported into paid jobs.

**Description of service:** Our aim is to overcome the challenges met by a group of people we work with, by giving the preparation, training and support that each individual requires to be confident and competent in their ability to work independently. We support the full expression of their rightful presence within the life and culture of their communities. We deliver support packages to meet their requirements.

Provides supported employment for those furthest removed from the employment market and with high support needs. One of the distinctive features of SOLWAY is that they support the housing support workers to provide employment support. This enables individuals to be supported 'without time constraints'.

**Examples of jobs:** A range of full time jobs such as Participation Advisor (NDT); Meeting coordinator (Thistle Hotel); Bartender (Strathclyde Park); Car Park/Market Attendant (Forge Market); Chef/Caterer; Admin Assistant (SOL); Gardener (Dalziel Park); Hygiene Assistant (Vue Cinema); Self employed car valet. Part time jobs have included General Assistant positions at Morrisons; Van Delivery Assistant (Boyles Ironmongers); Supervisor Glass Collector (Hamilton Palace Nightclub); Cleaning Assistant (Telewest).