

## **Valuing People Now on employment**

*Valuing People Now* states that people with a learning disability should have a fulfilling life, which includes the opportunity to work. The strategy acknowledges that only a small percentage of people with a learning disability are currently in paid work, and sees planning for employment as a key objective in person-centred planning.

*Valuing Employment Now* identifies a number of factors that need to be addressed in order to make employment a reality for people with a learning disability. It focuses on people with a moderate or severe learning disability and wants to establish a default expectation that everyone who leaves school will have the chance to get a job.

The aim is:

- to radically increase the number of people with a moderate or severe disability in employment
- for as many people with a learning disability as possible to work 16 hours or more per week.

## **Mencap's vision**

Mencap welcomes the emphasis on increasing the number of people with a learning disability in employment. However, for this to become a reality we believe more support must be provided. This is likely to prove challenging as no additional funding is being made available to support the goals set out in *Valuing Employment Now*.

We also want to ensure the call to get more people with a learning disability into employment is not at the detriment of providing services for people with profound and multiple learning disabilities (PMLD) and others who are unlikely to enter employment. We are concerned that the emphasis on people with a moderate or severe learning disability may also come at the cost of people with a milder learning disability.

## Making it happen

In order to make our vision on employment a reality for people with a learning disability, Mencap is calling for:

- more people with a learning disability to be in paid work, including full-time employment
- support for people with a learning disability to get a job and support in the workplace
- more employers in both the private and public sector to employ people with a learning disability
- every local area to have a multi-agency employment strategy, linked to Public Sector Agreement 16
- tough targets on employing people with a learning disability, as well as rigorous monitoring of achievements and mechanisms for accountability, with the public sector taking the lead
- all local councils to be signed up to NI 146
- reliable national level information about the employment situation of people with a learning disability
- people with PMLD to have access to stimulating and meaningful activities that enable them to reach their potential but don't have work as the only end goal.

Some of the things Mencap is calling for go beyond the commitments set out in *Valuing People Now*. **However, we believe that for its vision to become a reality, all of the above is necessary.**

## Taking action

Your local **Learning Disability Partnership Board** is central to making *Valuing People Now* happen in your area. Learning Disability Partnership Boards were set up in all local authorities when *Valuing People* was first introduced in 2001, to oversee inter-agency planning and commissioning of services for people with a learning disability. They also play a key role in *Valuing People Now* as it is their role to oversee and monitor its delivery locally.

Your local Learning Disability Partnership Board needs to know that you are interested in how hard they are working for people with a learning disability. The best way to do this is to regularly ask them questions. This will also help your understanding of what is happening locally.

Below is a **step-by-step guide** to finding out what's really going on near you.

### **1. Find your local Learning Disability Partnership Board**

Some of you may be members of a Learning Disability Partnership Board, in which case you will have direct access. If you are not, you can find your board and the relevant contact details by visiting the [Valuing People Now website](#).

### **2. Ask the right questions**

Once you have found your partnership board, it is time to find out what's really going on! Below we have provided a list of questions you can ask, which should help you and your partnership board monitor success on employment. Once you know how well or badly things are going, you will be able to tell which areas need more work and where to campaign for further change.

### **3. Keep track of what you have found out**

Make sure you keep a record of what you are finding out and don't be afraid to ask the same questions again, particularly if you think that nothing has changed. Sometimes it takes a little time to push those responsible into action!

### **4. Tell us your findings!**

Mencap is hoping to collect all the information you are gathering to inform what we should be doing on an England-wide basis. So, please do remember to stay in touch by emailing anything you think is important to: [campaigns@mencap.org.uk](mailto:campaigns@mencap.org.uk)

We look forward to receiving your examples of what is working well - and what isn't.

### **5. Campaign for change locally**

Are your Learning Disability Partnership Board and council delivering the goods? If not, start campaigning! You can either sign up to one of our existing campaigns on the [Mencap website](#) or, alternatively, why not organise your own local campaign? For further information you can download our [Speaking Out campaigns guide](#), or contact your local community development officer if you are a member of a Mencap local group.

## Questions to ask your partnership board

- How far has the Learning Disability Partnership Board progressed with reviewing its day service modernisation plans, to ensure any planned changes help support people into real jobs?
- What strategies are in place to boost job coach capacity and join different funding streams to make this happen?
- What is the local authority doing to ensure they are employing more people with a learning disability?
- Is the local authority signed up to NI 146? If not, why not? If yes, what targets have been set and are they being met?
- What has been done to get the support of local employers and trade unions to get more people with a learning disability into employment?
- What work has been undertaken to review the support available to people with a learning disability, specifically with learning a new route to work and the accessibility of local transport?
- What steps have been taken to involve people with a learning disability, including those who offend, those on the autistic spectrum, those with mental health issues and people from an ethnic minority background in producing local delivery plans on employment?
- What measures have been put in place to monitor the employment of people with a learning disability locally? What are the local targets?
- Is the local authority one of the 'Getting a Life' pilot areas? If so, what is happening?
- Is the local authority one of the 'Project Search' pilot areas? If so, what is happening?
- Is the local authority planning, monitoring and evaluating the day services programme with the needs of people with PMLD in mind? Is it ensuring that robust alternatives are in place for those unlikely to enter work, before closing day services?
- What work is being done to ensure that people with PMLD have access to a community resource base equipped for meeting complex physical and health needs, access to suitable and flexible transport, and skilled support staff who are working in line with a good manual handling policy?

If you need further help in approaching your local Learning Disability Partnership Board, please contact Mencap's campaigns team on [campaigns@mencap.org.uk](mailto:campaigns@mencap.org.uk)

**Good luck – and don't forget to let us know what you find out!**