

# Moving into Work

*Supporting people with learning difficulties to make the transition from vocational education and training into employment*



An information sheet for practitioners teaching people with learning difficulties on vocational courses and training in further education colleges, adult education services, work-based learning and voluntary sector organisations

## Introduction

Offering effective vocational provision for people with learning difficulties<sup>1</sup>; that is, provision where learners move on to employment at the end of their course or training can be challenging. Many learners with learning difficulties need support to make the transition to work and on-going support once they are in employment. The type of provision that includes this level of support is referred to by the Learning and Skills Council (LSC) as a 'supported employment model' (LSC, 2006).

## What is supported employment?

Supported employment services specialise in working with disabled people, including those with learning difficulties, to help them find employment and provide ongoing support once they are in a job.<sup>2</sup> One of the principles of supported employment is a strong belief that no one who wants to work is unemployable. The focus is usually on finding 'real jobs in the community' rather than sheltered employment. Supported employment develops individualised support packages with and for the person they are helping.

## Supported employment

Supported employment agencies, 'will typically be able to offer a *combination* of:

- Helping people identify their skills and preferences through the development of a **vocational profile**;
- **Job development** to find the person's preferred job through contact with employers;
- **Job analysis** to find out more about the workplace, co-workers, and the support the individual might need in that environment;
- **Job support** to ensure that both the employee and employer receive 'just enough' creative assistance, information and back-up to achieve success, with this support continuing as long as it is needed;
- **Career support** to help people think in the longer term about career progression.' (YPS, 2001)

Supported employment agencies are non-profit organisations. In some areas, supported employment services are part of Social Services departments. Mencap Pathway services specialise in providing supported employment services for people with learning difficulties. Supported employment agencies and organisations such as Remploy deliver a number of government-funded employment programmes for disabled people. These are not specifically for people with learning difficulties and some may offer support that is more appropriate for people with learning difficulties than others. They include:

1. The term learning difficulties is being used in this context to refer to individuals who have a cognitive learning difficulty that hinders their learning and their ability to cope independently. This set of information sheets is not focusing on learners whose learning support needs are primarily focused on what are 'specific learning difficulties' such as dyslexia or on physical or sensory disabilities. Some of the issues highlighted however, may be relevant to other disabled learners.

2. For information about supported employment agencies in your area visit the British Association of Supported Employment website [www.base-uk.org](http://www.base-uk.org)

- Access to Work
- Workstep
- Work Preparation.

The Government has announced major changes to its welfare to work reforms with effect from 2008 and a new programme will replace Workstep and Work Preparation in 2009.

Disability Employment Advisors who are based in Jobcentre Plus can advise on the different programmes.

## What is the current situation?

Many people with learning difficulties on vocational courses and training in post-16 education fail to progress onto employment (NIACE, 2002). A key finding of a 2007 OFSTED inspection report on college provision for 16–18 year olds with learning difficulties and/or disabilities was that:

*...learners' progression to employment, vocational programmes and further training remained underdeveloped. Colleges placed insufficient emphasis on developing learners' work-related skills.*

Providers must become much better at:

- *identifying, with the learner, goals that are relevant to their needs and aspirations;*
- *providing the learner with relevant learning opportunities to fulfil their potential and supporting them to move on.*

The LSC *Learning for Living and Work* strategy to improve provision for learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities has set a timetable for this to happen:

*The LSC will now support the FE system to move away from programmes that do not have clear progression outcomes and intentions. This will occur over the next three years. As such, the LSC expects that work-preparation programmes will be re-focused to adopt a supported employment model that will deliver the skills and knowledge to assist people into part-time and full-time employment. (LSC, 2006)*

The LSC has stated that by September 2010 it will no longer fund vocational provision for disabled learners that does not have a focus on the supported employment model or learning in the work place (LSC, 2006).

## Progression through Partnership

In June 2007, the Department of Health (DoH); the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) and what was then the Department for Education and Skills, launched *Progression through Partnership: A joint strategy between the DfES, DoH and the DWP on the role of further education and training in supporting people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities to achieve fulfilling lives.*

The strategy stresses the importance of joint working between the three departments to develop more sustainable and seamless services, and for this collaborative working to be reflected:

*"...through our delivery agents and partners so that we make a telling and lasting contribution to people's lives."*

Progression through Partnership acknowledges the LSC's challenge to providers in Learning for Living and Work to adopt the supported employment model by 2010 and states its commitment to work with the LSC to:

*"agree how the new model for supported employment will be implemented."*

A Joint Delivery Plan to take forward the work outlined in Progression through Partnership is due to be published in 2008.

<http://www.dfes.gov.uk/publications/progressionthroughpartnership/docs/LearnerDisabilityDocument.pdf>

## Foundation Learning Tier

The developing Foundation Learning Tier will reform provision below level 2. It has important implications for post-16 education and training provision for people with learning difficulties. Within the Foundation Learning Tier four Progression Pathways will be established as stepping stones to positive outcomes. One of the Progression Pathways will be:

*"to independent living or supported employment."*

A 'wrap-around' service of information, advice and guidance is to be developed and this will be essential to the success of the Foundation Learning Tier, which will embed transition work provision for people with learning difficulties so that it becomes an integral part of the curriculum. At the time of writing this (June 2008) the Foundation Learning Tier remains very much policy in the making. To keep up to date with developments, visit the QIA Excellence Gateway for information: <http://excellence.qia.org.uk/flt>

## Case study – Supported work experience

Shahista is a full-time student at an education centre for young people and adults with high support needs. She attends an ESF-funded vocational course at the centre. Her first work experience placement was at a Community Centre café. A Connexions Personal Advisor who speaks Urdu liaised with her family about the plans to set up the placement. They needed reassurance about the suitability of the site of her work experience placement with regard to the family's religious beliefs and practices.

Shahista was supported by a member of staff from her course at her placement interview. Together they went through her Individual Learning Plan with the staff at the café. They identified her strengths e.g. 'good at practical tasks' as well as some things that Shahista finds hard to do e.g. 'initiating discussions'. A job coach, attached to the course, visited Shahista once a month to work alongside her.

Shahista was able to work for four hours at the minimum wage without it affecting her benefits.

## Is your provision based on the supported employment model?

A study completed in 2002 found that in all cases where learners with learning difficulties were successfully moving into work and sustaining their employment, significant elements of the supported employment approach underpinned the education and training provision (NIACE, 2002).

### Case Study – Supported employment: A partnership approach

Working in partnership with Mencap Pathway Employment Service, Colchester Institute provides a comprehensive programme of study for people with learning difficulties wanting to find work. Mencap takes ownership of the employment side of things, providing job coaches, setting up interviews and finding jobs. The college wrote the programme of study itself, and funds it under Skills for Life:

*"basic skills is embedded in everything we do, so we can claim funding under Skills for Life".*

Colchester Institute started its Work Plus Project in September 2007 in response to needs in the community and developing LSC policy, in *Learning for Living and Work*. It knew that its students with learning difficulties wanted to work, and the Institute wanted to set up a truly person-centred, individualised service.

On the next page is a self-assessment exercise designed by an experienced manager and practitioner of vocational courses that support people with learning difficulties into work. You can use it as a checklist for your provision.

## Self-assessment exercise

**Take this challenge seriously, mark it honestly and check your score. Your Curriculum Manager should be very interested!**

Is the course outcome more geared to accreditation than finding real jobs for the learners?

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How many of the learners receive no welfare rights advice?

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Do employers expect to play no part at all in the curriculum planning?

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| None | 1                        | 2                        | 3                        | 4                        | 5                        | 6                        | 7                        | 8                        | 9                        | 10                       | All |
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Are placements often provided in organisations where there is no prospect of a real job?

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Are placements organised to the geographical convenience of the programme staff?

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| None | 1                        | 2                        | 3                        | 4                        | 5                        | 6                        | 7                        | 8                        | 9                        | 10                       | All |
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Are placements mostly provided within your own organisation?

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Does the vocational element of the course usually consist of shop and retail projects in the college?

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| None | 1                        | 2                        | 3                        | 4                        | 5                        | 6                        | 7                        | 8                        | 9                        | 10                       | All |
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Do employer placements tend to occur later in the academic year (March onwards)?

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| None | 1                        | 2                        | 3                        | 4                        | 5                        | 6                        | 7                        | 8                        | 9                        | 10                       | All |
|      | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |     |

Is the ILP document only used within the organisations and never on placement?

|      |                          |                          |                          |                          |                          |                          |                          |                          |                          |                          |     |
|------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|-----|
| None | 1                        | 2                        | 3                        | 4                        | 5                        | 6                        | 7                        | 8                        | 9                        | 10                       | All |
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Are your learners unemployed by the end of the course?

|      |                          |                          |                          |                          |                          |                          |                          |                          |                          |                          |     |
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| None | 1                        | 2                        | 3                        | 4                        | 5                        | 6                        | 7                        | 8                        | 9                        | 10                       | All |
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**Please add up your scores:**

- 100–80      Your programme can only be described as performing poorly. It could well be cut, and probably deserves to be.
- 79–60      Take encouragement; there is enough good work here to build up a successful programme.
- 59–40      With some modest development there is a supported employment programme waiting to break out!
- 39 and below      You should be helping with training and development in other organisations. Well done!

(With thanks to Pete Vickers, Vine Co-ordinator, Leeds City Council)

## How can you develop an effective curriculum for transition-to-work provision?

- Make sure the curriculum is flexible and responsive in order to support learners through a period of significant change.
- Person-centred learning plans are a particularly effective way of designing programmes to support learners in their transition to work.
- Provide support with interpersonal skills as part of the transition-to-work curriculum. People with learning difficulties may have had limited opportunities to mix in a range of social settings. Relating to and communicating well with colleagues is an important part of most jobs.
- Embed developing literacy, numeracy and ICT skills in practical tasks on work placements. The DfES *Skills for Working* guidance document provides comprehensive information and examples on embedding these skills in vocational provision for learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities (DfES, 2006a).
- Provide supported work experience in real work settings. Learning through experience rather than training in a classroom setting is particularly effective for learners with learning difficulties. This is referred to as a 'place and train model' rather than a 'train and place model'.
- Incorporating the principles and skills of self-advocacy throughout the curriculum is a key way of empowering individuals in their transition to work. Developing the skills to speak up for yourself and to make choices and decisions underpin taking responsibility for your role in the workplace and as part of a team.
- When developing the curriculum consult with partners involved in transition-to-work provision such as: employers; self-advocacy organisations; Disability Employment Advisers; Benefits office; supported employment agencies; Employment Service; Jobcentre Plus; Connexions. Partner organisations should be consulted on the content and development of the curriculum from the start.
- Ensure the curriculum takes into account equality and diversity issues, including differing abilities, gender, race and age. Disability legislation now makes it compulsory for employers to make reasonable adjustments in the workplace to support disabled people.

## Case study – Support into work

John works for a company that cleans occupational health equipment used in people's homes. He explained the main duties of his work:

*'I clean out equipment, bed mattresses, commodes, all from the hospital. When you clean, you have to wear an apron and gloves. I am getting paid here.'*

John has support from Steve, the placement officer at the local supported employment agency. Through a process of job analysis, Steve broke down the various tasks in the job and supported John to learn at his own pace. He visits once a week to monitor how John is getting on, as he explained:

*'...for the individual being supported the most important thing is their attitude. If they want to work it may not matter if they can't read or write. People develop their own strategies; it's a kind of lateral thinking.'*

Steve liaises with the local college which has adapted the curriculum to suit the needs of people who are on work experience or in work. For example, they have supported an individual to think about their appearance, if this has been a problem at work:

*'The link with the college and day services is really useful. We can put forward issues that we come across regularly.'*

Steve felt that he had learnt, through his work with John:

*'...to go for things. I didn't know how it would go but you have to trust your instincts. John is so much part of the team now.'*

## Supported employment and person-centred approaches

Supported employment practice focuses on one-to-one support, working with the individual to look at what they really want to do, the training they need to do this and the support they need when they are on work experience placements and once they are in paid employment. Support for the employer is also crucial.

Person-centred planning is a specific planning process increasingly used in schools to support people with learning difficulties in their transition to adult services and in Social Care services. Person-centred planning places the individual at the centre and focuses on what is important to them from their own perspective.<sup>3</sup>

Guidance from the DfES outlines how person-centred approaches can be used when working with people with learning difficulties in the FE system (DfES, 2006b). Five questions provide stages in a person-centred planning and assessment cycle that can produce a person-centred learning plan:

1. Who am I?
2. What do I want to do?
3. How am I going to get there?
4. How am I doing?
5. What next?

3. For more information on person-centred planning and approaches visit [www.helensandersonassociates.co.uk](http://www.helensandersonassociates.co.uk)



Below, the questions have been adapted to have a particular focus on developing a person-centred learning plan for an individual in vocational provision. The focus on getting a job has to be embedded from the very start in planning vocational provision for people with learning difficulties.

| Person-centred learning plan  | Transition to work  |
|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Who am I?</li> <li>What is important to me?</li> <li>How do I learn best?</li> <li>What support might I need?</li> </ul> | Do people: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Know how I learn best and how this will be supported when I move into different settings such as work experience placements?</li> <li>• Give me opportunities to tell others about what I am interested in and what is important to me so they can match my skills and interests with the kind of work I try?</li> </ul>  |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What do I want to do?</li> </ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What kind of job do I want?</li> <li>• What am I good at?</li> <li>• What am I interested in?</li> <li>• How can I be helped to set my goals and get a job?</li> </ul>   |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How am I going to get there?</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How can you best match my skills and interests to a learning/training programme that from the start will focus on the importance of my transition to work?</li> </ul>  |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How am I doing?</li> </ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Do I need to revise my goals? What is working well on my course/work experience placement?</li> <li>• What do I need more help with in the workplace setting that can be supported by learning in the classroom?</li> </ul>  |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What next?</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Do I know how I will be supported to make the transition to work and what ongoing support I will need?</li> <li>• Am I consulted about the support I need to make the jump from college to a job?</li> <li>• Who will work with me to work out what ongoing support I will need once I have a job?</li> <li>• Will others take seriously what I want for my career when finding me work opportunities?</li> <li>• Will information about my success and achievements be passed on to my employer and job coach?</li> </ul> |

## Conclusion

The LSC *Learning for Living and Work* strategy is committed to some interesting and exciting developments in vocational provision for disabled learners over the next few years. It has clearly stated that support with the transition to work has to be part of what your course offers. If it is not, provision will not be funded by the LSC beyond 2010. Now is the time to start making changes.

## References

DfES (2006a) *Skills for Working: Supporting the Development of Literacy, Language and Numeracy Skills for Learners with Learning Difficulties or Disabilities in a Vocational Context*, London: DfES

DfES (2006b) *Person-Centred Approaches and Adults with Learning Difficulties*, London: DfES

LSC (2006) *Learning for Living and Work: Improving Education and Training Opportunities for People with Learning Difficulties and/or Disabilities*, London: LSC

NIACE (2002) *Making the Jump – Transition to Work*, Leicester: NIACE

OFSTED (2007) *Current Provision and Outcomes for 16–18-Year-Old Learners with Learning Difficulties and/or Disabilities in Colleges*, London: OFSTED

YPS (2001) *A Framework for Supported Employment*, York: YPS

## Resources

### Adults with learning difficulties and employment

*\*You can work it out!*

**Supporting you into work**

*\*I want to work*

**A guide to benefits and work for people with a learning disability**

With a foreword by Anne McGuire, Minister for Disabled People, Department for Work and Pensions.

*\*I can get a job*

**A step-by-step guide to getting a job. This guide is for you and the people who support you**

With a foreword by Anne McGuire, Minister for Disabled People, Department for Work and Pensions.

*Valued in public*

**Helping people with a learning disability to work in public bodies**

Anne O'Bryan and Stephen Beyer, November 2005

With a foreword by Anne McGuire, Minister for Disabled People, Department for Work and Pensions

The above resources are published by Care Services Improvement Partnership (CSIP) Valuing People Support Team.

To order email [valuing.people.info@dh.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:valuing.people.info@dh.gsi.gov.uk) or visit

[www.valuingpeople.gov.uk/employment.htm](http://www.valuingpeople.gov.uk/employment.htm)

\*Written in an accessible style aimed at people with learning difficulties.

### Skills for Life

***Entry to Employment E2E: Motivational Dialogue Teacher Learner Pack***

Ref: T&LE2EMOTDIAL

***Skills for Working: Supporting the Development of Literacy, Language and Numeracy Skills for Learners with Learning Difficulties or Disabilities in a Vocational Context***

Ref: SFW

Available free of charge from the Department for Innovation, Universities and Skills. To order telephone PROLOG on 0845 60 222 60

### ***Putting Good Practice into Practice: Literacy, Numeracy and Key Skills within Apprenticeships***

#### ***Skills for Life Quality Initiative Embedded Teaching and Learning Booklet***

Available free of charge from the NRDC. Visit [www.nrdc.org.uk](http://www.nrdc.org.uk) and go to 'register now' to register your details. This will allow you to view and download or order all publications.

#### ***Lifelines 22: Developing Language, Literacy and Numeracy in the Workplace***

Sue Southwood

Cost: £7.95 + p&p

#### ***Making the Jump: 'Transition to Work' – Supporting People with Learning Difficulties Make the Transition from Education and Vocational Training to Employment***

Yola Jacobsen

Cost: £60.00 + p&p

#### ***We Can Do a Good Job: A Pack for Adults with Learning Difficulties Who Want to Work***

Yola Jacobsen

Cost: £15.00 + p&p

Available from NIACE. Order online at [www.niace.org.uk/publications](http://www.niace.org.uk/publications) or telephone 0116 204 7068 /2804

#### ***Into Volunteering***

Cost: £6.50 to organisations or £2.50 to job seeking individuals

#### ***Into Work Experience***

Cost: £6.50 for organisations or £2.50 for job seeking individuals

Both available from Skill: National Bureau for Students with Disabilities. Visit

<http://www.skill.org.uk/shop/shop.asp> or telephone 020 7450 0621

#### ***Support into Employment for Young People and Adults with Learning Difficulties and Disabilities***

Liz Maudslay

Ref: 062450

Available free of charge from the Learning and Skills Network. Visit

<http://www.lsneducation.org.uk/> and go to 'publications'

### **Useful websites**

[www.lsc.gov.uk](http://www.lsc.gov.uk) – The Learning and Skills Council

[www.base-uk.org](http://www.base-uk.org) – British Association for Supported Employment

[www.lsneducation.org.uk](http://www.lsneducation.org.uk) – Learning and Skills Network

[www.mencap.org.uk](http://www.mencap.org.uk) – Mencap Pathway and Work Right

[www.skill.org.uk](http://www.skill.org.uk) – Skill – The National Bureau for Students with Disabilities

[www.remploy.co.uk](http://www.remploy.co.uk) – Remploy – Finding jobs for Disabled People

[www.jobcentreplus.gov.uk](http://www.jobcentreplus.gov.uk)

[www.valuingpeople.gov.uk](http://www.valuingpeople.gov.uk) – Information about Valuing People and Valuing People Now

[www.shaw-trust.org.uk](http://www.shaw-trust.org.uk) – Shaw Trust – Provides employment services for disabled people

[www.esf.gov.uk](http://www.esf.gov.uk) – the European Social Fund, a European Union initiative that supports activities to extend employment opportunities and develop a skilled workforce

## Further information

There are six information sheets in this set which are aimed at a number of different key players who need to be involved in the process of supporting people in their transition to work: people with learning difficulties; employers; practitioners in the FE system; managers and co-ordinators of vocational training and courses; information, advice and guidance bodies; parents and carers. Collaborative working between different partners is an essential component of successful vocational provision for people with learning difficulties. Copies of the information sheets can be downloaded from: [www.niace.org.uk/research/HDE/documents.htm](http://www.niace.org.uk/research/HDE/documents.htm)

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