

Moving into Work

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



An information sheet for Information, Advice and Guidance services including Connexions and Nextstep

This information sheet outlines significant changes in vocational provision for disabled learners over the next few years in the further education system. It has a particular focus on provision for people with learning difficulties.¹ Information, Advice and Guidance (IAG) services have a key role in supporting these changes as highlighted by the Learning and Skills Council (LSC):

Whether the focus is a young person's transition to post-16 learning or where adults with acquired disabilities are re-thinking their career path, Information, Advice and Guidance (IAG) services are essential in helping individuals make the best possible choices about learning and work. (LSC, 2006a)

Employability and disabled people

Many disabled people who are unemployed want to work and there is currently an emphasis from the Government on vocational skills training and the drive to support disabled people off Incapacity Benefit and into employment. The Government recognises that employment for disabled people is:

...both a route out of poverty and a route to social inclusion... (Witcher, 2007)

In the post-16 education sector, there is recognition of the importance of closer collaboration between education and training, employers and supported employment agencies to bring together the skills and employment agendas. The LSC Annual Statement of Priorities 2007/8 states the purpose of further education and training for learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities:

...is as much about enabling economic participation (where appropriate) as it is for all other learners. (LSC, 2006b)

However, 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. (OFSTED, 2007)

Many people with learning difficulties are motivated to get a job, but too often this goal is not achieved. A national Government survey of nearly 3,000 people with learning difficulties found that only 17 per cent of those interviewed who were of working age had a paid job. The same survey found that 65 per cent of those who were unemployed wanted to work (Emerson et al, 2005). Research has shown that most people with learning difficulties fail to make the transition to employment from vocational training and courses (NIACE, 2002).

The LSC strategy

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:

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. In health and social care settings the term 'learning disability' is used. This set of information sheets is not focusing on learners whose learning support needs are for 'specific learning difficulties' such as dyslexia or on physical or sensory disabilities. However, some of the issues highlighted may be relevant to other disabled learners.

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 two 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, 2006a)

This means a major shift of focus for vocational provision in further education colleges, adult education services, work-based learning and voluntary sector organisations.

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/ft>

What is supported employment?

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).

Supported employment services specialise in working with disabled people to help them find employment and provide ongoing support once they are in a job.² In supported employment the focus is usually on finding 'real jobs in the community' rather than sheltered employment. One of the principles of supported employment is a strong belief that no one who wants to work is unemployable. 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 voluntary sector organisations. In some areas, supported employment services form 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:

- **Access to Work** – offers advice and practical support for disabled people and their employers to overcome difficulties in the workplace caused by disability.
- **Workstep** – run through Jobcentre Plus, this programme provides individually tailored support for people who face complex barriers to getting and keeping a job.

- **Work Preparation** – a programme run through Jobcentre Plus that supports disabled people's return to work following a period off sick or being unemployed.

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 based in Jobcentre Plus advise on these different programmes.

Supported employment and post-16 education

The emphasis of the LSC Strategy is for post-16 education providers to work in partnership with supported employment agencies or services and integrate the supported employment approach within the vocational course or training. There are some examples of vocational provision for people with learning difficulties working with a supported employment model. They come in various forms:

- working in partnership with local supported employment agencies;
- working with supported employment services that are part of their local social services department;
- incorporating into the course or training some of the key roles of supported employment such as researching the local employment market, finding local jobs and on-the-job support.

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 funded through project funds visited Shahista once a month to work alongside her. Shahista worked four hours on the minimum wage without it affecting her benefits.

Employment – A realistic option

A report to the Department for Work and Pensions on improving work opportunities for people with learning difficulties has stressed:

...recognising the importance of employment whilst still at school is critical. Ensuring effective individualised transition planning and implementation from education to employment could have a dramatic and long lasting effect on the life experiences of this group and other services. (Corporate Document Services, 2006)

There is a statutory requirement that children who have a statement of special educational needs must be supported by the school, Connexions services and other statutory agencies to prepare a transition plan. This process starts in Year 9. Connexions Personal Advisors have a key role to play in making sure that employment is an option on the agenda for the young person's future plans.

In some cases it may be more appropriate for a young person with learning difficulties to move on to a work-based training programme when they leave school rather than go on to college.

Case study – Transition and supported employment

Phil is a 19-year-old (Year 14) student at New Bridge Learning Centre in Oldham. The Transitions Service of supported employment agency TiE currently has a partnership agreement with both New Bridge Learning Centre and the Connexions Service to deliver work experience to students in Year 14. After vocational profiling and discussions with his parents, it was identified that Phil was looking to move directly into employment on leaving school. He was interested in retail work, particularly at a Tesco Store.

A work experience placement was arranged at the local Tesco store with which TiE had developed an excellent working partnership through previous work experience placements. Phil was fully supported by the Transitions Officer.

As Tesco is opening a new store in the locality where Phil lives, he was supported to apply for a position within the store. He attended the interview with video evidence of his abilities and was successful in securing a position for 22 hours per week. Phil has now been allocated an Employment Mentor through TiE's WORKSTEP Programme.

Phil is still at school and day release will enable him to attend the Tesco induction, where they are working with all prospective employees in preparation for the store's opening in August 2007. Phil's positive outcome is attributed to the good communication and excellent working partnership between all partners.

Person-centred planning

Improving transition planning and increasing the number of people with learning difficulties in paid work are two of the objectives of *Valuing People* (DoH, 2001), the Government's White Paper for services for people with learning difficulties. Regional transition networks have been established to support local areas to make sure that the main agencies including the Connexions service are working together; writing down how they will work together and who will do what.

Introducing a person-centred approach to statutory transition planning is the aim of a current national programme led by the Valuing People Support Team.³ Person-centred planning places the individual at the centre and focuses on what is important to them from their own perspective.⁴

3. www.valuingpeople.gov.uk

4. For more information on person-centred planning and approaches visit www.helensandersonassociates.co.uk

Case study – A person-centred review

Marcella's son had a person-centred review when he was at school in year 9:

His person-centred review was amazing; for the first time my son was in the review. I thought he's not going to do it, he's not going to stay in the meeting for 1.5 hours and he did. I saw him grow in confidence, when all the people there said what they like and admire about him and what is working for him and what is not.

Marcella feels that person-centred planning takes the focus away from the parent or carers and makes them think about what their son or daughter wants and how to make changes. She wants her son to be as independent as possible and to have a job:

A lot of education establishments, I think, don't believe that he can get employment. What I am thinking of is not a 9–5 job; one day a week as a first step. I know one woman worked 2 hours a week and gradually increased her hours.

I want his skills matched to a job that he can do...linking his ability to something... a person-centred approach.

Marcella's son now has a person-centred plan. It contains information about him including details of his wishes and aspirations for the future and records of his past education. It is kept in an interactive computer file based on the transactive format developed by her local Mencap.⁵

Learning Disability Partnership Boards

It is the job of Learning Disability Partnership Boards in each local authority to take forward the recommendations of *Valuing People* at a local level. The partnership board brings together local providers of services for people with learning disabilities. On each board there are two people with learning difficulties and two parent/carers. Many partnership boards have subgroups that focus on employment services and education/training opportunities for people with learning disabilities. Most boards will have a plan to develop person-centred planning and transition planning.

How can IAG services support people with learning difficulties who want to work?

- Recognise that employment is a realistic goal for people with learning difficulties. This may mean challenging your own attitudes, the attitudes of people with learning difficulties themselves, and in some cases parents and carers. A job, even if it is a part-time job, is an important part of an individual's life.

- Work with your local Learning Disability Partnership Board. They exist in every local authority, usually within Social Services. They are the key local forum that will put you in touch with local service providers for people with learning difficulties including education and employment.
- Develop partnerships with supported employment services in your area. They could be supported employment agencies, supported employment services within Social Services or supported employment services within learning providers.

Case Study – College-based supported employment services

The Rose Project, based at Havering College, started up in 2006. The Project Managers at the College work with the local Connexions service. Connexions provide four job coaches, who work closely with people in their new jobs. The local borough helps with funding, and has also provided several jobs for people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Other funding comes from a local charity and fundraising activities.

- Listen to what individuals' interests are with regards to work and discuss possible ways these interests could be matched to work experience or employment. Individuals interviewed as part of the research for this piece of work were on work experience and in paid jobs in a range of settings including: library archive offices; a café in a large supermarket; a garage; and working with pre-school age children in a nursery.
- Connexions Personal Advisors can make sure that employment is on the agenda as an option for the future when supporting the statutory transition process for young people with learning difficulties.
- Suggest pointers that individuals and their parents/carers should be looking for that indicate vocational training or courses are focused on finding employment. These include: opportunities for local supported work experience placements throughout the course not just at the start; access to specialist advice on benefits and how they might be affected by employment; a commitment to support learners in the transition to work; and ongoing support once in a job. For more information see the information sheet for parents and carers and for people with learning difficulties in this set.
- Involve parents/carers in the process. They can offer practical help such as helping their son or daughter leave the house on time to get to work. A parent's belief that their son or daughter has the right to work and can work can be critical for the individual's self esteem and confidence.

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. Information, Advice and Guidance services have a key role to play in supporting people with learning difficulties to pursue employment as an option and in helping them navigate the changes in provision.

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

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- Witcher, S. (2007) Speech given by the Deputy Director of the Office for Disability Issues at the NIACE conference on 'Joined up strategy for disabled learners' on 8 February 2007
- YPS (2001) *A Framework for Supported Employment*, York: YPS

Resources

Open Learning Resource on disability issues for Nextstep advisers: Information and advice on working with disabled people
<http://www.advice-resources.co.uk>

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 or visit 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 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 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.niace.org.uk – NIACE – The national adult learning organisation

www.esf.gov.uk – the European Social Fund, a European Union initiative that supports activities to extend employment opportunities and develop a skilled workforce

www.lsc.gov.uk – The Learning and Skills Council

www.base-uk.org – British Association for Supported Employment

www.lsneducation.org.uk – Learning and Skills Network

www.mencap.org.uk – Mencap Pathway and Work Right

www.skill.org.uk – Skill – The National Bureau for Students with Disabilities

www.remploy.co.uk – Remploy – Finding jobs for Disabled People

www.jobcentreplus.gov.uk

www.valuingpeople.gov.uk – Information about Valuing People and Valuing People Now

www.shaw-trust.org.uk – Shaw Trust – Provides employment services for disabled people



Registered office
NIACE, 21 De Montfort Street, Leicester LE1 7GE

Telephone: +44 (0) 116 204 4200 Fax: +44 (0) 116 285 4514
Email: enquiries@niace.org.uk Website: www.niace.org.uk

Registered charity number: 1002775 Company registered number: 2603322



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Written by Yola Jacobsen
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