

Making it Work

Embedding a supported
employment approach in
vocational education and training
for people with learning difficulties

Yola Jacobsen



Making it Work

The *Making it Work* book is for practitioners and managers working with people with learning difficulties in FE colleges, adult and community learning services, work-based learning and voluntary sector organisations. This book was produced as a result of a two-year project funded by the Department of Health.

It provides information about the supported employment process and how this can be embedded in vocational training and courses for people with learning difficulties. The book was developed in consultation with providers who are developing a supported employment approach in their courses, and case studies are provided throughout to illustrate how this work is being put into practice. Each section ends with a list of 'Points to consider' for the reader to reflect on how they could introduce the supported employment approach, and the implications that this would have for existing provision. An action plan to take this work forward is provided at the end of the book with a list of publications and useful resources.

Making it Work focuses on:

- the voice of the learner;
- disability rights legislation and learning and skills policies;
- principles and processes of supported employment;
- person-centred approaches in vocational courses and training;
- supported employment in the learning and skills sector;
- collaborative working;
- curriculum development and supported employment;
- working with parents and carers; and
- working with employers.

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and training for people with
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A note on terminology

This book refers to both 'learning difficulties' and 'learning disabilities'. On the whole, the two terms have the same meaning.

However, the term 'learning difficulty' is commonly used throughout the education sector and in this book. It refers to people who have a general cognitive learning difficulty that hinders their ability to learn and cope independently. The term 'learning disability' is commonly used in health and social services. We have retained its use in the book when we are referring to, or quoting from, external documents, policies, pieces of research or case studies.

The term 'learners' has been used throughout this book to refer to people in programmes of education or training. Some case studies, quotes or texts produced outside of NIACE use the term 'students', and where this is the case we have kept to the original wording.

Acronyms explained

BIS	(Department for) Business, Innovation and Skills
DCSF	Department for Children, Schools and Families
DfES	Department for Education and Skills (no longer in existence)
DIUS	Department for Innovation, Universities and Skills (no longer in existence)
DoH	Department of Health
DWP	Department for Work and Pensions
ESF	European Social Fund
FE	Further Education
LSC	Learning and Skills Council (no longer in existence from April 2010)
YPLA	Young People's Learning Agency

Foreword



Employment for people with learning disabilities is really important to me. Lots of people have told me that they want a job, and I think it is important that we are making sure that the number of people with learning disabilities who work is much closer to the number of all disabled people with jobs. This is a big gap, and we all need to work hard together to close the gap.

Having a job helps in a real way for people to be part of their communities and society. Making sure that more people with learning disabilities have the chance to get and keep a job is a big challenge. People with learning disabilities need the same opportunities with good support, and employers need to have a better understanding about employing people with learning disabilities.

It is important that people are supported to start thinking about jobs when they are still at school. That is why this book is so important. It will help to make sure that the right things happen at college and in education so that more people get and keep jobs.

Scott Watkin, Co-National Director for Learning Disabilities, Department of Health



Introduction

Work is important to all of us. It can provide the opportunity for us to develop our skills, help us become more self-confident, make friends, and widen our social circles. Paid work enables us to earn a living. Having a job gives us status and is a key route to social inclusion. This is particularly the case for those groups of people who are marginalised in society. Many people with learning difficulties want to work and they too can benefit from employment in all of these ways. Work offers a way for individuals to make a contribution, spend time in ordinary integrated settings rather than in 'service land', and to be valued members of their local communities. As one person with a learning difficulty commented:

“I want a life, not a service.”

The publication in 2009 of the cross-government strategy, *Valuing Employment Now: Real jobs for people with learning disabilities*, marks a significant commitment at the highest level to increasing the numbers of people with learning difficulties in employment.

*'We need to get more people with learning disabilities into jobs. Valuing Employment Now is based on the Government's belief that all people with learning disabilities, like all other people, can and should have the chance to work. To deny people that opportunity is a waste of talent for the individuals, employers, society and the wider economy. The current economic situation makes it all the more urgent to take action.'*¹

What is the purpose of this book?

The purpose of this book is to provide ideas and information on how the supported employment approach can be embedded in vocational education and training. This book focuses on how people with learning difficulties who are learners in the post-16 education and training sector can be supported to develop the skills and gain the necessary experience to move into employment and have real jobs in ordinary settings.

Economic climate

The current economic climate and rising unemployment will have a negative impact on job security and make finding work more difficult for many people, including people with learning difficulties. This makes it even more important that people

¹ Department of Health (2009) *Valuing Employment Now: Real jobs for people with learning disabilities*. London: DH Publications.

with learning difficulties have access to vocational provision that will enable them to get employment. Consequently, it is particularly important to ensure that programmes designed to enable people with learning difficulties to enter and succeed in employment meet their needs and are effective. Many people with learning difficulties want to work and have a right to education and training that maximises the opportunities for them to achieve their full potential, including the development of skills to get a job and to live a fulfilling life.

How should this book be used?

The best way to use the book will depend on the level of experience of the reader. Those who want to learn about supported employment and how to develop a supported employment approach may want to read the book right through. Those who are more experienced in this work will want to pick and choose the sections most relevant to their situation. The *Points to consider* sections highlight important issues to be taken into account when developing provision, and suggest practical ways to take this work forward. It could be used for information, reference and staff training.

A PDF version of this book is also available to download from:

<http://shop.niace.org.uk/making-it-work.html>

Who is this book for?

Making it Work is for practitioners and managers working with people with learning difficulties in the learning and skills sector, including further education (FE) colleges, independent specialist providers, adult and community learning services, work-based learning, and voluntary and community sector organisations. It may also be useful for supported employment agencies and welfare to work organisations. Feedback from those working in the learning and skills sector indicates that there is a need and desire for information and training on how to develop vocational provision based on the supported employment model.

What does the book provide?

The book:

- provides a focus on the voice of the learner;
- presents an outline of key disability rights legislation and learning and skills policies to provide the context in which providers are developing the supported employment model in post-16 education and training;
- provides information about the underlying principles of supported employment, its process and the approaches used to support people into and in work;

- examines what is meant by the term person-centred and suggests ways person-centred approaches can be used to embed the supported employment process in vocational courses and training;
- gives examples of how the supported employment process is being developed and funded in the learning and skills sector, and looks in particular at the role of the job coach;
- outlines the range of partners that need to be involved to develop this work, and suggests some ways to promote effective and positive joint working;
- looks at the role of parents and carers in supporting people into work;
- highlights effective approaches when working with employers;
- focuses on the core elements of a curriculum to support the embedding of supported employment approaches;
- provides case studies throughout that are based on examples of how the supported employment approach is currently being embedded in vocational education and training;
- presents an action plan format that could be used to support the development of supported employment approaches in vocational provision; and
- provides a list of publications and useful resources.

How was the book developed?

A draft version of the *Making it Work* book was produced at the end of the first year of a two-year project funded by the Department of Health. At the beginning of the project, a call for information was sent out to providers in the learning and skills sector asking for examples of provision for learners with learning difficulties that were embedding a supported employment approach. The information received from the call for information provided the project with a list of sites for fieldwork visits and a list of providers to invite to a seminar held in October 2008. Colleagues who attended the seminar were asked to:

- comment on a draft framework for the book;
- suggest what they thought should be in the book; and
- provide case studies for the book.

There were also a number of fieldwork visits to sites throughout the two years.

A number of learning providers piloted the draft version of this book in the summer term of 2009. Feedback from these providers and from critical readers has informed the writing of this final, updated version, launched in March 2010. A training day to support the use of the book was also trialed with the pilot sites and will be the basis of a regional training programme.

Section 1

From zoologist to movie critic: people with learning difficulties talk about learning and work

This section focuses on what people with learning difficulties think about learning for work, support into work and employment. As part of the project that developed the *Making it Work* book, a focus group was formed from people with learning difficulties working for a national equal rights organisation. Their comments, and quotes from other sources, are used throughout this section, where people with learning difficulties talk about:

- the difficulties in getting work;
- barriers that exist in services and through people's negative attitudes;
- the benefits and importance of working;
- following your dreams and ambitions;
- college courses and support into work;
- bad experiences of work; and
- what makes a good job.

The current picture

People with learning difficulties do work and hold down jobs. However, only a minority achieve this at present. In October 2009, the NHS Information Centre published baseline data that suggests that only 7.5 per cent of people with a learning disability aged between 18 and 64 receiving adult social services in England are in any kind of paid employment.²

² NHS Information Centre (2009) www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/social_exclusion_task_force/psa/indicators_data.aspx. This data is provisional, and covers the period between March 2008 and April 2009. Final data was expected in January 2010, but was not available at the time of writing.

“I know how hard it is for people with learning disabilities to get jobs. I have found it hard to get a job and my only paid employment up to now was in a supermarket.

I think one of the main issues is training. Employers need to have better understanding about employing people with learning disabilities. And people with learning disabilities looking for jobs need to improve their skills, too.”

Scott Watkin, Co-National Director for Learning Disabilities,
Department of Health³

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, but that 65 per cent of those surveyed who were unemployed wanted to work.⁴ As one young person with learning disabilities explained:

“I want to escape day services and to have a job (working with animals, acting, working as part of a team, dog walking).”

Why is work important?

The following statement is an excerpt from a conference presentation given by a young man with learning difficulties about his experiences of employment.⁵ He had been supported by a Mencap Pathways service to find work.

Why is it important for people with learning difficulties to get a job?

- YOU could achieve something positive. I have gained new skills and met new people.
- It builds YOUR confidence.
- It gives YOU independence.
- YOU will earn your OWN money and can be better off.
- YOU have to be willing to help YOURSELF. It can be scary doing new things, but remember there are people like those at Mencap who can help you if you need it.

Darren Stanley

3 Department of Health (2009) *Valuing Employment Now: Real jobs for people with learning disabilities*. London: DH Publications.

4 Emerson, E., Malam, D., Davies, I. and Spencer, K. (2005) *Adults with Learning Difficulties in England 2003/4*. London: NHS Health and Social Care Information Centre.

5 LSC (2009) *The Learner Voice. Learning for Work: Employability and adults with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Learner presentations from nine regional conferences (held January – April 2008)*. Coventry: LSC.

Jobs can bring a sense of achievement, new confidence, the chance to earn money and the chance to take control of your life:

“I did a paper round when I was 13 or 14. I needed to get out there, doing it to help my Mum with money. It was good to get paid for doing something. I had to prove myself.”

“I enjoyed going into work and taking holidays, meeting different customers and colleagues. I enjoyed getting paid.”

Following your dreams

Like everyone else, people with learning difficulties from an early age have dreams and ambitions about what they would like to do when they grow up. Some people do achieve these dreams in their adult life – through work or through activities out of work. For example, at the focus group people told us what they wanted to do as a child and thought about how this links with what they are now doing as adults.

“I wanted to be a pop star... now I am a singer in a band we formed at work, and I am an Elvis impersonator.”

“I wanted to be a movie critic or actor... now I use video cameras and drama in delivering training.”

“I wanted to be a rock and roll artist... now I do backing vocals in a band at work and play the mouth organ and guitar.”

“I wanted to be a nurse... now I work on a project about cancer. I visited hospitals to prepare for the cancer project. We will be training nurses and management.”

“I wanted to be a TV presenter... now I train people and I made a DVD.”

“I wanted to be an actress... now I have been filming with Panorama a film about hate crime.”

It is clear that while these dreams and aspirations might seem unrealistic to some people, the people in the focus group are doing things that have interested and motivated them since childhood. Some dreams, goals and ambitions can seem – for everyone – difficult to reach. But these interests and passions can be an important starting point for pursuing a career in an area of interest.

Expectations about people with learning difficulties and work

Too often people have low expectations about whether people with learning difficulties can work and what jobs they can do. This can include early years professionals, teachers and tutors, parents, and carers and employers. One of the aims of the Valuing Employment Now strategy is to challenge these assumptions:

“Everyone else involved in the lives of people with learning disabilities also needs to believe that work is both possible and desirable, and recognise their role in this.”⁶

Often low expectations and negative assumptions stem from not seeing or being aware of people with learning difficulties in real jobs. In 2008 a survey was carried out on behalf of Mencap as part of its ‘I want to work’ awareness raising campaign. Approximately 1,088 working UK adults aged 16+ were contacted and 62 per cent of them thought that people with learning disabilities were unable to work.

A member of the focus group told us:

“The Careers Advisor at school had said no to me doing qualifications because I was at a special school, so I could not take them.”

Another member of the group remarked:

“You’ve got to get to know what that person’s needs are properly. Everybody is an individual and there are different kinds of learning disability. People tend to think a learning disability means you can’t do nothing. Get to know the person and what their learning disability is for them and then work with them to work better.”

College and getting a job

For some people, work is an important end goal of learning. In one national survey,⁷ people with learning difficulties were asked what they thought was important about learning. Over 1,300 replies were received and the survey findings revealed that getting a job was one of the main reasons given for wanting to learn, alongside: improving literacy skills; making new friends; feeling more confident and therefore more independent; and keeping active intellectually. In the same survey, when asked for ideas on how learning could be better, learning on the job and more courses leading to work were key themes. Responses to the question, ‘what would you like to learn in the future?’ included learning about:

⁶ Department of Health (2009) Valuing Employment Now: Real jobs for people with learning disabilities. London: DH Publications.

⁷ Berkeley, V. and Jacobsen, Y. (2007) *Brightening Lives: What adults with learning difficulties say about learning*. Leicester: NIACE. Available to download from <http://shop.niace.org.uk/brightening-lives.html>

- car valeting;
- accountancy;

and how to be a:

- zoologist;
- forensic scientist;
- joiner; and
- drama teacher.

While there are some strong examples of colleges providing people with lots of support to start work, for many people their past experience at college has not been helpful; as illustrated by the following stories from two of the focus group participants:

“I went to college in 2004. My maths and English isn’t good. I found that at that time the college didn’t think people with learning difficulties could handle a job. I went to college for skills, there was no mention of getting a job.”

“I did a business admin course and got Levels 1 and 2 and typing qualifications. They did a placement in that course and all I did was stay in the college, in a pretend office, and I was stuck in there. I didn’t like it. Other people on the course got outside placements. I think they were giving them more opportunities. I don’t know why I got the placement in the college, but it was just me. It might have been more useful going out of college.”

More colleges are supporting people to find jobs and to develop skills to help them in their jobs and examples of this work features throughout this book.

The following statements from learners highlight how much college can help to identify what an individual wants to do and build up skills and confidence to help to find work:

“I never thought I had skills that could get me a real job but now I realise I can.”

“I am enjoying my cooking course as well as the Ready Steady Work project. I want to work because I love cooking, creating different food and pleasing people. I want to get a cooking job.”

“I never knew I had so many choices about what I could do or that I had so many skills.”⁸

⁸ LSC (2009) *The Learner Voice. Learning for Work: Employability and adults with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Learner presentations from nine regional conferences (held January – April 2008)*. Coventry: LSC.

At one of the regional LSC conferences⁹ a group of learners engaged in running a recycling scheme told us what they needed to help them progress in work:

- help with travel to work;
- help to solve problems;
- someone to listen to us and our employers, to help us to understand each other;
- help with things that change at work such as new staff, work rotas or tasks; and
- to be able to return to college part time to learn new skills for different jobs.

Work experience is a core part of vocational courses and training. It is important that care is taken in setting up the placement, that it is monitored and that there is good support for the individual and employer. This can make a big difference to the success of the work experience as illustrated in the two examples that follow:

“I did a college course after I left secondary school. Through this I got work experience at a store. It was not paid. I was there for ten weeks. It didn’t go too well. I signed up for it so I went for the interview and I said I’d like to work on the fruit and veg. All of the ten weeks I was there I found myself at the back of the shop racking bananas. They wouldn’t let me have the run of the ground floor. It was unfair, they were rotten.”

“I did a work experience placement, as part of horticulture at college, at B&Q, for 20 weeks. It was much better. I had a full working crew; if I wanted them, I just had to find someone that would help me out. They gave me strict instructions. There was more support, like support from the gardening manager and the crew. They gave me a phone and said ‘if you find things difficult then just call us and we will come to you.’”

When is a job not good?

When people with learning difficulties do work, too often they are placed in menial, repetitive jobs with no development and progression as illustrated by the following comments from the focus group participants:

“In the warehouse job I felt left out; I got the menial, tedious tasks; I had no development and I was bullied.”

“I went from school straight to work at the mill, lifting shoes on a lift from floor to floor. I’d have this big rack of shoes and I’d take them in the lift up to one of the floors and give them to someone, then I’d go and get another rack of shoes and take them up the lift. I used to do all of that from 8–5. There was no training or staff development.”

⁹ Ibid.

The issue of bullying at work came up several times in the focus group discussion, as did examples of feeling discriminated against and negative attitudes of colleagues and customers:

“Awkward customers with bad attitudes, being rude and putting people in boxes because of learning difficulties.”

“Unfriendly people who don’t want to work with someone with a learning difficulty.”

“[My boss] kept giving me all the tedious jobs, which no one wanted to do. It wasn’t testing my brainpower. Also, I told them about being bullied and called names... I got to the point I was really depressed and down.”

A bad day at work left people feeling:

- stressed and pressured;
- frustrated;
- feeling isolated; and
- tearful.

What is important in a job?

“It’s important to encourage employers to employ people with learning difficulties and pay them a proper wage.”

Focus group participant

As well as a decent wage, positive experiences of work included a supportive working environment where people felt that they were respected, accepted and able to make friends:

“People in a workplace who make you feel you are wanted.”

“Everyone getting on well and having a laugh.”

People enjoyed their jobs when the work involved:

- doing something you are interested in and liking the job you do;
- experience and excitement;
- variety – so not being repetitive;
- making a difference and changing opinions about learning difficulties through your job;
- having people listen to you; and
- having polite customers.

Support from colleagues or customers who give praise, positive feedback and compliments, but who are also honest, helped people in their jobs:

“We did a conference and we worked hard. I enjoyed it because I saw people’s faces and they were saying ‘I wouldn’t have thought people with learning difficulties could have done this sort of work in this way and been so professional.’”

“I got 100 per cent performance score when a mystery shopper called into the Asda store. I got this through excellent customer service. This was on work experience. I then gained another gold award whilst in paid work for helping a couple who were organising a church party. I helped them to purchase over 100 bottles of fizzy drinks. They wrote to the store to thank me.”

Points to consider

Learners’ own interests, dream and goals, as well as what they have enjoyed in past work experience, are the best starting points for identifying jobs. Is this the starting point in your discussion with learners?

How much do you know about what your learners really want to do?

Identify ways of talking to your learners about:

- their childhood dreams of work;
- what job they would like in an ideal world;
- what work experience they have done in the past – and within this what they did and did not enjoy; and
- what is important for them in a job.

Think about how these questions can be built into your day-to-day work with learners in a creative and engaging way.

To build up people’s expectations of what is possible, consider inviting people with learning difficulties who have found fulfilling work to tell your learners about this.

Section 2

The policy context

This section outlines current and recent policies that underpin the Government's focus on vocational education and training and employment for disabled people. It introduces Valuing Employment Now 2009, which is a hugely significant strategy underlying the development of the supported employment model in vocational training and courses for people with learning difficulties.

Learning for Living and Work (2006)

In 2006, the Learning and Skills Council (LSC) set out its expectation that work preparation programmes and vocational courses for learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities need to be refocused so that they:

*'...adopt a supported employment model that will deliver the skills and knowledge to assist people into part-time and full-time employment.'*¹⁰

Providers in the learning and skills sector were tasked with taking forward this development within a three-year timescale. By 2010, vocational provision not based on a supported employment model or learning in the workplace would no longer be funded by the LSC.

This expectation is to be carried forward beyond March 2010 when the LSC will have been replaced by the Young People's Learning Agency (YPLA) and Skills Funding Agency. Speaking about this transfer of responsibilities, the Director Designate of the YPLA stated in November 2009 that:

*"... the transfer provides a real opportunity to improve provision for learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities by enabling local authorities, supported by the YPLA, to take forward the Learning for Living and Work strategy."*¹¹

Behind the focus on the development of a supported employment model in the LSC *Learning for Living and Work* strategy were several factors concerning the effectiveness and quality of vocational education and training for people with learning difficulties. They include:

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

11 Keynote speech from Peter Lauener, Chief Executive Designate, Young People's Learning Agency to Skill's annual post-16 conference 'In Focus: making sense of progression for disabled learners' on 3 November 2009.

- the LSC's commitment to improve the quality of provision for disabled learners, and to cease funding courses that lead to the 'revolving door syndrome' where learners repeat courses rather than offering real progression routes;
- research that shows that whilst there are many courses for people with learning difficulties that are described as vocational, very few lead to people making the transition to employment;¹²
- research evidence which shows that where people with learning difficulties do successfully progress from vocational education and training into employment, significant elements of the supported employment approach have been used.¹³

Progression through Partnership (2007)

Progression through Partnership is the joint strategy between the Department for Innovation, Universities and Skills (now BIS), the Department for Children, Schools and Families, the Department of Health, and the Department for Work and Pensions on the role of further education and training in supporting disabled people to achieve fulfilling lives.

The strategy focuses on the essential need for all of these government departments to collaborate in order to help young people and adults 'achieve the education they want and need to be able to live fulfilling lives in their local communities and, particularly, enter the world of work.' The expectation for providers is that they will emulate the principle of partnership working underpinning this document.

Progression through Partnership refers directly to the development of the supported employment approach:

'The LSC has challenged its providers to adopt the "supported employment" model to meet the work preparation needs of these learners, no later than 2010, in Learning for Living and Work.'

Foundation Learning (due to be implemented in 2010)

Foundation Learning (previously known as the Foundation Learning Tier) is the name given to education provision at Entry Level and Level 1, and includes the qualifications at these levels within the Qualifications and Credit Framework (QCF).

Information, advice and guidance, and effective initial assessment and ongoing review, are considered to be critical success factors in offering Foundation Learning programmes.

¹² Jacobsen, Y. (2002) *Making the Jump: Transition to work*. Leicester: NIACE.

¹³ Ibid.

Learners will be offered personalised learning opportunities that help them gain credit at Entry Level and Level 1, on a learning journey leading to a range of appropriate destinations such as Level 2 qualifications, supported employment or independent living. Programmes of learning should be destination led. The implications of this are that providers need to work with learners to identify end points to their programme of study and build a programme of learning to enable learners to succeed and progress.

To keep up to date with developments, visit the LSIS Excellence Gateway for information: **www.excellencegateway.org.uk**

For further information on the QCF visit: **www.qcda.gov.uk**

Machinery of government changes

Since the publication of the LSC Learning for Living and Work strategy in 2006, there has been considerable change in the post-16 education and training sector, not least the anticipated raising of the participation age for compulsory education and changes in the machinery of government, which resulted in the creation of two government departments with a responsibility for education: the Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF) and the Department for Business, Innovation, and Skills (BIS). From April 2010, the replacement of the LSC with the Skills Funding Agency and the YPLA marks a major change in the way learning and training is to be commissioned and funded. The Skills Funding Agency will allocate funds for education and training provision for learners aged 19 and over. The YPLA will work with local authorities who, from 2010, will have responsibility for education and training for learners up to the age of 19, and for people with a learning difficulty assessment up to the age of 25.

For learners over the age of 25, it will be important that the work to develop vocational provision based on a supported employment model is carried forward by the Skills Funding Agency.

In early 2010, the DCSF and LSC issued the 16–19 Statement of Priorities and Investment Strategy. This signifies a continuing commitment to fund vocational provision for people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities based on a supported employment model. It will be carried forward by the YPLA, local authorities and learning providers:

'By September 2010, providers will no longer be funded to deliver work-preparation programmes for learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities that do not focus on learning in the workplace and the supported employment model. More young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities will be expected to gain meaningful employment as a result of:

- *better preparation for work by schools, colleges and training providers;*
- *better work experience;*
- *Skills Accounts and the Adult Advancement and Careers Service being fully accessible to people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities up to the age of 25.*¹⁴

Employment and disabled people

The Government's commitment to employment for disabled people continues to develop, and has been strengthened in a number of ways. These are set out chronologically below and described in more detail throughout this section.

- The introduction in 2007 of Public Service Agreement 16 (PSA 16).
- The Getting a Life programme, 2008–2011.
- The 2009 Valuing People Now Delivery Plan (Department of Health, 2009).
- The launch of the cross-government strategy, Valuing Employment Now, in 2009.

Public Service Agreement 16 (2007)

Public Service Agreements (PSAs) set out government department commitments to improve the value for money and efficiency of public services. There are a number of PSAs and each one has a specific focus. In October 2007, PSA 16 was introduced, the aim of which is to increase the proportion of socially excluded adults in settled accommodation and employment, education or training. PSA 16 focuses on four 'client' groups:

- care leavers at age 19;
- offenders under probation supervision;
- adults receiving secondary mental health services; and
- adults with moderate to severe learning disabilities.

In order to meet PSA 16 targets at a local level, local authorities are expected to work collaboratively with key partners such as Jobcentre Plus, adult learning providers and the voluntary sector to coordinate:

*'...skills and employment support across localities, and ensuring that provision meets the specific employment and skills needs of at-risk adults.'*¹⁵

14 DCSF and LSC (2010) *16–19 Statement of Priorities and Investment Strategy 2010–11*, p.13.

15 Cabinet Office (2007) *PSA Delivery Agreement 16: Increase the proportion of socially excluded adults in settled accommodation and employment, education or training*. London: The Stationery Office.

PSA targets should be included in local strategic agreements such as Local Strategic Partnerships and be part of Local Area Agreements.

Find out more about PSA 16 at:

www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/social_exclusion_task_force/psa.aspx

The 'Getting a Life' programme (2008–2011)

The 'Getting a Life' programme is a three-year cross-government project that is working with twelve demonstration sites in England. The programme supports a multi-agency team of key people from each site who can make decisions locally about what needs to happen to ensure that young people age 14–25 years with learning disabilities go into paid employment and lead full lives. Key partners involved include young people with learning disabilities and families, children's and adult services, schools and colleges, Jobcentre Plus, Connexions, Learning and Skills Councils and Supported Employment Agencies.

The 'Getting a Life' project will explore how to use person-centred planning to bring together the assessment and funding streams from four different national and local policy areas: Special Educational Needs (SEN) assessment and transition planning, Connexions, the LSC and post-16 education, and Jobcentre Plus.

A progress report on the 'Getting a Life' programme¹⁶ includes some challenging findings and recommendations on post-16 education and training:

- *'There needs to be a proxy in the education system for what constitutes success in achieving life chances for learning disabled young people. GCSE attainment is that proxy for non-disabled youngsters – what is the education system to judge its performance against for learning disabled teenagers?*
- *The post-16 system is not accessible to young people with learning disabilities apart from discrete learning disability courses. The usual practice is for young people to stay on at school until they are 19 and then to do another 'sixth form' at college. People report that the college course is usually a repeat of what they did at school.'*

Other findings include the following:

- There are low aspirations about what young people with a learning disability can achieve throughout the system and this leads to low aspirations of young people and their families – what is needed is for the voice of people and families to be heard by services and for families to have more information about what is positive and possible in terms of young people achieving fulfilling lives.

16 Progress report on 'Getting a Life' for the Learning Disability Partnership Board, November 2009.

- Repeated assessment based on what people cannot do is a deficit model and – there needs to be a change to looking at what people can and want to do in order to contribute towards society.
- Young people with learning disabilities need support from Year 9 (age 13/14) to plan for their future life, and this must include employment as a central focus; what is needed is for good employment support to be available from Year 9.
- Most people involved in the transition process for people with learning disabilities see employment as ‘someone else’s business’ – what is needed is the goal of supporting people into paid work to be a shared outcome and part of all processes.

The ‘Getting a Life’ programme is developing a suite of materials to support the work of the sites to implement a pathway into employment. These will be part of the Valuing Employment Now resource pack. For further information on the ‘Getting a Life’ programme visit **www.gettingalife.org.uk**.

Valuing People Now (2009)

Increasing employment opportunities for people with learning disabilities is one of six priorities for 2009–10 of the Department of Health’s Valuing People Now delivery plan. The plan, published in January 2009, set out the Government’s three-year strategy for services for people with learning disabilities. One of the key policy objectives was to:

‘...increase the number of people in employment and who have access to post-16 education.’

There is an emphasis on the importance of effective transition planning for people with learning disabilities if they are to lead fulfilling lives. The following action points were outlined in the *Education, work and getting a life* section of the plan:

- A cross-governmental Work, Education and Life Group to take forward the development and implementation of a National Employment Strategy for people with learning disabilities (subsequently published as *Valuing Employment Now* in June 2009).
- The Department of Health to continue to work with DCSF, DIUS (which later became BIS) and DWP on implementing the post-16 education strategy, Progression through Partnership.
- Support of the cross-government ‘Getting a Life’ programme to ensure that early learning from the programme is disseminated to regional and local Partnership Boards and other local partners.
- The Department of Health to work with the NHS to increase the number of people with learning disabilities employed by the NHS.

- The continuation of a programme to embed Person-Centred Transition Planning in the statutory transition process nationally and support for the DCSF's regional work to improve transition planning for young people with learning disabilities.
- The Cabinet Office to continue work to support the civil service to increase the number of people with learning disabilities that it employs.

For more information about Valuing People Now visit: www.valuingpeople.gov.uk

The strategy and an easy read version of the strategy, so that learners can find out about this initiative and government support, can be found at:

www.dh.gov.uk/en/Publicationsandstatistics/Publications/PublicationsPolicyAndGuidance/DH_093377

Valuing Employment Now (2009)

In 2009 the cross-government strategy, *Valuing Employment Now: Real Jobs for People with Learning Disabilities*, was launched. It sets out a goal to radically improve employment opportunities for people with learning disabilities, particularly those with moderate and severe learning disabilities, in England. This can only be achieved with collaborative working between health and social care, schools and education and training providers, employment agencies, employers, people with learning disabilities and their families.

Overall, the strategy sets out a plan to ensure that people with learning disabilities have more and better employment opportunities and more and better support to help them access these.

The strategy sets out a number of key areas for change:

- **Growing the presumption of employability.** There is a strong emphasis on growing expectations so employment is seen, not just as *optional* for people with learning disabilities, but as a real prospect. People with learning disabilities, their families and those who work to support them should embrace the notion that *everyone* should have the chance to do work that is right for them. This presumption of employability should exist from birth.
- **Joint working to create employment paths for individuals.** Partnership working is essential if the goal of radically increasing the number of people with learning disabilities in work is to be achieved. This needs to be based on a person-centred approach and needs to embrace effective transition planning.
- **Better work preparation at school, college and adult learning.** Learning providers need to support work aspirations and offer good career and skills preparation. This will be supported by various developments, including the introduction of Foundation Learning (enabling job coaching), the Government's

promotion of quality work experience, and the DCSF's examination of incentives in funding systems, such as bonuses when learners get jobs.

- **The role of personal budgets and social care.** Personal budgets can and should be used to support people with learning disabilities into work. Support broker sites will be developed to demonstrate how this can be done, and day centre resources will be released to fund supported employment.
- **Increasing high-quality job coaching.** The government will publish quality standards for job coaching and develop a strategy for development and growth of this workforce. It will also encourage local authorities to focus funding on supported employment, and will also revise Access to Work so that it better supports job coaching.
- **Clearing up confusion about the benefits system.** The Government will promote accessible information about benefits and being better off in employment. It will continue to work to reverse disincentives to taking employment.
- **Promoting self-employment.** Very few people with learning disabilities are self-employed. In response, there are plans to offer more accessible business advice and to promote this as a real opportunity to work.
- **Encouraging employers to see the business case.** There are plans for the DWP to offer 400 employment opportunities for people with learning disabilities and the Department of Health, Cabinet Office, DCSF and NHS have similar plans. The Government plans to lead by example in this area and to encourage all public bodies, especially local authorities, to do the same.
- **Transport to get to work.** Inaccessible public transport can be a barrier to work. Foundation Learning will accredit travel training, and there are plans to publish best practice in travel training. Learning Disability Partnership Boards are encouraged to review plans locally and to work to tackle harassment issues.
- **Addressing barriers where people live.** There are some barriers to work for people with learning disabilities relating to where they live. The Government will work with local authorities to address this, encouraging them to make links between homes and jobs at local and regional level, and reducing residential care alongside employment options.
- **Better support for the most excluded adults with learning disabilities.** Employment demonstration sites will include people from the most excluded groups, and the new Employability Hub will focus specifically on people with complex needs.
- **People with learning disabilities and their families leading the way.** People with learning disabilities and their families must be partners in policy making, actively involved in developments, and should be empowered to expect and campaign for change. The National Delivery Team will include a family carer and self-advocate. The team is to support local and regional delivery of Valuing Employment Now.
- **Better data and performance management.** Previously there has been little reliable data about the employment situation for people with moderate and

severe learning disabilities. This is now being collected via PSA 16, and this and other data will be used to set targets in 2010.

As part of the delivery plan for Valuing Employment Now, resources to support local and regional delivery of Valuing Employment Now will be developed.

www.valuingpeople.gov.uk/venresources

The strategy and an easy read version of the strategy can be found at:

www.valuingpeople.gov.uk/dynamic/valuingpeople119.jsp

The wider policy context

Government Disability Strategy – ‘Improving the Life Chances of Disabled People’ (2005)

Underpinning the development of the Government’s UK disability rights policy in the 21st century is the 2005 strategy document, *Improving the Life Chances of Disabled People*. One of the long-term targets of this strategy is that:

‘By 2025 all disabled people who are able and willing to work should have the opportunity to get and retain employment, wherever feasible. This includes getting the right support from employers, health and social services, Jobcentre Plus and from all other relevant agencies and individuals.’¹⁷

The strategy recommends a move away from government-funded supported employment programmes that failed to integrate disabled people towards programmes which:

- ‘assist disabled people’s progress towards open employment;
- provide value for money; and
- fulfil the wider objective of social inclusion for all disabled people.’

Employment as a right

UN Convention: Rights of Persons with Disabilities

The UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities is an international treaty which aims to protect and promote the rights of disabled people everywhere. The Convention makes it explicit that disabled people have and should enjoy the same human rights as non-disabled people. It sets a benchmark for the human rights of disabled people, against which countries can be measured.

¹⁷ Cabinet Office (2005) *Improving the Life Chances of Disabled People*. Available to download from: **www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/media/cabinetoffice/strategy/assets/disability.pdf**

Article 27 of the United Nations Convention for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities¹⁸ addresses work and employment issues. The Convention highlights training and education for work, support for career development, and access to work experience. It states that employment of disabled people in an open and inclusive work environment is a right and should be promoted in this way. Rights for disabled people in the workplace should be on an equal basis with others. It expects appropriate steps to be taken, including through legislation to:

- *'enable persons with disabilities to have effective access to general technical and vocational guidance programmes, placement services and vocational and continuing training;*
- *promote employment opportunities and career advancement for persons with disabilities in the labour market, as well as assistance in finding, obtaining, maintaining and returning to employment; and*
- *promote the acquisition by persons with disabilities of work experience in the open labour market.'*

On 8 June 2009 the UK ratified the UN Convention on Disability Rights, and its Optional Protocol on 7 August 2009. This Optional Protocol means that people who believe that their rights under the Convention have been breached can lodge a complaint with the UN Committee who are tasked with monitoring the Convention. The Office for Disability Issues will coordinate the implementation of the Convention across government departments in the UK. The ratification of the convention signified substantial progress in promoting the human rights of disabled people.

Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) (1995)

Under the DDA 1995 it is unlawful for an employer of any size to discriminate against someone who is defined by the Act as disabled, for a reason that relates to their disability. Employers cannot discriminate unfairly:

- during the selection process for a job; and
- when considering people for promotion, dismissal or redundancy.

Employers are also required to make reasonable adjustments to ensure that a person with a disability can access employment effectively. For more information visit: **www.equalityhumanrights.com**

The Special Educational Needs and Disability Act (SENDA) (2001)

The Special Educational Needs and Disability Act (2001) made it unlawful to

¹⁸ www.un.org/esa/socdev/enable/rights/convtexte.htm

discriminate against learners on grounds of their disability. Under the Act providers have legal duties in relation to disabled learners to:

- make reasonable adjustments so a learner can access provision; and
- be anticipatory with their provision. Under disability law employers and education providers are expected to take a proactive approach to encouraging people to disclose a disability and to encourage individuals as early as possible to say if they need support with their learning or training.

In 2005, the Disability Discrimination Act was amended to give all public bodies a duty to promote disability equality. Public authorities, including education providers, must have in place a Disability Equality Scheme and related action plan. This plan must show how information will be gathered to provide evidence of the organisation's performance with regard to disability equality. Some providers have chosen to subsume this into a Single Equality Scheme covering additional areas such as gender and ethnicity. For further information see the DDA publications page of the Learning and Skill Network website at:

www.lseducation.org.uk/dda/publications.aspx or 'Understanding the DDA' at: **www.skill.org.uk/uploads/Understanding%20the%20DDA.doc**

Employment and skills – the wider context

Developing the employability skills of all people within England and the rest of the UK is a high governmental priority. Significant numbers of reports and strategies that are not disability specific recognise the importance of employability skills and training for individual well-being and prosperity, as well as collective prosperity.

The Leitch Review of Skills (2006)

The final report of the Leitch Review of Skills, *Prosperity for all in the global economy – world class skills*, was published on 5 December 2006.¹⁹ The Review sets out a compelling vision for the UK. It shows that the UK must urgently raise achievements at all levels of skills and recommends that it commits to becoming a world leader in skills by 2020, benchmarked against the upper quartile of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD). This means doubling attainment at most levels of skills, including the achievement of ambitious Skills for Life targets. The focus on vocational skills and up-skilling/re-skilling is central in the document. Although responsibility for achieving ambitions must be shared between Government, employers and individuals, the implications of the report for providers in the learning and skills sector are far reaching.

¹⁹ HM Treasury (2006) *Leitch Review of Skills: Prosperity for all in the global economy – world class skills*. Norwich: The Stationery Office.

The UKCES Employability Challenge (2009)

The UK Commission for Employment and Skills (UKCES) was established by the UK Government in 2008, following recommendations in the Leitch report, 2006. It aims to raise UK prosperity and opportunity by helping to develop world-class employment and skills systems. In 2009, the UKCES published its *Employability Challenge* report where it sets out challenges to practitioners (including those in the learning and skills sector) and policy makers to dramatically develop the employability skills of people in the UK: 'a central part of what all publicly-funded training should do is to develop the ability to use knowledge and skills in the workplace effectively...The purpose of this document is to set out an unequivocal challenge to practitioners and policy-makers, to raise the status of employability skills, improve practice in developing them, and create a policy environment in which good practice flourishes.'²⁰ Employability skills are, it argues, essential for the UK economy to achieve productive goals and for the individual to progress in rewarding work. The report states: 'We want every school, college, university and training provider to treat the employability of their learners as part of their core business.'²¹ Practitioners are urged to develop learners' employability skills through experiential action learning, work experience and reflection, and advice is given on achieving this.

²⁰ UKCES (2009) *The Employability Challenge*. London: UKCES, p. 4.

²¹ Op. cit., p. 3.

Learning and work

Learning Through Life: Inquiry into the Future for Lifelong Learning (2009)²²

Learning Through Life sets out findings and recommendations from the Inquiry into the Future for Lifelong Learning. It puts forward a strategic framework for the next 10–15 years to meet the learning needs of all people in the UK. It also presents radical recommendations for long-term change. The links between learning and employment are central to the report, and it highlights the importance of supporting people to develop skills that can genuinely be applied in real work. The report suggests that learning needs to focus strongly on how skills are actually used, as well as how they are developed. Learning is seen as a basic human right that should enable people to take control of their lives.

Learning Through Life endorses the importance of links between education and employment and the supported employment approach. It highlights the importance of developments at a local level and job coaching as a way of supporting learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities into employment:

‘The case of people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities illustrates the need for local leadership in building links between education and employment. To achieve seamless pathways for students to move from formal education to sustainable employment, different agencies and providers need to commit to a process which encompasses all the necessary stages of transition, from formal education and training to sustainable employment. Job coaching is key to this. Some colleges do it already, but either need to grow this expertise further themselves or form partnerships with supported employment organisations (who are already expert in job coaching and engaging with employers).

Local authorities have an important role to play in prioritising and aligning resources for key elements, particularly when the current LSC local partnership capacity disappears. Key elements include:

- *ensuring adequate resources exist for job coaching and effective benefits advice;*
- *commitment from partner organisations for staff to give sufficient time and energy to person-centred planning as the first step in ensuring that services meet people’s requirements; and*
- *developing and coordinating programmes to raise expectations amongst professionals, parents and carers about people’s potential for open, paid employment.’*

²² Schuller, T. and Watson, D. (2009) *Learning Through Life: Inquiry into the Future for Lifelong Learning*. Leicester: NIACE.

Points to consider

Government strategies to promote the equality and well-being of people with disabilities, and changes in the structure and funding for learning for this group, emphasise progression and the importance of partnership working.

What structures and practices do you have in place to address current strategies and imminent changes?

What practices might you need to review and change?

How might you go about making changes?

Who might you need to involve?

If you are working with colleagues who need convincing about the relevance and importance of this work, how could you use information about the current policy and legislation to support your case?

Section 3

Understanding supported employment

This section:

- provides a definition of supported employment and outlines the core values that underpin this way of working;
- looks at the role of supported employment organisations; and
- outlines the process followed by supported employment practice.

Supported employment

Supported employment is a personalised approach to working with disabled people who want to have a job. It is not the same as sheltered employment, nor is it an activity called 'work' that is designed to keep an individual occupied. Supported employment aims to empower the individual to be an employee in their own right rather than a service user. It adheres to the underpinning values of social and economic inclusion and the promotion of self-determination, choice and independence. Supported employment practices focus on the individual and use a person-centred approach.

The supported employment approach is rooted in the social model of disability (see definition on page 27). In this model, it is the barriers created by attitudes or the physical environment that disable an individual, rather than their impairment. Therefore the supported employment approach is a specialist, individualised response that is used to overcome barriers that people with learning difficulties face in getting work.

Principles

In supported employment the focus is on:

- finding real jobs in the open employment market;
- a job where the employee is hired by the employer, paid the 'going rate' and receives all other employee entitlements;
- work that meets the aspirations of the individual in terms of their interests, skills, and future career;
- a job where there will be the opportunity for the employee to develop their potential;

- taking the social context into account, such as social interactions with co-workers and customers;
- work that meets the needs of the employer and is responsive to these needs as well as to those of the employee; and
- providing support for the employee and employer for specific aspects of the job, where it is needed. This support is provided for as long as it is necessary, and then it is withdrawn.

The social model of disability – a definition

Impairment is an injury, illness, or congenital condition that causes or is likely to cause a long-term effect on appearance and/or limitation of function of the individual.

Disability is the loss or limitation of opportunities to take part in society on an equal level with others due to social and environmental barriers.

Impairments and chronic illness often pose real difficulties for disabled people, but they are not the main problems. It is the 'barriers' which exist in society that create the main problems. The three main barriers are:

- environment (including inaccessible buildings and services);
- attitudes (stereotyping, discrimination and prejudice); and
- organisations which operate inflexible procedures and practices.

Disabling barriers experienced in the past can continue to have an adverse effect. For example, disabled people who attended segregated schools may have gained lower academic qualifications than their non-disabled peers, because their 'special' school failed to provide a proper mainstream curriculum.

Office of Disability Issues: **www.officefordisability.gov.uk**

It is integral to the supported employment approach that the individual wants to work. Crucially supported employment practice does not assume that an individual has to be 'work-ready' before they enter the workplace. Taking this approach has led to learners being placed on general vocational or employability courses that may have short, work experience placements in a simulated environment. Such provision tends to have a focus on accreditation rather than on progression to a job as its ultimate goal. The supported employment process looks at the skills a learner has and those they will need to get employment. The learner will be supported in a real work environment to develop these skills. There may be aspects of the job that would benefit from particular support at the college, such as literacy and numeracy. However, this learning is designed to address the actual work situation.

In supported employment the belief is that the best place to learn about work is in the workplace.²³ This has been described as the ‘place and train’ approach. Using this approach has major implications for the structure of vocational courses and training for people with learning difficulties in the learning and skills sector and the range of teaching methods that are used. At the core of any vocational provision there has to be opportunities for work experience or work placements throughout the course, not just at the end.

Case study – ‘A place and train’ approach

West Cheshire College is working with Cheshire County Council Supported Employment Services to develop a better understanding of the ‘place and train’ model. This model takes the reverse approach to current college-based learning. It looks in the first instance at the particular skills that learners need to be successful in the workplace rather than first identifying a specific course.

A training needs analysis is carried out as a starting point as part of the information, advice and guidance process, and focuses on skills and strategy in the workplace rather than those needed to access college-based provision. The majority of the learning is contextualised and delivered in the workplace.

The concept of ‘place and train’ has given students a contextualised approach to learning in real working environments. It has helped them to better identify their own strengths and areas for development.²⁴

Supported employment services and organisations

Supported employment organisations such as Mencap Pathway services, the Shaw Trust and Remploy specialise in supporting disabled people into and in work. Some local authorities have specialist employment services for disabled people that are based on the supported employment approach. BASE, the British Association for Supported Employment, is a membership organisation for providers of supported employment across the UK. The BASE website is a good place to find out about supported employment services and organisations that exist in your locality.²⁵

23 Adapted from the Joseph Rowntree Foundation (2000) *The Framework for Supported Employment*. www.jrf.org.uk

24 McGinn, J. (2009) ‘Leap2Work – not just a project’, in *Skill Journal*, Issue No. 93.

25 British Association for Supported Employment: www.base-uk.org

Supported employment organisations have established networks with local employers and other relevant organisations such as Jobcentre Plus. Within the organisation there will be staff with roles such as Job Coaches and Employment Placement Officers, who have experience of the supported employment process.

Points to consider

Are you aware of the supported employment services in your area and the services they offer? If not, how might you find this out?

The supported employment process

The supported employment model has five key elements:

- vocational profiling;
- job development;
- job analysis;
- work support; and
- career support.

Vocational profiling

Vocational profiling is a holistic, person-centred assessment process. It looks at the kind of work the individual might be interested in, any previous work they have done, and their qualifications, skills and interests. Should the individual want some help in deciding what kind of work they would like to do, visits to see jobs and different workplaces are arranged. As one Employment Officer commented:

“*Vocational profiling is not just a paper exercise, it has to be practical.*”

At this stage any other key partners, such as parents/carers and other service providers who need to be involved in the process of supporting the individual, are contacted. This is done with the individual's permission.

Case study – Vocational profiling in practice

This is a description of how First Line Employment, a supported employment agency in Newham, carries out vocational profiling:

- Once an individual is referred to the service, they are allocated an Employment Advisor who will get to know the person through spending time with them and completing a vocational profile. Often, they will go out and about to complete this. For example, arranging to meet in a café gives the advisor an idea of a person's punctuality, ability to travel and manage directions, and to handle money, etc. Building a vocational profile may take two weeks or two months depending on the person. Contact is made with the family in order to access as much support as possible.
- Job tasters, such as shadowing or work experience placements, may be arranged to help people find out about different jobs. This helps people to have an informed idea of whether they will actually like a job. Some people do not need this.

Job development

Job development involves researching the local job market and contacting employers. The aim is to find work that best matches the skills and interests of the individual. This process is also referred to as job matching. There has to be a balance between the kind of work the individual wants and is able to do, and the jobs that are available. The key is for the individual to be presented with the relevant options and information in a way that empowers them to make their own decision about which jobs to apply for. The supported employment service will help the individual through the application and interview process.

Case study – Job development in practice at First Line Employment

- Employment Advisors make contact with employers. The employer or job could be identified by the individual or by First Line Employment by contacting an employer and arranging a visit to tell them about the service. First Line has an annual target of advising at least 20 employers a year, and offers advice and guidance, disability awareness and presentations about their work. Advisors work with numerous employers via their existing service users.

Involving the service user

- At the job searching stage, advisors encourage and support service users to do as much as possible themselves: looking through papers, on the Internet, going out and about and handing in CVs, cold calling, etc. Employment Advisors may visit and try out a job themselves to make sure it's the right job and to understand the social aspects/unwritten rules outside of the job description. In trying out the job, the Advisor completes a job analysis form.

Job analysis

Job analysis takes place once the individual has a job. This process looks at all aspects of the job in great detail. The analysis will include the job itself, the workplace environment, the other workers and the kind of support or 'reasonable adjustments' that might be needed for the individual to do the job. Both the employer and the employee have to be involved in the process so their respective needs are met.

Work support

The job analysis stage identifies the type and level of support that is needed. Work support is provided by a Job Coach and developed specifically for the individual. The support offered can cover a range of things such as: help with transport to get to work and help to learn specific tasks, or support for the employers or other work colleagues. SMART targets are set to measure the effectiveness of the support provided:

- **Specific:** a series of ordered steps required to reach the productivity, quality and social standards required by the employer.
- **Measurable:** the goals are written in a way where the outcome can be measured. For example, 'to do well' is not measurable.

- **Achievable:** the goals are within the capability of the individual.
- **Realistic:** the goal is related to the job tasks the worker is carrying out.
- **Time-bound:** the goals will be reviewed at an agreed time.

Using SMART goals means that trainers are clear when the required standards are reached. Goals will include the steps required for the social inclusion of the participant in the social life of the workplace.²⁶

Case study – Work support in practice at First Line Employment

Job coaches provide support in work which may be travel training, support on the job and support in training (e.g. health and safety), a meeting at the end of each day and support for the family. Support will fade out over time, depending on the service user: arrangements are agreed with employee and employer. The service encourages employers to provide most of the support, as the service's role is to support the employer in supporting the employee. Some employers have good buddying schemes in place.

A learner at Havering College explained that the support from her job coach was tailored to suit her needs:

“I started the job with a helper. It was really good to have a helper at first, but I don't need one now.”

‘Systematic Instruction’ is a training method commonly used in supported employment. It is used to teach different tasks that are part of a job role. Tasks are broken down into small parts and taught to the employee. The job coach will use verbal and physical prompts such as pointing or gesturing. This support is gradually reduced until the employee can complete the task independently.

Case studies – Training in Systematic Instruction (TSI) for college staff

Learning Support Assistants at West Cheshire College are being trained as Job Coaches by Cheshire County Council Supported Employment Services using a model called ‘Systematic Instruction’. This identifies appropriate support strategies and the point at which support should be withdrawn to allow natural support systems within the workplace to take over. This model will be cascaded across other college support services.²⁷

²⁶ British Association for Supported Employment: www.base-uk.org

²⁷ McGinn, J. (2009) ‘Leap2Work – not just a project’, in *Skill Journal*, Issue No. 93.

In another college a member of staff attended a course on Systematic Instruction and provided the following description:

'This course helps you to understand the processes of discovering Vocational Profiling and the process of successfully supporting applicants into employment, using the Job Coaching model. It also enables you to analyse a specific job in relation to its component parts, in order to facilitate a good match. TSI helps you to analyse specific environments and tasks with reference to how they can be used in teaching, and utilise a problem-solving approach that makes use of all resources in the environment.

Whilst on the course, you develop effective facilitation and training techniques. It also makes you more aware of working within a specific set of values that respects the individuality of the person with the disabilities. On the course, you discuss the implementation of Systematic Instruction. This looks at a task that the person is having difficulties with. The task is then broken down and sequences of instructions are carefully planned into manageable pieces, taking into account the individual's learning styles. Then these bite-sized tasks are taught to the person and any support staff within the environment.'

Career support

Career progression is essential if an individual is to develop and fulfil their potential and not become stuck in a particular role. A key part of the supported employment approach is to help the individual and employer identify further training and workplace learning that can provide opportunities for the individual to progress within a job and grow skills that will be useful for future jobs.

Case study – From segregation to independence Ian's story

Ian had spent most of his life in segregated services, including attending a day centre for people with learning disabilities. He lived with his mum, had little independence and had never tried the world of work before.

When Ian decided he was ready for work, he was referred to the Pure Innovations Ltd Employment Team. He found work as a cleaner in a local pub where he stayed for 18 months, but due to management changes leading to a less supportive environment Ian needed to move on to something else.

Vocational profiling

Ian found it difficult to think about what kind of job he would like to do next because he had had limited experiences. His Employment Officer took Ian around different work environments to find out which environments would appeal to him. By exploring this, it was discovered that Ian enjoyed the atmosphere at the airport.

Job development

His Employment Officer was then able to identify a position at SSP, a catering company at the airport as a Customer Service Assistant, which not only involved cleaning but a wide range of housekeeping and stock replenishment skills.

Work support

Using Systematic Instruction, the Employment Officer trained Ian, not only to do the job, but to find his way into the airport and get through the security procedures. Ian uses visual memory prompt cards to aid him in remembering what tasks he needs to do. He also carries cards which help him get back to his workstation should there be an emergency evacuation.

Ian has now been employed at SSP for six years. He has used his income to take holidays to America, Paris and Tenerife. Ian now lives independently in his own flat and he has control over his own life.

Stages in the supported employment process

The table reproduced over the page illustrates the working process of a Supported Employment Service that has been working with FE colleges and Social Services in North Lanarkshire in Scotland.²⁸ A strong theme of collaborative working with other organisations/partners is evident throughout the process in order to support the employee. In this case, it includes partners such as: Jobcentre Plus, parents/carers, other professionals, employers, and Welfare Rights Officers.

²⁸ Beyer, S. (2008) *An evaluation of the outcomes of supported employment in North Lanarkshire (2007)*. Cardiff: Welsh Centre for Learning Disabilities, University of Cardiff.

Stage	Description	Expected time per stage
Referral	An assessment to ensure that the agency's criteria are met	Agree acceptance within 7 days of referral
Home visit	Visit to explain the service, and check on Welfare Benefits with Welfare Rights Officer if needed	Within 6 weeks of acceptance of a referral
Vocational profiling	One-to one meeting that takes place in a variety of settings, at different times, and involving different activities, including social outings. Information is also sought from family, professionals and relevant others. This period will include two short job tasters, supported by a job coach	Meeting twice per week for 2–3 hours per session, normally over 8–12 weeks
Vocational profile meeting	Seeks agreement on the person's preferences and the conditions the person wants, together with jobs and specific employers	Up to two weeks after
Job finding	Registering person with Jobcentre Plus, pursuing employers, assisting person in job search, interview preparation, and work placements as needed	Vocational profiling complete
Job coaching	After the job is obtained, providing training at work and fading support. Supporting welfare benefit changes	Meeting once per week for 1–2 hours per session until a job is found
Monitoring and evaluation	Agreeing criteria and monitoring success of placement from employer and employee perspectives	For as long as needed, as agreed with employer and employee
Career development	Updating vocational profile and taking action to improve current job or to change job	No timescale

Customised employment

The term ‘customised employment’ is based on the supported employment approach. Customised employment uses additional person-centred information to negotiate a job description with the employer that is based on what the employer needs and the strengths of the individual:

‘[Customised Supported Employment] combines supported employment with techniques from person-centred planning. It starts from the premise that severely disabled people can work, but are unlikely to be able to compete in the open labour market, even with adjustments. So rather than trying to fill an existing vacancy, the job coach ‘unbundles’ a job description and looks for unmet employer need. During ‘discovery,’ the job coach looks for what tasks the individual could do and enjoy. They then look for unmet employer need in these areas and broker a job, before supporting the person in work.’²⁹

Points to consider

To what extent does your vocational provision for people with learning difficulties focus on the supported employment approach and its principles?

In particular, are your programmes based on the assumption that learners with learning difficulties will be employed?

Which of the elements of the supported employment process are covered by your current work with learners with learning difficulties?

difficulties address the supported employment process?

Are there any elements of the process that are not effectively covered? How might these be covered and who would be best placed to do this?

²⁹ Department of Health (2009) *Valuing Employment Now: Real jobs for people with learning disabilities*. London: DH Publications.

Section 4

Supported employment as a person-centred approach

This section:

- discusses supported employment as a person-centred way of working;
- examines what is meant by the term ‘person-centred’; and
- looks at practical ways of using person-centred approaches to embed the supported employment process in vocational courses and training.

Supported employment and person-centred planning and approaches

Person-centred planning does not happen in the isolation of one service. It takes account of all aspects of an individual’s life. In the context of embedding a supported employment approach in vocational education provision, this could involve the learner, the college, parents/carers, employers, Connexions, a Supported Employment Agency and Jobcentre Plus. The supported employment process is described as person-centred in its approach. As one Employment Advisor explained:

“The whole idea behind it is that the person leads, they are the focus.”

Confusingly, the term ‘person-centred’ is often used as a generic expression to describe a way of working in order to meet the needs and aspirations of the individual learner/service user or client. However, in the context of services for people with learning difficulties, person-centred planning and person-centred approaches refer to a particular method of working that uses specific structures and techniques/tools. The focus of this way of working is on clear, achievable actions for the individual.

Person-centred planning and approaches

Recent work in the learning and skills sector found that many staff have an unclear understanding of person-centred planning and approaches. Person-centred plans are often mistakenly identified as similar to Individual Learning Plans, and taking a person-centred approach is equated with processes such as one-to-one tutorials, or strategies for differentiated learning. In all of these examples, the focus is

undoubtedly on the individual, but not necessarily on working in a person-centred way. At the end of a four-day course on person-centred working, one FE lecturer remarked:

“I knew of person-centred planning and had attended some training. If asked I would have said that we practised it – I now know better.”

It is essential to remember that the point of planning is not just to develop a plan, but to action it and keep the plan under review. As one practitioner commented:

“Person-centred planning is not an end in itself, but the beginning.”

Person-centred reviews

Since 2005, the Valuing People support team, who led on the implementation of Valuing People Strategy, have been running a national training programme for local authorities to train staff and parents/carers as facilitators for person-centred reviews for young people with learning difficulties in Year 9 (age 14) and Year 10 (age 15). This is in preparation for their transition to adult services. The format used for person-centred review meetings in schools has been adapted for use in FE and in Adult and Community Education settings, and piloted with some providers.

The aim of a person centred review is to:

- identify and discuss what people like and admire about the person, what is important to the person (now and for the future), and what help and support the person needs;
- identify and discuss what is working and not working from different perspectives (persons, staff, college, work, families and others); and
- agree actions that will support the person to get what is important to them now and for the future, continue what is working and change what is not working, build on person-centred information and develop it into a person-centred plan.

The people who attend a person-centred review are the person themselves, someone from college, school, family, possibly friends, and other professionals. Beforehand, some preparation time is taken to making the meeting as informal and focused around what the person wants as possible. The information for the meeting is usually gathered using a process of recording information collectively on flipcharts under predetermined headings, which enables most of the meeting time to be used for discussion and recording actions.

Case study – Person-centred learning review

Below are the notes from a person-centred learning meeting held in an FE College for Akil (not his real name) who was identified as becoming rather isolated, and lacking a clear progression route once he left college. One of the goals of this particular learner was to have a job. A one-hour person-centred learning meeting was held at college. The process for this meeting was copied from the person-centred review meeting format. It was attended by the learner, his brother, two of his class mates, a friend, his tutor, the course co-coordinator and a meeting facilitator.

Information was collected at the meeting by people writing on a flipchart using the person-centred review headings in the boxes below. This was used at the end of the meeting to produce the action plan.

1. What we like and admire about Akil?



- Akil is nice
- Kind, thoughtful and practical
- Friendly
- He works hard in Art
- He keeps trying even when things are hard
- Very helpful

2. What is important to Akil now?



- Family, parents and relatives
- Coming to college
- Meeting new friends
- Not to be rushed – being given time to say what he wants
- Going to the movies
- Living at home
- Approval
- Swimming

3. What is important to Akil in the future?



- Finding a job and work
- Go to ballet shows
- Find new friends and maybe a partner
- Routines
- Reading
- Being busy, but also having time to relax
- No arguing

4. What support does Akil need?



- Help with family
- Concentrating
- To talk about his worries
- Not to bottle it up and talk to his friends more

5. What is working?



Akil's view

- Enjoys college but wants to get a job
- Talks to teachers more in lessons
- Staff at college are helpful

Family's view

- Teacher's support
- Travelling to college by himself

College staff views

- Akil works hard in all his classes

What actions will be taken?



See action plan on page 41.

6. What is not working?



Akil's view

- Wants more friends
- ICT – it's difficult but wants to learn more

College staff views

- Not enough things to do in the week
- Not enough social life

Akil's action plan

What	Who	When
Get info about a local supported employment project	Tutor	By Christmas
Find out who is Akil's social worker. Discuss work and living at home	Course manager	This week
Social life – arrange trips to the theatre	Akil's friend to get more info Akil's brother	Next week? This month
Someone to talk to about worries	Course manager to give info to Akil	Before half term
Info re: counsellor for people with learning difficulties	Course manager to contact LD Team to ring Akil at home	

After the meeting the course co-ordinator commented:

'Akil was really pleased with the meeting and his brother was very positive. It covered lots of personal issues. He has had appointments with a counsellor but not kept them because he had not told his family. We achieved this at the meeting.'

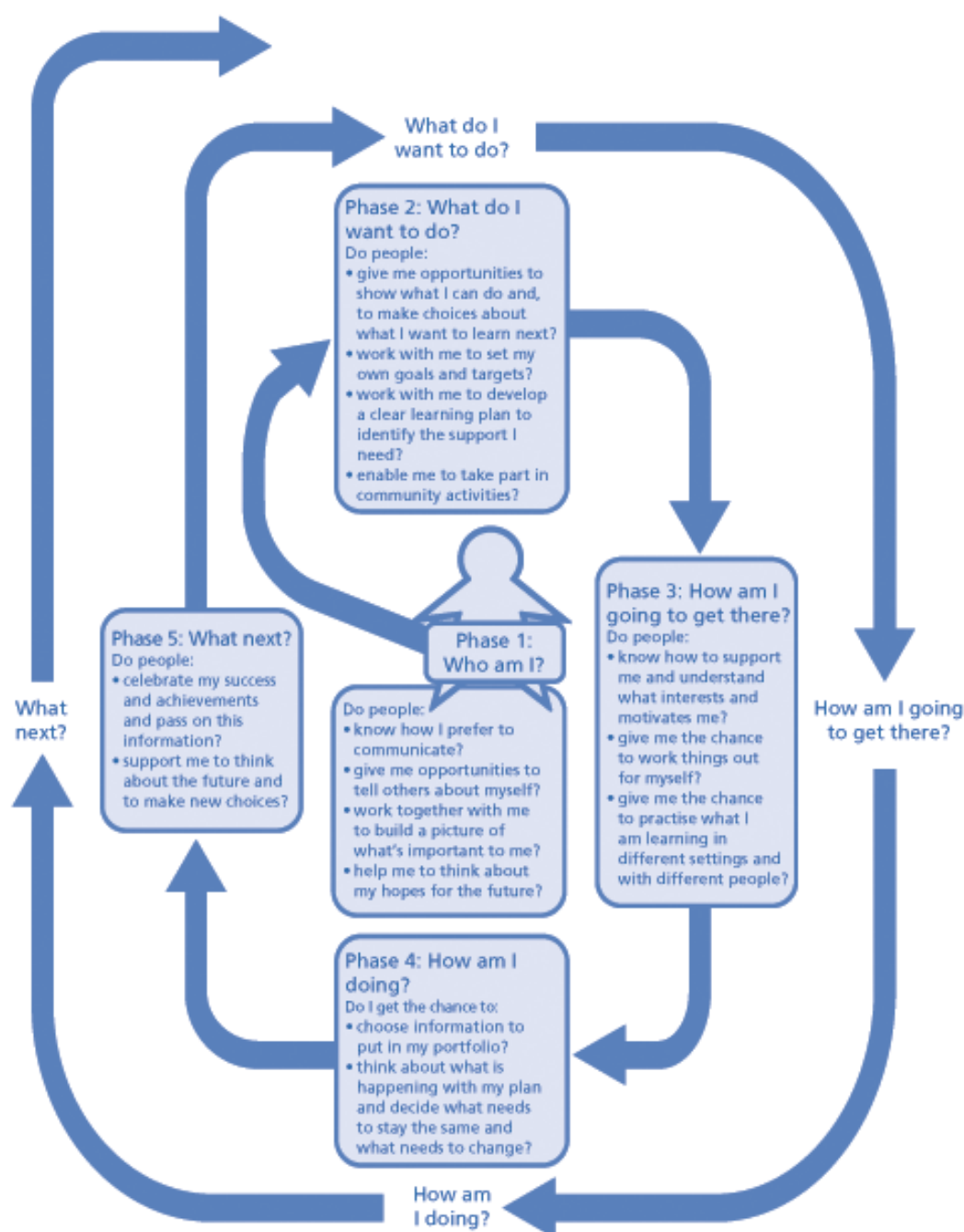
I was surprised at how anxious the other learners were and it took time for them to feel comfortable. Maybe we need more preparation, but both Akil's classmates have said that they want a meeting like this now. The class tutor was positive about the meeting.'

I can see using this process for full-time students. This could be a really useful thing. I chose Akil as he doesn't have a social or community network and is isolated. I hoped the meeting would help with this.'

At the three months follow-up meeting, there was news of progress made on all of the points in the action plan.

Person-centred learning

Guidance from what was the Department for Education and Skills (DfES)³⁰ outlines how person-centred approaches can be used in the planning and assessment cycle when working with people with learning difficulties. Each of the five stages of the cycle is directed by a question asked from the learner's perspective. Consequently, person-centred information is driving each stage of the process and the focus is on what is important to the learner. This is illustrated in the following diagram.



30 DfES (2006) *Person-centred approaches and adults with learning difficulties*. Leicester: NIACE.

Person-centred approaches and vocational provision

How this process might work in practice in vocational provision so that it mirrors the stages of the supported employment process is shown table below. The processes outlined in columns A, B and C run in parallel with each other. The focus is the learner and the key driver is partnership between the different stakeholders that have to be involved in the process.

Column A shows five 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?

Column B – the five questions have been adapted to have a particular focus on developing a person-centred learning plan for an individual in vocational provision.

Column C – suggests where these stages can link into supported employment practices. Who leads on these different stages will depend on how provision is organised. *Section 5* looks in more detail at different ways that the supported employment approach is being embedded in vocational courses and training.

A Person-centred learning plan	B Transition to work course	C Supported employment process
1. Who am I? What is important to me? How do I learn best? What support might I need?	Do people: • Know how I learn best and how this will be supported when I move into different settings such as work experience placements? • 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?	Vocational profiling to help the individual identify their skills and preferences.
2. What do I want to do?	• What kind of job do I want? • What am I good at? • What am I interested in? • How can I be helped to set my goals and get a job?	Job development to find the individual's preferred job through contact with employers.

A Person-centred learning plan	B Transition to work course	C Supported employment process
3. How am I going to get there?	• How can you best match my skills and interests when you develop a learning/training programme that from the start will focus on the importance of my transition to work?	Job analysis to find out more about the workplace, co-workers, and the support the individual might need in that environment.
4. How am I doing?	• Do I need to revise my goals? What is working well on my course/work experience placement? • What do I need more help with in the workplace setting that can be supported by learning in the classroom?	Job support in the form of job coaches to ensure that both the employee and employer receive the right balance of help, information and back-up to achieve success – with this support continuing as long as it is needed.
5. What next?	• Do I know how I will be supported to make the transition to work and what ongoing support I will need? • Am I consulted about the support I need to make the jump from college to a job? • Who will work with me to work out what ongoing support I will need once I have a job? • Will others take seriously what I want for my career when finding me work opportunities? • Will information about my success and achievements be passed on to my employer and job coach?	Career support to help people think in the longer term about career.

Using person-centred approaches and tools in the learning and skills sector

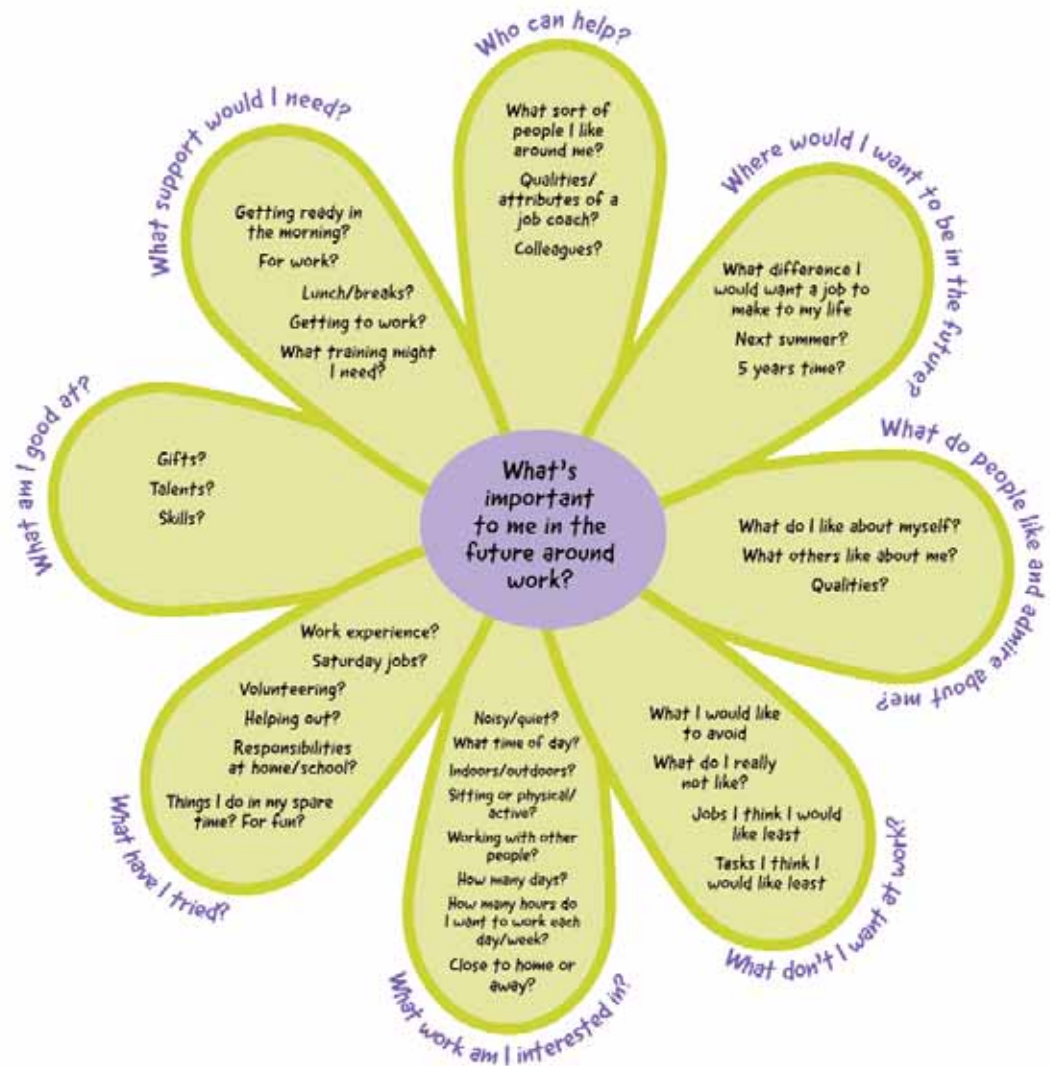
In 2007, the Valuing People support team, NIACE and Helen Sanderson Associates delivered a four-day training programme for providers in the learning and skills sector on person-centred planning and approaches. This course was repeated in 2008 and is continuing as part of the 'Getting a Life' programme. The course aims are:

- to provide training in the use of person-centred thinking tools and approaches;
- to offer practical support to develop the use of these tools and approaches in the adult learning context.

This course is being developed to focus on supporting people with learning difficulties to get paid employment. The following flower graphic has been developed for the course (a blank graphic can be found in *Appendix 2* – this can be photocopied and reproduced). The diagram uses a series of person-centred questions that can be helpful for an individual to consider when thinking about work. You might want to use this to help learners explore the central question about what is important to them around future work.

A person-centred approach to thinking about employment³¹

Thinking about what's important to me in the future around work



31 Diagrams drafted by Charlotte Sweeney, Helen Sanderson Associates and Yola Jacobsen, NIACE.

Another person-centred tool is the one-page profile. This is a way of capturing person-centred information about an individual. The purpose of the one-page profile is to collect key information about what matters most to the person in an accessible, individualised format with photo, symbols, etc. The following questions are asked:

- What people like and admire about the person?
- What's important to the person?
- How to best support the person?

Appendices 3 and 4 provide templates and completed one-page profiles. The profile in Appendix 3 is presented in a text only format, but you can be creative about how you do this so as to reflect the choices, tastes and style of the individual it is for. For more examples of one-page profiles and information on how to complete and use one-page profiles please visit: **www.helensandersonassociates.co.uk**

Person-centred working – a realistic approach?

There is a common misconception that a person-centred approach focuses only on an individual's aspirations and dreams about the type of work they want to do, and doesn't address the reality of matching this with vacancies available in the job market. What is the point in 'setting someone up to fail' and encouraging them to talk about dreams that are 'unrealistic' and impossible to realise in practice?

In fact, all of us have our dreams about our ideal job, and if we are honest, some of them would not be viable if taken literally. However, they contain at their core the essence of what is really important to us in our life and for our careers in the short and long term. This is, of course, the same for people with learning difficulties. However, often there is little space within the structures of services to empower individuals to consider and pursue their dreams and aspirations as a basis for what they want to do with their lives. It is exactly this inflexibility that the development of self-directed support and individual budgets is seeking to address.

When working with a person and listening to their dreams and aspirations the skill is to use this information as a guide to matching work available with the interests of the individual. As one of the managers of the Realistic Opportunities for Supported Employment (ROSE) project at Havering College commented:

“Students are often very definite about what job they want to do. We try hard to find the students what they want, but where this is not possible, we will try to find something similar or related. For example, one student wanted to work as a car mechanic, but would not be able to get the necessary qualifications for this job. He was really happy, though, doing a job valeting cars, which we found for him.”

Case study – Balancing what the student wants with what's out there

Staff at Chichester College on the Learning for Work project, explained their approach in the following case study.

'Students make choices all along the route. We will try to find something close or connected to what the student wants. For example, one student wanted to be a fireman. His profile wasn't suitable for this work, but we found him a job working for the Fire Brigade in a fire station.

Another wanted to work as an ambulance driver. Although his profile did not match this job, he was happy to take a job working in a hospital.

A third was interested in motor racing and cars. With support, he set up a small business washing cars. He is now self-employed, and will shortly be meeting an accountant for the first time.

So we do a reality check, but try things out.'

For more information on person-centred planning and approaches see:

www.helensandersonassociates.co.uk

www.valuingpeople.gov.uk

For more information on self-directed support and individual budgets see:

www.in-control.org.uk

Points to consider

To what extent do you use the specific techniques and tools that define person-centred planning in the context of education and training for learners with learning difficulties?

What techniques do you use to enable learners to address the key questions in the assessment and planning cycle?

Are there any gaps in the cycle?

What could you do to fill these gaps?

What else might you do to improve the process?

The next section examines how providers are re-focusing their vocational offer for people with learning difficulties to adopt a supported employment model.

Section 5

Supported employment and the learning and skills sector

This section looks at:

- the role of learning and skills in delivering outcomes in Valuing Employment Now;
- what Ofsted looks for in employability programmes;
- how the supported employment process is being developed in the learning and skills sector;
- the importance of the job coach role;
- how this work is being funded; and
- the role of DWP Specialist Employment Services.

The role of learning and skills in delivering outcomes in Valuing Employment Now

In Valuing Employment Now, the learning and skills sector is seen as a key partner in securing employment for people with learning difficulties. As noted in *Section 2*, one of the key areas for change is to secure better work preparation at school, college and adult learning. There is an expectation that colleges will equip learners with the skills and experience to get real jobs. The vision, with regard to education, is that by 2025:

- *'All young people with learning disabilities [will] get open work experience, supported with a job coach if needed;*
- *transition reviews [will] include what job people aspire to. A job plan sets out who will provide the necessary support and draw together the funding for it; and*
- *people [will] have travel training and can use public transport, without fear of bullying.'*

Ofsted – what are inspectors looking for?

The Common Inspection Framework sets out the questions that inspectors must ask of providers and details how inspectors will make their judgements. In relation to employment, inspectors will evaluate the extent to which:

- learners' work meets or exceeds the requirements of the qualifications, learning goals or employment;
- learners increase their employability;
- learners progress to further learning and employment or gain promotion;
- provision is planned to provide coordinated progression routes;
- the provider develops partnerships with schools, employers, community groups and others that lead to tangible benefits for learners; and
- learners receive appropriate and timely information, advice and guidance on their next step in training, education and employment.

The above list is not exhaustive and it is recommended that readers access the *Handbook for the inspection of further education and skills from September 2009* through the Ofsted website: **www.ofsted.gov.uk**

A supported employment model for the learning and skills sector

There is no set template for a supported employment model for vocational provision in the FE sector for people with learning difficulties. The LSC Learning for Living and Work strategy does not give a definition or description of a supported employment model. This provides the opportunity for education and training providers to develop a model that best suits their particular organisation. Given the existing expertise around supported employment, staff working in the post-16 education sector do not need to 're-invent the wheel' in terms of developing supported employment practices, but can draw upon existing good practice. This was the expectation outlined by the Learning and Skills Council in the Learning for Living and Work strategy.

*'We do not expect that individual providers will need to change their own skills base to address this focus, but instead that they build on effective practice, and also develop partnerships with the wealth of supported employment agencies that have considerable knowledge and expertise in this area.'*³²

Supported employment models

Broadly speaking, two approaches are being used to develop the supported employment model in work preparation programmes and vocational courses for people with learning difficulties. The first is collaborative working with a supported employment service/organisation. The second is through the development of

³² LSC (2006) *Learning for Living and Work: Improving Education and Training Opportunities for People with Learning Difficulties and/or Disabilities*. Coventry: LSC.

supported employment practices in-house. In some cases, there is a mix of these two approaches. Factors that have a bearing on which approach to take tend to include:

- the availability of local expertise in the form of a supported employment organisation or service;
- previous experience (if any) of supporting other marginalised groups of learners into work;
- involvement in regional 'Investment for Change' pathfinder initiatives that focus specifically on employability, disabled learners and the development of the supported employment model; and
- the existence of established and effective employer engagement strategies (or the ability to develop them) which provide an adequate foundation for placing students with learning difficulties into real jobs.

Supported employment in the learning and skills sector

The three case studies that follow each illustrate a different way that supported employment approaches have been embedded in further and adult education provision.

Case study 1 – A college-based supported employment service

Realistic Opportunities for Supported Employment (ROSE) programme

At Havering College in Essex, the ROSE programme has been supporting people with learning difficulties into work since 2006. There was at this time no local supported employment service or organisation in the area; the college developed its own supported employment service, which is managed by two college lecturers. The ROSE programme works in partnership with:

- Jobcentre Plus;
- Connexions;
- the Borough Adult Learning Disability Team and Person Centred Planning Co-ordinators;
- parents/carers; and
- Supported Living Agencies.

Students/clients are referred from their college vocational courses to the programme. The programme also takes referrals from outside agencies such as Social Services, Day Centres, Jobcentre Plus, Connexions. The ROSE programme offers a four-stage process with the aim of securing paid work employment.

Stage 1: Referral is received

An interview is held with the student and their parent/carer to discuss and agree 'realistic expectations of employment'. The discussions will include what kind of

work the client would like and if a travel training programme is necessary. This is followed by an assessment of the client's basic skills, and then a decision is made by all involved as to whether the application goes forward or not.

Stage 2: Job search

Once accepted onto the project, the programme managers research possible employment opportunities that relate to the individual's skills and preferences. Contact is made with employer, the support available is explained, and advice and support is offered to the workforce. This can include disability awareness training. Then the client is supported to attend an interview 'with reasonable adjustments' made to suit their needs. If the client is successful, the programme will work with the employer/client to clarify work times and wages. The employer completes health & safety, risk assessment and insurance documents. Disability awareness training is offered to the employer to give the frontline staff some awareness of the client to join their team.

Stage 3: Transition

Clients who are students at the college generally spend three days on their vocational/ work preparation courses and two days at work. However, work always takes priority. (There is some work experience which is arranged mostly by the college, not the ROSE Programme which really acts as an employment agency.) An 18-week external course is available to clients outside the college remit for Pre Employment.

Stage 4: Support

Once the right employment for the client is secured, the job coach role becomes involved. The role of the job coach is to provide a one to one person-centered, tailor made, support to the 'client' and to act as a mediator between the client, employer, parent and other employees.

After a client has been interviewed, but before they start their work placement, a job coach spends a day doing the job to look at the tasks involved and plan the support that the client will need. Job coaches from the programme support individuals in their employment for as long as it takes for the client to become an independent employee. Support may include travel training support from home to work and back home again, as well as on-the-job support. Regular reviews are carried out with the individual and the employer. After three months, all parties are involved in making a decision about whether the individual is ready to continue working independently as an employee. The job coach will work very closely with the employer and client to ensure all the required tasks are completed to the satisfaction of the employer.

The Traffic Light Support includes:

- **Red:** full-time on-the-job support;
- **Yellow:** half the working shift;
- **Green:** weekly visits to the workplace; and
- **Economic Well Being:** three monthly visits to the workplace to encourage up-skill of the client if appropriate.

Kathryn and Wayne were both supported to find and succeed in work, by the ROSE project at Havering College.

Kathryn and Wayne's stories, ROSE project

Kathryn has had many challenges in her life, and is a client of the Havering Community Adult Learning Disability team. Her goal in life was that she should work and live in her own flat. In the last two years she has achieved both of those goals. She lives in supported living and gained paid employment at Pets at Home in Romford. When she first started, she did four hours cleaning the animals in the back of the shop, but very quickly the staff at Pets at Home realised that Kathryn had other qualities and so now she works in the front of the shop, and is training to operate the tills. She is also completing an in-house qualification which is the equivalent of a Level 2 NVQ. Kathryn has achieved beyond her wildest dreams and has shown that with the right support and encouragement the sky is the limit.

Wayne is a true success story. He has gone from four hours a week paid employment to full-time employment. He wanted to work with cars, so he became a new member of staff at Alfa Car Hire where he was one of the team that washed all the fleet of Alfa car hires. After only six months and a huge gain of confidence Wayne showed that he wanted to work and progress from washing cars. He applied for the post of Brick Layer Technician at Havering College Construction Department and was successful. In this position, he has shown that he is a very enthusiastic, independent and capable young man who always likes to do his work to the best of his capabilities. Wayne has now been a valued member of the team in construction for over a year.

Case study 2 – College and supported employment organisation partnership

Leap2Work (learning, employment, achievement and progression) has been running since 2008 and is a partnership between West Cheshire College and Cheshire West and Chester Council local authority adult supported employment service. Using the LSC document, *Learning for Living and Work* (2006) as the blueprint for delivery, Leap2Work has explored and made reality the concepts of the 'supported employment model', 'place, train and fade' and also the job coaching role.

Young people are referred to Leap2Work via various routes, including the West Cheshire College, local schools or special schools, or as a direct referral from Connexions or other agencies. Attendance at West Cheshire College is not a prerequisite.

Leap2Work Project outcomes include: 164 young people age 16–25 to receive training and support into employment; 95 young people age 16–25 to enter into employment; and 80 young people age 16–25 to remain in employment for six months after entering in. This is no easy task in this current economic climate.

Up to December 2009, 19 young people had progressed into paid employment. The target was 31 up to this date.

Leap2Work is currently a European Social Fund project aimed at supporting young people with disabilities (age 16–25) into both supported work experience and, ultimately, paid employment. One of the major outcomes is to ensure sustainability at the College. It is not just a project. Sustainability is already being addressed with a small group of students with learning difficulties working at entry level, using existing LSC funding streams, including additional learning support and the Foundation Learning curriculum. When Leap2Work ends in December 2010 this corresponding model will kick in as part of mainstream curriculum delivery at the College.

The Leap2Work team consists of:

- a project leader;
- three supported employment officers (SEOs), who are a mix of local authority seconded staff and college staff that have learnt the job role through on-the-job training from their local authority colleagues;
- an administrator; and
- a growing team of job coaches.

There is a strategic partnership that supports the operational activity led by the College and Cheshire West and Chester Managers.

The project takes a 'place and train' approach (see page 28). The starting point for this process is a person-centred vocational profile or training needs analysis. These are carried out by college-based supported employment officers. It is their task to find an appropriate workplace setting to match the existing preferences and skills set of each individual on the Leap2Work project.

The role of the supported employment officer is to ensure both best match and fit between the individual and the potential employer, and to act as a facilitator ensuring all necessary health & safety checks and barriers are addressed prior to the start of the placement. The supported employment officer is available for the employer to use as a direct support mechanism, as well as supporting the individual on placement.

Key to the success of a placement is preparation for the interview and also direct support for the individual whilst in work. The latter is done using job coaches who are learning support assistants from West Cheshire College that have been specifically trained by Cheshire West and Chester's Supported Employment Team to use the 'place, train and fade model'. This model is based upon systematic instruction, and enables learners to become independent within the workplace as quickly as possible, whilst at the same time facilitating and embedding natural support from the employer. This role is invaluable to the success of an individual placement, particularly where higher levels of support are identified. The job coaches ensure that each individual understands their job requirements and can identify skills requiring further development, either on the job or back at the College.

Case study 3 – A partnership approach

Project Search is a partnership programme between Norfolk County Council, Norwich University Hospital, Remploy and City College Norwich, which enables learners with learning difficulties to gain experience of work through rotations in a range of hospital and service departments. Project Search is based on a model developed at Cincinnati Children's Hospital (www.cincinnatichildrens.org/svc/alpha/p/search) where it successfully assisted learners with learning difficulties into employment.

The City College Norwich project started in autumn 2008 with a hospital-specific induction programme delivered by college staff. Induction included in-depth health & safety training, food safety, the six stages of hand washing and an introduction to the hospital environment. Learners also have a short, hospital-based induction immediately before they start their rotations. Thereafter, taught sessions are built around needs arising from learners' work experiences. For example, many were accustomed to being treated as 'special' and needed help to be more aware of others; for example, by giving priority to patients in wheelchairs. In addition, a health and fitness programme was developed to help learners who were finding their jobs very tiring.

Learners are matched, for the first two rotations and choose for the third, to one of the rotations from a list of jobs in different hospital and service departments, and apply in the same way that they would for a paid post. If more than one learner is interested in the same job, they compete with one another.

Both the job coach from Remploy and the course tutor are trained in Training in Systematic Instruction (TSI), which they use to analyse the tasks involved in a job before a learner starts a rotation. The coach or tutor then develops a customised training plan and resources, and makes adaptations to meet the specific needs of the learner. The next step is to teach the job to the learner and then gradually

withdraw support as the learner gains confidence. The tutor or coach continues to visit learners once or twice a week, and liaises with their supervisor to identify and rectify any difficulties. Examples include: assistance in folding papers to fit envelopes; matching the letters on mail with post room listings; using photocopying machines; and manoeuvring a wheelchair more effectively in a work space.

Each learner has three rotations, a different one for each of the three terms of the course. Placements may be in human resources, medical records, the kitchen, the café, the audio visual department, reception, the post room or the education department. During their course, learners work five days a week from 9am to 3.30pm, the first hour and the last half hour are spent in the on-site classroom. The class time curriculum is based around work skills and the final half hour of the day is spent with their tutor to review the day and discusses any issues that have arisen.

Parents are involved throughout, by being invited to attend a presentation before the learners apply for the course and later after the learners have been accepted for their rotations. As well as the usual learner reviews, tutors and job coaches communicate frequently with parents over practical matters such as medical issues, travel and uniforms.

The college element of Project Search is funded by the LSC and job coaches are funded through Workstep. The project team is working closely with the Department for Work and Pensions to ensure that funding will continue after changes to Workstep have been implemented.

For anyone thinking of emulating this project, the Programme Manager from City College Norwich suggested the following top tips:

- Build very good relationships with the project and have steering group meetings early on. The steering group may comprise very senior staff in the early stages in order to establish terms, roles and responsibilities, and later be expanded to include staff working directly with the learners.
- Spend time with employers and managers to help them understand the project.
- Ensure that all staff are TSI trained from the outset.
- Give the tutor and job coach time to get to know one another and work together. For this project, staff worked together to develop common paperwork that is learner centred and addresses the needs of both employing organisations. Together they helped hospital staff to develop job specifications. This enabled staff to get to understand differences in approach and language.
- Record achievement.

This is one of the first projects of its kind. It is an ongoing project and is being evaluated at the time of writing this book.

Job coaches

The job coach role is pivotal to the supported employment process. As noted in *Section 2, Valuing Employment Now* sets out the Government's commitment to increase high-quality job coaching and to growing this workforce:

*'Job coaches help people to discover what work would suit their skills and interests, negotiate real jobs, and support individuals at work. But there is a shortage of skilled job coaches and quality varies. The Government will publish and consider how to accredit quality standards. There is also a funding gap, yet the taxpayer spends significant sums on people with learning disabilities through social care and education. The Government will encourage local authorities to refocus some of this on supported employment. The Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) is also changing the Access to Work fund so that it better supports job coaching.'*³³

As stated in *Valuing Employment Now*, it is expected that by 2025 there will be a workforce of skilled job coaches who meet minimum quality standards and use Systematic Instruction and assistive devices. Open supported employment with job coaches will be part of college courses for people with moderate and severe learning difficulties.

Increasingly, providers in the FE sector are focusing on the job coach role, and either working with staff from supported employment organisations or training their own staff to take on key aspects of job coaching. This is what one employer had to say:

“Getting the Job Coach helped Paula to settle in, and really took the pressure off us. The Job Coach idea was excellent. It takes the worry off the employers, and is absolutely key.”

Case study – Working with job coaches

- **Colchester Institute** in Suffolk is working in partnership with a Mencap Pathways service. Colchester Institute is the lead partner and offers a Work Plus course. Mencap leads on the employment placement aspect by providing Job Coaches. They find jobs, set up interviews for the learners with employers and also do travel training.
- **Bolton Community College** has a job coach based at the college. He supports students on their work experience placements that are part of their college courses.
- **Lambeth College** works in partnership with the Camden Society which provides employment services for people with learning difficulties. An Employment Liaison Worker (ELW) from the Camden Society is based at the college. The ELW helps learners build their vocational profiles by exploring their previous work experience, interests and skills. This information is used to identify and set up appropriate work trials or placements. Job coaches from the Camden Society support college staff and provide learners with individually-tailored support packages. Support may include career planning, advice and support with vocational training, job search; help with benefits and on-the-job training and support.

33 Department of Health (2009) *Valuing Employment Now: Real jobs for people with learning disabilities*. London: DH Publications.

Funding

Sourcing sustainable funding that underpins the development of the supported employment model is key to the long-term development of this work. There are currently conflicting priorities that providers have to navigate in order to ensure that moving into employment is the main focus of vocational provision.

Employment has to be recognised as a valid outcome in terms of targets and to draw down funding. Just as partnership working is essential in order to embed supported employment approaches, it is also necessary to access funds from a range of different sources. Using multiple sources of funding can promote the commitment of partnerships.

The ROSE project funds the job coaches with financial support from the LSC, the borough (who are also committed to employing people with learning difficulties) and Connexions. The project has also received support from a local charity, and is always looking for other ways to raise money. Currently many projects receive short-term funding but seek extensions or different sources to continue.

Other providers use additional learning support to fund job coaches for learners on work placements. European Social Fund (ESF) money is being used to fund the West Cheshire College project for two years. And several providers have been funded by LSC 'Investment for Change' monies to develop their vocational provision using a supported employment approach.

Valuing Employment Now sets out a range of funding options that are available, or will be in the future, to fund job coaches, including Foundation Learning, individualised budgets and Access to Work.

The role of DWP specialist employment services

The DWP runs a range of employment services and programmes to support disabled people. Disabled people can gain access to DWP support schemes through a Disability Employment Advisor (DEA) at Jobcentre Plus.

This section provides information about the following services:

- Workstep (this is due to be discontinued from late 2010);
- Work Choice (this will replace Workstep, as well as Work Preparation Schemes and the Job Introduction Scheme, from late 2010);
- Access to Work;
- New Deal for Disabled People;
- Pathways to Work; and
- Permitted Work.

To the best of our knowledge information was accurate at the time of going to print. It is essential that you check **www.direct.gov.uk** for accurate, up-to-date information, and also to seek individually tailored advice for the learners you are working with.

Workstep

Workstep is one of the specialist employment services for disabled people. This service provides:

- support to disabled people facing complex barriers to getting and keeping a job; and
- practical support for employers.

It aims to ensure that disabled employees can progress to become as independent as possible within the workplace.

Workstep funds organisations to deliver the service. The Workstep programme is often delivered by local authority supported employment services or organisations such as Remploy. It is available to people who have a job to move into of 16 hours a week or more.

It is worth noting that supported employment organisations who are Workstep providers can start working with disabled students during their last three months of study at FE college if they have a job to go on to. There are certain rules about who is eligible, so you will need to investigate this in relation to individual learners. However, this can help with developing seamless transitions from FE to supported employment. However, this is only available to people who aspire to, and will be ready for, 16-hour-plus employment.

Currently, for many people with learning difficulties, the transition from education and training to supported employment is not working well. People with learning difficulties may have a gap of several months between leaving college and being placed with a supported employment agency, by when much of their learning experience may have been forgotten. Learning providers have a challenge ahead to address issues of transition, so they do not amount to a gap in development and progression: either by developing in-house services or by working on close partnerships with, and rapid referrals to, supported employment agencies.

The following case study illustrates how a voluntary sector learning provider is working with a local Workstep provider to support this transition.

Case study – Workstep

A student was due to leave Petty Pool College in July 2009. He was very clear about his aims for the future and definitely wanted a paid job. He secured himself two work experience placements and was found another by the college. From one of these placements he was offered a paid job.

The college has a very good relationship with the local Workstep provider. Rather than referring the student to the provider, waiting for them to profile and then look for a job, college staff were able to go directly to the Workstep provider once there was the offer of paid employment for this student. The Workstep provider made the referral through the Job Centre, did the Better Off calculations and liaised with the employer to inform them of the support packages they offer. This cut down on the time the student had to wait for referral and support, but does not change the progression into employment.

The college finds this a really beneficial way of working. It has often secured paid work for leaving students and has been able to access Workstep in this way.

Work Choice

During 2010 it is expected that Work Choice will replace Workstep, as well as Work Preparation schemes and the Job Introduction Scheme. Work Choice is designed to incorporate a range of flexible services to support disabled people to take up work. There are four stages that disabled people will go through:

- 1 An interview – this will be used to explore things like goals, support needs and work history.
- 2 Work entry support – this support may help people develop skills, confidence, and job search and application skills. The provider will analyse what support might be needed in the workplace, and will liaise with employers.
- 3 In-work support – once the person has a job, they will be helped to identify what support is needed in the workplace and to explore things like in work benefits.
- 4 Longer-term in-work support – people will be able to receive support with their development, as well as regular reviews of employment and access to in work benefits.

Access to Work

Access to Work can provide disabled people and their employers with:

- advice about how the employer can support a disabled employee in the workplace; and
- money towards costs for making reasonable adjustments, including equipment needed at work, the costs of adapting premises, travel (if unable to use public transport), or a support worker or job coach.

It can also help with travel costs if employees' impairments affect their travel abilities, and it can help by providing reasonable adjustments in interviews.

Access to Work is available for people new to the workplace or who are returning after an extensive period of not working, who are becoming self-employed, or are unemployed and about to start a work trial. To be eligible for Access to Work, you have to be working 16 hours or over.

New Deal for Disabled People

Through this programme disabled people can access advice and practical support to help them move from benefits into employment. Job brokers offer individualised support that can help people with job search skills and job searching, and training and support for the first six months of employment. This scheme is only available in certain areas, but in other areas similar help and advice is offered by Pathways to Work. For more information and information about areas where it is available visit: **www.direct.gov.uk/en/DisabledPeople/Employmentsupport/WorkSchemesAndProgrammes/DG_4001963**.

Pathways to Work

Pathways to Work is a service providing support for people who are claiming benefits because of an impairment or health condition, such as Employment and Support Allowance, Incapacity Benefit, Income Support on grounds of incapacity, or Severe Disablement Allowance. It is delivered by Jobcentre plus in some areas, and associated providers in other areas. People on the scheme are invited to work-focused interviews to talk through job opportunities and to talk through support they might be able to get when starting work. People on the scheme might also be able to attend a condition management programme to help them understand and better manage their condition. Within the scheme, some people returning to work can get 'return to work credit'. This is a weekly payment of £40 per week, paid for up to a year. It is available to people where paid work is expected to last at least five weeks, is of 16 hours or more a week, if the person is earning more than minimum

wage, and less than £15,000 before tax, and if they have been getting Incapacity Benefit for 13 continuous weeks or more.

Permitted Work

Some people find it hard to move off benefits into full-time paid work. Permitted Work can help people discover if they are ready for work. The Permitted Work scheme may be available to disabled people getting Employment and Support Allowance, Incapacity Benefit, Severe Disablement Allowance or National Insurance credits.

This is a scheme that allows a person to do some work and still be able to receive benefits. There are different types of permitted work, but, generally, if you get Employment and Support Allowance or Incapacity Benefit you can work for less than 16 hours a week for up to 52 weeks and earn no more than £92 a week (rates from 2008) without it affecting benefits.

Points to consider

The case studies above describe several different ways that providers are embedding the supported employment approach in their provision for people with learning difficulties.

Which element of these approaches would suit your situation?

Consider:

- whether local supported employment services are available and, if so, whether this service might meet your needs;
- other partners with whom you currently work or might work;
- the skills and experience of staff in your own organisation;
- other resources such as accommodation you have available;
- additional resources you might need;
- how you might seek funds to support the service;
- how you could work with the Disability Employment Advisor at your local Jobcentre Plus; and
- what arrangements you could develop to enable learning and skills staff and supported employment providers to collaborate to provide effective and sustainable job coaching for your learners?

Section 6

Curriculum development and a supported employment approach

This section:

- provides a set of principles that can underpin a curriculum which embeds a supported employment approach;
- examines how Foundation Learning will shape the curriculum;
- presents core elements of the vocational curriculum;
- outlines the skills that employers value most, and illustrates how these skills could be included as part of the curriculum; and
- lists some things to avoid when developing a curriculum for supported employment.

A curriculum for progression

In the past providers have been criticised for having a multitude of Preparation for Work courses which did little to prepare learners for work and even less in securing employment for their learners. Having a curriculum fit for purpose is a critical success factor underpinning a well-thought-out strategy to embed a supported employment approach. In many cases this will involve a major cultural shift around the attitudes and expectations of staff and managers.

The Adult Learning Inspectorate (ALI, 2006) identified that: ‘...scant attention is paid to meaningful progression to employment.’³⁴ The Inspectorate went on to suggest that:

‘... an imaginative shift in the design of foundation programmes could provide opportunities for all young people and adults, including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, to pursue real work activities matched to their abilities.’

And that to do this: *‘the use of classrooms would be minimal.’*

Foxes Academy, a training hotel run by people with learning difficulties as a commercially successful business, was highlighted by the Inspectorate as a model of best practice.

³⁴ Adult Learning Inspectorate (2006) *Greater Expectations: Provision for learners with disabilities*. Coventry: ALI.

Principles

The introduction of the Adult Pre-Entry Curriculum Framework for Literacy and Numeracy³⁵ provides a list of core principles which underpin the framework. These principles have been adapted in the list below so as to apply to the development of a curriculum for the supported employment approach.

- People who have learning difficulties are entitled to learning opportunities, irrespective of disabilities and differences in ability, and should be included in educational provision that will support them to move into employment.
- Learners should be at the centre of, and involved from the outset in, the planning of teaching and learning based on a supported employment model.
- Individual learners, even those who experience similar learning difficulties, can and do learn in different ways and at different paces, so a personalised and person-centred approach is essential.
- Learners should be able to acquire skills that are relevant to their everyday lives with an expectation that this will include real work in ordinary jobs.
- Skills should be taught using real-life contexts in ordinary workplaces.
- People learn best when there is something important to be learned, and it is something they really want to learn, to do with a job that interests them.
- Learning should build on a person's existing strengths.
- Learning should help to increase a person's quality of life. It can contribute to improved choices and decision making, and to greater autonomy.
- Learning should make a positive difference to people's lives.
- Learning should always be interesting and enjoyable.

Foundation Learning

With the development of Foundation Learning it is essential that providers give immediate thought as to how best their curriculum offer supports this flexible progression framework. The emphasis is on personalised learning programmes which are:

*'designed to support the progression of every learner. This may be towards a learning programme at Level 2, as part of a Diploma, GCSE or Apprenticeship programme, or it may be towards independent living or supported employment'*³⁵

Providers will need to carefully consider how the units and qualifications which sit within the QCF can underpin and support their curriculum offer. Accreditation should not drive the curriculum offer.

³⁵ DCSF (2009) *Foundation Learning: A guide*. London: DCSF.

For young people, the curriculum surrounding Foundation Learning must include the following three elements:

- personal and social development skills
- vocational skills; and
- functional skills.

Because the offer is personalised:

*'the balance between each element will depend on the individual learner. For example, for someone with learning difficulties moving towards independent living, the focus may be largely on personal and social development: whereas for another learner progression towards a Diploma, vocational learning may be a much larger element.'*³⁶

It is also important not to lose sight of the fact that some people with learning difficulties will be well able to work and hold down a job, but will not have managed to acquire any qualifications or only minimal accreditation. This should not stand in their way of progressing into work.

Case study – A curriculum for work

On the Leap2Work project at West Cheshire College learners can gain a qualification whilst at work. BTEC Work Skills short courses (Award 30 hours) from Foundation Learning are currently being used to accredit essential skills linked to health and safety, interview skills and team building. There is a rolling programme of workshops based at the College whereby units are offered throughout the year to facilitate flexibility for all on the Leap2Work programme. Classroom-based activity is kept to a minimum and all learners identify, via their Person Centred Vocational Profile, which skills require further development in their own particular workplace settings in order for them to be successful.

Evidence for the BTEC Work Skills units is collected electronically using MP3 players, photographs and video recordings, with job coaches overseeing and supporting this process, where necessary. It is this aspect of Leap2Work which has completely changed the thinking at the College in terms of mainstream curriculum delivery and interactive assessment.

Electronic recording of assessment empowers the individual to understand what they are being asked to do and to take better ownership of the learning process. It is also a powerful tool to look back on achievement, and for the individual to take ownership of learning in a different way. Additionally, ICT skills are similarly developed for a real purpose.

³⁶ Ibid.

In 2010/2011 the College will fully implement the Leap2Work model into its mainstream curriculum approach using the Foundation Learning curriculum to drive a flexible and personalised approach to delivery.

Short delivery input using BTEC Work Skills units followed up by assessment in the workplace has been a key driver for the individual to recognise and contextualise success quickly. It is a more meaningful process for learners in a real workplace setting with real goals. Curriculum delivery for 2010 will be based on this model.

What does a curriculum for work need to include?

The Shaw Trust, along with the Welsh Centre for Learning Disabilities, carried out a three-year research project between 2004 and 2007 to find out 'what works' in helping young people with learning disabilities in the transition from school or college to employment. Their research highlighted the need for a curriculum that has flexibility to meet individual learners' needs – as opposed to a 'one size fits all' model.

The research led to the recommendation that schools and colleges prepare people with learning difficulties to develop:

- an awareness of what jobs are and what behaviours and tasks they require;
- key general work skills such as time keeping, receiving instructions and feedback, and organising one's tasks;
- their ideas and aspirations on what type of job they might want;
- an ability to make informed choices;
- social skills that are needed in doing a job, and interacting with colleagues in a workplace; and
- confidence in their ability and motivation to do a paid job.

More specifically, the research suggests that the following elements are needed in any comprehensive vocational curriculum:

- the opportunity for learners to understand their own strengths, weaknesses and preferences in respect of employment;
- finding out about local work environments so that learning and work experience can be linked to real opportunities;
- finding out what job opportunities these workplaces offer;
- setting goals for future employment, in terms of job preference;

- linking these to work experience, and the learning from it;
- understanding and developing relevant work skills (time keeping, dress, giving and taking feedback, etc.);
- building awareness of health and safety at work;
- developing a CV;
- developing an understanding of work-based roles and responsibilities;
- developing an understanding of team work;
- understanding, and practicing, the personal and team social skills needed at work;
- completing an application form;
- writing a letter of application; and
- preparing for and practising interviews.³⁷

The above checklist can be a useful starting point for developing a curriculum.

What do employers want?

At a series of LSC Learning for Work³⁸ conferences that ran in 2008, employers identified what they wanted from employees as being:

- good interpersonal skills;
- knowing when and who to ask for help;
- problem solving skills;
- the ability to work as part of a team;
- punctuality and regular attendance;
- trustworthiness and honesty;
- a positive attitude; and
- a desire to learn.

This list of requirements corresponds closely with the findings of research conducted by Remploy in the West Midlands region, which investigates the skills that employers value. The following table shows the top ten skills identified by employers as very important.

1st	Timekeeping	74%
2nd	Positive attitude	73%
3rd	Attending work regularly	69%
4th	Willingness to learn new skills	56%
5th	Communications	51%
6th	Getting to work	49%
7th	Literacy	40%
8th	Appearance	30%
9th	Numeracy	28%
10th	Technical skills	15%

Remploy Research, 2007

³⁷ Beyer, S. et al. (2008) *What Works? Good practice in transition to employment for young people with learning disabilities*. Available to download from:

www.shaw-trust.org.uk/files/shaw_trust_good_practice_guide.pdf

³⁸ Jacobsen, Y. and Little, P. (2009) *Learning for Work: Employability and people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. A report following nine regional conference (held January–April 2008)*. Coventry: LSC.

Developing the curriculum

A curriculum that embeds a supported employment approach has to be flexible so it can adapt to a learner's need when they will be going through a period of significant change. This flexibility will enable the course to be responsive to individual needs as appropriate. Partners involved in the delivery of the provision will also need to be involved in the development of the curriculum and should be consulted from the start. The following points were identified by an Employment and Learning Manager, based in a Local Authority Social Care Services, as critical to embedding a supported employment approach:

- staff believing that people can work;
- considering curriculum design from the perspective of removing barriers to employment;
- achieving learning outcomes and planning activities in a way that promotes aspiration; and
- supported employment and teaching staff to work very closely together.

Case study – Developing the curriculum for people with complex needs

In Rochdale, the 'Muck & Sparkle' project delivers NVQ units in horticulture or cleaning to people who have been, or who would otherwise be, using long-term day services. The project is delivered by staff from learning, supported employment and learning disability sectors. The project is pitched to meet different levels of support needs through different types of placement or work opportunities. A community enterprise project has been set up for people who are likely to always require one to one support. People can work on a paid basis, with their care needs supported through their direct payments package (and along the line, Access to Work as well, for their employment-related support needs).

The following case study illustrates how a college-led supported employment project and its partners responded to support a learner on work experience placement.

Case study – Flexible approach to curriculum

There was an issue at work with one of the students on a work placement. The staff were finding it difficult to manage aspects of the student's behaviour. We called a review, including the student, his support worker from home, and his job coach, and went through the issues in a positive way. We came out of this knowing that all that was needed was to establish some boundaries. The student simply didn't understand what was needed in the workplace or what was appropriate. A plan was drawn up, which was reinforced at home, at work, and at college. This worked really well, and he continued on the placement.

Communication and social skills

Relating to, and communicating well with colleagues is an important part of most jobs. People with learning difficulties may have had limited opportunity to mix in a range of social settings, so providing support with interpersonal skills is an essential part of the curriculum.

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 working as part of a team.

Case study – Developing communication skills

At Carshalton College, My Voice offers role play to help learners develop skills in work place interactions. My Voice is a training and employment support project which establishes links between education and employers with the aim of preparing young people for adult and working life. It is delivered by Kingston and Merton Education Business Partnership.

Using drama, the project helps young people to explore working with others. It supports young people to use verbal and non-verbal communications to represent themselves effectively in employment and in everyday situations. Young people are also helped to develop CV writing and interview skills. A group of actors who are evaluated as theatre facilitators deliver the workshops, which are designed to build confidence and creatively explore the effects of different behaviour. Forum theatre – whereby the audience can freeze action and ask the actors to change their behaviour – is used to enable learners to test out the effect of different behaviours. The final workshop is supported by the project manager and involves mock interviews with employers. Learners gain communication skills that enable them to self-advocate more effectively in their adult lives, whether they move on to independent living, residential provision, college or into employment.

Literacy and numeracy skills

The DfES Skills for Working (2006) guidance document³⁹ provides comprehensive information on, and examples of, embedding literacy, numeracy and ICT skills in practical tasks on work placements. Those individuals who do not have strong literacy and numeracy skills will need reasonable adjustments to the workplace to support them. Whilst literacy and numeracy skills are important, it is not the case that learners who have limited literacy and numeracy skills cannot work. The focus on matching an individual to a job has to be on what they can do and building on that, rather than looking at where the person's skills are weakest. Focusing on strengths can lead to weaker skills developing. One man with learning difficulties who is also dyslexic and now works as a trainer explained:

“I found out I was dyslexic at 16, two weeks before I left school. I went to college after I left school from when I was 16 to 18. I didn't reckon much to it. It didn't lead to a job. They didn't take my disability – dyslexia – on board. I had to drop out because I couldn't do the work. I did want a job but college didn't help. I did a YTS for 2 years, in retail, which was really difficult. There was lots of writing work to do and couldn't do it cos I'm dyslexic. I told them I'm dyslexic and they didn't take it on board. I wanted to go back to college to do English and Maths, I went back for a bit, but there were big classes, there was no one-to-one, I really struggled. I feel I've got more confidence through giving training at work. I write down things I need to write down and I've got a support worker. I notice when I've misspelled. I got more support here than I ever did at college or school.”

Case study – Support strategies for literacy and numeracy

Staff at Havering College supported a student who did not read to clock into work by colour coding her card. So the student could remember her number, it was changed to be only four digits and this was copied onto a keyring for her to remember. This same student found it hard to know when her 20-minute break was finished. A timer was put on the clock to help her manage this.

Travel

Having means to travel is essential for people who are working; therefore, travel training is an essential part of a curriculum based on the supported employment model. Systematic Instruction has been found to be a really helpful method for providing effective travel training.

³⁹ 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.*

In 2006, the Department of Transport commissioned a review of travel training schemes which found 139 travel training schemes in England.⁴⁰ The report identified the benefits to learners of travel training as:

- increased travel opportunities;
- increased choice;
- improved life skills;
- improved confidence;
- improved quality of life;
- improved health;
- increased motivation;
- increased feelings of value and worth;
- increased integration;
- increased social interaction;
- empowerment; and
- increased independence.

In 2009 NIACE published a guide⁴¹ for learning providers regarding how to work with disabled learners to find travel solutions. It promotes the use of travel assessments, and discusses solutions to barriers to travel, including providing travel training, using direct payments for travel, or using funds within the learning and skills sector to pay for travel. Many of the ideas in the guide could be used to support travel to work within a supported employment approach.

Case study – Travel Training Programme

SPARC is a voluntary sector-supported employment organisation based in Warrington that works closely with the local FE College, Warrington Collegiate. SPARC believes that:

‘... the best form of social inclusion for people with learning disabilities is open employment, and the key to getting a decent job is being able to cross roads and use local public transport independently.’

As well as delivering travel training, SPARC has developed an Independent Travel Training Programme pack. The purpose of the pack is to train individuals to:

- use the bus independently;
- cross roads safely;
- deal with health and safety issues;
- manage personal risks; and
- encourage families to play a close role in travel training.

⁴⁰ Paul Beecham and Associates, in conjunction with Sheffield Hallam University (2007) *Review of Travel Training Schemes*.

⁴¹ Nightingale, C. and Ewens, D. (2009) *Equity Road: A whole organisation approach to assessment for travel support funding for disabled adult learners*. Leicester: NIACE.

Points to consider

Does your organisation keep details of local travel provision, including timetables, taxi companies and dial-a-ride?

Do learners know about these routes and means of transport?

Do you know of funds available to support travel costs?

Are learners fully informed before starting work or a work placement about how to get there and what sources of funding they might apply to?

Do you or another local provider offer travel training?⁴²

Work experience

As part of the curriculum, it is important to build in opportunities for the learner to reflect on and learn from work placements, so it can influence their future plans. The Shaw Trust report offers some useful guidance on what learning providers and learners should spend time considering and reviewing together:

- *'What the young person liked and disliked about the work*
- *What skills were needed to do this work*
- *What the young person was good, and not so good at*
- *How well they got on with work colleagues*
- *How they learned best*
- *What tasks the young person would now like to do, and in what type of work environment*
- *Any ideas for jobs and companies that might meet these criteria*
- *Any support arrangements the person must have in place in any subsequent placement or paid job.*⁴³

The importance of providing supported work experience in real work settings should not be underestimated. Learning through experience rather than training in a simulated setting is particularly effective for learners with learning difficulties. Learners on the ROSE project identified the following things they had learnt on their work experience placements and in their jobs:

“I am talking to people more and I am not so shy. I am organising myself; how to go to the bank and use a Visa card.”

“Met lots of people.”

“I am more independent and confident. I didn't know what to do, and now I do.”

⁴² Beyer, S. et al. (2008) *What Works? Good practice in transition to employment for young people with learning disabilities*, p.12. Available to download from:

www.shaw-trust.org.uk/files/shaw_trust_good_practice_guide.pdf

⁴³ Ibid.

Developing a curriculum for supported employment – what to avoid

An education manager with extensive experience of developing a supported employment approach in vocational courses for people with learning difficulties made the following observations. They highlight some of the weaknesses that can be a feature of transition to work provision:

- the course outcome is more geared to accreditation than finding real jobs for the learners;
- support for individual welfare rights is not an integral part of the programme;
- employers expect to play no part at all in the curriculum planning;
- work placements are often provided in organisations where there is no prospect of a real job;
- placements are organised to the geographical convenience of the programme staff;
- placements are provided mostly within the college;
- employer placements tend to occur later in the academic year (March onwards);
- the Individual Learning Plan is only used with the college and never on placement.

Points to consider

To what extent does your current curriculum adhere to the principles outlined at the start of this section?

How does your curriculum support the progression from college into a job?

How is Foundation Learning underpinning the curriculum for work?

To what extent does your curriculum meet employers' requirements?

What action do you need to take to ensure that the development of communications, social and functional skills are embedded in work placements?

What action do you need to take to ensure that the curriculum embeds a flexible supported employment approach that can link to work experience and ultimately support an individual in their work?

What arrangements are in place for travel training – are they open to everyone who needs them, are they work focused and are they sustainable?

Section 7

Collaborative working: the benefits and challenges

This section:

- looks at the range of partners – both strategic and front line – that need to be involved in developing a supported employment approach to vocational training and courses;
- outlines some of the successes and difficulties of partnership working that are specific to this context;
- suggests some strategies to manage some of the difficulties identified; and
- highlights the importance of accessible information and effective use of information.

The importance of collaborative working

*'Joined-up working is essential to help address the often complex needs of people with learning disabilities and to support them into work and settled accommodation.'*⁴⁴

Many government documents and policies have stressed how important partnership working is, to support people with learning difficulties into work in an effective way. The government's Link Up, Link In campaign, launched in 2009, aims to promote ways in which services can work together towards reaching targets in PSA 16 (see page 15). The Link Up, Link In resource and website has been developed to support this work. Learning from, and building on, effective existing practice is the best place to start when developing collaborative working. Experience shows that the development of working partnerships with a number of key stakeholders is crucial to supporting people with learning difficulties into employment.⁴⁵

At a provider level, partnership working should include learners, parents/carers, employers, learning disability partnership boards, supported employment services, Jobcentre Plus, Connexions, and health and social care providers. Learning providers will need to form effective business partnerships with established supported

⁴⁴ HM Government (2009) *Link Up Link In Handbook*. London: Social Exclusion Task Force.
www.hmg.gov.uk/linkuplinkin.aspx

⁴⁵ LSN (2006) *Support into Employment for Young People and Adults with Learning Difficulties*. London: LSN.
www.lsneducation.org.uk

employment organisations that will have well-established employer engagement strategies. Learning providers will also need to draw on locally available expertise on benefit entitlements.

This is what one FE manager had to say about her experience and learning from collaborative working that focuses on employment and learners with learning difficulties:

“From an FE point of view it’s the understanding of the business cultures which support the learning of the students and ultimately their progression into work. Understanding the differences between FE and employers can change attitudes and practice – this is the most rewarding but also the most challenging aspect of partnership working. It needs staff to take different viewpoints and put themselves in a different place if the partnerships are going to work.”

Partnership working and person-centred planning

Joint working is a central feature of person-centred planning (see *Section 4*). All stages of a person’s pathway to sustained employment can be addressed more effectively through partnerships between different providers, rather than services working alone. The importance of joint working to facilitate person-centred planning is stressed in *Valuing Employment Now*, and creating better ways of joint working is highlighted as one of the key areas for change:

‘Where people with moderate and severe learning disabilities have jobs, it is achieved through very close partnership working between statutory, voluntary and private agencies, with funding streams brought together. Starting from a person centred approach, this joint working needs to map out a clear employment pathway for people with learning disabilities.’⁴⁶

Joint working cannot be carried forward only by front-line staff. Those in strategic roles have to make sure effective partnerships can be put into place and sustained. Local authorities, local strategic partnerships and, particularly, 14–19 partnerships need to take on a leadership role in ensuring that commissioning partners supply the glue to make services work seamlessly and effectively for people with learning difficulties. Supporting such partnerships to develop is one of the main aims of the ‘Getting a Life’ programme (see *Section 2*).

The following case study is an example of how one County Council working with a supported employment organisation has developed a strategic partnership in order to support people with learning difficulties into employment from an early age and raise expectations.

⁴⁶ Department of Health (2009) *Valuing Employment Now: Real jobs for people with learning disabilities*. London: DH Publications.

Case study

Northamptonshire – early intervention and transition

Northamptonshire County Council has responded to *Valuing Employment Now* by working in partnership with practitioners and stakeholders to create a county plan for employment. It has recognised the need for early intervention and has engaged its supported employment provider, Pure Innovations, to offer a dedicated employment advisor to work with schools and colleges to support young people aged between 14 and 17 into jobs after school, on Saturdays and during holidays.

This will involve working with parents, carers and young people at a much earlier stage to build trust, and the guarantee of employment is considered a real option. It is envisaged the work will raise aspirations and expectations in young people with learning disabilities and will enable them to enter and remain in the world of work.

The County Council is confident that by encouraging young people to have after-school or Saturday jobs, it will be building a more inclusive approach for young people to become part of their communities, and is fully committed to the Personalisation agenda.

Pure Innovations is also developing its work in transition in the North West and has transition Employment Advisors in schools. These advisors also work within the Youth Supported Employment Project (YSEP) model when non-disabled peers are recruited as mentors to support young people in finding and maintaining employment.

Points to consider

Who are your current strategic partners?

Who else do you need to be working with at a strategic level to make things happen?

Who are your current partners for front-line delivery? Is there anyone else you need to include?

What existing networks in your organisation could you tap into?

Who else do you need to include?

How can you work with partners to better understand each others' different cultures and ways of working?

How will you ensure that staff move with this culture change?

What joint training opportunities exist for learning and skills staff and their key partners?

How can you ensure there is time allocated to develop networks and partnerships?

Given the changes post 2010 with the YPLA and the role of local authorities in planning and funding education and training provision, what links are you making with your local authority around transitions to work for learners with learning difficulties?

Identifying challenges

As noted above, partnership working is crucial to the success of transition from education to employment and can benefit all involved. However, collaborative working can bring its challenges.

The following table is a summary of comments from learning and skills sector staff involved in partnership working to embed the supported employment approach in their provision for people with learning difficulties. As well as what works well, it identifies some difficulties that partnerships are likely to experience.

Partnership working – What works?	Partnership working – What has been difficult?
• Sharing good practice, and working practices.	• Finding a common language.
• Not fighting for the same business.	• Sorting out the paperwork to satisfy all partners. • Amalgamating paperwork with partner was hard at first.
• Agreeing that customers come first.	• Dealing with a large number of people and sharing the learning – but systems evolve as you progress.
• Good communication.	• A good understanding of each other's services.
• Excellent communication between Mencap and the College at project management and operational level.	• Initially taking into account other peoples' perspectives.
• Team site on the intranet, allowing access to programme management and learner information files.	• All services to have a better understanding of the needs of service users.
• Tailor-made Individual Learning Plan process has worked well for students and staff.	• Educating young people and carers at a very early stage – so employment is an expectation.
• Relationships with the other partners have opened the door to all sorts of things.	• Connexions are not as active as they could be.
• The borough putting in money and providing jobs.	• The partners are not as joined up as they should be, although people attend meetings.

The following sections suggest how you might go about addressing some of these challenges.

Developing a common language

In order for organisations from different sectors to be able to work together and understand each other, a common language has to be developed. There are specific vocationally-related terms for each stage of the supported employment process that are not common parlance in the FE sector, but have close parallels with the teaching and learning process. Similarly, there are terms used in education that are specific to that setting. The following table offers some definitions of phrases used in supported employment and those used in education. It makes a link between the terminology used in supported employment and that used in education.

The links between the education planning and assessment cycle and the stages of supported employment	
Education and training	Supported employment
Initial assessment – <i>identifying learners' strengths, interest and areas for development taking a person-centred holistic approach.</i>	Vocational profiling – <i>helping people to identify their skills and preferences through the development of a vocational profile.</i>
Programme planning – <i>developing a personalised learning programme that best meets the skills and interests of the learner.</i>	Job development or job matching – <i>finding work that best matches the skills and interests of the individual.</i>
Teaching and learning – <i>analysing and developing the most appropriate teaching and learning strategies for the learner. This may include breaking down tasks into smaller activities to support learning.</i>	Job analysis – <i>to find out more about the tasks involved in the job, the workplace, co-workers, and the support the individual might need in that environment. This may include breaking down tasks into smaller activities to support learning.</i>
Learning support – <i>ensuring that the correct support is in place and that it is 'scaffolded' in order to ensure it develops autonomous learners.</i>	Job support – <i>to ensure that both employee and employer receive 'just enough' creative assistance, information and back up to achieve success, with this support continuing for as long as it is needed.</i>
Supporting learners to progress – <i>ensuring that learners progress and move on as opposed to becoming immured in post-16 provision.</i>	Career support – <i>to help people with longer-term career progression.</i>

Points to consider

Are there any other terms that you think need to be added to this table?

What will you do to make sure that such sector-specific language doesn't become a barrier to your collaborative working?

How will you ensure when you discuss these processes with learners that you explain them in a way that is accessible?

Sharing information

To support the effective use and sharing of information between partners, some organisations have been working together to share paperwork. In this way, information for different organisations can be recorded and accessed on shared sites.

Case study – Sharing information

At Colchester Institute there is an area of the online website that is only accessible to the relevant team, where learner records are stored and updated by both Colchester Institute and Mencap. The site is used to store learner ILPs, assessment details, pen profiles, observation of progress, learner diary notes, details of incidents, and photographs of learners in college and on work placements.

The following case study outlines how one supported employment service is developing a format to streamline information collected by range of partners who are working together.

Case study – Rationalising paperwork

Pluss is an organisation that provides training and supported employment services to a range of organisations, including the NHS, Social Services, Jobcentre Plus and the Learning and Skills Council. Each of these contracting organisations requires different forms to be completed, although much of the data are similar. Pluss set out to rationalise the paperwork by creating a universal document for use with clients regardless of the funding stream. The new document will be based on the Vocational Profile, which is required for Workstep and contains personal data, including health and personal barriers, and skills and abilities. Adapted to be more user-friendly, the document is being tested within one unit in Pluss before being rolled out to the wider organisation. The document is available in paper and electronic form, and staff can extract key

data to complete the forms required by funders. It is currently being piloted in a local college where staff are also reviewing the information required by both organisations and the paperwork they currently use to identify further rationalisation. Learners involved in the pilot are on a life skills course where they are supported on placements by Pluss job coaches.

Making information accessible

At the core of a person-centred way of working is information that is accessible and easy to understand for the learner. The DfES guidance document, *Person-centred approaches and adults with learning difficulties*, includes a template for developing an accessible electronic Individual Learning Plan using a PowerPoint or Word format.⁴⁷ A similar approach is being developed to produce accessible, person-centred vocational profiles.

Case study – Developing an accessible vocational profile

First Line Supported Employment Agency in Newham is currently developing its vocational profile form. The standard nine-page form (from supported employment/American job coach model) is geared more to the practitioner and is person-centred, but is not accessible enough to service users. The service user is unlikely to be able to explain their profile to someone else. The new profile will make more use of images and multimedia, such as photos, CVs on laptops for interviews, and profiles on memory sticks for use in presentations and a service user website.

First Line is also developing an accessible website with information about supported employment: <http://web.thebigtree.org/firstline>

47 DfES (2006) *Person-centred approaches and adults with learning difficulties*. Leicester: NIACE.

Case study

Accessible information – thinking about work

A series of accessible work fact sheets for people with learning difficulties has been produced by In Control, an organisation that helps people to have real choices and control over their lives, and supports local authorities to deliver Self-Directed Support. The seven information sheets go through the process of how to get a job and include fact sheets on finding a job, benefits, using supported employment, and negotiating with employers.

For more information visit: **www.in-control.org.uk**

You might find it useful to visit the following websites for advice on making information accessible:

www.clearforall.co.uk

www.plainenglish.co.uk (click on 'Free Guides')

www.mencap.org.uk (especially 'Make It Clear')

Points to consider

How can forms that are used to collect learner data be developed so that information can be effectively shared by all partners and not duplicated?

How can you work with partners to rationalise the information you all need to collect and share?

What concerns might you and your partners have about doing this?

How might these be overcome?

Are there confidentiality/data protection issues that need to be considered?

Can you build on, or adapt, forms designed by other partnerships?

How can you adapt existing models?

Who do you need to involve in the redesign of documents?

How can the forms that you use to record learner information be made more accessible for learners?

How can you involve learners in developing their own accessible vocational profiles?

Look at the information you use with learners when discussing employment and getting a job. Could it be improved to be more person-centred and accessible?

How could you involve learners in doing this as part of their process of thinking about work?

Using information effectively

In recognition of the importance of collaborative working in the process of developing the supported employment model, NIACE produced a set of basic awareness-raising information sheets for key partners who need to be involved in supporting people with learning difficulties make the transition from college to work. The *Moving into Work* pack⁴⁸ is a useful resource to use with this book. It contains a set of six information sheets aimed at:

- people with learning difficulties;
- employers;
- parents and carers;
- practitioners in the learning and skills sector;
- managers in the learning and skills sector; and
- information, advice and guidance services.

The table below gives some examples of how organisations have used the *Moving into Work* pack to develop work with partners and colleagues.

Case study – Using information to raise awareness and engage partners

People with learning difficulties

- *'We have used these in working with learners when talking about work and what it means.'* (Service Manager, Mencap)
- *'I am a team leader at a Day Centre where my team is involved with supporting people with learning difficulties to gain work experience and voluntary work placements. The pack will assist us in our support.'*
- *'I am organising a careers fair in November and I think they may be useful to parents and students.'* (College Inclusion team)

Parents and carers

- *'We are attending a transitions event and this information would be really beneficial for the young people and their carers/parents.'*
(Social Services Department, Employment Service Support Manager)

Employers

- *'I am working with learners who are at entry level on a range of vocational programmes whom we expect to leave and progress to work over three years. Packs for parents and employers would certainly enhance what we already offer.'*
(Senior Tutor, Learner Services, FE College)

Practitioners in the FE sector

- *'...some packs for our student services and for a couple of tutors who are embarking on new employability courses.'* (Additional Support Co-ordinator, FE College)

48 *Moving into Work* information sheets are available from the NIACE website:
www.niace.org.uk/development-research/moving-into-work

- *'I would like some hard copies of the information sheets please as we are about to do some work around learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and NVQs.'* (Head of Libraries and Community Learning)

Managers and co-ordinators of vocational training and courses

- *'We are involved in a number of reviews for learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities across our Foundation Studies programmes and the work of our Additional Learning Support teams. I will arrange for them to be circulated to the appropriate person in each of our schools of learning.'* (FE college)

Information, advice and guidance services

- *'I would like to give a copy to each of our Information Advice and Guidance Team.'* (College Learning Support and Improvement Manager)

Points to consider

How could you use the information sheet idea to best effect with current and potential partners?

How could you adapt and update them to better suit your own organisation/situation?

How could learners use the easy read version for people with learning difficulties and develop it as part of their learning?

Could they be useful as a resource in staff development sessions?

What information about your provision could you use with partners and colleagues?

Section 8

Working with parents and carers

This section looks at key issues involved in working with parents and carers when supporting people with learning difficulties to make the transition into work.

Raising expectations

For most of us the expectation that we will work and earn our living is made clear to us from when we are very young with questions such as 'what do you want to be when you grow up?' As young adults we are expected to earn enough money to fund things like a gap year travelling when we leave school. Formal experience of work usually starts when we are young with paper rounds and Saturday and holiday jobs. This is often not the case for young people with learning difficulties. Parents and carers may not necessarily have the expectation that their child will work and become more independent as an adult. Parents and carers who have children with learning difficulties can see their role as looking after their dependent son or daughter from childhood through to adulthood. This vision for the future can also be sustained by the attitudes of service staff. Their expectations of what a person with learning difficulties can achieve in terms of employment can also be very low. Even when individuals have a job, very often the expectation is that they will only work for a few hours so as not to affect benefits, rather than working full time (that is, over 16 hours).

In order to raise expectations and broaden the horizons of both young people with learning difficulties and their parents/carers, employment has to be considered seriously as a part of the young person's future from as early as possible, and certainly when transition planning starts in review meetings at school from Year 9, when pupils are age 14. It may be that services need to take this lead. For instance, Connexions should attend Year 9 reviews and provide information, advice and guidance about employment as well as other options.

School and college – links for transition

Many providers in the FE sector have links with local schools, and the opportunity to meet prospective learners and their parents or carers. This is a good time to discuss the vocational provision on offer, the support that will be available, and to stress

that getting a real job in an ordinary setting is the goal. For some learners the best option may be to move into work from school rather than to first attend college.

Case study – Early involvement of parents and carers

The Youth Supported Employment Project in Merthyr Tydfil helps school students with learning disabilities aged between 16 and 19 years to obtain part-time jobs that are typical of those obtained by their peer group. The project is a partnership between the schools and a local supported employment agency.

The young people with learning disabilities are supported by non-disabled peers who are recruited from local schools. With on-site tutoring from the project coordinator, peer mentors initially provide intensive support to the young disabled students, with the intention of gradually withdrawing.

In the year 2006 to 2007, young people worked for between two and four hours per week. Jobs included feeding and walking dogs in a kennel; serving food in a hotel restaurant, and setting up sports equipment in a leisure centre. Disabled young people received the same level of supervision from their employers as other part-time employees. All recruits earned above the national minimum wage for their age group.

One of the project's current aims is to embed the coordinator into the local college so as to increase the involvement of college staff.

Early involvement of parents is crucial. The coordinator meets regularly with them as individuals or as a group, and invites them to celebrations of achievement. Parents involved in 2006-2007 were generally positive, identifying improvements in the confidence and self-esteem of their offspring. Their expectations of their children's prospects of finding employment were also raised:

'I never thought she'd get a job in a cafeteria – I never would have thought she'd get a job.'

Working with parents and carers

Practical help and encouragement from parents or carers can be crucial to enabling an individual to go out to work. For instance, they may help with getting up and ready in the morning, and in some cases with the journey to work. However, staff involved in supporting people with learning difficulties to find and keep supporting people with learning difficulties to find and keep employment, frequently mention

parents' and carers' resistance to their son or daughter getting a job as a major barrier. For many parents and carers, work may not have ever been suggested as an option and the idea can be something of a shock. They may not accept that their son or daughter has the skills to go out to work.

The case study below is a testament from a father whose daughter, with complex learning difficulties, was successfully supported into work by the ROSE project at Havering College.

Case study – A parent's story

Alexandra is 24 years old. When Alex left 'special school' we were apprehensive about what the future held for her. We were disappointed with the lack of 'useful' support during the transition stage, in both content and quantity. We wondered how Alex would cope after leaving the supportive environment of school. Our enquiries eventually led us to Havering College. This was to become a 'lifeline', a place for transition from school into adulthood, in preparation for independence. Our hopes were that eventually she might learn to read and write, engage in life skills and become prepared for a future life beyond education. What that might be, we had not the slightest idea. Of one thing we were positive... it would not be a job and definitely not paid employment. How wrong we were!

One day my wife and I met two enthusiastic women from the college who told us they were determined to find a job suitable for Alex and, to top it all, that Alex would be paid for doing this job. To say we were sceptical would be an understatement! The idea seemed ambitious and unrealistic.

Two and a half years later, Alex has been working for 18 months. Not in a small shop, not some menial task, not a work experience placement, but paid employment in one of the largest Sainsbury's superstores in the country. Alex is now a bright, engaging, happy, outward looking young lady whose confidence, self worth and esteem is growing day by day.

Thanks to the determination, patience and perseverance of staff at Havering College, their band of job coaches, the staff – and in particular, the manager – at Sainsbury's, Alex can now, unaided:

- find her way into the store from the car park;
- walk the entire length of the store unaided;
- find her way to the staff check-in facility and negotiate the key-pad, entering her staff number;
- select, pay for and enjoy her breakfast;

- converse with staff and shoppers at the store;
- collect products from the store room and wheel these out to the aisle; and
- stack these products onto aisle shelves.

Into the bargain, she gets paid the going rate; the same as any other employee. Although this is only for three hours a day, for two days a week, it is a significant 'leap' in the right direction and a stepping stone to future full-time employment, independence and social inclusion.

Other reasons for parents and carers to be concerned can include:

- worry about loss of benefits as part of the total family income;
- work being regarded as a less safe option than going to college or a day centre; and
- difficulty in 'letting go' and recognising that their son or daughter wants, and is able, to become more independent.

Parents and carers may need to be given the opportunity to talk their fears and concerns through with someone who can reassure them and help them feel more secure. They might need reassurance that their son or daughter will be safe from bullying and exploitation through job support and supervision. Meeting or reading about other people who have made the successful transition to paid work can be very encouraging. To this end, parents and carers of people with learning difficulties who have successfully made the transition into paid work can be a powerful resource for raising other parents' and carers' expectations and alleviating fears. If you can encourage parents and carers to act as ambassadors by talking at transitions meetings, parents evenings, parents' forums and open days, or by being peer supporters, this can be a tremendous help. As one college course co-ordinator commented:

“It worked really well. Wherever parents dismissed employment, we just sign-posted them to the parent – there was no technique she used – she just started the conversation with, ‘I know how you feel, it was just the same for me...’ and it just went from there. This resulted in parents coming back to the stand relating to employment reporting that they’d had second thoughts and could we provide them with some more information please... It was a great success.”

Case studies – Engaging parents and carers

Open evening

A college involved in link work with local schools ran an open evening for parents and people with learning difficulties. The evening included a presentation given by a colleague from the supported employment organisation that partnered with the college. The presentation included information about supported employment, the partnership with the college and several case studies of students who had moved into employment from college.

Parents' evening

A supported employment organisation had a stand at a parents' evening run by the local college. There was a lot of interest in what the organisation could offer, and in joint work with the college.

Parents as peer supporters

At Rochdale Adult Care Service, parents and carers were asked what would best help them to overcome their concerns about, and resistance to, the idea of their son or daughter going out to work. They identified peer support as the most powerful tool. They trusted that they would get a straight and realistic answer to their questions from a peer, based on their experience, not something that professionals 'have dreamt up'.

The Learning and Employment Manager asked a parent who had been most resistant to the idea of her son having a job to come along to the transition open day and 'be there' to support other parents. Young people who had been through the process towards employment provided the same reassurance to other young people who were thinking about their options.

Parents and carers might fear losing their own role as the key carer in their son or daughter's life. Their concerns about their son or daughter may mask fears about what they will do if they feel less needed. But this can be an opportunity for them to take on new challenges. It might be worth exploring with them opportunities to take up learning, work or volunteering - and signposting them accordingly.

Other things that can help reassure parents and carers and build their confidence with regards to their son/daughter taking up work include:

- getting feedback from staff members in colleges and supported employment agencies on the successes, challenges and things learned from work placements. This can really influence parents' and carers' subsequent decisions;

- having one key contact from college or a supported employment agency who can give information about options and the supported employment process, and give advice, help them make decisions along with their son/daughter and keep them informed; and
- having insights into some of the non-financial benefits of working – such as the potential to make new friends, and grow in confidence and independence.⁴⁹

Advice on work and benefits

The findings of the *What Works* report⁵⁰ stressed the importance of people with learning disabilities and their families getting individual benefits advice – that is specific to their individual circumstances – about how things will change if and when they get a job. Their research showed that one of the problems to overcome is the fear that people will lose their benefits and be worse off if they get a job. If people are badly advised, this can be the case. But with expert advice and a better-off calculation, people should be able to avoid taking on work that will leave them worse off. The idea that people will be worse off is, for most people, a myth. As the report states:

'Changes have occurred that can provide entitlement to return to benefit if a job doesn't work out, and tax credits can top up earnings. Wider evidence from one of our research sites shows that adults with learning disabilities who were willing to work over 16 hours per week were on average over 100% better off before tax.'

As noted above, many parents and carers worry about the loss of income if their son/daughter takes up paid work and doesn't get benefits as a result of this. While concerns about a possible drop in income are understandable, this is often a perception rather than a reality. Parents and carers may need information and advice about the minimum wage and extra benefits people can get while they are working.

As of 1 October 2009 the minimum wage rates are:

- £5.80 an hour for people aged 22 and over;
- £4.83 an hour people aged between 18 to 21; and
- £3.57 an hour for people aged 16 to 17.

Therefore, people should not be paid less than this. This rate changes every year and you need to check www.direct.gov.uk for accurate information, and most importantly get individually tailored advice about payment and benefits. If an

⁴⁹ Beyer, S. et al. (2008) *What Works? Good practice in transition to employment for young people with learning disabilities*. Available to download from:

www.shaw-trust.org.uk/files/shaw_trust_good_practice_guide.pdf

⁵⁰ Ibid.

individual with learning difficulties is claiming benefits, a Personal Advisor or Disability Employment Advisor based at Jobcentre Plus can be asked to carry out an In Work Benefit Calculation. This will show how an income could change if the person with learning difficulties gets a job. It might be able to claim extra benefits when in work, such as Working Tax Credit. Some benefits, for example Disability Living Allowance, Child Benefit, State Pension or bereavement benefits, can still be paid even when working. Talking to someone who works in 'welfare rights' can be useful – type 'welfare rights' and the town or city where you live into an Internet search engine to find contacts near you. Similarly, there is a Benefit Enquiry Line for disabled people and their carers on 0800 882200. Information is available about this enquiry line at **www.direct.gov.uk/en/DI1/Directories/DG_10011165**. (This information was, to the best of our knowledge, accurate at the time of going to print.)

Points to consider

Identify ways in which you might be able to engage parents and carers early on.

Find out about their expectations and anxieties.

Find out how they might wish to be involved when their son or daughter starts employment.

Design a parent involvement/communication plan.

Find out how families can receive expert advice on benefits and who can carry out a Better-Off Calculation with them.

Consider using or developing links with the local carers' association.

Think about how you can work with colleagues in social care to support parents and carers.

Talk to parents and carers whose children are now successfully in employment and invite them to act as ambassadors to inform and support other parents and carers.

Section 9

Working with employers

This section looks at key issues involved in working with employers, and provides case studies of interesting practice.

Employers who spoke at a series of LSC Learning for Work conferences in 2008 explained that their motivation for employing disabled people came from having a sense of corporate social responsibility and a commitment to making a positive contribution to the community. The employers also identified the following benefits to them:

- employees who act as 'buddies' learn new skills in working with people, which is very motivating;
- access to a pool of untapped recruits/good source of recruitment; and
- added value to business as a diverse workforce draws on a variety of life experiences and this can help with responding better to customers from a diverse range of backgrounds.

Establishing contact with employers

The Job Development stage of the supported employment process involves researching the local job market and contacting employers to find work placements and jobs for learners. An employer-led approach starts with researching the needs of a local job market in order to influence the kind of vocational training people receive. In other words, courses are designed to meet the needs of the local job market. This has to be balanced with a person-centred approach when working with people with learning difficulties.

Supported employment organisations have networks of contacts with individual employers and with local employer forums, local and regional enterprise organisations and Jobcentre Plus. Learning providers may already be involved in co-ordinated regional and local networks such as a Local Employment Partnership, Local Employer Fora or Enterprise Boards. Managers of provision for people with learning difficulties need to influence such networks and systems to raise the profile of the value of a supported employment approach for employers. This could be done by:

- involvement in Job Fair events; and
- promoting positive images of disabled people at work.

Case study – Promoting supported employment to employers

Bolton Community College developed a leaflet for employers to encourage them to offer work experience opportunities to people with learning difficulties. The leaflet gives a brief introduction to the vocational courses at the college and explains the benefits to learners of work experience. It describes what the college along with the Employment Placement Officer can offer employers. This includes training and support around disability awareness and support for the individual on placement. The leaflet also outlines the benefits for employers, which include matching students' skills to the area of work, introducing them to potential future employees and the opportunity for community involvement. A copy of the leaflet is available in *Appendix 1* at the back of this book.

It is important that work experience placements should not go on for years with no progression to a job. Work that only lasts a couple of hours a week and is more of an 'activity' or long-term unpaid work experience may not be of benefit to the business and sends the wrong message about employing people with learning difficulties. It may also not help the individual on placement to learn a range of skills that will help them in future work.

Informing and educating employers

In order to become engaged, employers may need to learn more about employing disabled people, the benefits that this can bring and the support available for them. Testimony from employers who have experience of supported employment practices when employing people with learning difficulties can be powerful. Employers who are engaged with the ROSE project at Havering College were asked for tips they would give other employers thinking of offering work experience and jobs to people with learning difficulties:

“Don't judge, have a wide view. It's got to be open, looking to the person's needs.”

“Get past your anxiety!”

“The Job Coach takes a lot of the pressure off.”

“Speak to other employers in the same situation who have done this sort of thing.”

Employers who employ disabled people might also be able to get a weekly grant for the first six weeks to help towards employment costs, as part of the Job Introduction Scheme. This applies to part time and full time paid work, as long as it is expected to last 6 months or more. It is not available when employees or employers are in receipt of certain other DWP support services, so it is a good idea to check the rules at www.jobcentreplus.gov.uk or www.direct.gov.uk. It is expected that the Work Choice programme will replace the Job Introduction Scheme from late 2010, but similar support may be available under Work Choice.

Successfully employing people with disabilities

Employers who have experience of employing disabled people have identified that in order to employ disabled people successfully they need to:

- have policy and procedures to allow for reasonable adjustments and identify adjustments needed by working with the individual to make changes so jobs are more accessible;
- learn from people with disabilities. This will also mean that they understand customers with disabilities and offer them a better service;
- work in partnership with the individual and support workers, and look at how appropriate new roles can be carved out of those that already exist using job analysis techniques;
- adapt the environment and provide training to meet individual learning styles;
- measure performance appropriately using external support staff if appropriate;
- understand the social model of disability and work with these principles;
- foster a workplace culture that values abilities, not disabilities, and sees people for what they are, recognising that everyone is different; and
- challenge stereotypes about what people can do.

The recruitment process

Standard recruitment processes can work against people with learning difficulties; for example, standard interviews are unsuitable for many people and do not allow them to demonstrate their skills and knowledge. Instead, good options are **working interviews** and **work trials**. Both of these allow the person to do the job for a short period of time to show what they are capable of in more practical terms than an interview allows. Working interviews are short-term periods (from one day or up to four weeks) where the person 'tries out' the job to show their practical skills and personal characteristics in the work setting. At the end of the agreed **working interview**, if the individual can demonstrate they can do the job they would expect to be offered the position at the agreed wage/hourly rate. A work trial also allows people to work unpaid to try the job and demonstrate their skills. It should last for a set period of a few weeks (advice varies, but Valuing Employment Now suggests it last no longer than six weeks) and there must be the real possibility of a job at the end, as well as support throughout.

As one supported employment expert explained:

“Employers want it made easy; they want people who want to work, want to learn. They want timely and appropriate support; they want help that’s helpful. They want no more than they want for and from anyone else.”⁵¹

Case study – An employer’s perspective

Sainsbury’s was one of the first employers to sign up to Local Employment Partnerships in April 2007, which aim to help those who have been in long-term unemployment to re-enter the workplace. The stores work with their local Jobcentre Plus and organise skills sessions to support applicants in becoming job-ready.

As part of their commitment to support individuals with a learning disability into work, they became one of the founder partners of Mencap’s WorkRight scheme in 2006. With the launch of their ‘You Can’ programme, they expanded their commitment to WorkRight. In 2008 they worked with Mencap and Remploy to recruit over 50 colleagues with learning difficulties. They also work with organisations such as Pure Innovations to give meaningful, sustained paid employment to people with learning difficulties. An HR manager stated:

‘The benefits we have seen firsthand are:

- increased loyalty;
- customer compliments;
- reduced turnover and absence;
- increased morale;
- positive press coverage locally and nationally; and
- access to specialist support given to our current colleagues through our local partnerships.

Your employees should reflect the diversity and socio economics of your area. Not only do your customers want this, they demand it and spend money where they find it. There is a huge group of untapped talent that could turn into your most valued and loyal employees.

There are many organisations such as Pure Innovations and Mencap who offer free professional advice and support in employing people with learning disabilities, and they will help you every step of the way. On top of this, many people with learning disabilities are already supported by Jobcentre Plus can support you financially with £1,000 cash back on recruits if they have been on benefits for more than six months and potentially £1,500 for in-work training in certain cases. So not only do you get loyal committed staff who your customers appreciate seeing and improve your morale, but you also get funding to help you and free professional support to make it happen.’

⁵¹ Stephen Parr, Presentation, LSC Learning for Work event, January 2008.

The advice that follows is from Linda Hossaini, the Employment Placement Officer at Bolton Community College, where supported employment approaches are used in vocational provision.

Working with employers

How to make the business case – business etiquette

- **Research the company**

Find out about the company's background, e.g. how fast the business has developed and how many centres there are in the locality. This shows you have an interest in and knowledge of the business.

- **Find out the names of all the management and the deputy management**

It is important to make a good impression when you visit the business, and this way if the manager is unavailable you have another name to use. This will also give you the edge in knowing another contact person to pursue.

- **Initial greetings**

When you are addressing the management, keep it professional – use their title and surname until they allow you to address them with their first name. Ensure you have the correct pronunciation and spelling of their name.

- **Find out when the busiest times are for the company**

Never go in asking for placements at the busy times of day as there is a good chance you will be turned down and the manager or staff may be too tired or stressed to suggest another, more convenient time to see you.

- **Find out about any positive and negative aspects of the company**

If the company is short staffed and overloaded with work, management may be happy to take students on unpaid work initially. Once trained, paid work may follow. Look for positive aspects, such as strong teamwork and good management/staff relations, as these will make for a good atmosphere and working environment for prospective students you wish to place there.

- **Try to chat to staff informally to find out what kinds of customer service skills they have to offer**

When you see the calibre of the present staff you are in a good position to promote your own students – and to say 'my students can do this as well as your present staff, if you would give them a chance'.

- **Find out if company sales are doing well**

If the business is doing well they must be busy, so extra help will be useful. If sales are poor, this is your opportunity to offer to promote the business with marketing opportunities through yourself or through the college in exchange for a couple of placements.

Working with employers Top ten tips

1 Appointment needed?

Ring and check before you visit. Some companies will let you cold call, but others will not let you in without an appointment.

2 Be prepared

Display energy and enthusiasm when approaching employers! Arm yourself with lots of information about the company. Be confident and concise about what you want from them and what you have to offer them.

3 Letter and a business card

Take a letter addressed to the manager stating who you are and your requirements, with a business card attached, just in case they are not available on the day. Some employers ask for these at the appointment. This shows you are prepared and mean business.

4 Look the part

Make sure you dress smart and business-like, and use an official identity badge.

5 Stay positive and always follow up initial rejections

If the manager cancels the appointment for any reason, be friendly and positive with reception staff. Staff are a vital link between you and the company (and later on students). Be determined to be successful.

6 Follow up arrangements

Always follow up any arrangements made at the company – return a call, set up meetings, put in place promised support for students. This is very important if you value that company's involvement.

7 Be assertive

Don't be modest about selling your students' capabilities. You should know your students well and how their skills match up to a particular area of the company. Do not be put off with any initial negativity towards the students from the employer. You have to patiently explain, train, and persuade the employer about the benefits of taking students on a work experience placement.

8 Business incentives

If you feel employer interest is waning, and you are losing ground, then offer business incentives such as marketing promotions, and state past achievements, such as how much you have increased takings at a particular company through promotions.

9 Other companies are involved!

Inform the manager about other companies offering placements. Mention positives such as where students have gained paid work, or where students have been targeted by a company 'Mystery Shopper' and gained top performance marks for the company.

10 Document support available

Inform the employer that there will be student support available from the outset, such as training from the employment officer, and student support from the officer and the job coach. Ensure vital contact numbers and support details are left in the company such as in a 'work placement agreement'.

Employer resistance and issues

Support

One of the main reasons for employer's resistance to work placements is the idea that students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are not able to do much without one-to-one support. This may be the case initially with some students, until used to the world of work environment. However, judgement must be used to place students to match company requirements. Also, the expectations of the students must be fairly matched to all or part of the job specification to achieve the best outcome.

No staff available for support

Employers sometimes state that they are busy and have no staff to buddy up with the students. In this case you must describe the support you can provide, such as job coaches or your own time. Make it clear that the student will be supported right from induction and until proficient to work alone. Employers are likely to see taking on students with learning difficulties as a big responsibility as far as support and health and safety are concerned. Once the student is settled in and working the employer relaxes to some degree. Keep the employer aware of a support timetable.

Who do we contact in an emergency?

Easy contact

Employers like guarantees that there will be regular support available and that the employment officer is just a mobile phone call away at all times. Also, the fact that they can look forward to regular monitoring visits from the officer can be useful.

Health and safety

Business access is 'for all'

Health and safety risks can be used by the employer as a reason not to get involved with students. However, employers cannot state that they have no accessible facilities for disabled people, or that the area is not big enough for a wheelchair or a walking frame. Most of the larger companies will have access for all.

Student 'too quiet' for customer service

If this is the case, explore other job roles within the company. For example, one student did not pass an interview for a garden centre of his choice, as he was 'too quiet' to serve the customers efficiently. However, he did get on at another garden centre helping out in the garden, which did not need so many customer service skills.

Incentives

Business incentives – offer to promote the business, such as through vouchers, adverts in college and adverts passed onto other employers. Arrange an open evening promotion – and invite employers to attend.

Financial incentives – explore these. For example, the Job Centre may pay as much as £75 for the first six weeks as a Job Introduction Scheme if the company takes on a student for 16 hours paid work who has been receiving benefits (although please note, it is expected this scheme will be replaced by Work Choice in late 2010).

Extra pairs of hands at busy periods – suggest no charge for the student's work (but after a while paid work can be asked for when the company have experienced the valuable support).

Free training on DDA matters from Employment Placement Officer – offer training and advice on disabilities, reasonable adjustments, grants for the business, etc.

Course advice for company staff – interviews can be arranged for staff from companies who wish to access college provision. Application forms/brochures etc. can be handed out to interested employers, by the Employment Placement Officer. This saves the employer time and it is an extra service which also promotes the college and makes for good links and partnership working.

Linda Hossaini, Bolton Community College

Resources and further information

Information and advice for employers about in-work support is available from Disability Employment Advisors at Jobcentre Plus. The Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) specialist employment programmes such as Workstep and Access to Work are particularly relevant. For more information see:

www.direct.gov.uk/en/AdvancedSearch/Searchresults/index.htm?fullText=support+for+work

The *Skills for Working*⁵² guidance published by the former Department for Education and Skills (DfES) provides useful information and sample resources for working with employers. The table, 'A step-by-step approach to working with employers', provides a summary. It is a good idea to make sure all the actions you take are SMART.

52 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*.

A step-by-step approach to working with employers

What to do	Things to consider	Who can help?
Research and identify employers	• The needs and preferences of the individual • The needs and preferences of the employer • Length of stay • Disability Discrimination Act 1995 • Local employment trends • Local employer details – keep a contact list • Information on organisation/ agencies who can provide support	• Network of family and friends • Employer Fora • British Association for Supported Employment www.base.uk.org • Equality and Human Rights Commission • Jobcentre Plus • www.tuc.org.uk/changingtimes/worktrends.htm • Yellow Pages • Connexions • Voluntary Sector • <i>Employing People with Learning Disabilities: A handbook for employers</i>⁵³
Health and safety check	• Ensure the learner understands their responsibilities with regard to health and safety • Ensure the employer understands any additional requirements of the learner • Complete a written health and safety assessment	• www.hse.gov.uk
Conduct an individual risk assessment	• Job matching using Initial Assessment and Employability Skills Checklist • Areas of special concern including medication (with consent) • Hazards • Criminal Records Bureau if appropriate	• Access to Work • www.hse.gov.uk

⁵³ Hemmings, S. and Morris, J. (2004) *Employing People with Learning Disabilities: A handbook for employers*. York: Joseph Rowntree Foundation.

Carry out induction and initial training	• How you introduce the learner to the workplace and vice versa • Travel training • Awareness and accessibility of notices • Canteen and toilets • Equal opportunities • Health and safety training including fire procedures and first aid information • Hours of work • Procedure for absence • Smoking rules • Dress code • Internet/email policy	• <i>Employing People with Learning Disabilities: A handbook for employers</i> • Equality and Human Rights Commission www.equalityhumanrights.com
Draw up an agreement between all parties	• Written and verbal agreement • Agree role of learner in workplace • Include the learner's goals/targets for the placement – what they want to achieve • Disciplinary and grievance procedures • Equal opportunities • Induction and training • Trade union membership	• Trades Union Congress www.tuc.org.uk
Make adaptations and get support	• Accessible information and communication aids and equipment • Clothing/uniform • Specific support • Travel expenses • Establish a review process linked to ILP	• Access to Work • Jobcentre Plus Disability Support • Specialist organisations that support people with particular disabilities • Organisations providing advice and support for lifelong learning such as NIACE or Department for Innovation, Universities and Skills

Supervision, performance monitoring and progression	• Training and supporting managers and supervisors • Ongoing accessibility of information and procedures • Maintaining a relationship with the employer or setting up ongoing systems of support such as keeping a log book, buddying or mentoring	• <i>Employing People with Learning Disabilities: A handbook for employers</i> • Social services
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Section 10

Taking action

The section provides a summary of the key points of each part of the Making it Work book and places them in an action plan format. The action plan is set out in the following sections:

- Listening to learners
- Changes in the structure of the Learning and Skills sector
- Supported employment
- The supported employment process
- Person-centred approaches
- Developing a supported employment model
- Curriculum development and a supported employment approach
- Collaborative working
- Working with parents and carers
- Working with employers

This action planning section can be used as a basis for work to develop the supported employment approach in vocational provision for people with learning difficulties.

You can download these pages from:

<http://shop.niace.org.uk/making-it-work-plans.html>

Listening to learners

It is important to be guided by the aspirations and interests of an individual, when considering the type of a job in which they will flourish. Listening to the experiences of people with learning difficulties who are in paid work could be a good way of raising the awareness of learners about working and getting a job.

What action do you need to take?	How will this be done?	Who is responsible?	When will this be done?
Create systems for talking to your learners about their dreams, goals and past experiences of work, and what is important to them in a job.			
Invite people with learning difficulties who have found fulfilling work to talk to your learners about this.			

Policy developments and changes in structure of the learning and skills sector

The policy context has never been so favourable for promoting employment opportunities for people with learning difficulties. However, it is a time of considerable change in the structure of post-16 education and training.

What action do you need to take?	How will this be done?	Who is responsible?	When will this be done?
Identify structures and practices you have in place to address current strategies and imminent changes.			
Decide which practices you might need to review and change to develop the supported employment approach in your provider.			

Values and principles of supported employment

The support employment process is rooted in the social model of disability and is underpinned by a clear set of principles. These principles will have an impact on teaching and learning.

What action do you need to take?	How will this be done?	Who is responsible?	When will this be done?
Carry out an appraisal of the extent to which your vocational provision for people with learning difficulties incorporates each of these principles (see page 26).			
Ensure that all aspects of the development of your vocational provision are based on the assumption that learners with learning difficulties will be employed.			
Identify changes in approach that need to be made in order to develop a supported employment approach in your provision.			

The supported employment process

The supported employment process follows a series of well-defined stages. Supported employment organisations will work to this staged process and will have expertise in the techniques used to support people with learning difficulties into and in work.

What action do you need to take?	How will this be done?	Who is responsible?	When will this be done?
Find out if there is a supported employment organisation in your locality and investigate the possibility of joint working.			
Identify which of the elements of the supported employment process are covered by your current vocational provision for learners with learning difficulties (see page 29).			
Assess how effectively your vocational provision for people with learning difficulties incorporates the supported employment process.			
Identify any stages of the process that are not effectively covered decide how you will change this and who would be best placed to do this.			

Person-centred planning and approaches

The term 'person-centred planning' refers to a particular way of working that uses a specific set of tools and approaches. Supported employment incorporates this approach.

What action do you need to take?	How will this be done?	Who is responsible?	When will this be done?
Review your knowledge of person-centred working and, if you need to know more, find some support and training.			
Look at how you can develop the use of person-centred approaches and tools in your practice.			
How will you involve learners in all the stages of the assessment and planning cycle using person-centered approaches.			

Developing a supported employment model

There is no set template for a supported employment model in vocational education and training. The way providers develop vocational provision in order to embed a supported employment approach will depend on their individual situation in terms of experience in this area of work, and whether there is a supported employment organisation they can work with.

What action do you need to take?	How will this be done?	Who is responsible?	When will this be done?
Decide what kind of 'model' would suit your situation.			
Investigate whether local supported employment services are available and, if so, whether you can work together.			
Talk to partners with whom you currently work about what they could offer.			
Approach potential new partners about their involvement.			
Audit the skills and experience of staff and consider how this could contribute.			
Take stock of other resources such as accommodation you have available.			

Curriculum development and a supported employment approach

There are a number of factors that need to be taken into account when developing a curriculum that embeds a supported employment approach.

What action do you need to take?	How will this be done?	Who is responsible?	When will this be done?
Audit your current curriculum against the list of points on pages 66 and 67. Discuss what needs developing and what needs to change.			
Decide how you will develop a flexible curriculum that supports the 'place and train' model (see page 28).			
Plan how travel training will be part of the curriculum offer.			
Look at how you will link the curriculum to support learners on work experience placements.			

Collaborative working

A range of partners need to be involved in developing a supported employment approach for vocational training and courses for people with learning difficulties. There are certain aspects of joint working that need particular attention to help partners work well together.

What action do you need to take?	How will this be done?	Who is responsible?	When will this be done?
Develop existing and new networks to support your work.			
Develop procedures with partners that ensure: • you understand each other's language and terminology • that sector-specific language does not become a barrier to collaborative working • that clear, accessible language is used with learners			
Develop ways to collect learner data that can be effectively shared by all partners.			
Work with learners to develop forms and information for learners that are accessible.			
Target information at key players whom you want to involve.			

Working with parents and carers

Parents and carers have an important role to play in supporting their son or daughter into work.

What action do you need to take?	How will this be done?	Who is responsible?	When will this be done?
Listen to parents' and carers' expectations and anxieties and act on them.			
Decide how you will engage and involve parents and carers early on in the process and plan how to do this.			
Develop links with the local carers' association.			
Identify colleagues in other organisations it would be good to work with to support parents and carers.			
Ask parents with experience of their son or daughter working to talk to other parents who are new to this situation.			

Working with employers

Raising the awareness of employers about the potential of people with learning difficulties to work and to be valuable employers is essential to ensure people have employment opportunities.

What action do you need to take?	How will this be done?	Who is responsible?	When will this be done?
If you have a local supported employment service, find out about their work with employers and if the service can effectively support your needs.			
Identify other staff in your organisation who can help with employer engagement, e.g. an employment placement officer or marketing staff.			
Investigate and build on the ideas used by other providers to develop employer contacts.			
Use the step-by-step section on working with employers outlined in this book if you decide to make direct approaches to employers.			
Establish links with Connexions, IAG and Jobcentre Plus staff and find out about specialist DWP programmes.			
Develop or adapt materials which describe the key features of Supported Employment and the benefits for the employer.			
Approach potential new partners about their involvement.			

Section 11

Resources

The following resources have been divided into:

- Resources for people with learning difficulties;
- Resources for practitioners and managers within learning settings; and
- Resources for employers.

These have been included in case you want to do any further reading or research – but you do not need to read all resources. However, some may come in handy when working with learners to prepare for and access employment, or in staff training.

Please note that all web links given in this section and throughout the book were correct at the time of writing.

Resources for adults with learning difficulties

Care Services Improvement Partnership (CSIP) job guides

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

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

Valued in public

Helping people with a learning disability to work in public bodies

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

The above resources are published by the CSIP Valuing People Support Team.

To get copies either email **valuing.people.info@dh.gsi.gov.uk** or download free from **<http://valuingpeople.gov.uk/dynamic/valuingpeople120.jsp>**

Other resources

Valuing People Now – easy read version

The easy read version of the three-year strategy (from 2009) about support and services for people with learning disabilities.

www.dh.gov.uk/en/Publicationsandstatistics/Publications/PublicationsPolicyAndGuidance/DH_093377

Valuing Employment Now – easy read version

Easy read version of the strategy about making sure that people with learning disabilities get the support they need to get and keep a paid job.

www.valuingpeople.gov.uk/dynamic/valuingpeople119.jsp

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: **<http://shop.niace.org.uk>** or telephone **0870 600 2400**

Resources for practitioners and managers within learning settings

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

Ref: SFW

Published by the Department for Education and Skills (no longer in existence).

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.

Other resources

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

Sue Southwood

Cost: £8.95 + p&p

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

Yola Jacobsen

Cost: £60.00 + p&p

Equity Road: A Whole organisation approach to assessment for travel support funding for disabled adult learners

Christine Nightingale and David Ewens

£8.95

All above resources are available from NIACE. Order online at

<http://shop.niace.org.uk> or telephone 0870 600 2400

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

www.skill.org.uk and go to the 'bookshop' 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

www.lsneducation.org.uk and go to 'publications'.

Progression to Employment: A guide for providers of education and training to learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities to assist with their progression to employment.

Samantha Sharpe and Richard Groves.

Available from:

http://readingroom.lsc.gov.uk/lsc/WestMidlands/Progression_To_Employment_Guidebook.pdf

Valuing People Now

The Government's three year strategy (from 2009) about support and services for people with learning disabilities.

www.valuingpeople.gov.uk/venresources

Available from:

www.dh.gov.uk/en/Publicationsandstatistics/Publications/PublicationsPolicyAndGuidance/DH_093377

Valuing Employment Now

The Government strategy about making sure that people with learning disabilities get the support they need to get and keep a paid job.

Available from:

www.valuingpeople.gov.uk/dynamic/valuingpeople119.jsp

Resources for employers

Employing People with Learning Disabilities: A Handbook for Employers

By Susan Hemmings and Jenny Morris

Available from Joseph Rowntree Foundation at:

www.jrf.org.uk/publications/employing-people-with-learning-disabilities-handbook-employers

Making it Work – A Guide to Employing People with Learning Disabilities

Available from Mencap at:

www.mencap.org.uk

Valued in Public – Helping People With a Learning Disability to Work in Public Bodies

By Anne O'Bryan and Stephen Beyer, November 2005

Published by the Care Services Improvement Partnership (CSIP)

www.valuingpeople.gov.uk

Useful websites

www.base-uk.org

The British Association for Supported Employment has information about supported employment and local agencies.

www.buryest.org.uk

Information about supported employment in practice

www.excellencegateway.org.uk

Online service for the post-16 learning and skills sector in England

www.gettingalife.org.uk

Getting a Life project

www.helensandersonassociates.co.uk

Helen Sanderson Associates

www.hmg.gov.uk/linkuplinkin.aspx

Link Up, Link In

www.in-control.org.uk

In control

www.jobcentreplus.gov.uk

www.lseducation.org.uk

Learning and Skills Network

www.mencap.org.uk

Mencap Pathway and Work Right

www.niace.org.uk

NIACE – National Institute of Adult Continuing Education

www.officefordisability.gov.uk/working/project-search.php

Project Search

www.pureinnovations.co.uk

and **www.pureinnovations.co.uk/pure-employment.html**

Details of a Supported Employment programme

www.remploy.co.uk

Remploy – Finding jobs for disabled people

www.shaw-trust.org.uk

Shaw Trust – provides employment services for disabled people

www.skill.org.uk

Skill – The National Bureau for Students with Disabilities

www.valuingpeople.gov.uk

Information about Valuing People

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HM Government (2009) *Link Up Link In Handbook*. London: Social Exclusion Task Force

www.hmg.gov.uk/linkuplinkin.aspx

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Jacobsen, Y. (2002) *Making the Jump: Transition to work*. Leicester: NIACE.

Jacobsen, Y. and Little, P. (2009) *Learning for Work: Employability and people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. A report following nine regional conference (held January–April 2008)*. Coventry: LSC.

http://readingroom.lsc.gov.uk/lsc/National/Learning_for_Work_Main_Report_FINAL.pdf

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http://readingroom.lsc.gov.uk/lsc/National/learning_for_living_and_work_complete_2.pdf

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Appendices

Appendix 1

What is Expected from the Employer?

- To set reasonable tasks
- To ensure a safe working environment
- To gradually increase challenges for the student
- To place the student alongside a mentor
- To liaise regularly with the Employment Placement Officer and JLS Coach
- To contribute to student achievement by completing assessment sheets



What Can the Employer Expect?

- Placed students
- Punctuality
- Commitment
- Hard work
- Requests for company rules & regulations

Call 01204 907806 or go on line at www.boltoncollege.co.uk





Skills for Independent Living The World of Work

Supporting people with learning difficulties to make the transition from school into a career and looking into employment

Call 01204 907806 or go on line at www.boltoncollege.co.uk

Case Study: Shaun Macdonnell

Shaun attended a Preparation for Employment Course and attended two Work Experience Placements at finishing the final at Ford, then at Volkswagen.

Shaun was informed that there was a newly created job on the car sales pitch. If Shaun could the car sales.

The Work Placement Officer supported Shaun for the interview and also in the transition from being on benefits to moving into and work in conjunction with New Deal at the Job Centre.

Shaun has now been working as a Valet at the new car showroom and has now been in full time employment for four years.

What's in it for the Employer?

- Students skills matched to area of work
- Trainee future employees
- Community Development
- A chance to participate in an equal opportunity project
- Job Centre funded financial incentive
- Marketing & business opportunities
- A chance to help students to achieve and thereby to providing positive learning experiences





An Introduction

Bolton Community College is one of the leading providers in courses specifically designed for students with learning difficulties. Those who experience mental health problems and those who are have physical disabilities.

Students who attend Preparation for employment Courses, Packs of Skills towards Work Courses, NVQ Training Level 1 or NVQ Hotel Level 1 have had the opportunity of accessing work experience with a local employer as part of their course criteria.

Benefits for Students Who Gain Work Placements

Research shows that there is a link between work experience and student personal and social development.

Work experience can make a significant contribution to students learning.

A well planned and supported work experience experience programme can make informed, realistic decisions about the world of work.

Work experience enables the student to complete vocational interest and gain qualifications in their chosen area.

Advice, Guidance and Training Available

There are several areas in which college along with the Work Placement Officers can assist in connection with the work placement experience.

These areas cover:

- Work experience info
- Health & Safety
- Travel Opportunities
- DDA legislation
- Staff training/mentoring
- Student travel plans
- Disposing support for students



Students gain valuable skills and knowledge in the classroom and also the experience of a placement with a local employer of choice.

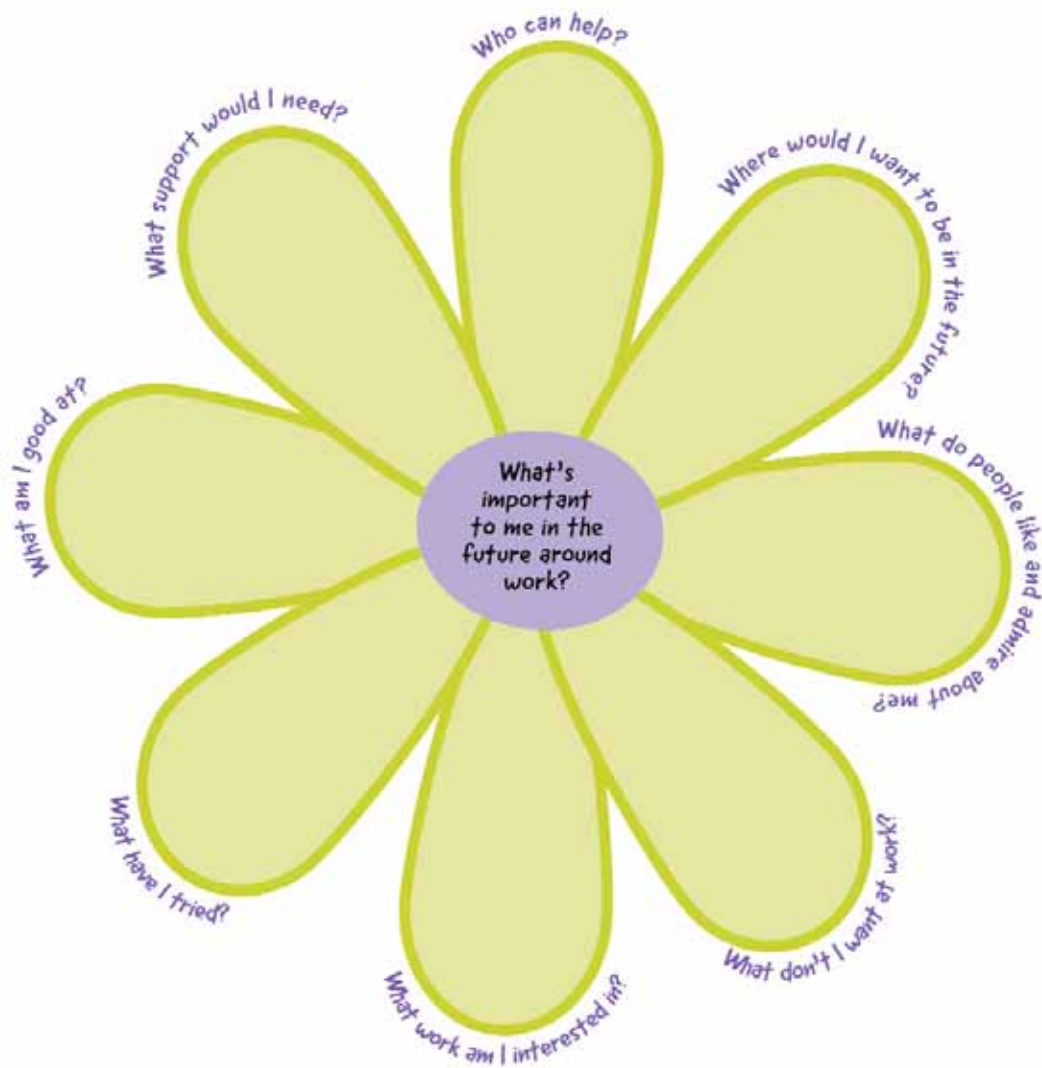
Students are supported in the workplace by the Work Placement Officer and Job Coach.



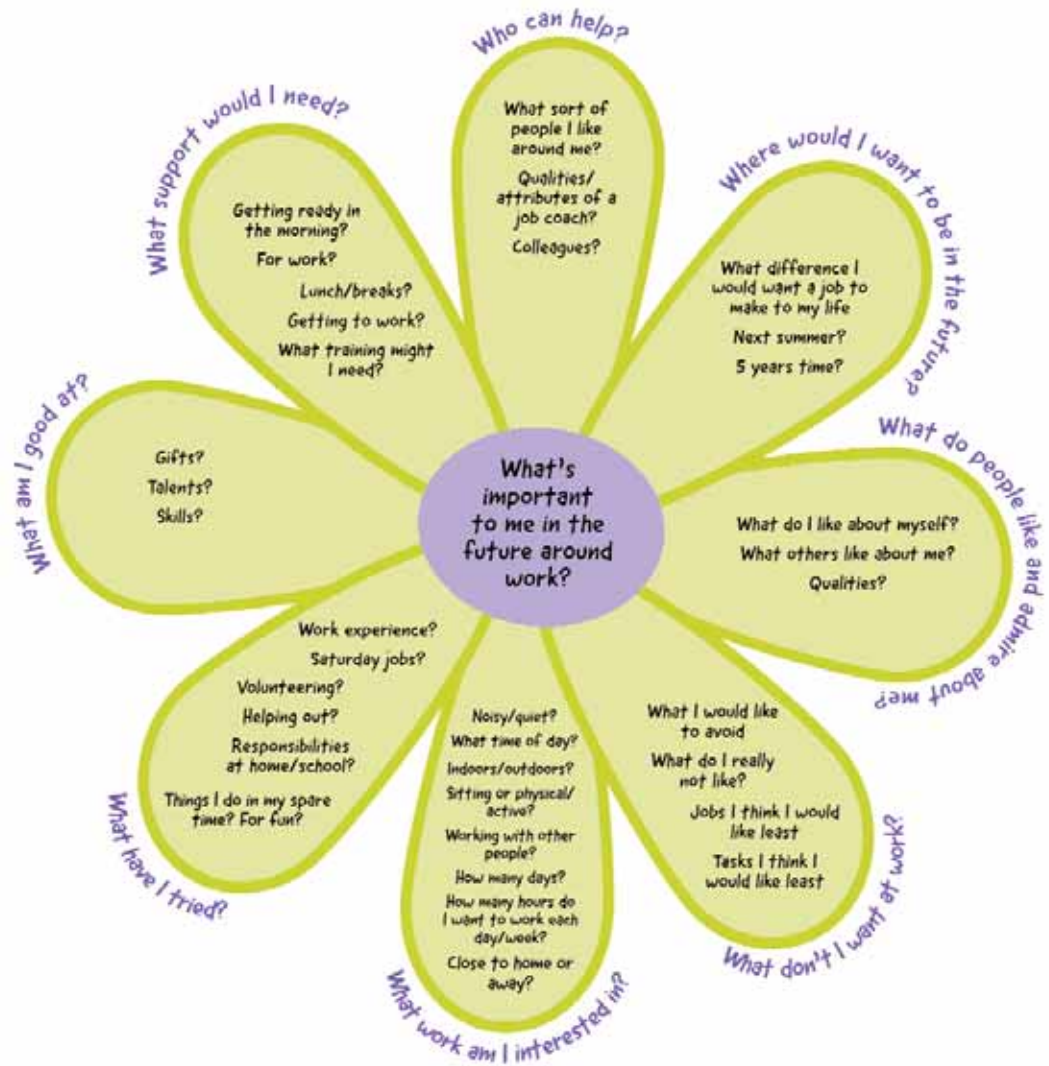
For more information on Skills for Independent Living courses Call 01204 907806 or go online at www.boltoncollege.co.uk

Appendix 2

Thinking about what's important to me
in the future around work



Thinking about what's important to me in the future around work



Appendix 3

Becky's one-page profile for work

At work, people like and admire these things about me:

- "Becky is so dependable; she is always on time, and never asks to leave early."
- "She is very conscientious about doing her job well."
- "She is very agreeable."
- "She makes our customers (and other workers) feel welcome."
- Willing to try new things – pitches in and helps wherever we need her!"

This is me at work

(Insert picture here)

These are important to me about my work:

- Working with other people who I can talk with and laugh with while working.
- Getting paid, earning my own money.
- Staying busy – not being bored.
- Knowing that I've done a good job, especially when I've just tried something new.
- Being friends with my co-workers – knowing that I belong to the group.
- Having some variety in my job – different things to do, mostly with people.
- Making other people feel welcome.

Valuable support for me at work includes:

- I need some time to get ready to work – when I arrive early, I will walk around and say hello to everyone in the kitchen and the dining staff. Please don't stop me, it helps me prepare.
- Remind me when it is time to enter my number in the time clock, I forget about time quite often.
- When I need to learn something new, explain it to me one step at a time. If I practice just one step I can catch on quickly. Many steps explained at once confuse me, and I get nervous.
- Really loud, sudden noises may startle me; if a large pan drops with a bang I may jump and get a little scared for a few minutes. Just reassure me that it was only a pan and it will be okay. Give me a minute or two to recover.
- If you say "Okay, Becky?" I will always say yes. It helps to say "what do you think Becky?" I am more likely to let you know if I don't know how to do something, or ask more questions.
- I need someone to remind me when my break begins and ends.
- I love to talk to people; when I am escorting people to their table, I will always talk with them.
- If you need me to do something else, just ask! I may not see what needs to be done without someone else's help.

One-page profile for work – how to develop each section

At work, people like and admire these things about me:

This section is about the person's personality and their gifts and skills. Some ways to learn about this includes asking:

- What is great about this person?
- What can they do really well?
- What gifts do they have to offer to an employer?
- What gifts do they bring to their co-workers?
- What gifts do they bring to customers, or others?

Record the answers under this heading.

For people who are not yet employed, the heading might be changed to simply read 'People like and admire these things about me'.

This is me at work:

(Insert picture here)

These are important to me about my work:

Ask the person, and others who know him or her best, the following questions:

Ask the person, and others who know him or her best, the following questions:

- What does this person want to get from their job?
- What are the things that really matter to this person about their work?
- What type of work does the person desire or want to try?
- What is it that motivates this person to get out of bed and go to work?
- When the person talks about work, what is it that they get the most excited about?

Use the tool 'Good Day/Bad Day' to examine a specific work day and determine what contributes to a really good day at work for the person.

Valuable support for me at work includes:

Ask the person, and those who know him or her the best:

- What needs to be present so that this person can do a good job?
- What helps this person contribute and work well?
- What do we know works for this person and their colleagues to be safe at work?
- What does the person need from managers to do their job well?
- What does he or she need from co-workers so that they view the person as a valuable member of their work team?
- What does a job coach need to do to help the person be successful and be seen as a valued co-worker?

One-page profile for work – the purpose of each section

At work, people like and admire these things about me: To describe the gifts, talents and personality characteristics a person holds, which can make a good contribution to the employer, the community, or the person's relationships with co-workers.	This is me at work: (Insert picture here)
These are important to me about my work: This section describes what really matters to a person about working, or about a specific job. It provides insight into what will motivate people, and help them to stay with a job. It may also provide insight into the likelihood of a job that may be a bad match for the person, based on not aligning well with what matters the most to the person.	Valuable support for me at work includes: To clearly describe what must be present in order for the person to experience success on the job. This provides specific details of what others need to know, and what they need to do, in order for the person to meet (or exceed) their employer's expectations. It explains the type of approach that is more likely to work well when providing support to the person (e.g., ask only one question at a time. Give them time to respond).

My one-page profile for work

**At work, people like and admire
these things about me:**

This is me at work:

(Insert picture here)

**These are important to me
about my work:**

**Valuable support for me at
work includes:**

Appendix 4

Thanks to Sharon for sharing this.

Sharon's One Page Profile



MY ONE PAGE PROFILE FOR WORK

IMPORTANT TO ME

- Working on the Person Centred Planning Team.
- To know what I am doing each day.
- For you to let me know if you need to cancel any arrangements that you have made with me.
- To make a brew whenever I want to.
- Coffee with milk and 2 sugars.
- To have plenty of time to eat my lunch.
- I don't like to rush.
- My mobile phone, I take it with me wherever I go.
- If you say you are going to phone me please do, because I will be waiting for your call.
- To have a Mc Donald's strawberry milkshake at the end of the day.
- Check dates in my diary with Gail and discuss what we will be doing next.

WHAT PEOPLE WHO KNOW SHARON LIKE AND ADMIRE ABOUT HER.

- Brilliant memory for names.
- Her enthusiasm and passion for the work that she does.
- How confident she is when delivering training.
- Sharon's friendly disposition, she is easy to get along with.
- Caring nature and concern for people if they are not feeling well.
- Her lively bubbly personality.
- Her sense of fun and adventure.
- I really admire her honesty.

HOW BEST TO SUPPORT ME

- Make any travel arrangements with me so I know the time, date, journey and who I will be travelling with.
- If I am going out anywhere help me to work out how much money I will need for the day.
- Talk me through our plans for the day.
- Read through my decision making agreements with me when necessary.
- Ensure that I have plenty of time to eat my lunch at least 45 minutes.
- To have a healthy diet, if you are out with me give me a little reminder of what I have had during the day e.g. drinks and snacks.
- To ring me and let me know if you need to cancel or rearrange any appointments you have made with me.
- Ring me or send me a text message when you say you will.
- Check with me that I have written all my appointments in my diary and on the calendar at home.
- Talk through what we will be doing next time we meet.



HOW BEST TO SUPPORT ME

- Make any travel arrangements with me so I know the time, date, journey and who I will be travelling with.
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- Her lively bubbly personality.
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- Check with me that I have written all my appointments in my diary and on the calendar at home.
- Talk through what we will be doing next time we meet.

Examples of Best Practice

