

1. Tackling a significant inequality

What innovative and evidence-based support are you already delivering to improve health and employment outcomes for people in your community which you think could be replicated at scale?

There is considerable consensus among providers and stakeholders in Scotland that a supported employment model is the most effective employability approach in terms of helping disabled people into sustainable paid work. Supported employment has been defined in Scotland as, "*promoting the rights of all individuals to achieve their full potential through a model of flexible support that enables people to overcome barriers to their employability and access real jobs for real pay*".

The Supported Employment Framework in Scotland sets out a five stepped approach successful supported employment:

- Engagement by SE Service – helping disabled people most distanced from the labour market to make informed choices.
- Vocational Profiling – identifying skills and preferences for work, giving work experiences that will help the individual make their own vocational choices.
- Job Finding – identifying the preferred job through employer engagement, also providing support to the employer.
- Employer Engagement – finding out about the workplace environment, co-workers and the 'supports' a person might need.
- On/Off the Job Support and Aftercare – backup to the employee and their employer, developing workplace independence and career progression.

Over the past seven years, SCLD has supported the development of the Project SEARCH model in Scotland. The main aim of Project SEARCH is to support young adults with learning disabilities and autism into full-time employment. It provides on-site workplace experience for young adults with learning disabilities and autism to acquire the necessary skills to progress to sustainable employment combined with classroom sessions which reinforce learning. The project also aims to raise the expectations of employers, students with learning disabilities and their families so that they see full-time employment as a realistic expectation.

The cornerstone of Project SEARCH is total immersion in a large business which has a commitment to support people with disabilities in the workplace. The programme achieves employment outcomes rates (over 16 hours a week) of 61% in Scotland (73% if all employment outcomes are included).¹ Data from North Lanarkshire's and South Lanarkshire's project SEARCH programmes between 2010/11 and 2012/13 indicate a cost per participant of £8,000 to £10,000.

¹ Mapping the Employability Landscape for People with learning Disabilities in Scotland (2016)

We advocate wider use of the Project SEARCH model in particular and of supported employment models more generally. The advantage of the “place - train - maintain” approach allows people to learn on the job with support from work colleagues and backed up by the skills of a job coach providing well-structured flexible support to both the service user and potential employer. The model also offers customised support, experienced and skilled job coaches, a focus on real jobs and emphasis on continuing assistance for career progression and further acquisition of skills.

2. Supporting people into work

a. Building work coach capability:

How do we ensure that Jobcentres can support the provision of the right personal support at the right time for individuals?

Although many people with a learning disability have support needs and conditions that directly impact on their ability to enter, sustain and progress into work, employment must be a very real aspiration for all. People with a learning disability remain one of the most marginalised groups in society and can often be isolated within their community. They experience far lower rates of employment than the general population – estimated to be in the range of 7% to 25%, well below the disability employment rate of 42% and overall rate of 73%². In the context of continued pressure on public spending, the challenge for job centre provision remains how best to deliver personalised, tailored and holistic support that allows everyone to fulfil their potential.

We welcome the Green Paper’s emphasis on personalised support and the proposals for a personalised support package to help people in the Employment and Support Allowance (ESA) Work Related Activity Group/Universal Credit Limited Capability for Work group (WRAG/UC-LCW) find and return to work. In order to play a more effective role in supporting people with a learning disability into real, sustainable employment, jobcentre provision needs to pay greater attention to individuals’ specific needs and ambitions. It must also be accessible for everyone and based within local communities. The move towards increasingly providing employability services on-line risks significantly disadvantaging people with learning disabilities. Moreover, the plans announced by the DWP to close eight Jobcentre Plus offices in Glasgow in Castlemilk, Langside, Parkhead, Easterhouse, Bridgeton, Anniesland and Maryhill and Cambuslang will impact on the ability of people with learning disabilities and associated health problems to access employment support. This will inevitably make Jobcentre provision more remote and increasingly inaccessible for individuals in communities which already experiencing significant disadvantaged. We find this decision difficult to reconcile with the stated aims of the Green Paper.

² Mapping the Employability Landscape for People with learning Disabilities in Scotland (2016)

Disability Rights UK's report, Taking Control of Employment Support³ found that *"there is a gaping gulf between what disabled people want and what they get" in terms of employability support. And "Disabled people require effective support which genuinely improves their position in the labour market."* From the research recently commissioned by SCLD we know that for 52% of young people with a learning disability college is their post school destination compared to the national average of 26%⁴. However, this post-school investment appear to make little contribution to improved employment prospects. Research consistently shows that work experience and learning on the job improves employment prospects. However, there is a danger that people with learning disabilities 'cycle' between different work preparation or life skills courses rather than being supported along a pathway into real and sustainable employment. People with a learning disability should have far more opportunity to gain experience and skills through work, rather than the endless 'work preparation' activities which have characterised DWP provision.

In our view, therefore, Jobcentre provision for people with a learning disability should be employment focused from the start. It is vital that job coaches undertake in-depth and thorough vocational profiling with each individual's in order to fully understand their skills, qualities, ambitions and support needs. It is equally important that this is followed by a good quality, meaningful work placement in a real work environment. This could include work trials, work placements, traineeships, internships and apprenticeships. Effective Jobcentre provision must work closely with third sector providers and have good relationships with local and national business to help find roles best suited to individual jobseekers.

What specialist tools or support should we provide to work coaches to help them work with disabled people and people with health conditions?

The Green Paper states that from 2017 the Government will introduce training which better enables work coaches to support people with mental health conditions and more confidently engage with employers on the issue of mental health. However, there is no mention of training to support job coaches to work with people who have other conditions or disabilities. We believe this is a missed opportunity and that this training should be extended to enhance Jobcentre Plus work coaches' skills and capabilities so that they can better support people with a wide range of conditions including learning disability.

We welcome the proposal in the Green Paper to recruit up to 300 more Disability Employment Advisers, focused on coaching work coaches to help build their confidence and expertise in supporting individuals with a health conditions or disability. However, this is a very modest increase in a UK context and will have only limited impact on the capacity of individual offices. It is particularly important for people with a learning disability that caseloads are kept at a level which enables job

³ Taking Control of Employment Support (2013)

⁴ Mapping the Employability Landscape for People with learning Disabilities in Scotland (2016)

coaches to have frequent contact with an individual and build a trusting relationship. Once this relationship is established job coaches need to have strong links with employers and an understanding both the local and national labour market. It is also important that they work closely with other services (such as health, social care, housing, and skills) to ensure that employment provision can be aligned to best meet the needs of individual.

The Green Paper also proposes recruiting 200 Community across Job Centre Plus. These will be people with personal and professional experience of disability including secondments from Disabled People's User-Led Organisations and third sector organisations. We welcome the fact that from next year Community Partners will be working with Jobcentre Plus staff, to build their capability and provide first-hand insight into the issues individuals with a health condition or disability face in securing and sustaining employment. We recognise the potential for Community Partners to engage with local employers and identify 'tailored local provision' designed to support to individuals with specific conditions or particular obstacles to employment. However, while it is essential that Job Centre Plus staff have strong links with local third sector delivery agencies, there is a limit to the extent the sector can be expected to help alleviate pressure on mainstream provision without more sustainable and long term funding structures.

b. Supporting people into work:

What support should we offer to help those 'in work' to stay in work and progress?

There is a need not only to support people with a learning disability into work but also to provide in work support to help people remain in employment. We think there is a role for in-work support both in a financial sense and in the form of continued on the job support and aftercare from a job coach once someone has entered employment. This type of support can be crucial in supporting individuals to sustain employment and deal with change in the workplace as well enabling them to live independent lives.

Frequently the barriers to employment are small: travel costs, clothing costs, health and safety accreditation. Providing the job coaches with budgets that can quickly resolve these problems could make a significant difference to people with a learning disability moving into employment. At present Access to Work can only be triggered once the person is in work not the period before the job starts.

It is vital that in-work disability benefit is protected from any further reductions or restrictions to the eligibility criteria. There is scope for employers and disabled people to be given the greater choice and control to determine how to spend the budget for disability employment support (including Access to Work funding), with specialist advice as necessary. This budget could also be used to facilitate access to

learning and qualifications in, or linked to, the workplace. This could take the form of on-the-job vocational qualifications, attending a local college, distance learning or accredited continuous professional development.

c. Improving access to employment support:

Should we offer targeted health and employment support to individuals in the Support Group, and Universal Credit equivalent, where appropriate?

The employment and welfare policies of successive governments has failed to move significant numbers of people with learning disabilities who receive out-of-work disability benefits into paid employment. A succession of large centralised employment support programmes have largely failed to help disabled people find and keep jobs, especially those who face the most significant labour market disadvantage. The Green Paper states that at present over 60% of those in the ESA support group have no contact at all with a work coach. It proposes increased focus on providing back-to-work support for people in the Support Group and the introduction of mandatory 'keep-in-touch' discussions with Work Coaches.

We are in favour of health and employment support for individuals in the ESA support group who choose to engage. This should include options for those who face most challenges to gaining employment to move towards the labour market and into work. However, this support must be flexible, treat individuals with dignity and respect and recognise their different support needs. We caution against any move to extend conditionality to this group. There will be some for whom work is unrealistic and in our view they should not be targets for automatic referral to a DWP programme. The threat of sanction by an agency that exists to support people with a learning disability is not constructive and risks presenting this group with further barriers to engagement. We welcome the Scottish Government's decision not to make conditionality a feature of the newly devolved employability provision. The Work Able Scotland programme will support people facing barriers to employment because of a health condition into work and help them to remain there.

How might the voluntary sector and local partners be able to help this group?

Specialist third sector organisations within the voluntary sector can offer bespoke insight and expertise around working with people with specific conditions or who face particular employment challenges. Where sufficient investment and access is given to the appropriate individuals, specialist contracted employment support can play a vital role in helping people with a learning disability to enter sustainable work. There is greater potential for more innovative, flexible approaches within the third sector provision than with large centralised programmes.

We believe there is scope for the DWP to engage more effectively with third sector organisations in the design and delivery of support. There is potential to build on schemes commissioned locally. This should include learning from and building on

models with a proven track record such as Individual Placement and Support (IPS) and Project SEARCH. These models have successfully demonstrated the merits of provision which combines in-work vocational training, support for the individual and engagement with and support for employers.

How can we best maintain contact with people in the Support Group to ensure no-one is written off?

The Green Paper asserts that people placed in the Support Group have *'been given the perception they do not have any capability for work and are unlikely to think about when and how they might start to prepare for an eventual return to work as a result of the Work Capability Assessment'*. It is essential that this group has the opportunity to engage in work related activity if they want to with a view to entering sustainable employment.

Accessible and inclusive information and methods of communication are essential to ensuring individuals with more severe learning disabilities have the opportunity to engage in employment focussed activity. People may require information in alternative formats for example easy read, large print, audio or DVD or require support to communicate e.g. advocacy support or specialist equipment. If information is not accessible or their communication needs are not met a person with learning disabilities may:

- Avoid engaging with services/Not turn up for an appointment.
- Have difficulty expressing their views and feelings.
- Have difficulty understanding and/or paying attention.
- Become frustrated, embarrassed, anxious or angry.⁵

We believe there is a role for a publicly funded advice service that offers holistic advice and support to people. This could include advice in other important areas such as energy efficiency measures or debt management. Additionally, we believe there is scope for independent advocacy to play a significant role in supporting people who use employment and welfare services. In our view, advocacy has the potential to make the system more accessible and responsive to the needs of people with learning disabilities, help people navigate the system and provide an enhanced level of support for during the assessment process.

We propose that the Government considers the role of 'one-stop-shops' to provide advice service and advocacy support on employment, welfare and wellbeing. We believe these would promote engagement with those who are furthest removed from the labour market and help ensure that no one is written off. Bringing employment, financial, health and wellbeing support under one roof would allow for much better communication between teams and is likely to encourage those in the support group to retain more active links with employment services. It would also encourage proactive signposting and promote better links with learning disability organisations.

⁵ [Principles of Inclusive Information \(2011\)](#)

Any development of these hubs should prioritise the user experience and co-designed with service users including people with learning disabilities.

Assessments for benefits for people with health conditions

Should the assessment for the financial support an individual receives from the system be separate from the discussion a claimant has about employment or health support?

We welcome the fact that the Green Paper recognises the assessment process requires reform. However, rather than seeking to reform the Work Capability Assessment, the Green Paper proposes a totally new structure in which the distinction between the ESA Support Group and the WRAG group are removed and assessments for financial support and employment support would happen in parallel. We recognise the potential advantages for those assessed as needing the most financial support being able to access the holistic health and employment support and signposting offered by and through Jobcentre Plus. However, there is relatively little information about how this would work in practice. We have concerns that this creates a system in which everyone is subject to mandatory work activity until they are assessed as being unable to do so by Work Coaches.

Building on our plans to exempt people with the most severe health conditions and disabilities from reassessment, how can we further improve the process for assessing financial support for this group?

We welcome proposals for a fast-track process for people with the most severe conditions and disabilities. The Green Paper proposes undertaking a 'case review' to examine whether an assessor could complete a reduced assessment using existing information which could avoid face-to-face assessment entirely. This is potentially very positive, however, we would like to hear more detail about how people in this group would be identified if an initial assessment is not undertaken. Assessors must be provided with comprehensive knowledge of the challenges disabled people face, including condition specific training. Assessors must also recognise that some people with the most severe health conditions may also want to work. Assumptions should not be made about an individual's ability to work based on their diagnosis. In our view, any significant changes to the criteria or process of financial support assessments should be independently reviewed and consider the full range of impairments faced by people. It is very important that people with learning disabilities can continue to access sufficient, timely and appropriate financial support from the welfare system when they need it.

3. Supporting employers to recruit with confidence and create health workplaces

Embedding good practices and supportive cultures:

Which measures would best support employers to recruit and retain the talent of disabled people and people with health conditions?

There is a danger that too much emphasis is placed on the employment capacity of individuals while insufficient attention is paid to supporting and influencing employers' recruitment practices. Employers are the gatekeepers to the labour market and developing their commitment to employing people with learning disabilities is critical. Efforts are needed to challenge both employers' and colleagues' preconceptions of what people with a learning disability are able to do in the workplace. This requires action and cultural change to:

- Challenge the misconceptions held by employers that people with a learning disability are only able to carry out routine jobs.
- Challenge the fears of existing colleagues through exposure to disability awareness training.
- Raise awareness among employers on how to provide a more accessible and inclusive workplace.
- Encourage employers to invest in the career development and progression of employees with a learning disability over the longer term.
- Encourage employers to make the adaptations in their recruitment and employment practices so that people can access and sustain the jobs offer.

It is also important that employers are encouraged and supported to recognise the positive business benefit of recruiting people with a learning disability, which include:

- Ability to draw labour from a wider pool of talent.
- Increased workforce diversity.
- Meeting, reflecting and understanding the needs of a wider customer base.

People with learning disabilities offer:

- High levels of reliability.
- Strong work ethic.
- High level of worker retention.
- Ability to undertake complex tasks.

For many employers there is a disconnect between their willingness to take on people with disabilities and their ability and confidence to do so. They may require advice, guidance and ongoing support to recruit people with a learning disability. Employer in certain circumstances may need to make reasonable adjustments to meet the needs of people with learning disabilities both at recruitment and in-work stages. Effective line management, access to open conversation and knowledge of self-management principle and techniques are all have a role to play. Employers need to have access to information and support that can help them address the health needs of their employees to allow people to remain in work.

Moving into work

How can existing government support be reformed to better support the recruitment and retention of disabled people and people with health conditions?

The Access to Work Scheme provides both financial and non-financial assistance to employers to make reasonable adjustments following a workplace assessment. However, people with learning disabilities report delays and obstacles in receiving support from Access to Work and anecdotally we have heard that staff can be unhelpful and difficult to deal with at times and that people may find the process stigmatising.

We would like to see a higher profile for Access to Work in Scotland resulting in an increased take up rate. We also think Access to Work could be more flexible at the point of moving into work. The availability of small grants towards additional costs such as travel, equipment or work clothes can make a big difference to someone's ability take up paid employment.

At present the specialist scheme for disabled people recruitment for Work Choice, does not reach those who have the most complex needs. There are also systematic failings within the ESA process itself, including a disconnect between assessment of barriers to work and the support required to overcome them. In Scotland, Work Choice and the Work Programme are to be replaced by the new transitional programme's Work Able and Work First Scotland. The Scottish Government has stated that the new Scottish employment service from 2018, will include a distinct offer for disabled people, including tailored and personalised provision for those for whom work is a reasonable objective. We await more detailed announcement of these plans and intend to take an active role in the consultation process.

4. Building a movement for change: taking action together

How can we bring about a shift in society's wider attitudes to make progress and achieve long-lasting change?

A substantial challenges lies in overcoming the low expectations that parents, teachers, college lecturers, employers and society at large have of people with a learning disability. Many individuals are still denied choice and autonomy in crucial decisions which affect their lives and experience stigma and discrimination. They are not always encouraged to see themselves as having a valuable role to play in society and the labour market, unduly limiting individuals' aspirations of what jobs and careers they are able to do. Despite this, people with a learning disability have the same aspirations in life as anyone else, such as to live independently, have supportive friends and family and have a rewarding job.

There is a role for national information campaigns to highlight best practice and individual success stories in an attempt to shift society's attitudes and achieve long lasting change. This should include raising awareness of the skills and capacity of the disabled workforce and their positive impact on productivity and profitability. For

employers there is a need to recognise the latent talent pool that exists and can quickly and easily be integrated into our workforce bringing with them significant social, cultural and economic benefits. Attitudinal change is not just required at an employer level, however, it is something that should concern everyone.

What is the role of government in bringing about positive change to our attitudes to disabled people and people with health conditions?

There is a role for government to lead by example and be a visible employer of disabled people. However, changing societal attitudes is a more difficult task than altering behaviour through legislation. Much of the Green Paper is framed from a perspective of how employers can be supported, rather than how employees can be protected from discrimination. In the context of Brexit it is essential that workers' rights, employment law and equality legislation continue to be upheld and protected. This remains essential to the pursuit of a more integrated workforce and open society and the significant social, cultural and economic benefits which result.