



**“Go for it!”:  
Supporting people with learning  
disabilities and/or autistic  
spectrum disorder in employment**

**“GO FOR IT!”:  
SUPPORTING PEOPLE WITH LEARNING  
DISABILITIES AND/OR AUTISTIC SPECTRUM  
DISORDER IN EMPLOYMENT**

**Julie Ridley, Susan Hunter & Infusion Co-operative**

**Scottish Executive Social Research  
2005**

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# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

## BACKGROUND

This research was about the employment support available for people with learning disabilities and/or autistic spectrum disorders (ASD) in Scotland. ‘Employment support’ covered a wide spectrum of provision, including ‘supported employment’. In the research, ‘supported employment’ was defined as real work for 16 hours or more in an integrated setting with ongoing support.

Recent policy including *The same as you?* (Scottish Executive, 2000) and *Working for a change?* (Scottish Executive, 2003), has emphasised the importance of supporting people with learning disabilities and/or ASD in employment. This research was commissioned to inform the work of *The same as you?* National Implementation Group in reviewing progress with this agenda.

## AIMS & METHODS

The study aimed to ‘map’ the nature and availability of employment support for people with learning disabilities and/or ASD in Scotland; to identify aspects of good practice; and to explore the direct experiences of individuals and their families. Its key objectives were to:

- Review the literature and identify features of good practices in ‘supported employment’
- Identify which organisations offered employment support to people with learning disabilities and/or ASD
- Identify links these organisations had with other bodies
- Collect and analyse Partnership in Practice (PiP) agreements
- Identify the number and characteristics of the people supported
- Identify any methods local authorities are using to evaluate employment support
- Identify examples of good practice in the support offered
- Explore the perspectives of supported employees, their families and employers

The study used both quantitative and qualitative methods and involved a review of the literature published in the past 5 years; telephone interviews with 10 key stakeholders; a postal questionnaire survey of 204 employment support providers in Scotland; in-depth qualitative interviews with 15 supported employees, their families and 10 employers.

## KEY FINDINGS

### Mapping ‘employment support’

- The commissioned study was about employment support in its widest sense not only ‘supported employment’. As such, it gathered information about a plethora of approaches, a small proportion of which would pass for what is internationally recognised as ‘supported employment’

- A wide range of small and large-scale organisations were providing employment support, the majority being part of broader services. Some provided this as part of “lifestyle” support, while just over a third were dedicated employment services
- Local authority social work/services departments or their equivalent and the voluntary sector were the main providers. Local authorities were the main funders of employment support
- Employment services tended to be in urban or mixed urban/rural areas and were relatively mature. Services in the voluntary sector were newer and relied on more diverse funding sources

### **Features of best practice**

- Best practice in ‘supported employment’ advocates individuals controlling their vocational destinies through self-determination, facilitated by person centred planning and a career-based approach. This means employment specialists acting as facilitators rather than experts
- Other features of best practice include taking account of employers’ as well as individuals’ needs; using ‘natural supports’ and supporting jobs in ways that are ‘typical’ for each setting; using intentional strategies to enhance social integration; supporting self employment; post or follow-up support; and ensuring people with severe disabilities can access ‘supported employment’
- There was evidence that quality outcomes resulted when services adopted a principled and values-led approach to ‘supported employment’

### **Experiences of supported employment**

- Individuals with learning disabilities and/or ASD interviewed for this research were highly satisfied with ‘supported employment’ and reported positive outcomes: e.g. increased self-esteem, self-confidence, vocational integration, an increase in income, and improved quality of life
- From an employer’s perspective, deciding to employ someone with learning disabilities and/or ASD was influenced by the predisposition of the company; difficulties with filling posts; labour shortages; the ‘business case’; and importantly, the professionalism of the ‘supported employment’ service
- Employers’ anxieties about staff reaction and individuals’ ability to cope were largely unfounded, as was an expectation that the ‘charity return’ would outweigh the ‘business return’. Other employees were more tolerant, accepting and supportive than expected
- Employers who had experienced the successes, resolution of problems, and the wide range of outcomes for their business and other employees, were enthusiasts and

champions of ‘supported employment’. They wanted the Government to be more proactive in selling ‘supported employment’

### **Survey findings**

- A Scotland-wide questionnaire survey found 3,024 people with learning disabilities and/or ASD being supported by 69 separate providers in jobs (both paid and unpaid)
- Although obviously progress in terms of an increase in the numbers of people supported in employment, it was plain that ‘supported employment’ was rare
- Only a third of supported jobs were full-time as defined by the Department of Employment (i.e. 16 hours or more), and the majority therefore would not have met the definition of ‘supported employment’ used in the research
- The majority were people with learning disabilities. Around 7% were people with severe disabilities and just 4% were people with ASD
- The model of ‘supported employment’ was being used effectively to find and support employment for people with ASD. However, just 180 people with ASD were being supported by a few specialist services, and the majority were people with Aspergers Syndrome
- There were basic inequalities in terms of who was able to access employment support, not least of which were the group that served as the original inspiration for ‘supported employment’ i.e. people with severe disabilities
- Also, less well served by existing services were people with ASD, women with learning disabilities and those from minority ethnic communities

### **Barriers to employment**

- The biggest barrier to employment was perceived to be the lack of leadership and not having a consistent framework from which to commission and audit the performance of ‘supported employment’
- The traditional view that the biggest barrier to employment is the welfare benefits system was challenged by the stories of individuals in this research who were financially better off in full-time employment, and by a growing body of evidence that with the right knowledge and motivation there are ways to work with the system
- In the longer term however, change is required within the social security and related systems to address the problems experienced by those living in registered accommodation who want to work
- Some identified negative attitudes and expectations as a major barrier to employment. This included the attitudes of a range of professionals such as care managers when they

did not consider employment as an option during community care assessments. To become more effective, the attitudinal barriers to employment will need to be addressed

### **A more coordinated & strategic approach needed**

- Although present on the landscape, ‘supported employment’ was not firmly embedded as a primary strategy for improving quality of life and providing opportunities for social inclusion. A more coordinated and strategic approach was called for
- Survey respondents identified a need for a better and “more secure” financial infrastructure for ‘supported employment’ calling for more mainstream funding of the sector, and greater investment in services in rural areas as well as for people with severe disabilities and people with ASD
- Alongside an increase in employment opportunities has grown confusion around terminology especially in relation to ‘supported employment’. This lack of conceptual discipline has led to a watering down of ‘supported employment’ as defined in the research
- Effective ‘supported employment’ services were placing people in interesting jobs that closely matched their individual preferences, but the predominance of part-time jobs and jobs in certain sectors suggests stereotyping of the abilities of people with learning disabilities and/or ASD
- It was argued that employment support should be separated from welfare or disability services, as this would increase their credibility not only with individuals and families, but also with employers
- Self-employment opportunities for people with learning disabilities and/or ASD were rare in Scotland. Self-employment can mean a closer match between individual preferences and contribution with the job, and a better fit with individual values and lifestyle preferences. As such, self employment has been viewed by some as “the next logical step” in ‘supported employment’
- There is ongoing debate about the merits of supporting mainstream agencies to get better at catering for everyone’s needs or whether both generalist and specialist agencies should co-exist and complement each other. Anxiety about mainstreaming services is particularly strong in respect of meeting the needs of people with ASD.

### **IMPLICATIONS FOR POLICY AND PRACTICE**

The findings from this study point to the need to build on the well-developed practice, skills and expertise of the ‘supported employment’ services in Scotland who are already achieving quality outcomes. In addition, there is a need to further develop practice through initiatives in certain priority areas. In particular, the research suggests practical developments or initiatives in the following areas would be helpful:

- The strategic development of a national definition, framework and standards for ‘supported employment’ in Scotland
- Drawing upon person centred planning approaches (including personal life plans) that show how to achieve a more consumer-driven and career planning approach
- Targeting school leavers to expand expectations and options for the future directly linking career assistance and ‘supported employment’ providers with schools
- Equipping employment specialists to facilitate self employment for people who want supported self-directed employment
- Implementing ways of delivering ‘supported employment’ for people with more severe disabilities
- Ensuring ‘supported employment’ is offered to people with ASD, in particular to adults with autism

Because there is little known about some of these, participatory development and action research models would seem to be appropriate both in terms of their development and evaluation. Such an approach would also be in keeping with the values and philosophy of *The same as you?* and recommendation 9 of *Working for a change?* which called for an employment-related participatory action research programme run by, and for, people with learning disabilities.

In addition, it will be important to continue to promote and publicise good practice and innovative services such as North Lanarkshire’s Supported Employment Service, that have found ways to tackle the benefits issues and place people in full time jobs. Engaging employers and people with learning disabilities and/or ASD as champions for ‘supported employment’ would also be beneficial strategies.

## CONCLUSION

In conclusion, while there are grounds for optimism, there is some way to go before the aspirations of people with learning disabilities and/or ASD for real paid jobs are met, especially for people with ASD. The positive experiences related in this report illustrate what can be achieved when best practice in ‘supported employment’ is implemented. Good practice was identified and while the results were life changing for the individuals involved and their families, ‘supported employment’ as originally intended was not being put into practice. It would seem that securing jobs with higher rates of pay and for more hours remains a key issue. There is a pressing need for central and local government to adopt a more strategic and coordinated approach to developing and funding ‘supported employment’ in Scotland so that its implementation can be more widespread.



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## DEFINITIONS USED IN THE RESEARCH

The following key terms were defined with the Research Advisory Group at the outset.

### **‘People with learning disabilities and/or ASD’**

The definition of learning disability from *The same as you?* was adopted in the research, which defined it as a significant, lifelong condition that started before adulthood, affects people’s development, and means that they need help to understand information, learn skills and cope independently.

Autism was defined in *The same as you?* as a lifelong developmental disability that affects the way a person communicates and relates to people around them. Autism can happen in people with different degrees of learning disability as well as in people of average or above average intelligence, for example, people with Aspergers Syndrome. This wide range is commonly referred to as autistic spectrum disorders or ASD. People with ASD may or may not have learning disabilities but everyone with the condition shares a difficulty in making sense of the world. Employment support providers and several writers make a distinction between ASD, autism and Aspergers Syndrome. Where it was felt relevant to do so, we have made these distinctions within the report.

### **‘Employment support’**

‘Employment support’ covered a wide range of diverse provision. This included a range of work opportunities such as open employment, work placements, work preparation, voluntary work, Training for Work, ‘permitted work’, unpaid jobs, sheltered or non-open employment, ‘supported employment’, co-operatives, and social firms. The support provided included providing job opportunities, sustaining and maintaining people in employment and supporting career development. Given this broad definition, a distinction was made between ‘supported employment’ (defined below) and other types of employment support.

### **‘Supported Employment’**

The following definition of ‘supported employment’ endorsed by the Research Advisory Group was used in the research:

*Supported employment is real work that is for 16 hours or more in an integrated setting with ongoing support*

- ‘Real work’ was defined as paid work and would normally be done by a typical member of the workforce, although this could include a job created by ‘job carving’.
- Jobs in ‘integrated settings’ were jobs with ordinary, mainstream or competitive employers where there are no more people with disabilities present in the workforce than would be expected to be present in the general population (approximately 6%).
- ‘Ongoing support’ was defined as support that was flexible, individualised and tailored to each person, and, importantly, was not time limited.



## CHAPTER ONE: RESEARCH CONTEXT

### INTRODUCTION

1.1 Since the 1960s, a body of literature has grown establishing that employment is a fundamental element, indeed an integral part of many people's ordinary lives and that opportunities for real paid jobs for people with learning disabilities is an essential part of empowering people to live ordinary lives (O'Bryan, 1991). Paid work remains the most culturally valued day or non-leisure activity and given a choice, many people with learning disabilities aspire to employment as a major life goal (Beyer et al, 2004; Scottish Executive, 2000; Riddell et al, 1999).

1.2 Employment has more potential than any other daytime occupation to ensure people with disabilities realise the goals of normalisation as expressed through O'Brien's 5 accomplishments:

*"It places them within the community; offers a basis for the development of relationships with community members; demonstrates their ability to make a useful contribution; enhances their social status; and by the income it provides and in other ways gives them greater choice and control over their lives."* (Dowson, 1998, pp15-16)

1.3 From the 1980s onwards, proponents of an ordinary life promoted work as offering a number of positive benefits. Such benefits were firmly grounded in the 'principles of normalisation' and the cultural meaning of work. Wolfensberger (1992) argued that employment in ordinary workplaces was an important determinant of the development and identity of adulthood, facilitating valued social roles for people who have been devalued and rejected by society. Critics of normalisation argue that it encourages and expects people to conform to the behaviours and attitudes of the dominant culture in society (Brown & Smith, 1992; Szivos, 1992). While normalisation has been influential, other factors such as the growing civil rights, self-determination and self-advocacy movements have also played a part in promoting employment and in the development of the 'supported employment' model.

1.4 A now vast body of literature about how having a job has changed the quality of disabled peoples' lives. In short, real jobs provide:

- Access to socially valued roles
- A purpose or structure to daily life
- Social links with the community
- Meaningful choices and opportunities
- A sense of personal future.

1.5 The drive towards employment in ordinary workplaces has in large part come about because people with disabilities have expressed, and continue to express, a preference for paid jobs (Racino et al, 1998; The Leighton Project, 1998; Beyer et al, 2004). However, there are still low numbers of people with severe disabilities or complex needs including people with ASD, accessing vocational and employment opportunities in the UK. Evidence shows that those who do, report many positive benefits (Weston 2002). A recent report

published by the National Autistic Society (Barnard et al, 2001) suggested employment was “the single biggest issue or barrier” facing adults with ASD.

1.6 Recognising the significance of employment in the lives of people with learning disabilities and/or ASD, the Scottish Executive in *The same as you?* (2000), identified that “many people want a decent job” and want “to have friends at work”. At the same time, there has been increasing interest by central government in the longstanding model of ‘supported employment’ as an effective way of tackling barriers to employment and promoting social inclusion not only for disabled people but for a number of other disadvantaged groups in society, such as young people leaving care, long term unemployed, minority ethnic groups, single parents and so on. To ensure people with learning disabilities and/or ASD access employment opportunities, *The same as you?* advocated:

- Including people with learning disabilities in ordinary work settings
- Helping people find jobs which offer the same pay, terms and conditions as employees doing the same kind of work
- Offering people the necessary support to be able to work on their own, with appropriate risk assessment and management
- Helping those with complex needs to find work and provide ongoing support where necessary (page 60)

1.7 An agenda for change was set out by the Scottish Executive’s short life working group on employment for people with learning disabilities in the document, *Working for a change?* (2003). It stated that only one in 20 people with learning disabilities in Scotland were in any form of paid work. Despite such policy attention and the recent data collection by the Scottish Executive about employment opportunities for people with learning disabilities and/or ASD (Scottish Executive, 2004), a need for more detailed information was identified and this research commissioned to address the gaps.

## **STUDY AIMS**

### **The Study**

1.8 This research study was part of a programme of research commissioned by the Scottish Executive to monitor the implementation of *The same as you?* (Scottish Executive, 2000). As such, the study investigated the level and types of support currently provided to people with learning disabilities and/or ASD in both paid and unpaid jobs and identified elements of good practice, illustrating these wherever possible through examples. The Scottish Executive Health Department Health and Community Care Research Branch commissioned a team of independent researchers, to carry out the research. The study was completed within 8 months, commencing in January 2004 and completed by September 2004.

### **Aims & objectives**

1.9 The main aims of the research were to map the nature and availability of initiatives and services to support people in Scotland with learning disabilities and/or ASD to gain and remain in employment; review the literature on good practice in ‘supported employment’;

identify examples of good practice from the mapping exercise'; and, explore the experiences of those in 'supported employment' and their families

1.10 Key objectives for the research as defined by the commissioners were to:

- Review the literature on 'supported employment', summarising main findings from key national and international documents and identifying gaps in information;
- Identify features of good practice from the literature;
- Identify the full range of organisations in Scotland offering support to people with learning disabilities and/or ASD in employment, noting the sector of agencies providing this support, the nature of the specialist support they offer and their funding arrangements;
- Identify the links these organisations have to other bodies and the contributions these bodies make
- Collect and analyse Partnership in Practice Agreements and community planning documentation in order to identify planning for employment
- Identify the number and characteristics of the people with learning disabilities and/or ASD who are supported by 'supported employment' organisations
- Identify any methods Local Authorities are using to evaluate employment support
- Identify from the mapping exercise examples of good practice in the support offered in gaining and maintaining employment
- Explore the views of people with learning disabilities and/or ASD who are employed and their families on what having a job means to them and the employment support available to them

## **RESEARCH METHODS**

1.11 The study used both quantitative and qualitative methods and in summary involved:

1. A review of relevant literature mainly within the past 5 years highlighting aspects of good practice in 'supported employment'
2. Telephone interviews with 10 key stakeholders to explore strategic and contextual issues
3. A postal questionnaire survey of all organisations in Scotland providing employment support to people with learning disabilities and/or ASD
4. In-depth qualitative interviews to hear the stories and experiences of 15 individuals in 'supported employment', their families and employers

### **Literature Review**

1.12 The literature review focused specifically on 'supported employment' research completed within the past 5 years (i.e. since 1998), to identify aspects of best practice in 'supported employment' from national as well as international research, and in particular to consider research findings from Scotland. Relevant literature was searched using various strategies including initial consultation with key researchers in the UK and USA working in the field of 'supported employment' and learning disabilities; consultation with known academics and practitioners in the field of ASD; standard searches of library databases including BIDS, Applied Social Sciences Citation Index and Sociological Abstracts; Internet

searches of key websites e.g. Norah Fry Research Centre, Joseph Rowntree Foundation, the Scottish Consortium for Learning Disabilities, BILD, Paradigm and others; specialist library resources e.g. Cardiff University Welsh Centre for Learning Disabilities and the National Autistic Society. A summary of the 2001 Partnership in Practice (PIPs) agreements and Social Work Statistics Division report (2004) collating information about the implementation of *The same as you?* was also considered.

## **Stakeholder Interviews**

1.13 In addition to exploring the understanding of issues at the level of employment support providers and users, we also drew on the views of those involved in strategic planning and development on the wider canvas. Telephone interviews were carried out with 10 stakeholders representing Careers Scotland, Scottish Enterprise, the Association of Directors of Social Work (ADSW), the Health Service, ENABLE, the Disability Rights Commission (DRC), the Scottish Union of Supported Employment (SUSE), Jobcentre Plus, The National Autistic Society and the Department of Transport, Enterprise and Lifelong Learning. The topics explored through these interviews further examined insights gained by, and the recommendations of the short-life working group (Scottish Executive, 2003), which considered barriers to employment and useful mechanisms for bringing about improvements.

## **Postal Survey Questionnaire**

1.14 A postal questionnaire survey was sent to 204 employment support providers in Scotland. Later on, 29 of these were removed from the database after we identified that despite receiving information to the contrary, they did not provide or were no longer providing employment support to the research target group. Another 8 respondents were deleted from the database as not relevant after consideration of their questionnaire responses. The questionnaire design took inspiration from earlier studies of 'supported employment' (Pozner & Hammond, 1992; Beyer et al, 1996), although this research was broader in its focus on employment support.

1.15 An initial list of organisations to approach was compiled using existing databases, specifically the membership database of SUSE, WAGE and with reference to other recent surveys including Arskey et al (2002). This was supplemented by requesting information from the 32 local authorities in Scotland and other key organisations about relevant services known to them. Contact information was checked by telephone prior to sending out the survey.

1.16 A pilot survey was conducted with 5 employment support agencies known to the Research Advisory Group, and the questionnaire modified as a result. Questionnaires were returned over a period of 8-10 weeks from the end of March to early June 2004. Agencies that had not responded were contacted by telephone and reminders sent out via email or post with a second copy of the questionnaire in May. Members of the Research Advisory Group also promoted the survey at the SUSE and Glasgow employment network meetings. Around 32% of responses were returned via email. Table 1.1 below shows a breakdown of the questionnaire response.

**Table 1.1 Response rate to the postal questionnaire survey**

Total number of organisations sent questionnaire survey	<b>204</b>
Projects or services later deleted from database	29
Questionnaires returned but not providing employment support to target group	8
Total response to postal questionnaire	<b>77</b>
Total % response rate to mail out	38%
Total relevant questionnaire responses	69
Response rate as % of 167 relevant organisations	<b>41%</b>

1.17 There were 77 returned questionnaires, 69 relevant responses representing a return rate of approximately 41% of relevant support providers identified for the research. Although we did not receive a response from key organisations such as the Scottish Society for Autism, the responses received do represent a broad cross-section of statutory and voluntary sector employment support providers and include Careers Scotland, Jobcentre Plus, ‘supported employment’ services, sheltered employment and other providers.

1.18 Most agencies did not routinely collect the type and level of detailed information sought through the questionnaire and many were returned partially completed. Further, for some ‘supported employment’ agencies, labelling people according to disability categories was felt to contradict the whole approach. There were numerous comments such as “we don’t need to know people’s disability to provide support”. Riddell et al (2001) also found in relation to ‘supported employment’ in Scotland that employers and supported employees either did not associate with, or resisted the label ‘learning disabilities’. Clearly this issue had implications for research that aimed to ‘map’ employment support to a specific target group, i.e. people with the label learning disabilities and/or ASD.

1.19 The response rate may have been affected by other recent data collection exercises, including the Social Work Services Inspectorate and Scottish Executive’s Statistics Division data collection from local authorities in relation to *The same as you?*, as well as other UK-wide and Scottish research concerned with the employment of disabled people. While the majority of respondents supported the aims of the research, they emphasised the need for better coordination of information gathering and research at a national level.

### **Supported employees’ stories**

1.20 In-depth interviews explored 15 supported employees’ experiences, as well as the perspectives of their families and employers. The majority of interviews were carried out by Research Associates who were people with learning disabilities recruited to work on the study alongside members of the research team. Other interviews, for practical reasons were carried out by telephone. The sample comprised 10 people with learning disabilities and 5 people with ASD (4 people with Aspergers Syndrome and 1 person with autism). The established approach of ‘conversation with a purpose’ was used to gather information across consistent headings while allowing scope for individuals to raise issues that were important to them. Interview schedules were sent out in advance so that interviewees had the opportunity to go over questions beforehand. All supported employees received a written copy of their interview. The purpose of interviews with families was to expand on information provided

by employees, especially when employees had given brief answers, and secondly to find out about the impact of ‘supported employment’ on the family.

1.21 The final sample was drawn from 5 agencies, although 6 were contacted. These were exemplars of best practice in ‘supported employment’ as identified both through the literature review and from the mapping survey. It was however necessary to include one agency that did not fully meet best practice criteria in order that the sample included sufficient people with ASD. While every attempt was made to include individuals from minority ethnic communities and people with severe learning disabilities within the sample, none were identified from the 5 agencies. Agencies were asked specifically to identify people whose experience would promote the wider development of ‘supported employment’ through informing, encouraging and inspiring others. In addition, we came across a young person who was self employed but not supported by a ‘supported employment’ agency and decided to include his/her story in the research.

## **INVOLVING PEOPLE WITH LEARNING DISABILITIES IN THE RESEARCH**

1.22 People with learning disabilities and/or ASD were as involved in the research as the research specification and timescale for the study allowed. First, Research Associates with learning disabilities were specifically recruited and paid to work as part of the research team. Interviews with employees, all but 3 with family members (which were telephone interviews) and all but one interview with the employers were carried out by a 2-person team – one Research Associate and one of the Researchers. Research Associates commented on draft interview questions, advised the team to send out the interview schedule in advance to help interviewees prepare, and were involved in identifying key themes from the data. Second, close attention was paid to establishing the best possible communication environment with each interviewee with learning disabilities and/or ASD.

## **DATA ANALYSIS**

1.23 Responses to the postal survey were entered into an Access database and transferred to SPSS for analysis. Interviews with supported employees, families, employers and other key stakeholders were handwritten or taped and typed out in full. The whole research team identified common themes and emerging patterns across the interview data. Research findings were discussed with the Research Advisory Group at its meeting in September 2004.

## **STRUCTURE OF THE REPORT**

1.24 Chapter 2 presents a review of recent literature on best practice in ‘supported employment’. Chapter 3 then provides a summary of the key points from telephone interviews with 10 key stakeholders as part of the broader context. Chapter 4 discusses the findings from the postal survey of employment support providers across Scotland, and identifies some examples of good practice. Chapter 5 further explores the survey findings about people receiving employment support and the types of jobs there were in. Chapter 6 draws on the stories of 15 supported employees, their families and employers to highlight key themes and issues in relation to good practice. Finally, in Chapter 7, we draw out the main conclusions from the study and present some ideas for future developments.

## **CHAPTER TWO: BEST PRACTICE IN ‘SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT’: A LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **INTRODUCTION**

*“By far the greatest challenges facing...supported employment over the next several years are the continuing growth and innovation in our field and assuring that supported employment is a reality for every individual who wants a real job in his or her community. (DiLeo & Langton, 1996)*

2.1 The above quotation captures a general feeling of anticipation and promise around the future development of supported employment evident within the literature. As Riddell et al (1999) observed, despite reservations, a “cloak of optimism surrounds supported employment”. This sense of confidence in the model permeated the literature reviewed for this chapter despite any “underachievement” identified by research. The purpose of the review of literature published primarily within the past 5 years was to summarise main findings from recent research, identify any gaps in information and highlight the key features of best practice.

### **MAIN FINDINGS FROM RECENT RESEARCH**

2.2 Best practice in supported employment is discussed under the following 8 main headings: preserving the integrity of the support model and supported employment; the need to tackle systemic barriers to further development; emergence of the notion of self determination and the promotion of choice; issues around marketing and job development; developments in the role of job coach and using natural supports within the workplace; the need to enhance social integration outcomes; supported self employment; and the importance of post employment services.

#### **Preserving the integrity of the ‘support model’ & ‘supported employment’**

2.3 The literature review suggested a need to re-assert the values of both the support model and its challenge to readiness approaches, and of supported employment. The ‘support model’ evolved from progressive movements in the field of disability representing a major shift from facility-based approaches to the provision of individual supports, which aim to realise individual goals and aspirations. The keystones of the support paradigm are community inclusion, an emphasis on quality of life, individual planning and support. It requires the development of systems offering options for choice, support and guidance: facilitation rather than direction. However as some authors suggest the shift in thinking required “can’t be reversed overnight” (Meyer, 2001) and there is evidence the readiness model persists.

2.4 Supported employment, emerged in the mid 1980s and has become a well-established approach demonstrating success in finding real jobs for a range of disabled people and maintaining them in these jobs (Schneider et al, 2002). It has also been found to benefit individuals by contributing to a higher quality of life (Eggleton et al, 1999). Consumer satisfaction with both the support received and jobs obtained through supported employment

has been reported (Parent et al, 1996). Employers report satisfaction with supported employment and find people with learning disabilities to be reliable, hardworking and effective employees (Petty & Fussell, 1997).

2.5 Despite this positive picture, the implementation of supported employment has been somewhat disappointing. A survey of employment options for people with learning disabilities, with responses from 60 countries, showed that despite good practice examples on inclusive employment, the overall picture “remains one of great concern” (Sutton, 1999). Participation in inclusive or integrated employment was found to be “very much in the minority”. Many countries in the EU invest more resources in segregated or specialist provision than in community employment, and, it is argued, supported employment has become part of “a long continuum” rather than providing an alternative to segregated provision (Beyer et al, 2002). The Policy Consortium on Supported Employment (O’Bryan et al, 2000a) further highlighted an urgent need to ensure supported employment becomes “much more widely available, with services of consistent quality”.

2.6 It was not until the 1990s that the concept of supported employment was applied to people with ASD. In the UK, most supported employment schemes focused on people with learning disabilities. The National Autistic Society’s specialist initiative, *‘Prospects’*, was devised for people with ASD who were “more intellectually able”, although a later evaluation of the scheme showed inclusion of a more diverse population of people with ASD. An initial evaluation of the outcomes of the *Prospects* initiative reported positive outcomes (Mawhood & Howlin, 1999). Overall, the ‘Prospects model’ of supported employment has been effective with people with ASD, and the initial high costs of the scheme gradually reduced over time as most were no longer reliant on welfare benefits (Mawhood & Howlin, 1999).

#### *Importance of defining ‘supported employment’*

2.7 The importance of agreeing a national definition of supported employment was clear from the literature. Research in the US demonstrated that when programmes define what supported employment is and who receives it, there are discrepancies between the providers and the commissioning and funding agencies (West et al, 1994). In the UK, which does not have an equivalent funding mechanism for supported employment, issues of definition are even more fraught.

2.8 There is wide variability in the practice of supported employment. Both Weston (2002) and Ridley (2001) found inconsistencies in supported employment in Scotland, some of which distorted and watered down the original concept and affected the quality of individual outcomes. Further, interviews with key informants providing employment services in Scotland (Riddell et al, 1999) found discrepancies between service managers claims to be using supported employment and what the researchers found to be a “very partial and half hearted version” of supported employment.

2.9 The United States Developmental Disabilities Act of 1984 defined supported employment as:

*“(i) Paid employment for persons with developmental disabilities for whom competitive employment at or above minimum wage is unlikely and who need ongoing support to perform in a work setting, (ii) is conducted in a variety of*

*settings in which persons without disabilities are employed, and (iii) is supported by any activity needed to sustain paid work including supervision, training, and transportation. (P2665)*

2.10 In 1986, the Vocational Rehabilitation Amendments Act further defined supported employment as jobs for a minimum of 20 hours per week. While some providers would and do argue that this has contributed to the unnecessary exclusion of people with more severe disabilities, others (e.g. Moon et al, 1990) have argued that people with severe disabilities can and should be able to work 20 hours per week or more but might need the flexibility to work fewer hours initially.

2.11 UK definitions have lacked statements in respect of the minimum number of working hours and the target group for supported employment. Consequently, some have regarded jobs for as little as one hour per week as supported employment, and as yet only small numbers of people with more severe learning disabilities have benefited (Weston, 2002). This is despite research showing that wage levels, and, to some extent, integration outcomes, are largely driven by the amount of hours worked (Kilsby et al, 1995; Mank, 2003).

2.12 Although there is no consensus, writers in the UK tend to agree on three basic elements: that is (1) that supported employment offers paid employment or ‘real jobs’; (2) that jobs are offered in integrated settings or with community employers; and (3) that there is ongoing ‘support’ (Pozner & Hammond, 1993; Beyer et al, 1996; Wertheimer, 1996). More recently, the Policy Consortium for Supported Employment (O’Bryan et al, 2000a) defined supported employment as a way of enabling people who need support to obtain and develop their careers in real jobs, with support provided on an individual basis to both employer and employee for as long as necessary.

2.13 Several authors further distinguish between supported employment and the Department of Employment’s ‘Workstep Programme’, although some suggest the distinction is far from clear-cut (Leach, 2002). Stalker (2001) however asserts that supported employment is quite distinct from Workstep, and Weston (2002) found that using the term supported employment to describe central government schemes such as this was contentious as some practitioners and agencies felt that subsidised employment was entirely different from the original model of supported employment.

### *Supporting people with severe disabilities*

2.14 Although originally developed as a way of placing people with high support needs or severe disabilities in ordinary jobs, those with the most severe disabilities are generally “underrepresented in the ranks of those benefiting from supported employment” (Mank et al, 1998b). Recent research in the UK (Weston, 2002) found relatively few supported employment agencies supporting people with severe disabilities or ‘complex needs’. One reason suggested for this was that services have found it easier to find jobs for people with lower support needs and that over time their support needs reduce making it possible for services to meet target numbers set by funders.

2.15 In examining the employment features of those with more severe disabilities in work, Bass (2000) found the quality of jobs and the wages offered were lower than those available to more able individuals. They tended to work fewer hours, to be unpaid and be less well

integrated. Similarly, Mank et al (1998b) found that people with more severe disabilities in the US had lower wage and integration outcomes and less typical features of employment.

2.16 However, research has also uncovered exceptions to this suggesting that high quality outcomes are possible for at least some individuals with more severe disabilities. For example, Mank et al's (1998a) research proved people with severe disabilities could earn high wages. All 55 individuals in this demonstration project were employed within the same County government in different departments. Leadership and commitment from within the Council was found to be critical. The researchers suggested as significant that the departments employing people with severe disabilities were identified as the same departments that generally accommodated diversity.

2.17 The findings of this and other research point to a range of successful strategies in working with people with severe or significant learning disabilities and/or ASD:

- Diversify the support model for example, support co-worker; job share; self employed; professional partnership
- Close attention is paid to both individuals' and employers' needs
- Recruitment practices are adapted to allow individuals to perform at their best
- Jobs are paid at or above the going rate
- There is a good 'job match' of the person and the work environment
- As many aspects as possible are 'typical' for the workplace, especially in terms of inclusion in the workforce
- Co-workers are trained by supported employment personnel
- The use of adaptations and on the job training using systematic instruction is critical
- It is important to build up the hours worked gradually, to hold regular reviews, and for support workers to understand individuals' methods of communication
- There is good communication between everyone involved so that any problems are resolved early on

(Mank et al, 1998b; Beyer, 2001; Weston, 2002)

2.18 The Policy Consortium for Supported Employment (O'Bryan et al, 2000a) identified the need to avoid perverse disincentives in the funding system that cause providers to avoid working with people with the highest support needs. They proposed adopting premiums for assisting people with greater support needs.

### **Importance of tackling systemic issues**

2.19 A key theme from the literature was the need to tackle the systemic barriers inhibiting the development of supported employment. Recent research carried out in the US by Mank, Cioffi and Yovanoff (in press) to examine whether supported employment was being implemented in better ways than when it initially emerged in the 1980s, suggested that larger systems issues defined the extent to which supported employment could deliver improvements over time. In large part, outcomes such as wage levels, and to an extent social integration outcomes, were driven by the amount of hours worked, which in turn was affected by financial disincentives and other structural issues related to the jobs market. Mank et al concluded:

*“Future improvements in the career outcomes for people with significant disabilities will not simply be a matter of what practitioners do in the next 10 years, it may be more of a matter of what we are able to do with the policy, funding and systemic issues that can be improved to support the work of people in local communities.”*

2.20 The ‘social model of disability’ recognises the barriers in the way work opportunities, the environment and support mechanisms are created and organised (Riddell et al, 1999). This review highlighted aspects of the social security system, conversion and infrastructure issues, a lack of strategic development of supported employment, and recruitment policies and procedures as key systemic issues impacting upon supported employment.

#### *Aspects of the social security system*

2.21 Increases as high as 500% in individuals’ annual earnings have been reported from supported employment in the US (e.g. Kregel, 1997). Financial gains from supported employment reported in the UK have been less impressive (Beyer et al, 1996). Riddell et al (1999) researching the impact of supported employment on individuals in Scotland concluded that the economic gain for the people in their study was “only marginal”, and that income from employment had replaced but not substantially changed these individuals’ overall level of income. It should be noted however, that published studies will not yet reflect the considerable developments in benefits and tax credits that have occurred in the UK since 1997, and which appear to be having a positive impact. That the picture is more optimistic for some people is evidenced by the individual stories collated in this research and presented in Chapter 6. Further, case studies from North Lanarkshire in Appendix 1 show individuals who are financially better off as a result of being in supported employment.

2.22 Aspects of the UK social security system and other related systems have been identified as causing major problems for individuals as well as for the development of supported employment (Simons, 1998; O’Bryan et al, 2000a). The Policy Consortium for Supported Employment (O’Bryan et al, 2000a) argued for “a debate about more radical reform of the benefit system”. At the same time, they advocated exploring “pragmatic options for alleviating some of the problems with the current benefits system”, and highlighted helpful developments including agencies mobilising effective welfare rights advice, enabling disabled people to make the most of opportunities within the benefit system.

**North Lanarkshire Council** ensures people with learning disabilities in supported employment are financially better off with a combination of wages and in-work benefits. Social Work Department Welfare Rights Officers stay well informed of benefit regulations and changes, introduce the income potential of employment from the start and perform financial calculations for each individual (O’Bryan, 2002).

#### *Conversion & infrastructure issues*

2.23 The original concept of supported employment assumed changeover from existing segregated day services and sheltered workshops and conversion in the use of financial resources to supported employment. This paradigm shift has not happened in practice

(Wehman et al, 2002; Beyer et al, 2002). Rather, supported employment has been added to a continuum of services. Statistics collated by the Scottish Executive (2004) found that during a ‘typical week’ in 2003, around 7,433 adults with learning disabilities and/or ASD in Scotland were attending a day/resource centre while 2,493 adults were participating in ‘voluntary work’, ‘non-open’ and ‘open employment’. Although 48% of those attending day centres were recorded as getting some sort of alternative day opportunity outwith the centre including paid or voluntary work, these figures show segregated provision continues to be the dominant experience for people with learning disabilities and/or ASD in Scotland.

2.24 Mank (1994) attributed limited systemic change to six main problems:

- An underestimation of the current system of segregated services;
- Limited incentives for change coupled with disincentives for those interested in dismantling segregation in favour of supported employment;
- Conflicting policies;
- The lack of sustained investment;
- Over-reliance on social services and under-reliance on the community;
- Little control on the part of people with severe disabilities.

2.25 In relation to research in the UK and Holland, Ritchie (1999) concluded that strategic redesign issues were not being addressed either at local or national level. Woodford (1999) described similar issues in relation to the Australian experience.

#### *The need for strategic development*

2.26 Despite apparent progress, recent studies show that supported employment services are often developed in isolation rather than as part of an overall strategic framework and this leads to duplication of effort, fragmentation and fragility of the sector (Smyth & Maynard Campbell, 1997; O’Byrne et al, 2000a). Ritchie and Stalker (1999) observed supported employment in Scotland to be a “marginal activity”.

2.27 Supported employment requires specific systems and structures to “ensure mainstream success” and to assure its quality (O’Byrne, 2002; Weston, 2002). A strategic approach requires commitment from above for instance at Chief Executive level; a common and agreed purpose between all partners; support from employees, trade unions, employers, and all appropriate local organisations; and effective monitoring and evaluation mechanisms which involve disabled people (Smyth & Maynard Campbell, 1997).

**North Lanarkshire Council** is an example of a local authority that has adopted a strong policy leadership and coordinated approach to supported employment (O’Byrne, 2002). In 1998 Social Work began a supported employment strategy as part of a broader social inclusion focus. From there, they were able to actively promote the benefits of supported employment to the wider Council.

**The Glasgow Partnership** brings together the local Council, NHS Board, Jobcentre Plus, Scottish Enterprise, Careers Scotland, Further Education colleges, LECs and ENABLE Scotland and has produced a plan as to how agencies in the area should work together under a common vision (*Equal Access to Employment Strategy*). The partnership identified the need for strong, strategic leadership within the City as a key issue. The document articulates the vision, principles objective and targets of the Equal Access to Employment strategy, outlines the management structure and work plan for implementing the strategy.

## *Recruitment policies and procedures*

2.28 Research exploring good practice in employing disabled people (Smyth & Maynard Campbell, 1997) highlighted several examples of local authorities in the UK that had adjusted internal recruitment policies and procedures to assist the employment of disabled people. Successful strategies have included guaranteed interviews for disabled people; targets for the number of disabled people employed by an organisation; recruitment and selection training for staff; and creating groups to discuss issues of concern and review policies.

**Leeds City Council** has pioneered a successful and well-documented approach to inclusive employment (North Lanarkshire Conference Report, 2004). They used in-house employment opportunities as the drive for promoting social inclusion. A flexible stance was taken to advertising and appointing staff, validated by the Employers' Organisation Recruitment Guide. Partnership working between the Human Resources Department and the Employment Service resulted in setting targets for employing New Deal job seekers via the Jobcentre Plus Service. 'Entry level' jobs were ring-fenced and initially offered to New Deal applicants. This approach is now perceived as an effective recruitment policy rather than a social inclusion policy

## **Self-determination & choice**

*“Self advocates and advocates are repeatedly calling for more rapid expansion and improved quality for all persons, across disability labels, who will benefit from a job in the community with individualized supports.”*  
(Mank, 2001)

2.29 Although the supported employment model has expanded the employment options and quality of work life for many people with disabilities, some authors have argued that it is primarily controlled by agencies and that employment specialists could do more to advance the self-determination of people with disabilities (Sowers et al, 1996). Several writers have emphasised both the importance of a consumer-led perspective and of individuals controlling their vocational destinies through self-determination and self-advocacy (Wehman & Kregel, 1998; Racino & Whittico, 1998; Martin et al, 2002).

2.30 'Self-determination' is a philosophy advocating supports and services based on the interests, needs and preferences of individuals with a disability and those who are close to him or her. In respect of supported employment, it means people with disabilities and their families determining what direction their career searches should go, how their careers fit with their lives and how services should best support their goals. 'Self-determination' is also a term used about an approach that means teaching disabled workers self-management strategies rather than relying on direct intervention by employment specialists as requirements change within a job (Beyer and Kilsby, 1997). This signifies "a paradigm shift" towards more empowering methods of training people with learning disabilities (Beyer et al, 2002).

2.31 The key components of a consumer-led approach have been described as:

- The disabled person as a customer selecting the supported employment service best suited to meet his or her needs
- Creating a ‘customer profile’ of what each individual wants to achieve through supported employment, identifying personal strengths, concerns, desires, and anticipated outcomes
- The individual becomes an active participant in marketing and career development
- Service providers involve their customers in every aspect of the employment match process including employment selection
- Service providers must use existing technology and best practices extensively described in the literature and involve the customer in all the decisions regarding his or her training
- Determine individualised strategies for providing support that will assist career development for the customer and employer
- The individual is in charge of the process and the role of the supported employment professional is to assist, facilitate and support.

(Barcus, 1999)

2.32 Ensuring services adopt a more consumer-driven approach includes promoting person centred planning approaches, emphasising choice and adopting a career-based approach to job development and support.

#### *Person-centred planning approaches*

2.33 Since the mid 1990s, connections have been made between supported employment and person centred planning, although individualised planning was always a feature of the model (Callahan and Garner, 1997). ‘Person-centred planning’ has been defined as a set of strategies to help find and create ways for an individual to participate fully in his/her community (Sanderson et al 1997; Wolf-Branigin et al, 1998). More recently person-centred planning approaches have been shown to be effective at enabling individuals to direct their own careers and enhancing long-term employment and career satisfaction (Steere et al, 1995; Sowers et al, 1996; Kregel, 1998).

2.34 Several authors including Rogan et al (2000) have identified person centred planning as a key feature of best practice in supported employment. Adopting a person-centred approach to supported employment achieves better outcomes: for example, Hagner and DiLeo (1993) argued that job seekers invest more in the process; employer contacts are broader in scope and are more creative; the individual is more motivated to succeed and keep the job; jobs are more specifically tailored to the individual; and social integration outcomes are better.

2.35 Person centred planning promotes self-determination and the central involvement of the job seeker in the process of supported employment. Meyer (2001), writing as a person with ASD, described person centred planning as a “radical planning paradigm”, which was both a planning and counselling technique. It is now recognised as having particular relevance for people who have ASD, particularly those with Aspergers Syndrome because it addresses one of their main problem areas that is, “executive function” or planning.

2.36 An evaluation of a person centred career planning tool, the *Personal Career Plan*, found it to be a viable method for expressing career preferences and attaining employment

based on individuals' preferences and choice (Menchetti and Garcia, 2003). A better match was obtained using this tool between individuals' career choice and current employment. A critical implementation issue was clarifying the individual's career vision into concrete statements around such things as preferred hours, wages, and outcomes. In common with other studies, the researchers identified the need to invest in staff training in person centred planning to enhance both the practices and values necessary for successful implementation.

### *Promoting choice*

2.37 Related to the notion of consumer or person-driven services and self-determination is the concept of choice and the importance of ensuring each person has "real personal choices" in employment (DiLeo, 1999). Wehman et al (2002) argues that informed choice and control must be a "key feature" of any employment support service. Moseley underlined the importance of finding jobs that reflect individuals' interests and abilities as long ago as 1988:

*"The idea that persons with mental retardation, for example, excel in dull repetitive tasks appears to be based on handicappist prejudice rather than evidence." (p217)*

2.38 In practice, as Wistow and Schneider (2003) found, "the opportunity to work seems to be valued more than being able to choose what sort of work". Similarly, research in 3 supported employment services in Scotland (Ridley, 2001) found "gaps in information about personal goals and aspirations coupled with a tendency to fit people into existing jobs". In some instances, there was greater reliance on professional knowledge of the current job market than on exploring individuals' aspirations.

2.39 In another study people with disabilities were asked about their ideal or dream jobs, and gave both specific and individual responses (Dufresne, 1996). They aspired to a wide variety of jobs and it struck the author that many people with disabilities "have dreams of which many of us professionals are totally unaware". Furthermore, their job preferences were found to be "not in synch" with the types of supported employment jobs on offer, which for the most part were in fast food and other catering related posts.

### *Career-based approach*

2.40 While models of career development for the general population assume changing jobs to be an integral part of the employment process, this is not always the case for supported employees (Pumpian et al, 1997). Factors such as the status of jobs and advancement opportunities have not always been taken sufficiently into account when determining suitable job matches (Sowers et al, 1996; 2002).

2.41 Racino and Whittico (1998) assert that self advocates now demand 'good jobs' with good pay and benefits, enjoyable work that enables a contribution, and 'quality' education, career planning and the possibility of advancement. A recent qualitative study of users' views on supported employment in England (Wistow and Schneider, 2003) found that getting and keeping a job was "not enough" and that people with learning disabilities sought career progression. Recognition of these needs has resulted in an important shift in thinking for supported employment (DiLeo, 1999).

2.42 Demonstration projects such as Pathways to Independence in Wisconsin are pioneering innovative ways of supporting people with disabilities to find satisfying careers using person centred planning methods, setting up ‘career planning teams’ and by developing better partnerships between everyone involved in an individual’s life alongside supported employment providers (Mills & Fentress, 2002). ‘Career planning teams’ are similar to ‘circles of support’ in that they are a group of people who care about the person and work together to help him or her find a career. The individual with disabilities is the ‘team leader’ and the team includes amongst others, the employment specialist or job coach and a benefits specialist. Menchetti and Garcia (2003) have pioneered the use of a ‘personal career plan’ as a viable method for finding out about individuals’ careers choices.

2.43 Another initiative, piloted in several states in the US was ‘career services vouchers’ (DiLeo, 1999). These vouchers were given to people with disabilities to be spent on “pursuing mutually agreed-on career goals from exploration and job development to accommodations and additional on-the-job support”. Such initiatives arise out of recognising the importance of putting control of resources in the hands of disabled people and thereby increasing their self-determination (Mank, 1994; 2001). Although not directly comparable, Direct Payments have rarely been used in this country to support individuals in employment (Ritchie and Stalker, 1999).

### **Marketing & job development**

*“Employers’ satisfaction with quality supported employment services is critical for ongoing support, integration and future placements. Job developers must be knowledgeable and skilful in balancing the needs of employers and consumers with disabilities. Employers who experience quality supported employment services may serve as advocates and communicate the benefits to other potential employers.” (Grossi et al, 1998)*

2.44 Finding the right job not only relies on a thorough understanding of an individual’s interests, preferences and goals, but also on understanding the needs of employers. Focus group research in the USA found that while supported employment specialists looked for employers who were aware and understanding, employers on the other hand emphasised competence and quality (Luecking, 1996).

2.45 Employers have identified both benefits and concerns regarding employing individuals with disabilities (Unger, 2002). Research finds that employers with previous experience of employing disabled people report more favourable perceptions and a willingness to hire other persons with disabilities. Luecking et al (2004) asserted that such employers develop more positive views even when these workers have severe disabilities. Unger concluded that to an extent employers were willing to sacrifice work performance or work quality in exchange for dependable employees. Similarly, research by Petty & Fussell (1997) found employers viewed people with learning disabilities as reliable, hard-working and effective employees.

2.46 Hagner & Daning (1996) found that having experienced job developers who had developed relationships with a network of employers and were more attuned to employers’ needs was important. Company-centred negotiations that focused on the needs of the company and the employer’s plans were found to be the most effective especially in getting

employers to create jobs when no position was open. This approach also led more often to natural supports being developed in the workplace. Most job developers in their study highlighted two critical success factors: presenting a businesslike approach to employers and second, establishing open and personal communication.

2.47 Some writers assert that employment specialists could do more to market supported employment to employers (Leucking et al, 2004). Further, the language and culture of disability services has “not jibed with those of the business world”. DiLeo (1999) urged employment services to avoid marketing messages that focused on disability as well as project names, logos, business cards and other materials “relating to human services, charity, hope or pity”.

2.48 Pierce (1999) identified backgrounds in healthcare or human services as a distinct disadvantage for supported employment staff, as this did nothing to equip them with the skills necessary to communicate effectively with employers. It has been suggested that the roles of job developer and job coach require different sets of skills and should ideally be separate roles. Studies where this has happened report positive findings (Mank et al, 1998a). The advantages for job developers include having the time to invest in relationships, recruiting managers’ interest and becoming an expert in the human resource system. Long-term support agencies can invest more in job analysis, job matching and natural supports.

#### *Importance of awareness raising/training in the workplace*

2.49 Research into employment for disabled people in the UK concluded that awareness raising and training for employers was a “vital part of any equality strategy” (Smyth & Maynard Campbell, 1997). This finding is supported by the work of researchers in the US (e.g. Mank et al, in press). These researchers found better outcomes for those working in companies where training was provided about diversity or disability awareness. Further, providing information and support to co-workers and supervisors in the workplace was linked to better wage and integration outcomes, as was less contact with supported employment personnel (Mank et al, 1999). Better outcomes were also associated with the provision of specific information about the support needs of the individual and providing information to co-workers and supervisors just as the individual started in the job rather than later.

#### **Job coach issues**

2.50 The role of employment specialist continues to evolve. At the same time, research shows gaps between what is expected, and the responsibilities of employment specialists and their levels pay and training (Agosta et al, 1996; Grossi et al, 1998). Having trained employment specialists has been shown to positively affect the quality of supported employment services (Grossi et al, 1998; Beyer, 2001). There are better financial outcomes for supported employees in services that have dedicated job finders and staff with qualifications (Beyer, 2001). Conley’s research (2003) recommended several enhancements to supported employment including recruiting and retaining qualified vocational workers and providing them with improved training.

## **‘Natural supports’**

2.51 A body of writing during the 1990s criticised traditional paid supports as intrusive and as hindering successful outcomes, in particular social integration, and instead advocated for the use of ‘natural supports’ in the workplace or greater involvement of employers in facilitating supported employment (Butterworth et al, 1996). DiLeo and Langton (1996) asserted that natural supports were an “inevitable outcome in the evolution of services” and the Rehabilitation Act Amendments (1992) formalised natural supports in the US as an “extended service option”. Developments in the area of natural supports have been perceived as the beginning of a shift in control and in encouraging the involvement of people with disabilities and their families in the process of supported employment (Wehman & Kregel, 1998).

2.52 Nevertheless, there can be great diversity in the way natural supports are defined and implemented. From their survey, Murphy et al (1996) concluded that the term was “neither self-evident nor well understood”. Some have argued (e.g. Test and Wood, 1996) that there is little or no convincing empirical evidence about natural supports or their effectiveness in the workplace for employees with disabilities. Even so, the use of natural supports has increased. Mank, (1996; 2003) suggested that natural supports had become “axiomatic” with the implementation of supported employment in that supported employment services assert that they make use of natural supports even though there are differences of opinion about definition, measurement and assessment of the impact of natural supports.

2.53 Recent research by Mank et al (2003) found better outcomes when employers and co-workers were involved in the support process from the start. In one study (Mank et al, 1999), where co-workers received training and information on how to support individuals with disabilities, supported employees earned 22% more and were significantly better socially integrated in the workplace. Weston (2002) established that the use of natural supports overcame employers’ fears around employing people with complex needs over time. Also when job coaches trained co-workers to provide ongoing support, supervisors were found to be more satisfied with accuracy and levels of productivity.

## *‘Typicalness’*

2.54 The focus on natural supports and better understanding workplace cultures has led to further advances in thinking about best practices in supported employment through natural or ‘typical’ processes. The so-called ‘typicalness’ of the job acquisition process, conditions of the job, similarity of work roles with colleagues, and initial training and orientation has been positively and strongly correlated with positive wage and integration outcomes (Mank, 2001; 2003). In other words, if employment is ‘typical’, outcomes such as wages, hours worked, and the degree of integration and interaction are better. However, in some cases, atypical features of employment may be needed and should still be considered valuable (Mank, 1997).

2.55 International research comparisons using data from Germany, the UK and Australia (Jenaro Rio et al, 2002) confirm a relationship between providing more typical interventions during the job development process and the social, economic and performance outcomes of supported employment. Weston (2002) found that although experiences of work were not ‘typical’ in every respect for people with severe disabilities or complex needs, ‘typical’ practice in terms of inclusion in the workforce was very important as it ensured people felt

part of the team, and this was one of the most successful ways of retaining people in jobs. Other UK research (Beyer, 2001) similarly finds higher wages for supported employees whose jobs were similar to others in the same workplace, and where they had similar terms and conditions.

### **Enhancing social integration outcomes**

2.56 While social integration is recognised as the “centrepiece” of supported employment (Mank, 1988), the process of facilitating social integration has been an ongoing critical development issue. There are mixed findings and many different views about what constitutes social integration (Chadsey-Rusch et al, 1997). Most research commenting on social integration outcomes has examined opportunities for vocational integration and it is often assumed that levels and quality of social interactions at work are synonymous with social integration (Hughes et al, 1998). In this respect, the social integration outcomes of supported employment have been largely positive. Traustadottir (1999) found the social relationships people developed at work could be the most important factor in whether or not people kept or lost their jobs.

2.57 Taking a broader quality of life perspective suggests that for some, having a job does not automatically result in broadening of social relationships and networks beyond the workplace and that facilitating social integration is a complex issue (Bass & Drewett, 1997). Riddell et al (2001) found that supported employment did not always provide sufficient opportunities for individuals to enhance their social networks. Similarly, Wistow and Schneider (2003) found variable social integration outcomes among the 30 supported employees they interviewed.

2.58 Disappointing social integration outcomes have been associated with jobs that are socially isolated and/or untypical of other jobs in the same workplace, and with unpaid or low paid positions (Ridley, 2001). Meeting people at work was a positive benefit for some individuals in this Scottish study and such relationships were highly valued. Further, mixing with others at work had indirect benefits such as increasing individuals’ self confidence, which encouraged at least one person to be “more sociable and talkative” in other social situations.

2.59 Research findings therefore point to a need to focus on the quality of jobs, the social atmosphere and connections at work, and to use intentional strategies to promote social integration. The importance of better support for relationship development including “getting better at spotting workplaces conducive to social inclusion” was one of the conclusions reached by Beyer (2001). Employment specialists could evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of different workplaces using one of the many measures designed for this purpose, such as those devised by the Virginia Commonwealth University (Parent et al, 1992).

### **Self directed employment/self employment**

2.60 The prospect of self-employment (sometimes referred to as ‘micro-enterprise’) for people with disabilities is a more recent phenomenon associated with the concept and promotion of self-determination, person centred planning approaches placing the individuals’

dreams and aspirations at the centre, and the development of personalised funding systems such as Direct Payments. Self-directed employment has been defined as an array of models where people taking responsibility for the work also have a significant say in how it is organised and managed (Rizzo and Van Houtte, 2000).

2.61 A nationwide demonstration project in the USA in 1993 on ways to improve consumer choice within vocational rehabilitation services, unexpectedly found that 13% of participants who became employed chose self-employment over regular employment (Callahan et al, 2002). They concluded that self-employment and participant choice/control were closely related concepts. Since then, the 1998 United States Rehabilitation Act Amendments officially recognised the importance of self-employment as an employment option within the US Vocational Rehabilitation system (Hagner & Davies, 2002).

2.62 Proponents of this option argue that it presents a “tremendous opportunity” especially for individuals who are challenged by the competitive labour market and although “not for everyone”, self-employment is hailed as “the next logical step in the evolution of supported employment” (Griffin and Hammis, 2003). In summary, the advantages are that it:

- Closely matches individual preferences, gifts, and unique contributions and allows for the creation of work opportunities when someone does not fit standard job descriptions
  - Encompasses some types of work not found in existing job opportunities
  - Offers another avenue for supported employment and is a viable alternative to day programmes
  - Offers control and self-reliance, which is appealing to some
  - Offers an opportunity to schedule the working day and week to accommodate personal productivity levels, personal goals, support needs, lifestyle choices etc
- (Newman, 2001; Hagner and Davis, 2002; Griffin and Hammis, 2003).

2.63 Self-employed individuals with disabilities may need access to business training, business plan development, skills training and education, assistance with obtaining financial resources and specialist benefits advice, and mentoring. Griffin and Hammis (2003), alongside other authors such as Rizzo (2002) emphasise the importance of providing a wide range of supports, systems for supported decision making, supportive business structures and innovative business coaching.

2.64 The literature also identifies one of the biggest barriers to developing self-employment options as the attitudes and approach of services supporting individuals with disabilities (Allen and Granger, 1997; Griffin and Hammis, 2003). Although other outcomes were positive, the businesses studied by Hagner and Davies (2002) were what they called “shoestring operations” in that they were not economically viable by traditional criteria. Shelley et al (1999) also found the income from self-employment was supplemented by other earned and unearned income.

### **Importance of post employment services**

2.65 The Montana/Wyoming Careers through Partnerships demonstration project illustrated the importance of post employment services to job retention and career advancement (Griffin & Hammis, 2003). Many participants in this project used funds for post employment services such as job coaching and financial support services (Newman,

2001). Reid and Bray (1997) concluded that individuals who kept their jobs for some time had at least one important source of support, which could be their job coach or someone at the workplace.

2.66 “Extended services” or ongoing support has rarely been researched although it is claimed as one of the “unique features” of supported employment, which has contributed to its success with individuals with severe disabilities (West et al, 2002). These researchers found that most people required very little support once stabilised in a job even when problems arose and that strategies involving natural supports in the workplace and other people such as family members, went some way to resolve the shortfall in funding for extended services.

## **GAPS IN INFORMATION**

2.67 Scant literature was found relating to adults with ASD and employment and, what there was predominantly focused on employment strategies with adults with Aspergers Syndrome. Nevertheless, a recent report published by the National Autistic Society (Barnard et al, 2001), suggested employment was the single biggest issue or barrier facing more able adults with ASD. Furthermore, Fast (2004) claimed that 90% of those with Aspergers Syndrome who are in jobs are what the author describes as “under-employed” in these jobs, that is, not working to their full capacity.

2.68 The main barriers to employment recognised in the literature were professionals’ lack of understanding of ASD in the employment context; confusing recruitment processes; interviewing techniques which disadvantaged people with ASD; adjustments in the workplace that tended to be physical rather than procedural; and the often high technical and knowledge skills of people with Aspergers Syndrome. Supported employment and person-centred planning can be the key to facilitating employment for people with ASD (Leach, 2002).

2.69 In examining what makes a successful job for people with ASD, Grandin (1999), herself a person with ASD, argued that jobs need to be chosen that make use of the strengths of people with ASD and in summary, that successful transitions into jobs or careers can be achieved through:

- Gradual transitions – work started for short periods while the person is still in school
- Jobs that have a well-defined goal or endpoint
- Capitalising on the person’s work not personality, and making a portfolio of work
- Supportive employers who recognise the person’s social limitations
- Having mentors – people who have common interests with the person with ASD
- Educating employers and employees about ASD
- Undertaking freelance or self-employed work

(Grandin T, 1999)

## **BEST PRACTICE FEATURES**

2.70 In summary, the literature review has identified several best practice features, which can be summarised as:

- A values based approach is taken to implementing supported employment;
- A user-led approach is adopted promoting self-determination, person centred services, choice and a career-based approach;
- Employers' needs are taken into account when marketing supported employment and job development;
- Employment specialists adopt a business like approach to marketing and job development, avoiding the language and culture of human service systems
- There is awareness raising and training for employers, co-workers and supervisors
- Employment specialists become consultants and facilitators rather than experts
- There is training for, and proper support given to employment specialists, including training in new approaches
- Employment specialists use 'natural supports' within the workplace and support jobs in ways that are as 'typical' as possible for each setting;
- Intentional and systematic ways are found to enhance social integration;
- Self employment opportunities are considered and supported by supported employment agencies;
- There are post employment or follow up services;
- Services use strategies to ensure people with severe disabilities are included;
- Systemic barriers such as the lack of strategic development and financial disincentives within the benefits system are tackled.

## CHAPTER TWO: SUMMARY OF KEY FINDINGS

- There is a gap in the literature regarding employment and people with ASD
- A value-based approach based on the support model has been found to be the most effective at promoting employment
- Given the variability in practice, revisiting the values and definition of supported employment is called for
- Implementation of supported employment across Europe has been disappointing with many countries found to invest more in segregated provision
- Although there is no consensus about the definition of supported employment, 3 elements are common – 1) paid jobs; 2) integrated settings; and 3) ongoing support
- Individuals with more severe disabilities are underrepresented in supported employment although studies show high quality outcomes are possible
- Research supports tackling systemic barriers as these define the extent to which supported employment can deliver improvements over time
- While aspects of the social security system are recognised as unhelpful, effective welfare rights advice has guaranteed positive financial outcomes for many people
- The changeover and conversion envisaged at the start has not been achieved – instead supported employment has become part of a continuum of services
- Supported employment is often developed in isolation, leading to fragmentation and fragility of the sector. A need for strategic development is emphasised
- Writers emphasise the importance of a user-led perspective and of individuals controlling their vocational destinies through self determination and self advocacy
- Ensuring a more user-driven approach includes promoting person centred planning methods, emphasising individual choice, and adopting a career-based approach
- Examples exist of local authorities promoting employment through flexible recruitment policies and procedures, promoting in-house opportunities, setting targets, and working in close partnerships with other agencies
- Finding the ‘right job’ relies on a proper understanding of both the individual’s needs and the employer’s needs
- Employment specialists could do more to market supported employment to employers and should avoid the language and culture of human services systems
- Employers with experience report more favourable perceptions and willingness to hire other disabled persons
- Awareness raising and training for employers, co-workers and supervisors is associated with better outcomes
- Training for employment specialists is critical for quality supported employment and is associated with better outcomes for individuals
- There is a gap between what is expected of employment specialists and their current levels of pay and training
- While ‘natural supports’ have been variously interpreted, better outcomes are associated with involving employers and co-workers in the support process
- When employment is ‘typical’ outcomes such as wages, hours worked and social interaction are better
- To enhance social integration, research suggests focusing on the quality of jobs, the social atmosphere at work and adopting intentional strategies
- Self employment opportunities were perceived as “the next logical step in the evolution of supported employment”, with potential to offer individualised options
- Post employment or follow-up services to those established in jobs are critical



## **CHAPTER THREE: BROADER STAKEHOLDER PERSPECTIVES**

### **INTRODUCTION**

3.1 It was clear from the short-life working group's report on employment, '*Working for a change?*' (2003), that achieving employment for this disadvantaged group is not just about closing day centres or changing expectations. In its discussion, the working group acknowledged the interplay of systemic issues, negative attitudes, limited knowledge and information, the lack of mainstreaming and leadership, all of which serve to compound the difficulties faced by individuals and their families and the innovative services which exist.

3.2 In this chapter, we discuss these issues from the perspectives of 10 key stakeholders chosen in collaboration with the Research Advisory Group. Five were central government departments, although one was at arm's length, and 5 were umbrella organisations within the statutory or voluntary sectors. They included representatives of Careers Scotland, Scottish Enterprise, the Association of Directors of Social Work, the Health Service, ENABLE, the Disability Rights Commission, the Scottish Union of Supported Employment, Jobcentre Plus, The National Autistic Society and the Department of Transport, Enterprise and Lifelong Learning.

### **IMPACT OF 'THE SAME AS YOU?'**

3.3 A common view across all key stakeholders was that in relation to people with learning disabilities and/or ASD, employment was not yet sufficiently high on the policy agenda, despite the current climate being especially conducive to change. This was borne out by the limited engagement with the employment agenda as identified in *The same as you?* Only 2 interviewees identified this document as having had a significant impact on their organisations, and both were social work related organisations. The impact had been to give a higher profile and priority to modernising day services and to developing 'supported employment' options. However, as one commented, while "employment has taken off in some areas, it's not yet on the corporate agenda"

3.4 A central government agency stated it had facilitated the creation of more effective links with wider structures in order to expand the 'employability' agenda. Half had no or little awareness of *The same as you?* with a minority stating that the Beattie report had had greater influence on their organisation. These were mostly, but not exclusively, broader employment agencies. This could be viewed as disappointing given these organisations are best placed to take forward the mainstreaming of 'supported employment'.

### **SYSTEMS EFFECTIVE IN PROMOTING EMPLOYMENT**

3.5 The most commonly cited method for effectively promoting employment was the 'supported employment' model. A general view was that the technical know-how, such as vocational profiling, job matching, Training in Systematic Instruction (TSI) and job coaching etc. existed and its success demonstrated. However, it was also argued that 'supported employment' was not available to most people with learning disabilities and/or ASD:

*“The best that is held up...has only 100 people in jobs – that’s peanuts. Compare that to the numbers in day centres. It’s self evident that we’re failing.”*

3.6 The importance of dedicated and “well-defined services” focusing purely on employment, and which included in-built sustainability through a support package for both employers and employees, was emphasised. Further, “intensive work on benefits” and providing support to find and stay in work had demonstrated that ‘supported employment’ works when implemented properly.

3.7 Alongside this, one voluntary agency noted that the spread of person-centred planning approaches generally had strengthened the ‘supported employment’ agenda. Interestingly this individual focus was echoed in the comments of the central government agencies, all of which identified the extension of their remit to people dependent on a range of benefits and the creation of personal advisers and key workers within their systems, to support this endeavour.

3.8 Two interviewees referred to the mainstreaming of funding as being helpful, although added that this needed to be based on an understanding of the principles of ‘supported employment’. Strikingly, there was only one mention of the Disability Discrimination Act as an aid to promoting employment. This was in relation to people with ASD for whom ‘reasonable adjustments’ beyond physical arrangements to include aspects of advertising and interviewing together with harassment, was deemed relevant.

3.9 In respect of employment practices being helpful, there were 2 distinctive views expressed. One was that ‘equal ops’ was “all well and good” as a backdrop but in day-to-day matters it was a “red herring”. The other view expressed was that a good ‘supported employment’ service would overcome any misunderstandings and resistance by working closely with employers. Also the point was made that opportunities were missed by failure to make the ‘business case’ for employing people with disabilities.

## **PERCEIVED BARRIERS TO EMPLOYMENT**

3.10 A predominant theme to emerge unprompted from voluntary and local statutory organisations, was a perceived lack of leadership and absence of a consistent framework from which to commission quality ‘supported employment’ services and against which to audit performance. As a result, there was felt to be unhelpful “variability” in the field and “no rhyme nor reason often as to what projects survive and which ones don’t”. Consequently, while some “good services” had not survived, some “bad services” continued to operate.

3.11 Asking specifically about the barriers identified by the short-life working group (Scottish Executive, 2003), interviewees expanded on the following: disincentives in the social security system; low expectations and negative attitudes; a lack of awareness; and poor employment practices.

## **Disincentives in the social security system**

3.12 Interviewees perceived the loss of welfare benefits, direct or indirect, as a result of paid employment as a barrier. What was interesting though was a perceptible shift in thinking from identifying what is often referred to as ‘the benefits trap’ as THE main barrier to focusing on inadequacies in the knowledge and expertise of employment specialists as the main problem. While it was acknowledged that the benefits system was “complex”, it was also felt there was “conflicting information” about this as a main barrier and that there were “ways around the difficulties” although “it requires knowledge”.

3.13 Interviewees stressed the importance of ‘supported employment’ services having access to specialist benefits advice workers. A minority were unconvinced that welfare rights officers had sufficient specialist expertise. When benefits issues were not tackled properly or employment workers operated in ignorance, the outcomes from ‘supported employment’ fell short and, in some cases, were “undesirable” for instance as one interviewee commented:

*“It’s not for the fainthearted, but there’s lots of services ignore it and then they end up with guys getting jobs at 4 hours a week so they dinnae have to deal with the benefit problem...That’s basically what people are saying- that it’s too complicated for me- let’s no get into that minefield- let’s call it permitted work or what another local authority has done, which is to demean work right down to therapeutic activity. It’s not even called work anymore”*

3.14 There were different views as to what constitutes progress with tackling the benefits agenda. Unlike ‘supported employment’ services, which were primarily focused on ensuring people received the ‘going rate for the job’, central government agencies commented on improvements introduced in therapeutic/permitted earnings and safety net arrangements.

## **Low expectations and attitudes**

3.15 Most identified low expectations and negative attitudes as major barriers in getting people into work. Attitudinal barriers across all sectors- employers, families, professionals and people with learning disabilities and/or ASD themselves, were described, though with varying emphases. Most interviewees did not locate the problem with people with learning disabilities and/or ASD but with the attitudes of others:

*“There are major attitudinal barriers. Not so much people with learning disabilities but we have care managers, day services staff whose attitudes are barriers. Supported employment isn’t embedded in SVQ training and so they don’t have the awareness of employment they should have.”*

3.16 Also, as the above person went on to say, serious attention has to be paid to staff as they influenced families’ attitudes. One respondent commented that the only way forward was to tackle this culture at an early stage through working closely with school leavers so that they did not “get into the benefits trap in the first place.”

3.17 Comments in respect of individuals with ASD, and more specifically about people with Aspergers Syndrome were interesting on two counts. First, it was suggested that people with Aspergers Syndrome encountered difficulties as a result of applying for jobs for which

they were unsuited due to their social disability rather than any lack of technical skill or qualifications. Second, as their disability was largely “hidden”, employer attitudes and discrimination was an on-going problem. It was suggested that this was perhaps because Aspergers Syndrome was less visible as a disability than, for example, Downs Syndrome.

### *Lack of awareness & employment practices*

3.18 More than half the interviewees identified a lack of awareness and employment practices as barriers. There was a view, chiefly expressed by voluntary organisations, that local authorities were not doing enough to promote employment within their own ambit and that central bodies were achieving less than they would like to think. However, establishing the infrastructures at a local level was slower. In common with the voluntary agencies that wanted clarity and standards in relation to ‘supported employment’, central agencies commented that lack of a definition of ‘employability’ and understanding of its uneven development in some, were problematic.

3.19 Predictably comments on employment practices tended to focus on human resource policies with organisations referring to equal opportunities documents and some additional arrangements such as the appointment of a ‘diversity manager’. The question of flexibility in employment was raised as a particular issue for people with ASD. It was said that ‘reasonable adjustment’ was often less about physical arrangements and more about support in knowing how to socialise and whom to ask if there was a problem. People with ASD would tend to leave a job rather than deal with such situations, which pointed to the need for regular reviews and flexibility in employment practices.

## **ACHIEVING CHANGE**

3.20 The 3 most important priorities for achieving change identified by the interviewees were having central leadership; changing expectations and attitudes; and mainstreaming employment.

### **Leadership & coordination**

3.21 Most interviewees were looking to the Scottish Executive to provide consistent strategic direction, which included establishing a formally recognised framework for ‘supported employment’ along American lines, as well as systems for monitoring and training. Most, though not all, thought there should be one governmental department in charge and that the department selected should have an employment brief to avoid the risk that such initiatives might not be seen as work. One person captured the spirit of the responses as follows:

*“Supported employment has so far been a grassroots development. Now it’s older, it needs the structure to grow properly”.*

3.22 Within the broad agreement that improved co-ordination of employment services was a priority in reducing barriers to employment, two approaches emerged. One could be described as the reduction of duplication and the creation of one-stop shops as both assistance

to employers and those seeking work. At a simple level, mutual access to vacancy lists and structurally, the merging of the Benefits Agency and Employment Services into Jobcentre Plus was seen as helpful. Nonetheless, we were told that despite the aspirations of newly created government agencies around 'employability', they were not properly geared up to dealing with people with disability.

3.23 The second approach favoured was a partnership approach through the creation of a forum with dedicated monies from a range of sources to develop and implement an equal access strategy which 'connects' economic development, training agencies and 'supported employment'. The Glasgow Employment Forum was an exemplar of this approach, which we were told, had generated much political interest.

3.24 We did however receive a specific suggestion in relation to ASD that one-stop shops and generic initiatives were not necessarily the way forward in so far as generic disability advisers rarely had the expertise or sufficient time to deal adequately with people with ASD.

### **Changing expectations and attitudes**

3.25 Changing expectations particularly those of professionals, families and agencies was seen as a priority task and likened to the 'culture shift' required to achieve the closure of the learning disability hospitals, and create a normative expectation that people should live and work in the community:

*"It's partly about chipping away at these attitudes but also using a sledgehammer! It's not acceptable to me that Social Work for instance who's responsible for support arrangements, does not include employment when putting together person-centred plans".*

3.26 There were comments about the importance of changing attitudes and expectations of carers generally in relation to people with learning disabilities and/or ASD, as difficulties that arose in relation to benefits often had implications for the whole family finances and not just those of the person with a disability.

### **Mainstreaming**

3.27 There was widespread support for mainstreaming in the sense of locating 'supported employment' within the world of work where its primary profile would be business rather than welfare focused. However, the view that specialist agencies should complement mainstream organisations rather than be replaced by them was overwhelming. This opinion was particularly strongly felt in relation to ASD where specialist resources were seen as critical to achieving improvement.

3.28 The introduction of person-centred approaches was seen as key in developing mainstream responses. This approach was beginning to show through the whole system whether it was the introduction of personal advisers and key workers in employment agencies, or person-centred planning and the use of direct payments in human service settings.

3.29 Interviewees across the sample identified the need to mainstream funding for ‘supported employment’ and for improved co-ordination of employment services. There was an acceptance that ensuring employment opportunities for people with disabilities was part of wider agendas. Indeed specialist agencies suggested the concept of ‘readiness’ had been successfully challenged but people were ‘stuck’ in the system.

### **Other priorities for achieving change**

3.30 Several other priorities were identified. These included carrying out diversity audits, promoting success stories, tackling the disincentives inherent in the social security and other related systems, and increasing the resources available for ‘supported employment’. Matters associated with ‘reasonable adjustments’ and work place culture were given particular emphasis in relation to ASD where, for instance, people with Aspergers Syndrome might communicate well in writing but not face-to-face.

## **ENCOURAGING COLLABORATION AT STRATEGIC LEVEL**

3.31 Suggestions about achieving collaboration at a strategic level across traditional boundaries such as across Careers, Employment, Equality, Benefits, Disability and Health fell into two broad camps. First, collaboration at a strategic level required leadership and guidance from the top. Second, it required coordination and partnership.

### **Leadership & guidance from the top**

3.32 Almost half the interviewees mentioned a need for leadership and for “practical and pragmatic” guidance from the top. Some talked about the need for a shared vision in which the Scottish Executive would take a lead to ensure that the social justice and employability agendas were articulated within departments and on the ground. Alongside this, and related to it, was the view that there had been recent significant policy changes such as the New Futures Fund, which signified that “the timing is right” to develop a national framework that cuts across disadvantaged groups and different departments so that “everyone buys into it.”

### **Coordination & partnership**

3.33 The second set of ideas focused on co-ordination and partnership as a way to achieve ‘joined-up working’. Some government organisations mentioned a pervasive cultural change that was taking place nationally within the Civil Service, which supported strategic working across departments: Departments were said to be “encouraged to work that way”. Working in isolation was now considered “wrong” and because of the target groups, agencies were increasingly required to “work with an appropriate range of partners to achieve targeted services.”

3.34 The requirement for a lead agency to promote and coordinate employment initiatives was identified by the short life working group in *Working for a change?*. While over half interviewees supported the idea of a lead agency, there was less support for the idea that this should be the Department of Transport, Enterprise and Lifelong Learning (TELL). Many

thought Social Justice or Equalities Unit better placed to do this. One considered it necessary to create a new agency without any “vested interest”.

3.35 Two respondents suggested the Glasgow Equal Access strategy provided a good model of partnership working, but required co-ordination by an organisation that was not a service provider. Although not a new idea in principle, it has been described in some detail elsewhere as ‘collaborative advantage’ (Huxham 1996), it appeared new in the ‘supported employment’ field.

### **CHAPTER THREE: SUMMARY OF KEY FINDINGS**

- Despite publication of *The same as you?* and *Working for a change?*, key stakeholders believed that employment was still “not yet on the corporate agenda”
- The ‘supported employment’ model was considered the most effective way of promoting employment with all disadvantaged groups
- Promoting employment required dedicated and well defined ‘supported employment’ services including support for employee and employer
- The emergence of person-centred approaches; mainstreaming of funding; and to a lesser extent, the Disability Discrimination Act and equal opportunity policies had helped promote employment
- Making the business case for employing people with learning disabilities and/or ASD was felt to be more significant than organisations’ equal opportunities policies
- A main barrier to employment was felt to be the lack of leadership and not having a consistent framework to commission ‘supported employment’ and audit performance
- Low expectations and negative attitudes, lack of awareness, poor employment practices, and disincentives in the benefits system were also identified as barriers
- There was conflicting information about the ‘benefits trap’ and a growing opinion that with knowledge and expertise this barrier could be overcome
- The importance of leadership and a strategic push from the centre was critical: This included developing a national framework for ‘supported employment’, setting standards, monitoring and promoting training to meet them
- It was felt that local authorities and central government could do more to promote employment within their own organisations
- The 3 priorities for achieving change were 1) central leadership and coordination; 2) changing expectations and attitudes; and 3) mainstreaming employment
- Other suggestions included carrying out diversity audits; promoting success stories; tackling benefits issues; and increasing resources for ‘supported employment’
- Changing expectations (of professionals, families and agencies) was likened to the culture shift required to achieve closure of long stay hospitals
- As far as lead agency, not all agreed with the short life working group’s suggestion that this should be the Department of Transport, Enterprise and Lifelong Learning. Several preferred to locate it within social justice or equalities agendas
- There were differences of opinion about the benefits of supporting mainstream agencies to get better at catering for everyone’s needs or whether both generalist and specialist agencies should co-exist and complement each other
- There was a more insistent anxiety that generic services would have insufficient expertise and time to provide a successful service to people with ASD.



## **CHAPTER FOUR: EMPLOYMENT SUPPORT PROVIDERS – A VARIED LANDSCAPE**

### **INTRODUCTION**

4.1 This chapter discusses findings from a questionnaire survey of employment support providers carried out during 2004. While national statistics (Scottish Executive, 2004) and other research showed employment-related activity to have flourished in recent years, less was known about the spread of ‘supported employment’ as distinct from other types of employment support, the type and quality of supported jobs, and the extent to which jobs in ‘open employment’ were full or part time and represented individual choice. Also, little was known about the levels of pay associated with supported jobs, although previous research has suggested these jobs are sometimes unpaid or low paid positions.

4.2 The study set out to examine employment support and as such, inevitably covered a vast canvas of activity. While it did include support for paid jobs or ‘real jobs’, it also included support provided to individuals in segregated or non-open employment settings, work placements, unpaid and voluntary work, vocational training as well as a whole host of other work-related activities. A distinction has therefore been made in this and other chapters between ‘supported employment’ and other types of employment support. We also discuss the different approaches to, and interpretations of, ‘supported employment’.

### **PIP AGREEMENTS & NATIONAL STATISTICS**

4.3 At the start of the research, Partnership in Practice (PiP) agreements completed by 32 local authorities with health and other partners in 2001 provided partial information about work-related activities for people with learning disabilities and/or ASD. However, these early statements lacked detail on progress made with the employment agenda. In particular, these statements did not show how local authorities were evaluating employment support. Further, the findings of our survey of employment support providers confirmed that evaluation of employment support services was not common practice: Under half of respondents altogether (33 out of 69) stated they had evaluated their services and just 18 of these were local authorities. Further, the responses indicated services to be engaged in routine monitoring, service reviews and collation of management information rather than commissioning independent and rigorous evaluation.

4.4 While a general level of activity around employment opportunities was evident from the PiPs, the extent of a focus on ‘real jobs’ was less clear, and while ‘supported employment’ services were well developed in some areas, there were no such services in others. There was little mention within these early PiP agreements of how local authorities were progressing with Recommendation 16 from *The same as you?*, which suggested local authorities and health boards should lead by example in promoting employment. Nor did the statements make specific reference as to how they would address the employment of people with ASD.

4.5 The first PiP agreements were written in the first half of 2001 and, from what was reported, employment for people with learning disabilities was not a high priority for local authorities and health boards. Since then, employment has come onto the agenda in the

learning disabilities field, evidenced by the publication of *Working for a Change?* in December 2003 and the commissioning of this research. Local authorities, health boards and their planning partners were completing new PiP agreements for the end of September 2004, just outside the timeframe for this research. These were expected to say much more about employment, particularly as the Scottish Executive stated that PiP agreements should address employment opportunities, specifically covering:

- Current employment schemes for people with learning disabilities and the involvement of other agencies, such as Jobcentre Plus
- Numbers of adults with learning disabilities with employment opportunities and any targets for the next 3 years
- Plans for development in the next 3 years.

4.6 The Scottish Executive collated new statistics about learning disability services for the first time in 2003. These were published in February 2004 as *Adults with Learning Disabilities: Implementation of The same as you?* As part of these statistics, local authorities reported a total of 2,493 individuals with learning disabilities in employment during a typical week in May 2003, with 979 of these in ‘voluntary work’, 714 in ‘non- open employment’ and 774 in ‘open employment’.

4.7 North Lanarkshire and Argyll & Bute were exceptional in terms of having large numbers of people in ‘open employment’. This was defined as paid jobs that ‘have/or could be put out to open job adverts’, with ordinary employers, for the ‘going rate of pay’ and that may or may not involve support from a job coach. Three others, City of Edinburgh, Highland and North Ayrshire also had more people in ‘open employment’ than other types of work. In most areas however, the statistics suggested the majority of people with learning disabilities were in jobs that either offered expenses only (‘voluntary work’) or allowances rather than a wage (‘non-open employment’).

## **QUESTIONNAIRE SURVEY**

4.8 The findings presented below based on questionnaire responses from 69 employment support providers in Scotland, start to paint a more colourful picture of available employment support. Appendix 3 shows the geographical spread of responses across Scotland. While every attempt was made to be inclusive of employment support providers across Scotland, the degree to which we were successful in this relied first upon receiving a response from local authorities and others to a request for information about local employment support providers, and second, on the quality of the contact information contained within databases held by SUSE and other bodies.

4.9 Responses came from 41% of employment support services contacted in different parts of the country, and were representative of all but 5 local authority areas in Scotland. Areas from which there were no returns were East Ayrshire, East Dunbartonshire, East Renfrewshire, South Lanarkshire, and West Dunbartonshire. South Lanarkshire was in the process of collating in-house information about its employment support services, but this was not available in time to be taken into account by this research.

4.10 As might be expected, the highest numbers of respondents were from the City of Edinburgh (9 or 13% of respondents) followed by Glasgow City (6 or 9% of respondents).

## PROFILE OF EMPLOYMENT SUPPORT PROVIDERS

4.11 Survey respondents came from a variety of organisations including local authorities, the voluntary sector, Careers Scotland, Jobcentre Plus, Further Education colleges, work creation schemes, and sheltered work settings. Respondents represented both large and small organisations. What they all had in common was that they provided employment support, even if this was marginal to their main purpose. The following brief pen pictures illustrate the range of organisations that responded.

### **Moray Council Employment Support Service, Elgin**

A dedicated employment service with 10 staff run by the local authority for people with physical and sensory disabilities, mental health and ASD provides “person centred support, facilitates rights, and promotes progression.”

### **Jewel & Esk Valley College**

Has 1 Placement Support Coordinator who works with people “who require additional support” (people with disabilities, mental health problems, young people, adult returners) offering work experience tasters and voluntary work opportunities.

### **Careers Scotland, Isle of Skye**

As part of the Highlands & Islands Enterprise, Careers Scotland employs a Keyworker to provide young people with “special needs, behaviour problems, or substance abuse” with “intensive support to ease the transition into sustainable further education, training or employment.”

### **Inverclyde Council Personnel Services**

A large department in a local authority provides support through 3 staff members to either people with a learning disability or physical disability to gain employment opportunities through the government’s Workstep programme.

### **Opening Project, Glasgow**

This dedicated employment service run by a voluntary organisation by and for disabled people in Glasgow, has 8 staff supporting unemployed disabled people to “gain and sustain employment of 16 hours or more”.

### **Locharthur Community, Dumfries**

As part of a broader service, a staff of 36 support a therapeutic community environment for people with learning disabilities where people live and work together on farms, garden, workshops or houses. The service offers support in “meaningful work that is of benefit to other people within or without the Locharthur Community”.

### **Beltane Products, Wishaw**

A sheltered workshop run by North Lanarkshire Council has 6 staff supporting people with learning disabilities in “sustainable gainful employment” in a factory setting.

### **Inclusion Alliance, Edinburgh**

A voluntary organisation with 21 Community Lifestyle Facilitators providing a “whole lifestyle support service” to people with complex learning disabilities. It offers support to people in community settings and activities, of which ‘supported employment’ is a part.

## ‘Employment support’

4.12 Given the research study sought to examine employment support in its broadest sense, it was important to understand what meanings respondents attached to the terms. In summary, respondents included the following as employment support:

- Pre-employment support e.g. job clubs, helping with CVs, interview coaching
- Job training (e.g. confidence building, literacy skills, travel, communication skills)
- Welfare benefits advice
- Traditional ‘supported employment’ - vocational profiling, job finding/search, job matching, job coaching, and provision of long-term support
- Supporting ‘natural supports’ in the workplace
- On-site mentoring in sheltered or non-open jobs
- Regular reviews and monitoring to sustain people in jobs
- Social support and help with personal care
- Support to employers
- Support to parents/carers
- Career planning, including planning with young people leaving school
- Disability awareness training
- Support to access specific government programmes such as New Deal, Get Ready for Work, Buddy to Work, Workstep Programme, Access to Work
- Providing special equipment
- And last but not least, advocacy support

4.13 Further, Table 4.1 below summarises their responses to a specific question about the types of employment support they provided:

**Table 4.1: Number and percentage of respondents providing different types of employment support**

Type of employment support	Number	Percent of sample
Pre-vocational training or work preparation	49	71%
Vocational profiling	44	64%
Job club	17	25%
Job finding/search	52	75%
Task analysis (e.g. TSI)	26	38%
Job matching	46	67%
Job coaching	53	77%
Monitoring of jobs	50	73%
Ongoing individual employee support	61	88%
Support to employers	50	73%
Developing ‘natural supports’ in the workplace	49	71%
Career planning	33	48%
Disability awareness training	38	55%
Other	5	7%

4.14 Services were commonly engaged in pre-vocational or work preparation activities, although not many offered job club support. Over three quarters provided job coaching support, clearly demonstrating the influence of the American individual ‘supported employment’ model. Although common, vocational profiling was not carried out by all

respondents. This might, in part, be explained by the degree of collaborative working between agencies such as Careers or Jobcentre Plus and ‘supported employment’ agencies at certain stages of the process. Fewer than might have been expected identified Training in Systematic Instruction or TSI within the support they provided.

4.15 By far the commonest type of support provided, was ongoing individual employee support (88% of respondents). This finding confirms what employment support providers told us informally, which was that they spend a considerable amount of time monitoring and supporting individuals in jobs, and that this aspect of their work often goes unrecognised.

4.16 Respondents highlighted the support they provided to employers almost as much as the support they provided to individuals with disabilities. Many reported working to develop ‘natural supports’ in the workplace but considerably fewer reported they were using a ‘career planning approach’. In more recent years, workplace disability awareness training has become an active part of the employment support providers’ strategy and in this survey, 55% of respondents reported delivering such training.

4.17 There were several ‘Other’ types of support identified. They offered for example, “work-related skill development”; social skills training to “address specific individual issues for example anger management, stress and anxiety management”; vocational guidance, such as help with interview techniques; personal development plans; welfare benefits checks including “income forecasting”. In short, employment support covered a vast canvas of activity, not to be confused with the ‘supported employment’ model.

### **Types of employment opportunities**

4.18 Given the diversity in the meaning of employment support, it should not be surprising to find an equally broad spectrum of employment opportunities being offered, including unpaid and voluntary work alongside paid jobs. Table 4.2 below summarises the types of employment opportunity offered.

**Table 4.2: Types of opportunity offered by employment support organisations**

<b>Type of opportunity</b>	<b>Number of providers</b>	<b>Percent of sample</b>
Supported employment	52	75%
Work placement (12 weeks or less)	42	61%
Job or work taster (up to 6 weeks)	41	59%
Voluntary work in non-profit organisation	39	56%
Jobs for ‘therapeutic benefits’*	36	52%
Jobs for ‘earnings disregard’*	31	45%
Unpaid jobs (more than 12 weeks)	25	36%
Sheltered or ‘non-open’ employment	24	35%
Jobs in a social firm	11	16%
Transitional Employment (Clubhouse)	0	0%
Jobs in Cooperative	1	1%
Other	12	17%

\*These terms have now been changed to 3 categories of ‘permitted work’

4.19 Table 4.2 shows that the majority defined their service as offering ‘supported employment’, despite around a third of respondents offering segregated employment in

factory settings. Over half were offering work placements of 12 weeks and under, job tasters for up to 6 weeks and voluntary work opportunities in not-for-profit organisations. Jobs for ‘therapeutic benefits’ or ‘earnings disregard’ were also common. The reader should note that although we recognise that the official terms in use by the Benefits Agency have changed to three categories of ‘permitted work’, we were advised at the start of the research, that work for ‘therapeutic benefits’ and ‘earnings disregard’ would be the terms most readily understood. These findings should therefore be taken to be equivalent to, or as relating to the ‘permitted work’ categories.

4.20 They were supporting unpaid jobs of 12 weeks or more to a lesser extent. The degree to which current opportunities were in unpaid jobs will be investigated further in chapter five when we look at how many individuals with learning disabilities and/or ASD were in paid, unpaid and voluntary work. A few respondents reported offering opportunities to work in a social firm. None of the 6 ‘clubhouses’ in Scotland responded to the survey, and so none of the organisations was offering Transitional Employment placements.

4.21 Only one organisation was offering employment opportunities in a co-operative setting, and 12 respondents identified ‘Other’ types of opportunities they provided. These were specified as “paid employment”, “open employment”, “intermediate work setting”, Training for Work scheme, Get Ready for Work scheme, Workstep, “fixed term training”, and the New Deal Environmental Task Force (ETF).

### **The staff of employment support providers**

4.22 For the services represented in the survey sample, the mean number of staff in each project or service was 9, while the median was 6. The largest number (8 respondents) were providers with a single member of staff. The majority of staff were full-time (76%).

4.23 The diversity among the providers was reflected in the range of job titles of staff of employment support services. Those who had specific responsibility for developing employment opportunities had job titles such as Employment Support Worker/Officer, Supported Employment Officer, Job Coach or Job Buddy. Generalist posts included Day Centre Officers, Resource Workers, Support Workers, Trainers, Team Leaders and Managers. Some employment services supported people to perform specific jobs in sheltered workshops and communities and had staff that were Welders, Tree Surgeons, Furniture Restorers, and Workshop/Factory Managers.

### **Service sector**

4.24 As Table 4.3 below shows, local authority social work departments and the voluntary sector dominated the employment support sector. Two respondents were private sector companies delivering support training and employment and, a further 3 described their sector as ‘other’ as they were part of the Highlands and Islands Enterprise Board or incorporated within a college. None of the respondents identified their organisation as being provided by or managed by the Health Service.

**Table 4.3: Sector of organisations providing employment support**

Type of organisation	Number	Percent of sample
Local authority	33	48%
Voluntary or non-profit	31	45%
Private	2	3%
Other	3	4%
TOTAL	69	100%

**Dedicated or broader services?**

4.25 Providers were asked whether they were a dedicated service or part of a larger organisation with a range of functions. Dedicated services were defined as those specifically offering employment support, having their own budget, controls and policies. The majority of employment support providers were part of a broader service (62%), while just over a third (36%) were dedicated employment services including ‘supported employment’ services or projects in the voluntary and local authority sectors.

**Area & length of time established**

4.26 Nearly half (48%) described the area they were serving as ‘mixed urban/rural’ and a further 32% were in urban areas. Few were in rural areas (19%). Employment support providers were relatively mature services, with over half having been in existence for 5 years or more and relatively few having been set up in the past 2 years. This could indicate slower growth in recent years. While this variable was the same whether the provider was in an urban, rural or mixed urban/rural area, local authority services tended to be older and voluntary sector services newer: around 70% of local authority providers had been in existence for 5 years or more compared to 47% of those in the voluntary sector.

**Table 4.4: Length of time employment support organisations had been offering employment support**

Length of time	Number	Percent of sample
Under 6 months	1	1%
6 months to under 2 years	10	15%
2 years to under 4 years	10	15%
4 years to under 5 years	6	9%
5 years and over	41	59%
TOTAL	68	100%*

1 missing case; \*does not sum 100% due to rounding

**Target groups**

4.27 Almost half of these services were targeted generically at “people with disabilities” or a subset of this such as “young people with disabilities”. Next, they were targeted specifically at people with learning disabilities. Few were working with people with ASD. Some services were providing support to “all groups”, which included unemployed young

people and care leavers, and others targeted services at people with mental health problems. One catered for “people with special educational needs”.

**Table 4.5: Target groups for employment support services**

Target group	Number	Percent of sample
People with disabilities, including young disabled	33	48%
People with learning disabilities	15	22%
General - all groups including unemployed	13	19%
People with mental health problems & learning disabilities	4	6%
People with ASD	2	3%
People with special educational needs	1	1%
TOTAL	68	100%*

1 missing case; \*does not sum 100% due to rounding;

### Service aims

4.28 Not surprisingly given the nature of the sample, the service aims of employment support providers were wide-ranging and, in certain respects, resist summary. While all primarily set out, in the words of one provider, to “assist individuals with disabilities to access employment opportunities”, they varied considerably in how they aimed to do this. Service aims ranged from supporting individuals to “enhance employability”, to providing “supported work placements” and segregated jobs in specialist industries, to providing ‘supported employment’ services, finding and helping individuals retain paid jobs with community employers. The 2 quotations below illustrate this diversity:

*“We aim to promote confidence, self esteem, broaden horizons and enhance employability and social skills.” (Polbeth Market Gardens Trust)*

*“Our aim is to ensure people with disabilities who want to work, receive appropriate supports and opportunities to access real jobs for real wages.” (North Lanarkshire Supported Employment Service)*

4.29 Vocational training programmes stated aims were to help individuals “make the successful transition into paid work”. Other organisations whose core business was supporting individuals in their own homes, aimed to assist them with jobs “if they wish to find employment”.

### Service criteria

4.30 Just over three quarters (77%) of organisations had selection criteria for their service. In common with other research findings (Beyer et al, 1996), the majority stated that the individual’s motivation to work and in some cases, to work a minimum number of hours per week, were the main criteria for service. In addition, eligibility for employment support regularly depended upon factors such as:

- Where the person lived (services worked within specific catchment areas)
- Being identified as having learning disabilities or another form of disability

- Being of a certain age e.g. over 16 or over 18 years

4.31 Additionally, some services required potential clients to be:

- Referred by another service, typically a support provider
- Eligible for the Workstep Programme
- Able to travel independently by public transport

4.32 A significant minority, including several purporting to operate as ‘supported employment’ services, stated that the individual must be “reasonably work ready” or be identified by another agency as being “work ready”, or “able to perform at an acceptable level of productivity”. They were required at referral to have a set of skills, such as good timekeeping and inter-personal skills, which would enhance employability.

## Funding

4.33 The main individual source of funding for employment support was Scottish local authorities. This was the case for both local authority and voluntary sector provision. The next most significant source of funding for all providers was central government funding (e.g. Scottish Executive, Department of Work & Pensions), followed by European funding, (e.g. European Social Fund or ESF). This was especially true for voluntary sector providers.

**Table 4.6: Sources of funding for employment support services**

Funding Source	Number	Percent of sample
Local authority	48	70%
Government (Scottish Executive, DWP etc)	33	48%
European funding e.g. ESF	24	35%
Local Enterprise Company (LECs)	9	13%
Other Charitable Trust	7	10%
Community Fund	6	9%
Private Sector	4	6%
NHS Board or Trust	2	3%
Social Inclusion Partnership or SIP	2	3%
Other	8	12%

4.34 There was no separate budget within support services such as *C-Change*, and so the costs of providing employment support would presumably come from generic budgets within the organisation and would thus be open to competition from other demands. Also, some organisations such as the *Garvald Engine Shed* (Edinburgh) and the *Locharthur Beeswing* (Dumfries) raised revenue from the sale of their products. Others received funding from a voluntary sector parent body such as *Quarriers* or *Camphill Village Trust*.

4.35 Funding was received from a variety of sources and the majority (67%) had between 1-2 sources (see Table 4.7 below). Only a minority had more than 3 different funding sources. Local authority employment support providers were mainly self-funding but some also received government or European grants, and less frequently, financial support from Local Enterprise Companies and the private sector. Voluntary sector providers received

financial support from a more diverse range of funders overall, including the local authorities, central government bodies, charitable bodies, SIPs, the health service and the private sector.

**Table 4.7 Number of different funding sources providing financial support to employment support providers**

Number of funding sources	Number of respondents	Percent of sample
1	26	38%
2	20	29%
3	16	23%
4	6	9%
5 or more	1	1%
TOTAL	69	100%

### Referral sources

4.36 Referrals for employment support came from a variety of places, but predominantly they were from social work/services departments. This is perhaps not surprising given that they were both the biggest provider, as well as the main funder of employment support services. Jobcentres were the next main source of referrals, followed by voluntary sector organisations, FE colleges, self-referral, Careers Advisers, family and friends, and ‘Others’. This latter category included Community Learning Disability Nurses, Educational Psychologists, Resource Centres, and Disability Employment Advisers (Jobcentre). One service did not receive referrals as such as they provided employment support to individuals they were already supporting in their own homes. Table 4.8 below shows in detail the main sources of referral.

**Table 4.8: Main sources of referral to employment support services in order of priority**

Source of referral	Number	Percent
Social Work/Services	54	78%
Jobcentre	47	68%
Voluntary organisation	38	55%
FE college	34	49%
Self	34	49%
Careers advisor	34	49%
Family or friends	31	45%
Schools	25	36%
New Deal provider	23	33%
Hospitals/clinic	16	23%
GP	10	15%
Other	8	12%

4.37 Respondents were asked to further identify the 3 most common referrers to their service. This was found to be staff from Resource Centres and the Jobcentre Disability Employment Advisers. Over half (51%) of respondents identified social work/services as the first most common referrer and 1 in 5 respondents (21%) identified the local Jobcentre as the most common referrer. Moreover, local Jobcentres and social work/services were the second most common referrer identified by 19% and 16% of respondents respectively. The third most common referrer was ‘self referral’, Jobcentres and FE Colleges.

## Partnerships with other agencies

4.38 To better understand the partnerships with other services these providers found the most helpful, respondents were asked to identify which organisations they worked with on a regular basis when providing employment support. As the following table clearly shows, social work/services, voluntary organisations, Jobcentre Plus, FE colleges, Careers offices, the local DSS office and the Department of Work & Pensions were the key partners in delivering employment support. Further, when asked to identify which 3 they found the most helpful, respondents identified (in priority order) Jobcentre Plus, social work/services, and voluntary organisations.

**Table 4.9: Organisations that employment support providers regularly engage with**

<b>Name of organisation</b>	<b>Number</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Social Work/Services	59	86%
Voluntary organisation	55	80%
Jobcentre Plus	54	78%
FE college	47	68%
Careers	44	64%
Local DSS Benefits office	41	59%
Department of Work & Pensions	37	54%
Schools	33	48%
Other local authority department. e.g. Chief Executive	23	33%
Employers' Forums	21	30%
Scottish Enterprise	14	20%
Highland & Islands Enterprise	11	16%
Local Enterprise Companies (LECs)	11	16%
Other	18	26%

4.39 In addition to the 'usual suspects' listed above, respondents highlighted the importance to them of local 'supported employment' networks, links with health providers, private employers, the welfare benefits department, parents and carers, local community groups, and SUSE.

## OPPORTUNITIES PROVIDED BY 'SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT' SERVICES

4.40 As already stated, a plethora of approaches to supporting people in employment were found from the survey, 75% of which purportedly offered 'supported employment'. Many of these were however, inconsistent with the definition of 'supported employment' adopted by the research, that is, "real work for 16 hours or more in an integrated setting with ongoing support". In Tables 4.10 and 4.11 below, we refer only to information in relation to the 52 respondents who stated they were offering 'supported employment' to examine the types of employment opportunity they offered and the number of individuals supported in these different opportunities.

**Table 4.10: Types of employment opportunity offered by agencies providing ‘supported employment’**

Type of opportunity	Number of respondents	Percent of sample
Work placement (12 weeks or less)	36	69%
Job or work taster (up to 6 weeks)	35	67%
Voluntary work in non-profit organisation	33	64%
Jobs for ‘therapeutic benefits’	31	60%
Jobs for ‘earnings disregard’	29	56%
Unpaid jobs (more than 12 weeks)	20	39%
Sheltered or ‘non-open’ employment	19	37%
Jobs in a social firm	9	17%
Jobs in a co-operative	9	17%
Other	7	14%

4.41 Although these agencies supported people in paid jobs, they also supported placements of 12 weeks or more, voluntary work in non-profit organisations, part-time jobs for ‘therapeutic benefits’ and jobs for ‘earnings disregard’, even though these do not necessarily lead to full-time paid jobs. A sizeable minority were supporting unpaid jobs lasting more than 12 weeks and 37% of the 52 respondents were supporting people in segregated settings. This suggests a lack of consistency in the way ‘supported employment’ has been implemented across the country, and, in some cases, a watering down of fundamental values and principles underpinning the model.

4.42 Table 4.11 below explores this issue further by looking at the number of individuals supported by the 52 agencies in each type of opportunity.

**Table 4.11: Number of individuals supported by employment opportunity**

Type of opportunity offered under “‘supported employment’”	Total No of supported employees
Paid jobs (not earnings disregard & therapeutic benefits)	1,013
Jobs for ‘earnings disregard’	295
Voluntary work in non-profit organisation	172
Unpaid jobs (more than 12 weeks)	164
Jobs for ‘therapeutic benefits’	148
Work placement (12 weeks or less)	73
Job or work taster (up to 6 weeks)	22

4.43 While the largest numbers of people were being supported by these agencies in paid jobs, significant numbers were in part-time jobs for ‘earnings disregard’, voluntary work, unpaid jobs lasting longer than 12 weeks, and part-time positions for ‘therapeutic benefits’. That as many as 164 individuals were being supported in unpaid jobs lasting more than 12 weeks is an issue of concern for the development of ‘supported employment’ given that its primary purpose is about helping people find and keep real paid jobs. Furthermore, agencies delivering ‘supported employment’ were commonly supporting unpaid jobs: 89% of all those reported to be in unpaid jobs of more than 12 weeks were being supported by these 52 agencies.

4.44 Several individuals in paid jobs and supported by these 52 agencies were on the government’s Workstep Programme, which provides a wage subsidy to employers. Eighteen of the 52 agencies were supporting around 300 individuals through Workstep, representing

approximately 30% of all those supported in paid jobs by these agencies. Workstep providers included several local authorities (Aberdeen City, Clackmannanshire, Dundee City, Falkirk, Fife, Highland, Inverclyde, and Orkney Island), as well as large voluntary organisations (ENABLE, Cornerstone and Leonard Cheshire). In contrast, although 21 of the 52 agencies were supporting individuals on Working Tax Credits, they were supporting just 85 individuals in this way.

## **OPINIONS ON BEST PRACTICE**

4.45 In the following paragraphs, we explore the opinions of employment support providers about ‘supported employment’, ‘good practice’ within their own organisations, the perceived barriers to employment, and ideas to increase the effectiveness of employment support.

### **Definition of ‘supported employment’**

4.46 Respondents were asked their opinion on the definition of ‘supported employment’ used in the research. The majority (67%) agreed with the definition, albeit with certain reservations. A fifth of respondents disagreed with the statement outright and a further 14% did not reply to the question. The main disagreement was in relation to defining ‘real work’ as paid work of 16 hours or more. This was felt to discriminate against people with more severe disabilities who, in their opinion, could still perform valued jobs but might only manage to work a few hours per week. One respondent in agreement with the definition commented:

*“In an ideal world, the definition of supported employment would be acceptable, however, people with complex needs may not be able to sustain 16 hours work due to fatigue or over exertion but would feel able to contribute a few hours a week for both a financial and personal incentive.”*

4.47 Some respondents believed that setting a minimum of 16 hours failed to recognise the disincentives operating in the welfare benefits system. While the research found examples that refuted such assertions, some respondents claimed that disabled people worked part-time hours because “they had a ceiling imposed on their earnings by the welfare benefit system”.

4.48 In terms of patterns of employment, one respondent suggested that advertised part-time positions could regularly be for less than 16 hours. For example, in one organisation a clerical officer was employed for 9 hours per week, and it was suggested the job might suit an applicant with learning disabilities. It was suggested that 16 hours was an “arbitrary cut-off” that would result in devaluing many current jobs.

4.49 There were some respondents who believed that jobs defined as ‘supported employment’ should be in integrated settings, but that it mattered less if they were paid or full-time positions. This was in stark contrast to the view that securing the ‘going rate of pay’ for the job or finding ‘paid jobs’ was central to ‘supported employment’. Some even disagreed that ‘supported employment’ necessarily meant jobs in integrated settings, preferring to define it more in terms of the support given. A minority sought to include pre-employment support in the definition of ‘supported employment’, arguing that it was

supporting individuals with disabilities to “secure and maintain paid work in a regular work environment” by providing the necessary support tailored to each individual.

4.50 From the above discussion, confusion over the definition of ‘supported employment’ seems endemic. Disagreement rages over whether it is desirable for ‘supported employment’ to only include jobs for a minimum amount of weekly hours, for example, 16 hours; only paid jobs at the going rate of pay; and, whether or not it should refer only to jobs in integrated settings. The level of confusion suggests a pressing need to return to basics with ‘supported employment’ and to re-examine its original values and principles.

### Issues in adopting new approaches

4.51 Table 4.12 below shows the extent to which the survey respondents felt their services had embraced ‘natural supports’, person centred planning and career planning approaches. The idea of utilising ‘natural supports’ within the workplace is not new, so it was unsurprising that the majority reported adopting this approach. Fewer respondents identified with person centred planning and career planning as links between these approaches and ‘supported employment’ are relatively recent. Nonetheless, it was encouraging that such high proportions did so.

**Table 4.12: Number and percentage of respondents adopting new approaches**

Type of Approach	Number	Percent
Developing ‘natural supports’	55	80%
Person centred planning	53	77%
Careers planning/development	43	62%

4.52 On enquiring further about issues related to the implementation of any of these approaches, respondents highlighted the following.

#### *Natural supports*

4.53 For services operating in rural locations, utilising natural supports within the workplace was regarded as a “necessity”, and for some as “the only way we could provide a service”. For others, using this approach represented “better use of limited support hours”. For whatever reason ‘natural supports’ were used, it was critical that they were developed “right from the start” and that this was “explicitly stated as an aim” to the employer otherwise “it will just not happen”.

4.54 Respondents often talked about the need to “achieve the right balance” between support from co-workers and support from the project/service. One observed that “natural supports might do the job for the client rather than help them” or that they might become “over protective or too authoritative”. It was thought that some employees might be unenthusiastic about providing ‘natural support’ but feel obliged to do so by their employer, and there were problems caused by staff turnover, which was particularly high in some industries like catering establishments.

4.55 They acknowledged that building ‘natural supports’ was more challenging in some workplaces than others and differed according to the nature of the job. A minority had found using ‘natural supports’ too challenging on account of employers’ fears or prejudice. The literature review found that adopting a ‘natural supports’ approach can mean many different things and that employment specialists have embraced the concept variously. These survey findings would seem to uphold this assertion.

#### *Person centred planning*

4.56 Difficulties with implementing person centred planning were framed more in terms of the way this approach was perceived to “challenge the service system”. There was scepticism about the approach, and a sense that it could lead to “unrealistic aspirations”. Another concern was that to “do it properly” would require more resources than available as person centred planning was extremely time intensive. However, as one explained, the challenge was taking the time to “build up capacity and resist the urge to go for quick outcomes”. The extra time taken was perceived as highly beneficial:

*“The focus is on sustained outcomes. The time we spend on preparation with clients means that we approach employers in a positive way.” (Voluntary sector ‘supported employment’ service)*

4.57 *Opus Employment* in Glasgow had developed a tool they called the ‘Personal Employment Plan’, which helped make the process of vocational profiling more person centred and ensured jobs were better matched to individual interests and preferences. The potential of person centred planning to enhance the individuality and person centredness of ‘supported employment’ more generally therefore has still to be realised.

#### *Career development*

4.58 Barely any comment was offered in respect of a career planning approach even though 62% stated they had adopted this approach. When they did raise issues, it was to highlight individuals’ lack of experience with choice and poor employment histories and how this impacted negatively on the development of personal career plans. The link between person centred planning and a career planning approach was not made.

### **Perceived barriers to employment**

4.59 Barriers or challenges to employment as identified by respondents were operating on three main levels: (1) at a basic or individual; (2) structural; and (3) perceptual/attitudinal levels. Although rarely highlighted as a main barrier to employment for people with learning disabilities and/or ASD, a few respondents identified individuals’ lack of self-confidence, skills and lack of experience in employment. At a structural level, respondents identified disincentives caused by the social security system or ‘benefits trap’; changes in patterns of employment; and high unemployment as all acting as barriers to employment.

4.60 Inadequate funding and resources for ‘supported employment’ was commonly highlighted as a main barrier. Not having guaranteed funding was causing “instability for

planning” for both the individuals and organisations. Services were currently short of appropriately trained staff with “the right blend of skills and experience.” A gap in terms of specialised support for individuals with ASD was highlighted. Further, it was felt the support required for people with more severe disabilities or high support needs was not properly acknowledged by funding bodies.

4.61 One respondent felt that offering financial incentives to employ individuals with learning disabilities acted as a barrier to the development of ‘supported employment’ but did not elaborate further. Another suggested that people with learning disabilities and/or ASD were often “disempowered” by the systems and those who supported them (including parents and residential support workers), often took away their “right to self-determination”. A minority identified transport as another barrier to employment, especially for individuals living in rural areas.

4.62 Finally, the attitudes of others were sometimes felt to act as barriers to employment. This included the negative perceptions and fears of employers, scepticism and negative perceptions of parents/carers and professionals and the attitudes of society towards disabled people. Some respondents claimed employers held stereotypical views of people with learning disabilities and/or ASD and that they needed to “constantly persuade employers of their value”. Some even felt there was a lack of employers “willing to engage with us”. Others suggested that families were sometimes concerned about the loss of benefits and the impact on the family income, or they had a problem with “letting go” and that these attitudes limited employment options.

### **Self identified examples of ‘ground breaking’ practice**

4.63 We asked survey respondents to identify any aspect of their current service that they would consider particularly successful or ‘ground breaking. Commonly respondents sought recognition for the “ordinary” achievements of ‘supported employment” as ‘ground breaking’. They highlighted the model’s effectiveness in finding jobs in areas of high unemployment, especially for people traditionally disadvantaged in the labour market. Indeed, what some perceived as being commonplace, such as assisting people into full time paid employment, was considered by others to be ground breaking as the ‘norm’ very often was unpaid or part time jobs.

4.64 Provision of disability awareness training for employers alongside a disability organisation was another example of innovative practice. A few services were focusing on school leavers, working in collaboration with the schools and social work to properly address young people’s vocational aspirations at a young age so that they “look at the option of employment and vocational training way before traditional day services”.

4.65 Developing self-employment initiatives was another area considered groundbreaking. Although in the minority, there were examples of services helping to develop successful ‘micro-enterprises’ or community businesses in gardening and horticulture. These businesses were providing viable self-employment for people with learning disabilities and/or ASD as well as a much needed community services for local residents in more rural areas. There were some who had or were developing social firms involving people with learning disabilities and/or ASD.

4.66 Innovative services, such as *Aspire* in Fife and *Prospects* in Glasgow, were ‘ground breaking’ because they were the unique in their area, indeed in Scotland, to be offering employment support to people with ASD, in particular to people with Aspergers Syndrome. Not only were they involved in providing direct employment support services, but they also delivered training programmes to other organisations wanting to improve what they offered to people with ASD.

4.67 General support agencies in the voluntary sector such as the *Inclusion Alliance* in Edinburgh and *Support for Ordinary Living* in Glasgow, were breaking new ground in successfully supporting people with “behaviour that can be challenging” to work in a range of busy settings, which included offices.

4.68 Whilst not providing a discrete employment support service, *Inclusion Alliance* provides a “lifestyle support service” in community settings of which employment was a part. What they offer is flexible, individually tailored support including long-term on-the-job support to people with more complex disabilities. Most of the jobs they support are part-time voluntary positions in a range of settings including a Bus headquarters, a charity shop, a nursery and office settings.

4.69 *Support for Ordinary Living or SOL* is a voluntary organisation with 3 dedicated ‘supported employment’ staff that works with adults with learning disabilities in a broad capacity. It seeks to ensure that individuals have “the opportunity to become valued members of society living the life they choose”. SOL perceives itself as a “unique service offering highly carved jobs with long term support.” They support a small number of people in a range of mostly part-time paid jobs.

4.70 Fragmentation of employment services was an issue highlighted within this research and one respondent, *Enable Glasgow* project was pioneering a new “seamless service” or one stop shop approach to delivering “an individualised employment pathway” for its customers. For the job seeker, this would mean contacting one person within the service who would help with finding paid work of his/her choice including access to mainstream programmes such as Get Ready For Work. It would also mean employers would only need to contact one agency when addressing their recruitment needs.

4.71 The *Opening Project* in Glasgow appeared unique in having a policy of only employing people who themselves have a disability:

*“All Opening staff are people with disabilities/impairments. This does not make people better workers but does assist with a better understanding of the key issues/principles of the ‘social model’.”*

4.72 This voluntary sector project funded by the Community Fund, ESF and other charitable funding, is a dedicated ‘supported employment’ service, which offers, “support to any disabled person within the City of Glasgow to gain and sustain employment of their choice of 16 hours or more.” A team of 8 staff provide support with confidence building, CV preparation, vocational profiling, job search, benefits advice, help with interviews, negotiations with employers, on-site support, monitoring and evaluation, and ongoing support.

## **Increasing effectiveness**

4.73 According to the majority of respondents “simplification of the benefits system” and an impetus on government to “revise the benefits system” were crucial to improving the effectiveness of employment support. Respondents also advised raising levels of earnings disregard for people who receive Income Support.

4.74 Respondents identified the need for a better and “more secure” financial infrastructure for ‘supported employment’ calling for more mainstream funding of the sector, and greater investment in services in rural areas as well as for people with severe disabilities and people with ASD. Rather than “reinvent the wheel”, they proposed the existing infrastructure of ‘supported employment’ and other employment support should serve as the foundation for expansion.

4.75 It was felt that having a “more understanding government”, “more leadership from the Scottish Executive”, and “greater joined up thinking” would further increase effectiveness. Local authorities and other large employers could do more to ensure there were job opportunities within their own organisations and “an increased profile for ‘supported employment’ at a national level” and stronger direction “from the centre” would help achieve this.

4.76 Existing employment support services within local authority social work departments were in favour of separating employment support from welfare or disability services believing that independent offices that were “not labelled as part of disability services” would increase the credibility of the service, not only with individuals and families but with employers too.

4.77 Improving the effectiveness of employment support also involved tackling the attitudinal barriers facing people with disabilities in employment. The way to achieve this, it was thought, was to develop “more sophisticated approaches to employers”, to educate employers to “recognise the contribution people with learning disabilities can bring to the workplace.” There should be “targeted work with employers in relation to inclusion” and companies should be made more aware of governmental policy in relation to employing people with disabilities.

4.78 Respondents identified a number of ways that practice within existing employment support services could be improved. Working more closely with schools and school leavers would address the issue of employment at an early stage and ensure that offering employment as a first option became the norm. Related to this was the need to impact on the practice of care managers so that they always considered employment as part of community care assessments.

4.79 Effectiveness could be improved with “better transitions between children’s and adult services” and better partnerships between employment support providers and other agencies such as education services, voluntary sector support providers and Careers services. Lastly, there was a call for more accessible information to be produced on employment for service users because current publications “tend to be medically explained”, especially those relating to ASD.

## CHAPTER FOUR: SUMMARY OF KEY FINDINGS

- 41% of over 167 relevant employment support providers responded to a questionnaire survey during April-June 2004
- A wide range of both small and large-scale organisations were providing employment support, the majority of which were part of broader services. Some provided employment support as part of a wider “lifestyle support” approach
- Just over a third (36%) were dedicated employment services and this included ‘supported employment’ services
- Local authority social work departments and the voluntary sector were the main providers of employment support, and not surprisingly, they were the main funders
- Financial support was also received from central government and European grants
- Most employment support services were in urban or mixed urban/rural areas and were relatively mature. Newer services were to be found in the voluntary sector and these services relied on more diverse funding sources
- The majority of services were targeted at disabled people in general, although 22% worked specifically with people with learning disabilities
- Few services existed to support people with ASD into employment
- ‘Employment support’ translated into diverse services offering a range of support, not all of which led onto real jobs in ordinary workplaces
- 52 out of 69 respondents defined what they provided as ‘supported employment’
- However, not all of these met the definition of ‘supported employment’ used in the research, and there was clear watering down of the concept in practice
- In view of the findings, there would seem an urgent need to return to basics with ‘supported employment’ and to agree a common definition
- While keenly embracing the use of ‘natural supports’ in workplaces, respondents were more cautious about person centred planning, which they felt needed resources “to do it right” and could potentially raise “unrealistic expectations”
- Career based planning approaches were far less commonly used
- Respondents identified the ‘supported employment’ model as ground breaking as it was yet to be adopted more widely, and the outcomes were positive when implemented properly
- Several services exemplified good practice and demonstrate that good services are being provided in different parts of Scotland
- Respondents identified 6 key developments as innovative – workplace disability awareness training; supporting micro enterprises or self-employment; specialist services for people with ASD; supporting those with challenging behaviour; providing seamless services to both employee and employer; and employing disabled people within organisations providing employment support
- Providers identified structural barriers; inadequate funding for supported employment especially for those with severe disabilities and/or ‘challenging behaviour’; and the negative attitudes of others as the main barriers to employment
- Suggestions for improvements included tackling structural barriers to employment; providing targeted funding for supported employment; building on existing expertise; more central government direction; expecting more of ‘big employers’ e.g. local authorities and health services; making employment support independent of disability services; tackling negative attitudes; fostering better partnerships; addressing transition issues with schools; and providing more accessible information about employment.



## CHAPTER FIVE: PEOPLE IN SUPPORTED JOBS

### INTRODUCTION

5.1 This chapter examines information from the questionnaire survey about people with learning disabilities and/or ASD supported in jobs (paid and unpaid) and about the types of job opportunities available. The survey was conducted to discover more about employment support providers, but also to explore the patterns of employment opportunity available to people with learning disabilities and/or ASD across Scotland, especially the extent to which jobs were unpaid or paid, and whether they were full or part time.

### OVERALL PICTURE

5.2 Underlying the research aim was an assumption that services kept records about the people they supported according to disability categories, but this assumption was flawed. For instance, one project completed the questionnaire in relation to their service and was clearly engaged in innovative work but did not keep “impairment records”. Although it was supporting 23 disabled people in employment, it could not provide any detailed information about how many were people with learning disabilities and/or ASD. From other comments received, we know that other projects/services did not return the questionnaire on account of not keeping such information. The information obtained will therefore be an underestimate of the true picture, but it is unclear to what extent this is the case.

5.3 Respondents were asked to provide a figure for the total number of people they currently supported in employment, and to specify how many of these were people with learning disabilities, people with learning disabilities and autism, people with ASD only, and people with Aspergers Syndrome. The survey identified 3,024 adults with learning disabilities and/or ASD as receiving employment support from 69 employment support providers. This is likely to be an underestimate given that it corresponds to figures aggregated from 41% of relevant organisations.

5.4 Table 5.1 below shows that 6 out of 10 people receiving employment support (not necessarily in jobs) from these agencies were people with learning disabilities and/or ASD. It also shows that only a minority of those supported in employment were people with ASD, and further that this was more likely to be people with Aspergers Syndrome. This was further confirmed by the experience of trying to specifically recruit people with autism rather than people with Aspergers Syndrome into the interview sample.

**Table 5.1: Number in each target group and as a percentage of total supported**

Receiving employment support	Number	Percent
People with learning disabilities	2,814	58%
People with learning disabilities and/or ASD	62	1%
People with ASD only	26	1%
People with Aspergers Syndrome	92	2%
Disability not known	30	1%
Other disabilities	1,816	38%
TOTAL	4,840	100%*

\*Does not sum 100% due to rounding up.

## **PEOPLE WITH SEVERE DISABILITIES**

5.5 Around 28% of the 69 respondents were providing support to people deemed to have high support needs, that is people with ‘multiple and profound learning disabilities’, ‘severe learning disabilities’, or ‘complex’ or ‘significant disabilities’. Most of these services were working with very small numbers of such individuals, usually under 10, while 7 stated they were working with between 13-50 individuals labelled as having severe or profound disabilities.

5.6 Around 7% of those supported in employment were identified as people with severe disabilities. While this is perhaps higher than might have been expected given the findings of other recent research (Weston et al, 2002) examining the extent of ‘supported employment’ for people with higher support needs in the UK, it is still low considering people with severe disabilities were the original target group for ‘supported employment’.

## **BALANCE BETWEEN UNPAID & PAID JOBS**

5.7 Out of 3,024 people with learning disabilities and/or ASD identified as receiving employment support at the time of the survey, the vast majority (78%) were being supported in work (both paid and unpaid jobs). Over 600 other individuals were at the initial stages of vocational profiling, or were being ‘assessed’ to establish their requirements, or they were looking for a suitable vacancy. Around 37% of those in work (both paid and unpaid) were currently receiving low level monitoring support only. This included infrequent contact with the employee or the employer and/or site visits.

5.8 The majority were in paid jobs: around 66% were in paid work supported by 54 services. This compares with 46 services supporting 817 individuals in unpaid or voluntary work. However, as will be explored below, as much as half of those in paid jobs were working part-time or under 16 hours each week, a third of which were working less than 10 hours for permitted work allowances.

5.9 For the majority, being supported in unpaid jobs meant engaging in voluntary work or working unpaid for private companies for more than 12 weeks. However, as can be seen in the table below, significant numbers were also in short-term unpaid work placements. One local authority respondent identified 300 individuals in unpaid or voluntary work but did not provide any further information so it is not known whether these were voluntary work, unpaid work, work placements and so on.

5.10 There was variation between employment support providers, firstly in whether they supported unpaid jobs at all, and second, in the extent to which they supported unpaid jobs. For instance, 8 respondents only supported people in paid jobs and others only supported people in unpaid or voluntary work. Yet other services supported both, whilst tending to favour supporting either paid or unpaid jobs and would have more in one category than the other. Further, not all respondents provided comprehensive information on all of the individuals they supported in unpaid jobs and so in many tables, we have only been able to provide information on about 60% of those supported in unpaid positions.

**Table 5.2: Number and percentage of people supported in different types of unpaid work**

Type of unpaid work	Number	Percentage of sample
Voluntary work in 'not-for-profit' or 'non-profit' sector	184	36%
Unpaid work (more than 12 weeks)	185	36%
Work placement (12 weeks or less)	113	22%
Job tasters (up to 6 weeks)	22	4%
Other	6	1%
TOTAL	510	100%*

\*Does not sum 100% due to rounding

5.11 In the paragraphs below we will look more closely at the characteristics of the individuals supported and the jobs they were in, making comparisons where relevant between those in unpaid and paid jobs. While respondents gave full information for some questions, this was not the case for others, and some provided very limited information. Where there is missing information, this is shown in the figure for total responses.

## PROFILE OF INDIVIDUALS SUPPORTED IN JOBS

### Gender & age

5.12 While people with learning disabilities and/or ASD in paid jobs were most likely to be male (63% were men and 37% were women), there were similar numbers of men and women in unpaid jobs (53% were men and 47% were women).

5.13 The table below summarises the age distribution of those supported in jobs. Just over half of those supported in unpaid and voluntary work were aged between 25-49 years, with only 5% aged under 18 years. A fifth of people in unpaid jobs were aged over 50 years. A higher proportion of those in paid jobs were aged 25-49 years: around 69% of those identified by the sample organisations as being in paid jobs were in this age range compared to 52% of those in unpaid jobs.

5.14 The percentage of individuals aged under-25 years was marginally less for those in paid compared to unpaid or voluntary work. Similarly there were fewer people in the older age groups, that is 50 years and over, in paid jobs in comparison with unpaid positions.

**Table 5.3: Age distribution of people supported in unpaid and paid jobs**

Age band	Unpaid jobs		Paid jobs	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Under 18 years	24	5%	17	1%
18-24 years	119	23%	228	19%
25-34 years	138	26%	393	33%
35-49 years	137	26%	422	36%
50-64 years	36	7%	122	10%
65 years and over	68	13%	6	1%
TOTAL	522	100%	1,188	100%

## **Ethnic origin**

5.15 The ethnic origin of the majority of people supported in unpaid work was described as 'White'. Respondents identified one person in unpaid work as Indian, 2 as Pakistani and one as from another ethnic group. A significant minority (around 2%) of those supported in paid jobs were from Black and Asian communities. The survey found 21 individuals of Bangladeshi origin being supported in paid jobs, 3 Chinese, 2 Pakistani, 1 Indian, 1 Black Caribbean, and 1 Black 'other'. A further 11 people in paid jobs were from 'other' minority ethnic backgrounds such as White South African.

5.16 Employment support services based in either Edinburgh or Glasgow were most commonly, although not exclusively, found to be working with individuals from minority ethnic communities.

## **CHARACTERISTICS OF SUPPORTED JOBS**

5.17 In terms of unpaid or voluntary work, a variety of what the Americans term 'entry level' type jobs were being supported. Among supported unpaid jobs were care assistants in local authorities and private nursing homes; cleaning jobs in different settings; voluntary work in charity shops; shelf stackers in supermarkets, warehouse and shop assistants; labouring jobs in kennels, stables and garages; janitorial and caretaker jobs in community centres; waitresses and kitchen porters in hotels and cafes; and sound technicians and production assistants in the music industry.

5.18 A comparable profile of jobs was evident among supported paid jobs but there was a broader range of positions taking place in a greater variety of workplaces. Similarly, many of the jobs were also in retail settings (shops, supermarkets, warehouses etc), catering establishments and hotels, but they were also in cinemas, housing associations, theatres, insurance companies, farms and libraries to mention just a few.

5.19 Typically paid supported jobs included jobs such as supermarket trolley assistant, car park attendant, bakery assistant, salesperson, store assistant, grocery assistant, kitchen porter/assistant, labourers, cleaning or domestic assistant, housemaid, hotel receptionist, bar/glass collector, leisure attendant, and bingo assistant. There were paid jobs in factory workshops as skilled operatives, as well as in restaurants and cafes run by specialist agencies such as *Quarriers* or *Garvald*. Some had paid jobs in office administration, gardening and landscaping, environment-related and recycling firms.

5.20 Those working with people with ASD were supporting people in engineering apprenticeships, in jobs such as a computer aided design or CAD operator, web designer, and financial and administrative positions with national utility companies and local authorities. Small co-operatives had been set up providing domestic and garden-tidy services to customers in the community. A few were supporting people in jobs as drivers of community vehicles, as tutors in adult literacy groups, bookkeepers, dog walkers, and as lifeguards.

5.21 Using an adapted standard industrial classification showed that the jobs market for people in unpaid jobs was predominantly in the not-for-profit or charitable sector as well as in 'Distribution', which includes hotel, catering and retail industries (see Table 5.4 below). There were also several unpaid positions in the Public Sector including local authority care

homes and teas-on-wheels services. Few unpaid positions were in Manufacturing, Construction and other types of industry. Apart from care assistants in private nursing homes, none of the jobs identified were specifically in the health services. ‘Other’ types of company that respondents could not easily fit into the designated categories were jobs in hairdressing, a private gym, and in the newspaper industry.

5.22 A slightly different pattern emerged for those in paid jobs in terms of the sector or types of company they were employed in. While they tended also to be in the Distribution industry, a significant minority were also working in the Public Sector, ‘Other’ industries (not listed), Manufacturing and the Charitable or Non-profit sector. As found in other research, there was an under-representation of paid jobs in industries such as Financial and Banking, Transport and Telecommunications, Construction and to a lesser extent, Agriculture, Forestry and Fishing. The wider variety found might be an indication of a more person centred approach being adopted by those agencies developing paid job opportunities.

**Table 5.4: Types of company providing unpaid and paid jobs**

Type of company	Unpaid jobs		Paid jobs	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Hotel, catering, retail & wholesale	145	28%	445	38%
Financial and banking	1	0.2%	13	1%
Transport and telecommunications	4	1%	17	1%
Construction	3	1%	10	1%
Agriculture, forestry and fishing	13	3%	76	7%
Manufacturing	17	3%	129	11%
Public sector (LA, civil service etc)	96	19%	220	19%
Non- profit or charitable sector	175	34%	100	9%
Other	53	10%	157	13%
TOTAL JOBS	511	100%*	1,167	100%

\*Does not sum 100% due to rounding

### Hours worked

5.23 Table 5.5 below summarises hours per week worked in both unpaid and paid jobs across the sample.

**Table 5.5: Hours per week worked by individuals supported in unpaid or paid jobs**

Hours per week	Unpaid jobs		Paid jobs	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Under 2	45	9%	29	2%
2-4	127	25%	244	19%
5-9	201	40%	193	15%
10-15	67	13%	159	13%
16-25	16	3%	235	19%
Over 25	43	9%	393	31%
TOTAL	499	100%*	1,253	100%*

\*Does not sum 100% due to rounding

5.24 The vast majority of unpaid or voluntary employment was in part-time positions of under 10 hours per week with over a third of these being for 4 or fewer hours each week. Around 75% of individuals in unpaid or voluntary work were working under 10 hours per

week and so it should not be surprising that 34% of people with learning disabilities and/or ASD in these jobs also continued to use day centres for part of the week.

5.25 Exactly half of those supported in paid jobs were in full time positions of 16 hours or more, with the largest percentage being in jobs of 25 or more hours per week. The other 50% of paid jobs were part-time with over a third (36%) being jobs for less than 9 hours per week. As the literature review highlighted, the high proportion of part-time jobs has implications for the outcomes from employment especially social integration as well as for wage levels. It also indicates that few agencies were working within an internationally agreed definition of ‘supported employment’. Interestingly, the proportion of individuals in jobs over 16 hours was roughly equal to that found by Beyer et al (1996) in surveying ‘supported employment’ agencies when the UK.

5.26 There was variability between providers in terms of the pattern of part and full time opportunities they supported. Over half of respondents did not support anyone in jobs of 16 hours or more. Of those that did support people in full time jobs, the greatest proportion supported people in jobs of 25+ hours per week, which included paid jobs in sheltered employment settings and jobs under the Workstep Programme.

### Length of time in jobs

5.27 Generally, unpaid and voluntary work positions were for relatively short periods of time whereas paid jobs were better established. Three out of 5 of those in unpaid jobs or voluntary work had been in these jobs for less than 12 months and 1 in 5 for fewer than 3 months. However, a significant minority (14%) had been in unpaid or voluntary work for at least 4 years.

**Table 5.6: Length of time individuals supported in unpaid or paid jobs had been in these jobs**

Length of time in jobs	Unpaid jobs		Paid jobs	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Under 3 months	84	19%	121	10%
3 to under 6 months	75	17%		
6 –12 months	103	24%	159	13%
Over a year and under 2 yrs	55	13%	205	17%
Over 2 years and under 3 yrs	39	9%	180	15%
3 years and under 4 years	20	5%	110	9%
4 years and over	60	14%	447	37%
TOTAL	436	100%*	1,222	100*

\*Does not sum 100% due to rounding

5.28 Over a third of paid jobs had lasted 4 years or more, and 3 out of 5 had lasted over 2 years. In contrast to other research, under a quarter of those supported in paid jobs had started within the past year. It is not obvious why this should be the case. However, it might be indicative of the time taken to establish real paid jobs. Further, it does suggest that employment support services were often concentrating their limited resources on maintaining existing employees in jobs and perhaps spending less time on setting up new placements.

## Wage or salary levels in paid jobs

5.29 Respondents were asked to indicate whether jobs they supported were paid at the national minimum wage or below and, if known, what level of weekly wages were received by people with learning disabilities and/or ASD. Table 5.7 below summarises the information obtained. Many respondents did not provide any or much information in response to these questions. Information was provided regarding minimum wage levels in respect of 56% of paid job opportunities, and only in relation to 28% of paid jobs was there any information volunteered about weekly wages.

**Table 5.7: Summary of the levels of payment received by those in paid work**

Details of payment	Number	Percent
Paid national minimum wage or above	988	81%
Paid below national minimum wage	237	19%
TOTAL	1,225	100%
Paid less than £50 per week	265	43%
Paid £50-100 per week	62	10%
Paid £101-150	128	21%
Paid £151-£200	143	23%
More than £200 per week	15	2%
TOTAL	613	100%*

\*Does not sum 100% due to rounding

5.30 The information above in relation to over half of paid job opportunities, finds the vast majority of jobs were paid at the level of the national minimum wage or above, while around a fifth were not. When it is acknowledged that 50% of paid jobs were for less than 16 hours per week, this result is less impressive. Although the high proportion of jobs paid at national minimum level or above appears to be a positive finding, as the following quotation illustrates, the statistics mask what was a “grey area” in practice:

*“The one area that is a bit grey is voluntary/permitted earnings. I know the government explanation is being paid the hourly rate for the job. Everyone we have in voluntary placement gets disregarded earnings but often commit more time than the £20 per week. This is their own choice.” (Local authority ‘supported employment’ provider)*

5.31 Some of those in jobs for 16 hours or more were receiving wages below the national minimum wage. What is more, nearly half of those in jobs of 5-9 hours and 37% of those in jobs of 10-15 hours were being paid below the national minimum wage level. This illustrates the diversity in the job opportunities supported for people with learning disabilities and/or ASD and that different financial outcomes were experienced from employment.

5.32 Bearing in mind the low response rate to this question, the findings indicate that the average weekly wage in paid jobs tends to be low, and suggests that ‘permitted work’ levels were commonly used. Other research has similarly found that many of those who found a job received only modest earnings (Corden, 1997). Around 43% were paid less than £50 per week. Obviously at such low rates of pay, having a job will not have the desired impact on individuals’ financial independence and it is likely that many individuals would not have been much, or indeed any, better off as a result of being in a job. This is in marked contrast

to the case studies presented in Appendix 1 and the individual stories discussed in the next chapter. It would therefore seem that securing jobs with higher rates of pay and for more hours clearly remain key issues for employment support providers.

## **CHAPTER FIVE: SUMMARY OF KEY FINDINGS**

- The majority of those supported in employment were people with learning disabilities
- Around 7% were people with severe or profound learning disabilities
- Only 4% of those receiving employment support were people with ASD
- While people with learning disabilities and/or ASD in paid jobs were most likely to be male (63% were men and 37% were women), there were similar numbers of men and women in unpaid jobs (53% were men and 47% were women).
- The majority of those in jobs (both paid and unpaid) were in the age range 25-49 years
- Few of those in unpaid jobs were from minority ethnic communities
- However, a significant minority of those in paid work came from Black and Asian communities
- The survey identified 3,024 individuals with learning disabilities and/or ASD to be supported in employment, and the majority were in paid jobs – i.e. 66% were paid jobs
- Exactly half of all paid jobs were full-time (at least 16 hours per week) and just over a third (36%) were under 9 hours per week
- This would indicate that few employment support providers were working within an internationally agreed definition of ‘supported employment’
- A high proportion of full-time paid positions were for 25+ hours per week, including jobs in sheltered factory settings and those managed under the Workstep programme
- Around 81% of those in paid jobs were receiving the national minimum wage. However, several individuals were working more hours than they were paid for
- Some of those in jobs for 16 hours or more were receiving wages below the national minimum wage levels
- Nearly half of those in jobs of 5-9 hours and 37% of those in jobs of 10-15 hours were being paid at rates below the national minimum wage level
- Rates of pay in general were low across the sample: 43% were earning less than £50 per week but there were notable exceptions – see Appendix 1
- Unpaid jobs mainly meant working in the traditional voluntary sector, but some were with local private employers
- In general, unpaid jobs were short-term placements, although a significant minority (14%) had lasted over 4 years demonstrating that unpaid placements do not always lead onto real paid jobs
- People in paid jobs had been in these jobs generally for longer than those in unpaid jobs
- It would seem that securing jobs with higher rates of pay and for more hours clearly remains a key issue.
- Supported jobs tended to be in a restricted range of industries, predominantly the service or distribution industry, although there was more variety among paid jobs

## **CHAPTER SIX: “TOTALLY GO FOR IT” – INDIVIDUALS’, FAMILIES’ & EMPLOYERS’ PERSPECTIVES**

### **INTRODUCTION**

6.1 This chapter presents the findings from qualitative in-depth interviews with 15 individuals with learning disability and/or ASD who were in ‘supported employment’, their families and employers. The key aim of carrying out interviews with supported employees and families was to collect information that would inform, inspire, encourage and ultimately would lead to more and better ‘supported employment’. This was a gift for the research team as opportunities to search out positive and inspiring information are rare.

### **PARTICIPATIVE RESEARCH APPROACH**

6.2 The purpose of including interviews with supported employees in the study was primarily to bring out authoritative real life information about what life is like for people who are in ‘supported employment’. Supported employees’ accounts provide honest, straightforward and often very moving evidence about the quality and impact of services, both good and bad. Their information is powerful and instructive. It is also essential if we are to gain a full and true picture of the services being examined. Participative approaches help to ensure the people who know about services through their own personal experiences genuinely inform research.

6.3 As detailed in Chapter One, we recruited 3 people with learning disabilities as Research Associates who had experience of research and/or employment issues, and together with the Researchers, they carried out interviews with supported employees, families and employers. For interviewees, the experience of being interviewed by someone who has similar life experiences can be far less disempowering than being interviewed by other researchers, however good their practice. The most persuasive argument for us, though, is that a participative research approach is the right way to work. Research about people with specific life experiences should as far as possible be driven, carried out and even better owned by people who are also part of that community.

### **THE SAMPLE**

6.4 The sample of 15 supported employees came from 5 different services. Four of these were selected from the 69 survey respondents as examples of best practice in ‘supported employment’. Another was chosen because it currently supported people with autism in employment. The services supported individuals in urban and rural areas and demonstrated evidence of most of the following aspects of best practice: supporting jobs for more than 16 hours a week; finding jobs in integrated work settings; ensuring people were better off financially; adopting a person centred planning and consumer-driven approach; using ‘natural supports’ in the workplace; and adopting a career development approach. One of the services, *Intowork*, was working solely with people with ASD, while the other 3 were working with people with disabilities including learning disabilities. In the paragraphs below, we describe these services briefly and use information from the interviews to illustrate how they supported individuals in employment.

### **Open Project, Paisley**

A voluntary sector project, which has existed for over 5 years, run by ENABLE Scotland. It offers support to around 30 people with learning disabilities to “access employment opportunities and sustain employment in an open environment”. Six staff support people in paid jobs, work placements and jobs in social firms. Most jobs are 16 hours or more. The Open Project emphasises the importance of individual choice and spending time at the beginning of the process to discover individual preferences and offering choice as they feel this “leads to greater sustainability”. They have also supported at least one person in self-employment.

Both employees and their family members commented on how helpful the job coach had been in helping to maximise their income through supporting claims for benefits and tax credits. One employee, who was about to be made redundant, was pleased at the continuing support he had received from the job coach and was confident that she would help him find another job.

### **North Lanarkshire Council Supported Employment Service**

A dedicated ‘supported employment’ service run by the local authority that started in January 1999. It works to ensure adults with learning disabilities and mental health problems who want to work receive appropriate support and opportunities to “access real jobs for real wages”. A large staff team of 29 supports around 70 individuals in paid jobs, most of whom are people with learning disabilities. The service has achieved an average paid working week of 25 hours for the vast majority and all those in ‘supported employment’ are financially better off.

North Lanarkshire’s job coaches consistently supported the employees they worked with to develop their skills within the jobs they were doing: for example, one person was supported to learn a number of tasks at his workplace to be in a better position to apply for any jobs coming up in that workplace; another was supported to undertake SVQ training offered by the employer. One employee received significant additional support to enable him to stay in his job until he could find one more congenial to him. It was recognised that it would be harder for this man to find other work if he was no longer in employment. Support was also given to employees to extend their horizons: one person was being encouraged to obtain a passport and to take driving lessons.

### **Intowork, Edinburgh**

A voluntary sector project that is over 3 years old is part of a broader service for people with disabilities, and works with people with ASD or Acquired Brain Injury. The service provides person centred, flexible support to enable individuals to achieve their employment potential. Their stated mission is “to create equality of opportunity to enhance the lives of our service users and support them to progress towards employment, social and economic inclusion.” Eleven staff support a range of employment opportunities for about 80 people. The majority of people with ASD who are supported in work are in paid jobs, and most of these work more than 16 hours per week.

The job coach had helped one employee change jobs within the organisation he worked for after it was recognised that his unhappiness with his initial job was affecting both his performance and attendance at work.

One employee, as part of his apprenticeship, had to spend a few months in a number of different parts of his company. The job coach had been meticulous in finding out in detail about the work tasks and environment of each of these placements to make the employee's transition from one placement to the next as seamless as possible.

Family members talked about the job coach being sensitive to family issues and concerns, whilst maintaining a clear focus on the needs of the employee.

### **Shirlie Project, Inverness**

A voluntary sector project providing one-to-one employment support to people with disabilities and looked after children for the past 7 years. The project aims to provide open paid employment at the going rate for those who need support in gaining or maintaining jobs; to enable individuals to achieve their potential; and to enable them to gain independence and respect. The project's 18 staff support nearly 200 individuals, 25% are people with learning disabilities and/or ASD. While not all of these individuals are being supported in full-time work, most are in jobs of 16 hours or more.

The project provided sustained support to one person who had a difficult relationship with some of his work colleagues to enable him to stay in his post. Employees were encouraged to think about their career development, whether that is about learning new skills in an existing job or looking for another job to meet their ambitions.

Job coaches also encouraged employees to develop other interests and used this as a natural way to keep in touch with people who needed less intensive workplace support: e.g. one employee was going to meet up with his job coach for a game of golf.

6.5 Among those interviewed were 11 men and 4 women. While this does reflect the predominance of men in paid employment found by the survey as reported in Chapter Five, this was a higher ratio of men than expected. The composition of the sample was purposive and as such, we worked closely with the selected agencies to achieve a mix of sample characteristics. Although we would have liked to include more women in the sample, this did not prove possible alongside meeting the requirement to include people with learning disabilities and/or ASD, people from urban and rural areas, those working 16 hours or more and so on.

6.6 Individuals aged 17 to 47 years were included in the sample. The following table summarises the age distribution of the supported employees interviewed and can be seen to reflect the survey finding that the majority of people with learning disabilities and/or ASD in paid jobs were between 25-49 years.

**Table 6.1: Age range of supported employees interviewed**

Age in years	Number of supported employees in sample
16-20	3
21-25	5
26-30	2
31-40	1
41-50	4
TOTAL	15

6.7 It is noteworthy that nearly all interviewees (11 out of 15 individuals) were living with parents or family, which could be perceived as the restrictive impact of welfare benefits on the employment of people with learning disabilities living in supported or residential accommodation. One person lived alone. Another was living in supported accommodation, another in a care home and another with her/his partner.

6.8 In terms of their employment history, the supported employees interviewed tended to be in their first ‘supported employment’ job (12 out of 15). Three were in their second ‘supported employment’ job; one with the same employer and 2 with different employers but supported by the same ‘supported employment’ provider. Eight out of the 15 were in their first paid job. Six had had previous jobs, which they had obtained without the help of ‘supported employment’ agencies, one of the 6 had obtained 3 different jobs previously.

6.9 Interviewees had been in their current ‘supported employment’ or self-employment for varying lengths of time. Table 6.2 below describes the length of time they had been in their current paid jobs and shows that those interviewed included a mix of people newly in jobs as well as those in well established posts.

**Table 6.2 Length of time interviewees had been in their current job**

Length of time	Number of interviewees
Within past 6 months	2
7-12 months	2
Over a year and under 2 years	3
Over 2 years and under 3 years	4
Over 3 years and under 4 years	1
Over 4 years	3

## **INDIVIDUAL NARRATIVES**

6.10 The stories all 15 people and their families told us were inspiring in many different ways, irrespective of whether they were totally ‘good news’. Collectively, people told us about the many benefits from employment for them as individuals, their families and their communities. Some people told us about significant struggles along the way but all confirmed that employment was life enhancing for them and their families. In the stories told below we have not used people’s real names to preserve their anonymity.

### **Edith**

Edith works as an events organiser in a nursing home. She plays dominoes and bingo with the residents and makes them cups of tea. Sometimes she goes out with residents. She works 4 afternoons a week for a total of 16 hours per week. She's been in her job for 8 months. This is her first paid job. She is in her 40s and lives with some other people in accommodation with support. Edith really likes her job because she gets to meet new people and because she gets paid! If she didn't have her job, she would really miss meeting people: the residents, the staff and the visitors: "without this, I'd be left out – no family, no friends." Edith's pay helps her to manage her bills better (e.g. her phone bill). She can also go on holiday, which she's never been able to do before: she's going to Spain. She's also doing more line dancing and buying more clothes. She said that the best thing about the job is "I'm happy. Happiness".

### **Robert**

Robert is on his second job with the same employer. He didn't like his first job very much: "I did it for 2 years. It was a bit boring. I was on my own all the time – down on the ground floor. I wanted a new job." With his job coach's help, he negotiated a different job. His current job is as a member of the Finance Department. It's a small team of 4 people; they all have different jobs and they have their own office. Robert's key tasks are: typing invoices, photocopying, counting money, stamping invoices, Visa card transactions and sending out invoices. He works for 9 hours per week spread over 3 mornings. His benefits situation limits his working hours (he lives in a care home). Although he works for only 9 hours per week, Robert highly values the money he earns because it makes a big difference to his disposable income. He feels happier working. Robert, who is in his mid 30s, was clear about the advice he would give other people thinking about working: "Go for it"

### **Angela**

Angela, who is in her 40s, has been working for 6 years as a clerical assistant in a Social Work Department. She answers the intercom and the telephones. She uses the computer a lot and does photocopying and the mail. She works from 10.00 to 3.00 five days a week. She likes to talk to everybody and work along with them. She gets on well with people. She likes to have a laugh and if she didn't have her job she would miss the people and the money. Angela said that the best thing about having a job has been "To help myself. To do things – doing my own things. I'm now doing the things that I can do myself. I can't go on the bus myself but I can do the taxi." She knows the job very well and is still learning new tasks. She feels more confident in herself. She has made friends and has a good social life. Her mum said, "Angela was needing work badly but no-one would give her a job. She went after job after job. She was getting very frustrated...It has made her a different person." Angela lives at home with her mum.

### **Debbie**

Debbie has been working fulltime as a carer in a nursing home for 4 months. She really likes working with older people: she likes sitting down and talking with people, helping them to feel better. She helps residents with personal care tasks and with eating. She's had quite a lot of training for her job: for example, she's learnt to use a hoist so that she can help people have a bath. She's also going to be doing an SVQ. She's now a key worker for one person and she can work on her own. The main things

Debbie's not too keen on are having to get up early and working weekends, both of which affect her social life. Debbie, who is 19 and lives at home with her parents, says that working has made her happier. She had got very depressed after leaving college 2 years earlier and her mum was worried about her. She's pleased she's got her own money and is planning a weekend away in York and a holiday. She's keen to help her mum get their house done up and for her mum to have a holiday too. Debbie's ideal job would be to work with special needs children. She thinks she'll stay in her current job for a couple of years and use her SVQ to open up new doors, maybe becoming a home help with the Council. She's planning to take driving lessons soon and then get a car; having a car will open up more options for her. Debbie thinks that a good employer would be like her boss, who's very approachable, good to talk to. She's provided really good training and offered Debbie the opportunity to do the SVQ. She always does what she says she will do. Other staff at the nursing home are good too. "They'll say, 'Don't stand by, come and ask'. When you tell them, they'll come straight away or send someone else if they're busy."

### **Steven**

Steven has worked for almost 4 years as a Domestic Assistant in a nursing home. He works 4 days a week on a shift basis and gets about one weekend a month off. He had previously worked in the garage where his dad had worked: his dad had got him that job. He thinks it's a good job. His job involves Hoovering, mopping and emptying the bins on a daily basis: he has to put the bins out twice a week and do a more extensive clean weekly. He likes working with people and working with older people like his granny. He's happy with the wages. The matron has said that he does his job very well. The only thing he's unhappy with is the bins, because they smell. He said that the best things about having a job are "It's just good. The residents are good. The staff are good. The boss is good." Steven, who is 27, is definitely more confident as a result of working. He's also better off financially: he contributes to the family's housekeeping costs and is able to afford to go on holiday (he's been to Sweden and Madeira with his parents this year). He's made new friends through work, although most people working at the home are older than him: he doesn't see them much socially, although there is a retirement party coming up. He's also learnt new skills, like Hoovering! He wants to continue working in the nursing home – and has plans to get beds there for his parents so that they'll give him their house, although he'd have to buy out his sisters! His ideal job would be the boss at the nursing home.

### **Jenny**

Jenny has been a self-employed garden specialist/horticulturalist for just over 2 years. What is now her business began as an engrossing hobby. She works from a plot of land on her parents' farm. She grows plants for people to order and bedding plants, herbs and perennials for sale from home and at the outlet provided by a local shop. She's more recently started to do a weeding and planting service. She's learnt that she has to pace herself and to avoid burn out only does one weeding and planting session of 2 hours in any day. Jenny, who is 23, works seven days per week, totalling about 40 hours in the week. She has Direct Payments: her team of 3 personal assistants help her with her work, as does her mum. However, Jenny is clear that she has the knowledge and that she is the manager of the team, but they do all work as a team. There are many reasons why Jenny is happy in her job. She likes seeing the final results, everything flowering and looking good. She likes that people come to her for advice. She likes helping people (she has given a week's work experience to someone with special needs, when no one else would give her a chance). She likes doing the actual work, a lot of which she can do easily, with music playing in the background. She is proud that she can stick at a task sometimes better than other people as she gets obsessed with it. She also takes pride in improving

what she does each year, by taking notes of what works and what doesn't. She's pleased with the money she's earning as the business is growing each year and her plan is to come off tax credits etc altogether. Jenny thinks that what makes a good job is "being happy with your work. It has to be something you enjoy doing. It has to be something that challenges you and stretches you but not so challenging you give up." She gave the example of answering the phone, which she wouldn't do previously, but now she's beginning to. There have been 3 key aspects of support for Jenny: her family; her personal assistants funded by Direct Payments, who have been critical to what she has achieved; and the Princes Trust, who took her on "with all her baggage", helped her start up and have continued to follow up with her to see that she can keep going. The Princes Trust was so impressed by her achievements that she won their New Business of the Year award for 2003. The best thing about having a job for Jenny is the potential for being independent and not having to rely on her family all the time, especially financially. She also likes the fact that she has learnt new skills and her job keeps her occupied. She gets out more as a result of her job: for example going to nurseries or Flower Shows. Having her PA's to drive her places has helped a lot; a medical condition means she is not allowed to drive herself. She has got to know more people through her work. Earning money has enabled her to buy her own clothes and to make contributions to the household. Jenny's dream job would be the head of a big garden chain with lots of money and she'd be swimming in the Caribbean! She is planning to have a house of her own and she and her family have already identified the site on part of their land. In the shorter term, her plans include thinking about getting a van or hatchback. Jenny's path to her current position hasn't been easy. She has clear ideas about help that other people might need. She believes employers need to be aware of people's individual differences and to accommodate these. She sees it as an issue about attitude and awareness. Some employers would need a course in how to deal with employees with difficulties. As she said when talking about the woman she offered work experience to, "I know what it feels like. If no one will give people like me a chance, I will."

### **Craig**

Craig is 21 years old and lives with his parents. Craig began an electronic engineering apprenticeship about 9 months ago after getting an HND at college: it will last 4 years. This is his dream job. He had previously had a job with Safeways. He had got this himself before he learnt that he had Aspergers. He moves round to different departments and goes to college for a month every 3 months for training. As an apprentice he also gets help from a more experienced colleague in each department he goes into. He likes having someone to talk to, to ask questions about the things he needs to find out. He likes the flexi-hours and the people he works with. The wages are quite good and will go up in stages through his apprenticeship so he'll be on full wages at the end of the 4 years. He also has been able to buy a car through the company scheme. For Craig, a good job is where he can see things through from beginning to end and to know he's done a good job. It's important that people are patient with him and show him as he's learning and not get annoyed with him. The job has made a big difference to his life. He's more confident. He goes out with the other apprentices. He's got more money and is able to give his mum some housekeeping money. He's also learnt more skills. Craig plans to stay in his dream job. He'd been interested in electronics since he was quite young. The training he's getting as an apprentice is so good and he understands that he's likely to get a job automatically at the end of the apprenticeship. He also finds it a nice environment to work in. His mum added that she thinks Craig is more able to mix with people and that he is learning that because his workplace is such a safe environment for him.

### **Andy**

Andy is 25 years old and lives with his parents and brother. Andy is on his third job working in the retail sector. The first job he had he got himself. He works on the checkout at Sainsbury's. He sometimes works at the kiosk or the petrol station. He works 3 shifts a week. He thinks it's not a bad job and that he'll probably stay there for a while, although his ideal job would be working for Rangers FC. The people he works with are pretty good: they have some days out together to places like Blackpool, and nights out at a club occasionally and at Christmas. He thinks Sainsburys are a good company to work for because of the way they treat him: "Their attitude; the way they treat you. When I started I made a lot of mistakes; they weren't angry". The personnel manager got someone to go over things again with him. The longer he has been there the better he has got at the job. He has his 6 monthly discussion of how he's doing, like all the staff. The store trainer helps staff learn how to use things like new tills. Andy thinks he couldn't have any better help. Andy has developed his skills with customers, chatting to them and keeping eye contact. The company gave him a voucher after a customer wrote in saying what a good service they had had from him. He's had a lot of praise for his work. According to his mum, one of the places where Andy worked before "didn't care: he wasn't fast enough for them".

### **Jeff**

Jeff lives with his family and works full time in the biggest garage in his area as their main tyre fitter. He works with 35-40 other people who are mainly qualified mechanics. The job is great for Jeff because he really likes cars and driving. His ideal job would be a rally driver. He's keen to learn to do other things at the garage: he's going to start doing some welding and would like to drive the recovery truck, but he'll have to wait till he's 21 (he's 20 now) to do that as those are the rules. The best thing about working for Jeff is that he can keep his car on the road. He feels good that he's working. His younger brothers think it's wonderful he has a job and his sisters are proud of him. He can take his sisters where they want to go: he's important in the family. The worst thing about having a job for Jeff and a lot of other employees who were interviewed was "getting up in the morning particularly Mondays". Jeff feels more confident now he's working. He used to rely on his mum but now he knows what working is about. He's better at handling unhappy customers. He talks to people outside work and he goes out on a Friday night.

### **Derek**

Derek is 17 years. He is in his first job and works for a firm that makes double glazed windows. He's only been working there for 7 weeks. He works fulltime. Derek wanted to be a joiner and went on a college course to learn manual trades. He came on work experience to the firm where he now works. He liked the work and the firm liked him. He's glad he got the job because he didn't want to sit about. Derek currently works on the first stage of making a window. He puts the steel in the plastic frame of the window, which involves choosing the right steel for the type of plastic being used and making judgements about the amount of space to be left between the plastic and the steel. He is part of a team, working with 3 other people. After they've completed their job the window is passed on to the next team. He will get the chance to learn other parts of the process. Then, if any better jobs come up at the firm, he'll be able to apply. The wages are OK and he's saving to go on holiday to Skegness. His mum said that she thought he was more confident now and that he has made some new friends through his work.

## **John**

John is in his 40's and has had his own flat for many years now. He worked for 10 years at a wood factory, then for 2 years as a kitchen porter. He left that job because of ill health and his GP advised him to work only part time. He now works as a storeman at a factory that makes computers. He's going to be made redundant as the factory is closing in August. He's been talking to his job coach who is hoping to line something else up for him. He's confident that his job coach will find something for him. When he started, John's job was to make up batteries for computers. Now when he's not very busy, he wraps up orders so he's not sitting around and it takes the pressure off the lads he works with. He gets on well with most people he works with: it's nice to be told he's doing OK. "The other boys and Tina (the staff trainer) help me out if there's a rushed job or if I have a problem, but mostly I'm left to get on with it, which helps I think. One of the boys helps sort out things like if the numbers in the order are wrong". The only thing he's not happy about is the wages, but he's now applied for tax credits. For John, the best thing about having a job is that you get to meet people, learn how to interact and work as a team. You get job satisfaction and it's something else you've learnt to do. John thought that a good employer was someone who's helpful, will hear what you have to say and will act on it - "Folks shouldn't judge you. I've been to interviews and felt uneasy with the attitudes of people. You have to get the tag off us. Employers should have extra help or training about how to deal with people with disabilities. They should have organisations to contact if things go wrong. AND equal pay, regardless of whether you're disabled."

## **Patrick**

Patrick, a young man in his early 20s lives with his parents and works at a garage as a tyre fitter. The other people who work in the garage also fit tyres, but do brakes, batteries and exhausts as well, because they have more qualifications than Patrick. Patrick finishes earlier than the other people at his work: this suits him. He gets on particularly well with one other colleague who helps him out and explains things. The wages he gets are the best bit of the job for Patrick, but he does think it's important to have a laugh at work. The money has meant that Patrick can afford to buy CDs, go on holiday and he's bought a scooter to get to work. Patrick said it was a good feeling going out to work doing something, "not lying in bed wishing I had a job. I can tell my mates that I work at the garage. I've learnt a lot but I'd like to learn a lot more. It's a good feeling going out to work, not lying in bed." He's also proud that he's taught other people to fit tyres. He likes talking to customers and appreciates it when he gets thanked for what he does for them. Patrick's ideal job would be a pilot or maybe a Tae Kwondo instructor. He feels he can do better than his current job. Patrick would like to learn to drive a car but thinks he'd need some help with the theory bit. He values the support he gets from Bill, his job coach. He has a lot of respect for Bill and trusts him. Bill has helped him deal with some difficult times at work. This is the second job Bill has supported him with.

## **Gary**

Gary is in his 40s and works as a cleaner at a further education college a few miles from his home. This is his first job. He works each weekday afternoon, adding up to a total of 16 hours per week. Gary has had some difficulties with some of his work colleagues and some students, so he now gets support for all his hours of work from Annie (who works for the Supported Employment Service). He explained, "I don't need help with the job – but with the other people at work." The job is better for Gary now with Annie's support but he's hoping to get a job in a bakery in his hometown. Gary likes having a job, but doesn't want to keep working in the college. Since he got his job, Gary is more independent. He

travels to places on his own. He talks to his mum about what he does at work now that he has a job. He helps out more at home too. Gary has more money, which has enabled him to save for a holiday.

### **Richard**

Richard who is in his early 20s lives at home with his family. He works at a call centre for a national utilities company. He types misdirected payment forms into the computer. He is good at this and the job suits him. He's the only person doing this job; the work was previously divided between all his colleagues. Everyone is pleased that Richard is now doing this job. He works 3 days a week from 2pm to 8pm; this is fine for him. Richard had had some difficulties in the past but had sorted them out and didn't want to talk about them. He tells people if there are any problems. Richard said that a good job means "having something real to do and having people to work with who you get on with". Richard sometimes goes to the pub with people from work after a shift to watch football. Richard thought that being a good employer means "being aware as they can be about me and the way I am and being trained properly in supporting me in my job and they should try to help him sort out any issues". Richard was pleased that his job coach spent time getting to know him and helped him work out what work he would be able to do.

## **MAIN THEMES FROM INTERVIEWS WITH SUPPORTED EMPLOYEES**

### **Jobs and workplaces**

6.11 Employees were working in a wide variety of jobs and workplaces. For example, 4 people worked for large companies: one was a national utility company; another was a major electronics/engineering company. Another 3 people worked for public sector organisations: a local authority, a further education college and a prestigious national public body. Three worked in large nursing homes. Two ran their own small businesses as community gardener and a horticulturalist/specialist gardener. The 13 people who were in employed jobs were working as care assistant, apprentice electronic engineer, supermarket checkout operator, a factory operative, as a storeman, call centre operator, clerical assistant, finance assistant, events organiser, tyre fitter (2 people), domestic assistant and as a cleaner.

6.12 It was notable that the range of jobs undertaken by the 15 interviewees was more variable than the traditional manual jobs available to people with learning disabilities in the past. For instance one person was employed as an events organiser in a nursing home, 2 were tyre fitters and some jobs required significant levels of technical skills (e.g. the apprentice electronic engineer). Some employees had achieved academic qualifications, which had assisted them when applying for jobs (e.g. National Diploma in retailing).

6.13 While the above list typifies entry level jobs, most employees in these jobs had only recently left school/college or, although in their 40s, had not previously been in paid jobs. Some employees were also clear about their plans to progress into more skilled work and some were about to or had already embarked on the necessary training. For others, it was evident that their jobs brought self-esteem and many other valued benefits, which we explore further, later on.

6.14 The majority of interviewees were employed full-time. All but 2 were employed for 16 hours or more each week. Six people were employed for 35 plus hours per week. The jobs people had were all typical of jobs in these industries and only one person worked on his own. Nine supported employees did the same job as other people at their workplace. Three had specific jobs as members of teams where there were a number of different jobs. Three people had a specific role which other colleagues undertook part of the time in addition to their other responsibilities. Everyone doing the same job as other people was being paid at the same rate as their colleagues, except for one person who was uncertain what the situation was. The majority (9 employees) worked the same hours as at least some of their colleagues, 4 did not. The 2 who were self employed are not counted in these figures.

## **Employment support**

### *Natural supports*

6.15 Eleven people said they were happy with the support they received from people at work to do their job. For example one person said, “When you ask them, they’ll come straight away or send someone else if they are busy “. Another said, “I couldn’t have any better help. My colleagues or the supervisor will help.” A third said “There’s always someone about that I can get help from if I need it.” One further person was happy with the support they received from one colleague, but not from the others they worked with. Another said they were happy with the support they got from their work supervisor, but not from other colleagues. The 2 self employed people were not asked this question.

### *Help from Supported Employment Agencies*

6.16 All employees, with the exception of one person who was self employed and had not received support for this from a Supported Employment agency, were asked broad questions about their satisfaction with the help they had received from the employment support agency. Questions focused on help they had had to decide on the right kind of job, to find the job and about on the job support. The questions were open and interviewees varied in the kind and amount of detail they gave in their responses.

6.17 The majority stated that they were now able to do the job itself without support. There were examples of people getting assistance from colleagues, for instance if they were falling behind or the task required 2 people (e.g. using a hoist at the nursing home). An employee working on the checkout said that staff would help with packing trolleys if there was a large load. These were examples of customer service or of colleagues working together in ordinary ways. One employee has a team of people to help her; they help her with the workload and provide the support she requires to enable her to do the work with her disabilities.

6.18 For many people, contact with job coaches or other ‘supported employment’ staff was now infrequent, taking place at long intervals and mainly for ‘check up/ review’. Contact was sometimes social. It was clear though that the continued back up of the ‘supported employment’ agency was regarded as an essential part of the ‘package’ even for people who had been in their jobs for 4 years or more. It was evident that employees knew they could

contact the agency and/or individual job coach if something was going wrong or, for example, if they wanted to change jobs.

6.19 With the one exception, job coaches had helped people work out what kind of job they wanted and had helped most people to find and apply for their jobs. They had helped with learning the job and in some cases helping to learn new tasks later in the employee's career: for example, the job coach of the apprentice electronic engineer learns each new set of tasks as he moves to a new department. A number of job coaches had also been very helpful to employees in maximising their income by supporting them to apply for the full range of benefits they were entitled to and for working tax credits. The role of job coaches in helping employees plan for the future is also referred to later on.

6.20 Employees and families spoke warmly of the help and support that employment agencies and individual job coaches had provided. There were many illustrations of very positive relationships, good and dependable communication routes, valued resourcefulness and also that "nothing was too much trouble". Even when contact was less frequent agencies provided a reliable and accessible backup bringing the reassurance that there was always "someone on your side".

### **Changes in current jobs**

6.21 Ten employees identified changes in their current jobs. Some changes did not apparently impact on people's experience of the job in any significant way such as a change in manager. However for one employee, a new company manager had recently been appointed and had introduced a number of changes that had had a negative impact on his job and work conditions. He found this unsatisfactory; however his job coach was supporting him to address some of the difficulties with the new manager and some colleagues provided natural supports.

6.22 Eight people described the following beneficial changes in their current job:

- Introduction of constant on the job support while a new a job was being found - as conditions were unsatisfactory in the current job
- Training leading to skills development, new tasks and responsibilities (2 people)
- Introduction of improved systems or equipment
- Move to new and better premises plus change of hours to incorporate a break to bring conditions in line with those of other colleagues
- Business growth and development – for the 2 people who were self employed
- Addition of new responsibility/tasks

6.23 Another employee was working fewer hours, although this was still over 16 hours, and seemed happy with this though she hadn't initiated the change. Four employees had however experienced significant difficulties at work. One felt that his/her difficulties had been resolved and that it had increased his/her confidence that this had been the case. Another had been unhappy with elements of his/her job and had negotiated, in conjunction with his/her job coach, a different job with characteristics more suited to him/her with the same employer. For the other 2 people, both of whom had significant issues with people they worked with, the difficulties had not been resolved, but they were determined to stick with

the job until they could secure a better job. It was striking that all still had positive things to say about being in work, despite the difficulties.

### **Impact/outcomes of paid employment**

6.24 All of the people in ‘supported employment’ we spoke to (and all of their families) told us about how their lives had been changed by getting a job. Everyone talked about how their confidence had increased and how this had a knock on effects in other areas of their lives. People were very happy to have a job, but were clear that this had had an impact on their whole life. For example, one young man was more dissatisfied with living in a care home as a result of being a valued and respected employee and was thinking through with his parents where he might live in future. Some family members specifically commented on how having a job had a profound impact on their son/daughter’s health and well-being.

6.25 Interviewees often mentioned how having a job had enhanced employees’ independence. A variety of examples were given: travelling alone, going out more socially, going on holiday, and taking responsibility for finances.

6.26 All supported employees were in paid jobs and were better off financially to varying degrees and this enabled them to enjoy a better and more varied lifestyle. People used their additional income to go on holiday, to pay for driving lessons, to buy a car or a scooter, to contribute to their families’ household costs or to buy more things, like CDs or clothes. Several spoke about the support they had had from their job coaches to maximise their income by applying for specific benefits and/or tax credits. One person who lived in a care home was circumscribed in the hours he could work because of his benefit situation

6.27 Another aspect of having a job that both employees and their family members mentioned was that it enhanced their self worth and how they were perceived by others. Employees felt proud that they could say they had a job, which their friends and acquaintances would recognise as a valued role within their community. One young man told us that it felt good that he could say where he worked, rather than to have to say he was unemployed or attended a day centre for disabled people.

6.28 Many of the employees we interviewed were very happy with most aspects of their current job. One common factor in this happiness appeared to be that they felt confident in their ability to do their jobs. Many employees stated that they needed little or no help to do their job now. This confidence seemed to stem in part from careful collaboration between them, their families, their job coach and their employer to ensure that the jobs, the conditions of work and the support from job coaches and/or fellow employees were tailored to their interests, skills and needs.

6.29 Thirteen of the 15 people interviewed talked about positive relationships with their work colleagues: indeed for some people this was a key positive aspect of being at work (e.g. “having a laugh”). Several talked about how their work colleagues would help them out if they were busy. The 2 other people talked about less than helpful working relationships, which seemed to reflect an unhealthy workplace rather than simple discrimination against a disabled colleague. When employees talked about their workplace, we gained the impression that employers who fostered positive working relations between all their staff and provided good working conditions for all staff were good employers of disabled people.

6.30 It was noticeable that whilst many employees talked about their positive relationships with work colleagues, very few had developed into significant friendships outside work. One person talked about going out socially on a regular basis with someone they used to work with and going to a nightclub occasionally with current colleagues. Another talked about watching football with his work mates at the end of a shift. Several more talked about going out with work colleagues at Christmas or on leaving nights out. Three people noted that they would like to do more things socially with their colleagues.

### **Jobs or careers?**

6.31 Most people said that their job coaches had discussed future options with them. It should be noted that 2 people were in their first few months of employment and that three other people were coming late into their first job. Many of the employees envisaged staying in their current job for some time. For a couple of people this may have reflected the fact that they had only been in their jobs for a few weeks/months. Two people who had been in their jobs for 3 years were keen to do tasks that others in their workplace undertook to develop their skills.

6.32 Some said that they thought they were in their ideal job. Others mentioned their ideal job with relish: the 2 tyre fitters had dreams of being a rally driver or a pilot. Many of the employees found it difficult to envisage their 'ideal' or 'dream' job that was different to the one they were doing, some because they explicitly said their current job was their dream job. Four people identified their ideal job as, variously, a rally driver, a pilot or a Tae Kwon-do instructor, working for Rangers FC and heading up a big Garden Centre chain.

6.33 Some were taking the lead in enhancing their jobs: for example, one of the tyre fitters had secured his boss' agreement that some of his colleagues show him how to weld. Others were using opportunities offered by their employers to open up future work avenues: for example the carer in the nursing home was pleased to be offered the opportunity to do an SVQ. Some people also talked about developing skills that would give them greater future work opportunities: learning to drive was mentioned in this context. For at least one person, it seemed that the boost to self-confidence as a result of being in a job had made them reassess what jobs they might be able to do in the future.

### **How to make it happen for other people with learning disabilities and/or ASD**

6.34 Supported employees' ideas about how more people with learning disabilities and/or ASD could work included having more agencies like the ones that had supported them into employment. Some suggested that employers needed to be more understanding of people with disabilities. To help this process, it was suggested that employers might need training or other forms of extra help.

## **FAMILIES' PERSPECTIVES**

### **Independence**

6.35 All family members talked about their relative having become more confident and independent as a result of having a job. This confidence/independence was expressed in various ways and impacted on several aspects of their lives. One mother had had concerns about her son's ability to travel independently to his work and was very pleased that her concerns had not been justified. Another mother talked about her son not being so anxious when his dad went away to work. Several talked about their family member being more confident in talking to people away from their workplace. A couple of mothers noted that their sons had become more willing to undertake household tasks.

### **Changes in the family**

6.36 A number of family members indicated that their relative's role in the family had been strengthened since they began work. One mother talked about her son's younger brothers thinking it was wonderful their brother had a job and that his sisters were quite proud of him. Her son had an enhanced role in the family since he got a car: he could take his sisters where they wanted to go. Another employee's mother spoke about how her son could now express himself better, which had contributed to a better relationship with his sisters. There is a sense from some interviews that having a job meant that the employee's life felt more like their siblings, which was pleasing for both the employee and their siblings.

### **Worries and concerns lessened**

6.37 Almost every family member talked about their relative getting a job easing their worries about them. Four people said they had had periods of depression and talked about feeling significantly better as a result of their relative being employed. A number of family members noted that they had had concerns about how having a job would work out for their relative. All of them were relieved that their concerns had now receded.

### **Advice to other families – “Go for it!”**

6.38 When asked what they would say to another family whose relative might be taking up a job, family members' responses were universally positive. “Go for it” was a phrase uttered many times in answer to the question. A number of parents emphasised how important it was that parents should support their sons and daughters to try employment and to maintain that support through inevitable delays and setbacks. People were encouraged to think positively.

### **How to make it happen for other people with learning disabilities and/or ASD**

6.39 Family members were asked about how more people could be in ‘supported employment’. Like their relatives, many said that there needed to be more ‘supported employment’ agencies and often coupled this with fulsome praise for their relative's job

coach and/or ‘supported employment’ agency. There was some suggestion that the existing schemes needed to be better advertised. It was also suggested that the government needed to advertise both what help is available to get jobs but also to make employers aware of the skills and talents of people with disabilities. One person suggested that the advertising could be as powerful as the drink/driving and smoking advertising campaigns. Another person suggested that it was important to raise awareness of ‘supported employment’ services during school years. A number of relatives also stressed the need for education for and understanding from employers.

## **KEY MESSAGES FROM SUPPORTED EMPLOYEES AND FAMILIES**

6.40 The key messages noted below are drawn from 2 sources: respondents’ answers to specific questions about advice to people in similar position, what more needed to be done to enable more people with disabilities to work and what makes a good employer; and analysis by the interview teams to identify themes from individual respondents’ strongly held views and assertions.

### **KEY MESSAGES**

#### **For people with disabilities**

- You can get your dream job
- Just ask - you can get difficulties at work sorted out
- You can run your own business: there are people and organisations who will help
- Jobs need to be stretching but not so challenging you give up
- Having a job is an awful lot better than sitting around all day
- Keep trying for the right job
- Don’t think if you’ll get a job, think when you’ll get a job
- You get to meet and be with people
- You gain confidence, more independence, more skills, more money and self esteem
- If things are going wrong in a job, hang on in there and get support to find a better job
- Positive relationships with colleagues really help; you can have a laugh too
- Job coaches and some jobs open up new opportunities- things you might never have thought of before
- Having a job can allow you to contribute to your household’s income – and in other ways to your family’s life

#### **For families**

- Family support, encouragement and backing really helps
- Supported employment can benefit the whole family – financially, worry/anxiety levels, relationships, individuality and independence
- Good job coaches will take you and your needs into account as well
- Your hopes could be surpassed, your concerns might not materialise

### **For employers**

- If you run a good business – good pay and conditions, a good atmosphere in the workplace and good working relationships – it will be a good place for ‘supported employment’
- You need to be aware of people’s individual differences and requirements
- People with learning disabilities and/or ASD can do a wide range of jobs and contribute to your workplace if the support is right
- Your other staff can help
- You’ve got to watch out that other staff treat the person in ‘supported employment’ reasonably
- Supported employment can be good for your business –customers will tell you so
- Advertise that you provide ‘supported employment’
- Make sure you and your staff have the training you need to get the support right
- Difficulties can be sorted out – work it out together, the answer can come from a wide range of sources

### **For government and other agencies**

- Promote equality – by promoting the value of ‘supported employment’
- Ensure that ‘supported employment’ agencies can work with people with high support needs
- Good ‘supported employment’ agencies have an impact not just on people’s employment but on their whole lives
- Government should look into the situation of people trapped by the benefits system, e.g. those in supported accommodation/care homes
- Promote direct payments as one of the supports for employment
- Education, awareness raising and training are all vital - in schools, colleges, for employers and for the public
- Ensure that gateways to employment, like college courses are better tailored to individuals and that support is not only available in segregated courses and facilities
- Ensure ‘supported employment’ is the norm

## **EMPLOYERS’ PERSPECTIVES**

6.41 Interviews were conducted with 10 employers with the permission of the people with learning disability and/or ASD. Two people were self-employed, 2 did not give permission to speak to their employer and it was not possible to arrange an interview with the other employer in the timescale for the research. The intention was not primarily to discuss individual performance but to use the experience of employing the individual to reflect on issues that arise for employers when considering such an employee. Their comments are not meant to be representative in any way of all employers’ views but exploratory and offer a snapshot in given circumstances.

6.42 Despite the small size of the sample, the places of employment were fairly wide-ranging. They covered factory work, an engineering production line, caring, data inputting and administration, property maintenance and garage work. All posts but 3 were in the

private sector and of the 3 in the public sector, one was with a private company subcontracted to do the work. Half of the companies had had previous experience of employing someone with a learning disability and/or ASD.

6.43 In the interviews we attempted to explore how employers came to employ the particular individual and whether any related concerns or expectations were realised; whether there has been any impact on the company of employing this person; and some general points about lessons to be learned by both employers and government from the experience.

### **Employers' experiences**

6.44 A number of factors and often in combinations influenced making the decision to employ someone with a learning disability and/or ASD. A vacancy had arisen and the company had been "keen to set a good example". Taken separately more than half employers referred to the company being predisposed in some way, for example:

*"As a company we've got a disability friendly attitude to disability. We've always done this. It helps us achieve a diverse workforce."*

6.45 Just under half said they were having difficulty filling a particular post. This seemed to be both a matter of good timing on the part of the 'supported employment' service and of particular skills shortages in the labour market. There was a vacancy and the 'supported employment' service had made contact with the employer either in relation to an advert or as a cold call. Also there was a skill shortage mentioned by more than one person from the West of the country.

6.46 Related to the above point was what is referred to at various times as the 'business case' for employing someone with disabilities. In other words, employers had realised that people with disabilities made reliable, motivated and consistent workers:

*"The problem we have is plenty of vacancies...The Job Centre doesn't send us 'good workers' - they send us criminals, drug addicts and folk who don't want to work...The people we get from the Supported Employment Scheme are very different - they work hard, they turn up and they're never off sick. Their folks have lots of talents."*

6.47 About a third of the interviewees referred to the professional approach of the 'supported employment' project both in discussing what their employees might have to offer as employees and in convincing them as employers about the support available on a regular and trouble-shooting basis. A third of employers also referred to a personal contact or sympathy that predisposed them to listen to the project's 'pitch' and proceed:

*"Well, the job coach is a personal friend. We were chatting one day about someone she couldn't get placed. She explained- it was just casual, off the cuff, about Aspergers and his need for structure. Well that suits the work I do...I thought maybe we could give this chap some work experience so that he could get the feel. I'd no intention whatsoever of giving him employment...."*

6.48 Looking at the group of employers who had no previous experience of ‘supported employment’, the pre-eminent factors were an existing vacancy, which had been difficult to fill; personal sympathy and company aspirations; and the professional approach of the project. The 3 people with Aspergers Syndrome were employed in 2 situations where there was a clear personal contact factor and one where there was previous experience of employing someone from the project.

### **Employers’ expectations**

6.49 When asked what expectations they’d had before employing someone with disabilities, the employers for whom it was a first experience, all said they had no idea what to expect but were anxious about staff reactions and whether the individual would cope. However, in retrospect, they suggested this was “fear of the unknown” and that it had not been borne out in practice. A third of the employers, both new and old hand, had rather low expectations or thought wrongly that “I would only get 30% of the job from him” or that the individual “would only last a couple of weeks”, or the balance between charity and business return would be more in favour of charity.

6.50 Two employers mentioned that previous experience helped because they knew that although adjustments would need to be made and caution exercised, it was possible for it to work well. As for any worries in taking people on, half the respondents were concerned unnecessarily about how the other employees would cope:

*“I did worry whether the other staff and clients would take to her. There are no visible signs of X’s disability and you know how vocal old people can be. If they don’t like you, you know about it. Also she was an outsider, she wasn’t even from Wtown, quite apart from her disability. What has made it work? – well it’s been down to her personality and the support she has had and we have had.”*

6.51 About a third of employers wondered whether the individual would cope and whether what was being asked was reasonable. One employer had worries about health and safety, which involved detailed risk assessments. Half commented on the importance of the job coach and confidence in the ‘supported employment’ scheme in dealing with such anxieties:

*“(Worries)... absolutely not, due to our relationship with the Supported Employment Scheme, they profile people very well and I know that the folk they send us will have a chance of doing the job available”.*

### **Reality of ‘supported employment’**

6.52 In reality, the anxieties of the employers were not realised. Indeed employers talked about “surprising us and himself” and of one individual it was said that he/she was “charismatic” and “took to the job very easily”. A third of the employers talked about the will and wish to work as carrying people through:

*“Well people with disabilities generally speaking have a better attitude, excellent attendance, want to work and will work. They have what we old fashionedly call a work ethic”.*

6.53 Half the employers interviewed referred to tailoring the job as the individual began to settle in. This involved adjusting hours for reasons of physical capacity and health, providing some extra support through a carer rather than the job coach, adjusting an administrative job to the components requiring less initiative or in one case, identifying an entirely new job. These comments suggest that flexibility and willingness to review posts and/or their component parts are vital ingredients of success. Other comments included a little extra effort at the outset, good relationship between the job coach and the employer and good information from the job coach.

6.54 Words such as “amazing” and “fantastic” were used to describe how well more than half the employees were doing in their jobs and a much smaller additional number were said to be “doing fine”. About a third were said to be managing well subsequent to some adjustments, minor setbacks and in one instance a complete job change. In this latter instance what had seemed positive features to do with limited social interaction, proved too unsupportive. Employers seemed to tackle these by discussion and using the job coach:

*“ She’s 90% of the way there. We’ve had a bit of stumbling; a few setbacks- mostly informal guidance has worked. On one occasion we did bring back the job coach because she was upset and brought it into work- and it was interfering...We spoke to them (accommodation providers) and it’s now resolved...”*

### **Impact on supported employees**

6.55 “Amazing” changes in supported employees were described as the outcome of managing the job well. Improved confidence, greater social interaction, communication and ‘joining in’ were the types of gain observed by employers, together with better organisation skills and being better off from being in a job. One person had rarely volunteered before but now asked questions, “initiates conversations” and was generally “more self assured”. For another individual there had been a “big difference” for instance:

*“Greater self-esteem, won’t take his work jacket off - he’s so proud to be a worker. The jacket, the job, the pay mean a lot to X and he’s better organised and more systematic in what he does”.*

6.56 Of particular interest were the comments from a third of the employers in respect of vocational inclusion. Individuals had now blended into the workforce and were “almost invisible”. People had become “part of the gang” and in one workplace other employees had stopped swearing only to start again when the supported employee started swearing and cursing. The employer commented - “that’s what I call inclusion.”

## Impact on the company

6.57 Without exception employers said the impact on the company had been one of raising their profile as being “more forward thinking” and “more caring”. Additionally half referred to the “added value” aspect, improved efficiency and a real asset - someone whom staff and clients liked. The following remark contains the ingredients typical of the comments made:

*“In the last five years we’ve become more aware of putting something back into the community and supporting people, more aware, more forward thinking. Also we have been able to capitalise on his skills, rather than passing him by. Maybe smaller companies might struggle to provide mentors (on site employee, not the job coach) It reflects well on us but we’re certainly not a charity and we couldn’t have kept him on if he hadn’t been a valuable employee”*

6.58 One manager commented that the supportive and generous reaction of some of his “tough” employees had “reinvented our faith in humanity!” Most employers said their companies had learned a “huge amount” both in relation to people with disabilities and/or ASD and as good employees; and in relation to their ability to support people successfully in the job even though it had been “a steep learning curve”. The presence of employees with disabilities had in some cases enabled workplaces to “become a nicer place to be”.

6.59 Those who were first time employers of people with disabilities commented on the learning about ‘supported employment’ and on how having access to “a system that works” had made a difference:

*“Well I’ve learned I don’t have to use the jobcentre anymore...I’ve got the confidence to take on people with disabilities or disadvantage. I recently took on a young person from X. I don’t think I would have done that before. I’m now prepared to look at different options”*

6.60 Interestingly 2 people commented that thinking how to meet the needs of the person with disabilities had helped them think about everyone else’s needs more clearly. Just like the companies, it was said that the employees themselves had learned from their workmates with disabilities. The learning was mostly around tolerance, putting something back, being generous, more accepting, “getting a buzz out of making it work”, and in specific instances, learning about Aspergers Syndrome. One manager said he was “proud of my guys, especially the younger ones” in the way they had supported the individual, and another commented that the individual with disabilities had “brought out a dormant caring attitude” which had resulted in “more camaraderie”.

6.61 There were only 2 responses that while basically positive, were more muted in tone. These employers indicated that some employees had been responsive and others less so, but “most are used to X as part of the team”. One manager went on to comment that if the situation were the same after a month or so, he would intervene.

6.62 Most of the employers we spoke to were operating in the context of an equal opportunities policy, which had varying degrees of prominence. Alongside this some mentioned employee representative committees, training, unions, flexible working and staff development programmes and whistle blowing policies. There was one exception where

there was no stated policy. Here the owner viewed “my own personality” as the safeguard, adding that he didn’t tolerate anyone being treated badly whoever they were.

6.63 The question of flexible working arrangements was notable because a third of the respondents commented on changes made in people’s working conditions to accommodate health issues or physical capacity. In only one instance had the solution to this been less than straightforward. The company in question had introduced new productivity and efficiency targets some time after the individual had been employed most successfully. This impinged on his ability to work the full day. So the company sought additional funding from the local authority to buy in additional hours. The employment service saw this as retrograde. The employer saw it as a way of keeping the individual in post. A more light-hearted story involved company dress code (wearing a tie), which the individual with Aspergers Syndrome found irksome. He was given dispensation- and eventually so was everyone else!

### **Lessons learned by employers**

6.64 When asked what lessons were to be learned from the experience, more than two thirds referred to the efficacy of support provided by the ‘supported employment’ scheme in terms of matching/profiling people to the vacancies available, the on-going support of the job coach if necessary and support/information provided by the scheme to the other employees where needed. One employer commented:

*“Supported employment schemes are great, very positive, you get great support from their system. They (the person with disabilities) take someone with them on the journey. You can help people tackle the hurdles rather than just leaving the job”.*

6.65 The above point was closely followed by the importance of not making assumptions about what people can or can’t do, and not to fear disability. A number of people made the point that people with learning disabilities and/ or ASD should be supported, not treated differently. In conclusion, it was clear that the experience of these employers had been that the barriers could and did come down; not only that but, in the words of one employer, “everyone wins”.

### **KEY MESSAGES FROM EMPLOYERS**

6.66 The following key messages were identified from the employers’ responses to specific questions about advice to other employers and what more needs to be done to enable more people with learning disabilities and/or ASD to work.

### **Advice to other employers**

- Experience has shown that people with learning disabilities are reliable and hard working employees
- Employers need to hear more about success stories from other employers
- People with learning disabilities have a lot to offer businesses and need to be given a chance
- Good ‘supported employment’ has a lot to offer employers – job profiling, job coaching and on-going support for the disabled employee are also of benefit to employers
- Flexibility of working arrangements is helpful not only with employees with disabilities but other employees too

### **Advice to government and other agencies**

- Government could do more to change attitudes and to sell ‘supported employment’ to businesses as many employers are unaware of the benefits
- Those promoting ‘supported employment’ need to adopt a business-like approach, and put the business case for employing disabled people
- In promoting employment, government and other agencies should recognise that employers don’t respond to charity but need to see the benefits to their company
- Government should provide more information about different disabilities to raise awareness, for example, about Aspergers Syndrome
- Government should set targets about the numbers of disabled people that should be employed within companies
- Develop more ‘supported employment’ schemes and make sure ‘supported employment’ becomes more widely available
- Government should make more use of senior managers in business who can act as ‘champions’ to speak out at conferences and to professional bodies

## CHAPTER SIX: SUMMARY OF KEY FINDINGS

- The 15 individuals with learning disabilities and/or ASD interviewed and their families expressed a high level of satisfaction with ‘supported employment’
- Some individuals had clear career ambitions while others were newly in work, or were developing in their jobs, or were happy and in their ‘ideal job’
- Outcomes of ‘supported employment’ included increased self-esteem and confidence, social inclusion, greater disposable income and better lives
- All were in paid jobs and were better off financially, some considerably so, and this had enabled them to enjoy a better and more varied lifestyle
- One person who lived in a care home was circumscribed in the hours he could work because of his benefit situation
- Whilst most employees felt that they got on well with work colleagues, very few spent significant amounts of time with them outside of work.
- Benefits for families included reduction of stress and worry, improved family relationships and relief that “desperate situations” had been turned around
- There was widespread praise from employees and their families for the support they received from their job coach and/or the ‘supported employment’ agency
- Several spoke about the support they had had from their job coaches to maximise their income by applying for specific benefits and/or tax credits
- Support to stay in jobs where there were difficulties was critical, at least until such time as a change of job could be arranged
- From employers’ perspectives, deciding to employ someone with a learning disability and/or ASD was influenced by the predisposition of the company; difficulties filling posts; labour shortages; the ‘business case’; and importantly, the professionalism of the ‘supported employment’ service
- Employers’ anxieties about staff reaction and individual’s ability to cope were largely unfounded, as was an expectation that the ‘charity return’ would outweigh the ‘business return’. Other employees were more tolerant, accepting and supportive than expected
- The impact of ‘supported employment’ on the company had been to raise its ‘forward thinking’ profile and increase confidence to make further appointments
- Employers identified flexibility and willingness to review posts as the main ingredients of success
- Employers stated the impact on supported employees was “amazing” - increased self confidence, communication, as well as “blending in” with the workforce
- The experience had taught employers about the efficacy of ‘supported employment’; to not make assumptions about what people with disabilities can or can’t do; and about the need for flexible working practices
- Individuals and families agreed that ‘good’ employers provided support for their employees with disabilities, using the same careful individualised approach they took with other staff
- Employers felt government should be more proactive in selling ‘supported employment’ to companies; identify champions: and exploit success stories
- The key message from employers was encapsulated by the following comment: *“We’ve learned that people with learning disabilities can work, want to work, they’re good and cheerful colleagues”.*

## CHAPTER SEVEN: DISCUSSION & CONCLUSIONS

### DISCUSSION

7.1 National policy in *The same as you?* and *Working for a change?* is unequivocal in stating that people with learning disabilities and/or ASD want to work and need support to get and keep real paid jobs. At the start of the research however, the extent to which employment for people with learning disabilities and/or ASD was ‘on the agenda’ for local authorities and practitioners, as well as the extent to which ‘supported employment’ was becoming established in Scotland, were unclear. The Scottish Executive commissioned this research to map current support for employment and to better inform the National Implementation Group’s work to promote employment.

7.2 The commissioned study was about employment support in its widest sense and not ‘supported employment’ specifically. This distinction is not just about semantics. The broad approach resulted in information being gathered about a plethora of approaches, a small proportion of which would pass for what is internationally recognised as ‘supported employment’, that is, real work in integrated settings with ongoing support. Employment support providers varied considerably in terms of the size of the staff team, sector, type of provider they were and, critically, in respect of the model and approach they took to providing employment support.

7.3 The Scotland-wide survey of employment support found just over 3,000 people being supported in both paid and unpaid jobs by 69 separate employment support providers. This came from questionnaire returns from 41% of identified relevant employment support providers and was therefore likely to be an underestimate of the real situation. Additionally, some services did not use disability labels, believing this to contradict ‘supported employment’ and its emphasis on capacity, further compounding the task of gathering comprehensive mapping information about employment support for these groups of people.

7.4 While the figures undoubtedly demonstrate progress in terms of an increase in numbers of people with learning disabilities in employment compared to the picture 20 years ago (Beyer et al, 1996), it was plain that ‘supported employment’ as defined by the research was still rare. Only a third of the supported jobs were full-time as defined by the Department of Employment (i.e. 16 hours or more), and which would have met the definition of ‘supported employment’ used in the research. The majority were part-time jobs, jobs paid under permitted work rules, unpaid jobs or voluntary work. In establishing ‘what works’ in promoting employment, the model of ‘supported employment’ was consistently identified as the most effective.

7.5 Although ‘supported employment’ was evidently present on the current landscape, it did not appear to be firmly embedded as a primary strategy for improving quality of life and providing opportunities for social inclusion. As the Policy Consortium on Supported Employment (2000) argued, ‘supported employment’ needs to be “much more widely available, with services of consistent quality”. To achieve this would require a more strategic and coordinated approach to be adopted nationally.

7.6 A lack of consensus around the definition of ‘supported employment’ was a key finding of the research. Alongside an increase in employment opportunities, has grown a

confusion around the use of terminology especially in relation to ‘supported employment’. This lack of conceptual discipline has led to a watering down of the model in some cases. Both the survey and literature review provided clear evidence that in the absence of a national lead on this issue, all manner of services consider themselves to be providing ‘supported employment’ even when they are supporting unpaid jobs or jobs in segregated settings. While there is nothing inherently wrong with for instance, part-time work and work experience, they are not the same as, and therefore should not be called, ‘supported employment’. Without further clarity of definition however, it is unlikely that ‘supported employment’ will develop and flourish.

7.7 The research found evidence of quality outcomes when services adopt a principled and values-led approach to implementing ‘supported employment’. The positive examples found further confirmed the existence of employers who recognised the value of the contribution that disabled employees make to their business. Employers who had experienced the successes, resolution of problems, and the wide range of outcomes for their business, staff, organisational learning and employees themselves, were enthusiasts and champions of ‘supported employment’.

7.8 Fifteen individuals with learning disabilities and/or ASD were interviewed for this research and all were highly satisfied with ‘supported employment’. They experienced positive outcomes such as increased self-esteem, self-confidence, vocational integration, an increase in disposable income and they felt their lives to be significantly improved. Families agreed with this and also felt they had benefited from their relative being in employment. They expressed less worry about the individual, and family relationships had improved.

7.9 There was only a limited sense that individual aspirations and choices were being explored through person centred career-planning methods. There was some evidence that effective ‘supported employment’ services were placing people in interesting jobs that closely matched their individual preferences, but the predominance of jobs in certain sectors suggested stereotyping of people with learning disabilities and/or ASD. Having now accepted that people with learning disabilities and/or ASD should have opportunities for employment, the restricted notion that they will be satisfied in certain types of jobs needs to be challenged, particularly as the research suggests that the main reason why community jobs fail is through poor job match.

7.10 The option of supported self-employment or employment in what the Americans call ‘micro-enterprises’ seemed rare in Scotland. We found some examples of self-employment and 2 people who were interviewed, both living in rural parts of Scotland, were self-employed. The potential of this option to provide the choice and flexibility sought by some individuals seems ripe for development. That self-employment for some people has advantages including a closer match between individual preferences and contribution with the job, and fitting employment around individuals’ values and lifestyle preferences, have led some to argue that self employment is “the next logical step in the evolution of supported employment technology”. This will of course necessitate putting in place personal and business support systems, and expanding the knowledge base of employment specialists.

7.11 The survey discovered major inequalities in terms of who was able to access employment support not least of which the group that served as the original inspiration for the ‘supported employment’ concept, i.e. people with more severe or profound disabilities. People with ASD and those from minority ethnic communities were poorly served. Fewer

women were being supported in paid work. Ensuring that employment is routinely considered for young school leavers was only happening through the efforts of a few services. As one of the key stakeholders remarked, targeted work with young people is vital to ensuring that they “do not enter the cycle of the benefits trap in the first place”.

7.12 The short-life working group which produced *Working for a change?* argued that helping people with learning disabilities choose, get and keep jobs should be a mainstream coordinated service. A strong counter argument is that while there is a clear logic for locating ‘supported employment’ within the business and employment world, its weakness might be that the focus on the disability agenda might be lost. There are alternative models as evidenced by the Glasgow Partnership. Translated into a national agenda, this would mean adopting cross-departmental collaborative models rather than locating all responsibility in one place.

7.13 A drawback of perceiving ‘supported employment’ as a general technological fix to the problems of unemployment, is that its’ outcomes might be compromised and it might not reach the people for whom it was originally designed, i.e. people with severe disabilities. ‘Supported employment’ grew out of principled and ideological stance concerned with inclusion and citizenship for all. The philosophical basis of ‘supported employment’ was about getting people on the margins to be included in the world of work. Where this has been most successful as demonstrated by this and other research, has been when a strong values based approach is adopted. In order to retain this, it will be critical to resolve the issues around definition, principles and establishing quality standards.

7.14 The traditional view that the biggest barrier to employment is the existing welfare benefits system was alluded to in this research. However, this was challenged by the positive stories of individuals who were financially better off in employment and by the practice of a few ‘supported employment’ services who had demonstrated that with sufficient determination and targeted information it is possible to support people into full-time work and for them to be better off in work, sometimes considerably so. This suggests a two pronged approach is necessary: 1) to advocate systemic change in relation to parts of the system that operate as disincentives to employment and 2) in the meantime, build on existing expertise which proves conclusively that with skilled understanding of benefits, tax credits and so on, it is possible to help more people to be better off financially as a result of being in work.

7.15 Negative attitudes or the low expectations of others were identified as a major barrier to employment. This included the attitudes of a range of professionals such as care managers, support workers and some families/parents. It was suggested by the research participants that SVQ and other professional training did not include an awareness of ‘supported employment’, and that employment was not routinely considered as an option during community care assessments, or by parents. The literature review confirmed the importance of investing in staff training in for example, person centred planning to enhance both the practices and values necessary for successful implementation. Employment support providers perceived that employers sometimes had negative attitudes towards people with learning disabilities, although the sample of employers we interviewed was overwhelmingly positive and had valuable things to say to other employers from a business perspective.

7.16 People with learning disabilities and/or ASD, families and employers participating in the research identified a number of recommendations or key messages they felt were

important for promoting employment. These were addressed at people with learning disabilities and/or ASD, families, employers, and lastly at government and other agencies. The key messages were highlighted in chapter 6 and are repeated below:

*For people with learning disabilities and/or ASD*

- You can get your dream job
- Just ask - you can get difficulties at work sorted out
- You can run your own business: there are people and organisations who will help
- Jobs need to be stretching but not so challenging you give up
- Having a job is an awful lot better than sitting around all day
- Don't think if you'll get a job, think when you'll get a job
- You get to meet and be with people
- You gain confidence, more independence, more skills, more money and self esteem
- If things are going wrong in a job, hang on in there and get support to find a better job
- Positive relationships with colleagues really help; you can have a laugh too
- Job coaches and some jobs open up new opportunities- things you might never have thought of before
- Having a job can allow you to contribute to your household's income – and in other ways to your family's life

*For families*

- Family support, encouragement and backing really helps
- Supported employment can benefit the whole family – financially, worry/anxiety levels, relationships, individuality and independence
- Good job coaches will take you and your needs into account as well
- Your hopes could be surpassed, your concerns might not materialise

*For employers*

- If you run a good business – good pay and conditions, a good atmosphere in the workplace and good working relationships – it will be a good place for 'supported employment'
- You need to be aware of people's individual differences and requirements
- People with learning disabilities and/or ASD can do a wide range of jobs and contribute to your workplace if the support is right
- Your other staff can help
- You've got to watch out that other staff treat the person in 'supported employment' reasonably
- Supported employment can be good for your business –customers will tell you so
- Advertise that you provide 'supported employment'
- Make sure you and your staff have the training you need to get the support right
- Difficulties can be sorted out – work it out together, the answer can come from a wide range of sources

- Experience has shown that people with learning disabilities are reliable and hard working employees
- Employers need to hear more about success stories from other employers
- Good ‘supported employment’ has a lot to offer employers – job profiling, job coaching and on-going support for the disabled employee are also of benefit to employers
- Flexibility of working arrangements is helpful not only with employees with disabilities but other employees too

*For the government and other agencies*

- Promote equality – by promoting the value of ‘supported employment’ and ensuring it becomes the norm
- Make sure ‘supported employment’ becomes more widely available
- Ensure that ‘supported employment’ agencies can work with people with high support needs
- Good ‘supported employment’ agencies have an impact not just on people’s employment but on their whole lives
- Government should look into the situation of people trapped by the benefits system, e.g. those in supported accommodation/care homes
- Promote direct payments as one of the supports for employment
- Education, awareness raising and training are all vital - in schools, colleges, for employers and for the public
- Ensure that gateways to employment, like college courses are better tailored to individuals and that support is not only available in segregated courses and facilities
- Government could do more to change attitudes and to sell ‘supported employment’ to businesses as many employers are unaware of the benefits
- Those promoting ‘supported employment’ need to adopt a business-like approach, and put the business case for employing disabled people
- In promoting employment, government should recognise that employers don’t respond to charity but need to see the benefits to their company
- Government should provide more information about different disabilities to raise awareness, for example, about Aspergers Syndrome
- Government should set targets about the numbers of disabled people that should be employed within companies
- Government should make more use of senior managers in business who can act as ‘champions’ to speak out at conferences and to professional bodies

## **IMPLICATIONS FOR POLICY AND PRACTICE**

7.17 The findings from this study point to the need to build on the well-developed practice, skills and expertise of the ‘supported employment’ services in Scotland who are already achieving quality outcomes. In addition, there is a need to further develop practice through initiatives in certain priority areas. In particular, the research suggests practical developments or initiatives in the following areas would be helpful:

- The strategic development of a national definition, framework and standards for ‘supported employment’ in Scotland

- Drawing upon person centred planning approaches (including personal life plans) that show how to achieve a more consumer-driven and career planning approach
- Targeting school leavers to expand expectations and options for the future directly linking career assistance and ‘supported employment’ providers with schools
- Equipping employment specialists to facilitate self employment for people who want supported self-directed employment
- Implementing ways of delivering ‘supported employment’ for people with more severe disabilities
- Ensuring ‘supported employment’ is offered to people with ASD, in particular to adults with autism

7.18 Because there is little known about some of these, participatory development and action research models would seem to be appropriate both in terms of their development and evaluation. Such an approach would also be in keeping with the values and philosophy of *The same as you?* and recommendation 9 of *Working for a change?* which called for an employment-related participatory action research programme run by, and for, people with learning disabilities.

7.19 In addition, it will be important to continue to promote and publicise good practice and innovative services such as North Lanarkshire’s Supported Employment Service, that have found ways to tackle the benefits issues and place people in full time jobs. Engaging employers and people with learning disabilities and/or ASD as champions for ‘supported employment’ would also be beneficial strategies.

## CONCLUSION

7.20 In conclusion, while there are grounds for optimism, there is some way to go before the aspirations of people with learning disabilities and/or ASD for real paid jobs are met, especially for people with ASD. The positive experiences related in this report illustrate what can be achieved when best practice in ‘supported employment’ is implemented. Good practice was identified and while the results were life changing for the individuals involved and their families, ‘supported employment’ as originally intended was not being put into practice. It would seem that securing jobs with higher rates of pay and for more hours remains a key issue. There is a pressing need for central and local government to adopt a more strategic and coordinated approach to developing and funding ‘supported employment’ in Scotland so that its implementation can be more widespread.

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## APPENDIX 1: CASE STUDIES PROVIDED BY NORTH LANARKSHIRE COUNCIL SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT SERVICE

### Margaret

Margaret is 19 years old – has learning difficulty and suffers with depression. She attended mainstream education and on leaving school attended a local college for two years. When she was referred to North Lanarkshire Council Supported Employment Service her sole income consisted of £15 Child Benefit.

An immediate priority for the service was to maximise Margaret's income. With the assistance of the service she was awarded Income Support and Disability Living Allowance increasing her benefit from £15 to £96.85 per week. Margaret started working in a local nursing home in March 2004.

Income prior to employment		Income maximised prior to employment		Income in employment	
Income Support	£	Income Support	£66.55	Earnings	£161.12
IB/SDA	£	IB/SDA	£	Tax Credits	£62.71
DLA (Care)	£	DLA (Care)	£15.15	DLA (Care)	£15.15
DLA (Mobility)	£	DLA (Mobility)	£15.15	DLA (Mobility)	£15.15
Other	£15.00	Other	£	Other	£
<b>TOTAL</b>	£	<b>TOTAL</b>	£	<b>TOTAL</b>	£254.93
Less housing costs	£	Less housing costs	£	Less housing costs	£
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>£15.00</b>	<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>£96.85</b>	<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>£254.93</b>
		<b>DIFFERENCE IN INCOME</b>	<b>£81.85</b>	<b>DIFFERENCE IN INCOME</b>	<b>£173.08</b>

### David

David is 24 years old - lives with relatives, and has autism and learning disabilities. Was previously unemployed. From 1994 – 1999 he had a job delivering the local newspapers to households. On 14/04/2004 David started work in a full-time permanent post of Litter Picker with North Lanarkshire Council. He works 37 hours per week.

Income maximised prior to employment			Income in employment	
Income Support	£11.55		Earnings	£193.10
IB/SDA	£55.00		Tax Credits	£48.34
DLA (Care)	£38.30		DLA (Care)	£39.35
DLA (Mobility)	£15.15		DLA (Mobility)	£15.55
Other	£		Other	£
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>£120.00</b>		<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>£296.34</b>
Less housing costs	£		Less housing costs	£
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>£120.00</b>		<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>£296.34</b>
<b>DIFFERENCE IN INCOME</b>	<b>£NIL</b>		<b>DIFFERENCE IN INCOME</b>	<b>£162.09</b>

## John

John is 34 years old – lives with family – has learning disabilities. He was at school and then College. Worked with a Welding Company as Steel Sawyer. In 1995 - SQA Modules in Literature, Communication, and English. In April 2000 gained SVQ in Hospitality Quick Service Level II. In May 2000 started as work experience with North Lanarkshire Council Social Work and since December 2000, John has been employed on a full-time permanent basis with NLC Social Work as an Admin Assistant working 27.5 hours per week.

Income prior to employment		Income maximised prior to employment		Income in employment	
Income Support	£	Income Support	£	Earnings	£162.19
IB/SDA	£97.85	IB/SDA	£	Tax Credits	£46.32
DLA (Care)	£15.55	DLA (Care)	£	DLA (Care)	£15.55
DLA (Mobility)	£	DLA (Mobility)	£	DLA (Mobility)	£
Other	£	Other	£	Other	£
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>£113.40</b>	<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>£</b>	<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>£224.06</b>
Less housing costs	£	Less housing costs	£	Less housing costs	£
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>£113.40</b>	<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>£</b>	<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>£224.06</b>
		DIFFERENCE IN INCOME	£	DIFFERENCE IN INCOME	<b>£110.66</b>

## Brian

Brian is 30 years old and has learning disabilities and epilepsy. He lives alone, renting house from parents. Brian has a home support worker. He attended the local comprehensive school and then College until 1994. From 1996 to 2003 he worked as Admin Assistant with the Benefits Agency (1996 and 1998), Clerical Assistant, NLC (1997), Mail Sorter with Royal Mail. Since 01/09/2003 Brian has been employed on a part-time basis with NLC Social Work Department as an Admin Assistant in Supported Employment. Works 17.5 hours per week.

Income prior to employment		Income maximised prior to employment		Income in employment	
Income Support	£55.65	Income Support	£123.50	Earnings	£96.54
IB/SDA	£	IB/SDA	£	Tax Credits	£87.81
DLA (Care)	£	DLA (Care)	£58.80	DLA (Care)	£58.80
DLA (Mobility)	£	DLA (Mobility)	£41.05	DLA (Mobility)	£41.05
Other	£55.65	Other	£	Other	£
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>£</b>	<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>£223.35</b>	<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>£284.20</b>
Less housing costs	£	Less housing costs	£	Less housing costs	£73.85 (Rent, C/Tax)
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>£55.65</b>	<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>£223.35</b>	<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>£210.35</b>
		DIFFERENCE IN INCOME	£167.70	DIFFERENCE IN INCOME	<b>-£13</b>

When Brian was referred to the Supported Employment Service his income was £55.65. The Service submitted claims for additional benefits, which resulted in his income increasing to £223.35 per week. When he moved into employment his income again increased to an overall total of £284.20. Brian wanted his own house, which he rents from his family at a cost of £73.85 per week. He does not qualify for a rent rebate. However, even after meeting his housing costs he is left with a disposable income of £210.35 per week.

## APPENDIX 2: RESEARCH MEASURES

### KEY STAKEHOLDER TELEPHONE INTERVIEWS

1. Could you please comment on your organisation's interest in employment support for people with learning difficulties and/or ASD.
2. What is your job remit within your organisation?
3. Does your organisation have a policy in relation to employment for people with learning disabilities (HR & with partner agencies) and how do you go about implementing it?
4. From your organisation's point of view, what systems are proving effective in promoting/supporting people with learning disabilities and/or ASD into employment?
5. What are the barriers to such developments from your own perspective (and in general)? (*Prompts from PiP co-ordinators, survey*)
  - benefits trap
  - low expectations by individuals ,families, systems
  - employment practice re equality
  - lack of awareness ie Sc. Ex. should promote investment in diversity- --
  - golden hellos, champions for employment
  - poor co-ordination of employment services e.g. Job Centre Plus, Careers
  - funding for supp. Employment not mainstreamed, leading to a funding maze, short-termism, and the more able/successful target population
6. How can these barriers be tackled? What would be the 3 most important priorities in achieving change from your/your organisations perspective?  
*Would you include any of the following ? (from the short-life working group)*
  - mainstreaming approach to employment ie specialist agencies complementing not replacing employers
  - a simplified, equitable and reliable benefits & taxation system which finds a way to fund the gap between productivity and earnings for those with high support needs
  - positive duty to promote diversity not simply follow legislation: diversity requirement eg health & safety, minimum wage
  - inclusive employment practices eg work place culture, reasonable adjustments, assistive technology
  - person-centred support incl potential of Job Centre Plus personal advisors, LACs, Direct Payments
7. What impact, if any, has the *Same As You?* had on your organisation's work/planning?
8. How can collaboration at a strategic level be encouraged to flourish across traditional departmental boundaries such as Careers, Employment, Equality, Benefits, disability, Health?
9. The need for a lead-agency to promote and co-ordinate employment initiatives was identified by a short life working group set up by the National Implementation Group for the *Same As You?*
10. Which organisation or department do you see as best placed to do this?
11. What do you think of the proposal that the agency selected should have firm roots and influence within the business culture – namely the Dept. of Transport, Enterprise and Life-Long Learning?

## QUESTIONS FOR PEOPLE IN SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT

### A The job & workplace

1. Is this your first job? Can you tell us briefly about any other paid jobs you had before this one?
2. What's your job? And how long have you been doing it?
3. Can you tell us about the job you're doing just now:

*Prompts*

What things do you do in your job?

What kind of workplace – small/big firm, shopfloor, office, outdoors etc

Do you work on your own or with others?

Start and finishing times?

4. Has anything changed about your job since you first started?
5. If so, has this made it better for you or not?
6. Do other people at work do the same job as you?
7. Do other people work the same hours as you?
8. How do you get to work?

*Prompts:*

Do you walk?

Take a bus?

Take a taxi?

Some other way?

*Satisfaction with your job*

9. What makes you feel happy in your job?

*Prompts:*

The work you do?

The place you work?

Hours?

Wages?

People you work with?

10. Are there any things about your job that you are unhappy with?
11. What do you think makes a 'good' job?
12. What do you think makes a 'good' employer?

### B Employment support

*Getting the job*

13. Did anyone ask you what kind of work you wanted to do before you got your job?
14. Did anyone help you to look for and get this job?
15. Did you choose this job?

*Support on the job*

16. How did you learn to do the job you do now?  
Who helped you to do that?

*Prompts:*

Your supervisor at work?

Other people you work with?

Staff at the supported employment service?

- Any others?
17. Does anyone help you to do your job now? Who?
- Prompts:*  
 Your supervisor at work?  
 Other people you work with?  
 Staff at the supported employment service?  
 Any others?
18. What do you get help with?
19. Is there anyone to help you if you get into difficulties with your job? Who?
20. Has this ever happened? Can you tell us about it?
21. Who would help you to learn a new task in your job?
- Prompts:*  
 Your supervisor at work?  
 Other people you work with?  
 Staff at the supported employment service?  
 Any others?
22. Are you happy with the help you get from people at work to do your job?
- Prompts:*  
 Do they help you in a way that makes you feel OK?  
 Do they help you when you need help?
23. Has anyone helped you to change to a better job where you work now?

*Satisfaction with the employment support*

24. Are you happy with the help you get from [name of supported employment agency] to do your job?
25. What would happen if you wanted a different or a better job? Who would help you to change your job?
26. Are there any changes you would like to your employment support?

**C What having a job means**

27. What's the best thing for you about having a job?
28. What's the worst thing for you about having a job?
29. Do you think that having a job has made a difference in your life?
- Prompts:*  
 How you feel about yourself?  
 Making new friends through the job?  
 Going out more?  
 How much money you have?  
 Learning more skills?
30. If you have more money now, what has that allowed you to do?
- Prompts:*  
 Buy/do things you couldn't afford before?  
 Save up?  
 Go on holiday?
31. Is the wage you get the same as other people doing the same job at your work? If not, what's the difference?
32. Is there anything else about having a job that's important to you that we haven't mentioned?

## **D The future**

33. Has anyone talked to you about what you might want to do in the future?
34. If you could do whatever job you wanted, what would be your 'ideal' or 'dream' job?
35. Over the next few years might you want to:
  - Get a better job? Here or somewhere else?
  - Give up work or retire?
  - Stay in the job you have now?
36. What advice would you give a friend who wants help to get a job?
37. What do you think should be done so that more people with learning disabilities and autism and aspergers can work?
38. Is there anything else that we haven't asked you about that you would like to tell us about your job and employment support?
39. We can send you a copy of our write-up of this interview. Would you like one ?

## QUESTIONS FOR FAMILY MEMBERS

1. How did you feel about X [ *name of person in supported employment* ] getting this job?
2. How did you hope that X would benefit from having a job ?
3. Have your hopes [or, if mentioned, fears] worked out ?
4. Do you see any differences in X since s/he got a job?  
*Prompts:*
  - How she/he feels about herself/himself ?
  - Range of friendships?
  - Better off financially?
  - More skills ?
  - Other opportunities ?
5. What difference has X being in a job meant to you and your family?
6. What would you say to another family whose relative might be taking up a job?
7. What do you think should be done so that more people with learning disabilities and/or ASD can work?
8. Is there anything else that would be helpful for the research that you would like to tell us ?

## QUESTIONS FOR EMPLOYERS

### Can we start with your experience of employing X

- What decided you to consider employing X.?
- Before you employed X what did you expect it would be like?
- Did it work out that way?
- Did you have any worries or concerns about taking X on as an employee?
- As far as you know, how is X managing the job?
- Have you seen any differences in X since s/he came to work for you?

*Prompts*

*-more confident?*

*- more friends?*

*-more skills?*

*-Better off*

### Can we talk about any impact X being here has had on the company?

- Has X's presence as an employee made any difference to your company?  
*(for example, the employer who said there was less swearing)*
- Do you think you have learned anything as a company from employing X?
- Do you think your other employees have learned anything from X being employed here?
- What do you do to ensure that all your employees, including X are treated fairly and equally?

### Can we finish with some general points

- Are there any particular lessons to be learned or points you'd like to make from the experience of employing X?
- What would you say to another employer who was worried about employing someone with a learning disability and/or autism?

*Prompts*

*What are the problems?*

*What are the pay-offs?*

*Would you encourage others to follow your example?*

- What would you say to government about what needs to change to encourage employers to take on people with learning disabilities and/or autism?
- Is there anything else you'd like to say about this before we end the interview?

### APPENDIX 3: GEOGRAPHICAL SPREAD OF QUESTIONNAIRE RESPONSES

**Table A.1: Distribution of questionnaire responses by localities**

Town/City	Number of questionnaire returns
Aberdeen	4
Alloa	1
Arbroath	1
Ayr	2
Bonnyrigg	1
Bridge of Weir	1
City of Edinburgh	9
Cumbernauld	1
Dalkeith	1
Dumfries	4
Dundee	3
Elgin	3
Falkirk	3
Glasgow	6
Glenrothes	2
Greenock	2
Helensburgh	1
Inverness	3
Inverurie	1
Isle of Skye	1
Kilwinning	1
Kirkwall	2
Lewick, Shetland	1
Livingston	1
Lochgilphead	1
Melrose	1
Motherwell	2
Paisley	1
Perth	1
Stirling	1
Stornoway	2
Thurso	1
Tranent	1
West Lothian	1
Wishaw	1
TOTAL	69

Notes:

Some of these services reach far into rural areas, for example, one supported employment service based in Inverness supported individuals on the Isle of Skye.

Although only the national address was provided for The Shaw Trust as staff were home based, they operated within Scotland, mainly within the Scottish Borders area.

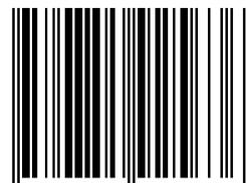
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