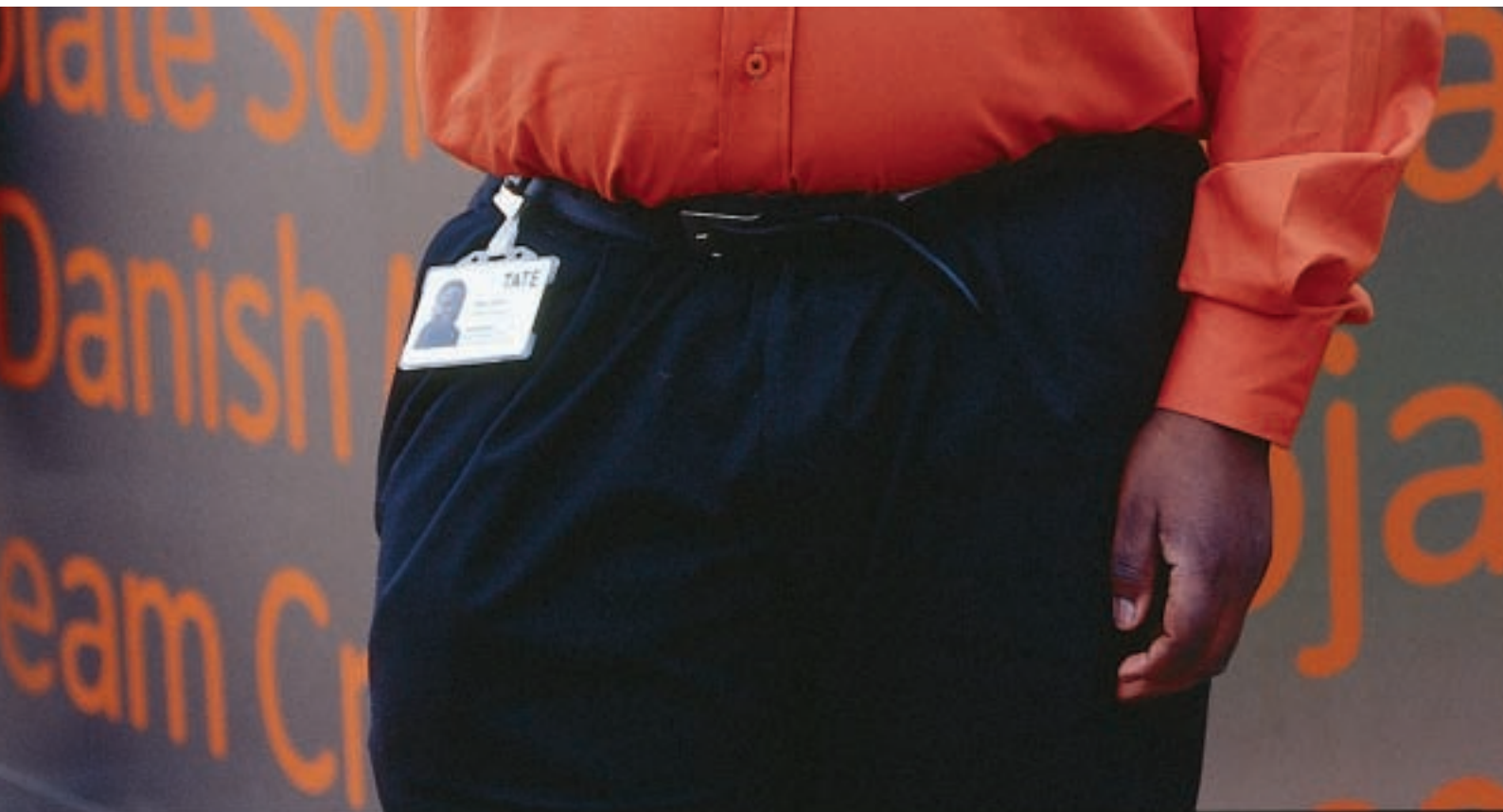




You can work it out!

Best practice in employment
for people with a learning disability



Best practice in employment for people with a learning disability

Contents

4	Supported employment
9	Running your own business – micro-enterprises
12	Social enterprises and social firms
16	Unpaid work experience, training and work trials
21	Volunteering
24	LETS and time banks
26	Sources of further information
29	Appendix A – information for commissioners of employment services
33	Appendix B – checklists for commissioners

Foreword

Work has been seen as an option for people with a learning disability for 30 or more years. But the number of people who have found paid employment in a real job has remained very low. In the 1970s it was assumed that no one could move straight in to a job, and that they would need extensive preparation and training. After a suitable period, it was thought some might eventually move into employment, while most would only be able to continue to work in a very sheltered environment. This latter option was the reality for most people who remained in training centres, doing simple 'contract work' for tiny amounts of pocket money.

Since then, experience in the USA demonstrated that many people with a learning disability both wanted to work, and could work in real jobs, with real wages. Small projects developed that sought to place people in jobs, and to train them once they were in work. But the number remained small, the projects were fragile, and there were immense structural and attitudinal barriers. The consequence has been that relatively small numbers of people are employed in real jobs. And the reality for many is that they take part in either 'work-related' activities or continuous training – or that they have no engagement with employment opportunities at all.

As services seek to help people find more meaningful activities than sitting around in day centres, employment is acknowledged as playing a crucial role in people's lives. But success in getting people in to paid work remains woefully inadequate. Instead, services have created a world based on work for which few people are paid. There is a growing variety of training, social enterprises, work-related projects, work experience, workshops and volunteering schemes. There are people who to all intents and purposes are working, but who receive little or no payment. This is illegal unless there is genuinely no obligation to attend and no obligation to do anything. Some people attend college – often for several years – but are then unable to find employment. This is a waste of skills and money. There are people who are described

Best practice in employment for people with a learning disability

as volunteering – this conveniently gets round the issue of employment contracts and payment. There are people who do work experience on an indefinite basis, and never get paid. Both these situations are exploitative.

Of course, people with a learning disability like everyone else need opportunities to develop their skills; to do work experience as a step toward employment; to run their own businesses; or to volunteer when it is clear that they do not want paid work. But there is a lot of muddled thinking and practice in this area, which wastes resources and provides unnecessary additional barriers to people achieving their aspirations. The Valuing People Support Team commissioned this guide to reduce this muddled thinking. It will help those responsible for procuring and providing employment opportunities for people to work out when work is work, training is training, work experience is work experience and volunteering is just that.

Anyone who is interested in employment for people with a learning disability can use this guide. We have provided an Appendix at the back of this guide that contains information specifically for commissioners of employment services for people with a learning disability.

In writing this guide, we have followed a common style of a brief introduction, which highlights common problems; followed by more detailed best practice guidelines with short pieces of supporting information where appropriate.

We have chosen to include sections on volunteering and LETS and Time Banks. While these may not appear immediately relevant to employment, we believe that they can offer interesting and varied opportunities for people who have either chosen not to work, or who are seeking to build skills to prepare for job seeking.

We have deliberately chosen not to include information on benefits in this guide. ¹Work related and other benefits are subject to change

Best practice in employment for people with a learning disability

and rules are complex. Experience indicates that benefits are best considered with the advice and guidance of an independent benefits advisor, or a 'champion' from the local benefits agency who has a clear understanding of the aims of the employment service and a commitment to people with a learning disability entering work.

Acknowledgements

This document was created by Bill Love and Peter Bates at the National Development Team (www.ndt.org.uk). It includes contributions from Simon Whitehead, Anne O'Bryan and Susan Boddy from the Valuing People Support Team (www.valuingpeople.gov.uk).

1. Supported employment

Supported employment is:

- doing whatever is necessary to support someone to gain, retain and fully benefit from having a regular job, with a regular employer. Extensive literature is available on the effectiveness of supported employment – it is best practice to be aware of and harness the lessons learnt from this research¹.

The following bad practice examples can occur:

- the term ‘supported employment’ is sometimes confused with day centre projects, sheltered workshops, training schemes and other support that doesn’t progress people into open employment
- using short-term funding to launch supported employment services does not take account of the long-term support needs of employees with a learning disability and their employers
- there can be too much focus on preparing for a job sometime in the future instead of creating opportunities to work and on-the-job training
- because of assumptions about people’s capacity and willingness to come off benefits, too few people with a learning disability are supported to work 16 hours or more a week.



Key points:

- The assumption must be that everyone has the capacity to work. Anyone who is old enough and wants to work can do so. People should receive appropriate, ongoing support to enable this to happen.
- Individuals and their families must be given clear and accurate information to allow them to make informed choices about job conditions. They should receive support to find creative alternatives to loss of welfare benefits where necessary.
- Support must be available when people want to change jobs or get a promotion, as well as when they need long-term job coaching.



- Services should make good use of technologies that are known to work, such as Training in Systematic Instruction.

Best practice advice for successful supported employment

We are using the definitions of supported employment created by the British Association for Supported Employment (BASE). Abridged versions of these definitions appear in italics.

A good supported employment service should have the following characteristics:

1. Individual focus

- Individual aspirations are identified through person centred planning and job profiling. People are supported to identify and secure employment that reaches towards those aspirations.

The emphasis is on finding out what each person wants to do and where his or her talents lie. The person is then introduced to an employment opportunity that matches his or her work profile.

2. Long-term commitment

- Long-term support in the workplace is provided without reducing the commitment to developing ‘natural supports’. This may be enhanced through the use of direct payments and individualised support packages.
- People are supported to achieve promotion and move between employers.

Ongoing support is provided to help each person get and keep a job to the employer’s satisfaction. The focus is on exploring all options until success is achieved. This support is not time limited and should include assistance for job advancement or job change as well as an initial induction into the workplace and its culture.

3. Full participation

- Employment support is offered to anyone with a learning disability who wants it. This means having the time and skills to support people with significant disabilities, healthcare needs and behaviours labelled as challenging.

The assumption is that everyone has the capacity to work. If appropriate, ongoing support can be provided. Anyone who is old enough and wants to work can do so. People considered to be severely disabled are not excluded.

4. Variety and flexibility

- A demonstrable commitment to developing natural workplace supports.
- Investment of time and skills in the development of positive working relationships with job seekers and employers.

Support should be creative, flexible and shared with employers. In short, whatever works! Support can come from service professionals, self-advocacy groups, co-workers, managers, supervisors and home networks. It can cover induction training, co-worker and employer support, transport, career guidance and home liaison. The emphasis is ultimately on the provision of support by colleagues and other natural networks with, if necessary, support service back up. Support is available to gain a relevant qualification if desired or necessary.

- Support is available for people who want to work outside traditional 'office hours'.
- People are supported to access the full range of employment opportunities (beyond traditional activities such as catering and horticulture).
- People are supported to access welfare benefits advice so they can work the number of hours they want.

Best practice in employment for people with a learning disability

Supported employment represents a wide range of jobs in the community and includes opportunities to leave one job for another. Job advancement opportunities are available. Individuals and their families are given informed choices about job conditions and creative alternatives to loss of welfare benefits where necessary.

5. Real jobs

- Everyone who is supported to work is receiving the wage for the job (National Minimum Wage or above) and receives other work-based benefits, such as training, pension rights, union membership, and a healthy and safe workplace.
- While other goals such as education or confidence building may be worthwhile, the entire focus of the service is to support people to gain and maintain waged employment.

Wages, pay intervals, and methods of payment, at the going rate for the job; safe working conditions and hours similar to other employees; job security and opportunities for advancement are key considerations.



Penny Mendonca

The focus is on creating opportunities to work and training on the job rather than preparation for a job sometime in the future.

Recent best practice developments in supported employment

One local authority has helped over 100 people get past the 'benefits trap'. All had previously relied on benefits and used their local day centres. Now the average income of these workers is £101 a week above the level they would receive on benefits, and 72% of them work in the private sector.

The local authority's approach has several key design features:

- they retrain welfare rights advisors to value earned income first
- they continue to ensure that individuals receive the level of benefits that keep them healthy and safe, including Disability Living Allowance
- they provide benefits advice at the same time as advice from a job coach
- they encourage people to go for full-time employment (16 hours or more) to maximise their earning opportunities (Tax Credits, pay rises, job advancements)
- they stay informed about the latest benefit reforms and changes
- they have high expectations of good jobs, but support people to make their own decisions
- they continue to support people's claims when they have lost benefits unjustly.

Another local authority is experimenting with helping people use individualised budgets, like Direct Payments, to hire their own job coaches. They hope that this will result in people who have been stuck getting ready for work actually getting the paid jobs they want at their own pace.

So far things are going well, but they have already learned that many different people must play their part for this approach to succeed:

- individuals with a learning disability must be keen to work and interested in taking the lead
- families must be supportive and willing to help their family member become an employer (as well as an employee!)

Best practice in employment for people with a learning disability

- the Direct Payments Support Service must be willing to help the person and their family take the lead and become an employer
- community members must be interested in taking on part-time job coach work to help individuals reach their full potential
- the local authority must commit to offering this option and support people to learn about and trust the approach
- the established supported employment service in the area must welcome this complementary expansion and ally with it
- an external supported employment expert must provide the focus, training and support for the approach, including speedy problem-solving
- Jobcentre Plus can help applicants gain Access to Work funding subject to them meeting eligibility conditions of the programme
- employers must be looking for good employees.

2. Running your own business (micro-enterprises)

Micro-enterprises are about owning a business and income-generation. This might also mean the person owning the business being self-employed.

Micro enterprises are:

- small business that people run for themselves with the main focus of earning money
- not services, controlled by services, projects or another 'fad'
- not about giving people 'something to do': they are about earning money
- open to everyone: it's not about behaviour or productivity
- flexible. As with any business, the direction and time commitment may change. This will have an impact on the rest of the person's life and the support (both staffing and financial) that they receive.

Best practice in employment for people with a learning disability

Bad practice examples can include:

- micro-enterprises being ‘owned’ by more than one person, leading to a lack of individual focus
- the enterprise being designed around, owned and controlled by anyone other than the person.



Key points:

- Micro-enterprises involve thinking at the ‘micro’ level – about this person, with these interests, living in this community.
- the best support comes from suitably experienced voluntary, independent or business sector agencies rather than traditional statutory service providers
- potential micro-enterprise support agencies must have proven entrepreneurial experience and strong links to local businesses and business support agencies
- ideally, micro-enterprises should be part of a choice of employment supports.
- people with high support needs can be successful in running micro-enterprises.

Best practice advice for micro-enterprises

We are using the definitions of micro-enterprises created by Steve Dowson (NDT), Doreen Rosimos and Darcy Smith (IncomeLinks, USA). Abridged versions of these definitions appear in italics.

The development of micro-enterprises (but not self-employment) is relatively new in the UK, and this makes it difficult to relay good practice. Current experience indicates that the best support comes from suitably experienced voluntary, independent or business sector agencies, rather than traditional statutory service providers.

Support for micro-enterprises could be delivered in the following ways, which are mutually supportive:

Best practice in employment for people with a learning disability

1. Support to individuals, including:

- assistance to access small start-up grants

Micro-enterprises aim to make money by seeking out ordinary commercial opportunities. They don't generate income through donations or grants (with the possible exception of money for start-up costs) and almost certainly don't depend on the social care industry. Micro-enterprises, like other ordinary businesses, aim to offer ordinary citizens a product or service for which they are willing to pay. The cost of starting a micro-enterprise doesn't need to be high.

- assistance to access financial supports, such as accountants and welfare benefits advice

Each micro-enterprise is different, so the size, type of business, and legal and financial arrangements can vary a great deal.

- assistance to access funding for personal assistants or support staff whose role includes supporting people in their micro-enterprise
- assistance to access funding support for individuals in a way that is sufficiently flexible to take account of growing or changing individual earnings

The amount of income can vary widely – it will depend partly on what each person wants to achieve.

The amount of time micro-enterprises require can vary from a few days a year to a full-time occupation. They're designed to suit each person.

2. Support for the development of a local micro-enterprise agency to assist people to:

- identify personal skills and opportunities to establish a micro-enterprise

Best practice in employment for people with a learning disability

Micro-enterprises are not schemes, projects, or standard packages to be delivered to whole groups of people. They require thinking at the 'micro' level – about this person, with these interests, living in this community.

Micro-enterprises are usually 'owned' by one person, and are very unlikely to be shared between more than three – if the micro-enterprise has been created to match one person's requirements, then it's probably only right for that person. And by keeping the ownership to one person, there's the best possible chance that the person will have real control over it.

- develop a business plan
- access business supports and start-up funds
- identify and develop long-term individual support (the micro-enterprise agency will not itself provide long-term individual support).

3. Social enterprises and social firms

A social enterprise:

- is a business that has primarily social objectives rather than focusing on profit
- may involve disabled people; where such organisations have been established by / for disabled people they are often known as social firms.

We recognise the value of social enterprises, but highlight the danger that, for people with a learning disability, the following bad practice examples can occur:

- a social enterprise may be established instead of supporting people to enter 'mainstream' workplaces

Best practice in employment for people with a learning disability

- a social enterprise may be viewed as the only employment option for people with more complex disabilities or behaviours labelled as challenging
- a social enterprise may be unsustainable
- a social enterprise may be developed with a lack of focus on the work interests of possible participants.



Key points:

- There must be a real and proven demand for what people will be producing.
- Wages and other work benefits must be available to participants, and they must be in line with legislation, including the National Minimum Wage.
- A workforce where people with and without a disability work alongside each other is always better than a segregated workforce made up entirely of employees with a disability.
- People must also have access to other work options, such as supported employment and micro-enterprises.

Best practice advice for social enterprises

In writing this guide, we use the Social Enterprises guidelines of The Department of Trade and Industry and Social Firms UK.

Observing the following points will help to promote best practice.

The promoters of the enterprise must have a detailed business case that demonstrates:

- a local demand for the product or service

Social enterprises/firms are businesses that combine a market orientation with a social mission.

- that if local suppliers of the product or service already exist, people with a learning disability are being supported to get jobs with these suppliers

Best practice in employment for people with a learning disability

Do social enterprises/firms exist alongside supported employment services that are open to all?

- that those involved have the necessary skills to develop and sustain the enterprise

Some social firms are tagged as 'emerging social firms' since they do not yet meet all the standards of a fully fledged social firm. Are there clear processes and timetables through which they will 'emerge' as a social firm?

- that positive links to the local business and social enterprise community exist

Social enterprises are diverse. They may include social firms and mutual organisations and may operate at a local or national level. As such they need to exist alongside other businesses.

- that a viable marketing and delivery strategy has been developed

Is there a real and proven demand for what people will be doing/making? If not, there is a risk that participants may find themselves filling their time with non-work related activities.

- that wages and other work benefits will be available to participants and that these are in line with legislation, including the National Minimum Wage.

If payments are made that fall below the National Minimum Wage, these might help to create a contract and thus give workers full legal rights as employees. If no payments or benefits in kind are received this may exclude the scheme from being a social firm.

In addition to considering the business aspects, it is best practice to consider who will be participating in the enterprise and whether:

Best practice in employment for people with a learning disability

- there is demonstrated demand from people with a learning disability to participate in both social enterprises and this particular service, commercial or retail activity

Or is the firm/enterprise being proposed in response to a general demand for work? If so, have opportunities for open employment through local supported employment agencies been thoroughly examined?

- there are clear and sustainable opportunities for participants to develop skills, interests and relationships with other community members. A workforce where people with and without a disability work alongside each other will offer more of these opportunities than a segregated workforce made up entirely of employees with a disability
- if it is proposed that the enterprise is to be used as a place where people develop skills and then move on, are realistic plans in place to support people to do so (for example, links to a supported employment agency)?

If support is made available for social enterprises, we recommend that this is done only when people also have access to supported employment and micro-enterprises. Look at opportunities to support people with and without a learning disability to establish social firms in partnership.

4. Unpaid work experience, employment training and work trials

Work experience

Unpaid work experience is:

- work, without wages, for a mainstream employer that is designed to provide employee and employer with experience of each other
- a chance for someone to understand and make an informed choice about a job
- a chance for an employer to recognise that person's skills.

The following bad practice examples can occur:

- without clear time limits, experience can become exploitation
- without wages, a contract and expectations of productivity, the person may have none of the things that make the experience 'work-like'
- unpaid work experiences fall outside of employment law, leaving individuals vulnerable to poor treatment.



Key points:

- A maximum of 16 days over 8 weeks is an acceptable length of time for unpaid work experience.
- Unpaid work experience is not a volunteer activity – most people would not choose to use their unpaid efforts to increase the profits of shareholders.
- If unpaid work experience is considered part of employment seeking, it should only be used as part of wider supported employment.
- Unlimited, unpaid work experience without a strategy for progression is likely to be exploitative.

Best practice in employment for people with a learning disability

Best practice advice for work experience

Observing the following points will help to achieve best practice:

- work experience must form part of a larger individual plan for exploring and, if this is what the person decides, gaining paid employment

People should not be moving from one period of unpaid work experience to another without any real direction or efforts to support them to gain paid employment.

- agreed time limits should be placed on the length of the work experience

There is no government-stipulated or agreed maximum length of time for unpaid work experience. Although this needs to be considered as part of individual planning, we would suggest a maximum of 16 days over 8 weeks.

Unpaid work is not a volunteer activity, as most people would not choose to be a volunteer at their local supermarket or use their unpaid efforts to increase the profits of shareholders.

- agreements should be in place with employers that could lead to real work
- participants should have their expenses met and be protected by health and safety guidelines.

Employment training

Employment training is:

- a stand-alone course or programme aimed at readying people with a learning disability for entry into employment.

Best practice in employment for people with a learning disability

The following bad practice examples can occur:

- training may not be clearly linked to the individuals' work aspirations
- programmes may have no proven record of enhancing individuals' work opportunities
- training can in fact be sheltered work activity described as employment preparation.



Key points:

- Training courses for people with a learning disability, standing alone from other employment initiatives, are largely ineffective in getting people in to paid work.
- People learn best in the same building, surrounded by the same people, and using the same equipment as they will be using when working. In-work training has proven to be more effective than classroom-based training.

Best practice in employment training

There has been considerable debate about the effectiveness of specialist courses or programmes designed to prepare people with a learning disability for work, as opposed to the 'job seeking and preparation' stage of supported employment. The difficulty focuses on whether such courses can be proven to have enhanced participants' chances of gaining or retaining employment.

We have not found any evidence to indicate that such courses for people with a learning disability, standing alone from other employment initiatives, achieve demonstrable results. For most people with a learning disability, new skills are most successfully transferred from the training stage to the work stage if the training is 'on-the-job'. This means that the person must learn in the same building, surrounded by the same people, and using the same equipment as they will be using when working.

Best practice in employment for people with a learning disability

While employment preparation schemes may build confidence and some skills, they are generally less successful than supported employment in leading to paid work. Preparation is more successful when it is done through the individual and work-based focus of supported employment.

Observing the following points will help to achieve best practice:

- there should be strong links and collaboration with employment services that meet the criteria for supported employment, micro-enterprises or social enterprises
- the employment preparation programme must demonstrate an awareness of local employment conditions
- the programme should be geared to the individual employment aspirations of participants
- since employment preparation is essentially an education-based approach, providers should be part of the further education sector. They should employ and supervise qualified trainers, use an accredited syllabus and awards framework, assess learners consistently and achieve their learning outcomes in a specific timeframe
- programmes should be monitored and evaluated to establish their effectiveness in readying people for and achieving employment, rather than merely counting the number of courses started or completed.

Work trials

Employers are increasingly using work trials to improve their recruitment procedures for people with a learning disability.

A work trial is:

- where an employer takes the opportunity to view the individual's skills and possibilities within the work, and specific job, setting
- an opportunity for the individual to really experience or 'test' the job.



Key points:

- There should always be a live vacancy at the end of a work trial.
- A work trial should not exceed a period of 8 weeks.
- People should not get caught in a succession of work trials.

Bad practice can occur where:

- work trials become another form of open-ended work experience or preparation
- the work trial is not sufficiently supported to allow the person to demonstrate their abilities.

How to achieve best practice in work trials

Observing the following points will help to achieve best practice:

- the work trial should be part of an extended selection process or 'on the job' interview
- there should be a live job vacancy that will be available to the individual if the trial is successful
- the work trial should last for a pre-agreed period that suits both the individual and employer. We would suggest that, except in exceptional circumstances, this does not exceed eight weeks.

5. Volunteering

Being a volunteer is:

- spending time, unpaid, doing something that is will benefit either an individual or a group
- building skills to add to a C.V.
- making a contribution to the wider community
- an opportunity to develop new relationships and a sense of personal well being.

Volunteering opportunities can lead to a number of areas of bad practice:

- volunteering opportunities may not promote community participation and opportunities to develop new relationships
- where people are using volunteering as a stepping stone to employment there may be no effective plan for how people will be supported to make the move to work
- volunteers may not be in receipt of out of pocket expenses and training
- people may be volunteering for a profit-making organisation where they should, in fact, be getting paid
- people may be working for the same organisation on a part-time paid basis and 'volunteering' the rest of the time.



Key points:

- People should not volunteer for profit-making organisations, even for a short time.
- Where people are using volunteering as a stepping stone to employment there must be an effective plan to support them in making the move to work.
- Volunteering opportunities should reflect an individual's goals and aspirations.
- Working and volunteering for the same organisation (to stay within benefit levels) is contrary to the National Minimum Wage, restricts progression and is never good practice.



- If the person is using volunteering as a pathway to something else, for example paid employment, an appropriate length of time for being a volunteer is a maximum of six months.
- Volunteering should not involve someone carrying out a role for free that others are normally paid for.

Best practice in volunteering



Penny Mendonca

Members of the general public sometimes volunteer in learning disability settings, but the majority of volunteers choose to contribute to other parts of community life. In a similar way, we should ensure that people with a learning disability who wish to volunteer have the support they need to volunteer within ordinary settings, for example a charity shop or community centre.

Observing the following points will help to achieve best practice:

- volunteering opportunities must reflect the individual's goals and aspirations
- where volunteering is not the person's sole aim but is part

Best practice in employment for people with a learning disability

of a longer-term plan, it should help them to gain skills that will enhance employment opportunities

Are plans in place to support the person to move forward either into paid work or towards other ambitions?

- support must be available and targeted to individual needs

Volunteering may be for any number of hours a week or perhaps as a one-off event. Support needs to be matched to the person's needs and aspirations.

- volunteering should enhance opportunities to develop and sustain relationships with co-volunteers

Are people being supported to volunteer alongside other community members?

- volunteers should receive payment to cover their expenses and any other volunteering benefits, like training

Does the person receive their out of pocket expenses, appropriate clothing and access to necessary training?

Remember, volunteering can affect welfare benefits. Working and volunteering for the same organisation (to stay within benefit levels) is contrary to the National Minimum Wage, prevents progression and is never good practice.

- ongoing person-centred monitoring should be in place

If the person is using volunteering as a pathway to something else, for example employment, six months is an appropriate maximum length of time to volunteer.

- volunteering opportunities must meet the criteria for avoiding exploitation.

The work is voluntary – the result of a real and informed choice about the place, the activity, the beneficiaries of the volunteering and the other options available.

Volunteering should not involve someone carrying out a role for free that others are normally paid for. Volunteering is done only at not-for-profit organisations and for someone who is not a family member.

People should not volunteer for profit-making organisations, even for a short time, unless it is very clearly time limited work experience.

6. LETS and community time banks

Through LETS (Local Exchange Trading System) and Time Banks, community members exchange their time and skills. No money changes hands – LETS operate with a locally defined ‘currency’ and Time Banks through the exchange of time. They allow participants to contribute to their communities and to be valued as active participants.

LETS are barter systems using mutual credit to rebuild local economies. Time credits are more like loyalty points. They don’t have to add up, and they don’t have to be spent for the system to work. They don’t track market prices of any kind – an hour is always worth an hour, whoever is doing the work. As LETS are more closely allied to bartering systems, they sometimes value one person’s skilled hour of labour more highly than another person’s unskilled hour, but they often use a flat rate for all. What they have in common is their control by local participants, the informality of exchanges and the sense of local participation and co-operation they seek to develop.



Key points:

- LETS and Time Banks are not employment.
- LETS and Time Banks should engage all citizens in an active community, and so should not be limited to people with a learning disability.
- Participation in LETS and Time Banks are less effective than supported employment in moving people towards a goal of paid work.

Best practice advice for LETS and Time Banks

Observing the following points should encourage best practice:

- LETS and Time Banks share a vision of engaging all citizens in an active community – they should be aimed at the whole community and not just people with a learning disability
- partnerships should be sought with local existing schemes to identify what could be done to support the wider participation of people with a learning disability. If no such schemes exist, partnerships should be sought with local economic and community regeneration initiatives.

7. Sources of further information

Supported employment:

- British Association for Supported Employment (BASE):
www.base-uk.org
- Policy Consortium for Supported Employment – briefing paper
www.jrf.org.uk/knowledge/findings/foundations/n20.asp
- Success in supported employment for people with learning difficulties: www.jrf.org.uk/knowledge/findings/socialcare/622.asp
- ‘Social Care Research 86 – May 1996 Supported employment for people with learning difficulties:
www.jrf.org.uk/knowledge/findings/socialcare/622.asp
- Beyer, S, Goodere, L. and Kilsby, M. (1996) The Costs and Benefits of Supported Employment Agencies. London, DfEE
- O’Bryan, A. Person Centred Planning And Supported Employment
www.valuingpeople.gov.uk/documents/PCPEmploy.doc
- Information on the Certificate and Diploma in Supported Employment: www.supportedemployment.net

Micro-enterprises

- See www.ndt.org.uk/projectsN/ME.htm for information about conferences, networks and further details on micro-enterprises, including an easy to read summary that explains what micro-enterprises are about.
- For a report on the relevance of micro-enterprises in the south west of England, see www.afse.org.uk/news/micro-enterprise.pdf
- To read about the American experience of micro-enterprises, see Griffin, C & Hammis, D (2003) Making Self-Employment Work for People with Disabilities Baltimore: Paul H. Brookes.
- For a short summary of the most frequently asked questions about micro-enterprises, see www.griffinhammis.com/publications/FAQSelfEmployment.doc
- Doreen Rosimos and Darcy Wilson – Income Links LLC, 45 Daley Road, Fitzwilliam, NH 03447 USA see www.incomelinks.biz

Social enterprises and social firms

- Information on social enterprises and a range of supporting information and guidance can be accessed at:
www.socialenterprise.org.uk
- European Confederation of social firms and co-operatives:
www.cefec.org
- Information on Social Firms and a range of supporting information and guidance can be accessed at:
www.socialfirms.co.uk
- A little out of date but still useful:
www.socialfirmsforessex.org.uk/benefits/natminwage.htm

Volunteering

- Volunteering opportunities: www.do-it.org.uk
- Advice on good practice in volunteering:
www.volunteeringengland.org
- www.volunteering.org.uk/missions.php?id=593
- Guidance on establishing a supported volunteering project can be found in: Bates, P (2002) A Real Asset: A manual on supported volunteering Ipswich: National Development Team.
- Elrick, D., Boyes, L., and McCormick, J. (2001) A Virtuous Circle? Volunteering with extra support needs Edinburgh: Scottish Council Foundation. How volunteer bureau work with volunteers with extra support needs could be improved Scottish Council Foundation email: scf@scottishpolicy.net.org Tel: 0131 225 4709
- Skill (1998) Disability Equality in Volunteering: All Kinds of People have the Skills You Need. London: SKILL: National Bureau for Students with Disabilities
- Useful information on volunteering and the law (recognising that the situation is liable to change):
www.avso.org/en/activities/RESEARCH/Legal%20Framework/countryreports/legal_status_uk.pdf

Work experience and training

- Limited legislation exists to cover unpaid work experience. What is available appears to predominantly cover students for whom work experience covers part of a course. Additional information is available at: www.work-experience.org/cms/ShowPage/Home_page
- The NDT website carries a longer statement of good practice in the provision of high-quality unpaid work experience. See www.ndt.org.uk/papers
- Information to support the development of effective adult learning is available from Niace at: www.niace.org.uk
- Information on Workstep: www.jobcentreplus.gov.uk/cms.asp?Page=/Home/Customers/HelpForDisabledPeople/WORKSTEP
- Information on the New Deal for Disabled People www.newdeal.gov.uk/newdeal.asp?DealID=NDDIS&Show=SUMMARY
- Gardiner, K. (1997) Bridges from benefit to work, York: Joseph Rowntree Foundation
- For a recent review of the role of day centres in supporting people with a learning disability into employment, see www.dwp.gov.uk/asd/asd5/summ2003-2004/203summ.pdf

LETS and time banks

- For further information on LETS, see www.gmlets.u-net.com/
- For further information on Time Banks, see www.neweconomics.org/gen/m2_i7_timebanks.aspx

Appendix A – Information for commissioners of employment services

While this guide is aimed at both commissioners and providers (including employers) of employment and employment-related services, the responsibility for the planning, procuring and monitoring of such services should rest with commissioners – those controlling the money and how it is invested. So potentially, commissioners should be able to determine what is provided, for whom and by whom. It is therefore crucial that they understand the importance of work, the differences between real work and other work-related activities set out in this guide, and what helps people to get jobs.

Who are the commissioners?

Traditionally, the commissioners of work-related services to people with a learning disability have by and large been social care services in local authorities, sometimes supported by health commissioners. Most of their investment has been in day care work, work preparation and training, and social enterprises, few of which have provided people with jobs. This historical legacy has meant that mainstream employment services have ignored people with a learning disability and compounded the widespread assumption that they are unable to work in real jobs.

Responsibility for commissioning employment services for people with a learning disability should rightly rest with the Department for Work and Pensions. But the knowledge about people and the current investments is in social care. Furthermore, there is a serious shortfall from either source in investment in supported employment, which can be an effective vehicle for moving people into paid work.

Best practice in employment for people with a learning disability

Increasing opportunities for people to work will require significant partnership working and collaborative commissioning between:

- social care commissioners
- the Department for Work and Pensions
- Jobcentre Plus
- the Department for Education and Skills
- the Learning and Skills Councils.

This collaboration is required at national, regional and local level, and should be predicated on an agreed definition of who we are talking about, and the definitions of employment, training and volunteering set out in this guide.

Most importantly, commissioners at a local level need to agree about performance indicators for supported employment, and identify whose responsibility they are.

Cost and benefit

This guide poses an obvious question – what is the best way to invest money to deliver employment?

It has not been within our scope to undertake a cost benefit analysis. However, the research undertaken by key thinkers in the field of employment and the experiences of the authors of these guidelines indicate a number of factors that must be included when considering the best investment of money to deliver employment:

- for many of us, work is not just about earning money, it can offer valuable opportunities to develop new relationships and to make a contribution to our communities. Employment supports that do not enable people to be part of their community rarely deliver these opportunities
- access to non-wage benefits, for example pensions, union membership and company benefits are an important part of employment for some people. Services that support people to access anything but employment within an ordinary employer rarely deliver on non-wage benefits

Best practice in employment for people with a learning disability

- in terms of the contribution they make to people gaining work, employment supports that offer employment training or preparation for employment appear limited when compared to support given to actually gain and maintain real jobs or to become self employed
- any investment of money into employment should begin with careful consideration of what ‘work’ actually is.

Performance indicators for supported employment services

Rather than looking only at numbers in work, commissioners should look at the following factors when considering whether a supported employment service is effective:

- the availability of person-centred support and whether people are achieving their aspirations

Gather quantitative and qualitative information on the range of jobs and roles; hours, wages and benefits; and on the longevity and enjoyment of employment.

- the range of people working and numbers of people with higher support needs accessing employment

Are job coaches appropriately trained, experienced and supported to both enable most people to move away from reliance on the supported employment service and meet the employment goals and long-term support needs of people with more significant disabilities?

- the hours and times that people work

Gather quantitative information to show whether people are working a range of different hours, both full- and part-time, and whether flexible support hours has enabled people to access flexible working hours.

Best practice in employment for people with a learning disability

- wages received and access to non-financial work benefits

Gather quantitative information to show whether people supported into employment receive the going rate for the job, are protected by employment contracts and have equal access to union membership, pensions and company benefits

- take-up of welfare benefits

Do people get personal benefits advice that supports them to be better off financially when working?

- demonstrable development in individuals' personal networks

Seek qualitative information (stories etc) to show whether people in work are developing new and valued relationships with co-workers, customers, etc.

- whether supported work mirrors local employment patterns

Does a review of local employment patterns and the range of jobs gained show that people are being supported to access the full range of local employment opportunities available?

- evidence of people developing within and positively changing employers.

Is support available when people want to change jobs, get promotion, etc as well as when they need long-term job coaching?

Appendix B – Checklists for commissioners of employment services

Recognising their key role in enabling access to employment, we have developed a brief checklist for commissioners for **supported employment**. Although this checklist is aimed at people in supported employment, commissioners could use this framework to develop checklists for other forms of employment support.

The checklist will help commissioners of employment services to consider those services against the key points made in these guidelines.

The checklist is not designed to replace more detailed audit or evaluation tools. Information about these can be found within the guidelines and from the links.

Sections of the checklist have been left blank deliberately to allow commissioners/providers to use their own categorisations. Please feel free to add anything to the checklist that will help you to build a more detailed picture of local development.

Supported employment checklist

Funding

An effective funding strategy will: give confidence to people using the service, families and carers and employers; and promote the participation of people with more complex needs.

- Does the service have the security of funding needed to be able to offer long-term support to people in their jobs and to develop the confidence of people using the service and their carers?

We recommend financial security of at least 18 months.

- Is funding linked to clear commissioning goals or to a service level agreement?
- Does funding/commissioning recognise that some people seeking employment may need the long-term support of a job coach¹?

Unless there is a recognition in the contracting of employment supports, that some people will require long-term support, there is a danger that supported employment will not be available to all people with a learning disability.

- Is the service open to supporting people who have individualised commissioning/funding?

Employment services that are not open to individualised commissioning/funding will find it difficult to support the increasing numbers of people using 'In control', service brokerage and individual support packages.

Information from individuals

Recognising the range of person-centred and individual planning approaches people use, we suggest that commissioners link into individual planning and reviews (alongside wider consultation) seeking to identify:

- how satisfied individuals are with their job and the support they receive
- whether there has been a growth in relationships made through work and whether these exist outside the workplace as well
- whether individuals control and benefit from their wages
- whether working is contributing to the individual developing new goals/aspirations
- whether people are being moved towards unsupported work, where appropriate.

Service

Style of service

Does the service follow a recognised path for supported employment, for example:

- vocational profiling
- job search
- job match
- job analysis
- job coaching

And, as appropriate:

- task analysis
- systematic instruction
- social support
- relationship building

Best practice in employment for people with a learning disability

These basic elements of supported employment have been developed over the last 25 years. They may vary, but the core principles remain the same. If services are not using a similar path we suggest that you explore why and assess all the evidence relating to how effective the alternative approach is.

Flexible working

Support for employment needs to follow changing work patterns.

Is job coach support available during evenings and weekends?	Yes	No
What is the percentage of people in employment who regularly work evenings or weekends?	%	

As part of basic provider contracts, we recommend that commissioners encourage flexible working patterns.

Job matching, staff encouragement, residential supporters and service expectations may all play a part in encouraging or limiting flexible work patterns.

Job coach training

We suggest that 100% of job coaches who have been in post for 12 months or more, should have received recognised training.

Percentage of job coaches, in role for 12 months plus, who have received accredited job coach training	%
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A lack of professional training for job coaches may be reflected in job matching, the development of natural supports and negative assumptions about individuals' capabilities.

Best practice in employment for people with a learning disability

The experience of employment

Are people being supported to work both full- and part-time?

Total number of people in employment	
Number of people supported to gain employment in last 12 months	
Number people working 16 hours or more per week	
Number of people working less than 16 hrs per week	

Commissioners/employment supporters may choose to undertake an additional exercise to consider whether the hours people work is linked to their level of disability, and whether this suggests there are preconceptions about people’s abilities.

It is important that people who are supported into employment have the same rights and opportunities as other employees.

People who:	%
Have a contract with their employer	
Are a member of a union	
Participate in a pension scheme	
Receive employer-provided training	
Receive other benefits, such as profit share, discounts, health club membership, etc.	

Best practice in employment for people with a learning disability

We strongly recommend that no one should work without the security of a contract with their employer. We recommend that commissioners address the methodology of services if this happens.

The percentage of people joining a union, contributing to a pension scheme and receiving employer training will depend on employment fields and employers. We recommend that employment supporters/commissioners ensure that people with a learning disability receive the same opportunities as other employees.

Many people do not spend their lives in one job, at the same level and with the same employer.

Change in work	%
Increased hours	
Decreased hours	
Promoted	
Left employer and gained new job	
Left employer and seeking new job	
Left employer and not seeking new job	

A lack of movement within people's working hours may indicate a lack of flexibility from the employment service. A high percentage of people leaving their employers may indicate difficulties in the supported employment process.

Best practice in employment for people with a learning disability

Are people being supported to explore the full range of local work opportunities?

Employment sectors (Information on the local employment sectors should be available within local authorities)	Local %	Employment service %

We have deliberately left the local employment section blank because of the variations in employment opportunities around the country.

Looking at the local employment market and the range of jobs people are being supported into may indicate whether the full range of opportunities is being explored.

Equality of access to employment and employment support

Employment services should reflect the desire of all sections of the community to work.

In this section, we have deliberately left the service % columns blank to allow commissioners/reviewers to add local percentages.

	Services %	Employment service %
Female		
Male		

Best practice in employment for people with a learning disability

Age	Services %	Employment service %
16-24		
25-40		
40-55		
55-65		
65+		

Ethnicity*	Services %	Employment service %
White British		
White Irish		
White other		
Mixed White And Black Caribbean		
Mixed White And Black African		
Mixed White And Asian		
Mixed other		
Asian Indian		
Asian Pakistani		
Bangladeshi		
Asian British		
Asian other		
Black Caribbean		
Black African		
Black British		
Black other		
Chinese		
Chinese British		
Chinese other		
Other		

*This is a suggested guide, you may choose to use local ethnicity gathering titles.

Best practice in employment for people with a learning disability

Impairment	Services %	Employment service %

Because of the range of local criteria, we have deliberately left the section on impairment categories blank.

Living situation	Services %	Employment service %
Unsupported		
Supported living		
Direct payments/ individualised funding		
Group home		
Hostel		
Family home		
Other		

We recommend that, in any of the above, if the percentage of people in employment is significantly lower than the percentage using services that commissioners/employment services consider whether perceptions about desire/capacity to work and the approach of the employment supporter is reducing individual opportunities.



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