

Valuing People Now - Employment



Supported employment and job coaching: best practice guidelines

Introduction

Employment is a priority for people with a learning disability as set out in Valuing People Now. Supported employment is a well-evidenced¹, personalised approach to working with people with significant disabilities, including people with learning disabilities and autism, to access and retain open employment, with support. The Government published a draft definition of supported employment in March 2010 (*Job Coaching or Supported Employment – approach and progress in developing standards*).

A range of stakeholders (including people with learning disabilities, family carers, providers of supported employment and employers) were consulted on the draft definition. The Government would like to thank all who commented and contributed on the draft and on this final document. The full list can be seen in Annex A.

The process has led to a consensus that the terminology, which should be used to describe high quality personalised support into and in employment, for people with significant disabilities should be “supported employment”. A job coach is one of the job titles used to describe people who provide this support.

This document is primarily aimed at supported employment practitioners and commissioners to ensure that more people with significant impairments get and keep jobs. It is also important employers understand that supported employment provides them with a way of realizing the positive benefits of diversity, such as drawing on a wider pool of talent, positively motivating all employees and meeting the needs of a wider customer base.

¹ *A Review of the Research Literature on Supported Employment*, Steve Beyer and Carol Robinson (2009)

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Although the supported employment and job coaching best practice guidelines have been written as part of the work of Valuing People Now, they apply to all disabled people in supported employment.

What is supported employment?

Supported employment is an evidence-based and personalised approach to support people with significant disabilities into real jobs, where they can fulfill their employment aspirations, and achieve social and economic inclusion. It should start from age 14 so that people can have meaningful work experience and Saturday jobs, as part of a person-centred employment pathway. Supported employment should achieve the following outcomes:

- real jobs where people have the opportunity to earn equitable wages and other employment-related benefits
- development of new skills
- social and economic inclusion
- promotion of self-determination, choice and independence
- enhanced self-esteem
- increased consumer empowerment
- increased quality of life where people are treated fairly and with respect.

Real jobs are those where:

- wages are paid at the going rate for the job, with the same terms and conditions as all other employees
- the job helps the person to meet their life goals and aspirations
- the role is valued by managers and colleagues
- the job has similar hours and times at work as other employees, with safe working conditions.

Real jobs are provided by different types of employers across the private, public and third sectors. It also includes self-employment, where a disabled individual may need access to specialist support for advice on business start-ups, help to spot commercial opportunities and to test and refine the proposition, help to launch the venture and help to grow the business.

The overarching guiding principle of supported employment is that it is designed to support individuals who do not necessarily meet traditional criteria for 'job readiness' or 'employability'. Fundamental to supported employment is that everyone can work, with the right job and the right support. Supported employment agencies should be able to offer a nil rejection policy, as everyone should have the opportunity to work and contribute to society.

The other guiding principles of supported employment are:

- Choice and control – people are presented with a variety of experiences, options and support to achieve their career aspirations. Support is built around an individual, promoting choice. People choose and regulate their own employment support to promote career satisfaction. All options assume that the disabled person can and will be employed.

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- Partnership – there is genuine partnership between the person, their family carers, employers, community supports and the provider of supported employment.
- Full inclusion – people are supported to be full and active members of their workforces and wider communities, both socially and economically.
- Rapid job search – intensity of support is provided as appropriate, to ensure that the supported employment effort results in successful jobs in months rather than years.
- Customisation – when the demands of the open jobs market create a barrier, the employment relationship is negotiated to meet the specific needs of employers and job seekers (for example, if no job is likely to be advertised that would provide a good match for the jobseeker)
- Careers – people are supported to enhance their skills, providing opportunities for greater responsibility, compensation and challenge, as part of ongoing career progression and development.
- ‘Natural supports’ – employment support is as unobtrusive as possible and fades over time. It builds on, and uses as much as possible, community supports or social capital.
- Long-term support – long-term support is available to employees, employers, family carers and community supports, to ensure people maintain employment stability and achieve career growth.
- Assistive technology – creative solutions are found using assistive technology to increase choice, control and independence.
- Continuous quality improvement – people who receive supported employment are actively involved in developing and evaluating services.
- Right to work in a safe workplace – everyone is supported to work safely, underpinned by good risk assessment taking into account the workplace, and an individual’s skills, awareness and capacity.
- Protection of human rights and freedom from abuse – support is provided which prevents discrimination, abuse and neglect and upholds a person’s legal and human rights.

Who provides supported employment?

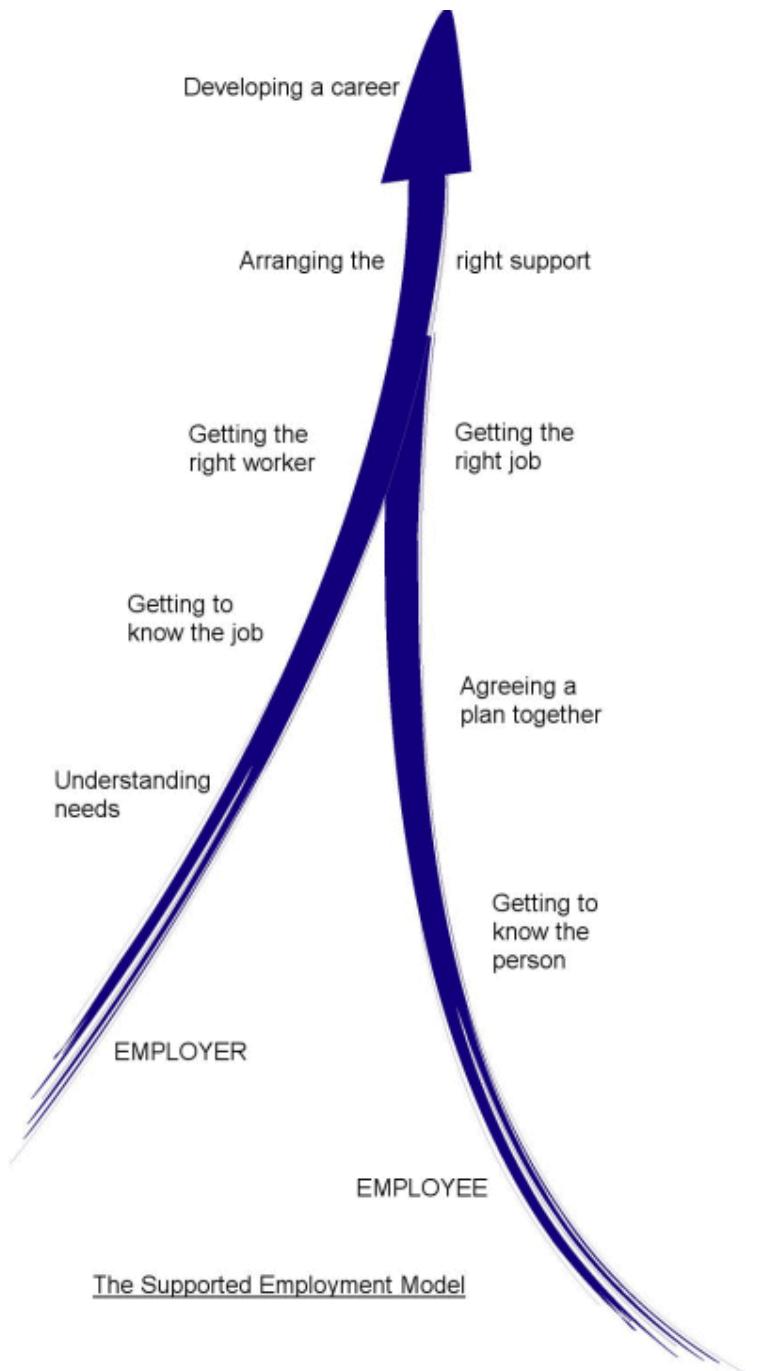
People from the age of 14 upwards can benefit from supported employment. It can support smooth and seamless transitions from education into employment and, if required, in employment on an ongoing basis. Support can be provided in work experience as well as in evening and weekend jobs. Support can be provided in whole or in part by schools, further education providers, Adult and Community Learning, Connexions, providers of supported employment, welfare-to-work providers, Jobcentre Plus providers, family carers, day services and community supports.

The people who provide support tend to have a variety of job titles such as job coaches, employment advisers, employment consultants and employment support officers. Jobcentre Plus staff and Disability Employment Advisors are often a key referral route onto supported employment. A person’s line manager and colleagues in the work place can also provide support; they are sometimes called ‘natural supports’.

It is important that everyone involved in providing supported employment is appropriately trained to understand and implement the evidence-based approach set out in these guidelines. There need to be clear protocols in place, to ensure that all information from the supported employment process follows the person (as they will be leading the process), regardless of who provides the support.

Key stages

Supported employment can best be illustrated as follows²:



² Diagram provided courtesy of British Association for Supported Employment

The Supported Employment Model

Work with the employer	Work with the job seeker/employee
<p>Employer engagement</p> <p>This starts with researching the local job market and contacting employers that best match the skills and interests of the individual job seeker. It requires a professional approach to promote and sell the business case of a diverse workforce to employers, and secure their commitment to participate fully in the supported employment process.</p>	<p>Job seeker engagement</p> <p>This involves identifying those people with learning or other disabilities who aspire to work, preferably in jobs of at least 16 hours per week, (recognising that some people may need to work less than 16 hours or may need to build up their hours over time). Support is gained and provided by family carers and community supports, ensuring all believe that their employment aspirations are achievable. Accessible information is provided to job seekers to develop self-determination and to make informed decisions. It is important that the impact on benefits is discussed from the outset and that solutions are found. This stage should ensure that the job seeker is a full and active participant in the process from the outset and is supported to maintain high levels of motivation to work.</p>
<p>Understanding needs and identifying vacancies</p> <p>An employer's needs are understood so that they can be good employers of disabled people. It also identifies an employer's unmet needs and opportunities for customising or developing jobs (jobs that will add value to the employer's business) for an individual job seeker. The recruitment and retention policies of an employer also need to be understood. A recruitment strategy is agreed that complements existing policies or supports the development of what exists to a more inclusive and beneficial policy for the employer to attract, recruit and retain a diverse workforce.</p>	<p>Getting to know you</p> <p>This is often referred to as vocational profiling, person-centred employment planning or discovery. It is a non-traditional, holistic and person-centred approach to assessment, undertaken in partnership, to understand a person's aspirations, skills, needs, abilities, talents, experiences, preferences, and informal supports and connections. Information on benefit income is gathered to ensure a better-off calculation is undertaken. The process is led by the job seeker, to get to know them well enough that the information will lead to a job and an effective support strategy.</p>
<p>Getting to know the job</p> <p>A job analysis is carried out to understand all aspects of the job, together with the workplace culture and environment. It also involves identifying potential natural supports and begins to build on these.</p>	<p>Agreeing a plan together</p> <p>A plan is agreed in partnership to find and keep a job that matches a person's skills, interests and all information gleaned during the 'getting to know you' process. It also looks at making sure that people will be financially better off in work. This process identifies each person's unique pathway into employment, which is led by the job seeker.</p>

Job match

Employers get the right worker and job seekers get the right job! This may involve developing, designing or customising jobs. This will require negotiation with the employer, to agree the reasonable adjustments that are needed for the individual to do the job. It also requires risk assessment to address equality and diversity, health and safety and safeguarding issues. Both the employer and employee, together with their family carers and community supports, need to be involved in the process so their respective needs are met.

Arranging the right support

A person-centred plan is agreed with employee and employer in conjunction with family carers and community supports, which is properly considered and justified to make sure the most ‘natural’ ways of providing support are used. It makes sure that people will get the right support to become valued employees and maintains their health and wellbeing. It makes sure that employers understand how to create workplaces that are supportive of disabled people. Support to employee and employer may include systematic training or structured training (on-the-job training that maximises people’s potential to acquire skills and independence); travel training; advocacy; disability awareness; job re-adjustments; job adaptations; support to be included at work socially; ongoing problem solving; and ongoing development of natural supports.

Developing a career

Career development, enhancement opportunities and career progression are agreed with the employee and employer to the benefit of both. Support is provided for employees to benefit from training opportunities and, where appropriate, to work towards qualifications.

Annex A – List of organisations and individuals who commented and contributed

Dudley Employment Support team
One Stop Shop
British Association for Supported Employment
College of West Anglia
Birmingham City Council
Adult Community Learning – Essex
Telford College of Arts and Technology
Coventry City Council
Brighton & Hove City Council
Nottinghamshire County Council
Hertfordshire County Council
VoiceAbility
Worcestershire Learning Disability Partnership Board
Derbyshire County Council
The ROSE Project
Leicestershire County Council
National Forum
Partington's Holiday Centre Ltd.
Shaw Trust
Working Links
PLUSS
Advance Housing
Ingeus
CDG – WISE Ability

Sandwell Council
Mencap
Papworth Trust
Norfolk City College
Remploy
Robert Elston
Dr Steve Beyer
Dr Mark Kilsby
Gina Collins
Richard Lawrence
Ciara Evans
James Kelly
Marsh Stetchman
Wayne Walker
Simon Whitehead
Chris East
Marcia Derbyshire
Andy Billings
Keith Bates
Colin Goodwin
Liz Garnham
Anne O'Bryan
Steve Parr
Ellen Atkinson
Mike Callahan
Deborah Parker

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