

# Jobs First Evaluation Summary Report



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## Background and policy context

This is a summary of the evaluation of Jobs First, a Department of Health demonstration project which ran from April 2010 to October 2011. Jobs First aimed to test out the use of Personal Budgets combined with non-social care funding streams to increase the number of people with moderate to severe learning disabilities in paid employment (although very few had 'severe' learning disabilities). The project combined a focus on personalisation and on increased employment, both of which remain important elements of central government policy as highlighted in the recent Adult Care and Support White Paper (Department of Health, 2012). Five local authority adult services departments participated in Jobs First (Herefordshire; Leicester City; London Borough of Newham; North Tyneside; and, Northamptonshire). Each site aimed to select a cohort of 20 people with learning disabilities, eligible for adult social care, who were judged to have moderate to severe learning disabilities for whom assessments, reviews and support plans were to be refocused on employment. A Comparison Group of 20 people, who received standard services, was matched in terms of demographic variables and level of learning disabilities.

The independent evaluation, commissioned by the Department of Health, aimed to:

- Investigate whether and how Jobs First made a difference to employment outcomes for people with learning disabilities.
- Identify organisational and practice developments that support this goal.

Multiple methods were used in the evaluation, with data gathered at two time points: First, we analysed quantitative case record data on 116 people with learning disabilities (out of a potential 200 people across the five sites). Of the 116, 76 were in the Jobs First cohort, 40 in the Comparison Group. Second, we undertook 142 interviews with 70 managers (nine of whom were interviewed twice) and practitioners, 26 people with learning disabilities from the Jobs First cohort (24 of whom were interviewed twice) and 13 family carers.

## Key findings

- ➡ Improving employment outcomes will require close working with other local authority departments and with Jobcentre Plus and establishing a secure funding stream for supported employment.
- ➡ Most participating professionals and family carers had positive attitudes towards promoting employment of people with learning disabilities.
- ➡ At follow-up the topic of employment was raised routinely in reviews for more people, rather than on an *ad hoc* basis.
- ➡ Most (19/26) of the people with learning disabilities we interviewed mentioned some kind of realistic employment goal.
- ➡ Jobs First was felt to be useful in '*clarifying the pathway*' of changes needed to improve support for people with learning disabilities to get paid jobs using Personal Budgets.
- ➡ Good relationships with in-house supported employment services and independent sector providers were needed to ensure sufficient, quality provision.
- ➡ This research supports other findings about the positive impact of employment for people with learning disabilities who are eligible for publicly funded adult social care, and about the importance of high quality supported employment services in supporting someone to get and keep a job.

# Findings

## Contextual factors

Six aspects of the context affected the implementation of Jobs First:

- The level and type of supported employment provision in the locality before Jobs First.
- The extent to which day service provision had been modernised to allow for a personalised approach.
- Involvement with other employment related projects, particularly Getting A Life.
- Progress with development of self-directed support procedures.
- The impact of public spending cuts, which created instability and reduced resources available for employment and other kinds of social care support.
- Locally high levels of unemployment, which could make getting jobs for people with learning disabilities particularly difficult.

## Attitudes

Almost all professionals, people with learning disabilities and family carers were positive about employment and very influential in promoting employment goals (or not). As has been found elsewhere, benefits of employment were reported to include improvements in confidence socially and with practical tasks, increased sense of autonomy and better overall quality of life. However, the following concerns were voiced by professional participants:

- People with learning disabilities having low expectations in relation to their own abilities.
- People being put off seeking work or increasing work to 16 hours per week because of the impact on welfare benefits income, often affecting the family not just the individual.

## Refocusing self-directed support steps

The following practice changes, needed to refocus self-directed support on employment, were emphasised by professional participants:

- Access to clear and comprehensive information for people with learning disabilities and their family about welfare benefits and the options for employment support.
- Raising the topic of employment routinely in reviews as a serious possibility for more people.
- Prioritising employment goals in all support plans; and combining the use of different funding streams for those people eligible.
- Help to re-claim welfare benefits or to re-establish support should jobs be lost.

### *Challenges to refocusing self-directed support*

Several factors remained challenging and caused delays in arranging employment support, which led to people with learning disabilities becoming disheartened and giving up:

- Support plans costed above the indicative budget identified by the Resource Allocation System (RAS), which were not agreed or 'signed off'.
- A lack of ownership and leadership from commissioning managers and care management staff in sites where day services had taken the lead on Jobs First.
- Raising the idea of employment with individuals and families was hard for some social care staff, because of previous experiences with insecurely funded initiatives and a lack of belief in the current likelihood of success.
- Prioritising employment within social care was difficult when funds to meet essential care needs (which would always take priority) were being reduced.

## Job coaching and support for self-employment

Job coaching was identified as a set of skills requiring an approach distinct from social care. Training in Systematic Instruction (TSI), which has long been used in other settings, was also identified as essential for Job Coaches through this project. Support needs to be tailored to individual needs, therefore it is hard to estimate costs. The level of support required may reduce over time, with some support from colleagues replacing Job Coaching, although some ongoing link needs to be maintained and for some people, support in work will always be needed. Job coaching involved:

- Profiling information about someone to understand their skills, strengths and interests.
- Balancing realistic goals with not discouraging people from pursuing a job they wanted.
- Working with employers to encourage them to employ specific individuals.
- Training people to use public transport so they can get to and from work independently.
- Supporting people initially in training for the job and for the experience of being at work.

Self-employment was seen as a good option for people for whom the employment relationship was unattractive or for those likely to find a work setting difficult. Two self-employment approaches were adopted in Jobs First sites: *In-Business*, which emphasised the involvement of informal support to help individuals set up businesses; and *Mi-enterprise*, a marketing cooperative approach, facilitating setting up of micro enterprises. Both approaches were viewed as valuable and had helped a small number of people to start trading.

## Organisational changes

Jobs First was felt to be useful in ‘clarifying the pathway’ of changes needed within local authorities and in collaboration with partners, to improve support for people with learning disabilities to get paid jobs using Personal Budgets. Three out of the five sites had ensured that assessed employment support needs were included in the Resource Allocation System, (RAS), contributing to part of the total value of Personal Budgets. Other sites allowed funds allocated for ‘social inclusion’ to be spent on employment support. Close working with Jobcentre Plus and with in-house and independent sector supported employment services was important, including ‘developing’ provision where there were gaps.

### Organisational challenges

Sites identified a set of areas for development at an organisational level:

- Promoting employment to staff at all levels, in all agencies and organisations involved.
- Systematically integrating employment goals into all contracts with providers working with adults with learning disabilities and into performance management regimes.
- Releasing social care funding currently tied up in day services into Personal Budgets.
- Working closely with housing providers to develop services that support employment.

## Employment outcomes

At baseline, six people in the Jobs First cohort (out of 59 for whom we had this data) were in paid jobs (including self-employment). At follow-up, 15 people in the Jobs First cohort (out of 60 for whom we had this data) were working across the five sites. All but two of these people were working fewer than 16 hours a week, with the minimum being three hours. Overall, the employment rate for all of those who could have been selected for Jobs First was 7%, which is similar to national estimates. Given the lack of follow-up data it is impossible to know the actual employment rate. No one in the Comparison Group was working at baseline (out of 39) or at follow-up (out of 33). The following factors were identified by the case record data analysis as increasing the likelihood that someone would be in employment:

- Being in the Jobs First group (at follow-up, a higher proportion of the Jobs First cohort were working compared with baseline, but lower proportions were looking for work).

- Looking for work or being employed or self-employed at baseline.
- Whether the person was receiving employment support at follow-up.

## Discussion and conclusion

More people in the Jobs First cohorts were working at follow-up, although many who did not get jobs appeared to have lost interest. Levels of interest of those in the Comparison Group appeared to remain constant from baseline to follow-up. Overwhelmingly, social care professionals and people with learning disabilities and their families were positive about the value of work for people with learning disabilities, suggesting that, at least in part, the policy goal is supported in the social care sector and by the target group. However, we know that less enthusiastic individuals and their families opted out of participating in Jobs First, which may have influenced this finding and also inflated the apparent employment rate.

The evaluation stresses the importance of social workers' and other professionals' attitudes and roles in generating a climate where seeking paid employment becomes the norm for people with learning disabilities. Many professionals perceived some potential in the use of Personal Budgets to purchase employment support, although it proved difficult to access sufficient funds for the initial intensive support required to get a job. The evaluation provides support for *Right to Control*, which allowed people in two sites to access funds from Jobcentre Plus rather than use Work Choice. Furthermore, non *Right to Control* sites benefited from Remploy funding, which supplemented the budget for employment support. However, it was not possible to 'braid' different statutory funding streams into a single budget. Savings were thought to be possible long-term, in reducing the need for long-term use of day services or support worker time. However, some professionals believed employment support for people with learning disabilities should be coordinated and funded by the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP), not by social care.

## National policy recommendations

- Welfare benefit rules should facilitate smooth transfers between work and benefits.
- Changing attitudes of employers, and the general public, should remain a priority.
- Central and local government responsibility for providing and funding supported employment services for people with learning disabilities should be clarified.

## Organisational recommendations

- Provide joint funding (social care, DWP education) for supported employment services.
- Ensure employment is a legitimate, important goal, seen in resource allocation decisions.
- Make explicit requirements on social care and Jobcentre Plus practitioners, and on independent service providers, to promote and support employment.
- Develop sufficient, good quality supported employment provision.

## Practice recommendations

- Discuss and plan for employment with young people with learning disabilities and families.
- Provide sustained employment support to help people retain and improve their jobs.
- Acknowledge that some care needs (e.g. for social integration) need ongoing support.
- Care managers/social workers should take the lead on job-focused self-directed support.

This research supports other findings about the positive impact of employment for people with moderate to severe learning disabilities and, most clearly, about the value of good quality supported employment services as being the key to getting and keeping paid work.

***Disclaimer:***

The views expressed in this report are those of the authors and not necessarily those of the Department of Health.

The Final Report of the Jobs First Evaluation from which this Summary is taken, and an Easy Read version of this Summary, are available to download for free from the SCWRU website.

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