

SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT

A phase-by-phase guide

base
british association for
supported employment

**Inclusive
Trading**

01



Engaging jobseekers

The service is effectively advertised in accessible formats and across various mediums to ensure that eligible jobseekers understand what the service offers and how it can be accessed.

02



Vocational profiling and action planning

The service provision begins within three weeks of the date of referral and adopts a person-centred approach. The use of a person-centred approach entails active engagement of the jobseeker in the process, with a focus on tailoring job search to align with the unique interests and preferences of the individual.

03



Employer engagement

The service provider has a strong grasp of the local labour market and the business case for Supported Employment. Employers are recognised as service consumers by the provider, who effectively considers their business needs and offers adequate guidance and support.

04



Job matching and securing employment

The service provider has a thorough understanding of the job requirements as well as the skills and aspirations of the jobseeker; as a result, the service provider is able to deliver a job match that benefits both the jobseeker and the employer.

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In-work support and career development

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Build a name & network

Make sure that people in your area know about you and understand the service you provide. Build relationships with key local referral sources such as schools and colleges, parent carer forums, local SEND services, Jobcentre Plus, housing teams and local charities.



Advertise your service

Flyers, posters and social media are all good ways to advertise your service and share service successes and news. Remember that maintaining your profile requires a strategy and on-going attention. The service website should be up-to-date, accessible and informative. It should enable people to get in touch, to find out more or to make a referral.



Be accessible

Provide a range of options for those wanting to join or to learn more as they consider whether it is right for them. This may include an email address, phone number, referral form, physical location and opening times or social media chat.





Consent and confidentiality

Make sure that your organisation provides a private area for confidential discussions, that disclosure issues are discussed and client-led, and that the jobseeker's circle of support are involved only with client consent.



Reflect on your reach and inclusivity

Check that your service profile reflects local demographics and reflect on how you can proactively reach different kinds of eligible people locally. Ensure that a zero rejection policy and culture is in place: this reflects the belief that with the right job and the right support everyone can work.



Signpost to alternative provision

Make sure that jobseekers are aware of the strengths, expectations and limitations of your service. Be prepared to guide people to alternative local services if they are more appropriate.





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Getting started



Support to an individual should start within three weeks of their date of referral. Arrange an initial meeting with the jobseeker to begin to get to know each other, discuss goals and expectations, and agree on how you will proceed. Well-matched paid work is the goal, and this should be part of the conversation from day one.

Listen & stay person-centred



Everyone is different so be sure to listen to each person's needs, challenges, interests and dislikes so that you can best engage and support people as well as find the right work environment and job match. Part of this will be agreeing together how, where, and how often to meet and setting expectations about each of your roles and boundaries.

Motivate & engage jobseekers



Recognise that clients come to you asking for help and wanting change. That is a brave and vulnerable step. Listen to who people are, what they enjoy and dislike, and reflect on what that means for the potential job matches. Offer motivation, positivity and confidence, highlight strengths, and avoid unrealistic goals. Paid employment is the goal but work experience or voluntary roles can be helpful steppingstones in building skills and confidence and testing out roles or sectors.





Whole-person vocational profiling

Vocational profiling should be considered a process more than a document. As such, the actual document remains live. Vocational profiling typically takes place over multiple sessions and observing the person in different environments. The aim is to really get to know the person, their life and circle of support, their goals, strengths, passions and dislikes. Really understanding the person provides the basis for more personalised support and an effective job match. Vocational profiles should be completed using person-centred and accessible approaches.



Action planning

Action plans should be used after each meeting to set out each person's actions and to structure the individual's progression towards a well-matched job. Action plans should be SMART, client-centred and co-produced with the jobseeker. It can be helpful to have scheduled review points at which you can reflect on progress and priorities with the client.



Enabling effective job matching

An effective job match will take into account a range of factors including the work tasks themselves, work environment, travel, work hours, workplace cultures, communication needs, knowledge and skills required, and commitment to workplace inclusivity and support. Really understanding the client as a whole person enables effective job matching across these different aspects of potential jobs.



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Build relationships of trust, respect and mutuality

Effective employer engagement is about growing trusted relationships with employers for mutual benefit. Be clear with employers about your service and aims and explain how you can help their business. Show that you really understand their needs, that you are committed to a relationship that helps them as much as your clients, and that your support is on-going. Remember that good employer relationships can identify and create opportunities that might not be advertised.

Your offer to employers: specific & general



Specific employer engagement is focused on a particular client, usually to try to place them into work. In contrast, general employer engagement is focused on understanding the employer's business and needs, building a trusted relationship or offering wider supports (e.g., training in inclusive recruitment, neurodiversity in the workplace) without a specific client in mind. Listening and making an offer to employers before asking for something from them is often an effective way to engage employers and start to build the relationship.

Be clear what your offer to employers is, try to build a strong general employer engagement offer, and use that to engage and grow relationships with employers.

Co-ordinating employer opportunities and relationships

Adopt a collective approach to finding and sharing opportunities amongst staff. For instance, you could create a group chat to quickly share opportunities that any team member see when they're out and about. Equally, share a database of employer meetings/calls, contacts, notes and named leads to ensure a co-ordinated and effective approach to employer engagement.



Employer networks and champions



Ensure that your service attends business networks and events to gradually grow awareness and understanding of your service amongst local employers. Employers pay attention to other employers so stay committed to quality support for employers (e.g. ensuring good job matches for the employer). Think about whether some employers would be willing to act as champions and ambassadors to your service within the local business community.

Define success and be fine with failure



For each employer interaction think about what a realistic success would be. Progress matters. Relationships grow. For example, a first meeting success might be finding out that the employer is open to the service, they've shared a little about their business and needs, and that they'd like to meet again. Equally, expect some disappointments and don't take it personally if employers don't engage: the timing might be wrong for them or at least you've learnt about them.

Employer prejudice, ignorance or misconceptions



Some employers may display prejudice, ignorance or misconceptions about people with learning disabilities and autism. Stay calm, explore whether the employer is open to listening to your case, and offer training or a further conversation if that is welcome.



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Laying foundations



Ensure that all clients have up-to-date CVs that demonstrate their strengths and use mock job applications and interviews where appropriate to build client's skills and confidence in these activities. Discuss with clients what kinds of information they are happy for you to share with employers and explain the potential benefits for clients of you being able to talk with employers. Discuss with clients what kinds of roles they want you to play during application and interview processes and when jobs begin.

Job matching



Ensuring an effective job match is key to job sustainment and client wellbeing. Have a consistent approach to job matching across the service and ensure that staff are well-trained in effective job matching. Job matching commonly consists of comparing the information in the vocational profile with job analysis (see below). With client consent, a discussion and action plan can be co-produced between the employer and client to help manage remaining needs and risks and/or to 'carve' roles or adapt workplace environments as helpful.

Job analysis



Job analysis provides in-depth insights into the key characteristics of a job role and its workplace environment. Its purpose is to really understand the nature of the work and work environment so that an effective job match can be made to a client. As such, job analysis offers a key part of the job matching process.





Job carving

Job carving is the adaption of job roles to better match them with an individual's needs and strengths. Job carving can therefore benefit employers and workers. Job carving may involve excluding certain tasks from the role, bringing in new elements to a role, or configuring elements of previously separate roles together. Your service should be familiar with job carving techniques and confident talking with employers about job carving where that may be beneficial.



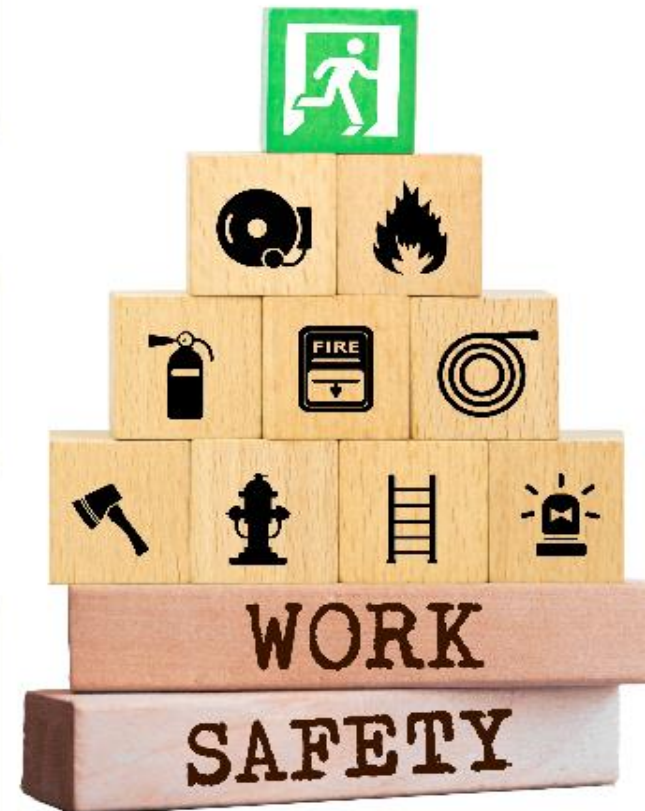
Workplace risk assessment

In collaboration with the employee and employer, you should conduct a risk assessment to ensure that the employer organisation is a safe environment for the client and that the employer has policies and procedures in place to ensure the health, safety and wellbeing of disabled staff.



Reviewing job matching success

Ensure that job matching processes are regularly reviewed and that all staff feel confident in effective job matching. When clients move into work you could monitor how well matched clients feel their roles are and assess how this relates to how long they sustain roles for and how satisfied they are in those roles. This information would help to shed light on the effectiveness and impacts of your service's job matching.





In-work support and career development

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In-work support agreement



Virtually everybody needs some support when they start a new job, regardless of disability. You should talk with clients about whether they want you to help them sustain job roles by talking with employers and/or supporting in the workplace. Once a client secures a job, if they consent to it then the provision of in-work support should be discussed with the client and employer and an in-work support agreement should be co-produced.

Job coaching, fading support and identifying natural supports

Job coaches support clients in the workplace, particularly during the early period in a new role to help ensure that any issues can be identified and mitigated. Job coaching can also take place outside the workplace if needed. Job coaches aim to be invisible in the workplace and over time the role of a job coach typically fades, in part because the job coach is able to identify and cultivate natural supports from co-workers and/or circles of support. As ever, it is important to tailor the job coaching support around each client.

Maintain the employer relationship and offer of support

Although job coach support fades, clients and employers both feel secure in the knowledge that they can get back in touch with you for support anytime in the future if needed: the relationship and support are on-going. After job coach support has faded out, maintain the relationship by catching-up with employers and clients about their progress.



Reasonable adjustments and access to work



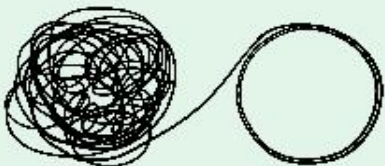
Staff should be knowledgeable about the legal responsibilities of employers to make reasonable adjustments for disabled workers. Reasonable adjustments are not always required, but if they are, you should assist both the employer and the employee in discussing, designing and implementing them. Staff should be knowledgeable about the potential for Access to Work or similar funding to provide resources to support clients in their employment via a range of potential supports.

Career development



Your organisation should offer advice and support in career development. This includes discussing career objectives with clients and, as appropriate, employers. It may involve the development of a career progression plan. Relevant training opportunities should be discussed with clients.

Handling conflicts, discrimination or poor workplace practice



Your service should support clients where conflicts, discrimination or poor workplace practice occur. Discuss with the client what they feel would be a positive outcome and whether they want you to facilitate discussion with the employer. Be open to the possibility that the job match may not be right and that an alternative workplace may be needed. Employers might be supported via training, discussing potential strategies, or reviewing and updating policies.



Editorial note:

This guide was developed through a collaboration between the British Association for Supported Employment (BASE), Inclusive Trading CIC, the University of Strathclyde and the University of Sheffield. It is part of a set of resources designed to help Supported Employment providers better understand, deliver, and evidence high-quality employment provision as defined by the SEQF.

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