European Union of Supported Employment

Education and Culture DG

Lifelong Learning Programme

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Introduction

The European Union of Supported Employment was established to develop Supported Employment throughout Europe. Studies and research have shown that there is a lack of consistency, guidance and training materials for professionals and service providers employed in the field of Supported Employment for disabled/disadvantaged people.

The European Union of Supported Employment developed a Partnership consisting of managers and professionals who represent national, regional and local Supported Employment service providers across Europe. The partners were already linked through their involvement with the European Union of Supported Employment and all the partners are currently delivering some form of vocational training or Supported Employment service either through their role as a local or regional organisation or through their national organisation for Supported Employment.

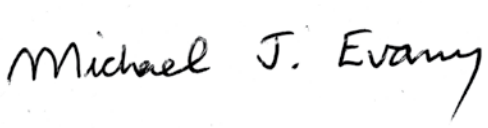
The Partnership's aim was to produce a European Supported Employment Toolkit. This toolkit consists of a range of Position Papers and How to Guides and has been designed to increase the knowledge and skills of professionals responsible for the delivery of Supported Employment services. The toolkit is primarily aimed at service providers for use in their staff development programmes.

The objectives of the Partnership were to:

- Design and develop a range of learning, practical guidance and instructional materials that will support service providers/participants in the acquisition and use of knowledge, skills and awareness to support disabled/disadvantaged people into the European labour market
- Develop the Supported Employment model in Europe to facilitate improvements to standards and practices in the vocational education and training of Supported Employment service provider organisations
- Improve the quality and increase the cooperation between organisations, institutions and professionals involved in the delivery of Supported Employment services throughout Europe
- Facilitate the development of innovative and good practices in the field of Supported Employment/Vocational Education and Training between the participating countries/partners

The Partnership sought to reinforce a consistent methodology for the delivery of specialist Supported Employment services for people with significant disabilities as part of a longer term aim of increasing the numbers of severely disabled people entering sustainable employment. The Partnership sought to address the need for support and assistance required by employers and to meet the need for improved awareness by policy makers and funders.

It is widely recognised that people with disabilities are one of the most economically inactive groups who face significant barriers when trying to access the open labour market. It was the intention of this Partnership to increase the awareness and competencies of the staff that are responsible for the assessment, job finding and on-going employment support for job seekers and employees with disabilities. Moreover, the Toolkit aims to reinforce the values, standards, principles and process of Supported Employment and to encourage us all to adhere to the full model of Supported Employment.



Michael J Evans
President, European Union of Supported Employment
Manager, Employment Unit, Dundee City Council

Participating Organisations

Austria

Lead Partner:	Dachverband berufliche Integration Austria

Denmark

Lead Partner:	Slagelse Kommune
Associated Partners:	VASAC Slagelse VASAC Odsherred Ellehøj EUSE Denmark

England

Lead Partner:	British Association of Supported Employment

Finland

Lead Partner:	VATES Foundation
Associated Partners:	Rehabilitation Foundation Kiipula Centre of Vocational Education and Rehabilitation

Germany

Lead Partner:	Bundesarbeitsgemeinschaft für Unterstützte Beschäftigung e.V.

Greece

Lead Partner:	Theotokos Foundation
Associate Partner:	Hellenic Association of Supported Employment

Ireland

Lead Partner:	Irish Association of Supported Employment Ltd
Associate Partner:	Employment Response North West Limited

Northern Ireland

Lead Partner:	Northern Ireland Union of Supported Employment

Norway

Lead Partner:	Mølla Kompetansesenter
Associate Partner:	Forum for Arbeid med Bistand

Scotland

Lead Partner:	Dundee City Council
Associate Partner:	Scottish Union of Supported Employment

Spain

Lead Partner:	Asociación Española de Empleo con Apoyo

Sweden

Lead Partner:	Stiftelsen Activa I Örebro län
Associate Partner:	Svenska Föreningen för Supported Employment

Committee and Meetings

Partnership Coordinator

Mike Evans	Dundee City Council, Scotland

Partnership Meeting Venues

November 2008	Vienna, Austria
March 2009	Palma, Spain
August 2009	Stockholm, Sweden
November 2009	Athens, Greece
January 2010	London, England
March 2010	Dublin, Ireland
June 2010	Copenhagen, Denmark

Editorial Committee

Mike Evans	Scotland
Marlene Mayrhofer	Austria
Henning Jahn	Denmark

Key Partnership Participants

AARNSETH, Kikki	Norway
BELLVER, Fernando	Spain
*BENGTSSON, Johanne Louise	Denmark
BOYD, Neil	Scotland
*CUNNINGHAM, Dermot	Ireland
*DAVIES, Huw	England
*DOOSE, Stefan	Germany
*DUNLOP, Edyth	N Ireland
*EKLUND, Bengt	Sweden
*ELSTON, Robert	England
*EVANS, Mike	Scotland
FRAGNER, Ute	Austria
HAARA, Øyvind	Norway
*HADDOCK, Margaret	N Ireland
HARKAPAA, Kristiina	Finland
HATLEM, Cathinca	Norway
HAUGAARD, Marie	Denmark
JAHN, Henning	Denmark
*HOHN, Kirsten	Germany
JENSEN, Stig Bahl	Denmark
JOHANSSON, Bertil	Sweden
KATSOUDA, Kaiti	Greece
LAMPINEN, Pauliina	Finland
MARTINEZ, Salvador	Spain
*MAYRHOFER, Marlene	Austria
ORA, Petteri	Finland
PIKKUSAARI, Suvi	Finland
*RYAN, David	Ireland
VEITLMEIER, Sabine	Austria
*WANGEN, Grete	Norway
WIIG, Ingunn	Norway
ZAPHIROPOULOU, Io	Greece

** Denotes Lead Officer for a Position Paper/How To Guide*

The Position Papers are designed to provide essential and relevant information for not only Supported Employment service providers but also for disabled people, parents/ carers, employers and policy makers at local, national and international levels.

The Position Papers state the views of the European Union of Supported Employment on a wide range of Supported Employment topics and encourage us all to adhere to the strengths and values of the complete Supported Employment model.

Values, Standards and Principles of Supported Employment

Introduction

Supported Employment is a method of working with disabled people and other disadvantaged groups to access and maintain paid employment in the open labour market. This method of working is a proactive policy in accordance with the United Nations Convention on the Rights of People with Disabilities.

This paper will define the differences with this methodology and other support mechanisms currently being used around Europe and will provide the position of the European Union of Supported Employment regarding the values, standards and process of Supported Employment.

Background

The concept, principles and values of Supported Employment are based on the early work from North America which demonstrated that people with significant learning disabilities could perform a variety of complex tasks, highlighting the potential and capabilities of people with learning disabilities to participate in paid work in the open labour market. Due to the success of Supported Employment assisting people with learning disabilities to access and maintain employment, the model was developed and expanded to include all areas of disability and disadvantage.

In the late 1980's, the model transferred across the Atlantic to Europe and a number of disability organisations in various European countries successfully piloted Supported Employment projects funded mainly under European Union programmes such as Helios and Horizon.

The European Union of Supported Employment (EUSE) was formed in 1993 and has developed its structure since that time. The definition of Supported Employment in Europe is recognised as:

> "Providing support to people with disabilities or other disadvantaged groups to secure and maintain paid employment in the open labour market"
>
> *European Union of Supported Employment 2005.*

The Issues

Supported Employment is completely consistent with the concepts of empowerment, social inclusion, dignity and respect for individuals. Within Europe, agreement has been reached on the values and principles that should be present at all Supported Employment stages and activities and adhere to full citizenship rights of individuals[1] :

Individuality – Supported Employment regards each individual as unique, with his / her own interests, preferences, conditions and life history

Respect – Supported Employment activities are always age appropriate, dignifying and enhancing

Self-determination – Supported Employment assists individuals to improve their interests and preferences, express their choices and define their employment / life plan according to personal and contextual conditions. It promotes the principles of self-advocacy by service users

Informed Choice – Supported Employment assists individuals to understand their opportunities fully so they can choose consistently within their preferences and with an understanding of the consequences of their choices

Empowerment – Supported Employment assists individuals to make decisions on their lifestyle and participation in society. Individuals are centrally involved in the planning, evaluation and development of services

Confidentiality – The Supported Employment service provider considers information given by individuals to them as confidential. The service user has access to his/her personal information gathered by the provider and any disclosure is at the discretion of and with the agreement of the individual

Flexibility – Staff and organisational structures are able to change according to the needs of service users. Services are flexible and responsive to the needs of individuals and can be adapted to meet specific requirements

Accessibility – Supported Employment services, facilities and information are fully accessible to all people with disabilities.

[1] European Union of Supported Employment – Information Booklet and Quality Standards (2005)

The values and principles of Supported Employment are supported by a 5-stage process/ methodology that has been identified and acknowledged as a European model of good practice which can be used as the framework within Supported Employment[2].

Engagement – Underpinned by the core values of accessibility to ensure informed choices are made

Vocational Profiling – Ensuring empowerment to the individual throughout the process

Job Finding – Self-determination and informed choice are key values in Supported Employment

Employer Engagement – Accessibility, flexibility and confidentiality are key values to be nurtured through this process

On/Off Job Support – Flexibility, confidentiality and respect are the key components to successful support measures. Support measures particularly refer to when the individual is in paid employment and are delivered through the provision of an Employment Support Worker/Job Coach

Position of the European Union of Supported Employment

The European Union of Supported Employment promotes the concept of Supported Employment as a vehicle/methodology to assist disabled and disadvantaged people access their right to work.

Whilst there are slight variations of the definition across the world, there remain three consistent elements that are fundamental to the European Supported Employment model:

1. Paid Work - Individuals should receive commensurate pay for work carried out – if a country operates a national minimum wage then the individual must be paid at least this rate or the going rate for the job
2. Open Labour Market – People with disabilities should be regular employees with the same wages, terms and conditions as other employees who are employed in businesses/ organisations within the public, private or voluntary sectors
3. Ongoing Support - This refers to job support in its widest concept whilst in paid employment. Support is individualised and is on a needs basis for both the employee and the employer

[2] European Union of Supported Employment – Information Booklet and Quality Standards (2005)

The European Union of Supported Employment promotes that professionals working in the area of Supported Employment should be able to demonstrate professional competence, knowledge and awareness of the values underpinning the process of Supported Employment.

Conclusion

Supported Employment is a method of intervention which assists individuals with disability or disadvantage to access paid jobs in the open labour market. The European Union of Supported Employment has clearly stated values and principles with ethical guidelines for professionals to ensure that the needs of the individual are paramount regarding all decisions in relation to the Supported Employment process.

Further Reading

- EUSE Position Paper "Client Engagement"
- EUSE Position Paper "Vocational Profiling"
- EUSE Position Paper "Job Finding"
- EUSE Position Paper "Working with Employers"
- EUSE Position Paper "On and Off Job Support"

Designed by Dundee City Council, 2009

Client Engagement

Introduction

Like many models of employment intervention, Supported Employment values the initial client engagement process. This process is essential to ensure understanding by all parties (i.e. the job seeker and the Supported Employment organisation) before progressing on to the next stage of the Supported Employment model.

This paper provides the position of the European Union of Supported Employment with regards to the issues and Supported Employment activities within the stage of Client Engagement.

Background

Client Engagement is the first key stage of the 5 stage Supported Employment process[1] . It is essential that the core principles of respect, self-determination, informed choice, empowerment, confidentiality, flexibility, accessibility and individuality are embedded in this initial stage[2] .

The outcome of client engagement is to ensure that the individual makes an informed choice as to whether they wish to use the Supported Employment model to find a job and which Supported Employment organisation can assist them to achieve employment.

Activities during this stage are wide and varied and require to be designed to ensure the individual is equipped with the correct information and knowledge before making an informed decision to move onto a Supported Employment programme. Activities must also be relevant and person centred if a positive outcome is to be achieved.

Moreover, the value base of zero rejection is embedded in the Supported Employment model under the ethos of "anyone who wishes to work can work, provided the correct level of support is available".

[1] For more information on the 5 stage Supported Employment process see EUSE (2005): European Union of Supported Employment – Information Booklet and Quality Standards

[2] For further details see also EUSE Position Paper „Values, Standards and Principles of Supported Employment"

Issues

The principle of zero rejection remains a contentious issue across Europe. Many mainstream local and national Government funded programmes are called "Supported Employment" and meet the individual country's criteria or understanding of economic employment rather than the value base of Supported Employment as described above. This can result in job seekers requiring to meet certain criteria to be eligible to access the project; for example, a job seeker may have to agree to work a minimum number of hours. This rejects and places restrictions on many potential job seekers with complex needs. The model of Supported Employment was originally developed to assist people with significant disabilities to access and maintain paid employment. This must always be at the forefront of any Supported Employment development.

The issue of "job readiness" is another factor that many countries impose in current government mainstream programmes; this again is against the principle of Supported Employment of placing the individual in the job – training them on the job – and maintaining and progressing them. The terminology of job readiness has resulted in many disabled people engaging in training to become job ready for most or all of their lives. Professionals working in the field have to signpost individuals seeking work to other alternative programmes of training and/or education when in fact it is work they are seeking. This once again goes against the fundamental principles of Supported Employment.

These programmes by their restraints of "economic employment" terminology often preclude those most in need of the model of Supported Employment. However, it is important to maintain the values and principles of the model and organisations should strive to achieve this.

Due to the above constraints which many Supported Employment professionals work within, key areas of partnership working have been developed and; communication to establish an understanding of Supported Employment within Europe continues.

Apart from these two fundamental issues (zero rejection and job readiness) the main aim of Client Engagement stage is to ensure the individual is well informed of the Supported Employment process and to identify a suitable support organisation.

Supported Employment organisations, when engaging with an individual, should ensure that the information they provide is clear, accurate, easily understood and available in accessible formats (such as large print, Braille, audio, plain language etc). Supported

Employment organisations need to explore alternative methods of engaging with people with disabilities and people from other disadvantaged groups. It is not sufficient to only produce information on services (such as information leaflets) but they also need to follow this up with face to face meetings, meetings with other stakeholders which have been suggested by the individual (such as a family member, health professional, teacher, careers adviser etc) and using new technology. Client engagement should also be held over a period of time.

However, there are often restrictions on the length of time an Employment Support Worker can spend on this stage of the process. Supported Employment organisations need to invest time and energy within the Client Engagement stage which will benefit future stages of the Supported Employment process.

A Person centred approach should be adopted by the Supported Employment organisation to achieve this. This approach will ensure that the individual is involved and in control of the Client Engagement stage and that they are making informed choices and decisions.

Individuals, in deciding which Supported Employment organisation to use, should have a choice of a number of providers. However, in certain geographical areas and in particular rural areas, there may be only one provider which the individual can use. Even if this is the case, the Supported Employment organisation should ensure good practice by adopting a person centred approach and ensuring that information and communication is provided is accessible.

Position of the European Union of Supported Employment

Whilst recognising and welcoming the mainstreaming (Government funded programmes) of Supported Employment across countries in Europe, EUSE has concerns that there is not a unified European approach to the delivery of the model. The European Union of Supported Employment maintains that the model of Supported Employment has the five stages of Engagement, Vocational Profiling, Job Finding, Employer Engagement and On/Off Job Support. Programmes which do not have all of these components or indeed have additional components are not Supported Employment. The naming therefore of many programmes as Supported Employment leads to confusion for all key stakeholders from Government agencies to people with disabilities.

EUSE will strive to ensure that the core values of Supported Employment are maintained. Engagement is the first stage of an important process for an individual and as such should lead to employment.

EUSE recommends a person centred approach to be adopted throughout the 5 Stage

Supported Employment model and that it is particularly important during the Client Engagement stage. Furthermore, Supported Employment organisations need to ensure that information and methods of communication are fully accessible and appropriate for all individuals.

EUSE advocates that individuals should have a choice of Supported Employment organisations to select, however they do recognise that this is not always possible or viable in certain areas. EUSE would recommend that all Supported Employment organisations regardless if they are the only providers should strive towards best practice.

Conclusion

The European Union of Supported Employment believes that there are difficulties within the current "models" of Supported Employment across Europe and as a result will continue to engage and inform key policy makers of the "model". Whilst taking this view EUSE also recognises the need for economic employment to be core to many country's employment action plans. The area for debate and exploration for the foreseeable future lies with EUSE working across Europe to ensure that we balance the need for both economic employment and the rights of the individuals wishing to work, who can work with the correct support.

Further Reading

- EUSE Position Paper "Values, Standards and Principles of Supported Employment"

Paid & Unpaid Work

Introduction

The right for employees to receive payment for employment is valued as a fundamental principle within the European model of Supported Employment.

This paper provides the position of the European Union of Supported Employment regarding issues related to paid and unpaid employment within Supported Employment in Europe.

Background

The European Union of Supported Employment was formed in 1993 and has an agreed definition of Supported Employment which states that:

> "Providing support to people with disabilities or other disadvantaged groups to secure and maintain paid employment in the open labour market"
>
> *European Union of Supported Employment 2005*

Whilst there are slight variations of the definition across the world, there is a general agreement that clients of Supported Employment should be paid the going rate for the job. Despite the universal acknowledgement of paid employment as a fundamental principle, there remain concerns that clients of Supported Employment are not always receiving either the going rate for the job, the national minimum wage (where one exists) or any wages at all.

The Issues

The issues which have arisen around paid and unpaid work stem from the claims by a range of organisations across Europe who state that they are delivering Supported Employment but, because of the lack of a wage payment, may not be fulfilling a basic element of the European Supported Employment model (paid employment in the open labour market).

To clarify this, it is important to state what Supported Employment is generally agreed not to be:

- Work Experience – payment is not received for work carried out
- Voluntary Work – payment is not received for work carried out
- Vocational Training – this is not work

Whilst acknowledging that work experience placements and voluntary work are not in themselves Supported Employment, it is important to note that they may be acceptable methodologies to assist people into employment as a relevant vehicle to build experience, knowledge and the confidence of the individual in a work environment.

Both are also possible ways for employers to get to know future employees and therefore potentially increase their willingness to employ[1].

There is a danger however, that if individuals progress to work experience or voluntary work (i.e. unpaid jobs) they may be seen as 'working' and can be left in that situation without progressing to paid employment. There is evidence that some providers of Supported Employment are not developing job seekers into paid jobs although this may be for valid reasons such as funding, benefit loss or the individual's inability to cope with tasks in a paid capacity.

Position of the European Union of Supported Employment

The model of Supported Employment revolves around support interventions for individuals when they are in paid work. By paid work we mean that:

- Individuals should receive commensurate pay for work carried out – if a country operates a national minimum wage this is the least that should be paid. Terms and conditions of employment (i.e. annual leave, pension schemes, and expenses) should be the same as other employees

The European Union of Supported Employment recognises the need and the value of a range of interventions in supporting individuals with disability and disadvantage into employment. However, paid employment is the recognised right of every individual and this is a fundamental aspect of the European Supported Employment model that should be adopted as the ultimate goal by all Supported Employment service providers.

Unpaid work such as job tasters, work experience placements and voluntary work are in themselves not Supported Employment. However, it is recognised that they can be used

[1] For further details see also EUSE Position Paper "Work experience placements".

as a progression activity towards securing paid work in the open labour market. These activities should also be strictly time-limited and should only be organised when there is a genuine need and is an agreed requirement of the individual job seeker.

Conclusion

The European Union of Supported Employment unequivocally supports paid work as the right of every person who seeks employment within the Supported Employment model. The European Union of Supported Employment recognises other "unpaid" work options as being used in an individual's journeys to paid work but believes that they should be of a temporary nature and serve a specific purpose to improve the skills of the individual ensuring progress and access to paid work.

Further reading:

- EUSE Position Paper "Work experience placements"
- EUSE Position Paper "Values, standards and principles"
- EUSE Position Paper "Working with employers"

Vocational Profile

Introduction

In order to assist people with disabilities or disadvantage to secure and maintain paid employment, a person-centered approach is used within Supported Employment to collect relevant information about the individual's aspirations, interests and abilities for work.

In the Supported Employment process a vocational profile is used to gather this information.

This paper provides the position of the European Union of Supported Employment on the aspects of vocational profiling within Supported Employment.

Background

Supported Employment was developed in the 1970/80's to assist people with disabilities to make their own choices about work and to define what support they need in order to be able to work. Vocational profiling was therefore established as a person centred tool to assist job seekers make informed choices about job preferences and to establish the necessary training strategies for on or off the job support. This differed from the traditional assessment process within rehabilitation programmes where individuals were tested in sheltered surroundings and were presented with different support alternatives by rehabilitation specialists.

In the vocational profiling process today, job seekers are supported to make informed and realistic choices about work and future career development.

The Issues

The vocational profile occurs at the second stage of the 5-stage Supported Employment process[1] . It is a tool that provides a structured and goal orientated approach towards securing and maintaining employment in the open labour market within a person centred approach. The objective is to achieve the best possible match between the job seekers' skills and support needs and the requirements of the job/employer; this is called the job match.

[1] For a description of the 5 stages see also EUSE (2005): European Union for Supported Employment – Information Booklet and Quality Standards

Vocational profiling in Supported Employment is not about service providers collecting information about the job seeker and then making decisions on their behalf. Vocational profiling is a tool that service providers may use to facilitate the process so that the job seeker is able to make personal and informed choices about jobs and careers.

Vocational profiling aims to develop the persons' own awareness and understanding of opportunities and obstacles in the labour market. There is evidence that vocational profiling is one of the most important success factors for sustainable integration into the labour market [2].

Work experience placements and job tasters are possible tools to be utilised in the vocational profiling process. The aim of the placements should always be clearly defined as part of the individual planning process and should be strictly time limited. Placements should always be a means to develop skills and opportunities for work and should not be seen as aims in themselves. The process should always lead to a support strategy that is owned and understood by the candidates, regardless of their disability and disadvantage.

There are occasions whereby little effort is made in supporting the job seeker to determine their career choice; instant solutions and instant job hunting are often prescribed as the best tools to find employment and to ensure a job match. However experience has shown that failure to plan and engage with job seekers fully, usually leads to unsuccessful job matching and job outcomes.

Position of the European Union of Supported Employment

In the person centred approach, the vocational profile is an individual, flexible and live plan with detailed information of the job seekers' abilities, motivation, skills and knowledge. The plan should also clearly define the support and resources that are required to meet the individuals' support needs.

Vocational profiling is a collaborative process between the job seeker and the service provider. It is important that the job seeker maintains ownership of the whole process (empowerment). Vocational profiling must ensure that the job seeker gains an insight and an understanding of their own career opportunities based on their interests and abilities. It is equally important that job seekers are able to identify what their individual support needs are and also to determine which support strategies will be effective and appropriate.

[2] Doose, Stefan (2007): Unterstützte Beschäftigung – Berufliche Integration auf lange Sicht, p. 329-334. Lebenshilfe-Verlag, Marburg.

The Employment Support Worker has the main responsibility for establishing good working relationships with the job seeker in the vocational profiling process while at the same time keeping the necessary professional distance. It is important to define who is responsible for the different tasks in the process and also to identify important stakeholders in the job seekers' professional and private network. The responsibility for the documenting and completion of the vocational profiling process lies with the Employment Support Worker.

The vocational profile should conclude with a working action plan specifying the agreed activities, outcomes, aims and objectives and who is responsible.

Conclusion

Vocational profiling differs from traditional assessment procedures in that it is a person centred process owned by the candidate and should contribute to their employment choice and choice of support strategies in terms of getting and maintaining jobs in the open labour market. The vocational profile is a crucially important stage in the Supported Employment process.

Further Reading

- EUSE Position Paper "Values Standards and Principles of Supported Employment"
- EUSE Position Paper "Work Experience Placements"

Work Experience Placements

Introduction

The concept of work experience placements for people with disabilities as a tool to help individuals find and maintain paid employment in the open labour market is an issue of much discussion in Supported Employment.

This paper provides the position of the European Union of Supported Employment with regards to the issues related to work experience placements within Supported Employment.

Background

Supported Employment was developed partly to prevent people with learning difficulties being stuck in sheltered workshops or in unpaid work. The origins of Supported Employment began with the recognition that the 'train then place' methods contributed little to the integration of people with disability into ordinary working life. The development of the 'place-train-maintain' strategy has worked well and the characteristics of natural supports, increased user participation and partnership working with key stakeholders are now common-place in Supported Employment.

The EUSE definition of Supported Employment includes the term "to secure paid employment in the open labour market". This was to signify that Supported Employment meant real jobs for real pay.

The organising of a work experience placement, therefore, could appear to contradict the EUSE definition as such a placement is usually without pay. Moreover, from a traditional Supported Employment perspective, the aim is to 'place-train-maintain'. This would assume that during the 'place-train-maintain' activity that the job seeker is in receipt of wages but evidence has shown that this is rarely the case.

The definition and components of a work experience placement is an area that has not been addressed and yet the use of work experience placements are common-place. This has led to a wide disparity of service provision and a range of views on the provision of work experience placements within Supported Employment.

The Issues

The majority of job seekers who access Supported Employment services have not been in employment for long periods of time or have not had any employment opportunities since leaving school or education and are unsure of their own job preferences, strengths and weaknesses. Supported Employment providers find that a work experience placement is an excellent tool to identify a job seekers' support needs as well as giving them a taste of real work. Moreover, they provide an opportunity for a job seeker to increase their choices by experiencing different environments and situations.

Research indicates that the majority of Supported Employment agencies use work experience placements as a method to achieve a paid job in the open labour market[1]. However, there are signs that work experience placements are lasting increasingly longer, sometimes in excess of six months; it may be viewed that these placements are in actual fact voluntary jobs and are not being used as a progression tool or a stepping stone to paid employment. There is also a lack of clarity of the difference between a job taster and a work experience placement; this could be simply down to different providers using different terminologies, although a job taster was often seen as an activity that only needed to last from a few hours to a few days to enable a job seeker to sample a particular job.

Moreover, as Supported Employment has expanded into other client groups, then the 'place - train - maintain' concept remains an effective tool but cannot be considered as the only tool to support job seekers with a disability or disadvantage into paid employment. Supported Employment has developed significantly in Europe over the last ten years and the emphasis is no longer solely on individuals with learning disabilities.

There are views that work experience placements have no place in Supported Employment because people with disabilities should be trained in the workplace as a paid employee. There are also claims that disabled people in work experience placements are being exploited as they are 'working' but not being paid. These arguments are of course valid, but only to a point.

There is no doubt that work experience placements are a useful and effective activity in the Supported Employment process and they are directly and indirectly instrumental in assisting job seekers securing paid work in the open labour market. If an individual has been out of work for a long period or has never been in employment then they need to determine their job preferences and their own strengths and weaknesses. It is not necessary for people to undertake lengthy training programmes to discover this and a work experience placement will help an individual to identify likes and dislikes within a particular workplace

[1] Spjelkavik/Evans (2007): Impressions of Supported Employment – A study of some European Supported Employment Services and their activities; p. 16. Work Research Institute, Oslo.

environment. A work experience placement may give the individual something to add to their application form, CV and an area to discuss at a job interview, thus improving their employment prospects as well as boosting confidence and self esteem. It could give them an insight into what real employment is like and help them assess their own skills and stamina. A work experience placement may develop new skills and build on existing ones; it could also provide an up to date employment reference. There may be the opportunity for the employer to consider employing the individual on a more permanent basis especially as the job seeker can demonstrate their own skills, abilities and motivation whilst undertaking a work experience placement.

The main issue appears to have shifted to a point where it is no longer about 'should we organise work experience placements?' instead the issue has moved on to 'how should we define and organise work experience placements?' There is no point in maintaining the traditional line that there is no place for work experience placements in Supported Employment when such a large majority of service providers throughout Europe use them to assist and support job seekers into employment. We must also guard against the provision of systematic and compulsory work experience placements especially when they do not result in the job seeker achieving paid employment.

Position of the European Union of Supported Employment

The European Union of Supported Employment (EUSE) recognises and acknowledges that work experience placements are an integral part of the 5 - stage process and are likely to take place at stage 2 (vocational profiling) or stage 3 (job finding)[2]. However, in line with the values and principles of Supported Employment, a person-centred approach must be adopted and a work experience placement should only be organised when there is a genuine requirement for it to occur. A work experience placement is an activity to assist the Supported Employment process and should be considered to assist job seekers to identify their job preferences, strengths, weaknesses, and support needs.

A work experience placement should be time-limited to avoid exploitation of the job seeker and EUSE would recommend that 8 -12 weeks is a sufficient time period to meet the objectives of the placement. A placement could be for any amount of hours per week but consideration should be given for it to be part-time hours to enable the job seeker to also continue with other elements of the Supported Employment process. Each placement should be risk assessed and be organised in a work place setting (preferably in the open labour market) or organisation or employment sector of the job seeker's choice.

[2] For more information on the 5 stage Supported Employment process see EUSE (2005): European Union of Supported Employment – Information Booklet and Quality Standards.

There must be an agreement by both the job seeker and the employer regarding the terms and conditions of the work experience placement; this agreement should cover issues such as placement objective, support to be provided, duties to be undertaken, limitations, insurance cover, reporting procedures and the evaluation process. The placement should be monitored and supported in the same way as a supported job.

A job taster should be organised in much of the same manner as that of a work experience placement. The main difference is that a job taster would not be expected to last for more than one week and should mainly be used for job seekers to sample different types of work for a short period of time.

The skills and knowledge gained during the work experience should be used to enhance the job finding process. Communications between the employer and the job seeker by the Supported Employment agency should be conducted in a professional manner which respects the dignity of both the job seeker and the employer and maintains the quality standards expected of Supported Employment.

Conclusion

Work experience placements should be viewed as a means to an end and not as the end result. They should be organised, developed and monitored within the traditional values and principles of Supported Employment and should only be undertaken when there is a genuine need to do so.

Further Reading

- EUSE Position Paper "Values, Standards and Principles of Supported Employment"
- EUSE Position Paper "Paid and Unpaid Work"

Job Finding

Introduction

Within the Supported Employment process, job finding is the stage that connects the job seeker with potential employers[1]. Job seekers' skills and abilities are viewed in terms of their relevance and requirement in the open labour market and therefore there is a matching of the job seekers' employment needs with those of the employers' needs.

This paper provides the position of the European Union of Supported Employment on the critical and challenging phase of job finding.

Background

From its origins, Supported Employment has focussed mainly on the job requirements of the job seekers. However more recently, it has been recognised that an awareness of the employment and recruitment needs of employers is essential for securing employment outcomes.

As Supported Employment has developed and expanded to encompass a wide range of job seekers then the job finding phase also needs to develop to continue to meet the employment needs of the relevant job seeker groups.

It is recognised and acknowledged by Supported Employment service providers that they must continue to develop their skills and methodologies in engaging with employers so as to be able to identify suitable job vacancies and to support their job seekers in all aspects of job finding.

The Issues

Supported Employment has its initial engagement with employers at stage 3 (Job Finding) of the process, with the primary focus on the needs of the job seeker. However, there is growing opinion that Supported Employment providers must also address the needs of employers. In order for the Supported Employment process to work, it must be advantageous for both the job seeker and the employer.

[1] For further information on the 5 stages of the Supported Employment process see also EUSE (2005): European Union of Supported Employment – Information Booklet and Quality Standards

One job finding method that has been developed by Supported Employment providers over the years is that of 'job carving'[2]; this is where a job is created by identifying parts of a job or tasks that the employer needs completing and can be completed by the job seeker. It can take imagination and creativity on the behalf of both the employer and the Employment Support Worker, but in many cases it can lead to a successful employment outcome.

Whilst there are obvious merits in this approach there can be a danger that such created jobs may be short term and have no progression prospects or career development opportunities for the employee. Moreover, this method may be extremely useful for some client groups such as people with learning disabilities but may not be wholly appropriate for other client groups who have no intellectual impairments. There are obvious merits in this job approach but it is important always to think about possibilities for career development and progression opportunities. Consideration should be given to the fact that many job seekers/employees have employment skills or professional training/education that makes them capable of more complicated jobs.

It is often said that one of the strengths of Supported Employment is the belief that one size does not fit all and therefore this view should also prevail within the job finding process. It is common in Supported Employment to secure jobs by mostly informal methods such as job carving, word of mouth, informal contacts and extending work experience placements. Of course, if these approaches work for the job seeker then all is well and good. However, as Supported Employment expands then there is a general concern amongst service providers that an increased knowledge of the formal methods of job finding must also be developed. The formal methods would include job application forms, job seekers having access to their own curriculum vitae and job interview techniques training. Awareness by Supported Employment providers of both the formal and the informal job finding approaches could lead to improved informed choices and self determination of job seekers and increased competencies of service providers in addressing the needs of employers.

There are issues regarding who should carry out the job finding process. Some projects employ a job finder, others believe the Employment Support Worker should perform job finding and some enable the individual job seeker to perform job finding activities. It is likely that all Supported Employment providers will claim to fully include the wishes of the job seeker but there is evidence that the job seekers' employment expectations only stretch to the limit of the skills of the Supported Employment personnel. The decision of who does the job finding may be influenced by financial or staffing constraints and whilst there are merits in all of the approaches, it appears that the success of whichever approach is adopted is dependent on the skills of the staff/job seeker concerned[3].

[2] Also often referred to as Job Creation

[3] Spjelkavik/Evans (2007): Impressions of Supported Employment – A study of some European Supported Employment Services and their activities; p. 34f. Work Research Institute, Oslo.

Moreover, when we apply the Supported Employment method of finding a job for an individual, we take a different approach than if we were trying to find an individual for a job. It is acknowledged that the key is finding the correct job match, and the skills and training required to ensure this match are critical.

It is recognised in many, if not all European countries, that the job finding phase is an area where Supported Employment needs to improve and make more progress.

In fairness to many Supported Employment providers it can be difficult to deliver effective job finding when there is so little available and reliable training in this area.

Position of the European Union of Supported Employment

The European Union of Supported Employment acknowledges the critical part that job finding plays in the Supported Employment process, and it is therefore essential that job finding is addressed in a professional and effective manner. In order for the successful 'job matching' to be achieved, the job finding activity must firstly be conducted. This can only be carried out if the Employment Support Worker has gathered extensive and detailed information about the labour market in their area, coupled with their knowledge of each of the employers doing business in the locality.

During Stage 2 (Vocational Profiling), Employment Support Workers are committed to finding out as much information as is possible about the job seeker[4]. It is equally important that the same commitment is given to researching potential employers. If, on completion of the research into one employer, it is indicated that they are not suitable for the current job seeker, the time and effort has not been wasted as the research may be of benefit to other job seekers.

The lack of systematic and effective training is of concern to the European Union of Supported Employment, and as this is both critical and challenging, this gap must be dealt with so as to improve the employment outcome success rate of Supported Employment. In recent years, the EUSE conferences that are held biennially endeavour to have workshops and speakers on job finding and marketing techniques.

The European Union of Supported Employment also acknowledges that the job seeker must play a role in the job finding process. Service providers can empower the job seekers to identify their own job preferences and this in turn should increase the chances of the job match being successful. Through playing an active role in the process, the job seeker should be

[4] See also EUSE Position Paper "Vocational Profiling"

encouraged to see themselves as someone who can be of benefit to a suitable employer. Their skills and abilities are needed and appreciated, and their role in society can be greatly enhanced through their participation in the open labour market.

When listings of potential employers are being compiled, both job seeker and the Employment Support Worker must be involved, and the job seeker should be encouraged to identify any contacts that they may have established. When decisions are made in relation to which employers are to be targeted, the details of the initial approach should be agreed and carried out in accordance with the agreement and permission of the job seeker.

The materials that are used to communicate the benefits of Supported Employment need to reflect the fact that we are dealing with two distinct customers – job seekers and employers. Marketing and promotional materials should be of a high standard that demonstrates the professionalism of the service being provided.

The use of informal and formal job finding techniques are strongly advised by the European Union of Supported Employment as this allows the service provider to select the most appropriate approaches to use in each situation.

Conclusion

In the past, the emphasis has been primarily focused on finding out the needs and skills of the job seeker. It should be recognised that Supported Employment service providers must carry out more research into the needs of employers and must develop links and better ways to approach them. Creativity and flexibility are needed when we are deciding how to carry out our job searches, and it is through good quality training that we can improve our techniques when it comes to job finding.

Further reading:

- EUSE Position Paper "Working with Employers"
- EUSE Position Paper "Supported Employment for Employers"
- EUSE Position Paper "Career Development and Progression"

Working with Employers

Introduction

In order for Supported Employment to be effective, it is essential that Supported Employment service providers work with both job seekers (clients) and employers. Service providers focus on identifying the skills and abilities of job seekers, and matching these capabilities with the needs of employers.

This paper provides the position of the European Union of Supported Employment on the Supported Employment aspects of Working with Employers.

Background

Supported Employment was developed in the 1970/80's to assist people with learning disabilities to access paid jobs in the open labour market. Since the establishment of the European Union of Supported Employment (EUSE) in 1993, the Supported Employment sector has grown quickly throughout Europe. The target client groups have expanded to encompass all forms of disability and other disadvantaged groups and therefore so must our awareness of working with employers.

From its origins, Supported Employment has focused mainly on the support needs of the job seekers, however more recently it has been recognised that an awareness of the support needs of employers is essential for securing employment outcomes. It is recognised and acknowledged by Supported Employment service providers that they must continue to develop and improve their skills and methodologies in engaging with employers.

The Issues

Supported Employment mainly engages with employers at stage 3 (Job Finding), stage 4 (Employer Engagement) and stage 5 (On/Off Job Support) of the Supported Employment process[1]. There is evidence to indicate that Supported Employment providers spend considerable time during Vocational Profiling (stage 2) to identify the needs of the job

[1] For more information on the 5 stages of the Supported Employment process see also EUSE (2005): European Union of Supported Employment – Information Booklet and Quality Standards

seeker; however there is little evidence to suggest that the same energy and time is applied to understanding and addressing the needs of the employer. Given that the employer has the right to decide on recruitment and selection, then recognition that the employer should be seen as an equal customer is justified. Moreover, there is a need for the service providers, and indeed the job seekers, to develop their awareness of labour market needs, both now and in relation to predicting the future trends.

Supported Employment services mainly contact employers with a view to job finding and identifying suitable work placements. However, service providers should be aware that employers may have additional needs other than simply the recruitment of labour resources. From a Supported Employment point of view those needs could include disability awareness training, knowledge of government support/funding programmes and practical solutions to health, safety and disability employment issues.

Moreover, employers often require assistance with developing and introducing good practice and employment policies concerning employees and applicants with disabilities. Through using the vehicle of a Supported Employment service, employers can acknowledge and demonstrate their Corporate Social Responsibility and this in turn can lead to a more inclusive society.

There is evidence to indicate that throughout Europe there is a wide disparity in the levels of training being provided to staff in relation to Supported Employment as a whole[2]. Some European countries have training and diplomas in Supported Employment whilst other countries have very little on offer to new and existing Supported Employment staff. In particular, there is a fragmented approach to training in relation to job finding, marketing techniques, employment and disability legislation and general employment engagement skills. The lack of available training in these specific areas is likely to have an adverse effect on contact with employers in both the public and private sectors. A critical aspect of Supported Employment and the key to a successful outcome is the ability to match the needs of the employer with the skills of the potential employee. When the match is done correctly it leads to a "win-win" situation where both the employer and the new employee achieve their objectives.

Working with employers is not always about face to face meetings. Marketing materials can play an influential role in promoting Supported Employment services in a professional manner. Experience has shown that there is a wide range of materials currently being used, and that the standard of this material varies considerably. Marketing and promotional materials can be expensive to produce but they can also create a positive impact with prospective employers if produced professionally.

[2] Evans, M./ Spjelkavik, O. (2007): Impression of Supported Employment – A study of some European Supported Employment Services and their activities. Work Research Institute, Oslo.

Position of the European Union of Supported Employment

The European Union of Supported Employment recognises and acknowledges that employers play a crucial role in Supported Employment. It is therefore essential that employers are treated in a professional and efficient manner throughout the Supported Employment process. A structured approach can lead to more success in terms of matching the abilities of people with disabilities to the needs of employers. As a service provider, Supported Employment personnel must have a good knowledge of the local labour market and employment related issues that face employers and be able to demonstrate this knowledge as an indication of the expertise available to employers from service providers. Additionally, Supported Employment personnel need to take an interest in the business of the employers, understanding their sometimes unique needs in terms of staffing and training. This will lead to the establishment of strong relationships, mutual trust and respect, and will allow for the opportunity to demonstrate the many benefits for employers of engaging with service providers.

When we are dealing with employers we must recognise that they are in business primarily to make a profit. We should at all times demonstrate that we can help them to achieve this goal through the recruitment of people from our services. It is not sufficient for Supported Employment to rely on the fact that 'it is the right thing to do' from a social viewpoint, and providers should also be able to demonstrate that it is the right thing to do from a business case viewpoint.

The materials that are used to communicate the benefits of Supported Employment need to reflect the fact that we are dealing with two distinct customers – clients and employers. Marketing and promotional materials should be of a high standard that demonstrates the professionalism of the service being provided.

The use of informal and formal job finding techniques are strongly advised by the European Union of Supported Employment as this allows the service provider to select the most appropriate approaches to use in each situation.

Conclusion

There is a general recognition and acceptance within Supported Employment in Europe that service providers need to do more to recognise the needs of employers and develop closer working links with employers. Without employers there are no employment outcomes and we must be aware that approaches to employers should be tailored to match the situation and circumstances (one size does not fit all). It is through training, research and continuous development that success can be achieved for all stakeholders through working effectively and efficiently with employers.

Further Reading

- EUSE Position Paper "Supported Employment for Employers"
- EUSE Position Paper " Job Finding"
- EUSE Position Paper "On and Off Job Support"

On & Off Job Support

Introduction

The provision of good support on and off the job is crucial for many people with disabilities and other disadvantaged groups to obtain and maintain paid employment in the open labour market. On and off job support is stage 5 in the five-stage-process of Supported Employment [1]. Effective support on and/or off the job is the core element of Supported Employment which makes it different from traditional placement services.

This paper provides the position of the European Union of Supported Employment on the important role of job support.

Background

Supported Employment began with the recognition that the 'train then place' methods contributed little to the integration of people with a learning disability into ordinary working life. The development of the 'place-train-maintain' strategy brought a new focus to support training in the real context of a company with an Employment Support Worker (job coach) instead of in a rehabilitation facility. The early practise was to place and train the individual through systematic training procedures with sometimes little attention to the company culture and the natural supports available on the work site from co-workers.

As Supported Employment has developed and expanded to encompass a wide range of job seekers, then job support also needs to develop to continue to meet the employment needs of the relevant job seeker groups.

The Supported Employment process today should provide a variety of support on and off the job that can be tailored to the individual employees with disabilities, the co-workers and the company. The employee is supported to participate in all regular employee introduction, probation, performance and development procedures. Job support nowadays is more than direct training in the workplace. Job support supports the co-workers to train and support the new employee as much as possible, the company to make company procedures accessible for persons with disabilities and the employee to take over a new professional role and to develop his or her potential.

[1] For more information on the 5 stage Supported Employment process see also EUSE (2005): European Union of Supported Employment – Information Booklet and Quality Standards

The Issues

Despite the fact that individualised job support is the key for many persons with disabilities to learn and maintain a job in the open labour market, funding of job support is often very limited. In many countries it is not possible to get more intensive job support and usually the job support is time limited. The amount of job support needed is often higher at the beginning of a new job and can be systematically faded over time, but ongoing support should be available whenever the employee or the employer needs it, as it is proven that this is one success factor in the whole process without which the person is at risk of losing the job again[2]. Often it is very difficult to get funding for the necessary long-term job support in the open labour market whilst, on the other hand, lifelong support in a sheltered workshop is financed without problems. The ongoing support on the job site is often limited to crisis intervention and is not designed to support the employee to participate in training and career development opportunities[3].

The kind of job support employees with disabilities, co-workers and companies need to work successfully varies in regard to the individuals, the target group and the company culture. As Supported Employment has expanded to encompass a wide range of job seekers with disabilities, then the provision of on and off the job support also needs to develop to continue to meet the employment needs of both the individual and the employer. It is important to note that effective job support is more than simple visits to the job site and includes instrumental, informative, emotional and feedback support. Some employees require more support to learn a new task in the company and prefer the attendance of an Employment Support Worker regularly on the job site, whilst others have a high qualification but need support to take over a new professional role and to deal with problems with co-workers and who prefer to have employment support outside the work place.

Moreover, the amount of support available on the work site varies from company to company. Job support addresses the employer's needs as well as the needs of the employee with a disability, which sometimes results in goal conflicts[4] . It is a balance to recognise the company requirements and to give guidance for adaptations and changes that facilitate the successful employment of people with different abilities.

[2] Doose, S. (2007): Unterstützte Beschäftigung – Berufliche Integration auf lange Sicht. Lebenshilfe Verlag, Marburg und Corden, A./Thornton, P. (2002): Employment Programmes for Disabled People – Lessons from research evaluations. Department for Work and Pensions In-house Report, Social Research Branch, Department for Work and Pensions, London.

[3] See also EUSE Position Paper "Career Development and Progression"

[4] See also EUSE Position Paper "Working with Employers"

The appearance of an Employment Support Worker on the job site can be confusing for co-workers and stigmatising for the employee with disability. Some employees, e.g. with mental health problems or former drug abuse do not want to disclose their problems to the employer and co-workers. The available opportunities for natural support by co-workers, family members and peers are on the one hand often not systematically used, whilst on the other hand it is difficult to rely solely on natural supports and sometimes too much may be expected of co-workers.

The support available is often strictly limited to work related issues. However, an employee's stability in the workplace is determined by a wide range of factors that also may need to be addressed by the Employment Support Worker in cooperation with other partners.

Position of the European Union of Supported Employment

The core element of Supported Employment is to provide and facilitate all the different supports on and off the job to help the employee to become and remain a valued worker. Job coaching and employment support is a professional strategy targeted to the employee, the co-workers and the employer. It is important to make the role of an Employment Support Worker very clear and transparent for all parties involved. Job support is an interactive process supporting the employee to successfully take over new roles and to foster his or her professional and personal development. Job support should help the company to accommodate diversity in the work place and to successfully include people with different abilities and support needs. Job supports and assistive technologies used should be discreet and fit into the company culture and natural supports by co-workers need to be encouraged and facilitated.

A person centred plan should orchestrate the different on and off the job community supports. An accessible action plan, based on the vocational profile of the person and the analysis of the work site and the company culture prepared in the previous stages of the Supported Employment process, should guide training and support needs. The employee's training and support must be appropriate and encourage workplace independence and progression.

The Supported Employment provider should work with the employee and the employer to determine preferred training and learning approaches, adaptations and support strategies which meet the individual needs and fit into the company culture. Co-workers and employers should be actively involved in this process and receive the necessary guidance to successfully include the new employee. A co-worker can act as mentor for the new employee to support him or her in the company and to act as a contact person for the Employment Support Worker.

The employee should receive personal and systematic support to learn and perform job tasks and to integrate successfully into the work team. The employee should be supported to participate in all 'typical' employee introduction, probation, performance and career development procedures. Job modifications, aids and adaptations can be effective tools to accommodate the work site making it as accessible as is possible for the employee. Employment Support Workers should therefore maintain a general awareness of such assistive technology and potential sources of funding for such modifications or specialist equipment.

Support and training should be flexible and available to develop relationships both in and outside the workplace including participation in workplace social events and activities with co-workers in and outside work.

It is important to both seek and provide regular feedback amongst all involved partners. The Employment Support Worker should be able to provide mediation between the employee, co-workers and the employer. The Employment Support Worker must react quickly in case of difficulties and should support all involved parties to solve problems as early as possible. Regular contact and a trustworthy personal relationship with the employee, co-workers and the employer is the basis for the successful support of an Employment Support Worker.

Employees should be supported to negotiate terms and conditions of employment according to individual needs, a regular work contract and opportunities for further training and career advancement. The employee should be offered support to participate in internal and external training and career development opportunities. Support and assistance should also be available to the employee should they want to move to a better position in the company or to change the job.

Support for the employee and the company should be provided both as intensively and for as long as is necessary. The support needs of employees with disabilities do not always disappear through their inclusion in a company. After intensive on or off the job support is no longer required, the Employment Support Worker should establish a follow-up system with the employer and the employee. The Employment Support Worker should stay in contact with the employee and the employer as this is an effective crisis prevention method and also provides the opportunity to develop new jobs based on good communications and a healthy working partnership. The employee and the employer should be able to contact the Supported Employment agency whenever needed.

Conclusion

Good support on and off the job is the core element of Supported Employment, which makes it a successful method to ensure people with disabilities obtain and maintain paid employment in the open labour market. Research has proven that supported work sites are more stable than unsupported work sites for people with disabilities. Despite this fact, the necessary funding for longer term and community based support is very limited or not available in many countries in Europe and must be enhanced in order to make full use of the positive effects of on/off the job support.

Further Reading

- EUSE Position Paper "Working with Employers"
- EUSE Position Paper "Values, Standards and Principles of Supported Employment"
- EUSE Position Paper "Career Development and Progression"

Career Development and Progression

Introduction

Supported Employment recognises that securing a job is not an end of an individual's development but a stage in an on-going process. Few of us gain a job and expect to remain in that job for life. The changing labour market demands versatility and continued skills development can give a worker an advantage within a changing economy. Most people want to develop their skills and experience because it opens up new career possibilities and helps to build self confidence, status and independence.

Background

The European model of Supported Employment provides the opportunity for persons with disabilities to access paid work in the labour market. Stage 5 of the Supported Employment process (On and Off the Job Support) acknowledges the need to provide on-going support to employees to not only facilitate the transition into employment but to also identify opportunities for personal career development[1] . The aim of individual career development and progression is therefore not only to consolidate the sustainability of an existing job, but to open up new career possibilities within a dynamic labour market.

Additionally, the Supported Employment model should ensure that the employee becomes less reliant on service support through the development of functional, social and work-place independence. Support is also given to assist employees gain recognition of the development of soft skills and accreditation of vocational skills.

The Issues

The economy and labour markets are continually changing as technology and demographic changes impact on the nature of local employment opportunities. There is a growing recognition that skills and employment are intrinsically linked and Government policies increasingly reflect this. No job is now regarded as secure for life and employees who continually develop their skills, knowledge and expertise are in a much stronger position

[1] For further information on the 5 stages of the Supported Employment process see also EUSE (2005): European Union of Supported Employment – Information Booklet and Quality Standards

to retain their jobs or have the flexibility to change career in response to personal aspirations or a changing economy.

People with disabilities tend to have lower skills levels than the average population and are therefore more vulnerable to economic change. They are over-represented in entry level jobs and often experience difficulties in progressing into the more skilled jobs that are being created within a knowledge based economy[2] . Often, the individual's career path may involve a sideways move rather than to a more skilled job.

It is quite common in Supported Employment that employees with a disability are no longer on the Supported Employment caseload once they have settled into their job. It could be argued that there is a contradiction within the process in the sense that on one hand Supported Employment is about supporting a person into a job then 'fading' the support to enable the employee to become an integrated member of the company, whereas, on the other hand, it is often considered that support should be for life and there is a need for further interventions for the employee to progress or develop their career. There are of course merits on both sides, but it is clear that Supported Employment services are limited and struggle to cope with existing demand without the added pressures of supporting an individual to change their job as part of a career process.

Many people with a disability will not have worked for many years, if at all, and will not have had an opportunity to gain or update qualifications. As well as qualifications, employers have consistently stressed the need for softer skills such as teamwork, communication and interpersonal skills, reliability and problem solving abilities.

Traditionally, Supported Employment services have had a focus on securing employment and supporting the training of a person to complete the tasks and duties required in a role. Support is often faded once the worker has demonstrated the ability to complete the tasks and ongoing skills development can then be seen as the responsibility of the employer. Not all employers are proactive in identifying and meeting the skills needs of their employees and it can become the responsibility of the employee to seek learning opportunities either within or outside the workplace. The development of softer skills is sometimes supported by an appraisal process but is often neglected by the employer.

The development of soft skills or the accreditation of vocational qualifications can help to build a sense of self worth and support job retention where an employee works on a long term basis for the same employer. It may open up opportunities for promotion and could lead to less reliance on external support thereby reducing stigma. The nature of support could come from an educational rather than social care perspective.

[2] Shima/Zólyomi/Zaidi (2008): The Labour Market Situation of People with disabilities in EU 25, European Center for Social Welfare Policy and Research, Vienna.

Often, the development of softer skills will have the additional benefit of supporting the worker's social independence and create wider opportunities for independent living. This can assist with empowering the individual and developing personal aspirations.

The potential for progression and career development can also be influenced by the local labour market and the availability of appropriate jobs that match the individual job seekers'/ employees' employment interests and aspirations.

Position of the European Union of Supported Employment

Career development should play an important role in Supported Employment during and beyond the process[3] . During the process, on-the-job support should be identifying opportunities for career progression and career development and enhancement opportunities should be explored. The employees have to be supported to consider internal and external career development and to make an informed choice on what is available and possible. Career development activities should also reflect the local and regional employment trends and needs of the labour market[4].

Most often resources are limited and personal career development aspects have to be neglected during the Supported Employment process in favour of supporting job seekers to gain and employees to maintain paid work in the labour market. The European Union of Supported Employment acknowledges that on-going career support during and beyond the Supported Employment process is also a funding issue. EUSE sees career development and progression as an important part of the Supported Employment process which has to be appropriately resourced.

There is also a need for the Supported Employment service to find the balance between securing jobs for new job seekers and providing long term support for existing employees. Supported Employment must also recognise that not all employees want change and many are content with their existing job and the terms and conditions of that job. This is especially true where the Supported Employment provider has found a suitable job match for their employee and has ensured that the employee made informed choices regarding their employment preferences. There is an increasing focus by governments on raising the minimum level of basic skills and vocational qualifications and funding is often available to support work-based learning. Supported Employment can play a key part in this process by ensuring that workers with disabilities are supported to access and maintain

[3] See also EUSE Position Paper "On and Off the Job Support"

[4] See also EUSE Quality Standards in EUSE (2005): European Union of Supported Employment – Information Booklet and Quality Standards

these learning opportunities. This should be linked to a notion of long term personal planning through individual development plans and support to access appropriate advice and learning opportunities.

Workplace appraisal systems can be used as a focus for developing personal action plans and individuals can be supported to access state funded learning, but a key task for Supported Employment services will be to support personal motivation and aspirations.

Conclusion

Supported Employment services should see career development and progression as an integral part of the Supported Employment process and seek to resource this activity appropriately. It is important to work in partnership with customers, employers and educational services to broker learning opportunities that help to empower individuals so that they can take advantage of wider vocational and social opportunities through higher personal aspirations. It is acknowledged by EUSE that is extremely difficult to establish a balance between using limited resources to secure employment opportunities for job seekers against using the same limited resources to focus on employees to progress or change their job to advance their career.

Further Reading

- EUSE Position Paper "Values, Standards and Principles of Supported Employment"
- EUSE Position Paper "On and Off the Job Support"

Supported Employment for Key Policy Makers

Introduction

The key challenges of national and European policies relating to people with disabilities are low employment rates, high unemployment rates and a rather high dependency on welfare benefits. For people with disabilities it is often hard to enter the labour market where they are at higher risk of being ousted from it easily. The future challenge is to promote policies which are able to encourage and empower people with disabilities to enter or remain in the open labour market.

This paper provides the position of the European Union for Supported Employment on the most important aspects of Supported Employment, a methodology that has proven successful in promoting and increasing the labour market participation of people with disabilities. This paper explains the approach, methods and effects of Supported Employment as a proactive policy to further employment and social inclusion of people with disabilities.

Background

The United Nations Convention on the rights of persons with disabilities, which was adopted by the United Nations General Assembly on 13 December 2006, is a legally binding treaty and national legislation has therefore to refer to it. States have to ensure legal consistency with the principles of the Convention, such as the obligation to ensure participation of persons with disabilities in social, political and cultural life – and their equal right to work and gain a living.

Labour market participation of people with disabilities is also a key issue in the European Commission Disability Action Plan for 2008 and 2009 and EU directives and the European Disability Strategy also refer explicitly to increased employment amongst people with disabilities and the elimination of discrimination. Moreover, the Common Principles of Flexicurity endorsed by the European Council on 14 December 2007 constitute the common framework for the integration of Flexicurity strategies in the EU Member States[1] .

[1] European Commission (2007): COM(2007) 359 final - Towards Common Principles of Flexicurity: More and better jobs through flexibility and security. European Commission, Brussels.

Therefore, key policy makers are more than ever challenged to implement legislative measures and labour market policies which mirror these developments.

The Issues

Supported Employment is a method of working with people with disabilities and other disadvantaged groups to access and maintain employment through providing appropriate and on-going support. Therefore, it is an individual-orientated method to promote labour market participation of this target group. Supported Employment addresses all people with disabilities, regardless of their handicap. The concept was developed in the 1970's in North America and found its way to Europe in the 1980's. This individual based working method is defined by a 5 stage process following the principle of "place-train-maintain" which has been acknowledged as a model of good practice during the last two decades[2]:

1. Client Engagement: Providing all information to enable the individual to make an informed decision as to whether or not they wish to use supported employment
2. Vocational Profiling: Helping individuals to identify their skills and preferences for work
3. Job Finding: Searching for a job considering the needs of all parties involved
4. Employer Engagement: Working with employers and job seekers to discuss several areas including terms and conditions of employment, required skills, support needed from service providers and/or available at the work place, etc.
5. On/Off Job Support[3]: Support for the client and the employer according to their needs

Methods and activities that are, by definition, not seen as part of Supported Employment include; sheltered workshops, voluntary work and vocational training[4]. The approaches and the extent to which the service providers are able to put the ideal of Supported Employment into practice vary throughout Europe but they all commit to the three following main principles of Supported Employment:

1. Paid Work - Individuals should receive commensurate pay for work carried out – if a country operates a national minimum wage then the individual must be paid at least this rate or the going rate for the job
2. Open Labour Market – People with disabilities should be regular employees with the same wages, terms and conditions as other employees who are employed in businesses/ organisations within the public, private or voluntary sectors

[2] European Union of Supported Employment – Information Booklet and Quality Standards (2005)

[3] See also the respective EUSE Position Papers on each of the 5 stages for further details

[4] See also the EUSE Position Paper on Values and Standards of Supported Employment.

1. Ongoing Support - This refers to job support in its widest concept whilst in paid employment. Support is individualised and is on a needs basis for both the employee and the employer.

In terms of disability policies related to labour market participation of people with disability and Supported Employment services, the following areas of discussion can be identified:

- Despite the growth in the provision of Supported Employment during the last two decades it is not delivering its full potential in many countries. Labour market participation of people with disabilities is still unsatisfactory, as higher non-employment rates and lower labour earnings of this group show[5]. As recent research points out, sheltered employment is still the measure of first choice in many countries where certain approaches of "special and separate employment" remain even though the benefits of Supported Employment for job seekers, employers and society are obvious. Statistics show that the number of people with disabilities participating in sheltered employment has increased in many countries throughout Europe since the year 2000. Promoting Supported Employment activities in these countries implies a paradigm shift towards a "mainstreaming disability model" which implies not just special employment services but employment measures for persons with disabilities in all policy domains (cross-sectoral policy) [6]
- The issue of incentives for job seekers to take part in active labour market measures is an area that requires careful consideration. The fear of welfare benefit loss (which might be the result of the measures in many countries) may not attract people with disabilities to consider paid employment as a viable option and, as evaluation shows, regulations may make it difficult for benefit recipients to try to work/enter the labour market without facing financial losses. However, there is evidence that this can be reduced when cross-sectoral policies are promoted in a country (e.g. co-operation of government departments)[7]
- Disability policies normally target a large and heterogeneous group. The diversity of this group is one challenge when working age disability policies are to be implemented successfully. An effective policy has therefore to reach/include all persons with disabilities whilst also ensuring that individual needs are addressed in order to raise the likelihood of labour market integration for as many disabled people as possible

[5] OECD (2003): Transforming Disability into Ability – Policies to promote work and income secure for disabled people. OECD, Paris.

[6] European Centre for Social Welfare Policy and Research (2008): The Labour Market Situation of People with Disabilities in EU 25. European Centre, Vienna.

[7] OECD (2003): Transforming Disability into Ability – Policies to promote work and income secure for disabled people. OECD, Paris.

- As recent research shows, active labour market programmes are increasingly seen as a strategy to tackle the negative impacts of the demographic shift such as a medium term expected labour shortage. Increasing the labour force participation of disabled people seems to be an appropriate strategy to make better use of so far under-utilised human resources

The Common Principles of Flexicurity have been endorsed by the European Council and the European Commission is committed to exploring opportunities for disabled people under the Flexicurity framework. Flexicurity is seen by the European Commission as a means to reinforce the implementation of the Lisbon Strategy, create more and better jobs, modernise labour markets and promote good work through new forms of flexibility and security to increase adaptability, employment and social cohesion. Flexicurity involves the deliberate combination of:

- Flexible and reliable contractual arrangements from the perspective of the employer and the employee, of ''insiders'' and ''outsiders'' through modern labour laws, collective agreements and work organistation
- Comprehensive lifelong learning strategies to ensure the continual adaptability and employability of workers, particularly the most vulnerable
- Effective active labour market policies that help people cope with rapid change, reduce unemployment spells and ease transitions to new jobs
- Modern social security systems that provide adequate income support, encourage employment and facilitate labour market mobility

Whilst Flexicurity is explicitly called upon to support gender equality, the European Commission must develop the link to ensure that equal rights for persons with disabilities are more explicit within Flexicurity.

Position of the European Union of Supported Employment

The European Union of Supported Employment promotes Supported Employment as a proactive, individual-orientated method to enable people with disabilities access their right to work. Supported Employment has proven to be a successful approach to increase the labour market participation due to:

- Supported Employment is based on and respects the individual's needs, desires and aspirations for work, following the principles of individuality, respect, self-determination, informed choice, empowerment, confidentiality, flexibility and accessibility

- Supported Employment is concerned with addressing some of the social, attitudinal, policy and practice barriers that exclude people with disabilities from the labour market and paid work
- Supported Employment is about securing and maintaining 'real jobs' in the open labour market, ensuring sustainable integration and income security and therefore reducing dependency on welfare benefits[8]

The personal income and financial security of people with disabilities depends primarily on their labour status and is the condition for full participation in social and economic life. Therefore, as a policy, Supported Employment has positive implications for social inclusion and full participation in society which are both linked to paid employment in the open labour market. Therefore this approach is seen as completely consistent with the United Nations Convention on the Rights of People with Disabilities. Moreover, the European model of Supported Employment addresses the common principles of Flexicurity and is an excellent methodology to deliver many components of a Flexicurity framework.

Legal frameworks, welfare state systems and funding structures differ throughout Europe but there is strong evidence that only long-term funding structures ensure quality of services, innovation and development of the sector[9]. Inappropriate funding structures are likely to have negative impacts: either when funding sources intended for other measures such as vocational training or qualification have to be used or when funding structures are dominated by unrealistic outcomes. Both result in short-term funding, even year-to-year funding in some countries[10] which is entirely inappropriate to deliver Supported Employment.

Key policy makers should, where possible, take the necessary measures to ensure a legal framework, structure and regulations that show consistency to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of People with Disabilities, the European Commission's Flexicurity approach and to promote growth and innovation within the sector of Supported Employment services. National strategies for mainstreaming Supported Employment are necessary and must take into account the values, principles and process of the Supported Employment model. Legislation, structures and funding systems should mirror the impact of active labour market measures in general and Supported Employment in particular.

[8] European Union of Supported Employment – Information Booklet and Quality Standards (2005)

[9] Corden, A./Thornton, P. (2002): Employment Programmes for Disabled People – Lessons from research evaluations. Department for Work and Pensions In-house Report, Social Research Branch, Department for Work and Pensions, London.

[10] Spjelkavik/Evans (2007): Impressions of Supported Employment – A study of some European Supported Employment Services and their activities; p. 16. Work Research Institute, Oslo

Conclusion

Income security and individual autonomy, equality and full inclusion of people with disability in society can only be reached through labour market participation because employment is crucial for securing income resources. National and European policies should ensure both the development of Supported Employment as a proactive strategy to employment and income security for people with disabilities and provide an appropriate legal and structural framework to ensure that persons with disabilities exercise their right to engage in work.

Supported Employment for Employers

About Supported Employment

Supported Employment provides support to people with disabilities or other disadvantaged groups to secure and maintain paid employment in the open labour market.

Supported Employment service providers ensure that an employer's recruitment requirements and concerns are dealt with in an efficient and professional manner.

Supported Employment personnel are likely to be qualified Job Coaches or Employment Support Workers and they work with employers and the potential employees, matching the employer's needs with the skills and abilities of potential workers.

The Benefits to Employers

- Supported Employment provides a free and confidential recruitment service
- It will enable you to access appropriate potential employees. A Supported Employment service provider will only submit details of potential job seekers who can actually complete the tasks that you as an employer need completing
- You and your new employee will be able to access continuous support of a qualified and experienced Employment Support Worker. This will ensure that the ' job match' continues to be successful
- The Employment Support Worker will enhance your recruitment and selection process by matching the right employee to the right job in the interest of your company recruiting and retaining a committed long term employee
- The fact that an employer employs a person with a disability or a person from a dis-advantaged group may lead to an increase in business and profits, i.e. increase in custom from their families and friends as well as the general public
- The Employment Support Worker will provide you with all the necessary advice and guidance on the incentives and grants that may be available to you
- You will be provided with assistance to co-ordinate any training that the new employee may need

- Supported Employment can enhance your company's profile, as it allows you to promote yourself as an equal opportunities employer
- Through using the vehicle of a Supported Employment service, employers can acknowledge and demonstrate their commitment to Corporate Social Responsibility

Background of Supported Employment

Supported Employment was developed in the USA and Canada in the 1970's and is currently developing throughout the world. The European Union of Supported Employment was established in 1993 to facilitate the development of Supported Employment throughout Europe. As an employer, you have an opportunity to be a part of a worldwide service that brings benefits to your company as well as to people from disadvantaged groups.

Success through Job Matching

Through detailed profiling, the skills and interests of the job seeker are matched with the requirements of the job. The successful job match will result in success for both the job seeker and the employer.

Success through Support

Through Supported Employment, appropriate support will be provided to the job seeker, the employer and co-workers. The support provided may be of a mentoring nature, although in some cases it may be possible to identify financial assistance where available. The frequency of the visits that an Employment Support Worker will make to the new employee will depend on their needs and the needs of the employer and co-workers.

Supported Employment services can be accessed by both public and private sector employers of all sizes.

Financial Benefits of a Supported Employment Service

The Supported Employment service is a professional, quality service provided free of charge. You will save money, as you will not have any advertising or recruitment expenses, for example, you will not have to trawl through dozens of CV's and job application forms. Training for prospective employees will be provided on the job where necessary and at no cost.

Impact of Supported Employment

Experience shows that work colleagues welcome and encourage people recruited through the Supported Employment process and that good working relationships are developed. Customers appreciate the social approach and repeat business is greatly increased. The Employment Support Worker can help your company to develop procedures for the systematic induction and development of employees with disabilities which may result in improvements in productivity and efficiency.

For further information on Supported Employment please contact:

Details of National Association

Details of European Union of Supported Employment

The How To Guides are consistent with the Position Papers and provide a range of both basic and specific information and useful advice and tips regarding methods on 'How To' conduct a specific activity within the Supported Employment process. They are not definitive but are illustrative of the process and methodologies to be considered in the delivery of Supported Employment services.

The How To Guides were produced by practitioners for practitioners and have been designed to encourage the reader to adopt best practice when delivering Supported Employment activities. Whilst the majority of the How To Guides are aimed at service delivery within the Supported Employment 5 stage process, we have also included a How To Guide to explore the skills and abilities of potential Employment Support Workers.

HOW TO GUIDE:
Client Engagement

Introduction

Client Engagement is the first stage of the 5-stage Supported Employment process, which the European Union of Supported Employment Quality Standards describe as follows:

"This stage probably provides the broadest range of activities, the majority of which will be unique not only to specific disability groups but may be also unique to individuals from any other disadvantaged groups".

Client Engagement is based on:

Individuality **Respect** **Accessibility**

Flexibility **Confidentiality**

Self Determination **Informed Choices** **Empowerment**

The core values of this stage are to provide accessible information in an appropriate manner and to support the individuals to use the information and experiential learning to make informed choices. The activities in this stage must be relevant, person-centred and part of an agreed plan of action to ultimately support the individual into paid employment. It is expected that at the end of the engagement stage the individuals will make informed decisions as to whether or not they wish to use Supported Employment to find work and whether they wish to do so with that particular service provider. At this stage the terms 'client' and 'potential job seeker' are interchangeable.

The activities within the client engagement stage will vary between different target groups (school-leavers, employees of sheltered workshops, clients of day care facilities, unemployed etc) or to the disability a person experiences. Nevertheless there are some general aspects of good practice of client engagement which are described in this How To Guide.

Why do we need good client engagement?

Good client engagement is required to ensure that a prospective job seeker is able to make an informed choice and to be confident that they will receive the service they need and clarity in what the process will entail. For this reason it is important to give clear, accurate and consistent information and to create a comfortable environment for the potential job seeker based on respect and confidentiality.

The activities of client engagement should set the standard of the Supported Employment service the job seeker will experience.

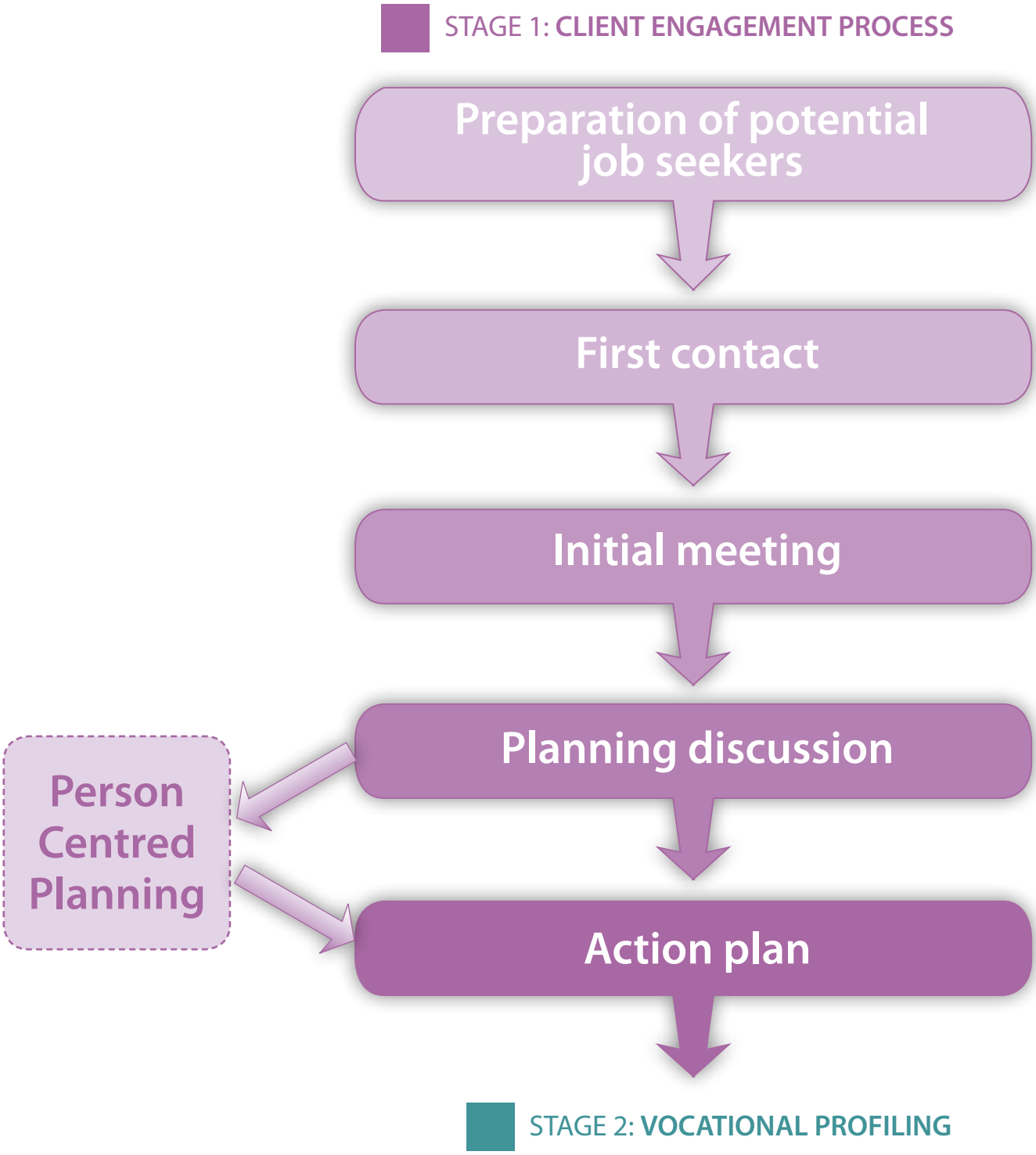
Good client engagement will break many of the conventional ways of transition by offering paid employment in the open labour market as an alternative to sheltered workshops, day care centres or to stay at home.

Process of the Client Engagement Stage

This could be described as a transition process because we are prescribing the transitions from school to work, from hospital to work, from unemployment to work or from sheltered workshops or day care centres to the general labour market.

The process of vocational integration should always be individual; from the recognition or wish of the individual to find open employment, to the realisation of this. The journey from the first thought to the concrete co-operation between a job seeker and the Supported Employment service provider should reflect the client's individuality and respect for the client's wishes. This process will differ from person to person depending on their needs and experiences; on their disabilities and disadvantages and on their personal circumstances.

The 5 steps of the process of the client engagement stage described below need not necessarily be addressed in the mentioned order. Depending on the needs of the potential job seeker, the order can be changed, or some steps avoided. Also signposting to other services can be necessary at any stage depending on the needs and wishes of the job seeker.



METHODOLOGY

Preparation of Job Seekers

Potential job seekers have their own unique history, experiences and resources when they make contact with Supported Employment service providers. Service providers will often have had little or no influence/involvement in an individual's education or on their earlier work experiences. Ideally a Supported Employment agency should work closely with the education provider to facilitate a positive view of employment. It is recognised that individuals should be encouraged and empowered to make informed decisions and choices regarding their employment preferences. The quality of the experience will determine the co-operation between the job seeker and the service provider.

To properly manage expectations, Supported Employment service providers should provide information to educational establishments, hospitals, sheltered workshops, rehabilitation services and funders. This can be achieved through publicity leaflets and attending/hosting information events with key stakeholders. Formal and informal links should be developed locally by the Supported Employment service provider with teachers, parents, employment office, insurance offices, medical and social care professionals, disability experts and organisations of disabled people[1].

First Contact:

The first contact can be via a telephone call, mail or a job seeker visit - in any event it should be realised in the most appropriate way for the individual. The aim of the first contact should be to make the potential job seeker feels welcome and valued. At the first contact the idea is to assure the individual in any future meetings that reasonable adjustments and accommodations will be provided if required. The potential job seeker or the person making the referral should be consulted about their needs or any particular requirements for a first interview.

It is important to remember that first impressions are important and that should include the conduct, attitude and social environment of the Supported Employment service provider.

Initial Meeting:

The initial meeting should ideally be face to face but in any event the meeting must put the client at ease and build up a level of confidence, trust and respect between the individual and the Supported Employment provider.

[1] Leach, S. (2002): A Supported Employment Workbook - Individual Profiling and Job Matching. Jessica Kingsley Publishers, London and Philadelphia, p. 35ff

- *Setting up a meeting*

  Social Environment: Wherever the initial meeting takes place, it should be comfortable and appropriate to the potential job seeker's needs. Ideally the client should decide the location but the room should be accessible, private and in a calm environment. Reasonable adjustments should be discussed and agreed depending on the needs of the potential job seeker.

- *Contents of the initial meeting*

  The meeting should provide general information about the Supported Employment service and the level, nature and types of support that are provided. The potential job seeker should be encouraged to tell you about their wishes, preferences, expectations and concerns. The service provider should outline the Supported Employment process and ensure that the potential job seeker understands and agrees with the activities and roles involved. The meeting should establish if the individual wants to work or to find out what work is like. Where appropriate, an individual may be referred to other, more relevant services or be provided with information of alternative support services.

The quantity of information and the length of the meeting will depend on the needs of the potential job seeker. The individual should be empowered to decide whether the Supported Employment service is the appropriate service for them. The service provider should gather sufficient information to determine if they are able to provide the support that the potential job seeker needs to achieve their aims. Consent must be obtained by the Employment Support Worker to contact other stakeholders, e.g. medical professionals, welfare benefit advisers, care managers etc.

The outcome of the meeting may be limited to gathering a minimum amount of information or indeed it may achieve the agreement of the development of a concrete action plan. Once an action plan has been agreed, the process progresses to the next stage in the Supported Employment process - Vocational Profiling.

Planning Discussion:

The Planning Discussion is a two-way-interaction, so that both parties give and receive information from each other. It is the responsibility of the Supported Employment service to ensure that clarity and understanding occurs.

The job seeker should be made comfortable and confident to obtain and provide as much information as they wish. The wishes and interests of the job seeker are paramount.

At conclusion the job seeker should be clear about what potential employment options they have with regards to welfare benefit advice and all aspects of employment support. It is the responsibility of the Employment Support Worker to explain clearly the form of support they can provide.

One method of a person-centred approach is "Personal Future Planning". By using this method, individuals may plan and self-determine their vocational integration with the support of individual circles of support. The instrument of Personal Future Planning is recommendable. With this method a potential job seeker can:

- Search for their individual supporters
- Gather a circle of support
- Reflect and develop with their supporters their individual interests and wishes, strength and resources
- Make concrete action plans with steps and tasks for the involved people
- Ensure that the agreed steps will be realised.

The involvement of other stakeholders should be mentioned in the initial dialogue meeting. Involved stakeholders can include parents, teachers, friends, administrators at social insurance offices and funding offices, peer supporters and self advocacy organisations etc.

There may be stakeholders who are present from the beginning; others may be involved later on. Additional stakeholders might be necessary, e.g. new nominations by the job seeker or who professionals think are necessary. This may depend on the themes which are being addressed, e.g. independent living, money management, etc.

The Employment Support Worker should inform the job seeker about the possibilities of involving other stakeholders – the job seeker decides who will be included.

A consensual agreement form for the involvement of stakeholders can be signed, if appropriate, by the job seeker and the Employment Support Worker.

The result of the initial dialogue should be recorded and signed by both the job seeker and the Employment Support Worker.

Action Plan:

The aim is to establish an agreed Action Plan setting out clearly defined and time bound objectives for both parties with reviews in place from the beginning. If at this

stage it was decided not to find work at this particular time, the potential job seeker should be directed to an alternative service. They should be assured that they can return to look for work when they feel ready.

The Action Plan, in effect, becomes the next stage of the Supported Employment process Vocational Profile (Stage 2)[2].

The Action Plan will include the following:

- What shall be done?
- Who is responsible for the realisation of the actions?
- When will the actions be realised?
- Who will ascertain that the action was realised?

Tips for Effective Client Engagement

This How to Guide was developed by practitioners for practitioners. Therefore the listed "Useful Tips" and "Things to Avoid" should help readers to benefit from the authors´ experience and knowledge.

Useful Tips:

- Make sure that the information you give is understood by the job seeker
- Make sure that you understood the information you got from the job seeker
- Offer both written and spoken information
- Use easy language
- Take your time to find out what kind of environment best fits the meeting with the job seeker
- Be aware of how signs or symbols can affect the first meeting with the job seeker
- After a meeting, always summarise what has been said or agreed. If needed, write it down and give it to the job seeker

Things to Avoid:

- If you meet the job seeker together with a stakeholder, do not speak as if the job seeker were not there. Remember it is the job seeker who should be in the centre of the process
- Do not speak with other stakeholders about the job seeker without including them

[2] Griffin, C./Hammis, D./Geary, T. (2007): The Job Developer's Handbook. Paul H. Brookes Publishing Co., Baltimore.

- Never ignore the wishes and interests of the job seeker
- Avoid putting your own values or prejudices on the wishes and interests of the job seeker

Reflective Questions

The following questions are intended to initiate further discussion and should help practitioners and Employment Support Workers to reflect their methods and approaches:

- In what way can you prepare the information given to the job seeker to ensure that it is understood?
- Remember to put yourself into the position of the job seeker. If you were they, what would you like to happen?
- How do you build up trust and respect?
- How can you ensure confidentiality?
- To whom should you give information in order to make it possible for job seekers to find your service?
- What are the benefits and disadvantages of a potential job seeker being accompanied at the initial meeting?

Relevant EUSE Position Papers:

- Values, Standards and Principles of Supported Employment
- Client Engagement
- Vocational Profile

Relevant EUSE How To Guides:

- Vocational Profiling

HOW TO GUIDE:
Vocational Profiling

Introduction

In order to assist people with disabilities or people from disadvantaged groups to secure and maintain paid employment, a person-centered approach is used within Supported Employment to collect relevant information about the individual's aspirations, interests, skills and abilities for work. In the Supported Employment process a Vocational Profile is used to gather this information.

The vocational profiling process occurs at the second stage of the 5-stage process. The preceding stage is the client engagement stage. This stage should clarify if the client wants to work and wishes to go further in the future stages of the Supported Employment process. The Supported Employment process is illustrated in the following flow-chart.

Why do we need a vocational profile?

Supported Employment was developed in the 1970/80's to assist people with disabilities to make their own choices about work and to define what they need in order to be able to access employment. Vocational profiling was therefore established as a person-centred tool to assist job seekers make informed choices about job preferences and establish the necessary training and support strategies for on or off the job support (place - train - maintain). This differed from the traditional assessment process within rehabilitation programmes where individuals were tested in sheltered environments and were presented with different support alternatives by rehabilitation specialists (train - place)[1].

What are the objectives of the vocational process?

The main objective is to gather and assess information about the job seeker that is relevant to a future job and career aspirations of the individual. The aim is to identify the job seeker's motivation, interests, work attitudes, resources and support needs, and to establish realistic aims for career development.

The information collected should be future orientated. This means that the Employment Support Worker together with the job seeker strive to think ahead rather than look back when it comes to identifying resources, experiences and employment goals for the job seeker. Collecting information about previous work experience/employment, rehabilitation programmes and education is a necessary part of the profiling process. However, to focus only on this kind of information, is not sufficient for gaining knowledge about the job seeker's employment and career possibilities. The employment and career aspirations of the job seeker offer valuable information which makes the vocational profiling process more personal, innovative and opens up a variety of options and opportunities for the future.

The process should be person-centered, this means:

- The job seeker's wishes and needs direct the process. The Employment Support Worker's role is to support and guide the job seeker through vocational profiling.
- The job seeker and the Employment Support Worker cooperate in terms of deciding what kind of information is relevant.
- The job seeker plays an active part in deciding who is going to provide information. For example, this may include family, friends, professionals of different fields, previous employers etc. It is important to include only people that can give relevant information. This means information that is constructive and job related.
- Lastly, the final decision about what kind of information to disclose is decided by the job seeker.

Note that personal information about health, housing, income matters and personal circumstances may already have been collected at the client engagement stage (stage 1).

[1] Corden, A./Thornton, P. (2002): Employment Programmes for Disabled People - Lessons from research evaluations. Department for Work and Pensions In-house Report, Social Research Branch, Department for Work and Pensions, London.

The Process and Methodology

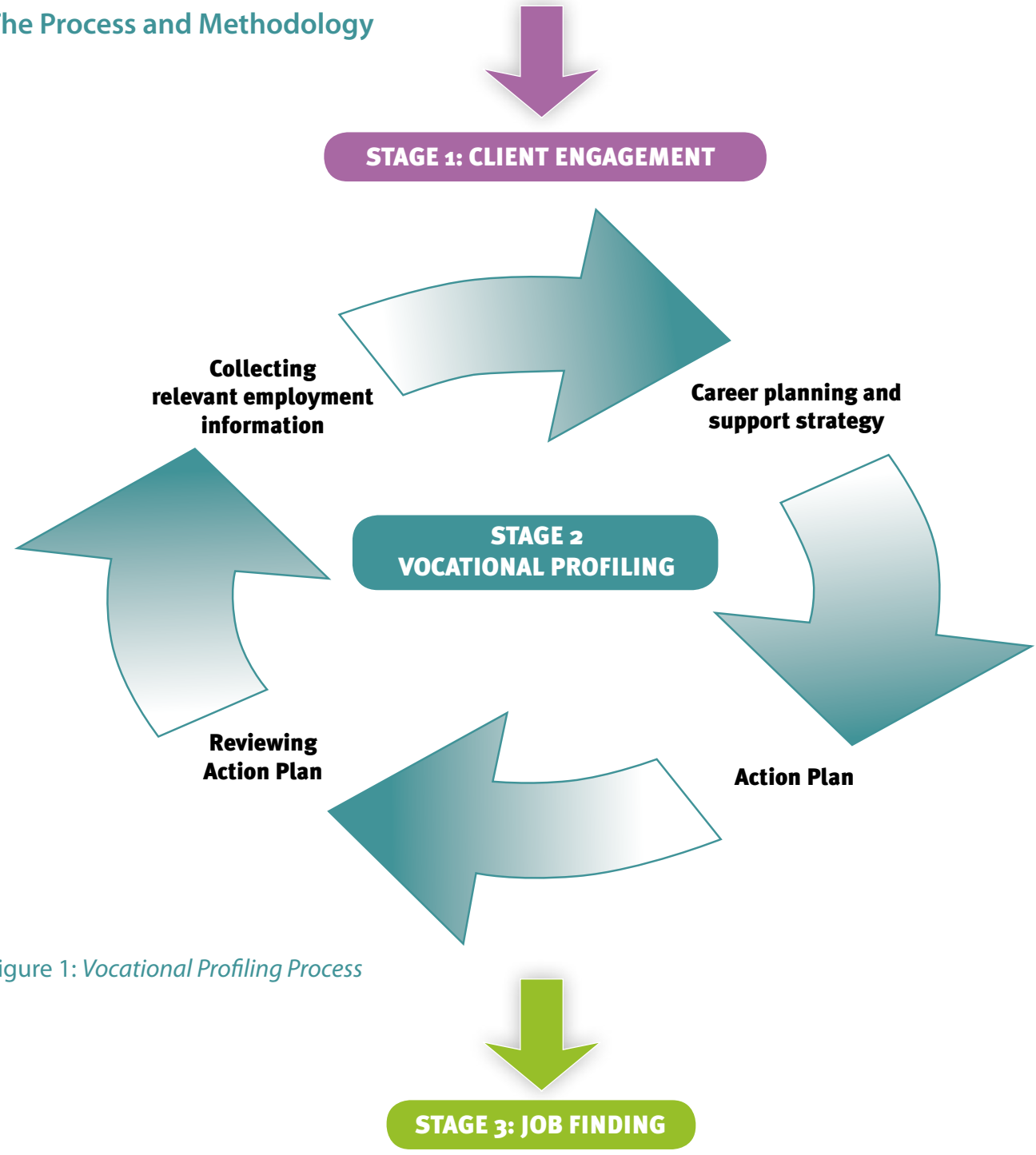


Figure 1: *Vocational Profiling Process*

Issues to be considered by the Employment Support Worker

The most important role of the Employment Support Worker is to establish a good working relationship and to empower job seekers to take the lead in their own career planning. In the vocational profiling process this means that the Employment Support Worker has to set several aims for the process together with the job seeker. The aims will include:

a) To find out what are the job seekers' overall job objectives;

b) To find out what kind of work and work environments are desired and realistic;

c) The kind of support strategies necessary in order to find, secure and maintain a job

The vocational profile is based on a mutual on-going discussion between the job seeker, the Employment Support Worker and, where relevant other key stakeholders. To assist in this process, a vocational profiling document is used[2]. This document contains all job relevant information regarding the job seeker. The profile is a live, developing, on-going document that needs to be reviewed on a regular basis. Furthermore, the profile is a personal document that belongs to the job seeker. The use of a single document will also ensure that all relevant job information regarding the job seeker is kept safely in one place and easily transferred between Employment Support Workers.

It is vital that a job seeker's vocational profile is updated on a regular basis to ensure that all relevant information is up to date (such as changes in circumstances, i.e. housing, social welfare/income) as this may have an impact on a job seeker's employment.

Vocational Profile Process 1 - Collecting relevant information:

This means arranging a number of meetings between the job seeker, the Employment Support Worker and relevant others to gather employment related information[3]. In order to avoid collecting information for its own sake, the Employment Support Worker continuously needs to reflect on the important questions below:

- Why do I need this particular information?
- What are the consequences of knowing and disclosing the particular information?
- What are the consequences of not knowing about certain aspects of the job seeker's life?
- How relevant to the job is information about symptoms, health conditions and personal life?
- How much information is it necessary to keep in the filing system?
- What kind of information will a future employer need to know and what is the best way to present information at a job interview?

Information Disclosure

On the issue of disclosure of information; the Employment Support Worker should take in to consideration the principle of the job seeker's choice. Although in some countries disclosure is mandatory, only relevant information needs to be disclosed to the employer. The individual must give their consent for information to be disclosed and it is important that disclosure provides only information that is relevant to the job situation. For some job seekers it is important to prepare what kind of information is necessary to disclose before approaching employers. All information should be contextualised and future orientated towards the desired jobs of the individual job seekers.

[2] See Appendix - Vocational Profile template

[3] Leach, S. (2002): A Supported Employment Workbook - Individual Profiling and Job Matching. Jessica Kingsley Publishers, London and Philadelphia, p. 68ff

Relevant information

Relevant information is information that may have a positive or negative effect on the work situation. Relevant information is collected by looking at the job seeker's current situation. There are legal and ethical issues in relation to gathering information which should always be considered. The Employment Support Worker should be guided by a code of ethics that should be well known and serve as a working tool in the Supported Employment organisation. It is crucial to avoid judgmental information about the job seeker and/or the job seeker's family and health conditions. Judgmental information may lead to stereotyping the job seeker, and may also impede the working relationship between the Employment Support Worker and the job seeker. Information should be open, yet at the same time specific and clear and concise – avoid jargon.

List of relevant information, see also example of template[4] :

- Work history, formal and informal. Work experience may include voluntary work, working in organisations, housework, child/family care, work practice through education etc.
- Education and formal qualifications (education, courses and training) give a picture of what kind of work areas to focus on and is important to include in the profile. However, this kind of information is not always sufficient to give the overall picture. It is therefore important also to look at the following information:
  - Physical skills – are there any physical disabilities that limit the choices?
  - Cognitive skills – learning skills and assessing situations and adapt own behaviour to different situations.
  - Personal skills – including important work related skills like hygiene, dependability, ability to travel independently etc.
  - Social skills – skills and abilities in understanding and interpreting messages given by other people and act to them accordingly.
  - Language and communication skills – including if there are specific facilitating needs in order to overcome communication issues.
- Work preferences
  - Preferred environment/surroundings (i.e. working inside or outside, working in a large company or small company, busy or quiet environment.
  - Location of potential employers.
  - Types of jobs (i.e. administration, retail, catering, manufacturing, construction, information technology, caring; unskilled or skilled jobs; academic/non academic).
  - Working hours (i.e. full time/part time, days, evening or weekends, shift work etc).
- Hobbies and interests

[4] See Appendix 1 - Vocational Profile template

Vocational Profiling Process 2 - Career planning and support strategies:

Based on the information collected, the job seeker and Employment Support Worker agree on the steps ahead. Together they have to decide what are the realistic jobs and career aspirations for the job seeker. If necessary, a job taster or work experience placement could be used as a tool at this stage in process.

Having decided what kind of work the job seeker would like to achieve, the next step is to determine what kind of support the job seeker and/or the potential employer need at or outside of the workplace. The vocational profiling process should aim to facilitate the transition into a job and to secure a good job match. This means matching the job seeker's skills, abilities and preferences to the work tasks, social skills tasks and the overall culture of the work place. In the vocational profiling process the Employment Support Worker and the job seeker need to decide what support is necessary to take them from their current situation to a job situation. It may be necessary for the Employment Support Worker to consider the support needs in crucial areas, such as:

- Social skills
- Independent travelling
- Work experience placements
- Strengthening qualifications
- Support at home/network

Providing support at this stage should be proactive; this means planning ahead and to have a strategic view on possible challenges in the future work situation; find alternative solutions to problems, build on experiences along in the process; and think about positive ways to provide information to future employers.

Vocational Profiling Process 3 - Action Plan:

On completion of the initial Vocational Profile* document a meeting is held to discuss and agree an Action Plan. A Vocational Profile Action Plan is a tool used in the vocational profiling process to record the different steps that are necessary to reach the objectives (i.e. to find paid employment) and move on to the next stage of the Supported Employment Process (Stage 3 – Job Finding).

In conjunction with the job seeker, the Employment Support Worker should arrange the meeting. The job seeker will decide who should also be invited to the meeting to assist them in their Action Plan such as a family member, other professionals, friends etc.

** NB: Vocational Profiling is an on-going process and must be continually up-date*

The Action Plan needs to clearly state the long term objectives (i.e. find employment) and the immediate objectives to achieve this. For each objective, decisions need to be made on:-

What –

What does the job seeker want to achieve? i.e. experience different types of employment (job taster), complete a qualification. This will be based on the findings in the Vocational Profile

How –

How is the job seeker going to achieve this? What actions/activities will the job seeker need to undertake? For example, identify different types of employment they would like to try

Who –

Who is responsible for carrying out the action? i.e. job seeker, Employment Support Worker, family member, other professional etc

When –

Set realistic time frames to complete action/activity. In addition to setting a time frame for each action, a review date should also be agreed between the job seeker and the Employment Support Worker

Achievements –

Record actions/activities when completed. This should be discussed at the review stage

As throughout the vocational profiling process, the job seeker will be central to developing the Action Plan in conjunction with the Employment Support Worker. The Action Plan must be agreed by the job seeker.

When preparing the Action Plan, it is important to remember:-

- Everyone involved should understand exactly what is going to happen
- All involved should be clear about their specific responsibilities
- The plan should be realistic in terms of timescales
- The plan should be reviewed regularly

Vocational Profiling Process 4 – Reviewing Action Plan[5]:

Finally, the Action Plan is crucial for monitoring purposes. Monitoring will make sure that we are heading in the right direction and also helps to choose alternative strategies if necessary. An Action Plan should include main objectives/what you want to achieve, strategies/how you are going to achieve, who is responsible for elements in the process, timescales/when and achievements/comments.

The job seeker in conjunction with the Employment Support Worker will agree a date to review the Action Plan. It will be the responsibility of the Employment Support Worker to arrange the review meetings and ensure that the job seeker and other relevant stakeholders are invited. At the review meeting the progress of the actions will be monitored, recorded and alternative strategies recommended if necessary.

Compiling a Vocational Profile

In many traditional services for people with disabilities and people from disadvantaged groups, meetings are held in an office base that are not always user friendly and can be intimidating to the job seeker. In Supported Employment there is a different approach. Reasons for this is the assumption that traditional meetings do not facilitate user involvement and that you do not get the relevant information solely by talking at meetings – the vocational profiling process is a much more live, dynamic and creative process which includes several tools. While clarifying the needs of the job seeker, the Employment Support Worker supports the job seeker to participate in various relevant activities. Activities are used as a tool in the vocational profiling process to make it easier for job seekers to make decisions about future jobs and careers. Activities should be job specific and may include visiting work places, talking to employers, going to the Job Centre, job sampling, reading newspapers, finding jobs on the Internet, interview training etc. It may also include working side by side in job tasters and work experience placements. Job related activities are also an efficient tool in the job finding process.

Involvement in different activities in the vocational profiling process facilitates a reflecting, interpreting and feedback process between the Employment Support worker and the job seeker. The processes can be one to one or group exercises or a combination of these including sharing experiences with peers. Feedback from peers on role plays may give valuable information to job seekers that are relevant to a future job. The process should be appropriate to the individuals', aspirations, needs, experiences and capabilities.

[5] See Appendix 2: Action Plan template

Useful Tips for Vocational Profiling:

This How to Guide was developed by practitioners for practitioners. Therefore the listed "Useful Tips" and "Things to Avoid" should help readers to benefit from the authors´ experience and knowledge:

Useful Tips:

- A person-centred approach should be used to collect relevant job related information
- Empower the job seeker to take part actively in the entire process
- Allow the job seeker to decide
- Review the Vocational Profile frequently
- The Employment Support Worker must be guided by a code of ethics
- Summarise and agree on what has been decided
- Confidentiality is required
- Make an Action Plan and review this frequently

Things to Avoid:

- Do not disclose information that the job seeker has not agreed with
- The Vocational Profile should not be an assessment
- Avoid communication that is not suitable for the job seeker
- Avoid an office based process of vocational profiling. It should take place in the environment where the job seeker lives and interacts with other people
- Avoid collecting irrelevant information during the process

Reflective Questions

The following questions are intended to initiate further discussions and should help practitioners and Employment Support Workers to reflect their methods and approaches:

- In what circumstance may medical history be relevant to a job opportunity? In what situation may medical history not be appropriate?
- Who decides what information is relevant in what circumstances?
- What kind of information can you gather from a job taster/work experience placement?
- If you were applying for a job, what kind of information about yourself would you provide at a job interview?
- What can be the consequences of omitting information to an employer?

Relevant EUSE Position Papers:

- Client Engagement
- Vocational Profile
- Job Finding
- On and Off the Job Support
- Work Experience Placements

Relevant EUSE How to Guides:

- Client Engagement
- Job Finding
- On and Off the Job Support

- Appendix 1: Vocational Profile template
- Appendix 2: Action Plan template

Vocational Profile Template

PERSONAL DETAILS

Title: Mr ☐ Mrs ☐ Miss ☐ Ms ☐

First Name: _____

Family Name: _____

Address: _____

_____

_____ Postcode: _____

Date of Birth: _____ Social Welfare No: _____

Home Tel No: _____ Mobile No: _____

Email: _____

Next of Kin: _____

Relationship: _____

Name: _____

Address: _____

_____

_____ Postcode: _____

Emergency Contact No: _____

Social/Key Worker (if applicable): _____

Address: _____

_____

_____ Tel: _____

Religion/Culture: *(considerations you may wish to be taken into account, eg Muslim, etc)*

_____

PEOPLE INVOLVED IN CONSULTATION

Name	Relationship to Client	Organisation (if applicable)	Tel No

HEALTH CONDITION OR DISABILITY INFORMATION

Briefly outline individuals health condition or disability
Outline impact on employment, if applicable *(communication support, assistive technology, appointments, medication, etc)*
Additional information *(support from family and other professionals, include contact details)*

SOCIAL WELFARE

Benefit/Pension	Amount	Frequency (weekly/monthly)

EDUCATION HISTORY (secondary education)

Dates	School/College/University	Qualifications/ Certificates	Grades

TRAINING

Dates	Training Provider	Training Course	Qualifications/Certificates & Grades

Other relevant qualifications and training *(driving licence, forklift truck licence etc)*

WORK HISTORY (including work experience)

Dates To/From	Employers name and contact details	Job Title	Main Duties	Reason for leaving

SOCIAL INTERESTS & HOBBIES

Please list any hobbies or interests

EMPLOYMENT PREFERENCES

Expectations about working

Preferred Career *(ideal career)*

Preferred work tasks *(clerical, retail, catering, computing, finance, warehouse, hospitality etc)*

Preferred working conditions *(full/time part-time, days or evenings, weekday or weekends, shifts etc)*

Preferred working environments *(working inside/outside, working in a quiet/busy workplace, working in small/large workplace, working in a quiet/noisy workplace etc)*

Other *(eg distance from home, preferred transport to work etc)*

PERSONAL SKILLS AND ABILITIES

Daily Living Skills *(budgeting, time management, domestic, use public transport etc)*

Communication Skills *(spoken, listening, written, following instructions etc)*

Social Skills *(social interaction, conversation skills, ability to cope with social situations)*

Weekly routines *(attending college, other activities etc)*

Other *(eg distance from home, preferred transport to work etc)*

Additional information

Job Seeker _____ Employment Support Worker _____

Date _____ Review date _____

What	How	Who (responsible)	When	Achievements with comments

I have taken part and agree with this plan.

Jobseeker signature _____ Employment Support Worker Signature _____

HOW TO GUIDE:
Job Finding & Employer Engagement

Introduction

Within the Supported Employment process, Job Finding and Employer Engagement are at stages 3 and 4 of the process that connect the job seeker with potential employers. A job seeker's skills and abilities are viewed in terms of their relevance and requirement in the open labour market and therefore there is a matching of the job seeker's employment needs with those of the employer's needs.

Why Engage with Employers?

Without best practice in the Job Finding and Employer Engagement stages, the model of Supported Employment would not function effectively and efficiently. Employers play a central role in ensuring that the job seeker has the opportunity to enter the labour market.

Employers should therefore be viewed as a customer of the Supported Employment service provider, and as such their needs, concerns and questions need to be addressed effectively.

The employer engagement process requires the service provider to be professional and to be at all times mindful of the need for the employer to meet their business agenda, and to run their business in an efficient manner.

The Process and Methodology

Within the process of Job Finding/Employer Engagement the following are some of the key players and stakeholders:

- Job seekers
- Employers
- Employment Support Workers
- Other support workers
- Co-workers
- Funders
- Family members and social network
- Service providers

These key stakeholders all play roles within the following Job Finding and Employer Engagement activities flowchart:

1. Job Search

At this stage, the Vocational Profiling process has been completed and the job seeker's curriculum vitae is compiled or is in final draft format. Familiarity with the skills and ambitions of the job seeker are now evident, and this information must be used to find suitable employment. Realistic goals regarding the employment objective should be maintained by all stakeholders, while still maintaining the focus on the wishes of the individual job seeker.

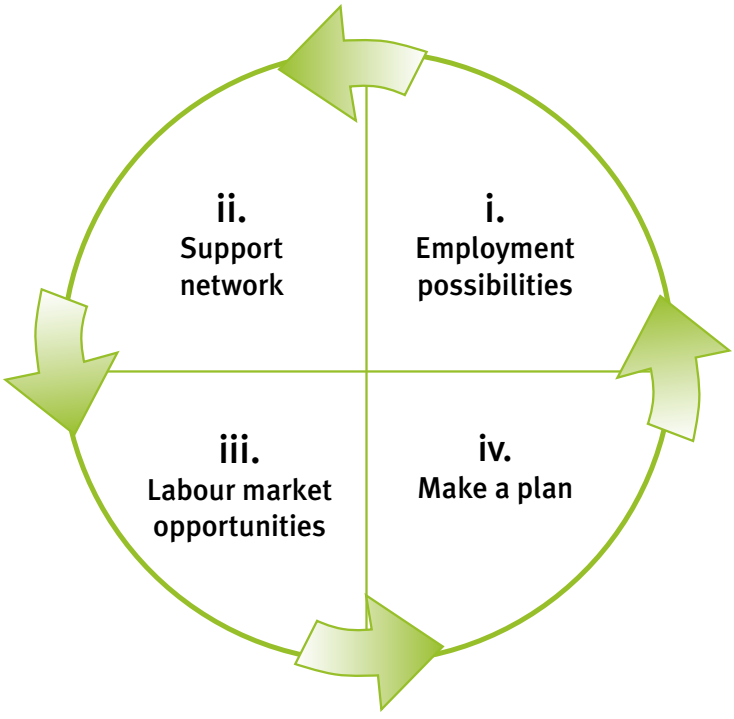


Figure 1: *Job Searching Planning Cycle*

i. Employment Possibilities

Together, the job seeker and the Employment Support Worker explore and assess the employment possibilities and prospects of the job seeker.

This part of the process is about analysing the information from the Vocational Profile, and relating it to the employment potential of the job seeker. This is achieved through discussions with the job seeker and other key stakeholders, including previous employers and personal network contacts.

ii. Support Network

Through discussions with the job seeker and key stakeholders, the potential support available is examined, and additional support needs may need to be identified.

iii. Labour Market Opportunities

Explore the existing options available in the local labour market, and also the potential for creating and developing additional opportunities. The following are some suggestions to consider as potential sources for jobs:

- Job seekers network
- Employment Support Workers network
- Other Agencies involved in Supported Employment
- Recruitment fairs
- Private sector recruitment professionals
- Local or national government agencies
- Printed media - local and national
- TV and radio advertising
- Business directories
- Trade directories
- Cold calling/phone and mail
- Business listings

iv. Make a Plan

The Employment Support Worker and the job seeker should develop and agree a plan on how best to make contact with employers and find the most suitable job.

As this is a continuous cycle, a dynamic process follows.

2. Approaching Employers [1]

When approaching employers, there are 5 key elements involved:

- Information Gathering
- The Approach
- Meeting the Employer
- Dealing with Objections
- Agreement

(i) Information Gathering

This is the foundation on which all further negotiation with the employers and job seekers are based. It is therefore essential that this stage of the process is carried out comprehensively.

Employers - It is important that whoever approaches the employer, they have gathered all relevant and necessary information on the employer and the nature of the employer's business. Examples could include the size and structure of the company, who are the key decision makers in relation to recruitment and what types of jobs they may offer.

Information can be gathered on the employer through a number of mechanisms including internet searching, business directories, and newspaper articles and through local contacts.

Job Seekers - Information relevant for the job seeking process, for example the Vocational Profile and their CV, must be available to both the Employment Support Worker and the job seeker. The job seeker and their Employment Support Worker should operate as a team and both should be clear regarding the wishes, skills, aspirations, and support needs of the job seeker. This information will have been gathered through the vocational profiling process, and used to compile the CV. This information will also be extremely useful if the job seeker is required to complete a job application form.

(ii) The Approach

It is essential that a defined goal has been identified for the approach, for example to introduce the Supported Employment service and secure employment opportunities.

The employer can be approached by either the job seeker, the Employment Support Worker, or by both together. However it is essential that the approach is always made with the job seeker's agreement.

[1] Leach, S. (2002): A Supported Employment Workbook - Individual Profiling and Job Matching. Jessica Kingsley Publishers, London and Philadelphia, p. 68ff

Potential employers can be initially contacted through a variety of methods:

- By letter or email
- By telephone
- Dropping in (some times called cold calling)
- Through being referred by a person or an organisation known to that employer
- By delivering a presentation to an employer's group or organisation

There are a number of possible promotional/marketing materials that are useful when making contact with employers:

- Business cards
- Brochures – it is important to have a separate brochure for employers
- Employer testimonials
- Relevant media articles
- DVD or a video link on your website can be of benefit

The more formal methods of job finding should also be considered and job seekers should be encouraged and empowered to make contact with employers directly. The formal methods of job finding include completing job application forms, writing letters to employers in response to vacancy advertisements, writing speculative letters and submitting a curriculum vitae to employers.

Completing an Application Form

It is important to read the instructions carefully, and to practice on a draft copy as it is vital not to make any mistakes on the original application form. Reading the job description and the advertisement will also give the job seeker and the Employment Support Worker an insight into what skills and qualities the employer is looking for and what the job is about. It is also important to ensure that spelling and grammar is correct and that the job seeker's handwriting is clear and legible; typed copies are also more welcome by employers. If the job seeker has experience relevant to the job then make sure it is mentioned, repeated if needs be. Additionally, experience gained outwith work and transferable skills should also be mentioned. All questions should be answered fully and it is inappropriate to simply put 'see attached CV' in any sections.

By keeping a copy of the completed form, the job seeker will be able to prepare for the interview with the knowledge of the answers already provided to the employer. It is also important to retain a copy of the job advert and the job description.

Letters

Letters are usually sent as an introduction to the CV or the job application form. They can highlight the aspect of the CV/job application that is most relevant to the employer, whether it is Employment history or Training. The letter should contain the job reference number or title (if appropriate) and structured as follows:

- First paragraph – Introduction and the reason for writing
- Second paragraph – Briefly indicate the area of the CV or application form that highlights the job seeker's suitability for the job and mention that the CV or job application form is attached
- Final paragraph – The job seeker should state they are available for interview

Letters can also be sent speculatively when a job is not advertised, and the structure should be similar to a general cover letter as described above. The key aspect is the first paragraph, and it should grab the attention of the reader, and encourage them to want to meet the job seeker.

Compiling the Curriculum Vitae

The aim of a CV is to get the employer to want to meet the job seeker to discuss their suitability to become an employee. A CV should be presented in a clear and relevant manner; it should be neatly typed and not be longer than 2 pages. It should contain information in the following areas:

- Personal details
- Employment history
- Training & educational qualifications
- Key skills
- Hobbies and interests
- Referees

Both Employment history and Training should be listed in reverse chronological order, and the section with the strongest selling point for the job seeker should be presented after 'Personal details', whether that is Employment history or Training & educational qualifications.

It can be beneficial to tailor the CV to suit the particular job being applied for, and the issue of disclosure of disability issues to the employer should be considered. In order to present a professional image, the following should be avoided on a CV:

- Gimmicks
- Unnecessary personal details
- Negative information
- Irrelevant details
- Gaps in dates
- Untruths

(iii) Meeting the Employer

The stage of meeting the employer is likely to happen either through the Employment Support Worker visiting an employer to discuss a job seeker or their own Supported Employment service; or through a job seeker being granted a job interview possibly after submission of a CV, job application form or a letter to the employer.

Throughout the discussion with the employer, always communicate the features of the Supported Employment service in terms of how it can benefit their company. This involves demonstrating the business case for choosing Supported Employment when recruiting staff especially the saving of time and money in the recruitment process.

The presentation can take several forms from a one to one meeting with the key person in the company through to a formal presentation to a group of interested people in a company. For both forms, always prepare, present and conduct yourself in a professional manner.

Throughout the communication process be aware of the need to discuss with the employer in terms of how the Supported Employment service can fulfil the employer's needs, bearing in mind the abilities of the potential job seekers and any concerns that either party may have.

During all communication with the employer, remember to use business language and not jargon from the Supported Employment sector, for example expressions such as 'profiling', 'natural supports', job matching' and 'job carving' etc. should be avoided.

Planning should take into account the job description, advert and person specification if available. Analyse the main job activities and make notes on the relevant experience and background of the job seeker. Consider any activities or duties that can count as transferable skills. Familiarise yourself with the company background, culture and what services or products they are involved with. Plan how the job seeker is going to get to the interview location and aim to arrive around 10 -15 minutes prior to interview.

Prepare for the interview by deciding what sort of candidate they are looking for and what questions will be asked. It is not too difficult to determine the type of interview questions that may arise and whilst it is not possible to be 100% accurate, the job seeker/ Employment Support Worker may be surprised how close they can predict potential questions. Go over your application form/CV and ensure the job seeker is comfortable with their employment background, dates, work history and experience. Practice some questions and answers and come up with one or two questions that you could ask the interviewer. There will always be a few areas of discussion that the job seeker may want to mention; therefore prepare the job seeker to ensure these positive aspects are mentioned during the interview as they will put the job seeker in a good light or they may demonstrate their ability or eagerness to do the job - work out different strategies for ensuring you mention all of them.

Presentation on the day will be so much easier if the job seeker has planned and prepared. First impressions count so ensure the job seeker dresses smartly, is neat, clean and well groomed. Be aware that everyone the job seeker comes into contact with such as the receptionist, secretary, administration staff may have an input into the selection process. Encourage the job seeker to smile, sit well back and present a positive posture. Maintain eye contact and answer the questions clearly whilst remaining positive, friendly and enthusiastic.

Disability Issues at Job Interview

As we are all well aware, not all disabled people have the ability to plan, prepare and present themselves for interview and the job seekers' ability/disability will have a direct impact on just how far the Employment Support Worker can go in assisting job seekers with their job seeking/interview skills. It is important that a job seeker has an awareness of the issues surrounding their disability and an understanding of their capabilities and limitations. Job seekers should also be aware of what support is available to them and how that support can be accessed. Moreover, the Employment Support Worker must be aware of the support, guidance and training needs of the job seeker.

Key areas for the Employment Support Worker to consider in assisting the job seeker to prepare for a job interview include:

- Does the job seeker have the skills required to fully prepare for the interview and can they be taught?
- Is the building accessible?
- Can the person travel independently to the interview location?
- What questions is an employer likely to ask regarding disability issues and what areas may cause concern?

For most people a job interview can be a daunting experience especially when confidence levels are low and experience of work is limited. Practice of interview techniques and role playing exercises can help and lots of support and re-assurance can boost confidence levels. Due to reasons of disability a person may not have good communication skills and may not be able to control hand/leg movements. Contacting the employer prior to or after interview may be useful or indeed essential[2].

(iv) Dealing with Objections

Be prepared for objections from the employer as there is the possibility of being turned down. Never take rejection personally. In reality, an employer's lack of knowledge and lack of awareness of Supported Employment job seekers may make them apprehensive about engaging with Supported Employment. By acknowledging their concerns and dealing with them in a professional manner, the majority of objections can be overcome. A good Supported Employment service provider can offer staff training and provide an advisory and guidance service on matters relating to employment and disability.

(v) Agreement

Ensure the goal for the meeting is achieved and any further action to be taken is agreed with the potential employer. Examples of this could be:

- Employer will advise of vacancies as they occur in the future
- The employer will meet with you to explore and review with you the range of jobs in their company in order to see what opportunities may be suitable
- To agree contact in the future regarding mutually benefiting opportunities
- To agree the next step in matching a job seeker with an existing job opportunity

3. Job Analysis

When a suitable job has been identified, a Job Analysis is carried out to determine the skills needed.

The Job Analysis should include:

- Job duties
- Task analysis
- Key features of the job – physical, cognitive, emotional, environmental, etc
- Productivity required
- Quality standards required

[2] For more useful tips how to help the job seeker preparing for the interview see also Ryan, D.J. (2004): Job Search Handbook for People with disabilities, 2nd edition. Jist Works, Indianapolis, p. 161-194

- Wages available
- Hours/days of work
- Accessibility of the job
- Health and safety considerations
- Company culture
- Worksite environment
- Social aspects of the job site
- Opportunities for providing support on the job
- Potential for organising natural support
- Transport considerations

The Job Analysis document is then used as the baseline to match a job seeker to the job. This is a "live document" and can be open to change depending on the requirement of the employer.

4. Job Matching

To determine if there is a match between the job seeker and the actual job, the following should be considered:

- Can the job seeker complete the tasks, or is there a need to adjust the job, or provide training?
- Does the job reflect the ambitions of the job seeker?
- Will assistive technology and/or adaptations be needed and can they be organised/ funded?
- Is the job seeker available for the hours required by the Employer?
- Does the job seeker "fit" within the work site?
- Does the job seeker accept the potential implications in terms of their social welfare benefit payment or pension?
- What is the anticipated future of the job, is it temporary, long term or permanent?
- Can the job seeker meet the expectations of the employer, and is a period of Work Experience needed to clarify this? In some cases, a Job Taster or a Work Experience Placement may be a useful and worthwhile activity for both the job seeker and the employer.
- Is support available when needed by both the job seeker and the employer?
- Does transport and accessibility need to be addressed?

A period of Work Experience Placement can last for a number of weeks, while a Job Taster or Job Shadow should last between 1 day and 1 week. The time period, and the responsibilities of the job seeker, employer and the Employment Support Worker must be agreed at the outset .

5. Secure the Job

Once the Job Match has been achieved, the following responsibilities and expectations should be agreed:

- Working hours and the rate of pay
- Provision of support, and who will provide it
- Productivity expected
- Quality expected
- Responsibilities of the employer, the co-worker(s), the job seeker and the Employment Support Worker in relation to the support requirements
- A review procedure may be identified and agreed to ensure the continued success of the job match

On the completion of this agreement, a contract of employment is drawn up and signed by both the job seeker and the employer. It may also be useful to have an informal agreement between the employer/employee and the Supported Employment service in relation to what support will be provided.

Timescales

It is very difficult to apply a time scale to any aspect of the Supported Employment process. However it is important to have scheduled reviews to ensure that progress is being made. Each case is individual but the first review should take place no later than a month after commencement of the job; dates for further reviews can then be agreed. Whilst accepting there are no defined timescales, it is important to find a job as quickly as possible; however this depends greatly on the following factors:

- The availability of a suitable job
- The number of other people who are looking for similar jobs
- Whether the job seeker knows the type of job he or she wants
- The caseload of the Employment Support Worker
- Social Welfare system
- Accessibility issues
- The social awareness of employers
- The support available to the job seeker outside of the Supported Employment network
- The availability of transport

Tips for Effective Job Finding and Employer Engagement

This How to Guide was developed by practitioners for practitioners. Therefore the listed "Useful Tips" and "Things to Avoid" should help readers to benefit from the authors´ experience and knowledge.

Useful Tips:

- Know and involve the job seeker
- Always get the job seeker's consent to allow you to pursue the process
- Always keep the job seeker at the centre of the process
- Know your potential employers
- Encourage employers with experience of Supported Employment to talk with other employers
- Make sure that every person involved has a clear understanding of their role
- If the job seeker is agreeable, involve the family
- Develop a knowledge of all the incentives and schemes available for employers, and be aware of how they impact on both job seekers and the employers
- Be honest with the job seeker and the employer in relation to the support needed and the levels that can be provided
- Always do what you promise and meet deadlines
- Ensure that support is available when it is needed
- Portray a professional approach at all times, use a good standard of promotional material, business cards and brochures etc
- Keep up to date with the details of the jobs advertised
- Where possible, support the job seeker to carry out their job search

Things to Avoid:

- Do not oversell the job seeker, the employer or the service
- Do not leave the job seeker, the employer or the co-workers without the support required
- Do not assume anything about either the job seeker or the employer
- Do not over protect the job seeker
- Do not get involved with employers who may not provide suitable worksites or appropriate jobs
- Do not allow the process to be more important than the job seeker

Reflective Questions

The following questions are intended to initiate further discussions and should help practitioners and Employment Support Workers to reflect their methods and approaches:

- Is it better to have a dedicated 'Job Finder', specifically working to find jobs and other staff to support the job seeker – or should Employment Support Workers carry out both roles?
- What are the parameters of the role of the Employment Support Worker at the stages of "Job Finding" and "Employer Engagement" and how can you ensure to stay within these parameters?
- What are the issues to consider when deciding whether to accompany a job seeker to a job interview with a prospective employer?
- What are the skills required for an Employment Support Worker to be an effective job finder?
- What makes a good employer for Supported Employment?
- What are the advantages and disadvantages of developing an Employer Network?
- What are the possible learning aspects of the job seeker and how do you ensure them?

Relevant EUSE Position Papers:

- Job Finding
- On and Off the Job Support
- Working with Employers
- Supported Employers for Employers
- Work Experience Placements

Relevant EUSE How To Guides:

- Vocational Profiling

HOW TO GUIDE:
On and Off the Job Support

Introduction

Everyone requires support when starting a new job. The provision of good support on and off the job is crucial for many people with disabilities or other disadvantages to obtain and maintain paid employment in the open labour market.

On and Off Job Support is stage 5 in the 5 Stage Process of Supported Employment. Effective support on and off the job is one of the core elements of Supported Employment which makes it different from traditional placement services. Research has proven that supported work sites are more stable than unsupported work sites of the same people with disabilities[1].

[1] Doose, S. (2007): Unterstützte Beschäftigung – Berufliche Integration auf lange Sicht. Lebenshilfe Verlag, Marburg

On and off the job support is related both to starting a new job and maintaining the job over a period of time. The support that is provided is dependent on the individual needs of the employee. Some people need support to learn a new task in the company and prefer to have an Employment Support Worker regularly on the job site while others need support to take over a new professional role or deal with issues with co-workers and prefer to receive job support outside the work place.

To define the appropriate type and level of support, the Employment Support Worker should consult with the employee, employer, co-workers, and selected individuals involved in the employee's life. This should be done regularly to ensure that the support is effective and valued. It is important to make the role of the Employment Support Worker clear and transparent for all people involved.

Where and when the support should be provided and by whom is dependant on the employees' needs and the employers' resources. The amount of support available on the work site varies from company to company. The Employment Support Worker should only give support on the job when the natural support available in the company is insufficient to meet the needs of the employee. This also applies to support provided off the job. The Employment Support Worker should try to foster natural support outside the workplace, i.e. referring the employee to professionals who can help with economic or family matters, language problems, mental health issues etc.

In addition to supporting the employee directly, the Employment Support Worker should also give support to the co-workers and supervisors in the company. This form of support can assist the co-workers to train and support the new employee and the employer to make company procedures accessible for persons with disabilities or other disadvantages. Effective Supported Employment will recognise the company requirements and provide guidance for adaptations and changes that facilitate the successful employment of people with different abilities.

When the type and level of support has been defined, it should be documented in an individual action plan which should state who is responsible for what actions and the timescale. The plan should be agreed upon by all parties involved. The plan should be revised and updated regularly according to the employees' development and current needs.

Process and Methodology

The following model indicates the action steps that are suggested to provide good support to an employee with a disability or other disadvantage. During the whole process, the Employment Support Worker will have to be conscious that time and the level of support required is dependent on the employee, the co-workers, the employer and their needs.

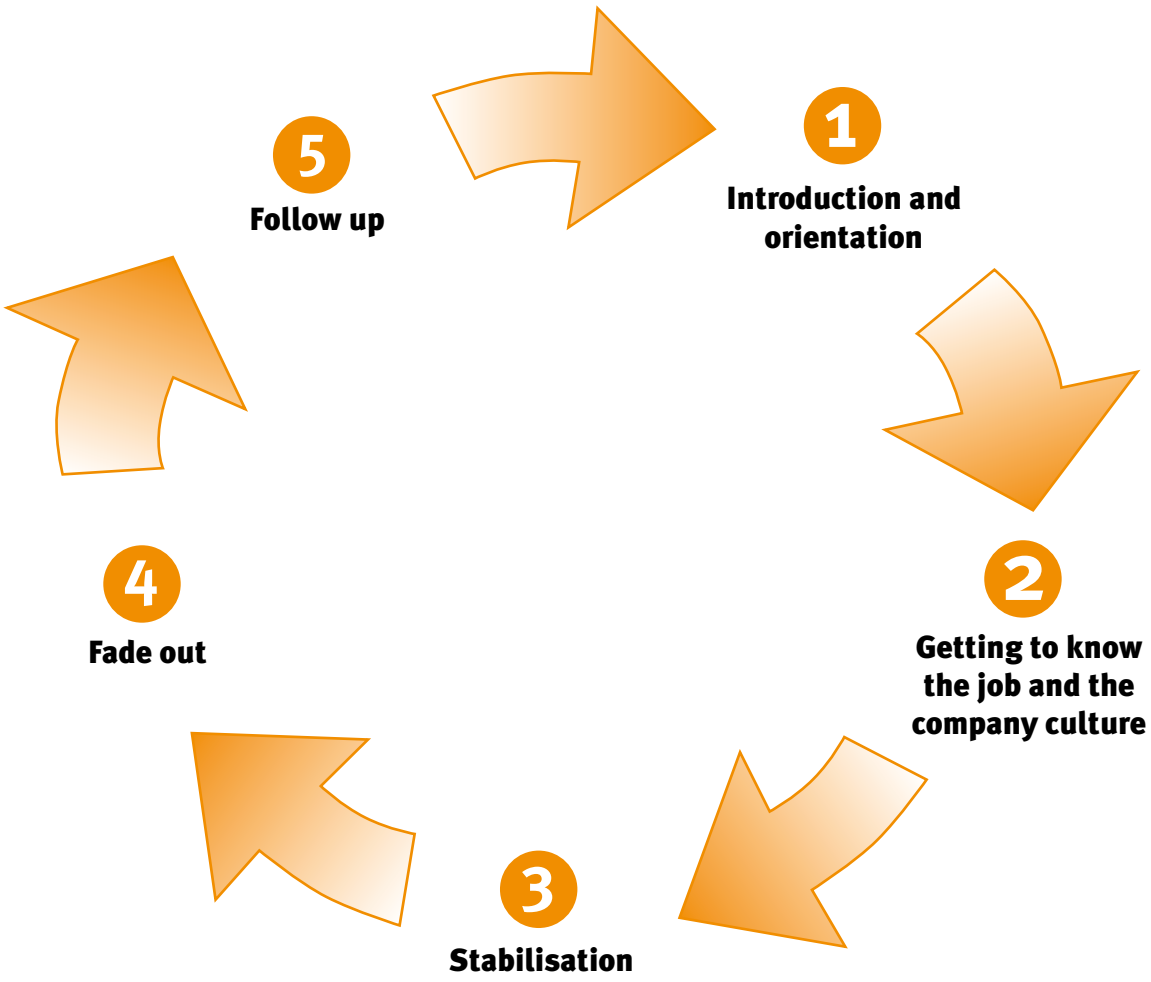


Figure 1: *The process of job support*

1. Introduction and Orientation

The introduction and orientation phase starts when the employee begins to work in the company. The goal of this phase is that the employee is introduced to the co-workers and supervisors. The employee is informed about his/her expected tasks and important aspects of the company. At the end of this phase an individual action plan of the required training and job support should be agreed.

The job support could be viewed in the context of diversity management. The general question is how the company can accommodate people with different abilities and needs so that they can work successfully and feel valued as part of the organisation. The employee is supported to participate in all regular employee introduction, probation, performance and development procedures. Job support assists the co-workers to train and support the new employee as much as possible, the employer to make company procedures accessible for persons with disabilities and the employee to take over a new professional role and to develop his or her potential.

From early in the process, the Employment Support Worker should be looking to foster natural supports. For example, a co-worker in the company can be asked to act as a mentor in order to facilitate the inclusion of the new employee. The mentor should take on the task voluntarily and have the required social and professional skills. A mentoring system could be a valuable tool that the company could use to include all new employees in the company. This is natural supports.

The Employment Support Worker needs to involve the employee, employer, co-workers, and selected individuals involved in the employee's life to define what supports they will require. If there are problems in the employees personal life (i.e. regarding health, housing, economic issues, family matters or other obstacles) the Employment Support Worker should refer to specialists for professional help with these problems.

In order to make a detailed action plan the Employment Support Worker should define the gap between the employee's current skills and the job requirements. When the employee knows his/her tasks and the employer has outlined the support/training normally given, the Employment Support Worker and the employee should examine and discuss the tasks. The employee should, in as much detail as possible, try to explain how much help he/she will require in addition to the normal support given by the company. The employee should say how, and by whom he would like to have the extra support/training. The Employment Support Worker and the employee should then have a meeting with the employer to discuss how and by whom the extra support on the job site should be given; these discussions develop an Individual Action Plan.

The Individual Action Plan should be detailed and should state who is responsible for what actions and the timescale. This plan should address work issues as well as personal issues that could affect the employee's performance at work. The roles and tasks of all involved parties should be noted and communicated to everyone. If there are any areas for concern or improvement, these should also be noted and the individual(s) responsible for working on these areas should be informed. The Employment Support Worker could use positive examples from previous situations to address any issues.

There will be continuous reflection during the support process. This important element requires the Employment Support Worker to communicate with relevant parties to ensure that the support is effective and needed. During this period the Employment Support Worker should build trusting, professional relationships with all stakeholders, thus ensuring that everyone is happy and feels supported. Care must be taken to ensure that any support strategies and adaptations that the Employment Support Worker implements, must fit to the company culture.

2. Getting to know the job and the company culture

In this phase the emphasis is on learning the task, building working relationships with co-workers and getting a greater understanding of the company culture. One goal of this phase is that the new employee can perform the task according to the company standards and his/her abilities. Another goal is that the employee is accepted as a valued co-worker and included in the work team.

The Employment Support Worker can do an initial task analysis to outline who is the best person to inform and train the employee to perform a certain task. In some cases the Employment Support Worker will work on-site with the employee while in other situations the mentor/co-worker or other persons in the company will be the best person to demonstrate the role.

The following questions are essential in completing the task analysis:

- What are the steps of the task?
- What is the order of the steps?
- What is the content of the task in the work process?
- Where are contact points with other co-workers?
- What is the usual time frame for the task?
- What material is needed for the task?
- Is there a perfect (or personalised) way of doing the task in the company?
- What are the potential problems?
- How do I know that the task is finished successfully?

For training of new tasks, the regular procedures of the company should be used as much as possible and made accessible to the employee. The Employment Support Worker assists the co-workers to train and support the new employee as much as is practicable. The mentor can take an important role in this phase as an expert of the tasks, the company procedures and possibilities for adaptations. The Employment Support Worker coordinates the process based on the individual action plan, organises meetings with all the parties involved and makes sure that the employee receives the support needed.

It is important also to assist with the facilitation of social inclusion. This should be done in a subtle way that is determined by the employee and the culture of the company. The mentor could play a main role in this process. Where possible, the employee should receive training and coaching in social codes and social skills that are essential to the job. This can be done through role play or peer support.

It is important to make all aspects of the company accessible and encourage the employee to regularly get involved in the company process. This means that the employee should attend those meetings that are natural and necessary for his/her job, even if this means having an interpreter or requiring someone to take notes, etc. This will ensure that the employee gets a better understanding of what is going on in the company.

The Employment Support Worker uses their observations in the work place as a basis of feedback for the purpose of development. This can also be used for problem solving. On the strength of an effective Vocational Profile, it is anticipated that the right person will be matched with the right task. However during this phase it is sometimes necessary to adjust the tasks to the employee's abilities and needs. It will be an advantage for the Employment Support Worker to be in the company for this to happen effectively and to work closely with the mentor, co-workers and the employer. Strategies for adjusting the job tasks include; job carving; job stripping and job enrichment[2]:

Job carving is when the tasks of the new employee are taken from the job descriptions of different existing jobs in the company. In that way a new job is created that fits to the abilities of the supported employee. The other employees in the company have more time to do other tasks, which they are qualified for or better suited to do.

Job stripping is taking away some tasks from the regular job description that are difficult to do for the employee because of his disability, e.g. reading or carrying heavy objects. In exchange, the person might take over other tasks from his/her co-workers.

Job enrichment is the adding of new tasks to the job description according to abilities of the employee or to foster inclusion in the company, e.g. in a job with little contact with co-workers during the day, the task of collecting mail in the company is added to allow the person to have more contact with co-workers.

[2] Griffin, C./Hammis, D./Geary, T. (2007): The Job Developer's Handbook. Paul H. Brookes Publishing Co., Baltimore.

If the job match is not correct or the role cannot be changed or developed, the Employment Support Worker, in consultation with the employee, should look to switch to other tasks, be transferred to another division, or in the end change the workplace.

The role of the Employment Support Worker will also be that of a mediator between the employee, employer and co-workers. The issues may vary and it is imperative that the Employment Support Worker maintains their professionalism at all times.

Different forms of support

On and off the job support can take place in many forms. It is the responsibility of the Employment Support Worker to ensure that the type of support is designed to meet the needs of the employee and is acceptable to the employer. The Employment Support Worker should assist the employee to make informed and realistic choices about how, when, where and by whom the support shall be provided.

Consultancy is often used in providing support to the employee and the employer. The Employment Support Worker has a greater level of expertise in particular areas than the employee and the employer. By making knowledge and information available to both the employee and the employer, the Employment Support Worker will assist them in making informed choices about what they wish to do.

Counselling is a more intensive and longer lasting form of support than consultancy. Counselling is an interactive process which has the aim of helping the employee to move towards problem solving. Counselling as a support form is often offered to people who have emotional or mental health issues. In the counselling process the Employment Support Worker supports the person in focusing on the successes, and redefining the "failures" as opportunities for learning and improvement.

Advice as to where further information can be obtained is one form of support that the Employment Support Worker should offer in areas where they do not have the expertise. Support is given by providing contact names, addresses and telephone numbers of the experts and sometimes actually helping them to make the first contact.

Learning the employee new skills can be done in several ways. Some people will benefit from the traditional learning methods offered by the employer. People with moderate or severe learning disabilities however will often need individualised, systematic instruction in order to learn the skills of the job.

Training refers to the repeated practice that is necessary to improve a skill. It may be necessary to improve in terms of the quality of job performance or in terms of the speed of performance. Training leads to improvement through continual evaluation of performance, feedback and adjustment. Some people have poor self-evaluation skills and are unable to provide self-feedback necessary for improvement. In these situations, the support of a trainer can be invaluable in evaluating the completed product, giving feedback about what worked well and what changes are needed and in monitoring the speed of work.

Assistance on the job can be necessary on a long-term basis for performing certain tasks e.g. reading and travel assistance for a blind person, a sign interpreter in meetings for deaf people or a personal assistant for a person with a severe physical disability.

Adaptations and Restructuring are sometimes required to enable the job seeker to perform well in the job. Employment Support Workers should be able to identify suitable tools, assistive technology, aids and adaptations for the employee because of their disability. While some of the adaptations might include special technical equipment for people who are hearing or sight impaired, some tools are rather simple but can be effective. Adaptations can include:

- Help for structuring (symbols, photos, colours instead of writing)
- Supports for orientation (task flow charts, plan, task cards, to do list)
- Technical tools (such as a calculator, talking clock, dictaphone, etc.)
- Help for remembering
- Self evaluation tools (such as self control tools, checklists and competence grids, work diary)

Restructuring the job may be necessary for some employees who are unable to perform the tasks independently and use the same method as other employees. People with physical disabilities can be supported by adaptations of the tasks. This might be done by changing the method i.e. doing the steps of the task in a different order or putting in new steps – or of introducing aids, such as specialised tools and equipment.

3. Stabilisation

This phase starts after the employee learns to perform all the tasks correctly. The goal of this phase is the further development of the employee's skills and relationships with the co-workers. It is important to address potential problems as soon as possible[3].

There should be regular meetings or talks with the employee and the employer. Discussions could include the evaluation of current performance and establishing new goals, with the Employment Support Worker reviewing the action plan continuously.

During this period it may be helpful for the Employment Support Worker to undertake a job evaluation which could include asking the following questions:

- Have the support strategies been helpful for the employee and the co-workers?
- Have the goals of the support been reached?
- What should be changed?
- What support is still needed?

4. Fade Out

The aim of this phase is to reduce the level of job support. Experience shows that employees with disabilities and disadvantages have very different support needs on the job. Some employees may require it for many years, while others just need support to get started with their work. In some countries the duration of job support is limited by the funding agency, whilst the concept of Supported Employment states that the support should be available as long as necessary[4].

[3] Corden, A./Thornton, P. (2002): Employment Programmes for Disabled People - Lessons from research evaluations. Department for Work and Pensions In-house Report, Social Research Branch, Department for Work and Pensions, London.

[4] Beyer, S./Goodere, L./Kilsby, M. (1996): Costs and Benefits of Supported Agencies. Findings From A National Survey. Employment Service Research Series R37. Stationery Office, London.

Nevertheless it is important to plan to fade out the external job support as much as possible. This can be done by encouraging independence at all times and involving co-workers e.g. as mentors. The best type of support is invisible support, the Employment Support Worker should be available but not in the frontline. The employee needs to be able to develop and should be seen and valued for their skills from the earliest point.

At the end of this phase the employee, employer and Employment Support Worker should agree on the form and level of support that is required in the future and what action to take in case of any problems or crisis.

5. Follow up

In this phase the Employment Support Worker should be available when needed, but it is also important to actively stay in touch and follow up any issues with the employee and the company as agreed before. This allows the Employment Support Worker to identify potential problems or changes before they become a crisis. Even if the job has to be terminated, an early contact with the Employment Support Worker allows the opportunity to search for a new job immediately.

The Employment Support Worker can also assist the employee to plan for lifelong learning and career development. The employee should be offered support to participate in internal and external training and career development opportunities. Support and assistance should also be available to the employee should they want to move to a better position in the company or to change the job. Supported Employment services should see career development and job progression as an integral part of the Supported Employment process and seek to resource this activity appropriately. It is important to work in partnership with employers and educational services to broker learning opportunities that help to empower individuals so that they can take advantage of wider vocational and social opportunities through higher personal aspirations.

Moreover it is good practice within Supported Employment to maintain a positive partnership and healthy contact with employers. There are different, creative ways of the Supported Employment agency to involve employers regularly in a positive way. Satisfied employers are a valuable source for new jobs or referrals.

Tips for On and Off the Job Support

This How to Guide was developed by practitioners for practitioners. Therefore the listed "Useful Tips" and "Things to Avoid" should help readers to benefit from the authors´ experience and knowledge.

Useful Tips:

- Be sure that everyone understands what their role is and that you clearly understand what your own role is
- Be sure that the employer and the employee know how, when and where to contact you
- Be careful how you give advice – ask the questions and let the employee find the answers themselves
- Respect the employer's workplace and make appointments for any visits
- Show an interest in the workplace and the people working there
- On and Off the Job Support is not therapy. Try to ensure that the person has other supports in place for different aspects of their lives

Things to Avoid:

- Avoid putting your values on the person
- Avoid doing anything for the person that they can do for themselves
- Avoid visiting employees without good reason. Keep the support relevant and structured depending on the employee and employer

Reflective Questions

The following questions are intended to initiate further discussion and should help practitioners and Employment Support Workers to reflect their methods and approaches.

- What is the role of the Employment Support Worker during this process?
- When providing support, it is important to ask yourself, how would I like to be supported on the job?
- When supporting an employee, how can you ensure that you do not put your values across as theirs? Have I respected their values throughout the process?
- As an Employment Support Worker, what role do I have in providing support to the employee and employer?
- How do I deal with conflicts of interest? If the employee no longer wants support or if you can no longer provide support due to funding and the person needs support.
- What are the issues I must address in trying to facilitate career development or job progression?

Relevant EUSE Position Papers:

- On and Off the Job Support
- Career Development and Progression

HOW TO GUIDE:
The Qualities of a Good Employment Support Worker

1. Introduction

Within the activities of Supported Employment there are a wide range of tasks and roles expected of its workforce. The traditional approach to the Supported Employment model is to provide consistent support from customer engagement and referral through to independent working wherever possible. This consistency is important to developing and maintaining relationships and maximising skills development and social integration within the workplace.

Some employment services split the various tasks into specialist roles carried out by different staff, each with their own job description. This paper covers support offered throughout the customer journey and is intended to offer guidance to commissioners and service managers on the recruitment of employment support workers.

In this paper the term Employment Support Worker is used to denote the role of supporting a job seeker from referral to independent working in the open labour market. The term 'job coach' is often used in this context but the European Union of Supported Employment defines this role as specific to providing in-work support and is therefore only applicable to a part of the overall customer journey.

Employment Support Workers need to have the ability and skills to undertake customer assessments; provide vocational information and guidance; develop personalised action plans; engage with and canvass employers at different management levels; have an awareness of risk assessment and workplace health and safety; provide initial and on-going training around personal and vocational skills; and have a strong knowledge of the wide range of discrete support services and be able to gain access to this where required.

Figure 1: *Illustration of the various roles associated with employment support*

Staff may enter the profession from a wide range of backgrounds and may or may not have relevant qualifications. Employment Support Workers should be able to gain specialist qualifications according to their national qualification frameworks but a qualification should not necessarily be a pre-requisite to entering the profession. Indeed, having the right attitudes is the most important attribute of Employment Support Workers.

Some agencies commonly recruit staff from within the social care environment but there is anecdotal evidence that knowledge of disability issues can be acquired whereas the attitudes cannot always be easily taught[1]. The list of job roles described in figure 1 does not include that of disability expert and it may be that focussing during recruitment on

[1] Conley. R.W. (2003): Supported employment in Maryland - successes and issues. Mental Retardation, 41, 4, p. 237-249.

the basic attitudes required, will lead to selecting staff members who can acquire the skills and knowledge but already have a strong underlying set of social values and core beliefs.

This assumption opens up a wider pool of potentially effective Employment Support Workers. Many agencies have reported the successful recruitment of staff from commercial or sales backgrounds. There is an argument to suggest that people who have not worked in disability support services are more open to ideas and have higher expectations of the job seeker.

A range of professional qualifications are being offered across Europe but there has been little pan-European discussion about the requirements of the workforce. This paper is intended to stimulate discussion around the content of workforce qualifications and exactly what makes a good Employment Support Worker.

This paper discusses the personal qualities and characteristics, skills and knowledge that Employment Support Workers are expected to bring to Supported Employment. It also discusses issues related to the role of the organisation in employing and supporting its workforce. It must be recognised that each country has distinct legislative and cultural contexts and there may be differing expectations as to the roles and responsibilities of Employment Support Workers. Attached to this guide is a template of an example of a Job Description[2] for an Employment Support Worker that may be of use to Supported Employment service managers when they are considering recruiting new Supported Employment staff.

2. Personal Qualities and Characteristics

The job of Employment Support Worker involves a wide range of roles. The worker may have to be an assessor, salesman, trainer, coordinator, counsellor, mentor and negotiator all combined in one person. Given that it is rare to find someone who has previous experience of all of the roles, there needs to be a debate about what sort of previous experience is potentially valuable to the Supported Employment sector. It may be that personal attributes or attitudes are more relevant than, and just as important as, previous work experience.

Those job seekers who are most disadvantaged in the labour market may have grown up with low expectations of working. Sometimes, their carers, teachers and support workers may not have fully supported their work aspirations. The Employment Support Worker might have to address these low expectations and it is vital that they have a clear focus on achieving an appropriate and sustainable job outcome for that job seeker. The Employment Support Worker must believe that the job seeker can achieve employment.

[2] See Appendix - Template - Job Description - Employment Support Worker

An Employment Support Worker has to liaise over time with a range of stakeholders, including job seekers, employers, co-workers and support services. They have to earn the trust of others in order to achieve positive outcomes and this is often dependent on the quality of relationships that are built and maintained. They may have to deal with sensitive issues and so approachability, tact and credibility are essential.

Employment Support Workers are responsible for mentoring job seekers and employers and so must demonstrate a high level of personal ethics and principles. They must be able to demonstrate a passion for their role and be creative as they seek to work in partnership with others to overcome barriers.

A good Employment Support Worker will seek to empower the job seeker; treating them with respect and showing dignity by encouraging the maximum involvement in their individual plans. Stereotypes can be avoided by using a person-centred approach and taking full account of each person's individuality.

High levels of customer service are vital. It may take years for a Supported Employment service to gain a strong reputation amongst employers but this can quickly be undone if unsatisfactory staff activity leads to poor levels of customer satisfaction. It is important to pay attention to the finer detail of services offered. Going that bit extra in terms of customer service also drives repeat business with employers and other partners.

Staff must be able to work within the context of service targets and must take responsibility for their part in achieving those targets. Many staff from a commercial background thrive under this pressure.

Supported Employment agencies should have some form of quality assurance process and Employment Support Workers must be able to understand how their actions contribute to the quality of the service. They must have insight into their role in generating and maintaining quality services and be able to contribute to the overall quality of services by setting a good example to colleagues.

Stamina and persistence are useful qualities for Employment Support Workers. It can be very disheartening when Employment Support Workers get continual negative responses from employers when they are searching for job opportunities. It is important that service managers recognise the potential impact of this on their workers and provide appropriate support.

Employment Support Workers require regular opportunities to discuss their work with colleagues and line managers. This can be achieved through formal supervision and appraisal systems. This support is important in maintaining the motivation and drive of individual staff. In some countries, internal and external counselling augments this support.

Finally, Employment Support Workers must also be flexible. We are increasingly moving towards a 24 hour economy and support may be required at weekends and outside the 9-5 hours of many office jobs. This has implications for contractual terms and conditions of Supported Employment staff.

3. Skills

As previously discussed, the quality of relationships is a key indicator of success and it is crucial that Employment Support Workers have the communication and interpersonal skills needed to initiate and maintain relationships with a wide variety of people from company directors to shop floor workers, from job seekers to their family members/carers.

Staff must be prepared to network widely and initiate discussions with employers, partner agencies and other stakeholders to create the innovation and opportunities that are needed to offer a high quality service to customers.

A successful Employment Support Worker must be able to inspire confidence and have the skills to negotiate job opportunities. They can only do this if they have a strong belief that success is only a matter of raising expectations, overcoming barriers and identifying solutions. They must be able to encourage, inspire, cajole and enforce and the personal qualities needed for this should not be underestimated. Indeed, the ability to demonstrate these skills should be actively tested during staff recruitment and selection.

It is impossible to be an expert in every vocational area and yet services place job seekers into jobs and work experience opportunities across all vocational sectors. The Employment Support Worker must be able to quickly identify the essential and critical components of each job role so that they can offer discrete training or supplement the training offered by employers.

Good observation and analysis skills can help with the early resolution of any difficulties in the workplace. These skills are vital to the successful integration of a disabled employee and are greatly enhanced by having a detailed knowledge of task analysis, systematic instruction and an understanding of the relevant practical issues.

Employment Support Workers may need to support change management within employing companies. They must inspire the confidence of company management and should be able to collect and analyse data and prepare written reports to a high standard.

Employment Support Workers may have to negotiate with different levels of management in order to arrange work experience placements, secure employment, negotiate reasonable adjustments to job duties, deal with harassment issues, enlist support for addressing development plans, support co-workers and so on. An Employment Support Worker may have to manage the different perspectives and expectations of the employee, employer and family members and so they must be able to negotiate

and resolve conflicts to everyone's satisfaction[3].

The social integration of disadvantaged employees is critical to successful outcomes and a good Employment Support Worker will have the skills to foster this without making themselves the centre of attention.

Equally, Employment Support Workers need to be able to deal with sensitive matters such as disciplinary procedures, deficits in health and safety practice, personal hygiene issues and the disclosure of confidential information in a way that is respectful but firm.

Workers are often operating on their own for long periods and must be able to structure and manage their time effectively. Being able to organise and prioritise are key skills for Employment Support Workers.

4. Knowledge

In order to succeed, the Employment Support Worker must be able to network in a complex working arena combining the interest of the job seeker and the employer by finding the necessary support from the service network.

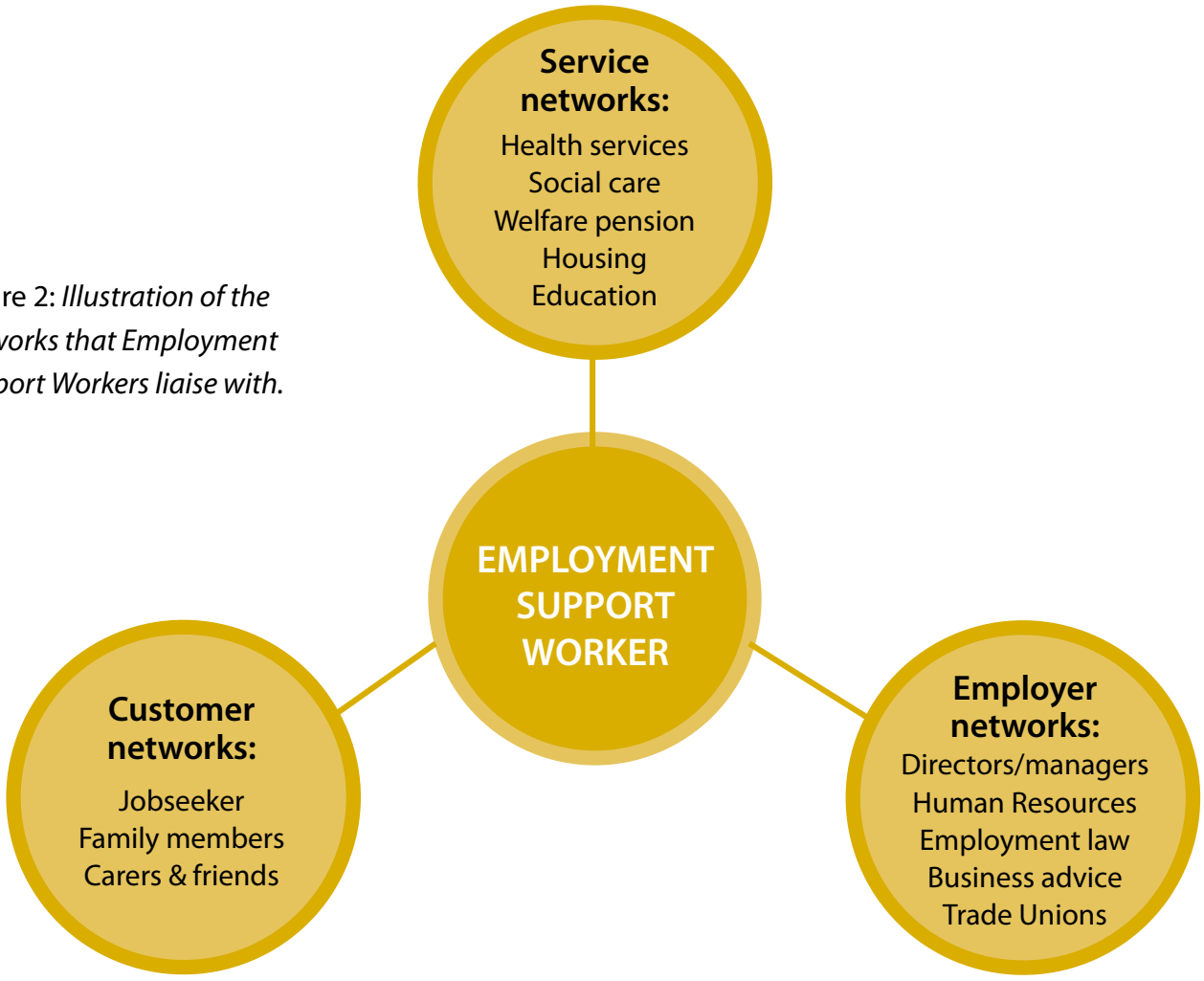


Figure 2: *Illustration of the networks that Employment Support Workers liaise with.*

[3] Everson, J.M. (1991): Supported Employment Personnel: An Assessment of their Self-Reported Training Needs, Educational Backgrounds, and Previous Employment Experiences. Journal of Association of Persons with Severe Handicaps, 16, 140-145.

The worker has to satisfy the needs of both the job seeker and the employer, both of whom are key customers for Supported Employment agencies.

It is not essential that incoming staff have high levels of knowledge of disability or personal experience of working within disability services. This is knowledge that can be acquired through induction and ongoing development and that is critical to the success of a good Employment Support Worker.

Increasingly, it is important that staff have an overview of the complexity and mechanics of welfare benefit entitlement and in-work financial supports so that they can offer advice on better-off calculations and maximise income levels for job seekers/employees. Staff need to know how to access specialist advice around the detailed financial implications of working.

They must also have an awareness of employment law and anti-discrimination legislation in their respective country because they will need to be alert to issues of exploitation, harassment and discrimination within the workplace.

Services have a duty of care to their job seekers when placing them in a workplace. Health and safety is primarily the employer's responsibility but Employment Support Workers should ensure that employers are meeting their health and safety and insurance responsibilities and that any risks have been assessed to ensure that the employee is able to work safely. This may involve supporting employers to meet their responsibilities.

Employers may have little experience of successfully recruiting significantly disabled employees. They may be influenced by media stereotypes and some of the common myths around health and safety, sickness levels and support needs. The Employment Support Worker must be able to give relevant information to the employer, and co-workers if appropriate. They must be aware of legislation and equal opportunities principles to work against these stereotypes and find solutions.

There are technical aspects to the role of Employment Support Worker. Staff must be aware of the eligibility issues, data and reporting needs and practical requirements of funding measures. They must be able to compile concise but comprehensive reports, maintain database information, record minutes of meetings and communicate action plans to stakeholders.

Perhaps one of the most important requirements is the awareness that the job seeker/employee has a private life outside of services. They have a right to expect their privacy to be respected and Employment Support Workers must recognise the limits of their support and involvement. They must be able to respect an individual's confidentiality. They are not the best friend of the job seeker/employee and passion and commitment must be tempered by understanding the boundaries of their role.

Many disabled employees experience a reduction in social care support once they start working and can become reliant on Employment Support Workers for general advice and guidance. It is important that the Employment Support Worker understands the

range of specialist and general provision available locally from other services and can access them as needed.

Tips for Supported Employment Service Managers

This How to Guide was developed by practitioners for practitioners. Therefore the listed "Useful Tips" and "Things to Avoid" should help readers to benefit from the authors´ experience:

Useful Tips:

- Implement a mentoring system using experienced staff to ensure good quality induction for new staff
- Provide opportunities for ongoing career development
- It can be a lonely job – support your staff
- Ensure supervision and appraisal systems are in place
- Get out with your staff to see what life is like from their point of view
- Support Supported Employment Workers when they are feeling demotivated
- Encourage peer support
- Provide feedback on situations and achievements to the Employment Support Worker
- Celebrate success, give praise

Things to Avoid:

- Avoid emphasising the need for formal qualifications and/or experience rather than personality and soft skills
- Avoid that heavy workloads means reduced time for team discussion, problem-solving and learning

Reflective Questions

The following questions are intended to initiate further discussions and should help service managers to reflect their methods and approaches:

- When recruiting staff what is the most important quality? Experience, formal qualification or personality?
- Where should you advertise to ensure you attract the best possible candidates?
- How can you make sure that your staff have the necessary soft skills and attitudes?
- How can you ensure a good quality induction for new staff?
- What are appropriate ways to support your staff to cope with the challenges of their job?

TEMPLATE - Job Description *(for example purposes only)*

Job Title - Employment Support Worker

Job Purpose

Provision of a Supported Employment service for people with disabilities and health issues adhering to the 5 stage process of the Supported Employment model and the values and standards of Supported Employment.

Maintain and manage an active caseload ensuring that the values and principles of Supported Employment are upheld.

Main Duties

Client

1. Identify and attract suitable clients for Supported Employment.
2. Work with clients on a one to one basis using a person centred approach.
3. Compile a vocational profile which will establish the client's skills and expectations and identify barriers and support needs. Develop an Employment Action Plan.
4. Identify suitable jobs through discussions with both client and employers.
5. Organise time limited Work Experience Placements when appropriate and in accordance with client needs. Provide support and monitor progress.
6. Provide information regarding welfare benefits and the financial implications of paid employment.
7. Provide appropriate support and training to enable clients to secure and sustain paid employment.
8. Provide aftercare through ongoing support.

Networking

1. Develop a network of contacts and build relationships with Health Professionals, Social Services, Labour Offices, Welfare Benefit experts etc to assist with the referral, assessment and support of job seekers.
2. Work with employers to develop employment opportunities through a range of support initiatives.
3. Raise awareness of Supported Employment through presentations, attendance at meetings/events and marketing.

Develop and awareness of:

1. Disability and employment issues.
2. Topics relating to employment including relevant Government employment programmes
3. The current local job market and employer needs
4. Recruitment and selection techniques
5. Income maximisation including welfare benefits
6. Retention and Redeployment issues.

GLOSSARY

Benefit

A payment made in accordance with a social insurance policy or a public assistance scheme. Welfare (Disability) Benefit systems vary throughout Europe.

Client

Customer of a professional service provider – customer of Supported Employment. Yet there are different approaches throughout Europe when a person definitely becomes a client this term is normally used for a person with a disability or disadvantage during the Supported Employment process. Increasingly used terms are 'job seeker' or 'employee'

Co-worker(s)

Colleagues at the workplace who can be involved in Supported Employment at different stages of the process. Supporting the individual to achieve integration at the workplace may include supporting interaction with work colleagues.

Employee

Any person hired by an employer to do a specific job. Employees receive a defined salary (minimum wage in countries where applicable) and have defined privileges. In the context of Supported Employment the term is for the client when already in a job and sometimes for co-workers. Job seekers, job tasters or persons during work experience placements are not employees.

Employer

A person, business or public body that employs workers. In the context of Supported Employment this term is used for a person, business or public body that is actively involved in the Supported Employment process in order to employ a person with a disability or disadvantage or to maintain the work for this person.

Employment Support Worker

Person working as a guide with people with a disability or disadvantage for a Supported Employment service provider throughout the 5 stages of Supported Employment. Professional backgrounds and job descriptions may differ throughout Europe as well as respective terms for Employment Support Workers in different countries.

Empowerment

Has become a popular term yet it lacks a clear definition in the social context. In general a working definition can refer to Empowerment as a process of enabling and providing

abilities (e.g. in the context of Supported Employment providing information and support to allow informed choice).

Job Coach

The term is often used to denote the role of supporting a job seeker from referral to independent working in the open labour market. EUSE Leonardo Project Partners chose the term "Employment Support Worker" to use in this context because this term better reflects that within the activities of Supported Employment there are a wide range of tasks and roles expected of its workforce. EUSE defines Job Coach as a role specific to providing in-work support and this term is therefore only applicable to a part of the Supported Employment process.

Job Finding Methods (formal/informal)

Various Job Finding Methods are used in Supported Employment in order to support the client to find work. It depends on the respective system or service provider how formal (e.g. internet database) and informal (networks, word-of mouth) methods are combined or if any emphasis is put on one or several of them.

Job Matching

Through person-centred analysis of individual strengths and needs and detailed profiling, the skills and interests of the job seeker are matched with the requirement of the job. Appropriate individual support can then be provided. Successful job matching meets both the job seeker's and employer's needs.

Job Seeker

Supported Employment client looking for a paid job in the open labour market.

Job Taster

A short, systematic and planned approach to sample different types of work. These short periods of usually unpaid work are used in the vocational profiling process for clients with little or no working experience. A job taster would be expected to last no more than one week.

Labour Market

Usually an informal market where workers find paid work, employers find willing workers, and where wage rates are determined. Labour markets may be local or national. They depend e.g. on exchange of information between employers and job seekers about wage rates and conditions of employment.

Furthermore, in the context of Supported Employment the term "open labour market" is often used to outline that "real jobs for real money" are the goal of the activities (contrary to sheltered work or unpaid work).

Mainstream Programme

A mainstream programme is a publicly funded long-term nationwide/regional Supported Employment programme. It includes regulations and standards and projects/activities have to cover all elements of Supported Employment. Nowadays, European countries with mainstream programmes include: Ireland, Sweden, Norway and Austria.

Marketing

Marketing a Supported Employment service is about finding jobs for the job-seekers. Marketing can therefore be defined as "...the management process responsible for identifying, anticipating and satisfying consumers´ requirements profitably". This part of the Supported Employment process has two main purposes: one is to market the service and the other is to market the particular individual.

Source: Leach, Steve (2002): A Supported Employment Workbook, p. 72.

Mentor

Supports a new employee and helps to forward the integration at the workplace. A mentor is usually a co-worker. Mentors are sometimes acting as contact persons for the Employment Worker.

National Minimum Wage

A minimum wage is the lowest hourly, daily or monthly wage that employers may legally pay to employees or workers. Equivalently, it is the lowest wage at which workers may sell their labour.

Source: Wikipedia

Natural Support

Support offered by the co-workers at the workplace, by employers and important others in the persons professional and private network.

Paid Employment

Paid employment jobs are those jobs where the incumbents hold explicit (written or oral) or implicit employment contracts which give them a basic remuneration which is not directly dependent upon the revenue of the unit for which they work. Persons in paid employment jobs are typically remunerated by wages and salaries, but may be paid by commission from sales.

Source: International Labour Organisation (www.ilo.org)

Person Centred Approach

According the person-centred approach, clients are their own best authority on their own experience. Clients have to be empowered (and supported) to be able to make full use of their capacities. In the context of Supported Employment, it is about assisting individuals to understand their opportunities fully so they can choose consistently within their preferences and with an understanding of the consequences of their choices (informed choice).

Recruitment

Recruitment refers to the process of attracting, screening, and selecting qualified and suitable people for a job in a business or firm.

Supported Employment

The EUSE definition Supported Employment is "Providing support to people with disabilities or other disadvantaged groups to secure and maintain paid employment in the open labour market." Whilst there are slight variations of the definition across the world, there remain three consistent elements that are fundamental to the European Supported Employment model:

1. Paid Work
2. Open Labour Market
3. On-going Support

Sheltered Workshop

Provides employment opportunities for people with disabilities or disadvantages. The word sheltered refers to a protective environment, workers can be paid or can receive benefits. Sheltered Workshops are not offering employment opportunities according to the approach of Supported Employment because these are not in the open labour market and sometimes are not paid.

United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities

The Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities is an international human rights instrument of the United Nations intended to protect the rights and dignity of persons with disabilities. Parties to the Convention are required to promote, protect, and ensure the full enjoyment of human rights by persons with disabilities and ensure that they enjoy full equality under the law. The text was adopted by the UN General Assembly on 13 December 2006.

Unpaid work

Any work for which no regular payment is received. Unpaid work such as work experience placements and voluntary work are in themselves not Supported Employment. However, it is recognised that they can be used as a progression activity towards securing paid work in the open labour market as long as they are time limited.

Vocational Profile

The vocational profile occurs at the second stage of the 5-stage Supported Employment process. It is a tool that provides a structured and goal oriented approach towards securing and maintaining employment in the open labour market within a person-centred approach. The objective is to achieve the best possible match between the job seekers' skills and support needs and the requirements of the job/employer (see also Job Matching).

Vocational Training

Vocational education or training prepares persons for jobs that are based on manual or practical activities, traditionally non-academic, and totally related to a specific vocation.

Voluntary Work

People are working on behalf of others or a particular cause without payment for their time and services. Voluntary work is generally considered an altruistic activity, but people also volunteer for their own skill development or to make contacts for possible employment. Voluntary work is not seen as Supported Employment. However, it can contribute to attain or maintain paid work in the open labour market.

Wage Subsidies

Monetary assistance granted by a government to employers to encourage them to hire more labour. There is an on-going discussion whether wage subsidies should be offered to employers or not in the context of Supported Employment to encourage them to hire a person with a disability or disadvantage.

Work Experience Placement

Working opportunity for job seeking persons to identify their job preferences, strengths, weaknesses, and support needs. Work experience placements are unpaid and can be for any amount of hours per week. A work experience placement should be time-limited to avoid exploitation of the job seeker and EUSE would recommend that 8 -12 weeks is a sufficient time period to meet the objectives of the placement.

Also referred to as internship.

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