National Disability Authority

Review of Apprenticeship

Advice to the Department of Education and Skills

# Introduction

The National Disability Authority (NDA) is the independent state body providing expert advice on disability policy and practice to the Government.

The NDA welcomes this review and in particular that the review will ‘explore the potential for connections between work-based learning and other further education and training provision.’

## Comprehensive employment strategy for disability

The National Disability Authority has been recently invited by the Government to develop a ten-year comprehensive employment strategy for people with disabilities, in partnership with relevant government departments and agencies, and to report to the Cabinet Sub Committee on Employment by end March 2014.

Apprenticeships have a role to play in building the skills and capacities of people with disabilities, and so will have a part to play in this wider jobs strategy for people with disabilities.

As with other publicly funded vocational training provision, access to apprenticeships is underpinned by equality legislation. It is unlawful to discriminate against people with disabilities in relation to employment or training, who are able to do the relevant job when reasonably accommodated to do so. These principles applied to apprenticeship mean that apprentices qualify for reasonable accommodation, and that applicants are accepted from people with disabilities who can undergo the training if reasonably accommodated to do so. Key to people with disabilities applying for and completing apprenticeships is creating awareness amongst people with disabilities that their individual support needs will be met.

# A wider approach to apprenticeship

The apprenticeship approach, combining on-the-job training with formal training, can have a much wider application outside of the skilled craft/trades to which it traditionally applied.

The National Disability Authority suggests that the new model of apprenticeship to develop from this review might cover

* A much wider range of skills and occupations across services, industry agriculture and construction
* A greater range of skill levels, from training in basic skills, to higher technological skills, through an on-the-job approach
* A range of durations, from short-duration apprenticeships (3-6 months) to the traditional 3 to 4 year apprenticeships or longer

There are particular reasons why on-the-job learning is an effective learning and training environment for people with disabilities. For example, people with intellectual disabilities can find it somewhat difficult to translate learning from a classroom context to a work context, and learn more easily in a concrete work situation. People with mental health difficulties can find learning on the job is more conducive to their recovery than attending training courses where prospects of actual work may be more uncertain.

# Apprenticeships as a route for people with disabilities

Apprenticeships offer young adults including those with disabilities, a career pathway by providing employment while the individual learns ‘on the job’. The National Disability Authority advises that consideration be given to extending the ambit of traditional apprenticeships to include the kind of ‘place and train’ models described below. Evidence shows that the ‘place and train’ is an appropriate method for many people with disabilities but in particular for learners with intellectual disabilities and those with mental health issues.[[1]](#footnote-1)

Two examples:

#### 1. Place and Train models for people with intellectual disabilities

The British Government’s **Valuing Employment Now** strategy (2009)[[2]](#footnote-2) focused on significantly increasing the opportunities for people with intellectual disabilities, especially those with moderate and severe intellectual disabilities, to get real work. A particular focus was given to a ‘place, train, and monitor’ model, with people with intellectual disabilities placed in workplaces, being supported by job coaches to settle in and acquire relevant skills.

The job coach in the ‘place, train and monitor’ model plays an essential role in breaking down work into tasks, and step by step training in tasks. This typically involves breaking tasks down into component steps for a person with intellectual disabilities. The trainer uses a prompting hierarchy to give just enough information for the person to do the job, without creating dependency. In addition, the job coach supports the person’s social integration into the workplace.

Over time, it is possible to reduce the input from the job coach in these two areas, with just occasional monitoring. In this model, the supported employment service continues to maintain a problem solving and career development brief for the individual.

### Broaden the model of apprenticeship to encompass this approach

The kinds of jobs where people with intellectual disabilities have been successfully placed include lower-skilled jobs in catering and retail, where these workers are able to make a real contribution when suitably skilled. A broadening of the model of apprenticeship to include the learning of the more basic skills involved in these kinds of work, and over a shorter period, could play a role in enabling more people with intellectual disabilities reach their potential and get a job.

## 2. Place and Train models for people with mental health issues

In the USA, UK and New Zealand a supported employment model called Individual Placement with Support has been introduced to support people with a wide range of mental health issues into work. The key principles[[3]](#footnote-3) are:

* Competitive employment is the primary goal
* This model takes a ‘place, then train’ rather than ‘train, then place’ approach.The rationale is tohelp people to get a job as quickly as possible and then support them in it, rather than lengthy pre-employment training/preparation
* Everyone who needs it is eligible for employment support
* Job search is consistent with individual preferences
* Job search is rapid: beginning within one month
* Employment specialists and clinical teams work and are located together
* Support is not time-limited
* Support is individualised to both the employer and the employee
* People are clear about their incomes on taking up work. Counselling on welfare benefits assists the person through the transition from benefits to work
* It is essential that the job search is rapid and results in a real job.[[4]](#footnote-4)

There is evidence that this approach is a successful one in securing jobs for people with mental health conditions (see Appendix 2). The ‘work first’ approach in turn is more successful in enabling people recover from episodes of mental ill-health.

# Apprenticeships in the new landscape

As the new landscape for further education and training emerges the reworked apprenticeships structure can provide a bridge from second-level education or basic training towards work. A key task in developing the comprehensive employment strategy for people with disabilities is to ensure there are clear bridges and pathways from education into employment.

The NDA would like to make the following comments.

## Key points for the new model of apprenticeships

* SOLAS will have an oversight role in apprenticeships as the coordination body for further education and training
* National and local protocols should be developed around how schools and disability services can link into local Education Training Boards and to apprenticeship and on-the-job traineeship opportunities
* The NDA would like to see a central focal point of advice for employers around any issues around employing people with disabilities, including as apprentices or trainees, which could offer guidance around issues such as reasonable accommodation or other issues that arise on the job.
* It would be useful to clarify an appropriate legal framework for apprenticeship and ‘place-and-train placements’.

# Learning from other jurisdictions

In many jurisdictions people with disabilities have been under represented in apprenticeships. In Australia, for example, they were the least represented of all equality groups. **Successful approaches to placing and supporting apprentices and trainees with disability in Australia** (Lewis, Thoresen and Cocks, 2010)[[5]](#footnote-5) describes three separate projects that examined the effective ways to support people with disabilities commencing and completing apprenticeship. Overall, it suggests that disability was not a hindrance to completion of apprenticeships or traineeships.

The key factors that assisted people with disabilities to complete successful apprenticeships were a combination of good job match, accommodating workplace, and intensive post-placement support.

The specific post-placement supports included preparing the supervisor and co-workers for:

* the arrival of the new apprentice
* dealing with any concerns
* recruiting their support to provide the necessary instruction and guidance,
* becoming familiar with the tasks the apprentice was expected to perform arranging any needed workplace modifications or equipment aids
* assisting with the apprentices’ skill acquisition and general performance when required

Off-the-job support was also crucial and included overcoming Vocational Education and Training education providers’ objections to teaching apprentices with disability in their classes and arranging for interpreters, note-takers, tutors, mentors and/or equipment modifications when required.

# Conclusion

An effective apprenticeship system can assist many young people, including those with disabilities to progress seamlessly from school to an environment where workplace skills are developed. The suggestions in this policy advice focus on the inclusion of people with disabilities into the new apprenticeship system.

# Appendix 1 – employment of people with disabilities

People with disabilities are only half as likely to be in employment as others of working age. The 2011 census showed 33% of people with disabilities of working age[[6]](#footnote-6) in work, compared to 66% of non-disabled people. In total, there were 112,000 people with disabilities in employment.

**Employment rate of people with disabilities, 2011, by disability type**

## Want to work

Some people with disabilities experience ill-health, which may mean they are unable to work. But over one third of people with disabilities, and almost two thirds of younger people in the 18-34 age groups who are not at work would like to work if the circumstances were right. Half of all those with mental health difficulties and out of work want to work.[[7]](#footnote-7)

# Appendix 2 – effectiveness of a Place and Train model

**Evidence on effectiveness of Individual Placement with Support**

The chart below presents evidence from 16 randomised controlled trials in different jurisdictions of Individual Placement with Support programmes. The results show significantly more success than those who were not assigned to this programme. On average, the findings show that about 60% of people with more serious mental health conditions can gain and sustain employment if the right support is provided.

**Evidence that Individual Placement and Support is more effective**

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### Results from other studies

**A.** A European research project (Burns et al, 2007), that compared traditional vocational service (non-integrated ‘train-place’) with Individual Placement with Support (IPS) for people with schizophrenia, showed that:

* 55% gained employment in IPS versus 28% in traditional service
* 13% drop-out in IPS versus 45% in traditional service
* 20% readmitted in IPS versus 31% in traditional service

Follow-up studies also illustrated that work outcomes improve over time for people with mental health difficulties.

**B.** A 2007-2008 study, by South West London Community Mental Health Teams, on 1,155 people with mental health issues, who were successfully working or studying in mainstream integrated settings using the Individual Placement with Support programme, showed that:

* 56% (645 people) were supported to get/keep open employment
* 25% (293 people) were supported to get/keep mainstream education/training
* 19% (217 people) were supported in mainstream voluntary work

**C.** Individual Placement with Support programmes assisted 73% of people from a service for people with first episode psychosis to move into employment or education after 2 years.

# References

Valuing People Now: a new three-year strategy for people with intellectual disabilities. UK Department of Health (2009)

Sainsbury Centre (2009a) Briefing 37: Doing what works, Individual Placement and Support into employment. London: Centre for Mental Health.

Bond, G. (2004) **Supported employment: evidence for an evidence-based practice.** Psychiatric Rehabilitation Journal, 27, 345–359*.*

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Sainsbury Centre for Mental Health, Doing what works: Individual placement and support into employment, 2009, cited in Perkins, et al. 2009,

Greg Lewis, Stian H. Thoresen and Errol Cocks September 2010, Centre for Research into Disability and Society, Health Innovation Research Institute, Perth Australia. **Successful approaches to placing and supporting apprentices and trainees with disability in Australia**.

Becky Priest, Helen Lockett and Bob Grove, 2009, Centre for Mental Health, **Implementing what works: The impact of the individual placement and support regional trainer**.

1. Please [www.nda.ie](http://www.nda.ie) employment seminar series for more information. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. [www.valuingpeoplenow.dh.gov.uk/content/employmentresources-hub](http://www.valuingpeoplenow.dh.gov.uk/content/employmentresources-hub) [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Bond, G. (2004) **Supported employment: evidence for an evidence-based practice.** Psychiatric Rehabilitation Journal, 27, 345–359*.* [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. This draws on the presentation of Dr Rachel Perkins ( co-author of UK Government report (2009) Realising ambitions: Better employment support for people with a mental health condition) at NDA seminar in 2011 [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. Greg Lewis, Stian H. Thoresen and Errol Cocks September 2010, Centre for Research into Disability and Society, Health Innovation Research Institute, Perth Australia. **Successful approaches to placing and supporting apprentices and trainees with disability in Australia**. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. Age 20 to 64 [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. National Disability Survey 2006, vol 2 [↑](#footnote-ref-7)