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**Department for Work and Pensions**

**Research Report No 279**

# **Desirable outcomes of WORKSTEP: user and provider views**

**Angela Meah and Patricia Thornton**

A report of research carried out by the Social Policy Research Unit, University of York on behalf of the Department for Work and Pensions

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First Published 2005.

ISBN 1 84123 878 3

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Printed by Corporate Document Services.

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# Acknowledgements

The research team would like to acknowledge the advice and support from colleagues within the Department for Work and Pensions. We would like to acknowledge the helpful comments of Stephen Beyer at the Welsh Centre for Learning Disabilities (WCLD) and Pauline Banks at the Strathclyde Centre for Disability Research (SCDR) on an earlier draft of this report and their contribution in carrying out fieldwork in Scotland and Wales. We would also like to acknowledge the contribution of Andrea Meek and Kim Sheppard (WCLD) and Kim Hansen (SCDR) to the fieldwork and of Sally Pulleyn at the Social Policy Research Unit (SPRU) who prepared the typescript for publication. We would like to thank the service users and WORKSTEP providers who took part in the research.

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# Abbreviations

<b>ALI</b>	Adult Learning Inspectorate
<b>CLAIT</b>	Computer Literacy and Information Technology
<b>DEA</b>	Disability Employment Adviser
<b>DWP</b>	Department for Work and Pensions
<b>NDDP</b>	New Deal for Disabled People
<b>SCDR</b>	Strathclyde Centre for Disability Research
<b>SEDI</b>	Supported Employment Development Initiative
<b>SEP</b>	Supported Employment Programme
<b>SPRU</b>	Social Policy Research Unit
<b>SPSS</b>	Statistical Package for the Social Sciences
<b>WCLD</b>	Welsh Centre for Learning Disabilities



# Summary

This study was carried out to find out what disabled people supported through WORKSTEP and WORKSTEP staff believe people want to achieve through supported employment. It also looked at how WORKSTEP can help disabled people to achieve their goals.

Findings are based on 13 group discussions involving 57 disabled people supported through WORKSTEP and nine group discussions with 49 staff from WORKSTEP provider organisations. These took place in 2004 in eight areas in England, Scotland and Wales.

## Gains to be made through work and WORKSTEP

Disabled people and staff from provider organisations sometimes did not say the same about what the most important gains are from work and WORKSTEP.

Disabled people supported through WORKSTEP said personal goals such as increased confidence and self-esteem were the most important things gained through having a job. Restoring confidence and a sense of identity was especially important to people whose conditions developed during their lives. Disabled people said it was important to feel like *'a somebody again'* and *'more than your disability'*.

Disabled people said it was important to set themselves goals and experience achieving them. Achieving things through their jobs, they said, encouraged them to set goals outside work, like learning to travel independently or to drive.

Going to work gave disabled people the chance to meet new people and make friends. This was especially important to people with learning disabilities who complained of feeling bored when *'stuck at home'*. The routine of work was important to people with mental health conditions. They said it offered a distraction from their condition and gave them a sense of an *'ordinary life'*. Disabled people said that having a job was a sign of *'wellness'* and getting on with life.

Staff said that mixing with other people, choice and independence in what you do, and the increased confidence and social life that follow were especially important to disabled people.

WORKSTEP staff believed that disabled people see earning money as an important part of having a job. Disabled people said that feeling proud and having self-respect were more important than having money, but money enabled them to be more independent. By this, people meant having to rely less on family and carers, having an income of their own, being able to choose how to spend their money, or living on their own. Many people also wanted independence from benefits.

Disabled people said that it was important to feel part of a community free of discrimination that understands their experiences and needs. Being able to go to work helped make them more visible in the community. Although WORKSTEP staff recognised that disabled people would value being included in their communities, they did not anticipate how concerned they were about discrimination. People with learning disabilities and mental health conditions especially highlighted lack of disability awareness.

Many people supported through WORKSTEP stressed that they valued being able to achieve things through their jobs. Some people with learning disabilities were keen to learn new skills, but were frustrated if they were not given the chance to try new or more stimulating jobs. WORKSTEP staff did not recognise how important having a sense of career was to disabled people. When referring to people who already had jobs when they joined the programme, they did not talk about how they helped these people develop in their careers.

## Support to help disabled people find and stay in work

People supported through WORKSTEP said they valued help that would ease the pressure while they were trying to find, gain and stay in jobs. WORKSTEP staff said it was important to treat everyone as an individual and it was important to get to know people and help with different kinds of problems that disabled people experience, not just those at work.

WORKSTEP staff said they offered help with looking for jobs, such as form filling, interview techniques and talking to potential employers, job coaching and training, and ongoing support both to disabled people and their employers, helping avoid any problems that might arise. Disabled people mostly liked these kinds of help but they sometimes wanted more of a say in what they got.

Once settled in their jobs, people who worked in supported factories or businesses usually found it easier to ask for ongoing help and support. Some staff said that they checked up on disabled people by visiting them in the workplace or by phoning to see how they are going on. Disabled people sometimes wanted someone to 'fight your corner' when there was a problem at work.

Both staff and people supported through WORKSTEP said that employers needed a lot of ongoing advice to help disabled people to feel more personally satisfied in their jobs. Disabled people said they would like to work in places where they feel accepted and respected by their workmates and valued for their contribution. However, staff said that it was sometimes difficult to encourage employers to see all that disabled people can achieve in work.

## Development in work

Few people supported through WORKSTEP were aware of its aims, but development in work was welcomed as a good idea that could help avoid boredom. Disabled people were aware that having training and qualifications were important in getting jobs. This was especially the case among people with learning disabilities. However, providers felt that people were sometimes sent on courses for the sake of it whether or not they actually needed the training. They felt that it was important to focus on skills that are important in helping people to get and keep jobs.

People who already had jobs when they joined WORKSTEP did not realise that it could help them to develop within their jobs. They thought it just helped them to keep the job they already had. They liked the idea that WORKSTEP could also help them to try new things.

The Development Plan was welcomed by WORKSTEP staff as an important way to record what disabled people were achieving through their jobs. It also helped staff demonstrate how they were helping people. Staff felt that there was pressure to focus on work-related achievements, rather than more personal or social goals which they and disabled people in the study felt were important. The researchers think that disabled people should be told about the aim of development in work and the support available. Development plans could be used to record whether the goals that disabled people listed as important are being achieved.

Some people working in supported factories said development plans were a good idea and were usually reviewed once or twice a year. They gave examples of how they told WORKSTEP staff they would like to try something new or do a course and then were given the chance to do this. Not all disabled people were aware of completing a development plan.

## Progression into unsupported work

People supported through WORKSTEP were not sure about whether moving on to work without extra help was a good idea for them. They liked the idea of having a 'safety net' to fall back on and knowing someone would be there to help them if they had a problem. Some people were worried that they would be forced to leave the programme before they were ready, or that they would not be allowed back if their job did not work out.

WORKSTEP staff were keen to talk about progression. They said it was a good idea to encourage disabled people to think about working on their own and encourage them to be more independent of help from WORKSTEP. However, they realised this was difficult for some people, especially those who need a lot of help. Both staff and disabled people said they should be able to choose whether or not they would like to progress.

The researchers think people should be told that they can be allowed back to WORKSTEP and that WORKSTEP could be changed so that people who progressed can have a little support from staff when they need it.

WORKSTEP staff said they come across problems when they try to help disabled people to stay in work without extra help from the programme. In the past, employers were sometimes given money to help pay disabled people's wages. Staff said that employers who still received this kind of help often did not want it to stop and that sometimes employers said they would not be able to continue employing disabled people without the extra money.

WORKSTEP staff said it had become easier since they started offering employers different kinds of help. Examples include helping to pay for training and job coaching, special equipment or adjustments to the workplace to help disabled people at work, and payments when disabled employees reached set targets or goals.

WORKSTEP staff felt Jobcentre Plus and the Adult Learning Inspectorate focus too much on progressing people into unsupported work. They said more attention should be paid to helping people develop new personal and social, as well as work, skills. For some people, improving confidence and independence are just as important as being able to do their job.

## Suggestions for improving WORKSTEP

WORKSTEP staff suggested:

- there should be more flexibility in the way disabled people join WORKSTEP. Some staff felt Disability Employment Advisers relied on established WORKSTEP providers, which made it difficult for newer providers to fill their WORKSTEP places;
- money WORKSTEP providers receive to help disabled people should be paid differently. They said it would be better to receive more money when new people join the scheme and were looking for jobs, and less money when people were settled in work without extra help. This would encourage staff to get more people on to WORKSTEP;
- a second scheme could be created to help disabled people not able to work 16 or more hours a week.

The researchers recommend:

- the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) could talk more to provider staff about what WORKSTEP is for, and the information could spread better inside the provider organisations;
- an easy to read booklet for disabled people could explain what WORKSTEP is supposed to do and tell them what to do if they are not happy with the service.



# 1 Outcomes research in context

## 1.1 Introduction

This introductory chapter contextualises the research findings presented in this report on the desirable outcomes of the WORKSTEP programme. It outlines the background and key objectives of the programme, illustrates why outcomes focused research has emerged as important in the context of service delivery and includes key messages that have emerged from related research to date. Finally, the content of the report is outlined.

## 1.2 Background

Responding to the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) interest in the outcomes of the WORKSTEP programme, this study was commissioned to uncover what both users and providers of WORKSTEP identify as the desirable outcomes of the programme, as well as their understanding of how it can achieve them. The study was undertaken by the Social Policy Report Unit (SPRU), with the Welsh Centre for Learning Disabilities (WCLD) and the Strathclyde Centre for Disability Research (SCDR), in 2004.

WORKSTEP is a supported employment programme organised by Jobcentre Plus and delivered by over 200 local authorities, voluntary bodies and private sector organisations and by REMPLOY. It is aimed at disabled people meeting the Disability Discrimination Act (1995) definition of disability who face the most significant and complex barriers to finding and keeping a job, and who, with the right support, can work effectively and develop within their job. At the time of writing around 25,650 people were supported through the programme in looking for jobs and in jobs either in the open labour market (referred to here as supported placements) or in factories or businesses established to employ disabled people (referred to here as supported factories).

In April 2001, WORKSTEP replaced the previous Supported Employment Programme and the existing 227 voluntary and local authority providers were issued with new contracts, in addition to a further 25 organisations, including some from the private sector, who had tendered to deliver the programme in those areas where there was perceived to be a shortage of supported placements. REMPLOY continued as a major provider.

The modernised programme introduced new eligibility criteria, quality standards, a new funding regime including outcome payments linked to individual progression as well as maintenance payments, the encouragement of vocational profiling and obligatory development planning for new entrants. The objectives were reformulated as:

- providing employment, with support, for people who would not otherwise be able to get and keep work;
- supporting people to develop within the programme, whether they progress to unsupported employment or not;
- supporting people to progress from WORKSTEP to working in mainstream employment without support from the programme, for whom it is an appropriate goal. A progression target of 30 per cent over two years, set as an aspirational target for supported employees recruited after 1 April 2001, was dropped in 2004 after a new round of contracts was issued.

### 1.3 Why outcomes research?

The need to develop evidence-based practice, which establishes 'what works' in the delivery of public sector services, has led to emphasis being placed on measuring service inputs against potential population level outcomes. This can result in outcomes for individuals being ignored. Both individual outcomes and aggregate outcomes need to be acknowledged, and balanced in the planning and evaluation process.

Although the main research evaluating the delivery of the Supported Employment Programme prior to April 2001 was presented in terms of measuring inputs in relation to aggregate level financial outcomes (Beyer *et al.*, 2003), there has been an increasing concern with the recognition of more immediate impacts, such as service outcomes for individuals. Moreover, outcomes research in general has pointed toward the importance of specifically including users' views in the development, evaluation and review of services that they receive<sup>1</sup>. Importantly, outcomes research in the social care field has been aimed at developing practice tools, such as care plans, designed to capture the achievement of user-defined outcomes of interventions. In the context of employment policy initiatives relating to disabled people, there is a risk that policy objectives and the concerns of programme

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<sup>1</sup> See, for example, the SPRU Outcomes in Community Care Practice series.

managers, service providers and employers are heard above those of the participants themselves. Not surprisingly, this can have implications for the successful implementation of programmes aimed at providing help to specific population groups.

Nonetheless, there has been a move within supported employment research towards more meaningful inclusion of user views alongside those of other stakeholders. In a study of the net costs and benefits of the Supported Employment Programme, Beyer *et al.* (2003) included a postal survey of over 500 supported employees<sup>2</sup>, while Walker's (2000) qualitative study of the programme focused solely on users. Researchers working on supported employment provision **outside** the programme have also employed qualitative methods to ensure that the voices of service users are heard. This has been particularly well documented in the context of clients with learning disabilities or 'complex needs'. These qualitative studies tend to be small-scale, drawing upon samples involving up to 43 participants and have employed a range of qualitative methods, including focus groups, (multiple stage) semi-structured interviews and participant observation.

It is important to note that such studies set out to **evaluate** service users' experiences of supported employment, rather than specifically to consult them about what they perceive to be desirable process or final outcomes. As Qureshi (1996) has pointed out, this is significant in that 'satisfaction surveys' have a tendency to ask users to respond to predetermined categories, rather than to focus on what is important to them.

## 1.4 Outcomes of supported employment: a review of the literature

A number of evaluation studies undertaken in relation to supported employment (and many of the Adult Learning Inspectorate (ALI) reports on individual providers of WORKSTEP) have reported comments from service users regarding what they perceive to be the principle personal benefits from engaging with the supported employment process. What follows is a summary of the key issues to emerge from these sources. It should be remembered that the aims of the works cited were not specifically to seek views on desired outcomes.

The principal areas of concern, extracted from the studies reviewed, can broadly be divided into four categories of outcomes:

- economic;
- career development;
- social;
- personal development.

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<sup>2</sup> Data from two focus groups, involving a total of nine disabled employees, also informed the study.

### 1.4.1 Economic outcomes

Economic outcomes noted as especially important differed slightly, depending on the nature of the impairment of the participants questioned. Individuals with learning difficulties cited in the studies by Bass and Drewett (1997), Jones *et al.* (2002) and Weston (2002) valued the idea of being in receipt of a wage. For some, this would facilitate increased independence and choice over how they spent their wages and gave them a sense of ownership, investment and agency; while one participant in a study of 30 people with learning difficulties undertaken by Wistow and Schneider (2003) specifically stated that they would prefer to work than be on benefit. Being a wage earner was an issue for people with a wide range of impairments too, and was articulated as facilitating a more powerful position in society as it meant that they were 'making a contribution' rather than depending on government welfare benefits (Beyer *et al.*, 2003).

Focusing on disabled people with a wider range of impairments, Beyer *et al.* (2003), Hyde (1998) and Walker (2000) found that many people on the Supported Employment Programme were reassured by the security that supported employment offered in an otherwise uncertain work climate. But while such security was valued, many also asserted their desire for greater equality with their non-disabled colleagues in terms of the conditions of their employment, including holiday entitlements, pay and pension rights and when and how they were paid.

### 1.4.2 Career development

Supported employment research illustrates that disabled people value being involved in job hunting; from the identification of their interests, skills and aspirations to being matched to the opportunities available and finding appropriate vacancies, thus increasing their sense of urgency in the process.

Although there were some exceptions, data on experiences of supported employment, both within and outside the programme, indicate that disabled people frequently feel that jobs are being 'chosen' for them (Bass and Drewett, 1997; Walker, 2000; Weston, 2002; Wistow and Schneider, 2003). This can often lead to people being placed in jobs to which they feel unsuited or which lack sufficient stimulation or challenge. Interestingly, job coaches consulted in Weston's (2002) study stressed the importance of supporting people with complex needs in making 'informed choices' about the type of work that they might be best suited to. Vocational profiling was identified as a way in which to achieve this. Meanwhile, staff involved in the Shaw Trust Supported Employment Development Initiative (SEDI) project (Hume, 2001)<sup>3</sup> spoke about the value of facilitating service users to be more involved in finding their own jobs.

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<sup>3</sup> The Supported Employment Development Initiative was set up by the Employment Service to inform the modernisation of the Supported Employment Programme (SEP) and involved the commissioning of 12 pilot projects. WORKSTEP was unveiled within three months of the pilots commencing.

Although these studies suggest that many people were apparently happy in their current positions and expressed no desire to progress, other participants demonstrated ambitions to achieve both within and beyond their current positions. Development within the programme through the acquisition of work skills and movement to different or higher level jobs was also confirmed as desirable by providers who were involved in the Employment Service's consultation prior to the unveiling of the modernised programme (Employment Service, 2000). To this end, more and better – more meaningful – on-the-job training opportunities were seen as essential by service users, along with opportunities to increase their skills base and attain qualifications.

A third of postal survey respondents in the study by Beyer *et al.* (2003) aspired to open employment, albeit with help if necessary. One respondent in Walker's study specifically spoke of wanting to move into open employment with her employer of ten years so that it could free up a place for someone else, thus opening up career development opportunities for other disabled people. One person with learning difficulties specifically expressed an ambition to build upon her experiences of work by opening her own café business (Walker, 2000).

### **1.4.3 Social outcomes**

Supported employment research suggests that the social outcomes of being in work feature more highly among the priorities of individuals with learning difficulties and complex needs than among people with other impairments. Observations made by participants involved in qualitative research undertaken by Bass and Drewett (1997), Jones *et al.* (2002), Weston (2002), Wistow and Schneider (2003) and Beyer *et al.* (2004) overwhelmingly indicate their perception of work as a route to increased social inclusion. For example, in Bass and Drewett's study of a group of 13 people interviewed both before and after they made their entry into supported employment, four stated that making friends was one of their principal reasons for starting work. Three of these said that they specifically preferred to work with non-disabled people. This was a view also expressed by some of the participants cited in Hyde's (1998) study of sheltered employment and supported placement provision in the early 1990s. Other participants cited in Hyde's study expressed concern over how they might be received in a non-sheltered environment, raising questions about whether sheltered employment is valued as a 'haven' by some employees.

Social acceptance and inclusion is not an issue that has been ignored in more recent research. For example, empirical data from Beyer *et al.* (2003) and Jones *et al.* (2002) have highlighted that many disabled people place high value on the need to feel supported and accepted by colleagues and employers. Drawing specifically on the experiences of people with mental health conditions involved in open employment projects, Secker and Membrey (2003) also point out that workplace cultures within which difference was accepted were more successful in helping people with mental health conditions remain in employment.

For participants involved in Weston's (2002) study, feeling part of a 'team' was viewed as a particularly beneficial outcome. This was not only a matter of being able to engage in workplace camaraderie or banter, and sometimes socialising with colleagues outside work, but was also indicated by an increased sense of status and responsibility that came with having a job.

#### 1.4.4 Personal development outcomes

Both service users and providers have identified personal development as an important outcome of supported employment. Among the personal outcomes that have been identified through the existing research, increases in self-confidence and self-esteem – facilitated by being involved in productive work – appear high on the agenda. For some supported employees, this was simply a question of being given a sense of purpose, a reason *'to get up in the morning'* (Walker, 2000: 8); for others, having a job helped them feel that they were resuming a *'normal lifestyle'* (Weston, 2002: 23). Service users consulted in the evaluation of the Shaw Trust SEDI Pilot also talked about the importance of feeling more in control of their future (Hume, 2001). However, it is difficult to identify whether they were referring specifically to the impact of the pilot on their careers or to their lives in general.

In many cases, this increased confidence and self-esteem can be linked to the sense of success and achievement produced by being given status and responsibility, by feeling valued by their employer and colleagues (see Bass and Drewett, 1997; Jones *et al.*, 2002; Wistow and Schneider, 2003), or by being engaged in activities which they perceive to be stimulating, *'worthwhile'* and which kept them *'busy'* by occupying their minds. Work was described as *'therapeutic'* by respondents with mental health conditions in Weston's study (2002: 78).

The suggestion is that through a combination of being involved in making choices about jobs, of experiencing improved confidence within work, of feeling valued and of making an economic contribution to society, disabled people can achieve a greater sense of self-determination and control.

### 1.5 Outline of the report

The report is structured as follows.

- Chapter Two details the methodology, including aims and objectives, research design, methods, overview of the sample and how the data were analysed.
- Chapter Three discusses desirable outcomes of work and WORKSTEP highlighted by service users and providers, along with their arguments about why the programme is needed.
- Chapter Four examines how support to help supported employees find, gain and sustain employment hinders or facilitates the outcomes desired.

- Chapter Five presents service users' and providers' views on development as an aim of WORKSTEP, including experiences of development, how it is measured, the Development Plan process and obstacles to development.
- Chapter Six focuses on progression as an aim of the programme. It examines how the concept is interpreted and responded to by both supported employees and provider and perceived obstacles to progression.
- Chapter Seven presents the impact of WORKSTEP for providers, highlighting what organisations gain from delivering the programme, obstacles to delivery and suggestions for improvement.
- Chapter Eight presents conclusions from the study, including implications for the management and delivery of the programme.

**Key points**

- Outcomes research in social care emphasises judging services in terms of what individual users say they want the services to achieve for them.
- In social care, practice tools are being designed to capture user-defined outcomes of interventions.
- A review of previous research provides some indications of the individual benefits of taking part in the Supported Employment Programme and other supported employment initiatives, classified here as social, personal, economic and career benefits.
- This is the first study to look specifically at what WORKSTEP users, and providers, want the programme to achieve for participants, and at how support through the programme facilitates or hinders achievement of desired outcomes.



## 2 Methodology

### 2.1 Research design and methods

The study engaged with participants via focus group methodology which enabled groups of service users and of WORKSTEP provider staff to share their experiences and perspectives with other supported employees or providers. The method brought people together who were supported by or represented organisations that differed in support type (supported factory and supported placement), type of provider (local authority, voluntary body, private sector and REMPLOY) and provider size. The aim was to encourage the sharing of experiences and expectations across a range of impairments and support types so that individuals could see how experiences could vary. Among supported employees, the intention was to share positive experience, where appropriate, and facilitate empathy and support where it was absent. With providers, the objective was to encourage participants to share their experiences of delivering the programme with providers who differed in size or offered different types of support, and to exchange strategies for implementation.

Parallel questions were presented to groups of supported employees and of provider staff in a semi-structured and discursive manner, divided into two distinct areas. The first area focused on identifying key outcomes and the type of support needed to achieve these. The second specifically focused on the WORKSTEP programme goals and set out to elicit responses to the goals of development and progression, including views on their appropriateness and identifying perceived obstacles to their implementation. Asking what their organisations gained from delivering the programme concluded provider discussions. The topic guides can be found in Appendix B.

Following two pilot groups, one with service users and one with providers, the main fieldwork was carried out in two stages between June and August 2004. In total, including pilot groups, there were:

- 13 focus groups involving 57 service users in England, Scotland and Wales; and
- nine focus groups with 49 WORKSTEP providers in England, Scotland and Wales.

### **2.1.1 Research with supported employees and overview of characteristics**

Field sites were selected to ensure that the sample would be representative of different parts of Great Britain, urban and rural areas and ease of access to the discussion groups by service users. A detailed description of the methodology, sampling strategy and participants' characteristics can be found in Appendix A. The Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) was used to sample randomly employed service users who were under 55 years old, and who had entered the programme since January 1995 with the aim of capturing more recent experiences. Supported employees were selected to reflect the different provider types within the specified geographical areas. The selected supported employees were then written to via their provider organisations and invited to attend discussion groups at central locations within each of the field sites.

As approximately one-third of WORKSTEP participants have learning disabilities, four of the 13 user groups involved discussions with people with learning disabilities only. One group was with service users with mental health conditions; one was with supported employees with a range of impairments who had joined the programme since April 2001; and the remainder involved people with a range of impairments and duration on the programme. Impairments reported by all user participants are shown in Table A.8 in Appendix A. A total of 57 supported employees participated in the study. Of these, only five identified themselves as being of non-white British ethnic origin. Thirty-seven were male, 20 were female. Table A.9 in Appendix A provides a breakdown of the age composition and shows that the largest group was aged 25 to 40.

The following areas were covered in the discussions:

- What supported employees hoped to gain through having a job.
- Doubts or concerns about going to work.
- What an ideal package of support would consist of.
- The characteristics of a 'good' or 'bad' workplace or employer.
- Future hopes or ambitions regarding work or career.
- Knowledge of the programme and understanding of its aims.
- The appropriateness of development as an aim.
- The appropriateness of progression as an aim.

### **2.1.2 Research with WORKSTEP providers and overview of characteristics**

With the exception of one geographical area where only providers were included, provider organisations were selected from the sample of supported employees. The selection reflected a balance of provider size, local authority, voluntary body and REMPLOY provision and, wherever possible, ensured the inclusion of a spread of organisations providing supported factory, supported placement and both kinds of provision. Additionally, providers new to WORKSTEP and those which had been involved with the Supported Development Initiative (SEDI) Projects were included. A total of 49 representatives from 31 provider organisations participated in the study. Of these, 11 reported having impairments but it was rare for provider participants to reflect on their own conditions when discussing the needs of their clients. Three described themselves as being of non-white British origin. Twenty-five were male, 19 were female. Table A.4 in Appendix A provides a breakdown of participants' ages. Twelve participants represented supported factories. The composition of the groups reflected a range of experience in supported employment provision.

The following areas were covered in the discussions:

- The benefits of WORKSTEP to participants.
- Perceptions of clients' views on desirable outcomes.
- What providers want to achieve for their clients.
- Why the programme is needed.
- Understandings of the aims of WORKSTEP.
- The appropriateness of development and progression as programme goals.
- Obstacles to implementation.
- What organisations gain from providing WORKSTEP.

### **2.1.3 Analysis**

Informed consent was obtained before the start of each discussion and all discussions were tape-recorded and transcribed. Following familiarisation with the transcripts, a matrix for analysing the data was developed using the 'Framework' method and then converted into Excel.

**Key points**

- Separate focus groups were carried out with supported employees and with providers, 13 and nine groups respectively, in areas representative of different parts of Great Britain.
- Supported employees were sampled to reflect different provider types and sizes, as well as different impairments and durations on the programme.
- With the exception of one group, representatives of providers were drawn from the organisations supporting the users who were invited to take part.

# 3 Desirable outcomes of WORKSTEP for supported employees

## 3.1 Introduction

This chapter presents findings from a series of questions put to both supported employees and WORKSTEP providers, designed to elicit views on what they perceived to be the desirable outcomes of participation in supported employment for disabled people. Their responses have been broken down into the key areas identified within existing research as outlined in Chapter One: personal, social, economic and career. The order in which these key areas are presented reflects how supported employees prioritised them.

User views are presented first, followed by what providers believed to be key outcomes. Because users were unlikely to identify themselves as participants in a programme called WORKSTEP, they were asked to think about the outcomes from work. Providers were prompted to identify outcomes in terms of what WORKSTEP achieves for supported employees. Among providers the concept of final outcomes was not always easy to grasp, and there were some tendencies to focus instead on inputs and process, that is what was provided and what worked to achieve outcomes. Providers were also asked about how they believed their clients would respond to a question about key outcomes. The view that beneficial outcomes would be identified with a job, rather than with WORKSTEP, emerged strongly.

As the findings presented below indicate, there was not always parity between what providers thought supported employees might say and what they actually said. Indeed, some providers doubted that their clients would engage with concepts such as 'self-esteem'. A suggested alternative response was *'I'm happy doing this'*. Providers acknowledged that clients' responses would vary depending on a range of

factors, such as the nature of the impairment or 'disability'<sup>4</sup> or whether or not they worked in supported factories or in supported placements. Other factors, they supposed, included the age of participants. It was suggested that older people might have lower expectations as a consequence of fewer opportunities for disabled people during their youth. Additionally, it was argued by providers that responses would vary depending on whether supported employees' conditions had developed later in life or they had been born with them.

The chapter concludes with views on why the programme is needed.

## 3.2 Personal gains

### 3.2.1 User views

Of the gains identified by supported employees, the greatest consensus surrounded those that can be labelled 'personal'. Reinforcing the findings of other studies, increased levels of confidence were high on the agenda and cited by participants with a wide range of impairments. A strong theme to emerge among participants who had acquired impairments during the course of their life was that their conditions had led to an erosion of their self-confidence, which had then gradually increased through being able to go to work, fulfil a role and engage with other people.

Perhaps linked with increased levels of confidence is the sense of achievement when supported employees' goals are accomplished. Such goals include, for example, completing a year without having to take any sick leave, improved literacy and numeracy and improved memory recall. One user with a mental health condition noted that *'the feelings that come from achieving a little more each day are tremendous'*. The experience of succeeding with their goals in the workplace encouraged supported employees to set personal targets or challenges outside work. Examples include *'learning to walk again'*, learning to drive, travelling independently and taking on additional interests such as voluntary work and college courses. One participant with learning disabilities said that, as she had been able to get her own flat, she felt more independent than *'being tucked underneath mum's arm'*. For another, his job had enabled him to gain his *'place in the world'*. It emerged strongly that the opportunity to work was perceived as a start in realising all that they might be capable of achieving, having initially felt that finding and maintaining a job was an unattainable goal.

In the absence of work, the alternative for many participants was day or rehabilitation centres, or simply being at home. While other studies suggest that this is of particular significance to people with learning disabilities (Bass and Drewett, 1997) and mental

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<sup>4</sup> With the exception of people with mental health conditions, the term 'disability' was widely used by both supported employees and service providers.

health conditions (Weston, 2003), respondents here indicated that it is a salient issue for participants with a wide range of impairments. Users with learning disabilities confirmed the problem of boredom when not engaged in stimulating activities, but other participants explained that work represented more than just 'something to do'. As with respondents cited in other studies, routine is important as a distraction from their condition. Participants with mental health conditions explained that engaging in the routine of work also represents a sign of wellness and gave them a sense of an '*ordinary life*', as it meant that they not only were forced to face up to each day, but also were focusing on something other than their condition. These issues were also of relevance to people whose conditions had developed during their life. One participant who had previously attended a rehabilitation centre described himself as '*escaping a circle*' which, in his view, few people leave. Others suggested that working was a sign of getting on with life.

Outcomes specific to people whose conditions had developed during their lives is not something that has been noted as distinctive in previous research, but emerged via a number of participants in this study. One motif that recurred was 'identity' and how it linked to the ordinary routines of working. Participants variously described wanting to be '*a somebody again*', feeling a '*person*', feeling '*worthwhile*' and useful, and being able to '*make a contribution*'. For these people, their perceived loss of identity was inextricably linked to their condition. One participant observed that being able to continue with their jobs enabled disabled people to feel '*more than your disability*'.

Other outcomes which supported employees with a wide range of impairments reported as important included being able to prove to oneself and others that they can work. Perhaps linked is the sense of equality which comes from being able to work like any one else. Users with learning disabilities suggested that being able to take pride in one's work, help others and have a sense of job satisfaction were important outcomes for them.

#### **Desirable personal outcomes**

- Increased confidence.
- Sense of achievement.
- Increased independence.
- Feeling stimulated.
- Doing something worthwhile.
- Sense of an ordinary life.
- Sense of wellness.
- Increased feelings of equality.

### 3.2.2 Provider views

WORKSTEP provider staff echoed many of the desirable outcomes articulated by supported employees. Greatest consensus emerged in relation to a perception that work facilitates choices for supported employees. Such choices range from the type of work they want to engage in, to their means of getting to work and to a sense of control over their environment. Some referred to work as '*opening doors*' for supported employees: the increased opportunities and choices presented through the skills they developed in work extended into their social and personal lives, in addition to having a knock-on effect on their sense of health and well-being.

As with the providers and employers cited in Jones *et al.* (2002), increased levels of confidence were noted as facilitating a range of other outcomes. Providers described observing how the experience of achievement increased their clients' self-esteem and gave them the confidence to attempt other things, both in the workplace and outside. Providers acknowledged that increased confidence would be an outcome which their clients would also highlight. Increased confidence, it was felt, led to greater independence which could be represented as taking '*ownership*' of their lives, a move to independent living or through increasing independence from carers and it was asserted that '*carers are often the worst culprits for holding people back*'. Some participants gave examples of clients whom they had watched make the transition from being timid, shy and dependent on family members, to outgoing and capable people who were highly valued for their contribution to the workplace. The key role of carers in helping or hindering people's move into employment has been identified previously by Beyer *et al.* (2004). Their research noted predominantly negative views on the part of providers of carer influences, but highlighted the fact that some families could also be seen as champions of employment for their relative.

Much of this 'transformation' was attributed by provider staff to the acquisition of basic skills such as literacy and numeracy and the doors which learning and training can open for supported employees, but a range of other personal outcomes were emphasised which also contribute to increasing confidence. It was highlighted that feelings of self-esteem, dignity, pride, status and social standing come with having a job and being able to prove oneself. Providers in one group suggested that their clients might also articulate pride in their work and feelings of '*making a contribution*' as desirable outcomes of work. The feelings of dignity and pride that come with having a job, it was argued, can lead to a sense of equality through the realisation that they are no different from anyone else which, in turn, leads to a sense of empowerment.

A dominant view among supported employees, some providers also referred to the importance of structure, routine and sense of purpose offered through work and how it presented an opportunity for some to get out of a '*rut*'. A distinction between jobs that they perceived to be tokenistic and not '*real*' and '*meaningful occupation*' was emphasised. During one discussion, the work offered by some supported factories was described as being the former by one provider whose organisation offered both supported factory and supported placement provision.

## 3.3 Social gains

### 3.3.1 User views

Participants cited in the studies undertaken by Bass and Drewett (1997), Jones *et al.* (2002), Weston (2002), Wistow and Schneider (2003) and Beyer *et al.* (2004) overwhelmingly indicate their perception of work as a route to increased social inclusion. This is borne out by the supported employees in this study. Being '*stuck at home*' was described as an isolating experience, leading to withdrawal and often a deterioration in physical and mental health; the last mentioned was particularly relevant to people with mental health conditions. For supported employees with mental health conditions the social implications of work were of particular significance, given the tendency to become very illness-focused if only contacts are with medical professionals and support groups of people with similar conditions. The distraction that work represents is thus described as '*refreshing*'.

The isolating impact of disability was acknowledged to lead to deterioration in social skills. Some participants described having felt nervous about going out and completing essential tasks such as shopping. It emerged strongly that work forced them to interact and had helped to improve their communication skills through listening and talking to others, thus increasing their confidence in meeting people in different situations. It was not uncommon that social engagement prior to starting work had been limited to family and carers. Additionally, some users with learning disabilities had found social interaction with colleagues and customers an opportunity to practice talking.

Of equal importance to many participants was the feeling that social inclusion in the workplace was an indicator of not being discriminated against. However, other participants with a wide range of impairments felt that there was still some way to go in achieving social inclusion and that increasing the visibility of disabled people in the workplace was an opportunity to raise social awareness and make steps toward achieving a greater sense of equality. Some described a sense of having to prove themselves to their employers and colleagues while others talked about the stigma or misconceptions that had to be worked against in relation to, for example, mental health conditions and learning disabilities. Another dimension to emerge – which has not previously been discussed in evaluation studies – is the sense of indignation that some participants with learning disabilities expressed about how they are perceived within society. One person said that they believed that people often equate slowness with laziness. Having a job, it was argued, enabled them to prove that they wanted to work. It emerged strongly that work was regarded as important in helping other people to understand what life is like for disabled people.

The range of experiences of participants working in supported factories warrants particular attention in the context of social inclusion and awareness raising. As Hyde's (1998) study of sheltered and supported employment in the 1990s indicates, supported employees' experiences are by no means consistent and this was also reflected in the responses reported in this study. Some participants described their

factory workplaces as safe and co-operative environments where they were able to learn about a range of other impairments or conditions and establish a sense of trust and empathy with colleagues and supervisors who were understanding, patient and supportive. Others reported a lack of empathy for and understanding of people with, for example, learning disabilities. It was also noted that supervisors and managers could be unsympathetic when it came to having to take time off due to their condition, or if it affected productivity.

Within some supported factories, employees were given the opportunity to try external placements and, therefore, experience 'outside' industry. However, employees of one factory that supports people who had retired from previous occupation due to acquired conditions suggested that their experience was not an inclusive one. The social isolation experienced by some, but not all, supported factory employees, can inhibit the achievement of outcomes identified by users as desirable.

While previous qualitative research suggests that making friends features high on the agenda of supported employees, and particularly those with learning disabilities, this was not the highest priority for many of the participants here. Yet, many valued having good colleagues with whom they were able to socialise outside work and this was reported by people with a wide range of impairments and across the support types.

#### **Desirable social outcomes**

- Expanded social circle.
- Social inclusion.
- Improved social and communication skills.
- Awareness raising about disability.
- Making friends and socialising.

### **3.3.2 Provider views**

Of the social outcomes listed by providers, there was greatest consensus around social integration. Work was not only seen as a way of reducing the sense of isolation which disabled people can feel when out of work, but also as increasing opportunities for mixing with a range of different people through public contact. There was a strong view that their clients would also highlight the social implications of work. It was suggested that clients might speak in terms of a routine which gets people out of the boredom of being at home, and one provider felt that some might say that it also gets them away from carers for a while.

For people working in supported placements, providers agreed that broadening social interaction was a particularly important outcome as it meant that contact was not restricted to people with impairments. Meanwhile, it was recognised that the supported factory context offered the benefit of peer group support.

The increased confidence stemming from social interaction was emphasised as a key outcome, along with friendships and an expanded social life. However, while providers asserted that WORKSTEP is important in raising awareness and making disabled people visible in the workplace, it is noteworthy that only one group of providers directly raised this as a principal outcome of work. Here, providers discussed the importance of dispelling possible misconceptions about the work carried out in supported factories. It was also noted that some people appear to feel embarrassment regarding disability and that WORKSTEP could address this through increasing the visibility of disabled people.

In terms of social inclusion, providers said that being *'like everyone else'*, or *'one of the boys or girls'*, might be an outcome highlighted by supported employees. Providers recognised the importance to supported employees of a sense of equality that stemmed from *'the going rate for performing a service, in exactly the same way as anybody else'*. However, none acknowledged the extent to which their clients might prioritise education about the stigma attached to particular conditions or impairments and awareness-raising as an outcome. Nor did any express an awareness of the way that supported employees with learning disabilities might feel regarding discrimination.

## 3.4 Economic gains

### 3.4.1 User views

The economic gains from work did not often emerge spontaneously from service users and, in some groups, they had to be prompted to discuss these as an outcome. Previous research suggests that the perceived value of the financial gains from having a job would vary depending on the nature of respondents' impairments and that being in receipt of a wage is particularly valued by those with learning disabilities (see Bass and Drewett, 1997; Jones *et al.*, 2002; Weston, 2002). This last point was not strongly borne out amongst the supported employees with learning disabilities in this study. Those who did raise it said that having a wage gave them independence which meant that they did not have to rely on others, in some instances facilitating a move toward independent living, including investment in a home of their own. Participants with a range of impairments highlighted financial independence as important, and some were reluctant to live off benefits as this made them feel like a *'parasite'*. A wage also meant being more financially secure and able to maintain commitments to the home and family, which gave people a sense of paying their own way, linked to the notion of *'making a contribution'*. Supported employees working in the supported factories of one very large provider were more likely to speak of financial benefits, and they explained that the

organisation offered financial incentives linked to its internal grading and development system.

For some, the income from work was important as it gave them options and facilitated choices or gave them autonomy in how to spend money that they knew they had earned.

Others noted that there was no financial inducement to work as the pay was low, and there were some reports of a decline in income in the move from benefit into work; thus, the wider benefits of work outweighed any calculated financial loss.

#### **Desirable economic outcomes**

- Financial independence from others.
- Independence from benefit.
- Independent living.
- Financial security.
- Being able to make a contribution.
- Having choices.

### **3.4.2 Provider views**

Discussions with providers echoed many of the points raised by supported employees. Increased self-respect and self-esteem linked to earning an independent living were noted by a number of providers, and it was reported that, for some supported employees, moving off benefit was a personal goal. It was also acknowledged that while moving off benefit did not always mean that users were better off financially, the increase in self-esteem was a higher priority for some users.

An income, it was suggested, enabled supported employees to make choices, for example about how to use their leisure time. Additionally, one provider observed that being able to engage with the concept of money enabled people with mild learning disabilities, for example, to live a '*normal life*'. However, another provider believed that the concept of financial benefit might be less of an issue for people with learning disabilities who did not live independently as supported employment might represent a form of respite for carers, thus questioning who the 'user' is in such cases.

It is interesting that in discussions about what they believed their clients would highlight as desirable outcomes from work only one provider acknowledged that they might associate a wage with independence and the pride that comes with being able to take '*your place in society*'. What providers did suggest was that their clients would highlight equality of pay with non-disabled workers and the security of a wage that would allow them to pursue some leisure interests. Providers believed

that wage support might feature higher on the list of priorities for people in job retention situations. In sum, when specifically asked what they thought their clients would articulate as a financial benefit of working, providers tended to anticipate that they would prioritise the practical gains that came with earning an income, rather than the associated personal outcomes such as pride, dignity and self-respect which supported employees prioritised.

## 3.5 Career gains

### 3.5.1 User views

Reporting users' views on career or professional goals and outcomes, and on how they are achieving these, is problematic. While many people, with differing impairments, acknowledged that they had career aspirations, few reported being on the way to achieving them or articulated these as a desirable outcome of work. Confirming findings in previous research, a number of participants with learning disabilities described feeling bored in their current employment and that, despite asking to be moved to what providers described as more '*meaningful*' and stimulating jobs, this had not been forthcoming.

For some participants, simply having a job was more than they ever thought that they would achieve and this in itself constituted a sense of 'career'. One participant observed that while he knew that his condition prevented him from becoming a professional in his field of employment, working in his environment and continually learning gave him a sense of a '*sort of career*'.

It was highlighted – particularly by those employed in supported factories – that learning new skills, finding out what they are capable of and a sense of developing themselves had been important. This was particularly beneficial in those factories where supported employees were rotated around various departments to learn different jobs, received specific skills training, or were given the opportunity to go on outside placements. In the supported factories of one very large provider, employees had the opportunity to rise up within the internal grading system and achieve promotion. However, equality of access to training opportunities was not the experience in all supported factories.

The possibility of increased pressures sometimes inhibited ambitions for a career. Participants with mental health conditions in particular felt pursuing a career was not important to them as it meant increased pressure, which was detrimental to their conditions. A supported employee observed that '*being disabled with a career has benefits. I don't have the pressure that able-bodied people have*'. Working in a supported factory meant that he was able to work in a less pressured environment where his condition was taken into account.

Those participants who did raise career gains as a desirable outcome of supported employment were in job retention situations, having acquired their conditions and entered the programme while already in employment. Those who had professional

backgrounds talked of being enabled to continue to fulfil their life ambition or to *'maintain their place in the system'*. However, none of these described how they might be continuing to develop their career, and some had assumed that this would not be an option for them. This will be discussed further in Chapter Five.

#### **Desirable career outcomes**

- Acquisition of skills or development through training.
- Sense of achievement.
- Meaningful or stimulating activity.
- Maintenance of career.

### **3.5.2 Provider views**

In discussing desirable career outcomes for supported employees, providers tended to focus on the process and input offered by the programme, rather than on what their clients were actually achieving through work. The programme was seen as offering job search support and advocacy for people entering work, and job security, support and empowerment for those people in job retention situations. It was also described as facilitating choices in relation to training and development. Some providers said that a key outcome was that WORKSTEP allowed for a focus on ability rather than disability, removing some of the barriers to employment, and enabling supported employees to gain work, sustain it and progress to open employment, if they want to.

Confirming the views expressed by supported employees cited in other studies (Bass and Drewett, 1997; Walker, 2000; Weston, 2002; Wistow and Schneider, 2003), one provider also noted the importance of placing supported employees in jobs that reflect their skills and abilities. This was something, it was argued, that is not always achieved in supported factories where work can be *'tokenistic'* or not *'real'*. It is interesting that while some providers emphasised the importance of *'meaningful employment'* only one specifically suggested that the activities of some supported factories could not be categorised in this way.

Interestingly, provider staff seemed to struggle to engage with the suggestion that disabled people might have ambitions toward careers, though it was acknowledged that their clients might emphasise literacy as a desirable outcome, and one provider mentioned promotion as another possibility.

## 3.6 Why WORKSTEP is needed

### 3.6.1 Supported employees' concerns about work

Supported employees were asked about any doubts that they may have had (particularly if they had previous negative experiences) when they first started looking for work or, in the case of job retention situations, when they made the decision to return to their job.

Many spoke of the lack of employment opportunities available for disabled people, some suggesting that there are not enough employers willing to give disabled people a chance. While one participant suggested that the situation was better under the previous quota system, another believed that the quota system still existed. None demonstrated an awareness of the Disability Discrimination Act 1995. Participants with differing impairments had doubted whether they would actually be given the chance to work because of the misconceptions that people have regarding disability and an unwillingness to look beyond the surface of the impairment or label. The problem of convincing potential employers of what they *can* do was also highlighted.

People with mental health conditions specifically spoke of the stigma that is attached to their conditions, while some people with learning disabilities said that there are few employers willing to give them a chance. One participant with learning disabilities said: *'that's discrimination, isn't it?'*

There were fears, particularly among people with learning disabilities, about not being respected or about being picked on once they found a job. There were also concerns among people with differing impairments that employers and colleagues might be unwilling to accommodate their conditions, either through practical help or adjustments or in terms of having to take time off for medical appointments.

Among people with mental health and long-term medical conditions there were concerns about how employers would respond if they needed to take time off due to illness. One participant with a mental health condition who had returned to his job after an extended period of absence said that, as his condition is both invisible and requires ongoing management, he felt that his employers thought that he was a malingerer.

Some participants whose conditions had developed while already in work expressed a fear that they would either lose their job or would not physically be able to continue with it. One described keeping her condition from her employer for three months as she thought she would not be allowed to continue with her work. Some who were in job retention situations expressed having had concerns about how their colleagues would readjust to their conditions on their return to work and did not want to be seen as a *'burden'*.

Other concerns included a fear that they would let their colleagues down and feelings among participants working in supported factories that their condition might get in the way and prevent them from keeping up with production.

Some participants with learning disabilities said that they had been unsure about whether or not they would be able to do the work, how they would cope with the people they worked with or be able to relate to their colleagues in conversation.

### 3.6.2 Why providers think WORKSTEP is important

Responding to a direct question about why WORKSTEP is needed, providers acknowledged all of the concerns expressed by supported employees. Greatest consensus centred on the issue of equal opportunities and the rights of disabled people to access employment. One provider suggested that the programme ensured that disabled people were not '*left on the heap*' any longer than they need be. Frequent arguments were that in helping disabled people to access the workplace, the programme served a role in increasing social awareness and educating people about various impairments or conditions, thus helping to dispel the fear and stigma which is often attached to particular conditions, for example mental health conditions. There were suggestions that providers working with clients in supported placements provided a role model for how disabled people should be dealt with in the workplace. One supported factory manager said that inviting visitors into the factory fulfilled a social awareness role in dispelling the myths about the nature of the work undertaken in sheltered factories and gave greater value to the work being carried out by disabled employees.

The support required to achieve equality of employment for disabled people was recognised as being two-fold: to the supported employee and to the employer. The strength of the programme was described as its flexibility in that it allowed for one-to-one support tailored to meet the needs of the individual, providing them with the opportunity to learn new skills and develop in work.

It was recognised by a number of providers that, in order to place supported employees successfully and maintain their employment, as much support sometimes needed to be given to the employer. The nature of this support is varied. It includes helping employers to understand particular conditions and the limitations and abilities of the individual, making that person seem '*less of a risk*', and providing financial support to compensate employers for the '*lack of ability*' of a potential employee, either through training or more sustained financial input.

Unlike under the New Deal for Disabled People (NDDP), it was argued that WORKSTEP is important in that it offers long-term support. However, in contrast to the old Supported Employment Programme, some providers said that it has direction and continuity in that it is goal-orientated through the aim to evidence supported employees' development and progression in work. One provider suggested that the Supported Employment Programme actually deskilled people and created dependency. It was argued that being targeted-driven made WORKSTEP a more accountable programme.

### 3.7 Conclusions

Although the benefits of supported employment can be categorised in terms of personal, social, economic and career outcomes, many are interdependent. Identified by both supported employees and providers as the principal gains to be made from participation in work and WORKSTEP were:

- social inclusion;
- independence;
- confidence;
- sense of achievement.

Other benefits included:

- increased self-esteem and dignity;
- feeling stimulated;
- doing something worthwhile;
- sense of an 'ordinary' life;
- sense of wellness;
- expanded social circle;
- improved social and communication skills;
- making friends and socialising;
- awareness raising about disability.

Both groups of respondents noted the importance for disabled people to feel part of a community, and that community should be free from discrimination and understand the experiences and needs of disabled people. These were points that emerged particularly strongly among participants with learning disabilities and those with mental health conditions. There was consensus among both providers and supported employees that awareness-raising through the increased visibility of disabled people in the workplace was a principal reason why WORKSTEP is needed.

An expanded social circle was also mentioned by supported employees and providers, as was self-worth or self-esteem, though these were raised with less frequency than the outcomes noted above. However, while providers spoke of improved quality of life, structure and increased choices as outcomes of work, supported employees highlighted different priorities. These included having a sense of purpose, an '*ordinary life*', job satisfaction and the positive feelings that come with '*making a contribution*'.

The most significant point of departure was in how providers anticipated supported employees would respond to questions about outcomes. Providers suggested that their clients might focus on the practical financial gains associated with having an income, as opposed to the feelings of pride and self-respect that they actually spoke of. Likewise, no provider anticipated the strength of feeling that their clients would have in relation to issues of social inclusion, discrimination and the need for greater social awareness regarding disability. These were concerns that were highlighted in particular by participants with learning disabilities, but not acknowledged by providers to be priorities amongst clients. Similarly, there was little acknowledgement on the part of providers of the possibility that their clients might articulate anything beyond basic skills as a desirable outcome, though one provider did mention promotion. While not emerging spontaneously when users were asked to list outcomes, ambitions to develop within and beyond their current jobs and have a sense of 'career' emerged strongly from discussions with supported employees, particularly those with learning disabilities.

Progression to unsupported employment did not emerge as a reason why WORKSTEP was needed. Progression aims are discussed in Chapter Six.

### Key points

- Social inclusion, independence and a sense of achievement were the outcomes most commonly cited by service users and providers.
- Other outcomes included:
  - increased self-esteem and dignity;
  - feeling stimulated;
  - doing something worthwhile;
  - sense of an 'ordinary' life;
  - sense of wellness;
  - expanded social circle;
  - improved social and communication skills;
  - making friends and socialising;
  - awareness raising about disability.
- Users and providers sometimes prioritised different benefits. Providers highlighted quality of life, structure and increased choices, while users prioritised having a sense of purpose, an '*ordinary life*', job satisfaction and the positive feelings that come from '*making a contribution*'.

Continued

- Providers anticipated that their clients would focus on the financial gains from work, but users themselves said that pride and self-respect were more important.
- Providers did not anticipate how strongly users would feel about issues such as social inclusion, discrimination and the need for awareness raising about disability. Participants with learning disabilities felt particularly strongly about this
- Having a sense of career was important to service users but was not acknowledged by providers, who focused only on the desirability of basic skills.



# 4 Support to help WORKSTEP users look for, gain and sustain employment

## 4.1 Introduction

Chapter Three reported what supported employees and provider staff want WORKSTEP to achieve for its users. This chapter turns to the types of support needed to achieve those ends. It focuses on the inputs and processes which lead to outcomes for users.

This chapter covers the range of support needed to help disabled people find jobs, settle into the workplace and sustain employment. Responses from supported employees are presented first, followed by data from providers. Participants were asked about the help provided to look for work, in-work support and how issues are addressed or resolved. While supported employees were asked about relationships with employers and other colleagues, and about different forms of practical and financial help, responses from providers also highlighted how they support employers to support service users and incentives offered. The chapter also includes responses to questions designed to elicit supported employees' views on what would constitute an ideal package of support and on what a good workplace would look like.

## 4.2 Help to find jobs

### 4.2.1 User views

Being matched with a job '*you want to do, not what they want you to do*' was identified as important by supported employees. Participants employed in supported factories frequently reported being asked about their interests and what they would like to do, but this was not uniform across the placement types. For example, one participant with learning disabilities said that she had never been asked what type of work she was interested in doing and had subsequently been placed in an environment where she was happy with neither her job nor the sector she was employed in. The implication is, therefore, that consultation with clients about their interests is more likely to achieve a successful outcome.

Likewise, supported employees suggested that it was important that people were matched with jobs that reflected their skills and abilities, but it was acknowledged that this was not always possible due to the dearth of opportunities available for supported placements.

Supported employees' experiences of job search varied and there were anxieties about form filling and interviews, which were particularly pertinent to participants in one group of people with learning disabilities. What supported employees seemed to value was input from providers who offered to take '*the pressure off*' by helping with application forms and advice about interview techniques. It was not uncommon for participants to describe being accompanied to an interview by their provider, although they did not necessarily sit in on the interview.

Service users had differing expectations and needs in relation to support with finding jobs. Some wanted to play a less active role themselves, wanting their providers to find them jobs, negotiate with potential employers and organise work trials.

Some users with learning disabilities or mental health conditions expressed expectations of discrimination and wanted someone who would be an advocate during the interview, offering reassurance to the employer about their conditions, what they were capable of doing and the range of support that could be provided.

### 4.2.2 Provider views

Getting to know new clients was a priority for providers. Initial assessment and vocational profiling processes were described and providers across the groups emphasised that these were not specifically work-focused activities but a holistic approach. Initial assessments were often described as distinct from the Development Plan process, enabling providers to identify where service users '*are at*', the range of inputs necessary to get them work ready and the type of work environment that would suit them professionally and socially. There was an acknowledgement that

assessing clients could be easier in supported factories where there is more regular contact with supported employees. Interestingly, only one provider acknowledged the importance of asking clients what **they** want and listening to them, regardless of whether it was perceived as realistic or appropriate.

Providers noted that their clients often came with unrealistic ambitions about the kind of work that they could do and that they had to be careful to avoid dampening their enthusiasm. One gave an example of clients who had a Computer Literacy and Information Technology (CLAIT) certificate assuming that they would be able to find clerical work without experience of an office environment. Providers gave examples of organising work trials to establish whether a client was suited to a particular environment, along with the identification of any skills gaps and subsequent provision of training.

Participants in one group reported encountering problems because some clients referred by Disability Employment Advisors (DEAs) had apparently been misled about the type of support available through WORKSTEP. Consequently, some newly referred clients had come with the expectation that the WORKSTEP provider would find them a job rather than having themselves to engage in the job search process as active participants. One provider drew attention to the lack of commitment to work on the part of many of the people referred to his organisation and it was suggested that a lot of input had to be provided to maintain interest.

The range of inputs described as available included help with application forms, pre-employment training (including work trials), interview preparation, accompanying clients to interviews, advocating on behalf of a client, including the discussion of financial and other support packages available. One provider described using a computer programme to help clients identify jobs that they had not previously considered.

## 4.3 Support in work

### 4.3.1 User views

Supported employees indicated that it was important to receive the right balance of support in settling into the workplace. Many suggested that intensive support was particularly beneficial starting a job, including induction into the workplace, job coaching and regular review visits for people in supported placements to ensure they were happy. However, it was equally important to strike the right balance in setting up a job coaching arrangement. Here, people with learning disabilities noted that it could be '*embarrassing*' being shown how to do things, while another person said that it was important that job coaches did not sit '*on your shoulder*' and make you feel nervous and pressured. It was suggested that supported employees should be consulted about whether or not they would like a job coach and how they would like to be supported. Equally, it was felt that where employers might be resistant to the idea of a job coach, providers could help explain why this might be beneficial for everyone.

Because the reported frequency of ongoing contact with providers varied, supported employees did not suggest how or how often providers should maintain contact with them. While peoples' needs varied and the level of input required would be greatest in the early stages of a placement, it was felt important to receive constructive feedback about their work. A number of participants suggested that it would be reassuring to know that they could contact their provider if they needed to and know that, if needed, there would be someone who would '*stand up for me and fight my corner*'. Users with mental health conditions also indicated that it was important to have the continuity of a designated support worker. Other participants pointed to the value of help and advice with issues that extended beyond work, for example in relation to benefits and housing.

In addition to wanting the reassurance that providers would be available if they needed support in resolving issues in the workplace, supported employees said that it was important to have reassurances that employers would actually listen to and respond to interventions made by providers on their behalf. In this respect, people who were already in work when they first received help from WORKSTEP suggested that it would be useful to have a designated supervisor who had responsibility for them and any issues relating to their condition. Moreover, they said that in the event of staff turnover it was equally important to ensure that this responsibility was transferred to someone else, and so avoid their needs being forgotten or overlooked.

Support in resolving issues in the workplace was perceived as being no less important to people employed in supported factories or workshops where the employer was also the provider. Participants said that it was important to have some kind of procedure or system of line management that would allow supported employees to raise any concerns that they might have and know that they could do so in confidence. Likewise, there needed to be reassurances that their concerns would be dealt with fairly and sympathetically. Some participants indicated that it would be helpful to know that there were systems in place that would ensure accountability and independent monitoring in those situations where the provider is also the employer.

### **4.3.2 Provider views**

Providers acknowledged that starting a new job could be an anxious time for supported employees and examples were given of job coaching, mentoring or work shadowing to help alleviate anxiety. One provider stressed the importance that this should be discrete and non-intrusive so that the supported employee is not set apart from colleagues. It was recognised that the provision of extra support could cause resentment within a staff team and, in one group, providers gave examples of clients who had requested that review meetings take place in a neutral environment outside the workplace.

The process of reviewing placements varied and some providers were more proactive than others in ensuring that their clients were happy. Reviews were generally reported to take place on a six-monthly basis, though there were cases

where they were more frequent. Some providers also supplemented the review process with phone-calls and one large organisation had an advice line available to supported employees.

Although it was suggested that there was pressure to focus on work-related issues, some providers said that they took a holistic approach. One, who had a background of employment with Jobcentre Plus, acknowledged the benefit of being able to see the *'bigger picture'*.

There was no consensus on how problems in the workplace are identified. One provider suggested that it was easier to pick up and deal with issues in supported factories as supported employees could simply knock on the door, rather than having to wait weeks for an appointment. While some suggested that clients tended to approach them if they were having problems, others reported that clients were often reluctant to initiate contact with their provider between reviews, and that it was only during the review process that a problem might be identified.

Providers drew attention to the differing levels of support required by supported employees. Some were described as needing minimal intervention at work, while others required a higher level of reassurance on a regular basis, which could be problematic in view of heavy caseloads and the amount of time which local authority providers, in particular, were able to spend working with people in job retention situations. There were examples of providers engaging in job search activities with supported employees in an attempt to set up a new job before the existing one broke down. One provider gave an example of having to repeatedly assuage anxieties over relatively minor issues. It was acknowledged that in supported factories where the provider is also the employer, there was the additional problem of balancing production requirements against the needs of supported employees.

## 4.4 Adapting to the culture of work

### 4.4.1 User views

When asked about settling into the workplace and adapting to their colleagues and expectations of their supervisors, participants reported a range of experiences. These were not dependent on placement type.

There were suggestions that supported factories could provide a supportive and understanding environment built on inclusiveness and empathy. It was suggested by some that these could be places where allowances were made for people's conditions, with time and patience shown as supported employees learnt new jobs. However, it was also acknowledged that the pressures of production could undermine the capacity of supervisors to provide adequate support. Employees of supported factories highlighted the importance of being reassured that the pressure to meet production targets would not be transferred down the line to supported employees.

Service users who were employed in supported placements expressed a strong view that supportive colleagues could help them to 'fight their corner' and prevent an unbearable situation from evolving. They also highlighted the importance of feeling valued and respected by colleagues and wanted opportunities to socialise outside work, which would engender a sense of acceptance or belonging within the culture of the workplace.

Supportive colleagues were particularly important to those people who were in job retention situations, having entered the programme while in work. It was suggested that knowing people prior to the onset of their condition was important and that this encouraged people to be more accommodating in the workplace. Supportive management was identified as crucial to smoothing the path for a successful return to the job, and continuity of management was thought important in sustaining the job.

#### **4.4.2 Provider views**

Ensuring an environment that is sympathetic to supported employees was a concern that emerged strongly among providers and there was agreement that substantial input was required in supporting the employer in order to make placements succeed. In addition to a range of financial and practical incentives (discussed in section 4.5), providers suggested that much of their work focused on helping employers to understand and overcome their concerns about a particular impairment. Disability awareness and the implementation of the Disability Discrimination Act were also acknowledged as areas of concern to employers. In many cases, it was suggested, employers *do* want to help supported employees to succeed, but often need information and help to do so, be it having the pressure of job coaching and supervision hours lifted, or the provision of ongoing advice and support with how to deal with particular issues. One provider highlighted helping employers understand the limitations of people with particular impairments and how those might impact on their ability to complete tasks, such as people with learning disabilities who struggle with multi-tasking. The concern is not simply with placing a client, but in providing ongoing support to the employer to make the placement sustainable, even after the supported employee has decided that they no longer need the support. In one group, it was argued that if they could advertise the support available to the employer, providers would succeed in securing the co-operation of more employers. It was acknowledged that smaller businesses could often be easier to work with as they can have a more personal approach in which supported employees are *'treated as people and not a number on a clock card'*.

## 4.5 Vehicles of support

Supported employees' awareness of the range and sources of support available to help them at work tended to be quite limited. There was an acknowledgement from some that their employer was in receipt of a wage subsidy for them, or that part of their salary was covered by their provider. Some users joining the programme since April 2001 spoke of '*financial carrots*' being dangled to their employer. These included covering the cost of training.

Users who were in job retention situations specifically spoke of the kinds of support needed to help them to retain their jobs. These included help to and from work, workplace adjustments, financial support to the employer to cover reduced workload, IT equipment and human resource support, such as administrative or classroom support. These, it was felt, should be offered in addition to the range of ongoing support from providers described above.

While not all clients are supported through the provision of a wage subsidy, providers spoke at length about the problems involved in moving away from the culture of wage subsidies, particularly amongst employers of those people who transferred to WORKSTEP from the Supported Employment Programme. The risk of a placement breaking down if providers mentioned to employers the withdrawal of subsidies emerged as a strong concern. Such comments confirm findings from research on a Supported Employment Development Initiative (SEDI) project which failed to meet its targets to progress existing supported employees by changing the support funding (Beyer and Thomas, 2002). In finding jobs for clients who joined the programme after April 2001, providers expressed a reluctance to mention the possibility of wage subsidies to employers. It was reported that it had been easier to move the emphasis toward 'development grants' or alternative packages of support, such as training and workplace adjustments. It was suggested that help with the cost of making necessary physical adjustments for a supported employee was of particular value to smaller employers. Providers gave examples of covering the cost of job coaching, extra supervision hours, equal opportunities training or one off payments to pay for training that would lead to a specific qualification. In this last example, supported employees received 12 months' ongoing support but nothing beyond that. Others highlighted the implementation of contractual agreements through which employers accepted that financial support was time limited, tapered and often dependent upon supported employees achieving predetermined targets. One provider suggested that employers had been known to play providers off against each other in order to secure a higher financial subsidy, something acknowledged by providers contributing to a study of providers new to WORKSTEP (Thornton *et al.*, 2004).

## 4.6 Identifying good workplaces and packages of support

Supported employees were asked to point to characteristics of a good or bad workplace, or employer, and to consider what would constitute an ideal package of support.

Participants in some of the groups initially struggled to say what they thought a good place to work would be like and found it easier to identify negative characteristics. By implication, they wanted to work in a friendly, positive atmosphere where supervisors were approachable and patient. They wanted to be able to work free of pressure, and people with learning disabilities in particular stressed the importance of having things explained to them clearly and not being asked to complete confusing or complicated tasks. Participants with mobility and visual impairments drew attention to practical issues such as accommodating physical adjustments that make the workplace safe and accessible. One visually impaired user said that a good workplace would be one in which her employer or supervisor would take responsibility of making new staff aware of her condition and for asking them to adhere to particular health and safety procedures.

Supported employees also stressed the importance of being recognised for their contribution to the workplace, and being understood, accepted, respected and valued by their colleagues to whom they feel equal. It was also suggested that a good place to work would be where disabled people did not have to feel '*grateful for having a job*'. It would be an environment in which colleagues are friendly, supportive and patient, and prepared to make allowances without making supported employees feel that their condition is a nuisance. Managers and supervisors would be approachable, understanding and supportive in helping people to succeed with their goals. Participants also suggested that good managers would take responsibility for educating the workforce regarding disability awareness – including mental illness – and ensure a non-discriminatory environment. Service users with mental health conditions said that it was important that employers made more than '*tokenistic*' gestures such as indicated by the provision of a counselling service in the workplace: they believed that underlying attitudes and stigma regarding mental illness also needed to be addressed.

In terms of identifying an ideal package of help that would help them to sustain and enjoy their work, participants acknowledged that people have different support needs and that it should be tailored to meet the needs of the individual. Service users with learning disabilities prioritised help with job search, form filling and interview techniques. Others highlighted the importance of knowing that someone is there with encouragement when things are difficult or '*a shoulder to cry on*' if the placement breaks down. An ideal support worker was summed up as someone who would be able to educate about rights as a disabled person in the workplace, advocate on the disabled person's behalf and would support them if they wanted to try different things.

## 4.7 Conclusions

Both service users and WORKSTEP providers acknowledged the importance of support which eases the pressure on supported employees through every stage of finding, gaining and sustaining employment. This ranges from help with job search, form filling and interview preparation to ongoing support and advocacy in the workplace to avoid or resolve issues that can arise. Although providers are encouraged by their management to ensure their activities are work-focused, they also highlighted the importance of taking a holistic approach in supporting their clients. This was a view endorsed by supported employees, who valued help with benefits and housing for example.

While it was recognised that clients' support needs varied, twice-yearly contact with those in supported placements appeared to be the norm with most providers. Supported employees said that it was important to know that ongoing support would be available after they had settled into their jobs should any issues arise. People who already had jobs when they joined WORKSTEP valued practical help and financial support. For them it was also important to know that ongoing support and advocacy would be available, particularly if staff turnover led to a less sympathetic work culture. Users also identified some need to separate out support functions from line management in supported factories.

Bringing together service users' views, the ideal package of support consists of:

- a holistic approach to needs;
- practical help to get a job that is wanted and uses abilities to the full;
- advocacy during the hiring process, if desired;
- tailoring to meet the needs of the individual;
- consultation about the type and intensity of support at work;
- provider staff who visit the workplace;
- encouragement and constructive feedback about work done;
- someone to fight your corner when issues arise;
- a support worker at the end of the phone if there are problems;
- information about and support to try new opportunities.

Both service users and providers emphasised the level of input that was needed with employers to ensure that a placement was successful. From the users' perspective, this often hinged on increasing awareness of particular impairments and how these might present problems for supported employees in completing particular duties or combinations of tasks, while at the same time focusing on **ability** rather than disability. The providers stressed the importance of educating employers, but also prioritised the significance of different incentives, which ranged from wage subsidies or 'development grants' to ongoing advice and support.

The correct package of support, it was argued, could facilitate a positive working environment for supported employees in which they felt accepted, respected and valued for their contribution to the workplace and team that they were part of, and supported in achieving their goals.

Service users said that features of an ideal workplace might include:

- supportive and understanding employers and colleagues;
- allowances made for physical needs;
- production requirements balanced against the needs of supported factory employees;
- stability – low staff turnover;
- feeling accepted, respected and valued for their contribution;
- absence of discrimination;
- an unthreatening atmosphere.

### **Key points**

- Support to help disabled people find, gain and sustain employment was acknowledged as important by both service users and providers. Both stressed the importance of a holistic approach rather than one which focused only on aspects of work.
- Service users felt it important to have ongoing support in case issues arise in the workplace.
- Users who already had jobs when they joined WORKSTEP valued practical and financial support but said that they would value ongoing support and advocacy in the workplace.
- Users' views indicate that the ideal support worker should:
  - tailor to meet the needs of the individual and ask what support is preferred
  - visit the workplace
  - give encouragement and constructive feedback about work
  - fight your corner
  - be at the end of the phone if there are problems
  - give information about and support to try new opportunities.

Continued

- Users and providers emphasised the level of input required with employers to ensure that supported employees felt that their jobs were rewarding. Encouraging employers to focus on ability rather than disability was highlighted.
- Service users want to work in friendly environments free from discrimination where they feel accepted and respected by their colleagues and valued for their contribution.



# 5 Development as an aim of WORKSTEP

## 5.1 Introduction

This chapter examines participants' awareness and knowledge of the aims of WORKSTEP, focusing specifically on the concept of development and how this is interpreted and understood by both supported employees and providers.

Service users' knowledge of WORKSTEP varied considerably. Few were able to convey an accurate understanding of the programme and some had not been familiar with the name 'WORKSTEP' prior to being approached about the study. Indeed, one participant with learning disabilities became distressed when asked about their knowledge of the programme: *'I'm in a sheltered accommodation job; I'm not telling a lie'*. Participants who were employed in supported factories or businesses were more likely to be familiar with the term and with the concepts of development and progression. Those employed in the supported factories of one very large provider linked the information that they had received about WORKSTEP to the organisation's recent inspection by the Adult Learning Inspectorate (ALI). Participants in the mental health user group indicated that they had been unaware that WORKSTEP was a national programme; they thought it was a service provided only by their provider. Other supported employees demonstrated an awareness of the type of input available in looking for work and accessing ongoing support, but the majority were not aware of development and progression as programme goals. While lack of awareness of the name 'WORKSTEP' may not in itself be a problem, lack of awareness of the existence of a national programme and its aims is more problematic. Although it was not discussed in the groups, there may be some benefits to supported employees from knowing that their provider is contractually bound to meet standards and that there is a body supervising performance, for example if a user wanted to complain.

The programme aims were explained to supported employees. They were asked to interpret the concept of 'development' and for their views on how appropriate they felt it was as an aim. Their views on progression off the programme are discussed in the next chapter. Participants were invited to discuss their ambitions and to provide examples of development that had been facilitated by their work, how they are helped or encouraged to develop in their jobs by providers and employers, the effectiveness of the Development Plan process, and any obstacles that they might have encountered. Parallel questions were put to providers.

## 5.2 Interpreting and responding to the concept of 'development'

When it was explained that development within work was one of the programme aims, service users unanimously agreed that this was something that would be valued by supported employees. Although not previously aware of the aim, one participant asserted that development '*can only be a positive thing*'. Having the opportunity to develop, it was noted, prevented stagnation and boredom in work, and it was suggested that this was particularly important for younger people.

There was a tendency for providers to use the term 'progression' instead of 'development' when talking about personal advancement within a job. To avoid confusion with progression as a programme goal, providers distinguished '*soft or hard progressions*' or '*progression with a small or big "P"*'. While hard or big 'P' progressions referred to progression **off** the programme, soft or small 'p's applied to development **within** work. The latter, it was explained, included things like turning up to work on time and, for some, were not necessarily work-related goals.

While providers supporting clients in supported placements tended to emphasise 'soft' development targets, such as attendance and time-keeping, it was interesting that there was little acknowledgement that service users might want to feel that they were pursuing careers. Indeed, while emphasis was placed on acknowledging ability rather than disability, and on the need to help supported employees fulfil their potential, some providers were critical of the fact that the programme did not – in their view – recognise that '*people have limits to their abilities and skills*'. Even where providers were dealing with professionals in job retention situations, the emphasis was placed on maintaining existing jobs. There was no acknowledgement that individuals in this position might want to develop further or try something different.

These views contrast with those of users. In one user group it was asserted that, regardless of how simple the job is, it is important for all disabled people to feel that they have a career. However, as noted in Chapter Three, this can be less important to people with mental health conditions who may want to avoid the additional pressures that come with careers. Nonetheless, participants suggested that the concept of development within work enabled them to set goals for themselves which, if achieved, gave them the confidence to attempt independently new challenges, which might not be work related.

Providers were critical that the onus of the programme appeared to be on achieving measurable targets. There was a strong view that the ALI reinforced this and there were objections to supported employees being seen as 'learners' rather than 'employees'. Consequently, it was suggested, the concern with being able to demonstrate 'distance travelled' meant that many clients were put on courses for the sake of it. However, service users recognised the importance of training and qualifications and the capital that these have when looking for work. Participants with learning disabilities particularly noted this and were receptive to training opportunities. Among people with learning disabilities, there were experiences of having attended food or health and hygiene courses and having had office training. One woman reported that her enquiries to her provider about the possibility of obtaining a qualification in domestic work had been dismissed.

There was evidence of disagreement among providers about the type of client WORKSTEP has been designed for. One suggested that the emphasis on learning and basic skills meant that the programme was focused toward people with learning disabilities. It was argued that many of the assessment tools used were inappropriate for clients that did not require, for example, help with literacy. Another provider suggested that guidelines are directed toward providers working with clients in supported placements rather than in supported factories. This was not a view shared by other members of that group, and in other groups it was noted that there are often increased opportunities in supported factories to develop new skills by trying different jobs and opportunities for promotion.

### 5.3 Developing in work

Service users were asked questions aimed at eliciting evidence of having developed while in supported employment or of an ambition to do so in the future. Providers were asked about how their clients responded to opportunities for development.

A number of providers who were relatively new to supported employment noted historical shortcomings in the programme that had left supported employees in positions of '*stagnation*'. The problem of stagnation had been a particular concern within the supported factories of one very large provider, which, it was suggested, was currently being addressed by the Personal Development Plan Process and the requirement that five per cent of work time is dedicated to learning. Both service users and providers acknowledged that supported factories were environments that **could** provide scope for learning and development within the organisation. There was evidence that supported factories managed by local authorities and by very large providers could offer a range of opportunities including training courses, rotation around different departments to learn new skills, the chance to try outside placements, opportunities to progress within internal grading structures and gain promotion into supervisory or managerial positions. Several supported employees of a very large provider had succeeded in moving into positions of responsibility and, in one of the provider groups, a supported employee attended as a management representative.

Providers gave examples of clients whom they had watched develop from being timid and dependent on their carers, to assertive and independent employees who made valuable contributions to their workplace. Indeed, one supported employee whose condition had developed during adulthood described how he had been forced to change careers after he had become ill and had gradually worked his way up and had found ways of applying his previous qualifications in his new career. Having increased in confidence and self-esteem, he also learnt to walk and drive again: *'slowly I ticked them all off'*.

During one provider discussion, it was acknowledged that boredom in the job could lead to problems in the workplace. However, this view was not shared by all providers. While it was recognised that clients **do** want to progress, it was suggested that there is more likely to be resistance from long-term clients and from those with learning disabilities. Some providers argued that change can be perceived as a threatening prospect for clients with learning disabilities who often simply want security and routine. An example was given of clients who had threatened to walk out of their jobs when presented with the opportunity of doing something different.

These views contrast with users'. Participants who had been doing the same job or working in the same environment – in some cases for years – expressed dissatisfaction at the lack of opportunities to develop or try other things and pointed out that being given the option to develop was *'a great motivator'*. In contrast to the observations made by providers, ambitions to learn and develop within work emerged strongly among participants with learning disabilities. Such ambitions ranged from wanting to increase their hours or earning potential to becoming *'a boss or team leader'*, opening their own shop, becoming a head chef, working at Kew gardens, working in an office and being a *'career girl'*.

There was resistance among supported employees with learning disabilities at being stuck in *'dead end jobs'*, such as domestic and retail work, and people with mental health conditions in particular highlighted the importance of *'stimulating'* work. A provider representative who was relatively new to supported employment asserted that providers had a responsibility to revisit clients' situations and ensure that they are *'developing and learning and trying new jobs'*.

Discussions with supported employees in job retention situations indicate that review of clients' situations is no less relevant among those already established in their careers. It seemed that while such service users were grateful for the support to retain their positions, there was also a sense of being unable to move beyond their current status or to try something new. Two participants indicated that they would like to move to a different area of their profession, to change location or try for promotion. However, they acknowledged that there were particular *'constraints'*, such as insurance implications, if they were to relocate and concerns that senior management might have about covering additional responsibilities if they were to fall ill.

## 5.4 Reviewing and measuring development

The Development Plan is a compulsory element for service users joining WORKSTEP from April 2001, and represents an important means through which achievement of the aim to develop supported employees can be measured. The process was generally welcomed by providers as an improvement on previous monitoring methods and the Development Plan was recognised as a quality control and goal-orientated document by both providers and service users. However, there is no programme-wide pro forma for the Development Plan and providers essentially have a free hand in designing the process. This has implications for measuring standards and performance across the range of provision.

Providers acknowledged that the Development Plan was a 'live' document and open to review. While there was variation in the frequency with which it was revisited, most providers said that reviews were undertaken every six to twelve months. Provider representatives and supported factory employees from a very large provider reported that a very learning and development-orientated regime had emerged within the organisation over the past two years, driven by its bi-annual Personal Development Plan system. Provider representatives from one small organisation providing both supported factory and supported placement support reported six contacts a year with clients. For those in supported placements, this took the form of two Development Plans and four reviews (which could take the form of follow up phone-calls). Their supported factory employees had three Development Plans and three reviews. Supported employees confirmed the frequency of this contact.

A recurring theme among providers was the difficulty they often had in encouraging clients to understand and engage with the concept of development and to think beyond their immediate concern with finding a job. However, there was evidence that providers actively tried to engage their clients in thinking both about what they would like to achieve and what they think they have achieved through work. Providers felt that the requirement to evidence development worked against reviewing real personal achievement, such as the personal and social outcomes highlighted in Chapter Three. One provider suggested that while the process should focus on identifying and building upon supported employees' strengths and helping them overcome weaknesses, the nature of the paperwork meant that providers felt that they constantly had to justify why their clients were on the programme.

Supported employees' reflections upon the Development Plan process varied. Those who were supported by providers that carried out at least bi-annual reviews valued the opportunities to learn and develop which came out of a planning process in which they were engaged as active participants. Service users from an organisation specialising in supporting people with mental health conditions spoke highly of their planning process. They described it as a contract with clear guidelines and a time frame which the provider, employer and service user sign up to, ensuring that everyone fulfils their respective responsibilities. These views were not shared by all those who had regular reviews, however, and the view that development reviews

lacked meaning was not uncommon. Experience of a supervisory role led one participant to dismiss quarterly development plans as a *'meaningless'*, fifteen-minute tick box exercise. There was a report of training needs identified two years previously still not met, and a complaint that the exercise was completed so that the provider could *'cover themselves'* with no effort to help the user towards what he would like to achieve in work. Participants employed in the supported factory of one small provider said they were given a sheet of paper by their supervisor and expected to sign it *'to say you agree with it'*.

When asked about whether or not they had the chance to tell their providers and employers what they would like to do at work, one group of participants with learning disabilities struggled to engage with the concept of 'development' and 'review'. One suggested: *'What we've achieved? What we're good at?'* While she reported that it was her employer, rather than the provider who set her targets, another participant described a review process in which he was not involved as an active participant. Indeed, he said that his employer and provider discussed his progress and marked him out of ten for time keeping, attendance and so on. However, when probed, it appeared that he was not invited to contribute *his* views on how well he thought he was doing. This was not an isolated example. Another user said that she lacked the *'courage'* to contribute her views in this process.

Some user participants were unable to recall having experienced anything resembling a vocational profile or Development Plan exercise. Indeed, one participant with learning disabilities was quite clear in asserting that she had never been asked what she would like to do. Another participant, who had been selected by the ALL to be interviewed as part of its inspection of her provider, admitted that she had *'never heard of a Development Plan'*.

How the Development Plan was implemented varied among providers. Some used it only as a means of evidencing development in work rather than addressing the personal and social outcomes identified in the user groups, unless these were directly relevant to work. Many providers believed that Jobcentre Plus and the ALL were principally concerned with 'hard' outcomes specifically relating to work, so focused on these for that reason. Providers supporting clients with learning disabilities asserted that 'soft' targets formed the basis of their work and hence focused on personal and social outcomes which were more relevant to their clients.

One provider, who was very new in post, asserted that he felt able to identify his clients progressing when they started *'taking ownership of their own development'*, and many providers reported that clients had become increasingly proactive in demanding formal training. This is perhaps a reflection of the increasing awareness that supported employees – not least those with learning disabilities – have of the capital that formal training has in the search for and advancement in work. While some providers were very training orientated, others did not always see the emphasis on formal training as a positive thing and some argued that the Development Plan should focus on making jobs more interesting to supported employees and to ensure that they are not prevented from fulfilling their potential.

## 5.5 Obstacles to development

It is not surprising that supported employees had more to say about perceived obstacles to development than did providers.

Both service users and providers acknowledged that participants' conditions ultimately dictated their ability to progress and that this was a particular concern for those whose conditions were likely to deteriorate.

While providers argued that clients with learning disabilities often found change threatening or struggled to retain information, supported employees were more specific in highlighting their concerns. These included problems with literacy when it came to completing application forms. Structural obstacles included the difficulties of finding and accessing jobs in rural areas where public transport links were patchy. For some this might mean moving, which could be a daunting prospect.

Issues particular to supported factories were raised. There was agreement among providers that supported factories could be limited in terms of size and the opportunities that they consequently provided for development and promotion. This was acknowledged by one supported factory employee. Representatives from a very large provider envisaged a time when they would have a problem with a highly skilled workforce that had reached a plateau in terms of opportunities for promotion. This, it was argued, could present a disincentive for development. They also suggested that while people new to WORKSTEP often started work in supported factories enthusiastic about training and development, they quickly find themselves adapting to a cynical work culture proliferated by colleagues who have been in supported employment for many years.

The view that there were limited opportunities to develop outside the supported factory environment emerged strongly among supported employees. There were complaints by users that an insufficient number of employers were aware of WORKSTEP, and that where there were opportunities to try outside placements there would always be a fear either of discrimination or of an inability to cope with the '*aggressive*' production-orientated culture of '*open industry*'.

Supported employees complained that some employers in their current jobs either did not give them the chance or were not interested in supporting them to develop. In some instances there was no evidence of support to the employer beyond financial help in the shape of a wage subsidy. One provider suggested that, in some instances, it was not in the interests of the employer to move a supported employee into a new role, as they often did the jobs that no one else wanted to do and a move would leave the employer with the problem of filling the gap.

Providers were less proactive than some service users would have hoped. For example, there were complaints about a lack of time to provide training in supported factories, or that training that had been requested was not delivered. Other users felt that they had not been given the opportunity to express their desire to develop.

Alternatively, aspirations had been expressed but help to achieve them was not forthcoming. An example here concerns a participant with learning disabilities who reported that she had expressed an interest in moving into a different sector, but did not have the skills and experience to do so. Rather than helping her to find an opportunity to gain such experience through a voluntary placement, her provider had set her the task of finding and setting it up for herself. Her failure to succeed with this task had led to anxiety in anticipation of her next review.

## 5.6 Conclusions

When it was explained that development within work was one of the aims of WORKSTEP, service users unanimously agreed that it was an important component as it helps to prevent stagnation and boredom and gives supported employees the opportunity to set themselves goals.

It was noted by both service users and providers that supported factories were environments in which there might be increased opportunities to develop new skills, try different jobs and achieve promotion, albeit with limits due to the size of businesses.

While service providers suggested that clients with learning disabilities and those who have been in supported employment for a long time would be less likely to engage with the concept of development, this was not borne out by the views of service users themselves. It was not uncommon for participants with learning disabilities to express both dissatisfaction with being stuck in what they perceived to be *'dead end jobs'* and ambitions to pursue a career. The failure of providers to acknowledge that career development might be an important goal for their clients was significant. When discussing professionals in job retention situations providers were unable to present evidence of doing anything more than helping clients to maintain existing jobs.

Clearly, people's needs go unmet if they are not aware that support is available. The implications of users' views are that WORKSTEP's development aim needs to be promoted to supported employees, employing user-friendly language and examples of successful development within work.

Providers need to be encouraged to recognise that supported employees might want to feel they are pursuing a career and to avoid assuming that people have limits to their abilities. It would be beneficial if Jobcentre Plus found ways of ensuring that providers are educated to expand their perceptions of what is important to service users and what they can achieve. Specifically, providers need to acknowledge:

- the importance of equality and a world free of stigma and discrimination;
- that service users want to be engaged in activities which increase their sense of dignity and self-esteem and enable them to feel valued for their contribution to society;

- that regardless of their condition, users value opportunities to develop within their jobs and learn new skills;
- that people with learning disabilities do have an awareness of the capital of training and qualifications in the labour market;
- that people in job retention situations want support in developing within their careers.

The introduction of development plans was perceived to be a positive move among providers. In some cases it had led to a change in the way that clients' situations are reviewed. However, while the Development Plan was welcomed as a quality control document, the absence of a proforma meant that there was little consistency across provider organisations.

Providers suggested that the emphasis placed on documenting 'distance travelled' did not always have positive outcomes. For example, it was suggested that this has led to an over-emphasis on formal training and that clients were being put on courses for the sake of it. This contrasts with the views of supported employees who recognised the importance of training and qualifications and welcomed the opportunity to try new things.

While supported employees, who were engaged as active participants in their Development Plans and reviews, tended to speak positively of the process, others suggested that it lacked meaning and value if their requests for training and new opportunities were not followed up. Supported employees and WORKSTEP providers did not give any evidence that development plans addressed the personal and social outcomes or long-term ambitions that users identified as being desirable (reported in Chapter 3) but rather focused on short-term, work-orientated goals. Piloting a proforma might be one way of ensuring both greater consistency and coverage of those aspects the research has found to be of concern to service users.

### Key points

- Service user awareness of development within work as a programme aim should be promoted in accessible language along with examples of successful development.
- Service users were unanimous that development would help to prevent boredom and stagnation.
- Service providers did not readily acknowledge that clients with learning disabilities would engage with the concept of development. Yet users with learning disabilities expressed dissatisfaction with being stuck in what they perceived to be '*dead end jobs*' and many expressed ambitions to pursue careers.

Continued

- Providers failed to acknowledge the importance of career development to service users. Even when discussing professionals in job retention situations, the emphasis was only on supporting them to maintain their existing jobs.
- It would be beneficial if Jobcentre Plus found ways of ensuring that providers are educated to expand their perceptions of what is important to service users and what they can achieve.
- Development plans were welcomed by providers as an important quality control document, but the absence of a proforma means that there is little consistency across provider organisations.
- There was disagreement between users and providers about the role of formal training. Providers felt that the emphasis on measuring 'distance travelled' meant that clients were being put on courses for the sake of it, while service users recognised the capital that training and qualifications have in the workplace and welcomed the opportunity to try new things.
- Users employed in the supported factories of one very large provider spoke positively of being involved as active participants in their development plans. However, there is little evidence overall that personal and social outcomes and long-term careers goals were being addressed. Piloting a proforma might be one way of ensuring greater consistency and coverage of those aspects found to be of concern to service users.

# 6 Progression as an aim of WORKSTEP

## 6.1 Introduction

This chapter focuses on participants' awareness of and responses to the concept of progression as an aim of WORKSTEP. As noted in Chapter Five, there was a tendency to conflate the concepts of 'development' and 'progression' and providers often made the distinction between 'soft' and 'hard' progression. While 'soft' progression referred to personal progress – such as catching a bus, putting on a clean shirt for work and keeping a job – this chapter is concerned with what providers referred to as 'formal' progression: progression from the programme into open employment and the removal of 'grant support'. Providers were particularly keen to talk about progression and frequently raised it unprompted early in the discussion, when discussing outcomes for example.

## 6.2 Interpreting the concept of 'progression'

Few supported employees were aware of progression as an aim of WORKSTEP and those who were aware of it tended to be employed in supported factories. A very small minority believed that progression into open and unsupported employment was 'the whole point' of the programme and had learned this from their support workers or via the factory setting. One supported employee with learning disabilities reported that written information about WORKSTEP was posted around the factory she worked in prior to its inspection by the Adult Learning Inspectorate (ALI). She explained that she had asked what the notices said, but was unable to retain the explanation given to her.

Amongst the few people who knew about progression, the accuracy of supported employees' knowledge was frequently influenced by anxieties that it would herald the closure of supported factories, fears of being forced off WORKSTEP before they were ready to, and fears that there would be no way back onto the programme if

their job did not work out. For service users in one group, the fear of being forced into open employment before they felt ready was borne out of their misunderstanding that there was a two-year limit to WORKSTEP. These participants had received information about the programme aims via their provider and were particularly concerned about the change in name as they felt that the word *WORK-STEP* implied movement off the programme. Only one service user had experience of leaving the programme and then returning when she fell ill.

One provider questioned whether supported employees would understand what progression actually meant. There is evidence from service users to support this view. For example, supported factory employees in one group tended to confuse 'open employment' with 'open industry' and movement out of the factory environment into supported placements appeared to be a daunting prospect in itself. Service users with learning disabilities frequently failed to understand that open employment meant **no** support.

Those service users who had no previous awareness of the progression aim typically responded rather guardedly. It was felt that the appropriateness of progression as an aim depended on the individual and there was a strong view that the decision to move off the programme should come from the individual. However, it was acknowledged that some people need encouragement to think of progression as a possibility.

Providers reaffirmed the view that progression into open employment was not suitable for all supported employees and it was suggested that the aims do not leave room for individual choice. Providers felt that Jobcentre Plus' concern with progression was too narrow and this feeling had been reinforced by the focus of the ALL inspections. For some supported employees, it was argued, simply keeping a job constituted progression.

However, it was also acknowledged by providers that there were people – particularly those with learning disabilities – who had been in supported employment for longer than they need be and that attention should be given to moving them off the programme. It was recognised that many were quite capable of working without additional support. Indeed, progression was viewed very favourably by providers in one group who asserted that the programme should not be about providing '*cradle to the grave*' support, as it had been in the past. It was acknowledged that this approach could create dependency, which made it very difficult to move long-term clients off the programme. While it was felt that clients that had joined the programme since April 2001 would be easier to progress, it was argued that there should be a safety net for those unable to sustain open employment. This was a particular concern among smaller providers who lacked the capacity to absorb returnees in the way that the larger providers could.

When asked about whether they felt that progression was an option that they would like to consider, very few supported employees indicated that this would be a suitable option for them and of these the majority had learning disabilities. One,

who reported having literacy problems, said that with the right training input now he felt he had the confidence to progress into open employment. Another said that he would like to be able to set up his own business as a DJ, which he currently pursued as a hobby. A further example came from an individual who indicated that he would like to progress if he could find a job within easy travelling distance.

## 6.3 Obstacles to progression

A range of issues were presented by both service users and providers when they were asked to respond to the programme's progression aim. While supported employees' concerns centred on the withdrawal of support, providers presented a number of issues they perceived to be obstacles to implementing the aim. As previously noted, providers were particularly keen to talk about progression and frequently raised it without prompting.

### 6.3.1 Withdrawal of support and financial disincentives

There was strong concern from participants with a wide range of impairments about their ability to continue with work without the security of the 'safety net' offered by their provider. It was acknowledged by some that they had not yet called upon their provider for support, but the knowledge that they could was reassuring. Lack of confidence to succeed independently was cited as a concern, and while one participant with a mental health condition understood the reasoning behind the progression aim she nonetheless thought the prospect was 'scary'. Service users expressed a concern that they might be rushed into something before they were ready and highlighted a fear of failure and having to return to the system. In this respect, providers could do more to reassure users that support provided to help them to work toward progression, if this is felt to be appropriate, will not be withdrawn until they feel that they can manage alone, and that the option of returning to the programme will not be foreclosed.

Their conditions were noted as an obstacle to progression by some supported employees. One person gave an example of having tried to work in open employment prior to joining the programme, but his mobility problems had prevented him from completing his job successfully. For those with long-term medical conditions and people in job retention situations, there was the acknowledgement by both service users and providers that the nature of their conditions meant that their support needs would increase.

Both supported employees and providers emphasised the particular concerns that local authority and supported factory employees had in relation to progression. A possible decline in wages and loss of in-service benefits, such as annual leave, sick pay and pension schemes, were cited as disincentives to progression for local authority and supported factory employees. One service user suggested that leaving employment in the local authority supported business where he worked would be 'like cutting your arm off'. Additionally, representatives from a very large provider of

supported factory placements argued that supported employees within their organisation benefited from a *'protectionist'* approach, facilitated by the trade union.

Interestingly, the depth of concern that supported employees had about the withdrawal of support was not something acknowledged by providers. There was recognition that their clients might find change a daunting prospect especially in relation to making new friends, that there were concerns about job security in open employment and that they may continue to need an advocate to help them articulate their problems at work. Only one provider suggested that their clients might be *'afraid to let go'*.

### **6.3.2 Employer-related obstacles**

Providers overwhelmingly identified finance as the principal obstacle to progression. While not all supported employees' wages are subsidised, negotiating the withdrawal of wage subsidies with those employers who received them was a strong concern for all providers and it was said that *'finance is a very powerful thing for employers'*. It was believed that some supported employees would lose their jobs if wage subsidies were withdrawn and that both small and larger businesses want to be compensated for the problems that come with employing a disabled person, for example, reduced levels of productivity. It was argued that the withdrawal of wage subsidies presented particular problems when it came to progressing clients who had been in supported employment for lengthy periods and that it was easier to achieve with those who had joined the programme more recently. The shift away from the culture of wage subsidies toward 'development grants', tapered and target-linked payments and a range of other incentives – including financing training and supervision packages, investment in equipment and so on – had made it easier to progress more recent clients into open employment more quickly.

Both service users and providers recognised that it was difficult to find employers prepared to take disabled people on without additional support. This was not always a question of financial support. Some providers reported situations where the client was ready to progress, but the employer was reluctant to relinquish the input from WORKSTEP. Reasons for this included anxieties about the Disability Discrimination Act – though it was not explained what these anxieties were – or the absence of sufficient internal support mechanisms to deal with problems that could arise. For reasons not specified, Jobcentre Plus was singled out as an employer with whom it was difficult to progress very long-term supported employees (16 years or more). One provider went as far as suggesting that few employers would *'tolerate the kind of behaviour'* that some supported employees can demonstrate, making them difficult to place and sustain even in supported placements.

### 6.3.3 Timescales

As far as providers were concerned, the new payment structure linking outcome payments to individual progression within perceived timescales was one of the principal obstacles to implementing the goal of progression. It was suggested that the original progression target of 30 per cent over two years for clients who joined the programme since April 2001 was an unrealistic expectation. Although this target had been abandoned in April 2004 – three to five months before the fieldwork took place – no provider representatives demonstrated an awareness of this.

Given that the programme is regarded as a last resort for those people facing the most significant barriers to employment, providers were particularly critical about the contractual obligations for a development plan to be in place within three weeks of joining the programme and for clients to have jobs of 16 or more hours a week within eight weeks of the completion of the Development Plan. Some providers also observed that due to high caseloads and a lack of commitment among some people joining the programme, it could take up to two weeks to have an initial meeting with a client. Additionally, it was noted that if new clients had been misled by, for example, a Disability Employment Adviser about what WORKSTEP offered, it could take longer to engage them with the concepts of development planning and job search. Some providers admitted that they had consequently begun to select those clients that they knew would be easier to progress within the original timeframe.

Only one supported factory manager provided evidence of having specifically incorporated the progression timescale into the development planning process. The first year, it was explained, is dedicated to developing supported employees' skills, while the second year focused specifically on progression. However, it was noted that supported employees start to feel insecure toward the end of the second year.

Representatives of very large providers indicated that they could afford to be more flexible about timescales, and those with longer experience of providing supported employment spoke of the strategies used to work around timescales, such as not dating development plans. Those who had not met their contractual ceiling also said that they felt less pressured to progress, but acknowledged that this could change when their contracts were full.

There was greater anxiety among those who were relatively new to supported employment, who represented new providers or who had yet to be inspected by ALI. There were reports of pressure from managers to meet progression targets and obtain a good grading from the ALI. While inspection was recognised as being an important Quality Standards measure, one participant suggested that providers are so preoccupied with the goal of achieving a grade three from the ALI and competing with other local providers that all their efforts are focused upon this. One provider said that without a good ALI report *'we're all down the road'*. Clearly, the demands of inspection were perceived to be at odds with the needs of clients. This provider asserted: *'we'll never get a grade one because to get a grade one you just follow the Inspectorate's lines and we're not going to do that, we're going to help participants'*.

## 6.4 Conclusions

Few supported employees had been aware of the WORKSTEP aim to progress employees, for whom it is appropriate, into unsupported employment. Supported employees discussed the aim of progression with reservation. Very few felt that progression into unsupported employment was something that they could achieve. There was a strong sense of anxiety about the withdrawal of the 'safety net' that WORKSTEP offers and fears that they would be forced off the programme before they were ready and that they would not be able to get back onto it if they were unable to sustain their job. It follows that there may be a case for allowing continued low level involvement of providers with people who have moved into unsupported employment as it was generally agreed that workers and employers continue to need episodic advice, advocacy and sometimes practical help to sustain a successful progressed placement.

There was consensus among both service users and providers that progression should be a matter of choice for the individual.

Both supported employees and providers acknowledged that there would be particular concern about progression among certain groups of people. These included local authority employees, those employed in the supported factories of one very large provider and people in job retention situations or with degenerative conditions whose support needs would increase. Providers emphasised the problems with progressing clients who had been on the programme a long time, and the drive to develop a less dependency-orientated programme was generally welcomed. However, there was strong criticism of the timescales and what providers were expected to achieve for their clients within what were perceived to be unrealistic timescales. It was acknowledged that the pressure to progress 30 per cent of clients joining WORKSTEP since April 2001 had led to some providers selecting people they knew they could progress within a two-year time frame. Without exception, providers were unaware that the 30 per cent progression target had been withdrawn in April 2004.

Additionally, providers were overwhelmingly critical of the programme's perceived narrow focus on progression to unsupported employment and failure to acknowledge adequately 'personal progression' or development. It was felt that the ALL reinforced this and that the demands of inspection did not necessarily coincide with or acknowledge the needs of supported employees, or those of employers who often want ongoing support.

Finally, the issue of finance was identified by providers as being the principal obstacle to progression, particularly for those clients who had been in supported employment for a long time. It was argued that those employers who receive wage subsidies are reluctant to relinquish them and providers risk jeopardising clients' jobs if they withdraw the funding. However, it was acknowledged that the move away from wage subsidies toward different forms of support, for example, 'development

grants', tapered or target linked payments, the financing of training, job coaching and supervision packages, had made it easier to progress those clients who joined the programme more recently.

### Key points

- Service users demonstrated a general lack of awareness of the aims of WORKSTEP and of the progression aim in particular.
- Users discussed the progression aim with caution and expressed a strong sense of anxiety about the withdrawal of the '*safety net*' that WORKSTEP offers, being forced off the programme before they were ready and not being able to return to the programme if they were unable to sustain their job. There may be a case for continued low level involvement of providers with people who move to unsupported employment.
- Both service users and providers felt that progression into open employment should be a matter of choice.
- Providers welcomed the move toward a less dependency-orientated programme, but emphasised the problems of progressing certain groups of clients.
- There were criticisms by providers of the timescales in which they had been expected to progress people. Without exception, they were unaware that the progression target had been withdrawn in April 2004.
- Providers were critical of the programme's perceived narrow focus on progression to unsupported employment which they felt was reinforced by the ALI. They did not demonstrate any awareness of the wider programme goals, including the importance DWP attaches to personal and social outcomes identified by users.
- Finance was identified as an obstacle to progression by providers. It was felt that employers in receipt of wage subsidies would be reluctant to relinquish them and providers were concerned about putting clients' jobs at risk. However, it was acknowledged that the move toward alternative packages of support, including 'development grants', tapered or target linked payments and the financing of training had made it easier to progress clients.



# 7 Provider views on delivering WORKSTEP

## 7.1 Introduction

A range of issues were addressed which were specific to service providers. This chapter examines some of these issues, beginning with what their organisations gained from delivering WORKSTEP. It also identifies what providers perceived to be the obstacles to delivery and their views on how the programme could be improved.

Factors such as the size and type of provider, length of service provision and how much experience provider representatives had in the field of supported employment were often reflected in the nature of their responses.

## 7.2 What organisations gain from delivering WORKSTEP

The most frequently cited benefit among representatives from voluntary body providers was that delivering WORKSTEP contributed to the ethos of the organisation, helped it to fulfil its mission or enabled the charity to set out to achieve what it was established to do. Helping people who would not otherwise find employment and enabling disabled people to take an active role in society were described as being the principal concerns of some organisations. One representative who was very new to supported employment suggested, at the risk of being '*ridiculed*' by more experienced and cynical participants in his group, that the programme helped '*bridge the gaps in society*'.

Similar views were expressed by representatives of local authority providers. Delivering the programme, it was suggested, fitted into authorities' social inclusion agendas and enabled them to set a good example, for instance, by making its workforce representative of the local population or helped existing disabled staff to retain their employment within the local authority. One supported factory manager specifically said that it enabled the factory to succeed with its business objective, which was to offer employment to disabled people. For others, the delivery of

WORKSTEP helped put disability on the local authority's agenda and, where it was located in Social or Community Services Departments, provided a social service and contributed to its social care agenda, facilitating a move away from institutionalised settings for disabled people.

Representatives from both voluntary and local authority providers stated that the WORKSTEP contract was an important source of income for their organisations. For voluntary body providers, the income from WORKSTEP enabled the organisation to exist or, for larger charities, helped finance the delivery of other programmes. Meanwhile, managers from local authority supported factories stated that the contract funded their factories. It was suggested that WORKSTEP subsidised the wages of disabled people employed by local authorities. However, the income from the WORKSTEP contract was not seen as a benefit to all providers. A manager of a small voluntary body supported factory said that the income from delivering the programme was not worth the amount of administration and bureaucracy involved, particularly for local authorities with small contracts.

Voluntary and local authority providers shared the view that delivering WORKSTEP enabled their organisations to provide '*seamless provision*' as it allowed continuity with, or complemented other, Jobcentre Plus programmes they had contracts with (for example, Work Preparation, Access to Work, New Deal for Disabled People (NDDP)), facilitated partnerships with other organisations and services, and helped them when bidding for other Jobcentre Plus contracts as it was felt that having an existing contract would make it easier to secure further contracts.

Other benefits identified included the movement away from the wage subsidy model as it meant that employers would be less dependent on the income from employing a supported employee, making it easier to progress them into open employment if and when it was appropriate. The only representative of a private provider suggested that delivering WORKSTEP enabled the organisation to diversify its services.

A factory manager from one very large provider argued that WORKSTEP had been a catalyst for change within the organisation, making it more accountable to Jobcentre Plus, and providing structured development for supported employees and greater consistency across its supported factories.

Responses from some representatives highlighted issues of provider size. Only one provider felt unable to identify any benefits to his voluntary organisation, arguing that the financial rewards were not worth the volume of administration and bureaucracy involved. A local authority provider reported that smaller organisations felt '*outgunned*' by the larger ones and it was argued that larger providers had greater capacity to provide seamless provision. One very senior manager from a large organisation suggested that the WORKSTEP contract had helped the organisation to sharpen its image and enabled it to compete with the larger ones.

### 7.3 Obstacles to delivering WORKSTEP

While providers welcomed many of the changes that were introduced with the modernisation of the programme, it was also acknowledged that there were problems in transforming a *'stagnant'* programme into something more productive. As noted in Section 6.3, moving away from the culture of wage subsidies had proved particularly problematic, both in placing clients and when attempting to progress them into open employment, and the new funding structure and associated timeframes were perceived to be unrealistic.

High staff caseloads were of particular importance given that provider organisations needed to keep occupancy levels within five to ten per cent of their contract ceiling to justify increasing contract sizes. Keeping up occupancy levels had proved difficult in view of competition from NDDP, believed to be widely publicised, and providers felt that WORKSTEP was not being marketed effectively. The need to progress clients into open employment was therefore offset against the pressure to maintain occupancy levels.

Providers highlighted the increased administrative burdens that had come with the modernised programme. They drew particular attention to the pressure that came regarding monitoring and documenting development for the Adult Learning Inspectorate (ALI) inspections. There was also criticism of the increased bureaucracy, for example in tracking outcome payments, and suggestions that many providers lacked the organisational capacity to deal with it.

### 7.4 Suggestions for improving the programme

While WORKSTEP was acknowledged to have initiated important changes in the arena of supported employment, providers argued that there were areas that warranted improvement.

It was felt that the referral process needed to be made more flexible to allow for provider referrals, rather than relying on Disability Employment Advisers (DEAs). DEAs were thought often to refer to established providers they had experience of working with. It should, be pointed out, however, that some providers already have gained approval to recruit participants directly.

It was suggested that the funding structure could be altered to move the existing sustained progression payment to the front of the programme, which would be an incentive to get new clients on to WORKSTEP. It was suggested that payments at the *'back of the programme'* were not an incentive for progression and that greater emphasis needed to be placed on getting new clients onto WORKSTEP to increase occupancy levels.

In one group, providers commented on the eligibility criteria and Permitted Work Rules and suggested that a second programme should be developed to accommodate those people unable to work 16 or more hours.

There were suggestions that WORKSTEP should cater for people who wish to pursue self-employment, a group believed to have been denied access.

Providers stressed that the focus on progression should be widened to allow for greater recognition of personal development in measuring distance travelled, rather than simply focusing on training and work related development and progression into formal employment. The ALI, it was argued, should acknowledge '*softer*' progressions through the inspection process. Additionally, there was a strong view that the programme goals should be more realistic, particularly regarding the timescale for progression.

Providers expressed concern that individual choice should be prioritised and that there needed to be a safety net for those people unable to sustain open employment. It was suggested that the programme should perhaps be forked to accommodate people for whom progression was not a realistic option, in addition to those who would be able to move into sustained open employment.

Finally, providers expressed views that there should be greater continuity across the main Jobcentre Plus employment programmes for disabled people and that providers should be '*kept within the policy loop*'.

## 7.5 Conclusions

Providers said that the WORKSTEP contract was important in contributing to their organisations' mission or, in the case of local authorities, facilitated the promotion of social inclusion. It was an important source of income, which helped finance other programmes and funded supported factories and the employment of disabled people within local authorities. Delivering the programme allowed larger organisations to provide seamless provision for disabled people.

While WORKSTEP was welcomed as a move toward making the supported employment more productive, providers suggested that the goals needed to acknowledge that the cycle of dependency created by the previous programme would not be broken overnight as long-term clients were often apprehensive about change and employers opposed to the withdrawal of wage subsidies.

To improve the programme it was suggested that greater flexibility was required regarding the referral process, the time frames for development and progression targets and the nature of the current funding regime.

There was a strong view that the programme needed to account for individual choice and to acknowledge the limitations of some supported employees. Progression, it was argued, was not always a realistic option and the ALI should expand the concern with progression to include '*softer*' outcomes such as personal development.

Given that even senior representatives from provider organisations were unaware that the 30 per cent progression target for people joining the programme after April 2001 had been withdrawn, it is evident that better communication is needed both within organisations and between Jobcentre Plus and WORKSTEP providers. This is particularly relevant regarding the wider programme goals. With the exception of development within work, which received less attention than progression, providers did not refer to any other Departmental or Jobcentre Plus objectives for the programme. If entrenched beliefs about the narrow focus on progression are to change, and if WORKSTEP is to deliver what its users want, Jobcentre Plus needs to be more explicit in communicating to providers that the programme is committed to achieving wider, social objectives.

### Key points

- The WORKSTEP contract was perceived to support provider organisations' missions or, in the case of local authorities, promoted social inclusion.
- The contract was an important source of income which funded supported factories and the employment of disabled people within local authorities.
- Providers welcomed the move to make supported employment more productive but felt that the goals needed to acknowledge the cycle of dependency created by the previous programme.
- Providers felt that the programme could be improved if there was greater flexibility in the referral process, the time frames for development and progression targets and the nature of the current funding regime.
- There was a strong view that the programme needed to account for individual choice and the limitations of some supported employees, particularly regarding progression. It was felt that Jobcentre Plus and the ALI could do more to acknowledge '*softer*' outcomes such as personal development.
- Lack of awareness regarding the wider programme goals and the withdrawal of progression targets demonstrated that improved communication between Jobcentre Plus and providers is needed. DWP and Jobcentre Plus need to be more explicit in communicating to providers that WORKSTEP is committed to achieving wider, social objectives.



## 8 Conclusions

The study was carried out to elicit what service users and providers identify as the desirable outcomes of WORKSTEP, as well as to explore their understanding of how the programme can help to achieve these outcomes.

Research to date has tended to emphasise measuring service inputs against potential population level outcomes in establishing 'what works' and policy objectives and the concerns of programme managers, service providers and employers have tended to be prioritised in this process rather than the interests of participants. Nonetheless, there has been increasing interest in identifying service outcomes for individuals. While much of the previous research about supported employment has tended to be evaluation-based, this study aimed at prioritising service users' views on what they believe are desirable outcomes of supported employment.

Engaging both service users and providers, the study reports what are perceived to be the desired outcomes of supported employment for service users, the range of support required to help them to achieve desired outcomes, and understandings of, and responses to, programme goals relating to development and progression. These conclusions balance the desired outcomes identified by individual supported employees against the wider programme goals of WORKSTEP, exploring obstacles to the successful attainment of both and setting out some implications for the delivery and design of the programme .

### 8.1 Desirable outcomes of WORKSTEP

#### 8.1.1 Key findings

In group settings, supported employees readily responded with social and personal outcomes they thought achievable for disabled people through work. While participants involved in this study confirm many of the outcomes identified in previous research, there were also a number of important departures or differences in emphasis, particularly in relation to those with learning disabilities. The study also highlights the experiences of people whose conditions had developed in later life, a category of analysis missing in previous research.

The key outcome areas that participants identified were:

- social inclusion, part of a community free of discrimination;
- confidence;
- sense of achievement;
- increased self-esteem, dignity and pride;
- financial independence from family and benefit;
- stimulation from work;
- doing something worthwhile;
- sense of an 'ordinary' life;
- a career;
- sense of wellness;
- expanded social circle;
- improved social and communication skills;
- making friends and socialising.

Increased social inclusion emerged strongly as a desirable outcome. Service users with a wide range of impairments argued that it was important for disabled people to feel part of a community that is both free of discrimination and also understanding of their experiences and needs. While providers acknowledged that their clients would identify social inclusion as important, none anticipated the strength of feeling that would emerge in relation to increasing the visibility of disabled people in the workplace to address issues of discrimination and the need for greater social awareness regarding disability. These were issues that were emphasised by participants with learning disabilities and mental health conditions in particular. The sense of indignation that supported employees with learning disabilities had in relation to discrimination and lack of awareness is something that has not been reported previously.

Increased levels of confidence and a sense of achievement when both personal and work related goals are accomplished were widely recognised by supported employees, and were also acknowledged as key outcomes by service providers. Participants whose impairments had developed during the course of their life emphasised the loss of confidence that had accompanied the onset of their conditions. This, they suggested, had increased through being able to go to work, fulfil a role and engage with other people. Participants with a wide range of impairments argued that the experience of achievement encouraged them to set themselves goals outside work.

While other studies have highlighted the importance of alternatives to home and day centres to people with learning disabilities in particular, this was something identified by participants with a wide range of impairments and was described by

providers as *'meaningful'* employment. Routine and increased self-esteem and confidence, which came with the expansion of participants' social circles, were seen as being important distractions from their conditions, gave them a sense of an *'ordinary life'* and were recognised as signs of wellness or getting on with one's life. For people who had become disabled during their life, being able to work helped to restore the loss of identity associated with their conditions and enabled them to feel *'worthwhile'*, that they were *'making a contribution'* and were *'more than your disability'*.

While other studies have suggested that the financial gains from work are particularly valued among service users with learning disabilities, this was not borne out through this study. Indeed, contrary to the perceptions of providers, financial gain was not something that often emerged spontaneously within the user discussion groups. Some service users noted that there was no financial inducement to work given that income from benefit could exceed potential wage income. However, participants explained that the income from work gave them independence, both from family and carers and from benefit. An important finding is that providers anticipated that their clients would prioritise the financial gains that come with having an income rather than the associated personal outcomes, such as pride, dignity and self-respect, which service users highlighted.

Although supported employees with a wide range of impairments expressed career aspirations, few reported having been given the opportunity to achieve them. As reported in previous research, participants with learning disabilities complained of being bored in jobs that lacked stimulation. Those participants who did identify career gains as a desirable outcome were in job retention situations, having entered the programme while already in employment. Often with professional backgrounds, these service users spoke of the importance of being enabled to *'maintain their place in the system'*. Interestingly, providers failed to acknowledge that disabled people might consider career a desirable outcome and, even with regard to clients in job retention situations, they emphasised maintaining jobs rather than developing within them.

### **8.1.2 Implications for DWP's management of WORKSTEP**

Interestingly, the concept of final outcomes was not always easy to grasp among providers, and there were some tendencies to focus instead on the inputs and processes. It seems that provider staff do not routinely invite supported employees to talk in such terms about what they want to achieve through work.

Clearly, providers would benefit from guidance to raise their awareness of the importance of assessing their service in terms of what it is achieving for individuals. Likewise, providers might benefit from information highlighting the outcomes that users themselves aspire to, rather than relying on their current assumptions about, for example, the presumed financial benefits of work.

Discussions with both users and providers suggest that the range of outcomes that users highlighted were not routinely focused on in the Development Plan process. A study of development plans would be necessary to confirm the impression from this research that they focus more on aspects of employability, such as time keeping or attendance, or are used more to identify inputs such as training needs. Given that the Development Plan is a compulsory element of the programme, it would be efficient to include an assessment of the achievement of user-defined outcomes within this process rather than establish a separate method. A small-scale longitudinal trial, with unreserved commitment on the part of providers participating, might test ways of measuring the achievement of user-defined outcomes through the Development Plan and its reviews.

## 8.2 Support to help WORKSTEP users

Both service users and providers acknowledged the importance of support which could facilitate a positive working environment in which supported employees felt accepted, respected and valued for their contribution to the workplace and team they were part of, and supported in achieving their goals.

Supported employees valued support that eased the pressure on them in finding, gaining and sustaining employment. While users valued providers that helped them to find work that **they** wanted to do, increasing the likelihood of more personally satisfying placements, providers acknowledged that users' expectations were not always realistic. However, providers emphasised the importance of taking a holistic approach in both getting to know their clients as individuals and in developing appropriate support packages for the individual. The support available ranged across help with completing applications forms, especially valued by people with learning disabilities; advice regarding interview techniques; accompanying users to interviews; and liaising or advocating with potential employers.

Users' experiences of help to settle into their jobs and ongoing support varied. There were individuals who felt that the approach taken with them was intrusive, while others indicated that there had been insufficient contact from their providers. While providers acknowledged that WORKSTEP enabled them to deliver a person-centred service, they also suggested that the pressure of large caseloads could sometimes be an obstacle to its delivery. Nonetheless, consultation with individual service users might help providers to deliver more appropriate and personalised packages of support. Providers said that ongoing support was often maintained at the request of employers, even when clients felt comfortable without additional support.

In terms of ongoing support, the frequency of contact again varied considerably. Service users who were in job retention situations were least likely to be aware of the availability of ongoing support and advocacy. Although they benefited from and valued financial and/or practical packages of support, they indicated that issues concerning workplace culture and management, and their career development needs were being overlooked. Such issues also appeared to be pertinent to people with learning disabilities who were in supported placements.

While some supported employees and providers suggested that supported factories offered more understanding and supportive environments for disabled people to work in both service users and providers acknowledged in situations where the provider is also the employer there was a need to balance production requirements against the needs of supported employees.

### **8.2.1 Ideal package of support**

Bringing together and building on service users' views, the ideal package of support consists of an approach which:

- takes a holistic approach to needs;
- tailors support to meet the needs of the individual;
- asks disabled people what they want to achieve;
- involves disabled people in deciding what and how much support they want.

The practical aspects of an ideal package, necessarily tailored to individual abilities and preferences, include:

- help to get a job that is wanted, reflects interests and uses abilities;
- help to complete application forms;
- advice on interview techniques;
- advocacy with potential employees;
- support during the hiring process;
- provider staff who visit the workplace;
- encouragement and constructive feedback about work done;
- someone to fight your corner when issues arise;
- a support worker at the end of the phone if there are problems at work;
- information about and support to try new opportunities, learn new skills and experience other work environments.

To achieve a successful and sustained supported work placement, users felt that the ideal package should be combined with the following workplace features:

- supportive and understanding employers and colleagues;
- allowances made for physical needs;
- production requirements balanced against the needs of supported factory employees;
- stability – low staff turnover;
- feeling accepted, respected and valued for their contribution;

- absence of discrimination;
- an unthreatening atmosphere.

### 8.3 Programme goals

#### 8.3.1 Development

Service users tended to identify with their provider organisations, rather than with a national government programme and many were unaware that they were part of a programme called WORKSTEP. It is a cause for concern that users demonstrated an apparent lack of awareness of the programme goals regarding development and progression. When asked about their views about development, users were unanimous in saying that it was an important component of WORKSTEP, which could help to avoid stagnation and boredom. Providers also held this view.

Service providers underestimated the extent to which supported employees with learning disabilities would engage with the concept of development. It was not uncommon for people with learning disabilities to express dissatisfaction with being stuck in what they perceived to be '*dead end jobs*'. Many reported ambitions to pursue careers but complained of lack of opportunities. Some also indicated that they would value more support regarding development from employers and providers.

It was significant that providers hardly recognised that career development might be an important outcome for their clients. Indeed, people who were established in their careers when their impairments developed were amongst the worst informed about the support providers were expected to offer in helping people to develop within their jobs.

Providers welcomed the Development Plan and its review as an important quality control process. Given that providers are free to design their own plan it is not surprising that variation was reported by users and providers as to how the process was implemented at a local level. Discussions with both users and providers indicate that the focus is often on aspects of employability and work-related training, which users valued. However, there was no evidence that the Development Plan was being used to document the social and personal outcomes that supported employees identified as important goals to be measured against.

A number of service users employed in the supported factories of a very large provider reported engaging in a process in which they were invited to express any ambitions they had in work and to identify their own training and development needs. They were subsequently presented with opportunities to develop their skills, undertake courses in on site training suites and try different jobs, either within the factory or through outside placements.

This contrasted with the experience of others who questioned how meaningful the Development Plan process was. For example, some suggested that it was a tick box exercise wherein requests for training were not followed up or no effort was made to help people achieve the goals they had identified.

While supported employees with a wide range of impairments recognised the capital that training and qualifications have in the workplace, providers expressed concern that the focus of the Development Plan was with documenting 'distance travelled' and that this had produced a training orientated culture in which clients were being put on courses for the sake of it.

### 8.3.2 Progression

The concept of progression into unsupported employment was new to most supported employees and the response tended to be caution. Only a small minority suggested that it was something that they would like to achieve. There was anxiety about the withdrawal of the 'safety net' offered by WORKSTEP, fears that they would be forced off the programme before they were ready and concerns that they would not be able to get back onto the programme if they were unable to sustain their job. Both service users and providers felt that progression should be a matter of choice.

WORKSTEP providers were particularly keen to talk about progression which dominated their interpretation of the aims of the programme. Indeed, with the exception of development, which received less attention, providers did not acknowledge that the programme has wider, social objectives. It was evident from the discussions that providers perceived the concerns of Jobcentre Plus and the ALL to be narrowly focused on progression, for which there was outspoken criticism. Clearly, it is necessary for the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) and Jobcentre Plus to communicate more effectively that the objectives of the programme extend beyond progression.

While it was acknowledged that the previous Supported Employment Programme had been 'stagnant' and dependency-orientated and needed to be developed into something more productive, providers highlighted a number of obstacles to implementing this programme goal. Providers argued that sustained progression into open employment was an unrealistic goal for a number of their clients, for example, those who had been in supported employment for a number of years and had become dependent upon the support and people in job retention situations or with degenerative conditions whose support needs would increase.

Finance was overwhelmingly identified as the biggest obstacle to progression. Although not all placements are subsidised, providers welcomed the shift away from the culture of wage subsidies toward different forms of support, such as development grants, tapered or target linked payments, the financing of training, job coaching and supervision packages<sup>5</sup>. Nonetheless, they reported difficulties in

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<sup>5</sup> Thornton *et al.*'s (2004) study of providers new to WORKSTEP outlines some of the strategies used to engage employers.

persuading employers to let go of the expectation of wage support. Providers suggested that they risked jeopardising clients' jobs if they mentioned the withdrawal of wage subsidies to those employers who, they argued, want to be compensated for a lack of productivity among disabled employees.

Although the target to progress, within two years, 30 per cent of clients who joined WORKSTEP since April 2001 was abandoned three to six months before the fieldwork took place, this information had not filtered down to providers. Consequently, there was criticism that this target was unrealistic. Providers suggested that the timeframes that they were expected to work within in relation to development plans and job search were unrealistic given that people joining the programme are the most difficult to place. Some admitted to selecting clients whom they knew they would be able to progress within the two-year timeframe.

### 8.3.3 Implications for goal attainment

Alongside information from providers, findings on supported employees' awareness of, and reaction to, the programme goals of development within work and progression to unsupported employment suggest the following implications for goal attainment:

- If the programme goal of development is to be achieved, users need to know about it and be made aware of the range of support to achieve it. It will be important to promote the aim of development in user-friendly language with examples of what people can achieve with support.
- A proforma for the Development Plan could be developed and implemented to ensure greater consistency across provider organisations.
- There is scope to emulate the use of practice tools developed in the social care field to record whether or not user-defined outcomes are being achieved<sup>6</sup>. The Development Plan process within WORKSTEP could be expanded to incorporate the desirable outcomes identified by users, with appropriate measures of achievement. A small-scale, longitudinal trial is suggested. It will be essential for the Development Plan process to be both meaningful and owned by users.
- Providers could do more to reassure users that support will be available to those clients who **choose** to work toward open employment and that it will not be withdrawn until they feel able to manage alone. They could do more to reassure users that the option of returning to the programme will not be foreclosed, should things not work out.
- There may be a case for maintaining low level contact with people who move into unsupported employment and continue to require episodic advice and support. Discussions with providers indicate that they would expect this to be built into the funding structure.

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<sup>6</sup> See the SPRU Outcomes in Community Care Practice series.

## 8.4 Suggestions for developing WORKSTEP

WORKSTEP was acknowledged by providers to have initiated some important changes in the delivery of supported employment that were enabling what had been a *'moribund'* and dependency-orientated programme into one which was more productive. These changes included the introduction of quality standards and development plans which – together with the ALI inspections – made the programme more accountable, and a movement away from the culture of wage subsidies.

The following suggestions for further improvement arise from the discussions:

- Providers felt that there could be greater flexibility in the referral process to allow a wider range of providers to make their own referrals, rather than having to rely on Disability Employment Advisers (DEAs).
- The funding structure could be altered to address providers' concerns about occupancy levels. Replacing the payment for sustained progression with a payment at the front of the programme, it was argued, would be an incentive to get new clients onto WORKSTEP.
- The structure of the programme could be altered to accommodate those clients who providers suggest are unable to work 16 or more hours per week.
- The programme could be forked to accommodate both people who would be able to progress into sustained open employment and those for whom this would not be a realistic option.
- DWP and Jobcentre Plus could improve communication with providers regarding the aims of WORKSTEP. Some providers suggested that they would value being consulted when policy changes were being made.
- It was apparent that some provider organisations would benefit from improved internal communications about WORKSTEP and its objectives.
- Service users may benefit from knowing that their provider has a contractual obligation to meet national standards and that the ALI exists to supervise performance. This would be particularly beneficial in situations where the provider is also the employer.
- Service users may be reassured if providers communicated to them that they are protected by programme rules, such as those for re-entering WORKSTEP from unsupported employment.
- A client-centred and accessible information brochure, highlighting what service users can expect to receive from the programme could both increase knowledge and make them aware of what they should do if they feel that their provider is not delivering the service adequately.



# Appendix A

## Research methodology

### A1 Pilot

Topic guides were piloted with a group of three local providers and a group of eight randomly sampled and locally employed supported employees. Participants in both the supported employee and provider groups were also asked to comment on the clarity of the written information they had received about the study and asked for their opinions on the choice of venue and timing of the events. Few changes were made to the topic guide as a result of the pilot and data from these two groups were included in the analysis.

### A2 Sampling, recruitment and participation

Following the pilot the main stage fieldwork took place in two waves:

- Focus group discussions in four field sites in England, one in Wales and one in Scotland. Six group discussions took place with WORKSTEP providers and nine with service users.
- Focus group discussions in two further field sites in England: two with providers and three with service users. This second wave was designed to include supported employees and staff of one very large provider that was unable to participate in the first wave in England and Wales.

In total, including the pilot, 13 group discussions were held with supported employees and nine with providers in eight sites.

## A2.1 Sample design

The sampling strategy had three stages:

- selection of geographical areas within which to site the research;
- sampling of supported employees from these areas;
- selection of providing organisations from those with whom the sampled supported employees were registered.

Exceptionally, in one area only providers were recruited.

### *Selection of sites*

A number of criteria were taken into account in selecting sites: representation of different parts of Great Britain; urban and rural areas; ease of access to the discussion groups by service users; the mix of established and new WORKSTEP providers; and sufficiently large numbers of supported employees with the characteristics selected for sampling purposes (see Section A2.3)

In the first wave, four geographical areas were selected in England to capture a spread of provision across the country: Yorkshire, Midlands, East of England and South of England. The Yorkshire and the Midlands sites were chosen primarily for the transport links they offered and the possibility of capturing provision that extended to neighbouring towns or cities. In contrast to these, the East of England and the South of England were selected to include more rural provision. The former also presented the opportunity to include providers that had been contracted following identification of gaps in WORKSTEP provision and also Supported Employment Development Initiative (SEDI) project organisations.

Selection of the Welsh and Scottish sites was made in consultation with colleagues at the Welsh Centre for Learning Disabilities (WCLD) and the Strathclyde Centre for Disability Research (SCDR) who advised on what would be reasonable in terms of ease of access for service users. South Wales and Central Scotland were selected on the basis of the density of WORKSTEP provision.

In the second wave, the selection of two further areas extended the geographical representation. A site in South East England was selected on access grounds. A site in the North West was selected because it offered the potential to capture supported employees in North Wales. However, a provider later advised that it would be unreasonable to expect users to travel that far.

A further consideration, which added to the complexity of the selection of the fieldwork areas, was whether there were sufficient supported employees to allow for two focus groups of people referred to the programme since its modernisation in April 2001 and one focus group of people with mental health conditions.

### *Sampling supported employees*

Service users were selected from the WORKSTEP database using random sampling through SPSS. The larger the provider, the higher the frequency in which they were selected.

To capture the experiences of more recent entrants to supported employment, clients who had joined the programme prior to 1995 and those aged over 55 were excluded. Gender and ethnicity were not considerations. All of those who were sampled were in employment.

As the database does not hold supported employees' personal addresses, samples were developed for each area based on the postcodes of their employers, which, it was hoped, indicated where they lived.

Five separate groups were scheduled for clients with learning disabilities, so that the language used in the former could be adapted appropriately, and one for people with mental health conditions. It was also planned to hold two groups comprising people who had joined the programme post April 2001.

For each planned discussion group, 40 supported employees were randomly selected from the WORKSTEP database using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS). One area had been selected because it had highest number of people joining the programme after 1 April 2001 and sampling here was made on this basis, but this left only 27 people for two groups in that sample. In these groups users with a range of impairments, including learning disability, were sampled.

### *Sampling providers*

One of the aims of the study was to capture experiences across a range of provider types including: size (in terms of number of supported employees), geographical coverage, local authority, voluntary, private sector and REMPLOY, supported placement or factory, new providers and those providers which had previously participated in SEDI.

Provider size was defined by the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) as follows:

- Small = 50 or less clients
- Medium = 51-200 clients
- Large = 201+ clients

Additionally, the researchers felt that a further category 'Very large' needed to be created for the two national providers whose numbers (based on the study's user selection criteria) exceeded 2,000.

The researchers aimed for a maximum number of eight organisations per discussion group, which would be representative of provider size and type. In the South of England site, there were no 'small' providers; and in the Midlands there were too many small providers to include so those closest to the proposed site were selected.

Invitations specifically requested that provider representatives should work directly with clients, in the case of supported placements, or be managers, in the case of supported factories.

## **A2.2 Recruitment and achieved participation**

### *Providers*

Learning from the pilot suggested that an important way forward in securing the co-operation of larger providers would be by writing to senior management at the head office of the organisations. Telephone-calls to WORKSTEP managers also were used as a method of recruiting providers locally. The researchers telephoned the provider to explain the research, seek their cooperation and identify appropriate participants before dispatching letters of invitation. As explained in Appendix A, Supported employees, these approaches were also part of the strategy to recruit supported employees.

In a number of cases, senior managers in particular were extremely co-operative and eager for their organisations to be included in the study at that time. However, in the case of one very large provider, the situation was complicated by the fact that the fieldwork coincided with preparations for a forthcoming inspection of its WORKSTEP provision in England and Wales by the Adult Learning Inspectorate (ALI). Senior management within the organisation felt that participation in the research would place too heavy a burden on staff and would confuse supported employees. Given the size of the provider, a second wave of fieldwork was subsequently arranged. Sampling was weighted toward this provider and it was planned that groups should consist of three representatives (staff and users) from this provider, along with those of two other providers.

A number of providers who had been invited were unable to attend the discussions due to other commitments or staffing issues. Two did not respond to the invitation and four who had accepted failed to attend. Local managers of one large provider did not respond to an email circulated by its contract manager in relation to the second wave. Consequently, clients of this provider who had been sampled were also excluded across both sites as there was no way of distributing their invitations.

Forty-nine representatives from 31 provider organisations attended one of nine discussion groups. Table A.1 illustrates how organisational representation was distributed by provider size, while Table A.2 shows the number of participants according to provider size. Six representatives attended from each of the two very large providers.

**Table A.1 Participation of providers by size**

<b>Provider size</b>	<b>Number of organisations</b>
Small	9
Medium	15
Large	5
Very large	2
<b>Total</b>	<b>31</b>

**Table A.2 Number of participants by provider size**

<b>Provider size</b>	<b>Number of participants</b>
Small	10
Medium	19
Large	8
Very large	12
<b>Total</b>	<b>49</b>

Table A.3 indicate providers' self-perceptions of their impairments (if any), drawn from a questionnaire they were asked to complete at the end of the discussion.

**Table A.3 Providers' perceptions of their impairments**

<b>Impairment</b>	<b>Number</b>
Mobility impairment	2
Visual impairment	0
Hearing impairment	1
Speech impairment	0
Long-term medical condition	5
Learning difficulties	0
Mental health condition	1
Neurological condition	1
Other	1
Prefer not to say	0
None	38

Table A.4 indicates providers' age and Table A.5 reflects ethnicity.

**Table A.4 Age of providers**

Age Group	Number
16-24	1
25-40	20
41-54	19
55+	9
<b>Total</b>	<b>49</b>

**Table A.5 Ethnicity of providers**

Ethnic Group	Number
White British	43
White Irish	3
Other White background	1
Anglo Indian**	1
Brown British of African Ethnic Background**	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>49</b>

\*\* Participants' own definitions.

### *Supported employees*

Because users' addresses are not held in the WORKSTEP database invitations had to be issued via provider organisations, although not the preferred method of contact. It would have been preferable to have sent invitations to supported employees directly so that their providers would not know who had been invited, therefore limiting the opportunity for them to 'gate-keep' the process.

As noted above, prior to any correspondence about the study being circulated, the researchers initially contacted WORKSTEP managers by telephone, explaining the research and to ask if they could forward invitations to selected supported employees. Providers reported that some individuals sampled had left the programme or were off sick and they were therefore dropped from the sample. Letters explaining the purpose of the study and details of the location and timing of the discussion groups were sent out to supported employees, along with a reply slip (on which they could highlight any specific support needs) and a reply envelope.

Almost 400 supported employees were invited to attend one of 15 meetings across England, Scotland and Wales, the aim being to facilitate groups with five participants in each (or averaging five). By holding the groups in hotels – a strategy endorsed by users involved in the pilot – and by offering a £20 gift to participants, along with travel costs and refreshments, it was hoped that a 12.5 per cent acceptance rate would be achieved for each group.

Table A.6 shows that overall 57 supported employees participated in 13 groups. In five groups, five or more users participated, and the average was four per group.

Five supported employees who had initially accepted the invitation cancelled (two) or failed to attend (three). In the South East, this led to the cancellation of one group. The response rates were particularly poor in Yorkshire and the Midlands and, despite having asked providers there first to ‘encourage’ clients who had been included in the sample, and later to open the invitation to others who fitted the selection criteria and would be willing participants, two groups had to be cancelled due to lack of interest. Two participants who attended one group at the provider’s suggestion were not in the original sample and were still at the job search stage. Table A.6 illustrates participation rates at the various field sites.

**Table A.6 Participation rates by site**

Sites	<i>Mixed impairments</i>		<i>Learning disabilities</i>	<i>Post April 2001 entrants</i>		<i>Mental health</i>
	Group 1	Group 2		Group 1	Group 2	
	Midlands	-	-	-	4	cancelled
North West	1	3	3	-	-	-
Central Scotland	8	7	7	-	-	3
South of England	5	3	3	-	-	-
South East of England	5	cancelled	-	-	-	-
South Wales	4	2	2	-	-	-
Yorkshire	4	cancelled	cancelled	-	-	-
Pilot	8	-	-	-	-	-
<b>Total</b>		<b>35</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>3</b>

Table A.7 shows the participation of supported employees by provider size.

**Table A.7 User participation by provider size**

Provider size	Number of participants
Small	19*
Medium	18
Large	8
Very large	12
<b>Total</b>	<b>57</b>

\* Eight of these were in the pilot.

### *Commentary on level of participation achieved*

An early decision had been made to schedule the supported employee discussion groups for the evening. The rationale was that it would be easier for most people to attend after normal working hours, rather than having to negotiate time off with employers, and that it would allow the research to be seen as valuing disabled people's work. The strategy was not called into question during the first wave. However, when participation rates continued to prove poor – in fact worse – during the second wave, it was suggested by providers that this was precisely because people were being asked to attend in their own time. Managers at a number of supported factories run by a very large provider invited the researchers into their factories where there would be access to more supported employees, in a familiar environment and amongst a group of peers. Given the aim to facilitate an exchange of experiences among supported employees receiving different types of support in a range of workplaces, this was not an option.

Learning from the first wave was reflected in the approach to the second wave. First, it was apparent that many supported employees had little or no awareness of the term 'WORKSTEP', so the wording of invitation letter was altered. Secondly, feedback from some groups suggested that some people had been intimidated by the 'big white envelopes' in which their invitations were delivered, so these were changed to A5 envelopes and reply envelopes were white, stamped and addressed, as opposed to brown and pre-paid which might look more 'official'. It would appear that although the vast majority were refusals, this strategy did lead to an increased response rate and some respondents noted on their replies that they would be working or had prior engagements at the time of the meetings.

As anticipated, there was evidence of some 'gate-keeping' by providers. It was suggested by some providers that certain clients would feel intimidated doing something like this alone and that the individuals that had been sampled were not the most appropriate. Where large or very large providers forwarded invitations via their central payroll database, the situation was more straightforward. In one situation, the researchers were made aware of the possibility that a provider contact had failed to pass invitations on to supported employees and had returned reply slips on their behalf. One of the individuals who had, apparently, initially refused to take part went on to participate in a group discussion.

## A3 Characteristics of user participants

### **A3.1 Impairments**

Table A.8 reflects supported employees' self-perceptions of their impairments, drawn from a questionnaire they were asked to complete at the end of the discussion. Note that a number recorded multiple conditions, which is not reflected in the WORKSTEP client database. Table A.9 shows the ages of participants. Table A.10 presents a breakdown of users' ethnicity.

**Table A.8** Users' perceptions of their impairments

<b>Impairment</b>	<b>Number</b>
Mobility impairment	14
Visual impairment	5
Hearing impairment	3
Speech impairment	3
Long-term medical condition	16
Learning difficulties	25
Mental health condition	5
Neurological condition	6
Other	4
Prefer not to say	0
None	0

**Table A.9** Age of users

<b>Age Group</b>	<b>Number</b>
16-24	3
25-40	31
41-54	21
55+	2
<b>Total</b>	<b>57</b>

**Table A.10** Ethnicity of users

<b>Ethnic Group</b>	<b>Number</b>
White British	52
White Irish	1
Mixed background – White/Asian	1
Mixed background – White/Black Caribbean	1
Black Caribbean	1
Chinese	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>57</b>



# Appendix B

## Research instruments

AM/SP

Address

E-mail: amm11@york.ac.uk

Date

Dear

I am writing to ask for your help. Jobcentre Plus has asked us to speak with disabled people about what helps them to find and stay in work. We would like to invite you to take part in a discussion group.

The discussion will take place at **[venue]** on **[date/time]**.

Jobcentre Plus has asked organisations like [provider name] to help disabled people to get a job and stay in work. There are lots of organisations doing this all over the country and this is known as the WORKSTEP programme. We got your name, and the names of the other disabled people we are inviting, from Jobcentre Plus records.

The aim of the discussion is to find out what disabled people gain from being able to work, why working is an important part of their lives, the good things and bad things about finding and keeping a job and how you can be helped with this.

The study is being carried out by the Social Policy Research Unit which is an independent research organisation. What you say will be kept confidential, so when we write about what people have told us neither your employer, or the people that support you at work, will be able to find out what you have said. If you decide to help us, a summary of what we find out will be available to you.

If you agree to talk to us, we will meet any of your support needs in helping you to attend and take part in the workshop. This includes help with travel and support – like signers or large print material – that will help you to communicate if needed. We will also provide sandwiches, tea and coffee.

If you are interested and are selected to take part in one of our discussion groups, you will receive £20 in cash as a 'thank you' gift for your help with this study. This will not affect your entitlement to benefit in any way.

If you have any questions, please contact me on **01904 321951**. If you would like to take part, please complete and return the attached reply form as soon as possible to avoid disappointment, as places are limited. A pre-paid envelope is provided. I will then get in touch about the arrangements.

We hope that you will agree to take part, as this is a valuable opportunity to let Jobcentre Plus know what is important to you as a disabled person.

Yours sincerely

Angela Meah

THE UNIVERSITY *of York*

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## Supported employment discussion group

Please return as soon as possible to avoid disappointment, as places are limited. A stamped addressed envelope is provided.

Please tick as appropriate:

- I would like to take part in the discussion about work and WORKSTEP/ supported employment.
- I would NOT like to take part in the discussion group.

**Do you need any support to help you get to and from the meeting? Please tell us what support you need in the space below.**

**Will you need any support to help you join in the discussion? Please tell us what sort of support you need in the space below (for example, transport, BSL support).**

**Is there any kind of food or drink you must not have? If yes, please tell us in the space below.**

**Name:**

**Address:**

**Phone number:**

*Please return to Angela Meah  
SPRU, University of York, Heslington, York, YO10 5DD*

AM/SP

Address

E-mail: amm11@york.ac.uk

Date

Dear

I am writing to remind you about the discussion group about WORKSTEP and supported employment which you have agreed to take part in.

This will take place at **VENUE/ADDRESS** on **DATE**. I have enclosed a map to help you find it. The discussion will take place in the **ROOM**, but I will be there to meet you at reception. Sandwiches, tea and coffee will be available on arrival.

I have enclosed a form which we will go through on the day. This is to check that you have understood what we will be doing and why. We will ask you to sign it on the day. We thought you might like to have a look at it beforehand.

If you have any questions, don't hesitate to contact me on the number above.

I'll look forward to seeing you on the day.

Yours sincerely

Angela Meah

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## Informed Consent

I understand that:

- The purpose of the discussion is to talk about WORKSTEP and what things disabled people hope to gain through work and what difference any help or support they get makes to them.
- The discussion will last for an hour and a half or less, and that this will be tape-recorded. The tape will then be typed up.
- A report will be written for Jobcentre Plus and that my name will not appear in it.

The researchers have reassured me that the people who help me at work and my employers will not be told what I have said.

The researchers have offered to answer any questions I might have and what I will have to do during the discussion.

I have read and understood this information and I agree to take part in the discussion group.

Signature: .....

Name: .....

Date: .....

If you would like to receive the research findings in a special format tick one of the boxes below.

Braille       Large print       Audio-cassette       Computer disk

## Supported Employee Topic Guide

### PART ONE

We would like to start off by talking about work and what you get from it.

- **Why do you think it is important for disabled people to have the opportunity to work?**
- **If you think about your own needs and hopes, what did you hope you would gain from having a job?**
  - Probe around key areas: personal, social, career, economic.
- **Did you have any doubts about going out to work? If so, what were they?**
  - Probe around concerns about the level of support that would be provided; whether they would be able to sustain it; concerns about the appropriateness of the job they might be matched with.
- **Do you have any goals or dreams – either to do with work or your life in general – that you would like to achieve? How do you think that your current job will help you to work towards them?**
- **If you could devise an ideal package of support that would help disabled people to fulfil their work dreams, what do you think it would offer?**

Encourage them to think along the lines of what support would actually involve, probing around:

- the extent to which they were consulted re. their interests, skills and previous work experience and the type of work they would like to do. Identify extent to which ‘vocational profiling’ was evident, whether a development plan was drawn up and whether this has been revisited.
- how stakeholders (DEAs, providers, employers) liaised with them and each other in setting up their job. For example, explore what service inputs were made re. job coaching, training and practical issues such as transport to/from the workplace and any physical adjustments that needed to be made, and what difference these might have made.
- how they found their introduction to both the work and workplace. Ask them to share their experiences of new employers and colleagues. Have these changed with time?
- **If you were to draw up a ‘model’ of a ‘good employer’ or good place to work, what characteristics would it have?**

Similarly, what would a ‘bad’ one look like?
- **Do you see your job as a ‘job for life’ or a stepping-stone to something else? If so, what?**

- **Do you ever see yourself working somewhere where you won't need extra support? If so, where?**
- **Just to round up the discussion in this part, would you say that your experiences so far have met the expectations that you originally had?**
  - Encourage participants to think in terms of the nature of the support that they have received since starting work and the extent to which they feel that they have developed in/through work.

## **PART TWO**

In this part we will be talking about WORKSTEP, which is the name of the Government programme that arranged your job.

- **What do you know about the WORKSTEP programme?**
  - **What do you think it is for?**
  - **Do you think it is a good idea?**
  - **How did you find out about WORKSTEP?** Probe for sources of (mis)information – for example, providers, fellow supported employees.
- **One aim of WORKSTEP is to support people to develop and have the chance to achieve more through your job.**
  - **Did you know about this?**
  - **What do you think about the idea? Is it right for you?**
  - **What opportunities do you have to tell the people who support you what YOU want to achieve and how do they go about helping you to do this?** Probe around the development plan and review process.
- **Another aim is to help people to work independently, if it is right for them, without the support of the organisations that help you at the moment.**
  - **Did you know about this?**
  - **What do you think about the idea? Is it right for you?**

**Outcomes of WORKSTEP: supported employee questionnaire**

Please tick the boxes that you feel apply to you.

1. I am  male  female
2. I am aged  16-24  25-40  41-54  55+
3. I consider myself to belong to the following ethnic background:

**White**

- British  Irish
- Other White background (please specify) .....

**Mixed background**

- White & Black Caribbean  White & Black African
- White & Asian
- Other mixed background (please specify) .....

**Asian or Asian British**

- Indian  Pakistani  Bangladeshi
- Other Asian background (please specify) .....

**Black or Black British**

- Caribbean  African
- Other Black background (please specify) .....

**Chinese or other ethnic group**

- Chinese  Other (please specify).....

**4. I have the following impairments:**

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> mobility impairment         | <input type="checkbox"/> visual impairment      |
| <input type="checkbox"/> hearing impairment          | <input type="checkbox"/> speech impairment      |
| <input type="checkbox"/> long-term medical condition | <input type="checkbox"/> learning difficulties  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> mental health condition     | <input type="checkbox"/> neurological condition |
| <input type="checkbox"/> other                       | <input type="checkbox"/> prefer not to say      |
| <input type="checkbox"/> none                        |   |

**5. What is the name of the organisation that supports you through WORKSTEP?**

.....

**Thank you for your time and help**

AM/SP

Address

E-mail:

Date

Dear

As part of its strategy to evaluate WORKSTEP, the Department for Work and Pensions has contracted us to speak with a group of providers and some of their clients about the outcomes, benefits, they think WORKSTEP should be delivering for disabled people. Your organisation has been selected from the Department for Work and Pensions WORKSTEP evaluation database to participate in this study.

The Social Policy Research Unit/the Strathclyde Centre for Disability Research/the Welsh Centre for Learning Disabilities (*delete as appropriate*) is an independent research organisation. We will be carrying out a number of focus group discussions in England, Scotland and Wales which will ask providers questions about the kind of service outcomes that they believe are valued by their clients and why, and how they can best achieve them.

All responses will remain anonymous and individuals will not be identifiable in the published report. A summary of the report will be available to you.

The event is scheduled to take place at **[venue], [time], [date]**. Please contact me by **[date]** to confirm that your organisation will take part. We expect senior managers (*in the case of factories* /front-line staff working directly with clients (*in the case of supported placements, delete as appropriate*)) to attend the workshop. Please could you let me have the name and contact details of the person who will take part from your organisation? A list of topics to be discussed and further practical details will be sent a week before the event.

At the same time, we will be running separate discussions with service users about what they value about the programme and what they hope to achieve from it. Ideally, we would write to them at their home addresses, but the records we have access to might not be up to date. Consequently, we wondered if it would be possible if you could help us to contact the supported employees we have written to by filling in their addresses on the enclosed envelopes. It would be a great help if you could then post these pre-paid envelopes on our behalf. A copy of the letter we are sending out to supported employees is enclosed for your information.

For any policy questions relating to this research, contact:

Lisa Naylor  
Family and Disability Analysis Division (FDAD 4)  
Department for Work and Pensions  
Level 2, Kings Court  
80 Hanover Way  
Sheffield, S3 7U

Tel: 0114 209 8246

We appreciate your co-operation.

Yours sincerely

AM/SP

Address

E-mail:

Date

Dear

I am writing to confirm your participation in a focus group discussion about WORKSTEP on **DATE/TIME**.

Enclosed is an informed consent statement which we thought you might like to see in advance.

- The topic guide will focus on the following areas: What providers see as the main benefits for participants and why, and whether or not these are views shared by their clients.
- Providers' views on the official aims of WORKSTEP and how appropriate these are to supported employees.
- The benefits to provider organisations from delivering WORKSTEP.

**YOU MAY WISH TO ENCLOSE A MAP/DIRECTIONS TO THE VENUE.**

I'll look forward to meeting you.

Yours sincerely

Angela Meah

THE UNIVERSITY *of York*

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I understand that the purpose of this discussion is to focus three areas of interest in relation to WORKSTEP. These include:

- What I see as the main benefits for participants and why, and whether or not these are views shared by your clients.
- My views on the official aims of WORKSTEP and how appropriate they are to the people I support.
- The benefits to my organisation from delivering WORKSTEP.

I understand that:

- I have been asked to contribute my views in a group discussion with representatives from other provider organisations and that the discussion will last for an hour and a half or less, and that this will be tape-recorded and the tape will then be transcribed.
- All responses will remain anonymous and that individuals will not be identifiable in the published report, a summary of which will be available.

The researchers have offered to answer any questions I might have and what I will have to do during the discussion.

I have read and understand this information and I agree to take part in the discussion group.

Signature: .....

Name: .....

Date: .....

## Provider Topic Guide

We would like to begin by talking about what you feel your WORKSTEP services should be achieving for disabled people – that is, what ‘outcomes’ they should be delivering

- **What do you see as the principle benefits for participants of the services you provide through WORKSTEP?**
- **Why in your view is the programme needed?**
- **What do YOU want to achieve for supported employees through the service you offer?**
- **To what extent do you think supported employees share your views?**
  - Prompt for examples of the kinds of feedback that they receive from their clients.
  - Explore how this might vary depending on the clients’ situations or circumstances.
  - Probe around how they ask individuals what they want to gain from the process and how they record this, for example, through the Development Plans.

### May we talk now about the official aims of the WORKSTEP programme?

- **What do you understand the aims of WORKSTEP to be?**
  - Probe for understanding of development within the programme, the development plan process, progression to unsupported employment, emphasis on support other than wage subsidies and the Modernisation agenda.
- **How suitable and desirable are these goals for your clients?**

If necessary, explain the stated official goals:

*‘to provide support in jobs for people with disabilities who have more complex barriers to finding and keeping work but who, with the right support, are able to make a valuable contribution in their job and where appropriate develop and progress to open employment’*

- *supporting people to progress from WORKSTEP to working in mainstream employment without support from the programme, for whom it is an appropriate goal;*
- *supporting people to develop within the programme, whether they progress to unsupported employment or not; and*
- *providing employment, with support, for people who would not otherwise be able to get and keep work.*

- **Have you encountered any problems in implementing these goals? If so, what are they?**

- Prompt, for example, around the payment structure, providing non-financial incentives to employers, dealing with supported employees who feel safe in their current situation and are reluctant to 'move on' (e.g. in supported workshops/factories).

Finally, a few questions about what's in it for you, as an organisation, from delivering WORKSTEP.

- **Before we begin, it would be useful if you could give us a brief history of your organisation's provision of supported employment.**

- **Given this history, what are the benefits to your organisation from delivering WORKSTEP?**

- What do you want to achieve from it?
- What has the organisation gained so far? Prompt, for example, around routes to other contracts; joining up Work Preparation and WORKSTEP.

- **Is there anything else that you would like to say that hasn't already been discussed?**

Just to round things off, we'd like to recap on the main points that you've highlighted in terms of what WORKSTEP achieves for disabled people.

- **What would you say were the principal benefits of the programme for the people you support?**

**Outcomes of WORKSTEP: participant questionnaire**

Please tick the boxes that you feel apply to you.

1. I am  male  female
2. I am aged  16-24  25-40  41-54  55+
3. I consider myself to belong to the following ethnic background:

**White**

- British  Irish
- Other White background (please specify) .....

**Mixed background**

- White & Black Caribbean  White & Black African
- White & Asian
- Other mixed background (please specify) .....

**Asian or Asian British**

- Indian  Pakistani  Bangladeshi
- Other Asian background (please specify) .....

**Black or Black British**

- Caribbean  African
- Other Black background (please specify) .....

**Chinese or other ethnic group**

- Chinese  Other (please specify).....

**4. I have the following impairments:**

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> mobility impairment         | <input type="checkbox"/> visual impairment      |
| <input type="checkbox"/> hearing impairment          | <input type="checkbox"/> speech impairment      |
| <input type="checkbox"/> long-term medical condition | <input type="checkbox"/> learning difficulties  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> mental health condition     | <input type="checkbox"/> neurological condition |
| <input type="checkbox"/> other                       | <input type="checkbox"/> prefer not to say      |
| <input type="checkbox"/> none                        |   |

**5. Please tell us which organisation you represent.**

.....

**Thank you for your time and help**

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