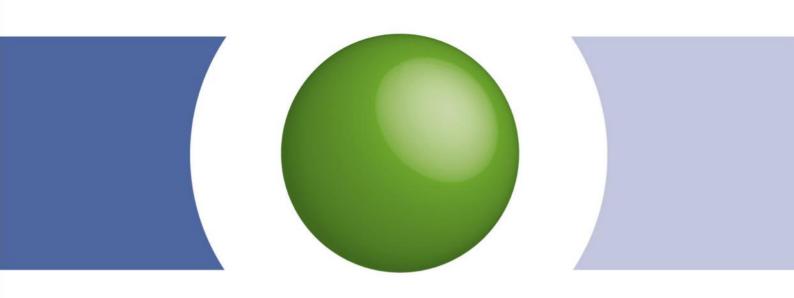


Commissioning Effective Employment Supports (for people with learning disabilities and people with mental health problems)

A Practical Review Tool for Commissioners





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This document is a practical resource for social care and NHS commissioners to use to help ensure that the employment supports they commission for disabled people (most likely for people with learning disabilities and people with mental health problems) achieve good outcomes at a cost effective price.

This is an evidence based resource. It arises from research that NDTi was commissioned to do by the National Institute of Health Research's School of Social Care Research. The research looked at the relationship between investment and outcomes.

The research gathered commissioning and outcome data nationally and studied commissioning and services in depth in a number of local areas. The full research findings can be found at and downloaded from http://www.ndti.org.uk/major-projects/current/employment-support-for-disabled-people/

As part of the research fieldwork we undertook three action learning sets with a range of local authority and NHS commissioners. During these, commissioners confirmed how little time they typically have to give to reviewing and developing employment support services after the initial commissioning process. There was some consensus that ongoing contract review probably averages at about 10 minutes a week, with more intense periods of activity at key contract milestones, especially at the end of contracts.

Given that, this tool was developed with the support of those commissioners involved in the learning sets, with the intention of providing commissioners with a small number of vital questions so that they can ask of service delivery. These questions will quickly provide an insight into the effectiveness of current provision, as well as identify if any further action needs to be taken. Our intention is that it should not take longer than about 30 minutes to ask these questions. In our experience it may well take considerably longer to address the answers and achieve effective service improvement.

In this document we have summarised and shared just a small percentage of the evidence and findings from the main research report. The phrase 'too little knowledge is a dangerous thing' could perhaps have be written for such summaries so if you unclear about anything we have written we suggest you refer back to the full report. Alternatively, call us on 01225 789135 if you would like a more detailed discussion.

This Brief Review Tool is written for both commissioners and providers of supported employment – a separate version aimed at people using personal budgets will be available later. Indicators need to be used with some reflection. This is an art not a science.

The questions are focused much more on individualised employment support (supported employment for people with learning disabilities, and Individual Placement & Support,

IPS, for people with mental health problems) and self - employment than other forms of employment support. This is because, as the report demonstrates, these are the support options that evidence shows deliver the best employment outcomes.

Questions to Ask and Data to Collect

In the following sections we have posed a series of questions about the success of commissioned services. We have separated them out between different types of employment related support. This is because different types of support should have different purposes e.g. work preparation and individual placement supports have different foci.

The questions suggest that you ask each employment support provider about the total number of people supported and the job outcomes they achieve. This will give you the most basic information and indicator of success or not. If you have the capacity we suggest that you ask for more detailed answers to some or all of the questions that identify their outcomes for each group of the population. You will

want to identify your own population groups but we suggest that you include, as a minimum:

- Gender
- Age (including people under 18 and above 65)
- Ethnicity
- Living situation
- Level of impairment
- Geographical location (urban and rural)
- Wage rates (above, at, below national minimum wage)

Employment support type

Individualised employment support

- Individual placement and support (IPS)
- Supported employment

Definition

We define paid employment as being a retainable, paid role within an open, competitive employment market and which provides a significant number of hours of employment per week.

Findings summary

There is acknowledged evidence that supported employment (within the learning disability field) and individual placement and support (IPS) (within mental health) are the most effective solutions to supporting people into paid jobs and there is more economic evidence in support of these approaches than others.

The average cost per job outcome identified through our research is between £8,217 for all services and £2,818 and £4,024 for services that follow best practice. (N.b. learning disability services are at the top end or even slightly higher than this range once full economic costs including overheads are included).

Fidelity to the best practice support models is important in terms of outcomes and value for money.

Question 1 to ask	What processes/supported employment models are support providers using to:		
	 Enable people to identify their desired type and style of employment 		
	Identify and deliver the right support to gain and maintain employment		
Why to ask	Evidence shows that support providers who use established best practice across job identification, matching, gaining and support achieve better outcomes for individuals and value for money		
When to ask	Tendering Commencement of contract Annual reviews If results are poor		
Who to ask or where to look	Evidence from individual planning and support documentation and usage records		
	Ask people who use the service if they have been supported into styles of employment are roles they choose.		
Positive indicators	Processes clearly follow one of the established methodologies, best described at:		
	IPS model fidelity: http://www.centreformentalhealth.org.uk/employment/ips.aspx		
	BASE's supported employment http://base-uk.org/information-commissioners/what-supported-employment		
	Support providers are able to justify variations to the recognised models with clear evidence of jobs gained/maintained and individual satisfaction		
	Staff have received recognised training		
	External satisfactory evaluations or model cohesion processes		
Negative indicators	People why have been supported into work are content with and well matched to their roles (there is not a high turnover) Processes that do not reflect the established best practice models		
	There are poor outcomes in terms of jobs gained/maintained and individual satisfaction		
	A high concentration of people being supported to gain jobs in particular sectors or with individual employers		
	A lack of specialist staff training		
	People are not content and not well matched to their roles (there is a high turnover)		

Question 2 to ask	In the last 6/12/24 months what has been the total contract value ¹ of the service and how many people have been supported to gain or retain employment?
	If you are asking the question over 24 or more months we suggest seeking information about 12 months periods (0-12, 13-24, 25-36, etc.) to give an indication of ongoing and changing outcomes
Why to ask	This question will give you a very basic cost per person and cost per employment outcome
When to ask	Every 6 months or as needed if you are concerned about outcomes
Who to ask or where to look	Contract monitoring information
	If you commission a service with a number of different components (i.e. different types of employment support) we would suggest seeking the information for each component and as a whole
Positive indicators	Among employment support providers following best practice, the NDTi identified a cost of between £2,818 and £4,024 per employment outcome (see caveat above about learning disability costs). A cost within or close to this suggests a positive answer
	There may be reasons for a service showing a higher cost, this includes:
	The service being relatively new and becoming established
	Local employment conditions or the supports needs of people being supported (although our research indicated that this would not generally make a significant difference to outcome levels or costs)
Negative indicators	A cost significantly above that indicated above suggests a negative answer
	It is not possible to identify the real costs of the employment support service because:
	It is contained within wider service funding (for example general day services)
	The total cost including management, overheads, etc. is not known

¹ Total service costs include all management costs, overheads, etc.

In the last 6/12/24 months how many people have been referred/self-referred to your service
 Of these, how many people came 'on to the books' Of those who came 'on to the books' how many gained/retained a job
A summary of the reasons why those who were not accepted onto the books were rejected.
This information will provide you with:
An idea about the percentage of people who are accepted by the employment support provider and therefore the percentage not accepted (which is likely to lead you to ask why) and;
The percentage of those who are supported to gain or retain a job (which may prompt you to ask questions about methodology)
Whether the service is taking on a broad range of referrals and, if rejecting people, the reasons why
Every 6 months or as needed if you are concerned about outcomes
Contract monitoring information
The percentage of people taken 'on to the books' and subsequently being supported to gain or retain employment are in line with those in the service specification
The NDTi's research indicated that the average overall job outcome rate for LA/NHS-commissioned supported employment services is 38%, between a typical range of 13% and 63%. Of those 38% people who gain or retain a job, 61% would secure a new job, 36% would retain a job, and 3% would become self-employed
For best practice sites, the overall job outcome rate is 43%, between a typical range of 30% and 56%. Best practice sites tend to have a much more equal balance between gaining and retaining jobs
The closer the figures are to the best practice figures, the more comfortable you could be with the information
The percentage of people taken 'on to the books' and subsequently being supported to gain or retain employment are not in line with those in the service specification.
The NDTi's research indicated that employment rates below 30% should be looked at. Similarly, employment rates that are above 61% should also be explored to consider what these jobs are and who is getting/keeping them
A significant number of people being rejected from referral because it was felt too difficult for them to be supported into paid work

Question 4 to ask	In the last 6/12/24 months and in total, how many (by number and percentage) people have you supported to gain jobs in each of the five main employment categories (industry, retail, leisure, etc.) in your area		
	In order to make use of the answers to this question you will need to know your local employment % for each of the named employment categories.		
Why to ask	When used against local information for what % of the population works in that employment category, will indicate whether the provider is restricting employment options or enabling access to as wide a range of employment options as possible.		
When to ask	Every 6 months or as needed if you are concerned about outcomes		
Who to ask or where to look	Contract monitoring information		
	If you commission a service with a number of different components we would suggest seeking the information for each component and as a whole		
Positive indicators	Outcomes are roughly in line with local employment trends, if not is the employment support provider able to give a reasonable explanation		
Negative indicators	Outcomes are not roughly in line with local employment trends		
	There is a significant focus on a small number of employment types		

Employment support type

Self-employment support

Definition

We define self-employment as someone who does not have a contract of employment with an employer², someone who is their own boss.

Self-employed people pay their own tax and national insurance.

Findings summary

There is, as yet, no costed evidence of the return on investment in supporting self-employment. We believe that this is not an indication of the value of self-employment but rather because of the small number of people who have been supported to become self-employed.

Good strategies recognise the important role of selfemployment as an employment choice.

² This is not where the person is working in the same role and conditions as contracted employees but for some reason is excluded from having a contract of employment.

Question 1 to ask	If the employment service supports both employment and self-employment – what percentage of people using the service are supported to become self-employed?	
	Or	
	If the employment service just supports people to be self-employed, what percentage of people who use all local employment services are supported to be self-employed?	
Why to ask	Is self-employment being given an equal opportunity with other forms of employment – some people will want to be self-employed	
When to ask	Every 6 months or as needed if you are concerned about outcomes	
Who to ask or where to look	Monitoring information	
	Local Authority workforce statistics	
Positive indicators	The percentage of people supported into self-employment is roughly the same as the percentage of the local working population who are self employed	
Negative indicators	The percentage of people supported into self-employment is significantly different to the percentage of the local working population who are self employed	
Who to ask or where to look	Monitoring information	
	Local Authority workforce statistics	
Positive indicators	The percentage of people supported into self-employment is roughly the same as the percentage of the local working population who are self employed	
Negative indicators	The percentage of people supported into self-employment is significantly different to the percentage of the local working population who are self employed	

Question 2 to ask	How many people are supported to be self-employed and, of this, how many are registered with Her Majesties Revenue and Customs (HMRC) ³		
Why to ask	Do the businesses conform to the usual rules of self-employment		
When to ask	Every 6 months or as needed if you are concerned about outcomes		
Who to ask or where to look	Monitoring information		
Positive indicators	Everyone who has been trading for more than 6 weeks is registered with HMRC		
Negative indicators	A significant percentage of people who have been trading for longer than 6 weeks are not registered with HMRC		

³ This is not the only test of legality for a self-employed person but it is a valuable indicator.

Question 3 to ask	Having identified what is an hourly average for each self-employment role ⁴ ,		
	Against the local average hourly rate for their employment role what percentage of people supported to be self-employed pay themselves		
	 Less than 50% of average hourly rate 50-75% 75-100% 100-125% 125-150% 150% plus 		
Why to ask	Are people being supported to receive the same financial rewards from being self-employed as other community members?		
When to ask	Every 6 months or as needed if you are concerned about outcomes		
Who to ask or where to look	Monitoring (records trawl)		
Positive indicators	People are receiving same hourly remuneration as others (after a reasonable start-up period)		
	Where there is a significant variation this can be explained for each individual		
Negative indicators	People are receiving a hourly remuneration considerably below that of others (after a reasonable start-up period)		
	Variations cannot be explained for each individual		

⁴ For the local hourly pay rate for being a self-employed gardener, artist, computer technician, etc. Employment support organisations may argue that finding the average hourly rate for a role is difficult – we would suggest that it is a crucial part of helping someone think about self-employment and the type of role they want.

Employment support type

Definition

Findings summary

Employment preparation

Employment preparation programmes aim to develop the skills (personal and professional) that, it is believed, participants need to improve the likelihood of them gaining and retailing a job.

Outcomes information about employment preparation programmes tends to focus on the number of people who have completed the course and on examples of participants having developed 'soft' skills. We could not identify any reliable evidence of employment preparation programmes delivering real work outcomes. ⁵

⁵ It could be argued that, because there is no outcomes evidence, employment preparation programmes should not be included here. We have included them because they are part of many areas current employment offer and as such should be reviewed.

Question 1 to ask	What was the total ⁶ cost of the programme(s) in the last 12 months		
	In the last 12 months how many people completed the programme(s)?		
Why to ask	To identify the cost per completing participant		
When to ask	At review		
Who to ask or where to look	Commissioning information and provider outcome information		
Positive indicators	Because there is little evidence about the outcomes of employment preparation programmes it is difficult to suggest positive or negative indicators. We would suggest:		
	 The cost of the individuals participation in the programme is less than any saving identified by individualised employment support providers (see later question) 		
	When compared to local outcomes information (see next question) it is believed that the investment, per individual, in the programme delivers value for money		
Negative indicators	The cost of the individuals participation in the programme is greater than any saving identified by individualised employment support providers (see later question)		
	When compared to local outcomes information (see next question) it is believed that the investment, per individual, in the programme does not deliver value for money		

 $^{^{\}rm 6}$ Include all overheads, management costs, etc.

Question 2 to ask	How many people completed/left the programme in the last 6/12/24 months? Of those how many moved on to:		
	A job		
	Volunteering		
	A college course		
	 A further employment preparation programme A supported employment / individual place and support agency 		
	A day centre		
	Something else		
	Don't know		
Why to ask	To discover where did people who attended the programme move on to?		
	Does this indicate that the programme delivered support that successfully prepared people for employment?		
When to ask	At the end of each programme		
Who to ask or where to look	File review		
	It's likely to be necessary to set in places processes to follow the outcomes for each individual participating in the programme		
	A substantial proportion of people moved from the programme into employment		
	If people moved from the programme into an individualised employment support there was a demonstrable reduction in time taken / cost in their finding employment compared to people receiving individualised employment support who had not also		
	received employment preparation support		
Negative indicators	People move into education, day services, volunteering, further employment preparation programmes or nothing		
	If people move to individualised employment support services there is no demonstrable saving in terms of time or cost compared to people who had not received employment preparation support		

Question 3 to ask	Although this question is in the employment preparation section, it is to be asked to the providers of individualised employment support.
	Of the people who came to your service having completed the (insert name) employment preparation course:
	Did you notice any significant difference in their work skills or readiness for work compared to other people you supportOn average what was the time taken or cost of supporting them to gain employment compared to your average?
Why to ask	To identify whether the employment preparation programme made a demonstrable difference to the individual's employment prospects or lead to a saving in time/cost within the individualised employment support service
When to ask	End of year, having introduced tracking mechanisms for individuals
Who to ask or where to look	The providers of individualised employment supports
Positive indicators	It can be demonstrated that having completed the employment preparation programme people needed less time (and therefore cost) from the individualised employment support provider
	The saving was greater than the cost per participant of the employment preparation programme
Negative indicators	There is no evidence that people who had completed the employment preparation programme people needed less time (and therefore cost) from the individualised employment support provider
	The saving was less than the cost per participant of the employment preparation programme

Employment support types	Sheltered workshops	Social firms
	(Sheltered workshops and social firms are not the same thing however for the purposes of this tool the suggested questions are the same)	
Definition	An appropriate paid job for people, who, it is believed, would otherwise not be able to get a job	A separate business that includes a social aim of increasing employment opportunities for disadvantaged people.
	in a safe environment.	This may include the stated claim of aiming to support people to
	Projects/programmes tend to identify some desire for have throughput so can act as a training place.	become 'work ready'
Findings summary	There is little evidence of significant levels of transfer out of sheltered workshops into mainstream employment	There is little evidence of significant levels of transfer out of social firms into mainstream employment.
		There are indicators of ,relatively, high levels of ongoing subsidy
	Indicators are of a cost subsidy per job of approximately £22,000 per annum	required by some services that identify themselves as social firms

Question 1 to ask	If one of the stated aims of the service is to support people to develop the skills and confidence to move into 'open' employment:		
	In the last 6/12/24 months how many people have left the service? Of these how many move on to		
	 A job Volunteering A college course An employment preparation programme A supported employment / individual place and support agency A day centre Something else Don't know In the last 6/12/24 months how many people commenced employment/training with the service?		
140 d			
Why to ask	What is the level of throughput and to where?		
	Is the level of throughput acceptable?		
When to ask	Annually		
Who to ask or where to look	Individual monitoring systems or a review of files		
Positive indicators	If here are clear expectations from commissioners for the number of people who will enter and move on from the service:		
	People moved on from the service to open employment outcomes		
	The number of people moving into the service is in line with commissioner expectations		
	There is a clear and dated plan for each individual's move through the service into open employment		
Negative indicators	There are no clear expectations from commissioners for the number of people who will enter and move on from the service:		
	People did not move on from the service to open employment outcomes		
	The number of people moving into the service is not in line with commissioner expectations		
	There is not a clear and dated plan for each individual's move through the service into open employment		

Question 2 to ask	If the service receives any form of grant income or subsidy (this includes making a charge to individuals) from the local authority, health trust or other statutory agency:
	What is the total grant income or subsidy for the service?
	What does this equate to for each participant (this is only people eligible for support/services)?
Why to ask	To identify the level of subsidy, if any, per participant for comparison against other employment support options
When to ask	At contract commencement or review. At least annually
Who to ask or where to look	The provider. Commissioning information.
Positive indicators	The level of subsidy per participant is acceptable to and affordable by the commissioner
	The level of subsidy per participant compares favourably against the cost of offering other evidence based employment supports
Negative indicators	The level of subsidy per participant is not acceptable to and affordable by the commissioner
	The level of subsidy per participant does not compare favourably against the cost of offering other evidence based employment supports.

Question 3 to ask	Is there a business plan for the service? What, if any, financial support does it require from the local authority or other statutory sources.
Why to ask	Is the business financially viable?
	If financial support is required is it available in the medium / long term or is there a plan to make the service (at least in part) financially self-sufficient?
When to ask	At commencement and/or as part of annual review
Who to ask or where to look	The business plan and/or business case
Positive indicators	There is a full business plan/case
	The business plan/case has been reviewed by experts in the business area
	Any ongoing subsidy is clearly detailed and resourced with a reduction in amount needed as deemed reasonable by business case 'experts'
	All 'workers' receive at least national minimum wage for each hour of work
Negative indicators	There is no proper business plan /case
	Any ongoing subsidy is not clearly sourced
	All 'workers' do not receive at least national minimum wage for each hour of work

Question 4 to ask	If a justification for the workshop is that people will be safer than in mainstream employment:
	How do traditional safety at work measures (safeguard, accident books, sickness) compare to sector norms?
	What evidence do you have that people are safer from bullying and other negative behaviours than they would be in a similar mainstream business
Why to ask	Sometimes the justification for a separate workplace (which includes sheltered workshops) is that participants are more vulnerable to poor health and safety measures in mainstream employment or open to bulling/inappropriate behaviours from colleagues, customers, etc.
When to ask	As part of annual review. Spot-checks if there are concerns
Who to ask or where to look	Record books. Participant reviews/questionnaires.
Positive indicators	There is evidence that health and safely incidents at work are lower than is average for similar types of 'open' workplace
	There is evidence that people are less vulnerable to bullying/inappropriate behaviours from colleagues, customers, etc. than they would be in a similar 'open' workplace
Negative indicators	There is no evidence that health and safely incidents at work are lower than is average for similar types of 'open' workplace
	There is no evidence that people are less vulnerable to bullying/inappropriate behaviours from colleagues, customers, etc. than they would be in a similar 'open' workplace

Building Blocks for Effective Commissioning

However there is no point in collecting the right information if there is not then a strategy that enables change to take place that arises from the information gathered.

It is important to highlight and explain the characteristics of the effective commissioning of employment supports that the research identified. In summary, the detailed evaluation of eleven sites showed that the following approaches or actions need to be in place in any local area for effective supported employment models to deliver the best employment outcomes for disabled people. In each case, up to five important indicators are suggested that could help evidence that the required action is in place:

1. **Strategic Priority.** A positive decision by key decision makers to make employment a central strategic outcome and contextualise that to local circumstances so it becomes part of the culture of service behaviour.

Positive Indicators:

- Clear and strategic visions (for example employment outcomes for disabled people are a Council priority and reported to the Health & Wellbeing Board)
- Championed at a senior level (across both care services and economic development)
- Committed and informed leader (knowledge of best practice and time to use it)
- Commitment and action from people responsible for delivering employment support services
- Employer engagement across all employment sectors and employer sizes (with leadership from employers)

2. **Defining Employment.** A clear understanding of what is meant by employment-based on 'real' work including proven steps to it.

Positive Indicators:

- Shared definition of employment (for example of real work) that is understood and adhered to by commissioners and providers
- Shared definition of employment that is understood and adhered to by commissioners and providers
- Shared definition of employment that contain enough information to promote good outcomes (for example wage levels, hours, terms and conditions)
- Shared understanding of the evidence-based steps of employment support (following recognised best practice)
- People maintaining/retaining employment is viewed as of equal importance to gaining employment (targets are set and monitored)

3. A comprehensive employment strategy, owned by key players, based on evidence linked to wider strategies that is used to guide action/delivery

Positive Indicators:

- Good level of knowledge of best practice and national policy among employment support leads (for example planning references evidence)
- Evidence of key players having ownership (leadership, commitment, policy and practice development, connection to other initiatives) rather than just a passing interest (use of language, receiving reports)
- The strategy includes the transition to adulthood (for example clear employment conversations and plans)
- The strategy includes links to economic regeneration
- The strategy is clearly linked in to a measurable, delivery plan (for example details expected number of jobs gained and retained and sectors)

4. Knowledgeable leadership (if not commissioners then commissioners listening to it) that works with all stakeholders, but especially providers, to specify, support and manage development of systems and markets that deliver the objectives stated above.

Positive Indicators:

- Providers have a clear understanding of best practice and national policy
- Commissioners have a clear understanding of best practice and national policy
- Services are developed following conversation with all stakeholders⁷
- Commissioners have the knowledge and skills to develop a 'marketplace' of best practice based employment supports
- Checks are in place to ensure that providers have fidelity to best practice

5. The gathering of relevant and appropriate data and information to inform achievement of the above

Positive Indicators:

- Outcomes data is available on the performance of each employment support service and the overall service. This includes hourly wage, hours worked, employment type (gained/retained), sector job is in, job progression, plus all equality data required (see below)
- There is clear evidence of outcomes data being used in the development, monitoring and review of services
- Data includes outcomes, customer satisfaction and individual stories.

⁷ This should always include people using services and families

Based on the information you have identified, you may think that you need additional support

Local employment commissioning, provision and outcomes – An independent review focusing on outcomes and value for money for the NDTi.

The recent research completed by the NDTi on behalf of the SSCR into the relationship between investment and outcomes in employment support for disabled people has highlighted some fundamental questions for people commissioning and providing council/NHS funder employment support services. These include:

- Do local strategies have the right level of sign up and engagement to create the right drivers and conditions for real outcomes (people gaining and retaining jobs)?
- Do local commissioning strategies are based developing and sustaining best practice in provision?
- Are local services providing supports that are proven to deliver real employment outcomes at a reasonable cost?

An NDTi independent review of local employment commissioning, provision and outcomes focuses on:

The evidence base of commissioning and delivery

- The methodologies used by and outcomes from employment support providers
- The experiences of people using the services
- Value for money in outcomes

This will include consideration of:

- Local strategies and 'buy in'
- Local commission objectives and plans
- The local employment support 'market place'

Each review is tailored to local needs and carried out by a small team drawn from NDTi staff and associates who have direct experience of planning, commissioning and providing employment supports.

For a conversation about an independent employment review please contact Bill Love on 01225 789135 or at bill.love@ndti.org.uk