

SEND Employment Forum Lewisham

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Our members



Understanding our members.

- Ensuring we have appropriate membership and representation across the LA and local area partnership

Inclusion of:

- Both specialist and mainstream schools
- Representatives from parent/ carer forum
- Young Advisors, Young Mayors Forum and Champions of Inclusion
- DWP and local DEA's
- Central London Career's Hub co-ordinator
- Those with lived experience
- Local employers and social enterprise



Forum meetings

February 2023

Introducing partners and establishing the shared intention for the forum, around collaboratively working to create more pathways for residents with learning disabilities into employment.

Agreed values for the forum

- SEND in this forum is inclusive of those without a diagnosis
- Information and best practice sharing is key
- Employment should be considered in a holistic way, considering wellbeing
- Offering and facilitating a choice of career paths and options
- Important that pathways are communicated to those who need to know
- Data and monitoring the impact of supported internships as a pathway to paid employment

Forum meetings

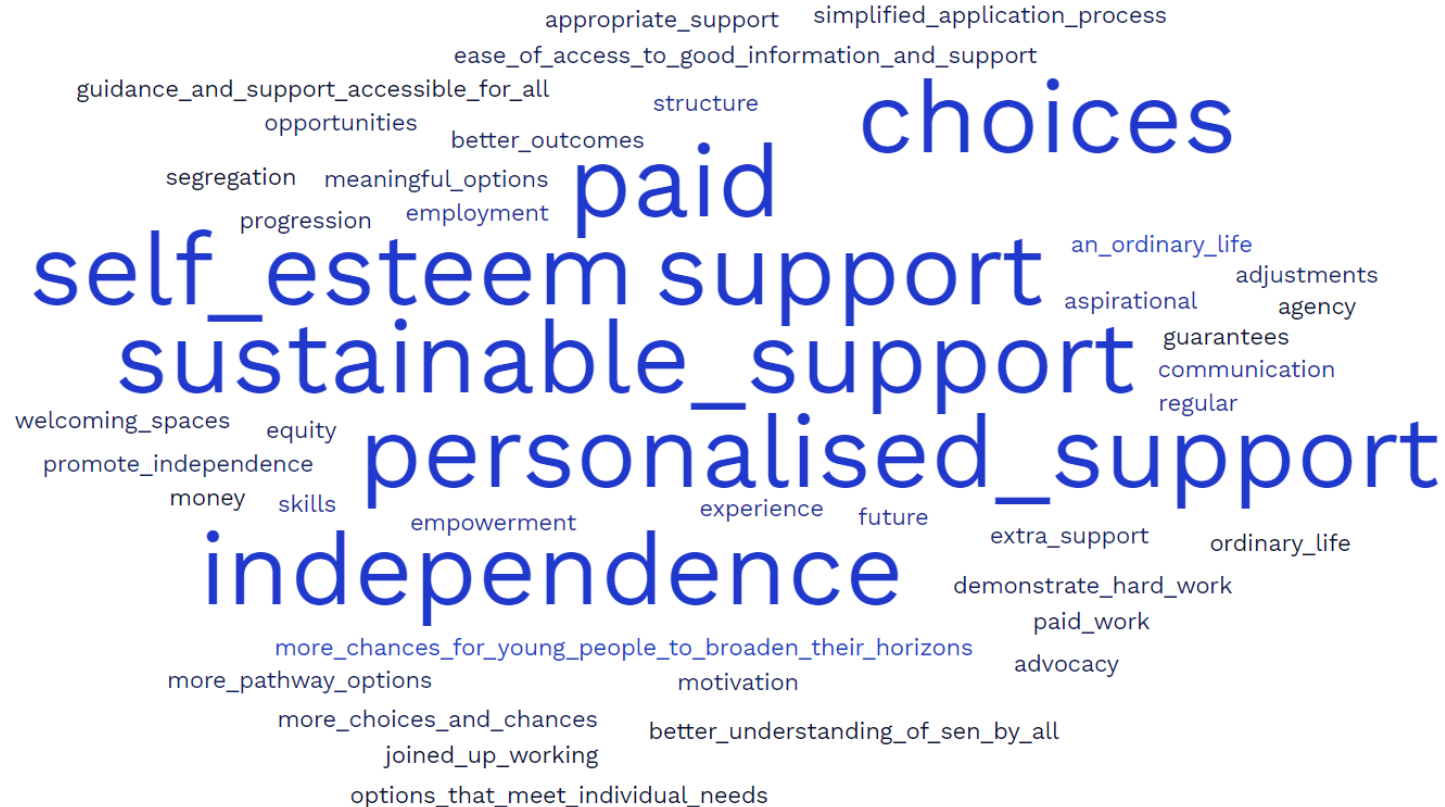
April 2023

Understanding and mapping the local need and provision available, identifying early opportunities to collaborate and begin to create a collective plan of action.

Employment focused 'People's Parliament'.

- 39 people with disabilities attended and 20 members of this group participated in an employment focused workshop which further supported the SEND Employment forum to understand what has helped those with lived experience engage with work and some of the challenges / barriers to paid work.

What do good Pathways to Employment mean for people with learning disabilities?



Lewisham People's Parliament (LPP): what does 'work' mean to you?

"Feeling valued"

"Self esteem"

"Feel like a normal human being"

"Routine"

"Helps with mental health"

"Being part of a team"

"Meeting new people"

"I can buy what I want"

"I am sick of voluntary work"

"I want my voluntary job to pay me"

What are some of the challenges, or barriers, to paid work for people with learning disabilities in Lewisham?



LPP: What has helped you engage with work?

- Having a job coach
- Having a supportive family
- Getting help with on the job training
- A 'buddy' at work
- Help with doing applications on the computer
- Support to purchase equipment needed (example: laptop)
- A number of negative experiences of JCP reported
- One size fits all doesn't work

“The system is inconsistent”

“I need help to manage the transfer in to work.”

“Job applications are brutal, nasty”

“My psychologist helped me see what are my obstacles and what adjustments do I need, they did me a report”

Forum meetings

July 2023:

Sharing findings from the last forums systems mapping workshop, Updating partners about related work within the council including the workshop with Lewisham Speaking Up.

Sharing related updates from partners, including the sharing of any good practice.

Support and services: what do we have?

Building People, Changing Minds (Work experience placements, NCIL funded)	'Local Offer' – Information Page
Baseline	3 C's – Job coaching
Lewisham Mencap (Social Clubs)	Housing association apprenticeships (Hexagon & Phoenix)
Radical Recruit (Provider/ specialist employment agency)	Supported Housing Providers
Supported Internships/ Internships Work	Social Enterprises
Lewisham College – Supported Learning & support for mainstream students with SEND, Careers Advice	Job Centre Plus
Independent travel training for YP with EHCP from Lewisham Council	Lewisham council SEND department
Ignition Brewery	Volunteer / Charity Organisations

Support and services: what do we have?

Toucan Employment	Therapy services offer provision for CYP but currently this has a long waiting list- S<, OT, Drumbeat Outreach
Ignition Brewery	Transition reviews for YP with EHC plans, preparation from YR 9 to prepare for transitions.
Lewisham Works	Gatsby benchmarks used in schools
Insufficient range of supported internship placements	Work experience in all SEND schools at KS4 & KS7
Lewisham Parent Carer Forum	Lewisham Young Mayor: Champions of Inclusion
Adult Learning Lewisham: Pathways to Employment course	

Current Challenges

Parent and carer perception of a person's capability of employment

Lack of aspiration among young people and their families

Good services exist but many have limited capacity, limited eligibility or long waiting lists

Fear of coming off benefits, or the impact working will have on benefit entitlement by both individuals and families/ carers

Lack of employers with understanding of disability or supported employment

People getting 'stuck' in cycle of college courses or work experience/ volunteering, without progressing to paid work

What would a better system look like?

Employers	Individuals with LD (and their families)
Employers working together with all partners to help to find work and understanding individuals differences	Ensuring people aren't having to do referral processes again and again (single front door/ referral process).
Continual training for employers, so they are confident to take people on	Clear pathways for CYP and adults, that are holistic but with employment at the heart
Financial help for employers – liken to Job Introduction Scheme that supported small employers to take people with additional needs on.	Opportunities for employment for over 25 who may have slipped through the net
Legislation/mandation (social value?): every employer has to have an offer where they consider YP and adults with LD and differences	Greater aspirations - more information for families to feel empowered and look at the positives - with appropriate guidance and info
Being able to apply for jobs in different ways, an open minded recruitment process	Better guidance and communication for individuals and families on money, benefits and student finance
Barrier removal: interviews, non essential criteria on job descriptions	Continuity of support
More inclusive employers with an understanding of SEND and MH	Good travel training: learning how to travel, not just specific routes.
Job carving	Building social confidence, resilience and other personal development for workforce

What would a better system look like?

Support & statutory organisations	Opportunities
Central team to organise and support individuals, a one stop shop	Ensuring that training and work experience leads to employment
A benefits system that supports people into work, and has "linking" put back in, so if a job doesn't work out, people aren't put onto a new benefit	Supported employment that supports self employment/micro enterprises/entrepreneurship
Intentional planning for employment for all students from YR 9 (at the latest)	More internships with realistic paid prospects at the end
Having a social care system that works around employment - needs to be flexible	
Joint approaches where everyone knows what is available and things are signposted in a meaningful and empowering way	

LPP: What needs to change in the employment system?

- Not a one size fits all approach – each person to be recognised as an individual.
- Bring back 1:1 disability employment advisors (as used to exist at DWP) to meet people face to face and 1:1 [for employment support and DWP appointments]
- Need support if everything is online, it's no good if they [DWP] just say all jobs are on the computer if you can't use it
- Need a system of support that actually helps disable people find work.
- Attitude in society needs to change towards disabled people, lots of stigma towards disabled people on benefits

What can we do to improve our current system? Suggestions from forum

- Hold an open event for people with LD and employers to discuss opportunities and what the employers require
- Ideas of different ways of gaining employment not just via an interview process
- Employment skills for employees as well as employers
- Champion employers that are working well and learn from these
- Employers with understanding of LD and MH, so they are more confident to take people on
- Create directory of employers and pathways which result in employment
- Big employers (LA / NHS) should set an example to local employers
- Specific curriculum and learning for ITT
- 1 point of contact with one story to be shared and only once
- HR departments need to remove unnecessary barriers
- More ongoing support to build social confidence
- More information in the right places - not always online - everyone (including us as professionals) needs to know where and who to go to for info for useful signposting etc
- Financial support for employers would help. There used to be a scheme called the Job Introduction Scheme that gave some funding to small employers
- Funding available to access employment
- More investment and resources for supported employment - for long term employment... having good brokerage between supporter and employer.... There is not enough of it in Lewisham

Identified priorities

Employer engagement

- Identifying good practice among employers
- Providing a training offer to employers to support the recruitment of people with SEND
- Local authority creating opportunities for people with SEND
- Consider supported apprenticeships



Ignition Brewery hosted a networking event with other local businesses to share good practice, build knowledge and confidence in hiring colleagues with learning disabilities and neurodiversity and how to create an inclusive place of work.