



**YORKSHIRE AND HUMBER IMPROVEMENT
PARTNERSHIP**

**A GUIDE TO PRODUCING AN EMPLOYMENT
STRATEGY FOR PEOPLE WITH A
LEARNING DISABILITY**



employment



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This document has been written as part of the YHIP funded NDTi work in Yorkshire & Humberside to support the writing and review of local employment plans. We recommend that it is used in partnership with government policy as it is published and updated.

Agencies based outside the region who would like to know more about the project, employment planning or the NDTi please visit our website www.ndti.org.uk



Policy context

Valuing Employment Now established a cross government employment strategy for the next fifteen years. Its aspiration is that the same level of employment that currently exists for people with disability generally - 48% - should be in place for people with moderate and severe learning disabilities by 2025.

This aspiration is founded on peoples right to work, the belief informed by best practice in the UK and USA that people can work, and the knowledge that they will be better off financially and socially if they do.

Valuing Employment Now expects every Local Learning Disability Partnership Board to ensure that a cross agency employment strategy is in place that can take forward the development of employment opportunities for people in their local area. This guide is to assist commissioners and others in the Yorkshire and Humber Region with their local employment strategy.

There is no reason to believe that the new Government will scrap Valuing Employment Now. Indeed the Minister for Social Care has confirmed that the policies for people with a learning disability remain in place.

Be clear why a strategy will help

A strategy is about planning change from where we are now to where we think we want to be; it implies that we know where we are now, we know where we want to be, and we can plot the journey accordingly. It is an important way to involve a lot of people in planning something that is complex and requires input from different sources, and which may have to overcome multiple hurdles. So the process of putting a strategy together is almost as important as the strategy itself, because if done effectively it brings all the key players together, gets agreement about direction, and seeks commitment to action. Only 30% of strategies are said to be implemented, so a good strategy has to focus on execution – this means plans that are *simple specific realistic and complete*; and plans that identify who is accountable.

Make the case for an employment strategy

The case needs to be made for a strategy; without top level commitment from key players it will never be implemented, as it requires fundamental change in the way services react to people.

Joblessness is one of key indicators of social exclusion. Getting a job has to be seen as a central feature in helping individuals to achieve their aspirations. *Unless the whole system sees it as a priority, it will not happen for people.*

Only 7.5% of people with moderate and severe learning disabilities are in paid employment, and only a fraction of them in jobs of 16 hours plus. We know that many more people want to work and could work. We also know that there are significant barriers to enabling them to work – culturally, structurally and personally. Significantly, overcoming these barriers is complex and involves many different agencies, departments, and people. Progress requires commitment from many parties – ownership of an agreed plan is essential.

There is a powerful business case to be made. The evaluation of supported employment in North Lanarkshire revealed a significant difference in cost between supporting someone in to employment, and providing alternative support and activity - £7200 compared to £15000. Recent research in the USA reports a return of \$1.46 for every \$1 invested in supported employment for people with disabilities because of the benefits saved, taxes paid, and contribution to the GDP. *In these times of austerity, the cost effectiveness of work seems irrefutable, and is at the heart of economic recovery, and yet people with learning disabilities are so often ignored and discarded.* A 30% reduction in provision of day services by getting people jobs will reduce costs, increase inclusion, and lessen dependency.

There are universal benefits too: a more divergent workforce, a more inclusive society, and reasonable adjustments to the workplace that can benefit everyone.

For useful information on N Lanarkshire, evidence about supported employment and other sources visit Valuing Employment Now Resource Hub on www.valuingpeople.gov.uk/venresources. In particular see “An Evaluation of the Outcomes of supported employment in North Lanarkshire (2007)” by Dr Stephen Beyer; and “A Review of the Research Literature on Supported Employment” by Dr Stephen Beyer and Dr Carol Robinson.

Get the right people on board

After overcoming disbelief in the presumption of employability, probably the single biggest challenge in getting people jobs is the sheer complexity of it: employment is everybody and nobody's responsibility. Because people have been cocooned in a social care world of dependency for so long, that is where most of the investment in them lies; but the jobs and the skills required to get them for people lie elsewhere. And if the work does not start with children and young people, another generation will be missed. So the process of developing and implementing a strategy needs to find away to engage people themselves (possibly through User Led Organisations), and their families; and then multiple other partners. These are likely to include:

- Senior special education commissioner for people under 16;
- Senior special education and YPLA commissioner for 16-25 year olds;
- Senior college managers responsible for further learning for people with special educational needs;
- Senior health care commissioner;
- Senior adult social care commissioner;
- Care management and personalisation leads;
- Jobcentreplus;
- Supported employment providers;
- Employers;
- Head of adult social care provider services;

Taking the initiative and providing leadership

Strategies do not make themselves. If it is left as everyone and no-one's job, it will not happen. Someone has to take the initiative and the lead. Valuing Employment Now indicates that the Learning Disability Partnership Board should take the lead, but that assumes they are aware. And someone will still need to put a process in place and do the work. Without capacity – time, knowledge, authority, skills – again it will not happen. It is important to identify from where this capacity is coming, whether the person/people have the discretion necessary to negotiate hard, and can deliver to tight time tables.

Key elements

A robust strategy will have several different elements:

- Building a foundation of strong values, committed people and services who will over time challenge and change attitudes and presumptions about employability;
- Short term objectives that will make quick gains by getting some people jobs, demonstrating what is possible, and making the case for wider deeper strategic change;
- Long term objectives that will consolidate good practice, build on success and make a lasting contribution to a radical new approach to welfare that is cost effective and based on active citizenship rather than passive dependency.

It will be founded on some clear values:

- The presumption of employability
- The right to work
- The responsibility of citizenship: shouldn't the choice **NOT** to work be challenged as it is for everyone else?

It will include everyone. Whilst acknowledging that there will be some people who will never work for a variety of reasons, the opportunity to do so should not be denied anyone – however complex their needs, whatever their gender, race, religion or sexual orientation.

Personalisation and the employment pathway

All the evidence suggests the best outcomes are achieved for people with learning disabilities by using an individual place and train model. This means a personalised approach based on individual profiling, placement in a job, with training on the job. This is central to the strategy because this is how people will get and keep jobs. It presumes an individualised pathway to employment. It should be central to wider efforts to personalise services, do person centred planning, implement individual and personal budgets using support planning and resource allocations that prioritise employment.

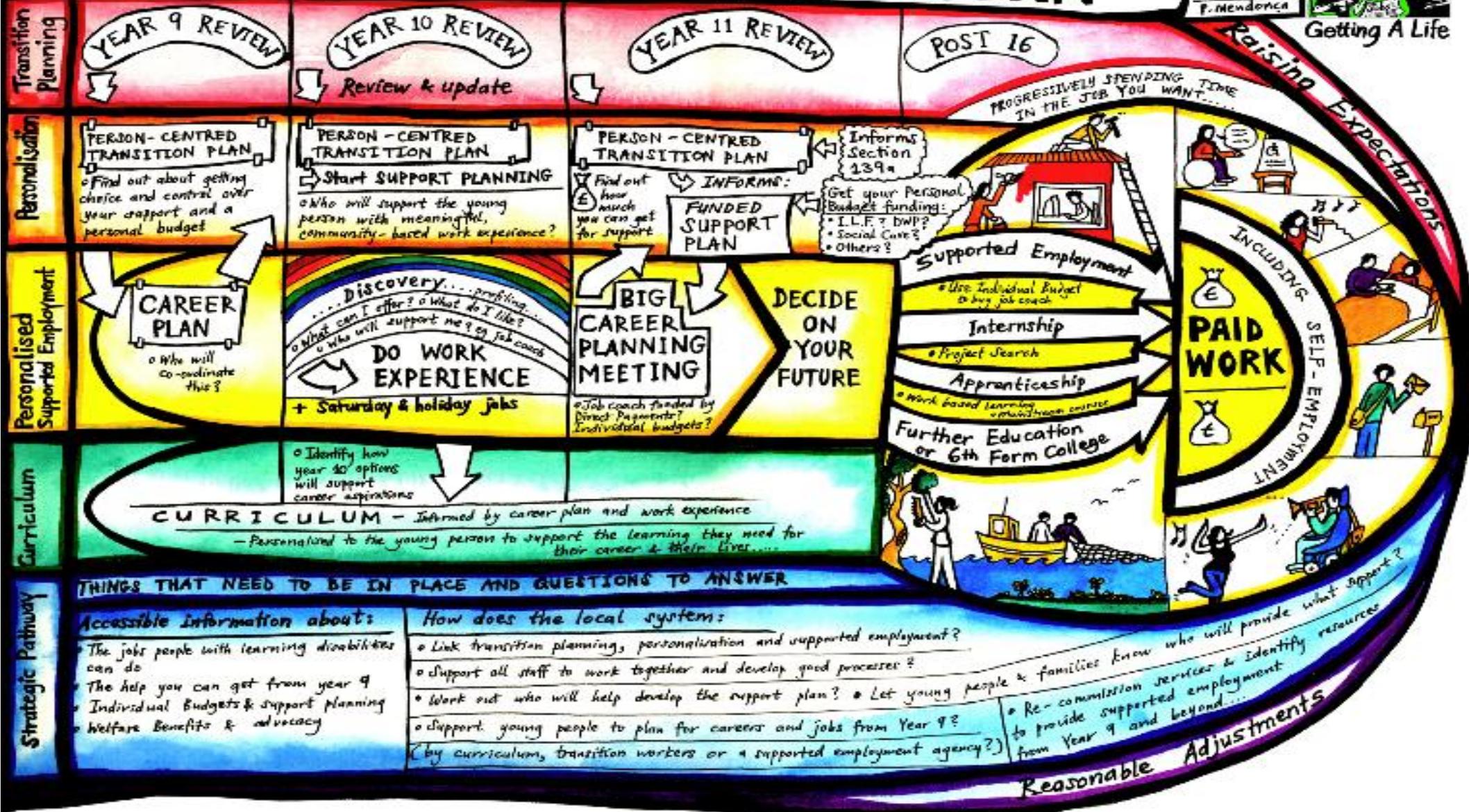
Example of pathway developed for Getting a Life pilot sites:

PATHWAY IN TO PAID WORK

March 2010
F. Mendonca



Getting A Life



Without the pathway, the delivery chain will not be connected for individuals; they may not have the information, reach the right support, or be linked to the most appropriate opportunities. A strategy needs to demonstrate how individuals start and stay on this pathway, and whose responsibility it is.

Key questions will include:

- Who will kick start the journey towards employment for individuals?
- Who will guide and signpost them and give them a belief that work is the right decision?
- Who is eligible for a personal budget locally?
- Is the authority prioritising certain groups? If so who?
- Is there agreement that personal budgets can be used locally for employment? Does everyone understand this? How is this monitored?
- What is the local person centred planning strategy, does it address the presumption of employability and how to support people to get a job?

The early years

Low expectations about the chances of working later in life are set early in life. If work is not part of the assumptions about what is possible, individual and parental aspirations will be low. This is particularly the case where responses to people, and support services are based on traditional values of dependency, and concentration on children's deficits.

To start to change aspirations about a life that might include work requires a different approach by health care professionals in children's health services. This is a major workforce issue. *Making the change is helped when people with disabilities are represented in the health care workforce, where their visibility reinforces what can be rather than what cannot.* Children with disability teams also need to take on a role that seeks to change expectations in the minds of those who work with families.

Early learning in children's centres, nurseries and schools can start to build on the understanding about what children would like to do when they grow up, including the idea of work. This can be addressed through play, teaching, role models etc

Transition

Millions of pounds are spent on special and further education for people with learning disabilities, but very few end up with a job. If every one who left school or college went in to employment, the next generation would have better lives, and would not be so dependent on the state for expensive social care. This means a clear focus in transition planning on employment outcomes.

Key questions for a strategy:

- From the age of 14 do young people get support to develop Person Centred Transition Plans that pay specific attention to employment, housing, health and friendships and relationships?
- Is Person Centred Transition Planning being brought together with support planning in your area? For example is there an upfront allocation of money to support the Person Centred Transition Plan?
- Is employment a central component of the transition plan?
- Do people get meaningful work experience in community based settings from 14 plus?
- What welfare advice do young people and their families receive during transition? Does this include advice about employment?
- Do young people get work experience from year 10?
- Do young people and their families get accessible information on what is positive and possible about employment from year 9? Do young people and their families get support to learn what can help them to get a job for example personal budgets and individual budgets, post 16 options and supported employment?
- What post 16 options are available locally to support people into a range of different careers (and it may not necessarily be college)?
- Are colleges providing vocational courses and opportunities that help people get jobs when they leave?

Supported employment and job coaching

The social care workforce is not trained to help people get jobs. It requires skills in vocational profiling, systematic instruction, customising employment opportunities, and working with employers. These are the tasks of job

coaches, usually as part of supported employment organisations. But there is a shortage of job coaches with the right skills and knowledge to work with people with moderate and severe learning disabilities. Most areas will need to build capacity in the employment sector.

Key questions for the strategy:

- Is there a local supported employment agency and or job coaches with the skills in supporting people with severe learning disabilities and complex needs into employment and who will provide supported employment support?
- Has the cost of a job coach or service from supported employment agency been calculated? What evidence is there that this is based on established best practice for support and costing?

Employers and jobs

Sceptics will argue that at a time of recession and growing unemployment it is unrealistic to expect employers to employ people with a learning disability. This should not and does not have to be the case. North Lanarkshire grew their supported employment service directly after the biggest employer in the region (the Ravenscraig steel works) closed down. But employers will not employ people out of charity – it has to be demonstrated that people with a learning disability can contribute effectively to the business. This means positive engagement with employers, making the case, addressing issues of support for employers and employees quickly and effectively.

Key questions for the strategy:

- As the biggest employers, are the local authorities, local health services and other public bodies signed up to a proactive approach to employing disadvantaged people?
- Is there a supported employment organisation who knows how to engage with employers?
- Are there links with other big employers, or employers' organisations in the area?
- Is the local and regional Jobcentreplus building the employment needs of people with learning disabilities into its own links with employers?

Funding streams

Because the employment of people with a learning disability is everyone's and no one's responsibility, its funding is complex, and at risk of 'cost shunting' arguments. The truth is, people will not get and keep jobs without the contribution of all the key agencies, and this includes financial. Employment contributes to personal health and well being, improves social inclusion, reduces dependency on services and benefits, and contributes to the economy.

How to braid funding round individuals, and commission collaboratively are major challenges. This is why a strategy based on strong partnership is essential.

Key questions for the strategy:

- Are the key health and social care commissioners on board?
- Can personal/individual budgets be used to buy job coaching/supported employment?
- Are the children's and further education commissioners on board?
- Are schools and colleges supportive of vocational outcomes?
- Are Jobcentreplus flexible about the use of Access to Work?

Making it happen

Wide ownership of the finished strategy is essential to its implementation. Cross agency leadership and co-ordinated oversight will be needed. This is a role for the Local Learning Disability Partnership Board, although it may want to delegate this to a smaller more dedicated task group. People with learning disabilities and family carers can be key allies in making sure employment is seen as a priority and taking things forward, but they will need to see and understand the evidence, and be involved appropriately.

Key questions:

- Does the Learning Disability Partnership Board have sufficient delegated authority to develop and implement an employment strategy? If not, who has?

- Are there are other key commissioning groups or boards who need to be engaged?
- Who will project manage the development of the strategy and its subsequent implementation?
- Have they got the capacity (time, skills, resources) to undertake the task?
- Does the strategy include how to get people and their families engaged and involved in developing employment opportunities?

GOOD LUCK!!

NDTi/SJW/0910
