





## About the research

In March 2022 [Mencap](#) commissioned [National Development Team for Inclusion \(NDTi\)](#) to do some research to better understand what people with a learning disability want when it comes to work, why so few people with a learning disability are able to access or maintain paid work, and what more can be done to help address the barriers to work for people with a learning disability in the UK.

As part of this research we heard from people with a learning disability and employers about what stops people with a learning disability getting or keeping a job:

51



We spoke to **51 people** with a learning disability in 7 focus groups and 4 interviews across England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. In the focus groups and interviews we asked people to talk about what gets in the way of getting or keeping the job they want.

We had responses from **188 people** with a learning disability through an online Easy Read survey. In the survey we asked people who don't have a paid job but would like one, what is stopping them.

188



18

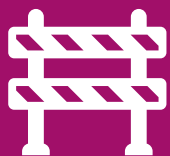


We interviewed **18 employers**; 11 from organisations that currently employ someone with a learning disability in their organisation and 7 from organisations that do not. Interviews were conducted with an NDTi researcher and a co-researcher with lived experience of learning disabilities. Employers were asked about the main challenges or barriers to employing people with a learning disability.

A group of **9 people** with lived experience of learning disabilities was formed to inform, guide and advise on various aspects of the research. This was called the Research Working Group. All those involved did so as part of their paid Mencap roles or were paid for their time by NDTi.

9





## People with a learning disability told us that the main thing stopping them getting a job was the “benefits trap”

45%

of people completing the survey who would like a paid job said that being worried about their benefits was stopping them from getting a job

*“My main concern when I finally get a job is will my benefits stop or carry on.”*

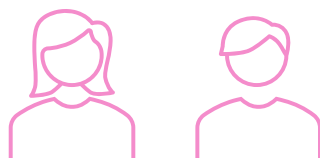
20%

of people completing the survey who were in paid work said that problems with benefits was one of the worst things about their job

*“A lot of people say, why don't you get a proper job? I think, how could I get a proper job? ... I had a proper job and because of me and my wife's claim it really mucked everything up.”*

Even though people were on a range of benefits, some of which are not subject to a 16-hour rule, there was widespread belief that people with learning disabilities cannot work more than 16 hours a week.

*“It's the benefit trap, you can't do more than 16 [hours] and that's it, it's gone.”*



*“People with learning disabilities you can only do 16 hours of paid work, if you do any higher than that you lose your benefits.”*



## People with a learning disability told us about other things stopping them getting and keeping a paid job (1)

*"It's like they stereotype before they get to know me which is unfair... As soon as they hear the words disability, they don't wanna know you"*

*"There used to be a bit of bullying going on... I was scared. I tried my best to be brave."*

**Discrimination and poor treatment**



35% of people completing the survey who would like a paid job said that not getting enough support to look for a job was stopping them.

*"For me it's about knowing where to start and how to find a job. It's really difficult to know where to begin with job search and stuff."*



**Limited support**

**Poor quality support**



*"[Employment support worker] wasn't very good, she didn't get what I really wanted..."*

*"Jobcentre Plus is a waste of time... All that they care about is getting people off of benefits, not about getting people jobs."*



**Locality and transport**

15% of people completing the survey who would like a paid job said that limited jobs in their area was stopping them from getting a job.

*"I live a long way away, so it makes it really hard for me to get a job... There are no buses for me either. There are no pubs, or shops, there ain't nothing"*



## People with a learning disability told us about other things stopping them getting and keeping a paid job (2)

30% of people completing the survey who would like a paid job said that not having the right experience was stopping them from getting a job.

*"They don't seem to recognise transferable skills... their rigidness is really annoying, often I can't even apply for jobs even though I know I have the skills."*

Limited experience



22% of people completing the survey who would like a paid job said that not having the right qualifications was stopping them from getting a job.

*"Every job, even customer services, you need a Level 2 Customer Services qualification... There are a wide variety of jobs in [area], but you can't even apply for them due to the qualifications"*



Lack of qualifications

Attitudes of others



22% of people completing the survey who would like a paid job said that other people thinking they shouldn't was stopping them from getting a job.

*"I did ask my mum if I could work and mum and dad said no because no-one don't want to employ me"*



Low self confidence

*"You can be a barrier for yourself, put yourself down, think you're not worth it, you can't get a job"*

*"The hard thing for me is when I apply for jobs and I get an email saying your job application was unsuccessful. I find it very hard to search for other jobs."*



## People with a learning disability and employers both told us about things that make organisations inaccessible

### Inaccessible recruitment processes

23% of people completing the survey who would like a paid job said that application forms not being accessible was stopping them from getting a job.

*“Application forms that I have to fill in, that’s hard for me to understand” (Person with a learning disability)*

*“We only work with certain recruitment firms and they may not represent anyone with learning disabilities. The first stage of the application process requires them to read a lot... All our adverts are online” (Employer)*



### Inaccessible organisations

*“The management didn’t understand me, they don’t make things in Easy Read communication, they didn’t understand me.” (Person with a learning disability)*

*“Infrastructure is an issue - not all of our IT systems are set-up to be fully accessible for people with disabilities.” (Employer)*

*“The portal has been a big struggle, I’ve never seen a portal like it before” (Person with a learning disability)*

*“There’s a lot of rigidity around some of our processes... the rigidity in our policies... we inhibit ourselves by not being flexible when we could be.” (Employer)*





## Employers told us what was stopping them from employing people with a learning disability

### Not knowing how to do it or how to get support

*“We do have roles in the organisation at entry level, but we just don’t know how to do it.”* (Employer)

*“I know there are a couple of different places I could go to get some advice. Whether or not it would be the right advice, I suppose that would be difficult for me to say.”* (Employer)



### Awareness and attitudes among employers

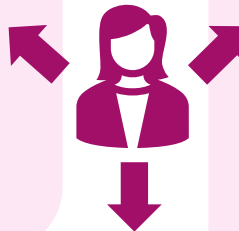
*“We are fearful of getting it wrong.”* (Employer)

*“We still have a pocketful of managers who are prejudiced and have a stereotypical view, and even though we have been doing this for years, they are still unwilling to dip their toe in the water and take a student.”* (Employer)

### Perception of lack of suitable roles

*“We are a relatively small organisation. Relatively few of our jobs are entry level ones.”* (Employer)

*“We have safety critical roles in our organisation... we would need to make sure that whoever was in that role was able to carry that role out to the required standard from a safety perspective.”* (Employer)



### Unsupportive policy and legislation

Some employers felt challenged by ensuring they were complying with equality legislation, for example balancing the need to treat everyone equally with the need to provide reasonable adjustments.

*“I find Access to Work is difficult... I thought Access to Work might be able to pay for [employing a job coach] but I have heard that they don’t pay on time and it takes ages to process the applications.”* (Employer)

### Real or perceived resource implications

*“The biggest challenge I would say is time and what I mean by that is that sometimes we find that people with learning disabilities take a little longer to get the hang of things - a bit more time and patience needs to be invested in helping them.”* (Employer)

Two employers from organisations that do not currently employ people with a learning disability said that the financial costs that they perceived employing someone with a learning disability would incur would need to be considered, or would be a barrier.



## Main findings

The research has found that there are barriers to people with a learning disability getting a paid job operating at different levels:

**Cultural** – Discrimination, prejudice, limited awareness and attitudes.

**National and UK-wide** – The welfare benefits system, government provision such as Access to Work and equality legislation.

**Local** – Inconsistent availability and quality of support (for example, employment support and supported internships) for people with a learning disability and for employers. Variable job and transport availability locally.

**Organisational** – Inaccessible recruitment procedures and inaccessible organisational structures and processes.

**Individual** – Lack of experience and qualifications, and limited self-confidence of people with a learning disability.





## More from this research project

There are two other research summaries in this series:

- ❖ **Work: What do people with a learning disability want?**
- ❖ **What can be done to support people with a learning to disability to get and keep paid work?**

The **research summaries**, the **full research report** which provides more details about the methods, limitations and the findings from the research, and an **Easy Read** research report are also available on Mencap & NDTi websites.

[www.mencap.org.uk](http://www.mencap.org.uk)

[www.ndti.org.uk](http://www.ndti.org.uk)

