

NDTi Insights give you the most important bits of learning from a piece of work by the National Development Team for Inclusion (NDTi). We aim to make them quick to read; they point to more detailed materials for those who want more information.

Employment Support for Disabled People: Early Findings.

Who should read this?

This paper has been written mainly for people who are responsible for commissioning services designed to help people with mental health problems and people with learning disabilities to get and retain paid work. It will also be of interest to providers of employment supports, people with learning disabilities and families.

Background and Purpose of Report

NDTi has been commissioned by the School for Social Care Research to study the cost effectiveness of investment in employment supports for people with learning disabilities and with mental health problems by local authorities and NHS partners. The first stage involved data collection from across England with returns covering 83 local authority areas and NHS partners. This Insights shares provisional findings from this first part of the study. The next stage of the work involves qualitative research into how employment support has been commissioned in a number of local areas.

Plain English summary

NDTi has been doing research into whether the money spent on employment support for people with mental health problems and people with learning disabilities is being used well.

The first stage of this work has been finished and this Insights is about the early findings – including about whether commissioners have the right information to spend public money well and whether personal budgets are really helping people to get paid work.

Main findings

Whilst information on a wide range of issues has been obtained in the first stage of the research, this Insights and the interim report concentrate on just three issues that we expect to be of wide interest and merit attention prior to the publication of the full, peer reviewed research findings later this year

Levels of Spend

- Detailed spend figures were obtained from 2010 – 2013. The general trend has been of an increase in the early years, and a reduction in spend in 2012/13. This has broadly taken spend down to at or below the start level. There is some provisional evidence that local authority spending has been protected less than NHS spend.
- Over a longer five year period, there appears to have been a growth in overall levels of spend – provisionally attributed to policy initiatives in the last decade such as the PSA employment indicator.
- Despite the 2012/13 reduction, more commissioners expect spend on employment supports to be consolidated or increased over the next few years than expect it to be cut.

Information held by Commissioners

- The vast majority of commissioners have data on how much they spend on employment support. However, 44% were unable to break down spend between different types of employment support. In a minority of cases this was because of pressures on authorities meaning they could not access the data for us, but the prevailing reason was that it simply did not exist. As such, many commissioners do not appear to be aware of the balance of spend on employment support between approaches that are underpinned by an evidence base and those that are not.



Further NDTI Insights:

Also available in our Insights series is:

Insights 14: A review of the Economic Evidence Around Supported Employment

Insights 1 The Real Tenancy Test: Tenancy Rights in Supported Living

Other Insights being published soon will cover:

The Transition of Young Disabled People into Adulthood

Widening Service Options for Older People

www.ndti.org.uk/publications/ndti-insights

This report

A copy of the full interim report is available at http://www.ndti.org.uk/uploads/files/SSCR_Summary_report_Jan_12_v2b.pdf

For more information on the employment research, please visit the NDTi website <http://www.ndti.org.uk/major-projects/employment-support-for-disabled-people/> or contact Philippa Chapman at philippa.chapman@ndti.org.uk

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Main findings – continued

- 66% of commissioners collect data on the number of people getting work through commissioned employment supports. 15% do not and the remainder did not answer the question.
- Whilst most commissioners state they collect some outcomes data, there is more limited collection of information such as the complexity of disability of people gaining work and the impact of someone getting a job on their use of other health and social care services.

The Use of Personal Budgets

- 76% of respondents said people were allowed to use personal budgets for employment support. 12% stated they were not.
- Only 28% of respondents knew that people were using personal budgets to access employment support. 17% knew they were not and 35% did not know either way.
- Only 12% of respondents had any information about how much of people's budgets were being used for employment supports.

Conclusions and key messages

It must be emphasised that these are provisional conclusions and that further analysis of the data is being undertaken and will be considered alongside the qualitative research being undertaken in 11 sites across England.

- Given general reductions in spending by local authorities and the NHS over the next couple of years, the reported reduction in spend on employment supports in 2012/13 is perhaps not unexpected. However, as effectively supporting people into paid work could and should lead to a reduction in people's demand for health and social care support, spending on employment supports could be seen as a way of reducing health and social care costs - and so cutting this area of activity is perhaps surprising. There may be a link here with the evidence that most commissioners are not collecting data on the impact on people's use of other services when they are supported into paid work. Without this, it will be difficult to argue the case for employment support as a cost effective, preventative strategy.
- The lack of information held by many commissioners about the types of employment support they are commissioning will impact upon their ability to commission cost-effective employment supports. As there is clear evidence that some models/approaches of employment support are more effective than others, commissioners will need to know what models are being used by the organisations they commission from. Many appear not to have this information.
- The lack of information held by many commissioners about whether personal budgets are being used to purchase employment support and/or how much is being spent on this through personal budgets, could be considered as raising questions about whether the way in which personal budgets are being implemented in significant parts of the country is 'fit for purpose' in terms of being a mechanism to help support the policy priority and stated wish of many disabled people to gain and retain paid work.