



Taking control of employment support

October 2013

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This paper was written by Neil Crowther and Liz Sayce. We are interested in stimulating debate and welcome feedback and discussion on the proposals

October 2013

www.disabilityrightsuk.org

Taking control of employment support

Executive summary

Employment support programmes, including the Work Programme and Work Choice, are largely failing to help disabled people find and keep jobs, - especially those who face the most significant labour market disadvantage. Successive governments have set up huge, centralised employment programmes and the stark truth is that they have not worked:

- The National Audit Office concluded that the last government's 'Pathways to Work' programme *'has turned out to provide poor value for money and the Department (for Work and Pensions) needs to learn from this experience.'* The programme, statistically speaking, made no difference to disabled people's employment prospects
- The current government's Work Programme set a (modest) performance target: 16.5% of people on the out of work disability benefit Employment and Support Allowance should secure sustained employment through the programme. Government figures from July 2013 show only 5.3% of new Employment and Support Allowance claimants had secured employment (a 95% failure rate). Optimistic projections suggest this might rise to 12% as the most recent recruits go the full course of the programme (a failure rate, at best, of 88%)
- The Work Choice programme, set up for those disabled people facing the greatest barriers to employment, has slightly better results with about 31% securing employment. However a recent evaluation commissioned by the Department for Work and Pensions shows that it is not serving the very people it was set up for – those with the most complex needs. Since 2011/12 it has helped only 58 people with serious mental health problems per year get jobs in the whole of Great Britain, whereas one NHS Trust in just one area of London helped more than three times as many people (201) with serious mental health problems (239 posts in one year) to get jobs, using the proven individual placement with support model. The outcome payment model in Work Choice means providers are subject to perverse incentives to take on those with the fewest barriers.

It is time for a radical re-think.

Disability Rights UK asked disabled people for their experiences and views of employment support. Over 500 disabled people responded to our survey and gave their experiences and perspectives on what they found most helpful and unhelpful in getting and keeping work. We also analysed research evidence. We found:

- There is a huge appetite for a personalised service. We asked whether respondents would like to know more about the resources available for their support, and types of support available, in order to have a say. 78% of respondents said yes. We asked whether they would like to decide how the money on their employment support is spent. 74% said yes. Research shows that a personalised plan helps people experiencing barriers or with support needs to find and keep a job and that with individually tailored support, job outcomes are typically twice as good as with more traditional vocational support. Only 36% of respondents to our survey had had a personal plan. 58% said they would like one.
- There appears to be a gaping gulf between what disabled people want and what they get. Research shows mentoring by someone in a field you are interested in is effective. Only 16% of respondents had been offered this. 38% asked whether they would want this type of mentoring said yes. Mentoring by someone facing similar barriers can also be useful. 12% said they had been offered this. 46% said they would want it. Research consistently shows that work experience and learning on the job improves employment prospects: yet only 13% of respondents had been offered this.
- Most respondents had not had support from the Work Programme. Support to get and keep work came most commonly from family (44%), friends (35%) or a disability organisation (33%).
- 63% said the support they had received did not help them get a job

Existing programmes are failing Britain's employers, whose success increasingly relies on accessing the widest possible pool of talent, including disabled people. They are providing extremely poor value to the taxpayer, with the government continuing to waste millions of pounds on programmes which do not work. The Work Programme is projected to cost £3-5 billion over 5 years, yet is not working for a core group: people living with disability or long-term health conditions.

It is time to cut out the middleman, releasing the money that is presently being wasted and transferring control of employment support to those who know

how it can be used best - disabled people and employers. The incentives are instead currently targeted at providers – and are often perverse. The government should focus on influencing and supporting the people who can really transform employment opportunities: employers and disabled people.

Disabled people require effective support which genuinely improves their position in the labour market. Our survey found that disabled people want to be involved in shaping and directing such support. Successful employers positively embrace people with potential and the desire to learn and develop. Working together, we believe successful employers and disabled people are best placed to work out the support each requires to achieve these goals.

That is why the following approach should be piloted and evaluated:

1. Disabled people should have far more opportunity to gain experience and skills through work, rather than the endless ‘work preparation’ favoured by the current centralised schemes. This could include work trials, work placements, traineeships, internships and apprenticeships.
2. To facilitate this, employers and disabled people should be given the opportunity and power to choose how to spend the budget for disability employment support (including Access to Work funding), with specialist advice as necessary.
3. This budget should also be used to facilitate access to learning and qualifications in - or linked to - the workplace. This could take the form of on-the-job vocational qualifications, attending a local college, distance learning or accredited continuous professional development.

The pilots should explore the benefits of this approach across a range of groups and scenarios, including:

- areas with high growth in small and medium sized employers
- people who have left employment since acquiring an impairment
- people with low levels of skills and qualifications, including young people not in employment, education or training and
- people with significant mental health problems and/or a learning disability (who have particularly low employment rates).

Taking control of employment support

'Disabled people are the best problem solvers.' **Baroness Jane Campbell**

1. Introduction

1.1 When the UK government ratified the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in 2009, with cross-Party support, it undertook to take steps to ensure that disabled people enjoy *'the right to work on an equal basis with others in a labour market and work environment that is open, inclusive and accessible'*¹ and in doing so to recognise *'the need to promote and protect the human rights of all persons with disabilities, including those who require more intensive support.'*²

Although some progress has been made in narrowing the employment gap between disabled and non-disabled people over the past two decades, a 30.1 percentage point gap remains.³ In 2010 the UK's employment rate for disabled people was lower than the EU average⁴, and since 2010 progress in narrowing the gap has stalled.⁵ The disappointing total figures regarding disabled people's employment hide much worse levels of labour market exclusion for some disabled people, in particular young disabled people, those with low or no formal qualifications, people with learning disabilities and people with mental health problems.

Evidence on the effectiveness of past and present government-commissioned employment support suggests pockets of good practice but overall extremely poor performance and in particular a failure to reach those with the greatest labour market disadvantage.

The failure to ensure that UK employers benefit from disabled people's talent stands in the way of Britain's economic recovery – a fact which has come to enjoy cross-Party recognition. In a recent speech on disability and employment, Prime Minister David Cameron said *'Let me put it bluntly. I'm always talking about Britain competing and succeeding in this great global race. But what hope do we have in this global race if we lose out on the talent*

¹ Article 28 – Work and Employment – United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities

² Preamble J - United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities

³ Labour Force Survey Q2 2012, Appendix Table 46.1

⁴ EU-Social Inclusion, Income and Living Conditions Survey 2010.

⁵ Labour Force Survey Q2 2012, Appendix Table 46.1

*and skills of one-fifth of our population? It would be like competing with one hand tied behind our back. What hope do we have as a country if a fifth of our people are excluded from mainstream society?'*⁶ In another recent speech on disability and social security, Liam Byrne, Shadow Work and Pensions Secretary said *'What we know about innovative societies is that they draw on every ounce of talent...In other words, our success in the new world that is coming depends on our resolve to give everyone a chance to contribute....And yet, today we don't do that. Why? Because we have not shattered the link between disability and disconnection. Between disability and disadvantage. Today, one in five adults in Britain has a disability of some kind. That means that unless we give all disabled adults the chance to contribute, we're only drawing on 80 per cent of our power.'*⁷

Britain's economic recovery depends upon our ability to find our place in a new world order, competing with the emerging economic power-houses of Brazil, Russia, India and China among others. Ernst and Young have identified what they believe are likely to be the winner and loser business organisations in the emerging global economy: *"The winners will be easy to spot: They will be the organizations that constantly monitor broad trends in the external environment, embrace technology and look for talent everywhere, especially among previously neglected segments of the workforce such as women, minorities and older workers'* Successfully positioning more disabled people alongside other previously marginalised groups such as older workers and members of ethnic minorities, to enter the workforce is central to Britain's future competitiveness. Successful businesses will reach out and embrace untapped talent and potential where it exists. But at the moment the policy and programmes which should help employers locate such talent are failing. Britain cannot afford this failure. Money is being wasted on ineffective programmes. Disabled people who want to work are stuck on out of work benefits with many living in poverty.

This failure also presents a major missed opportunity in relation to achieving economic growth and deficit reduction. The Social Market Foundation estimated in 2007 that 'improving the skills of disabled people to world leading levels by 2020 would give a boost equivalent to 18 extra months of growth over 30 years, some £35 billion.'⁸

⁶ Prime Minister David Cameron MP, July 18th 2013. Speech at DWP Disability Employment Conference

⁷ Liam Byrne MP, Shadow Work and Pensions Spokesperson, July 24th 2013 Speech: A Country Firing on all Cylinders

⁸ SMF (2007) Disability, Skills and Work – Raising our Ambition

The costs of failure will be borne by future generations. As the ex-Chair of the Equality and Human Rights Commission, Trevor Phillips, warned: *‘if jobs and prosperity return for everybody except women, ethnic minorities, the young, the old or disabled people then we will still be paying the welfare bill for people who are kept out of work by discrimination... ...there will not be a sustainable recovery unless it's an inclusive recovery.’*⁹

This is why Britain requires and deserves a radically different and more effective approach to enhancing the employment opportunities of disabled people.

⁹ Trevor Phillips, February 8th 2011, Why Equality and Human Rights are Essential to Economic Recovery

2. Disabled people and employment opportunity in Britain today

46.3 percent of working-age disabled people are employed compared to 76.4 percent of working-age non-disabled people representing a 30.1 percentage point gap between disabled and non-disabled people.¹⁰

While this gap had reduced by 10 percentage points over the last 14 years progress has stagnated since 2010¹¹ and the UK's employment rate for disabled people in 2010 was lower than the EU average (41.9 percent compared to 45.5 percent).¹² Using momentum measures of progress, the Equalities Review 2007 concluded that this employment gap would 'probably never' be closed if we continued to rely on conventional means.¹³

These disappointing figures obscure considerable inequalities between disabled people. For example, while the employment rate for disabled people aged 50 and over has increased from 34.9 percent in 2001 to 41.0 per cent in 2012 (a faster rate than for non-disabled people), employment rates for young disabled people have dropped from 46.0 percent in 2001 to 36.0 percent in 2012.¹⁴

The employment rates for people with some impairments remain consistently low. For example, people with learning disabilities or mental health conditions have employment rates of under 15 percent¹⁵ whereas the employment rate of people with mental health conditions (other than depression, bad nerves or anxiety) is only 14 percent and their economic inactivity rate is 79 percent.¹⁶

Qualifications play a pivotal role in determining the employment prospects of disabled people. The employment rate for disabled people with any qualifications is substantially higher (54 percent) than those with no qualifications (17 percent).¹⁷ There is an employment rate gap of 35.4 percentage points between disabled and non-disabled people with no qualifications, compared with 15 percentage points for those with a degree¹⁸.

¹⁰ (Labour Force Survey Q2 2012, Appendix Table 46.1)

¹¹ (Labour Force Survey Q2 2012, Appendix Table 46.1)

¹² EU-Social Inclusion, Income and Living Conditions Survey 2010.

¹³ Cabinet Office (2007) Fairness and Freedom – the final report of the Equalities Review

¹⁴ (Labour Force Survey Q2 2012, Appendix Table 40.2).

¹⁵ (Labour Force Survey Q2 2012, Appendix Table 36.1)

¹⁶ (Labour Force Survey Q2 2012, Appendix Table 36.4–36.5)

¹⁷ (Labour Force Survey Q2 2012, Appendix Table 37).

¹⁸ (Labour Force Survey Q2 2012, Appendix Table 38.2)

The Joseph Rowntree Foundation 'Monitoring Poverty and Social Exclusion 2012' report found that lacking a Level 3 qualification has a much greater impact on being low-paid than having a disability.

To these ends there has been very welcome progress, with the proportion of disabled people without a Level 3 qualification having fallen from 74 per cent in 2000 to 53% in 2010 – a fall of 21 percentage points in a decade.

Yet 54 percent (1 million) of disabled people who are long-term sick or disabled either have no qualifications or have qualifications below GCSE grade A to C¹⁹. Disabled people are around half as likely as non-disabled people to hold a degree level qualification (15 percent compared with 28 percent) and nearly three times as likely not to have any qualifications (19 percent compared with 6.5 percent).²⁰

Disabled young people aged 18-24 are far more likely to not be in employment, education or training (NEET) (42.1 percent) than non-disabled people (18.6 percent). Disabled young people aged 16-17 are slightly more likely to be NEET (14.6 percent) than non-disabled young people (8.0 percent).²¹ Around 80 percent of disabled people aged 16-17 are currently in full-time education or employment. However, more than three-quarters of those who leave full-time education and are potentially in the labour market are not working.²² Not being in employment, education or training for six months or more between 16 and 18 is the single most powerful predictor of unemployment at age 21.

Disabled people in work are more likely to have low paid, low status jobs. The employment rate gap is especially marked in senior management, the professions (including medicine), construction trades, engineering and IT, the arts and media, food, and hospitality. It is less wide in clerical jobs (especially in the public sector), nursing and caring, shop and sales work, and cleaning.²³

The UK Commission for Employment and Skills (2011) has suggested that projected changes in the occupational structure of employment in the UK economy are generally unfavourable to the growth of disabled people's employment given their current occupational and skills profile: *'disabled people are under-represented in many occupations projected to grow (e.g.*

¹⁹ (Labour Force Survey Q2 2012)

²⁰ (ODI Indicator B8).

²¹ (Labour Force Survey Q2 2012, Appendix Table 39.2)

²² (Labour Force Survey Q2 2012).

²³ (Labour Force Survey Q2 2012, Appendix Table 47)

*managerial and professional) and over-represented in occupations expected to decline (junior administrative and manual). Expanding occupations offering the best prospects for growth in disabled people's employment are sales and customer service occupations, and personal services.*²⁴

In considering strategies to address this skills deficit attention must be paid to the complex two-way relationship between disability and qualifications. Disability may result in people acquiring fewer qualifications, but equally early educational disadvantage raises the likelihood of becoming disabled later in life.²⁵

Although most disabled people in work are employed in the private sector, there has been a bigger percentage increase in the numbers of disabled people working in the public sector since 2002 (30% compared to 24%).²⁶ Research (Berthoud 2011) has found that while the relative disadvantage of disabled people is rather insensitive to cyclical economic fluctuations, it is highly sensitive to local variations in demand (the "disability penalty" is higher in poorer-performing local economies). As a consequence reductions in public sector jobs in particular localities are likely to be detrimental to disabled people's employment, given that localities highly dependent on public sector employment also tend to be areas exhibiting a high "disability penalty" in employment.²⁷

Disabled people also face a significant pay-gap. In 2012, the mean hourly wage rate of disabled people was £12.15, while that of non-disabled people was greater at £13.25.²⁸

²⁴ UKCES (2011) Disability and Skills in the Changing Economy

²⁵ UK Commission for employment and skills (2011) Disability and skills in the changing economy

²⁶ (Labour Force Survey Q2 2012, Appendix Table 43.2)

²⁷ UKCES (2011) Disability and Skills in the Changing Economy

²⁸ (ODI Indicator B7).

3. How effective has government policy and practice been in improving the employment opportunities of disabled people?

3.1 The Sayce review noted that *'at a time when the Government aspires to enable more disabled people than ever before to gain sustainable employment – with 1.5 million people on benefit being re-assessed to explore whether they can work – it is imperative that effective disability employment programmes are ready and waiting to help. It would not be fair to expect job seeking without employment support.'*²⁹

The programmes established to support disabled people into employment, some of which disabled people are compelled to engage with, have however demonstrated extremely poor results despite significant investment.

- The National Audit Office concluded that the last Government's 'Pathways to Work' programme *'has turned out to provide poor value for money and the Department (for Work and Pensions) needs to learn from this experience.'* The programme, statistically speaking, made no difference to disabled people's employment prospects
- The current government's Work Programme set a (modest) performance target: 16.5% of people on the out of work disability benefit Employment and Support Allowance should secure sustained employment through the programme. Government figures from July 2013 show only 5.3% of new Employment and Support Allowance claimants had secured employment (a 95% failure rate)³⁰. The most optimistic projections suggest this might rise to 12% as the most recent recruits go the full course of the programme (a failure rate, at best, of 88%)³¹
- The Work Choice programme, set up for those disabled people facing the greatest barriers to employment, has slightly better results (about 31%

²⁹ Sayce, L (2011) Getting in, getting on and staying in – Disability Employment Support fit for the future, DWP

³⁰ DWP (July 2013) Statistical Summary of Work Programme Official Statistics https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/210226/work-programme-stats-summary-june-2013_v2_020713.pdf

³¹ Projections of providers, cited at Welfare to Work Convention 2013

securing employment)³² but recent evaluation shows that it is not serving the very people it was set up for – those with the most complex needs.³³ Since 2011/12 it has helped only 58 people with serious mental health problems per year (on average) get jobs in the whole of Great Britain, whereas one NHS Trust in just one area of London helped more than three times as many people (201) with serious mental health problems (239 posts in one year) to get jobs³⁴. The NHS Trust used an individualised approach – individual placement with support (IPS) – which has been shown both in the UK and internationally to be far more effective than traditional vocational approaches: Burns et al found IPS clients with significant mental health problems were twice as likely to gain employment (55% compared to 28%), worked for longer, and had reduced hospitalisation rates³⁵.

- Whilst some Work Choice and Work Programme providers do innovate and offer a valued individualised service for people facing barriers, the payment framework acts as a disincentive. A recent Scottish study of employers' experiences of employment support found a perception that Work Choice reviews with clients were tick box exercises, that not enough attention was paid to individual circumstances and many managers believed insufficient attention was given to longer term support for disabled people with fluctuating or longer term needs³⁶
- The 'differential payments' regime which is designed to provide higher rewards to Work Programme providers for securing work for those with the greater labour market disadvantage has not prevented providers from concentrating on the 'low hanging fruit' as a consequence of high caseloads and pressure to achieve job outcome targets.³⁷
- This finding echoes that of a recent report by the Institute for Government which found that in all areas of outsourced public services '*providers sometimes responded in undesirable ways to the reward structures created*

³² DWP (August 2013) Work Choice Statistics – Number of Starts and Referrals
<https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/department-for-work-pensions/series/work-choice-statistics-number-of-starts-and-referrals--2>

³³ DWP (July 2013) Evaluation of the Work Choice Specialist Employment Programme

³⁴ Central and North West London NHS Trust vocational employment results 2011/12

³⁵ Burns T et al (2007) The Eqlise Project at
<http://informahealthcare.com/doi/abs/10.1080/09540260802564516>

³⁶ Coutts and Ridell (undated) Employers' Views of Supported Employment for Disabled People in Scotland. SUSE, University of Edinburgh and CREID

³⁷ Newton et al (2012) Work Programme Evaluation, Department for Work and Pensions

*by commissioners and regulators. Such ‘gaming’ behaviours included excessive ‘parking’ of service users with complex needs and ‘creaming’ of users who are easier to support, and therefore more profitable to serve.*³⁸

- Evidence suggests that providers have done more for participants with fewer and less severe barriers to employment, while support for those who might benefit from specialist interventions was less widespread. The evaluation of the Work Programme suggests that this appeared ‘to reflect the tendency for many end-to end providers, for reason of cost, to attempt wherever possible to meet support needs either in-house, or through referrals to cost-free support services.’³⁹
- Partly as a result of these constraints, the routine use by end-to-end providers of specialist and spot subcontractors is not universal.⁴⁰ The failure to draw on specialist providers has also been a feature of the Work Choice programme.⁴¹ This stands in the way of providers offering genuinely personalised support for the most disadvantaged individuals.
- Although use of individual action plans is in principle the norm in the Work Programme, ‘how, when and with what intensity they were used, varied considerably in practice, as did the degree and manner in which the participants’ own preferences and views were incorporated into the planning process.’ There is evidence that participants would prefer more involvement in this process, and that this would increase their engagement with the work programme.⁴²
- Disabled people have told the government that there is a need for more training and retraining opportunities, including apprenticeships, volunteering, work experience and supported internships.⁴³ Yet the UK Commission for Employment and Skills found that: *‘there is a continuing under-emphasis on skills development for disabled people in employment programmes. This reinforces rather than compensates for the “double disadvantage” that disabled people experience through low participation rates in formal*

³⁸ Institute for Government (2013) Making Public Service Markets Work

³⁹ Newton et al (2012) Work Programme Evaluation, Department for Work and Pensions

⁴⁰ Newton et al (2012) Work Programme Evaluation, Department for Work and Pensions

⁴¹ Inclusion (2013) Evaluation of the Work Choice Specialist Employment Programme, DWP

⁴² Newton et al (2012) Work Programme Evaluation, Department for Work and Pensions

⁴³ Fulfilling Potential – The Discussions So Far 2012

education. Disabled people's participation in government-funded further education and skills provision (including apprenticeship) has improved, but they remain underrepresented.'

- Although there has been an increase in overall numbers of disabled apprentices from 9,200 in 2005/6 to 35,600 in 2010/11 the proportion of disabled apprentices has reduced from 11 percent to 8 percent over this period. This is particularly the case amongst 19-24 year olds.⁴⁴
- The proportion of disabled apprentices completing their framework has increased from 49 percent to 70 percent but success rates for those with mental ill health, emotional/behavioural difficulties, multiple learning disabilities and moderate learning disabilities are consistently lower than other groups⁴⁵
- The evaluation of Work Choice found that Disability Employment Adviser (DEA) and provider assessment of a disabled person's likelihood to be able to work 16 hours per week or more within six months (the standard length of the pre-work support module) was acting to preclude disabled people with some impairments from the programme as compared with the predecessor WORKSTEP programme.⁴⁶

3.2 The views and experiences of disabled people

Disability Rights UK asked disabled people for their experiences and views of employment support. Over 500 disabled people responded to our survey and gave their experiences and perspectives on what they found most helpful and unhelpful in getting and keeping work. We also analysed research evidence. We found⁴⁷:

- There is a huge appetite for a personalised service. We asked whether respondents would like to know more about the resources available for their support, and types of support available, in order to have a say. 78% of respondents said yes. We asked whether they would like to decide how the money on their employment support is spent. 74% said yes. Research shows that a personalised plan helps people experiencing barriers or with support

⁴⁴ Department for Business Innovation and Skills 2012.

⁴⁵ Department for Business Innovation and Skills 2012

⁴⁶ Inclusion (2013) Evaluation of the Work Choice Specialist Employment Programme, DWP

⁴⁷ The survey was conducted on-line over the Summer of 2013. Figures cited give percentages of 'n' where 'n' is the number of respondents to the specific question.

needs to find and keep a job and that with individually tailored support, job outcomes are typically twice as good as with more traditional vocational support. Only 36% of respondents to our survey had had a personal plan. 58% said they would like one.

- There appears to be a gaping gulf between what disabled people want and what they get. Research shows mentoring by someone in a field you are interested in is effective. Only 16% of respondents had been offered this. 38% asked whether they would want this type of mentoring said yes. Mentoring by someone facing similar barriers can also be useful. 12% said they had been offered this. 46% said they would want it. Research consistently shows that work experience and learning on the job improves employment prospects: yet only 13% of respondents had been offered this.
- Most respondents had not had support from the Work Programme. Support to get and keep work came most commonly from family (44%), friends (35%) or a disability organisation (33%). Only 23% said they had support from the Work Programme and 20% from Work Choice; and even fewer from health (11%) or social care (5%) workers
- 63% said the support they had received did not help them get a job
- Many respondents commented that they were offered the opportunity to work on 'basic skills' such as job applications and completing CVs yet had few opportunities for retraining or developing specific vocational skills and qualifications
- 80 per cent of respondents do not believe that employers receive the advice or support that they need to employ disabled people

Overall the disabled people responding to our survey were not satisfied with the support on offer – and they wanted more of the person-centred and evidence based approaches that are so sadly lacking. They want to develop their skills and careers.

4. Taking control of employment support – our proposals in detail

4.1 Disabled people should have more opportunities to gain experience and skills through work, not be forced to endure endless ‘work preparation’. This should include work trials, work placements, traineeships, internships and apprenticeships.

We believe that a ‘work first’ approach should be pursued, with in-work development increasingly taking the place of pre-work preparation.

The Sayce review found that *‘Evidence from across learning disability, mental health, physical rehabilitation and beyond shows consistently that support that is flexible, personalised, long lasting when needed, with a rapid focus on job search, is more effective than a series of stepping stones to employment. It also shows support must be available to the employer.’*⁴⁸ This echoes international evidence which finds that the key to achieving job outcomes is a focus on active engagement with the labour market ⁴⁹ (OECD 2010).

The UK Commission for Employment and Skills (2011) concluded *‘Given the evidence that employer attitudes and behaviour are positively influenced by experience of employing disabled people, government schemes and their providers should put particular emphasis on placing disabled people with employers (including SMEs) with less prior experience of disability, and providing post-placement support.’*⁵⁰ There is significant evidence that supported employment is more effective than pre-vocational training in helping people with serious mental health problems to obtain competitive employment.⁵¹

The Perkins Review into employment of people with mental health problems (2009) recommended that ‘Individual Placement and Support’ (IPS) should be the basis of the future approach.⁵² IPS consists of individual support, rapid

⁴⁸ Sayce, L (2011) Getting in, getting on and staying in – Disability Employment Support fit for the future, DWP

⁴⁹ OECD (2010) Sickness Disability and Work: Breaking the Boundaries

⁵⁰ UK Commission for employment and skills (2011) Disability and skills in the changing economy

⁵¹ Crowther, R. et al (2004) Vocational Rehabilitation for People with Severe Mental Illness (Cochrane Review), the Cochrane Library, Issue 2

⁵² Perkins, R (2011) Realising Ambitions – Better Employment Support for People with Mental Health Conditions

job search followed by placement in paid employment and time-unlimited in-work support for employees with mental health conditions and employers. A key principle of the programme is that employment specialists and clinical teams work and are co-located together on one site. Evidence suggests that with this individualised support, people with significant mental health problems can achieve employment outcomes of 55% (Burns et al, op cit). Work Choice, by comparison, achieves job outcomes of just over 30%, and does not adequately serve people facing significant barriers, like people with serious mental health problems.

Other research has found that work-based learning opportunities, for example longer-work placements, work experience for students as well as part-time or weekend jobs are important for preparing disabled people for work and raising their aspirations.⁵³

We welcome the recent announcement by the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills of a new supported internship and trainee programme for young people with 'complex learning difficulties and disabilities' and believe that such an approach should be built upon, for instance through business/school partnerships that enable disabled young people to gain work inspiration and development opportunities to boost their career prospects.

⁵³ Beyer S and Robinson C (2009) 'A Review of the Research Literature on Supported Employment: A Report for the cross Government learning disability employment strategy team'. London: Department of Health.

Taking control of employment support – Kevin

Kevin is 34 and has learning disabilities. He was a grounds-person at a football club before being made redundant two years ago. Since then he has found it difficult to return to work. Jobcentre Plus (JCP) referred him to mainstream provision for help with CV writing and job applications. However, this support didn't cater for Kevin's particular needs and he remained unemployed. A referral for a fork lift licence was also unsuccessful as Kevin needed help approaching employers after completing the course. However, Kevin remained eager to find employment.

Kevin was referred to the Disability Employment Adviser in JCP, who found he was eligible for Work Choice funding. Through Right to Control – an innovative approach in selected areas, giving individuals the chance to choose and manage their own support - Kevin chose to have his support as a direct payment. With this, he purchased help from Linked Employment who specialise in helping people with learning disabilities. Linked Employment worked with Kevin to profile the type of work he was interested in. They then approached their contacts to find suitable opportunities for Kevin. Linked Employment liaised with potential employers, informing them of his needs and arranged for Kevin to meet them. One employer was particularly impressed and offered Kevin a full time job. Kevin is still employed full time and is no longer receiving out of work benefits.

Case study kindly provided by Essex Right to Control

Our proposals

- In-work development opportunities should be the primary focus of employment support for disabled people; and employment support should centre on the relationship between disabled people and participating employers.
- The government's 'Disability Confident' initiative is an opportunity to secure meaningful commitment from employers to provide paid opportunities to disabled people to try out jobs and gain valuable experience through taking up apprenticeships, traineeships and work placements, in return for which employers should be empowered to access free information, specialist advice

and support, financial support with adjustments or training costs and access to other participating employers for 'peer support'. The Australian Job Access Helpline and website, with 4000 pages of information available to employers, job seekers, employees and professionals, is one model worth exploring.

4.2 To facilitate this work first approach, participating employers and disabled people should be given the opportunity and power to assume responsibility for choosing how to spend the budget for employment support (including Access to Work funding), with specialist advice as necessary.

Building on our first proposal to focus on in-work development, we believe that employers and disabled people undergoing work placements are best placed – with external advice as necessary – to plan and commission the support and resources they require and should be empowered to do so. Achieving this demands that – subject to piloting and evaluation – the Department for Work and Pensions radically reforms its present approach to commissioning.

Evidence from the evaluation of the Work Programme and Work Choice suggests that the current model of commissioning and the behaviours of prime contractors undermine personalisation and fail to reach the most disadvantaged groups. The Sayce review recommended that *'Long term it would make sense to have just one specialist disability employment programme offering a personal budget to individuals which they could use to purchase employment support, building on the Right to Control.'*⁵⁴ We now believe, given the poor performance of existing programmes, there to be a strong case to implement such an approach sooner.

However, we recognise that support needs not only to be bespoke to the individual seeking work, but to prospective employers also and that together employer and employee are ultimately best placed to understand what will work. We believe that such an approach offers the potential to overcome the lack of engagement of specialist or spot providers in the current Work Programme and Work Choice initiatives. It could ensure effective support is secured, while also harnessing the collaborative experience, ideas and innovation of disabled people and employers.

We believe that such an approach may improve levels of self-efficacy, confidence and motivation among those seeking employment, as well as the engagement, understanding and motivation of employers, in line with the vision of the Sayce review regarding the importance of confident disabled

⁵⁴ Sayce, L (2011) Getting in, getting on and staying in – Disability Employment Support fit for the future, DWP

people and employers. The evaluation of the Work Programme found that *'there is evidence that participants would prefer more involvement in this process (developing individual action plans), and that this would increase their engagement with the work programme.'*⁵⁵ Our survey found that 80 percent of those not presently in paid employment would like to be in a position to make choices about the employment support they receive, with 74 per cent keen to have a say in how the money available for their support is spent.

Some aspects of support should be portable thus allowing disabled people to participate on a more level playing field in today's job market with increase in short-term contracts, portfolio careers and varying working practices. We particularly welcome the government having accepted the recommendation of the Sayce review that Access to Work should be available young people on traineeships, supported internships work trials and work academies.

An independent advisory panel report regarding Residential Training Colleges commissioned by DWP identified *'The opportunity to "think new thoughts" about their life chances and their ability to work, especially when they are able to discuss and network solutions with their contemporaries i.e. other disabled people looking for work'*⁵⁶ as a particular benefit of such provision. This need not happen in residential settings. In our survey, 46% of respondents said they would value mentoring support 'from someone facing similar barriers to you'. Yet 'peer support' is not a routine feature of Work Choice or the Work Programme. This deprives both disabled people going through employment support and employers of the inspiration, confidence and practical ideas and solutions that such engagement would offer. Peer support has been central to the successful implementation of direct payments and individual budgets in social care and could usefully be extended to employment support.

Our proposals

- In order to implement our 'work first' approach, the government should pilot and evaluate a new commissioning approach in which dedicated budgets attach to individuals securing work, with expert advisers supporting participating employers and disabled people to plan and commission resources and support as necessary. This would replace the existing model of top-down commissioning by DWP of Work Programme or Work Choice providers.
- Further elements of employment support should become portable, following individuals rather than being targeted at employers or through specific

⁵⁵ Newton et al (2012) Work Programme Evaluation, Department for Work and Pensions

⁵⁶ DWP (July 2013) Residential Training Provision – Independent Advisory Panel Report

institutions (including equipment, communications support or more personal employment support)

- National and local government should take further steps to facilitate the closer engagement of Disabled People's User Led Organisations in the delivery of employment programmes, particularly to unlock the power of peer support and peer mentoring: exploring other vehicles to bring those disabled people seeking employment into contact with those who have successfully secured jobs. Networked approaches to peer support can spread resources further than purely one – on –one models of support

4.3 This budget should also be used to facilitate access to learning and qualifications in or linked to the workplace, such as on-the-job vocational qualifications, attending a local college, distance learning or accredited continuous professional development.

As we highlight above, disabled people's employment prospects pivot to a considerable degree on their skills and qualifications. Our survey revealed frustration at the lack of access to vocational education and retraining opportunities in the present programmes of employment support.

Research has found that qualifications play a greater role in shaping the employment prospects of disabled people when compared with non-disabled people:

*...the results show that both men and women with educational qualifications are significantly more likely to be in employment than those without any qualifications; a finding that applies for both categories of the disabled as well as the non-disabled. However, the marginal effect of each qualification is stronger for the work-limited disabled, indicating the particular importance of obtaining qualifications among this group.*⁵⁷

An effective disability employment strategy will therefore have education and training at its heart. Employers must be central to any initiatives to address disabled people's skills and qualifications to ensure they match the needs of the local economy.

⁵⁷ Jones, M. and Latreille, P. (2006) Disability and Self-Employment: Evidence from the UK

Taking control of employment support – Graham

Graham is 38. He was diagnosed with anxiety and depression 13 years ago. He hadn't worked since then, and was receiving Income Support paid through Incapacity Benefit. He was receiving support from the Community Mental Health Team (CMHT) and Jobcentre Plus (JCP) but made little progress. Graham recently developed a passion for cycling which has had a positive impact on him. With help from the CMHT he began to improve his situation by undertaking Maths and English courses and completing voluntary work. The CMHT arranged for a work experience placement at a cycle shop where he assembled and repaired bicycles.

The shop's owners were so impressed with his ability and commitment they offered to employ him if he gained the relevant qualification. Unfortunately neither Graham nor the CMHT could fund this. The CMHT used Right to Control to refer Graham to Work Choice. Staff from both organisations worked with Graham and a course was found, with JCP making a direct payment to cover the costs. Graham completed the course with flying colours, and soon began work at the cycle shop. Graham remains in full time employment, 13 years after first receiving Incapacity Benefit.

This example shows how, when Work Choice is transformed to offer real choice and control to the individual, it is possible to cut through complex systems to achieve the job goal.

Case study kindly provided by Essex Right to Control

Our proposals

- Pilot an approach that links 'employer ownership of skills' – ie routing resources to employers for skills development in their sector or supply chain or locality – to budgets for the support required (see 1 and 2 above) to enable disabled people to get and keep work. When an individual disabled person plans their support needs, they should be able to plan their skills development at the same time- whether through a traineeship, or apprenticeship, or tailored course to develop on the job learning

- The link between employer ownership of skills (generally) and the bespoke support that a disabled person may need, should mean any highly individualised needs can be addressed in the context of mainstream development opportunities (like traineeships or apprenticeships). This could help disabled people who have missed out on skills and education to ‘catch up’, not in the sense of going back over earlier education but by gaining the skills needed for the particular employment path they are pursuing
- The emphasis should be learning with the job – in the workplace, or through colleges or training providers that are commissioned by the employer and the disabled person themselves.

4.4 Piloting and evaluating our proposed approach

We recognise that our proposed approach amounts to a radical departure from the current approach to commissioning employment support. While we are able to point to individual examples of elements of our approach making a significant difference to the employment prospects of disabled people, and to research evidence, we strongly recommend that the proposals in this paper are the object of pilot and evaluation, involving a range of national and local partners.

The pilots should explore the benefits of this approach across a range of groups and scenarios, including pilots in areas with high growth in small and medium sized employers and pilots focused on people who have left employment having acquired an impairment, on people with low skills and qualifications including young people not in employment, education or training, and people with significant mental health problems and/or a learning disability.

We welcome debate on this paper and the proposals within it.