

Thoughts from the UK Supported Employment Sector

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Employment rates

Official commitment to encouraging the employment of people with disabilities

UK employment rates:

Overall: 75%

Disabled people: 46%

Long term mental health: 7.7%

People with learning disabilities known to social care: 7%

These rates have remained stubbornly low.

Previous policy initiatives



2001 -2004: Welfare to Work joint investment plans – local action plans to coordinate services

2007 - 2010: Public Service Agreement (PSA) 16 – focused on employment and accommodation of:

- ex-offenders,
- young care-leavers,
- people with moderate/severe learning disabilities,
- people using secondary mental health services

2010: Work Choice – a new national disability employment programme
Work Programme – mainstream welfare to work programme

Government programmes to support people working 16+hours/week:

Work Programme – mainstream welfare to work programme.

- Prime contracting, payment by results, differential payments
- 2 years to support individuals into sustained work

Work Choice – modular disability programme.

- 28 prime contracts, 25% outcome payments, 75% service fee
- 1 year to support individuals
- Also delivered nationally by Remploy

Access to Work – funds “reasonable adjustments” eg job coaches, specialist equipment, travel to work

Prime contractor builds their own supply chain.

Government is meant to have a stewardship role.

Governance of the market via “Merlin” accreditation system

Problems:

- Burden of multiple initial tenders
- Up to 35% management fees
- Data sharing, transparency, gaming on outcomes
- Unpredictable flow of customers
- Target driven – leads to parking & creaming
- Little, if any, customer choice
- Little connectivity with local service provision

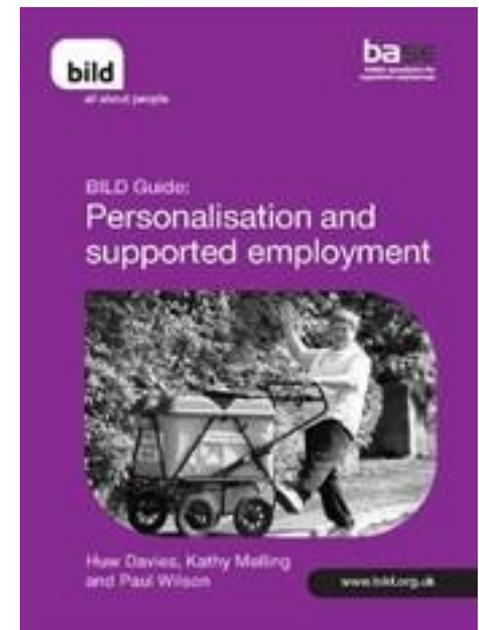
Widespread local provision in place via municipalities

- Quality and outcomes are variable
- Not a statutory service so vulnerable to disinvestment
- Some services have strict eligibility criteria (rationing), others can be offered on preventative basis
- Some are pan-disability, others are specialist
 - leads to fragmentation from the employer perspective

Big push to use personal budgets and direct payments – the idea is to raise standards and improve outcomes through retail competition

They don't work for employment!

- No customer information on quality or outcome rates
- Insufficient funding to purchase quality support
- Is customer paying for outcome or process?
- Doesn't cover the cost of infrastructure, employer engagement



Engagement with employers

- Clear roles/responsibilities, info on quality

Engagement with commissioners

- Proactive agreement on costs and outcomes

Managing quality

- Quality assurance and benchmarking
- Workforce development

Model fidelity

- Keeping the model in a target-driven environment

Developing a new national disability employment strategy:

- Recognition that Supported Employment works!
- Better involvement of specialist providers within national programmes
- Linking national procurement with local commissioning
- Bring an employment focus to transition from education
- Smarter local commissioning
- Active employer marketing campaigns
- Pooled budgets for funding provision

- Status Employment is a medium sized charity (NGO) that believes that in the UK at least 50% of working age disabled people not in work.
- Disabled people are more than twice as likely than non-disabled people to have no qualifications.
- Status Employment will always challenge disabling attitudes to ensure that work and training opportunities are a matter of equal right.
- Status Employment promotes the social model of disability, which asserts that people, policy and the built environment disable individuals.
- Status Employment is a typical specialist supported employment provider that helps people with severe and enduring mental health needs find employment using supported employment (Individual placement and support)

- We have nine job coaches providing supported employment. We also have complimentary health and well being programmes including trapeze, football, dram and allotments as we believe that to place and maintain our candidates into employment then they have to feel better about themselves
- This form of employment support is seen to be the most successful way of getting disabled candidates into employment
- Yet in Britain Supported Employment has never been mainstream funded meaning that supported employment agencies have always had to rely on a mixture of funds from Government, local municipalities, European Social Fund, Lottery funding, and Trust Funds to deliver their services.
- This has meant that delivering quality projects long term has been a problem with many projects closing after 2 to 3 years.

- To run our service costs approximately £450,000 per year
- Before the introduction of prime contracting we had 25% of our money from mainstream Government disability employment funding, through a funding programme called New Deal for Disability.
- On a normal year it raised us approximately £120,000 worth of funds which we could match to £250,000 before having to seek other funds to provide our services.
- Due to being unable to contract directly with the Government we now have less the 2% of our income from mainstream Government disability employment funding.
- This proved a challenge to our board and trustees if we were to be able to carry out our charitable mission.

- Despite the massive loss of income we decided that we had to carry on because we believed our candidates needed us to provide them with a service
- We didn't see any of the main providers offering to provide supported employment.
- At first we were very positive about the new process in the initial roll out, as we had a good reputation our quality was good and we believed that the Prime Providers would want our services.
- We went to many meetings, filled in over 15 expressions of interest and had only positive replies from 4 Prime Providers.
- All of them charged between 25% and 35% subcontracting charge. One of the Primes who didn't reply to us wrote to one of our existing funders offering to under cut us.

- When the Prime Providers were picked for our areas both refused to even acknowledge us. Their results in placing people with severe mental health needs were significantly worse over a larger district. They certainly did not seem to offer the much vaunted innovation to our candidates who were mainly refused a service
- After this experience we decided on the strategy of seeking money elsewhere as our belief was that, although we would engage in the contracting process, we believed that the Prime Contractors would not see the value our service.
- We therefore started to approach trust funders for grants to deal with the shortfall. It did mean we looked at different ways and allowed us to become more innovative.
- This meant that we developed our very successful football, trapeze and drama projects to run alongside our supported employment which has improved our results

- We are now have a very small contract with a Prime Provider but we have to take all the risk and were offered no pump-priming money for the service and I am not sure what we get for the 25% subcontract fee.
- It's important to engage with different contractors to see if you can get into bigger consortiums and open dialogue with potential Prime Providers.
- Do talk to your national association so they can affect the stewardship of the supply chain and to put in a reasonable workable code of conduct that works for both the Prime and the Sub, wherever the Sub is in the supply chain. Make sure they give you a voice to the procurer.
- Be positive and don't expect to gain contracts – have a plan B

Conclusion

- Remember the importance of supported employment.
- Spend time convincing procurers of your value and that supported employment is the most cost effective way of gaining employment for disabled people.
- Make sure they value you and see the importance for your specialism and that they develop a procurement system that allows for this type of specialism.

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