

Influencing and Informing Engage to Change Knowing me, knowing you: Listening and learning events Cardiff, Carmarthen and Llandudno, June 2024

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Background:

Engage to Change was a seven-year, pan Wales project, funded through the National Lottery Community Fund and supported by the Welsh Government to help young people with a learning disability and/or autism to tackle employment barriers and transition into a paid job. Led by Learning Disability Wales, it brought together ELITE and Agoriad Cyf supported employment agencies to deliver job coaching, unpaid and paid placements and paid jobs in ordinary workplaces. The project was supported by self-advocates from All Wales People First and evaluated by the National Centre for Mental Health (NCMH) at Cardiff University.

The Engage to Change project successfully provided employment support through job coaching to 1075 young people and delivered 244 supported internships, gaining an overall paid employment rate of 41%. This is compared to an estimated employment rate of 4.8% for people with learning disabilities in England ([BASE 2024](#)).

Influencing and Informing Engage to Change is a partnership between Learning Disability Wales and NCMH at Cardiff University. We are taking forward the policy, research, and legacy work of the Engage to Change project.

We are doing this by working with others including Welsh Government, Members of the Senedd, local authorities, colleges, health boards, people with lived experience and their families.



Introduction

We felt it was important to bring people together, in person, to discuss employment, what people's experiences were, what support is available, and what is still needed to help people with lived experience to get a paid job.

We held three listening events called "Knowing me, knowing you". The first event took place at the Future Inn, Cardiff Bay on 11th June. It was attended by 65 people. The second event was at the Halliwell Centre, Carmarthen on 12th June and was attended by 47 people.

The third event was at Venue Cymru, Llandudno on 17th June and was attended by 45 people.

People who attended included people with lived experience of having learning disabilities and/or autism, parents and family members, employers, service providers and service commissioners for example from local authorities, health and social care, colleges, and third sector and private organisations.

Welsh Government leads for employability and skills, Jobs Growth Wales+, Supported Internships, Young Person's Guarantee, Disabled People's Employment Champion and their colleagues also attended.

Each of the events included presentations from Influencing and Informing Engage to Change project manager, a young person who had been supported by Engage to Change to get a job, a parent and an employer.

The project manager talked about Engage to Change and the work we have been doing since the project finished in May last year. She talked about the need for job coach support to be available through all employment programmes across Wales including those funded by the Welsh Government, and for job coaching to be recognised as a profession.

The young people and parents talked about their experiences, the support they had from Engage to Change and the difference having a job meant to them and their family.

The employers talked about unlocking the potential of people with learning disabilities and inclusive workplaces. Also, the difference employing a person with learning disabilities and/or autism has made to their workplace

After lunch, there were table discussions mainly led by a member of staff from Learning Disability Wales and NCMH Cardiff University. We'd like to thank an attendee at the Carmarthen event who volunteered to facilitate a table and 2 people who attended the Llandudno event for doing the same. A series of questions and prompts were used to get the discussions started. The same questions were asked at each event, see Annex A.

This report has been organised into sections reflecting the feedback from each group discussion.



Summary

Since 2016 supported employment has evolved across Wales. However, it is clear there is still a long way to go. The people who attended our events were engaged and passionate about employment for people with a learning disability and/or autism. There were clear themes which emerged from discussions. These are highlighted here:

The importance of working: Employment is clearly important. People with learning disabilities and/or autism who attended told us they want to work, but finding support is difficult. Having a job can be life-changing, people told us that they felt they were contributing to society and had more independence and opportunities through working. Parents and carers questioned what their children's lives would look like without employment, what are their other options? Employers and commissioners were aware of the benefits of employing people with learning disabilities and/or autism and how this increased awareness and challenged pre-conceptions and stigma.

Communication and accessibility: It was clear across all stakeholder groups that communication around transition and employment is poor. People struggled to know what was out there, what they could apply for and what they could ask for. For people with learning disabilities and/or autism and parents/carers having better advice while in school and college was highlighted. Better information should be provided about options for employment and how to access support, and written employment information or policies are often not written in an accessible way. Information about government schemes was not getting through to people or their parents. This is a barrier. Employers and commissioners also noted that there are gaps in communication. Projects promoted by Welsh Government do not necessarily communicate and link to local funded projects. This is a missed opportunity.

Support: Despite pockets of good practice being highlighted across Wales these were seen as sporadic and regional and there was still a sense of "where do we go"? People valued work experience, but this was inconsistent and limited as a real opportunity. Tying in with communication and accessibility many parents and people with learning disabilities/ autism had not heard of national schemes such as The Young Persons Guarantee, Working Wales, Jobs Growth Wales+ and Access to Work. Careers Wales was more commonly known, however they were often highlighted as talking to the young person in school but not supporting further. A lack of direct support, for example from a specialist job coach, was highlighted. Peer support (young people and parent/carer mentoring) was suggested as a good example of raising knowledge and expectations. People with lived experience and parents/ carers noted that employers and commissioners needed to be better at supporting opportunities for employment, including reasonable adjustments and accessible working practices.

·Funding: Redtape, policies and procedures were highlighted by employers and commissioners. There was a call for more accessible national funding for supporting and maintaining employment for people with learning disabilities and/or autism in Wales. Continuity of funding is also an issue. Longer-term funding and a more unified strategy across Wales would be beneficial.

At the end of this report there are sections on “What is Needed” and “What should Welsh Parliament be doing”. These sections highlight stakeholders’ calls for better provision in Wales around transition and supporting people with learning disabilities and/or autism to find, gain and maintain employment. We are hoping that the Welsh Government, Welsh Parliament and stakeholders can learn from the feedback collated here. Employment is everyone’s business. There are direct links between employment and wider life, for example, wellbeing, independence, health and social care provision, caring roles and the economy. Despite this, people with a learning disability and/or autism are not generally regarded as a priority for employment support. This needs to change.



People with lived experience of learning disabilities and/or autism:

People with lived experience who attended the event in **Cardiff** were young people or young adults. They included a person attending college, a person who had left college but was not employed, people who are employed, several had been supported by Engage to Change to get a paid job and were still employed.

The key points mentioned by people with lived experience were:

- o Experienced a lack of signposting to the right help and support available to provide expertise in finding the correct or appropriate next steps in training and work
- o Didn't have careers advice or get asked what job they would like to do while they were in school
- o Never knew what they wanted to do, had no choice
- o Had a one-week work experience while attending a mainstream school.
- o Had valuable work experience that was rewarding and much needed but no further support
- o Didn't have a clue as there was no help to plan towards getting a job
- o College was not enjoyable, there was no career advice
- o Transition is under-supported, under-valued and under-resourced
- o Had a volunteering placement but no paid job
- o No support until Engage to Change
- o Job coaching wasn't available while in school
- o Had work experiences and got a paid job through the Engage to Change project. Job coach really helped and would need that support again if they changed jobs.
- o Has a personal assistant through Access to Work who helped in getting a job and supports in work.
- o Transport is an issue and a barrier to accessing work.
- o Not being able to drive is a barrier when it's a requirement of a job
- o Inaccessible recruitment is a barrier
- o No awareness of Access to Work funding.
- o Hadn't heard of the Young Person's Guarantee.
- o Don't really know what Welsh Parliament does.

What does having a job mean?

- o It means everything to have a job and earn money
- o I am much happier now I have a job
- o I am happy, I didn't know what skills I had
- o I like having money. In the future I would like to move out and live alone
- o I like the flexibility of being away from my parents in work

What would help?

- o Support and breaking down tasks helps
- o Job carving, jobs need to suite individuals and employers needs
- o Employers need to get to know the person
- o Better transition support from school to employment is needed
- o Need to know about the options and about job opportunities
- o Reasonable adjustments
- o Better information should be provided to learners in colleges about options and opportunities for further learning and how to access employment support.

People with lived experience who attended the event in **Carmarthen** were young people who attended a local FE college to do the Independent Living Skills curriculum pathway 3 and 4. They have work experience either within the college or Hywel Dda UHB (supported internships). One person mentioned they had paid part time work while in college, two people were employed having been supported by Engage to Change.

The key points mentioned by people with lived experience were:

- o Didn't recall being asked about getting a job or seeing anyone from Careers Wales while in school
- o Did have someone speak to them in school about getting a job
- o Didn't have work experience while in school
- o Most of the young people didn't know what they wanted to do.
- o How is a 16 year old supposed to know?
- o Hadn't been asked about what job they'd like to do when they leave college
- o Did talk with Carees Wales while in college but nothing happened
- o Some had discussed work with their parents
- o One person had PA support from Carmarthenshire People First
- o Experience is important for knowing how to progress to and in employment, but support is needed
- o As a young carer one person is worried about working because of their caring responsibilities
- o One young person, already living independently, was concerned about the impact of working on their welfare benefits.
- o Didn't know about the Young Persons Guarantee.

- o Didn't know about Jobs Growth Wales+ or supported apprenticeships

What does having a job mean?

- o It's important to have a job to be independent, have your own home and get to know new people
- o A job is important to get money, become yourself, create who you are and have confidence in yourself
- o The first time I got a job was amazing, nothing like volunteering, a proper job with money and it was brilliant
- o Really enjoy working part time while in college and earning good money which means I can go on holiday

What would help?

- o It's hard to get a job. Help is needed to apply for a job and advice on where to look
- o Interview support is needed
- o One to one support is needed to know what to do in the workplace and to travel there independently

People with lived experience who attended the event in **Llandudno** were a range of ages both young people and adults. They included people who had been supported by Engage to Change to get paid jobs and were still employed, people who had volunteered and never had paid work, and a young person who attends college.

The key points mentioned by people with lived experience were:

- o Employment was discussed while in school
- o Employment wasn't discussed while in school
- o There was a careers advisor in school but no work experience or mention of employment
- o One person mentioned support from Careers Wales that helped a lot
- o Had support from Agoriad job coaches (Engage to Change project) to get a job
- o Didn't have any support
- o Had job coach support for an internship through Engage to Change
- o Some people had one or more jobs where they didn't get paid or had a voluntary job. One of these was for a long period of time
- o Transport is a problem even if able to use a bus
- o Not every job works
- o One person felt they were lucky to have an apprenticeship and find all aspects of the work really good

- o One person had a negative experience of an apprenticeship that fell through due to lack of understanding their needs and lack of support
- o One person does a lot of voluntary work and is able to travel independently but would love to have paid employment
- o Hadn't heard of the Young Persons Guarantee

What does having a job mean?

- o Having a paid job means having an income and being more independent
- o It's beneficial because it's something I always wanted to do. I make sure I'm doing a good job. Punctuality is important
- o Happy to have the opportunity to help others and feel part of society, contribute to the local community and be a role model for others

What would help?

- o Support is needed to learn about work from the beginning
- o Job coach support and help with anxiety and social skills
- o Support from work colleagues is important
- o Getting feedback on the work you have done is important it makes you feel good and more confident



Parents and carers:

Parents and carers who attended the event in **Cardiff** included those whose son/daughter was employed; undertaking a supported internship; at college; volunteering; and was unemployed.

The key points mentioned by parents and carers were:

- o The only input from Careers Wales was at a school transition review and this was at their request
- o The social worker was not helpful with regards to employment
- o There weren't many options
- o There is no information out there about support to get a job. How do you know where to go?
- o The system is difficult to navigate, parents have to fight for support and often are not signposted to the right place to get support for finding the appropriate steps to employment
- o Some parents are trying to help with getting a job but finding the support needed is difficult
- o Other parents are not doing this, and it leaves the young people behind
- o Son had a job interview, but questions were only provided an hour before, this panicked him and he wasn't successful
- o One parent mentioned their young person needs/wants a job 5 days a week, but how will that happen? Staying in college would be a step backwards
- o A parent mentioned their young person hadn't been asked their opinion/views about work experience and employment
- o Another said their young person needed to realise what they were capable of
- o Searches often find support that is not relevant, not provided in their area or has stopped because funding has ended
- o It's harder if you live in a rural area and if you don't have the internet.
- o Reasonable adjustments have not always been part of their experience in education, having a knock-on effect on things such as lack of confidence
- o Hadn't heard of the Young Persons Guarantee or Jobs Growth Wales+
- o Inactive young people are a waste of skills

Positives included:

- o Workers with disabilities are loyal and productive employees
- o Once given a uniform it fostered a sense of belonging for their daughter, essential for job integration
- o Disclosing a disability and asking for reasonable adjustments resulted in interview questions being provided a week in advance
- o Support provided by Engage to Change
- o Support provided by Cardiff CC supported employment project
- o National Autistic Society, a good contact for meeting other parents and helped gain confidence to ask the questions that need to be asked
- o Good support from the wider family

Concerns included:

- o Loss of benefits if the young person gets a job or increases their part time hours
- o Funding for attending college – 2 years in Wales but 3 in England so if a young person living in Wales attends a college in England they are not funded for the final year when work preparation and support for transition to work takes place
- o Lack of support for when a supported internship or another programme ends, and the young person hasn't got a paid job

What would help?

- o Information needs to be available, accessible and published. Easy read information for young people is needed and a 'hub' of information in one place.
- o Support is needed for travel. Some parents told us they had taken responsibility for travel training.
- o Support is needed to help the young person transition to work and get a paid job
- o Better off in work calculations are needed
- o People with disabilities can work but employers need to get on board



Parents and carers who attended the event in **Carmarthen** were two, both of whose son/daughter was employed and one whose employed son was supported by Engage to Change.

The key points mentioned by parents and carers were:

- o There was some interaction with Careers Wales but no continuity
- o One person did have support from their college, Careers Wales and Remploy to get a job but that was 25 years ago
- o Another had a mixed bag of support, but a long time ago
- o Little or no information provided at times
- o Support can vary between areas
- o Parents often need to push before anything is done but not all parents can do this
- o It's difficult for some parents to let go to trust employers
- o Some young people are not given the chance because it's assumed they can't work
- o they can't work

Positives included:

- o Having a job also brings a social life which is so important
- o Now she has a plan to work and get a house for herself
- o Job coaching and support provided by Engage to Change

What would help?

- o It would be helpful to have awareness of what is available and where to get help from
- o It's a case of finding the right fit and important that employers make reasonable adjustments
- o A needs led profile of support that follows them from college into employment
- o Job coaching is a useful tool.
- o Employer liaison would be helpful
- o Role models, it's about learning from each other



Parents and carers who attended the event in **Llandudno** included those whose son, daughter, or grandchild was at college; volunteering; employed; at college and working part time; unemployed. Some had been supported by Engage to Change

The key points mentioned by parents and carers were:

- o There was little or no talk about getting a job while in school or input from Careers Wales
- o Some parents discuss employment a lot. Others have so many plates spinning that it's the last thing they think about
- o Have to be proactive as a family. What happens and what about parents who are not proactive?
- o It's difficult to know where to go and who to speak to.
- o One parent mentioned a young person getting a part time job themselves while also attending college, but without disclosing due to fear of being labeled or judged
- o A parent mentioned a young person who works part time feels awkward due to not interacting socially with colleagues both in and outside the workplace because they feel too anxious and that they don't fit in
- o One parent mentioned a young person trying to do voluntary work but there was no support, so it was very difficult and highlighted his lack of social and life skills
- o Colleges are not preparing young people for employment
- o Another parent mentioned the employer did not recognize the persons' support needs, and they had a traumatic time. They need on-going job coach support and help with social skills to reduce anxiety
- o Social interaction with work colleagues can be very difficult for some young people
- o Hadn't heard of the Young Persons Guarantee or Jobs Growth Wales

Positives:

- o It means a lot for young people to earn their own money
- o Support of job coaches (Engage to Change)
- o Support from staff at Ysbyty Gwynedd (supported internship)

Concerns included:

- o Funding for college
- o Impact of employment on welfare benefits
- o Appropriate support

What would help?

- o Parent/carer role models are desperately needed. Parents who have lots of knowledge and experience
- o Good information is needed. Information sites need to be easily accessible
- o Families need education about paid jobs
- o Employers need to do more, understands needs, provide opportunities and resources
- o Parents need to challenge employers
- o Ongoing job coach support

Employers, commissioners and service providers:

Employers, commissioners, and service providers who attended the event in **Cardiff** included civil servants from Welsh Government, providers of supported employment, supported living, a school, 2 colleges and a university, people working for Bridgend, Blaenau Gwent, Cardiff, Monmouthshire, Newport, Powys, Torfaen, Vale of Glamorgan Councils, Cardiff & Vale Regional Partnership Boards, a range of third sector organisations that offer advice, support and promote rights.

The key points mentioned by employers, commissioners, and service providers were:

- o A lot of support is provided linked to the Young Person's Guarantee for young people 16-25
- o Work has been done with Engage to Change
- o Support/a lot of funding put into FE, also JGW+. Communities for Work+ has a target of 20% of people supported must be disabled or have a long-term health issue
- o A lot is provided for people who need support with their mental health
- o Feedback to WG on what Careers Wales has been doing is sporadic
- o There is too much red tape around work experience and part time jobs for teenagers
- o In theory anyone needing support about employment whether looking for work or already working, should get it from Working Wales, they are the gateway. At the very least advice/guidance should be provided
- o The issue is the level of support needed and provided
- o Working Wales has a local support finder on their website. It's not the best and needs to change
- o Young Persons Guarantee and JGW+ have a big marketing campaign using social media and radio aimed at young people but it appears this isn't getting through to young people with ALN, their parents and people who work with them
- o There are gaps in communication and funding. Projects promoted by Welsh Government do not necessarily communicate and link to local funded projects. This is a missed opportunity
- o Often, we have short term project funding, amazing projects, like Engage to Change, but when they are finished there is no legacy
- o Waste of talents. For instance, people are crying out for gardeners, they are in high demand. We risk that we will still have a proportion of young people who stay inactive, and this is not fair

- o Lots of employment programmes do not have the knowledge to support people with disabilities and this is a big issue
- o We have hosted supported internships in Cardiff university. We have moved so far but we need to ensure that this doesn't just happen when people move into employment through internships, we need to make sure we can help people move on. We have been able to support young people with reasonable adjustments and we have continued the commitment to supported internships in conjunction with Cardiff and the Vale college
- o There are areas of good practice around the university, but it would be good to assess the wider university for inclusiveness. We need to be top down from senior managers and Vice Chancellors
- o We have internal communications to educate people about the supported internships and we have flagged human resources as an area for engagement and improvement
- o The Engage to Change research team that sits within Cardiff University has helped us review some of our practices, but it is work in progress. This is our challenge

Support from attending providers:

- o Cardiff County Council have walk-in interviews for several jobs, where people interested in the job meet the person in a more informal way and then, they complete an application form and do the interview afterwards. This was used to increase the number of people going for a job, as for some jobs, they had only one application, which was not great for Cardiff Council
- o Cardiff University host supported internships in partnership with Cardiff and Vale College
- o Cardiff City Council in partnership with schools and University of Wales hospital offer supported internships
- o Celt+ in the Vale of Glamorgan has supported employment mentors who provide training, in work support, and access to volunteering. They support disabled people with physical, sensory, learning difficulties, autism or mental health conditions. They are no longer funded to provide travel training
- o MTiB provides supported employment with job coach support. Some contracts and projects have ended but they support where they can and signpost to other services. They are a Disability Confident leader so can support employers/businesses to become Disability Confident
- o Coleg y Cymoedd offers supported internships in partnership with RCTCBC
- o Achieve Together facilitates coproduction groups for people with learning disabilities. They promote and campaign on employment for people with learning disabilities, provide advice on CVs, interviews and advise on policies and accessible recruitment
- o Caerphilly CBC autism lead is helping to set up supported employment across Caerphilly
- o Studio 37 in Pontypridd provide work experience for people with learning disabilities
- o Job coach support available through WG Jobs Growth Wales+ and Supported Shared Apprenticeships

What more could you be doing and what would help?

- o We need to have a point of contact for transition. Each council should have a facilitator, a coordinator to work with employers and present the option and different pathway to employment. How can we do it?
- o Work with schools and raise the profile of career advice. Maybe WG could make sure that this is done correctly?
- o We need to make sure people know about Access to Work and use it. It can also be used for self-employment, to employ a PA for instance
- o We need to job carve and be creative, but a collaborative approach is missing
- o Have more information available on where to signpost to
- o Look at how we can be more proactive and make things easy read and accessible as standard
- o Engage to Change and the supported internships have promise in making change and influencing good practice within the university, we need to be standardising process to support this.

Employers, commissioners and service providers who attended the event in **Carmarthenshire** included civil servants from Welsh Government, TUC Cymru, Careers Wales, Welsh Water, DWP, 2 colleges, 2 universities, a supported employment provider, Ceredigion, Pembrokeshire and Swansea Councils, West Glamorgan Regional Partnerships and third sector organisations that offer advice, support and promote rights.

The key points mentioned by employers, commissioners, and service providers were:

- o Talked about/explained Young Person's Guarantee, JGW+, supported shared apprenticeships and what support they provide. JGW+ and SSAs have a supported employment approach and job coaches for support. There is funding for ALN support and bespoke programmes e.g. work tasters.
- o WG have Disabled Peoples Employment Champions who visit/work with employers to get them to think differently about employing disabled people, change their hearts and minds, be more flexible, see the benefits.
- o WG is working to make flexible working a legal requirement e.g. employers must give a carer time off work.
- o Many employers are struggling to fill vacancies especially in hospitality, but the working hours are often not suitable for young people/people with ALN and travel can be difficult
- o As disabled people's employment champions we work with employers to look at reasonable adjustments and how they can support people into work, what the barriers are, how can we place and support employment, our work is about showing them what they could be doing. As a team of five disabled peoples champions, we are not enough, we need more people. All of us have an impairment as disabled people's employment champions, we have the lived experience when we work directly with employers."

- o Currently no disabled people employment champion with learning disabilities.
- o Need to safeguard people but enable them to work if they want to, getting the balance right is key
- o Parents can be very protective. It can be difficult to manage parents expectations
- o Funding models are wrong within Welsh Parliament
- o Some services re only funded for a short period of time
- o The usual CV and interview experience is not easy for people with learning disabilities
- o WG want people to get a good job and one that is right for them

Support from attending providers:

- o Coleg Sir Gar provides internal internships as Pathway 3 of ILS curriculum and external supported internships as Pathway 4. Work skills taught. One to one support including for travel training to travel independently. Possible jobs at the hospital – portering, canteen , mailroom, café.
- o Gower college has a transition package and links with employers, runs award winning apprenticeships – for people who are neurodivergent rather than people with learning disabilities
- o Local Supported Employment scheme funded by DWP (Pembrokeshire, Ceredigion, Carmarthenshire). Aiming to help with ore consistency to service and support and external employers
- o Job coach support available through WG Jobs Growth Wales+ and Supported Shared Apprenticeships

What more could you be doing and what would help?

- o Champion the law and people’s rights
- o Query whether employers are aware of these programmes. An employer’s perspective would be useful
- o Work with employers to address travel difficulties especially for jobs that have unsociable hours e.g. by suggesting employers provide transport, (some are now doing this).
- o Look at case studies such as supported internships and look at disability confident status
- o More practical and hands on experience is needed to show employers what people can do
- o More accessible advertising of young people’s programmes such as Young Persons Guarantee, Jobs Growth Wales+ etc.

Employers, commissioners and service providers who attended the event in **Llandudno** included providers of employment support and supported employment, residential care, a health board, a university, Careers Wales, people working for Conwy, Denbighshire, Gwynedd, Wrexham Councils and third sector organisations that offer advice, support and promote rights.

The key points mentioned by employers, commissioners, and service providers were:

- o From an employer perspective I've worked seven years in Betsi Cadwallader UHB, there is a lot of nurturing going on there, but most businesses don't work like that
- o They are misconceptions around learning disabilities but once employers have experience, or they may even have personal experience, they are then more likely to support a young person into employment
- o In north Wales it is possibly easier than elsewhere in Wales for local authorities to work together and for people to know what is available. Also, because there is only one health board and regional partnership. In other areas density of population, geography, several health boards and several regional partnerships may make this more difficult
- o Professionals shared their experience of working with people with hidden disabilities and the need to have tailored support and reasonable adjustments that work for them (e.g. meeting where they are comfortable etc.)
- o There are things that run on a cost element that can sometimes be harder to manage - when you have to cost budget them, but it's about what opportunities you can find to give people the opportunities to transition
- o The main element is managing expectations of parents and young people.
- o Vocational profiling is a key element, together with knowing about reasonable adjustments and knowing how to apply for access to work.
- o Recently held a reverse Job Fair in Flintshire.
- o Discussion about why DWP job centre does not work. A disability lead, offered through DWP, it is not enough because there is not enough time allocated to the individual, not enough time to build a relationship (bonding time) and not enough time to find a job match
- o In my area it's the difficulty in carrying it through
- o In Wrexham we are just starting to put a process together, step by step so that parents and young people will know what to expect
- o We are looking at what are realistic goals and is there a clear pathway? Probably not, but we need to provide better information and opportunities
- o Not enough hours to accompany the person I support to find work experience

- o Employer engagement role but it's hard to find jobs for people with learning disabilities
- o Work in transition role but no obligation for education provision to know what young people are doing when they leave – it's a “not my responsibility” situation
- o As social services sometimes the middleman between parents and employers
- o Parents are not always of the same mindset as the young person. They are often concerned about loss of benefits
- o Younger people's parents are becoming more interested in how employment can work alongside benefits
- o Parents of older adults become very worried about benefits

Support from attending providers:

- o The new transformation programme across north Wales is focussed on supported employment for people with a learning disability of all ages who are known to social services. It is a fantastic model.
- o Conwy and Denbighshire have an employment pathway coordinator who goes into schools to promote pathways to employment and options other than staying in school. This is now the same in the other regions in north Wales
- o Social workers can refer people with learning disabilities to employment pathway coordinators then Co-options, Agoriad or Hft (depending on the area) deliver the supported employment job coach support to get a paid job
- o Conwy employment service is modernizing day opportunities, café, gardening and ? for them to provide training for jobs. Also, their media centre will provide training in social media, marketing and technology. People will then be referred on to the employment pathway coordinator for job coach support to get a paid job
- o Working Denbighshire is looking at how they can better support people with learning disabilities and autistic people into work. Now they refer to Co-options for this, but only pwld not autistic people. This support is also needed for autistic people. Working Denbighshire do not have job coaches but mentors. Staff have not done job coach training but a series of autistic awareness training online. They receive a lot of referrals but very few for autistic young people



- o The health check champions which is run by people with learning disabilities gives great skills. It is run via Conwy Connect and aims to break the barriers and engage people with learning disabilities in raising skills. At the end of July we will have an event around transition for young people aged 18 to 25 we will aim to give some key bits of information to young people and parents
- o At Conwy Council we don't have any specific programme for people with learning disabilities, but we are taking people who are late diagnosed would have slipped through the net we are talking more about learning difficulties here than learning disabilities, but we need to be more inclusive
- o Denbighshire community active employment – However resources are limited to help PWLD into employment, concerned about the setting the person up to fail, worry about giving enough time to the young person
- o Gwynedd has a Job Opportunity Support Officer who has supported people with a wide range of learning disabilities some with significant LD
- o Coleg Cambria have a DFN Project SEARCH supported internship programme with Asda. Their job coach looks for jobs that young people with ALN are interested in and match with. Asda staff are good, but it would be helpful if they had ALN awareness training
- o BCUHB offer supported internship programmes in partnership with Grwp Llandrillo Menai, Agoriad Cyf and Hft supported employment agencies
- o Job coach support available through WG Jobs Growth Wales+ and Supported Shared Apprenticeships

What more could you be doing and what would help?

- o It's about asking people what they want to do
- o Make sure young people with learning disabilities know they can and should have the opportunity to do what they want
- o As a transition worker start work earlier with parents. From 11 years onwards start talking about employment, transition, finance, so parents have all the information and it isn't left too late
- o Developing skills – working in a shop/using a till – job opportunities
- o Supported internships such as DFN Project SEARCH.
- o Working with EPC's to develop a presentation about supported employment and it's benefits to schools.
- o More approaches to Job Fairs held e.g. reverse job fair. Well-being pathways.
- o Travel training is needed e.g. to use buses
- o Hold sessions on how to fill an NHS application form
- o Getting young people involved at earlier age
- o Educating parent/carers about employment pathways/opportunities
- o Design flyers, facebook adverts

- o Not referring individuals to day services but providing wider options e.g. paid employment.
- o Connect as local authorities to learn from each other want to make sure we have best practise
- o More emphasis on social cause. Employers like the supermarkets and large employers should have more expected from them, social value should be highlighted as more important
- o Important to increase the awareness between employers to challenge pre-conceptions and stigma
- o Have an index of employers
- o Connect as a network to make sure we provide a net of support
- o Ask WG to create a list of support available. This can be a challenge because we are funded in different ways. The risk is that the person feels lost in the system.
- o Utilise each other services, commissioning is usually shocking. We do our day-to-day jobs, but we get waylaid we need a dedicated focus on learning disabilities
- o Be creative in the way we recruit people to break down barriers. Ideas from the table on ways to support accessible recruitment:
 - Video application
 - Job fair (large employers don't generally attend)
 - Move away from task-based interviews to values - this will help getting more applicants
 - some employers do not get enough applications
 - Standardised questions/provide in advance
 - Push for disability friendly association
 - Use of videos



What is needed?

In this section key messages from people with lived experience, parents and carers, commissioners, service providers and employers who attended each event has been collated. This is due to the majority being the same or very similar with little difference between the region covered by each event.

- o Influence: WG, DWP, regional networks
- o Long term funding - Shared Prosperity Fund is too short-term (ESF used to up to 7 years)
- o If a programme is proven to work, learning from it, ongoing development to incorporate supported employment and job coach support into longer existing programmes or set up specific, intensive support programmes
- o There needs to be awareness raising about people with hidden disabilities
- o A lot of work with parents/carers to address barriers and open the door to employment opportunities
- o Role models (young people, parent/carers, employers) it's about learning from each other
- o Role models with learning disabilities across every local authority to champion employment and the possibilities
- o Work about employment pathways and employment support within schools, parents/carers and young people. Maybe WG could make sure that this is done correctly?
- o People coming in to schools to help every young person to think about employment and to give them practical help including to decide the jobs they want to do
- o More support and information in schools to learn about work, different jobs and have work experience placements
- o More support and information in schools about different ways of getting a job and programmes available to support
- o A needs led profile of support which can follow them from college into employment is there one of these
- o People need to be tracked from school, college and what they do next to monitor/evaluate what works
- o More resources, more money, qualifications and facilities in colleges
- o More opportunities in colleges, linking outside interests/hobbies to workshops/courses in college. Life skills not just academic courses
- o Reasonable adjustments in school, college, work (even fairly small, inexpensive adjustments can make a big difference)

- o Better information sharing about what support and programmes are available that is accessible to and aimed at people with ALN, their parents/carers and others who support them
- o Signposting to local services and support
- o Toolkits to help support people with hidden disabilities such as autism and/or learning disability
- o A point of contact for transition to employment. Each council should have a facilitator, a coordinator to work with employers and present the option and different pathway to employment
- o To link in with employers and employment to make a curriculum relevant from an ALN perspective, the right and relevant employers to go into schools/colleges to engage ALN young people
- o Job coach support that can help with getting a job but also other things such as how to do tasks in the workplace, deal with worries, travel training and social inclusion
- o Vocational profiling is key together with knowing about reasonable adjustments and how to apply for Access to Work
- o Better off in work calculations
- o Employer liaison – working better with employers, job seekers and programmes such as JGW+ to fill those hard to fill vacancies.
- o Raise awareness among employers of benefits of employing disabled people
- o Better joining up between employers and employment programmes. Informing employers about support available to them as well as the benefits of employing a disabled person and how to make reasonable adjustments
- o Public sector to lead by example by employing people with learning disabilities
- o Large employers such supermarkets should have more expected of them, social values should be highlighted
- o TUC needs to educate reps to help employers to employ people with learning disabilities
- o The north Wales learning disability employment programme should be for autistic people too.

What should Welsh Parliament be doing?

In this section key messages from people with lived experience, parents and carers, commissioners, service providers and employers who attended each event has been collated. This is due to the majority being the same or very similar with little difference between the region covered by each event.

- o They need to know what is needed, what is available and what isn't available
- o They should not leave anyone behind. They should know that people with learning disabilities and autism can work
- o They should keep projects like Engage to Change and supported internships going otherwise many young people will miss out
- o Pledging long term commitment from for a consistent approach to supported employment across Wales
- o Providing funding for supported employment and better structures for people of all ages
- o Money should be going to job coaching so that employers can be supported, and young people can be supported. Job coaching takes some of the responsibility off the employer and can navigate a fair and equal relationship
- o Using it (Engage to Change) to shape WG single operating model
- o Looking at the north Wales learning disability employment strategy – it's a fantastic model that includes job coaching
- o Visiting supported employment/internship projects to see how it is done
- o Looking into allocating appropriate support according to support needs. Providing specialist support for anyone who needs it, including people with disabilities. On a project basis, individual basis or as part of what is already being provided
- o Providing funding for employers to take on people with a learning disability plus more needs to be done to encourage them to keep people on after the funding ends
- o Providing information and opportunities open to everyone whether this is social workers, education establishments, colleges, employers, local authorities, but everyone needs to have clear and open information
- o Better and targeted advertising of programmes such as JGW+, Young Persons Guarantee and what they offer, simplifying the offers

- o Information needs to be easy read and accessible so that young people with learning disabilities can have the information as well
- o It is important that the Welsh Government makes sure this learning (Engage to Change) is going in to at all schools across Wales
- o Being better at providing information about support available including to employers e.g. Access to Work.
- o Working with DWP to resolve issues with Access to Work funding including inaccessible process, delays with payments, insufficient pay awards to cover costs etc
- o Listening to young people with learning disabilities
- o Prioritising people with disabilities better
- o Employing a disabled people's employment champion who has learning disabilities and providing any support they would need to do their job
- o Offering in-house training for employers is there a national qualification? If not, there should be
- o Looking more at social value and about promoting opportunities in employment this should be made mandatory across the board
- o Promoting job coaching so that young people are supported in the roles in the right way
- o Creating a list of support available. This can be a challenge because we are funded in different ways. The risk is that the person feels lost in the system.
- o Developing a Youth friendly employers scheme
- o Developing a standard or stamp of recognition for those employers who want to provide training, employment and work experience opportunities for people with a learning disability or autism.
- o Setting up an awards system for schools, colleges, and employers who excel in providing employment for people with learning disabilities and/or autism



Annex A

Knowing me, knowing you

Questions for discussion groups

People with learning disabilities and /or autism

- When you were in school did anyone talk to you about getting a job or what job you would like to do when you left school?
- Have you had any support to get a job? What does having a job mean to you?
- What are the things you need to help you to find, learn and keep a paid job?

Prompts if needed

- What support do you/ did you need to look for work?
- What about help to learn a job?

What about the future, if you want to change jobs what support would you need?

- What about supporting your choices around employment?
- What should Welsh Parliament be doing?

Parents and carers

- Is the person you care for employed?
- If yes, what support did they have to achieve this?
- If not, is getting a paid job something, you discuss with them?
- What are the things you need to support the person you care for to transition into employment?

Prompts if needed

- What about while they are in school?
- What about work experience?
- What about information and communication?
- What about choice and advocacy?
- What should Welsh Parliament be doing?



Employers/ Commissioners

- What are you doing to support people with a learning disability and autistic people into employment?
- What more could you be doing?

Prompts if needed

- What information do you need to support this?
- What could Welsh Parliament be doing?
- What role could job coaching play?



Service providers

- What are you doing to support people with a learning disability and autistic people to get and keep a paid job?

Prompts if needed

- What is the eligibility criteria?
- What is the referral process?
- How do people find out about your service?





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