

“100 Voices on Employment”



A Report by Equal People
(October 2014)

Introduction

Equal People is an involvement group. South Tyneside Learning Disabilities Partnership Board asked the group to: -

- gather the views of adults with learning disabilities living in South Tyneside around employment
- identify the barriers to employment for this sample group
- use this information to make recommendations that would improve employment outcomes for all adults with learning disabilities living in South Tyneside

Three group members (Paula Lowson, Peter Gardiner and Stacey Conway) supported by Carole Watson (Involvement Worker), designed a short questionnaire. This questionnaire was completed by 100 adults with learning disabilities from: -

South Shields Central Library (Day Opportunities)

Redesign 4 you

Activities Group

Arts 4 Wellbeing

Trinity House (Day Opportunities)

Harton Action Stations

MISTAS (Men in South Tyneside) - Self Advocacy Group

Equal People, Talk 2 Us and Ladybirds members

Tenants at Simonside Court

Remploy

People on the Learning Works Scheme

Low Simonside Community Association (Day Opportunities)

People attending the Thursday evening group at Jarrow Community Centre



Pictures were used to promote discussion. The findings were presented to South Tyneside Learning Disabilities Partnership Board on 21st October 2014 with 7 key recommendations.

What did we find out?

- Most people wanted to work; 72 out of 100 said they wanted a job
- Most people had work experience in the past. This was largely voluntary; - only 15 out of 100 people had paid work experience
- Most people had support to find employment in the past; – now, people felt there was less support – and very little information about getting a job. 83 out of a hundred said they needed more support.
- People wanted to try a wide variety of jobs: - cooking, gardening, working in an office/for the council, working with the police, fire service or hospitals were the most popular choices. Helping people was also a popular option.
- People said the main barriers to getting a job were: - lack of information and support, losing their benefits, not being able to read and write very well, not being able to apply for jobs “on line” or fill in application forms, not having any work experience.



How could we help you find a job?



“Help us to look for jobs; - I don’t know where to start if jobs are on line!”

“Teach people more about technology I taught my mam.”

“Talk to parents and carers they need to be involved, too.”

“Give us a chance to get work experience we need to learn work skills.”

“We need a place to go where we can learn things where people give you the support you need.”

“A social worker helped me in the past now I don’t have one, so how do I get things sorted?”

“The council should work with South Tyneside College they’re already giving work experience to young people.”

“Some people need “one-to-one” support and help with communication who is going to pay for that?” (staff comment – while supporting someone with high support needs)

“We should learn interview skills.... so we’re not frightened of going for a job.”

“I’ve done lots of work with Your Voice Counts. It builds up your confidence.”

“People should think about what we CAN do ... not what we can’t do.”

“People will need travel training to keep them safe.”

“I like art and crafts. Could I have more information about setting up in business and selling my work?”

Key Messages

- People would like the opportunity to get real work experience in a supported environment.
- People want to learn new skills to help them find work – including interview skills and job searching
- People would like clear information –especially around how employment affects benefits
- People want parents and carers to be involved
- People want to learn in a safe environment
- People feel travel training should be built into employment training
- People want to be offered employment training at annual reviews
- People attending day opportunities enjoy the range of activities, staff support and “feeling safe”
- People are unlikely to sign up to employment training without a firm alternative structure in place to support them



Recommendations

1) Set up an employment group

This group would be responsible for writing an action plan. It would be attended by: -

Ian Shotton (Learning Works)

Council staff

John Moiser (Job Centre Plus)

South Tyneside College

Schools

Transport companies

Parent /carers

Carole Watson – supporting the 3 self advocates involved in this research.

2) Ask Harton Action Stations to run an employability skills course



Peter and Paula said they were already attending courses there and enjoying them. Carole and a member of Equal People visited the building to find out more.



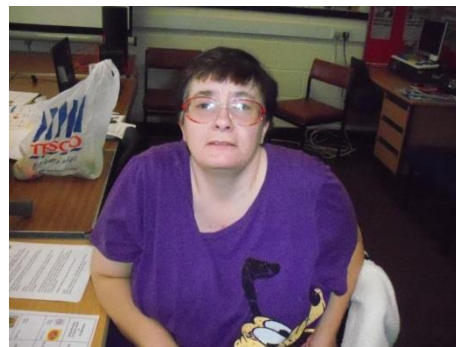


We found courses are open to everyone – not just people with learning disabilities. The building is accessible. It has a computer room, kitchen and 3 meeting rooms which could be used. Peter was already doing an NVQ course in customer care in the building. Harton Action Stations also offers basic skills courses, job searching on computer, basic cookery and food hygiene courses (accredited by Adult Community Learning).

Keith Hardy (the Manager) said he would look at setting up an apprenticeship scheme and open day for employers. Remploy already use the building - so good links to employers are already established.

3) Film 3 people trying to find a job. Film them at the start, middle and end of the journey.

This film could be used to show employers the barriers facing people with learning disabilities. Paula suggested filming success stories, too, and would like to talk to camera about her own employment experiences. The film could also be used in training and incorporate sections on Job Centre Plus and Learning Works as examples of good practice.



4) Plan an employment event as part of Learning Disabilities Week (June 2015).

The event would be planned by the newly-formed Employment Group. The employment film would be shown to an audience of employers at South Shields Central Library. This would be followed by focus groups involving employers, carers and people with learning disabilities – looking at barriers and working towards solutions.



Paula said she would like employers to sign a pledge to employ a person with learning disabilities on a 6 month trial (this was a successful strategy during the Safe Places campaign).

5) Hold a focus group for parents and carers

This focus groups would be led by Learning Works and held at Harton Action Stations to identify the barriers for parents and carers. It would be held before the main employment event and would focus on giving parents and carers accurate benefit information and showing them the venue for the employability course. Paula, Peter and Stacey said it was important to “get them on board” if we were going to move forward with employment. This would also be fed back to the Partnership Board.



6) Look at how people with learning disabilities can set up a social enterprise

This will give people the opportunity to produce their own art and craft work and sell it to the general public. The social enterprise opportunity will be open to all adults with a learning disabilities and offered at annual reviews . Carole Watson has a useful contact who could help South Tyneside set up this scheme.

7) Make sure people with learning disabilities are offered employment training as part of their annual review.

A lot of people said they wanted this choice. We said it should be offered to people of ALL ages and abilities - but recognise this is only possible when a structured employability course is in place.

Paula Lowson, Peter Gardiner and Stacey Conway
(with support from Carole Watson)

October 21st 2014

Update (December 2015)

- 1) Following the “100 Voices on Employment”, there was an Employment Summit held at the Dunes in South Shields on Feb 6th 2015. There were 81 people at the event (including self advocates, council staff, health and employment /training groups). Two people with learning disabilities gave testimonies about the difference employment had made in their lives. There was an opportunity to discuss the barriers to employment and consider the next steps.
- 2) An Employment Sub Group began on 2nd June 2015, chaired by Keith Hardy, the Manager of Harton Action Stations. The group is working to an action plan which includes all the points raised at the Employment Summit.
- 3) There will be a Transitions event in March 2016 . This will be held at Keelman’s School and will include stallholders and presentations. The Employment Sub Group will ensure key messages from the Employment Summit are included.
- 4) Your Voice Counts supported self advocates from the Employment Sub Group to meet Chris Thompson from South Tyneside College on 8th December 2015. He works on the Media Studies course; - all agreed a short film about the barriers facing young people with learning disabilities would be an excellent tool when working with employers. Filming will begin in January 2016.
- 5) There will be a “Celebration” event in June 2016 (during Learning Disabilities Week). This will be an opportunity for all sub groups to showcase their progress to date. The Employment Sub Group will launch their employment film at this event.

