Conference report: Working together – using personal budgets for employment support

Friday 23 March 2012, Birmingham
BILD in partnership with BASE (British Association of Supported Employment)

Opening

The event was opened by Huw Davies from BASE who welcomed people to the event and told the audience that it was timely to have a conference on the topic of personalisation and supported employment as a number of project evaluations and policy decisions were due, or had recently been published.

Getting a Life
Linda Jordan NDTi

Linda Jordan from NDTi was joint project manager for the Getting a Life project set up in 2008 with funding from Department of Health as part of the delivery of Valuing People Now and Valuing Employment Now. The project worked with 11 demonstration sites over 3 years to identify barriers to young people with a learning disability getting into paid work after leaving school or college. The project worked with between 20 and 25 young people in each demonstration site and by the end of the project nearly 20% of young people were in employment. The project took a ‘whole systems’ approach analysing the barriers from the perspective of the young people and their families, as well as schools and colleges, employers, Job Centre Plus and social care.

The evaluation of the project highlighted that the things that needed to change are: the aspirations of all those involved, transition and career planning from year 9 onwards, that supported employment needs to be built into the curriculum during transition, and that young people need detailed holistic vocational profiling. Linda is now involved in the Preparing for Adulthood element of the SEN and Disability Green Paper. This is building on Getting a Life because it is:

- Outcome focussed – on employment, independent living, health and social inclusion
• Promoting the use of personal budgets and individual budgets for supported employment
• Encouraging career planning with young people from year 9
• Offering wider opportunities for work experience and internships
• Building strong links between schools and colleges and supported employment

**Personalisation – making it real**

Martin Routledge, Head of Operations at In Control and programme manager for Think Local Act Personal, the sector leadership coalition supporting personalisation

Martin spoke about the failure in the past to put sufficient emphasis on employment in social care and learning disability policies and legislation, this has changed since Valuing People Now and Valuing Employment Now and these changes are being continued through the Sayce Report, the Right to Control pilot sites and in *Making it Real*. Think Local Act Personal is the Coalition governments, sector wide commitment to transforming adult social care through personalisation and community based support.

Martin told the audience about *Making it Real*, that has been produced by the Think Local Act Personal National Co-production Advisory Group, which is made up of people who use services and carers. *Making it Real* highlights the main outcomes of importance to the quality of people’s lives, these are set out in a number of ‘I’ statements. One of which says ‘I have opportunities to train, study, work or engage in activities that match my interests, skills and abilities’. And in practice this means that ‘Systems and organisational culture support both people and carers to achieve and sustain employment if they are able to work’.

Martin urged the audience to find out more about *Making it Real* as in the future it is likely that local authorities will be signing up to its outcomes. Organisations can also sign up to *Making it Real*. The outcomes can also be used as part of a self assessment process for organisations and local authorities.

For more information about Think Local Act Personal and *Making it Real* go to [www.thinklocalactpersonal.org.uk](http://www.thinklocalactpersonal.org.uk)

**Book launch**

What works or doesn’t work – the evaluation of the Jobs First pilot
Martin Stevens Kings College London

Martin Stevens told delegates about the evaluation that he and colleagues at the King’s College Social Care Workforce Research Unit are currently completing into the Jobs First pilot. Jobs First was set up as part of the Valuing Employment Now delivery programme to focus on employment opportunities for adults with learning disabilities in 5 local authority areas. In each authority about 20 people were supported into employment, many using personal budgets.

Some of the emerging themes from the findings are that to promote employment for people with a learning disability what was needed was:

- Changing attitudes about employment for people with learning disabilities, in some pilot sites the stories of people with jobs was particularly powerful
- Good support planning and brokerage
- Using social care funding to support access to a job
- The need to prepare people for work in schools, colleges and day services
- Ongoing support, often from supported employment providers, for employers to identify jobs and develop natural support

Martin noted that the funding to support people to get into work was complex, involving social care and different streams of Department for Work and Pensions money; coordinating non social care funding was still a struggle. Good local commissioning was important in relation to supported employment to plan and deliver good local supported employment options.

Martin concluded that the changes required so that people could be supported into work were complex requiring good interagency working and changes in attitudes and aspirations.

Afternoon workshops

After lunch delegates had a choice of three workshops:

A Working for myself was chaired by Peter Taylor
B The challenge to providers of a changing market place was chaired by Paul Wilson from BASE
C Commissioning high quality employment support was chaired by Huw Davies from BASE
Preparing for adulthood and work  
Alasdaire Duerden, Department for Education

Alasdaire spoke about the consultation on the Government’s special educational needs and disability Green Paper: Support and Aspiration. The consultation on the Green Paper has now closed and the Government response should be available soon. The Coalition government has a strong commitment to the policy priorities of independence and access to work. They are seeking to mainstream the needs of children and young people with disabilities across departments, for example with Department of Work and Pension and Department of Health.

A number of government initiatives are promoting better access to employment for young people with SEN and disabilities including the Wolf Review of Vocational Education, raising the participation age and work in relation to participations and NEETs (young people not in education, employment or training) and the work on independent information, advice and guidance.

Alasdaire concluded by reminding the audience of the SEN Green Paper priorities of:

- Access to education opportunities that build on what has gone before and enable young people to progress
- A greater focus on outcomes – particularly employment
- Good opportunities and support in order to get and keep a job
- 0-25 education, health and care plans for all children young people
- Improved access to post 16 learning
- Improved further education vocational learning opportunities and the FE workforce

Alasdaire told delegates to look out for the government’s response to the Green Paper which should be out soon.

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