

DESCRIPTION OF THE PRACTICE

1. Title of the practice

- *'AN EMPLOYMENT SERVICE AS THE FRONT DOOR TO SERVICES FOR PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES -*

2. Organisation responsible for the practice

Gloucestershire County council, Southwest England

3. Contact person(s)

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4. Summary of the practice

The programme is run by the Gloucestershire employment team, which works across the county, making use of six drop-in centres. The team's function is to support people with learning disabilities (LD) to maximise their skills and independence, thus reducing (if not preventing altogether) the need for long-term social care support or a package of care - the services put together to meet a person's assessed needs as part of the care plan. The team supports people with LD to get into employment. By having the skills, training and experience required to get and maintain a job, people with an LD are diverted from requiring statutory services.

People with a disability experience employment support at the front door of the council. Everyone getting support from the council is directed to the employment team prior to their annual reassessment. All new cases are initially sent to the employment team prior to assessment by social workers and a consideration of the need for a package of care commencing.

In this document, 'LD' means learning disabilities.

5. National/regional/local context of the practice

Supporting people with learning disabilities (LD) into employment is part of the national agenda. Local authorities are asked to report figures on the number of people with LD working for more than 16 hours a week to the central government.

The national average rate of people with LD in employment is 7 per cent. Local statistics are collected under the Adult Social Care Outcomes Framework (ASCOF). Employment rates are one of only two national measures that are reported in this way.

It is estimated that 65 per cent of people with LD would like a paid job. About per cent cent of those known to services were thought to be in employment when the Labour Government published Valuing Employment Now in 2009.

The British Association for Supported Employment has been successfully used for decades as a personalised model for supporting people with significant disabilities in securing and retaining paid employment. The model uses a partnership strategy to enable people with disabilities to achieve sustainable long-term employment, and to enable businesses to employ valuable workers.

The employment service is a key part of Gloucestershire's prevention strategy. Prevention is highlighted as very important in recent legislation, most notably the Children and Families Act (2014) and the Care Act (2015).

This programme was implemented because:

1. People with learning disabilities had clearly told the council they wanted to work and that this was one of their top priorities.

2. In 2012, Gloucestershire's average employment rate of people with learning disabilities was lower than the national average (6 percent - national average is 7 percent). Urgent action was required.
3. The enablement team had been created but lacked the skills and expertise to support people with learning disabilities into sustainable employment opportunities.
4. It was important to modernise the existing systems and support structures from outdated models of day care and traditional support to a focus on how people could contribute to society.
5. Demand for services was growing at a time of reductions in government grants. An effective prevention and diversion strategy was required.

6. Staff involved

The programme is run by the Gloucestershire employment team, which works across the county, making use of six drop-in centres. (See also sections 4 and 12).

7. Target group

The programme was initially focused on adults with learning disabilities. In the last six months [of 2015], it has extended to incorporate people with mental health issues and physical disabilities, as well as young people taking on weekend jobs.

8. Aims of the practice

The purpose of the employment team is to support people with LD to get jobs. By having the skills, training and experience required to get and maintain a job, people with an LD are diverted from requiring statutory services.

- To maintain Gloucestershire's strong employment rate [of people with learning disabilities], which has now risen to ca. 20 per cent
- To reduce expenditure on existing packages of social care
- To avoid getting people into services unnecessarily, when with support, they could be assisted to make a contribution instead
- To promote the employment of disabled people among employers
- To ensure that planning for a job starts in childhood and that disabled children grow up with the same aspirations for the future as their non-disabled peers

9. Issues for social services

Service Integration/ Cooperation across services		Service Planning		Contracting	
Technology		Skills development (of the workforce)		Quality of services	
Others: active inclusion	x	Employment of people with disabilities	x		

ANALYSIS OF THE PRACTICE

10. Status

Pilot project (ongoing)		Project (ongoing)	x	Implemented practice (restricted areas)	
Pilot project (terminated)		Project (terminated)		Widely spread practice/rolled out	

11. Scope of the practice

Describe the setting of the practice, considering the following criteria:

- *Micro-level practice:* a practice that involves individuals at the local level
- *Meso-level practice:* practice that involves organisations or communities
- *Macro level practice:* a practice that involves large population groups

The programme takes place at the county level and follows a national agenda.

12. Leadership and management of the practice

Description of the leadership of the practice, considering the following criteria:

- *Collaborative management:* shared between large partnerships, often of central, regional, and local representation
- *Organisational management:* by one organisation
- *Professional management:* managed by a single person
- *Shared management:* shared with no defined leadership

Gloucestershire County Council is the lead organisation. The initiative was designed by the council's employment commissioner, who was initially seconded to design the pathways and processes by the Department of Work and Pensions. The programme is run by the council's employment team, which is a part of and managed by the Learning Disability enablement team of the Learning Disability Operations team.

The programme is supported by Gloucestershire Clinical Commissioning Group, the Department for Work and Pensions and local user-led organisations.

13. Engaging stakeholders in the practice

Description of the engagement of stakeholders, considering the following criteria:

- *Individual practice:* individuals have sought practice change
- *Network approach:* one or more organisations develop a network
- *Collaborative approach:* large collaboration with relevant stakeholders

The programme is led by Gloucestershire County Council, with support from the variety of partners described above.

The partnership is underpinned by a **shared employment strategy**, which has been contributed by all agencies.

The delivery of this strategy is overseen by a working group.

14. Involvement of service users and their families

Description of the involvement of service users, considering the following criteria:

- *Team involvement:* service users and carers were part of the practice team
- *Consultative:* a consultative body of users was set up for ongoing dialogue and feedback
- *Involvement in care:* person-centred approaches to care/support

Coproduction takes place on two levels:

1. Family members and service users are a part of the employment programme working group. They have contributed to designing the strategy and hold a scrutiny and challenge function in overseeing its successful implementation.
2. The user and his/her network of support are involved in putting together their support plan, including setting outcomes for preparing for employment / maintaining a job.

15. Costs and resources needed for implementation

Description of how the practice is financed, considering the following criteria:

- ☐ *Within existing resources:* staff time and other resources are provided 'in-house'

- *Staffing costs*: costs for staff investment
- *Joint/Pooled budgets*: two or more agencies pool budgets to fund services
- *Funded project*: external investment

The programme is funded by Gloucestershire County Council.

Running the service and all associated programmes and grants costs GBP 300,000 a year. Funding has been secured for a further two years.

Resources needed for the implementation of the programme include:

- A team of 10 staff, managed by the Enablement Team Manager.
- The provision of 'Forwards' employment clubs out of the six disability drop-in centres in Gloucestershire localities
- Investment in training and development for staff
- The provision of a 'Forwards app' – giving people information about employment on their smartphones.
- Close links with local social enterprises which provide short-term employment and development opportunities to prepare people for future mainstream employment

16. Evaluation approaches

Description of the evaluation method of the practice, considering the following criteria:

- *Multi-method*: use of both a qualitative and a quantitative approach
- *Single method*: a qualitative or quantitative approach
- *Audit*: looks at data sources such as existing medical records and/or other routinely collected service data.
- *Informal*: refers to in-house service evaluation using locally designed tools and/or collecting opportunistic feedback
- *No evaluation*
- *An evaluation is planned*

A multi-method evaluation has been carried out, including metrics such as:

- The number of people in employment and the increase in this rate
- The average cost of a care package for a person in the employment
- Retention rates in employment
- A cost-benefit analysis of the programme
- User-led audits

17. Measurable effects of the practice and what it has achieved for...

Service users	The employment rate for people with LD has increased year after year. The majority of people who have been through the programme no longer require packages of care now that they are in employment or have had their support significantly reduced.
Formal caregivers	n. a.

Informal carers	Families are starting to see employment as the norm (especially parents of children and young people, for whom this agenda fits strongly with their aspirations for the future).
Organisations	More employers are employing people with disabilities.

	<p>There has been a reduction in social care expenditure on people with mild-moderate learning disabilities. The majority of people who have been through the programme no longer require packages of care now that they are in employment or have had their support significantly reduced.</p> <p>□ Sometimes, reductions have been minor: e.g., people receiving a few hours of support a week (around GBP 60 a week) are no longer receiving any support. Other packages have been very significant, e.g., a recent case reduced from GBP 600 a week to GBP 200 a week.</p> <p>A financial evaluation of the programme is being carried out, which will produce more detailed results.</p> <p>Learning disability services were significantly overspent until four years ago. Since the start of the piloting of the employment pathway, and now in its implementation, the service has delivered within budget or in an underspend position every year. This has taken place within the context of the overall budget decreasing by 5-10 per cent every year.</p>
Other	

18. Anticipated or 'aspirational' effects of the practice and what it has achieved for...

This category can include outcomes which are not documented, quantified or properly evaluated. They can include such elements as improved knowledge, quality, workforce, etc.

Service users	More people with LD are retaining jobs and enjoying the various benefits of employment: including income and positive health outcomes.
Formal caregivers	n. a.
Informal carers	n. a.
Organisations	The social care workforce has developed a culture of supporting people to work rather than taking a paternalistic and 'caring' approach
Other	In general: positive risk-taking is increasing. The agenda enjoys widespread political support.

19. How the practice has changed the way the service is provided (lessons learned)

The programme has changed the way support is provided (see also earlier sections).

Gloucestershire has seen a reduction in care packages and people who would otherwise have accessed services, avoiding being unnecessarily drawn into the system.

Having a job has also benefited other areas of people's lives - for example, the ability to travel independently (thanks to travel training programmes when required), make friends and have the confidence to live independently.

The programme is cost-effective in two respects:

- decrease in the number and amount of packages of care (see section 17)
- better management on the demand side by diverting new cases to employment.

20. Sustainability of the practice

Description of whether the practice is sustainable, considering the following criteria:

- *Potential for sustainability:* practice was newly started or is ongoing/not yet mainstreamed. How could the practice be sustained (in terms of resources)?
- *Organic sustainability:* service users have been empowered to take the practice forward

☐ *Established:* the project has been operational for several years

The programme requires ongoing investment to maintain. However, it is cost-effective as its rate of return is higher than the investment required to run it (see sections 17 and 19).

21. Transferability of the practice

Description of whether the practice has been transferred, considering the following criteria:

- *Transferred:* transfer to other regions, countries, service user groups, etc.
- *Potential for transferability:* there is interest from the outside; elements of the practice have been taken up and used elsewhere; material for transferability (for ex. training material) has been developed

The programme was initially focused on adults with learning disabilities. In the last six months [of 2015], it has extended to incorporate people with mental health issues and physical disabilities, as well as young people taking on weekend jobs.

The principles of this approach are highly replicable and being considered in other work – for example, work with vulnerable families, care leavers and NEETs (Not in Education, Employment or Training).

The programme has been implemented elsewhere. The programme has been explored by numerous Local Authorities both in the South West and across the rest of England, and elements of it have been replicated elsewhere or written up as best-practice.