

Survey of Supported Employment in the North West

Employment services for people with learning disabilities

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Working with local services in Cheshire, Greater Manchester, Lancashire, Merseyside and South Cumbria in moving towards better futures for people with learning disabilities.

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Summary

The findings of the survey indicate that :

- **Supported employment in the North West is healthy.** It is a practical, attainable, *valued* option, and can compete with traditional day services in terms of quality and cost.
- **Supported employment is successful in terms of :**
 - the numbers of services now providing supported employment (over 40 active schemes in the North West)
 - the numbers of people in employment (an estimated 700+)
 - the quality and range of integrated work available
 - providing opportunities to people of all ages and levels of learning disability
 - cost effectiveness compared with traditional services
- **Commitment and investment equals success and quality.** Services with the largest budgets had the most people in paid work and the lowest costs.
- **Underfunding (lack of resources) is the most serious problem for services**
- **Demand exceeds supply.** There are more people wanting jobs than existing services can support.
- **There are no apparent major problems in finding jobs**
- **There are still difficulties with:**
 - the benefit trap
 - lack of support from other service staff and families
 - low expectations of potential workers
 - lack of awareness amongst purchasers
 - low pay and part-time culture amongst supported employment services attached to larger organisations
 - still no supported employment provision in some areas and only limited provision in others

Recommendations

At Regional Level

A co-ordinated approach across the North West is required on a number of major issues.

1. It is necessary to raise the profile of supported employment with policy makers and major funders e.g. North West Association of Directors of Social Services. It is also necessary to pursue the possibility of joint funding across the region for supported employment co-ordination.
2. A North West strategy for dis-investment in traditional services and re-investment into supported employment needs to be developed and agreed.
3. Purchasers, and care managers need to appreciate the advantages and suitability of supported employment as an option which should be available to all.
4. The potential for a purchasing or brokerage agency (or agencies) for the North West needs further exploration. It may be necessary to devise a standard unit cost system for purchasers and providers of supported employment .
5. A strong agency network is essential for mutual support and growth, to share success, to maximise funding opportunities, and to disseminate best practice. Existing links need strengthening.
6. Pooling of information is required to strengthen the lobby for change to benefit regulations at local and national levels.

At Agency Level

Supported employment agencies need to consider ways of increasing access to employment opportunities for all people with learning disabilities irrespective of age, sex, or level of disability.

7. Agencies need to ensure people in services receive formal assessments and that supported employment is presented as a real option. This could entail a supported employment presence at assessment meetings.
8. *Attached* services need to explore ways of expanding into larger, more independent services. This could be done by raising the awareness of purchasers, users of services, and their families or carers, and eventually creating the right climate for re-investment into supported employment services.

9. The potential for cross-client group services requires investigation. The obvious advantages include staff cover, extension and co-ordination of employer contacts, increased funding opportunities, shared administration and office costs, and cross-fertilisation of ideas.
10. The possible advantages of 'floating off' agencies to the independent sector, or buying into, or setting up, independent sector agencies needs examination. This could create opportunities for the use of the Special Transitional Grant in supported employment provision.
11. An improved salary structure for support workers which reflects the high levels of responsibility and commitment required should be seriously considered.
12. Agencies should ensure Training in Systematic Instruction (TSI)¹ and other appropriate training is available to all staff in supported employment services.

At Service User, Family, Carer Level

Users and their families and carers are all potentially powerful agents for change. They often have access to politicians and prominent, influential people in society in ways which may be more difficult for professionals working in services.

13. Users and families and carers committed to ordinary living need to be involved in raising the profile of supported employment generally among other users, families, and carers. They often have more credibility than service workers. Expectations need to be raised amongst people using services and their families, particularly if the percentage of women in employment is to be increased.
14. Users, families, and carers need support to organise and become an effective lobby for supported employment opportunities.
15. Users, families, and carers can be instrumental in getting supported employment into the assessment process and ultimately onto care plans. This is one of the ways in which evidence can be collected to argue for disinvestment in traditional services and re-investment in supported employment services.

¹ Training in Systematic Instruction is based on a constantly evolving technology devised originally by Marc Gold & Associates USA. (TSI) Ltd is a UK organisation set up specifically to provide this training for staff who are supporting people with learning disabilities in integrated employment.

Introduction

Reasons for Survey

A national survey of supported employment (supported employment) was undertaken in 1992 as part of the *Real Jobs Initiative*² which included the North West. A total of 13 services from Greater Manchester, Lancashire, Merseyside, Cheshire, and Cumbria, responded.

Since then, the number of such services in the North West has increased considerably and it was felt necessary to obtain an accurate, up to date picture of supported employment in the area.

Apart from this increase in the number of services there has also been a significant development in the range and quality of services which are now available. It was intended, therefore, to look also at the qualitative aspects of present services in terms of that provided to the individual.

There has been a growing debate over the cost of supported employment compared to traditional services. Therefore one aim of this survey was to examine the cost effectiveness of supported employment. Cost benefit to the service user, the service provider or purchaser, and ultimately the tax payer are areas which are examined.

In the North West, and probably elsewhere, there seem to be two distinct models of supported employment developing. Some agencies have separate budgets, are specifically formed to provide and promote supported employment, and do not have any other function. Others are also involved in supported employment as part of a wider service provision. These are often attached to day centres or residential facilities. This survey will compare the two models in order to make recommendations for future investment and further development.

² Lister T., Ellis L., 1992 *Survey of Supported Employment Services in England, Scotland, and Wales* National Development Team: Manchester.

Definitions Used

The following definitions were adopted for the purpose of this survey. They are the same ones used in the national survey carried out in 1992. These definitions were included as part of the introduction to the questionnaire used in the survey.

Supported Employment is defined as:

Real work in an integrated work setting with on-going support provided by a supported employment agency.

The crucial term is 'work': supported employment placements are work, not 'vocational training' or 'work preparation'.

As used in this definition:

Real work refers to work that would be done by a typical member of the workplace if it were not done by a worker with a learning disability. This excludes work that has been artificially created for a person with a learning disability to do. Consolidating several small tasks to create a job is acceptable, but, creating new tasks which would not normally be done by a non-disabled worker is not.

Integrated work setting refers to a work setting where the proportion of workers with a learning disability is roughly equivalent to the proportion of people with a learning disability in the general population. For work sites with less than 25 workers, the number of workers who have a learning disability should not normally exceed two. For work sites with less than 10 workers, the number of workers who have a learning disability should not normally exceed one. For this reason large crews, or enclaves where people work together on one site, are excluded from this definition.

On-going support refers to job-support services that are theoretically not time-limited. Current funding requirements often make this an unrealistic expectation, but the service should be committed to providing support for as long as the worker with a learning disability requires them in order to perform his or her work satisfactorily. These services typically include on-site training, job support, co-worker support and training, performance monitoring, advocacy, and transport. In some circumstances on-going support may be as minimal as being available by telephone to deal with occasional problems.

This definition makes no mention of such controversial issues as wages, hours of work, and the severity of learning disability of the target population. This study seeks to determine how the issues are being dealt with by service providers throughout the North West. As a result, the definition is broad, rather than restrictive. A service which

catered for a population with relatively mild disabilities, whose placements were unpaid and for a limited number of hours per week was still considered supported employment as long as it met the requirements of the definition

History of Supported Employment

The idea that people with learning disabilities can do ordinary jobs in integrated settings developed during the 1970s. In Britain, Mencap's Pathway project led the way at the same time that Marc Gold was breaking new ground in North America. Previously it had been assumed that people with learning disabilities required controlled or segregated environments in which to work.

The earliest supported employment schemes in the UK were established around 1984. They concentrated mainly in the North West, London, and Wales, although there were a few in other parts of the country.

In February 1987 a national consortium of interested professionals (including the North West Training and Development Team), in consultation with John O'Brien from the USA, obtained funding from the Rowntree Foundation to bring over to this country a team from Marc Gold and Associates (MG&A). They ran a series of workshops on Systematic Instruction for a number of people already working in supported employment services. This led to many agencies adopting the philosophies and methodologies first practised by MG&A. Training in Systematic Instruction (TSI) Ltd. was formed in 1988 to continue the training in this country.

There are, of course, other individuals and organisations, mainly from the USA and Canada, who have influenced the consequent spread and development of supported employment in the UK.

In this country a definition of supported employment has been adopted by the Association of Supported Employment Agencies (ASEA) which is supported by TSI Ltd. The basic elements of this definition are:-

The **support** required by a person to enable them to carry out the job must be focused to meet the individual needs of the worker. It must contain a long term commitment with no discrimination against people in terms of perceived ability or unacceptable behaviour.

The **job** should be paid, worthwhile, in integrated settings, and offering the same variety of work as is available to the non-disabled community.

The supported employment concept moves away completely from the *readiness model* where people have to prove their competence, often in totally artificial situations, before

being given the chance to work. It avoids the insensitive and often demeaning situations, still around in some day services, where people have been receiving 'training for work' for 20 to 30 years.

The responsibility in the supported employment model is shifted to the agency, and eventually to the support worker, to provide whatever appropriate training and support the client-worker requires to enable them to obtain and carry out the job. The support and training is provided in the workplace in the same way as that provided to the rest of the workforce whenever possible.

The demand from people with learning disabilities for employment has increased considerably over the years. Many surveys and feedback from self-advocacy groups have shown that people now recognise the status and independence that goes with work. People are bored and frustrated by the limited opportunities presented by traditional segregated provision in day centres.

Method Adopted

A detailed and lengthy questionnaire, with covering letter and stamped addressed envelope, was sent out to all known employment service providers in the North West in January 1995. The questionnaire was based on the one used in the national survey in 1992, with some minor alterations.

Telephone contact was made, and an introductory letter sent, prior to the questionnaire being circulated. An extensive telephone follow-up took place with many of the recipients. Support and advice was available by phone to participants and several services were visited. Returns were completed by March 1995.

Some respondents did not answer all the questions. The findings presented in this report therefore are based on the responses available for each question.

Participants

Questionnaires and letters were sent out to 42 service providers in Greater Manchester, Lancashire, Merseyside, Cheshire, and South Cumbria. Grateful acknowledgement is made to all respondents for participating.

Of the **29 services who responded** four stated they did not meet the criteria of the definition, and one had only just started to operate. **There were 24 services, therefore, who actively participated in the survey:**

- Access Employment Consultants Liverpool
- Action for workers, Ulverston
- Blackpool, Wyre, and Fylde Supported Employment
- Bridgework UK, Liverpool
- Bury Employment Support and Training
- Chance to Work, Liverpool
- Choices, Ellesmere Port
- Crossways Centre, Leyland
- Ecroyd Centre, Colne
- Employment Placement East Zone, Burnley
- Employment Placement, The Knoll, Lancaster
- Employment Placement, West Lancs, Ormskirk
- Hopwood Hall College, Rochdale
- Integrate, Preston
- Jobmatch, Tameside
- Meadowbank Lodge, Winsford
- Mill Lane Centre, Barrow in Furness
- Mowbray Centre, Blackburn
- Network, Olive Mount, Liverpool
- PACE, Middlewich, Cheshire
- Pathway Employment, Wigan and Leigh College
- Pathway Employment, Bolton
- Salford Work Development Unit, Swinton
- Supported Development Agency, Liverpool
- Thingwall Industries, Walton, Liverpool
- Training Into Employment, Oldham
- Whinfield Centre, Kendal
- Worklink, Stockport
- United Response, St. Annes

Findings of Survey

Service Information

We needed to examine the structure and composition of supported employment services in the North West in terms of status, staffing, and populations served.

An understanding of how they operated was crucial for any future design process. The systems they used, the criteria and policies which underpinned their operation, were all significant considerations.

It was important to assess the effectiveness of services in delivering measurable outcomes.

Structure and Composition of Supported Employment Services

Status of Services

Out of the 24 active participants in the survey only seven services stated that they were independent in terms of not being part of a larger service organisation. At least 15 could be classed as independent. They had, in most cases, a separate budget and staff who had been appointed solely to carry out the provision of supported employment.

These 15 services are referred to in the report as a separate group in order to examine their particular characteristics. They will be henceforth be referred to as the *independent group*.

The remaining nine services tended to be attached to larger services, such as day centres. They were usually operated by a single, often part-time, member of staff with responsibility for supported employment. This often restricted their ability to provide the level of support and diversity of opportunity which people required.

This group is referred to as the *attached group* throughout the report.

A total of nine agencies could be classed as being part of the '*independent sector*' as defined under the *Care in the Community Act*. They were not part of any local authority provision and were operated in the main by voluntary sector organisations or health trusts. The scope for further development of this sector needs to be addressed in view of the Special Transitional Grant (STG) funding arrangements now in place. A high proportion of STG money can only be spent in this sector.

Age of Services

(Table 1³)

There has been an encouraging increase in the number of supported employment services operating in the North West over the last five years. The numbers rising from 11 in 1990 to the present 24. (See Figure 1 below.) This takes into account only those who took part in the survey. There are additional services who did not respond, and on whom we do not have any recent information.

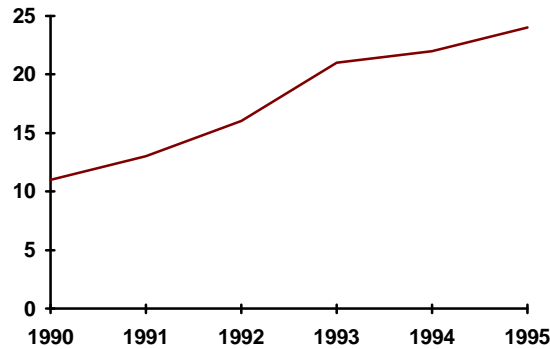


Figure 1
Growth in Services 1990-1995

Recently, however, the rate of increase appears to have reduced. In the last two years only three new services have started up. There is no obvious explanation for this, as there are still areas without any supported employment provision and in most others the demand for employment far exceeds the ability of existing services to supply it.

Numbers of Staff Employed in Services

(Table 2)

The highest number of staff employed by any one agency was 17, all of whom were full-time. At the other extreme, there were two agencies that employed just one part-time member of staff, and a further three employed one full-time staff member.

The 15 agencies in the *independent group* employed an average of 5.3 full-time staff, and 3.5 part-time staff.

The *attached group* mostly had only one or two staff.

³ See Appendix.

Staff Salaries

Salaries	Numbers of Staff	%
less than £10,000 per year	46	32
£10,000-£14,999 per year	65	45
£15,000-£19,999 per year	31	22
£20,000-£25,000 per year	2	1
Total	144	10

The 32% of staff earning below £10,000 per annum are support workers. Their level of salary does not reflect the level of responsibility and commitment required for that work. Nor does it compare favourably with that of other day service workers who are often working in less demanding situations.

Support Worker Duties

(Table 4)

Support workers carried out a full range of duties in most services. All agencies stated that support workers were involved in on the job training for client-workers. Only 50% of the agencies saw this training as supplementing the client-worker's production in order to ensure it was at the same level as that of non-disabled workers doing the same job.

Support workers were involved in sorting out benefits for client-workers in 50% of agencies. This is substantially lower than the 74% involved at the time of the national survey. The decrease could be due to the increased availability of specialist benefit advice agencies. Furthermore, regular 'benefit take-up' campaigns have taken place recently, particularly at times of benefit changes.

Populations Served and Unemployment Rate

(Tables 5 & 6)

Over 90% of the agencies operated in areas which had a population in excess of 50,000. 65% had populations in excess of 100,000. The agency areas appeared generally to follow the local authority boundaries. Liverpool was an exception. Several services in Liverpool served particular client groups. One was exclusively for young people (18-24) with both physical and learning disabilities. Another was set up to provide supported employment as an option for people resettled to the community from residential institutions.

In 50% of the agency areas, the unemployment rate was higher than the national rate i.e. 8.4% (Department of Employment figures for February 1995). One third of the agencies operated in areas with a rate in excess of 12%.

The high levels of unemployment across the North West (8.7%, Department of Employment, February 1995) do not appear to have been a significant factor in placing people in jobs. Some of the most successful agencies were operating in areas of very high unemployment. This clearly challenges the belief that people with disabilities cannot get jobs when unemployment is high.

How Services Operate

Referral systems

(Table 7)

Most of the agencies (71%) took referrals directly from day centres. Of the 15 *independent agencies*, six took 50% or more of their referrals from this source. Community Learning Disability Teams, Further Education Colleges, and PACT teams regularly referred people to this group. Two agencies made all referrals internally through their parent organisations. The group generally tended to take referrals, however, from a wide spread of agencies.

Of the nine *attached services*, four took 100% and one 85% of their referrals from day centres. Six of them took all their referrals from within their own service. Two of the services took referrals from the Community Learning Disability Teams, and one stated that all referrals were self made.

Being attached to a larger service meant, in the majority of cases, that employment opportunities were limited to people from within that service. There is a certain inevitability about this as the supported employment service was seen as part of the overall service delivery. In many instances it was funded from the same source.

There was little evidence to suggest that many people were being referred as part of a formal Care in the Community assessment procedure. This was possibly because, until now, comprehensive assessments have been applied mainly to new service entrants. As formal assessments become available to existing users of services, there should be an increase in referrals from this source. **There is a real need to get supported employment on to the assessment agenda.**

Another reason for low number of referrals from the assessment source could be a lack of knowledge on the part of assessment teams. Options would be limited to those services known to be available. A true assessment of need would not be taking place in such situations. It would be more a matter of fitting people into existing services.

Selection Criteria

(Table 8)

Motivation of the individual was a selection criterion cited by 20 (83%) of the services. It was considered the most important criterion by 14 (58%) of them.

Severe learning disability was a factor for 54% of services. Family support and social skills were factors for 46% of services.

That motivation was the main criterion is a healthy sign. It meant that pre-conceived ideas around the abilities of people or their readiness for work were less likely to be a consideration.

Job Search and Matching Strategy

(Table 9)

All participating services indicated that their strategy was first to determine an individual's interests and capabilities and then to search for a job that matches those interests and capabilities.

Virtually all the services used the vocational profile approach, and associated meetings with client-worker, family and friends, and prospective employer. Most maintained contact with employers and monitored job adverts in the press. Visits to job centres and assistance with job applications and interviews were common.

Position on Pay

The difference between the 15 independent services and the nine attached ones is pronounced on the issue of pay.

The *independent services* take a much firmer line. Five considered the normal going rate essential, another five highly desirable, three the ideal to strive towards, and two negotiated wages based on productivity. **None considered wages to be secondary. Only four out of 15 accepted job placements with little or no pay.**

Of the nine *attached services*, however, four considered wages to be secondary, three an ideal to strive towards, and two negotiated wages based on productivity. **Virtually all, i.e. eight out of nine, accepted job placements with little or no pay.** This is an inevitable consequence of setting up services which are under-resourced and poorly supported. Low or unpaid work for a few hours per week is often seen as the only option by staff working under these conditions.

Subsidised Employment

(Table 10)

The survey revealed that 100 of the 437 people in work were in receipt of a wage subsidy. The Sheltered Placement

Scheme was being used by 95 of these. Youth Training, and Training for Work schemes were also used by some services. **Only the 15 independent agencies used any of the above schemes.** The general lack of resources amongst the *attached services* was probably the reason for this.

A total of 160 people were using Therapeutic Earnings as a way into employment. Of these 122 were from the *independent agencies* and 38 from those *attached to larger services*.

Being in receipt of income support limited the earnings of a further 25 people.

Work Experience

(Table 11)

It was the opinion of 54% of the services that work experience does not often lead to paid employment at the normal going rate. Others (21%) stated that about one half of such placements resulted in paid employment. Only 17% of services believed that most work experience placements eventually become work which is paid at the going rate or better.

The number of people who graduate from work experience into paid employment at the normal going rate is relatively low. Agencies need to be aware of the limitations of work experience placements and the debilitating effect on people whose expectations of paid employment are never realised. It is far better, in most instances, to concentrate resources on a smaller number of paid jobs than a larger number of potentially damaging work experience placements.

Effectiveness of Services

The effectiveness of a service can only be realistically measured by the outcomes. **How many people are actually in employment? Are all age groups, both sexes, and all levels of disability being adequately catered for? How long are people retaining jobs and what are the reasons for them leaving?**

Numbers in Employment

A total of 437 people were being supported in employment at the time of the survey. **The average number of people in jobs per agency was 19.** This figure was the average for all 24 active services included in the survey.

If we were to consider the 15 *independent services* only, this figure increases to **25 per agency**. The average for the *attached services* was **10 per agency**.

Taking into account the people in employment supported by agencies who did not take part in the survey, **the probable**

total number of people in work in the North West is over 700.

Number of Other People Supported by Supported Employment Services

Participating agencies were asked to state the numbers of individuals who were not currently in employment but for whom they were the main day service provider. This was to include people who were in the process of looking for work or receiving relevant training. A total of 959 were stated to be in this category.

When these numbers are taken into account **an average of 62 people** were being supported by the 15 *independent agencies*. If realistic comparisons, particularly in terms of cost effectiveness, are to be made between traditional day services and those providing supported employment, these figures are very significant.

Job Distribution Across Sexes, Age Range and Levels of Disability

(Tables 12, 13 & 14)

These areas are examined in more detail in the section on 'Individual Client-Worker Perspective'.

Most services catered for people from both sexes, across the age range, and with varying levels of disability.

Some services tended to concentrate on people from a particular age group or people with a certain level of disability. Some services were specifically set up to work with just one client group e.g. school leavers with profound and multiple disabilities. There did appear to be a genuine attempt to include in employment provision people from both sexes, and with different ages and levels of disability.

Job Retention

(Table 15)

The turn-over in jobs was low. Over a period of one year, 41 (9%) of those in work had decided to leave, and 20 (5%) were made redundant or sacked.

Inappropriate social behaviour (21%) and poor work behaviour (14%) were stated as the most common causes of the failure or termination of job placements. Loss of benefits (10%) and family problems (10%) were also seen by agencies as contributing factors.

Main Problems Facing Services

Services were asked to state the two or three greatest problems currently confronting their service. The following were most commonly expressed.

Resources

Lack of sufficient resources, mainly in terms of staff or funding, was the most commonly identified problem facing services. The demand for employment services often far outstripped their available resources. Too often services were seen by funders and other service providers as luxury. The services with the largest budgets had the highest numbers of people in paid employment and the lowest unit costs per client-worker. **When the resources provided were of a reasonable level, services flourished.**

Staff Training

Not having enough trained staff was identified as a problem by some services. This was very much a training issue linked to resource shortfalls. Funds were not available, in these services, for essential TSI, and other appropriate, training. **Appropriate training is an essential prerequisite to success, in what is still a relatively new, yet very demanding, field of work.**

Benefits

Benefits were identified as probably the second most significant problem with which services had to contend. The levels of benefits received by potential workers presented a barrier to employment. This was particularly so when people were living independently and in receipt of a package of benefits including housing benefit.

The high numbers of people in part-time work and earning only the maximum £15 allowed under the therapeutic earnings disregard rule are a direct consequence of the benefits trap. Anyone earning more than the £15 allowance loses pound for pound the equivalent amount from their benefits. There are some exceptions to this but generally people enjoy little financial gain from being in work. Another problem is the difficulty experienced by many people of getting back onto benefits if the job finishes. (See 'Cost Benefits to Client-worker and Exchequer' page 24).

Low Expectations

Low expectations of people with severe learning disabilities, often emanating from families and on occasions staff involved in other services, was quoted as a problem by a number of agencies. As a consequence, people often lacked the required support and encouragement. In some cases families and staff were actively discouraging any movement away from safe and familiar environments.

Job Finding

Only 7 services stated that the economic situation, high levels of unemployment, or general difficulties in finding jobs were a problem. Finding people jobs does not seem to

present a problem as long as the right resources and commitment are present

Individual Client-Worker Perspective

In addition to examining the composition and structure of supported employment services in the North West, we needed to look at the quality of service as **delivered to the individual**.

The scope and nature of this survey was such that it was not possible to include users of services. *A survey of users would be valuable in the future if supported employment services are to be seriously evaluated.*

It was possible, however, to examine some qualitative aspects of services to the individual by looking at issues such as accessibility, variety and choice of work, integration, permanency and levels of support, remuneration, and dependency on benefits.

Some of these have already been discussed earlier in the report in terms of service or agency effectiveness. It is not the intention in this section to duplicate those findings but to explore them from a slightly different perspective.

We needed to look at how accessible services were to people of different ages, both sexes, and with different levels of disability and support needs.

Age of Client-workers

(Table 12)

The ages of people in employment ranged from under 18 years to 65 years. The largest proportion (94%) of these were in the 18 to 49 age group.

Services were provided, to some extent, for people of all different ages. It was found, however, that in some situations certain age groups were not catered for at all. There were 13 services, for example, that did not support anyone over 50. Only 5% of the total in work were over 50 years of age. This is almost certainly well below the level expected in the non-disabled working population. It could be that, because of the very limited resources available generally, this group is not seen as a priority

There is only one service that supports people under 18 years. Most people with severe learning disabilities are in full-time education until 19 and so it is not surprising that only 1% of those surveyed were in work. Another service only supports people in the 18-24 group.

It seems, therefore, that whether age is a factor in access to supported employment depends on the location.

Levels of Learning Disability

(Table 13)

Services which took part in the survey were asked to supply information about the levels of disability of those they were supporting in work. The results showed that 83% of client-workers were people with a moderate or severe learning disability.

People with a profound learning disability accounted for 6% of those in work. Most of those people are in part-time work earning an average of £3-£4 per hour. They are in a wide range of jobs including work in offices and children's nurseries, to garage work and operating a courier service.

The two figures above compare very favourably with those found in the 1992 national survey i.e. 67% and 1% respectively. It would appear that in most agencies operating in the North West there is no general discrimination against those with the highest support needs.

People with all levels of disability, including multiple disabilities, are catered for in services across the North West. Not all services, however, are able to cater for all levels of disability. There are nine services which at present only support people in either one or two of the level of disability categories.

Locality would again appear to be the primary factor in determining accessibility to services or not.

Client-Workers with Multiple Disabilities

(Table 14)

Nearly 11% of those in work could not communicate verbally.

A total of 34% had disabilities in addition to their learning disability. 9% had a psychological disability, 16% a physical disability, and 9% behaviour seen as challenging.

These figures demonstrate that not only are opportunities being made available to people with multiple disabilities in the North West but that people with this level of multiple disability were able to hold down jobs when adequate support was provided.

Sex of Client-workers

Of the total of 437 client-workers, 273 (62%) were men and 164 (38%) were women. These percentages are very similar to the findings of the 1992 national survey i.e. 61% and 39%.

One reason for the imbalance may be that there tend to be more men with severe learning disabilities in general. Another reason may be a higher expectation for employment amongst men with learning disabilities and

their families, than amongst women. Most agencies operate a fairly open policy of selecting people for employment. The main criterion for selection is the motivation of the individual. If this is so then work needs to be done to redress the imbalance by raising the expectations of potential women employees.

The proportion of men and women client-workers in most individual services is similar to that found overall. The bias in favour of men, therefore, appears to be consistent across the North West.

Previous Activities

(Table 16)

Almost one half (49%) of all people in work were previously based in day centres. Of the remainder, 12% came from special education and a further 12% were not previously involved in any formal activity.

Far more people with learning disabilities attend day centres than take part in any other activity, and it is this which is reflected in the survey's findings.

Variety and Choice of Work

(Tables 17 & 18)

Small, locally owned businesses employed the highest number of client-workers, followed by large private sector businesses, and then the public sector group i.e. health, social services and other local authority departments.

There are certain kinds of work which people have traditionally seen as being more suitable for people with learning disabilities. From the survey we found that 41% of those in work were employed in those areas. Kitchen and waiter/waitress work accounted for 16% of jobs, and 16% were employed in domestic, portering and housekeeping work. Groundskeeping and outdoor maintenance work involved only 9% of the survey sample.

Although this 41% is a substantial number of people working in stereotypical jobs the figure compares well with the 50% found in the 1992 national survey. There does appear to be a movement into other areas of work.

The wide variety of worksites used confirms this trend. Factory work (23%) and retail store/shop work (16%) were the two most popular, with outdoor (11%), office (10%), and restaurant (10%) work close behind.

From this evidence, it seems that services are doing everything possible to ensure the right job match. The use of a wide variety of work sites indicates the move towards meeting the individual needs of potential workers and not just slotting them into whatever stereotypical work happens to be available.

Integration

(Table 19)

All services claimed high levels of integration for client-workers in jobs. Excellent integration was claimed for 50% of those in work, and good integration for 40%. As few as 10% were in jobs which only provided a fair level of integration and none was completely segregated.

Hours of Work

(Table 20)

The hours per week that people worked varied not only between the individual services but between the two types of service.

The nine services in the *attached group* were **predominately supporting people in jobs of less than 15 hours per week**. Out of a total of 91 placements, 86 (95%) were in this category.

The *independent group* also supported some people in jobs of less than 15 hours per week but it was only 35% of the total supported by this group. Jobs of between 15 and 34 hours per week accounted for 31% of the total, and jobs of over 34 hours per week for 34%. This is not because the *independent group* served more capable people. On the contrary, 46% of those supported in jobs by this group were people with severe or multiple disabilities.

Workers supported by attached services are very unlikely to find work of more that 15 hours per week. However, workers supported by independent services have a high likelihood of finding such work.

Levels of Support

(Table 21)

The majority of services provided a range of support from continuous on-site support to no support.

Two of the services in the independent group were specifically for people with very high support needs and therefore all of their client-workers required continuous on-site support. Of all those in work, 25% received continuous on-site support or contact on a daily basis. On-site support may reduce for some after the initial training stage. For others it may always be needed.

Over one half (53%) of the client-workers had become very independent, requiring monthly contact or even none at all. **This illustrates the ability of supported employment to enable many people, most of whom would previously have been totally reliant on services, to break away from the dependency trap and lead relatively normal lives.**

Pay

(Tables 22 & 23)

As with hours of work, there appears to be a large discrepancy between the *independent services* and the *attached services*, in the issue of client-worker rates of pay.

Of those workers who received some payment, 44% of them were paid less than £50 per week. In the *attached services* 90% of workers, who were paid, were in this category. In the *independent services* only 40% were earning this amount and 41% were averaging over £100 per week (44% were on an hourly rate of over £3).

Even more disturbing, are the numbers of people who are not paid any wage. In the *attached services* 71% of all those in employment receive no pay. In the *independent services*, the figure is 9% of those in work

These figures fit with the numbers of people working less than 15 hours per week. **It would appear that in the great majority of *attached services*, client-workers are working less than 15 hours per week, and for less than £50 per week, in many cases for nothing.** Most or all of them getting some pay will be in receipt of therapeutic earnings.

All participating services were asked to state the **highest weekly salary** earned by a client-worker in their service. The average highest weekly salary of those submitted by the *independent* group was £122 per week. The highest single amount was £225 per week.

The average from the *attached group* was £33 per week, the highest individual amount was £92 per week.

Benefit Dependency

Nearly all client-workers were totally dependent on benefits when they joined the services. Just over half (54%) of the services supported people who became less dependent and one third of services had client-workers who had become completely independent of benefits.

Length of Time in Job

(Table 24)

It was encouraging to find that over half (54%) of people have been in their current jobs for longer than one year and 33% for over 2 years.

This demonstrates the ability of people with learning disabilities to hold down jobs and become valued and reliable members of the workforce.

Costs of Supported Employment Services

Levels of Commitment

Many of the services show high commitment to the development of supported employment services. There are 12 supported employment services with a budget of over £50,000 per annum, six of these with one of over £100,000. Other funding authorities do not appear to be as committed in terms of financial investment.

Service Costs

The financial information supplied by the *attached group of services* did not contain sufficient detail to be used in the analysis.

In the *independent services* group, budget information was supplied by 11 services. It was this information that was used in the following calculations.

The following method was used to calculate the cost per annum of supporting a client-worker in employment:

The total projected budget costs for this current financial year were divided by the total number of client-workers currently supported by the 11 services. The final figure was the average cost to the services of supporting a client-worker.

The total of the current budgets is £1,459,412 and the number of client-workers currently supported is 310.

The average annual cost is £4,708 per client-worker

If we include the other 354 people for whom these services claim to be the main day service then **the average annual cost would be £2,198 per client-worker.**

If we take out of the calculation the two high cost specialist services who cater only for people with very high support needs then **the average annual cost is £3,867 per client-worker.** This represents the most likely true figure for mainstream supported employment services.

There is quite a wide difference between costings for individual services. One of the large, well established, services with a client-worker group across the level of disability range has a cost as low as £1,340 per client-worker per annum. Another similar service has an annual cost of £6,785 per client-worker. These figures do not take into account the additional people who are supported by the service but not currently in employment. If these were included in the calculations the figures would be much lower.

A much closer examination than was possible in this survey would be required to account for this difference in costs

between the two services. The higher cost service has been in existence less than 12 months whereas the low cost service has been operating for over five years. The established service has over 50% of client-workers in jobs which are over two years old. They require minimal support. The more recent service, on the other hand, mostly supports people who have been in jobs for less than six months.

This example shows that as services develop over years, increasing numbers of client-workers, requiring minimal support, enable unit costs per client-worker to reduce considerably.

Some services specialise in supporting people with very high dependency. The annual cost per worker in those services is higher, ranging from £7,722 to £15,117. As before, these figures do not include other people supported by the service who are not in employment.

All of these costs compare very favourably with those of traditional day services. Costs per person for people attending day centres tend to range upwards from a minimum of £4,500 per annum. The average gross cost, excluding capital charges, for people with learning disabilities who attend day centres, for all authorities in England and Wales, issued by The Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA) in March 1994 for 1992/93 was £5,650 per annum.

This cost depends on a number of factors, including the type and standard of service provision, as well as the level of support required by the individual. It is not unusual for special care or special needs provision to cost annually as much as £15,000 - £20,000 per person in traditional services.

Financial Benefit to Client-Worker

From the information received, it was difficult to determine with accuracy the financial benefit to the client-workers. Apart from the 22% of workers who did not receive any pay, we can assume that the remainder received some financial benefit. Even those on therapeutic earnings would normally have an additional £15 per week on top of their benefits.

Those people in the 40% who earn over £100 per week may well have gained a more substantial increase in their disposable income. Without detailed information about the individual's previous benefit situation it is not possible to measure the financial advantages that employment could have brought.

Cost Benefit to the Exchequer

When a person, previously in receipt of high levels of benefit, obtains a job and comes off benefit, the cost to the exchequer is reduced two-fold. Not only is the benefit previously paid out reduced or even done away with completely, but additional income is generated from tax and national insurance contributions.

The present benefit system, as it applies to the majority of people with severe learning disabilities, is a disincentive to work, particularly full-time. People would have to earn very high wages indeed to enjoy any financial advantage. This is often referred to as the 'benefit trap'. There is also a high risk that, if the employment ceased, previous benefits would no longer be available. (See Benefits Section page 16)

Many people are clearly not prepared to take this risk, even if they could obtain a job with a sufficiently high pay. A sensible system, whereby people could retain a proportion of their salary on top of benefits, would enable people with learning disabilities to break out of the benefits trap. It should be possible to implement such a system at no cost to the exchequer overall.

Recent governments seem to have consistently avoided these issues. Schemes such as the Disabled Working Allowance have been shown to be totally inadequate when applied to this client group.

New Initiatives

The following two projects are examples of different ways of working. They indicate how supported employment services could develop in the future.

Merseyside Supported Employment Development Agency - Maxim

This venture was set up in Liverpool in January 1995, to run for two years. It is funded by Liverpool City Council, Liverpool Health Authority, and Merseyside Training and Enterprise Council.

Its main function is to act as a brokerage service between the two main purchasers of supported employment services (that is Liverpool City Council and the Health Authority) and a number of organisations operating as providers of supported employment in Liverpool.

The supported employment Development Agency also intends to create a system of accreditation for providers of supported employment. Other back-up support, including access to data banks and training, will be made available to provider agencies. They will also set up a 'fast track' employment service for people who are currently available

and waiting for work, and who will probably require minimum support. Another service for those with high support needs will also be developed.

The project has a number of features which could be applied on a wider scale. It does very much depend on the will and commitment of the major funding bodies to develop and support supported employment as an alternative to other services. This is certainly the case in Liverpool but is not so generally in the North West.

The brokerage concept is attractive, particularly if the agency can maintain independence from purchasers, and resist the temptation to become merely an extension of the purchasing arm.

Accreditation of supported employment agencies is an inevitable consequence of the onset of the purchaser/provider culture. The establishment of an accreditation system should be seen as a positive move which will enable a standard to be set for supported employment services. The national Association of Supported Employment Agencies (ASEA) and other groups have been considering the basic elements of an accreditation system for some time. If a system could be devised and adopted nationally then not only would it increase the profile of supported employment, but could prevent services being restricted by having to conform to 'day service specifications' written with traditional services in mind.

Bolton Employment Support Team - A Supported Employment Service Working Across Client Groups

The employment support team in Bolton has developed from a Pathway scheme which was set up in 1987. It has since expanded into an employment service which supports people from a number of client groups. It is now available to people with mental health problems and people with physical and sensory disabilities, as well as people with learning disabilities. The Pathway scheme is still operating and is the arm of the service which supports people with learning disabilities into work.

The other client groups are supported by workers who have specialist experience in working with that group. Even though staff tend to work primarily with their own client group, there is cross-over, and the service has adopted a team approach. Meetings of the Bolton Employment Support Team take place weekly. It also has a Joint Review Body which meets every six months.

There are appreciable advantages in having a combined employment service of this kind. The team shares premises including administration support, reception and meeting facilities. There are obvious financial benefits in this arrangement. Employer contacts are also shared, which, as well as maximising job opportunities, is far less confusing

for employers than being contacted by different agencies carrying out similar work.

Support and cover is available across the client groups. The different staff backgrounds provide a much wider experience and skill base than would otherwise be accessible across the service. Joint training events are also run for staff of all client groups.

There is generally less shunting of people around the system, particularly for those who do not fit neatly into one client group category, such as people with learning disabilities who also have a mental health problem.

The service has a much higher profile than a lot of separate services would have had. There is also access to a wider group of funding bodies.

A cross-client group service appears to have a lot of advantages, particularly for the smaller services who struggle to survive with limited resources and support.

Conclusions

Supported employment is alive and kicking in the North West. Over the past five years a growing number of agencies have been established to support people in jobs. There can now be no doubt that, with the right level of investment, supported employment can compete with traditional day services, in terms of both quality and cost.

Even so, the large majority of people with learning disabilities are denied the chance to consider employment as a real option. Massive resources are tied up in services which at best offer family relief, and at worst containment.

The survey has shown that there are two distinct models which have been adopted to provide supported employment services in the North West. They are referred to in the report as the *independent services* and the *attached services*.

The *independent services* have been able to promote and develop a wide range of employment opportunities, often for a more diverse group of people. Their success can be measured, not only in terms of the obvious outcomes such as numbers in work, range of disability served, and costs per client-worker, but in quality of service delivery. The rates of pay, hours of work, and variety of work available are measurable indicators of quality. All are significantly higher for this group.

The *attached services* group do not receive the same level of funding and it is doubtful that the required level of management commitment is always there. They are all attached to larger services, often day services, and usually function with only one or two members of staff. Most of their employment placements are below 15 hours per week for very little or no pay. There is a danger of encouraging the growth of a low pay and part-time culture which could perpetuate people's difference and disadvantage

Shortage of resources was identified by almost all participating services as a problem and the main obstacle to further development. The demand for services could seldom be met by the available resources. There appeared to be little re-investment of resources from traditional services.

An adequate investment is an essential pre-requisite to the establishment of a successful supported employment service. Where this has occurred the services have eventually become increasingly cost effective compared with traditional services.

Some geographical areas contained supported employment services which provided a full range of employment opportunities for all people irrespective of age, sex, and level of disability. In others, employment opportunities were very restricted, if available at all. Access to appropriate

services for individuals was dependent almost entirely on where they lived.

The Care in the Community Act has been implemented now for two years. In that time the increase in new supported employment services in the North West has slowed down considerably: only two new services have been started during that period. As few as one third of the services had any people referred as the result of formal assessments. It appears that the legislation has had little impact on the development of supported employment opportunities for people so far.

The essence of the Act was to provide a wider choice of services within the community for people through formal assessment procedures which would identify their individual needs. Emphasis was placed on widening choice through the development of the independent sector, the provision of services to meet individual need, and people receiving those services within the community.

It appears that, even if people are being formally assessed, supported employment is often not on the agenda. There is no real choice for large numbers of people as there are no alternative services to those which have been traditionally available. People are still being slotted into existing segregated provision. We must ask if there has been any serious attempt to put the principles of the Act into practice.

Taking the North West as a whole, there is a growing number of pockets of excellence, containing people with a lot of expertise, who are backed up by funders and purchasers with commitment. There is also a number of individuals who are struggling in terms of knowledge and support from funding bodies.

There is a need to bring together and co-ordinate exponents of good practice, both purchasers and providers. It is important that we learn from those who are most successful. Because of the high levels of expertise and skills concentrated in this area, the North West now has a unique opportunity to lead the way in supported employment and to become a major influence in bringing about wide scale change in services to people with learning disabilities.

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Age of service	No. of	%
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	Services	
Less than 6 months	0	0
6-11 months	2	8
12-23 months	1	4
24-35 months	5	21
36-60 months	5	21
More than 5 yrs	11	46
Total	24	100

Table 1
Age of services

Total Number of Staff	No. of Services	%
0	0	0
1	5	21
2-3	5	21
4-5	5	21
6-7	1	4
8-10	1	4
over 10	7	29
Total	24	100

Table 2
Numbers of staff employed in services

Salaries	No. of Staff	%
less than £10,000 per year	46	32
£10,000-£14,999 per year	65	45
£15,000-£19,999 per year	31	22
£20,000-£25,000 per year	2	1
Total	144	100

Table 3
Salaries of staff employed in services

Responsibilities of Support Workers	No. of Services	%
Pre-job training of client-workers	10	45
On-the-job training for client-workers	22	100
Training and support of co-workers	15	68
Supplementing a client-worker's production to ensure equal productivity	11	50
Finding job placements	17	77
Selection & placement of client-workers	18	81
Primary liaison with employers	16	73
Primary liaison with families/carers	15	68
Ancillary job-related support (transport)	15	68
Sorting out benefits for client-workers	11	50
Other	6	27

Table 4
Normal Responsibilities of Support Workers

Population of Area Served	No. of Services	%
Less than 10,000	0	0
10,001-25,000	1	5
25,001-50,000	1	5
50,001-100,000	5	25
100,001-250,000	5	25
250,001-500,000	5	25
More than 500,000	3	15
Total	20	100

Table 5
Breakdown of Populations Served

Unemployment Rate	No. of Services	%
3% or less	0	0
3.1%-6%	1	6
6.1%-9%	8	47
9.1%-12%	3	18
12.1%-15%	3	18
more than 15%	2	11
Total	17	100

Table 6
Unemployment Rates in Populations Served

Referral Source	No. of Services taking referrals	%
Sheltered workshops	5	21
Day Centres (SECs, ATCs etc)	17	71
Special Schools	6	25
Ordinary Schools	3	12
Community Learning Disability Teams	12	50
Further Education	8	33
PACT teams	9	37
Families	5	21
Other	10	42

Table 7
Referral Sources

Criteria	No. of Services	%
Severe Learning Disability	13	54
Moderate Learning Disability	5	21
Considered Job Ready	7	29
Evidence of Family Support	11	46
Support from Another Person	5	21
Motivation of the Individual	20	83
Social Skills of Individual	11	46
Proximity of Home to Jobsite	1	4
Available Public Transport	3	12
Person needs Re-deployment	6	25
Result of Formal Assessment	8	33
Others	13	54

Table 8
Selection Criteria

Elements used in Job Match Process	Nos. of Services	%
Use of Vocational Profile	22	92
Interview/Meeting with Client-worker	22	92
Interview/Meeting with Family, Friends etc.	22	92
Interview with Prospective Employer	23	96
Information from other Agencies e.g. FE, Day service	16	67
Visits to Job Centres	14	58
Regular Contact with Employers	18	75
Scanning Job Adverts in Press	19	79
Assisting with Job Applications / Interviews	19	79
Other	10	42

Table 9
Elements of Job Matching Strategy

Subsidised Schemes	Total Nos. on Schemes	% of Total in Work
Training for Work (TFW)	11	3
Youth Training (YT)	26	6
Sheltered Placement Scheme (SPS)	95	22
Job Introduction	1	1
Other	3	1

Table 10
Numbers of Client-workers on Subsidised Schemes

Position on Unpaid Placements	No. of services	%
Very few lead to payment at normal rate or better	13	54
About one half lead to normal rate or better	5	21
Most lead to normal rate or better	4	17
Do not normally accept placements with little or no pay	0	0
Service not been operating long enough	2	8

Table 11
Converting placements with little or no pay into placements paid at normal going rate

Age Range	No. of Client-workers	%
Under 18	3	1
18-24	98	22
25-34	143	33
35-49	169	39
50-64	23	5
Over 65	0	0
Total	437	100

Table 12
Age Range of client-workers

Level of Learning Disability	No. of Client-workers	%
Borderline	8	2
Mild	40	9
Moderate	195	45
Severe	168	38
Profound	25	6
Total	437	100

Table 13
Estimated Level of Learning Disability

Additional Difficulty	No. of client-workers	% of total client-workers
Can't speak	47	11
Mental illness	41	9
Physical disability	69	16
Challenging behaviour	39	9

Table 14
Client-workers with Difficulties in addition to Learning Disability

Causes of Failure or Termination	No. of services	%
Client-worker skill deficits	5	7
Changing demands of employer	4	6
Inappropriate social behaviour	15	21
Poor work behaviour	10	14
Poor job match	4	6
Inadequate support	6	9
Loss of benefits	7	10
End of subsidy to employer	0	0
Transport problems	2	3
Family problems	7	10
Other	10	14

Table 15
Causes of Failure or Termination

Previous Activity	No. of Client-workers	%
Special Education	54	12
Ordinary School	2	1
Further Education	17	4
Residential Institution	36	8
Sheltered Workshop	14	3
Day Centre	216	49
Special Needs/Care Unit	3	1
Open Employment	8	2
No Formal or Structured Activity	53	12
Other	34	8
Total	437	100

Table 16
Previous Main Activity Status

Job Type	No. of Client-workers	%
Domestic/portering/housekeeping	69	16
Groundskeeping/outdoor maintenance	39	9
Kitchen helper/waiter/waitress	71	16
All other kinds of work	254	59
Total	433	100

Table 17
Numbers in Stereotypical Jobs

Kinds of Worksites	No. of Client-workers	%
Restaurant (fast food)	17	4
Restaurant (non-fast food)	39	10
Hospital	13	3
Hotel/motel	10	2
Business office	42	10
Outdoors	46	11
Retail store/shop	63	16
Warehouse	23	6
Factory	93	23
Service station/garage	14	3
Other	49	12
Total	409	100

Table 18
Types of Worksites

Level of Integration	No. of Client-workers	%
Excellent Integration	219	50
Good Integration	174	40
Fair Integration	43	10
Complete Segregation	0	0
Total	436	100

Table 19
Levels of Integration

Hours Worked per Week	No. of Client-workers	%
Less than 15 Hours	206	47
15-34 Hours	111	25
35 Hours or More	120	28
Total	437	100

Table 20
Hours Worked per Week

Levels of Support	No. of Client-workers	%
Continuous on-site	84	19
Daily contact	38	9
Weekly contact	56	13
Bi-monthly contact	36	8
Monthly contact	122	28
No support required	101	23
Total	437	100

Table 21
Levels of Support Provided to Client-workers

Average Weekly Salary Earned	No. of Client-workers	%
Less than £50 per week	161	44
£50-£100 per week	64	18
£101-£150 per week	95	26
£151-200 per week	38	10
Over £200 per week	7	2
Total	365	100

Table 22
Average Weekly Salary Earned

Average Hourly Rate	No. of Client-workers	%
Less than £1 per hour	34	11
£1-£2 per hour	62	20
£2-£3 per hour	79	26
£3-£4 per hour	124	40
£4-£5 per hour	6	2
Over £5 per hour	1	1
Total	365	100

Table 23
Average Hourly Rates Earned

Time in Job Placement	No. of Client-workers	%
Less than 1 month	17	4
1-6 months	95	23
7-12 months	78	19
13 months-2 years	86	21
More than 2 years	137	33
Total	413	100

Table 24
Length of Time in Current Job Placement