

# Key lessons from the Engage to Change Project

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- 1** People with a learning disability and/or autism can work if they have the right job and the right support. The most effective support is specialist and provided by a Job Coach within a Supported Employment Model.
- 2** The employment rate for people with learning disability is 5.1% and 22% for people with autism in England. Wales statistics are likely to be similar. **The employment rate for the main Engage to Change project is 25%, 44% for the Engage to Change DFN Project SEARCH internship sites, and 35% for all forms of internship, which are proving to be very effective.**
- 3** The main outcomes reported by families and young people are enhanced **independence and confidence**, improved reported **mental health**, improved **quality of life**, positive feelings such as **self-respect** and pride for being in work and improved social inclusion.
- 4** Engage to Change initiated a **change in culture** in the way young people with learning disabilities and/or autism are viewed by employers and colleagues. Employers valued the on-site training offer and the ongoing availability of Job Coaches. Employers reported benefits of employing these young people, such as their reliability and dedication, increased workforce diversity and positive corporate social responsibility. Our project contributes to the creation of a more **neurodiverse workforce in Wales**.
- 5** Participants have reported a high satisfaction rate for the project linked with **vocational profiling procedures** and the **individualised approach to employment**, facilitating a good match between work placements and jobs and personal skills and interests.



## Providing these key findings we suggest:

National and Welsh Governments can help make these outcomes more widely available to people with a learning disability and/or autism by recognising the business, social and economic benefits of inclusive employment and promoting these with businesses, communities and relevant departments. **We suggest the following strategies:**

- 1** Legislate and fund a **National Supported Employment Programme** and an **Inclusive Internship Programme** for Wales, which could be accessible to anyone with a learning disability and/or autism in Wales, to ensure everyone who wants to work reaches their full potential to be employed.
- 2** Recognise that some services meant to prepare people for work are not effective and that government could disinvest from this services and fund what works in getting, and maintaining people in, employment.
- 3** Maximise use of the **Access to Work scheme** alongside Supported Employment and Internships as a flexible support budget that can help create a level playing field for disabled people in relation to work. Access to Work can be used to overcome barriers to employment from poor transport, inaccessible workplaces, and to help with specialized equipment.
- 4** DWP is planning to roll out a **Local Supported Employment programme** across Britain to explore the further use of Job Coaching. Further work will be needed if Welsh Local Authorities are to embrace the proposed DWP Job Coach funding strategy.
- 5** Our experience in Engage to Change is that the aspirations of the **Well-being Act**, the **Future Generations Act** and the **Youth Guarantee** will not reach these people without Supported Employment being a part of the support system in Wales.

**Welsh Government's Employability Plan** represents an individualised approach to skill development and employment for everyone. Welsh Government need to guarantee a place for Supported Employment and Job Coach support in these emerging arrangements so that people with more complex needs can be a part of this.



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