

# Parent views on Supported Employment for young people with Learning Disabilities and Autistic young people.

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By Gerraint Jones-Griffiths, Learning Disability Wales  
With Andrea Meek and Dr Elisa Vigna, National Centre for Mental Health, Cardiff University



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# Acknowledgements

We would like to thank parents and carers in the Neath Port Talbot area for their time and input into this report

In my role as Lead Ambassador for the Engage to Change Project I was invited, along with the E2C research team, to talk to a group of parents about supported employment and pathways into work available across Wales. There were 10 parents, whose young people all had additional learning needs, including diagnosis of learning disabilities and autism and were aged from very young children to young adults.

We co-produced a presentation which talked about the legacy of E2C, the unique role of the job coach and supported employment agencies, raising expectations of employment, what support is needed and the pathways available now.



**What is Engage to Change?**

Create and support employment opportunities by working with young people and employers in Wales

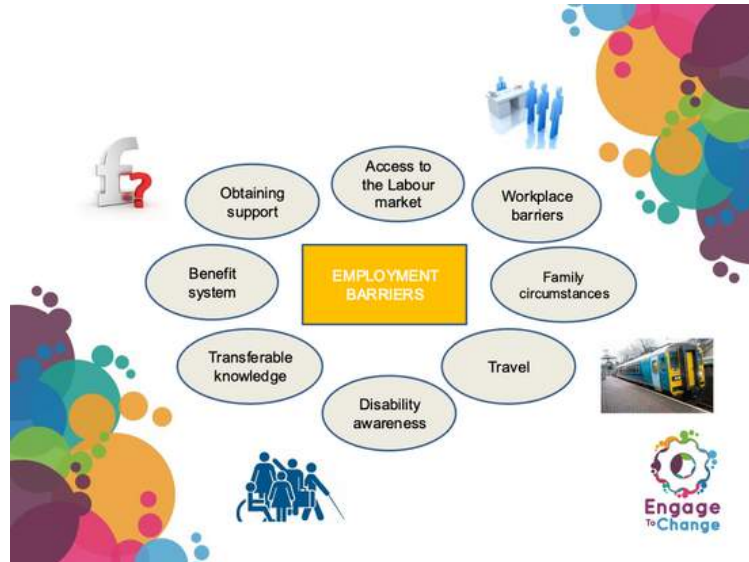
**Aimed at:**  
16 to 25 years old  
Learning Disability/ Autistic/  
Specific Learning Difficulties

**Partners:**

- Learning Disability Wales / Anableidd Dyddu Cymru
- ELITE
- DFN Project | SEARCH
- Engage To Change
- NCMH
- Agoriadcyf
- Other logos: CREDIT, Cymdeithas yr Iaith Gymraeg, Cymdeithas yr Iaith Gymraeg, Cymdeithas yr Iaith Gymraeg

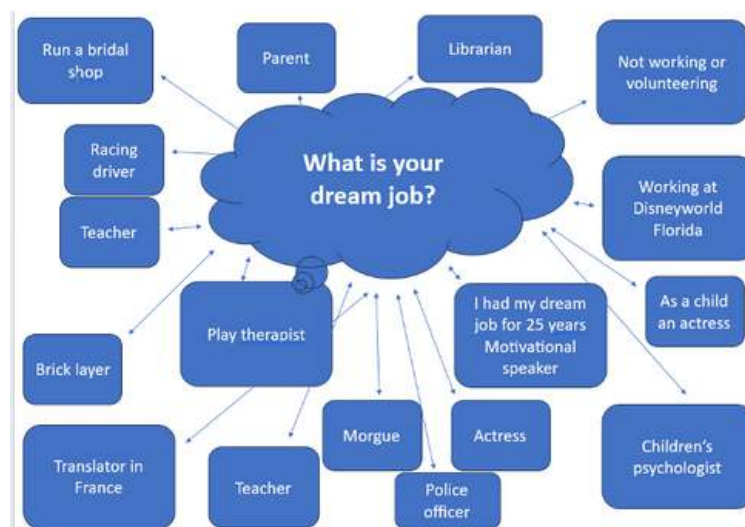
# Barriers

We had an interactive session with the parents, asking them to tell us about their experiences and thoughts about employment for the YP they support, we talked about the social model of disability and the barriers in society to employment for young people with learning disabilities and autistic young people.



# What are the expectations?

We had an interactive session with the parents, asking them to tell us about their experiences and thoughts about employment for the YP they support, we talked about the social model of disability and the barriers in society to employment for young people with learning disabilities and autistic young people.



We then went on to our second question, which was what do they think their young persons dream job is? The group found this question harder but we wanted parents to think about this, previously when we have done workshops or presentations not many young people know what dream job they want, simply because they have never been asked. But we had some great answers!



We explained that the employment rate for people with learning Disabilities is low, with only around 5 in every 100 young people going into employment (4.8%). Parents told us that they felt schools, education and services had very low expectations that the young people they cared for would go into employment.

# The benefits of employment

We talked about the benefits of employment for YP. We asked parents why they thought employment was important, for this we used Mentimeter to collect responses, the results are below.



Parents talked about employment giving structure and a sense of purpose, fuller independence, improving communication skills and being part of a team. Working in the community, being paid and being able to afford nice things and holidays were also important.

## Thinking about change

We wanted to know what parents thought about 4 key questions. We used post it notes to collect responses, the results are below.

### 1. What support might your young person need to start thinking about employment?

“Teachers are not good enough (supporting children to think about employment)”

“There is a need of a support worker in school, we must have meaningful career fairs and or with conversations about careers for ALN students. This does not happen. We need more talking about the next steps in the future”.

“Help identifying their own strengths and skills also help develop CV’s”.

“CV and application techniques with people interviewing and to help achieve the correct qualifications”.

“Help with their social skills and with their dyslexia, also particular task analysis, how to deal with hierarchy”.

“Someone talking about it in schools from a young age. Like before – a 2-week career visit, these have stopped. All children have different learning needs.”

“Maybe support them to explain about employment.”

## **2. What support do you need as a parent/ carer to support your young person with employment?**

“Having a job coach, travel training, task analysis (needs led) and by having a P.A”.

“Proper clear communication from potential employers and job coaches, teachers teaching YP from a young age.”

“Clear communication and tasks broken down”.

“Having friendly chats to get through”.

“My child is no A level child, but he can certainly have a job if support is available”.

“Life skills in school instead of doing algebra, they will never understand algebra, but they could use life skills”.

“Travel training”.

“Maybe be able to ask for support from family or friends.”

“Help to support us or give experiences around what the child would like to do.”

1. What could schools and colleges do to encourage employment as an outcome for the future?

“Schools and colleges should have direct links with employers, help teach more vocational subjects and help prepare with life skills such as an interview”.

“Staff trained in life skills awareness and to offer apprenticeships and higher education, travel training and interview skills”.

“To bring in a job coach - try before you buy if you like, have confidence building, travel training and having a buddy system”.

“Positive language around skills and identifying potential employment goals”.

“Someone to explain to the employer about their needs”.

“Teach full employment skills i.e life/employment rules”.

“Using positive language and identifying opportunities”.

“Having an ambassador coming in school, like you Gerraint”!

“Having seminars with school leavers, showing them the options”.

“Look at the child not at the deficiency, look at what they can do, no at what they can't do”.

“Support young people with learning disabilities so they become independent.”

**4. What should your LA or WG be doing in your area to encourage employment for young people with learning disabilities and/or autism in Wales?**

“Provide travel training, working in partnership with the LA, schools, health, parents, YP, SW and to take accountability for services they provide.”

“Providing proper funding, experiences and support following through changing they promise. Liaising with schools to understand individual issues experienced by YP.”



“Communication with schools and colleges and to put support in place for jobs and for volunteers”.

“Having more staff in place, more partnership work between parents, social workers and the young person”.

“We want to have a say, speak to us we are fighting parents”.

## Parent Tips

We talked about how parents could help prepare young people for employment and about rights and reasonable adjustments. We talked about how reasonable adjustments can be requested at the application stage including the importance of asking for easy-read and accessible versions of application forms from employers.



### Parent tips

- Early planning for transition to employment
- Begin building skills and independence
- Travel training
- Talk about and identify their skills
- Talk about what jobs/ environments they might prefer
- Promote self-advocacy
- Experience matters for informed choice
- Get support (Supported employment agencies/ local authority/ charities)
- Benefit planning (online tools such as <https://www.entitledto.co.uk/help/better-Off-Calculation> )
- Know your rights



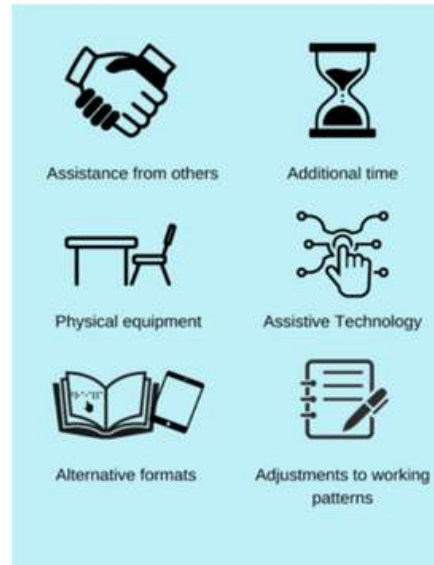
Engage  
To Change

## Know your rights and reasonable adjustments

Equality Act 2010

Menu of reasonable adjustments:

- Time out (quiet space)
- Movement breaks
- Additional time for processing
- Information in advance
- Recording meetings
- Sensory - air conditioning/ lighting/ smells/ crowds
- End of row seating/ Natural light
- Quiet workspace
- Music while working
- Set workspace (avoid hot-desking)
- Accessible communication – easy read/ clear points
- Accessible software (text to speech)
- Screen reading software
- Dyslexia friendly font/ colored paper/ screen filter
- Clear communication for unwritten rules
- Visual prompts / reminders
- Alarms/ reminder apps – help with organization
- Flexible working
- Job Carving
- Access to Work



### Key points from the session were:

1. No one knew about Engage to Change/ supported internships or supported apprenticeships
2. Two people had some experience of their child working with a job coach, one through Elite SEA and one through the job centre
3. Some young people had experience of work but parents noted strongly that they hadn't had any support and that experiences had been short/ negative
4. There was a lot of discussion around the roles of schools/ colleges and the use of negative language around skills / expectations for employment.
5. All agreed that they were parents of "forgotten children" (as one parent put it) when it comes to employment
6. There was some discussion around disclosing autism and or learning disability in application forms. The problem being always the same: if the applicant discloses a disability, then it is likely the employer will not call them for an interview. On the contrary, if they do not disclose, they will get an interview but no support will be available. One parent expressed her concern as their child is now into employment without disclosing their disability, so they were wondering how long they could last without support as reasonable adjustments couldn't be requested.

# Discussion and recommendations

Parents were very engaging and passionate with regards to supported employment and they highlighted that there was not enough expectation around employment for young people with additional learning needs and that support was difficult to find.

Parents felt that the Welsh Government, Local Authorities, schools & colleges could be doing more to communicate and promote supported employment/ supported internships and supported apprenticeships for young people with learning disabilities and autistic young people.

Parents need better support to understand the rights and reasonable adjustments that young people are entitled to when looking for employment.

Supported employment agencies should be better promoted. Open referral is important. Job Coaching should be available in schools and colleges.

Parents wanted a clearer picture of the numbers of young people with learning disabilities/ ALN in employment in Wales. They said this should be done by the Welsh Government so that services and support can be better arranged and targeted.

Parents said it was frustrating that we had nowhere concrete to signpost parents to - a sign that the end of E2C has left a gap in provision.

## Conclusion



**Project Legacy**

Since the start of Engage to Change we have:

- Asked for a National Job Coaching service
- Asked for more jobs in the NHS and Local Authorities
- Brought Supported Internships to Wales
- Influenced Pathway 4 in FE
- Apprenticeships and traineeships are more inclusive
- Helped make assessments for qualifications more fair
- Job Coaching is now a priority in the new Welsh Employability plan (Hefin David MS report)
- Job coach support available through Jobs Growth Wales traineeships, supported and supported shared apprenticeships and supported internships



The Engage to Change project has left a legacy. However, the project formally stopped taking referrals in May 2023.

Parents said it was frustrating that we had nowhere concrete to signpost young people to if they were interested in working. This is a sign that the end of E2C has left a gap in provision.

Looking ahead, we need the Welsh Government to financially support and promote supported employment, supported apprenticeships, supported internships and a national job coaching service.

Parents need more support and better communication to think about employment as a pathway for the young person they care for.

We need better services and support in schools and colleges to talk about employment and to prepare young people with learning disabilities and autistic young people for work.

This will help raise expectations around employment.

## Useful links

E2C video: [Pathways to Employment](#)

E2C video: [Research highlights "We want to work"](#)

E2C video: [What does a job coach do](#)

E2C Reports [Research - Engage to Change](#)

ReAct+ [ReAct Plus | Working Wales \(gov.wales\)](#)

Communities for Work+ [Communities for Work Plus | Working Wales \(gov.wales\)](#)

DWP/Access to Work [Access to Work: get support if you have a disability or health condition: What Access to Work is - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)

Report by Hefin David, MS:

<https://www.gov.wales/sites/default/files/publications/2023-06/230616-transitions-to-employment.pdf>

[https://www.gov.wales/sites/default/files/publications/2023-07/transitions-to-employment-easy-read\\_0.pdf](https://www.gov.wales/sites/default/files/publications/2023-07/transitions-to-employment-easy-read_0.pdf)

## Contact us:

[engagetochange@ldw.org.uk](mailto:engagetochange@ldw.org.uk)

Authors:

[gerraint.jones-griffiths@ldw.org.uk](mailto:gerraint.jones-griffiths@ldw.org.uk)

[Meek@cardiff.ac.uk](mailto:Meek@cardiff.ac.uk)

[Vignae@cardiff.ac.uk](mailto:Vignae@cardiff.ac.uk)

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Website: [www.engagetochange.org.uk](http://www.engagetochange.org.uk)

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