

Disabled People, Employment and the Work Preparation programme

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- Green Paper *Pathways to Work: Helping People into Employment* (DWP, 2002)
- Makes case for increasing levels of employment among disabled people
- Work Preparation – one of the Jobcentre Plus¹ programmes, designed to develop capability and confidence, overcome obstacles and explore alternative employment through short-term workplace trials.
- Paper draws on data from national evaluation of Work Preparation Programme (Banks, Riddell and Thornton, 2002).

¹ Jobcentre Plus delivers the services formerly provided by the Employment Service and the Benefits Agency. From 1st April 2002, employment services for disabled people have been provided by Jobcentre Plus. These include the New Deal for Disabled People, Job Broker Services, WORKSTEP and the Work Preparation programme.

Work Preparation - origins in provisions of 1944 Employment Act

Established :

- a quota system to ensure that at least three per cent of the workforce of all non-governmental organisations with more than 20 employees were registered disabled;
- national network of industrial rehabilitation units to rehabilitate disabled people and sheltered workshops and factories
- service to help disabled people find employment.

1980s: Placement, Assessment and Counselling teams (PACTs) established to provide localised and flexible service.

Mid-1990s: job rehabilitation renamed Work Preparation

Lahey and Simpkins (1994) report noted:

Short time allocated to the programme (6-8 weeks on average) - insufficient for service users with higher support needs

Action plans imprecise & unrelated to service users' own objectives.

Contracts not tightly monitored

DEAs rarely visited an employee during a placement.

Recent UK government policy

‘Work for those who can, security for those who can’t’.

Goals for disabled people: to introduce effective civil rights, remove barriers to work & provide active help for those wishing to work.

Civil rights : extension of the Disability Discrimination Act

Assistance for those wishing to work:
New Deal for Disabled People (NDDP)

2002 Green Paper Pathways to Work

- Degree of impairment of some people claiming incapacity benefits was less than that of many people in employment.
- About two thirds of people claiming incapacity benefits had mental or behavioural, musculo-skeletal or heart, circulatory or respiratory disorders - 'less severe health problems'.
- Barriers to employment: negative employer attitudes, low levels of skill and qualifications and lack of confidence (not individual impairment).
- New Deal for Disabled People - less effective than other New Deal programmes.

- More skilled support from specialist disability advisers & help to return to work combined with action planning during early stages of claim
- Easier access to specialist employment programmes plus new work-focused rehabilitation programmes, offered jointly by Jobcentre Plus and local NHS providers.
- Financial incentives for incapacity benefits recipients to seek work and move into employment
- Specialist adviser support for people having to move from incapacity benefits to Jobseeker's Allowance
- Efforts to encourage employers, trades unions and the insurance industry to keep people attached to the labour market.

The research

- Telephone interviews with a sample of 21 Disability Employment Advisers (DEAs) and ten Employment Service Occupational Psychologists (OPs).
- Four focus groups with Disability Service Team managers and contract managers drawn from most Employment Service Regions and countries. (Work Preparation at the time was managed by Disability Service Teams within the framework of seven English Regions, Scotland and Wales. For convenience, the term Region is used to cover all nine areas).
- Postal survey of all Work Preparation contractors, some organisations of and four disabled people and Employers' Networks on Disability which produced responses from 122 contractor representatives and a small number of users and employers. This is referred to as the stakeholder survey.
- Analysis of Employment Service records of the relationship between types of provision, service user characteristics and outcomes in three Regions (referred to in this paper as the baseline study).
- Literature review on Work Preparation and vocational rehabilitation, drawing on UK and international literature.

Purpose of Work Preparation

Work Preparation is an individually tailored, work focussed programme, which enables disabled people to address barriers associated with their disability and prepare to access a labour market, with the confidence necessary to achieve and sustain their job goal.

- Employment Service - future priority to clients most likely to achieve 'positive outcome' within 13 weeks of completion
- Professionals & service providers - emphasised employability
- c.f. service users – in Wilson et al (1999) study – wanted a job.

Target group

- Those closest to labour market?
- Those in greatest need of support?
- Two programmes?

Outcomes

- About 20 per cent of clients in some sort of employment 13 weeks after end of programme
- Destination of about 52 per cent of clients unknown
- No association between nature of impairment and type of outcome (although some people unable to access WP).
- International debates – which outcomes measured & incentivised?

Table 1: Classification of outcomes and proportion of clients achieving each in three Regions

| Outcome | Criteria | % |
|---------------------------------------|---|------|
| Employment | Mainstream & supported employment | 18.5 |
| Further/higher education | Further/higher education (full-time or part-time) | 2.2 |
| Training | Training, including Work Based Training for Adults (England), Training for Work (Scotland) | 5.1 |
| Further ES programme | Further ES programme e.g. WORKSTEP | 5.1 |
| Retention | Remain with employer in current position or alternative more appropriate position | 0.5 |
| Referred back to DEA/looking for work | Sometimes written on provider's final report – suggested client not yet 'work ready' and might require further support, or looking for jobs | 11.7 |
| Other, including voluntary work | A number of clients were involved in voluntary work, sometimes hoping paid work could be achieved in the future | 1.5 |
| Sick | Deterioration in condition – no longer able to seek employment | 4.1 |
| No recorded outcome | Outcome not recorded in either client's file or provider returns, but client still in contact with DEA at some level | 23.7 |
| Unknown | No information apart from start & finish dates | 27.7 |

Note: Data are for 2,823 clients in 3 regions, starting Work Preparation from April 2000 – March 2001. Outcome data recorded 13 weeks after end of placement.

Delivery of Work Preparation

- Disability Service Team managers – criticised service providers’ performance and contractual arrangements
- Standard placement – almost always 6-8 week work placement
- Employers did not understand purpose of programme
- Follow-up by DEAs variable
- Outcome reporting unreliable

Conclusion

- Service users see Work Preparation as stepping stone into work
- Service providers & ES staff see work as only one valid outcome
- General agreement: need for greater continuity and flexibility of support
- Ongoing debates about purpose & target group for vocational rehabilitation programmes
- Green Paper: prioritise those at risk of losing jobs through accident or illness
Jobcentre Plus: prioritise those closest to labour market
- Bauman (1998) : higher rates of employment may be accompanied by greater sense of insecurity & exclusion.