

Learner and Learning Support

Progressing Young People into Supported Employment

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Summary

To review and share good practice of the approach Mencap use to progress young people into Supported Employment, and support employers in providing opportunities for young people.

Key lessons learned - The key points of making a successful progression into Supported Employment

- The importance of a thorough assessment of learners needs, abilities and aspirations
- How skilled job coaches can deliver a range of Work Skills that are transferable to personal life The value of providing continued “in work” support

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Provider name(s): Mencap

Sector coverage: Special Schools, Colleges of Further Education (FE), Independent Specialist Providers and other agencies who want to engage young people into Support Employment opportunities.

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Introduction

About organisations involved

Mencap Pathway Employment Service supports People with a Learning Disability into paid Employment and progression to Employment. We believe everyone should have the chance to get a job and the Mencap “Employ Me” programme, which is the specialist programme of support, enables people with a learning disability to develop the skills they need for the workplace, find a job and get the most out of it.

What we wanted to achieve

We aimed to enable people to identify job opportunities, review a person’s training needs and provide on the job support where appropriate. Below are the details of how we worked with individuals and supported them to gain the work experience and paid job opportunities through the Employ Me programme.

Implementation

Planning our approach & what we did

We first meet with the individual to assess if the programme is suitable for them, gathering as much information as possible about the person in a person centred way. This is then used to determine what level of support and training may be required to ensure we get the support right for the individual. Once it has been identified by both the individual and the Mencap Employment Co-ordinator that 'Employ Me' is suitable we then conduct an assessment. This then forms the action plan for the person.

The assessment identifies what type of job the person wants to do, whether they have ever worked before, whether they are independent travellers and of course what support they need to have to ensure they are able to gain paid work and sustain this. Once the assessment is complete we work with the person to draw up an action plan that identifies the next steps to getting a paid job. This could include some training, work trials or going straight into paid employment.

As part of the programme we deliver a range of Work Skills. These include:

- Communication and Building relationships at work – various communication methods and how they work. This encourages individuals to practise communicating with different people, including supervisors, colleagues and customers, and support them to apply this at work.
- Working as part of a team – areas of team work, and how this helps individuals understand what makes a good team and how to be a useful member of the team.
- Being Managed – the role of a supervisor and how to interact with them. It enables individuals to understand constructive criticism and how to use it to improve performance.
- Time Keeping – enabling individuals to understand the importance of time including how to manage time in the work place as well as getting to work on time. It enables us to support the person to explore different ways to plan time and prioritise jobs.
- Dealing with Problems – we support individuals to understand what a problem is and how to resolve them or who to go to in the workplace. This also allows us to support them to understand that dealing with problems can be a chance to learn new things.
- Keeping safe – discussing dangers at work, home and online and ways to avoid them.

These work skills are transferable skills for the individual's personal life too. Some of the other skills training we provide is called 'My Skills'. These include:

- Assessing Skills for Work – identifying an individual's personal skills and strengths so we can compare them with what an employer is looking for. This may highlight skills that need to be improved; if so then we set an action to help develop these skills.
- Exploring Job Opportunities – many of our customers have not had any experience of work. They don't know what type of work they want to do and in what area. So with these customers we look at areas of interest and help them to trial different work placements so they have a feel for a particular type

of work. This then allows the person to make informed choices about what type of work they want to do.

- Travel Training – we help to develop the skills needed to travel independently, plan a journey, deal with any problems and keep safe whilst travelling. Many of our customers are not independent travellers, so when they become independent travellers it is a huge achievement as this enables a person to travel on their own to their choice of work placement or paid work.
- Job searching and Interview Skills – we help our customers to prepare a CV, complete application forms and support at interview stage. We ensure regular job search activity is taking place for those looking for work. We introduce different ways of looking for jobs, such as the internet, newspaper and using the job centre (we have arranged Job centre visits for our customers so they are aware of what to expect and that they have the confidence to use the facilities themselves). We then look at different ways in which our customers can apply for work and we support them to complete applications and apply for jobs on their behalf.
- Workplace Rights and Responsibility – once our customers have been successful in gaining paid work, we support them through their induction period and help them to understand rights and responsibility of both themselves and the employers when at work. This will include the person's pay, annual leave entitlement and how to request it, working hours, breaks and safety issues concerned with the job role.
- Health and Safety – helping individuals to understand why the rules of health and safety are important and that they should be adhered to at all times. This could be wearing protective clothing, having an awareness of the different cleaning products and how they should be stored and used.

When our customers gain paid employment we still provide in work support. Here we help them to understand their role and the tasks they need to do. We then gradually take a step back from intensive in work support once the person is confident to do the job by themselves. We also promote a buddy in the workplace and support the employer to implement this, so our customers have extra support when they need it.

Outcomes and impacts

What we achieved

There are several very good examples of how the approach has worked, some of which are included in the individual case studies.

What we are taking forward

Mencap are now working closely with the project partners and others to embed Support Employment as a progression opportunity for our young people and assisting with developing their employability skills. Further work is also being taken forward to engage and support businesses in providing Supported Employment opportunities.

Further reading

- <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=b13hv1y9fDE&feature=youtu.be>
Case Studies of successful progression into Support Employment

