

# How can we better support young disabled people who are moving out of education to find appropriate work?



## Natspec response to DWP Health and Disability Green Paper

Question 30: How can we better support young disabled people who are moving out of education to find appropriate work?

1. **Young disabled people should be eligible for support to gain employment *before* they leave education.** They should not have to wait to become unemployed before becoming eligible for support. Otherwise, we run the risk that some will slip through the net and/or begin to lose skills and confidence and move further away from employment as a result.

### Recommendation

- At least a term ahead of their education leaving date, DWP should work with schools/colleges to connect students with disabilities who wish to progress into work with an organisation providing employment support, and a named individual within it. This should become a standard part of transition planning for young people with an EHC Plan.
2. **Employment support currently does not meet the needs of young people with disabilities leaving education.** There is no appropriate support for young disabled people who leave education ready to work, but without having secured a job to progress straight into. Current support tends to take the form of extended learning programmes which only serve to lengthen a young person's journey to employment. These are based on a false assumption that disabled young people, especially those with a learning disability, are amongst the 'furthest from employment'.

### Recommendations

- DWP should introduce a dedicated funding stream for job search, application and interview preparation for disabled young people who do not have jobs to go to on graduation but are ready for work.
  - The support offered should be designed to maintain the young people's confidence and skills during this job search period, including through continuing work placements. The support might also extend into their first weeks in employment.
  - During this period, young disabled people should have access to a trained job coach who is able to support them into work. Job coaches should not be confused with DWP's 'work coaches' who currently do not have the specialist skills to provide the bespoke support needed or the remit to provide in-work support.
  - DWP should be open-minded about the type of organisations capable of offering this service; for example, some colleges may be well-placed to offer this kind of support for their students' post-graduation.
3. **Some disabled young people who move directly from education into paid employment end up losing their jobs for want of relatively low-level, low-cost support,** such as advocacy services for the employee or both parties having telephone access to a known, trusted individual capable of advising them in certain situations, e.g. where a young person needs to adapt to changing requirements within their job or some form of conflict has arisen. Currently some colleges are providing this kind of post-education support without any

funding but as the numbers of college leavers gaining employment grows, this free service is becoming unsustainable.

### **Recommendations**

- DWP should introduce a dedicated funding stream for supporting disabled young people moving directly from education into employment.
  - The support offered should be available to both employee and employer to facilitate both to sustain the young person in employment.
  - DWP should make this funding stream available to a range of different types of organisations capable of providing this service, including colleges.
4. **There is a lack of understanding within Job Centres of effective practice in helping young disabled people secure employment.** Currently they have not embraced [supported employment](#) as a successful model for enabling disabled people to access paid employment. To be truly inclusive, Job Centres must see themselves as responsible for enabling disabled young people to access supported employment. Supported employment gives Job Centres the chance to break away from a model of offering endless support programmes with low success rates to an approach where disabled people are supported to learn on the job.

### **Recommendations**

- DWP should task job centres with ensuring they are offering supported employment for disabled young people, whether they grow this capability inhouse themselves or contract it out to specialist organisations, such as those with BASE membership. Use of trained job coaches should be a mandatory part of the offer, regardless of delivery model; a 'place and train' approach should be the norm, allowing disabled people to learn in situ, rather than through a classroom-based approach that may or may not lead to employment.
  - DWP should increase the number of disability employment advisers (DEAs) and train them so that they have a detailed understanding of supported employment principles and practice.
  - DWP should ensure all JCP staff are trained in the fundamental principles and values underpinning the supported employment approach and key processes within it. This will help them to recognise when standard practices or guidance are inappropriate, e.g. requiring young people with learning disabilities to focus on improving their CV or apply online for multiple jobs when this is unlikely to be instrumental in their gaining work.
5. **Employers are sometimes reluctant to recruit disabled people**, either because they have misconceptions about their capabilities or are unsure that they can meet their support needs. They are also often unaware that their current recruitment processes deter or disadvantage disabled applicants. Employers are not always aware of how to make reasonable adjustments (and that most of these are low or no-cost) or of the type of in-work support, including natural support, that would benefit some disabled employees. Supporting employers to change their practices and attitudes would have a profound effect on employment outcomes for young people with disabilities.

### **Recommendations**

- DWP should run an awareness-raising programme for employers about the benefits of employing disabled people, making a business case for recruiting more people with disabilities. This could be based on [work already done by Mencap](#), for example.
- DWP should encourage employers to adopt more inclusive and accessible recruitment processes, such as working interviews, and provide guidance to employers on doing so, including different types of reasonable adjustments to the recruitment process. For example, students in Natspec colleges recommend use of pre-interview visits to a workplace and sharing in advance pictures of the interview setting and people involved.

- DWP should provide guidance to employers on in-work and [natural support](#) for disabled employees. This could be co-created with disabled people, drawing on their experience of what helps them most.
- Students in Natspec colleges have offered the following examples of in-work support and adjustments that they would find helpful:
  - task tags
  - visual checklists
  - time out space
  - Step by step instructions
  - a mentor to go to with worries or problems.
  - specialist equipment, screens, desk, dyslexia software.
  - regular review meetings
  - adaptable start/finish times
  - job buddies.

6. **Government has missed chances to incentivise employers to recruit disabled young people**, most recently in the Plan for Jobs which offered employers £3,000 for recruiting an apprentice and £1,000 for taking on a trainee, but offered nothing for employers taking on supported interns.

### **Recommendation**

- DWP should consider ways to incentivise employers to recruit disabled young people, and as a matter of principle always include supported internships alongside traineeships and apprenticeships in any employer incentive schemes or policies.