

Working for change: A programme of work to sustain support for a learning network on the employment of people with learning disabilities in Working for change: A programme of work to sustain support for a learning network on the employment of people with learning disabilities in Scotland

Final Report 2009 -11

1. Background

The SCLD Employment Project was established in April 2009. Employment had been identified as a priority for people with learning disabilities in *The same as you?* in 2000.

In the original submission to the Scottish Government, SCLD agreed to work in partnership with Workforce Plus and other partners to build on work already developed since the publication of *'Working for a Change?'* in 2004 in order to:

- support the developing cross sectoral community of practice,
- provide an information hub with access to good practice examples
- increase the visibility of people with learning disabilities within employment,
- promote examples of good practice and
- link with the Scottish Autism Services Network to link people with ASD to this agenda.

Over the past 23 months the Employment Project at SCLD has not only met the targets laid down in the initial contract, but has made substantial progress in identifying unmet need in terms of employment support and prospects for those with learning disabilities.

Much of this has come from:

- Issues raised by the Learning Network, through conferences and seminars;
- People with a learning disability, their parents, carers and teachers; and
- Partnership working with others.

A. What we have delivered as part of contract (high level outputs) to March 2011

Output Target	Achieved by March 2011
Service 6 Task Group Meetings by 2011	Serviced 7 Task Group Meetings.
Create an Employment Section on SCLD website	<p>Increased the traffic on the SCLD website by 200%.</p> <p>Created a podcast within the site which is run by an Employment Champion.</p> <p>The podcast has been used to interview people who have acknowledged employment as a key priority.</p> <p>The Employment Project now sends out a weekly e-bulletin informing the Learning Network of research, training and policy information.</p>
National policy developed through all networks	<p>Worked with VIAS to raise awareness of the supported employment needs of young people with a learning disability and autism.</p> <p>THE Employment Project has</p>

<p>Cohort of 200 practitioners known as the Learning Network</p>	<p>promoted the Scottish Government's Supported Employment Framework, Project Search and the More Choices More Chances policies through events, the website and SCLD publications.</p> <p>Learning Network now has 247 practitioners. The data base now has an additional 550 practitioners from the Young Scotland's Got Talent events, this will grow as the roadshows attract more young people.</p>
<p>Learning Events – 4 per year</p>	<p>There have been 13 events over two years.</p>
<p>Capacity Building Fund</p>	<p>Research has been commissioned on the impact of Self Directed Support on employment for people with learning disabilities and autism by Dundee University.</p> <p>SCLD worked with the Glasgow Supported Employment Project to host a breakfast meeting for Glasgow employers.</p> <p>The National Employment Co-ordinator has worked with CEiS to look at the opportunity to establish a social enterprise employing people with a learning disability and autism.</p>

The initial feedback from the market research has been very positive. This work has been funded separately by SCLD core funding.

This work will inform the future policy direction of SCLD as the organisation looks to meet the employment aspirations of people with learning disabilities and autism in Scotland.

Two demonstration projects have been developed to improve the delivery of supported employment in Scotland:

The Career Planning Tool and the Geeza Life Geeza Job Course are being piloted in partnership with VIAS and the Glasgow Social Care Providers Forum.

The course for 12 Social Care Workers provides training on employability skills improving their person centred plans.

The Career Planning Tool has been piloted by 17 Careers Officers and Teachers

Source training and expertise from SCLD partners -240 person training days by 2011.	Training delivered by SCLD and partners -122 person training days. The recession and the restrictions on budgets have affected the numbers of individuals who have been able to attend training courses.
Employment Champion available for up to 40 events	The Employment Champions will have attended 20 events by March 2011. The initial proposal was to have one Employment Champion. The project employed six Employment Champions on a sessional basis. They present as a group and as individuals.
Link with the Autism Services Network	Attended 4 Autism Services Network Meetings by 2011. The Employment Project has funded three events hosted in Glasgow and Edinburgh. The events have been oversubscribed due to the level of interest in the employment of people on the autistic spectrum.

B. Evidence

Following each initiative, every individual is issued with an anonymous survey which is returned on the day or is submitted online.

From the surveys:

- 81% of those who had attended events had improved their learning.

- 83% of individuals trained rated the training very good or excellent.
- 90% of those who had attended were more confident looking for work*

*source SCLD surveys

C. What we have delivered as part of contract (high level outputs) to March 2011

The Learning Network is contacted on a six monthly basis to identify need and feedback on the activity delivered from previous Learning Network requests.

- Supported the practitioners in the Learning Network; met their self-identified training needs.
- Reviewed national policy developments and provided timely information.
- Increased the knowledge of practitioners.
- Supported the creation of new jobs in Scotland through Project Search.

D. Additional outputs and value

Research

In addition to the contracted activity, SCLD has participated in two specific pieces of research:

Study of Workforce and Employment Issues, Surrounding Self Directed Support for the Scottish Government – Reid Howie Associates

Disability Skills and Employment – EHRC, Centre for Research and Education, Inclusion and Diversity - University of Edinburgh, Riddell, Edward, Weedon, Ahlgren.

Consultations

The National Employment project has been asked to facilitate consultations on the future of Access to Work Funds through Jobcentre Plus.

Skills Development Scotland SDS, has consulted with SCLD on the future design and delivery of national training programmes.

SDS has recently consulted the National Employment Project on the expansion of their Template For Success, identifying and resourcing young disabled school leavers throughout Scotland.

Employment Champions

One of the successes of the Project has been the six Employment Champions who have developed a role representing the opinions and aspirations of people with learning difficulties and autism in Scotland.

Their forthright message and disarming delivery has proved very successful.

The requests for their contribution have come from a range of individuals and organisations. To name a few: colleges looking to inspire potential students and reassure parents; national training providers seeking their opinions on the design and delivery of training; policy advisors asking for their contribution on the development of equality legislation; and the NHS has asked for their opinions on the design and layout of hospital buildings.

With this experience their confidence has grown, making them a valuable resource to SCLD.

New Project Development

The National Employment Co-ordinator has organised a number of events throughout Scotland promoting the American employment model Project Search.

In addition to the 3 national Learning Events, there have been 4 National Steering Group meetings and a workshop to develop the innovative evaluation tool Demonstrating Value.

The Employment Project has continued to promote the concept of Project Search through publications, presentations and postings on the SCLD website.

To date, three sites have emerged: Lanarkshire, Renfrewshire and Stirling.

The North Lanarkshire site in Wishaw General Hospital has 8 interns who are now in their third placement. To date 1 Intern has secured a job at Wishaw General Hospital.

Renfrewshire Council and Stirling Council are aiming to run Project Search programmes in September 2011.

SCLD sourced funding of £15,000 to support this activity from More Choices More Chances at the Scottish Government.

Transition

A key area of activity has been:

- A national awareness campaign for young people with learning disabilities and individuals on the autism spectrum.

Following the successful conference held in Hampden on 9 June 2010, the Co-operative Community Fund and Skills Development Scotland have agreed to support a series of local roadshows throughout Scotland.

The first in this series of roadshows was held on 22 January 2011 in Larbert, attracting young people from across the Forth Valley area.

‘The whole day was a humbling experience and we met some remarkable youngsters. The positive attitude they demonstrated along with exceptional work ethic was so refreshing.’

Elaine Christian, Jobcentre Plus, Falkirk.

The next in the series of roadshows are scheduled for:

- 23 April – Hilton Hotel, Dundee
- 7 June – Lemon Tree, Aberdeen
- 22 June – COSLA, Edinburgh

In addition to this, there is ongoing development work with VIAS :

- Examining the potential for a hand held personal record, to register both formal and informal skills, aspirations and testimonials of people with disabilities and disenfranchised young people.

The SCLD Employment Project has worked with VIAS who designed the tool to assess the market interest in the product.

The prototype has been piloted throughout Scotland, the initial feedback has been very positive.

Skills Development Scotland is interested in developing the Career Planning Tool, negotiations are continuing.

- The Geeza Life Geeza Job Training Course aims to skill social care staff to support disabled people into work. The pilot training programme promotes employability skills for staff working within social care organisations and individuals working as Personal Assistants.

The course will be evaluated to assess the potential to deliver the course throughout Scotland.

From the work of the SCLD Employment Project over the past 20 months a number of key policy areas have been highlighted. These can be summarised as:

- Young people and their transition into employment;
- Project Search and the role of the public sector as an employer; and
- Developing the work and skills of SCLD and its consortium partners into the wider Scottish economy.

In a short space of time the Employment Project has made a significant contribution towards highlighting the importance of employment opportunities for people with learning disabilities.

The total funding for the project over two years has been;

£161, 670 Scottish Government

The project has attracted additional leverage funding of:

£49,749 Scottish Government – SDS Research Grant

£15,000 More Choices More Chances – Project Search

£18,750 Skills Development Scotland – Young Scotland's Got Talent

£1,750 Cooperative Membership Community Fund – Young Scotland's Got Talent

£85,249 – Total additional funding

In the immediate future it is critical that SCLD continues to develop employment as a key strategic objective.

Complementary to this is the importance of SCLD taking the skills and resources of SCLD to other organisations in the public sector. This should be based upon raising the profile of SCLD as a Scottish-wide organisation that provides training, research and advisory services to a wider public sector.

SCLD needs to form operational and strategic alliances with other major Scottish organisations such as, for example COSLA, Department for Work and Pensions, Skills Development Scotland, Scottish Enterprise, etc. in order to highlight the significant disadvantage suffered by individuals with a learning disability and individuals on the autistic spectrum.

As originally envisaged, the Employment Project is due to come to an end on 31 March 2011.

However, the success of the project and the ongoing nature of a number of associated activities suggest that a continuation of this work, led from within SCLD, is important.

SCLD wishes both to continue and further develop the work already started; maintaining the website and retaining employment as a key strategic objective.

SCLD has been actively seeking funds to continue the work of this valuable project.