

Working austerity

Our research identifies the need for the government to promote policies that demonstrate that they regard people with learning disabilities as full citizens. A key element of citizenship relates to work.

Key messages

- While the government has promised no new cuts to disability benefits, people with learning disabilities are living with the realities of an austerity welfare state, which threaten their day to day existence.
- All political parties are committed to supporting hard working people but people with learning disabilities experience barriers to entering the labour market
- The Department for Education should strengthen employment as a strand within the transition review for young people with Special Educational Need and Disability (SEND) aged 14 - with a requirement to engage with supported employment providers which continues at every subsequent review of the Education, Health and Care Plans (EHC);
- The Department for Education should allow for the continuation of EHC plans for young people to twenty-five in employment, but not in education;
- The government should promote a national register of job coaches backed by emerging quality standards to support training and development;
- Each local authority should be required to provide opportunities for supported internships for people with learning disabilities in their area;
- Each local authority should be required to develop pathways to employment for people with learning disabilities linked to outcomes based commissioning;

- Employment support should be included as an outcome in personal budget planning.

Background

Our research has shown that disabled people with learning disabilities are living with an almost overwhelming sense of uncertainty; job seekers are unsure of how to get a job; support workers are unsure if their own job is secure and providers are faced with the seemingly endless cuts administered via local authorities.

- Employment rates for people with learning disabilities remain stubbornly low - less than ten percent of people with learning disabilities in the UK are in paid work, and this figure has changed little over twenty years.
- Regrettably, perceived un-employability has become part of the way the identity 'people with learning disability' has been constructed.
- Local authorities that commission supported employment providers are experiencing swinging cuts.
- One theme which emerged across the research was the impact of employment on people with learning disabilities in terms of health and well-being as well as their economic security and community participation.

Evidence

Our research [add link to [Our research page](#)] explored the contemporary employment experiences of people with learning disabilities in a time of austerity drawing on qualitative research undertaken between 2013-15. The research demonstrated that:

- There is currently little focus on employment in transition planning for young people with learning disabilities - if a young person goes into employment they lose their Education, Health and Care Plan;
- Employment is rarely explored by people with learning disabilities using a personal budget

- Job coaches using evidence based practice can provide effective support to move people with learning disabilities into employment and to support them in paid work;
- Supported internships have emerged as an effective strategy to move people into employment but their availability is patchy across the country;
- Currently, few local authorities develop pathways to employment for people with learning disabilities linked to outcomes based commissioning;
- People with learning disabilities can and want to work but are still facing the low expectations and aspirations of others:
- Despite increased guidance and support being available for people with learning disabilities to run their own businesses, very few people do and those who do can have big plans.

Conclusion

The current period of austerity in Britain means that people with learning disabilities are experiencing increasingly precarious lives - this is evident in their access to paid work. In order to counter the uncertainty, there is a need to focus on effective commissioning of outcomes based employment strategies supported by skilled job coaches and supported employment programmes.

Worryingly, despite the overwhelming evidence that supported internships and supported employment models work in terms of moving people with learning disabilities into employment and keeping them there, access to such programmes and support remains patch across the county.

For more news and research on the impact of the cuts on people with learning disabilities - and information and resources for surviving austerity – visit **humanactivism.org**.