

Disability Discrimination Act and Work Based Learning



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Name of project: Ways to work

Organisation: Breakaway Supported Employment and Central Sussex College (Crawley Campus)

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The main criterion for including projects on this website is that they are all developmental or case study research projects undertaken as part of DDA: improving work-based learning for people with learning difficulties and/ or disabilities. The overall aim of this project was to support work-based learning providers to respond to the DDA. Project reports do not necessarily reflect good or best practice.

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Background

This report summarises a process of action research within a case study undertaken by Breakaway Supported Employment Service and Central Sussex College (Crawley campus) Educational Development Department. Breakaway is part of Southdown Housing Association and is funded by West Sussex County Council to provide a supported employment service to adults with learning difficulties.

The project aims to look at improving work- based learning for people with learning difficulties through joint work between Supported Employment and Further Education for Adults with Learning Difficulties. The two organisations have worked together for about 12 months, but this project offered a mechanism to increase the level of joint work with a common aim.

Overall aims of the case study

1. Improved joint work between Crawley Campus (Central Sussex College of Further Education) and Supported Employment (Breakaway) providers in order to promote transition to work for learners with learning difficulties on a FE work preparation course.
2. To consolidate ASDAN course learning through supported learning at workplace.
3. Sharing existing methods and tools used by Supported Employment for work based learning with College staff.

Planned achievements within case study timeframe

The case study period provides a snapshot of the first term of a course lasting one academic year. From the College's point of view the key outcomes at the end of the academic year are to achieve the ASDAN FE Award at the appropriate level and to achieve some form of employment. However the planned project targets (September – December 2005) are: -

1. Job-coaching tasks in work site alongside selected learners. *
2. Staff from both services to share information about classroom and workplace inputs to improve transferral of learning between the two environments.
3. Better awareness about individual's learning needs as they occur in real situations and improved facility for responsive input through closer staff liaison.
4. Laying the ground for improved transition paths from College into employment.

*Those selected to work with Breakaway

Action plan

1. Set up learning programme (to include Equal Opportunities, boundaries, social skills, Health and Safety)
2. Identify learners for the course
3. Identify learners to be supported in work experience positions either by Breakaway (minimum of 3 at any time) or by College
4. Begin to find out about learners' work choices and skills.
5. Search for employers suitable for learners' work choices.
6. Monitoring, support and task teaching at work experience locations.
7. Regular feedback between Central Sussex College and Breakaway staff

Project aim



The project set out to look at how closer joint working between a College and a Supported Employment Agency could enhance the chances of people with a learning disability getting employment when leaving college. Both organisations were concerned that learners from College should not slip into a “black hole” on leaving.

What was done and how was it done?

Certain activities were set out in the Action Plan in order to meet the aims and achievement targets of the project up to January 31st 2006. The following description of how these were put in place shows what was done and how it was done.

Action 1: Set up learning programmes.

Learners have 10 guided learning hours per week for 36 weeks. At the end of this period they will have achieved the ASDAN FE Award at one of three levels – Level Up, Challenge, FE Award. The aim is that they will also progress into either paid or voluntary work.

The course is delivered as follows: -

Tuesday

0915-0930 – Group tutorial

0930-1030 – Jobsearch

1045-1200 – Rights and Responsibilities

1245-1400 – Community Studies

1415-1530 – Information Technology

Wednesday

Work experience – times negotiated with employer.

The subjects studied within the ASDAN framework are broken down as follows: -

Jobsearch

1 Presenting Myself – introduce another learner, make a presentation about something of personal interest, identify practical and personal strengths, write a personal profile, complete CV.

2 Applying for jobs – What is stopping you getting a job, finding information from adverts, phoning for an application form, completing application forms, applying for real jobs (ongoing throughout programme).

3 Interview skills – Preparing for interviews, practising interviews, employer mock interview, and self-assessment of interview video.

4 Information and help – Where to look for jobs and advice, job research using Careers Information Database (CID), jobcentre visit, talk about voluntary work.

5 World of work – What an employer expects, rights and responsibilities at work, handling problems at work, Equal Opportunities at work, Health and Safety at Work.

6 Moving on – Letter writing assignment, recap application forms, recap interviews, update CVs, plan and achieve next steps plan.

Rights and Responsibilities

1 Consumer rights – research, letters of complaint, role plays

2 Police – your rights, who’s who in court, crime in the community

3 Know the law – legal ages, employment law

4 Unemployment – what to do, where to go, Internet research, benefits

5 Problems at work – bullying, harassment, role-plays

6 Crime – your responsibilities, what would you do, case study

Community Studies

1 Increase knowledge and awareness of what could be done in the college environment



- 2 Increase knowledge and awareness of local issues
- 3 Increase knowledge and awareness of local transport
- 4 Increase knowledge and awareness of the use of local public buildings and organisations
- 5 Comprehensive survey of leisure activities and paid/voluntary work agencies.

Information Technology

- 1 Word processing
- 2 Using data
- 3 Using technology in the home and college
- 4 Graphics
- 5 Internet
- 6 E-mail

Work Experience

The learners have a minimum of a one-day per week, term long (13 weeks) work experience placement each term. Where learners are not in placement they are offered the opportunity of either work in college or class work in college until an external placement is found.

The programme is supported by:-

- Individual Life Long Learning Programme which includes individual learning targets
- Formative and summative assessment
- Tutorials
- Termly reports
- Work experience monitoring and reports. Those supported by Breakaway have additional job coaching as required.

Action 2: Identify learners for the course

4 learners were identified through prior knowledge by the college in the summer as people who would benefit from the course. They were approached and asked if they would like the opportunity.

1 learner was recruited at an open day in a local day centre. He had attended college on full time courses some 2-3 years previously.

2 learners were referred by their group homes. Both had attended college part time before.

1 learner was referred by family home and had attended college before both full time and latterly part time.

1 learner was already working through Breakaway but needed college support on basic skills and personal skills and had attended college before both full time and part time.

These eight were selected, as they needed extra support to become independent of college and actively target employment as a personal goal.

Action 3: Identify learners to be supported in work experience positions by either Breakaway or Central Sussex College

3 learners from Surrey were ineligible for support from Breakaway so were immediately nominated for work experience support by the college.

1 learner was already working with Breakaway but doing voluntary work as additional work experience for the course so continued to be supported by Breakaway at work.

2 learners had taken part in a summer work experience project with Breakaway so remained with them.

2 learners left were taken on for work experience support by the college.

Breakaway participated in the enrolment process for all learners on the course, and the College and Breakaway agreed which learners within the cohort would receive additional supported



employment input. Within the period of this case study (one term) approximately one third of the learners receive additional support at work.

Action 3: Begin to find out about learners work choices and skills.

All learners were interviewed prior to the course and asked about work preferences. At this point the preferences were taken at face value. Part of the job search programme encourages learners to consider their skills and match them against different types of work. Assessment of skills also forms part of the feedback from work experience providers in the first term. Some basic independence skills are commented on by referral agencies in the application pack for joining courses. Consolidating and expanding this information into a vocational profile on the lines of the Breakaway model has been a learning point for the college. See "issues arising."

Action 4: Search for employers suitable for learners' work choices.

Learners supported by College

A number of issues arose from the concept of 'suitable', which are dealt with under "issues arising" below. These centre around what are realistic choices, the knowledge of opportunities out there, resources available to look for placements, the attitude of employers, and travel considerations.

In summary, with the 5 individual learners supported by College: 20 unsuccessful calls were made by College staff to find 4 placements. For one learner, a placement was found but the company then put back start date by a month before pulling out all together. The learner was taken on by College Facilities Dept but withdrawn on Health and Safety grounds. He was then placed in a protected college placement while being trained on Health and Safety issues that had caused a problem. Learner will move out to known employer after Christmas. Another learner was only taken on for a very short period by a company, so is currently working for 5 weeks up to Christmas in a College workshop area. There will also be a 1-day taster organised at a company who can offer no more than that.

Learners supported by Breakaway

Due to the different emphasis within supported employment, Breakaway normally only recommends short work experience positions to help avoid exploitation of candidates, but also because the model offers intensive support for a number of weeks at the start. College work experience positions often run for a longer period, with less intensive support. Not all learners had these set up from the start, despite both staff teams starting early in their search.

One learner received intensive input in his new paid job, covering all aspects of task routines, induction procedures, and support through the employer's mandatory health and safety training. Breakaway will continue to monitor him in the work place. He will continue attending the College course to build on his confidence, basic and personal skills.

A second learner's voluntary administration position had to be put on hold due to a Health & Safety issue with the work environment, He will need further input on confidence building and making the transition to other work /study environments.



A third learner's employer required Breakaway's on-site support to start the work experience and ensuring that he had understood the information given on the Induction Day. Breakaway monitored him on a regular basis, receiving positive feedback, and will be looking for suitable opportunities for paid work with him. He has missed some weeks at college, this will be addressed by his tutor at college. This learner has a hearing impairment but is reluctant to use his hearing aids, which makes verbal communication difficult for him. This affects his success during recruitment processes, but if taught tasks by demonstration he can learn and use his initiative appropriately. See issues arising.

Action 5: Monitoring, support and task teaching at work experience locations.

College view

The College has been able to monitor and give support to learners and employers but does not have the resource or trained staff to offer the task teaching service. The College see this as requiring training in Systematic Instruction.

The College work plans and reports on progress have been used previously with full time learners on courses where work experience was less of an integral part. The work programme probably should be expanded.

Supported Employment view

Breakaway's input was on-site training, to facilitate learning of tasks and work cultures, including testing understanding of Health and Safety. Due to the routine use of Job Analysis in any new work environment, the positions are examined in detail to ensure suitability to the learner's capabilities. The Supported Employment method is to give detailed intensive and consistent support in the first few weeks, and to identify colleagues who can give some natural support after intensive external support is withdrawn. If the Supported Employment worker has done their job properly this should not be an unreasonable level of demand on the employer.

Action 6: Regular feedback between Central Sussex College and Breakaway staff.

This has mainly been by e-mail and telephone. Much of the contact has revolved around issues of getting people placed. Feedback on performance will take the form of an end of term review of each learner. Joint work on developing skills and finding employment will increase as the learners get nearer the end of the time on their course. A planned session by Breakaway in college has not happened as learners had to go out on a project as part of their Community Study. Breakaway have requested that interview skills input be brought forward following the performance of 1 learner at a job interview. Out of the 8 learners on the course, Breakaway has worked or intends to work with 5 of the learners as a matter of course, outside of this project's activity.

The college job search course looks at getting employment by teaching presentation skills, self awareness, job matching, what jobs involve, general job seeking skills such as CV and application form completion and interview skills as well as a theoretical overview of job survival skills such as handling conflict at work. These complement the work done by Breakaway in developing practical work skills and the social skills to survive at work. Feedback on the efficacy of these 2 approaches for individuals is a vital cog in the work. In other words the



college has the time to prepare people for getting a job and Breakaway the resource to ensure it happens and the learner keeps the job.

Issues arising

Actions 1 and 2: Learning in College and at work.

The learning at College and the work place must and, on this course, has complemented each other. In College, learners are preparing for the world of work by learning:-

- Personal presentation skills
- Job seeking skills
- Rights and responsibilities which develop self advocacy and decision making skills
- How to access facilities in the community to prepare people for maybe not being in work 5 days a week and thus wanting to utilise spare time effectively
- How to conduct themselves and handle conflict and problems at work and in general

Work experience gives the opportunity to transfer and use these skills in a real life environment. Experience of both College and Breakaway staff is that people with a learning disability often fail to maintain jobs for reasons unconnected with their ability to do the job. These are often reasons to do with personal relations at work or problems happening outside the workplace. These are often issues which can be dealt with in a classroom situation to back up support given by Breakaway staff at work e.g. "I" felt he was being teased at work and this was explored in a classroom session on bullying and how to handle it. He then felt confident to go back to work and broach the issue with his manager who helped to sort out the problem. The accreditation for the course does not acknowledge work based learning specifically and that is something to be considered for future courses. It would be an issue if considering work-based learning as a vehicle for delivering this sort of programme.

While learning on the job it is helpful to many learners to have a base where on the job learning can be backed up in a classroom situation. e.g. "U" went for a work experience interview and did not do well so College brought forward the Interview module in job search. Conversely classroom learning is reinforced when applied to a work situation as soon as possible. Accreditation of the work based element should be investigated for the future.

Actions 3, 4, 5 & 6: Work experience and employers

The College feels that a lot of time has been spent finding work experience placements. Initially placements sought were of the type requested at initial interview. In some cases these were unrealistic. Unrealistic choices seem to be made when learners do not have a good idea of what a job involves and the skills and standard of work that is required. Learners can only make judgements on what they know and many have very limited knowledge of what is available in the job market. Interview (College) and a Vocational Profile (Breakaway) are used to find out about skills and preferences. College staff feel they have needed to be quite directive with some learners in order to make best job match.

Breakaway also finds that it takes a lot of time to find work experience positions, as much as for paid jobs, and for one learner it took a worker a full working day of making phone calls to find them a short-term work experience position. This is why it is worth doing a good job-match before spending time job-hunting.



The usual Supported Employment approach is to do a thorough Vocational Profile over a number of one-to-one appointments in different locations **before** making suggestions for a suitable job-match, which suits a candidate's particular circumstances. This ensures that the intensive on-site support is applied in a position in which a candidate is likely to become successfully independent.

Many jobs are multi tasked and multi skilled. This makes it increasingly difficult to match learners to jobs. It also means there are jobs where relatively well paid people are doing basic, routine tasks which tie up their time unproductively. Breakaway try to negotiate "job sculpting" to try and free up these routine tasks for their client group which can benefit employers/employees as well. The ongoing difficulty for them (and on this course for College staff operating mainly in the classroom) is getting in front of enough employers to get this sort of message across.

The College has a department delivering work-based learning and this may offer opportunities to interface with a large employer base by various methods. Breakaway also has limited resources to make a large number of employer contacts. There is a separate Equal project running until 2007 on employer diversity, focussing on disability equality with employers, which may benefit our approaches to employers in the longer term.

Many employers have no or very limited experience of people with a learning disability and time has to be taken to brief them. In Breakaway's experience the message then often has to be relayed to other people in the organisation before decisions are made. The time it takes to place people has put strain on the delivery of this course. It is crucial for the work experience element to be adequately resourced with staff. Organisations offering work related training to people with a learning disability must have experience of working with them. Gaining commitment of employers is a key issue.

The continued work based support is crucial to both learner and employer. Breakaway has experience of writing work based learning programmes (task analyses). This provides the basis for job-coaching people, and when taken to the fullest degree with Systematic Instruction it is an empowering technique for learners. Systematic Instruction requires a detailed task breakdown and consistent task teaching by the same person, which enables people to become independent. The learning experience is richer if the work based learning programme is well planned and regularly monitored.

Summary

The College believes time and adequate staff are crucial resources for work experience. Finding placements/jobs requires a team of people with this specific responsibility that have time to make the connections and build up a relationship with a network of employers. Good quality marketing resources are crucial particularly visual ones. An organisation ideally needs access to a large database of employers and preferably employers who have made some commitment to training. Skill and creativity is needed to find realistic jobs for people with a learning disability and this may involve negotiating with employers on job sculpting since most jobs now have an element of multi-tasking and multi-skilling. Few employers have experience or understanding of learning disability and this has to be carefully explained. Use of case studies, pictures, and video is very helpful. Work based learning programmes must be well planned and learners regularly monitored. Helping learners make informed job choices is



crucial and a skilled role. It requires the ability to assess a person's ability and knowledge of the local labour market.

Breakaway would agree that adequate time and resources need to be applied, but instead need to **be used** to go into more detail with fewer candidates and employers, rather than using large databases. This is because Breakaway's experience finds that it is the personal attitudes of the potential line manager which dictate the likely accessibility of employment to candidates with learning difficulties, not remote HR departments of large companies.

There is much goodwill offered by employers, and the knack is to help them fill vacancies which might otherwise be expensive to advertise, and in which there is high turnover of staff. Many routine jobs are challenging enough to people with learning difficulties, but other people may get bored in them after a short time. Likewise a part-time job may be challenging enough to someone who needs longer time than others to do their routine chores.

Other issues

- Benefits

This will always be an issue for people with a learning disability and work. It requires expert people to do calculations and give advice on Benefit issues. This includes making sure things are followed through with the Benefits Agency. The expertise in this project is provided by Breakaway and due to our joint approach the right advice has been given to learners.

Work programmes like this one need someone with Benefits expertise to give advice, do calculations and follow through with the Benefits Agency.

- Breakaway access to new clients

The link between College and Breakaway from the beginning of an academic year gives time for information about supported employment to be given people well before they are due to leave. This includes interested people who are not part of this course. Breakaway can work with people earlier to help them make a transition from College to work.

The link between Breakaway and College enables more people to access supported employment well before they leave College.

- Issues of confidentiality for report

The College and Breakaway had to ensure confidentiality for people appearing in this report. In most College courses for ALDD pictures are used as evidence and signatures of agreement for this are required. Similarly all learners signed to say they agreed for their case histories to be referred to in the report.

Future practice and wider implications

It is vital to be aware of what the learners can and cannot do and the Vocational Profile is a useful tool in this. Learning programmes in work and college need to meet the needs of the individual. College and Breakaway had a useful discussion on the merits of the College's "Employee's Log Book" and how much value there was in learners writing down things about the workplace. This is an important area of consideration when developing learning programmes. The demand for evidence of achievement is usually linked to the written word and evidence that criteria have been fulfilled e.g. NVQs. This may not be relevant for learners with a learning disability and future course development should take account of what a person



can realistically achieve. If for example this sort of course was funded under Work Based Learning the sort of framework used for "Modern Apprenticeships" would in most cases be too prescriptive. Achievement would need to be linked to specific individual targets such as completing the work based programme and achieving some generic work skills targets and perhaps some of the Adult Core Curriculum Milestones or Entry Level Basic Skills targets. Building accreditation around a mixture of job specific and generic work skills underpinned with Basic Skills at Entry or Pre Entry might work for a purely work based learning model. The learning would require some degree of one to one support from a job-coach. There would need to be expertise in coaching people with a learning disability specifically.

Many learners need the personal presentation, self advocacy, independence skills (including money/travel), problem solving skills most of which are covered in the programme offered on this course. This would not count against a work based learning model but some form of classroom input would probably be required.

It is crucial to have a lot of information about what a learner can and cannot do in order to place correctly and develop a meaningful individual programme. It is equally crucial to match learning programmes specifically to their needs rather than a pre set "framework". Although a work based learning approach would be workable most learners need this supported by off the job training in personal and basic skills. They also require job coach support from an experienced person. The College view is that the right natural support from within the workplace would require staff training, but Breakaway feel this should occur naturally if the job-coach has done that part of their job effectively.

Our suggested guidelines on working arrangements

- Find your local Supported Employment Service for ALDDs and twin with FE college
- Identify shares of capacity and roles
- Agree division of labour finding work experience placements
- Establish selection criteria for learners
- Agree target group and select candidates for joint input for long-term work (those needing extra 1:1 help making the transition out of college and into work)
- Agree who needs on-site support and how to communicate to benefit them best (e.g. in our project feedback on poor interview skills from Breakaway enabled the college to input interview skills into the programme earlier)
- Assess and match learners to positions and review termly.
- Allocate support worker time in positions

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