

Employer Engagement and the SEND Reforms

a short guide for local authorities

Funded by



Department
for Education

In 2013-14, local authorities spent £8.1bn¹ on support for working age adults with a disability. **In addition, £4.5bn is spent on meeting Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) requirements.**

There is potential for significant savings if authorities can secure sustainable employment for young people with a disability. This will require carefully planned engagement with employers.

The numbers of adults of working age who have a learning disability and are in employment is declining and now stands at 6%². Employment rates are also low for other disabilities such as autism conditions. We know that many, if not most, want to work and can do so with the right support. Many young people with disabilities are not entering the labour market once their education has finished and may feature in the Not in Education, Employment, or Training (NEET) cohort. There is a strong economic and moral imperative to address this.

Where do the cost savings come from?

There is potential for significant ongoing savings to daycare, transport and personal budget costs if young people are supported into employment.

Case Study:

Gateshead Council estimates that it has saved many thousands of pounds by supporting people into employment over the last year. Dave has a diagnosis of Asperger's Syndrome and Dyslexia and lives in his own flat purchased for him by his parents. He had a package of care provided through an external, out of borough, provider which included sleep in's due to anxiety and one to one support during the day to access social opportunities. Gateshead's supported employment service worked with him to secure appropriate employment. Dave now works 2 days per week on a fourteen hour contract; his package of care has reduced from £75,000 to £26,000 a saving of £49,000 per annum.

How does this link into wider strategies?

Authorities may wish to consider how their employment and skills plans can best address the needs of young people with disabilities by promoting apprenticeships, supported internships and work experience opportunities. Some local authorities and City Deal areas are ensuring that employer engagement, on behalf of young SEND jobseekers, features within their wider economic strategies e.g. NEET strategies.

Berkshire Elevate³ is integrating the improvement of employment rates in to its wider NEET strategy across the six local authorities. It is actively sharing best practice and linking to the economic development work taking place to achieve its aim of a 50% reduction in youth unemployment within three years.

Summary

Local authorities have regular contact with employers and the world of business.

Ensuring that meeting the needs of young people with disabilities runs as a thread throughout these relationships and plans is critical.

This coordinated approach to employer engagement can lead to a substantial improvement in employment outcomes for young people with SEND, potentially saving millions of pounds and improving the lives of the young people and their families.

Case study: Wolverhampton

One of Wolverhampton's key priorities is prosperity for all where they have set out an ambitious, long term plan to bring organisations closer together to deliver joined up, value for money services which make a difference to local people and businesses.

Ensuring more young people with SEND leave education with jobs and sustainable careers is now part of this plan.

Governance of the initiative includes regular updates to the City's Inclusion Board. This has resulted in Employment and Skills organising the first regular employer engagement event, which will provide the opportunity to hear from other local employers who are disability confident.

1. <http://www.hscic.gov.uk/catalogue/PUB16111/pss-exp-eng-13-14-fin-rpt.pdf>

2. <http://ascof.hscic.gov.uk/Outcome/1001/1E>

How can I use the Social Value Act?

Local authorities can use a corporate commitment to support young people with disabilities into work experience and supported internships, driving this into broader commissioning and procurement using the Social Value Act⁴. The use of social clauses is permitted within procurement and can create valuable opportunities for young people to experience and enter the world of work. For example, Halton Council aspires to include one social value outcome within every procurement exercise.

The Social Value Act asks commissioners to think about securing extra benefits for their area when they are buying services. Before they start procurement, commissioners should think about how the services they are going to buy, or the procurement process they are going to use to buy them, could secure the most valuable benefits for their area. As well as economic development, similar prioritisation could be placed within investment strategies for housing, environment and community inclusion.

What do local authority staff need to know?

Staff responsible for economic development should be aware of the business case for recruiting workers with a disability when approaching employers. They need to understand the approach taken by supported employment providers and how supported internships operate so that they can support businesses to bring innovation to their recruitment processes.

How can we lead by example?

Local authorities need to be champions themselves. It is possible to create job opportunities by thinking creatively when procuring or managing contracts. Some town centre management functions are carried out by local authorities using service fees from local business. This could create a job for a young person with a disability whilst promoting the corporate social responsibility agendas of the businesses involved.

How do we work with schools and colleges?

Local authorities have the opportunity to strengthen links between employers and schools/colleges. This could include workshop presentations to employer forums, employer involvement in developing young people's job search and interview skills, participation in active information, advice and guidance measures and identifying employer mentors and champions.

The Government's Careers and Enterprise Company plans to link senior business volunteers with individual education providers to build employer engagement plans. The network of volunteers is supported by Enterprise Coordinators who will work with a cluster of schools and colleges to link them to the very best initiatives, such as work experience and speaker programmes. The aim of the network is to make it simpler for schools and employers to work together.

3. <http://berkshire.elevateme.org.uk>

4. <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/social-value-act-information-and-resources/social-value-act-information-and-resources>

5. <http://www.preparingforadulthood.org.uk/what-we-do/supported-internships/dfc-information-for-employers>

Top Tips

Ensure that multi-agency strategic plans include targets for improving the employment rates of young people with disabilities

Improve data collection on the outcomes for people with a disability up to 25 years of age

Ensure economic development officers and procurement staff are knowledgeable about supported employment and the SEND reforms

Coordinate employer engagement to minimise duplication and maximise effectiveness

Ensure those who are engaging with employers are aware of the many benefits of employing a person with disabilities

Use social clauses to gain benefits through the Social Value Act

Ensure clear pathways and trained support for young people with SEN and disabilities⁵

Facilitate links between business and education providers.

Resources ([click to download](#))

[Social Value Act](#)

[Section 106 obligations](#)

[Apprenticeships and disability](#)

[Careers and Enterprise Company](#)

[Realising Talent for Everyone](#)

This guide has been produced as part of the Employment is Everyone's Business project in partnership with:

