



# What can be done to support people with a learning disability to get and keep paid work?

## Research summary 3



## About the research

In March 2022 [Mencap](#) commissioned [National Development Team for Inclusion \(NDTi\)](#) to do some research to better understand what people with a learning disability want when it comes to work, why so few people with a learning disability are able to access or maintain paid work, and what more can be done to help address the barriers to work for people with a learning disability in the UK.

As part of this research we heard from people with a learning disability and employers about what supports people with a learning disability to get and keep paid work:

51



We spoke to **51 people** with a learning disability in 7 focus groups and 4 interviews across England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. In the focus groups and interviews we asked people to talk about what helps them get or do the job they want.

We had responses from **188 people** with a learning disability through an online Easy Read survey. In the survey we asked people who have a job, what support they get to do their job.

188



18



We interviewed **18 employers**; 11 from organisations that currently employ someone with a learning disability in their organisation and 7 from organisations that do not. Interviews were conducted with an NDTi researcher and a co-researcher with lived experience of learning disabilities. Employers that do employ people with a learning disability were asked about what worked well. All employers were asked what would encourage them to employ more people with a learning disability.

A group of **9 people** with lived experience of learning disabilities was formed to inform, guide and advise on various aspects of the research. This was called the Research Working Group. All those involved did so as part of their paid Mencap roles or were paid for their time by NDTi.

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# What supports people with a learning disability to get a paid job?



## Accessible recruitment processes

*"We're adjusting our recruitment process to make it less administrative, less process driven and being a bit more flexible." (Employer)*

*"[organisation] has a guaranteed interview scheme for people with disabilities. So if I matched the skills that they're looking for then they can invite me for interview." (Person with a learning disability)*

*"People come in and trial and see what it's like, see whether they like it and whether they think they could do it with some support." (Employer)*



## Trainee/internship schemes

*"We have one person in digital marketing, three people in IT, one in admin, three in operations... there's nobody who has not got employment from a supported internship." (Employer)*

*"What I do know, as a result of those two [traineeship] programmes is that there were 14 individuals who went through the programme and that three of them still have jobs today." (Employer)*



## Employment support

*"I got help from [job coach] to get the jobs. [She] has been amazing" (Person with a learning disability)*



## Voluntary work experience

*"Having had experience as a volunteer with charities helped me get my foot in the door...it's all about your experience." (Person with a learning disability)*



# What supports people with a learning disability to stay in paid work? (1)



## Supportive employer

**46%** of people completing the survey who were in paid work get support from someone at work to do their job.

*“We can provide flexible working hours, later starts or more hours over less days or vice versa.” (Employer)*

*“It’s gotta be a good organisation and gotta be a good team that understands you.” (Person with a learning disability)*



## In-work employment support

**33%** of people completing the survey who were in paid work get support from a job coach to do their job.

*“It’s having that time to invest in a colleague who needs a bit of extra support and that’s where job coaching is really helpful... helping the person settle in and getting them up to speed in terms of their job and integrating into the workplace.” (Employer)*

*“I ask lots of question and it helps me to learn from other people...having someone there with me showing me what to do was really helpful.” (Person with a learning disability)*



## Travel support

**15%** of people completing the survey who were in paid work get help to travel to work.

Three people with a learning disability in the focus groups had received travel training or had a travel buddy. Two employers provide training or support around travel to ensure people can get to work and back home.



# What supports people with a learning disability to stay in paid work? (2)



## Good communication

*“It’s very important to check that communication is right at the very beginning and to understand what they need.” (Employer)*

*“Just go a wee bit slower to explain things and make them feel welcome... build up a relationship, so they understand you and you understand them.” (Person with a learning disability)*



## Right person for the right job

*“[Supported employment organisation] give us the people who are matched to our vacancies, and this works well.” (Employer)*

*“It is a question of understanding people’s gifts and talents” (Employer)*



## Support for the employing organisation

*“Through working with [supported employment organisation], as well as being helpful in terms of supported employment, it’s also been quite good in terms of being educational for me.” (Employer)*

*“My Employment Officer signed [organisation] up for a training programme. These people who ran it had a learning disability as well, and it really helped them understand people with learning disabilities and how to work along with them.” (Person with a learning disability)*



## Family support

**20%** of people completing the survey who were in paid work had support from their family to do their job.

*“My family is really supportive which helps me so much” (Person with a learning disability)*



## What does, or could, encourage organisations to employ more people with a learning disability? (1)

*"I think if more people could just see it and what is possible, how easily it can be done, it would encourage more people to try. It should just be our normal practice and seeing it would give others confidence that we could all do more." (Employer)*

Seeing positive examples



Awareness raising



*"I think awareness raising that people with a learning disability are not hard work. You know, there's this perception, I think out there that it's a lot of effort from an employment point of view... once you work with someone with a learning disability, you get to understand that it's not that difficult." (Employer)*

*"[Support] from experts to help us get it right and push us to do something different. Maybe because, we aren't the experts, we're under no illusion that we'll be able to do this on our own. We absolutely would like some support from a professional organisation that will help us achieve this goal." (Employer)*



Getting support



Having a business need

*"A wider talent pool, especially at the moment where there seems to be a recruitment crisis across the whole of the UK... the labour market is changing ... It does widen your talent pool, from which you can recruit and that can only be a good thing." (Employer)*



## What does, or could, encourage organisations to employ more people with a learning disability? (2)

“We haven’t lost anybody we took on and they are very loyal and hard-working people... We take a lot of agency people at certain times of year... some don’t care too much, they are not so reliable and they are more expensive.” (Employer)

Recognising the benefits –  
reduced turnover/recruitment



Recognising the benefits –  
a diverse workforce



“It kind of reflects our [user] population... So it's about inclusivity really and giving everybody an opportunity.” (Employer)

“Our customers - many make decisions on price or our sustainability strategy as much as anything, but equally, it will touch some people and they will do business with [organisation] because of their values; being an inclusive and diverse organisation is an extremely positive outcome of employing people with disabilities.” (Employer)



Expectations of customers



Expectations of investors

“Our investors are very important to us and if they asked for it, we would change immediately.” (Employer)



## Main findings

These research findings have shown that there are a number of things that can support more people with a learning disability to get and keep paid work:

Learning disability awareness raising, such as training delivered with people with lived experience of a learning disability.

Sharing positive stories and examples, emphasising the benefits to organisations as well as to individuals with a learning disability.

Good quality employment support that provides in-work and ongoing support when needed, available to everyone.

Increased opportunities for supported internships across the UK.

Employment support that provides support to the employing organisation as well as the individual with a learning disability.

Organisations working to become more accessible both in their recruitment procedures and in their internal structures and processes.

Promoting and supporting aspirations and ambitions among individuals with a learning disability.

It was emphasised in 'Research summary 2: What stops people with a learning disability getting and keeping paid work?' that the main thing that stops people with a learning disability getting a paid job is concerns about how it will affect their benefits. The actions above need to be complemented by good quality benefits advice for individuals and policy and campaigning work around the impact of the 'benefit trap' on people with a learning disability.





## More from this research project

There are two other research summaries in this series:

- ❖ **Work: What do people with a learning disability want?**
- ❖ **What stops people with a learning disability getting and keeping paid work?**

The **research summaries**, the **full research report** which provides more details about the methods, limitations and the findings from the research, and an **Easy Read** research report are also available on Mencap & NDTi websites.

[www.mencap.org.uk](http://www.mencap.org.uk)

[www.ndti.org.uk](http://www.ndti.org.uk)

