

Supported Employment is individualised support

A case study from The Scottish Union of Supported Employment (SUSE).

Introduction

Supported employment in Scotland is defined as services that provide **individualised** support to secure people with disabilities, long term conditions and multiple barriers to work a sustainable, paid job in the open labour market.

Good quality and effective supported employment services adhere to the principles of supported employment: everyone has the potential to achieve employment, with the right support; that support is personalised and includes ongoing support in work; and the employment services work with the employer as well as the individual.

The below demonstrates these principles in action through the work of Cornerstone Employment Service, in Aberdeen.

Background

Cornerstone Employment Service, like most supported employment services, depends on a variety of short-term funding sources, which include European Social Funds (ESF) and the Local Authority. Cornerstone also is a subcontractor on the Department of Work and Pensions (DWP) Work Choice Programme.

Cornerstone's ESF funded project enables it to support individuals to retain or progress in their work. It allows flexibility, which is important for a personalised service. This is apparent in three short stories of Cornerstone's work ¹.

Andrew

Andrew is a young man who was socially isolated. When Cornerstone's employment coordinator met him he didn't go out of his home. Andrew has Asperger's Syndrome. After

a long period of getting to know him, at home where he felt safe, the employment coordinator went with him to a young person's group. Gaining confidence through being with people his own age, Andrew joined a college Access course. Andrew did well at college and decided to try work through job placements. His success in these was assured by the employment coordinator working alongside him at first, and supporting him to learn the tasks and meet colleagues. Now Andrew has a job with a social enterprise for sixteen hours a week. He still has the employment coordinator's contact details in-case of any issues, but he doesn't call at all.

Bruce

Bruce was in work, and on the Work Choice Programme. The Work Choice provider assessed he needed additional support, because changes at work meant neither he nor the employer were happy and he was at risk of losing his job. Through the ESF project, Cornerstone was able to provide the intensive, one-to-one support needed, in addition to the Work Choice input.

Bruce had worked in an office for many years, was familiar with the routine and had supportive colleagues. Then he was moved to a reception post in another workplace, where he struggled. The Cornerstone employment coordinator came into the workplace and assessed the tasks within the job, shadowing him for a couple of shifts. The employment coordinator found Bruce's job description didn't match what he was doing and it wasn't clear what he was required to do: confusion that was problematic for Bruce.

The employment coordinator met with the employer and the Work Choice provider to

¹For the purpose of this case study names have been changed.

explain the issues and what Bruce needed – a tick list, diaries and daily reminders.

Bruce was supported to attend a one-day Customer First training. The employment coordinator developed a job description that matched Bruce's tasks; and some changes were made in the physical environment. The coordinator and Bruce devised an electronic message pad, which meant Bruce could type and email phone messages as soon as they were received, to avoid confusion.

These activities, where the employment coordinator spent time in the workplace and built on Bruce's strengths, meant that he has become confident and effective. As a result Bruce has retained his job and the employer retained a loyal employee.

Clara

Clara was in a supported permitted work scheme, but she wasn't flourishing at work and often turned up late. She wanted a real job, preferably in hospitality.

The employment team's initial assessment with Clara suggested she needed some relevant experience and training. She was supported to attend a 10 week hospitality training course, and

did well. Clara said she'd like to work in her local Asda cafe. The employment coordinator called the cafe, explained Clara's CV and set up a work trial which gave the employer, Compass, and Clara a chance to try out the job. For the first three weekends, the employment coordinator coached Clara in the workplace, setting up the job and doing Clara's induction.

Clara started work in November 2011. After two months the employer and Clara were clear about her tasks, so the employment coordinator stopped providing regular support. The employer says that Clara is a committed, thorough worker and they have "never seen anyone so focussed". Clara wants to increase her hours to sixteen hours a week, and this suits the employer. For this change, Cornerstone will return to the workplace to facilitate a smooth transition.

Now Clara is in a genuine job and is busy, doing something she chose, her performance has improved greatly. She has saved up to go on a holiday to Paris and she says the job "makes her happy".

The employer is so pleased they have asked Cornerstone to contact other sites with a view to placing more clients there.

