

Annex 1: Supported Employment

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Supported Employment is a Methodology originally developed in the United States which enables individuals with disabilities to be employed in real jobs in the open labour market where training and other supports are provided on an ongoing basis. One of the things that differentiates Supported Employment from other approaches is the fact that this Methodology begins with placement unlike most other methodologies which typically begin with training, in the hope that ultimately placement and the labour market would follow. We know from all of the evidence across Europe that unfortunately, many of the traditional approaches have not had significant success and large numbers of people with disabilities and indeed, other disadvantaged groups continue to be outside of the labour market.

In effect, there are three key stages of Supported Employment.

1. Placement into the labour market.
2. Training on the job.
3. On-going support.

I. Placement into the Labour Market

As previously mentioned the first stage is placement. A key element of the Methodology of Supported Employment is the use of Job Coaches who are specially trained in the Methodology to provide whatever support is necessary to people with disabilities and key to the model, also to support employers. Job Coaches carry out a vocational profile of the individual and in collaboration with the person, identify the area of work that would match with the person's interests, skills and capacities. Job Coaches who are trained in sales marketing techniques then go to the labour market and “sell the idea” of Supported Employment to employers and persuade them to create an opportunity for the individual to enter their business. Key to this is a commitment to the employer that the Job Coach will be available to assist with identifying a suitable job, be present when the person starts for their induction/trial period Assist with any training that is required on the job both in terms of the actual work skills and to address any social or other issues that may arise and be there long term, should the employer need some assistance or input at any time in the future. This is one of the unique selling points of this Methodology as we know, from many studies that the big issue for employers is not in fact productivity or cost, it is the fear of being asked to engage with a population whom they are not familiar

with, feel out of their debt and also feel they lack the expertise.

Once the employer has agreed and the person is beginning the job, they are accompanied to work, if needed by the Job Coach who will carry out a detailed analysis of the tasks that need to be completed and begin the teaching on the job of what exactly the supported employee requires, in order to be successful at work.

II. Training on the job

The Job Coach also assists with social interaction with co-workers and as has been mentioned, any other areas such as help with transportation to and from work.

When it comes to supporting employers, the Supported Employment Methodology has a very particular emphasis. The employers are seen as one of two primary customers in this model, the other customer being the individual with disability. As with all customer service, the service provider (the Job Coach) endeavours to ensure that the needs of the customer (the Employer) are met. Employers therefore, are not seen as a barrier or a problem with this approach rather, they are seen as an essential part of the solution to improving the employment prospects for people who are disadvantaged in the labour market. Job Coaches therefore, assist employers in a wide variety of ways. This might include:

- Assisting the employer to identify areas of work within their business that might be suitable for an individual with disabilities.
- Assisting the employer to amend or expand their equal opportunities policy to include provision of people with disabilities
- Assisting employers to bring on board their management team by providing disability awareness training
- Assist the employer to source the right disadvantaged worker for the opportunity that exists within the company
- Provide training on the job once the individual has commenced
- Assist with the adaptation of the Induction Programme to ensure it is suitable for people with disabilities
- Assist the employer in accessing relevant grants/supports e.g., completing the paperwork around an application for a ramp or an adaptation to a bathroom
- Work with the employer to address any initial difficulties/problems that might present



- Provide continued support to the employer once the person has been established within the business
- Be available to the employer on an on-going basis, should any difficulties arise into the future.

III. Ongoing Support

In essence, the Job Coach works, as what might be considered, a mediator between the individual seeking employment who typically has some form of disadvantage and the employer, the person who will provide the employment. It should be remembered that the number one issue for employers is fear of the unknown and therefore, this emphasis on customer service for the employer and a commitment to on-going support with complete flexibility, is a key selling point from the employer's perspective.

Job Coaches also provide ongoing support. Once the person is competent at the job and the employer is happy that the person is now well integrated, the Job Coach no longer attends the site. The Job Coach is however, available should any issues arise into the future. Obviously, situations can change with an individual which may mean a difficulty presents that the employer is not able to deal with, or the work practices are changed because of a re-organised workforce or the introduction of new machinery etc. These are issues with which somebody who is disadvantaged may need some additional assistance. Once again, experience with companies large and small demonstrates that this commitment to on-going support is a key factor in employers agreeing to participate in the Methodology of Supported Employment.

While Supported Employment historically has been used for people with disabilities, in more recent years the success of the model has been observed by other personnel working with different disadvantaged groups and is now being applied to other populations. Supported Employment is now being used with young offenders, drug abusers, migrant workers and other people who are deemed to be disadvantaged in the labour market. Key to the success of any Supported Employment initiative is proper training of Job Coaches, as they are critical to ensuring success. Several excellent [toolkits and guides exist online](#), available free to people new to supported employment to help them develop expertise, knowledge and training. A first toolkit focuses solely on supported employment for persons with disabilities and a later toolkit has been developed that focuses on other marginalised or disadvantaged groups in the labour market.

One very significant difference to the Supported Employment approach is the fact that the assessment of the individual is totally focused on ability as against disability or disadvantage. The purpose of the assessment is to identify the person's interest, capacities and their skills, not to decide who can who cannot go to work. It is important not to confuse Supported Employment with Open Employment, as it is designed for people who are likely to require some form of on-going support. It is true that many people who began with Supported Employment have graduated into Open Employment



but there are also people with more complex needs or more severe disabilities, who have been successfully included in the labour market but their continued success is contingent on the availability of on-going support.

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