



Seeing the full picture

How the voluntary and community sector supports people who are out of work

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Executive summary

Background

Over the past five years, the National Lottery Community Fund has distributed over £800 million of National Lottery, government and European funding to employment projects led by charities and community groups. Eight of our larger programmes alone have supported 181,000 people on their employment journey since 2010.

Our funding **complements mainstream provision**, giving voluntary and community sector (VCS) groups access to funding so they can **support people who may need more help, for longer, or in more flexible formats than other services** may be able to offer.

Getting started

Many VCS organisations base their employment services in places people are familiar with, knowing that some find formal environments intimidating. They work from places like **community and youth centres, or homeless drop-in centres**. Support workers from our employment programmes like [Talent Match](#), [Building Better Opportunities \(BBO\)](#), [Big Lottery Veterans Service](#), and [Making It Work](#) have met some participants in their homes first, knowing that it's a place where people feel most comfortable to open up, while allowing staff to get a better understanding of the range of support they might need.

It can be difficult to find the time to get to know people; to find out what's really going on in their lives, their ambitions and talents. Our grantholders really focus on this important step, **recognising its importance** when working with people who are **the least likely to access support**. Simple things help here, like starting with conversations rather than form-filling, and having the first meeting over a coffee rather than over a computer.

Equal opportunities are at the heart of our employment funding. The charities we fund make sure their services are open to everyone and are as easy to access as possible. Funding employment services that are **led by people from the communities they support**, like [Babbasa](#), [The Limehouse Project](#) and [Intercultural Youth Scotland](#), are an important part of this - as is supporting organisations which work in **effective, fair partnership with grassroots and community groups**.

Delivering employment support

The route from unemployment to a job can be long. What's important is that **people feel ownership of this journey**, and that services show people that they matter by **being flexible, adapting support** to what's going on for that person. Setbacks are part of life, so people should be able to return or stay as long as needed.

One-to-one support is at the core of the employment journey. Usually this is based around **a dedicated key worker who will form a trusted relationship** with the person, and will be with them throughout. **This is something that the VCS do well, going the extra mile** for example to accompany people to their first job interviews, or even drive them to work on their first day. [Talent Match Plus Liverpool](#) is currently developing a tailored qualification for the key worker role, recognising that it's a vocation requiring training, recognition and support.

VCS groups are increasingly working together, and with public and private partners, to **create integrated services**. These can address and support people with both work and non-work issues without having to signpost them to other services; people can get everything they need from one place, or from one provider. **Embedding mental health support** in employment projects is particularly important, recognising it as an issue affecting people of all ages and backgrounds.

Lots of people benefit from simple changes in their lives to improve their employability. This might be getting money to buy work clothes, acquiring skills that many of us take for granted like budgeting or using public transport, or learning what to expect in the workplace. Usually these require **only small amounts of money, but can make a huge difference to someone**, especially when mentors and other key workers are able to make such decisions.

Key workers can identify priorities, so they get **the right support for people at the right time**. This might mean dealing with other issues before thinking about employment, like housing or addiction. For others, the job is the “hook”, and it's only later that issues in the background can be addressed. Peer support and group work can be important too, to help people to create connections and networks, and **avoid developing a dependency** on their key worker.

Setting people up to succeed

If you've never worked before, it's difficult to know what it will be like when you start. That's why many projects **help people understand what's expected of them in the workplace**, like how to manage time, and deal with difficult situations.

But lots of things can affect people's ability to stay in or progress within work, like working relationships, and ongoing personal issues. This is why many of the groups we fund **continue to help participants three to six months into their first or new job**. This help is usually provided by the same key worker, or someone who has mutual lived experience to share, and might include advice on what to do when someone disagrees with you at work, practical help in organising childcare, or support to cope with and balance issues the person may face outside of work, alongside their working commitments.

Appropriate support should be available for employers too, to help them understand what they, their supervisors and other employees can do to make the transition into the workplace as smooth as possible. Staff at [Accelerate](#), a free employment service in Warwickshire, have worked with employees to create workplace circles of support to help participants settle into a job and sustain employment.

Introduction

Over the past five years, the National Lottery Community Fund has distributed over £800 million of National Lottery, government and European funding to employment projects led by charities and community groups.¹ We've supported over 5,300 projects, from small grants of less than £10,000, to multi-annual million-pound investments. Eight programmes alone have supported 181,000 people on their employment journey since 2010.

Our funding complements mainstream provision: it doesn't duplicate or replace it. We give voluntary and community sector (VCS) groups access to funding so they can do more in this space; supporting people who need more help, for longer, or in more flexible formats than other services may be able to offer.

We think there are unique features that make the VCS stand out in providing employment support, especially for people who have never worked, have been out of work for a while, or have particular barriers to accessing or progressing in employment. We focus on some of those messages here, looking at what works, from approaches and principles, to practical tips and specific examples.

This isn't an exhaustive list, and we focus here on the way charities work with participants, rather than messages related to wider employment partnerships and policy.

Getting started

1. Meeting people where they are at
2. Getting to know people
3. Making services accessible for all

Delivering employment support

1. Individual journeys
2. A trusted key worker
3. Seeing the full picture
4. Small hurdles
5. The right support at the right time
6. Peer support

Setting people up to succeed

1. What to expect in the workplace
2. In-work support

Getting started

1. Meeting people where they are at

Many of us are used to seeking help from Jobcentres to find or secure work. But for others, formal environments can be intimidating, making it hard to take the first step. That's why many VCS organisations base their services in places people are familiar with, where they feel comfortable, and which they trust.

[Birmingham Changing Futures](#), which worked with people experiencing multiple disadvantage, operated from homeless drop-in centres and well-known charity centres. Together with peer support workers, Jobcentre staff travelled to meet clients in these locations, until the necessary trust was created and participants' lives were stabilised.

Similarly, [Talent Match Plus Liverpool](#) works from safe places in the community such as youth clubs, making employment support more accessible for young people who aren't accessing any support, including benefits, and aren't working or studying.

In some cases, charities start with home visits, knowing that some people need that extra encouragement to get involved. In Scotland, [Making it Work](#) support workers used a mix of home visits, drop-in events and networking to engage and then help 3,115 lone parents onto the employment ladder. [Gingerbread](#), the lead partner in Fife, was used to working with people in their own homes or out in the community. Staff found that this approach worked well for lone parents too: "A lot of the cases that we're working with are very complex, and many of the parents do not feel confident on an initial engagement to be coming along to a job club, or to a corporate, office-type environment. So, the fact that support workers are going to actually visit them in their homes has been really successful."²



Learning conference - Birmingham

Starting at home

In 2016-2019, the **Big Lottery Veterans Service** helped 210 veterans with their employment search in the North East. The support workers also provided a listening ear and help with issues like food, mental health and housing.³

The support workers were ex-service people themselves, so they decided to meet many of the participants in their homes first, knowing that it was the safe space where people felt most comfortable to open up. It also allowed them to assess participants' home circumstances and get a better understanding of the whole range of support they might need.

This work provided a much-needed lifeline for many veterans. "The advice that staff have given to myself in my condition trying to find meaningful employment has been good. Staff have been great; it's better because they come from a military background themselves. Know the pitfalls ex-servicemen like myself encounter", one veteran said.

Another added: "If this support wasn't available, I would be lying in bed looking at four walls", or "on the street."



2. Getting to know people

“Society has a tendency to put people into boxes”, explained one young man, but “I have never had that feeling with **Talent Match**.” People can face all sorts of barriers to work, and there can be hidden nuances to their circumstances that they may not be ready to share at the start of their journey.

That’s why it’s so important to take the time to get to know people. The charities and community groups we fund do this well, often starting with conversations rather than form-filling. They might do the first meeting over a coffee or a game of pool at a youth club, for example.

This is so that staff can work with participants to build a rapport:

- Get to who they are and where they come from.
- Find out their strengths and aspirations.
- Find out and understand what’s going on in their lives.
- Learn what’s stopping them from working.

These may seem straightforward or self-evident steps, but they can be time-consuming, and require intensive one-to-one input from staff with the right inter-personal qualities. Services which support large numbers of unemployed people every day, can’t always make the time and space for these to happen.

Our grantholders, however, really focus on this approach, recognising its importance in getting those who are least likely to access support involved.

The right start

Talent Match, our largest employment programme for young people, supports people throughout the whole employment journey, starting with meeting them wherever they’re at. One young man found work after almost three years in the programme; his history of homelessness and mental health difficulties meant he needed long-term support to develop his confidence and self-esteem before moving on to more traditional employment support.

Another participant said of the programme: “Talent Match has supported me and given me opportunities to progress. They have encouraged my own unique talents and helped me to find something I can excel in.” And a Talent Match Humber participant highlighted how the programme helped them overcome fears of traditional services: “Before Talent Match I was nervous to go to the Jobcentre. Now my life has turned around and I’m even involved in training our local Jobcentre staff.”⁴

3. Making services accessible to everyone

Equal access to services is at the heart of our employment funding. To make sure people don't fall at the first hurdle, charities we fund make sure their services are open to everyone and that they are as easy to use as possible. This means thinking about and acting on the different issues that might stop people from coming forward, from previous experiences of stigma or prejudice, to practical barriers like inaccessible buildings and facilities, or bureaucracy.

For example, if participants don't have the formal identification required to enrol in a service, such as a passport or birth certificate, our grantholders might show them how to obtain it. And they won't wait for the documentation to arrive before working with the participants – to reduce the risk that people might disengage.

They also work with employers to tackle misconceptions, help them to understand how they can be more open and supportive, and identify adaptations they can make with support from well-established schemes, like [Access to Work](#).

We know that organisations with a track record of working with minority groups are more likely to have their trust than generalist groups with no track record of working with the community. And we know people trust organisations that are led by people from the communities they support, or that work in effective, fair partnership with other grassroots and community groups. Finding ways to hear and respond to a range of voices, and recognising the ways in which age, sex, gender, race, disability, class, sexuality and other identity issues affect people's employment journeys differently, help ensure a nuanced and inclusive approach.



Learning conference - Birmingham

We fund groups led by people with experience of the issues affecting their beneficiaries – often referred to as ‘lived experience’ - to do that. Like [The Limehouse Project](#), which works with around 7,000 residents from Tower Hamlets each year, the majority from Bangladesh. They provide training (in business, early years and English), employment advice and volunteering opportunities to around 1,000 people a year.⁵ Four-fifths of their staff come from the local community so they have a good understanding of the issues people face, and the strengths they bring.⁶

We also fund grassroots groups like a migrant workers group in Sefton, women-only employment group Hope Women Salon in Ealing, and an employability project for LGBT+ people led by Gaydio Brighton. Some of these organisations are working on both the demand and supply sides of the labour market. They help people to access opportunities, and also help employers to create and manage workplaces that tap into the potential of underrepresented groups in their workforce. Intercultural Youth Scotland for instance is a youth-led movement, doing just this through their [Restless Natives](#) programme in Glasgow.

Grassroots action to address labour market inequalities⁷

Babbasa, an ethnic minority led youth organisation in Bristol, is working with young people, businesses and the community to address inequalities in the local labour market.

Over the years, they’ve supported over 2,200 young people from 67 different cultural backgrounds with their confidence, helping young people become active citizens in their communities and access employment, training and business opportunities. They do this by running youth empowerment, leadership and employment programmes, including the National Lottery funded Challenge programme.

Over 130 of their participants have found a job, often in digital, science or IT; 40 young people have gone onto establish their own business; many have returned to education, and at least 64 have left to access higher education. Cameron, one of their former participants, describes his story at Babbasa: “When I was growing up,

my home life was full of abuse and I was continually faced with fear, pain, and hostility [...] Now, I’m running my own carpentry business. One day I hope to go to university to study Robotics. It’s a long way off, but I’m going to do it, and I’m going to make sure I’m going for it everyday.”

They also operate a recruitment service which connects local businesses with a diverse pool of young talent, who they may otherwise struggle to reach. Bristol 24/7, Plimsoll Productions, Wessex Water, and Icon Films are some of the companies they’ve helped to recruit young or ethnic minority candidates. They’re also working to create more inclusive workplaces, by running cultural competency training for businesses, carrying out inclusion analyses, and advising businesses on strategies and policies designed to enhance inclusion.

In 2020, they were awarded a Queen’s Award for Enterprise for Promoting Opportunity (through social mobility) for their dedication to community work in Bristol.

Delivering employment support

1. Individual journeys

The route from unemployment to a job can be complicated and require more than just enrolling people on a pathway of support. While some may just need a bit of encouragement and help, others will go on a much longer and more complex journey, which may well include setbacks.

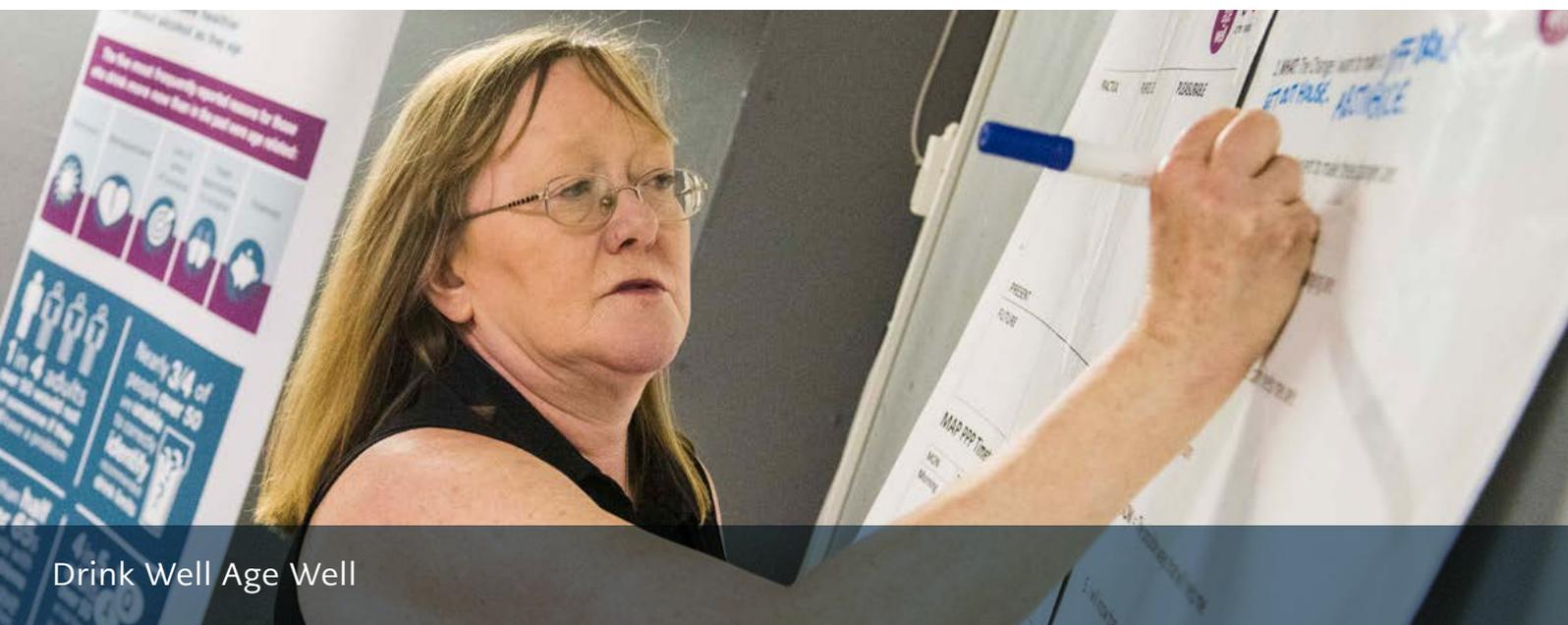
What's really important is that people feel ownership of this journey, and that they're motivated to undertake the different steps it involves. This is why an individualised approach, tailored to people's talents, interests and circumstances, is so important. And this is what the VCS does so well, showing people that they matter by being flexible and adapting support to what's going on for that person. And the services many organisations run are voluntary, with an open-door policy so people are able to return or stay as long as needed.

Changing lives

DFN MoveForward, funded through the Life Chances Fund, demonstrates an individualised, flexible approach in all that it does. Three coaches work with up to 15 students with mild to moderate learning disabilities through one-to-one and group sessions. The coaches support the young people to develop life skills, become more independent and take part in a range of different workplace experiences, building on interests and talents.

Alongside this, a business partnerships manager links students with employers to provide work insight days and work experience opportunities, as well as supporting employers to tailor their offers to the needs of young people.

This is a long-term programme lasting over five years, which means that participants are fully supported to make the transition from education into employment, and also through the early stages of their working life. So far, the organisation has started to work with 176 young people in London, Kent and the Midlands.



2. A trusted key worker

One-to-one support is at the core of the journey to employment. A trusted key worker might be described as a mentor, a navigator, a job coach, or something else. But essentially, it's about having a dedicated person to form a trusted relationship with the participant, who will get to know and understand them, and will be with them throughout.

Key workers have specialist skills. They know what the journey to employment looks like, understand the realities of local labour markets, and have the interpersonal skills needed to both support and empower people. Talent Match Plus Liverpool is currently developing a tailored qualification for this role, based on the idea that the career is as much a vocation as nursing or teaching, and therefore needs a similar approach in terms of the training and support given.

The key worker will assess the needs, talents and aspirations of each person. But for some, work needs to happen even before this step can be undertaken. One support worker on our Building Better Opportunities (BBO) programme visited a participant in their home for a number of weeks and talked to them through the bedroom door until they felt ready to come out. Mentors from [Greater Manchester Talent Match](#) hold initial meetings with young people in their homes – whether that's a family home or a homeless shelter. They then continue as they started: staff accompany young people for walks to help them build the confidence to hand out CVs, go along to interviews and open days, drive them to work on their first day, and attend appointments they've helped to make for young people.⁸

Individual support

The employment service of the [Scottish Association for Mental Health](#) uses a specialist intervention known as Individual Placement and Support (IPS), which embeds employment advisors in mental health teams to help people experiencing long-term mental health issues into work.⁹ Participants are supported on a one-to-one basis to identify and build on their strengths and interests through a 'place and train' model where people have a chance to get experience and receive training alongside placements.

In 2018/19, 277 people were helped with 45% starting employment as a result of the scheme. One client reflected: "Without the help of IPS and my psychologist I don't think I would have been ready for employment. IPS has really helped me find a suitable job that I love and enjoy."¹⁰

3. Seeing the full picture

Standalone employment services play a vital role for people looking for work, but when people have multiple or more complex needs or need support from a range of services, they can fall through the gaps or see one issue reach crisis point even while others are improving. That's why VCS organisations are increasingly working together, and with public and private partners, to create integrated services which can together address and support people with work-related and non-work issues without having to signpost them to other services; people can get everything they need from one place, or from one provider.

Many grantholders are working to embed mental health support in all their employment work, recognising it as an issue affecting people of all ages and backgrounds. Talent Match Plus Liverpool used to refer young people to specialist providers and separately focus on employment. But staff soon realised they lost some people during the referral process, so they started building this expertise into their own service and now take a trauma-informed approach to employment support. The organisation now provides speech and language therapy, counselling and behavioural therapy - all in-house and integrated into a trusted environment. This prevents people from dropping out while tackling some of the deeply personal and entrenched issues that were preventing participants from finding and holding a job.



Fulfilling Lives Newcastle

4. Small hurdles

Not everyone needs specialist support; many benefit from help to make simple changes in their lives which can improve their employability. This might be building up routines, overcoming practical barriers, or acquiring skills that many of us take for granted.

Travel is a common issue; bus journeys, for instance, can be complicated, and people who aren't used to travelling by public transport might not know about new systems like contactless payments. Many charities we fund provide travel training to go through these details, while others, like [Kickstart Norfolk](#), provide funding for scooters or bikes so people can travel to work, training or traineeships. The funding might also cover the cost of driving licenses and relevant safety clothing and equipment.

Responding to frequent requests from people wanting to enter the construction industry but not having the money to get the necessarily permissions, the [Welsh Centre for Action on Dependency and Addiction](#) is running a pilot project to fund costs associated with the Construction Skills Certification Scheme card for labourers. This pilot covers health and safety training, card registration fees, course costs, and travel expenses for those interested in career in construction.

[Getting Ahead](#), another programme in Wales, prepares young people for the practicalities of working life, such as appropriate work clothing, travel planning and budgeting, as well as providing more traditional skills training.

Some BBO projects use social prescribing to help people overcome physical or mental health issues that might be stopping them from working. This could be finding a reason to spend more time outdoors, developing a better routine for exercising, or making the most of opportunities to make friends and overcome isolation.

The value of flexibility

When grant funding is flexible, providers can give mentors and key workers access to much-needed discretionary funds. These can be used to address low-cost practical barriers.

For example, mentors from the Making it Work programme in Scotland put together practical packages of support to help lone parents returning to work. Discretionary funding could be used to cover food, clothing and travel costs between the last benefit payment and the first pay day in the client's new job.

Key workers at [Artillery Youth Centre](#) in Belfast fund things like driving tests.¹¹ In other cases, they pay for interview clothes or train tickets for interviews. These are often very small amounts of money, but make a big difference.

5. The right support at the right time

For many people who face complex issues or barriers to getting a job, like addiction and housing, these need to be identified and addressed first. “We now have a homeless conversation in the first appointment”, explained staff from [Birmingham Changing Futures](#). “Getting a permanent roof over their head is the priority, not getting a job. We agree their commitment is to find secure accommodation and only once that's done do we focus on job hunting.”¹²

For others, employment, training or qualifications are the ‘hook’ and it's only later that other issues in the background can be uncovered and addressed. Hope Women Salon, based in Ealing, received £1,000 of National Lottery funding to enable women to learn basic skills in the beauty sector, alongside CV-writing and interview skills. These joint employability activities have created an environment where women don't only improve their skills, but share and start addressing problems they face at home and in the community.

The ultimate goal might be increasing employability, but because some participants aren't ‘work-ready’, projects use creative ways to help them move step-by-step towards this point. The [Real Ideas Organisation](#) is a partner in BBO-funded project Game Changer and they use digital badges to recognise competences. To earn their [Professional Skills Badge](#), participants need to demonstrate some of the key skills and qualities employers are looking for, like reliability, teamwork, timekeeping and attendance. The badges help to keep people motivated and engaged, and have been shared with employers as evidence of participants' abilities. In 2018/19, Real Ideas supported 125 people into employment and 1,500 people in social enterprise and community activities, as well as finding 95 work placements for young people.¹³

“For some service users, employment brought stability; for others stability set them on the path to employment.”¹⁴

Evaluation, Better Off programme

Adapting during Covid-19

Effective employment services need to be flexible enough to change and adapt during a crisis. Talent Match teams have had successes with remote services during the pandemic. The closure of face-to-face provision negatively impacted many people. But at the same time it made services more accessible for some, such as people who find it difficult to leave the house or speak to people in person, or people who live in rural areas. Talent Match Plus Liverpool reported a 90% engagement rate with online and telephone counselling, which is far higher than engagement in face-to-face provision.

Many providers plan to continue running remote services going forward, alongside face-to-face provision. **This Ability** has developed an entirely new dedicated online platform for learners, many of whom have underlying health conditions and are anxious about leaving home. The online platform offers 24/7 access to training and also boosts the project's ability to track learning and progress.

Game Changer, a BBO project based in Cornwall and the Scilly Isles, runs an Opportunity Bank which connects young people with local businesses to provide work-based experience, mentoring and insights into career and sector pathways. Since Covid-19 restrictions have been in place, it's been moved online. This has enabled many young people to attend online sessions for the first time; previously, poor transport links made this too difficult. Since the pandemic started, the project has connected young people to a local legal firm, an environmental and ethical cleaning company, and a local bespoke joiner.

But it's not been the same for everyone. Others have experienced trauma during lockdown including abuse and toxic relationships. For this reason, Talent Match mentors have continued to work with both survivors and perpetrators of domestic violence throughout Covid-19. This has included organising a local taxi firm to take young people who are living in such circumstances to a local police station if they receive notification of a crisis, dropping off essentials and providing 'care packages'. Through this service, one young woman was given a phone; a £10 item which saved her life.

6. Peer support

Alongside one-to-one support, employment charities use peer support and group work to create connections and networks for people. Group work enables people to share experiences with those who are going through similar things. We've also learned that peer support can stop people from developing a dependency on their key worker.

The work of forces employment charity **RFEA** in supporting military veterans in West Scotland centres around peer support. Military veterans experience particular issues to accessing and sustaining employment, including a lack of experience of civilian roles and non-military recruitment processes, and cultural differences between military and civilian workplaces.

Employment services don't always understand these specific issues, which is why RFEA provides specialist peer support. In 2019, RFEA supported 168 people in West Scotland, helping nearly 45% of those into sustainable employment or training.

Setting people up to succeed

1. What to expect in the workplace

If you've never worked before, it's difficult to know what it will be like when you start, and what will be expected of you. Setting goals, communicating with colleagues, managing time, and dealing with difficult situations are just some of the workplace competences we all need. The [Skilling Up](#) project in Northern Ireland is delivering a personal development programme covering these competences for young people who are out of work. Delivered by a local youth centre, the project also teaches vocational skills which are useful for many jobs, including food hygiene, first aid and driving theory.

It's not always possible to recognise these new skills through qualifications, so some of our projects have developed their own systems to recognise employability. This Ability supports young people with a disability or a long-term health condition into employment in Hull and East Riding. Participants use an [Employability Passport](#) to record and validate soft skills such as reliability, openness, motivation and resilience, that they have developed through their work placements and training.

New environments, new experiences¹⁵

The [Community Apprentice](#) scheme, run through the [#iwill Fund](#), raises aspirations by exposing young people to different career options and work environments.

When a group of young women in Birmingham were working with a city centre employer, they had to travel into the city centre offices after school. This presented a challenge, not because of the cost but because the young women didn't want to travel to the city centre alone, and their parents were also worried about this.

Exposure to new environments is part of the experience, so the project manager didn't want to find a more local venue for the sessions. Instead, she spoke to parents to reassure them and establish trust. She set up minibus transport for initial sessions which was then phased out and instead a buddy staff member accompanied the young women on the bus. This also helped the young women to build their independence, which worked as the group were soon going to and from sessions unaccompanied on public transport.

2. In-work support

Finding a job is a fantastic achievement. For many it's a new beginning, but not the end of their journey. There are lots of things that can still affect people's ability to stay in or progress within work, like working relationships, ethics, workplace behaviour, and ongoing personal issues.

“I don't think it's hard to find a job in general, but finding one that you want to do and that you'll be passionate about and that you can see yourself staying in – that's what's difficult. Not only because it's hard to get into, but also because you might not know what you actually want to do.”¹⁶

Young person, Talent Match

That's why many of our grantholders are extending their support into the workplace, continuing to help participants three to six months into their first or new job. This might be things like advice on the process to follow when feeling unwell, or guidance on what to do when someone disagrees with you at work.¹⁷ Or it may be practical help, for example to obtain suitable work-related clothing or help in organising childcare.

The Getting Ahead programme in Wales has employed mediators to help smooth any issues between new employees and employers. [New Leaf](#), a BBO project in Cheshire, meanwhile, has focused on supporting those who need motivation to stay in work when they're finding things hard. Their mentors help participants develop strategies to cope when feeling overwhelmed, and help them talk through situations so they can stop and reflect before making any hasty decisions.



Learning conference - Birmingham

[Social Enterprise Lancashire Network](#) picks people up from their homes and buys alarm clocks for people who don't have one, so that they don't miss their first day at work, or arrive late.

This ongoing support should preferably be given by the same trusted person, but could also be provided by someone who has graduated from the programme themselves, and has a mutual lived experience to share.

To increase the sustainability of outcomes, support should be available for employers too, especially for small and medium-sized employers. They may need help to understand what they, their supervisors and other employees can do to make the transition into the workplace as smooth as possible. Work may also be needed to break down stigma and misconceptions due to prejudice or lack of understanding, without which a job could potentially do more harm than good.

With the permission of the employee, key workers from the [South Yorkshire Housing Association](#) have sometimes shared participants' wellbeing plans with employers to show them where their strengths are. And employment advisers at [Working For Carers](#) have talked to line managers on behalf of the carer about their caring responsibilities and how they can manage their work around them. Staff at [Accelerate](#), a free employment service in Warwickshire, have worked with employees to create workplace circles of support to help participants settle into a job and sustain employment.¹⁸

In Scotland, Moving Up invested a total of over £3 million of National Lottery money in 2012-2018 to break down barriers to employment and progression for people who are disadvantaged in the workplace.¹⁹ For example, [Glasgow Centre for Inclusive Living](#) used their National Lottery grant to set up its Equality Academy, which offered graduate placements for disabled people and support for employers to develop their equality and diversity practices.



Drink Well Age Well

A chance to shine

The Rank Foundation's Time to Shine programme creates opportunities for people across the UK who show leadership potential to take on roles in the VCS. The focus is on people with lived experience who have never been in work, are underemployed (in roles that don't match their skills and experience), or are returning to work after a long time. These paid placements are important, as most VCS internships require a university degree, with few opportunities for people with experience gained outside of education, such as volunteering.

Time to Shine places equal value on what a leader can bring to an organisation and what they can gain from their placement. Organisations come forward with an identified role in which the participant can learn and grow, rather than simply being an extra pair of hands. This enables organisations to create roles they need but can't resource without evidence. They then identify someone they think could fit this role, which could be an existing volunteer or beneficiary.

During the placement, leaders and their managers attend workshops and events, and take part in small learning groups and a mentoring programme. They also have access to bursaries throughout the year.

The majority of people who complete their placements choose to stay working in the sector. Some find permanent roles within their host organisation. Others go on to play more active and impactful roles in their communities, including creating businesses or charities of their own, or pursuing social, youth work or caregiving roles.

Since we partnered with the Rank Foundation to scale up delivery across the UK in 2019, our funding has enabled 104 people to take up placements in the last two years. This will be scaled up in 2021 to 250, thanks to additional funding from the government's Community Challenge programme.

The programme can be a vital lifeline, as one participant explained: "I went to the Jobcentre but they told me that I'd been signed off for life due to my disabilities [...] but I had aspirations like any normal person [...] I wanted to do something with my life, to show people with a disability that you can work."²⁰

References

- 1 This includes financial years 2015/2016 – 2019/2020 and covers all grantholders that have used one of the following key terms: aren't employed, aren't employed, employment, entrepreneur, entrepreneurial, entrepreneurs, jobless, NEET, not in education or training, not in employment, social enterprise, unemployed, unemployment, interview skills, preparation for employment, work experience, work skills, neet.
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