

# Impression of Supported Employment

A study of some  
European Supported Employment services and  
their activities

By

Øystein Spjelkavik & Michael J. Evans

Oslo, July 2007  
Work Research Institute

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The report explores the practical workings of supported employment in different countries in Europe. The aim of this qualitative study is to get an impression of how supported employment is practised, organised and understood in these countries and to use this information to gauge the progress of Norwegian supported employment. It is also intended that the study will stimulate further discussions and research on supported employment in general. The report discusses several aspects of supported employment and offers recommendations for further development.

*Keywords:*

- arbeid med bistand
- individual support
- job coach
- supported employment
- vocational rehabilitation





## Foreword

This report explores the practical works of supported employment in different countries in Europe. The aim of the study is to get an impression of how supported employment is practised, organised and understood in these countries and through that benchmark Norwegian supported employment. It is our hope that this report can stimulate further discussions and research on supported employment in general.

The study is based on interviews in selected supported employment services in Ireland, Finland, Portugal, Scotland, Holland and Spain. The approach has been of a qualitative kind with a strong emphasis on descriptions by people that are directly involved with the support of disabled persons into a job in the open labour market.

Thanks to all friends that helped us find our way around. Thanks to managers and staff of supported employment services that have been willing to spend so much of their valuable time to answer our questions. We also greatly appreciated the passion shown by service providers and their great patience with us.

Members of the reference group have also provided us with insight and information. These have been representatives of the Norwegian Directorate of Labour and Welfare, the Ministry of Work and Welfare, the University College of Akershus and Forum for Arbeid med bistand (FAB), the Norwegian branch of European Union of Supported Employment (EUSE):

- Per Brannsten and Elisabet Rohme Sivertsen, Directorate of Labour and Welfare
- Åne Osmunddalen and Siri Lassen, Ministry of Labour and Social Inclusion
- Grete Wangen, University College of Akershus
- Gunn Sofie Dahl and Kjell Hartberg, Arbeid med bistand /FAB

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Michael Evans, Dundee City Council, has been co-researcher in this study. Mike is a very experienced practitioner in the field of supported employment and is now President of the European Union of Supported Employment (EUSE). Mike has taken part in this study from its early stages; he participated in some of the interviews and is co-author of the report.

Work Research Institute, July 2007

Øystein Spjelkavik

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## Summary

This report explores the practical workings of supported employment in different countries in Europe. The aim of the study is to get an impression of how supported employment is practised, organised and understood in these countries and to use this information to gauge the progress of Norwegian supported employment. It is also intended that this study will stimulate further discussions and research on supported employment in general. The study is based on existing documentation from earlier research and evaluations of Norwegian supported employment (Arbeid med bistand) and interviews in selected supported employment services in Ireland, Finland, Portugal, Scotland, Holland and Spain. The approach has been of a qualitative nature with a strong emphasis on descriptions by people that are directly involved with the support of disabled persons into a job in the open labour market. The intention is to present the workings of supported employment services as seen through the perspectives of involved personnel. As such, there is no intention to present any kind of 'general truth' about supported employment in these countries.

There are a wide variety of ways in which supported employment projects are financed, and supported employment takes on different forms in the various countries. Although the goal is ultimately for supported employment services to find jobs, there are hardly any financial incentives for supported employment services to get a job quickly for a client. Funding does not seem to be dependent on fast results. However, early job contracts for a client may give the supported employment service a better credibility towards funders. There is a significant struggle to access funding in countries without public funding. It is likely that there will be more pressure on services within a national supported employment programme framework to produce and document outcomes and results. While clients are referred to supported employment services from a wide variety of sources, the most common referral route seems to be from public bodies. It is a general picture that clients in supported employment see themselves as too able for sheltered workshops and therefore want a job in the open labour market. There are several limitations for entry to supported employment, both self-imposed by the supported employment service, and those imposed by public referral services. It appears to be common that supported employment services claim that clients must be 'reasonably stable'. There is a great variety in clients' work capabilities and motivation.

Supported employment services receive information about the client from the referring organisation and other relevant organisations. In cases with a public referral system, the referral organisation decides if a particular service is the right one for the individual client. Services must in principle accept clients that are referred to them; however, referring organisations are frequently flexible. Services without a public referral system can select clients, and can make sure that clients are motivated. In general clients of supported employment want to work, however, it appears that often motivation is an issue although this may well depend upon how getting a job will affect their welfare benefits. The alternatives for clients appear to be sheltered workshops, training programmes, welfare benefits and to stay at

home. Clients of supported employment services have various degrees of work history with many having little or no employment experience. Supported employment services themselves rarely provide any kind of pre-job training; if seen as necessary then clients receive pre-job training with other services. Many supported employment services rely upon its network of support organisations to help deliver a holistic service to its clients. It is often seen as a problem that other parts of the rehabilitation system do not recognise employment as part of the client's progress and job coaches sometimes feel that there is a lack of support towards the client from other parts of the support system. It is an impression that job coaches lack training and methods to ensure active participation from job seekers who are not able or used to making decisions on their own behalf.

Whilst all supported employment services have contact with employers, the degree of contact with employers varies considerably. There is an impression that job coaches prefer to work towards small and locally based enterprises. This may be because they find them more personal and therefore more suitable for their clients. Supported employment services operate job-finding activities through informal and to a lesser extent, formal channels although applications for vacancies or available jobs advertised are rarely used. The supported employment services typically find jobs for their clients mainly by job coaches or job finders contacting employers by telephone and follow up a positive response by visits to the company. While 'job carving' is a typical way of getting a job contract, the most common strategy to secure access to a job is by organising work experience placements. There are great differences with regards to the length, content and purpose of work experience placements. Financial incentives such as wage subsidies exist in different formats in all countries, although job coaches tentatively referred to bureaucratic rules as a barrier for not using them. It still appears to be common that some form of compensation is given to the employer for lower productivity of clients, e.g. to make agreement with employers on a combination of wage and benefit pension; or as in some cases that no wage is paid by the employer. It appears to be common that clients of supported employment work part-time. While that may be according to the wishes of the clients, job coaches also pointed to systemic barriers that prevent clients from working more hours. Most of the clients of the supported employment services found jobs in the private sector, typically in jobs that require unskilled labour. Although the ultimate aim is to find permanent jobs for clients, it appears to be common to accept short-term contracts, and clients often do not get a permanent job. Our study discovered that a permanent job contract does not necessarily mean a paid job, as it sometimes happens, especially in the public sector, that the employer does not pay any wage to the clients of supported employment and the clients still receive benefits or pension. To our knowledge there are no statistics available on job retention in any of the countries that we have visited. While it was stated in all supported employment services that some of the clients need support in a job over a long period of time to be able to keep the job, we found very few examples of funding for such long-term support. It is still an impression that after a job contract, there is support available for job retention purposes; even if not funded it takes place as voluntary support, mostly by direct visits and by telephone calls.

Information in actual quantifiable results in terms of job outcomes for clients in the supported employment services is vague, and in general, evaluations of supported employment services appear weak. None of the supported employment services that we visited had any targets in terms of caseload or results for individual job coaches. When referring to results or outcomes, it is often difficult to know if job coaches refer to work experience placements, temporary jobs or permanent jobs. The caseload of job coaches in different countries differs significantly, an issue that may be connected to types of clients, length of support and what kind of support that takes place. Because of differences in funding as well as poor documentation in several services, it is difficult to compare results. It is still an impression that the emphasis concerning a job output appears to be far less weighted in some countries than in others, and that the end result of supported employment need not necessarily be a permanent job contract on the open labour market.

A number of recommendations for further development of supported employment in general are proposed:

- To further develop the EUSE 5 stage process as the European model of supported employment.
- The Values and Principles underpinning Supported Employment as a process to secure and maintain a job on the open labour market should be recognised, developed and more widely used.
- Supported employment providers should give consideration to producing reports on their activities in line with EUSE standards and methodology in an agreed format to ensure consistency in the development of supported employment in Europe.
- Increased recognition by funders of the need for long-term support after a job has been secured.
- Establish what the components of best practice in supported employment are.
- Improve the practical relevance of the diploma.
- Development of short training courses on a range of practical topics.
- Consideration of a Job Club approach as part of the job finding process designed for clients of supported employment.
- Develop methods that increase job coaches' counselling skills to clients as active participants in their own vocational rehabilitation process.
- User participation is achieved before there is a referral to a supported employment service.
- Co-operation between supported employment and other initiatives must be developed in order to avoid clients' unresolved problems becoming obstacles to securing a job.
- Supported employment services develop training of job coaches in job finding techniques and skills, and improve communication with and support to employers.
- Supported employment develops a very clear and acceptable definition of what are a job taster and a work experience placement.
- Develop supported employment national associations as an instrument for policy influence.
- Lobby the EU regarding the introduction and funding of supported employment.



# 1

## Introduction

### 1.1 The background for this report

The background for this study was an evaluation on Norwegian supported employment, Arbeid med bistand (AB), published in 2003 and the Norwegian labour market authorities concern on the development of Norwegian supported employment during recent years. There was a strong interest to learn more about supported employment by comparing the Norwegian case with supported employment in other countries. The aim of this study is to explore the practical works of supported employment in some other European countries and thereby give us an impression of how supported employment is practised, organised and understood. These impressions may then be used to identify similarities and differences with the Norwegian case and also raise some vital questions about supported employment in general.

### 1.2 Method

It is widely recognised that there is a great variety of organisations and financing systems of supported employment services in different countries, and these differences may influence both the practical aspects as well as the end results of supported employment. It is also generally acknowledged that there are differences regarding approaches and methods used in supported employment. There is also a wide variety in the population of clients in supported employment services and because of this we get an unclear picture of what is taking place within what is termed supported employment in different countries, and concern has been expressed as to whether discussions with international practitioners, researchers and policy makers actually refer to the same issues. Ultimately activities and results from supported employment in different countries are not easy to compare.

We deliberately did not set out to collect quantitative information or compare statistics. National statistics have an unfortunate tendency not to offer like with like comparisons. We also did not want to use quantitative questionnaires, which is not useful for carrying out explorative research and would have caused difficulties to make sure that questions and answers take into consideration the national or local situation and variations of funding, rules, regulations and definitions. Therefore the approach chosen for this study has been of a qualitative kind and solely case oriented, with a strong emphasis on descriptions based on face-to-face interviewing of people that are directly involved with the support of disabled persons into a job in the open labour market, job coaches and other involved personnel in supported employment services in their respective countries.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> We also had a wish to interview staff within relevant public services or administration and we were dependent on local partners to make contact and set up meetings for us. As it appeared to be difficult for local partners to get access and to set up meetings with personnel in public service and administration, we did not insist too much on these particular interviews.

The particular countries in this study were chosen because we knew that supported employment activities were taking place, and, for practical reasons, because we had contacts in the particular country that could help us to get in touch with relevant services that performed what they labelled supported employment activities. It is acknowledged that the projects interviewed may or may not be typical or representative of their respective countries. It is our intention to present the workings of supported employment as seen through the perspectives of involved personnel. As such, it is not our intention to present any kind of ‘general truth’ about supported employment in these countries. Some may argue that a particular service that we have visited should not be considered ‘supported employment’. To that we can only say that all services that have been visited have referred to their own work as ‘supported employment’. Language is often a barrier and we are aware of the fact that we may have misunderstood information given to us through interviews. However, although we needed to use a translator in some few cases, the approach offered opportunity to talk things over until there was a general understanding of the issues discussed.

The themes covered in the interviews<sup>2</sup> have been the same in each country:

- The system: the organising and financing of the supported employment service; and rules and regulations that the service must relate to.
- The working of the service: cooperation; and aspects of job coaches’ competence and workload.
- The clients/job seekers<sup>3</sup>: who they are (target groups), what alternatives they have to work, employability and motivations.
- The employers: supported employment services’ contact with and approaches to employers; how services find jobs, what type of jobs, and kinds and levels of job support.
- Results: how results are defined and measured; targets, monitoring and evaluation of services.

We interviewed job coaches individually or in groups during 2005 and 2006:

- Portugal: interviews with job coaches and managers in 4 supported employment services from different regions of the country and also staff at Ministry and Directorate level and personnel in relevant public service and administration for supported employment. Three of the four supported employment services were members of FORMEM, a branch organisation for vocational rehabilitation centres. In total 11 persons were interviewed. Information has also been collected at the annual FORMEM conference in Aveiro in 2005,

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<sup>2</sup> See interview guide in Appendix 1.

<sup>3</sup> In Norway and other countries it is more common to use the word ‘job seeker’ than ‘client’ about participants of supported employment services; some also prefer the word ‘user’. We are aware that ‘client’ is not politically correct; however, to avoid misunderstandings during interviews we agreed with interviewees to use the word ‘client’ and we do so also in this report.

- Holland: interviews with job coaches, job finders and managers in one supported employment service with several branches throughout the country. Interviews took place in two of the branches. The service held the quality certificate of BOREA-keurmerk, issued by Boaborea, a Dutch branch organisation for rehabilitation enterprises. In total 5 persons were interviewed. Information has also been gathered from a Norwegian that has worked as a job coach in a supported employment service in Holland and from talks with staff of public services.
- Ireland: interviews with job coaches in 4 supported employment services in different regions of the country. In total 5 persons were interviewed. All job coaches that have been interviewed belong to services that are financed by the national supported employment programme. Information has also been collected at the 2005 conference of the Irish Association of Supported Employment.
- Scotland: interviews with job coaches and managers in 3 supported employment services in two different cities. In total 8 persons were interviewed.
- Spain: interviews with job coaches and managers in 4 supported employment services in three different cities in the Catalan region. In total 8 persons were interviewed.
- Finland: interviews with job coaches and managers in 5 supported employment services in four different cities. In total 7 persons were interviewed. In addition, 14 job coaches have answered questions by email. Information was also collected at the 2006 Nordic supported employment conference in Helsinki.

Each interview lasted for 1-3 hours. The interviewees were told not to prepare anything special before the interview other than give us available information about the service (if existing) that may help us to understand the local situation. In most interviews one interviewer and one assistant were present. Both took notes during interviews and notes were compared afterwards. In some cases interviewees have been given follow up questions by email afterwards. Some quotes that we felt were as close as possible to what was actually said have been used in the report.

*All informants have been told that information is handled confidentially according to standard research procedures; all interviewees are treated with full anonymity, and no names of persons or services will be used or published.*

We have not carried out any specific interviews in Norway for this study. The Norwegian supported employment service, Arbeid med bistand (AB), has already been thoroughly evaluated both during a pilot programme in the early 1990s and again in 2003, and also a study into the long-term effect of clients undertaking the service was completed in 2004.<sup>4</sup> Instead of any new research, we rely on this existing documentation when we discuss the Norwegian case in a 'European context'. This means that in some cases our evidence may be a little outdated. We have tried to compensate for this limitation by having a continuous discussion with Norwegian job coaches that we have met, both in other research projects, at conferences and workshops, and particularly with the job coaches that have been part of

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<sup>4</sup> See Appendix 2 for relevant literature on supported employment in Norway.

the reference group for this study as representatives of Forum for Arbeid med bistand (FAB), the Norwegian branch of European Union of Supported Employment (EUSE).

### 1.3 Supported Employment

In Norway, as in other parts of Europe, the strategies for integrating people with vocational disabilities in the open labour market have traditionally followed a ‘train-place’ approach. Rehabilitation services, such as the Labour Market Enterprises in Norway, were based upon the view that those disabled persons that were not to stay at home or in sheltered workshops needed job training in a segregated arena prior to a job on the open labour market. From the end of the 1970’s, in particular among people with learning disabilities, it was increasingly recognised that this approach did not contribute much to the integration of vocationally disabled people in ordinary working life. It became clear that training and good working skills were not the only necessary prerequisites for a disabled person to find a job. The concept of a ‘job coach’, who had the task of offering well-structured support to a vocationally disabled person, was introduced. This support could include finding a job, on-the-job training, social skills training, assistance with travel to and from work, and other support necessary to make the employment successful, both for the vocationally disabled person and the employer.<sup>5</sup>

The ‘job coach model’ constituted something else other than training and ordinary rehabilitation practice. The original idea was to first get a job and then train in task performance (‘place and train’). As many of the early assignments in non-sheltered environments often followed a ‘place and pray’ strategy, the ‘place-train-maintain’ strategy was developed. When the necessary stability had been achieved the job coach was to withdraw, and leave the job seeker to himself and the new colleagues (natural supports).

Supported employment has been increasingly emphasised by the principles of inclusion and ordinary work (‘real jobs’) in Norway and in many European countries. Possibilities for vocational rehabilitation, based on supported employment, have resulted in many vocationally disabled people becoming part of working life. However, many vocationally disabled people who want to work are outside of working life and there are far more sheltered than integrated possibilities for vocationally disabled job seekers. As reported in an OECD report<sup>6</sup>, the transition rates are still relatively low:

“Most OECD countries offer special employment in a sheltered environment, be it in sheltered workshops, special businesses or protected segments in ordinary companies. The Netherlands and Poland are the two countries that have gone furthest in developing segregated employment in a protected labour market. Both countries

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<sup>5</sup> This chapter is in parts based on Lissens & Van Audenhove (2000): *Supported Employment for people with mental health problems: the practices in four European organisations*. Jyväskylä, Finland: Gummerus Printing; Rush (1990): *Supported Employment. Models, Methods and Issues*. Sycamore Publishing Company; Wehman, Revell & Brooke (2002): *Competitive employment: Has it become the first choice yet?* Virginia Commonwealth University; Wehman (ed) (2001): *Supported Employment In Business. Expanding the Capacity of Workers With Disabilities*. Training Resource Network: <http://www.worksupport.com>

<sup>6</sup> OECD (2003): *Transforming Disability into Ability. Policies to Promote Work and Income Security for Disabled People*. Paris Cedex: OECD Publications Service.

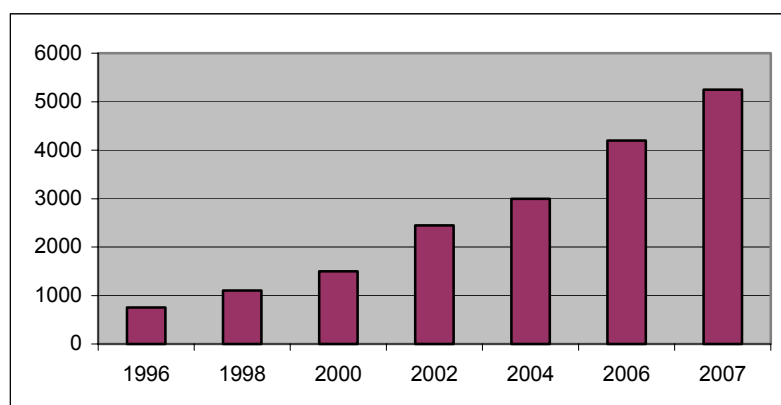


provide such employment for about 1 % of the working-age population (...). Hand in hand with very high disability benefit recipiency rates, this practice results in the particular segregation of people with disabilities in these two countries. Sheltered employment is also widespread, with around 5 per 1,000, in Switzerland, Sweden and Norway, followed by 3 per 1,000 in Austria, Belgium, France and Germany. In most countries, a majority of those in sheltered employment are more severely disabled people with mental illnesses, often involving congenital learning disabilities. While sheltered employment increasingly is considered inappropriate for large numbers of people with disabilities and most countries would prefer to see it replaced by supported employment-type initiatives, empirically there are no signs of any significant cutbacks yet. In several countries there have been attempts to make the sheltered sector more business-like and competitive, in the hope of increasing the chances of transition into the open sector. The Netherlands is one such example; in 1998, a significant programme re-orientation took place with the aim of increasing efficacy (e.g. responsibility shifted to municipalities, flexible per-person rather than per-company subsidies). In the United Kingdom, progression targets have been introduced more recently with the change to Workstep. And in Spain, since 1997 sheltered entities have greater contract flexibility, can dismiss their workers under the same provisions and procedures applying to other workers, and have more flexibility regarding the percentage of their workers without disabilities. So far, however, these attempts to raise transition rates have been successful only in a few cases.” (OECD 2003:114).

In 1996 supported employment became a national mainstream labour market measure for job seekers with vocational disabilities in Norway. The framework for work and activities of the Norwegian AB-initiative is found in public regulations, and in the specification of requirements for purchase of services in the AB-initiative. We find a similar system in Ireland, and recent signals indicate that Scotland may introduce a national programme or standard as well. According to the specifications of the Norwegian regulations, the provider of the AB-units has to answer to certain demands concerning agreement to cooperate, producing annual reports, recruitment, activities of the initiative, and ways of reporting and template of follow-up. We find the same principles at work in many countries: Organisers of supported employment that receive public funding have to be approved and they have to report on how the funding is spent.

### **Participants of supported employment in Norway (Arbeid med bistand)**

(Source: Directorate of Work and Welfare 2007)



Although supported employment has grown considerably and exists in most of the major Norwegian cities, the service is not necessarily easy available for vocationally disabled job seekers. Supported employment is still small compared to the number of vocationally disabled job seekers with a need for support to obtain an ordinary job in the open labour market. There are often reports about waiting lists in several cities, and due to geographical distances, availability to supported employment is difficult for job seekers in rural areas.

However, it is important to note that new formats have emerged with traits of supported employment. In recent years in Norway, more attention has been paid to the perspective and methods used in supported employment with a view to transferring them to the system of vocational rehabilitation and inclusion. Several new developments have emerged in Norway that have taken inspiration from supported employment:

- job coaches connected to cognitive programmes for ex-offenders, and to methadone-assisted vocational rehabilitation for drug addicts
- long-term wage subsidies with a strong emphasis on individual follow up
- service groups in the Labour Market Enterprises that work in ordinary enterprises
- job coaches employed with sheltered workshops in some rural areas
- job coaching specially designed for hearing impaired job seekers
- job coaches as part of established firms on the open labour market
- job coaches connected with the Fountain House for people with mental issues
- new pilot programmes for Individual Place and Support.

Additionally parts of the national Norwegian programme Inclusive Work Life, which is basically a tri-partite agreement between the Norwegian government, the Employers Organisation and the Trade Union Association, assumes a perspective as well as methods that resemble several aspects of supported employment.

An aspect unique to Norway is that the Labour Market Enterprises and Sheltered Workshops are funded to deliver supported employment. These providers of services to people with disabilities may be seen as having two customers. Put simply, one customer is those that buy their services; the other customer is those that buy their products. Both Labour Market Enterprises and Sheltered Workshops are performing a production of their own, and are funded by NAV to also deliver supported employment alongside training and assessment services. This in itself may not be a problem, but concerns arise when funding for training and assessment services as well as their own production are the most important income sources. The inference therefore is that supported employment takes a back seat or comes second to such vocational assessment, training and production. When compared to supported employment initiatives in other countries, there may not be the same incentive for the management of Labour Market Enterprises or Sheltered Workshops in Norway to allocate resources to the development of supported employment services; the more

attractive incentive, it appears, is to develop production and vocational training and assessment as that this is where both money and their skills are to be found.



# 2

## The service and the system

### 2.1 Issues to explore

In Norway, supported employment has been a mainstream nationwide programme since 1996, originally funded by The National Employment Service and presently funded by the Norwegian Labour and Welfare Organisation, known as NAV.<sup>7</sup>

We were aware that the majority of European countries did not have supported employment as a mainstream activity and so we wanted to find out how other projects were financed.

We wanted to examine what the different funding mechanisms looked like and if there was competition locally or nationally for supported employment funding. It was also important to look at what supported employment activities were funded and to what extent funding was results based. Furthermore we wanted to find out if there were financial incentives for projects to secure jobs quickly.

To compare supported employment services between projects and countries it was important to determine who the service was aimed at and what restrictions there may be on access to services for individual clients. We wanted to discover where the clients were referred from and why did clients want to use the service. We wanted to know if the services work with clients that are motivated to get a job, and clients that have a high or low degree of disability or work output, e.g. to what extent a client has work capabilities compared to a 'non-disabled worker'. Moreover we wanted to see if there were eligibility criteria that may prevent a client using a supported employment service.

In Norway, a client can participate in the supported employment initiative for a limited time period. We wanted to find out if other projects had a time limited approach and if so what the time restriction was and how it affected the project and the client.

In Norway the situation is that the vast majority of clients who are referred to AB Units are done so through NAV and we wanted to find out how projects elsewhere in Europe were recruiting clients to use their supported employment services.

### 2.2 Financing of the supported employment services

We found that there is a wide variety of ways in which supported employment services are financed. In both Spain and Portugal it was common that the Labour Offices funded projects to deliver occupational training courses, and the service had to apply for funding to run the course each year. Some of these services received additional funding from local

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<sup>7</sup> NAV was established on July 1, 2006, as a merger of three former organisations: The National Insurance organisation (state), The National Employment Service (state) and The Social Welfare System (municipal).

or regional municipalities. The funding lies in the occupational courses paid for by the Department of Labour and in extra sponsor money projects may attract. Generally the occupational course does not supply enough funding, and to a large extent agencies, especially private agencies, depend on extra funding from private sponsors. Although none of the supported employment services that we visited in Spain and Portugal had experienced dramatic financial cuts, there was a high degree of uncertainty over future and long-term financing.

Within the 'no job/outcome – no pay' system typically found in Holland, there is a tendering process each year, where the Public Insurance Organisation (UWV) selects services among existing providers. If accepted, the supported employment service makes a bid for every client and receives payment for job coaching when the client has secured a job. The amount of payment received depends on the number of hours the client works. This means that if a client cannot work full time, the job coach gets less hours to coach, which means less funding. The financing of a client in a supported employment service runs for 3 years. For the first year the service gets 15 % of the hours the client works; for the second year the service gets 7.5 % of the hours the client works; and for the third year 6 %. The rate of financing is €72 per hour. Ultimately clients that work more hours bring more money to the supported employment service than those with few work hours. Those that work fewer hours usually have more support needs, which means that the money received for clients that work full time, subsidises those clients with less hours and more support needs. If it turns out that a client does not get a job, the organisation can still get some money ('no job/outcome – less pay') as long as they can document what efforts have been done to find the client a job. However, with reference to clients that have low work ability or are not able to work many work hours, one job coach said: “When we have difficult clients we should get more money, like 100 % financing for only 10 % wage.” Another job coach commented about the Dutch system:

“It is very simple - if you follow the regulations and produce results, you are good. If not, you are bad and don't get any further clients through tenders”.

The Dutch 'no job – no pay' system simply means that the supported employment service does not get any payment for the client before the job contract is secured. This obviously gives very strong incentives to get the client a job, but according to job coaches there are also drawbacks:

“We always have to get job contracts. We would work much better with every client if we would get a fixed sum every year. If funding was fixed, we could look for the best employers without worrying about expenses. This would make the job more stable.”

Supported employment in Ireland is a mainstream programme and supported employment services are 100 % financed by the Labour Office.<sup>8</sup> According to rules, supported employment services can use 2 months for profiling and 4 months for job seeking, but in reality the Labour Office allows for flexibility as long as the supported employment service gives good reasons why they need more time.

Interestingly, in Ireland, with a national supported employment programme, job coaches raised more complaints that refer to both the changing population of clients in the supported employment services as well as to what are seen as shortcomings of the system than what was the case in all other countries:

“The most frustrating issue is the funding situation. I would prefer a contract, not this funding from year-to-year. We would like to get more appreciation from the national level.”

In the Scottish system, funding lies both in the UK Workstep programme, local community sources and European programmes, and ultimately supported employment will naturally tend to be shaped by any given funding for each service. At a Scottish supported employment service we were told that they spend considerable time looking for clients, as the service has no statutory entitlement to have automatic referrals. Projects throughout Scotland are generally organised as either part of a local municipality or a disability organisation and are funded from a variety of sources including UK government programmes, Scottish government programmes, Local Authorities, Health Services, European Social Fund and Lottery Funding. A supported employment service interviewed received three main sources of funding; Local Authorities funding; government funding through the UK Workstep programme; and European Social Fund. Whilst the last source is annual funding, the others are more long-term.

Funding of the supported employment service was an important issue in all countries. In Finland; funding for employment support services are found in the municipal social services, the employment offices and the social insurance organisation. Funding from these different sources depends on the situation of the client; in principle the employment office funds job seekers that are not on pension and social insurance funds those who are on pension. The employment office fund Job coach services for 60 days, while social insurance normally funds 60 days of work experience and job coaching. We were told that in many cases the 60 days period can be doubled and for clients with learning disabilities the upper limit is 180 days. We were also told that ‘rehabilitative work’ provides continuing support and that clients can stay long term. Additionally Employment Service Centres (ESC), which are a one-stop provider for employment services, municipal social services, municipal health services and social insurance services, are providing a job coaching service that aims to find jobs in the open labour market. The ESC's buy services

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<sup>8</sup> There are also supported employment services in Ireland that are not publicly funded through the Labour Office (FÁS).

from different organisations and service providers, either the third sector or private, for unemployed job seekers with or without disabilities.

## 2.3 Competition

It appears that in a local community in any of these countries there are actually very few organisations delivering supported employment services. We found that supported employment services are typically small units, and in general there is not much experience of competition between them. Existing providers tend to know about each other and to a certain extent they also cooperate.

In some countries, private agencies are experiencing growing competition and must become increasingly proactive to recruit enough clients although some services, especially those that are part of local municipalities, are attracting too many clients and are operating waiting lists. In countries with a tendering system, services compete to be chosen by the funding authority. If supported employment services get poor results, especially in systems based on tenders from the public authorities, whose goal is to divide the good from the bad through practice, they will eventually have no work themselves.

There is a mainstream supported employment programme in operation in Ireland and as such there is no real competition with other agencies except with other employer based training providers and perhaps in the tendering process. In Scotland job coaches said there is competition at local level for access to clients and at national level for access to funding. As there is no national mainstream programme for supported employment, the services work to their own terms and conditions of service delivery. In Holland, the main competitors to supported employment services, it would appear, are the bigger rehabilitation institutions.

Staff in the Dutch supported employment services said that recently too many organisations that are not qualified had established themselves in this field because they see business opportunities. Connected to this, it was seen as a problem that the funding organisation (UWV) “only measure quantitative results; it would be better to also consider quality of work performance in services.”

In many of the countries that we visited there are a growing number of firms who offer employment services to people with disabilities, some of which also deliver various versions of supported employment. There appears to be a common view that competition will be stronger in the future and therefore many projects and services want more focus on evaluation of methods and results in the organisation.

## 2.4 Where do clients come from and why do they come to Supported Employment?

It is most common that a client is referred from an organisation in his or her community to get help finding a job. Clients come to supported employment to gain employment but not in a sheltered workshop. It is a general picture that clients in supported employment see



themselves as too able for sheltered workshops and therefore want a job in the open labour market. In both Spain and Portugal supported employment services deliver occupational training courses, and in these cases clients are referred from the Labour Office or at least must be registered with the Labour Office.

The most common referral route to supported employment projects was from public bodies such as the Labour Office or the Welfare Office. Additionally clients are referred from a wide variety of sources including health services, social services, disability organisations, colleges, carers, special needs schools, mental health organisations and self-referrals.

We found that clients of projects are normally in receipt of disability welfare benefits and they may or may not be registered with the local labour office. In cases where supported employment is a part of an official referral system, as in Ireland, it is in general very difficult for a potential job seeker to come directly to the project and they must normally register at the labour office to be a participant of supported employment.

In Holland we found that occasionally a rehabilitation organisation or a sheltered workshop may request the assistance of a supported employment provider to assist their clients to get a job in the open labour market.

In systems with public referrals, as in Ireland, civil servants contact the supported employment service when they have clients that require supported employment. They can decide that a client shall start in supported employment, and the job coach or project does not have much influence upon the type of client or the number of clients. Therefore the supported employment service cannot, in principle, refuse to accept clients although in most cases there is some flexibility.

## 2.5 Limitations for entry to supported employment

People of all ages are participating in supported employment, but there is a clear impression that most clients are aged between 20 and 35.

Historically the largest group of job seekers using supported employment services used to be those who had learning disabilities, but now there are indications that the largest group are those with mental health problems. Target groups in supported employment are people with all sorts of disabilities, e.g. autism, physical disabilities, learning disability, people with brain injury. Some of the supported employment services that we have visited are specialised, and only accept clients with a particular diagnosis, e.g. learning disability or mental health problems. We were also told that some services have specialised on particular minority groups, such as Romani people in Portugal, people with brain injuries in Holland or travelling people in Ireland.

We found no obvious financial incentives to only work with 'mildly' disabled clients. The general situation appears to be that the level of disability severity was not an issue, however motivational and job ready factors were.

However, there are several barriers for entry to supported employment, both self-imposed by the supported employment service, and those imposed by public referral services. Clients in supported employment must be motivated to work and be 'reasonably' job ready, be able to travel independently and have support. We found supported employment services that do not accept people with alcohol or drug problems and who claim that clients must be 'reasonably stable'. We also found supported employment services that did not specialise on any particular target group, but who usually did not accept people who have severe mental health problems.

In Spain, in one particular supported employment service, we were informed that of 300 annual referrals, 100 have mental health problems. Around 150 clients are accepted each year and the remainder goes to other services or sheltered workshops. An Irish job coach said:

“Mental health problems are the greatest difficulty. The Employment Office has ideas about a job, parents have unrealistic expectations, and I see immediately that the client uses medication. Then we may have to say no. I ask a colleague to observe as well, because I don't want to be the only one who decides about the client. We cannot jeopardise our business.”

In general most projects stated that clients must be willing and able to work. In Spain the client had to be assessed to have clear ability to work, defined as being able to work at least 50 % compared to an able bodied worker. Some services insist a client must be able to work a minimum of 12 hours per week, while others use a minimum of 18 hours per week as a definition of a potential supported employment client's work ability. Yet other services do not define a potential client of supported employment in terms of work ability, but in terms of disability. In one case we learned that clients of supported employment must be assessed as having between 33 % - 65 % disability.

Job coaches in one supported employment service said that their client had between 60 and 80 % output while job coaches in another supported employment service in the same country estimated their clients' work output between 40 and 60 % compared to that of a non-disabled person.

In Ireland we were told that all clients of the national programme must be able to work at least 18 hours a week, within 6 months of starting on the programme, but this can be viewed on a case by case basis.

## 2.6 How long can a client participate in the service?

In Portugal, clients of supported employment typically follow a 4-year programme. After that clients can no longer stay officially in the programme, but the supported employment service insists that they offer help to find other forms of support. There are however supported employment services in Portugal that have no time limit, and they underline that

it is normal that clients want to have contact many years after they get a job, but there are admittedly financial problems for such long-term follow up. In Spain, clients of supported employment typically follow a 9 month Occupational Course (alternatively 5 or 8 months), but clients can easily join a further 9 months course and in this way receive longer term support.

In Ireland, it is recommended that the maximum time for a client to be on their Programme is 18 months, but this apparently is flexible, and we were told that people with mental health problems often stay longer. Furthermore, if clients lose their jobs, for example after 4 years, they can re-enter the same supported employment service, depending on the reasons why the person lost the job.

“Some clients have been in our service for 5 years, because we never strike somebody off. Maybe they do not get high support, but there may be issues where it is an advantage that we are in the background.”

We found few examples in the countries we visited of funding to support people after they get a job, but yet support still takes place. While in Holland the financing of a client in a supported employment service runs for 3 years, in Scotland, clients can usually access the service for as long as it takes, “within reason”, as commented by a job coach. However, statistics in one particular Scottish supported employment service show that the average time between Initial Interview and a Work Experience Placement is 2-3 months and the average time between Initial Interview and securing a job, either supported or unsupported, is 4-6 months.

Job coach services in Finland are paid for 60 days, which includes follow up time. If no result (job) is achieved, the client goes back to other rehabilitative services. We were told that persons with learning disabilities and mental health problems can get extra time if required. It appears to be relatively easy to extend the length of the period, especially if the client is progressing. We were also told that in supported employment services provided by the municipality, clients with learning disabilities “can stay forever” – meaning that such clients receive continuing support without any time limitation.

## 2.7 Summary

We found that there are a wide variety of ways in which supported employment projects are financed, from stable public funding in Ireland and Finland, outcome-based funding in Holland, mixed public and private funding in Spain, Portugal and Scotland.

From this we also notice that supported employment takes on different forms in the different countries. In Holland supported employment activities is directed towards the objective of getting the client into a job in order to receive funding for the service, in Finland supported employment to a much larger degree is directed towards what might be labelled 'employment related activity', but not necessarily a job contract. While in Ireland,

job coaches are paid to carry out a national programme with an objective to help clients get a job in the open labour market, supported employment services that we visited in Portugal and Spain are basically paid to arrange an occupational course including work experience placements.

Apart from the obvious incentives inherent in the Dutch system, funding of supported employment rarely relates to job outcomes. Although the goal is ultimately for supported employment services to find jobs, there are hardly any financial incentives for supported employment services to get a job quickly for a client.

Both in countries with and without a national programme, funding normally lasts for a particular time period. Funding does not seem to be dependent on quick results. However, early job contracts for a client may give the supported employment service a better credibility towards funders. In Holland, quick results give better financing of the service.

In Scotland, funding through the European Social Fund (ESF) is usually based on the targets set by the project and agreed by the funding body. This, to an extent, means that if a project does not achieve its projected results and outcomes then future bids to the ESF may be rejected.

Apart from the occasional competition to attract clients, we did not find much competition between supported employment services. There is however a significant struggle to access funding in countries without public funding. It is likely that this competition in the future will come from new service providers that acknowledge the business possibilities inherent in society's efforts to integrate vocationally disabled job seekers. This will create a challenge for the existing private supported employment services regarding access to both clients and funding. With this development it is also likely that there will be more pressure on services within a national supported employment programme framework to produce and document outcomes and results.

While clients are referred to supported employment services from a wide variety of sources, the most common referral route seems to be from public bodies. It is a general picture that clients in supported employment see themselves as too able for sheltered workshops and therefore want a job in the open labour market.

There are several limitations for entry to supported employment, both self-imposed by the supported employment service, and those imposed by public referral services. Most projects stated that clients must be willing and able to work; they must be motivated to work and be 'reasonably' job ready, be able to travel independently and have family support. It also seems to be common that supported employment services claim that clients must be 'reasonably stable', e.g. not have problems with alcohol or drugs, or have severe mental health problems.

The length of time a client can stay in a supported employment service varies considerably between countries. We also noticed a great variety in clients' work capabilities and also

motivation; this is probably due to different referral systems and different financial opportunities for supported employment services, both inside countries and between countries.

## 2.8 Implications for Norwegian supported employment

In Norway, the AB-units must usually accept clients that are referred to them, although discussions regarding difficult clients may take place with the referral organisation, NAV. In other countries supported employment services appear to have more options to choose and reject clients. These differences emerge because of the different organisation and funding of supported employment. There are reasons to assume that these differences generate a different population of clients in supported employment services in Norway compared to other countries.

In Norway, as in Ireland, all referrals to supported employment (AB) have to go through the local Employment Services. Whilst, this is a different referring system compared to other countries, it appears to be a common feature that clients in one way or another must register with a public body to be allowed entrance to supported employment. This obviously has to do with the clients' financial situation, but more so in Portugal and Spain than in other countries. In Holland, with the 'money follows client' principle, the registration has more to do with financing client's choices. In Norway and Ireland it is principally the other way around; money is given to the provider of a supported employment service who then has to accept the clients that are referred to them. The referral route to supported employment is much more varied in other countries than in Norway, and in principle, easier to access for those that may want to use it. The merger of the National Insurance organisation, the National Employment Service and the Social Welfare System into NAV may broaden up the referring base for clients into the service. Another relevant issue in Norway may be to develop opportunities for direct referrals from other parts of the rehabilitation system to the AB-units.

In Norway, clients can receive support through the AB-initiative for a maximum period of three years, and only in certain cases this period can be extended by 6 months. While in Finland, Ireland and Holland there are time limits, other countries do not operate with a time limit. Compared to other countries, it still appears that the time available in the AB-units to help a client through the supported employment process is sufficient. The time limitation in itself is probably not a very important issue; it appears to be more important to pay attention to the workload of a job coach given the level of motivation and work capabilities of the job seekers and on which stage of the inclusion process they are. Another important issue is to examine how the available time of the client is being utilised, to improve the efficiency in the AB-unit, and to develop better methods to find suitable jobs more quickly. Some AB-units in Norway have improved the work instructions for job coaches and focus more on the job coaches' qualification in regard to assisting the client to find a job.

The entry criteria for clients to the AB-initiative is found in the regulation's definition of the target group, defined as vocationally disabled people in need of follow-up to get a job in the open labour market. While we have seen that limitations for entry to supported employment in other countries may be a client's lack of capabilities, lack of motivation or mental health problems; in Norway it is more likely that clients with such limitations will still be accepted in AB, as this is usually decided by the referring organisation, NAV. It is therefore a challenge to develop a joint understanding with NAV on what type of clients can benefit from supported employment.

Because of differences in systems and funding, supported employment services in Holland and Scotland have better prospects as well as obvious reasons to reject clients that lack motivation. We assume therefore that the level of motivation and job readiness among clients of supported employment is somewhat the same in Ireland and Norway, and those clients in supported employment services in Holland and Scotland are more motivated and job ready.

# 3

## The working of the service

### 3.1 Issues to explore

The Norwegian AB Units are managed by sheltered workshops or Labour Market Enterprises who also provide vocational training and rehabilitation programmes. It is fair to say that the supported employment initiative in Norway is an integrated part of the vocational rehabilitation system.

The problem in Norway has been that other parts of the system are often not there when needed, and that the job coaches in these cases feel that they must do the job that other parts of the support system should have done. It has been problematic in some cases where the local employment offices have found the AB services convenient for assessing the capabilities of clients, either because of a lack of anywhere else to refer them to or because of clients request for a disability pension. Whatever the reason, this has ultimately resulted in the AB services being referred some clients that were not job ready or particularly motivated to get a job.

We wanted to discover what types of services were being provided by European supported employment projects and if, in addition to supported employment, there were other services available. We also wanted to find out how, if at all, supported employment projects complimented other employment and vocationally based provision.

Due to the fact that there have been some complaints amongst Norwegian job coaches concerning work conditions, we also wanted to get an impression of how job coaches valued their job and what thoughts they had about their working conditions and levels of pay.

The competency and training of any staff will often have a direct impact on services and results and it was useful for us to find out if training and development of project staff was included in any financial support.

### 3.2 What else other than supported employment does the service provide?

Whilst it is normal for projects to find unpaid work experience with employers for a certain period of time, supported employment services typically help clients to get a job in the open labour market.

The general picture is that most of the supported employment services that we visited do not offer vocational, social or educational training for clients. However, some supported employment services offer a holistic service, or are part of an organisation that offers holistic support where supported employment is part of the service. This we found

typically in the community based services in Finland, and also in Scotland. In one Scottish service, specialising in clients with learning disabilities, their mission statement read: “To empower our clients by creating a holistic, flexible, needs-led service incorporating employment, training and community based activities”. In this service, as well as in some services in Finland, it is common that clients take part in various leisure activities and courses, including living skills training and social skills training. This particular Scottish service helps clients with adult learning courses and college courses, and also supports them with a Job Club.

In Spain, services are often obliged to offer training and courses as part of the Occupational Training Course through which the supported employment service is funded. To be permitted to run the Occupational Training Course, the agency must document training activities in areas such as communication, social skills, self-esteem, labour market laws and regulations, and job seeking.

Some supported employment services co-operate with training centres where clients can receive pre-job training. The supported employment service may refer the person to a training organisation, often a part of the organisation that the supported employment service itself belongs to, but the supported employment service does not provide training.

The services that we visited in Holland only provided supported employment. In addition to providing support to paid work, including assistance with CV preparations and letter writing, one of the Scottish services also helps clients to access training “according to individual interests”. Another Scottish supported employment service also organises Job Club for their clients, and also co-operates with employers in management and disability policy matters, and provides support and advice regarding the availability of assistance, financial packages, legislation and government supported programmes. Some job coaches in Finland said that their service offers particular help to clients in transition from school and to clients’ families that sometimes have problems. One supported employment services that we visited in Spain offered support for independent living and family support as part of their activities.

### 3.3 Co-operation with other parts of the rehabilitation system

The main organisations that supported employment projects co-operate with seem to be health agencies, social services, disability organisations, Labour Offices and municipalities.

“Our service also provides a Moving Forward Course specifically aimed at people with mental health issues; this course is run several times per year in partnership with Mental Health Services and the local college. This course helps bridge the gap between leaving hospital and accessing employment.”



None of the supported employment services interviewed co-operate with traditional sheltered workshops. We found that there is generally little co-operation between the sheltered sector and supported employment. Social firms, sheltered workshops and rehabilitation services sometimes buy placements for their clients through the supported employment service and sometimes clients can leave the supported employment programme and go to them instead. Those are clients that are described as having “huge difficulties” and who “are a long way from work”.

In Spain we were informed about the need for co-operation with hospitals and psychiatrists, because medical personnel sometimes decide if a person can work or not (through a formal certificate). However, job coaches in Spain complain that these parts of the rehabilitation system tend to know too little about work, and often say that a person should not work: “They do not see work as part of therapy or rehabilitation, but as a strain on mental health conditions.”

Co-operation between supported employment services does not seem to be a frequent issue; there are some places deliberately offering little co-operation between supported employment agencies, mainly due to the fact that they are competing to get the same clients. In most other cases there simply was not any other supported employment agency to co-operate with.

Apart from the job coaching service in the Employment Service Centres (ESC) in Finland, who has contracts with third and private sector organisations, none of the supported employment services that we visited were involved in any kind of formal contractor partnership arrangements. However, in all countries there is informal co-operation with various services including medical and social care professionals.

### **3.4 Job coaches' competence and working conditions**

It is our impression that job coaches typically have a university or university college degree, such as psychology, social work, sociology or teaching. Although job coaches in supported employment are generally well educated, we found that they seem to feel themselves to be lower valued than their educational degree.

The typical pattern appears to be that job coaches have developed specific competence in supported employment through informal local training, by learning from each other, by 'work shadowing' - with a job coach at work, and by frequent contact with medical professionals, e.g. psychologists or doctors.

Some job coaches in both Spain and Portugal have participated in EU programmes on supported employment where they gained some useful experience and skills. In Holland there are few supported employment related courses, e.g. the 'Support on Work' course at the University of Maastricht. One job coach in Ireland said that he had followed a course about mental health problems at the Open University.

Many job coaches in Ireland and Finland have studied for the diploma in supported employment and have a certificate, but in Ireland the diploma was criticised<sup>9</sup>:

“The diploma is based on idealism. The diploma and real life are far apart. The diploma deals for example with people who can work only 5 hours/week, but in reality these job seekers hardly exist in supported employment in Ireland.”

In Spain some of the job coaches refer to the diploma study of supported employment, but the general picture is that job coaches are trained on the job and that they have little or no further competence development. Job coaches that we met in Spain were typically educated in psychology or pedagogic.

In Finland the formal education of job coaches we interviewed was in social work and psychology. There is no formal education in supported employment, but many have completed the diploma.

However, the general feeling concerning formal and further competence development seem to be summed up by this Irish job coach:

“There isn’t enough funding for us to progress, to get training in our job”.

Several job coaches raised the issue of the lack of relevant training and education for job coaching. In all countries but Finland, there was a clear criticism towards the diploma study of supported employment, with arguments that it does not reflect the practical aspects of a job coach’s everyday life with clients and employers. In Finland, however, the diploma received very good reviews from job coaches, who also argued that the diploma study offers a good opportunity to meet and share experiences with other job coaches. In Finland, Ireland and Holland there was a wish among job coaches to get more access to education and training, e.g. improved competence on different mental health issues and marketing; “we have the social education, but we need some on how to sell”, said one Finnish job coach.

Another common issue is the wage of a job coach. In Finland staff turnover appears to be low because job coaches like their jobs. In Ireland we were told that there has been some turnover of job coaches, mainly due to more lucrative job offers elsewhere.

In Portugal job coaches said they are paid an average salary in their country. This is accepted as reasonable pay, but is less than a teacher/social worker, and apparently people with the same level of university education as some of the job coaches earn more. Also, in Holland the income of a job coach is described as average for their country; the job finder is paid better, but still less than teachers or employment officers. For a long time the wages

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<sup>9</sup> We have been told that the diploma is currently under review, due to unfavourable comments.

for job coaches in Ireland were low, however the current level is now described as average. In Scotland, job coaches that we met said they are paid an average salary and are also given a company car towards which they also make a financial contribution. In Finland the level of payment for a job coach is described as less than that of a social worker, and as comparable to the wage of a personal assistant for a disabled person.

The level of payment for job coaches is generally regarded as too low and not related to the actual formal education of job coaches. The wage of a job coach appears to be at a slightly lower level than a social worker, and below that of a teacher or an employee at the labour office. Job coaches tend to say that the wage is too low, but also say the wage is not why they stay in this job.

It is our general impression that job coaches like their jobs. However, some job coaches that were interviewed had complaints about poor working conditions and the amount of work. In Spain, job coaches in the public sector seem to be more relaxed and have better wages than those in the private agencies; while some job coaches in Ireland complained about poor working conditions and a large caseload.

### 3.5 Summary

The general picture is that the supported employment services do not offer vocational, social or educational training for clients. In services that are part of an organisation where supported employment is part of the service, it is common that clients take part in various courses, including living skills, and social skills training.

We found that there is generally little co-operation between the sheltered sector and supported employment; and also co-operation between supported employment services does not seem to be a frequent issue.

Job coaches in supported employment services often have a university or university college degree, but in their role as a job coach they seem to feel themselves to be lower valued than their educational degree. The level of payment is generally regarded as low and not related to the actual formal education of job coaches.

Participation in training courses such as a diploma does not seem sufficient to many job coaches. It is our impression that job coaches have developed more relevant supported employment competence through informal local training, by learning from each other, and by 'work shadowing'. Obviously 'work shadowing' is not enough to maintain a high quality supported employment standard; as it is dependent on the principle that somebody must be competent enough to lead others.

Turnover appears to be low where job coaches are satisfied with their work conditions, while low wages and dissatisfying work arrangements may create a higher turnover.

### 3.6 Implications for Norwegian Supported Employment

While Norwegian job coaches view co-operation with other parts of the support system as mainly good, the challenges described are often linked to difficulties in mobilising other public services to become active participants in the co-operation of a client. Occasionally the job coaches become problem solvers on behalf of clients in areas where other public services are responsible. The reason why the ‘problem solving’ phenomenon appears to occur more in Norway than in Scotland and Holland may be because clients that are not job ready and have complex needs that need to be resolved are being referred to Norwegian supported employment more so than in the other countries.

It seems to be more usual in Norwegian supported employment than in other countries that job coaches also work with other forms of vocational rehabilitation, e.g. in sheltered workshops or with pre-vocational training. This obviously has to do with the particular way of organising supported employment in connection to established rehabilitation providers. We found similar issues at some services in Finland.

Most of the Norwegian job coaches have qualifications from social work, economics, administration or teaching and have previously worked in the health and social services sector. Most have chosen this job on the basis of their interest in the field or because they want to work with people. This seems to be more or less the same picture all over.

Although managers of supported employment services that we have visited considered that the personality and experience of the job coach was more important than qualifications, it seems to be common in most countries that job coaches have university college education. The dominant subjects of their studies are social studies, economics, administration, teaching and educational studies, psychology, and occupational studies.

In Norway, as in Finland and Ireland, many job coaches have participated in some form of training course in supported employment. However, job coaches in all countries expressed a wish to receive more training in cross-professional and multi-authority co-operation, training and guidance in legislation, rules, rights, marketing, coaching, and more basic education and further education in supported employment in general. The job coaches also want to receive more guidance in their job performance, and want to develop their own professional competence – in areas such as training and guidance, job finding and marketing, job matching and developing working relations.

Although the Norwegian job coaches evaluate their general working conditions as satisfactory, it is a general impression that Norwegian and Irish job coaches tend to be less satisfied with their job than their colleagues in the other countries that we have visited. This may be connected to the fact that several job coaches in both Ireland and Norway commented on the lack of autonomy for the supported employment services. Some Norwegian job coaches also report internal conflicts between the providers of the supported employment initiative and its staff, an issue that was not touched upon in the other countries.

# 4

## The clients of Supported Employment

### 4.1 Issues to explore

To assist in comparing the Norwegian programme with its European counterparts it was important to get an impression of other projects' clients (the job seekers). One of the issues we wanted to explore was, are there any differences between the disabilities, abilities, options and motivation of the job seekers in the projects.

We wanted to find out if the services required that job seekers were motivated to both attend the project and to find a job. Additionally we wanted to explore if there were alternative services available to clients and if there were other elements of support for them from other parts of the system.

We also wanted to discover how close the job seekers were to the labour market and if they had recent work history or work experience. It was important to assess if they had received any additional training or work preparation. Moreover we examined the job seekers' activity and responsibilities in the supported employment process.

### 4.2 Knowledge about the job seeker in advance

Supported employment services receive information from the referring organisation, from documents and interviews, from the public service offices, Job Centre, school, family etc. In cases with a public referral system, as in Ireland, the referral organisation decides if this particular service is the right one for the individual client, and with the assistance of health professionals decide upon work suitability.

When persons are referred to supported employment in Ireland or Finland, the services must accept them as clients. However, Irish job coaches also admitted that there is some flexibility with the referring organisation (FAS). Supported employment services in the other countries still have a possibility to select clients after checking their suitability and they typically have a meeting with the potential client to confirm if the person is suitable for the service. In both systems, job coaches underline the importance of getting to know the potential client and to gain their trust.

“We have no checklist; every person is unique. We try to get to know the person. We build up a person’s profile and from that we see if the person really is job ready. We meet with the person a couple of times. Sometimes people have a misconception of our service. We look at a person’s background, especially when a person has a history of mental health problems or drug dependencies.”

“I often visit the client at home, it is important to see what is behind the front or the face; I must get an impression about several aspects of the client.”

In some services, clients must produce evidence of their disability, such as a certificate of disability, or a psychiatric report. Some projects request written confirmation that the medical consultant agrees that the person can work.

In many cases it is the medical profession who decide upon a client’s work capability, but job coaches also learn about potential work output through initial interviews, by observation in job tasters and work experiences, and by vocational profiling in general. In Spain, the employment course includes developing communication and social skills. In one supported employment service in Holland they told us that clients’ work output could be tested through a work experience period of 6 months; while in Scotland, job coaches at one service said that job tasters and work experience placements are essential to assist determine a client’s job preferences and abilities as well as assessing how much support may be required. A job taster could range from one day to 2 weeks, while a work experience placement would last from 2 to 8 weeks.

### 4.3 Motivation and alternatives

We have seen that clients are referred from an organisation in his or her community to get help through supported employment to find a job. However, apart from self-referrals, there is no guarantee that all clients come voluntary or that all clients really want to work, as stated very clearly by job coaches both in Ireland and Finland.

We may assume that clients are referred to supported employment services because they want to work. Therefore motivation should not be an issue, but several job coaches insist that this may well depend upon how getting a job will affect their welfare benefits. According to job coaches, what also affects the motivation of clients is that many clients are unsure about what they can work as and how it will affect them; they are also uncertain about how they will cope and be accepted in the workplace.

The alternatives to a job in the open labour market through supported employment appear to be sheltered workshops, training programmes or simply to stay at home with a benefit pension.

“The clients want a job, but the problem is to get the social part of their lives to function so that they can have a job. Therefore it is necessary to use work experiences and hope that a job can be the outcome. Sheltered work might be an option, but none of our clients have ever had that as a result. Most of them only have pension as an alternative.”

In Ireland, job coaches commented about the clients:

“I would prefer if only people who really want to work come here. Expertise should be targeted; we should use people that have the expertise more often. The concept of supported employment has changed; it is a rush job, trying to incorporate everything. Clients have changed completely as concerns appearance, behaviour; they are higher functioning now than before, but they may have other problems.”

“We have to realise that work is not for everybody. Because we are part of a system, clients are referred to us who are not 'job ready'.”

According to Irish job coaches, the public programme for supported employment is too restrictive: “Eighteen hours work ability is too much. If the level were lower, more persons would benefit. Employers usually don't want this sort of employee, but I could find opportunities for them. Now I have to reject people”. Another Irish job coach said: “Sometimes people work only 3 hours per week, but this can change their lives.”

In most of the countries that we visited it was possible for clients to combine a job wage and disability pension. In some countries, however, this is very difficult. We were told that in Portugal this combination is not allowed. In Spain the combination of job wage and disability pension may happen, but job coaches told us that usually part of the disability pension is suspended when a client is working, depending on wages and hours worked.

Many clients of supported employment in the countries that we have visited face what job coaches refer to as 'the benefit trap'. For the client there is sometimes an incentive to get more money through wages than disability pension, but in several countries there is a concern that clients fear to lose disability pension when they receive wages. In the Portuguese system, social benefit is suspended when the client works and receives a wage, no matter how much they earn. Some receive social benefit if they do not receive a wage, which equals the minimum wage (€374 per month). If a client has previously been in work they may receive unemployment benefit, which is 70 % of the average wage or the minimum wage, depending of which is higher. Apparently young people do not have any alternative income source. A Portuguese job coach told us about a case:

“One client worked for 3 years without a contract or a wage to develop job and social skills. At the end of the programme he still goes to the same job, but gets no pay, the family arranges transport while the job arranges food. The person keeps his benefit. For the person in question and his family this is a success. But for us this is a problem. If the person gets a wage, he loses his benefit – this is a risk. We don’t really know how to judge it, if this is a success or not.”

In Holland the clients’ alternative to a wage is welfare benefits of 70 % of the minimum wage plus possible help for housing. In general, clients are described as “usually motivated” when they come to a supported employment service in Holland. One motivation factor is that clients get more money from wages than pension, providing they work more than 20 hours. A minimum income is granted for everybody but sometimes it is difficult to convince the client to work without earning more money than they received on benefits. In cases where there are problems connected to motivation, clients are referred to another agency or service that provides pre-job training.

“The contract says I have to help the person to find work. Sometimes I have to motivate them. Most clients are motivated, only a few are not, and those are mostly young people who get too much money, like one of my clients who has a work experience placement at a motorbike workshop. He receives more benefits during his work experience than his colleagues get paid through ordinary employment at this workshop. He is not motivated to get an ordinary job.”

In Ireland a person on a disability welfare allowance can earn up to €120 per week without affecting their disability allowance. The minimum wage in Ireland is €7.65 per hour<sup>10</sup>, which means that some clients can work up to 16-17 hours per week without it affecting their welfare benefits. However, whilst the minimum wage regularly increases, the ceiling of €120 per week has not increased and therefore some people with disabilities have had to reduce their working hours to remain under the weekly threshold. For every €2 someone earns over the €120, €1 is taken off their disability allowance. An Irish job coach said:

“All my clients who are in employment are part-time workers because they want to keep their disability allowance.”

This situation regarding minimum wage and weekly earnings also occurs in Scotland.

Some supported employment services also stated that they experience problems with “over-motivated clients” in that they are impatient, and that “they expect to get a job too quickly”.

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<sup>10</sup> We have been informed that the minimum wage in Ireland is going up to 8.65 in July 2007.



#### 4.4 Clients' previous work history and support from other parts of the system

We found that clients of supported employment services have various degrees of work history with many having little or no employment experience. In Portugal we met with one supported employment service that has mainly first time job seekers, whilst in another supported employment service most job seekers were likely to have worked before. We were informed at a Scottish service that at least 50 % of their 400 referrals had not worked for at least 3 years, whilst in Holland, nearly all of the clients in the supported employment services that we visited had no work experience at all. In Finland we were told that many had dropped out of school at an early age: "Few of my clients have ever had a chance for anything."

The situation is apparently slightly different in Ireland, where many participants of supported employment have been in sheltered workshops before, or have had some other forms of training. Many clients have been in institutions, and many are also school leavers. Some have had jobs, but have had an acquired disability.

Apart from the occupational courses in Spain and Portugal, it is our impression that supported employment services themselves rarely do any kind of pre-job training. In Scotland, clients of a supported employment service may follow a Moving Forward course designed for people with mental health issues. Job coaches interviewed in Holland were clear that they do not do pre-job arrangements, and that clients' work ability is checked in the job:

"Many clients seem to work fine at first, but that often is a wrong impression."

"Some clients can stay at a job for some months simply to get training; we check their abilities at the job."

"We use work experience placements to check if the client is able to get up in the morning and to participate in the process."

"We have co-operation with an organisation that does bicycle repair, furniture, café and many other things. Our clients can stay there some weeks or some months."

It is also an option to let other parts of the rehabilitation system take over:

"There are monthly meetings at our service and we talk about all our clients. One decision can be to remove a client from our service; then he or she will be transferred to services that are specialised to work with clients in work preparation."

Many supported employment services rely upon its network of support organisations to help deliver a holistic service to its clients. Agencies within this network include social services, health professionals, welfare benefit advisors and disability organisations. These specially developed networks support each other in the aim of guiding clients from inactivity to employment. For many clients there are supports available within the system. Some clients may require specialist equipment, interpreters, adaptations to the job etc due to their disability. Others may require support in the workplace or an employer may be attracted with a short-term wage subsidy. All this help is generally available but the supported employment service has to act as the ‘facilitator’ to make it happen as accessing these services can be confusing and complicated for both the client and the employer.

Most of the supported employment services that we visited had several contacts with other parts of the rehabilitation system. Both in Spain and in Holland clients must document that they have access to relevant treatment. In Finland clients are often part of a social services programme, which includes a supported employment service. Finnish job coaches said that some clients apparently have so many unresolved problems that the job coaches do not expect that many of them will get any ordinary job. In Portugal we were told that that support from other parts of the system whilst participating in the supported employment service is not usually available; then the client must rely on family support.

In Scotland, one supported employment service had developed a network that included professionals from the health service, local colleges, welfare benefits, disability organisations and training providers. According to job coaches, this network enabled the supported employment service to access a wide range of support and expertise and allowed the supported employment service to concentrate on securing jobs for clients.

Many job coaches argued that there should be more money spent by the government to train clients before they come to the supported employment service: “Then we can present them to the employers”. This issue was also raised in a Scottish supported employment service:

“There is little or no vocational rehabilitation at local or national level and many clients are in need of work preparation or job ready activities.”

Many projects consider it a problem that other parts of the rehabilitation system, e.g. mental health institutions, do not recognise employment as part of the client’s progress and job coaches in supported employment services sometimes feel that there is a lack of support towards the client from other parts of the support system.

## 4.5 Summary

Supported employment services receive information about the client from the referring organisation and other relevant organisations. In cases with a public referral system, the referral organisation decides if this particular service is the right one for the individual

client and the services must accept clients that are referred to them. Other services can select clients, and can make sure that clients are motivated. In some services, clients must produce evidence of their disability, such as a certificate of disability, or a psychiatric report, while in other cases projects request written confirmation that the medical consultant agrees that the person can work.

The alternatives for clients appear to be sheltered workshops, training programmes, welfare benefits, or to stay at home. Clients' motivation to get a job may well depend upon how getting a job will affect their welfare benefits. The majority of clients of supported employment services are typically unsure about what they can work as and how it will affect them; they are also uncertain about how they will cope and be accepted in the workplace.

We found that clients of supported employment services have various degrees of work history with many having little or no employment experience. It is our impression that supported employment services themselves rarely provide any kind of pre-job training; if seen as necessary then clients receive pre-job training with other services. Many supported employment services rely upon its network of support organisations to help deliver a holistic service to its clients. These networks support each other in the aim of guiding clients from inactivity to employment. It is often seen as a problem that other parts of the rehabilitation system do not recognise employment as part of the client's progress. Job coaches sometimes feel that there is a lack of support towards the client from other parts of the support system.

All interviewees said that they encourage clients to be active in the job finding process. Apart from the development of action plans, we did not get much practical evidence of a 'client led process' and 'user participation' in the supported employment process. However, some evidence of user involvement can be found in the existence of Job Clubs parallel to the supported employment service where clients can be active.

#### 4.6 Implications for Norwegian Supported Employment

Most clients of Norwegian AB are granted rehabilitation money, which gives them the same financial base as clients in the Dutch or Irish supported employment. In other countries, clients of supported employment usually remain in receipt of welfare benefits as a financial base, which often gives them a weak incentive to work because they risk losing this benefit. It seems to be more common in Norway that clients of supported employment end up with a disability pension.

Clients in most countries appear to have similar characteristics to the Norwegian clients in that many have had little or no work experience from ordinary jobs. Most participants of the AB-initiative have completed their compulsory education, whilst very few have higher education or work experience from jobs demanding higher education. In Holland as in Ireland, it appears to be difficult to find jobs through supported employment that require higher education.

Both Ireland and Norway have a national vocational rehabilitation policy that is being carried out by government agencies. Therefore the clients of supported employment may have participated in several other rehabilitation measures. As in the Irish case, a large percentage of the Norwegian clients of supported employment have participated in job market initiatives before; for almost two-thirds of Norwegian clients, the AB-initiative is actually the second or third initiative they have participated in. This is proof that clients of AB have difficulties in finding a job and maybe also to keep the job. Some Irish job coaches complained that many of their clients were not able to work enough hours. While in the Irish case, it is necessary for the client to work at least 18 hours to reduce the benefit pension, in the Norwegian case, it is not uncommon that clients end up with 100 % benefit pension and a job contract with wages up to the minimum allowance for salary level for a person on pension (the so-called 'bonus wage'). However, for many clients, a job with a 'bonus wage' combined with benefit pension may develop into more hours of work and may lead to a reduction of the benefit pension on a longer term. An acknowledged problem is that there are no apparent incentives for the client to increase their working hours, or for the service to support such progression.

As in other countries, Norwegian job seekers with mental health problems represent a large diagnosis group of supported employment. In the Norwegian case this diagnosis group constitutes more than 30 % of all clients of the AB-initiative, though people with learning disabilities still represent a significant albeit declining group of participants. As in Ireland and Finland, the job seekers often have complex needs and require a broad range of support measures in order to find and keep a job. Norwegian job coaches regard mental health problems, physical impairments and lack of education as the most important barriers when it comes to obtaining a job, and they also emphasise general social occupational disabilities and a lack of motivation amongst job seekers as being common key barriers.

The difficulties Norwegian job coaches sometimes experience relate to finding other bodies to act as active participants in the collaboration of a client. This is a problem also reported by Irish job coaches, while supported employment services in Holland and Scotland apparently do not face this problem so much, maybe because they have better possibilities to avoid clients with too many unresolved problems or complex needs. In Finland, on the other hand, it appears to be accepted that clients of supported employment have significant unresolved problems, and it is therefore expected that many of them will not be able to get a long-term job contract and wage.

Norwegian clients of supported employment define user involvement as participating in discussions, giving their own opinions and participating in the decision-making process. However, as mentioned in chapter 2, clients of Norwegian supported employment do not always choose the service themselves, and they seldom find the jobs themselves. According to job coaches, it is important to find out about the job seeker's interests and skills. However, it is an impression that job coaches lack training and methods to ensure active participation from job seekers who are not able or used to making decisions on their own behalf.

# 5

## Approaches to employers

### 5.1 Issues to explore

From previous research in Norway it was found that an area for improvement was how the AB Units interacted with employers and the business community. Whilst our research did not include visits to local employers we did nevertheless want to discuss employer contact and job finding within the European projects.

In particular we wanted to find out how the projects were networking and communicating with employers and to see if any projects had special arrangements or agreements. We wanted to explore how projects were approaching employers and what services they were able to offer.

A particular area of interest was who was finding the jobs and what job finding methods were being used. We also wanted to examine what role the client had in the job finding process and what types of jobs were being found and for how long was the client remaining in employment.

### 5.2 Contact with employers

Whilst all supported employment services have contact with employers, the degree and kind of contact with employers varies considerably. Some job coaches told us that they look for jobs and make contact with employers according to the client's job wishes; others said that they have contact with the same group of employers. In both cases though, it happens often that the same employers are approached several times.

Several job coaches mentioned that they try to get involved with employer's networks to inform employers about supported employment and to develop employer contacts, but none of the supported employment services that we visited had any real contact with any particular network of employers.

The Dutch supported employment service had developed a specialised job finder function, and in one of the supported employment services in Scotland several of the staff are qualified Human Resource managers, but their approach is not part of any formal employer network. A Scottish job coach said:

“Because we offer a wide range of support and assistance with issues that are important to employers, we build up good relationships with local employers in both the private and public sector. This has led to easier access to employers for job vacancies and work experience placements.”

In Portugal, one job coach said that the number of employer contacts for each job coach was ranging from 50 to 60 enterprises in the local area, while a colleague in another supported employment service said that the service had a list of contacts in several hundred different companies.

None of the supported employment services that we visited had any specialised co-operation with particular businesses. Job finders in Holland said that they prefer to approach the supervisors in large companies and use these supervisors to suggest to senior management to provide a placement for the client. Although there are several examples of supported employment services working with a number of large companies and multi-internationals, such as in Holland, there is a clear impression, especially from Portugal, Finland and Spain, that job coaches prefer to work towards small and locally based enterprises. Many job coaches find these enterprises more personal and less formal; they appear to be more integrated with the local community and job coaches find it easier to organise tasks and internal support that make the job suitable for their clients.

### 5.3 Finding jobs

Supported employment services operate job-finding activities through informal and to a lesser extent, formal channels. Applications for advertised vacancies or available jobs are rarely used. The supported employment services typically find jobs for their clients mainly by job coaches or job finders contacting employers by telephone and follow up a positive response by visiting the company. Several job coaches said that they often find this part of their work difficult:

“The hardest part is having to contact about ten employers in order to get one interested”.

“The biggest problem is to make employers change their attitudes and their routines.”

Job coaches in Finland said:

“The worst part is to find jobs. I don’t have the time to look for them as I get stuck here in the office, which is absolutely wrong. This is because I have so many clients, sometimes more than 20 to relate to at the same time.”

“I was reluctant about approaching employers at first. This is easier now because I have decided just to be honest about the client. It is also important to agree with the client about what to say to the employer. I also take care to know about all sorts of support and financial aspects. Insurance is no problem because the client is already insured; the employer need not worry about that.”

To make the search for jobs more effective, some services, particularly in Holland, operate a specialist 'job finder' staff member who telephones and visits companies. Specialist job finders typically were less 'client oriented' and had less complaints about approaching employers than many of the job coaches:

“Employers always look for quality in a person. I focus on the shortcoming, the disability of the client. For me it’s an aim just to get inside the company.”

“Convincing the boss is the main difficulty. Co-workers are much more helpful and easier to convince; they are more flexible.”

To make the job search process even more efficient, a supported employment service in Holland had engaged a specialist service that telephoned a wide range of employers, and when a contact was made, the job finder took over and visited the employer. When the employer had signalled interest, the job coach took over and brought the client in. In one of the supported employment services in Spain we were told that the project manager functions as a job finder and makes the initial contact with the employer, and thereafter a job coach takes over.

According to job coaches interviewed in Spain and Ireland, 'job carving' is a typical way of getting a job contract:

“We use time to promote the service to potential employers, visit them, and look around at the workplace. It is important to get to the employer at the right time. One has to know how employers think. We use very little advertised jobs. We rather look for job-possibilities, 'bits of jobs'; what we see and discover when we look around worksites. We need to be there. It does work, but I didn’t think it worked before I tried it.”

The more formal aspects of job finding and job seeking also exist in several of the supported employment services that we visited, although less dominant. These formal activities include support of clients through job applications, responding to advertised vacancies in newspapers or on the Internet, submitting CVs and preparing for job interviews. A few of the supported employment services, in Spain and Scotland, also organise Job Clubs for their clients, while others encourage job seekers to participate in external Job Clubs.

The most common strategy to get a job is to make contact with an employer to organise what is generally termed a work experience placement. According to job coaches, work experience placements can on many occasions result in a positive outcome, as suggested by a Scottish job coach:

“On the formal side, I support clients through job applications, responding to advertised vacancies, submitting CVs and preparing for job interviews. On the informal side I make contact with the employer to organise a work experience placement, which on many occasions can lead to a job offer.”

Irish job coaches said:

“I get them a work experience placement and eventually the employer says: Okay, I have a job.”

“There was a client on work placement for 2 years, because he wanted that job.”

“If it’s not realistic, or if the person wants only a very specific job, then I don’t recommend work placements.”

According to information from Spanish job coaches, it is normal to organise part-time and temporary contracts for clients for the first 6 months, leading on to a permanent contract: “This gives good opportunities for employers to check if they want to keep the client”. Another Spanish job coach said that placements are used only where it is possible to achieve a job contract and that placements last a maximum of 4 months with the client working 4 hours per day. Job coaches in other countries say that 1-3 months is the normal for a placement, and yet others say 1-9 months. A Portuguese job coach informed us “it is normal to get a job contract after 1.5 years training in a placement”. In Finland, many job coaches that were interviewed said that they organise work experience placements. However, the length and content of a placement apparently varies greatly among supported employment services, a Finnish job coach said:

“Some clients can stay at a job for some months to receive training. It takes time for our clients to get accustomed to work, to routines, to get into work processes, to simply to get into a structured society and job.”

It is a common feature that a placement is organised without wages from the employer, and in some cases also without a contract. During this period the clients usually retain their disability pension.

In Finland, job coaches in one service said that work experience placements only take place where there is a clear need for a worker. In other services, job coaches said that it only takes place where there is a clear possibility to get a work contract. In one Finnish service it was clearly stated, “we do not do work experience placements”.

According to job coaches in a supported employment service in Holland, the vast majority of the work experiences are successful, in the sense that they end with a job contract, and it



is also said that work experiences usually last only for a week. However, work experience placements are not used much in the Dutch supported employment services that we visited. Job coaches explained that in the Dutch 'no job – no pay' system, work experience placements are not easy to arrange because payment that the service receives for the client is connected to coaching, which is paid in accordance to the number of hours a client with a job contract works: “There is a clear need for more try-out possibilities”.

We were told that in the Irish system, the Labour Market Authorities (FÁS) considers a person who is on a work experience placement without payment as 'not employed'. In other countries that we have visited, it has not been so clear. In both the Spanish and the Portuguese system, the provider of an occupational course has to secure the client a work experience placement as part of the course.

According to some supported employment services, such work experience placements may be regarded as discrimination or exploitation because the person is not paid, but it nevertheless often helps a person to get a job. According to job coaches in Holland, work experience placements give the employer the opportunity to get to know the job seeker. But the person has no insurance while in a work experience placement, which is considered problematic. On the other hand, people may be covered by insurance if they participate on a course, so job coaches say they try to make use of that.

A term coined by some job coaches, e.g. in Finland and Spain, was “job tasting”, which was described as a less formal and much shorter version of a work experience placement. According to job coaches in Spain and Finland, the aim of a job taster is not to get a job; a job taster is used mainly for action planning purposes of a client, to check work abilities or to help develop clients’ job preferences. In Ireland job coaches said that that they wish it was easier to arrange both work experience placements and job tasters. Insurance is a main concern for employers and organising job tasting is difficult because the person is not insured at work: “Employers in our area take them on the job, pay them, but put them on probation; this way they have insurance. I would prefer it to be easier to set up job tasters”.

#### 5.4 Who finds jobs and how?

In many of our interviews we found that either the job coach or job finder finds the actual job, not the client.

“I look at newspapers for available jobs, into the list of employers we have previously used etc. and contact employers. It is an individual strategy; so I treat employers differently. And it depends on the type of disability.”

“I get the employer to choose my client because I put pressure on him; or the employer wants to help the community; and also because the client does the job.”

In some supported employment services they do not encourage clients to contact employers by themselves because they may adversely affect the relationship with the employers. Both in Finland and in Holland some job coaches/job finders said that they hesitated to encourage clients to contact employers themselves because they feared they could spoil their chances of securing a job. However, all say that they encourage job seekers to be active in the supported employment process, and that they try to make it a client led process.

It is still very difficult to get evidence of what a 'client led process' means in practical terms. Some job coaches say that the client is supposed to look around for possible jobs or to search for possible employers within his or her personal network. A few supported employment services that we visited, e.g. in Spain and Scotland, use Job Clubs to encourage clients to be responsible for their own job search and to participate as fully as possible in the job finding process. In a Scottish service we were told that clients who had a reasonable idea of their job preferences were encouraged to use the Job Club, whereby clients did their own job search with assistance from the supported employment service. Clients who were unsure of their job choices or who lacked confidence were provided with more personalised job finding support, usually with the job coach assuming more of the responsibility of contacting employers.

In supported employment services in all countries it was stated that it was an aim that both the service and the client are actively participating in the job finding process. Some job coaches said they ensure that clients' job seeking skills are developed. In Portugal, one job coach said: "The clients don't find jobs, but the job finding process is client led." The following are statements from Ireland:

"I try to encourage the client. We do interview techniques, CV-training etc. I want them to get good at this. We can use our facilities, the offices in the building for that".

"I ask clients to identify places, to go around, look in the local paper, and to find out what type of job they want. I help the clients to write to potential employers, and I encourage clients to make that first move themselves."

In one of the supported employment services that we visited in Finland, job coaches were very clear that they are the ones that find the jobs, although many also say that they encourage the client to be active.

In Scotland, job coaches in one of the supported employment services we visited said that they encourage the clients to have ownership and responsibility for their own job search, by using the job club and by having a mutually agreed job finding action plan.

In Holland the job finder searches for jobs that suit the wishes of the client. However, according to job finders, to find a job means to match the employer's needs of a job seeker

that can fit with any given job description. Job coaches in Spain said that whilst they prefer that the client finds the job, in most cases it is actually the job coach or the job finder that finds the job.

## 5.5 Type of jobs

In general, jobs for clients of the supported employment services that we have visited were mostly found in the private sector. In Portugal, job coaches estimated that 20 % of the jobs found are in the public sector. In both Spain and Ireland the public sector has a 3 % quota for employing people with disabilities. According to job coaches in both countries there is a disadvantage with this quota system because employers reject people with disabilities if the 3 % quota is already achieved. In one Spanish supported employment service, job coaches said that they use the quota system actively for their clients, job coaches in other services said that most of their clients have too low a degree of work output to be taken into consideration of public organisations that operate under the quota system.

We found that most jobs found for clients in the supported employment services in all countries visited were low skilled. Both in Finland and Holland job coaches said that it is difficult to find jobs suitable for clients that have a high education degree. Although one of the supported employment services in Portugal reported that they find an equal amount of unskilled and skilled jobs, depending on client's qualifications, Job coaches in other supported employment services said that the kind of jobs that they find for clients are typically jobs that require unskilled labour.

In all countries, the ultimate aim, as expressed by job coaches, is to find permanent jobs for their clients. In Portugal, while job coaches said that many clients get permanent jobs, they also accept 1-year contracts. In another service it was said that clients "only sometimes get a permanent job". In Finland, some job coaches said that often the client does not get a permanent job contract: "One client is in permanent work experience since he will not have enough skills to get a permanent job". We were also told that a permanent job contract does not necessarily mean that the employer has to pay a wage to the client.

The typical result of participating in the supported employment services that we visited is that the clients secure mainly part-time jobs, be it on a temporary or permanent contract. In Ireland very few clients are working full time. We were told that ability-wise, many clients could work more hours, but there is apparently not enough work available in the kinds of low entry jobs in factories, retail, petrol stations, and cafes, that are typical work places for their clients. In Spain, job coaches said that most jobs found are unskilled and part time, typically 20 hours per week, in supermarkets, offices, kitchens, and hotels.

In one of the Scottish services we found that around 75 % of the 100 clients supported into jobs each year come off welfare benefits and work full-time, while the other 25 % work less than 16 hours a week and combine wages and welfare benefits. Additionally, all the Scottish supported employment services said that the vast majority of their clients were seeking unskilled/semi skilled work.

## 5.6 Follow up and job retention

It was stated in all supported employment services that we visited that some of the clients require a lot of support in a job over a long period of time. A general picture is that people with mental health problems need long term support after a job contract is established.

Irish job coaches said:

“The clients can fall out; the reason usually is mental health and periods of time when the person does not feel well.”

“We are not getting good enough results on a long term basis because clients don’t get the help they need. So it’s a lot of time wasting.”

The typical situation is that after securing a job, there are still possibilities for the client to maintain contact with the supported employment service. Job coaches in all countries said that an employer may contact the supported employment service if there is a problem, and that they do not follow any strict time regulations for such contact.

In Spain it was said that support is always available for job retention purposes. Even if not funded, it takes place as voluntary support, mostly by direct visits and telephone calls. In Portugal we found some variety between supported employment services on this issue. Whilst in one service we were informed that “support is always available after the job-contract”, a job coach in another service said that “the clients can get one year of support, although not normally from the job coach, but by someone else taking over.” In a third Portuguese supported employment service, it was said, “there is support as long as a client wants and any way the client wants or needs,” whilst in a fourth service: “A job coach can use 4 years to get a contract for a client, and the fifth year can be used for follow-up after the job”.

In Scotland, job coaches in a supported employment service said that they seldom give support to the employer or the client longer than 3-4 months after the job has started as it is not needed. However, they were clear that support from the service is always available if required in the future.

In Holland, job coaches said that there is always an agreement with the employers that they can call if there are problems. They also said that twice every year the employer and/or clients are contacted and if someone needs support later on, it is possible to apply to the Public Insurance (UWV). It was said, however, that it is normal that clients leave the job: “Our clients are young people under 25; they change their minds and find new jobs – as all other young people do.” Job coaches referred to clients that they knew and estimated they had stayed in a job ranging from 2 months to 5 years; and they considered that, on average, their clients stay in their jobs for about 3 years.

According to some of the job coaches interviewed in Ireland, job retention is generally good, but as in all countries visited, there are no statistics available on this issue. In one Irish supported employment service they said that they keep track on their clients and knew that half of the clients that got a job remained in that job. Irish job coaches said:

“Some clients have been in our service for 5 years, because we never strike somebody off. Maybe they do not get high support, but there may be issues where it is an advantage that we are in the background.”

“We do fade out, but still keep contact through reviews with employers and the employees.”

In a Scottish service, it was said, “there are no reliable figures to determine how long a person remains in employment as support to the individual is not usually required to be long-term.” However, in this particular service it was also said, “There is anecdotal evidence to suggest that more than 60 % remain in employment after one year.”

## 5.7 Financial support

In most countries there are regulations that make financial incentives available for employers. It is common in supported employment to use these regulations to enable a person to work with a salary combining a wage with welfare benefits. Work experience placements and job tasters in ordinary jobs where the employer does not pay wages are also widely in use in supported employment.

Financial support such as wage subsidies exist in different formats in all countries that we visited, but not all supported employment services use them. Although clearly designed as a form of compensation, wage subsidies are often used only as the last resort and on a time limited/tapered basis, e.g. 3-6 months. When asked about the use of wage subsidies, some job coaches tentatively referred to bureaucratic rules as a barrier for not using them, and not to any kind of principle against subsidising their clients' wages.

In one Portuguese supported employment service, they often use wage subsidies for the first 3 months. In Holland, wage subsidies, termed 'lower salary agreement', are granted according to productivity, e.g. if a person works 38 hours but his productivity is only 50 %, then 50 % of the wage is paid by the Public Insurance (UWV).

In a supported employment service in Holland, we were told that clients that could get subsidised jobs were referred to other agencies. According to Dutch job coaches, an important tool for the supported employment service's approach to employers is legislation with strong financial incentives for employers to employ clients from supported employment services: If a company employs a young person with disability, they receive a lifelong exemption of paying sick-leave wages. For other employees with disabilities the employer gets this exemption for five years. The Dutch supported employment services that we visited were of the opinion that the existing financial incentives to employers are

sufficient, but the problem is that they are not always known among employers. A Dutch job coach also felt that in their system there is a shortage of support to employers:

“Employers should be rewarded for giving our clients some training. There should be opportunities of small rewards for both the client and the employer.”

In Finland the use of wage subsidies is dependent on the degree of disability and for how long the client has been out of work. Wage subsidies can be used for an unemployed job seeker, with or without disabilities, through employment offices and social services. Wage subsidies for people with disabilities are usually paid for two years with an additional two-year period if required.

In Ireland, the Employment Support Scheme (ESS) was a payment to the employer as compensation for the loss of productivity. The ESS was much used in supported employment services, but in 2005 it was abolished and replaced with a Wage Subsidy System (WSS). The supported employment services are not pleased with this replacement. The argument is that job seekers on ESS could retain their benefits. With the new WSS the person has to give up their allowance or pension completely and must work at least 21 hours a week. According to job coaches, many of the clients of supported employment would not have got their jobs without ESS. They are in 'carved jobs' and the employers' commitment depends on being compensated for lower productivity. According to job coaches, uncertainty over the new grant now makes employers reluctant to engage with them, e.g. a person who gets invalidity pension is only allowed to work for 20 hours a week, but if the employer receives a wage subsidy, the person has to work at least 21 hours. Another problem is that in some regions the labour market authorities do not allow job coaching combined with WSS because this means that the employer gets double payment, both job coaching and productivity compensation.

## 5.8 Summary

Whilst all supported employment services have contact with employers, the degree of contact with employers varies considerably. Many supported employment services intend to get involved with employer's networks, but hardly any of the ones we have visited actually did that.

There is an impression that job coaches prefer to work with small and locally based enterprises. This is because they find them more personal and thus more suitable for their clients.

Supported employment services operate job-finding activities through informal and to a lesser extent, formal channels although applications for advertised vacancies or available jobs are rarely used. The supported employment services typically find jobs for their

clients mainly by job coaches or job finders contacting employers by telephone and follow up a positive response by visits to the company.

It was stated that both staff and clients are actively participating in the job finding process and that staff ensure that clients' job seeking skills are developed. However it was also acknowledged that it is usually not the job seeker but the job coaches/job finders that find jobs.

While 'job carving' is a typical way of getting a job contract, the most common strategy to get access to a job is by organising work experience placements. The concept of 'job tasters' is a much shorter version of a work experience placement, and the aim is not to get a job but to check work abilities or to help develop clients' job preferences. There are also great differences with regards to the length, content and purpose of work experience placements.

Financial incentives such as wage subsidies exist in different formats in all countries, although job coaches tentatively referred to bureaucratic rules as a barrier for not using them. It still appears to be common that some form of compensation is given to the employer for lower productivity of clients, e.g. to make agreement with employers on a combination of wage and benefit pension; or as in some cases that no wage is paid by the employer.

It also appears to be common that clients of supported employment work part-time. While that may be according to the wishes of the clients, job coaches also pointed to systemic barriers that prevent clients from working more hours. Most of the clients of supported employment services found jobs in the private sector. Job coaches also said that their clients get typically jobs that require unskilled labour, and that it is difficult to find jobs that are suitable for clients with a high education degree.

According to job coaches in all countries, the ultimate aim is to find permanent jobs for their clients. However, it appears to be common to accept short-term contracts, and job coaches also admit that clients often do not get a permanent job. We also found that a permanent job contract does not necessarily mean that this is a paid job, as it sometimes happens, especially in the public sector, that the employer does not pay any wage to the clients of supported employment and the clients still receive benefits or pension.

According to some job coaches, job retention is good but to our knowledge there are no statistics available on this issue in any of the countries that we have visited. While it was stated in all supported employment services that some of the clients need support in a job over a long period of time to be able to keep the job, we found few examples of funding for such long time follow up. However, the typical situation is still that after a job contract, there is apparently support available for job retention purposes; even if not funded it takes place as voluntary support, mostly by direct visits and by telephone calls.

## 5.9 Implications for Norwegian Supported Employment

The regulations of the AB-initiative restrict the client's participation to a maximum of three years. In most other countries there are also time limits, but perhaps not so strict.

We found very few examples of funding for long-term follow up and support after a client has secured a job contract. However, even if not funded, long-term follow up appears to take place more often than in Norway, albeit as voluntary support. There are participants that require lifelong support even if they have a job, but it need not necessarily be the supported employment service that provides this. However, it may be part of the service's responsibility to make sure that such support is available and this might be an important aspect concerning job retention of clients of the Norwegian AB.

Our research shows that Norwegian job coaches spend a smaller percentage of their time maintaining contact with employers and co-workers, while they spend more time maintaining contact with clients. This appears to be very different from the situation that we have found in some of the Dutch and Scottish cases, but resembles to a certain degree what we have seen in services in Finland, Spain and Portugal, especially when working with clients with mental health problems. Meetings and internal matters also take up much of the Norwegian job coaches' time, something that seems to be a common issue in all countries.

In Norway as well as in Ireland, relationships with the local employment services are reported as predominantly good, but there are instances of lack of communication and mutual understanding about clients and the understanding of what the supported employment service is all about.

Usually participants of AB get their first work experience through job tasters or work experience placements, as in most of the other countries. Also as in all countries, there are no clear definitions on what are job tasters and work experience placements or the differences between them; nor are there any documented methods on how a client may progress from a work experience placement to get a steady job contract.

In the public sector in Norway as in all the other countries, administration practices, lack of control over budget resources, and a lack of employment contracts for disabled workers represent barriers to gaining a permanent position for clients of supported employment. In some countries, e.g. in Spain, there is a quota system for the public sector, but according to some job coaches, the usage of the quota system for clients of supported employment is difficult.

In Norway, as in the other countries, job coaches primarily use the telephone and their own networks when searching for appropriate jobs. Securing work through advertised jobs is rare. Employers seldom contact the AB-initiative themselves in order to get employees. We found more innovative approaches to employers in countries such as Holland and Scotland, where there are stronger incentives to be more proactive towards employers. Some of them use specialised Job Clubs, specialised job finders and specially trained



Human Resource managers, notably seen in Holland and Scotland. This may be of particular interest to the Norwegian AB-teams that want to develop new ways of job seeking and approaches towards employers.

In most countries job coaches said that they mainly approach smaller companies to find jobs for their clients. It is also a common feature that supported employment services use the same companies several times. This is similar to Norway. The type of jobs that clients get appears to be the same in supported employment in all countries; the clients' work tasks are clearly set out, practical and limited, with an emphasis on tasks related to tidying, cleaning, odd jobs, and various commercial services. It is the clients' employers, sometimes in consultation with a job coach, that normally define the clients' tasks.



# 6

## Results

### 6.1 Issues to explore

One of the critical issues to arise from earlier studies into supported employment in Norway was the actual number of job outcomes. Some have considered that a 35 % success rate for AB Units (in 2003) to be poor whilst other consider this to be good in relation to the client group.

Our aim was to try and compare results and to gauge where the Norwegian results were in relation to other European projects. We wanted to see how results were measured and what differences if any, there were with regards to the definition of a job.

We were also very interested in the duties of a job coach with regards to how many clients were on a caseload and whether job coaches had targets of clients, placements or job results.

We wanted to find out within each caseload how many clients were being supported to look for employment and how many were being supported whilst in employment. We also wanted to discover how projects and its results were monitored and evaluated.

### 6.2 Results and how they are measured

There was a wide disparity of available data between the supported employment services we interviewed. At one end of the scale many of the services did not have statistics regarding outcomes, whereas a few other services held a vast range of information on clients' job results and outcomes. With the exception of a few cases, information in actual quantifiable results in terms of job outcome for clients in the supported employment services was extremely vague, and in general, evaluations of supported employment services appear very weak. A general impression is that services that monitored results were also able to provide more detailed information on several aspects of the supported employment process. One of these services could document that during 2006 the service consisting of 5 staff, secured permanent job contracts for 69 clients.

According to job coaches and managers that gave us information about their supported employment projects, the services are in general measured by job outcomes. However, we encountered a service in Finland where, according to the job coaches, funding of the service does not relate to a job outcome: "The service is not a job centre or an employment office, it is a coaching service".

The supported employment services in Holland are evaluated by the Public Insurance Organisation (UWV) and according to their contract a minimum of 35 % of the clients

must get jobs, and of these, normally 50 % get full-time work, and 50 % get part-time. In many cases, the Public Insurance compensates the employer for a lack of productivity.

In Portugal, the supported employment services receive funding to arrange an occupational course and must ensure that clients follow the course that normally lasts for 4 years, including work experience placements: The supported employment service risks losing money if clients leave the course early. All supported employment services interviewed in Portugal have to report costs and results in detail every 6 months. Two services said that IEFPP (Department of Employment) visit once a year. None of the organisations have yet experienced any dramatic consequences concerning funding. There is a clear difference between a job and a 'real job'. Clients are mostly on unpaid job training for up to 4 years, which is referred to as a 'job'. A 'real job' is when the client begins work under a job contract.

According to job coaches interviewed in Ireland, the supported employment services have to make reports about their clients every month. In Scotland the measurement of results will depend on who is funding the work and what the agreement specifications are. Some job coaches argue that a 'soft outcome' is an outcome such as being more motivated to work or improved behaviour. There are also the possibilities for those who are in receipt of welfare benefits to do some work (not more than 16 hours per week) and still receive welfare benefits. Disabled people who move on to training or further education courses may also be classed as a measurable outcome.

In one supported employment service in Spain we were informed that they are funded to secure jobs for 60 % of the clients. However, much of the funding of supported employment in Spain is connected to an Occupational Course where work experience placement, not a permanent job, is the indicator of measured results. Therefore, in many Spanish services it was not clear if the job coaches referred to jobs or work experience placements. We noticed, however, that amongst job coaches there were clear expectations for clients to secure job contracts. In one service the staff expected 7 clients to find jobs annually, and job coaches also said that it normally takes 3 months for a client to get a placement and 12 months to secure a job, in some cases however up to 2 years.

Although all job coaches that we talked to held the belief that the aim of supported employment is to get clients a job, funders in Finland do not require a direct measure of outcomes. One job coach said "Last year I got 3 out of 10 clients into jobs." Another job coach anticipated that "of my 20 clients, 50 – 60 % will get a job in 2007". Whilst in another supported employment service, one of the job coaches was able to support 4 clients into jobs in 2005; another job coach had assisted 10 clients into permanent jobs in 2006. In one supported employment service we were informed that 50 % of 170 clients have job contracts, but only 5 of them actually receive salary from the employer. The reason for this is that the public employers, where most clients from this supported employment service are working, do not pay wages: "We always hope that the employer will pay an ordinary wage some time later".

### 6.3 Job coach's duties

A common theme of complaint among supported employment services in all countries except Finland, are the bureaucratic aspects of their work, which is the paperwork connected to reports and the annual efforts to secure funding.

It appears to be normal in supported employment services that job coaches have formal reviews, in some cases annually, and that there are supervision meetings, in some cases monthly.

In the supported employment services that we visited in Holland, each job coach normally works with 20 - 22 clients. Whilst a minimum of 35 % of the clients have to get jobs, the individual job coach is not given targets in terms of results, but their job performance is evaluated through their team leader. We were informed that a job coach working with very difficult clients may work with 10 -12 clients. In general, it is said that the job finder has one year to find a job for a particular client, but several job finders said that it normally takes them 3 - 4 months to find a job, but not necessarily a permanent job contract. A client may have up to 3 non-permanent contracts, usually 6 month contracts (although some are for one year), but it is a rule that a permanent work contract for a client shall be in place within 3 years.

A Portuguese job coach told us that he can use up to 4 years to get a work contract for a client, and a fifth year can be used for follow-up after the job has been secured. According to job coaches in one supported employment service in Portugal, there were 2 staff members and 20 clients, including 5 new clients, and further 3 – 5 clients in jobs to follow up. According to these job coaches it can take from 1 week to 4 years to get a job contract for a client, depending on the client and access to employers. In another service with 2 staff members and some 20 clients, we were informed that 2 clients were in paid jobs. Referring to these two clients, it was said that a job contract is normally achieved after 1.5 years, but that this varies according to the clients' wishes and work ability.

In Ireland the caseload for job coaches is said to be a “grey area” and we were told that there is no standard or set number of clients for each job coach. One job coach said that at the moment he was working with 34 clients and 18 of these were in jobs with contracts, 10 of them part-time. Another job coach told us that at the beginning of the year she had 40 clients; after 6 months she had 25 left. A third job coach worked with 22 clients, 13 of which were in employment, she said that “the caseload is high at times; it depends on the level of support. It is manageable; it depends on how you plan”. Another job coach said he was expected to have a caseload of 25 clients a year; at the moment he had 28 clients and 2 on a waiting list. He did not see this as a very high number as they were all in employment, “some of them call only every third month”.

“The longest time before finding a job for a client was 12 months. It depends on the type of the job. The quickest was 2 months. However, it isn't time, but the job match that is important.”

Job coaches in a Scottish supported employment service said that it is normal for each job coach or support worker to secure between 6 – 10 job outcomes per year and to organise 12 – 18 work experience placements each year. The caseload of each job coach in this particular service varies from 10 – 16 clients at any given time.

The job coach caseload in the Spanish supported employment services is not standardised. One job coach said she works with 20 clients, and some of these clients have been in work for up to 15 years with 7 - 8 of them being visited once per month. In another service it was said that a job coach is expected to have 12 new clients per year in addition to following up of those already in jobs. Job coaches in another Spanish supported employment service said that it normally takes 3 months for a client to get a placement and 12 months to secure a job, but in some cases up to 2 years. We were told that in this service, the maximum caseload for a job coach is 20 clients, but then most clients will be in work so the job coach is not required to find jobs for all. The expected employment outcome in this service is 50 % of all clients, and without any time limit. Information about a third service showed that out of 15 – 16 clients per year, a maximum of 6 are expected to get a job. According to information from job coaches, it is normal for clients to secure part-time and temporary contracts for the first 6 months, leading to a permanent contract. Job coaches say that they follow up clients in jobs; one said he still follows up a client that found a job 4 years ago. At a fourth supported employment service in Spain, we were told that it is expected that 60 out of 150 clients get a job with minimum 6 months contracts.

In Finland there is no set number of how many clients a job coach is supposed to have as a caseload. One job coach said that he is supposed to have 15 - 20 clients at any given time; another one had 20 clients. While many job coaches have a caseload of 10 – 12 clients, it is also normal to have up to 40 clients.

## 6.4 Summary

Except for some very few supported employment services, information in actual quantifiable results in terms of job outcomes for clients in the supported employment services was extremely vague, and in general, evaluation of supported employment services appear very weak. To us this was quite surprising, given that the objective of these services was to support clients into jobs. Only the Dutch services referred to a contract in which it is stated that a minimum of 35 % of the clients must get jobs.

None of the supported employment services that we visited had any targets in terms of caseload or results for individual job coaches. When referring to results or outcomes, it is often difficult to know if job coaches refer to work experience placements, temporary jobs or permanent jobs. The caseload of job coaches in different countries differs significantly, an issue that may be connected to types of clients, length of support and what kind of support that takes place.

In Finland there is no direct measure of outcomes, although the aim obviously is to get clients a job contract. Supported employment services that we visited in both Portugal and Spain report costs and results regularly, but these reports concerns clients' participation on occupational courses and job training. This does not mean that clients do not secure 'real jobs', but we found no clear measurement of results in terms of number of clients that begin to work with a permanent job contract.

In Ireland, the supported employment services file reports about their clients every month to the Labour Office, but there are no performance-based demands on the service in terms of job outcome. In Scotland the measurement of results depends on who is funding the activities and what the agreement specifications are.

## 6.5 Implications for Norwegian Supported Employment

Most of the AB-participants experience some form of employment activity within the open labour job market; the most common activities in the labour market being job tasters and work experience placements, and to a lesser extent permanent employment. In other countries, notably Finland, Portugal and Spain, the end result for many clients often appears to be work experience placements and temporary employment, and to a lesser degree, welfare benefit pension.

According to statistics of the job seekers who completed the Norwegian initiative in 2001-2002, 35 % of clients found full-time or part-time work, whilst a further 25 % of clients were granted disability or retirement pensions. Unlike the results in Holland, approximately half of the AB-participants, who have a job whilst in the initiative, do not receive wages, 26 % receive ordinary wages, while 23 % receive wages up to the minimum allowance for salary level for a person on pension in Norway. As noted in Chapter 4, it seems to be more common in Norway than in other countries that clients of supported employment end up with a disability pension.

Because of differences in funding as well as poor documentation in several services, it is difficult to compare results. It is still an impression that the Norwegian results compare favourably to what we have seen elsewhere. In the Dutch services, as a rule, a minimum of 35 % of clients are supposed to find a job. It must also be said that some services that we have visited perform much better in terms of job output for their clients.

We know that many job seekers that find a job through AB also leave the job during the first year. The picture seems to be the same in other countries, and there is no documentation or research available that sheds light on the long-term effects of supported employment.

In Norway supported employment in the AB-units is funded by public authorities (NAV) to find jobs for vocationally disabled job seekers. However, we find that the emphasis placed on the AB-units concerning a job output appears to be far less weighted than in Holland. In this sense, the situation of AB in Norway resembles more the impression we

have got from Finland, Portugal and Spain, where the end result of supported employment need not necessarily be a job.

As long as it is fairly accepted by the funding organisation that the end result need not be a job, the question about clients being job ready and clients' motivation to get a job will not be a very important issue. For a job coach that has no strong incentive to 'produce job contracts' as an end result, it will not be a problem to use time on other aspects of a client's life that are not necessarily job-related. Therefore, job readiness and motivational aspects among clients will easily influence a job coach's performance and ultimately the performance of the AB-initiative as a whole. This is an important issue for funders, but should be also for AB-units, especially if it holds true that competition to deliver supported employment will be stronger in the future. An improved assessment of clients before they are referred to an AB-unit may be one pre-condition to improve the results of AB in terms of job outcome.

According to the Norwegian regulations, each job coach must work with a minimum of 12 job seekers at any given time. This apparently is not a very high number, but it must be taken into consideration, as pointed out in Chapter 2, that clients in other services that we have visited tend to be more job ready, more motivated and have less complex needs for individual follow up.



# 7

## Implications and recommendations for Supported Employment

### 7.1 Introduction

The backgrounds of this study were evaluations and concerns about Norwegian supported employment. However, the information gathered and the inferences from this information lead us to a logical conclusion that there are implications for supported employment on a far wider geographic scale.

In many ways our visits to other supported employment services in Europe has produced more questions than answers and it has raised the opportunity to have a critical look at the methodologies and activities of supported employment in several European countries. We found the projects we met and job coaches interviewed to be thoroughly motivated and committed to supported employment and yet many of the projects were not adhering to some of the underpinning values and principles of supported employment. It would appear such deviations were forced by funding providers and clearly caused concern for supported employment providers.

Some of our impressions can be summed up as follows:

- there is a great variety of organisations and financing systems of supported employment services in different countries, and these differences may influence both the practical aspects as well as the end results of supported employment;
- there are differences regarding approaches and methods used in supported employment;
- there is a wide variety in the population of clients in supported employment services;
- there is no general agreement about the definition and difference between job taster, work experience placement and an ordinary job;
- there is no general agreement if supported employment is about getting a job or if it is a social issue;
- there is uncertainty and disagreement on issues such as job readiness and clarification of job seekers' employability and motivation;
- the understanding of 'get and keep a job' and 'long-term follow up' varies.

In this chapter we want to use the information we have gathered to form a constructive viewpoint on what we consider to be key areas of supported employment that should be revisited. To this end we have used the impressions we believe we have found to ask some rhetorical questions, make statements, propose recommendations and in general be more subjective to hopefully improve and further develop supported employment in Europe.

## 7.2 Differences and similarities

The question of where the funding comes from appears to be crucial to explain disparities of supported employment in different countries. That is understandable; obviously each service is dependent on what funding is available in their country and therefore must conform to the requirements of that funding.

At the same time there is clearly a lack of a unified set of supported employment quality criteria or standards towards which each service can perform and assess their own measures.

The great variety in clients' work output and motivation to work is probably due to different referral systems and different financial opportunities for supported employment services, both at local and national levels. This makes it difficult to compare performance between services because we are not comparing like with like.

However, whilst acknowledging and accepting there will always be differences with supported employment, this study provides some evidence that there is a need for consideration on some fundamental aspects of supported employment.

What is a job? What is a work experience placement? What does job ready mean? How does supported employment define those concepts? How can we make sure that everybody talks about the same and how can we ensure that providers contribute to the aims of supported employment?

Since the introduction of supported employment into Europe there has been a significant increase in the number of supported employment providers. Moreover, the client group is considerably broader than the original target group of people with intellectual disabilities. These changes can be viewed as positive, as it indicates a development of supported employment by more providers to more service users.

However, the aim of supported employment is to help an individual to find and maintain a paid job in the ordinary labour market and yet this study demonstrates that this key principle is not as central in supported employment as it should be.

### *Recommendation 1:*

- To further develop the EUSE 5 stage process as the European model of supported employment.<sup>11</sup>

### *Recommendation 2:*

- The Values and Principles underpinning Supported Employment as a process to secure and maintain a job on the open labour market should be recognised, developed and more widely used.

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<sup>11</sup> See Appendix 3: EUSE 5 stage process of supported employment.

### 7.3 Results of Supported Employment

In many of the countries that we visited, especially in Spain, Portugal and Finland, there are apparently few incentives such as in the Dutch system, to progress clients into permanent jobs. Both in Spain and Portugal many clients are in placements (training in employment), and few of the supported employment services were able to give a clear picture on how long it takes before a client gets a job or how many clients secure a permanent job contract.

Referring to the origins of supported employment, and to coin a phrase in common use in supported employment “one size does not fit all” and we must reconsider the merits of the ‘place then train’ approach. Of course this is a basic perspective, but in practice it may not be appropriate for everyone, especially since supported employment has now been broadened to cover a wider range of disabled and disadvantaged people. It is not possible to be too prescriptive concerning this topic but we must remember that ‘place and train’ may not be such a good idea if participants have poor social skills/behavioural problems which may be better addressed *before* they are exposed to the workplace, employers and co-workers.

Over the past few years the simple comment of “are participants job ready?” has stimulated a great deal of debate. The main cause of this contentious issue is rooted in the supported employment ideology that everyone can work and that supported employment is aligned to a ‘place, train and maintain’ type ethos. There are three key reasons to embrace this:

- it prevents vocationally disabled people undertaking unnecessary training
- it provides immediate integration in the open labour market
- it ensures that the focus of the job coach is on securing open employment.

However, problems arise when a participant is considered not to be job ready. It is, of course, not possible to fully define ‘job ready’ as each participant will have weaknesses, abilities, strengths, habits and personal issues that are individual and complex. When we attempt to define ‘job ready’ we must take into account the qualities sought in an employee by the employer – trustworthy, reliable, flexible, effective and motivated. These are traits that employers look for and if a participant has none of these qualities then a supported employment service must question the job readiness and perhaps supported employment is not the most appropriate measure for such participants.

In the Norwegian case, when AB became established, more standardised and formal instructions were introduced, reducing the autonomy of the job coaches. The concern is that a successful approach to supported employment is to an extent to rely upon a flexible approach to methods and there is a risk that rules and routines in national programmes such as in Ireland and Norway, no matter how general and necessary they are, may jeopardise this approach. There is evidence to suggest that job coaches in both Ireland and Norway feel that they are bound by fixed regulations. Some examples of this can be found

in the fact that some clients may require long-term support but regulations limit their rights to support. Additionally, supported employment services in some cases have little or no say in who is referred to their services by employment service offices. However, it could also be argued that there is enough flexibility and room for manoeuvre within national programmes and that projects may be using the rules and regulations as an excuse to cover up for a lack of proactivity or job outcomes.

*Recommendation 3:*

- Supported employment providers should give consideration to producing reports on their activities in line with EUSE standards and methodology in an agreed format to ensure consistency in the development of supported employment in Europe.

## 7.4 Long term effect

We know little about the long-term effects of vocational rehabilitation through supported employment. We still have reasons to recommend that the support provided by job coaches should continue to be directed towards keeping a job. However, we could not find any examples of funding for support after the client had got a job in the countries that we have visited, except perhaps in the Workstep programme operated in Scotland (and the UK).

Clients of supported employment are not ordinary job seekers as such, but are participants in a supported employment service because they have particular needs, which may include job adjustment and on-going support after they have secured a job. In the Norwegian case, most of the clients that found a job contract through AB lost their jobs during the first year. This is an indication that perhaps in the funding of supported employment there should be quality criteria that defines the minimum length of support, e.g. one year after a job contract. The lack of focus on individual career and development may be an area for improvement that could have a positive impact on the long-term effect of supported employment.

There may also be a case for looking at how clients are securing jobs when we consider the long-term effect and job retention. It is possible that the informal approach to job finding leads to jobs being ‘specially created’ or ‘carved’. Whilst there are considerable merits in this approach it could be argued that created or carved jobs are often not sustainable due to financial or operational reasons of the employer. On the other hand, a temporary job may be better on a CV than no job at all.

*Recommendation 4:*

- Increased recognition by funders of the need for long-term support after a job has been secured.

## 7.5 Job coaches competence

The training of job coaches appears to be unplanned and our impression is that there is a need for more continuous and relevant training.

The absence of standards, definitions and agreed methodology indicates that the training and development needs of supported employment personnel may not be addressed in the near future.

It is unclear if any form of supported employment diploma is going to have a significant impact on the competence of supported employment staff. It would also appear that whilst the quality of the various diplomas is high, the relevance, according to job coaches, is questionable.

One way to improve the situation in the short – medium term would be to further develop ‘work shadowing’ between respective agencies and national associations. It must be taken into account however, that before we share good practice we have to establish what best practice actually is.

Another way to increase the skills of supported employment personnel would be the development of a range of short training courses on a variety of practical topics. Such courses could be produced and delivered by supported employment staff that has expertise in the relevant disciplines. Course titles could include: vocational profiling; job finding; partnership working and supported employment principles.

### *Recommendation 5:*

- Establish what the components of best practice in supported employment are.

### *Recommendation 6:*

- Improve the practical relevance of the diploma.

### *Recommendation 7:*

- Development of short training courses on a range of practical topics.

## 7.6 The holistic approach and user participation

There is a tendency among job coaches in Norway to handle issues that are the responsibility of other public services’ (particularly the social services). Our interviews also suggest that clients who are not motivated to start a process aimed at open employment are referred to the supported employment service; this actually appears to happen more often in Norway and Ireland than in other countries. These clients, according to the job coaches, often have other problems that have to be resolved prior to job search. In these cases job coaches often develop a ‘holistic’ approach and serve the clients on issues not belonging within the service’s field of responsibility, instead of involving the relevant public body. It appears therefore, that co-operation between supported employment and other initiatives

must be developed in order to avoid clients' unresolved problems becoming obstacles to securing a job.

If the supported employment service requires a holistic approach to ensure stability in the workplace, then of course they should liaise with the appropriate body (health, social services). However, such liaisons are not always easy to establish and it is understandable that individual job coaches may take on this role themselves – especially given that many of them come from care-orientated backgrounds.

Supported employment faces challenges with respect to counselling clients as active participants in their own vocational rehabilitation process. Even though user participation in relation to this target group is sometimes said to be difficult, we nevertheless regard this issue as a challenge for supported employment.

The key values of supported employment include both 'self determination' and 'informed choice' and yet we find that this is greatly limited because of a lack of awareness or limited competence amongst job coaches.

There could and should be increased user participation in the job search process, especially where participants do not have an intellectual impairment or disability, there need not be a requirement for the job coach to do all the job finding. Moreover, it is essential that participants are involved in all process stages and activities. Additionally, user participation should be achieved before there is a referral to a supported employment service. In Ireland, Norway and Finland there are indications that public services are referring vocationally disabled people to supported employment services for other reasons than finding a job; in the Norwegian case often for suitability or assessment purposes. This procedure is unfair to both the clients and the supported employment services.

*Recommendation 8:*

- Consideration of a Job Club approach as part of the job finding process designed for clients of supported employment.

*Recommendation 9:*

- Develop methods that increase job coaches' counselling skills to clients as active participants in their own vocational rehabilitation process.

*Recommendation 10:*

- User participation is achieved before there is a referral to a supported employment service.

*Recommendation 11:*

- Co-operation between supported employment and other initiatives must be developed in order to avoid clients' unresolved problems becoming obstacles to securing a job.

## 7.7 Approaches to employers

Job coaches in supported employment contribute to reducing the risks and uncertainty of employers often connected with recruiting a person with a disability. However, supported employment services are not well known among employers, and building healthy relations with new and existing employers could be one way of spreading this information in both the public and private sector.

Whilst there is a definite need to improve both formal and informal relations with employers, care must be taken that supported employment services are aware of the problems and needs of employers. It is not sufficient to approach employers and offer only unemployed disabled people, the supported employment service must look at the bigger picture and accept that employers are also customers and as such the needs of these customers must be recognised. The employment of vocationally disabled people is unlikely to be a priority for employers. However, addressing sickness absence, legislative matters, identifying support and improving equal opportunities may have an increasingly higher priority. The needs and problems of employers can become opportunities for supported employment services. The research of the Norwegian AB indicates high levels of employer satisfaction, but what is it employers are actually satisfied with? We must be careful to note that although employers are extremely happy with the supported employment services in Norway; this is normally not reflected by how many clients secure paid work with these employers.

We must question the availability of training of job coaches in job finding skills and techniques. A good job coach should not be gauged by their academic achievements or their commitment to disabled people but should be judged by the number of vocationally disabled people they support into jobs. It should be taken into account that there is no 'one best way' to secure employment and that a wide range of methods should be constantly considered and used.

Job finding and marketing for vocationally disabled people would be enhanced and improved if supported employment services were to improve their relationship with employers. There is little evidence that indicates strong links with the employers, and employers seldom contact the supported employment service when looking for labour. In addition, Norwegian and Irish job coaches have expressed a wish to spend more time working with employers and job coaches in many of the countries that we have visited have requested more training in working with employers.

### *Recommendation 12:*

- Supported employment services develop training of job coaches in job finding techniques and skills, and improve communication with and support to employers.

## 7.8 Work Experience Placements

In the majority of supported employment services that we visited, the provision of work experience placements provides an essential tool in addressing the clients and perhaps the employers' doubts or apprehensions. We found, however, that often there is no distinction between Job Tasters and Work Experience Placements.

The seemingly extended use of job tasters and work experience placements in supported employment can be both a good and a bad thing. It can be good because vocationally disabled people are exposed to the open labour market and get an opportunity to develop skills and determine their own strengths, weaknesses and job preferences. However, by continually offering employers this option it can create a 'something for nothing' culture. This may be reflected in the fact that whilst in the Norwegian case 80 % of participants receive work experience/tasters, only 35 % secure paid jobs. Moreover, the high satisfaction rates amongst employers; both with the Norwegian AB services and other supported employment services in Europe are certainly not reflected in the number of vocationally disabled people they ultimately employ. There is also the risk that the work experience placement actually becomes the end result as opposed to an effective tool that will lead to a real job outcome.

We suggest that in supported employment the concept of Work Experience Placements (WEP) is developed in order to benefit all parties concerned.

If an individual has been out of work for a long period or has never been in employment then they need to determine their job preferences and their own strengths and weaknesses. It is not necessary for people to undertake lengthy training programmes to discover this and a WEP will help an individual to identify likes and dislikes within a particular workplace environment. A WEP will give the individual something to add to their application form, CV and an area to discuss at a job interview, thus improving their employment prospects as well as boosting confidence and self esteem. It will give them an insight into what real employment is like and help them assess their own skills and stamina. A WEP will develop new skills and build on existing ones, it will also provide an up to date employment reference. There may be the opportunity for the employer to consider employing the individual on a more permanent basis.

A work experience placement can also be of benefit to employers. It can break down barriers within the workplace and can reduce the stereotyping of people with disabilities. It can also enable the employer to see what sort of support a job seeker may require and it is a good test of the ability and reliability of the supporting service provider.

In respect of the supported employment service provider, a WEP will provide a valuable in-depth assessment tool in compiling the vocational profile and developing the job finding action plan. It will enable the job coach to identify how much and what sort of support is likely to be required and to gauge the levels of ability and learning skills that the individual possesses. Organising WEPs can be a useful marketing aid due to the sort of constructive



contact that is made with the employer; moreover the activities of the WEP will assist greatly to enhance the job seeking qualities of the individual and increase their competitiveness in the open labour market.

Work Experience Placements have increasingly become an important tool in the process of supported employment. For that reason it is considered important to define (or provide a value for) work experience as an activity that must be agreed by the individual and be undertaken in the open labour market within an organisation or employment sector of the individual's choice. The work placement must be time limited to a short period (e.g. up to 8 - 12 weeks) and must be supported and monitored in the same way as a supported job. There should be a written agreement approved by the three involved parties (individual, support provider and employer) covering issues such as placement objective, support to be provided, duties, limitations, insurance cover, reporting procedures and the evaluation process.

*Recommendation 13:*

- Supported employment develops a very clear and acceptable definition of what are a job taster and a work experience placement.

## 7.9 Political influence and knowledge about Supported Employment

Currently, there is an acknowledged lack of political influence of supported employment services in all involved countries. While supported employment services in general seem to have good relations with local municipalities, they are generally too weak, too small and too scattered to exercise any strong influence on national disability, employment and inclusion policies. Many projects are therefore dependent on larger, sometimes umbrella organisations to negotiate and work at the national level. Interestingly, very few interviewees mentioned their national associations for supported employment as an important instrument for policy influence and yet these national associations are ideally placed to lobby at local and national levels.

However, before any lobbying takes place, supported employment providers must identify exactly what they are lobbying for. As we have seen throughout this study there are significant differences at local, national and international levels and therefore national associations and their members should ensure they are talking the same language and that their message is consistent. To influence policy, supported employment providers must agree what policy changes they want and why.

Whilst at EU level there is much discussion about employment and disability, there is currently no dialogue regarding supported employment. There are many disability organisations trying to influence EU policy with regard to disability issues, but none appear to be prioritising the benefits of supported employment.

*Recommendation 14:*

- Develop supported employment national associations as an instrument for policy influence.

*Recommendation 15:*

- Lobby the EU regarding the introduction and funding of supported employment.

# Appendix

Appendix 1: Interview guide

Appendix 2: Relevant literature on Supported Employment in Norway:

Appendix 3: EUSE 5 stage process of Supported Employment



## **Appendix 1: Interview guide**

Interview guide for personnel in supported employment services.  
By Øystein Spjelkavik, Work Research Institute.

### **1. The SE-service, the system, rules & regulations**

1. Referrals of clients to SE service
2. Financing of the service/of job coaches & job finders/of support
3. The working of the service
4. Job coaches' formal qualification
5. Incentives to get a job quickly
6. Other services that work with the same approach

### **2. The clients**

1. Clients' alternatives to job
2. Clients' motivation for a job
3. Clients' workability
4. Earlier work experience of clients
5. Pre-job arrangements that can be done for/with clients
6. Support from other parts of the system/other agencies while participating in the SE service
7. Clients' own activity in the SE process

### **3. Jobs/employers**

1. Contacts with employers.
2. Approaches to employers
3. Who finds jobs and how
4. Type of jobs
5. Contractors

### **4. Results**

1. How are results measured
2. Incentives to work with "easy"/"difficult" clients
3. Job coaches' duties/obligations
4. How long time does it take before a client gets a job/placement
5. How is the job coaches' work evaluated
6. The long-term effect (job retention)

### **5. Weaknesses**

1. What are you mostly complaining about in your daily job
2. Unwanted effects, limitations
3. What does not work properly

## Appendix 2: Relevant literature on supported employment in Norway:

Relevant literature<sup>12</sup> on supported employment in Norway:

Blystad & Spjelkavik (1996), *Integrering av yrkeshemmede i arbeidslivet*. Evaluering av Arbeid med bistand. Oslo: Work Research Institute.

Blystad & Spjelkavik (1997), *A Norwegian Approach To Supported Employment*. Oslo: Work Research Institute.

Frøyland (2006), *Supported Employment or Segregated Rehabilitation?* Oslo: Work Research Institute.

Hernes, Stiles & Bollingmo (eds) (1996), *Veien til en vanlig jobb. Nytt perspektiv på attføring*. Oslo: Ad Notam Gyldendal. Swedish edition: *Vägen till arbete. Nytt perspektiv på rehabilitering*. Stockholm: Johansson & Skyttmo Förlag.

Schafft & Spjelkavik (1999), "A Norwegian Approach To Supported Employment". *Journal of Vocational Rehabilitation* 12 (1999) 147-158.

Spjelkavik, Frøyland & Skardhamar (2003), *Yrkeshemmede i det ordinære arbeidslivet – inkludering gjennom Arbeid med bistand*. Oslo: Work Research Institute.

Spjelkavik, Frøyland & Evans (2004), *Supported Employment in Norway – A National Mainstream Programme*. Oslo: Work Research Institute.

ECON (2004), *Arbeid med Bistand – hva skjer når bistanden opphører?* R-2004-102. Oslo: ECON.

ECON (2005), *Arbeidsmarkedstiltak i motbakke*. R-2005-054. Oslo: ECON.

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<sup>12</sup> Many of these publications can be downloaded at [www.afi.no](http://www.afi.no) and at [www.econ.no](http://www.econ.no)

## **Appendix 3: EUSE 5 stage process of supported employment**

A 5-stage process has been identified and acknowledged as a model of good practice and one that can be used as a framework within Supported Employment.<sup>13</sup>

Within each of the 5 stages there is a wide range of activities, some will be unique to a specific disability group, others will be more general and will apply across all disadvantaged groups. Across all stages and activities, service providers should consider their timescales as an opportunity to take responsibility for not wasting the individual's lifetime.

### **Stage 1 - Engagement**

This stage probably provides the range of activities, the majority of which will be unique not only to specific disability groups but may also be unique to individuals from any other disadvantaged groups. The core values of this stage are to provide accessible information in an appropriate manner and to support the individual to use the information and experiential learning to make informed choices. The activities in this stage must be relevant, person centred and part of an agreed plan of action to ultimately support the individual into open employment. It is expected that at the end of the engagement stage the individual will make an informed decision as to whether or not s/he wishes to use supported employment to find work and whether s/he wishes to do so with that particular service provider.

### **Stage 2 - Vocational Profiling**

The activities in this stage will provide an insight into aspects of the individual's skills, abilities, strengths and weaknesses and will produce a detailed profile of employment related issues that will influence the remainder of the process. Supported employment gives job seekers the opportunity of actively selecting a job compatible with their interests, aspirations, needs, conditions and background experience. This planning process is based on an empowerment approach, in which participants are encouraged to make their own career choices and participate in the design of their own work project in accordance with their interests and vocational aspirations. A Person Centred Planning approach should be fully adopted within this stage.

### **Stage 3 - Job Finding**

Job finding is a key stage where the activities involved can influence employers and secure employment for job seekers. There is no one best way to job search and Supported Employment providers must consider a range of activities that best suit the needs of the parties concerned.

It is not to say who should or should not conduct the job search but at all times the job seeker must remain in control of the activities and be given the fullest advice and be equipped to make informed choices.

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<sup>13</sup> Taken from EUSE (2005), European Union of Supported Employment Information Booklet and Quality Standards.

Irrespective of the effects of disability or any other disadvantage, the ownership must rest with the job seeker, with the Supported Employment provider furnishing detailed guidance and advice.

There are, of course, a number of methods that can be used to identify a suitable job or employer through:

#### **Stage 4 - Employer Engagement**

The activities in this stage will depend on what format the engagement or meeting with the employer takes.

For the purposes of this work, there is an assumption that the Supported Employment professional and probably the job seeker will meet with the employer. This stage will determine what is potentially on offer from the employer.

Potential areas to be discussed will include:

- Skills/experience required by employer
- Hours of work (or Job Taster/Work Experience Placement)
- Terms and Conditions of employment
- Workplace culture
- Support required by job seeker
- Support available from Supported Employment provider
- Support available from employer/co-workers
- Issues surrounding disclosure
- Awareness training for employer and co-workers
- Health and Safety requirements
- Availability of funding and support through Government Programmes
- Guidance and advice to employers regarding their obligations/responsibilities under legislation

#### **Stage 5 - On/Off Job Support**

The levels, amount and forms of support to be provided will depend upon the individual's needs, abilities and employment situation. Support is a key feature of supported employment and is present at all stages of the process. Professional support should gradually fade and be replaced by support from co-workers. The levels of support and fading strategy should be planned and reviewed with co-workers, employer and the individual.

The provision of On or Off the job support enables the individual the opportunity to learn and perform appropriately, to be part of the work team, contribute to the company culture and also assists with career progression. It also provides the employer with a support mechanism and provides co-workers with knowledge and understanding, this in turn assists the development of natural support in the workplace.



The package of support measures to be provided should be person centred and flexible and could include:

**On the Job Support**

- Guiding and assisting with social skills
- Identifying a mentor/co-worker
- Determining workplace culture
- Supporting the client to adapt to the workplace
- Providing support to the employer and work colleagues
- Identifying workplace custom and practice
- Identifying opportunities for career progression

**Off the Job Support**

- Solving practical problems/issues (transport, work dress etc)
- Discussing interpersonal work relationships
- Assisting with welfare benefits bureaucracy
- Maintaining liaison with Healthcare/Social Work professionals
- Listening and advising regarding issues raised by service user