



Canolfan Cymru ar gyfer Anableddau Dysgu
Welsh Centre for Learning Disabilities

**A review of contracting arrangements
between Elite Supported Employment
Agency and Bridgend in the context of
day service reform**

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INTRODUCTION

Bridgend social services are moving towards significant change in day service provision. A business plan for the development of those parts of the service has been adopted. Employment is a key feature of future opportunities to be made available to people with learning disabilities. A long standing contract has been in operation between Bridgend and Elite Supported Employment Agency which has formed a major plank in Bridgend's employment plan. Bridgend and Elite wish to ensure that their relationship is effective and responsive to the changing policy context within Bridgend and Wales. This research was commissioned to review both sides of this relationship and make recommendations for future joint working and future contracting.

The Welsh Centre for Learning Disabilities is a multi-disciplinary research and development organisation with a twenty year track record in the development and evaluation of services that seeks to provide for the inclusion of people with learning disabilities in the community. Our approach is based on a social model of disability which sees the principle problems of disability as devaluation of disabled people by society, a lack of appropriate support, and a lack of commitment to remove environmental barriers. We view access to paid employment as being of great importance in the inclusion of people, and one strand of our work has been research on supported employment.

Aims of the review

The aims of the review were as follows:

- To explore the requirements of Bridgend for supported employment in the context of their developing day service policies and plans;
- To explore current provision of supported employment by Elite SEA;
- To identify the strengths and weaknesses in the match between requirement and provision and factors contributing to this;
- To make recommendations for future effective joint working.

To this end, our research set out to provide the objective information that was necessary and relevant for the partners to achieve their purpose of examining, and recommending improvements to, their current joint working.

BACKGROUND TO GOOD PRACTICE IN DAY SERVICE CHANGE AND SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT

It is estimated that less than 10% of people with learning disabilities are in employment. This is lower than for the disabled population in general. The reasons for this low level of employment are complex, but include the effects of the low expectations of people's employability from professionals; a lack of effective training and preparation for employment; and the acknowledged impact of social security benefit rules and the disincentives to moving some people into work. Changing this situation is a government objective both in Wales (WAG, 2003) and England (DoH, 2000).

Despite the overall low level of employment people with learning disabilities experience, they are well represented on government specialist employment schemes. WORKSTEP offers places in Supported Factories and a network of community jobs, some with wage subsidy, for around 22,000 people. These places are supported by local authorities and voluntary bodies, and Remploy Ltd. People with learning disabilities represent about 38% of people on the WORKSTEP programme (Beyer et al., 2004). The government also operate a community based Access to Work scheme for people regarded as having less need for sheltered work, which offers flexible funding for assistance such as aids and adaptations in the workplace, personal support at work, and transport. People with severe learning disabilities represent only around 2% of people accessing the scheme (Thornton, Hirst and Arksey, 2000).

It is also estimated that there are between 7,000 and 10,000 jobs, usually offered through the local government funded 'job coach' model of supported employment programmes (Learning Disabilities Foundation, 2002). The majority of people using these schemes are people with learning disabilities (Beyer, Goodere and Kilsby, 1996). Many employed through this model work part-time and earn only small amounts within Income Support disregard limits and within the Permitted Work regulations.

Employment related support

The idea of work for people with learning disabilities is not new. Some of the earlier day services for people, such as the ATC model, featured ideas about 'occupation'. However, the predominant assumption was that *if* people worked at all it would primarily be in 'sheltered' settings with significant numbers of people seen as more 'capable' moving into the workshops set up after the second world war. However, most people with more significant intellectual impairments, particularly those using the developing social care services were, by definition, seen as 'incapable' of work (Simons, 2000).

Those assumptions began to be challenged in the UK during the 1980's, with the publication of *An Ordinary Working Life* (King's Fund, 1984). Part of a series of papers that questioned the appropriateness of segregated services, *An Ordinary Working Life* argued that people with learning disability had as much right as any other citizen to 'valued, rewarding and unsegregated' employment. Here the emphasis had shifted away from the value on work as occupation, towards recognition that workplaces had potentially much to offer, including social status and the opportunity to develop a much wider range of relationships. *An Ordinary Working Life* also began to question assumptions about incapacity, shifting the emphasis away from individual impairment as the primary barrier to work. It suggested that people

with learning difficulties have something to offer employers, and with the right support and adaptations, anyone might be able to work.

Things have moved on significantly since the publication of *An Ordinary Working Life*, both in terms of the development of wider Welfare to Work policies, and more specifically within services targeted at people with learning disabilities. Depending on the locality, individuals with learning disability who wish to work may be presented with a potential array of services focused around employment as opposed to social care. In practice these do not always fit into neat boxes. However, they can generally be characterised into:

- Specialist supported employment agencies, often offering Job Coach support
- The WORKSTEP programme
- Social firms and Social enterprises
- Vocational training organised through Colleges of Further Education
- A range of ‘schemes’ offering combinations of training and employment
- Government employment services, including Disability Employment Advisors, the New Deal for Disabled People Job Broker schemes, and the Connexions Service.

‘Specialist’ supported employment

An Ordinary Working Life was heavily influenced by the experience from literature on ‘supported employment’ from the US. In the UK supported employment has often been used a generic term for a range of employment related supports (including the WORKSTEP Programme).

The core assumption underlying specialist supported employment is that the best place for people with learning disabilities to learn about work is in the workplace¹; hence specialist supported employment has also been characterised as the ‘place and train’ model of employment support (see Beyer, 1995). Many employment rehabilitation programmes draw to some degree on ‘work readiness’ models, where employment is typically only attempted after a period of preparation through vocational training or work experience. However, while such approaches are popular, there was little evidence that in themselves they are effective at helping people with learning disabilities progress on to paid employment.

The early emphasis in specialist supported employment was on the use of ‘job coaches’ to provide on the job training. However, over the years the approach has evolved and in its ideal form (O’Brien et al., 2000) would include:

- Exploring an individual’s skills and preferences through some form of vocational profiling
- Job development, involving work with employers to identify tasks which they need to be carried out and which would meet the individual’s interests and capacities

¹ Many proponents of supported employment would argue this applies to many other groups as well. However, although there are always risks in making sweeping generalisations, one of the common characteristics of people with learning difficulties is that they have some trouble generalising skills across different settings.

- Job analysis to find out about the workplace, co-workers, and the support the person might need
- Help for the individual to apply for the job and subsequently in career development
- Job support to ensure the employer and employee receive just enough assistance, information, back up and creativity for success, if necessary continuing for as long as needed.

This model of supported employment has been researched in the US since the 1980s and a significant body of literature demonstrates that it is an effective method of finding disabled people jobs with better outcomes than sheltered forms of employment in wage and other economic outcomes, engagement in meaningful activity, cost:benefit, social inclusion and employer satisfaction (Hill, et al., 1987; Rusch et al., 1993; Storey & Horner, 1991; Kilsby & Beyer, 1996; Shafer, et al., 1988). There is increasing recognition that reliance on the delivery of support by an external job coach is not necessarily the most effective way of promoting inclusion in the workplace. A range of strategies have been developed to draw on the 'natural supports' within workplaces, in particular facilitating the involvement of, and support from, co-workers. There is research evidence that the careful use of natural supports also can have a significant positive impact on outcomes (Mank et al., 1997).

In the UK, there is considerable variation between supported employment agencies in the way they are organised and the way they work. In some cases supported employment agencies are stand-alone entities, in others they can be organised on an outreach basis from day centres. The latter model is possibly the least well documented in the literature. Some providers rely much more heavily than others on unpaid work experience as a route into employment. Not surprisingly, there is also evidence that some providers are more effective than others. In their survey of 200 supported employment agencies in the UK, Beyer, Goodere and Kilsby (1996) found that outcomes (in terms of jobs found, wages paid and hours worked) were higher for agencies which were:

- independent and particularly not part of a larger social care oriented organization
- mature, as it appeared to take agencies some years to develop the range of skills and contacts needed.

The specialist supported employment sector has grown rapidly over the last decade. Beyer, Goodere and Kilsby (1996) estimate that this particular sector was supporting close to 5,000 people (predominantly people with learning disabilities) across the UK. More recent anecdotal estimates suggest that this figure is now around 10,000, with increasing involvement of people with mental health needs and/or other impairments (Beyer and Kilsby, 2000).

Although there is some overlap between supported employment and WORKSTEP contractors, historically relatively few resources have gone into the specialist supported employment sector from mainstream government employment sources, with local authority social services and, to a lesser extent, health authorities being the key funders of this sector (Beyer, Goodere and Kilsby, 1996).

The move from day centre to employment

There is significant evidence of unmet demand for employment opportunities amongst day centre users, although the estimates of the extent of this demand vary quite widely. Therefore, at one extreme Glenn and Lyons (1996) report that 65% of users would choose this option. On the other hand, Russell and colleagues (1996) found just a third of day centre users indicated they would like paid work. Both Simons (1993) and Shanley and Rose (1993) point to examples of people who were working, or who wanted to work, but who also wished to keep some contact with day services.

The predominant focus for employment is still on people who are perceived to be relatively able (Beyer et al., 1996; 2000). While it is certainly the case that it may be more difficult to place and support people with significant needs, the potential gains can also be considerable both in terms of quality of life gains, and in terms of cost effectiveness of provision (Shearn, Beyer & Felce, 2000). O'Brien et al. (2000) have argued that, while services need to be practical, nobody should be automatically excluded from employment when support is effective.

There remain structural barriers to those people in day services moving into work, over and above support issues. There also remain problems with the welfare benefit system which provides disincentives and heavy marginal tax rates on the boundary of benefit and employment. While tax credit reform and benefit liberalisation are helping, people with learning disabilities remain cautious about any move from benefit and all it implies (O'Brien et al., 2000). In addition, the impact of the National Minimum Wage has been mixed, helping some in work to increase their income, while others it has forced to reduce their hours to stay within benefit disregard limits (Schneider, Simons and Everatt, 2001). The impact of these barriers is that fewer people with learning disabilities are entering work, and that many more remain within Income Support disregard limits, working for a small income while retaining benefits, using Permitted and Supported Permitted Work routes (Beyer et al., 1996).²

Employment and day service reform

There remains a strategic dilemma for those involved in day centre reform. Day centres and services clearly need to be modernised but most of the more promising developments have happened outside of the traditional day service structure. The dilemma is whether those running day centres re-commission the services in a different way or reform and re-cycle the staff roles currently within day service to deliver new activities such as employment.

More recently research commissioned under the Valuing People initiative in England (Beyer et al., 2004), looked at the role of day services in helping people into employment and concluded :

- People reported that day centres were good at helping them to consider the possibility of employment. They also provided practical support – in particular they organised visits to workplaces and provided work experience.
- Specialist employment officers in agencies were mentioned frequently as providing help, particularly with job applications and job trials.

² Was called Therapeutic Earnings until recently.

- Some day centres were focused on employment and understood good practice in the area, while others were imprecise about how their activities helped people to get jobs.
- The smallest group of day services provided little or no employment-related activity and referred on to specialist agencies for most aspects of employment work. They used social care planning for assessment of need; provided a broad range of general activities (sport, arts and crafts); and trained basic skills, such as time management, money management, numeracy and literacy. Here the links to employment outcomes were weak.
- A second and largest group of day services used systems of work skill assessment and formal work preparation, ranging from courses in specific work skills to work activity programmes (greenhouse projects, buffet enterprise, voluntary work placements). It was not always clear how well these led on to paid jobs.
- A third group of day services had their own employment placement teams, and provided support for people into paid work. They mainly used vocational profiling to enhance other forms of assessment; either drew on colleges or other local courses for some training (health and safety, food hygiene, work awareness) or trained people on the job.
- Where day centres are focused on employment outcomes, they tend to use the concepts developed in Supported Employment (vocational profiling, job matching, job placement, on-the-job support, career review etc.), which are wholly compatible with Person Centred Planning, the system for planning people's futures promoted by *Valuing People*.

In terms of recommendations, the report suggested that :

- Extending employment opportunities for people with learning disabilities will require action from a range of key players.
- Developing partnerships between Local Authorities (including day centres), specialist teams and agencies and mainstream services is an effective means of providing support to people with learning disabilities and of providing the comprehensive provision of support they need.
- Appointing employment specialists within day centres is unlikely to provide the necessary vision or impetus to overcome cultural resistance to trying out integrated employment.
- That change can be initiated by investing in partnerships, bringing in mainstream and specialist organisations to work with day centres on vocational profiling and to helping them align their in-house programmes with the requirements of local employers.
- It is easier for people to find and stay in work if they receive specifically targeted support in which employment of their choice is assumed to be a goal.

This needs to begin at school to create a climate of expectation and aspiration of paid employment. At the transition stage, Local Authorities should ensure that a direct route into employment is available after school and college.

- That Local Authorities may need to consider all of their employment related activity and ensure it is focused on achieving paid jobs.
- Evidence suggests that a comprehensive range of work exploration, work placement and support services are required to help a greater number of people in to paid jobs.
- Work preparation is fundamental to employment for some people with learning disabilities. However, the wide range of approaches we have seen in day services and linked services suggests that guidance is needed on best practice as to what constitutes effective work preparation for getting people into paid employment.
- Work preparation alone is not enough. It needs to be part of a spectrum of provision including availability of support into work, and access to expert benefits advice for people wishing to work. To overcome the evident fragmentation of employment support services, clearly signposted individual pathways through complex inter-organisational structures are required.
- Local authorities may need to consider how they can ensure their policies on residential care and housing benefit reflect the principles set out in government policy, and particularly that they are supportive of increasing employment opportunities and remove barriers to people in residential care moving into employment.
- There is a need to enlist carers as full partners in the pursuit of employment, beginning at the transition phase, and recognising that carers have individual perspectives and attitudes towards work.

From the history of day service reform and employment commissioning in Bridgend, it is clear that the Local Authority have been grappling in a positive way with issues that are widely experienced. It is hoped that this research will inform the debate in the context of Bridgend, particularly in the area of partnership working.

METHOD

Collaborative Review design

In our experience, review for the development of policy and new working benefits form a close relationship between those proposing and owning the changes, and those undertaking the review. Those recommending change can be more secure in their proposals if they are confident that the review has asked the right questions, measured the right things, avoided bias, and drawn the correct conclusions from the results. Those reviewing services can also be more confident, and cut out wasteful work geared at covering all eventualities, if they can be sure that discussion at the end of their work will be about what it tells us and the best way forward, rather than what the review failed to cover or tell us (Patton, 1982; Scally and Beyer, 1994). A Reference Group with representation from Bridgend and Elite was, therefore, central to our proposal for an effective review.

The review involved holding a short series of meetings of approximately 2 hours with a Reference Group of key stakeholders. In the first meeting the WCLD worked with the Reference Group to clarify the questions to be answered by the research, and how these could be framed most usefully to meet the central purposes of those managing change to provide recommendations. After this WCLD spent some of their time allocation designing in detail interview schedules, information collection tools, the way respondents and information sources would be contacted, and how information would be analysed to answer these questions.

The Reference Group met for a second time to review the suggested measures, information collection methods, and proposed analysis, specifically to ensure they are confident that the means used will be sufficient to answer the questions they needed to answer. Once agreed, WCLD then moved on to fieldwork, establishing contact with responding people, collecting the information required and analysing it.

In the third meeting, the WCLD presented their analysis and draft recommendations to the Reference Group and worked with them jointly to agree what the information revealed, and what recommendations they might point to. This report is the result of that process.

Interviews

In any contracted service there are a number of points of contact between the contractor (Elite) and the contractee (Bridgend). There was room here for different perceptions of what the aims of the contracts were, of what should happen under contracts, and how successful service delivery is.

In addition, Elite managers and staff, people with learning disabilities and their carers have views about what has been delivered and what should be delivered. These view points also needed to be explored. The policy and service context within Bridgend was important also, and these were explored with appropriate Bridgend officers.

In the research we talked to senior Bridgend staff at Director and Principle Officer levels, Day Services Operational Managers and link Officers, Social Work Team Leaders, Day Service employment project workers, Contracts team and Mental Health Project staff with responsibility for disability employment issues, about their policies and plans now and for the future, their view of current collaboration, and

what a contract with Elite should achieve in the future. We talked to the Elite manager, and their link staff with Bridgend.

We also talked with managers representing voluntary sector providers, some associated with the Bridgend Employment Consortium, for a view on how Elite's work was viewed and how it fitted into their view of Bridgend and their policy platform.

Case studies

What actually happens in employment practice and support is also key to a balanced view of performance and future potential. We carried out case study work with 4 workers with disabilities, and the other stakeholders in their lives, such as carers and case managers. These provided useful insights into how effective procedures were, and stakeholders views on the effectiveness of the partnership between Elite and Bridgend. Case studies are selected to illuminate issues, rather than being randomly selected, 2 were selected by Elite and 2 by Bridgend. These were selected to highlight how procedure and communication between the partners operate in some successful, failed, and difficult to place cases.

Focus group

We used a focus group format with people with learning disabilities from Bridgend as a cost effective check on the broader perception and experience of employment, how it should be approached by Bridgend, and how Elite was viewed as a provider by some people who use their services. In the event we contact Bridgend Day Services to name 12 individuals; 4 people with contacts with Elite, 4 people on day service projects and 4 people Attending the Day Centre at Bryn *Bryngarw*.

Each group was then asked to consider a number of questions including:

- How did the idea of this person getting a job come about?
- What was wanted in the job?
- How was the job approached?
- What did the job involve?
- What was good about the job?
- What was bad about the job?
- What was good/bad about the help received from Elite, from Bridgend or from anyone else?
- What happened to the job in the end?
- What led to this job being a success/ failure?
- How could it have been done better?
- How could Bridgend or Elite change what they do to be more helpful in getting people into jobs?

The information provided was recorded on flip charts for later use.

Documents and database

Finally, to adequately describe policy and employment procedure, WCLD reviewed relevant policy, planning, procedural and contractual documents from both partner organizations. These included Bridgend day service modernisation policies; Bridgend policies relating to client employment; business plans; existing agreements with Elite; contract monitoring documentation; Elite procedures and process documentation; and

minutes of Employment Consortium documents on directions in employment development.

This stage included building a database on clients using Elite from October 2003 until October 2005, with data on area referred from, inputs and outcome. The database included details of :

- Client characteristics- e.g. age, sex etc.
- Area referred from
- Type of jobs and industries obtained
- Wages, hours, progression in jobs
- Time taken to obtain jobs
- Job loss rates and reasons for job loss
- Reasons for suspensions

RESULTS

Data on performance of ELITE

The research team wanted some objective material against which to assess the opinions of interview respondents on the contribution Elite were making under their Service Level Agreement with Bridged.

Referrals to Elite

Data provided by Elite shows that there were 100 referrals made to Elite between April 1994 and October 2005, averaging out at just fewer than 10 referrals per year. Figure 1 shows that majority of those referred were Males (67%), compared to only 33% female. This suggests that females are underrepresented and may reflect the fact that the main types of work activities offered through the Day Services' timetable involve 'building work'. This is traditionally regarded as a male oriented career route, emphasising the need to extend current work experience programmes to include more jobs traditionally associated with female workers.

Figure 1: Source of referrals to Elite – April 1994 to October 2005

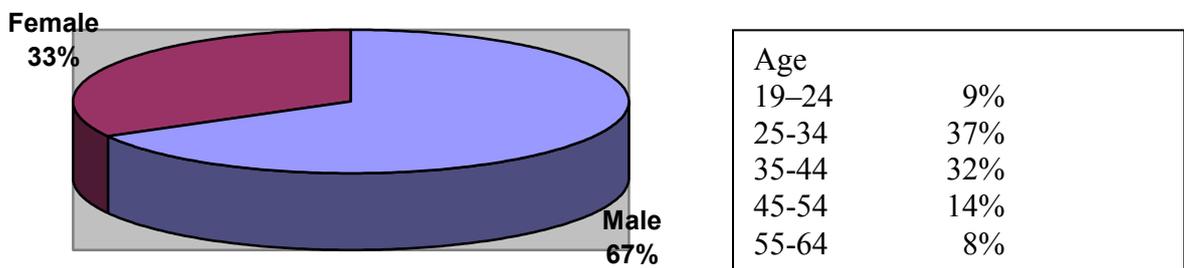
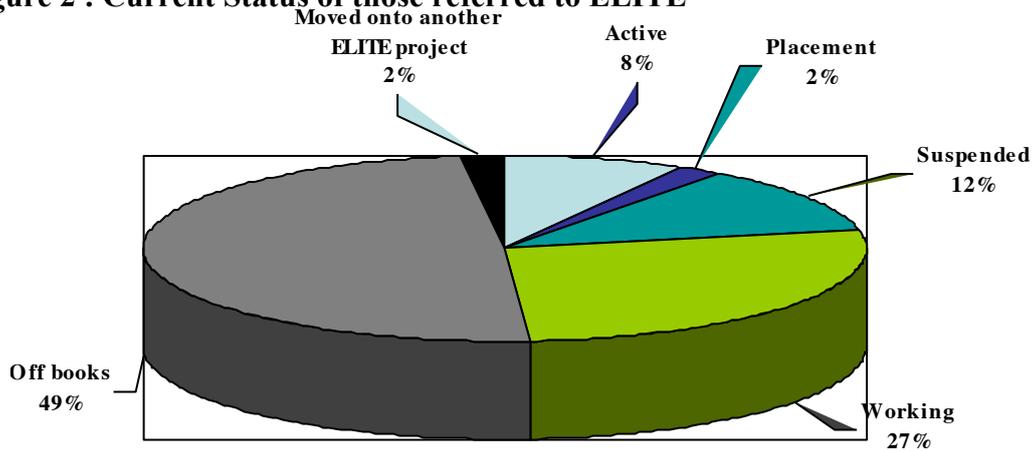


Figure 1 also shows that the majority of those supported were aged between 25 and 44 years (69%). This reflects the greater numbers of people within this age range attending Bridgend day services. Nine percent of those referred were younger adults aged 19 – 24. This reflects good practice. Research has shown that there are advantages in investing in the development of career aspirations at an earlier age. It increases the potential for a smooth transition from school towards employment; reduces the likelihood that the client will develop a long term dependency on constant

day service provision thereby improving the clients chances of obtaining paid integrated employment.

Figure 2 shows that of the 100 people referred to Elite nearly half are described as ‘off the books’ (49 individuals = 49%). These individuals, although referred to Elite, had become inactive following Vocational Profiling and the initial development of an Action Plan. This activity revealed that many of those referred no longer wanted to work, some felt they could not commit to work at that time, and one person had moved out of the area altogether. Figure 2 also shows that 2 individuals referred to ELITE had moved onto other projects within the agency. These were clients who were not eligible for funding from Bridgend LA and had moved onto other employment projects. Clearly, the day service needs to ensure that there is a mechanism for identifying any changes in the preferences of these clients towards work, and ensure that, where appropriate, they are referred back to the employment service.

Figure 2 : Current Status of those referred to ELITE



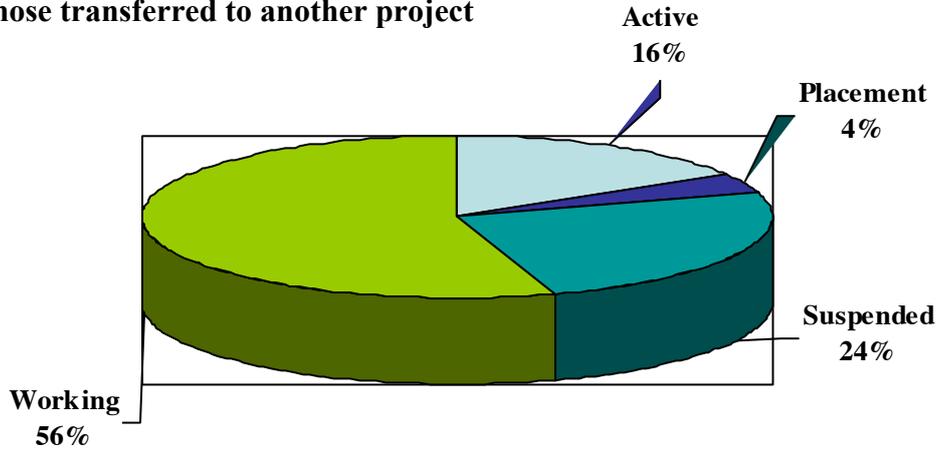
Given the proportion of people categorised as ‘off the books’ and those moving to new projects within Elite (total=51%), it makes sense to break down the status of those remaining with these two categories omitted. Figure 3 shows the current status of those supported through Elite with the aforementioned categories omitted, this amounting to some 47 individuals remaining. Encouragingly, the highest proportion of these clients are currently in paid work (27, individuals=56%). A further 12 individuals being categorised as being ‘suspended’ (24%).

These were people who had received some support from Elite, but felt that currently, they were not ready or wanting to move into paid work. Some of the reasons for this were “ill health”, “lack of commitment”, “temporary request by day services” “self-suspensions” or that “parents do not require the service at this time”. It is anticipated that some of those classified under this category may require the support of Elite in the future and, as with those categorised as ‘off the books’, ongoing monitoring is required to determine when these clients will need further assistance to progress further in pursuing paid employment.

Figure 3 also shows that 8 individuals (16%) are described as being ‘Active’, meaning that Elite are assisting these individuals to progress towards paid work by developing vocational profiles and/or targeting potential jobs that suits these

individuals needs and work aspirations. A further 2 individuals are undergoing supported work placements. Again, the aim of this is to enable clients to develop an informed choice around the types of jobs that would suit them in order to progress into paid work.

Figure 3: Current Status of those supported by ELITE excluding those off books and those transferred to another project



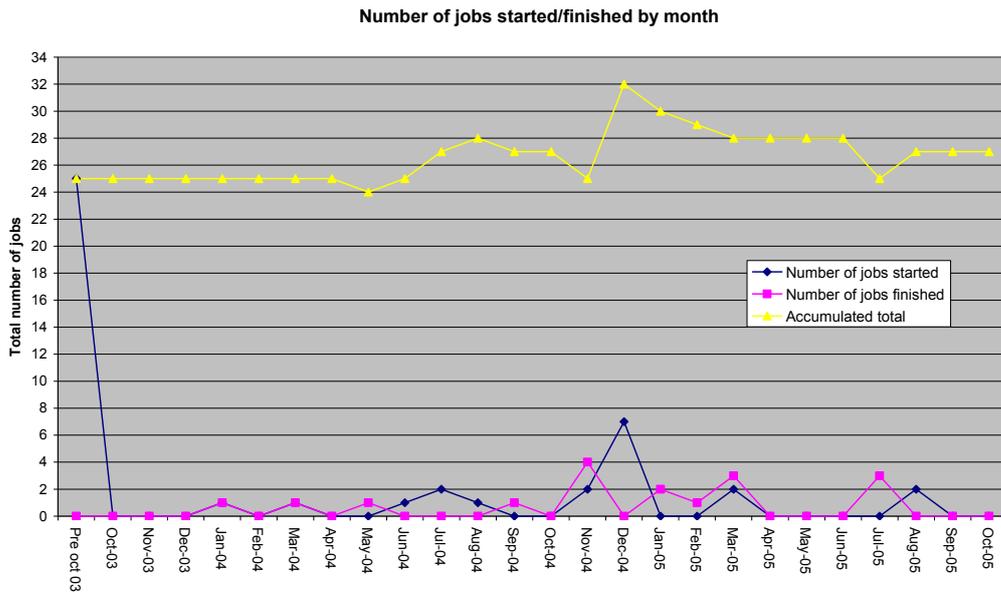
Number of Jobs Obtained and Job Losses

Figure 4 provides an indication of the extent that jobs were obtained or finished between October 2003 and October 2005. It shows that as of October 2003, the total number of jobs supported by Elite stood at 25. This figure peaks at 32 jobs in December 2004, it then decreases to 27 jobs at October 2005. Figure 4 also shows the number of jobs found and lost over the 2-year period. It suggests that there were 18 new jobs obtained during the period, with 6 jobs obtained during year 1 and 12 jobs during year 2. This means that an overall total of 44 different jobs were supported by Elite over the period. This amounted to supporting 39 clients in paid work, as 3 clients had moved into a new job and 2 clients were undertaking more than one job. However, of those 44 jobs, 17 had finished, representing 38% of all jobs found over the period.

These results suggest that although at face value the total number of jobs obtained rose by only 1 new job over the period, there was a significant amount of activity dedicated to job finding and job matching also occurring. In the event, the actual number of jobs obtained was 18. Also, any review of the financial cost implications of the contractual arrangement, needs to take account of the fact that as of October 2005, a single job coach was supporting all 27 jobs, as well as being responsible for job finding and matching activities with other job seekers.

The positive achievements of job finding are countered, to some extent, by the by the relatively high number of clients losing their jobs. Further analysis shows that around 40% (15 out of 44) of those in work as of October 2003, lost their jobs over the period. Research has shown that high levels of job turnover are usually associated with poor job matching procedures. If the jobs obtained do not match people’s work preferences and aspirations and do not match their talents, they can get bored, or/and find it difficult to adjust to the demands of the job. This highlights the need to ensure that the practices of Elite and the Day Services are sufficient and efficient for finding jobs based on each clients work expectations, preferences and abilities.

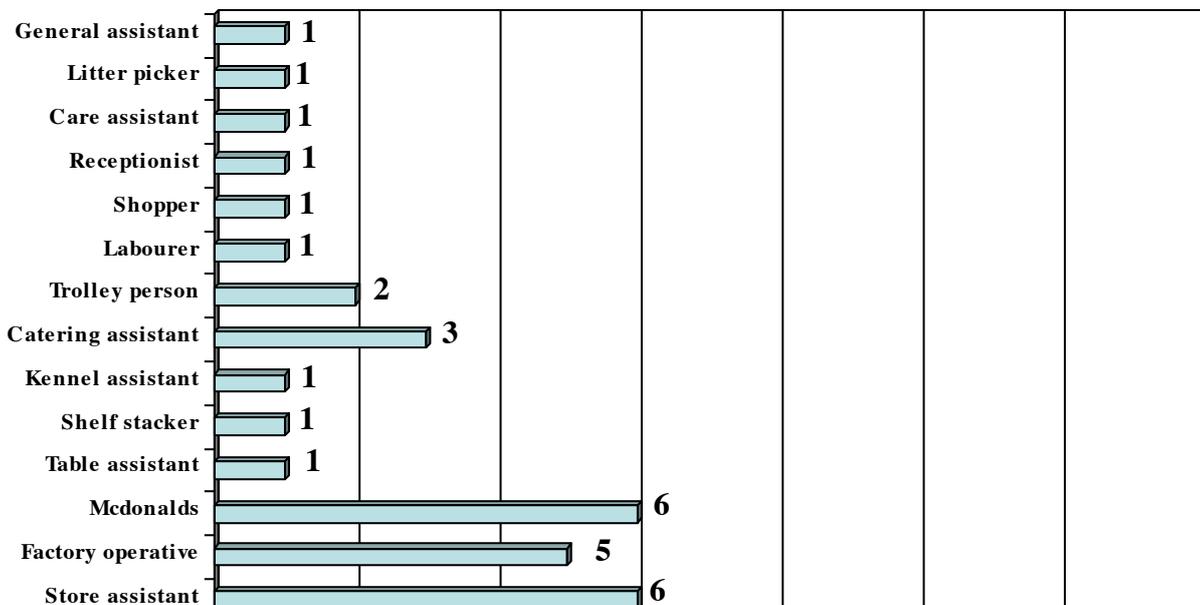
Figure 4: Numbers obtaining jobs, job finishes and numbers of jobs accumulated – October 2003 to October 2005.



Types of Jobs Obtained

Figure 5 shows the nature of the 44 jobs obtained over the period. Encouragingly, it shows a variety of jobs representing different sectors of the labour market, including office work, work with animals, factory production work and building. The results suggest, that a high proportion of the jobs involved cleaning jobs (13 = 28%), with jobs obtained in ‘McDonalds’ and ‘Store Assistant Work’ accounting for 6 jobs each (14%).

Figure 5: Types of jobs being obtained by ELITE – Oct 2003 to Oct 2005



Although these results are promising, just over half of the jobs obtained involved ‘Food Preparation and Cleaning’ jobs (23 of the 44 jobs obtained = 52%). This, again, raises the issue as to whether the variety of jobs obtained, are a true reflection

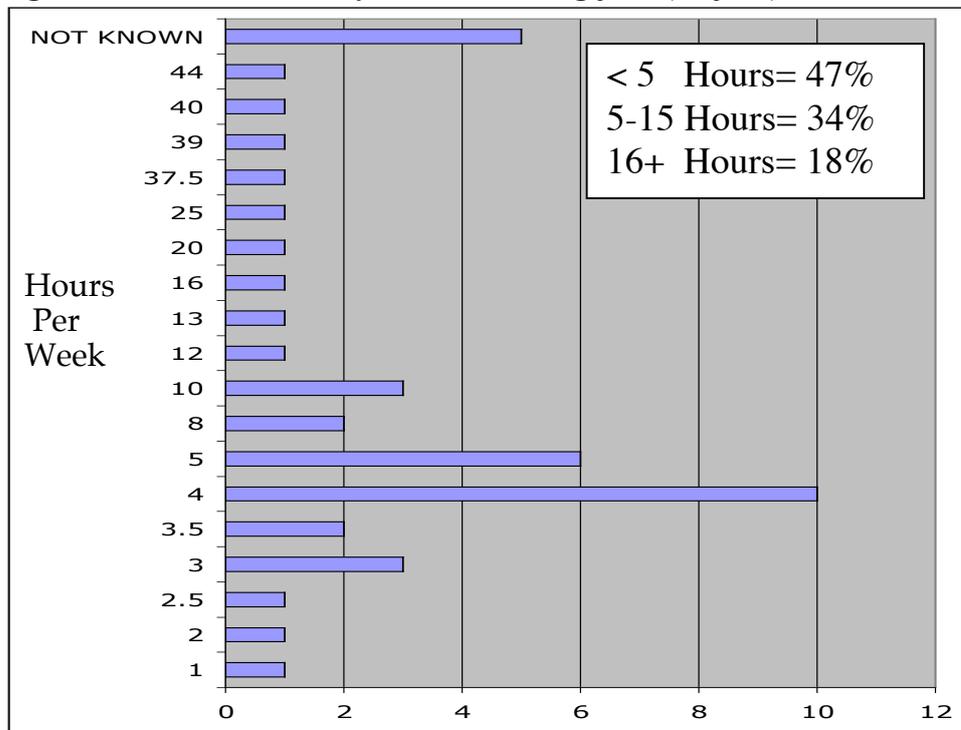
of the variety of preferences of the clients, or reflect more the availability and accessibility of such jobs in the labour market.

Hours Worked

Figure 6 shows a breakdown of the average number of hours worked per week by the clients for the 44 jobs obtained. The range of hours worked is impressive (1 hour – 44 hours per week). Nearly half the jobs (47%) are of less than 5 hours, reflecting the imposition of the Earnings Disregard Limit. Closer analysis of the data show that over half of those in work (62%) were taking advantage of the ‘Permitted Work Programme’.

Although there is a real threat of lost income for some, especially for those receiving benefits for living in supported housing, Elite and the Day Services need to continually monitor the extent that this is due to the fears of parents, and/or low expectations among service providers. This would imply the need to develop flexible employment services, with the potential to ensure that people are not left without a service should the employment option fail, or the clients experience long delays in-between jobs. Monitoring also needs to take account of the extent that this reflects some people’s choices to want to work unusual hours to fit in day service activities (eg, 10 hours a week at 2 hours a day. This will have an effect on the type of work that is available for these hours, reflecting the high proportion of cleaning and McDonalds placements.

Figure 6: Hours worked by those obtaining jobs (44 jobs)



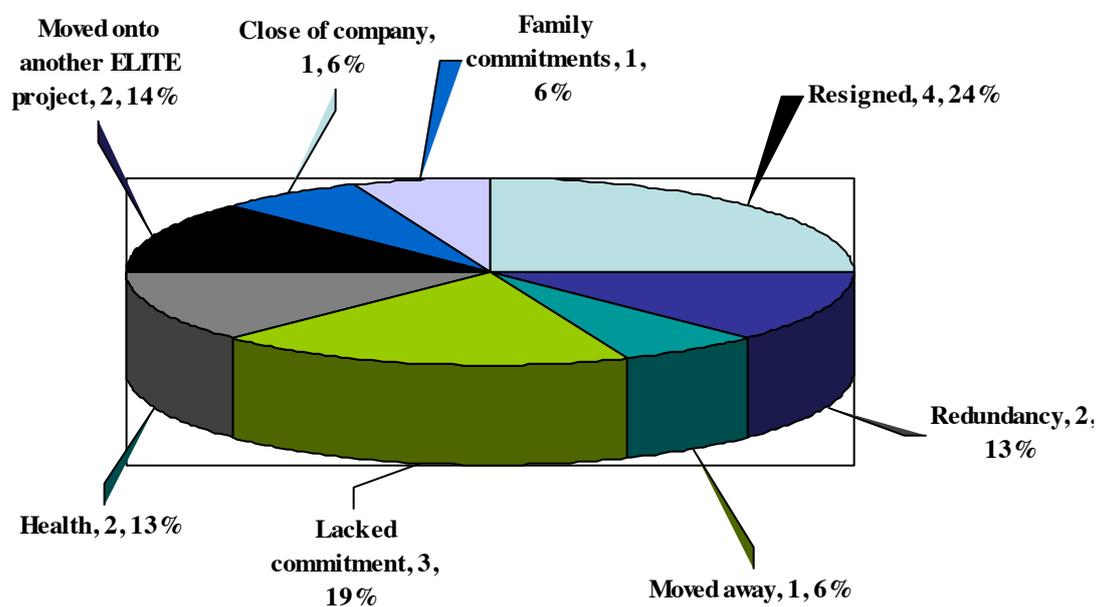
Encouragingly, Figure 6 shows that 18% of the jobs obtained met the Government criteria for full-time employment (16 hours and above per week), with 4 employees working over 37.5 hours per week. This shows the potential that supported employment has for enabling people with learning disabilities to work full-time and become significantly less dependant on continued day service support. Figure 6 shows that the hours worked in 5 of the jobs obtained was unknown. This was

because Elite had faded support to such a level that less contact was required, creating a ‘distance’ between the agency and the employee. The agency need to weigh-up the advantages and disadvantages of this approach and find ways of obtaining and monitoring hourly rates that are as unobtrusive to the clients’ privacy as possible, such as a simple follow-up phone call to the employer. A similar issue relates to the wages that clients are receiving. Although information is provided showing that all rates of pay were at minimum wage or above, the absence of more detailed information makes it difficult to gauge any financial cost benefits from both the client and taxpayer perspectives.

Reasons for Job Losses

Figure 7 shows the main reasons that people lost their jobs. It suggests that 4 people resigned and 3 clients showed a lack of commitment to their jobs (24% and 19% respectively). Although these can be viewed as being down to individual choices on the part of the clients, it may also be a further indication that some of the jobs obtained did reflect individual preferences. However, what is also clear from Figure 7, is that the majority of the remaining job losses (57%) were outside of the control of the agency being due to family commitments, redundancy, the close of the company, ill health, or, moving house to another area.

Figure 7: Reasons for Job losses



CASE STUDY RESULTS

As part of the evaluation Elite and Bridgend were invited to select four case studies, two reflecting a positive experience or outcome and two reflecting a negative experience or outcome for the individuals concerned. Each person involved was approached to take part and interviews were carried out with the identified person, their Elite worker, their appropriate Bridgend day service contact, their family or professional carer/support worker and their case manager. One person had no case manager interview, one person had no day service interview and we were unable to interview one of the individuals themselves.

Ms. A – Negative Case Study

Ms. A is a fifty-eight year old woman who has a learning disability and a history of mental health problems. She lives in a staffed house in the Bridgend area. After referral to Elite, Ms. A completed a Work Awareness Course (O.C.N accredited) to level 1 standard. Several time limited supported work placements followed but it was found that commitment would be a problem.

Ms. A was matched to a four hour paid weekly cleaning vacancy with a supportive employer. After several weeks of good progress and job training Ms. A said she could not work because of an injury to her arm. She was off work for a long period and was eventually laid off by the employer. When visiting Ms. A at home staff informed Elite that this behaviour does occur with Ms. A on a regular basis. Further work placements took place to test commitment and another paid work opportunity was eventually provided for Ms.A. This was a paid five hour per week office cleaning vacancy.

Before the job was set up it was explained that commitment would be required and if the job failed because of lack of commitment Elite would have to review the service they were able to supply to Ms. A. After initial job training Ms.A worked alone with monitoring from time to time. After a few months the same pattern has emerged, Ms. A has been off work for long periods with an injury to her arm. At present she is still employed but not working. The employer has stated this cannot go on for much longer. Elite and home care staff have tried with all their power to encourage and advise Ms. A but do not think this pattern of behaviour can be changed.

How did the idea of this person getting a job come about?

The support worker reported that Ms. A had been on Elites books for a number of years and it was they who offered her the position. Over the years she has had a number of placements through Elite. Elite reported that there was a vacancy at the job centre, for which they thought Ms. A would be suitable. They contacted the job centre about the placement and then spoke to the employer to set up an interview for Ms. A. She was already undertaking a work placement as part of the work awareness course but commitment was an issue at the time.

“Ms. A was already interested in working so this was a progression from her course.”

Ms. A stated that the people at Elite sorted out a job for her.

“I wanted to have a job I didn't mind what work it was as long as I got a job.”

What was wanted in the job?

Ms. A states that she just wanted to work.

“I wanted to work. I didn't mind any hours but I wanted it to be in Bridgend.”

The Elite point of view is that Ms. A had identified that she wanted social interaction more than anything else in a job. The hours ideally needed to be within the permitted 4 hours per week but the job offered was 5 hours, it was explained to Ms. A that this would affect her benefits and she was happy with this. Elite also stated that Ms. A requested a job that was local and involved cleaning.

“Ms. A is very independent as a person and so made her own choices.”

The support worker reported that there was a clear outline of what Ms. A wanted to do and the type of work which would be suitable.

“She has had cleaning jobs in the past and this is the only job really suited to her. The hours were organised so they were late afternoon, as Ms. A would refuse to get out of bed in the morning to go to work. The wage was also restricted so it didn’t affect her benefits.”

The case manager believed that Ms. A had identified she wanted shop work as she had already had a very positive placement at a local supermarket. Here her attendance had been excellent, as had her motivation. However, the job was ended by the store itself due to staff restructuring and Ms. A realised that further shop work depended on the options that were available at the time. The care manager also felt, as Elite had, that the social aspects of work were important to Ms. A and that the hours she could work were an issue.

“Ms. A. wanted a job in Pencoed as she enjoys socialising and being independent, so local work was a good option. Permitted hours were wanted to maintain benefits.”

How was the job approached?

Ms. A’s support worker stated that Elite contacted herself and the other residential staff to ask for their opinions on finding an appropriate placement.

“Elite consulted with us on how to approach the job and hours etc. I am not sure if Elite were actually seeking a job for Ms. A. or if one came up by chance and she was available to take it.”

Elite reported that as well as speaking to the relevant support staff they contacted the job centre regarding the placement. They then spoke directly to the employer in order to set up an interview for Ms. A.

“We explained (to the employer) what our part was at Elite, what we do and what support we give. We also liaised with the house to see what they thought was the best course of action.”

The case manager stated that he was in doubt as to how the job was approached for Ms. A as the contact he has with Elite generally only occurs when there are problems.

“I am unsure (how the placement was approached), I assume that Elite would have discussed with her what placements were available. I am aware that she tried various placements and did some courses with Elite, believe they then identified a paid placement for her. Elite usually contact us when something isn’t right, rather than to invite us to reviews etc.”

Ms. A recounted that she was taking part in one of Elites courses when she was offered the job.

“I was doing a course on food hygiene in Talbot Green with Elite and they asked me if I wanted the job that was available in Bridgend. I thought about it for a bit and then decided to take it. They told me all about the job first though.”

What did the job involve?

This was a cleaning position, Ms. A worked for one hour a day from 3.45pm to 4.45pm, Monday to Friday, at an office in Bridgend. Her duties included cleaning all of the communal areas of the office. She dusted and polished, vacuumed, emptied bins and cleaned the toilets and kitchen. Her earnings were £24 per week.

What was good about the job?

The support worker stated that the placement was suitable as it was easy work for Ms. A to do, she had the right skills for the job and after initial training she could continue unsupported. Also, at only one hour per day the theory was it would prevent her from getting bored with the placement.

The case manager believed that the job allowed Ms. A to have confidence in herself and pride in what she was doing, it was good for her on a personal and social level.

“With regards to the self esteem and ownership of working I think the job meant a lot to Ms. A. as an individual. She was proud to say “I am off to work now” and would refer to the people she worked with as “friends”. I believe that initially she was shadowed by someone from Elite at the placement to show her what to do, which gave her confidence in the job”.

Elite reported that the job was good for Ms. A. as it “got her out of the house”. They also stated that this placement was a test of her commitment as there was some independent travelling involved. The staff at the placement were praised by Elite for their understanding, patience and supportiveness with regards to Ms. A. From Ms. A’s perspective things were also positive and there were a number of points about the placement that she felt were good.

“I liked the job, the company were nice and friendly. I was happy with my wages and they went straight into my bank. The people there helped me if I needed it but I didn’t have any support, I got on with the job on my own.”

What was bad about the job?

All of the individuals interviewed for this case study (including Ms. A) stated that there was nothing bad or negative about this placement.

What was good/bad about the help received from Elite, from Bridgend or from anyone else?

Ms. A reports that there was nothing negative about the input she received, although she did feel that finding a job took some time.

“There was nothing bad really. They did take a while to find me a job. They were helpful at Elite and I got on with them. They answered all my questions and went to the interview with me.”

Ms. A’s support worker stated that Elite kept in touch with them regarding the progress Ms. A. was making and regularly telephoned to check on things. Due to the amount of time of with sickness Ms. A has recently had they understand that Elite are not happy with the situation at present.

Elite themselves were unsure if Ms. A was receiving help from any other service, however they felt that she had been able to utilize a lot of their support and services and that despite her not attending work they had continued to support her. The input given at the start of the placement was also felt to have been of great help to Ms. A.

“We gave her initial job training support when she first started, we also worked on appropriate language and conversation as this was an issue at the time, this has been of great benefit to her.”

The case manager believed that he (and the Community Support Team) had liaised with both Elite and Ms. A’s support staff in order to help Ms. A although there was also some room for improvement.

“The Community Support Team has liaised with Elite regarding the work placement, we have tried to empower Ms. A. regarding her decisions and choices for work. Ms. A has always said Elite has helped her although I feel that Elite tends to put things in place and then withdraw, so the help is limited and the review is not frequent enough. The house staff and myself have looked benefits with Ms. A in liaison with Elite as they have the best knowledge of this, how many hours she can work etc.”

What happened to the job in the end?

Ms. A reported that she is off sick at present because she has fractured her arm and wrist, although she feels she would go back to work when this has healed. From the support worker perspective the placement came to an end due to recurring behaviour by Ms. A

“She is on long term sick at present but I don’t think she has any intention of going back. I think she got bored of the placement in the last 12 months and she has only managed to work for around 10 months of this time. This is a regular pattern of behaviour for Ms. A. She has told staff she has fallen and fractured her wrist although this has not been substantiated. We are looking into this behaviour at present.”

Elite stated that in the previous few weeks Ms. A’s employment had been terminated. Ms. A worked from September 2004 to April 2005 and they understood that although Ms. A had suffered a lot of ill health, due to her (unsubstantiated) claims of having broken her arm she had abused the placement.

What led to this job being a success/ failure?

From Ms. A’s point of view she felt the job had gone well.

“People said that I was doing a good job and that I was too fast at doing the cleaning. I got on with the people at the workplace and I had good feedback from the offices, they said I was good. Elite have called me to see when I will be back in work. I don’t know yet though because the doctor told me I can have another sick note for a while.”

The case manager believed that a number of issues led to the job being a failure including the timing of the support that Ms. A was given and her mental health problems at the time. He also suggested that the job became monotonous for Ms. A. and a more suitable placement would have been one where she could have enjoyed

the social aspects of the job, such as that which she had previously experience working at a supermarket where she could chat to customers and different staff.

Elite felt that the placement was unsuccessful due to Ms. A's motivation and health problems, even though all the support she needed was in place.

"The job failed due to Ms. A's lack of commitment, we couldn't have given her any more support. The employers also gave her good support and a good number of chances and she abused this. Depression had a lot to do with the failure of this placement."

This view is one that the support worker also shared.

"The job was a failure but only on Ms. A's part. Elite could not have done more for her and they are still having input until she decides what to do. Elite have also been excellent in communicating with the staff team at the house."

How could it have been done better?

Although Ms. A herself stated, "I wouldn't change anything" this view is not shared by the case manager who offered a number of suggestions.

"I think that the support could have been done better, someone calling in when she was at work to support her, or a rotation system for jobs might be a possibility, where she worked in one place for a few weeks and then moved onto a new place. A change of scenery whilst doing the same work might stop people getting bored, Ms. A. herself would have preferred shop work, I feel she gained more self worth from this than she did from cleaning."

The support worker felt that the only improvements could have been on Ms. A's part and that nothing could have been improved on the part of Elite.

"Ms. A. could have done better if she had maintained her motivation and hadn't continued to uphold that she had a problem with her arm."

Elite also believed that they had done all they possibly could to support Ms.A.

"I don't think we could have done anything else at Elite, even when the staff at her house would intervene and get her up for work there would still be problems. It was just an overall lack of commitment from Ms. A. She may benefit from more community support team input or attendance at a day centre, something to give her some motivation."

How could Bridgend or Elite change what they do to be more helpful in getting people into jobs?

The support worker suggested improvements could be made in the types of jobs offered but felt that ultimately it was down to each person to make their placements a success.

"I think Elite do a really good job of finding people employment. One of the other tenants has a paid placement with Elite and this has been a real success. I believe it is down to the individuals themselves to make their placements work. Elite could offer

more of a range of jobs, it seems to be always cleaning, Ms. A has never been offered a different placement other than cleaning by Elite.”

The case manager believes that changes should be made within the Bridgend day services system and that communication between the various services involved needs to be enhanced.

“I think there needs to be improvements in networking and working closer together with employers. There is also a need to identify people who want to progress, a team is needed within the day centre setting to then provide a service for people who want to move on and gain skills, such as woodwork units, horticulture teams etc. There should be something which values people and their skills. Bridgend should also look at providing in-house teams of people with learning disabilities who could provide services within the borough area, such as removal services, cleaning services, painting and decorating etc.”

Mr B - Negative Case Study

Mr. B is a forty-four year old man with a learning disability who lives in a supported house in the Maesteg area. Mr. B has been an Elite client for many years, he has all the skills required to succeed in paid employment. He has completed several work placements and has experienced paid employment with Elite’s support on a number of occasions.

During the initial stages of work placement or paid work Mr. B is excellent but after a period his time keeping and commitment become poor and the job eventually fails. Elite and all the support staff have made numerous attempts to improve his behaviour but to no avail.

Mr. B was provided with a work placement in 2005 in what he said was his dream job, produce assistant at a local store very close to his home, with hours negotiated by Elite to suit him. This lasted several weeks and then the same behaviour began to emerge, he would not turn up for work, arrived late, then handed in his notice.

Following this Elite suspended Mr. B indefinitely. He has proven over several years his behaviour will not change, despite various strategies being implemented to encourage his commitment and recognition of work responsibilities.

How did the idea of this person getting a job come about?

Elite recalled that Mr. B was referred to their service by the day centre, after discussions with him and the day service staff he was assessed and taken on as a client.

“Mr. B was one of the more able day centre clients who had already gone through a lot of the day centre programmes. He had also identified himself as suitable and ready for work. We tested him out with work experience before finding him a paid placement.”

Mr. B’s day service worker also stated that it was Mr. B who identified himself as wanting paid work

“Mr. B was in a work group at the centre and he then expressed an interest in paid work. We referred him straight to Elite as he already had some good work experience behind him.”

The case manager also believed that the idea of work would have come from Mr. B. himself, however he expressed concern at the type of placement offered.

“The idea definitely came from Mr. B, he has been registered with Elite for a long time. Elite contacted me to say that Mr. B was starting work in a food store, however I didn’t think this was an appropriate placement for him.”

The support worker reported that Mr. B had been involved in work projects at the local day centre, however because of problems with his motivation he eventually lost these placements. It was at this point that Elite came into the picture although again there were concerns regarding the suitability of the placements they were offering.

What was wanted in the job?

Elite said that Mr. B was very specific about what he wanted in a placement and that discussions took place with his mum and the community support team regarding this.

“He wanted to work in a store or a shop so he could deal with and help members of the public. He ideally wanted a supermarket environment which was local to him. We asked for advice on dealing with Mr. B as he does have a few complex problems.”

According to the day service worker Mr. B’s rationale for working was clear,

“He just wanted money from it, this was his motivation. Elite went through a form of job choices and he picked what he was interested in. He wanted part time work in his local area. I am not aware of any restrictions on the job type but I am aware he didn’t want the job to affect his benefits.”

How was the job placement approached?

Elite stated that there were a number of steps they went through when identifying a placement for Mr. B but they were aware that the placement needed to be a certain type and hours were restricted also.

“With regards to paid work Mr. B was offered various opportunities. He did various unpaid work experience first to test his commitment and then we found work as a handyman in a doctors surgery, however commitment soon became an issue. We then identified a work experience placement at a local supermarket which was very close to his house. We arranged that the hours were late afternoon so he didn’t have problems getting up in the morning, this unpaid placement then turned to paid work and lasted for 6 to 7 weeks before the same problems began to emerge.”

The day service worker was aware of how the placements were approached and they felt that Elite had kept them involved regarding these. He believed that Elite were aware of the current vacancies on offer and job matched Mr. B with one that they saw advertised, they then gave feedback on what had been found for him.

However both the support worker and case manager felt that they had been left out of this part of the process and that Elite had not kept them informed. The support worker recalled:

“Elite didn’t ask us for our opinion how to approach a placement. They didn’t inform us about anything and it was only through Mr. B himself that we got any information such as where he was working, what days, start date, what he was doing etc.”

What did the job involve?

Mr. B worked in a local supermarket, one day a week for 4 hours. He would first work on the grocery counter filling up the section, helping customers etc, then he would move onto his next job which was filling shelves from the stock room, Mr. B earned around £20 per week.

What was good about the job?

The support worker stated that the job was good as it encouraged Mr. B. to get out of the house and mix socially as he was in danger of becoming a recluse at the time. Mr. B’s family was also pleased with the placement because of the social benefits it would bring.

The case manager believed that the job brought Mr. B confidence and self esteem due to the fact that he was working.

Elite felt that the good aspects of the job were ones which allowed Mr. B. to achieve the goals he had in life. Monetary gain was not an issue, personal fulfilment was more important. Elite also felt the supermarket itself was extremely helpful in this case.

“At the start Mr. B felt that this was his ambition, to work in a store, in a paid job with other staff so he felt part of the team. He felt he had achieved what he wanted. He told me this on several occasions. The store itself was very supportive of Mr. B, the manager constantly gave him more and more chances to prove himself.”

What was bad about the job?

The support worker reported that Mr. B struggled with some aspects of the job and that he may not have been employed in the most appropriate position within the supermarket.

“He said some of the manual work was too heavy for him and he would also be quite anxious on occasions when he got home so we were aware he wasn’t happy there towards the end of the placement. The job was not suitable for him with regards to the food aspects which it entailed.”

The case worker said that although the locality of the job was positive in one respect, it also proved to be a negative point and again he raised questions over the appropriateness of the placement.

“Mr. B is not always discrete in what he says and this was an issue, especially in such a small community. There were also issues around the suitability of the placement, around him working with food stuffs, there were personal hygiene issues which needed to be addressed.”

What was good/bad about the help received from Elite, from Bridgend or from anyone else?

Elite felt that Mr. B had received a substantial amount of support from services, including themselves.

“What was good from the Elite side was that he had one to one job training and support to settle him into the work placement. The staff at the store were very supportive and gave him a great deal of help. The day centre were also very supportive and always gave help to accommodate Mr. B’s wishes, we did a lot of work with them to help him. He couldn’t have had any more support from these services in Bridgend and the staff at his house went out of their way for him as well, they gave him support around how to dress, personal hygiene, going to work etc.”

This was a view shared by the case manager, support worker and day service worker, they all felt the correct support systems were in place for Mr.B from all of the parties involved.

What happened to the job in the end?

After some problems at the store and commitment and personal problems on Mr. B’s part, Mr. B resigned from the position himself.

What led to this job being a success/failure?

Mr. B’s support worker believes that although support from Elite was there to begin with a lack of input during the placement was an issue.

“I think that the long term planning wasn’t in place. There was no back up while he was there, no support and no communication between Elite and us. Maybe more input would have allowed us to intervene and sort out problems as they arose.”

Elite, the day service worker and case manager all shared the same view, that the job was a failure due to Mr. B himself. Elite stated,

“He starts off so enthusiastically and he demonstrates excellent people skills and motivation but then laziness takes over, he then has difficulty going to work and maintaining the work ethic.”

The day service worker expressed that the problem was with Mr. B’s attitude and outlook:

“There is no criticism of Elite or the day services in this case. Because he has had more than one work opportunity he has had a number of chances to prove himself but his attitude has let him down each time.”

How could it have been done better?

In all cases it was felt the Mr. B had received as much support as he possibly could have, however the support worker also felt that Elite could have done more work with the house staff and the community support team. Better input and communication might have saved them from a failed placement.

How could Bridgend or Elite change what they do to be more helpful in getting people into jobs?

Elite suggested that although things have improved in recent years there is still a need to work more closely with day services in order to help people get into jobs.

“ If we had more involvement with regards to the development of people at the day centre we would be in a better position to identify people we could work with and give support to. The work that is done at the day centre often fails to give people an understanding of “work ethic” so when they come to us for work it is a big difference and people struggle with this. There is a need to work more closely with the day centre and its associated projects such as Bryngarw, we will be working there later this year to help people move on and progress.”

Improvements suggested by the support worker include better communication between the parties concerned and offering people an incentive to work.

“I think Elite need to discuss issues with the various services so they can inform us of the plans and activities in place. They need to reassure services that they are able to provide a good service. The day services should also look at giving people an actual wage for their work (at the day centre) not just an “allowance” for attendance.”

The case manager commented that the locality of the Elite base was an issue and that the service Elite and Bridgend offers people should aim to provide a progressive path for individuals:

“I think that as Elite are based in Llantrisant and are therefore out of the county the networking isn’t too strong. If they were more local then local firms may be more aware of what they offer. Think Elite should also look at placing people so they can gain experience and prove they can maintain a “CV” of actual work. There also needs to be progression, people in Bridgend day service places such as Wood-B and Bryngarw have loads of experience and skills but nowhere they can progress onto.”

The day service worker felt that there was a lack of work based provision for females within Bridgend day services. She also identified a need to work with the parents of service users with regards to work experience and employment.

“As an idea they (Bridgend) could set up a day services work project for females, maybe a catering or clerical service, at present it all seems to be geared up for the gents. Bridgend and Elite need to get the message across to parents more and change their attitudes to work. Until this happens we are banging our heads against a brick wall a bit!”

Mr. C – Positive Case Study

Mr. C is a thirty-seven year old man with a learning disability who lives with his brother and his brothers’ family. Following referral to Elite Mr. C attended a work awareness course. A six week work placement was arranged to run concurrently with the course. Mr. C expressed an interest in catering type work and working with members of the public so a supported work placement was arranged in the restaurant of a supermarket close to Mr. C’s home.

This proved to be a great success, Mr. C was very happy working there and was valued by staff and customers. Following the successful completion of the course Elite negotiated with the employer paid work of twenty hours weekly for Mr. C at the store. Because of Mr. C’s commitment to work and support and guidance from Elite Mr. C has been employed at the store for several years and no longer uses day services.

Mr. C, at his own request, has progressed within the job and now works in the customer services department. Mr. C is absolutely delighted to have made a success of his first paid job, he is very well liked by customers and staff at the store and has become a valued member of the staff team. Mr. C's self esteem and self value have been boosted by his success in this employment, he now sees himself and is seen by others as a valued member of society. He now works independently at the store, with six – monthly monitoring visits from Elite.

How did the idea of this person getting a job come about?

Mr. C recalled that he had been thinking about finding a job as he had already tried a few work placements at the day centre where he was based, he believes that it was Elite's suggestion that to find him paid work.

"It was Elite's idea. I did 8 weeks training with them and then I got a job. I first met Elite at Wood –B, they came there to meet me and I had an interview with them. I had told my brother and the staff at Wood-B that I wanted to work."

The day service worker remembered that Mr. C had been keen to work during his time at the day centre; he had proved he could work and had participated in work experience placements which had been very successful and so when Elite requested people for referral Mr. C's name was put forward.

Elite's records show that Mr. C was referred to them from day services as he had been identified as someone who could benefit from developing his skills and gaining paid employment. Mr. C attended the Elite Work Awareness course and during this a work placement was arranged for him which was such a success that he was offered paid work by the employer.

What was wanted in the job?

The carer stated that Elite did not ask for his opinion at the time of the referral. He remembered he had a meeting with the people from the day centre about what they were undertaking at Wood-B and that they suggested Mr.C should progress towards the work based programmes. The carer had some reservations over the type of job that would be offered as he felt Mr.C is of a nature where he wants to please and so would have agreed to any job that was presented to him. The carer wanted Elite to provide a job which gave Mr. C confidence and improved his skills.

Mr. C remembered that he had a good idea of what he did and didn't want to do.

"I wanted to work in a coffee shop and I wanted to work in the Bridgend area so I could get there on the bus. Elite asked me what I wanted to do and they got me training in the coffee shop at Sainsbury's to see if I would like it. I didn't want a job on the checkouts or in the cash office. I said I wanted to work in Sainsbury."

Elite recalled that Mr. C had clear ideas about work which they took into account when identifying a placement for him. They were aware that Mr. C already had a strong sense of what "work" was and they were able to identify suitable training needs which would benefit him.

"He wanted to be working first of all. He had a strong work ethic and wanted to be dealing with members of the public. He identified restaurant work as his first choice"

of job. A Sainsbury's supermarket was very local to him and so gave him easy access to work. He needed health and safety training to begin the job which we did with him and he took this in fully and put into practice."

How was the job placement approached?

Mr. C said that before the placement started he had to have a meeting with some of the people concerned and during this they discussed his choices and gave him information regarding the job.

"Elite gave me an interview to see what job I wanted. The manager of Sainsbury was there as well, all the managers have been good. They told me everything I needed to know and everything I would have to do in my job. They talked to me about pay and my hours. My brother already worked in Sainsbury so he and Elite found me a job together I think."

The day service worker recalled that they supported Mr. C at the initial meeting with Elite where he was interviewed about his job skills and work preferences. However, following this meeting the day service worker felt she received little further contact or feedback and so she was unsure who actually found the placement for Mr. C.

"Mr. C is quite able and so he told Elite what he wanted and didn't want, he made his own choices. I don't remember Elite passing any information back to us or involving us in any way once the referral process was complete. Mr. C's first placement was at another supermarket, he then moved to Sainsbury's, however I am not sure if it was his brother (not Elite) who found him the work placement as he was already working there."

The carer felt that Elite were not considerate towards the family whilst the job placement was being set up and so he decided to intervene and approach his own employer regarding a possible work opportunity for Mr. C.

"Elite never asked the family what type of job would be suitable and their first offer was a paper round which I didn't agree with and found insulting. I felt Elite had not considered Mr. C's ability or his nature, they had considered what he could not do rather than what he was capable of. They gave him more of a learning disability than they needed to. At the time I was already working in Sainsbury's and I approached the personnel manager and explained the situation to her. She already knew of Elite and was willing to work together with us as a family and Elite to provide a placement. Once I had introduced Mr. C, Elite and Sainsbury's I withdrew and allowed Elite to do the rest and support him in the application and then into the work environment. I left it up to them as to what his role and job would be at the store."

Elite stated that they had good contact with Sainsbury's because of PR work they had done there informing them of who they were and what they did. Sainsbury's had agreed to provide work placements and Mr. C was one of the first people to take up an unpaid, and then a paid, position there after completing the Elite Work Awareness course.

What did the job involve?

Mr. C began working at Sainsbury's a number of years ago and his first job was in the coffee shop. He was responsible for taking the meals out, clearing and wiping the tables, sweeping the floor, filling the dishwasher and food preparation (cleaning and

cutting salad). He worked for 20 hours to begin with and so he was in receipt of benefits and a wage. However he has since progressed in the job over the years and he was offered a permanent position within the store with his hours increasing to 30 per week. He is now a grocery assistant and his tasks involve shelf stacking, customer assistance, stock room support and helping with deliveries. Mr. C currently earns approximately £5.50 per hour and is no longer in receipt of benefits.

What was good about the job?

Mr. C said that Sainsbury's was a great place to work, he likes the people there and feels the manager has been supportive. He enjoys going to work and states that the jobs he is given are well within his capabilities although he would like to work more hours. Elite repeated Mr. C's view stating that Mr. C enjoyed the work and thrived on working in such a busy environment. Sainsbury's were seen to be very helpful in this case and Elite felt that this together with the fact that Mr. C was prepared to learn and take advice made this placement a good one. Mr. C's carer believes that there are a number of reasons why the job has been a good one and why after a number of years Mr. C is still happy and continues to want to work there.

"The job suited his needs and it was adjusted by Sainsbury's to suit his abilities and has since been developed with their ongoing support. The job has brought Mr. C into the community and has built up his confidence. He has taken ownership of the job, he has fitted in and he has been accepted and respected for the work that he does. I also think it has given Sainsbury's a good view of what people with a learning difficulty can do as they have taken on a few others from Elite since he first started."

The day service worker agreed with the carer with regards to the job suiting all of Mr. C's needs. She felt that the job *"allowed him to be in control of his own destiny"* and resulted in an increase in Mr. C's confidence and self esteem. Again Sainsbury's were seen as being very supportive, the day service worker stated that the staff there all made time for Mr. C and he has been treated as part of the team which has allowed him to progress over the years.

What was bad about the job?

There were no major issues identified here although the carer felt that there had been a slight lack of ongoing support from Elite but despite this Mr. C had not encountered any more problems that the average worker would come across. Elite stated that Mr. C's personality meant that he dealt with any issues he did have appropriately and gained knowledge from them.

"Mr. C sees everything in a positive light and so he has not experienced any big problems. The restaurant was a very busy environment for him to have his first job in, often customers could be awkward so this was a big learning curve for Mr. C but he coped very well with it."

What was good/bad about the help received from Elite, from Bridgend or from anyone else?

From Mr. C's perspective he is happy with the help and support he has been given from all the parties concerned.

"Elite were great, they come to see me every 6 months to see if I am working ok and if I have any problems. I am happy with the help I have had. The people at Bridgend have all helped me to move on from the day centre, I visit them every now and again"

to see them. My brother helped me get the job as well because he already worked at Sainsbury's. I have had good support from Sainsbury's, they are good to work for."

Mr. C's carer reported that there were positives and negatives on the parts of Bridgend and Elite. With regards to Elite he felt that the initial idea and input they offered was good but the first job Mr. C was offered (a paper round) was insulting. The support going into the job was also viewed as appropriate but the carer then felt that this support was withdrawn by Elite and Sainsbury's ended up taking a lot of responsibility for the placement. With regards to the day centre and Wood-B these were viewed as places which had been beneficial to Mr. C by adding to his level of development and providing him with good skills. However as far as Bridgend social services were concerned the carer described them as "abysmal" and stated that they had done nothing to help Mr. C or the family.

Elite repeated the carers view with regards to the day centre stating that they helped Mr. C by recognising that he had the skills to succeed in a placement and that they saw the need for him to move on from day centre as it was not suited to his needs. Elite also felt that their service had provided a good standard of support to Mr. C.

"The training we did with him initially at Elite helped him, he had one to one training with us which introduced him to the job. We supported him in the job until he was confident to work by himself. He had help from us to find and maintain the position and we have provided him with any ongoing support or training he has needed."

From the day service point of view Elite were helpful in the fact that they had the skills to move Mr. C on to paid employment, they were seen as having the time to pursue the paid aspect and provide job coaching and one to one support whereas the day service focused mainly upon work skills. However in addition the day service worker recognised that the work Mr. C had done at the day service work projects was also beneficial to him.

"Mr. C was an ideal candidate for work because of his abilities and his nature and so this helped us to guide and encourage him towards working. Although Mr C. enjoyed the social aspects of the day centre he wanted more to do and had always showed an interest in work. We encouraged this and he took part in a number of work placements we were running, from these he gained a good understanding of what work was like."

What happened to the job in the end?

Mr. C has worked at Sainsbury's for a number of years now and has progressed within the store, moving from working in the restaurant to working on the shop floor. According to Elite this move was something that Mr. C himself pushed for:

"He used his initiative and recognised he needed to progress and move on".

He currently works 30 hours per week and the placement has been so successful that Mr. C no longer accesses day service.

What led to this job being a success/failure?

Mr. C personally felt that the job has been a success and stated,

“It is a good job and I work well there, I enjoy it. If I have any problems then I can speak to the manager.”

The **carer** believes that the job has been a success due to a combination of things including the initial support Mr. C received from Elite which allowed him to settle in. The carer felt the other parties and Mr. C himself all played a significant part in making the position work.

“A big factor was the support he got from Sainsbury’s, they have been excellent and I feel they should receive some recognition for this and the support they give to others like Mr. C. The lion’s share of the success has been down to Mr. C himself, how he has worked hard and proved himself and his worth in the job. He has developed through the job and this has been a good thing for him. I feel the day centre provided Mr. C with some of the basic skills he has been able to use since he left, they progressed him through their service from the day centre to the Wood-B workshop which he enjoyed.”

Elite and the day service worker both repeated the view of the carer and attributed the success of the job to the support Mr. C received from their services as well as the hard work done by Mr. C himself. Elite stated,

“The big factor in the job being a success has been Mr. C himself. His personality is ideal for that type of job. He has an excellent work ethic and was prepared to take advice, work, and work hard.”

How could it have been done better?

Mr. C is happy with all the aspects of placement and stated that although he wouldn’t change anything he would like to do more overtime.

Elite were also very positive about this case and felt that a lot of circumstances had come together at the right time for Mr. C and he was very fortunate. His case was seen as a real success story and Elite stated *“it is the ideal model of how we would like everyone to end up.”*

The day service worker identified that one problem has been a lack of communication from Elite and stated that some feedback, especially in the early part of the placement, would have been appreciated. She also felt an annual update would be useful in order for them to see how Mr. C is progressing within the job.

However from the carer point of view it was felt a quite a few improvements could be made, not only with regards to Mr. C’s case but also for all the placements in general.

“There does need to be a system in Elite to see how things are getting on, possibly there should be a tick chart system which is reviewed or something like an appraisal system for each of the people they put into placements. I am unsure what ongoing training they have at Elite but in Mr. C’s case Sainsbury’s have taken all this on and provided it for him but I think Elite should take some responsibility. I don’t feel companies get “value for money” from Elite when they take someone on, I think they are under the impression the person will get a lot more support from Elite at work than they actually do.”

How could Bridgend or Elite change what they do to be more helpful in getting people into jobs?

Mr. C thought that Bridgend and Elite should be aiming to get more people into jobs and suggested that they could take more people to interviews, however he also believed that there was a problem with motivating people within day service.

“More people like me could get jobs, I think the people at the day centre are lazy and they should get out a bit more.”

The carer felt that in order to get more people into jobs Elite would need to expand and the day service would need to fragment further into schemes such as Wood B and Bryngarw, with the possibility of new ventures such as a sports based scheme being introduced which could integrate people of all abilities, including those with learning and physical disabilities. He also felt that a lot of work needed to be done on enhancing the services that Elite and Bridgend offer and that the relationship between them needs to be improved.

“Elite’s job should be redefined within Bridgend so they know where they fit in, they should also have a more business like approach and there is a need for them to canvas what they can do for employers and what employers can gain from them. Both Bridgend’s and Elite’s job should be to let people know that people with learning difficulties have a place in society. They should both have a mission statement that they will aim to encourage the idea that everyone is respected and valued in society. The services seem to be pulling apart, they need to come back together and show they understand that people with learning difficulties have a viable position as members of society.”

The day service worker suggested that although a number of improvements had been made which have aimed to make day service staff more aware of Elite and the service they provide, they are still at a disadvantage because there has been a change in the day centre population recently. She felt that day services now tend to cater for the less able learning disability population with the trend being to steer the more able into college or work straight from school and this has been a problem for them. Despite this the day service worker also reported that at present the links between the day centre and Elite appear to be stronger than they have ever been.

Finally from the Elite perspective it was felt that there were some improvements to be made on the part of the day service, the numbers and types of referrals needed to be looked at as well as teaching service users a “work ethic” and providing for the female day centre population.

“Currently we are not getting the volume of people being referred to Elite that we need. The people who are referred at present only have basic requirements such as one afternoon a week work, easy jobs etc. If the day service could do a little bit more to explain the work ethic and the “working week” to people this would be a great help. We would like people to be aware of the realistic demands of employment. I also think that more needs to be done with the ladies at the day centre, most of the programmes they have seem to be male orientated.”

Mr. D – Positive Case Study

Mr. D is a twenty-seven year old man with a learning disability. When referred to Elite he lived in staff supported housing in the Bridgend area, he has since returned to live with his parents in the Bridgend area.

Following referral to Elite Mr. D attended a Work Awareness Course (O.C.N. accredited). He completed this successfully to Level 1 standard. Running concurrently with the course a six week supported work placement was arranged at McDonalds Pencoed as Mr. D had identified his first choice of employment as working in a catering environment. He had also expressed an interest in working with people in his own age group. As his travel skills were poor a travel training programme was put in place by Elite, this along with training in the workplace enabled Mr. D to become a valued member of staff at the restaurant.

During the work placement it was found that he very much enjoyed this type of work and was popular with other staff. Towards the end of the placement, because Mr. D wanted to continue with some day centre activities, Elite negotiated four hours paid work one day per week.

Mr. D has continued with this employment and has now worked at the restaurant for two years. He travels independently to and from work and no longer uses day centre services on his work days. His contact with staff and customers at the restaurant and his success in maintaining his employment has boosted his self confidence and self esteem, he is a valued member of the team and is respected by staff and customers alike. He now works independently at the restaurant with six-monthly monitoring by Elite.

How did the idea of this person getting a job come about?

Mr. D stated he had heard about Elite at the day centre and he had already been thinking about getting a job. He then spoke to Elite and they organised training and a placement for him.

Mr. D's carer recalled that it was a mutual decision between her and Mr. D. They had spoken about the possibility of work and Mr. D had wanted to be like others in the family and have a job. She believed that it was the people at the community support team who put them in touch with Elite.

The community support team care manager said that he was aware Mr. D had wanted a job and so he worked together with Elite and Mr. D's family in order to provide this for him although there were steps Mr. D needed to go through first.

“Mr. D wanted a job, he wanted to work and feel the prestige form a job. He did a course with Elite at the start of the referral, they talked to him about appearance, work history, appropriate conversation etc and they set out for him what would happen so he had an idea what to expect.”

What was wanted in the job?

Mr. D stated that money was a priority as well as the locality of the placement.

“I wanted a paid job first of all and I didn’t mind what I was doing but I wanted it to be local so that I could get to it easily. I had to be paid a certain way so that I could still keep my benefits.”

The care manager believes that Mr. D was very clear in what work he wouldn’t be happy with (i.e. gardening) and that access was an important factor when thinking about the placement as Mr. D would have to be shown how to travel and get to work. Mr. D’s carer was unsure if he actually knew what he wanted or if he was aware of what a job involved. She recalled Elite had spoken to them about benefits and she also showed some concern over the amount of choice Mr. D was presented with.

“I don’t think he (Mr. D) knew what work actually entailed, he just liked the idea of going to work like mam and dad did. He likes order so it had to be work that was set and routined. I remember the hours and the wages were limited due to benefits, Elite explained this to us. I don’t think he was given a choice of location for the job, I guess it isn’t easy to find a job placement and so he had to take what was offered.”

Elite said that after discussion with Mr. D he stated he wanted a job for around 4 hours per week in order that he could continue with his day service placement in conjunction with work.

How was the job placement approached?

Mr. D recalls that Elite held a meeting and asked him what job he wanted. They found the placement for him, helped him fill in the forms and go to the job interview.

The carer and day service worker were both unsure how the job was actually identified, however the carer stated that Elite and the community support team had kept her involved and had informed her about everything she felt she needed to know.

The care manager felt that on this occasion he too had been kept fully informed by Elite and that they were able to locate a job for Mr. D because of the rapport they have with companies in Bridgend.

“I believe that the person from Elite found this placement due to his networking capabilities and his relationship with local employers. Elite informed me of everything I needed to know. They also asked my opinion on the type of placement it should be as they were aware I had known Mr. D for a number of years previously as I had worked with him in the woodwork unit of the local day centre, therefore I knew what his capabilities were.”

Elite stated that originally Mr. D began the job as a work experience placement whilst he was on the work awareness course. The placement was such a success that it was then converted to part time paid employment.

What did the job involve?

Mr. D works at a McDonald’s restaurant for 4 hours every Tuesday. He is a “lobby host” and is responsible for clearing and cleaning the tables, emptying rubbish bins, refilling tissues and condiments and keeping the bathrooms clean. Mr. D is paid on a monthly basis.

What was good about the job?

Mr. D identified a number of aspects of the job that he felt happy with.

“I like all the people I work with, I like the job and I don’t have to pay for lunch! The pay is fine, it goes straight into my bank account so I get a pay slip every month just like everyone else does. I know what I have to do when I get to work as I have been there a while now. Elite taught me to travel and got me a bus pass so I can catch the bus on my own now.”

The carer felt that although Mr. D was nervous about the placement to begin with the job has been ideal for him.

“At first Mr. D was afraid but he really wanted to do the job and everyone encouraged him. The job suited him, it has worked and been successful and he has enjoyed it. The people and staff at McDonalds have been great, they are extremely helpful. It is a very busy McDonalds but they have always made time if we have had any problems. They also involved him in training when he first began. Elite have overseen the placement throughout and this has given him a lot of moral support.”

The care manager also stated that the support Mr. D has received from McDonalds has been substantial and that the job has been good on both a social and personal level for Mr. D.

“I believe Mr. D is enjoying the job and is proud of working, he feels being away from the day centre is a positive move. He enjoys meeting the public at work and this has bought him out of his shell. The manager at McDonalds has been very supportive, they are aware of how to work best with Mr. D, how often to remind him of his job and the rules etc.”

Elite highlighted these points too, again praising McDonalds as an employer.

“McDonalds have been very supportive, they have a high turnover of managers at the restaurant but all have been a great help and have supported Mr. D’s placement, they have always contacted us over any issues that have arisen. Mr. D has benefited greatly by gaining independence and his social skills have also improved as a result of him having a job. It was a good placement for Mr. D, it has suited him and he has worked hard to maintain it.”

What was bad about the job?

Mr. D stated that there were some aspects of the job itself which he didn’t enjoy.

“The only thing I am not too keen on is cleaning the toilets and I also don’t like it when people are lazy and drop rubbish on the floor.”

Elite and the carer acknowledged that there had been some problems with the clocking in system and Mr. D’s wages. The carer said,

“Mr. D had some problems with the clocking on system, he was unable to understand the digital system McDonalds had in place and so this caused problems with his pay. Elite intervened and sorted this out with the manager at McDonalds which was a great relief as it was starting to worry Mr. D.”

What was good/bad about the help received from Elite, from Bridgend or from anyone else?

Mr. D felt that the support he had been given was excellent from Elite and Bridgend.

“They have both been really good to me so I can’t complain about anything. They have helped me get a job and backed me up at the placement when I had trouble with the clocking in system.”

Elite believed they had prepared Mr. D well for work.

“He did the work awareness course which looked at health and safety, appropriate work wear, conversation, interviews techniques etc. All of these benefited him when he went to the job. We also gave him support to learn the job.”

Both the care manager and the carer stated that the support for Mr. D has been well maintained and this has helped him. Mr. D’s carer feels both she and Mr. D have been kept up to date with matters and their wishes have been respected throughout.

“He has never had any bad input or anything we can criticise. Elite and Bridgend have supported us through everything. There was never any pressure from Elite about the work placement either. Mr. D was given as much time as he wanted to think about things. Elite laid everything out for us and then left us to decide. All the input we have had has been very helpful and we have no complaints at all about Elite or the community support team, both are very open and are always available if we need them.”

The day service worker repeated this view and also felt that the input Mr. D had received from the day service and Elite had worked well together.

“The help he has had has worked well for Mr. D. His job placement is a success; he looks forward to going to work. He has a lot of potential which we are aiming to get to at the day centre. His work placement and input from Elite have a different focus to what we do with him but I think they work well in conjunction with each other. He had travel training from Elite which allowed him to travel to his work placement alone. This was a big positive step for him.”

What happened to the job in the end?

The job is still going well. Mr. D has been there approximately 18 months to date. He continues to work at McDonalds on a Tuesday and attends day centre the rest of the week.

What led to this job being a success/failure?

According to Mr. D because he enjoys the placement this has made him want to go to work.

“The job has helped me build my confidence and meet new people. This has made me want to go to work. It is good because I have a mixture in the week by working at McDonalds and working at the day centre where I am based at the Bryngarw project.”

Mr. D’s carer believes that the success of the placement was down to team work and good research.

“The setting up of the placement was done well, the community support team, Elite and the day centre all worked together and they found the right environments and balance for Mr. D. He currently works one day a week, attends the Bryngarw project 3 days a week and goes to college on one day. The whole package is a success. If there has been a problem it has always been sorted out.”

The care manager felt that it was Mr. D himself who made the placement a success. He stated that throughout the placement he has turned up and has proved his capacity to fit in and do the tasks required as well as being able to accept guidance when he needed to.

Elite and the day service worker also believed that Mr. D was the major factor in making the job a success. This, together with a few other important factors, allowed him to achieve what he has. The day service worker said,

“I think he was well matched to the job, it is exactly the right level for him. He works hard and he is always well turned out for work and looks forward to the day. His family are very supportive of the placement and the work we do with him here at the day centre so this is a big help from our point of view.”

According to Elite,

“It is a success due to a combination of factors, the fact that McDonalds are supportive and the commitment for Mr. D himself, he has made it work. The day centre he attends has also been supportive, we at Elite have a good rapport with them which means everyone knows what is happening.”

How could it have been done better?

Mr. D suggested that he would have liked a different place to try during day centre time.

“I like it at McDonalds but I am not too keen on the gardening I am doing all the rest of the time at Bryngarw. I would like something else to do as well.”

The day service worker also picked up on this and believed that possibly more days a week working at McDonalds should be considered for Mr. D now. He felt that this would be something that Mr. D would really enjoy. None of the other parties involved suggested improvements. In general it was felt that the placement has gone, and continues to go well and that Mr. D is happy and looks forward to working.

How could Bridgend or Elite change what they do to be more helpful in getting people into jobs?

Mr. D thought that the assistance he had been given from Elite and Bridgend could also help others find and maintain a job.

“The staff are really good at both of these places and they do try and help all of us. I found the job hard to start with but I am used to it now. I think with a little bit of help from Elite more people could work like me, they just need to be encouraged basically.”

The carer felt that although they had been given a great deal of help there was some room for improvement.

“I don’t want to criticise any party as they have helped us greatly. Maybe meetings would be a good idea though, informal get-togethers, both with and without Mr. D present, just to check progress and to ensure that everything continues to work well and that each team continues to work towards the same goal.”

Elite reported that greater support from the day service was needed and commented that there has been a lack of referrals in recent months, this has been blamed upon a shortage of staff which means they are therefore unable to complete the necessary paperwork.

The day service worker suggested that work needed to be done with parents and employers and that communication needed to be improved between Bridgend and Elite in order to help more people into jobs.

“All services should aim to convince parents that work is an option and that their children won’t be “used”. I think that there needs to be more communication between Bridgend services and Elite. Elite could also involve us more, for example we could help them obtain and identify placements. I think it is important to introduce people to local employers to improve knowledge and social awareness. This would give the employer more confidence and familiarize the service user with the setting, for example if a person gained a placement in a garden centre which he visited on regular basis. At the day centre we try to visit lots of places and introduce ourselves but we are never approached to provide people for work placements. We need to be able to push ourselves more.”

CASE STUDY THEMES

There are some major themes within these case studies. From a positive perspective the case studies show that Elite are able to deliver appropriate and progressive placements which can be held successfully over a number of years. They illustrate that in certain cases Elite and Bridgend Day Services can, and do, benefit from sharing knowledge and working together in order to provide information, training and support geared towards the individuals needs. Elite are viewed as helpful in that they provide dedicated one to one targeted input, are knowledgeable regarding the benefit system and have a strong networking capability with employers in Bridgend. The day services are seen as best placed to provide people with basic work skills and an understanding of “work ethic”. The service users reports show their experiences with Elite (and where appropriate day services) have been positive ones, with each person reporting that they are happy with the contact and support they have received. The case studies also highlight that support from employers is substantial, with managers often going out of their way to accommodate people’s requests or to provide help and assistance when problems occur.

From a negative point of view the case studies demonstrate that communication between Bridgend and Elite needs to be reviewed. In all of the cases there were problems identified regarding feedback upon referral to Elite, a lack of consultation with the parties involved, and lack of long term feedback from Elite. Communication appears to vary greatly, both by case and by the individuals involved with each case. For example the carer involved with Ms. A felt that she had been kept well informed by Elite from beginning to end and had been consulted for her opinion, whereas Mr. C’s carer felt that he was given little consideration by Elite at the time of referral and despite this placement being a success he felt he received minimal contact from them

over the years. The case studies highlight the need for good communication around an individual and their placement, what is being done and any problems that occur. Cases need to be discussed and shared, the aim should be to prevent problems which can arise when motives and actions are not agreed by all, and all parties would benefit by being kept up to date about changes in individuals health or any other circumstances which may jeopardise their chance of a successful placement.

Concerns were also highlighted over the support and monitoring arrangements for individuals. Within these case studies several of the people interviewed were unaware of any ongoing support or monitoring arrangements from Elite. It was generally felt that although input and support from Elite is good when starting the placement more intensive monitoring and intervention is required to ensure motivation is maintained and the placement runs smoothly. However, it may be difficult to sustain a successful placement in cases such as Mr. B's where a number of factors including mental health problems and an apparent poor job match led to the breakdown of the position.

A further negative theme identified related to the types of placements offered and the problem of educating individuals to understand the "work ethic". Elite and Bridgend came under criticism here, Elite for appearing to offer limited types of placement with little choice for individuals (McDonalds, cleaning and supermarket jobs) and Bridgend for failing to provide people with progressive work environments, offering little opportunity for females and not educating individuals as to what "work" actually involves. These are seen as problems that Elite and Bridgend need to work together to manage.

Overview

For Elite there are a number of issues that need to be addressed:

- Communication with the relevant parties.
- Ensuring all relevant knowledge is gained around an individual (hygiene problems, mental health issues, medical issues) and that this knowledge is kept up to date.
- Feedback on what is going well to the individuals' network.
- Reviewing why a placement is unsuccessful.
- Providing ongoing support in a placement on a case-by-case basis.
- Widening the network of employers worked with within Bridgend.
- Undertaking PR work within Bridgend County Borough Council and with the service users and their families to ensure an understanding of the Elite mission statement and service provided.
- Promoting a wider understanding of benefit issues and constraints.
- Developing a structured working arrangement with Bridgend, working together to identify, educate and support individuals.

For Bridgend there are also a number of issues that need to be managed:

- Providing a progressive work experience base within the day service for male and female service users, aiming to provide individuals with a CV of work.
- Creating a context among staff and families that supports people to move beyond 4 hour per week jobs and into an earned income.
- Identify clearly who is responsible for liaising with parents regarding work.
- Promoting an understanding of "work ethic" amongst service users.

- Promoting Elite’s work within Bridgend as a whole, ensuring appropriate individuals are aware of the contract arrangements.
- Promoting Elite’s work within day services, ensuring individuals are aware of referral arrangements.
- Clarifying who is responsible for proactively identifying people who are suitable for referral and ensuring numbers are regularly reviewed.
- Developing a structured working arrangement with Elite, working together to identify, educate and support individuals.

INTERVIEWS WITH KEY STAFF

We carried out interviews with operational and senior managers from social services, who were at some level involved in managing day services for people with learning disabilities, and mental illness. The questionnaires used covered a wide range of topics, including the performance of Elite within their contract, the influences on Social Services in respect of day services and employment, and views on future aims and policy in this area. The degree of direct contact with Elite varied considerably across respondents, but a good range of perspectives on commissioning, case management and strategic and operational management was obtained.

Main influences on Social Services in terms of helping people with learning and other disabilities become employed

In addition to concern for individual choice, independence and inclusion, one of the primary influences on social services in relation to the search for more employment opportunities has been the need to reduce reliance on formal day services. Person Centred Planning, and the increasing aspirations of people with learning disabilities and their families, are pushing care managers to pursue more normal lives for people.

In addition, the general remit of Bridgend and other Boroughs in economic development has also echoed interest within social services in Social Firms development. Wider staff felt that social services (and health) needed to move from just providing services to employing people with disabilities.

Policy goals Social Services have around employment for people with learning disabilities

Social Services has a policy of developing local centres which pursue active citizenship. This has enabled a more flexible approach to develop over linking people to activity around home life, find closer links for people to their communities and political and community life. While not an exclusive route, work opportunities within Bridgend’s direct resources have been concentrated into a number of Work Projects. These have included the Bryngarw development, woodwork and craftwork Projects, and conservation projects, linked to renovation and landscaping of local housing estates. Social Services were looking for an increasing commitment to work experience, and a subsequent move to mainstream or supported employment. There was also an interest in tying in college and community education input to help achieve this. While there was a commitment within Bridgend to equal opportunities, and at least one person has achieved employment within the local authority, there was not a formalised agreement to deliver jobs for people with a learning disability, or to ring-fence any jobs. Volunteering was also seen as being an option for people. However, experience has been that this seems to be a substitute for work experience, but possibly do not want to progress, perhaps through parental pressure. It is unclear

at present whether this group draws support through the localised service, or part of a work related project.

In general, front-line staff and managers supported employment as one route for people with learning disabilities. However, there was still a strong orientation towards long-term preparation. Respondents still generally felt that future goals should put a focus on people to prepare for work through college or community education. However, they did feel that work still needed to be done on staff attitudes and work with service users to change their expectations around work.

“Ground work needs to be done to give people a ‘work profile’, to help create awareness and motivation and to progress individuals. We need to ensure we provide a progressive environment and get away from traditional day service.”

View of the reputation of Elite

There was a feeling among some senior respondents that Elite was not always creating good job matches for people, and thereby not meeting people’s needs. The workshops within Bridgend have been mechanised and the products they deliver to respondents were regarded as of high quality. The opportunities for work placements through Elite, which may be entry-level within supermarkets and the like, were not regarded as having the same attraction as the opportunities within the Work Projects. Another respondent felt that Elite had a reputation that was mixed, with points being some good and some being unacceptable, with examples of both being given. The main areas of concern were communication, in terms of some situations where respondents felt that Elite had not listened to advice from social services, and occasions where important information and events had not been passed on to Community Support Team. These respondents did generally support employment as an option, and wanted more, but felt that greater flexibility in communication between the professionals involved and Elite was needed, and a case was made for more reviews of jobs. Network Training days were an opportunity to build greater understanding between Elite and social services.

Front-line staff and managers were aware of Elite, understood what they were about, and were generally positive about their work. Respondent’s reported that Elite had become more involved with the day centre staff team and had tried to promote themselves more. Respondents felt that this should now gain more referrals for them.

One respondent felt that, in principal, Elite was an excellent idea, but that the goals they set were “unrealistic.” There was a strong view among some respondents that there was not an “endless supply” of people that the Day Service can refer to Elite, and that Elite should do more work with care managers outside of day services as not all people within Bridgend access the day centres. Another, while positive about Elite, felt that they pigeon holed they put people into categories-

“...those who can stack shelves, those who can clean etc. I know they have to provide a safe working environment but the jobs were not always thought suitable or age appropriate.”

A number of respondents felt that the types of jobs offered should be expanded- “Instead of focusing on the three job types which are typically McDonalds, cleaning and the supermarket, they should expand their horizons. I think they should be pushing to show what people with a learning disability can actually do. They could

possibly invite firms to day service placements such as..... Bryngarw to show them people's skills." A further respondent was worried about the extent to which people were monitored when in work, fearing that people were "setting people up to fail." Others felt that Elite had moved from contracting to provide employment only, to now offering work experience and job trials, and that this was seen as a positive move.

What role should Elite be playing in achieving the goal of paid employment?

ELITE had been seen as an essential part of the route to employment for some time. However, there were now some dilemmas, for Elite and for Bridgend Social Services. One respondent felt that Elite had been successful in the past with more able people, but as this group became a smaller proportion of the day centre population it was becoming more difficult to place people. The majority noted that Elite has not been as successful recently in impacting on flow through from Day Centres, and the Day Centres are not referring people to Elite in any numbers. Over the years referral and placement into work had seemed to hit a plateau, with some people having been in work situations for extended periods of time and have been monitored, another body of people then who seem to be recycling in and out of jobs, but there does not seem to be a passage of additional people through into jobs. Bridgend have considered trying to commission work experience from Elite. It was acknowledged that this was not seen as only an issue for Elite, it being as much a day service issue.

The role of Community Support Teams and Care Managers in this problem was unclear, as they too were party to referrals. Certainly, respondents felt that employment was on the agenda for Care Managers, but mainly for people who were more able. There were a number of factors that worked against people not going into employment: parental worries, people not wanting to move, welfare benefits, and vested interests of service providers.

One senior respondent reported that Elite was not an integrated part of the blue-print for the future of day services and employment, but was unsure whether it was consciously not included, or whether it had not been properly considered.

Another senior respondent felt that people with learning disabilities in the service had some doubts over the credibility of employment as a realistic option for them, leaving welfare benefits behind. The reasons for this is unclear but may involve attitudes of parents, the level of income they could expect to earn, the complications of residential care and the costs involved. The fact that some jobs are 4-5 hours, sometimes after day service hours, may add to the feeling that people were "working" for too long in the day.

Front-line staff and managers did feel Elite should have a continuing role in employment within Bridgend, and that there should be more working together. Elite continued to offer trial work experience. This gives Elite a chance to assess the person and it gives the person a chance to see if they like the job. This was also reflected by a respondent who was more negative about Elite's performance thus far. "I think that Elite should get to know the individual, spend time with them before they think about a suitable placement so this reduces the likelihood that they will set people up to fail." On the other hand, one respondent felt that Elite already took too long to get to know and place people, and that quicker turn-around was needed.

"The whole process from the Elite side takes so long, they go through job matching,

referrals process, interviews etc. People can lose interest so they need to reduce the delay.”

They also felt that parental issues were a factor in the lack of referral for employment. They felt that Elite could help to involve parents more, perhaps giving presentations to parents to make them more aware of what Elite does and to let them know that work is an option. It was felt that the Day Service and Elite could work together to achieve this. Another respondent felt that the main problem in gaining employment was in getting companies to give people a chance and that Elite should aim to be showing companies what people with learning disabilities can do - they should be working with employers rather than the employees.

What role should Day Services be playing in achieving the goal of paid employment for people with learning disabilities?

Senior respondents told us that the Work Projects were trying to gain funding to move more purposely towards social firm status. There were plans to introduce NVQ type assessment and qualifications through the Work Projects. Respondents also raised the issue of whether the Work Projects were too focussed on environment, and whether in the future there might be scope for projects in wider work areas, such as office work enclaves. They also hoped for more opportunities to be made available in the Local Authority for training posts.

People who had experienced work experience and volunteer people were seen by front-line respondents as the people who were natural choice for referral to Elite:

“A natural progression if the person wants to work and do paid work”.

Respondents felt that Elite was building on from placements that Day Services had originally found, and that there was a partnership.

Interviews with front-line staff and managers revealed some clear views on the role Day Services should play in progressing people to employment. A number of respondents felt that Bridgend had been successful in obtaining work experience, but that the move to paid work required partnership. “Bridgend day service has found a lot of work placements, Elite take over when paid work comes in as they are better placed and more knowledgeable to sort out pay and benefits issues.” Respondents felt that Bridgend needed to continue to

“... prepare people for work, they need to support them to get the skills they need and provide health and safety training, food hygiene and travel training.”

A number of respondents felt that an early decision was needed on who would go forward to an employment route.

“When people first come into day service they need to be channelled towards work rather than get stuck in the day service system if they are suitable. People get settled into day service and get ‘comfy’ so we need to filter people as they enter.”

What role should Bridgend Council itself play in achieving the goal of paid employment for people with learning disabilities in the future?

Front-line staff and managers felt that the new Bryngarw work venture was an excellent move forward. They felt that other projects like this should be developed,

focusing on something other than grounds maintenance and horticulture, in which females could be more involved. The availability of more project-based schemes would help the work experience side of the Day Service to develop.

These respondents generally felt that there was strength in the fact that Elite's focus is purely on work, as day centres felt inhibited by day to day general activity with people which prevents us focusing on work as much as they might like. They also have the benefit of funding to focus on this specific area, are able to target their resources more effectively and in a more appropriate manner on work. They are also able to keep their employment knowledge up to date where time constraints affect the day services' ability to keep as up to date.

Specific changes you would like to see in the work done by Bridgend or Elite, or in the relationship between them

Front-line staff and managers felt that progress might be made if :

- Day Service staff had more time, monthly structured meetings with Elite would help. These meeting could be used to go over new referrals, to feedback on existing referrals and to review any problems. Time constraints prevent this at present.
- Feedback from Elite has been seen as slow in the past, and there is a feeling that staff only receive a list of referred names of those people who have been removed from Elite's books due to problems. However, the introduction of quarterly reviews on what Elite has been seen as useful, and feedback needs to be improved and occur more quickly.
- Some respondents felt that there is a lot of paperwork involved in a referral to Elite, that staff have to complete, not all of which is user friendly and regarded as time consuming and ambiguous. Some sought changes that would make the forms more easy for people with learning disabilities to complete themselves.

What are the strengths and weakness of contracting and contract monitoring between Bridgend and Elite, and any need for change?

Contracting was seen as problematic. A Service Level Agreement had been in place for some years, with annual monitoring. It was felt that it had not been challenging, and that more recently it had been tightened up and made more selective. One respondent felt that there were some uncertainties around the way that Elite operated, particularly how waiting lists operated.

To what extent should Bridgend be adopting a cross-disability approach to employment?

Respondents identified people with mental health issues as another group who may need additional support in relation to employment. They felt that job retention was a key issue for people becoming ill, or relapsing, and were aware that employment was now part of the "recovery Model" approach to mental ill health. The NHS Trust were felt to have a positive agenda in this area, and that Elite might have something to offer in future initiatives for this group.

Additional input from staff involved in the development of mental health strategies suggested that employment was a high priority for this group. Consideration was being given to recruit support/recovery workers to provide support for work, travel and job coaching. There appeared to be interest in a cross-disability approach to employment support from the mental health perspective, but there was no real forum

for pursuing it.

Front-line staff and managers were generally positive about the prospect of a cross-disability approach to employment. However, there appeared to be no practical experience of working in this way, and it seemed that significant planning would be needed to develop practical models. There was some apprehension that such a move might compromise opportunities for people with learning disabilities. “At the end of the day people with learning disabilities should not get less than the others. Each group needs specific support – but working across services would be interesting although I am not sure how this would be achieved.”

Findings from the “Working Lives” Report, looking at the role of Day Services in employment in England

The Report identified three sorts of day service, in relation to employment:

- Day Services that provided little or no employment-related activity
 - Referring on to specialist employment agencies for all aspects of work preparation, and placement.
 - They gave help to motivate people to “get on well” with people
- Day Services that provided all aspects of employment support through their own specialist teams or staff:
 - Vocational Profiling; Job Coaches; Training or work tasters in the community
 - The model these service used was the supported employment (SE) model
- Day Services that provided some aspects of work preparation:
 - Help clients to “get on well” with people; talking, discussing work
 - Vocational Profiling
 - Training or work tasters in in-house projects
 - Commonly refer people on to specialist employment agencies for job-finding, placement and on-the-job support
 - Agencies commonly offered a SE model. SE agencies were more connected to world of work than day services

Day services in the final category see their own Work Projects/enterprises as the place for teaching valuable job skills:

- The aims and operational models of these enterprises remain unclear
- Training methods vary considerably and often do not include systematic methods
- Guidance and a link into a credible system for transition into employment is needed if they are not to become dumping grounds for perpetual training

Partnerships with experienced, specialist employment services, competent to deliver employment outcomes for people with learning disabilities seem to be the best way forward, and LA investment in partnership is needed.

SUMMARY OF ISSUES

We have found through our interviews and data collection that employment is seen as an important goal for people with learning disabilities in Bridgend, and that the partnership with Elite is valued by many across the local authority. There is however, long standing dissatisfaction within both Elite and Bridgend with the current arrangements. The process of a person in day services deciding to move into employment, gaining support from staff and carers, overcoming any concerns, gaining any preparation possible, and then working with support to find a job, convince an employer, and to learn and maintain a job, is very complicated. Many people are involved, and it is easy for barriers to emerge at any stage. Within this context, a number of potential barriers and issues have emerged for all concerned. We summarise these here, before bringing together our recommendations.

For Bridgend

Throughput from work-based training was an issue. The model for the Work Projects was, in our opinion, unclear. There had been moves towards Social Firm status is unclear. There had been some discussion with families about projects generating pay, and the general view had been that they did not want pay to become an issue for the welfare benefits of people with learning disabilities. However, it was unclear to us whether there was a clear way forward for the projects and a clear model for whether they would become businesses or not.

The question remains, therefore, whether the Work Projects are fully geared up to helping people into paid work, whether it be in community-based jobs, or through developing wage based social firms. Is it clear to staff and service users that the Work Projects are about preparing people for paid work, and is it geared up to effectively provide people with the skills and the personal preparation to ultimately move through to paid work?

The extent to which the work service is helping people to develop a realistic work ethic and expectation of what jobs are really like, has been questioned. Logically, there is a need for those involved in work preparation to be clear on the training needed for people to become prepared adequately for a job. Relevant accreditation is needed, linked to progression to community-based employment. Do those involved in vocational preparation set out to match their training to the local jobs market or do they instead do “general training?” Is the work environment and the employment culture it produces, accurate in reflecting local community jobs? There is a suggestion that matching training to the local jobs market is the most effective strategy for transitioning people into paid work. Another question is whether the micro-training approaches used by staff within day services and Work Projects are effective in teaching work tasks and routines, and in helping people build the number of hours they can work per week, and the range of tasks they can do successfully?

If the model is unclear, then there is the danger that job referrals generated by Day Services may be unrealistic. There has been some comment that referrals themselves can restrict job finding, with too many requests for 4 hour jobs, to avoid the affects on welfare benefits, and for specific days, to avoid changes in people other routines.

A number of our respondents suggested that there were not enough options in Work Projects for women.

A further issue for Bridgend is whether the base of referral to Elite is too narrow. Some suggested that more referrals should come from Care Managers, Supported Living and other Voluntary Sector providers, as well as from Work Projects and Day Services.

The relationship between social services and college in relation to employment has also been raised as an issue. There is some concern that college performance in the area of employment is not optimal. They provide good basic skills for some, but offer a “revolving door” for others, who do not progress to employment and keep coming back for more training. There may be more the local authority and colleges can do together to provide a stronger route into employment for people with learning disabilities.

For Elite

Clearly the current review exercise has in part been sparked by the perception that Elite is not finding enough jobs. As part of this, Elite has been seen by some as failing to match people to jobs that they have developed skills in through the day service. This is the other side of the criticism of Work Projects that they teach skills that are not matched in the local labour market. For Elite, there is a perception that they are over reliant on food, cleaning, and supermarket trolley jobs. Others have refined this to wonder whether Elite could use their expertise to “socially market” people with learning disabilities in day services to employers to forge effective links for more and better jobs.

There is also a feeling among some within Bridgend that Elite has not fully listened to placement concerns and that not enough feedback gets through on what they do after clients are referred and placed, whether the news is good or bad, or on overall performance of the person. Some saw this lack of a clear picture as representing a lack of on-going support when people were placed and initial training had faded.

There was a concern that Elite did not sell themselves enough, and that there is a need for more written information for those potentially involved in employment and referral. The question was raised as to whether the Elite service to Bridgend was too reliant on one worker, and whether Bridgend might benefit from being part of other projects that Elite developed, such as their transition work?

Some noted that parents can be unsupportive of paid employment, and the question of whose role it was to tackle this systematically was raised.

For service users

Those people with learning disabilities who have work recognise the value of work to them, and where they are employed, people like to talk about their work. They also saw a role for both Bridgend Day Services and Elite in helping them to find work. They are not totally naive, and recognise that there are attitudinal barriers to becoming employed for some people with disabilities, and also for some carers. They recognise a need for experience to accessing employment, including the need for work trials, relevant skill opportunities, and relevant qualifications. People also recognise that there is competition “out there” and that its not easy to find a job. Some people are not clear what the process of getting a job is and, where they have tried, why it has not been successful for them.

For Cross-disability and other issues

We raised the issue of a cross-disability approach to community-based employment support. We found that there is no real understanding of what a cross-disability initiative might look like. However, there did seem to be a consensus that similar issues are faced by people with a range of disabilities in relation to employment, in that there is a need across the board for:

- Effective training and qualification
- Work placement
- Move on from segregated schemes
- Job support

There also seems to be a wide spread view that Bridgend needs to do more as an employer, to employ people with disabilities.

It was suggested that there may be benefit in thinking around age related themes- such as transition, to develop any cross-disability employment initiative. There was also said to be a need for more thinking around mainstream initiatives to underpin further employment, such as Community First Partnerships, Regeneration initiatives, and European funding.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Our conclusion is that there is broad support for the partnership between Elite and Bridgend to continue, and to develop. There are problems in the way that the current arrangements are working on both sides of the contract relationship, and there are significant issues that have to be resolved by each partner. However, employment is still regarded as a key area by Bridgend, despite barriers of work availability, welfare benefit rules, and negative attitudes towards disability and employment in society. There is a need to look at people's progress to employment as an integrated process combining work preparation and advocacy activities within Day Services, and particularly Work Projects, with work trial operated by Day Services and Elite, and job finding and placement, currently provided by Elite. It is unlikely that unilateral action by either party will lead to more and higher quality jobs. If more people are to move into employment, there is a good case for closer joint working and planning between Bridgend and Elite, in the context of Bridgend's day service reform and inclusion strategic aims. Our specific recommendations follow.

1. There is a need for greater joint-working in training to improve throughput to paid employment
 - 1.1. There are likely to be benefits through sharing expertise between ELITE and Day Services in the areas of CV development, work experience planning, assessment (particularly Vocational Profiling) and on-the-job training
 - 1.2. Joint work is needed to identify the most relevant local employment sectors for the people coming through Work Projects and the skills required for these people to be successful in these community-based jobs
 - 1.3. Joint work is needed to ensure that the work environments and the skills, including soft skills, developed through Work Projects are as far as possible realistic and reflect the local jobs market
 - 1.4. We must include more options for women in Work Projects and community jobs
 - 1.5. Work-based experiences should form a part of this progressive matching of skills and workplace
 - 1.6. Joint efforts should reflect the anticipated move towards Social Firms and Bridgend offering its own long-term jobs within projects
2. Bridgend Work Projects need to continue to develop an assessment and career development process, linked ultimately to open employment as a possibility
 - 2.1. Work Projects should avoid unrestricted referral into projects leading to "saturation" and reduced opportunity for new entrants and existing workers alike
 - 2.2. There should be greater emphasis on people's development towards employment as part of the "contract" between service users and the Work Projects
 - 2.3. Vocational input by colleges need to be increasingly integrated with this employment development agenda
3. Greater joint work in job development
 - 3.1. Over time, jobs found by Elite should better reflect the skills people are developing through the Work Projects, given that this development would

itself be linked as much as possible to the realistic requirements of community jobs

- 3.2. There should be further joint work to develop specific relationships between local employers and Day Service clients, to underpin the delivery of good work-tryout opportunities and subsequent “reasonable adjustment” to deliver paid jobs for people with learning disabilities
 - 3.3. Consideration should be given by both partners to the creation of group and “distributed” enclave arrangements to blend Day Service’s Social Firm development and open employment
 - 3.4. Further joint work should be considered within operational divisions of Bridgend as a Unitary Authority and other public sector employers to:
 - raise awareness of the capacity of people with learning disabilities to work
 - raise awareness of reasonable adjustment strategies that can help people become successfully employed
 - provide in addition to paid jobs, opportunities for work-tryout and opportunities to develop these into paid jobs
4. Greater joint work in developing demand
- 4.1. There is a need for sustained work on raising awareness of employment within potential referrers in Community Support Teams, group living and supported living providers and others to :
 - raise the levels of referral of people with learning disabilities from Bridgend
 - ensure a broader ability caseload for Elite that offers both challenges and successes
 - 4.2. Increasingly publicise job successes within the service and the Authority with the help of self-advocates and parents to:
 - highlight successes and outcomes for people of employment
 - raise awareness of the reality of risk and benefit issues
 - continue to build knowledge of the issues among other advocates- Care Managers, Day Service staff, Transition workers etc.
5. Greater joint work in making the service flexible and responsive and to build positive reputation
- 5.1. Elite should ensure more feedback is delivered to an individual’s key stakeholders, even when there is “no news,” and that decision making is transparent to all concerned
 - 5.2. Bridgend should ensure that information on work and jobs is fed back to all relevant people to ensure a clear picture of progress is achieved
 - 5.3. To this end there should be regular meetings established at operational level to:
 - develop and bring forward referrals for work trials and supported jobs
 - discuss progress on individual cases
 - analyse failures in existing jobs, to fully understand the causes, and revise practice in Elite and Day Services accordingly
 - remove internal barriers to progress of employment
 - identify further joint working on assessment and other issues already mentioned
6. Joint work to extend funding opportunities

- 6.1. There is room for pursuing joint funding opportunities to further the joint working, building on different expertise from Bridgend and Elite
- 6.2. Elite should look at ways to open up opportunities offered through its other developmentally funded projects to Bridgend (e.g. transition)
- 6.3. There should be a review of the current contract between Bridgend and Elite to provide for a wider relationship, with a further review period to gauge success
- 6.4. It is clear that the current level of funding of Elite will not allow for the more integrated joint working envisaged. Any review of the contract should look at the level of resources in the contract, wider sources of funding, existing Bridgend staff resources and how they are committed, to see how the more integrated approach may be delivered jointly
- 6.5. Bridgend and Elite should consider funding options across wider client groups (particularly mental health), not to dilute effort, but to achieve more employment staff and better economies of scale.