

Response to the Consultation on the Green Paper

Helping People to Work

Or

A New Deal for Welfare: Empowering People to Work:

from the

**National Advisory Group on Learning Disabilities and
Ethnicity**

April 2006

Introduction

The National Advisory Group on Learning Disabilities and Ethnicity is coordinated by the Foundation for People with Learning Disabilities. It aims to influence policy and government plans to make sure they meet the needs of people with learning disabilities from minority ethnic communities and their families.

The group includes members from People First, The Foundation for People with Learning Disabilities, the National Learning Disability and Ethnicity Network led by ARC, the Ethnicity Training Network at Leeds University, a family carer from the Learning Disability Task Force, Values into Action, Mencap, the Disability Rights Commission, the Social Care Institute for Excellence and the Race Equality Unit.

Its co-chairs are Richard West and Professor Zenobia Nadirshaw.

Members discussed the Green Paper at the last meeting of the group on March 28, 2006. The self advocates in the group led the discussion. Afterwards some members gave their ideas about the paper by email.

Getting a job

Members said that many people with learning disabilities want to work, but often they have never worked. We do not know the exact numbers of people with learning disabilities who have a job, but it is somewhere between 10% and 17%.

We do not know how many come from minority ethnic communities.

For people with learning disabilities, it is not about getting back to work, it is about getting a job in the first place.

The members believe people often discriminate against people with learning disabilities and it is hard for them to get a job. Getting a job is even more difficult for people with learning disabilities from minority ethnic communities, due to the strong prejudices and negative attitudes that exist in Britain today.

It is important that there are a range of jobs for people with learning disabilities. Too often the jobs available are menial and low paid. Sometimes there is little incentive to get a job.

Advice, information and support

Members described advisers in job centres plus as often afraid of people with learning disabilities. Some have training to work with people with learning disabilities. Others do not.

Personal advisers need to be trained by people with learning disabilities, including people with learning disabilities from minority ethnic communities. They need to understand each person's capabilities.

It is important that there is follow up if someone has had advice. Members had had bad experiences where they had heard no more after a meeting.

There is a lack of information about getting support to get a job. The information needs to be easyread and in different languages. The group was very concerned that the easyread version of the Green Paper was not ready at the time the paper was published.

Members welcome the opportunity to have support to make plans as the Green Paper suggests. They would value the support of advocates.

Employers

Employers need incentives to create jobs, Currently there are not enough jobs for the number of people who are expected to be looking for them.

Employers, including employers from minority ethnic communities, need support and advice about providing employment for people with learning disabilities and about making reasonable adjustments.

Employment programmes and supported employment

Members said that people with learning disabilities may find it difficult to get jobs under the government's current programmes.

For example it is harder for people with learning disabilities to get on the Access to Work programme. People often need ongoing support.

The supported employment model is very helpful to people with learning disabilities. If someone with learning disabilities also has mental health problems, their need for support will fluctuate and this needs to be taken into account.

Preparation for work

Schools and colleges should prepare people with learning disabilities for work. People may need travel programmes.

Young people and their families from minority ethnic communities need support during the transition from full time education and the opportunity to consider and prepare for paid employment.

Benefits

It is good that there are plans that people with learning disabilities and high support needs can get higher benefits. It should not be assumed however that they do not wish to work.

People are scared of coming off benefits. It needs to be easier for people with learning disabilities to move from benefits to work and if necessary back to benefits again.

People with learning disabilities should have support from people who know them well if they want to appeal about decisions that personal advisers make about work and benefits.

Conclusion

The group is pleased that the government is going to give more help to people to get jobs. Members want the plans to be sensitive to the needs of people with learning disabilities from minority ethnic communities and hope their suggestions will be followed.

Hazel Morgan, Co Director
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On behalf of the National Advisory Group on Learning Disabilities and Ethnicity