

Supported Shared Apprenticeships in South Wales

What we have learned



This document was written by **Dr Elisa Vigna and Andrea Meek** from the **National Centre for Mental Health at Cardiff University**. It is an easy read version of ‘**Influencing and Informing Engage to Change, Supported Shared Apprenticeships in South Wales**’.

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How to use this document



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Words in **bold blue writing** may be hard to understand. You can check what the words in blue mean on **page 19**.



Where the document says **we**, this means **Influencing and Informing Engage to Change**. For more information contact:

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What this paper is about

This paper is about:



- job coach support,



- provided through 2 different types of **apprenticeship** programmes.

An **apprenticeship** means working and learning at the same time. A person doing an **apprenticeship** is called an **apprentice**.

We looked at job coach support provided through:



- **Supported Apprenticeships**

This is where **apprentices** get support from a job coach.



- **Supported Shared Apprenticeships**

This is where the supported employment agency acts as the employer and pays the wages. **Apprentices** get support from a job coach.



Apprentices will be able to work in up to 3 different workplaces.



Over time the actual workplace will hopefully take over as the employer.



This paper looks at support provided by:

- ELITE Supported Employment Agency
- Cardiff and Vale College
- and Cambrian Training.

About Engage to Change



Engage to Change was a project that ran for 7 years in Wales.



It gave people with a learning disability and autism support to get ready for employment and get a paid job.



Over 1000 young people were supported through the project.



Learning Disability Wales
Anabledd Dysgu Cymru

Learning Disability Wales led the project.



ELITE and Agoriad Cyf provided supported employment.



The National Centre for Mental Health (NCMH) carried out research to find out what works.



We found that job coach support, and support based on individual needs works best.



In 2021 we ran a trial **Supported Apprenticeship programme**. It included job coaching.



This ended in 2023, but it worked well. It resulted in **Supported Shared Apprenticeships** funded by Welsh Government. **Supported Shared Apprenticeships** are available across Wales.

More about Supported Apprenticeships



Supported **Apprenticeships** provide an important way of getting young people with a learning disability into a job.



They provide learning and experience while the young person gets the support that they need.



It is really important that there are equal chances for disabled people to get **apprenticeships**.

Supported Employment Agencies



There can be a lot of challenges for people with a learning disability and autism to work.



Supported Employment Agencies give people the support they need to find the right job for them.



They also work with employers and give advice about things like welfare benefits. And they support the young person to learn the job role.

Training providers



Training providers offer support with the education side of **apprenticeships**.



They provide the training the young person needs to help them in their job. And gain qualifications.



Mencap say there are still some challenges for people with a learning disability to get **apprenticeships**.



For example, some ask for maths and English qualifications, even though they are not needed for the job itself.



People are also concerned that they will get left out when they tell their employer about the support they need.

The Supported Apprenticeship Programme in South Wales



ELITE had 134 referrals for support from 2022 to 2023. Many young people referred themselves. Some came from other projects and organisations.



Some people were unable to get onto the programme. This was because of issues like:

- 1 person not living in the right area
- 5 people not having the right qualifications
- 41 people withdrew for unknown reasons.



In January 2024 there were 25 young people on the 6-month work preparation programme. This is to get them ready for the **supported apprenticeship**.



There were 24 young people on the **supported apprenticeship programme**. And 17 people were being assessed.

More about the young people involved



Almost 7 in 10 young people being referred were male.



The average age was 24.



The young people had different needs. For example:

- 17 had autism
- 3 had a learning disability
- 3 had a learning difficulty
- 10 had both a learning disability and autism.
- 10 had autism and specific learning difficulties.
- 2 had a physical disability
- 2 had a sensory disability

Supported Apprenticeship and Supported Shared Apprenticeship



27 supported **apprenticeship** programmes were delivered in different work places.

Types of jobs



The young people were supported into lots of different types of jobs.



The most popular was Business Administration. Followed by Customer Service and then Cleaning and Support Services.



Other types of jobs were in fashion, healthcare, a gym, providing food and drink, gardening and in a warehouse.

What works



Researchers interviewed 2 staff members from ELITE. They discussed what helps get young people into a **Supported Shared Apprenticeship** programme.

Here are some of the things they think are needed:



- Match people to jobs carefully.



- Make sure the young person understands what a supported **apprenticeship** involves.



- Job coaching from the Employment Agency is really important.



- Organisations need to work well together and be clear with each other.



- Match people to the right **apprenticeship** for them.



- Support and courses before the **apprenticeship** starts is important.



- Think about all of the young person's needs. This is called **reasonable adjustments**.



- Make sure the job centre, Careers Wales and others understand what **Supported Shared Apprenticeships** are.

Things to think about



Supported Apprenticeships are a great way of supporting people with a learning disability or autism to find work.



Young people who already had some work experience were more likely to get a job.



In this report, about 6 in 10 young people already had some work experience.



It is important to make sure everyone involved is clear about:

- what supported **apprenticeships** involve
- and what they can expect.



Lowering the grade of joining the **apprenticeship** means more people could take part.



It is really important for young people to have an assessment to check the **supported apprenticeship** is right for them.



There needs to be changes to the entry levels needed in maths and English. This is to make it more suitable for people with learning disabilities and autism.



Employers need to be given reasons to offer **supported apprenticeships**. This will help make sure disabled people are more included in the workplace.



There needs to be a plan in place for Wales about job coaching. Job coaching support should be given to anyone who needs it.



A review of the **Supported Shared Apprenticeships** programmes needs to be carried out for the whole of Wales.



More support time may be needed for some young people.



There is not enough evidence about the effects the programmes have on getting a job long-term yet.



But job coaching seems to be an important part of including people with a learning disability or autism.

Hard words

Apprenticeship

An apprenticeship means working and learning at the same time. A person doing an apprenticeship is called an apprentice.

