In Business
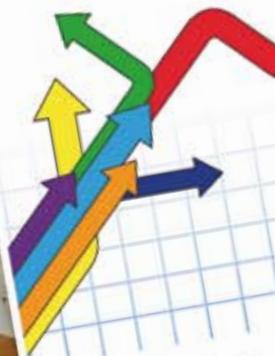
Developing the self employment option
for people with learning disabilities

Programme Report

In Business

**Developing a
Business Idea**

In Business

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for people with learning disabilities

Programme Report

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People with learning disabilities have talents and skills, but rarely do they get the chance to start their own business. In Business was designed to challenge this and to make self employment a realistic option for some by setting out to support and capture the journey to business for people with a learning disability and those who support them. In Business had a particular focus on:

- innovation and developing business opportunities

- enterprise development, planning, research and feasibility

- service delivery change and developing support structures.

The way services are being designed and delivered is changing. A general move towards self directed support coupled with the accompanying individualised budgets heralds a move away from centre based services, enabling individuals to have greater control over the support they receive.

Encouraging innovation linked to the particular interests and skills of the individual is central to person centred approaches, and a particular challenge is to support the development of creative ideas.

Supporting realistic business and financial planning processes requires the introduction of market based approaches. Many people within support services are encouraged to produce things as part of their 'experience'. Such products, however, are often based on the ability to produce and rarely are they developed with a market or customer orientated approach.

In all respects, In Business sought to capture the journey, identify the barriers and produce appropriate and accessible guidance.

In Business worked primarily in four pilot sites, chosen to enable the project to work in both rural and urban economies and with both statutory and voluntary organisations.

Sixty-one individuals were supported to explore options and a further 20 people in small groups have worked on business ideas. The enterprise ideas explored included music workshops, dog walking, car washing and plastic recycling.

Successful business development was more likely to occur where an individual's skills, interest or aspiration met a genuine community need or headache, in that an ability to deliver a product or service needed to be based on a clear demand, either existing or created for that product or service.

There is a lack of in-depth knowledge about business processes. Unsurprisingly, paid care staff were not always business-minded, or attuned to the idea that self-employment is a realistic option for people with learning disabilities.

RED (Rapid Enterprise Development) workshops have been specially designed to take the participants (people with a learning disability and support workers) through a basic business

Executive Summary

planning process.

For almost all of the people supported during the project, the establishment of a business support circle enhanced the opportunities and support across all aspects of an individual's enterprise.

Better results were achieved when supporting people with a combination of day care and external support, although for some there was a reluctance to allow the business to develop at a pace that was considered too rapid.

Getting into business can be relatively straightforward, yet some people perceive it as a complicated process, while others make it unnecessarily so. Initial enthusiasm for a good idea can be undermined or dissipated either by a lack of ambition (sometimes in the guise of supporters' resistance to change) or unrealistic expectations that self-employment will be the whole answer to achieving a person's goals.

The In Business programme set out to open the route to self employment to people with a learning disability and those that support them. We have found that, for some, self employment offers a natural and comfortable route to work and that with the right support; it is not only possible but indeed desirable to do so.

Background and Introduction

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There are approximately 800,000 adults with learning disabilities of working age in the UK. It was recently estimated that in England only 11% have a paid job, often part-time, and benefits are currently organised in a way that does not anticipate that most people with learning disabilities will ever work. The Department for Work and Pensions report 'Working Lives'[1] concluded that day centres were poorly prepared for moving people into jobs and that links with specialist agencies should be strengthened if employment goals are to be achieved. The Foundation's policy briefing on employment and people with learning disabilities also highlighted that people with learning disabilities want a job and can make a valuable contribution through work[2].

One of the options available to people who are interested in work is the establishment of their own small business. Experience from the US has shown that the small business model is a way to link innovation with a particular interest of a person with a learning disability. It also has the potential to maximise their earning potential through employment and give them more control over their lives, while demonstrating the contribution that a person with a learning disability can make to their local community.

In Business set out to support more people with a learning disability to have their own business. It had a particular focus on encouraging innovation and researching the viability of each small business suggestion. Developing and testing the feasibility of business opportunities and changing the way support services are delivered were all part of this project.

The In Business project included four primary sites across England, each supporting up to 8 people with learning disabilities to become 'entrepreneurs' and establish their own small businesses. The key features of the project were that:

- the In Business project manager advised paid support staff, families and entrepreneurs about accessing small business loans and grants, budgeting and debt management and how to navigate the benefits and tax systems in relation to self-employment

- each entrepreneur was supported to develop their own business plan based on their interests and abilities

- staff members and family members were engaged and trained in order to support the entrepreneurs

- banks, small business advisers and mainstream employment services have been engaged in this project from its early stages.

This report provides a narrative for the first two years of the project. It describes the sites that took part, the role of the project manager, the support provided to each of the sites and some of the outcomes achieved by the entrepreneurs. The report also identifies what worked well during the

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[1] Beyer *et al.* (2004) Working lives: The role of day centres in supporting people with learning disabilities into employment. Leeds: Department for Work and Pensions

[2] Available at http://www.learningdisabilities.org.uk/information/issues/education-and-employment/daytime-opportunities/?EntryId5=15060

project, what was less successful and what needs to be done to make self-employment one of the default options for people with learning disabilities in the future.

The findings from the project are being disseminated, providing 'real life' examples of small businesses. Guidance has been designed to stimulate new and innovative ways of supporting people with learning disabilities to start up their own business and/or become self-employed. In Business has provided direction to local policy and practice by illustrating new pathways to small business development, how to access start-up funding, how to explore self-employment and entrepreneurial endeavours, and advice about tackling the barriers presented by the benefits system. An accessible version has been produced for potential entrepreneurs.

The Project Sites

The project sites were chosen to reflect a range of experiences and situations common to people with a learning disability; from both rural and urban economies, covering areas with differing experiences of deprivation, and involving both local authorities and voluntary sector organisations. Pen-pictures of the sites and the partners to the project are provided below.

Cornwall Council, the second local authority to act as a pilot site, was chosen as a large rural county. The county recently adopted a unitary authority structure with a single tier of local government.

Cornwall has one of the lowest population densities of the English counties, although it has also experienced one of the highest rates of population growth in the last 20 years, partly due to the inward migration of older people settling there in retirement. While Cornwall as an administrative entity is one of the poorest areas of the UK, with GDP at only 62% of the national average and high levels of unemployment, there are great disparities in the distribution of wealth within its borders, which contain some of the most deprived as well as some of the most affluent wards in England.

The economy depends heavily on the tourist industry (accounting for a quarter of GDP) and farming and food production. The county is also renowned for its rich artistic heritage, which has spawned significant creative industries such as graphic and product design, web design, architecture, photography, art and crafts. There has also been an emphasis on environmental and sustainability issues. Because of its economic status, Cornwall is one of four areas in the UK to receive grants from the EU Social Fund and has twice been awarded European Objective 1 funding: the current 5 year award of £445 million was made in 2008.

Cornwall has recently undergone extensive reviews of its services to people with a learning disability.

Independent Options is a small voluntary sector organisation that helps people with learning disabilities to access leisure and social opportunities in mainstream society. Their services include short break holidays (including hotel provision) and a range of accommodation options, including supported tenancy, adult placements and managing their own homes.

The Project Sites

Waltham Forest is an Outer London Borough and one of five Boroughs in East London hosting the 2012 Olympics. Out of the 376 local government districts in England and Wales, Waltham Forest is home to the 11th largest non-white minority ethnic population. It is also an area of significant deprivation, ranking 19th for over-crowded housing conditions, 29th for unemployment and 17th for number of single-parent households.

The local authority supports adults with learning disabilities through a wide range of day services, day centres and supported employment initiatives.

The Care Management Group is a large independent sector provider of learning disability services in the South East of England and other areas. It supports nearly 600 people with learning disabilities and associated complex needs through domiciliary care, supported living and residential services. It also supports people to access employment, education and leisure services.

Individuals, groups and supporter organisations from other areas expressing an interest in exploring self employment and small business ownership have also been helped.

Role of the In Business Manager

Role of the In Business Manager

The In Business Manager adapted the support he provided to suit the needs of each site and the different approaches to enterprise development that were pursued: "The important bit is that the enterprise is built around the individual rather than the individual fitting into an enterprise". A learning point from the project therefore concerns the motivation of potential entrepreneurs. However, from an early stage the project manager found that, for whatever reason, people with learning disabilities "weren't coming along and saying 'what I've always wanted is to be self-employed'"; the partner organisations had "put the [In Business] sign on the door and nobody came". It appeared that, with a few exceptions, self employment was simply not on most people's radar.

As a consequence all the partner organisations recognised that the businesses developed during the project were likely to grow faster than the individuals' understanding of the concept of self-employment. An important principle for the project was therefore to ensure that the partner organisations worked in a person-centred way by linking business ideas to what people enjoy and are good at. It was apparent that certain necessary, though not sufficient, conditions underpinned the successful application of the project in this respect: first, a solid infrastructure to support employment initiatives, and second, an environment that encouraged new ways of supporting people with learning disabilities. In Cornwall these conditions took the form of:

- recent investment in the service infrastructure, around person-centred planning, employment initiatives linked with European Convergence (objective 1) funding, the community placement team (which supports disabled people into employment), and dedicated resources to modernise day services

- re-provision of support from the old hospital regime, which not only threw up a number of people looking for new things to do, but also a cadre of support workers tasked with getting to know them, what they like, what they want to do.

Within this context, the In Business Manager undertook a number of tasks.

I) Providing advice and information

In two areas, a key part of the role of the In Business Manager was the provision of business advice which was advertised as, "come to me with half an idea and I'll show you how to test it, measure and plan for it; the guy who will do the technical bits". He explained the added value of the advice offered in the context of the project: "we can all be business advisers when it comes to the ideas, but the key to it is to understand exactly how it will be made to work, who you have to talk to, and how we can use language understood by all".

The project manager was a navigator and signposter for individuals and their supporters, in the guise of a 'critical friend'. At one site, for example, a care manager approached him with a potential business idea for a young woman who would shortly be leaving residential college. "During the conversation it became clear that [the care manager and the parents] needed to hone down the idea to identify one unit of sale and focus on the bit that they are going to do."

ii) Influencing cultures

Adapting standard business advice to the learning disability and social care context became a core component of the In Business Manager role. The project identified the wider cultural implications of people with learning disabilities being in business. This entailed challenging some assumptions about what constitutes a business: "part of my job is about changing the measuring stick. No one says that a business must earn a certain amount of money".

Attitudes prevalent in social care services that had the effect of limiting the entrepreneurial opportunities available to people with learning disabilities included:

- "We are not allowed to put people into situations that are risky"

- "If it isn't going to last forever, we are not allowed to start"

- "If it involves something we've never done before, we need to get permission"

- "There are more reasons not to do something than there are to do it."

In Business therefore had to address the issue of how specialist learning disability services can support people to establish their own businesses as it became apparent that the project did not fit easily within established categories of support for this group.

This prompted a series of reflective questions about the balance of the project: was it about employment with a bit of person-centred planning and social care? Or was it about person-centred planning and social care with a bit of employment? Perhaps it fits more naturally within the wider agenda about social inclusion and citizenship.

iii) Developing resources

In Business has produced a set of resources designed to help people with learning disabilities and their supporters to think about and set up a business[3]. The resources include:

- a Business Planning Workbook providing an accessible and practical route to exploring a business option, refining the opportunity together with a basic feasibility process.

- a short guide to setting up a small business includes:

  - an overview of the process of becoming self employed

  - planning and developing the venture

  - ensuring that personal and business obligations are met, such as registering as self employed with HMRC and

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[3] All resources are available for download from the Foundation's website:
http://www.learningdisabilities.org.uk/our-work/employment/in-business

- notifying the DWP of income in line with relevant welfare benefit regulations

- writing a business plan, which builds on the workbook above and outlines the chapters required to capture the business successfully in a plan

- an easy to use financial spreadsheet to enable entrepreneurs to input specific financial information relevant to their ventures with variables such as sales and staffing support included on adjoining pages. This will help to ascertain the projected cash potential for the business ventures

- an easy break-even analysis worksheet to help work out what levels of production or delivery make a particular business viable.

We are delighted that the resources developed by the Foundation and the In Business project have been cited in the new Cross Government Employment Strategy – Valuing Employment Now[4].

In order to continue to build an understanding of self employment within the learning disability sector and open up self employment and small business ownership as a realistic route to employment for some, In Business and the Foundation for People with Learning Disabilities worked with partners from the social enterprise and social care sectors to establish a social enterprise - RED Initiatives CIC.

RED (Rapid Enterprise Development) is a community interest (not for profit) company that provides a wide range of supports, resources and interventions around self employment. Underpinned by a 'shared open resource' website www.redcic.com, RED runs business development workshops delivered around specific 'enterprise tables'. They use a range of interactive sessions and role play to work out the basics of a business idea, from marketing to finance, and the viability of the idea. Participants and their support workers finish the two day session with the confidence and the basics of a business plan to work on. These are backed up with ongoing mentoring support to the individual.

iv) Linking with the mainstream

A key task for the In Business Manager has been to forge links between the learning disability sector and mainstream employment and business support services. For example, contact with JobCentre Plus is crucial to access many of the Government's specialist employment services and to ensure welfare benefit 'better off' calculations are made on an individual basis. In response to this need Cornwall's community placement officers put entrepreneurs in touch with a business advisor who could show them a number of income scenarios and what effect they would have on current benefit provision.

Various Business Link offices have been engaged in the project and work is continuing to help these agencies find the best ways to support local people with a learning disability. An article about the In

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[4] Valuing Employment Now: real jobs for people with learning disabilities. (2009) London: Department of Health

Business programme has appeared in the British Chamber of Commerce members newsletter and the In Business Manager sits on Business Link London's Learning Disability Network.

Specific local initiatives to link with mainstream services have included engaging Tamar Enterprise in Cornwall to support one young man to look at his business, while Independent Options was able to take advantage of a bespoke service from Economic Partnerships that offers specialist business support across the UK and Europe and that has significant experience within the social enterprise sector.

v) Facilitating peer support and networking

Website. In Business has a dedicated web page on the Foundation's site that will offer a range of links, stories and resources in due course. This is supplemented by the dedicated RED website as outlined above – www.redcic.com - providing a range of tools and resources, case studies and a number of enterprise ideas for people to think about.

E-group. In Business established an e-group that linked the pilot sites together to enable them to share information and seek advice. Members of the Foundation's team of consultants and researchers joined the e-group, thus widening the expertise available to people at the pilot sites. However, the e-group was not used routinely, perhaps reflecting the problems of such networks with very limited numbers. Inter-site meetings and exchanges were therefore arranged to provide opportunities for sites to make further links, visits and support.

Other dissemination activity. In Business has encouraged participation in the project and will publish the learning through a number of outlets:

- Foundation Stones Newsletter
- Chamber of Commerce members' mailings
- website information
- In Business project promotional leaflet
- Cornwall celebration event and conference
- communities conference
- Learning Disability Today
- Business Link London – Big Event
- Community Care Live
- In Control – Employment Advisory Group
- Newham Council – Big Employment Event
- In Control – the Big Event

- Business Link London - Learning Disability Advisory Group

- Cross Government Employment Strategy – Social Exclusion Task Force

- Getting a Life project

- Valuing People Support Team.

vi) Developing the sites

In **Waltham Forest** the In Business Manager supported a steering group consisting of a number of local authority managers, each with particular responsibility for supporting people to develop person centred approaches through a range of activities, services and programmes:

- a number of individuals were identified who either had an interest in self employment itself or a set of skills and interests that could be developed through a small business

- the In Business Manager provided a range of business planning support, assistance in developing a product or service, market niche advice and guidance around financial forecasting and marketing

- regular steering group meetings were held to work through business ideas collectively

- links were established with local support agencies with special regard to individual benefits advice, access to Government (DWP) based specialist employment support initiatives and longer term and sustainable support

- a RED (Rapid Enterprise Development – see above) workshop was run to enhance the business planning skills of the individuals and their support circles and to assist in the business planning cycle. A series of surgeries are planned to further the ventures beyond the initial two year piloting phase of In Business.

In **Cornwall** a steering group consisting of the Community Employment Manager and the Day Services Modernisation Manager met regularly to monitor progress:

- a small amount of extra funding was provided in Cornwall to facilitate the additional intervention required to work with people with higher support needs moving on from long stay hospitals

- individual entrepreneurs and their supporters were engaged to develop their business ideas with the In Business Manager providing one to one support and advice

- two smaller initiatives were introduced to develop entrepreneurial interest locally. 'Take off with a tenner' offered a participant the chance to develop an initial small business idea and to see what profit could be made from a £10 investment. 'Take off with a T-shirt' introduced a competition to win a T-shirt printing press for the most original and well researched business plan

- a pilot workshop was designed to work specifically with people who had an initial idea of what they wanted to do and to support the person (and support group) to develop those ideas, move forward to test a trade position and to develop a 'business circle of support' designed to help a person achieve business success. This was later to inform the basis of the RED offer

- local business support was introduced from a variety of sources. Volunteer Business Mentors, mainstream Enterprise Agencies and Business Link were all used. Crucially, Community Placement Officers were also trained to spot business opportunities and to complete first phase feasibility work.

Independent Options made links with Economic Partnerships to develop opportunities within the In Business programme. Economic Partnerships Limited is a third sector development consultancy experienced in the development of co-operatives, social enterprises and social firms with special regard to working to support people with a disability:

- of significant interest was the use of business mentors drawn from the local business community. The linking of individual entrepreneurs to these mentors was seen as a positive step towards introducing standard mainstream business and project planning processes to the programme

- the In Business Manager supported this process by offering specialist learning disability employment knowledge

- a Steering Group met monthly whilst a larger meeting convened every other month attended by the In Business Manager, Independent Options CEO, Independent Options Trustees, Economic Partnerships and supporting staff.

Within **Care Management Group** (CMG) interest in the project was driven by person centred planning and the desire of a number of tenants of CMG's supported living services to explore self-employment:

- CMG's starting point was to establish local community needs in an attempt to match business development with local demand for products and services. This approach was pursued through a community event to engage with local residents living close to a supported living scheme

- several small business ideas were explored as a result of this initiative and good links were made with the community via an open evening and discussion forums hosted by the potential entrepreneurs

- a RED workshop was held to add some energy to the development process and to build the capacity within the wider organisation

- the In Business Manager continues to provide business support to the Operations Director, whilst broadening support and guidance to the Supported Living Managers.

vii) Contact with other initiatives

The In Business Manager has established and continues to maintain contact with a range of other projects and individuals exploring options around self employment and small business development. In some cases this had been encouraged by the introduction of individualised support systems, whilst other cases followed a continued desire to seek employment suitable for the individual. Business support, advice and guidance were provided as appropriate and the learning from these initiatives will add to the learning overall.

Outcomes

Across all pilots, some 61 individuals have been supported to explore options and a further 20 people in small groups have worked on business ideas. The enterprise ideas explored included music workshops, dog walking, car washing and plastic recycling. A list of the participants pursuing these ideas is shown in Appendix 1. As expected, and as part of the development process, some of the disabled entrepreneurs decided that either their ideas were unlikely to become viable as a business or that alternative routes to employment were more appropriate for them.

i) Factors influencing change

Self employment presents most of the barriers to work experienced by people using other work routes, such as benefits, in addition to the perceived barrier of being self employed itself. Yet support for self-employment is also available from the same Government schemes as for other types of employment such as Access to Work, while self-employment can offer a solution to the issue of transport of an individual who either works from home or offers a service within a local community.

Most pilot sites worked with the assumption that self employment will enable an individual to limit earnings, and thus not result in a reduction in welfare benefits, fitting with most individuals' preference for initial 'test trading' that offers a 'toe in the water' approach to setting up a business.

ii) What has worked well?

The project has stimulated people with learning disabilities to come up with ideas for enterprise and express an interest in setting up a business. This has resulted in a range of business ideas from people of various abilities.

Successful business development was more likely to occur where an individual's skills, interest or aspiration met a genuine community need or headache, in that an ability to deliver a product or service needed to be based on a clear demand, either existing or created for that product or service.

Success was further more likely for people with higher support needs and less understanding of money whose incentive was not financially focused. For example, one man's motivation for developing a business was to use the income generated by it to purchase leisure and travel activities.

For almost all of the people supported during the project, the establishment of a business support circle enhanced the opportunities and support across all aspects of an individual's enterprise. In particular, it was important for circles to cover:

- general business advice - including feasibility, planning, registration, etc.

- sector specific advice - for example, seeking horticultural expertise to support one man with his plant growing business

- personal/employment support - with knowledge of DWP employment programmes, benefits.

Outcomes

RED workshops were rated highly by participants in Cornwall, Wimbledon and Waltham Forest, with additional RED 'tasters' delivered in various locations in the North East and Newham. RED workshops have been specially designed to take the participants (people with a learning disability and support workers) through a basic business planning process. Using innovative techniques to avoid over reliance on the written word, RED utilises a series of posters to capture the business proposition,

Case Study

Delroy Smith is a 47 year old man who lives in a residential care home in Bristol with two-to-one support from the Brandon Trust. Delroy does not use spoken language.

Whilst developing his person-centred plan and thinking about how Delroy could be helped to find work, his support team realised that Delroy really liked to tidy the plastic bottles at his home and recycle them. This led to a small idea about providing a recycling service in the neighbourhood.

Having contacted the In Business programme for some business advice and help moving this idea forward, including a discussion about test trading, a leaflet was designed offering a collection and recycling service around his local community. Although Bristol has an extensive recycling scheme, there is no plastic collection. This must go to bottle banks, but this usually means storing a pile of empty milk bottles somewhere first.

The uptake was swift and very quickly a small round was formed.

Delroy is supported to collect and recycle bottles from his local community and levies a small charge for the service. In doing so he has developed his own small business and an employment opportunity where previously he was seen as unlikely to work. Utilising one passion, for recycling plastic, has allowed him to pursue another: trains and buses. With income from his business he was supported to enjoy a weekend trip to London, experiencing the full range of tourist activities and enjoying a break that he had never experienced before.

The In Business programme has supported Delroy to develop a business centred around his skills and interests that meets a local community 'headache' and offers him a chance to enjoy the fruits of his labour.

Delroy's entrepreneurial achievement was recognised in October last year when he was short-listed for the 2008 Awards for Excellence in Recycling and Waste Management.

including market research, customer profile, breakeven point. These accessible workshops are delivered around specific 'enterprise tables' and bring together an individual's emerging business circle to take the ideas forward. Business mentoring is offered to develop the ideas further after the workshops.

A specially designed RED was also developed to train Community Support Workers through the business planning process from initial idea to outline business plan, financials and marketing. The RED programme is shown in Appendix 2.

iii) What has not worked so well?

Some initiatives (such as the two competitions in Cornwall) received a poor response. This may have been because other changes were absorbing support staff time and attention, deflecting them away from developing employment and self employment opportunities.

Key people, such as family and friends, have been slow to come on board and participate actively. This may reflect concerns about losing current services if self-employment is pursued as an option and indicate some mistrust of council services. Others doubted whether their sons or daughters had the ability to succeed, reflecting the experience of many employment related developments.

There is some evidence, however, where a few individuals have been exploring self employment options, that this activity has generated further interest amongst their peers. This is particularly true of Cornwall, where, as we have seen, there is a significant economic leaning towards self employment and small business ownership within the wider community.

iv) Being in the social care system

Research has suggested that employment (and self employment) is difficult to manage from within the day care setting. The Department for Work and Pensions report 'Working Lives' concluded that day centres were often ill equipped to support people to pursue employment goals. People who generally have a busy day with leisure activities are less likely to change the pattern of their daytime activity and therefore find it difficult to explore employment. They may have had limited opportunities to make informed choices and limited experience of a work ethic (getting to work on time, etc.). This was borne out by the experience of In Business. Many participants found it difficult to develop their particular business idea from within day centres, either because there was simply not the resource to allocate individual support time to plan and research business opportunities or because the key staff did not possess the skills required.

Better results were achieved when supporting people with a combination of day care and external support, although for some there was a reluctance to allow the business to develop at a pace that was considered too rapid.

Outcomes

v) Working in the system

There is a lack of in-depth knowledge about business processes. Unsurprisingly, paid care staff were not always business-minded, or attuned to the idea that self-employment is a realistic option for people with learning disabilities. Staff sometimes needed permission to be creative, to find new solutions to old problems. Sometimes they simply lacked the confidence, motivation, or commitment

Case Study

David lives in Cornwall and attends a large day centre in Liskeard, one of the harder areas to get a job in a county that has already been defined as an Objective 1 area and whose economy is therefore considered 75% or less of the European average. David likes gardening but has serious health support needs and so requires constant support or at least someone close by at all times.

A couple of years ago David heard about In Business and asked his support worker to get in touch with the programme. David was particularly annoyed at the removal of the incentive pay, where service users got given a pound or two each week to attend the day centre. He wanted to replace this income and more.

David was invited to a RED business planning workshop run by In Business where people with a learning disability and those who support them were invited to develop a business plan over two days and to learn many of the skills needed to take things forward. As a result of the workshop, David had a basic business plan and had identified that, like most people, he needed support with the business in general, support with his particular sector – in his case growing coleus plants – and help with the personal side: benefits, housing, etc.

In Business has been able to develop a business support circle, find a business mentor (a horticulturalist) and, in partnership with the local authority, an employment support worker. The mentor is part of a mainstream mentoring service and so has needed some support in working with people with a learning disability. The first issue was that mentors usually work one to one, so it was important that they were comfortable with the use of support workers. They struggled with this at first, but got the idea when we explained that this is not so different from a deaf person having an interpreter with them during a meeting. Jon now supports David with all the generic business issues, forms, tax office and the like. He also helps a bit with the money.

David has now set up Mr H's Plants and sells at local nurseries and farmers' markets and has a barrow at the end of the drive. We are very excited to see what he earns this summer.

to work in a new way. RED workshops attempted to address this issue by targeting the training as much towards the support staff as the individual.

The problem is most acute in traditional day centres with day centre staff having to juggle priorities. There is also a conflict of seeing employment as a valued activity alongside other traditional 'day care'. There is perceived to be a conflict between care and paid work so that when staff are busy the employment 'project' gets put aside. In some cases, where the idea that getting into business is seen as a day centre based activity, one of the factors that held people back was the risk aversion of day centre workers when things did start to move on.

vi) The role of social care

The question of the proper role of social care support in people's lives was a recurrent issue. In some areas, the rate of change can be described as 'slow but strategic', whilst in others change appeared to be proceeding apace. One local authority, focusing on person centered planning, had a community employment person who tried to incorporate self employment but was not very business minded; specific employment developments got 'lost' in the move to modernise services.

Another manifestation of this was the false expectations of the project apparent in at least three of the sites. People there were familiar with the social enterprise model that the project manager and others have been promulgating for a number of years, but failed to recognise that In Business is a different model that required the business to be based around the individual rather than a group.

What needs to change?

i) From day services to (self) employment

We know from previous research[5] that day services support staff rarely possess the requisite skills to spot business opportunities, let alone to help individuals develop them. This is hardly surprising; good business ideas are hard to come up with and doubly so for people with a learning disability, while much work activity in day centres is based on what people can produce rather than being based on what the market wants. However, opportunities for business development are more likely to flourish where day services establish links with other employment projects and social enterprise.

ii) Enterprise development

There is a general lack of understanding about what a business is, often highlighted by the desire to seek funding rather than using trade income to launch a venture. Where there have been business focused developments, this has tended to be along the lines of social enterprise and focuses on the creation of employment opportunities for small groups rather than for individuals. Such enterprise development is often linked to the modernisation of day services.

Self employment should become one of the default routes to work for people alongside supported and open employment.

iii) Changing the way social care support is delivered

Traditional services tend to be geared up to support groups and conversion to individualised forms of support within local authority settings has been hard to achieve.

In places where there has been significant development in the way that support is arranged, such as the adoption of person centred planning, there is evidence of a higher level of understanding of business support needs. However, In Business can cite early uses of a direct payment to support an individual develop his business, visit suppliers and attend events and this has been shown to be a useful way to support an individual. In one example, a direct payment was used to incorporate enterprise support into a person's care package.

iv) Maintaining momentum

Getting into business can be relatively straightforward, yet some people perceive it as a complicated process, while others make it unnecessarily so. Initial enthusiasm for a good idea can be undermined or dissipated either by a lack of ambition (sometimes in the guise of supporters' resistance to change) or unrealistic expectations that self-employment will be the whole answer to achieving a person's goals.

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[5] Beyer et al. (2004) Working lives: The role of day centres in supporting people with learning disabilities into employment. Leeds: Department for Work and Pensions

What needs to change?

Momentum also relies upon providing the right sort of support at the right time. For example, the initial workshop held in Cornwall boosted the project at a time when initial responses were disappointing. It is also crucial to follow up such training with specific and tailored business support, often focusing on the development of an individual's business circle.

v) Leadership and commitment

Clear commitment and expressed anticipation of positive outcomes from strategic leaders underpinned many of the successes. Where this was articulated within a strategy to commission employment, including self employment, expectations and aspirations were also found to be higher.

There were also shortcomings in local project management with some sites failing to make a realistic assessment of the funding and time commitments required to support the programme. In particular, not enough thought had been given to the time and resources that would be required to translate ideas into practical action. Other areas benefited from external funding and having a clear focus on employment in general.

Conclusions

Conclusions

People tend to choose self-employment for one of three reasons: the business or area of interest lends itself to self-employed status; there is a desire to work for oneself (and the actual business activity is secondary), or it is the option of last resort. Although not exclusively, most people engaging with the In Business process were doing so because other opportunities did not achieve their desired outcome. Mary Jane's story illustrates this dilemma.

The starting point for the project has always been employment based activity. Traditionally there have been a number of routes for people with learning disabilities to achieve employment, but mainly focusing on working for someone else. Although the emergence of the social enterprise sector has provided further alternatives, self-employment should be a realistic option for at least a small number.

Case Study

Mary Jane is a wife and a mum and a person with cerebral palsy and a learning disability who lives in Cornwall.

Once her children started school, Mary Jane was desperate to find work. As her disability means that she has some mobility problems, her business idea was a remote administration service offering companies secretarial services such as typing and admin. Despite some effort contacting local employers, no work was forthcoming.

Mary Jane decided to have a rethink. It was during this process that an idea struck. Mary Jane had been interested in researching family history for years, so would it be possible to offer this as a service to others?

With some support, notably from John Anderson-Riley, an accountant and family friend, Mary Jane developed a business plan and sought further support. She was able to secure some start-up funding through the local Pirate Trust.

Mary also made contact with the In Business Manager who provided business support along the way and helped with marketing and promotions and developing the web site. Scout Enterprises offered local welfare benefits advice through their Pathways to Work contract whilst John offered support with business administration. Such a 'business support circle' is an invaluable support structure for people starting out on their own.

www.familyhistoryresearch4u.co.uk offers a range of services and interesting family tree based products, ideal as gifts and presented in a report containing certificates. Mary Jane enjoys her work and hopes to expand her business in the near future.

However, there are also some sound structural reasons why self-employment could be the best option for some people with learning disabilities, including the National Minimum Wage (NMW), which can be a major issue where the productivity of the business is low. Self-employed people are not subject to the NMW. Also self-employment can offer an individual the chance to slowly build up their hours as the business develops and can avoid the (perceived) 'leap' that is required with other routes to work.

An important part of self-employment for people with learning disabilities is getting everyone involved in thinking about the place of 'risk' and 'failure', since many successful business people will have gone down a number of dead-ends before hitting on a successful formula. This prompts the questions about how we support people with learning disabilities to become self-employed: how long does it take before a business is considered a success? And how do we measure effectiveness?

In Business set out to explore innovation, business planning and service delivery change. The initial assumption was that these would occur in that order, but the project demonstrated that this is not necessarily the case. Moreover the conditions for entrepreneurship need to be exploited as they occur and sometimes it is an external change that triggers an opportunity.

i) Innovation

Many of the business ideas that were pursued during the project owed their inception to day service activity of one type or another. This is hardly surprising, given that many non-disabled people enter self employment via some paid work where they learn the 'ropes', develop networks, learn about the particular sector and identify contracts before deciding to go it alone.

This was not always the case and exceptions were evident where individuals displayed a desire to develop personal interests or skills, notably in the case of family history research and making soft toys.

RED has enabled In Business and partners to publish a range of business ideas for people to browse, copy and adapt to their own needs. The website offers a handful of 'MEMOs' (Micro Enterprise Model Opportunities) and hopes to increase the number of these as each successful venture is captured in the future.

The project reinforces what experience suggests, that it is also vital to include specific trade or sector support when designing and testing a new business proposition.

ii) Business development

Access to decent and appropriate business support enabled people to move their ideas forward. Where this was local and person-centred – for example, with a business mentor - the subsequent

Conclusions

business development was quicker and more robust, resulting in support that was geared to the individual. However, in some cases mainstream business support did not appreciate or value the contribution of such small businesses, nor understand the support they were required to offer for people with a learning disability.

Nevertheless, In Business has contributed to the cross Government employment strategy for people with a learning disability and has undertaken (and continues to do) development work with Business Link in various locations, notably London, Cornwall and the Midlands. Business Link is making strenuous efforts to focus some attention on the needs of people with a learning disability and has hosted a number of events seeking advice and consultation on the matter. On one occasion they were able to support the direct delivery of a RED workshop.

Furthermore, In Business has developed a range of tools and resources available free to download from both the Foundation's website and the RED website. These tools are cited in the new Government strategy - Valuing Employment Now[6]. With this in mind, we will target local authorities appropriately to ensure self employment is a key element to their focus on PSA 16 targets.

iii) Service delivery change

Almost everyone who starts a business needs some sort of support or help to achieve their aims. Most people with a learning disability are going to require some additional supports as well. This merely reflects the experience of the wider employment agenda.

In Business has identified that support needs to cover general business, specific sector and personal support. In most cases the ongoing support needs of an individual presented the greatest problems. Many organisations did not have the capacity within existing arrangements to support each individual to the extent required.

Clearly the introduction of Individual budgets will play a pivotal role in how we support people in the future and there is a clear fit with supported self employment. In Control are very keen to drive the wider employment agenda forward and will include self-employment within that. Interesting pilots are planned to explore how the 'enterprise support worker' can be incorporated into wider packages of community care provision.

iv) And finally

Overall this is an issue of rights: self-employment must be an option for people with learning disabilities just as it is for many of us who work in the learning disability sector. Given that we are only

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[6] Valuing Employment Now: real jobs for people with learning disabilities. (2009) London: Department of Health

talking of a small number of people - on average 10% of the non-disabled population choose self employment - the key issue is whether self-employment is a more realistic route to work for some.

The trick is clearly to combine the combine the skills, interests and aspirations of the individual with a genuine market demand, and to have a reason to do it if money is not the key driver.

Appendix 1 - In Business Participants

Entrepreneur	Business
GW	T-shirts
ZW	Art
DH	Coleus plants
DJ	Dog walking
FG	Disability awareness etc
ET	Disability awareness etc
SP	Family history research
LW	Card sales
SD	Consultant
GB	Music workshops
AJ	Pet cushions
TH	Jewellery sales
J	Art Sales by commission
R&F	Jewellery
Group	Cakes sales
BS	Driving
SP	Sandwiches
AD	Sign language/Easy read support
LC	Ink recycling
V	Soft toys
B	Paper recycling
CC	Character impressions
K	Car wash
RA	Can recycling
CM	Origami cards
DK	Woodwork
Group	Disability awareness
SM	DJ
RT	Art
Group	Children's parties
Group	Car wash
Group	Steel band
R	Travel information service. Themed weekends etc
D	Relief service to car sales ventures

Appendix 1 - In Business Participants

P	Recycling and handyman
M	Disability awareness
N	Old records
G	Squeaky Clean Car wash (Eco – low water use)
M	Car boot/eBay/loft/garage clearance
K	Community veg
S	Sniper Steve DJ
D	DJ Irvine
L&K	Live and Kicking Community Veg
D	Reptile sales
J	Beauty treats
P	Cards
H	Football coach
J	Accessibility business
G	Cleaning
D	Plastic recycling
A	Plastic recycling
B	Art
D	Plastic recycling
A	Shredding
A	Plastic recycling
J	Easyread business
S	Multimedia artist
J&J	Soups Kitchen

Appendix 2 - The RED Workshop Schedule

RED Session	RED Objective	Activities/Tools/Resources	Outcome
RED 1: Warm up	Break the ice	Old newspaper Run a number of warm up games including: • cross the river of fire • get knotted • line up in order of age, height • jump either side depending on enterprise idea	Participants: • understand the programme • feel more confident in participating • understand the value of working together
RED 2: Generating the business idea	To identify the business idea	Discussion on where business ideas come from, and what make a great business idea. Access to MEMO List Case Study presented by past REDDIE Prepare poster which sets out: • name and 'strap-line' • outline the business idea • highlight the USP • motivation • link between commercial and social purpose – please mind the gap! • why is it going to succeed	Participants: • understand where ideas come from • have chosen an enterprise idea
Pitch 1	We all get to know the business ideas	Each enterprise table pitches their idea to the group using their poster. Pitch should be a maximum of 3 minutes. After the pitch each group has £5,000 to invest. Only rule is they cannot invest in own enterprise. Report back must include justification of investment	Participants: • become attached to their own idea • feel more confident in communicating

Appendix 2 - The RED Workshop Schedule

RED Session	RED Objective	Activities/Tools/Resources	Outcome
RED 3: Finding the entrepreneur	To identify the traits of an entrepreneurial group	Participants: • collectively draw a life size entrepreneur • fill in a skills matrix • consider their own life history and identify what they've done to be enterprising • Prepare a poster on their entrepreneurial team	Participants understand the traits of their enterprise group
RED 4: Business networks	To identify all the people you need to know about to run a successful enterprise	Scissors and string Use the whole group to create a 'whole system network'	Participants understand that complicated networks can be understood through diagrammatic techniques

RED 5: Customers and consumers	To identify their perfect customer and consumer	Market research techniques identified and communicated through chalk 'n' talk followed by:
		• 5 things they want to know about customers/consumers
		• games:
		  • industrial espionage/mystery shopping on the internet
		  • people bingo
		  • group make a poster of their perfect customer
			Participants understand:
			• different techniques for carrying out market research
			• their ideal customer

Pitch 2		As before but focusing upon the entrepreneurial group and evidence of market. The business idea can also be re-shaped given market research findings	

RED Session	RED Objective	Activities/Tools/Resources	Outcome
RED 6: Barriers to enterprise	To identify barriers to setting up an enterprise	Group discussion using Post-Its to identify barriers. These are then grouped into 3 to 5 categories. People PinBall: • set up room so there are 3 to 5 'pins'/chairs with flip chart saying barrier • send down first group/person – hits first barrier. Discussion on solution/send in the solution squad with solution card • send down second person – hits first barrier – shows card – goes past first barrier, stops at second, etc.	Participants understand barriers to enterprise development, and how to address them
RED 7: Making it all add up	To identify financial break-even	Group discussion using Post-Its to identify different types of cost Allow chaos to reign for a while then group into order: • start up/equipment • direct costs: up and down • overhead costs: stay the same • define the unit Break even game/illustration on one of the ideas Show the 'levers' of management.	Participants understand how many 'units' they need to make and sell to break-even, and what they might do with any profit
RED 8: Marketing	To design a marketing strategy	Group discussion on their 'route to market' and price point. A marketing poster is designed	Participants understand the 4 Ps
Final pitch		As before but using all of the posters. The pitch is to a 'role played' bank manager who has the power to give out genuine awards to promote the business development process	

Appendix 2 - The RED Workshop Schedule

RED Session	RED Objective	Activities/Tools/Resources	Outcome
RED 9: Project Planning	To design the business development plan for each enterprise	Structured discussion to develop workplans and organise business development meetings with business support people/ organisations. Potential sources of finance identified.	A business development plan which links in to an individual's person centred plan

About the Foundation for People with Learning Disabilities

We promote the rights, quality of life and opportunities of people with learning disabilities and their families. We do this by working with people with learning disabilities, their families and those who support them to:

- do research and develop projects that promote social inclusion and citizenship

- support local communities and services to include people with learning disabilities

- make practical improvements in services for people with learning disabilities

- spread knowledge and information.

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