



Scottish Union of Supported Employment

## **Access to Employment Project Review and Learning**

SMART CONSULTANCY SCOTLAND  
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# SECTION 1

## INTRODUCTION AND REPORT PURPOSE

### Introduction

This report presents a review of the SUSE 'Access to Employment' project which operated for 3 years until the end of March 2018.

This innovative project sought to promote increased knowledge sharing and joint working between social care and employability, including capturing and disseminating good practice. It also included a strong action research element by offering additional, individual resource allocations to identified SDS recipients to test employability related supports that aimed to advance their personal development.

The review is based upon combining key learning from a series of related activities:

- overall reflections on project development and progress (including regular interim updates to Inspiring Scotland).
- an analysis of the recorded journeys of 14 people directly supported by the project in 2017/18.
- a series of consultations and a survey of Self Directed Support delivery organisations.
- a composite report on case study discussions with people supported by the project in the initial 2 years of operation (2015-2017).
- consultations with relevant staff responsible for SDS or employability services within a selection of local authorities.



This report considers the key messages from each of these sources, and concludes by collecting all of this learning in a series of final reflections, and suggestions on what these may mean for future action.

## Report Structure

The following sections of this report are structured as follows:

*Section 2* – summarises the background and origins of the project, the wider context within which it was developed, and the actions undertaken.

*Section 3* – summarises a series of 14 ‘participant journeys’ of people directly supported by the project in 2017/18, considering their: aspirations; progress; activities undertaken; and self-assessment of progress on 6 key indicators within the project’s distance travel based ‘Evaluation Web’. It also includes 4 specific case studies.

*Section 4* – summarises the key messages from a series of consultative and research activities to gather feedback from Self Directed Support delivery organisations.

*Section 5* – presents key messages from conversations with people supported by the project in years 1 and 2, and some perspectives from supported employment agency staff.

*Section 6* – identifies the key issues and perspectives from a sample of local authority officers involved in the management of Self Directed Support.

*Section 7* – pulls together the key reflections and learning from all aspects of the review process, and from this suggests some potential future actions.

*Appendix 1* – details the local authority officers consulted as part of the review process.

*Appendix 2* – is the full report of the SDS support agencies review summarised in section 4.

*Appendix 3* – is the full report of the case study review summarised in section 5.

# SECTION 2

## CONTEXT AND PROJECT SUMMARY

### Context

The context within which the Access to Employment project was developed and operated included a combination of Scottish wide policy developments and legislative changes, international expectations on supporting people with disabilities, and SUSE's own analysis of the future challenges and opportunities that the self-management of personal budgets presented.



### ***Scottish Policy Drivers***

The main domestic context for the Access to Employment project is the implementation of '**Social Care (Self-Directed Support) (Scotland) Act 2013** from April 2014. This introduced a new law on social care premised on a duty to offer people qualifying for self-directed services 4 options on how and what they wanted to use these resources for, and to provide them with enough information to do this.

It is based on maximising self-empowerment, and on three core principles that people:

- have the same freedom and choices as others.
- get the type of support they want, and when and where they want it.
- are offered real choices and have information to make these.

These choices potentially involve using SDS to support: progressions to College, access or retain a job, or to take up volunteering.

**‘A Fairer for Scotland for Disabled People’** (2016) is Scotland’s delivery plan to support the United Nations Convention on the rights of persons with disabilities. It contains 93 actions to realise 5 long term ambitions, one of which is ‘Decent Incomes and Fairer Working Lives’. This includes a commitment of ‘...making sure disabled people can enjoy full participation with an adequate income to participate in learning, in education, voluntary work or paid employment’. A key aim is to half the employment gap between the population as a whole and people with disabilities.

A more recent development is the **Scottish Government’s ‘Disability Employability Gap Action Plan’** which is anticipated to be published later in 2018 and will set out the actions for halving the gap between people with disabilities in employment (43%) and the non-disabled population (80%).

The Scottish Government’s **‘Supported Employment Framework for Scotland’ (2010)**, notes that many people with disabilities are held back by low expectations. It recommends supported employment as an approach to increase the number of disabled people with satisfying, suitable work. But this needs to be: consistent; rooted in quality standards; and based on sustainable funding. Support for people in receipt of a personal budget is likely to be delivered using the Supported Employment Framework.

## ***The international context***

At the international level, **the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD)**, which is ratified by the UK Government, came into operation in 2008. This states that disabled people have a right to work on an equal basis to others in a labour market (article 27). Overall it states that this is a human rights issue, and that people with disabilities should move from being ‘objects of charity’ to ‘subjects with rights’.

## ***SUSE developmental history and observations***

SUSE applied for and was awarded a Scottish Government Capacity Building Grant in 2011, with the purpose of raising individuals' and service providers' awareness of the possibility of using SDS for employment. Then, and now, SUSE's target group was people with a disability or long-term health condition.

The aim of the previous capacity building project was that individuals in receipt of a social care budget would access supported employment (provided by experienced agencies with employment support workers) through Self-Directed Support.

This project recognised that there were virtually no examples of people using SDS for employability in Scotland, and that a new project required to test opportunities and fill this gap. It was premised on the belief that to fully implement the aims of Self Directed Support to provide choice and control, people in receipt of an individual budget need to be offered the option of employment services to either support them to stay in work or gain and sustain work, if that is what they want.

The successful completion of this project – allied to policy developments noted above, particularly the 2013 Act – led to the successful funding application to the SDS Innovation Fund for the SUSE Access to Employment project.

## **Access to Employment Project Summary**

### ***Aims and Purpose***

The project was designed to promote increased knowledge sharing and joint working between social care and employability services – particularly through capturing and disseminating good practice. It was premised on: the production of case studies of individuals using SDS for employment; outlining the “offer” from supported employment for those with individual budgets; and testing what outcomes could be achieved for people with (or eligible for) an individual budget who receive employability support. SUSE also wished to test what a potential market would look like; what kind of support would people buy with their budget and what would it cost.

The project was operated by experienced specialist employability agencies with the capacity to sustain the activities to be piloted after the end of the project. As a pilot testing innovative approaches to using SDS for employability outcomes, it provided an additional ‘employability budget’ to individuals to pay for the employability input. This was in addition to any budget the individuals would currently receive or be eligible for if they applied for SDS.



It aimed to prove or otherwise that when individuals, commissioners and SDS providers practically see that SDS can be used successfully for employability interventions, there will be an appetite to use parts of individuals' regular SDS budgets to support employability. Based on the learning, this had the potential to sustain the aims and activities of the project beyond the 3 year funding period.

Project outcomes were defined in the initial funding applications as to:

1. Provide the right employability support to individuals whose outcomes (in their support plan) reflect a desire for work or employment.
2. Provide innovative examples of individuals with a disability or long-term health condition progressing towards, into and within employment, whilst in receipt of a SDS budget.
3. Through these examples, increase individuals' awareness of the employment choice and increase their confidence to ask for appropriate employment support.
4. Demonstrate to Local Authority SDS services and third sector care services the role of employability in SDS: employment is a possible outcome and supported employment services can be an input in SDS delivery.
5. Demonstrate to specialist employability services the range of innovative ways in which they might work collaboratively with individuals with a SDS budget.

The project also sought to demonstrate how different approaches may work with people with a variety of needs, including differing disabilities, and from different parts of the country, including both rural and urban areas.

## ***Project Beneficiaries***

The intended client group was primarily people with long-term health conditions and disabilities. The project intended to support people with employability aspirations, including part-time employment, volunteering, self-employment: dependent on individuals' skills and choices. It aimed to make people in receipt of, or eligible for SDS, more aware of the possibility of employment, or a move towards employment, as an outcome. It was targeted at people with higher support needs than the clients of the mainstream employability programmes, such as Work Choice, and was intended to fill a gap in terms of providing employability support to people who needed longer-term, more intensive, innovative inputs than the mainstream programmes allowed.

## ***Project Activities***

Following set up, the project consisted of 3 linked elements:

### ***Recruitment of local authority and voluntary sector care services who could provide employability support.***

SUSE and the Co-ordinator advertised the project, and recruited SDS services/practitioners to tell individuals about the project, and supported them to participate if it fitted with their aspirations.

This involved developing marketing material for the project; advertising it on SUSE's and partners' websites; attending relevant meeting and conferences; writing to Local Authority SDS Leads; calling and meeting practitioners with a responsibility for SDS and scoping whether areas where the project partners already had contacts - Renfrewshire; Fife; Glasgow; East Lothian and Aberdeenshire – had people with a SDS budget who might benefit from some employability support. It also involved marketing the project, and its opportunities, to Disabled People's Organisations and individuals with a disability in receipt of a personal budget. It built on SUSE's already strong contacts with organisations such as Lothian Centre for Inclusive Living, Glasgow Centre for Inclusive Living (Equality Academy) and Independent Living in Scotland.

### ***Identification and recruitment of project participants***

The services expressing an interest then referred participants to the project - individuals choosing to explore employability and employment (with their full knowledge and permission). The partner agency then worked collaboratively with the individual to find out about their existing SDS support, outcomes plans, and their ideas around working towards employment. Following this planning stage, the agency advised the individual on where to find the most appropriate employability support. If the partner agencies didn't directly have services that fitted an individual's requirements, they were expected to find that support for the individual by contacting other SUSE members.

Initially it was estimated that up to £2,500 would be an appropriate additional 'employability budget' for individuals to purchase a year's employment-related support. This was subsequently increased to £2,850. To promote innovation and creativity, as few restrictions as possible were placed on how the fee could be used, to enable maximum scope to test what works best.

Once the individual was connected with the appropriate support service, after an initial meeting, a simple application was intended to be submitted jointly by them and the service support agency to the Project Coordinator. This included a plan of activities, costings (at an hourly rate) for each activity, and a rationale for these. Examples of activities included vocational profiling, job search, 1-to-1 mentoring, work tasters or work placements, vocational training, job matching and on-site job coaching.

To be eligible for support, the individual must not have been in receipt of any other employment service, and must have an individual budget or be eligible for one (e.g. in a care service). In most circumstances, individuals were supported by the project for a maximum of one year.

Initially, the service and individual were required to submit an action plan (at month 1) and a final report (at month 12). The final report included a record of activities and outcomes achieved. The service was paid £2,600 for each person they supported.

### ***Continuous study, self-evaluation and knowledge dissemination***

As a pilot learning project, the project was set up to ensure that all the learning was gathered. SUSE held a series of internal learning sessions throughout the three years, which resulted in some key 'in flight' adjustments. Interim annual reports were prepared and communicated via the SUSE website, and through SDS Learning networks both locally and nationally.

This review constitutes the final aspect of the project's learning, and will now be distributed across all key stakeholder groups.

### ***Project management***

Within SUSE, the board members from Capability Scotland, Enable and RNIB Scotland led this project and reported its progress to the wider board. The project was managed on a day to day basis by a part time project co-ordinator seconded from ENABLE Scotland.

## ***Review of progress and outcomes***

The project operated primarily as detailed above. In total, 52 people were supported across the 3 years, and collectively received £130,666 of additional employability supports.

More details on the key learning outcomes of the project are contained in sections 5 and 6 of this report.

## ***Project costs and sources of funding***

The total costs of the project over the three years of support are detailed overleaf:

<b>2015/16</b>	<b>£63,900</b>
<b>2016/17</b>	<b>£77,085</b>
<b>2017/18</b>	<b>£67,418</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>£208,403</b>

Actual spend was as follows:

<b>Assessment and Planning with individuals</b>	<b>£27,700</b>
<b>Employability support to individuals</b>	<b>£102,966</b>
<b>Project Co-ordinator</b>	<b>£22,500</b>
<b>Learning and dissemination</b>	<b>£23,173</b>
<b>Learning events (inc Annual Reviews)</b>	<b>£20,506</b>
<b>Marketing and dissemination</b>	<b>£10,562</b>
<b>Sub total</b>	<b>£207,407</b>

This funding was provided through the Scottish Government's National Strategy for Self-Directed Support in Scotland.

# SECTION 3

## PARTICIPANT JOURNEYS 2017/18

In year 3, the Access to Employment programme adopted a more systematic approach to supporting individuals identified as eligible for support. This involved applying processes closer to those used in mainstream SDS allocations – identifying eligibility, assessing need, agreeing support options and related hours of support, and agreeing hourly rates with providers. The new process involved an initial application for support, assessment of eligibility/priority by SUSE; and three subsequent progress reports prepared by the support agency – an initial ‘Participant Action Plan; a midway report; and a final report.

The initial action plan, midway and final reports each triggered a payment to the service. In the final year of this project this was 3 equal payments of £950.

This approach in year 3 provides rich information for review and learning purposes, and has been used in two ways:

- to identify key trends in terms of initial participant aspirations, supports identified, progress, and time inputs.
- to prepare some individual case study examples by translating the details of the recorded documentation.

## Analysis of participant returns

### *Long term goals*

The participant’s long-term goals were checked at each stage – project commencement, mid-point and at the end of support. This enables assessment of both the variety of these, and any degree to which they notably altered over this timeframe.

In the project start forms, long-term goals ranged across: access to paid employment (primarily part time); volunteering; improving skills; developing confidence; and creating independence. Numerically, improving skills and accessing volunteering opportunities were commonly identified, and for some participants these were viewed as stepping stones to potential employment in the longer term.

By project mid-point these remained broadly similar, but the prevalence of volunteering as a key objective appears to have increased. Skills and potential job access also remain significant aspirations. The mid-point forms also suggest more specific future goals – specific volunteering opportunities are often mentioned by name, and the types of employment aspired to are more detailed in terms of job role and sector.

The end project forms continue to suggest volunteering and work placements as the most common future goal – with potential onward progression to paid work. A number of participants also planned to continue specific training through FE colleges or other courses. Supported employment and Project Search options were each mentioned by 1 participant. Another participant had progressed to employment, and now wished to retain and progress further in their work.

### ***Types of anticipated and actual supports provided***

A wide range of supports were identified at the project's commencement; the mid-point and final reviews then updated these with details of the actual supports provided. This enables comparison between initial expectations of relevant supports, and whether these subsequently changed in practice.

Anticipated supports to be provided at project commencement included:

- ongoing review sessions
- specific courses and awards – for example the Gold Youth Achievement Award, First Aid certification etc
- basic employability, job-search and communication courses
- support to volunteering opportunities and work placements
- CV preparation and interview skills
- mentoring support
- IT skills training/ECDL
- 'Better Off in Work ' calculations
- in-work retention support (1 participant only)

The mid-point reviews indicate that by this point 472.5 hours of support had been provided to participants. These broadly reflect initial plans, but with perhaps a greater emphasis on volunteering, work placements and mentoring. Direct employability skills remain notable, and more specific references are apparent to support with planning transport to opportunities or transport training.

The end project reviews note that a total of a further 862.5 hours of support had been provided to participants. The pattern and range of supports provided remains broadly similar, but with an increased emphasis on specific post project options. Volunteering, work placements and mentoring supports – alongside ongoing progress reviews – remain dominant.

### ***Hours of support provided***

The initial forms indicated that a total of 1,385 support hours were projected across the 12 participants for whom responses to this question are recorded – an average of 115.4 hours per participant. This ranged from a minimum of 4 hours to a maximum of 210. The spread is further highlighted in the table below:

<b>Number of hours of support projected</b>	<b>Number of participants</b>
0-49	1
50-99	1
100-149	8
150-199	1
200+	1

In practice, the actual hours of supported to all participants was 1,335. These details were only provided for 11 participants, so average recorded hours of support provided per person was 121.

Consequently, the average hours of support actually provided was more than initially projected – but only by a small margin of 5%.

### ***Costs of support***

Hourly rates of support varied between £8 and £30. Some providers operated on the basis of the same flat rate irrespective of the support activity, whilst others varied this. The majority of hourly support rates was around a mid-range of £18-£20.

## ***Other information and agencies involved***

The initial and mid-point forms asked for any general information and details of other agencies that were involved in supporting participants to give a more holistic view of their journeys. These responses highlighted:

- a range of wider ‘wrap around’ care supports – Social Work services and other social care agencies
- specific mobility and home care supports
- links with local Third Sector Interfaces and other volunteering support agencies
- links to local employability projects and FE Colleges

## ***Participant outcomes***

The end project review requested information on any outcomes achieved by participants. 11 completed returns indicated:

- for 7 participants the key outcomes have been volunteering opportunities, work experience, and significant improvements in core skills
- 2 participants have progressed to paid employment
- 1 participant has progressed to Project Search
- 1 participant has identified, and is pursuing, a supported employment opportunity

## ***Next steps and onward referrals***

The end of project review asked about the participant’s planned next steps, and any onward referrals from the project. A range of useful information emerges from the 11 completed responses, which partly reflect the outcomes summarised above:

- full time paid work remains at most an aspiration for most project participants, though support continues to be provided where this has been attained
- more common outcomes are continued volunteering, work experience and (very) part time work – and support in these situations continues to be provided either directly by the project support organisation or other identified volunteering projects



- a number of participants have used the skills and experiences gained on the project to further develop their independence – one via reducing day-care hours and replacing these with volunteering and mentoring. Another participant continues this journey through support from the local Independent Living project
- some participants have been referred to Jobcentre Plus and local employability projects for further specialist support
- 1 participant continues to advance aspirations towards employment through working to attain the Saltire Award

### ***Evaluation web analysis***

The project devised and applied an ‘evaluation web’ to gauge self-evaluated changes in participant views of a number of key ‘softer’ employability related skills. This was completed for each participant at the start, mid-point, and end of their support period.

6 indicators were applied as detailed in the table below:

<p><b><i>Social skills for work</i></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• listening to others</li> <li>• positive attitudes</li> <li>• asking for help if needed</li> <li>• participating in activities</li> <li>• willing to help others</li> </ul>	<p><b><i>Motivation</i></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• enthusiasm</li> <li>• getting involved</li> <li>• expressing opinions</li> <li>• putting ideas forward</li> <li>• willing to try new things</li> </ul>	<p><b><i>Being prepared</i></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• arriving on time</li> <li>• being ready for the planned activities</li> <li>• dressed appropriately</li> </ul>
<p><b><i>Responsibility</i></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• taking on agreed tasks</li> <li>• being responsible for your own work/tasks</li> <li>• completing tasks</li> <li>• asking of help if needed</li> <li>• stating preferences</li> </ul>	<p><b><i>Communication</i></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• taking to colleagues</li> <li>• talking to customers</li> <li>• expressing opinions or telling people what you want</li> <li>• passing on information</li> </ul>	<p><b><i>Team work</i></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• working well others</li> <li>• agreeing team goals</li> <li>• agreeing responsibilities for each work</li> <li>• being flexibility</li> <li>• willing to help others</li> </ul>

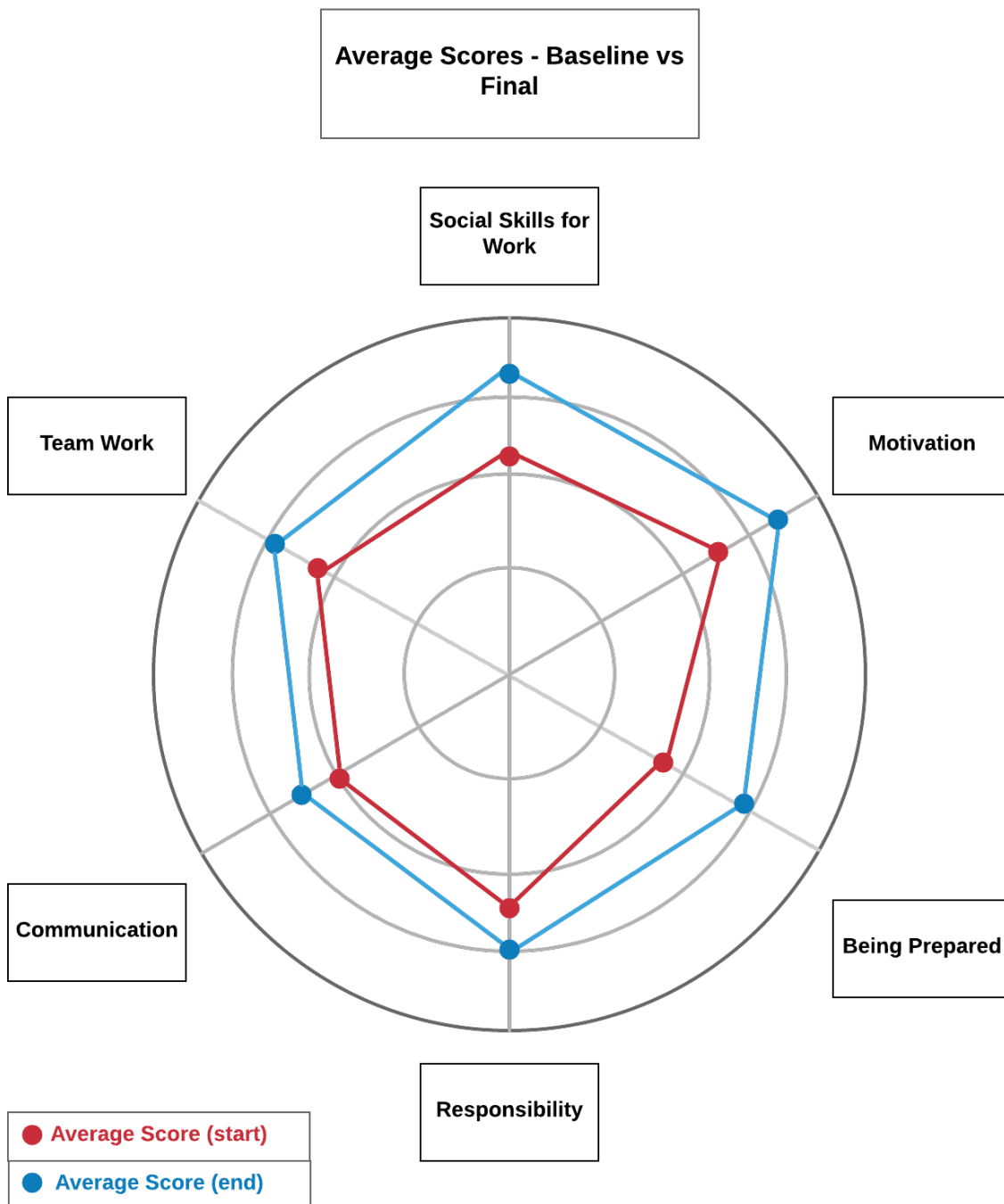
Analysing the results from the initial data and the final forms indicates the following aggregated changes by indicator<sup>1</sup> (scale 1 – low; 9 - high)

Indicator	Average score – start	Average score – end	Net movement	% change
Social skills for work	5.14	7.45	+2.31	+45%
Motivation	6.86	7.82	+0.96	+14%
Being prepared	4.79	7.00	+2.21	+46%
Responsibility	6.64	7.27	+0.63	+9%
Communication	5.57	6.27	+0.7	+13%
Team work	6.21	7.18	+0.97	+16%

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<sup>1</sup> The options were on a scale translated as 1=low skills to 9=high skills.

Visually represented, the diagram overlaid highlights the 'before and after' of the evaluation web across all participants:



This clearly highlights positive movement across all indicators, and is particularly marked for 'social skills for work' and 'being prepared'.

## ***Provider's report evaluation***

The end project evaluation asked the organisations providing support to identify (from a presented list) the outcomes they felt the activities supported were achieving for the service users. As many options as applicable could be ticked. Results were as follows:

<b>Outcome</b>	<b>Number of respondents</b>
Improved access to information and support with planning and managing SDS	1
Improved knowledge of choices of available support options	7
Increased participation and confidence in SDS	3
Improved confidence in SDS personal outcome plans	3
Improved knowledge of and engagement with SDS in the community	2
Improved planning and better support to achieve personal outcomes (greater choice)	7
Improved opportunities to influence work culture and practice	7
Improved skills to manage direct payments, employees and reporting requirements	1
Increased social inclusion and access to community activities	10
Improved confidence in dealing with Local Authorities	2
Improved knowledge and awareness of approaches to increase choice and control	8
Improved motivation and commitment to delivering SDS values and principles	1
Improved flexibility and creativity in support provision	5

Across the participants, all outcomes were identified. Most common (in descending order) were: increased social inclusion and access to community activities; improved knowledge and awareness of approaches to increase choice and control; improved planning and better support to achieve personal outcomes; and improved opportunities to influence work culture and practice.

Improved motivation and commitment to delivering SDS values and principles; improved access to information and support with planning and managing SDS; and improved skills to manage direct payments, employees and reporting requirements were less commonly cited.

## Case Studies

To complement the aggregated analysis, 4 case studies have been developed based on the participant forms. These provide examples of individual journeys by people supported by the project. The names have been changed to ensure anonymity.

### Case study 1 – June

*June joined the project with the goals of attaining paid employment that she ‘felt valued in’. She received a total of 117 hours of support combining: regular review meetings; a ‘thinking about learning and work course’, employer visits, and work placements. In addition to her support agency, June was also connected and supported by local agencies providing volunteering and work experience opportunities.*

*By project mid-point, June had started several work placement activities in assisting others with additional support needs in a sports related context. At this stage, she realised she was not ready to engage with other employability supports.*

*By the end of the project she had experienced work experience within her preferred sport related setting offering support to people with learning or physical disabilities. June’s confidence increased significantly through these activities. But by the end of the project, it was agreed by June that she was not ready to enter paid work in the immediate future – a view shared with her parents and social worker.*

*She will now continue her volunteering with support from Voluntary Enterprise, access Makaton training to improve her communications, and seek to continue sports coaching training through the local Disability Sport agency.*

*From the start to the end of the project, June self-assessed progress on all elements of the evaluation web. The most significant gains were in: communications; team work; and social skills for work.*

## **Case study 2 – Keir**

*Keir is autistic and started the project with virtually no independence having been in building based day services 4 days a week for 4 years. He was keen to address this situation, and had great motivation to do so. But he recognised he had to progress gradually. In this context, his longer term goals were established as: to volunteer in a conversation café every week with 1:1 travel support; visit the local library weekly to use the computers; and to visit a café weekly to meet new people.*

*Keir received a total of 46 hours of support combining: regular review meetings which sometimes included his parents; support with travel; work experience; access to a library IT course; and specific work on communication skills.*

*Keir greatly increased his confidence through course participation, and both he and his parents are very enthusiastic in the new approach this has triggered in his care. He remains very positive and now plans to undertake a First Aid course to support his café based volunteering aspirations. He is hoping to access a fortnightly volunteering opportunity at a car wash, aims to have a weekly lunch at a local café, and to continue improving his IT and communication skills.*

*From the start to the end of the project, Keir self-assessed progress on all but one of the elements of the evaluation web. The most significant gains were in being prepared for work, and social skills for work.*

## **Case study 3 – Alyson**

*Alyson started the project with the goals of: gaining volunteering and work experience; developing her employability skills and confidence; and ideally at some point to gain a paid job.*

*Alyson received a total of 140 hours of support combining: regular fortnightly review meetings; CV and interview skills support; job coaching; set up and support in volunteering opportunities; support in accessing a seasonal job; employer engagement activities; and benefits supported (involving her mum).*

*Alyson continues to volunteer in a local nursing home, and has been referred for specialist employability supports to the Jobcentre. Her long term aim remains to move into some form of paid work. Her temporary Christmas job experience has increased her confidence to achieve this.*

*From the start to the end of the project, Alyson self-assessed progress on all but one of the elements of the evaluation web. The most significant gains were in being prepared for work, and social skills for work.*

#### **Case study 4 – Calum**

*Calum had not worked for many years prior to joining the project. In this context, he started with the goals of accessing part time work, to develop new work related skills, and 'brush up' on old ones.*

*In total, he received 98 hours of support – a large share of which included a supported work placement. Other supports included: life and core skills training; job-search training; action planning and goal setting; and communication skills*

*By the end of the project, Calum was established in a volunteering role with a drink awareness charity, and had developed three drop-in sessions for them. He is now much clearer and more precise in terms of future job aspirations and the hours he wants to work. He continues to work with the local independent living service, and is determined to use his SDS allowance to maximise his independence.*

*From the start to the end of the project, Calum self-assessed progress on all elements of the evaluation web. The most significant gains were in: communications; team work; and social skills for work.*

# SECTION 4

## PARTICIPANT REFLECTIONS 2015/2017

Learning from the experiences of people directly supported by the Access to Employment project in the initial two years has been captured through a different mechanism. This included 12 in depth discussions with participants (and if appropriate their support workers). These were undertaken by Dawn Edmiston SUSE's Network Development Co-ordinator.

These were based around 13 semi-structured questions conducted between November 2017 and February 2018. Recipients lived in a variety of urban and rural settings across Scotland. Headline messages by 5 key themes were recorded.

**Barriers to employment** – were identified as: a lack of confidence; limited and time constrained support options (especially for people aged over 25); fluctuating and sporadic ill health; behaviour/anger issues; limitations due to 16-hour benefit rules.

**Challenges to employment between urban and rural areas** – transport emerged as a significant issue across both urban and rural areas; in rural areas the main problems were the unreliability and infrequency of public transport; in urban areas the anxiety of travelling at busy, peak hours was more commonly cited.

**Activities undertaken whilst on the project** – 2 participants gained part time work, and 7 started voluntary work or a work placement. 3 focused more on CV writing and building trust and confidence with their support worker.

**Benefits gained from involvement in the project** - 10 participants reported increased confidence, 4 participants reported learning new skills, 3 participants said they valued the 1-to-1 time with the employment coach, and 3 said constructing a CV was very valuable to them.

**Future aspirations** - participants had wide and varied future aspirations. 7 of the 12 wanted to find part-time work, 1 wanted to go to college, 2 wanted to continue volunteering as it was felt they weren't ready for work, and 2 aspired to involvement in the acting world.



The final part of this review element included gathering some views from the employment workers supporting the participants. Key future suggestions included:

- for some participants, the options of either a longer (2-year period) of funding support or a more intensive but shorter period of support – this may suggest a desire for greater flexibility in the use of resources available
- an increased budget for travel in larger, rural areas
- recognition that for some people dedicated and additional employability support was only appropriate once a robust care package was in place

The full report of these discussions is contained in appendix 3.

# SECTION 5

## SUPPORT AGENCY REFLECTIONS

### Background and process

This research was conducted for SUSE by consultant Jean MacMillan.

It was designed to consider how Self-directed Support (SDS) is currently being used to help people who are eligible for social care into a paid job.

The research process set out to investigate the following questions:

1. Do clients want to gain employment, does this come up during planning sessions?
2. Do agencies feel equipped to support clients with this request?
3. Do agencies know providers they could refer clients to or commission services from?
4. Are local authorities encouraging for SDS budgets to be used in this way?
5. Are there any examples of clients trying employability activities?

The method for this aspect of the review included:

*Interviews with stakeholders:* in-depth semi-structured interviews were held and explored a number of issues in relation to the way in which Self-Directed Support can help individuals into employment, training for employment or volunteering.

*A focus group:* which included support agencies, carers, and clients. The focus group was structured around the support agencies, the journey of the client, and the experience of all those involved in that journey. Discussion included recommendations for improvements to the experience of each group.

*Survey:* an on-line survey was conducted with Self-directed Support Scotland (SDSS) members from which we achieved a 57% return. The survey was focused on three areas: the people the organisations support; the organisation in which they work; and the experience of the respondent with decision makers such as the local authority.

## ***Key findings***

The full report from this aspect of work is contained as appendix 2. Headline findings were:

- Consistently across feedback from carers, clients and support agencies there was a general view that SDS is about the care and welfare of an individual and that employability rarely featured in planning or discussions with clients and their carers. At this time employment is not part of the discussion.
- The language associated with SDS is primarily about ‘support’ and not about ‘development’ – this matters in practice and reflected that SDS had developed into a practical support care tool and not as a support to explore routes and opportunities.
- Delivery of SDS is uneven across Scotland and budget cuts have had an impact on clients who have seen a reduction in their financial package as well as much tighter criteria around access to funding.
- The culture for people with disabilities has changed, but practices and systems have been slow to respond. Training for providers would be beneficial so that employment becomes an integral component of assessment planning and to encourage creative ideas around support for employability.
- While there is no shortage of information available, specific, local information is required as well as a clear understanding of the impact of earnings on benefits.
- Local Authorities should have a more defined role in supporting SDS for employability and develop a more even delivery across Scotland. Employment needs to be explicitly outlined within SDS assessment and followed through in a flexible way with timely reviews.
- There were no examples provided by those involved in the research which illustrated the use of practical of SDS to support employability outcomes. This suggests that there is very little happening in this area.

This element of research led to some recommendations for future action, these are incorporated into the final section of this report.

# SECTION 6

## LOCAL AUTHORITY PERSPECTIVES

5 officers from 4 local authorities were directly consulted in the final months of the Access to Employment project to ask about their experiences, and generally on whether the approach tested by SUSE appeared to have the potential to increase the use of SDS resources to support individual employability outcomes. The officers consulted are detailed in appendix 1.

The consultations reflected some significantly varying views amongst local authorities on the appropriateness of the overall concept of using SDS resources to support employability focused activities. These reflected differing views on: the need for SDS monies to be used in this way; the degree to which mainstream employability funded services already in place met (or should meet) any demand; and perceptions on whether the SDS assessment and allocation processes and guidelines encouraged/allowed SDS resources to be used in this way.

These, and related issues, are discussed in more detail below. But a key and important message for future developments needs to be simply stated based on these consultations: individual local authorities have very different views on some fundamental issues that the Access to Employment project was testing.

### **The wider context and premise of the Access to Employment project**

It was generally accepted that to date introducing employability focused activities as part of an SDS support package was not common, and that other priorities for the funding tended to dominate. This reflected that many people in receipt of SDS support did not view this as relevant or important. Rather, more traditionally focused care based supports were much more prevalent.

Views on whether this may or should change in future were much more varied. One viewpoint was that budget pressures and the need for primarily care based support required continued focus in this area. Moreover, tightening budgets mean that the people receiving SDS payments are more likely to be in the 'substantial' or 'critical' categories and on average be less likely to prioritise employability linked supports.

An alternative view, however, was that whilst employment based supports may only be relevant to a small number of SDS recipients, where this was relevant it could and should be used more. This, it was argued, was in line with changing trends and policy directions that were emphasising more empowerment and imaginative

use of funding that sought to develop and progress people. This would be a more sustainable approach that could potentially reduce dependency and funding requirements in the longer term. Moreover, good employability supports could positively impact on a much wider range of holistic, quality of life improvements including confidence, independence, reduced isolation etc. One consultee summarised that this was about a mind-set change to in future view SDS as 'developmental' rather than 'care' based resources.

## **Resources and opportunity cost**

In reality, the volume of SDS resources available was potentially the 'elephant in the room' in discussing these issues. Increasingly allocations required to be driven by focusing support on those most in need – which in practice could mitigate against developmental aspirations, or support to people with more realistic employability progression aspirations.

But set against this was need to the balance short term budget challenges against the need for longer-term shifts towards moving more people on from extended reliance on SDS support. It was recognised managing this was not easy – in practice longer-term savings could by definition not assist the immediate management of scarce resources. In this context, some term of short term bridging funding would be logical, but this was considered unlikely in the current climate.

## **Added value**

Another area of varying local authority views was the degree to which using SDS resources to support employability added value or could be justified in the context that many of these supports were or should be available through employability specific resources and services already available through national or local sources. Local Strategic Skills Pipelines, it was suggested, should meet any demand, and in some of the consultees' areas this happened – either through local services or DWP's 'Access to Work' programme. In this situation, using scarce SDS resources was both unnecessary and unjustifiable. The challenge was, therefore, more in ensuring people accessed these existing services at no additional cost, rather than placing further pressure on scarce SDS resources. It was noted that in some areas there may not be adequate services that were able to provide the employability support required, or there may be limited provision and waiting lists in operation to manage demand.

But other consultations reflected views that a gap did potentially exist between where traditional care services ended and employability services began. Thereby, in practice, there was a 'grey area' which led to no relevant funding being available – and the potential employability journey of some SDS recipients ending. This crystallises a long-standing debate on agreed definitions of 'care' services and an 'employability'

services, and whether there was in practice a seamless continuum that enabled people to progress (and control) their development aspirations across these domains.

The SUSE Access to Employment project was largely established to test this very proposition. It reinforces the need to reflect on the ways in which the individuals supported by dedicated project funds used these resources. These issues are returned to in the concluding section.

## **Involvement and knowledge of the project**

Local authority consultees knowledge of the Access to Employment project ranged considerably. This clearly impacted on their ability to comment on progress, but was also instructive in itself. Though some general early awareness raising work was noted, there was a view the project has appeared to focus most of its time in working with direct care providers rather than with SDS assessment staff and commissioners. In this respect, connections to the wider 'community care community' appeared limited. Some consultees noted that perhaps awareness had been raised with other colleagues, and not communicated internally. But nonetheless, they remained surprised that had not known more about the project.

## **Future development**

Views on the relatively profile of the Access to Employment project were considered instructive in future developments. Quite simply, it would be very useful for SUSE to directly inform the debate and issues scoped out above – and the divergent views apparent from the local authority consultations. Consequently, distributing and communicating the key findings of this evaluation to a wide range of audiences was considered very important, alongside the potential for further development of training and guidance materials. These had to be very practical in nature.

# SECTION 7

## KEY REFLECTIONS AND LEARNING

This final section now summarises key reflections on the Access to Employment project initially focusing on the 5 project outcomes established at the outset.

### ***1. Provide the right employability support to individuals whose outcomes (in their support plan) reflect a desire for work or employment***

The project directly supported a total of 52 people who collectively received just over £130,000 of additional funding to advance their employability aspirations. This represents a spend on these supports slightly below the initial budget projections.

The types of supports provided in practice are detailed in section 3. These reflect a wide range of supports heavily concentrated on: ongoing 1-to-1 reviews; volunteering and work experience; wider employability/core skills support; IT support; and support to travel.

Outcomes are not aggregated across all participants, but from the 26 people surveyed through the 2018 and 2015-17 research analysis it is clear that most continued an employability journey through volunteering and work placements. A few job and formal education progressions are recorded, but these are limited in number. This is not unexpected; from the outset SUSE were clear that these were not seen as the key anticipated outcomes from the pilot.

In terms of participant self-evaluations, the 2017/18 web analysis highlights positive movement across all 6 key 'softer/core skills' indicators. Improvements in 'core skills for work' and 'being prepared' were particularly marked – indicating progress on 2 key employability linked capacities.

The pilot also sought to test the costs of the employability supports provided. Whilst this varied, a common hourly rate of between £18-£20 was applied – with no discernibly different pattern by the different types of support provided. This provides a baseline for considering future interventions of this nature.

**2. Provide innovative examples of individuals with a disability or long-term health condition progressing towards, into and within employment whilst in receipt of an SDS budget**

The project has assisted a small number of people into work whilst in receipt of an SDS payment. But these are limited in number, and the degree of information captured on participants is limited. On reflection, this initial anticipated outcome has not been fully realised. The evidence suggests people moving towards the labour market and developing key core skills which may be of longer term benefit, was more significant. This is understandable given the support needs of project's participants. It may lead to employment access in the future, but this is not yet measurable

**3. Through these examples, increase individual awareness of employment choice and increase their confidence to ask for appropriate employment support**

The core indicators self-evaluation, and wider participant research, would indicate notable progress for many participants on this outcome. The vast majority of activities supported directly related to employment support, and to enabling people to gain a better understanding of future employment options.

**4. Demonstrate to Local Authority SDS services and third sector care services the role of employability in SDS: employment is a possible outcome and supported employment services can be an input in SDS**

Reflecting on progress on this outcome requires to be subdivided into the 2 stakeholder groups referenced. A more conclusively positive answer can be presented for third sector care services, which through the additional individual budgets available have had more scope to think about, research and fund employability linked supports. This created the opportunity to see the impact this made – not just in terms of direct employability linked progress, but on a range of other positive health and wellbeing measures. Discussions with staff generally confirmed this positive sense of what the programme had tested and achieved.

Summarising local authority views on the degree that the project progressed this outcome is less straightforward. A starting point here is to note the lack of knowledge some consultees had of the project – this not only restricted their ability to comment, but was also considered a missed opportunity for them to get more involved.

Local authority views captured on the appropriate use of SDS to support employability services were very diverse. But the project's experiences had probably not significantly influenced these either way. This strengthens the case for SUSE to now use the findings of this review to inform future debates in the sector.



**5. Demonstrate to specialist employability services the range of innovative ways in which they might work collaboratively with individuals with a SDS budget**

The project has tested this in practice and enabled a mechanism to try new activities focused on employability. On a few occasions, this appears to have triggered a more fundamental review of individual care packages. But this has all been premised on additional and ring-fenced funding being available. Time will tell whether any sustainable changes in the use of 'core' SDS allocations will now alter as a result of pilot activity: this is not possible to predict on the basis of the evidence currently available.

These issues are reinforced and further developed from the 3 stakeholder groups engaged in the review process.

Highlight messages from the *participant discussions and case studies* were:

- The employability supports provided through the project were generally viewed very positively, and the various measurement mechanisms applied indicated consistently positive self-assessments of progress across a range of core employability and wellbeing indicators.
- Many participants aspired to some form of paid employment – but were realistic that interim progress steps were often more attainable and also of great value. These were mainly volunteering and work placements.
- Barriers which limited progression, and which it was hoped the project could help address, included - confidence, a sense that existing employability support options were limited and time-bound, and concerns on fluctuating health conditions.
- The main support received included regular 1-to-1 reviews, support to access volunteering and work placements, employability courses, and mentoring.

**Service provider key messages were:**

- The additional funding support provided by the pilot undoubtedly enabled a better overall support package to be provided.
- This was set within a context in which employability supports were very uncommon within SDS support packages – where the focus remained firmly 'care' rather than 'developmental'.

- Budget cuts, and a consequently increasing focus on people most in need, further mitigated against significant consideration of employability supports.
- There was a sense that in practice the support packages currently provided were behind new policy aspirations – and that more guidance was needed on imaginative ways to weave employability interventions into a future approach more focused on diversity of supports, service user empowerment, reduced dependency, and progressions.
- Approaches across local authorities were very varied, and there was often a lack of appropriate local information on employability options and their implications.

**The *local authority consultations* were more mixed in terms of messages, and include:**

- The use of SDS to access employability supports is currently very limited, and is only likely to be relevant to a relatively small number of people with SDS allocations.
- There were notable differences of opinion on whether the current use of employability services would or should increase in future (considered further below).
- Across the mix of views captured, it was recognised that budget pressures impacted on likely practice - this reinforced that the added value of using SDS to support employability aspirations required to be very clearly articulated.

## **Moving forward**

The project has tested to a degree some of the key questions in terms of how or whether SDS can (or should) play a greater role in supporting employability aspirations for appropriate people. This raises very fundamental issues on the degree to which SDS allocations are primarily considered a ‘care’ or a ‘developmental’ resource; a debate inevitably influenced by increasingly tight overall budgets. It should be noted, however, that an area of apparent consensus is that these options will only be - at most - relevant to a small percentage of SDS recipients.

The way in which services with social care origins relate to those explicitly focused on employability related progressions remains central. A number of consultees believe that there is (or should be) no need for scarce SDS resources to ‘subsidise/replace’ supports that are available through local or national employability services. Consequently, the main future challenge is that stronger connections

and practical referrals are developed with existing services, rather than applying or redirecting SDS supports.

But other consultees argued that this was not happening in practice for all SDS recipients, and that a 'bridge' required to be resourced to support employability aspirations which perhaps should be jointly funded – otherwise we will fail to realise everyone's aspirations. Moreover, whilst relevant employability specific supports were sometimes available, the scale of these often presented a practical barrier – with a recognition that the demand commonly exceeded supply. It was suggested, that considering SDS support in this context was more in line with a future policy context stressing empowerment, choice, independence, and building upon individual assets.

Layered into this, in the context of SDS principles, is the critical issue of personal choice. This has 2 dimensions:

(a) that some people may *want* to use their SDS allocations to support employability progression aspirations, and;

(b) that some people may view employability supports as a preferable and more rewarding way than traditional care packages to develop core skills such as confidence, independence, communications etc, and to reduce isolation. Consequently, this may be a relevant and appropriate use of SDS resources, irrespective of whether the activities supported led to any of the standard employability progression outcomes.

Consequently, in the context of the future debate, these 2 general starting positions need to be recognised.

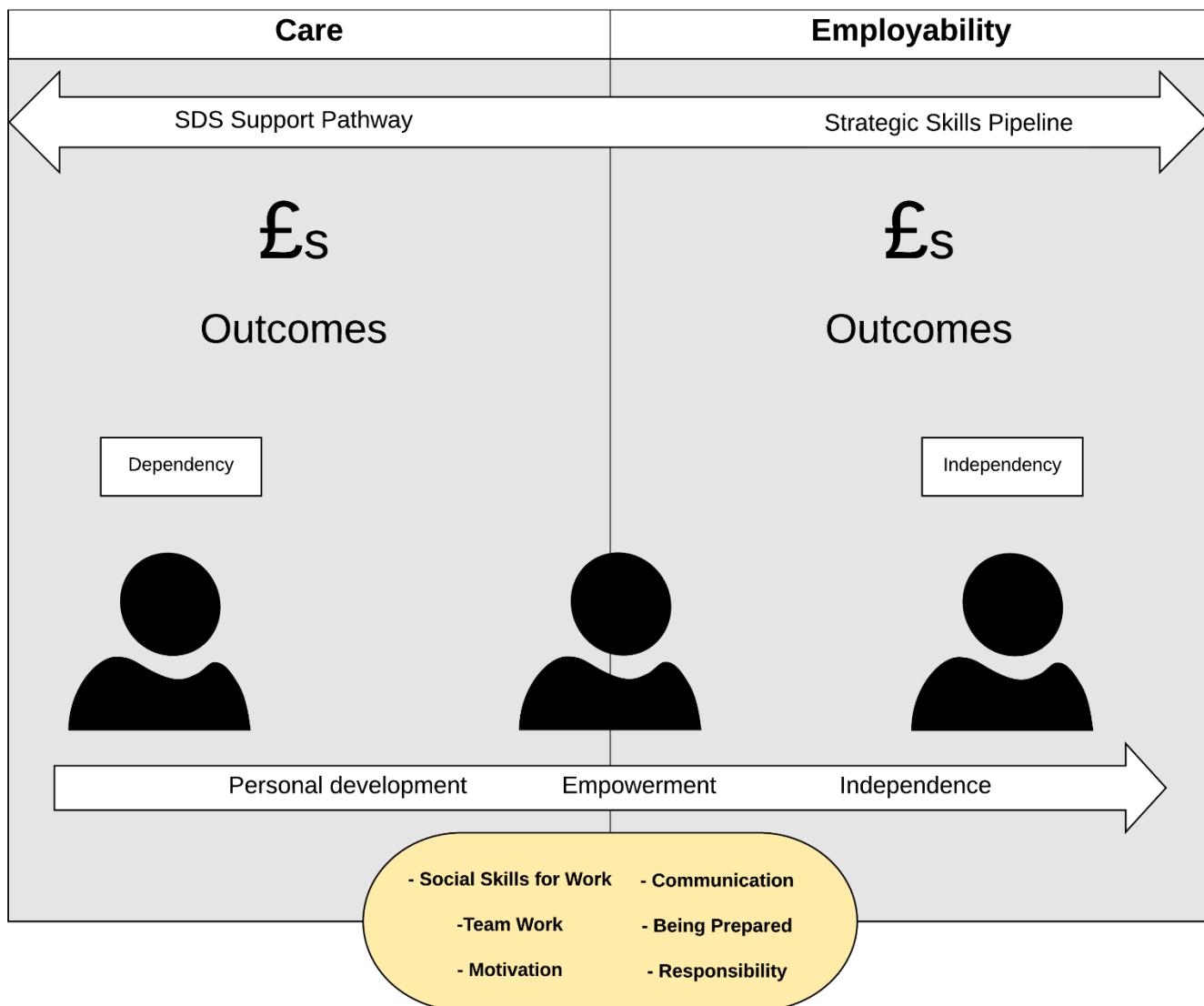
Firstly, people who are not convinced that it is appropriate to use SDS for explicit employability services. This view suggests that the key development challenge is to ensure any people in receipt of SDS supports with relevant aspirations maximise their connections to existing employability services, and that clear pathways to access these are understood and applied at local level. This may lead to further consideration of training, capacity building, and review activities to ensure this happens in practice.

An alternative view is that it is appropriate to consider using SDS resources more to support employability focused supports and aspirations. The Access to Employment project has generated some good practical information and examples to support further development. But more is needed. Within this, a key requirement is to be more explicit on the intended outcomes of this type of support – clarifying the balance between seeking traditional employability outcomes, and the degree to which the main motivation may be to develop wider skills and competencies that improve health and wellbeing. The Access to Employment project at this stage suggests more evidence of progress on the latter.

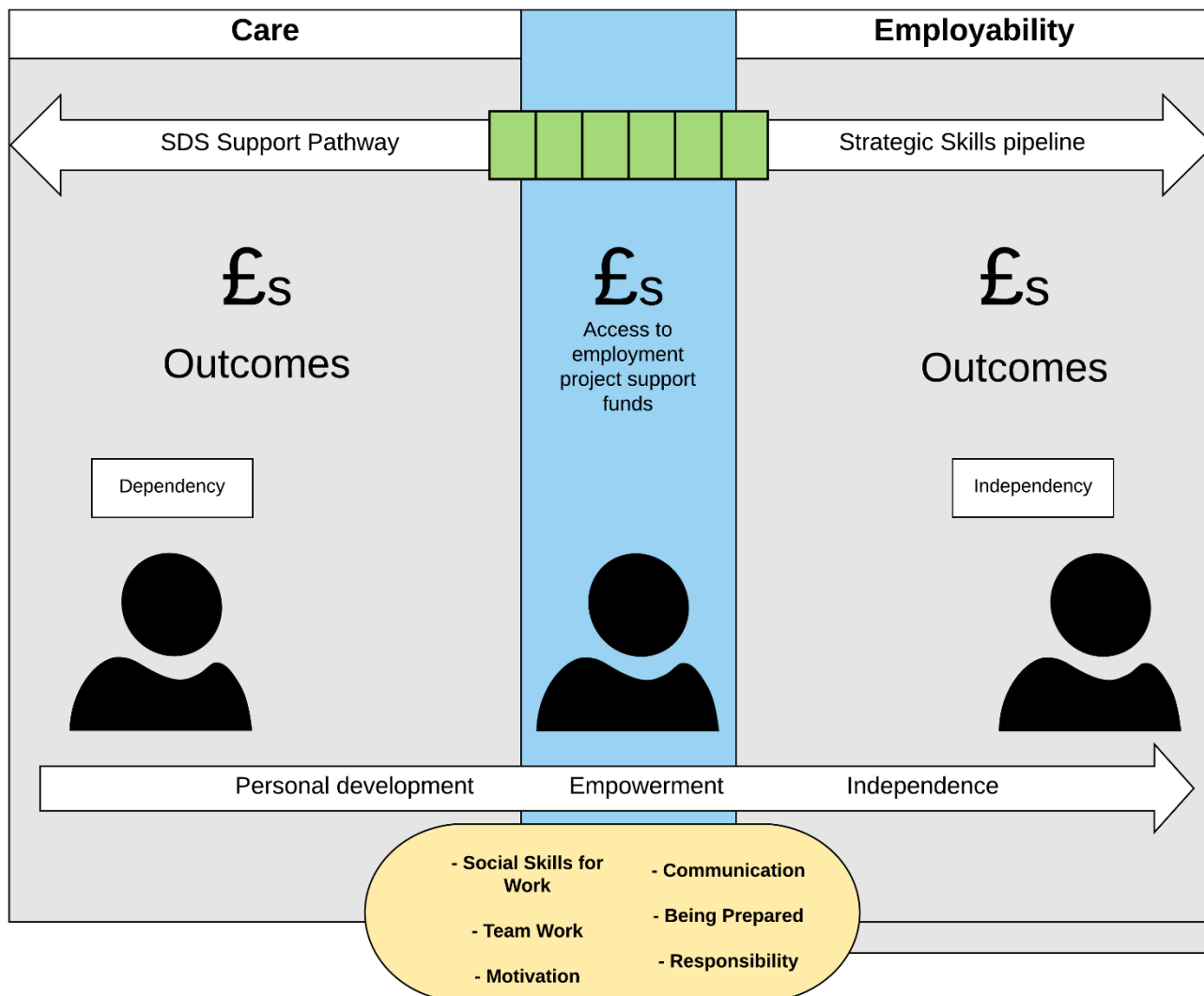
Dissemination and discussion of this report is relevant to either context.

The following diagrams seek to summarise the ongoing nature of this debate, and the ongoing questions and issues which require to be considered. The first scenario suggests that the care and employability support pathways/pipeline are fully integrated and offer a seamless process for people to meet their aspirations. The second reflects an alternative perspective where these services can be dislocated – leaving in practice a gap between where SDS funding ends, and where employability supports within the Strategic Skills Pipeline begin. This latter scenario posits that in these circumstances individual developmental journeys can be halted – unless resources at either ends of the spectrum are used more imaginatively/flexibly, or additional resources are made available to *bridge* the gap. The Access to Employment project sought to do this on a pilot, short-term basis to evidence/prove to funders that in the longer-term they should work together to move towards the former scenario

**Scenario 1 – an ideal and joined up support pathway**



## Scenario 2 – the current reality for some SDS recipients?



The 2 diagrams posit varying scenarios, but both demand further reflection on some common questions:

**In practice, is there a joined up seamless support pathway of services for people in receipt of SDS who have employability aspirations?** Scenario 1 suggests there is, scenario 2 that there is a gap. This may reflect significant local area variations that merit further investigation.

**To what degree do the providers of these areas of support have common aspirations and outcomes?** The suggested pathway of 'personal development-empowerment-independence' is probably more understood in a care context, but the range of related skills listed below this are common to both care and employability aspirations. These are the 6 areas the Access to Employment project recorded positive progress for participants in the evaluation web analysis (see section 3). This is a critical area of discussion: if these are commonly recognised as

shared outcomes, the potential for a more integrated approach - as represented in scenario 1 - should be easier to realise.

**In practice, do funding realities outweigh shared aspirations and outcomes?** In an outcome driven context, all service providers are increasingly sensitive on the need to evidence outcomes. A key sub question, therefore, is whether the shared *aspirations* referenced above, are in reality shared *outcomes*, in terms of accounting for funding. For employability supports, these may link to performance related payments. This may in reality be a key reason for the 'gap' in scenario 2. In short: does where support via SDS or other care based funding ends enable enough employability services to pick up support at this point in a way that satisfies their funding outcome requirements? This is a complicated but critical question, and one where more transparency and debate between all stakeholders may be of considerable value.

**Where does personal choice and control fit in this debate?** To a large degree, the scenarios presented are from a service provider perspective. In the context of SDS, and the principles behind its development, the ongoing cultural change required may be that this should be truly driven in future by the needs and aspirations of SDS recipients. Proper use of SDS resources would then be developmentally focused on personal choice rather than projected outcomes and progressions.

**Is there a need for a 'bridge'?** This is the logical final question suggested by the two scenarios, and it is what the funding available through the Access to Employment project effectively created – albeit on a small scale and time limited way. The wider project and policy rationale suggested this may be required as a temporary measure to enable care and employability services to naturally integrate – based on a shared set of development aspirations, and the new driver of SDS entitlements. Feedback for this review suggest this may be more established in some areas than others at present, but generally more progress is needed. Whilst the Access to Employment project has provided some intelligence to advance this debate, further developmental work (with a strong local focus) is required.

### **Suggestions for future action**

1. SUSE and partners should widely disseminate this report and seek to generate further feedback and discussion on the key issues – potentially based around the two diagrams detailed above.

2. Consider further research to locally test individual employability journeys for people in receipt of SDS support to identify the degree the existing employability support infrastructure is accessed and applicable to their progression aspirations, and the key barriers where this does not happen.
3. Seek further clarity and communicate the degree (or otherwise) that progressing in paid employment may impact on subsequent SDS allocations – ideally detailing case studies where this may or may not apply.

# APPENDIX 1

## **LOCAL AUTHORITY CONSULTEES**

Rosie Black – Dumfries and Galloway Council

Avril Hope-Smith – Dundee City Council

Vicki Lorimer – City of Edinburgh Council

Margaret Petherbridge – Falkirk Council

Gary Smith – Dundee City Council

These consultations were undertaken by David Smart of Smart Consultancy Scotland.



# APPENDIX 2

## SUPPORT AGENCY RESEARCH

These consultations, and the report below, were prepared for SUSE by Jean McMillan.

## RESEARCH WITH SUPPORT AGENCIES ON BEHALF OF SCOTTISH UNION OF SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT

### Introduction

This report presents the findings of independent research into the way in which an individual budget, provided through Self-directed Support can help people achieve their employment goals. These goals could include finding employment, undertaking training towards employment or volunteering.

The research was commissioned by the Scottish Union of Supported Employers and seeks to better understand the barriers people may face if they are in receipt of an individual budget and want to get a paid job. The small-scale research set out to investigate the following questions:

1. Do clients want to gain employment, does this come up during planning sessions?
2. Do agencies feel equipped to support clients with this request?
3. Do agencies know providers they could refer clients to or commission services from?
4. Are local authorities encouraging for SDS budgets to be used in this way?
5. Are there any examples of clients trying employability activities?

This work constitutes part of the larger review of the Access to Employment project which has also gathered information from local authorities and client case studies.

### Method

**Interviews with stakeholders:** in-depth semi-structured interviews were held and explored a number of issues in relation to the way in which Self Directed Support can help individuals into employment, training for employment or volunteering.

**Focus group:** a focus group was held which included support agencies, carers and clients. The focus group was structured around the support agencies, the journey of the client and the experience of all those involved in that journey. Discussion included recommendations for improvements to the experience of each group.

**Survey:** a survey was conducted with Self-directed Support Scotland (SDSS) members from which we achieved a 57% return. The survey was centred around three areas: the people the organisations support, the organisation in which they work and the experience of the respondent with decision makers for example, the local authority.

## Key Findings

### ***1. Do clients want to gain employment, does this come up during planning sessions?***

The majority of support agency responses indicated that clients are not involved in employment, volunteering or training and that most clients do not express a keen interest in these activities during planning sessions. Where clients do express any interest it is likely to be concerning a paid job or volunteering rather than training. Most respondents, both support agencies and clients, reported that SDS was not concerned with employment as SDS is still associated with social care and not employment and that those seeking employment, where employment was the only outcome or goal, would be referred directly to DWP where they will be supported through Access to Work and Fair Start.

Both support agencies and clients reported that Self-directed Support (SDS) was not viewed as a route to employment but principally as a financial support for care, it had developed into a practical care tool and not for supporting people to explore routes and opportunities.

*“People get a care/support package but they never get a development package so social workers might not see a personal budget as a valid way to help with employment. They may not understand that SDS can support a person to get a job or stay in a job”*

*Comment from Carer*

There were many shared reasons articulated for employability not being part of the planning session. These included:

- A concern about the impact employment will have on benefits and support which was backed by most support agencies reporting that personal budgets would be re-assessed when clients took up paid work.
- A belief that SDS is not concerned with employment and the funding does not support employability activities - one council was reported as 'only funding critical personal care through SDS for new claimants.'
- Little confidence in social workers ability to support individuals into paid work or training for work
- The journey is frustrating, tiring and long. If a person is not determined, it can be easy to give up
- Respondents felt that they needed more information about the support available to them - both looking for a job and support to keep it. There is not enough information available in an accessible format. One respondent suggested that about 5% of clients seek help through online material and this relates to the 'level of skill and literacy to be able to make effective use of internet searches'.
- A number of respondents reported on the culture change that had happened as very recently people with a disability would not have expected to seek employment. Assumptions and perceptions have been slow to change.

*"Aspiration - this is key. Up until a very short time ago individuals would have been actively discouraged from working. Total culture change required on behalf of service users and services"*

*Comment from Support Agency*

- Respondents felt they were limited in what could be delivered through SDS especially if the client did not choose Option 1. 'Where people with learning disabilities opt for option 3 or 4 support staff are unlikely to think of employability as an option'. {Carer response}
- The issue of employment for carers was raised and noted that if SDS does not fully support a client, the family carer is unable to either maintain an existing job or seek employment as their role of carer takes precedent. A support agency suggested that parents are more likely to cope with caring for a family member with profound and multiple learning disabilities (PMLD) if they are able, should they wish, to maintain employment - enriching their lives, contributing to the

household income and giving them purpose and self-worth. Budget cuts in local authorities have had an impact on the budgets available to individuals with PMLD. It was noted that one family who experienced a reduction of 54K in the money they received resulted in the parent giving up employment to care for their child.

- Clients have to have a strong advocate who shares aspirations for employment and this is not always the case.

## **2. Do agencies feel equipped to support clients with this request?**

Agencies reported a good knowledge of the benefits system but an uneven understanding of employability services to which they could refer their clients. However, there was a broad range of opinions regarding the level of service that clients received with 50% reporting that the service was not good. One group were stalled in their intention to appoint an employability post as they discovered that the post would attract a VAT cost and that additional money was not in their account. Care services do not attract VAT.

## **3. Do agencies know providers they could refer clients to or commission services from?**

62% of support agency respondents felt that they had good information on local opportunities to offer clients and approximately 56% felt that they had a working knowledge of supported employment and how it can be used to support people to gain paid work. 37% reported that they did not have strong connections with employment or training providers.

## **4. Are local authorities encouraging for SDS budgets to be used in this way?**

There was a general consensus that local authorities for the most part valued the benefits of employment for their clients but were not creative in the use of their budgets. It was strongly agreed that each local authority delivers SDS in a different way and so there were inequalities in the system where clients received different levels of support and service across the 32 local authority areas.

*“There are too many barriers, 32 different stories about what is happening. There is no consistency, not all local authorities use the same system. The Government should push for all to use the same process.”*

*Comment from service user*

Most respondents thought that reduced local authority budgets had had an impact on service delivery and that they were receiving less support than previously experienced. They described eligibility criteria that was difficult to meet and a focus on basic needs. Local Authorities were expected to give control to individuals to use their budget as they wanted but clients and support agencies were of the opinion that local authorities were not keen to relinquish control.

While participants agreed that relationships with social workers were essential for effective support, many reported that because of cutbacks clients were not guaranteed meetings with the same social worker or that there were sufficient social workers. One respondent described a situation in a council where there were 800 people on the assessment waiting list.

### ***5. Are there any examples of clients trying employability activities?***

There were no examples provided by those involved in the research which illustrated the way in which SDS could support an individual into employment.

## **Conclusions**

- The general view is that SDS does not support clients into employment. Social Workers are more likely to consider a care package for their clients than to consider employment, training towards a job or volunteering.
- Austerity measures within local authorities have affected the service that clients can receive and clients also think that the financial packages associated with SDS have been reduced.
- The nomenclature associated with SDS is associated with care and not necessarily with development, hence the focus on personal support rather than paid work.
- Clients are also concerned about a reduction to their benefits and support and this is a barrier to considering paid employment.
- The journey to achieving SDS can be long and tortuous and clients and their carers/supporters have to be resilient in the face of difficulties and bureaucracy that they experience.
- Social workers are reluctant to relinquish control of their budgets and explore alternative, creative opportunities.

- Clients and their carers have information about some of the services they can consider but the information about SDS and in particular local opportunities and services does not fully meet the needs of individuals.
- Support Agencies in the most part have links to employability support for their clients but report little interest in employability opportunities from their clients.
- The delivery across 32 local authorities is uneven resulting in many different delivery models.

## ***Recommendations***

### **EQUALITY ACROSS SCOTLAND**

Local Authorities services would benefit from sharing good practice around the ways in which SDS can support employability.

### **DEVELOPING AN EMPLOYABILITY FOCUS**

Local Authorities should have a more defined role in supporting SDS for employability. A pathway to work within the care assessment could help people access the right support at different stages of the journey.

### **INFORMATION**

There is information available but more local information would be useful. Welfare rights advisers in local authorities to advise on the impact of SDS on benefits would help people understand the impact of paid work on benefits.

### **LANGUAGE**

Language narrows the focus: a change in nomenclature from care to development needs may help to support a change of attitude.

### **DEVELOPMENT OF THE WORK FORCE**

Social workers and support services would benefit from development - to better understand the role SDS plays in employment and to develop and share more creative approaches to meet their client needs.

## Case Studies

While the majority of respondents reported little engagement with employability support through SDS, one respondent provided the following case studies of individuals maintaining employment through the provision of SDS.

1. After a year of seeking support, client A was awarded a direct payment in 2008 and initially employed her Dad to get her ready for work in the morning and a PA to support her with personal care and household tasks. Having control over her care has removed the inconsistencies she experienced while being supported through the Home Help service. The support that SDS provides helps client A to stay in work and continue to live an independent life.
2. Client B was already in work and being supported at home by her parents. Direct payments have supported her to move into her own accommodation as well as giving her the support she needs to stay in work. 'Direct payments gives you the freedom and choice to live the live you want.'
3. Client C was originally supported through the Students Awards Agency for Scotland (SAAS) which paid for a PA. He then applied for a direct payment to increase the hours of his PA. As an employer Client C has control over the hours and the activities he organises and pays for, allowing him flexibility and control over his circumstances.

Creative ways of supporting individuals through SDS have been illustrated by one Support Agency. This organisation was given discrete funding through SDS to support homeless individuals. Although the following case studies do not demonstrate individuals moving into paid work they do show how creative support can move them closer to employment.

4. Client D had been homeless and lost access to her children. Through engagement with the Support Agency she was given funding for sports clothing and a membership of a gym. She maintained the membership, going to the gym most mornings and had gradually increased the time she is allowed to have with her children. Her mental health has improved and she is now in a better place to consider the next stages in her life. She said that the gym gave her a reason to get up in the morning and without that she would have been lost.
5. Client E is a student and had become depressed and not attending his classes. On discussions with the Support Agency he disclosed that he was homesick and needed to see his mother. The agency paid for a flight through SDS back to his home - he has since returned and is fully engaged in his studies and is much more outgoing.



# APPENDIX 3

## CASE STUDY INTERVIEWS

Dawn Edmiston SUSE's Network Development Co-ordinator undertook these consultations and produced this report.

### REPORT ON SDS EMPLOYABILITY FUND RECIPIENTS

#### Introduction

Between 2015 and 2017 20 service users from SUSE's member organisations received funding from SUSE to use as a Self-Directed Support budget. This funding was awarded on the basis that it would help the disabled service user to pursue employability activities. SDS usually covers self-care and physical support but doesn't allow people to move forward or to improve their circumstances through employment and engagement with their community. SUSE believe that disabled people have a right to work and ought to receive support to get closer to the job market.

#### Methodology

After the funding ended interviews were completed with the 12 service users in order to get a picture of how the money was used and the impact the funding had on the client. SUSE staff developed 13 set questions to be asked in the interviews; these were designed to allow us to evaluate the impact of the funding. We then sifted through the available information on all recipients of the funding and selected those we wanted to interview so that we had a wide geographic spread across Scotland. The interviews were conducted between November 2017 and February 2018. Each interview lasted approximately an hour and the client had the chance to make additional comments or questions at the end. In some occasions it wasn't possible for the service user to be present at the meeting, in which case the interview was conducted with the employment worker or job coach who supported the client with their employability activities.

The recipients of the funding were spread throughout Scotland; in Glasgow, Fife, Ayrshire, Inverness-shire and Aberdeenshire. This spread across Scotland gave us a good understanding of the different challenges in urban and rural areas. The clients were service users of different support organisations; for example, Enable, Hansel, The Shirley Project, Grampian Opportunities and Fife Supported Employment Services. Although not by design or intention all of the clients we



selected for the interviews had a learning disability or an autism spectrum disorder. By being involved in the project the clients hoped to gain experience in a variety of new working environments, trying new things and ultimately to feeling more confident around working.

The service users received the funding between 2015 and 2017, some received funding for one year and some for two years during that period. This report will focus on 6 main themes which were reoccurring issues for the 12 disabled service users interviewed.

The six themes are:

- Barriers to employability
- Challenges to accessing employment rural v urban
- Activities done on the project
- Benefits that arose from involvement in the project
- Service users' future goals
- Suggestions for project delivery from employment workers

## **Barriers to employability**

**Out of the 12 participants interviewed, 3 participants had never taken part in any employability activities prior to the project, 3 had done unpaid work through volunteering or an unpaid work placement and 6 had worked part-time.**

Lack of confidence to enter the workforce was cited as a barrier; some clients didn't feel ready for the workplace. The lack of available support from care agencies and ongoing support from supported employment agencies was given as a barrier, especially for clients who are over the age of 25. It was reported by Enable Glasgow that there is a lack of opportunities for service users over 25 and that meant that there were no agencies to refer clients to after their time with Enable had finished.

The unpaid work undertaken by participants ranged from a couple of hours a week in a charity shop, one client helped in a car wash due to his passion for cars and one client from Enable has been working in the Disney Store one morning per week for over 15 years without being paid or being made an official employee despite being able to do the task required.

For one participant ill health was a barrier and this led to her having to leave a voluntary position in a charity shop. Poor health can be fluctuating and sporadic.

2 participants had been previously dismissed from employers for behaviour or anger issues mainly directed towards other staff members. The nature of autism is that the person likes to follow routine and structure and if another staff member

deviates from the structure this can cause anger and aggression; which wasn't appropriate to the workplace and led to dismissal. Poor personal hygiene was also a reason for dismissal in one case.

There was also a reluctance or indeed inability to work anymore than the permitted 16 hours of paid work per week as this would potentially impact on the service users benefits from the DWP.

Employment workers reported that there was a staunch reluctance from employers to employ a disabled person, so they would continually be on unpaid work placement. In one instance the family of the participant chose to remove them from an unpaid work placement in a car wash as the family felt he was being taken advantage of and not being allowed to do 'real work'. Instead he was picking up litter and tidying up.

## **Challenges to accessing employment rural versus urban**

The supported employment providers that Suse worked with on this project were spread across Scotland, some were based in urban areas in central Glasgow and East Ayrshire and Stirling and some were rural organisations based in Inverness, Kirkcaldy and Inverurie.

### **11 of the 12 participants said using public transport due to anxiety caused or due to its availability was a barrier to employment.**

Participants who lived in urban areas cited public transport as a barrier as it caused them anxiety, 1 wouldn't cross a main road and another would only work in his neighbourhood in Glasgow and refused to travel to other parts of Glasgow to work or to meet with his employment worker. In urban areas the challenges for service users accessing employability activities were travelling in busy areas often with lots of crowds which for a client with autism is distressing. Travelling to places of employment at peak times was also cited as an issue by one participant, which meant he would only work for a few hours in the middle of the day and refused to travel in the evening.

Of the clients who lived in rural areas all except one cited the rural location and unreliability of buses as a barrier to accessing employability activities. Only one participant from Inverness City said location and distance wasn't a problem. The challenges faced by service users in rural areas were the unreliability of public transport. Buses often only run once or twice daily and people with disabilities rely on public transport to access work. 3 clients said that they experienced anxiety when using public transport and therefore were not independent travellers and relied on lifts from family or support worker. The distances between towns in Fife can be expansive; in Kirkcaldy the service user lived two hours from the nearest big town; Stirling and it

is here that most of the employment opportunities exist. Therefore, rural geography was a barrier.

Bad weather during the winter months often meant that places would be inaccessible and public transport cancelled. “Having snow or strong wind often meant we’d be cut off entirely from the big towns for days” – Shirley Project, Inverness. This has an impact on someone being able to retain work.

## **Activities done whilst on the project**

A variety of activities were undertaken whilst on the project.

**2 of the participants gained paid part-time work as a result of the funding, one in a café and one in a laundry. 7 participants started voluntary work or a work placement. And 3 participants focussed on confidence building, CV writing and building trust in their employment coach.**

Of the two who gained employment one person continues to work in the café, the other had to stop due to moving house. The voluntary activities undertaken were helping in a charity shop, helping in a respite centre for older people, gardening, admin, car wash assistant, helping at a kennels and volunteering at a pet rescue centre. One of Enable’s clients completed an admin placement at the Enable offices in Glasgow and continues to do this. A client from Hansel in Ayrshire completed the John Muir with support from the Forestry Commission. This award is an initiative for people to become more involved in the environment and with nature. Upon completion of this he was invited to an award ceremony at the local council headquarters to be presented with a certificate.

One client from Hansel volunteers in a guinea pig rescue centre 3 days per week and loves this activity and now feels less anxious because of it.

## **Benefits gained from involvement on project**

Service users reported a wide range of benefits from participating on the employability project.

**10 participants reported increased confidence, 4 participants reported learning new skills, 3 participants said they valued the 1-1 time with the employment coach and 3 said constructing a CV was very valuable to them.**

Confidence grew as clients began to realise that they had skills to offer and that work would be a viable option for them and that they were capable of working. A client with the Shirley Project in Inverness began to believe that it was possible for him to work

through the project and has since found a part-time job in Poundland. Focused one to one time with a job coach allowed the client time to discuss and explore their interests and likes and dislikes and how that would correspond to a working environment. The time with a job coach allowed the client to build trust with the worker.

The clients reported learning new practical skills such as gardening, administration and laundry. They also learnt soft skills such as customer service, communicating with colleagues and customers, time management and asking for assistance when needed.

They enjoyed trying new things such as working in a guinea pig rescue centre, that they wouldn't otherwise have had the opportunity to try. Self-esteem grew and in turn clients developed a more positive outlook for the future. Involvement in the project allowed one client in Highland to participate in her local community more and therefore she developed a sense of belonging and made more friends. One client from Enable was given support to write his CV, through doing this he realised that he had done a lot more valuable stuff than he had previously thought. He was so proud of his CV he started going into employers himself to hand them his CV and was able to market himself to employers.

## **Future aspirations**

The participants had wide and varied future aspirations.

**7 of the 12 wanted to find part-time work, 1 wanted to go to college, 2 wanted to continue volunteering as it was felt they weren't ready for work, and 2 dreamed of being in the acting world.**

The clients reported a desire to work in part-time jobs in retail or customer service, working with animals, and one wanted to work in a garage as his passion was cars. One client in Grampian would like a job supporting other young disabled people like herself.

Others would like to continue doing temporary work tasters and voluntary work to help them decide what they like doing. One client is aiming to go to college to do a course in childcare, however, has found this challenging as the course leaders feel the course would be too challenging for her. One client desires to work in horticulture using the gardening skills he gained during the project volunteering at the forestry commission. A client in Stirling Employment Services wants to write scripts for movies and has recently joined a local drama group to help him achieve this.

## **Suggestions made by employment workers**

When I conducted the interviews the employment workers at the organisations were asked for any other comments and their views around delivery of the project.

4 staff members said that their client would have benefitted from additional funding or more funding over a longer period of time. The employment worker in Grampian said that her client received 2 years of SUSE funding and this helped the client progress further and become more confident than if she'd only received one year of funding. Two years of continued funding allowed the client to work with the staff member closely and begin to trust her and open up to her. In rural areas in Aberdeenshire it was reported that extra funding would have allowed the client to visit opportunities in other towns. A suggestion was made for some of the funding to be used towards travel.

In Grampian and Aberdeenshire there was also a suggestion for an extra travel budget to allow the client and their job coach to access a variety of activities as distances are much further there and it can be 50 miles to a work placement. Because of the Suse project Grampian Opportunities is now delivering a short term intensive employment mentoring program as "it has changed the way we look at supporting clients".

At Enable Glasgow it was noted that the client must have a solid care and PA package before the employment project can be successful because having a good care system in place is vital to the success of all other projects. It was reported that a client from Enable Glasgow would have benefitted from another year of funding as he was very far removed from the job market, as he was voluntarily non-verbal, and another year with support from a work coach might have given him the support he needed to progress into work. A suggestion from Enable Kirkcaldy was that some of the money could have been used as an employer incentive as most employers are still reluctant to take on a disabled employee.

Shirley Project in Inverness said that the project was "brilliant! anything helps" and it gave weight to employment initiatives, which are often overlooked. They did suggest that more money over a shorter period would have been preferred.

Hansel in Ayrshire suggested a networking and information sharing event every 6 months for the organisations that support disabled service users with employability and their clients to share good practice and client stories.