

Institution: Cardiff University		
Unit of Assessment: Psychology, Psychiatry and Neuroscience (4)		
Title of case study: A new supported employment model for learning disabled and autistic young people in Wales		
Period when the underpinning research was undertaken: 2008 - 2016		
Details of staff conducting the underpinning research from the submitting unit:		
Name(s):	Role(s) (e.g. job title):	Period(s) employed by submitting HEI:
Stephen Beyer	Senior Lecturer	21/01/1985 - present
Andrea Meek	Research Assistant	01/12/1999 - present
Elisa Vigna	Research Assistant	03/12/2003 - present
Axel Kaehne	Research Assistant	01/11/2005 - 30/04/2013
Claire Pimm	Research Assistant	01/05/2011 - 31/05/2013
Amy Davies	Research Assistant	14/11/2011 - 30/06/2014
Period when the claimed impact occurred: 01/01/2014 – 31/05/2020		
Is this case study continued from a case study submitted in 2014? No		
1. Summary of the impact (indicative maximum 100 words)		
<p>Young people with learning disabilities or Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) experience significantly higher levels of unemployment than their peers. Cardiff research on supported employment models influenced Welsh Government's decision to fund a supported employment model for learning disabled or ASD young people in Wales. It also underpinned the design of a supported employment project called <i>Engage to Change</i> which received £10M in Welsh Government funding. Impact from the <i>Engage to Change</i> project included work experience for 610 learning disabled or ASD young people, with over a third of them securing paid employment, and 81% of employers reporting a positive effect on their company's approach to creating a diverse workforce.</p>		
2. Underpinning research (indicative maximum 500 words)		
<p>The National Autistic Society reports that just 16% of autistic adults are in full-time employment. Further, according to the national learning disability charity, MENCAP, only 6 in 100 people with a more severe learning disability are in work, compared to 49% of the wider disability community and 79% of the general population.</p> <p>'Supported employment' is a well-established model whereby people with identified needs (such as those with physical or learning disabilities) are supported to find paid work. The model involves using specialist job coaches who build up a profile of an individual – looking at their specific skills, experience and interests – enabling a match to a suitable employer. Supported employment involves close collaboration with employers to maximise the success of the employment outcome. The Cardiff team conducted research to investigate whether there was a need for supported employment for young people with learning disabilities or autism in Wales and, if so, how that should be implemented so it would be a valuable tool supporting this cohort into meaningful employment.</p> <p>In summary, Cardiff's research showed that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • young people with learning disabilities who wanted to find paid work after leaving school faced many barriers, including a lack of personal support to help them try out jobs while at school or college. Too few organisations existed to help these young people find jobs when they left education [3.1]. • A combination of well-structured work awareness training provided in the last year of school or college combined with supported work experience (provided through external employment agencies) had a positive impact on the likelihood of these young people finding employment [3.1]. 		

- Supported employment agencies are better at providing work training in real jobs than schools and colleges, and generate more paid jobs at above the national employment rate for people with a learning disability (5.6% in 2019-2020), exceeding other support models. In addition, in the UK, many transition employment agencies are funded to work exclusively with adults, precluding them from providing the services needed for younger people with learning disabilities who are still in school [3.1].
- The supported employment approach could assist people with learning disabilities and autism into work on a large scale [3.2, 3.3, 3.4]. The Cardiff team showed that multiple work experience placements for young people with learning disabilities or autism are possible if they are individually designed and offered with job coach support [3.3].
- Supported employment was relevant to the Welsh Government's skills development policy as young people with learning disabilities or autism spectrum disorder significantly increased their employment skills through completing work experience [3.3]. They were also highly rated by employers, and participants gained paid jobs at three times the UK rate of 6% when making use of the supported employment model [3.3, 3.4].
- A problem for the delivery of the supported employment model was the availability of effective job coaching services and the resources to pay for them while people are aged 16-19 years of age [3.4].

Overall, Cardiff research demonstrated the need to develop a Welsh strategy to make job coaching available for young people with learning disabilities or ASD through a supported employment model [3.5].

3. References to the research (indicative maximum of six references)

[3.1] Beyer, S. & Kaehne, A. (2008) The transition of young people with learning disabilities to employment: What works? *Journal on Developmental Disabilities*, 14, 1, 81-90. <http://www.oadd.org/index.php?page=299>

[3.2] Beyer, S. (2012) The impact of agency organisation and natural support on supported employment outcomes. *Journal of Vocational Rehabilitation*, 136, 1-11. DOI:10.3233/JVR-2012-586

[3.3] Beyer, S., Kaehne, A., Meek, S., Pimm, C. & Davies, A. (2014) Regional SEN Transition to Employment Initiative (Real Opportunities): Impact of the Real Opportunities Project. Caerphilly, Wales: Real Opportunities Project
<https://www.realopportunities.org.uk/professionals/research-and-evaluation.aspx>

[3.4] Beyer, S., Meek, A. & Davies, A. (2016) Supported work experience and its impact on young people with intellectual disabilities, their families and employers. *Advances in Mental Health and Intellectual Disabilities*, 10, 3, 207 - 220. DOI: 10.1108/AMHID-05-2014-0015

[3.5] Townsley R., Robinson C., Williams V., Beyer S. & Christian-Jones, C. (2014) Research into Employment Outcomes for Young People with Autistic Spectrum Disorders. Cardiff: Welsh Government.
<https://gov.wales/sites/default/files/statistics-and-research/2019-07/140602-research-employment-outcomes-young-people-autism-en.pdf>

4. Details of the impact (indicative maximum 750 words)

The Cardiff team's research on supported employment models led to a change in the Welsh Government's approach to supporting young learning disabled people and those with ASD into paid work in Wales. The Welsh Government subsequently awarded £10M to a project that implemented a supported employment model, called *Engage to Change* which was underpinned by Cardiff's evidence. This project has supported 610 learning disabled young people to date and changed employer attitudes towards hiring learning disabled young people.

4.1 Influenced the Welsh Government's approach and use of a £10M fund to assist young people with learning disabilities or ASD into employment

Cardiff research influenced autism policy in Wales leading to a move away from the use of generic employment support models (e.g. standard job seeking services offered through Jobcentre Plus) to implementation of the supported employment approach. In a speech, Ken Skates MS, Deputy Minister for Skills and Technology, highlighted Cardiff research [3.5]: *"This [Beyer's] report has provided officials with a better understanding of the nature and extent of employment outcomes and barriers to employment for young people with ASD living in Wales. The report's recommendations will provide officials with direction on how better to respond to the specific needs of this group of young people"* [5.1, p.3].

Subsequently, the Welsh Government revealed its Refreshed Autism Plan [5.2] which named the 'Getting Ahead Two' grant, a £10M fund, in conjunction with Big Lottery, to provide employment support for learning disabled or ASD people aged 16 – 25 years old in Wales. The Welsh Government used this entire grant to fund a supported employment model in the form of a project called *Engage to Change* which cited Cardiff research in its tender submission [5.3, p.68-71 and p.92-96, citing 3.2, 3.3, 3.4]. Jon Day, the Chairman of Learning Disability Wales, the agency leading the proposal, notes that: *"Dr. Beyer's research mentioned previously, and a paper on effective employment support organisation, informed the design of the best practice model used within the Engage to Change intervention. This research formed part of the evidence submitted in our consortium tender submission to highlight the effectiveness of the supported employment approach in Wales"* [5.4].

Using Cardiff research findings in its design, the *Engage to Change* project matches employers and potential employees through a placement programme whilst removing formal recruitment processes. It also advocates for employment followed by training (rather than the traditional approach of training before employment) which makes it more effective for young learning disabled or ASD individuals to apply training to real-life work situations. The Cardiff team continues to be responsible for collecting data to evaluate the project and demonstrated that, after only four years, *Engage to Change* achieved the following impact:

- In total, 610 learning disabled or ASD people have joined the *Engage to Change* project to receive support in finding work. Of these individuals, 490 have benefited from unpaid work experience and 388 individuals were provided with paid work placements, both of which are a key gateway into longer term employment [5.5].
- 224 project users (of the 388 provided with work placements) secured paid jobs through *Engage to Change*. This equates to over half (57%) of all individuals securing work following their paid placement, compared to the UK national average employment rate of 5.6% for learning disabled people [5.5].
- As such, the scheme was found to have an 86% employment success rate, as measured by the Department of Work and Pensions metric for a successful route to employment (i.e. remaining in a job for over three months) [5.5].
- Interviews with participants and their families demonstrate the benefit of this programme and the positive impact on their quality of life: One participant said, *'One thing is that I am employed, so if people ask I can say "yes". I am more confident in myself, starting a new life and I am more independent in some things. [...] I have become more independent in the job, doing stuff and I don't mean just in work but socially'* [5.6 p.10].

The *Engage to Change* project also generated the following additional impact:

- **Job creation:** As part of the programme, new jobs have been created: 30 people are now employed to deliver the *Engage to Change* project in two job coaching agencies (called AGORIAD CYF and ELITE) in North and South Wales [5.3, p185].
- **Additional funding:** The success of *Engage to Change* led to further funding for job coaching in Wales from the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) through the Department's 'Access to Work' fund. Previously, this fund was only available in

England but now yields £250,000 per year in additional income to Wales. Zoe Richards, CEO of Learning Disability Wales notes, “*Without Engage to Change, and the Supported Internships schemes it is delivering, this money would not be available in Wales. This represents an important impact on UK Department of Work and Pensions policy, and a concrete increase in services for, and life chances of, young people with a learning disability or autism in Wales*” [5.7].

- **Widespread recognition of a best practice model:** The Welsh Government’s ‘Well-being of Future Generations’ Policy Commissioner promoted the *Engage to Change* internship model at Betsi Cadwaladr NHS Trust as a way to help local communities improve employment opportunities [5.8]. Additionally, the Children’s Commissioner for Wales’ review of transition of people with a learning disability recommended that the Welsh Government’s ‘Prosperity for All’ employability programme build on *Engage to Change* to develop a lasting and widespread supported employment model [5.9, p.39].
- **Evidence for further Welsh Government policy:** Dr. Beyer was an adviser for the Welsh Government’s Apprenticeships Working Party which developed a Disability Action Plan to enable more disabled people to enter Apprenticeships, feeding in *Engage to Change* research findings and lessons. The published Action Plan [5.10] included two case studies of people with learning disabilities who had received successful internships within the *Engage to Change* project, modelling how people could be engaged in a reformed Apprenticeship.

4.2 Changed employer attitudes towards recruiting learning disabled or ASD employees

Engage to Change worked with 454 new employers in Wales [5.5, p.3]: 87% would continue to employ the person they had been matched with if adequate support was available and 68% said employing the person had a positive effect on the productivity of other staff. 72% of employers reported that offering a placement or paid job in the *Engage to Change* project had a positive effect on the attitudes of other staff to work. Over three quarters of employers (81%) reported that engaging with a person through *Engage to Change* had a positive effect on their company’s approach to creating a diverse workforce and 65% said it had a positive effect on their customers [5.11, p.9]:

In summary, the Cardiff team changed the Welsh Government’s policy on supporting young people with learning disabilities or autism into employment. The Cardiff team also provided the underpinning evidence for the successful tender from *Engage to Change* for a new £10M investment designed to help young people with learning disabilities experience employment, leading to a significant increase in successful longer-term paid positions and positive changes in attitudes to employment of learning disabled individuals.

5. Sources to corroborate the impact (indicative maximum of 10 references)

[5.1] Speech by Ken Skates MS (2014) The Welsh Government’s aspirations for people with a learning disability or Autistic Spectrum Disorder. 10 July. Cardiff: Welsh Government

[5.2] Welsh Government (2016) Refreshed Autistic Spectrum Disorder Strategic Action Plan (p.15, p.20)

[5.3] *Engage to Change* - Project plan - Learning Disability Wales FINAL.pdf (p.68-71, p.92-96, p.185 for staff diagram at two job coaching agencies)

[5.4] Testimony: Jon Day, Chairperson of Learning Disability Wales which leads the *Engage to Change* project. This testimonial details how Beyer’s research provided evidence submitted in the *Engage to Change* tender which was awarded £10M by Welsh Government

[5.5] Beyer, S., Meek, A. and Vigna, E. (2020) *Engage to Change briefing: What policy changes are required to provide people with a learning disability or ASD equal access to the labour market in Wales?*

[5.6] Beyer, S., Vigna, E., Meek, A. and Meighan J. (2019) Research outcomes for *the Engage to Change* study. Cardiff University, National Centre for Mental Health: *Engage to Change* Evaluation Team (p. 10)

[5.7] Testimony: Zoe Richards, CEO Learning Disability Wales. This testimonial details how *Engage to Change* led to further funding in Wales of £250,000 per year from the Department for Work and Pensions

[5.8] Future Generations Commissioner for Wales (2018) *Well-being in Wales: the journey so far* (p.11)

[5.9] Children's Commissioner for Wales (2018). *Don't Hold Back: Transitions to adulthood for young people with learning disabilities*. Swansea, Llansamlet: Children's Commissioner for Wales

[5.10] Welsh Government (2018). *Inclusive Apprenticeships: Disability Action Plan for Apprenticeships 2018-20*

[5.11] Vigna, E. and Beyer, S. (2020) *Supported Employment in Wales: Emerging issues in challenging times for supported employment providers and employers*. Presentation at Wales' National Autism Team: Employment Symposium Webinar, 4th December 2020