

# External evaluation of the **BRIDGE** **TO WORK** programme

## REPORT FOR CITY BRIDGE TRUST

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# Executive summary

## WHO TOOK PART

Disability Rights UK (DR UK) and Learning & Work Institute (L&W) were commissioned by City Bridge Trust to carry out an external evaluation of the Bridge to Work programme. The programme aims to increase employment among young disabled people in the capital. The model allows for a variety of approaches and is being delivered by six organisations in London:

- Inclusion London
- Mencap
- Muscular Dystrophy UK
- my AFK
- NAS
- Whizz-Kidz

The programme has a strong core focus on the positive change that results from opening up opportunities to participate in work experience. Project activities include personalised job search support for young disabled people, advice on employment rights, job coaching, the development of an online resource for job seekers and research and policy work aimed at employers and education providers.

DR UK and L&W used a mix of approaches and instruments in this interim report:

- Qualitative interviews with frontline staff
- Qualitative interviews with participants
- Quantitative research through ongoing collection and analysis of management information (MI) supplied by partners
- Online participant surveys to further measure soft outcomes
- Interviews with employers



## WHAT HAS BEEN ACHIEVED

- Young disabled young people think that participation in Bridge to Work has improved their employment prospects.
- 82 per cent of survey respondents reported a positive ‘hard outcome’ at the end of the programme.
- Most survey respondents agree with various positive statements about the programme’s impact on their self-perception, employability skills and employment prospects.

## HOW WERE OUTCOMES ACHIEVED

- Some early success factors appear to be; highly personalised support arrangements; ensuring other background issues and barriers are overcome first; the quality of the relationships with employers and the opportunity to try out more than one kind of work.
- The most successful approaches to employer engagement were based on selling the business case, matching candidates to employer need, job carving, offering in-work support and removing the perception of risk.

## HOW COULD THESE BE IMPROVED

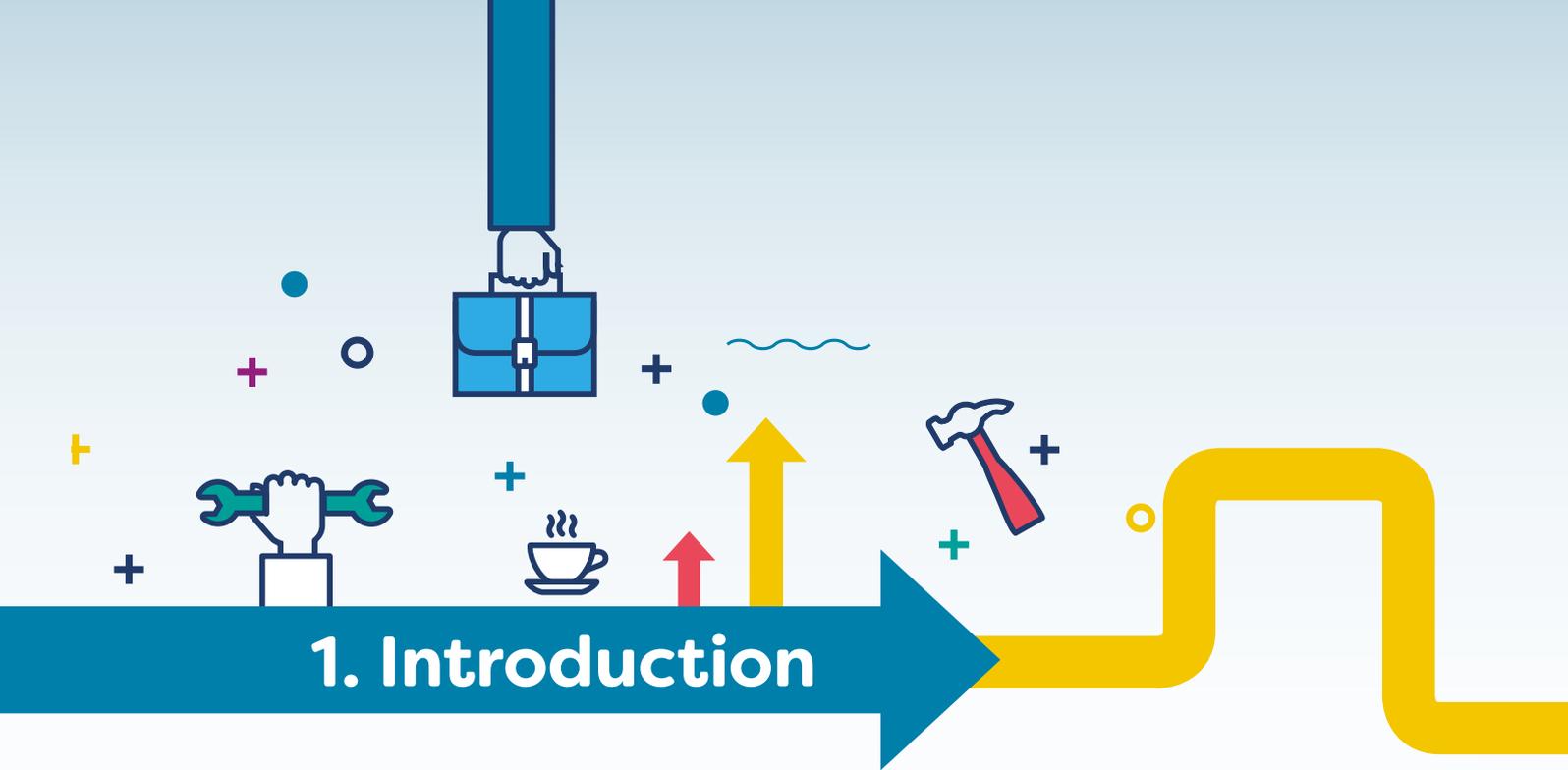
- Partners could potentially be more proactive about discussing issues and adjustments, not only when participants first start, but throughout the placement.
- There is potential for greater partnership working and emphasis on the Bridge to Work programme rather than individual projects.
- Providers could be more systematic in collecting and providing participant demographic information.
- DR UK and L&W could support the process better by providing further ideas and guidance about data collection.

## OTHER CONCLUSIONS/EMERGING FINDINGS

- The focus on the benefits of work experience aligns closely with other emerging research and the direction of government policy.
- Most participants believe that barriers exist to them being able to work.
- Notwithstanding the above, the motivation levels of participants are generally very high.
- The programme's impact on participants' understanding of adjustments to make the workplace accessible is relatively low.
- The most common sectoral destinations for those progressing into employment were catering and hospitality, followed by retail and the charity sector.
- There has been very limited uptake of the Change London bursary scheme so far.







# 1. Introduction

## Bridge to Work programme

### CONTEXT

The City Bridge Trust, the City of London Corporation's charitable funder, has a stated commitment to tackling disadvantage in London and making it a fairer and better place to live and work. Although employment rates have risen steadily in the capital over the last ten years, only half of working age disabled people in London are in paid work. This compares to nearly 80 per cent of non-disabled people in employment. Young disabled people who are not in education, employment or training (NEET) tend to stay stuck in that group for longer and their aspirations dwindle. By age 26 disabled people are nearly four times more likely to be unemployed and research by Tania Burchard ('The education and employment of disabled young people', 2005) indicates by this point they are much more likely to feel frustrated, disillusioned and believe nothing they do will make a difference.



This disadvantage has major long-term costs and leads to more disabled people living in poverty and claiming benefits for long periods of their lives.

According to a report from the Joseph Rowntree Foundation ‘Monitoring poverty and social exclusion 2016’ disabled people account for half of those in poverty. Overlooking such a significant segment of the London workforce is also a waste of talent, experience and perspectives which could help businesses in the capital to grow by better representing the diverse range of customers they serve.

The City Bridge Trust recognises that the barriers to employment faced by disabled people can be multiple and complex. However, there is a consensus that many of the challenges can be overcome with the right support. The Bridge to Work programme was designed by City Bridge Trust to provide financial backing for six organisations which are tackling these issues in the capital.



## AIMS

The Bridge to Work programme aims to narrow the employment gap for young disabled people in the capital, specifically:

- Supporting a significant number of young disabled people into paid employment.
- Sustaining disabled people in paid employment, through advice, support and developing good practice.
- Strengthening the links between potential employers and disabled young Londoners, including improving recruitment processes.

The programme model allows for a variety of approaches. There is a strong core focus on the positive change that results from opening up opportunities to participate in work experience. Project activities include personalised job search support for young disabled people, advice on employment rights, job coaching, the development of an online resource for job seekers and research and policy work aimed at employers and education providers.

Disability Rights UK (DR UK) and Learning & Work Institute (L&W) were commissioned by City Bridge Trust to carry out an external evaluation of Bridge to Work. The process has included exploring the rationale behind the delivery model and assumptions about how outcomes would be achieved in order to develop a programme-wide Theory of Change.

The programme also aims to use the learning from the six projects to better inform future policy and other funding interventions aimed at increasing disability employment.

## FUNDING AND ELIGIBILITY

The Trust has invested £3.3m over five years from October 2017 to support the six projects to deliver a range of activities.

The programme is open to 16 - 30 year-old Londoners with a disability or long-term health condition.

As part of the overall £3.3 million, Leonard Cheshire Disability is being funded to help young disabled Londoners into jobs with a £350,000 bursary scheme for paid internships. This initiative, called Change London, allows them to award bursaries of up to £4,000 per person to London-based SMEs, as well as eligible charities. All Change London placements will be for a minimum of 200 hours a year within a 12-month period.



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## SUMMARY OF INVOLVED ORGANISATIONS

- **my AFK** helps and empowers young disabled people and promotes an independent lifestyle by providing employment, training opportunities and mobility equipment unavailable on the NHS. Many of their young people have complex learning support needs. Therefore, they work closely with them to develop practical ways to involve them in making decisions about how they want to live their lives. my AFK's project uses a supported employment model offering job coaching, employment brokering, work related learning and travel training.
- **Inclusion London** supports Deaf and Disabled People's Organisations (DDPOs) to have a strong and influential collective voice and to deliver empowering and effective services to Deaf and Disabled Londoners. Action on Disability is a user-led organisation managed and controlled by disabled people which also campaigns for the rights of disabled people and influences local and national policy and practice. The 'Making it Work' project uses an internship model where disabled young people spend nine months with a host employer supported by an on-site tutor and job coaches.
- **Muscular Dystrophy UK** brings individuals, families and professionals together to fight muscle-wasting conditions, affecting around 70,000 children and adults in the UK. They support research to find effective treatments and cures and work to try and ensure everyone has the specialist care and support they need. They also provide a range of services and resources to help people live as independently as possible. Their 'Moving Up' project offers in-depth, holistic support and provides internal work experience placements and employability skills for young



disabled Londoners. It also offers advice and support on employment rights and opportunities, particularly targeted at young people in universities, clinics and colleges across London.



→ **National Autistic Society (NAS)** is the UK's largest provider of specialist services for autistic people, parents, carers and professionals. As part of Bridge to Work, NAS are developing a free online training module to support young Londoners with autism into employment.



→ **Royal Mencap (commonly known as Mencap)** is a leading voice of learning disability. All their work is based on valuing and supporting people with a learning disability and their families and carers. Mencap is delivering a project with two interlinked streams of activity. Their 'Employ Me' programme supports people with a learning disability to get job ready. Their Employer Engagement programme engages and educates employers, increasing their accessibility and supporting them to employ people with a learning disability. This includes supporting them to have the confidence and ability to enter apprenticeships.



→ **Whizz-Kidz's** mission is to transform the lives of disabled children by providing the equipment, support and life skills they need, when they need them – giving them the chance to develop their full potential. As part of Bridge to Work, Whizz-Kidz is working to create partnerships with 18 Local Authorities in London to identify wheelchair users in education who could benefit from a work placement within their local area. Whizz-Kidz also recruits participants through university and college career centres.



## EVALUATION AIMS AND METHODOLOGY

City Bridge Trust, working with DR UK and Learning & Work Institute, are aiming to explore:

- The extent to which the service models and the overall programme enable young disabled people to access employment opportunities.
- Reasons behind success rates and the key aspects of each model which work well for particular groups.

Over the course of the five-year programme, the evaluation also aims to learn more about:

- Partnership working and the enablers and barriers to this.
- The extent to which each project and the overall programme has influenced attitudes to disabled people in the workplace and amongst employers.
- The strengths, weaknesses and effectiveness of the programme and whether it has functioned as intended.

DR UK and L&W are using a process evaluation approach, drawing out lessons along the course of the project, making recommendations based on the data and supporting project partners to develop and improve their service offer throughout the delivery period.

Findings and analysis will be drawn together in interim reports (of which this is the first) and a final report in 2022. By agreement with the City Bridge Trust, lessons and good practice identified in the research will be shared externally to better inform government policy and other funders' initiatives aimed at getting more disabled people into work. The end of Year 3 and the final report will include an assessment of the programme's value-for-money and long-term effectiveness.

As a starting point, DR UK and L&W carried out a range of scoping activities, including desk research and interviews, to ensure all stakeholders were fully familiarised with the programme, the projects, the evidence base, and lessons from previous, relevant interventions.



Two Theory of Change workshops were held with partners early in 2018. These aimed to:

- Collate the different support models being used
- Map out processes and participant journeys
- Facilitate awareness of the underlying assumptions about how and why the programme will bring about positive change
- Enable partners to understand and agree the connection between activities, outcomes and impact – the causal model of change
- Agree what data should be collected

From the workshops, DR UK and L&W designed a mixed method evaluation framework incorporating the following approaches and instruments:

- Qualitative interviews with frontline staff
- Qualitative interviews with participants
- Quantitative research through ongoing collection and analysis of management information (MI) supplied by partners
- Online participant surveys to further measure soft outcomes
- Interviews and surveys with employers to triangulate data on success factors and to explore changing attitudes over time

## Structure of the report

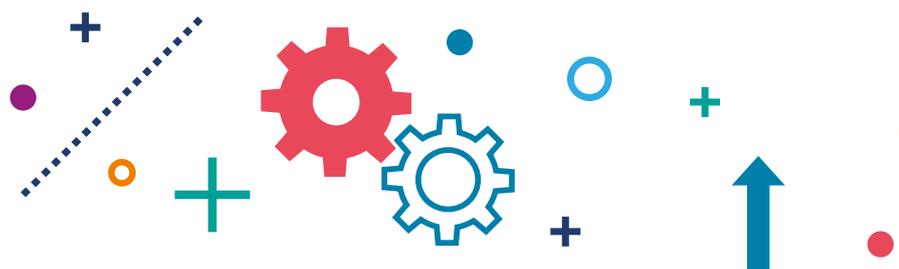
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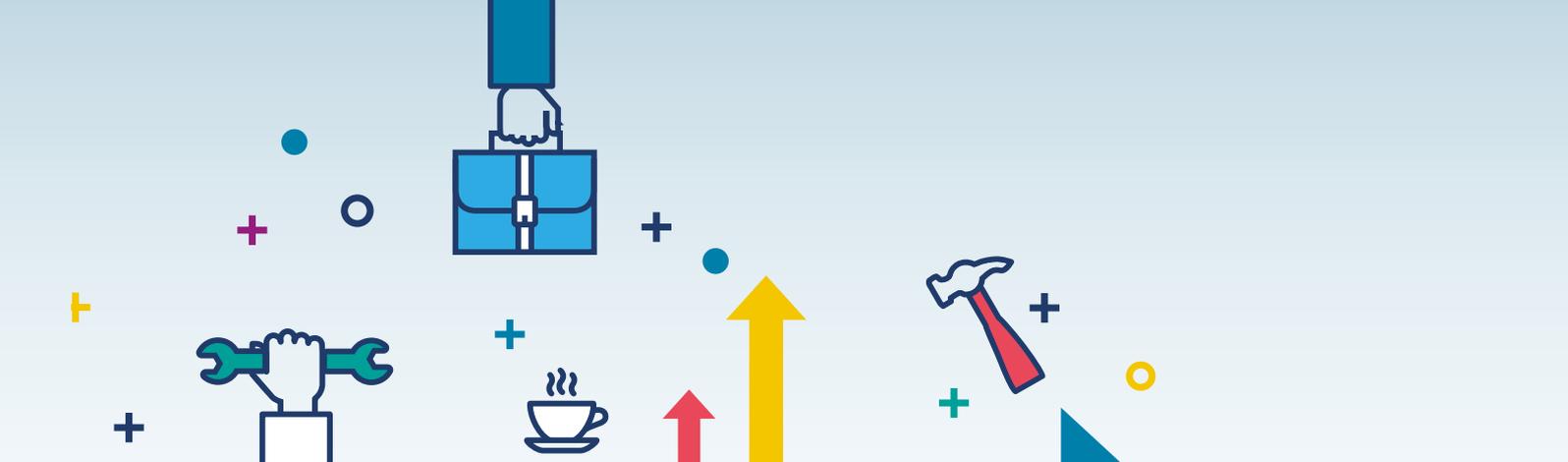
- Interviews with 12 participants from the four projects which had participants during the 2018 calendar year
- Interviews with delivery partner staff
- Interviews with three employers
- Activity and outcome data on 109 participants drawn from the MI
- The responses of 35 participants who completed an online survey

This is structured as:

- Overview of the six delivery partners
- Description of participant characteristics, needs and barriers
- Participant experiences of support
- Analysis of employer engagement
- Findings on soft and hard outcomes so far

The report includes some preliminary suggestions and recommendations for delivery partners and engaged employers to consider.





## 2. Programme details

This section provides an overview of the six initiatives that were funded through the Bridge to Work Programme.



### my AFK

my AFK (formerly Action for Kids) provides services for young people with learning disabilities and their families, focused on preparing young people for life after school. They also provide mobility equipment that is not available through the NHS to disabled people up to age 25. They primarily operate in eight boroughs in North London.

my AFK has been running work experience programmes for approximately 15 years. In that time have built up a bank of employers, some of which they have

longstanding working relationships with. The Life and Work programme, which is part of Bridge to Work, has been running for around five years. Participants on Life and Work attend a meeting with staff at my AFK and complete a series of work placements, with the goal being sustainable, paid work.

Participants on Life and Work are recruited through local colleges and schools. my AFK believe that the programme represents an improvement on the standard employability and skills training offered at college. Participants join Life and Work from other my AFK programmes aimed at younger people, or because they are young people not yet in a position to start work placements.



The Life and Work programme includes soft skills training, such as learning about rights in the workplace, or how the young people can advocate for themselves. Participants can also receive travel training, where they are supported to take public transport, with a goal of independent travel.

Life and Work aims to get participants into paid work through work placements. Most participants go through multiple placements, with the aim of experiencing different kinds of job roles and sectors. Upon starting the programme participants explore their interests with a job coach, and my AFK aims to place participants in roles that are in line with those interests. Work

placements typically last about four weeks but can vary in line with participant needs and employers' ability to support participants. A local bike shop provides many of the initial placements, particularly for participants who have no prior work experience.

my AFK has shifted the programme focus away from training sessions in house to increasing time on work experience. When the programme began participants attended training two to three days per week, but this has been reduced to one day as they found that placements were more effective for building confidence and some soft skills.

Employers are recruited through direct approach and offering them the opportunity to take on work experience placements with my AFK providing external support, so they will not need any in-house experience or be out-of-pocket providing support. They will discuss current recruitment needs and staffing gaps and suggest participants who may be able to fill those roles.





## Mencap

Mencap has not given their programme of work within Bridge to Work a specific name.

Participants are recruited to the programme from other Mencap programmes, and by identifying gaps in existing employment services in local authorities around London. In those instances, participants are recruited through SEN departments, special schools/colleges and other service providers in the local authority.

Participants start the support with a one-to-one exercise to discuss their hobbies and interests and to create a CV. They then discuss their goals, skills and qualifications, general life goals, and the kinds of work they might be interested in doing. Participants also discuss their general strengths and weaknesses, and their ability to travel on public transport independently.

The programme is based around what Mencap call the 'employ me impact framework tools', a living document.

At the time of interviewing participants, only a few had completed work placements, although opportunities were in the process of being arranged.





## Whizz-Kidz

Whizz-Kidz provide support, mobility equipment and other services to children and young people with mobility disabilities, as well as their families. The Whizz-Kidz work experience programme was initially set up to provide work placements for young wheelchair users in mainstream schools, who often missed out on work experience days due to a lack of accessible placements.

The programme has expanded to include young people beyond school age, with recruitment focused on people up to age 25. The programme includes work placements in a variety of environments. Whizz-Kidz has longstanding relationships through fundraising or other work with numerous large corporate organisations such as banks, accounting and insurance companies which have provided many of their work placements. The programme also includes employability sessions, which are often hosted by employers that cover workplace soft skills, CV advice, job-search skills, and mock interviews. They also offer wheelchair skills training for young people who are new to using wheelchairs or who have received new and unfamiliar equipment.

Participants are recruited through partnerships with local authorities, and on an ad-hoc basis through university and college careers centres, as well as from Whizz-Kidz other programmes. Placement lengths are typically for around four weeks but may be longer or shorter depending on participants interest and capacity. Participants meet with Whizz-Kidz staff to discuss their interests and skills, and Whizz-Kidz works to secure them placements in sectors or roles that interest them.



## Muscular Dystrophy UK

Muscular Dystrophy UK (MDUK) was founded in 1959, with a focus on muscle-wasting conditions. They fund research into medical treatments for those conditions, advocate for access to new and emerging treatments, and provide various services to people with muscular dystrophy and their families.

MDUK's Moving Up programme is an outgrowth of their 'Trailblazers' network of roughly 700 young people disabled young people, which has been operating since 2008. The Trailblazers programme is a pan-disability network, but most of its members have physical disabilities and use wheelchairs or other mobility aids. The Moving Up programme recruits from Trailblazers, and through other means, primarily social media. Most participants are either university students on summer holidays or recent graduates, although the programme accepts people from all educational backgrounds.

Participants on Moving Up have a pre-placement interview where they meet with programme staff and discuss their access and support needs. Participants then complete an internal work placement in Muscular Dystrophy's office near London Bridge. The internal work placement allows participants to access immediate support as they



are assigned a mentor within the organisation. While on the internal placement participants also access careers advice and support, as MDUK have found that while participants had received careers support from school or university, this advice is rarely disability specific.

Participants than typically move on to external placements.

One interviewee was recruited for a permanent role within MDUK prior to starting an external placement and it appears that Moving Up, and Trailblazers more generally, are useful staff recruitment pools for MDUK.

MDUK works with external workplaces to ensure they are accessible for the participant they will be hosting and that processes are in place to ensure that participants are properly supported.

Participants in Moving Up go through disability rights training and disability-specific careers sessions, to support them in finding permanent paid work.

MDUK also has an employer engagement programme to provide support to organisations wanting to employ disabled people, some of whom have also hosted work experience placements.





## National Autistic Society (NAS)

As part of Bridge to Work, NAS are developing a free online training module to support young Londoners with autism into employment. The resource aims to build confidence in applying for work, improve knowledge of how to apply for jobs and support young autistic people to learn practical employment skills. The resource can be completed alone or with the support from family or professionals. NAS will also inform and educate job centres on how to best support autistic job seekers to find work.

As of the last evaluation meeting with NAS in November 2018, the tool was not yet in use. However, it could be beneficial for participants on other Bridge to Work programmes and could be incorporated into the delivery package of those programmes.



## Inclusion London

Inclusion London is leading a partnership of Deaf and Disabled People's Organisations (DDPOs) including Action on Disability to test out new approaches to their internship model and roll them out. The two organisations' project 'Making it Work' includes disabled young people spending nine months with a host employer, supported by an on-site tutor and job coaches.

This project is also working with employers, supporting them to understand the business case for employing disabled people and giving them the tools to improve recruitment and retention. They will develop an evidence base for wider policy and practice in employment support for disabled people.

Direct programme delivery is not now scheduled to launch until September 2019. This is due to the need to develop strong links with a local college to act as a hub for referrals. Inclusion London's project of employer engagement emphasises the social model of disability. This differs from the 'pragmatic' approach of some other delivery partners, which emphasises the offer of motivated workers accompanying a package of free advice and support. Inclusion London's emphasis on the social model in employer engagement is at least in part because of its status as a DDPO, the only disabled people's user-led organisation among the six delivery partners.





### 3. Participant characteristics, needs and barriers

This section includes data drawn from management information (MI) submitted by four delivery partners and the analysis of 12 participant interviews.<sup>1</sup>

Inclusion London did not have any Supported Internship participants in the reporting period. The NAS model does not include supporting participants directly into work.

Unless stated, all quotes in this section are from participants.

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1. From Mencap, my AFK, MDUK and Whizz-Kidz



## **PARTICIPANT NUMBERS**

The partners that directly supported young disabled people in Year 1 submitted information on a total of 109 participants.

## **DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS**

Of the participants for which we have MI data, 66 are male, 41 are female and two participants did not list a gender. Not all providers were systematic in collecting or providing participant demographic information, including qualification level, impairment type and ethnicity data. Providers may have focused on the impact of an impairment rather than asking about the specific health condition or impairment that participants had. From the information provided, there were 32 White/White British participants, 24 Black/Black British, 10 Asian/Asian British, seven Chinese/other ethnic group and three Mixed-race participants.

The programme is open to 16 - 30 year-old Londoners with a disability or long-term health condition. All of the 12 interviewed participants were between the ages of 20 and 26.

The vast majority of those interviewed were in receipt of Disability Living Alliance (DLA) or Personal Independence Payment (PIP). These are benefits for people who need support with day-to-day tasks and living costs such as care and mobility. Some of them received Employment and Support Allowance (ESA) or Universal Credit.

### ***Household circumstances***

All but one of participants who were interviewed were living with their parents. Some hoped to live independently in the future, but others were happy to stay where they were and had no plans to move out. One participant lived with a friend in privately rented accommodation.

### ***Educational histories***

It is notable that most interviewees had attended mainstream schools and then attended college to study for vocational qualifications. The range of vocational areas included business, media studies, construction training, travel and tourism and health and social care. Four had obtained BTECs.

Of the others, two had university degrees, one had attended university but was not able to complete due to health problems, and another was still studying at university. Only one was studying at functional skills level.

### ***Health conditions and impact***

Participants interviewed had a range of impairments (and some of the partners specialised in supporting particular impairments). Five had learning disabilities and/or autism/Asperger's. Seven had mobility difficulties with causes including spina bifida, muscular dystrophy and cerebral palsy. Five participants used a wheelchair all the time, another two used a wheelchair some of the time.

### ***Employment history***

Most participants did not have any work experience prior to Bridge to Work. However, some had been on work placements previously or had done part-time paid work in the past. One was already in part-time work when they started on the programme.

## BARRIERS TO EMPLOYMENT

There was a strong perception among participants that barriers exist to them being able to work.

Some participants felt that a lack of experience was a key barrier, as they had not worked in the past.

One participant thought that their main barrier was not performing well at interview, as they had got to the interview stage several times but had never obtained a job. Some felt that travelling to and from work was a barrier.

Some participants said that their disability was a barrier to some extent – in particular, that some jobs would not be suitable for them due to their condition.

*“The medical condition is sometimes a problem for getting work because, you know, a lot of places that I’d, you know, like to work, they require you to stand up for a long period of time and be quite mobile, so it’s quite difficult but there are other jobs as well where you can just sit down at a desk.”*

One participant had to spend a considerable amount of time each day managing his health. They thought they would need to find an employer that would allow him to work part-time and flexibly.

*“All of the additional time that managing my health takes that leaves me a lot more limited, and then the way in which the world of work isn’t designed for that; it’s very hard to find a job that you do for two hours a day, so the way in which the world of work doesn’t take account of impairment effects in its design.”*

Another participant had previous experience of both unpaid and paid work where things did not work out.

*"The barriers were that my disabilities weren't taken into consideration, reasonable adjustments weren't made."*

One was not sure of their barriers to work but thought that they would probably need some in-work support.

*"I'm going to need a bit more support in a job. Like more help and stuff. Like with my reading and writing and other bits."*

my AFK identified that for some participants the biggest barriers to work are not employers' willingness or their own skills or confidence but may be due to wider factors such as housing troubles. In those cases, my AFK point participants to other services as they have realised that trying to assist participants can tie up resources.

## **VIEWS AND MOTIVATION IN RELATION TO EMPLOYMENT**

All participants were motivated to do whatever they could to increase their chances for finding work. Some also wanted to increase their confidence. Those who were offered support involving work placements were very keen to take advantage of these, to gain experience and to see how they would manage in the workplace.

*"I was hoping to get... more confident about getting a job. Also, I just wanted to learn what it is like to be in the real world of work environment."*

*"You could get experience in a bunch of different areas. The flexibility was there straightaway which is crucial for anyone that has a physical disability."*

Some were keen to work full-time, while others thought that part-time work would be more sustainable for them.

work being “important to me”, being “curious about” particular work environments and their desire to “get into work as soon as possible”. There was a common sense of simply wanting to work without necessarily having the ambition (or seeing it as realistic) to aim for a particular career area.

It could be that most participants see this as just being realistic. However, some research, for example ‘The education and employment of disabled young people’ Tania Burchard (2005), has identified how young disabled people’s aspirations dwindle progressively from age 16 if they have negative experiences in relation to work experience or miss out on other ‘employer encounters’ or career development opportunities.

It may be worth partners exploring participants’ career ambitions more deeply, from a careers guidance perspective for example.

In this context it might be useful to consider the feedback of one employer to see if any areas in relation to participant motivation could be improved.

*“We’re very used to people coming for work experience here who desperately want to work in television. It was quite odd for us to have initially two people who didn’t particularly want to work in television and we had to kind to get our heads around the fact that actually them getting work experience of any sort was still useful ... it’s quite odd for somebody to come to the end of a two-week work experience and it’s not actually what they want to do but we... it’s fine, we’ve sort of recognised that it’s alright”.*

**Employer**

*There've been times where [other employees] have felt that they perhaps weren't getting energy and enthusiasm back ... they were surprised that [the participant] didn't seem particularly interested in joining a creative meeting".*

**Employer**

This is not to say that employers did not recognise the value of work experience and the transferable skills that can be gained.

*We're fine with people just giving it a go because ... we can recognise that it's a good way of them, of boosting someone's confidence, coming into a work environment ... it doesn't matter what the work is necessarily, it's just about having experience of the working office environment.*

**Employer**

Some participants did have specific career aspirations on joining the programme. These included working in the financial sector, business and administration and as a teaching assistant.





## 4. Participant experiences of support

This section includes data drawn from management information (MI) submitted by four delivery partners and the analysis of 12 participant interviews.

All quotes in this section are from participants.

### **REFERRAL METHODS AND COMMUNICATION OF OFFER**

Participants reported that they came into contact with the Bridge to Work partners in a range of ways; including through other sources of support such as college Learning Support, their Jobcentre Plus coach and referral from their university careers service. Several had been in contact with the partner organisations prior to this programme and the Bridge to Work programme was a natural progression of the support.

### **SUGGESTIONS FOR IMPROVEMENT TO INITIAL ENGAGEMENT**

None of the participants raised any suggestions for how the initial engagement process could be improved.

## SUPPORT RECEIVED AND VIEWS OF THIS

### *Initial appointments and action plans*

First appointments generally involved the provider getting to know the participant; their interests, qualifications and aspirations, their disability, and the kind of work they were interested in. On the basis of this, an action plan was put together which typically includes job goals, support needs, commitments, agreements and next steps.

In the context of motivation mentioned in Section 3, some participants said that their plan included an action step to research the company beforehand, its values and mission. This made sense to them as a way of seeing where they could fit in and make the most of the opportunity.

### *Employment and skills support*

Some participants received employability support including some or all of the following: CV development, job-search and application guidance, interview preparation and mock interviews.

*"I feel like my CV is better than my old one that I used to do in like school... I've updated it and it's better... and it looks neater as well."*

*"I'm having some support on my CV which is really useful. I've got two very different CVs now coming together. My writing and publication and performance CV isn't the same as my health and social care policy CV, so it's been helpful to split those two."*

*"I have done the employment programme. It is very helpful. Confidence has gone up so much, telephone skills have also been improved as well."*

Money management, travel training (intensive one-to-one instruction on travelling safely and independently on fixed-route public transportation) and workplace visits (so that participants could better understand and become familiar with a particular working environment), were also included for participants where needed.

*"It's mostly just about trying to get us prepared for work, so like what we need to know about, like first impressions when you go for job interviews, like money management and also for like how you're supposed to dress when you go for job interviews as such."*

*"We learn about pay slips, and interviews and bank stuff... We go out sometimes, we go on computers as well but when we go out, like where to go and stuff... planning the journeys."*

Some of the support was provided one to one, and some was provided in groups. Participants who accessed group-based support often found the social interaction with other participants particularly beneficial because they got to meet other disabled people and make friends.

*"The things that I particularly liked was making friends and understanding them and I had a good time here as well with my friends and I enjoyed doing the activities... and then eventually I'll get work."*

*"The place was good, there was a lot of space and they had a lot of just people, different people... like me who had disability as well and who understand."*

## *Work experience support*

Ten of the 12 participants interviewed had been on work placements as part of Bridge to Work. For five, the work placements appeared to be the main aspect of the programme.

Some participants had work placements in addition to employability support. For others, the programme mainly comprised a series of work placements, enabling them to try out different jobs and working environments, and gain some relevant experience working in those areas. The difference in whether participants received employability support or not seemed to depend on their individual needs rather than the organisation. This indicates a high degree of personalisation across all the approaches. Some young people were simply readier for work.



## PLACEMENT ACTIVITIES

Two interviewees were completing ongoing, part-time work placements at the providers, one as an admin officer and the other in a more research-based role. The roles had been chosen to suit their interests and abilities and to help them develop. Both felt that the placements were helping them to gain valuable workplace experience. Another had done a placement in the fundraising team at their provider, and this had led to a full-time job there.

Other participants had done placements at external organisations. For example, some respondents did work placements at several different financial institutions. In contrast, others completed placements at several quite different workplaces including a financial institution, a public sector organisation, a theatre and a café. Another had a longer-term placement as a teaching assistant in a school and hoped to move on to another placement at another school to gain more confidence and experience.

## SUPPORT PROVIDED

The level of support provided on these placements had depended on the needs of each participant. One had to be reminded, during the placement, of the preparation the provider had done with them on the importance of being patient at work. Another had received in-work support in the form of job-coaching, and had found this very helpful.

*"I do get job coaching, yes. It is helpful, I haven't started yet, but I am going to start soon and yes, it is a very good idea, we want it to be encouraged, it shouldn't be looked at in a negative way, it all helps."*

Some participants had visited some of their placement organisations before the placement started, as part of an orientation and to make sure everything would be suitable for them, which was found to be helpful.

*"We went for a pre-placement meeting, kind of look through the building and things like that, see how accessible it was. I met with my buddy who was someone that was from [the organisation] that would be looking after me in my time while I was working there and just to make sure that I would be okay with everything there, just to get a look around the building and things so it was good."*

Others got support and training from staff at the placement organisation and thought that this was sufficient.

*"I got some guidance, I had an introduction at [the employer] and also, I got a little guidance, I get to watch some Microsoft Excel videos and I got support from some of my colleagues there, it was enjoyable support."*

*"If I needed help I just asked, otherwise they just left me to do the work."*

A couple of participants had been provided with buddies at their placement organisation, someone who they shadowed, or checked in with regularly.

*"What they do is give you a buddy there, it's really well organised, like at [organisation] what they did is they gave me a buddy which was always there to greet me in the morning and like organise like a different department I needed to visit and they used to spend time talking to me, what each department does."*

All reported that the relationships with their work placement colleagues had been positive because they had been made to feel welcome and part of the team. Staff at work placement organisations were described as approachable and supportive.

*"The people there are lovely, I mean they will support me, they're always helping me if I have any questions regarding their system... supporting me to learn new skills, so I didn't feel any kind of discrimination towards me or ignorance."*

*"I really liked the people there. I felt that they were really welcoming, really warm. They were happy to answer any questions that I had... Also I really enjoyed meeting some of the graduate students who are on grad schemes. So people that are closer to my age and, you know, find out what it was like starting up there coming straight out of university, and the challenges they face, the things that they enjoy while being there."*

## REASONABLE ADJUSTMENTS

Participants reported that very few reasonable adjustments had been needed. One, a wheelchair user, had needed help with a heavy door, which colleagues were happy to provide. Another felt that colleagues gave them additional help and support with various tasks when required. Some of the work placements included job coaching and intensive support for those who needed it.

Some of the wheelchair users mentioned that the workplace had to be accessible for them, with lifts and suitable toilets. One was provided with an adjustable height desk on request, another was told that he would get this but when he arrived, he was given a standard desk which has not been suitable for him (see the section on challenges, below).

## CHALLENGES FACED AND FEEDBACK ON SUITABILITY OF THE PLACEMENT

Most participants said that their placements had been reviewed with the provider during and after the placement had finished, and few challenges or difficulties were reported. However, as previously mentioned, one individual requested an adjustable height desk suitable for their wheelchair, but they were given a standard height desk on their first day. They did not feel able to bring this up with colleagues or his provider contact, because they did not wish to appear “*awkward or demanding*”. This has resulted in some considerable physical discomfort. A more formal review process during longer-term placements may have prevented this from happening.

*"It would have been quite useful I think for there to be a sort of check in... particularly in terms of access, adaptiveness, equipment, etc. whether people's needs were actually being met once they tried out the office space... An opportunity to say that the desk wasn't working for me, because when I was shown to it, it was just sort of, you know, does that look all right, and I said yes, because I wasn't used to working at a desk, and so didn't realise that things would be problems until they were. I don't want to come across as awkward or demanding, so yes it would have been really helpful if there had been an opportunity for me to mention [that]."*

Overall, the opportunity to access work placement opportunities was seen as a highlight of the programme. The work placements were generally of a high quality, with a range of host organisations and sectors in which participants were keen to work. Participants often tried out different jobs and worked with various teams within the organisation, for example:

- HR and finance teams
- One week in production and another in the creative development team
- Customer services, reception team and breakfast team in a hotel

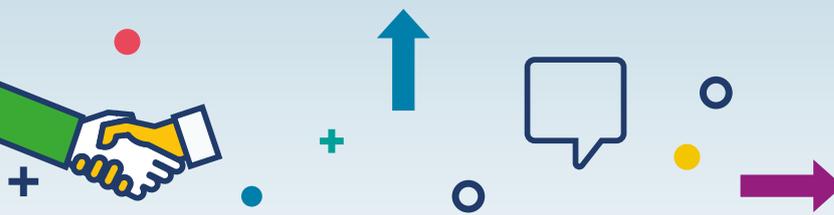
Participants were positive about having broad experiences such as these. Colleagues at the host organisations were reported to be welcoming and helpful.

*"I think the people have really looked after me, made sure that I got lunch, made sure that I have been able to get there on time ... The work, if I ever mention that I'm finding it a bit difficult, they will always be very quick to help me ... I've always felt like I've been treated very nicely while I've been at work placements."*

The practical experience and insight the work placements offered participants appears to have been highly rewarding for many of the cohort.

*"It's been fantastic. I really am pleased with it. I couldn't really fault it. I feel like it's just helped me grow so much as a person and has helped me to mature and just better understand myself and the things that I would enjoy doing... and where I'd like to go in the future."*





## 5. Employer engagement

### HOW EMPLOYERS HAVE BEEN ENGAGED

All quotes in this section are from delivery partner staff.

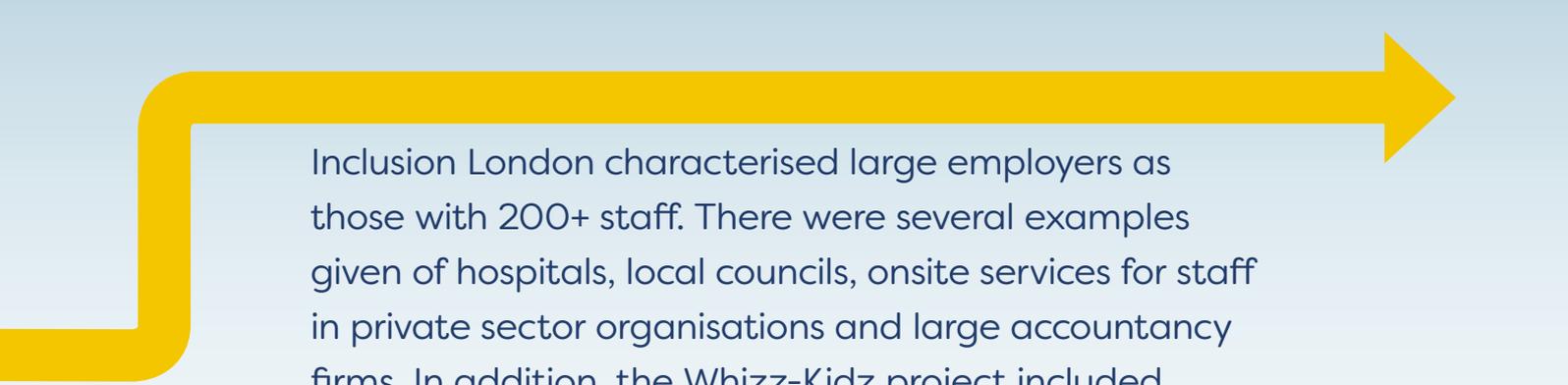
All partners reported that they were building on existing relationships with employers, for example where there was a history of placements being provided or where other types of partnerships already existed as a result of fundraising activities or relationships at board level.

*“There’s usually a connection, once they get engaged with us they don’t want to disengage, and it’s a natural next step for us to then begin talking to them about employment.”*

More often, these relationships were with larger employers rather than smaller ones. Reasons given include the perception that larger employers would have a greater number and type of jobs available and that they would be more able to accommodate disabled people due to financial and accessibility reasons, but also because they could have disabled staff already.

*“Large employers have a wider range of jobs and roles”*

*“Larger organisations have the financial ability to make changes, are more likely to have disability friendly offices and have staff members with disabilities already”.*



Inclusion London characterised large employers as those with 200+ staff. There were several examples given of hospitals, local councils, onsite services for staff in private sector organisations and large accountancy firms. In addition, the Whizz-Kidz project included partnerships with 18 local authorities.

*“Typically, it's entry level jobs and that depends very much on what the business has available so in hospitals it can be things like preparing their surgical equipment, portering, working in canteens, on security, and housekeeping. [The employer} had a wonderful range of jobs because they have a whole little village in their head office so there was a bike shop, a gym, a hairdressers, a shop. We've had others at councils so, again, there's security, reception...”*

Smaller local employers were also mentioned. my AFK for example had previously developed a partnership with a bike shop and a café.

The delivery partners recognise there is a lot to be gained if they can build more relationships with SME's as they account for the majority of the labour market. The perceived limitations of SMEs include the lack of support infrastructure, the reduced likelihood of HR teams who fully understand the Equality Act and the lack of capacity to implement accessibility changes.

One partner mentioned they would be cold calling SMEs to let them know about the Change London bursary scheme. This is a £350,000 initiative, being run by Leonard Cheshire, which can award bursaries of up to £4,000 per person to London-based SMEs, as well as eligible charities. Change London placements can be for a minimum of 200 hours a year within a 12-month period.

*"We're really happy about those bursaries because this whole time we've wanted to approach companies that wouldn't ordinarily have taken people".*

However, the evidence so far from the programme as a whole suggests that using bursaries as a way to engage SMEs has not yet been widely adopted.

Approaches to employer engagement were commonly based on offering a service e.g. fixing a recruitment problem, matching a candidate to their current need and/or providing in-work support. Other forms of employer engagement included attending networking events in the capital, presenting to chambers of commerce, taking advantage of staff personal contacts (ex-colleagues, friends, housemates) and getting buy-in from someone influential in the organisation, especially if they have a strong personal interest.

DR UK carried out a small number of employer interviews for this interim report. Interestingly none of the relationships had come about as a result of being directly approached as part of the Bridge to Work programme. One was looking for a partner as an extension of its Disability Confident accreditation and found the provider through an online search, another came through a City Bridge Trust networking event and the third already knew the charity and took the initiative from the employer side.

The evaluation next year will include more exploration of ways that partners are trying to broaden their employer engagement, and how the bursary can be used to support this.

## SUPPORT PROVIDED TO EMPLOYERS

Many of the organisations' models are evolving but the most common elements of support for employers include:

- Disability Awareness training
- Offering practical guidance on adjustments and making the workplace accessible
- Using the job coach role to support both the young person and the employer
- Early intervention to prevent issues from developing further

Employers were found to be open to the support being offered and ways to improve their working practices to make them more accessible.

*"On the whole we [delivery partner organisation] have found employers quite receptive and it's rare that people are deliberately wanting to exclude disabled people. It's just like any organisation, you kind of do what you've always done and you do what's most efficient for you and you don't really see what the problems are."*

The employers interviewed all spoke positively and enthusiastically about the programme. The elements they found supportive were:

- Having somebody to go through the range of their jobs to assist with job-matching.
- Help to make sure the work environment was accessible.
- Having guidance available in case of any problems - they found this reassuring even though no actual problems had arisen.

It should be noted that Inclusion London's approach specifically includes challenging employers to remove barriers - not just supporting individuals into employment. This aims to create wider change for the future. This approach also helps avoid the problem of the employer becoming too dependent on support or seeing the primary relationship in each case as being with the support organisation, instead of directly with the potential employee. Obtaining data on the results of this approach, including employer feedback, will be a key activity in the Year 2 evaluation research.

## **KEY SUCCESSES/CHALLENGES**

The majority of participants interviewed and surveyed had been on work placements and had positive experiences with their employers, to the extent that they felt confident about getting another job in the future and felt that they were properly supported while on placement. Few challenges or difficulties were reported.

The most successful approaches to employer engagement were based on:

- Offering help to fix a problem - rather than them helping a disabled person.
- Selling the business case e.g. Mencap use a 'Good for Business' brochure that explains the business case for employing people with LDD.
- Matching a candidate to their current need, this could be quite formal such as through vocational profiles.
- Meeting the need creatively, for example through job carving - this can include tailoring the job so it is suitable for an individual, swapping job duties, sharing around a team or creating specialist roles.

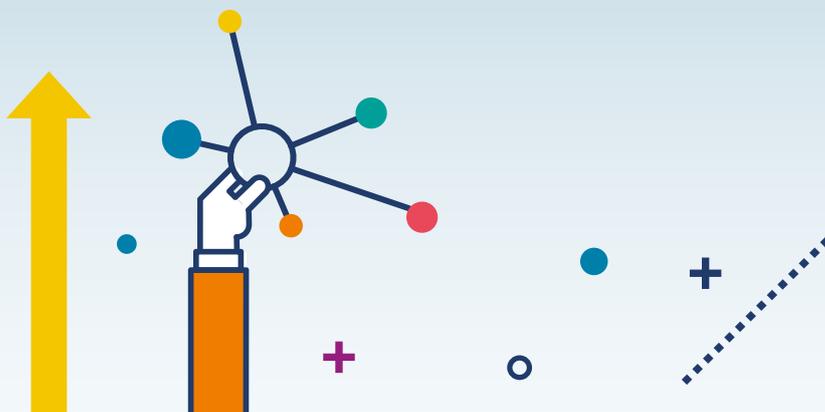
- Removing risk by starting off with a placement.
- Adding value and reassurance through offering in-work support – described by one partner as *‘the USP of providing a member of staff to support the employer and individual’*.

Mencap emphasised that not having employment (immediately following the placement) as an absolute requirement was helpful to employer engagement. If they had to get people into work quickly to meet their project targets, they would run the risk of the job opportunity accessed being unsustainable. This would not be good for their relationships with employers.

Partners did not report any major challenges with employer engagement at this stage. However, Inclusion London highlighted there is a gap in employers’ knowledge about Deaf and Disabled people’s organisations (DDPOs) and why they are important.

## **USE OF BURSARY**

According to Leonard Cheshire, six SMEs in total have been issued Change London bursary contracts since the start of the programme. Only one of those six employers were referred to the programme by a Bridge to Work delivery partner.



## 6. Bridge to Work outcomes

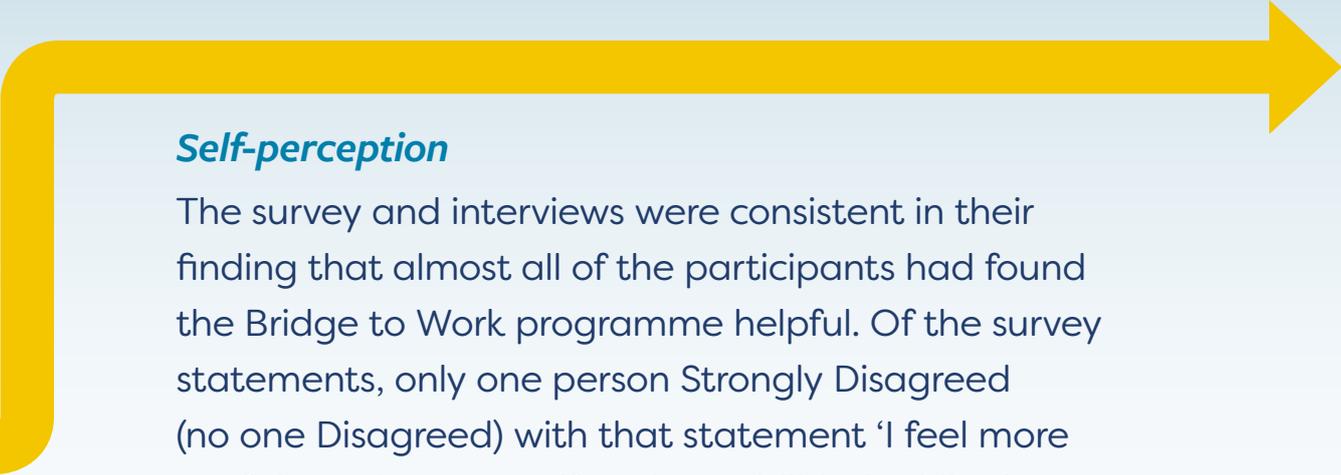
This section focuses on both ‘soft’ and ‘hard’ outcomes. It builds on management information (MI) submitted by four delivery partners and the analysis of 12 participant interviews. It also includes data drawn from an online survey of 35 programme participants.

All quotes in this section are from participants.

### SOFT OUTCOMES

Most survey respondents were positive about the impact of the programme. With each of the seven statements we presented in the survey at least 75 per cent of respondents agreed or strongly agreed. The statements were:

- I feel more confident about myself and my abilities
- I have a better CV
- I have better job search skills
- I have better interview skills
- I understand more about different types of work I could do
- I understand more about adjustments which can make the workplace accessible to me
- I feel confident I could get another job in the future (if/when this one finishes)



## **Self-perception**

The survey and interviews were consistent in their finding that almost all of the participants had found the Bridge to Work programme helpful. Of the survey statements, only one person Strongly Disagreed (no one Disagreed) with that statement ‘I feel more confident about myself and my abilities’, while the rest Agreed or Strongly Agreed. Most interviewees also reported their confidence had improved greatly.

*"I was not very confident at all, but then the confidence grew as time went on, the confidence just grew, and I am doing more things now."*

For one participant, the work placement had given them greater insight into his capacity for employment.

*"I've got more clarity about how much work I could do, where previously I really wouldn't have known. I'm now sharply aware that a day a week in the office is my absolute maximum, whereas before I just wouldn't have known."*

The travel training that one participant received meant that they were now able to travel to work independently using public transport, which they did not think they would ever be able to do. This has transformed their life.

*"I now come to work every single day on the bus and go wherever I want on the bus and its completely changed a lot within my personal life because I can get anywhere I want without having to rely on anyone or pay for a cab or, yes... They were so willing to share their experiences and show me kind of the options that actually are out there."*

## **Employability skills**

Some participants felt better equipped to apply for jobs and to be successful at interview as a result of the Bridge to Work programme.

*"Before meeting up with [the provider], I tried to apply for interviews, however, I wasn't successful because I didn't know what are the tricks and what the interviewer is expecting... in terms of answering the questions. Basically [the provider] helped me a lot in order to understand what the interviewer is expecting from an applicant, and this is really useful knowledge."*

Some had a better idea of the kind of work they wanted to do in future, and, having completed certain tasks a work placement, or having visited relevant workplaces, they were confident that this kind of work would suit them.

*"Since the work placements, because I tried new roles and I found a role that I wanted to do."*

*"Before I did my teaching assistant I was thinking of different jobs, but when I started, I just loved it so much that I decided I want to become a teaching assistant."*

## **Views about employment prospects**

All participants thought that the Bridge to Work programme had improved their employment prospects in future. For some this was because they had more skills to find and apply for jobs successfully. Others had more clarity about the kind of work they wanted, more appreciation of what it would involve, and more confidence that this would be right for them.

*"I feel like it's been so beneficial to me because going through the educational system... I don't really feel like it's given me the ability to actually*

*have the skills that you need in order to get a job. So I feel like through [provider], being able to go into these different companies and see how they operate from the inside out has really benefited me in understanding how a firm operates and the kind of people that you'd meet there, the kind of etiquette that's expected there, the kind of work that you do there and just how it all functions."*

*"Before I wouldn't think that I would be able to get a job, I thought I would be sat at home after I finished college and now doors are open for me."*

### **Views about/awareness of reasonable adjustments**

Only one participant mentioned having received disability awareness training but had found this very helpful. Knowing their rights, in combination with a work placement had made them feel much more confident.

*"I was very much more informed after taking on the project, so they tell you what your rights are within a workplace and yes... I felt very confident after having taken on the placement."*

Matching what we found in some interviews, there was less agreement with the statement 'I understand more about adjustments which can make the workplace accessible to me'. Nearly a quarter (24 per cent) disagreed or strongly disagreed that they had an increased knowledge of workplace adjustments. This suggests there may be an issue with communication and understanding around reasonable adjustments. Young disabled people, particularly those new to the workforce and/or new to being disabled may not know what adjustments they need or are available to them, while employers may expect that disabled people – being experts in living with their disability – know what support or adjustments they need and/or feel uncomfortable making suggestions.

# A summary of responses to the online survey is shown on the following pages.



Figure 1

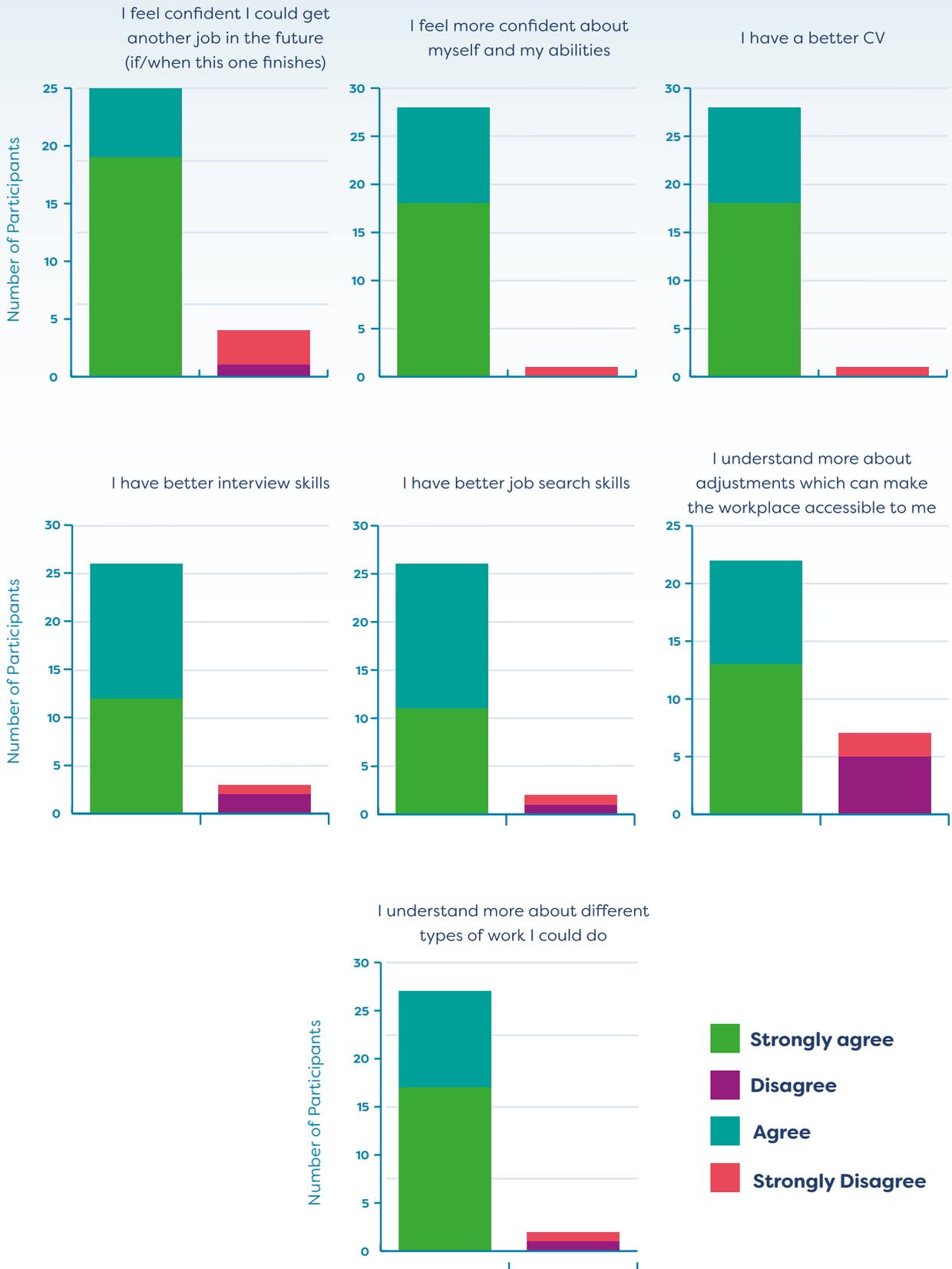


Figure 2

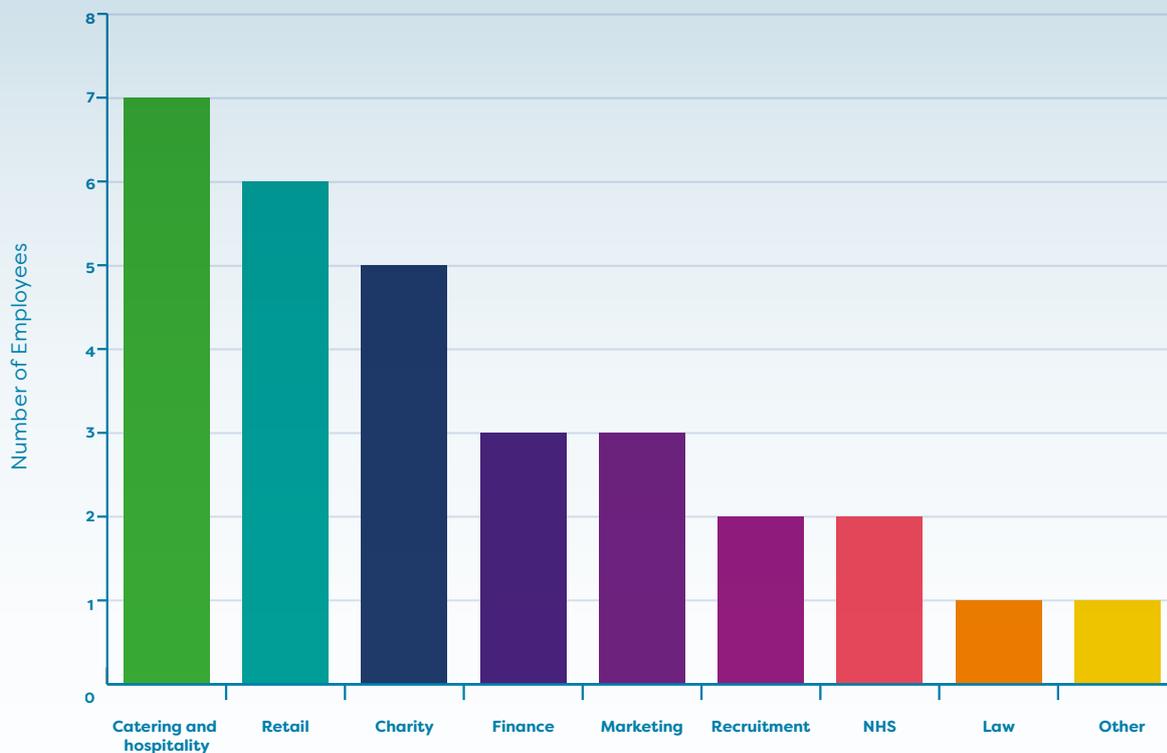


Figure 3

## HARD OUTCOMES

Of the 109 participants represented in the MI, 30 progressed into some form of paid employment (around 28 per cent).

Three of those interviewed entered paid work during their time on the programme. Two gained work at their work placement organisation (one part-time and one full-time). Another gained part-time work elsewhere with the support of the programme. All of the others were hoping to enter paid work in the future, although some wanted to gain more placement experience first.

The most common sectoral destinations for those progressing into employment were catering and hospitality, followed by retail (mostly from my AFK) and then the charity sector (all from MDUK).

We only have information on contract type for 22 of those participants, suggesting that delivery partners could improve their outcomes monitoring and engagement with participants post-Bridge to Work. Most commonly, these participants were on permanent, part-time contracts.

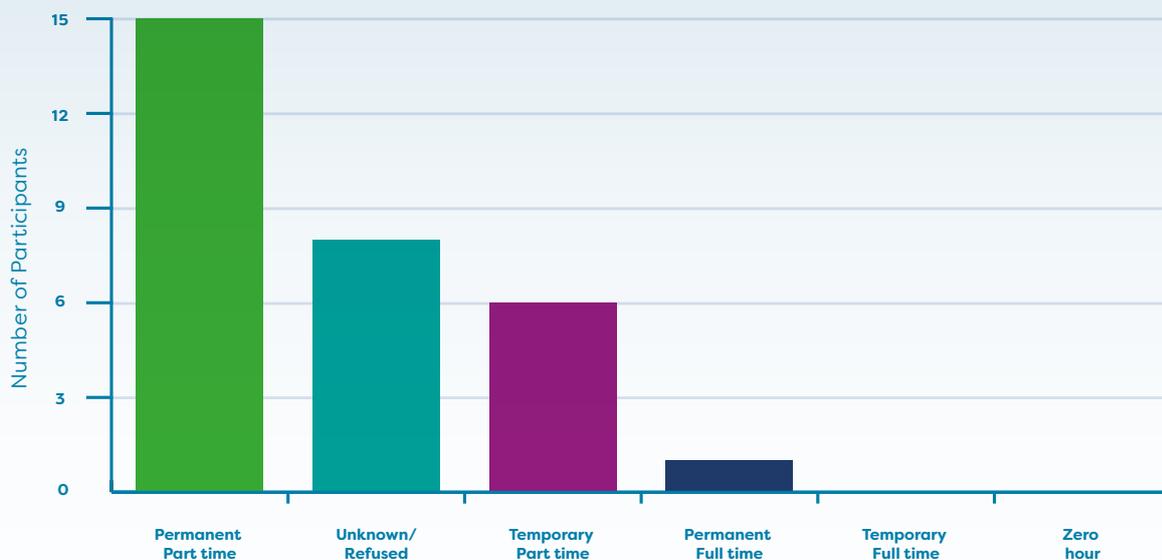


Figure 4

Additionally, participants sometimes returned to their programme after taking on temporary paid work – for example several Whizz-Kidz participants had temporary paid work and then returned to the work experience programme.

As some participants are students these temporary pieces of paid work may have functioned as a summer job rather than a route into longer-term employment.

No delivery partner reported that Access to Work funding was used (or even applied for) to support progression into paid employment.

Partners have recognised the need to stay involved with participants after completion of the programme, but this can be difficult.

For example, Muscular Dystrophy UK has set up a mentoring programme pairing completed participants with a professional mentor for six months but has struggled to convince people who have completed Moving Up to take part, leaving many enthusiastic mentors without mentees.

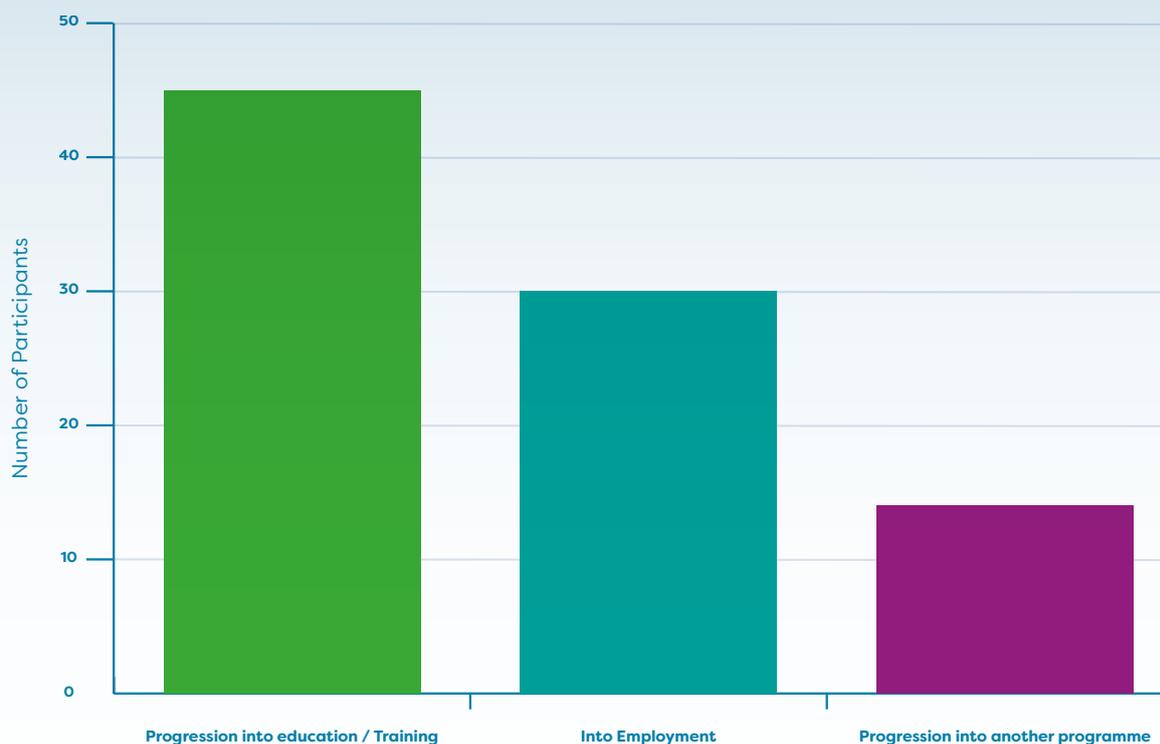


Figure 5

45 participants progressed into further training or education and 14 moved on to other programmes. At least some of those progressing to education were students completing their placements and returning to their course.

## **SUPPORT WHICH ENABLED OUTCOMES TO BE ACHIEVED**

The support was highly practical and tailored to individual needs. It involved employability skills, money management and travel training for those who needed it. Participants had received intensive support in specific areas required e.g. CVs tailored to different sectors, answering the telephone, interview preparation. Participants who had group work enjoyed receiving support alongside others who they felt were in a similar situation and understood them.

Most of the participants had been on workplace visits and/or work placements. The visits gave participants more insight into the potential careers available to them. Work placements generally had pre-placement visits, to ensure that the placement and the work environment would be suitable for participants.

Some of the participants had reservations about their capabilities in the workplace prior to the programme, and work placements helped dispel these, and give them a realistic picture of how they would fare in employment. Importantly, it also gave them some valuable information about the kind of work they wanted to do, through having tried out different kinds of work to see which suited them.

*"I think a huge part of me getting [the job] is because of [the programme] and the opportunity that that gave me to explore those different avenues."*

The work placements also provided participants some insight into the number of working hours a week that would be sustainable for them. One participant became aware that they would definitely be able to work for one day a week in an office but would need sufficient adjustments for this to be manageable. Another gained the confidence to travel to their work placement on public transport with the support of a travel training programme, and this has given them a great deal more independence.

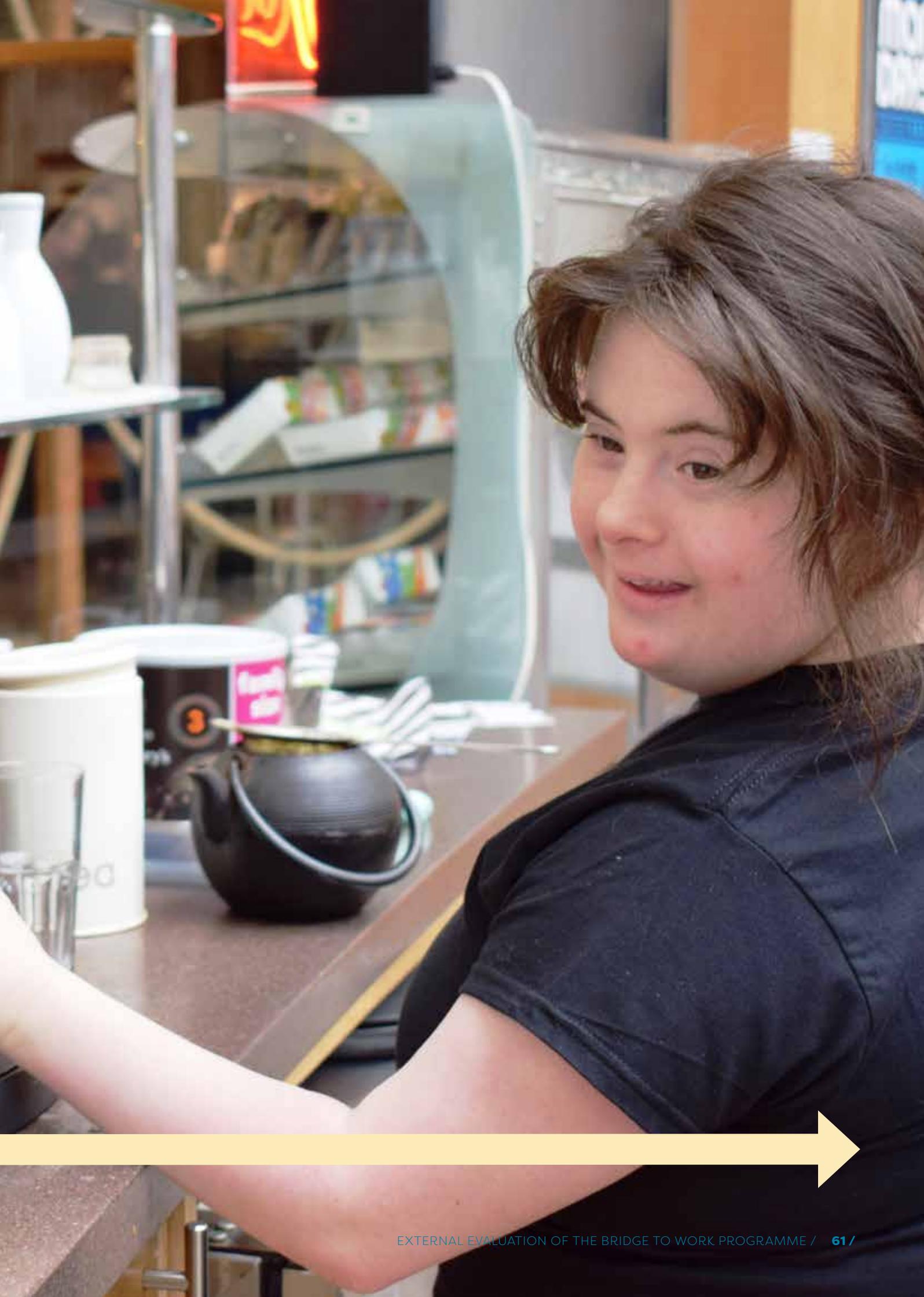
Those who gained paid employment during the programme did so with the direct support of the programme provider. They believed the support had been a critical factor, although one who was in part-time work when they started the programme and gained full-time work at their placement organisation

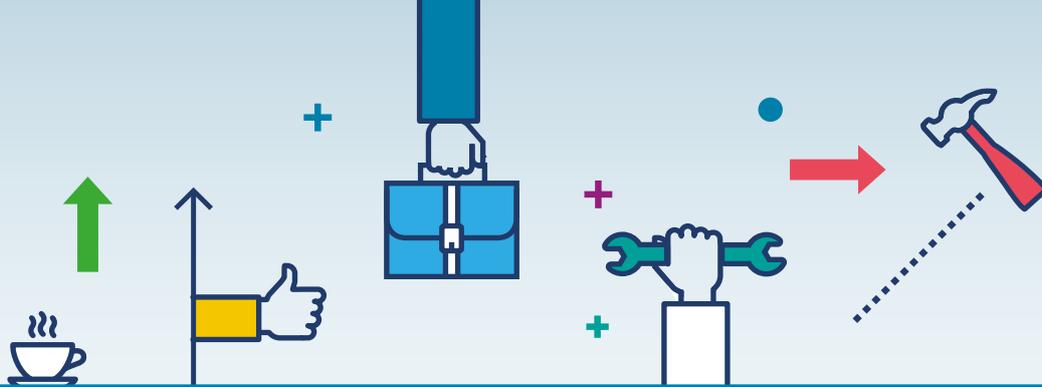
believed their previous employment experience had assisted their quick outcome.

*"I feel very lucky to have had a quick outcome, if you like. I think it probably helps that I was in employment beforehand because I know that a lot of people that come through... it's one of their first experiences within the workplace and it's a great first experience to have but I think the reason the outcome happened so quickly is because I had other experience as well which led into the employment here."*

Patterns in relation to characteristics and outcomes included that:

- A series of high-quality work placements has worked well for a number of the participants. Typically, they already had qualifications from university or college, but they needed practical experience to provide them with insights into the workplace and more confidence in their abilities.
- Intensive employability support together with workplace visits and well-supported short work placements appear to have worked very well for participants with learning disabilities.
- Travel training which allows participants to travel independently opens-up a wide range of new possibilities for them and provides a significant confidence boost.





## 7. Conclusions

### CONTEXT

The Bridge to Work programme is taking place in a context where only half of working age disabled people in London are in paid work. Targeting disabled young people is especially vital as, if they fall into the NEET group, they tend to stay stuck in that group for longer and their aspirations dwindle (House of Commons Briefing Nov 2015).

Recent research into what makes a difference has focused beyond the traditional idea of skills and qualifications and much more on the value of work experience and ‘employer encounters’ to bring the world of work to life. Research by the Careers & Enterprise Company shows that a young person who has four or more encounters with an employer is 86% less likely to be unemployed or not in education or training and can earn up to 18% more during their career.

Young disabled people especially struggle to reach this number of encounters because of access difficulties, lack of family or friend connections in ‘high places’ (i.e. people who can help open doors and introduce employers), prejudiced ideas about what work they are ‘suitable for’, health and safety barriers and the rigid nature of traditional work experience programmes at school.

The Department for Education recently evaluated work experience and vocational technical provision for young people on SEN support.<sup>2</sup> The resulting report identified the principles of good practice for post-16 providers (which can also be applied beyond schools or FE providers). This included:

- Effective assessment processes so that young people's aspirations and support needs are well understood by all parties
- Effective careers information, advice and guidance made available so that learners understand the full range of options available and can make informed choices
- Ensuring employers have a range of opportunities to engage with work experience
- Dedicated employer engagement resources to identify and support employers and understand factors driving employer engagement
- Offering a range of 'work experience' options for learners to engage with, such as work placements, peer mentoring/support and employer presentations
- Monitoring progression throughout the programme so that good practice can be understood and built on, and any issues can be identified and addressed early
- Linking work experience to the needs of local employers and the local labour market so that it is relevant to the needs of both learners and employers
- Building progression and aftercare into work experience programmes

In this context, with its focus on the positive change that can result from participating in a significant programme of work experience, Bridge to Work is well

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2. This report, known as a 'Rapid Evidence Assessment' was produced by Peter Dickinson of the Institute for Employment Research and Mairi Ann Cullen of the Centre for Educational Development, Appraisal and Research at Warwick University. It was published in December 2018

positioned. Over the course of the five years, it provides an opportunity to generate policy and delivery lessons regarding increasing disability employment.

For example, lessons from Bridge to Work have already informed the design of the DWP Intensive Personalised Employment Support programme. This is aimed at people living with a disability who are unlikely to move into work within the next year or longer. Disability Rights UK contributed to discussions about the programme design, as such many common features of Bridge to Work can be found in this new voluntary programme. This includes participants having a dedicated key worker to support them overcome complex barriers to employment.

In Year 2, DR UK and L&W can explore the evidence base in relation to the impact of longer-term work experience. However, the experience of both evaluation partners is that the quality of placements is more significant than the length.

## **EMERGING FINDINGS**

- Most participants believe that barriers exist to them being able to work – this is mainly based on previous negative experiences in relation to work experience and careers education.
- The motivation levels of participants are generally very high; however, this is reduced when they do not have a particular interest in the vocational areas where they complete their work experience.

- The data so far clearly indicates that young disabled young people think that participation in Bridge to Work has improved their employment prospects.
- At least 75 per cent of participant survey respondents agree with various positive statements about the Bridge to Work programme's impact on their self-perception, employability skills and employment prospects.
- The level of understanding in relation to adjustments which can make the workplace accessible was the lowest rated 'soft outcome' in the participant survey.
- 82 per cent of respondents reported a positive 'hard outcome' at the end of the programme; 28 per cent progressed into some form of paid employment, 41 per cent progressed into further training or education and 13 per cent moved on to other programmes.
- The most common sectoral destinations for those progressing into employment were catering and hospitality, followed by retail and the charity sector.
- The most successful approaches to employer engagement were based on selling the business case, matching candidates to employer need, job carving, offering in-work support and removing the perception of risk by starting off with a placement – with no requirement in advance that this should lead to paid employment.
- Some early successes factors appear to be; highly personalised support arrangements; ensuring other background issues and barriers are overcome first e.g. housing difficulties or the need for travel training; the quality of the relationships with employers and the opportunity to try out more than one kind of work.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

### *Recommendations for ongoing delivery*

- There is a need for more employer engagement outside of partners' usual contacts with new employers and particularly with SMEs. This could be important for longer-impact for two reasons. Firstly, according to the Business Register Office for National Statistics, over 99% of all London businesses are SMEs and they account for around half of all London employment. Also, at some point there will be a need to move beyond employers who are already committed to the disability employment agenda and can see the benefits of this, to change wider attitudes and workplace cultures.
- So far, there has been very limited uptake of the Change London bursary scheme which includes awards of £4,000 per person to London based SMEs to offer a paid internship. Only six SMEs have accessed this funding to date and just one of those was referred through a Bridge to Work partner. Greater awareness raising around the bursary is key to increase engagement with SMEs, provide participants access to a wider range of employers and gain valuable learning about the barriers to be overcome to increase the representation of disabled people in smaller organisations.
- Partners could potentially be more proactive about discussing issues and adjustments, not only when participants first start, but also throughout the placement. This could help ensure any issues are addressed when they first arise and reduce the risk of drop-out or negative experiences for placement participant and employer. There might be a standardised way to ask and check to reduce the stigma on individuals.

- There is potential for greater partnership working and emphasis on the Bridge to Work programme rather than individual projects. The aim should be for more sense of the programme as a whole. All partners could consider ways to share learning about delivery, work together to overcome obstacles, share contacts etc. Partner feedback could be helpful in addressing how this could be done. This would not be to diminish the individual aspects of each project, rather to ensure the strengths of each organisation are built upon so the identity of the programme becomes greater than the sum of its parts.
- Related to bringing projects together, there is a need from Year 2 onwards to better integrate the work of NAS and Inclusion London into the overall programme.

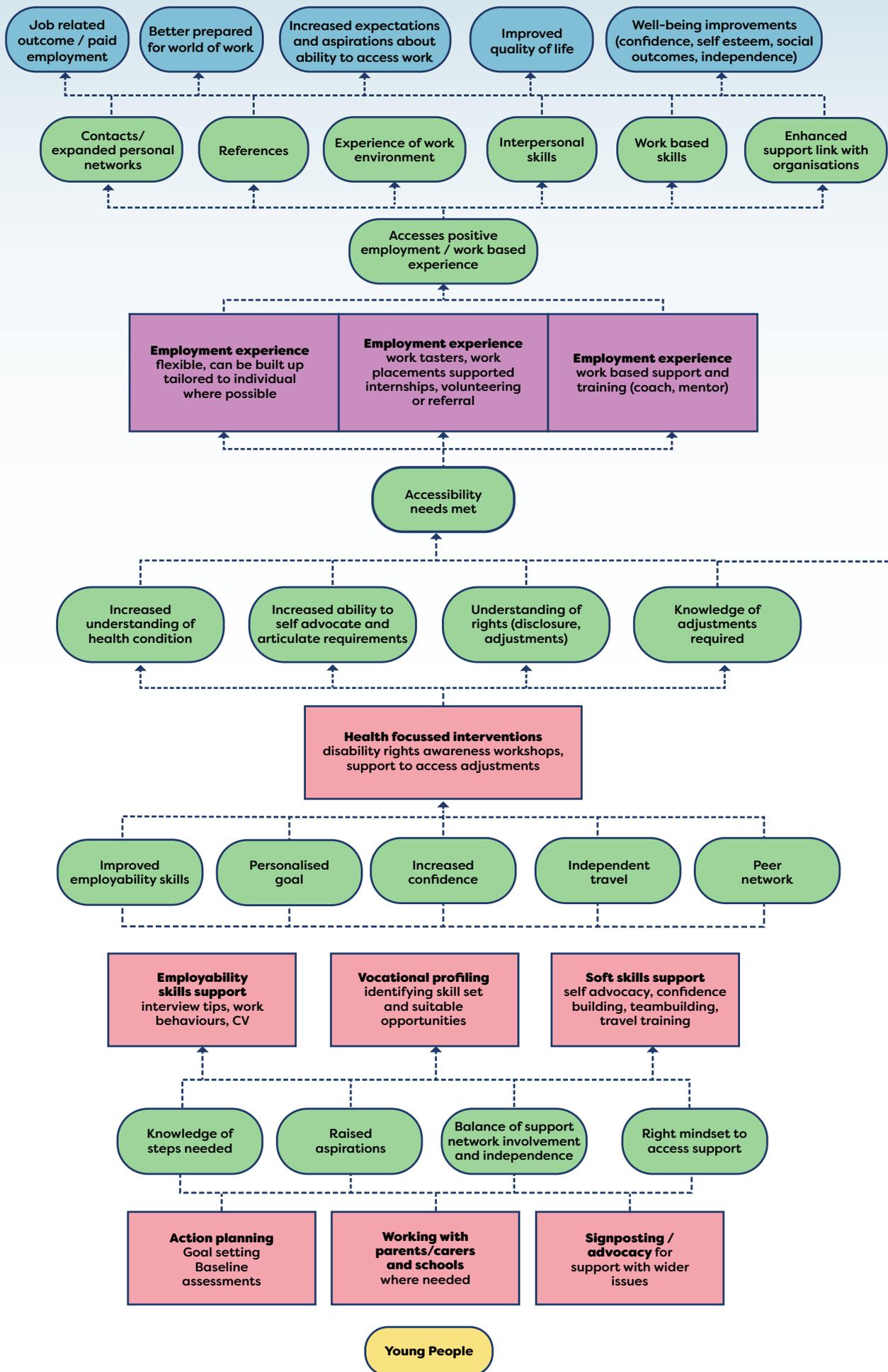
### ***Recommendations for evaluation***

- Providers could be more systematic in collecting and providing participant demographic information, including qualification level, impairment type and ethnicity data. However, it is recognised that Year 1 has included a lot of getting used to new models and setting up systems and all partners have cooperated and adapted well.
- Moving forward, more data will be needed on outcomes, especially those moving into paid work where information is currently quite patchy. There could be ways to collect the data in a more detailed, consistent and accessible way. This will be important to effectively measure impact and understand the characteristics of programme participants.
- Wider promotion work and integration with evaluation activities will also be needed to ensure that more participants take part in surveys and interviews.

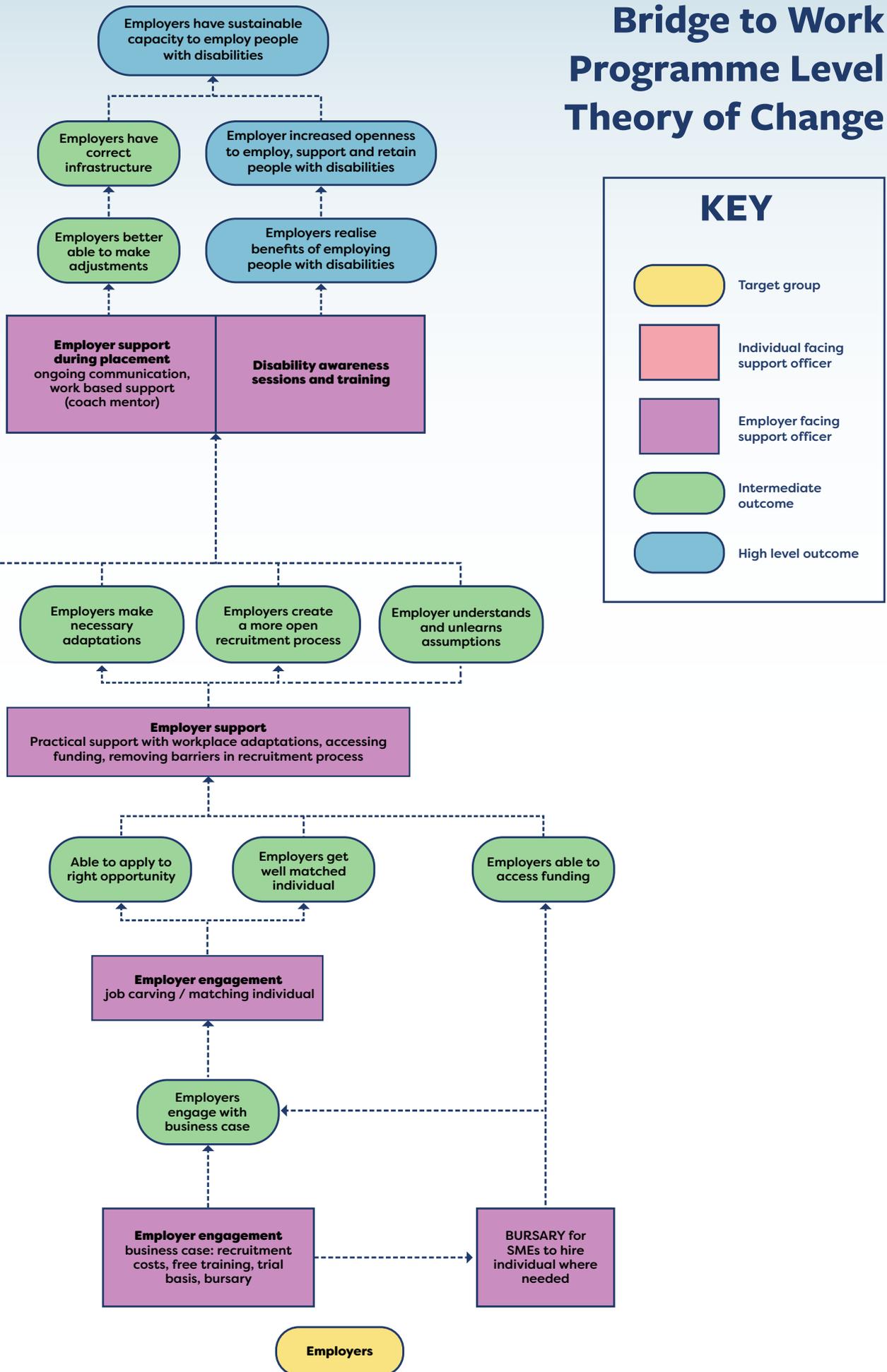
## NEXT STEPS

- DR UK and L&W will explore whether additional data collection would be beneficial for partners. Some guidance could be created in the New Year if that was felt to be beneficial.
- DR UK and L&W will conduct further research to explore employer perspectives and the extent to which each project and the overall programme has influenced attitudes to disabled people in the workplace. For this, more access will be needed to employers.
- Over time there will be a deeper evaluation of employer engagement programmes, comparing the different approaches of the delivery partners, and which organisations are most influenced by which messages.
- It will be important that partners collect details on how they allocate funding (including resources, marketing materials and staff costs) as well as participant characteristic and outcome data to assess Value for Money in further stages of this evaluation. This will explore how the funding has been used, whether it has supported the intended target groups and what impact it has had.





# Bridge to Work Programme Level Theory of Change



The City Bridge Trust is committed to ensuring that all our communications are as accessible as possible to everyone, including disabled people. For this reason we use 14 point font size to follow established best practice. This document is also available in electronic format at:

*[www.citybridgetrust.org.uk/bridge-to-work](http://www.citybridgetrust.org.uk/bridge-to-work)*

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