



Summary

Learning by doing together

About the DRILL Programme

DRILL (Disability Research on Independent Living and Learning) was an innovative 5 year, UK wide programme led by disabled people, for disabled people and funded by the National Lottery Community Fund.

Launched in 2015, the programme was managed by a partnership of Disability Action Northern Ireland, Disability Rights UK, Disability Wales and Inclusion Scotland.

The aim of the programme was to build better evidence about approaches which enable disabled people to achieve independent living. The findings from the projects it funded can be used to inform future provision across a wide range of policy areas, and give a greater voice to disabled people in decisions which affect them.

This is one of a series of summaries of the project supported by DRILL. Final reports, toolkits and summaries of all the projects are available from the DRILL website at www.drilluk.org.uk.

Overview of the project

This project looks at the potential for paid peer support roles for people with learning disabilities within learning disability services.

Approach

The project used participatory research and co-inquiry. A job description, person specification and recruitment strategy were co-produced.

Seven day-long workshops were carried out with partner organisations to plan a new peer worker post.

A peer worker was recruited.

Findings

Learning disabled people are underrepresented in the job market. Their employment rate is very low and has not really increased in the past decade.

If peer support workers are to be employed more broadly, energy and resourcing must be made available within the sector.

The first step in inclusive job design is to ensure that it fits well and brings out the best in people.

Job crafting is a key tool when it comes to recruiting peer support workers. Job crafting means changing parts of a workers' job and their tasks. It is useful idea in thinking about how jobs can suit people and can change things within service provider organisations.

'Community job crafting' offers a way to work together to find the things that people with learning disabilities have to offer and to make space for them in organisations.

Designing a job with services users creates an opportunity to think differently about service users and about services.

Employing people with learning disabilities within services used by people with learning disabilities can help to address some of the power differences.

Peer support can shift the power in support services and empower learning disabled people by giving them more control and influence in the services they use.

Findings (continued)

The six key elements to successful peer support are trust, safety, friendliness, helping each other, honesty and time.

The way employers recruit and select staff shapes who gets to apply for a job, and who is given it. If the processes aren't fair and open, people could be discriminated against.

Attitudes of wider support networks, overprotective cultures and a lack of ambition of members of a support network may deter people from applying for jobs.

Job crafting is a step forward for service providers, but it isn't a solution to all of the problems for people with learning disabilities in employment.

Recommendations

The Learning project outlined many recommendations, some of which are listed here. All recommendations are included in the full report, which is linked below.

- Use the 'community job crafting' method when designing jobs to ensure inclusivity
- Employ people with learning disabilities within the services that they use
- Organisations must commit to funding and resourcing a new kind of post, involving people who want to make it happen
- Ensure support workers have the right information so that they are able to share it with service users
- Employers and organisations must recognise that there are different types of knowledge, but they are all valuable
- Peer workers must not be used to gap fill, it must be a completely new and paid role
- Allow peer workers to develop their own peer support practice over time
- Provide feedback and support for people who aren't selected
- Ensure application forms are accessible, including producing them in easy read
- Information on access needs, and reasonable adjustments should be gathered.

Final report

Learning by doing together

Please click on report name to read the full report.

Project partners

CHANGE



**Keyring Living
Support Networks Ltd**



**Joseph Rowntree
Housing Trust**



**Centre for Employment Relations
Innovation and Change (CERIC) –
Leeds University Business School**



NHS Employers

