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In-work support: What is the role of in-work support in a successful transition to sustained employment?

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In-work support: *What is the role of in-work support in a successful transition to sustained employment?*

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TM Case Study Summary Theme Report

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We would like to thank all the people from the TM partnerships who gave up their valuable time to take part in the research detailed in this report. As always we are indebted to those who gave up their time to speak with us and openly share their experiences and their TM journey.

Contents

About this report

This report focuses on the role that in-work support plays in helping employment programme beneficiaries move into sustained employment. It draws on finding from the Talent Match (TM) National Evaluation.

TM is a Big Lottery Fund strategic programme investing £108 million in 21 Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) areas, which have experienced particularly high levels of youth unemployment. The focus of the programme is on developing holistic approaches to combating worklessness amongst long-term NEETs (i.e. young people who are not in education, employment or training). A key aspect of the programme is to bring young people closer to, and into employment.

Part One of this report outlines what in-work support is and why it is important.

Part Two presents findings from analysis of programme monitoring data on the provision of in-work support and insights from qualitative research in four TM partnerships and case studies of provision of in-work support.
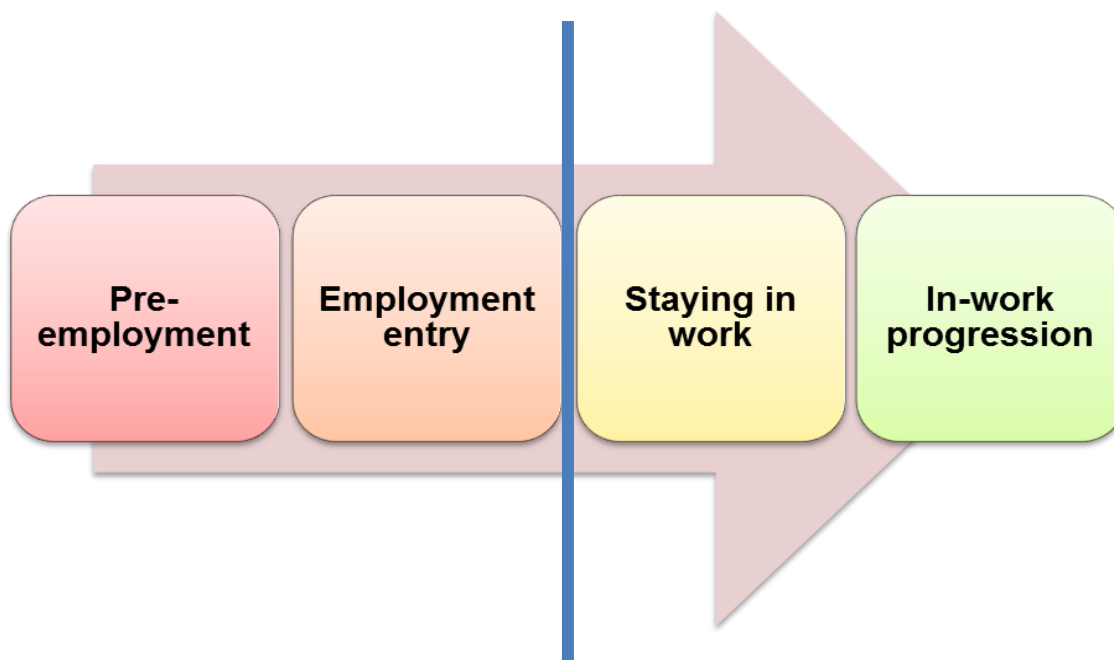
Part Three sets out the learning on in-work support emerging from this research.

Part 1: In-work support in context

1.1. Pathway to employment

Figure 1 shows a stylised pathway to employment.

Figure 1: Pathway to employment

Conventionally employment support programmes have focused on pre-employment and employment entry – to the left of the blue line. Yet if they are to sustain employment beyond the short-term individuals who face labour market disadvantage often need in-work support and help with progression in employment (to the right of the blue line).

A key feature differentiating TM from many other employment support programmes is that longer-term support can be provided to a beneficiary and employer for an extended period.

While there is evidence from the literature on 'what works' at the pre-employment and employment entry stages of the pathway the evidence base on staying in work and in-work progression is much smaller.

In-work support can be important from an individual perspective for employment retention and from a societal and economic perspective in terms of reduced spending on out-of-work benefits and increased tax take.

1.2. What is in-work support?

In-work support encompasses:

- Practical measures to assist TM beneficiaries to sustain employment – e.g. help with transport to work, assistance with organising caring responsibilities, help with training relevant to the job, etc.;

- Guidance on work-related matters;

- Supporting beneficiaries with non-work related issues that impinge on their ability to hold down a job from an adviser/mentor on a formal or informal basis; and

- Assistance provided to an employer to support a beneficiary's job retention.

Key points from the literature on in-work support are:

- Integrated support is particularly beneficial.

- There are two main times when in-work support is particularly important: (1) in the early days of employment; and (2) at times of crisis in a beneficiary's home and work life.

- Employment retention (and progression) is eased by: (1) individuals being in a job they like and which suits their skills and preferred hours of working, and that is relatively easily accessible geographically; and (2) employer commitment to sustaining employment of the individual employee.

Part 2: Findings: TM experience of in-work support

<div style="text-align:right">2</div>

2.1. Findings from monitoring data

Of those TM beneficiaries who secure jobs most enter classic, relatively low barrier to entry (and low barrier to exit) jobs, predominantly in the service sector – including administrative, retail, care work, customer service, bar staff and cleaning roles. Other common job roles are warehouse operative and labourer. Job turnover would be expected to be relatively high in these jobs, indicating that in-work support and help with 'next steps' is important.

Across all TM partnerships just over half of all TM beneficiaries in part-time or full-time employment or in self-employment at any stage of their TM journey reported that they received in-work support. There are variations in the proportion of beneficiaries in receipt of in-work support by TM partnership, but these differences could reflect differences in interpretation of what in-work support constitutes by TM partnership area.

TM beneficiaries in full-time employment were more likely to receive in-work support than those in part-time employment, but there is little variation in self-reported receipt of in-work support by gender, parental status, disability, qualifications, etc.

Figure 2 illustrates the percentage of Talent Match clients who remained in work and who were receiving in work support or not. It demonstrates that, at each stage, a higher proportion of those who remained in work were receiving in-work support, compared to those who were not (with a difference of 5 or 6 percentage points).

Figure 2: Percentage of TM beneficiaries receiving in-work support at any stage
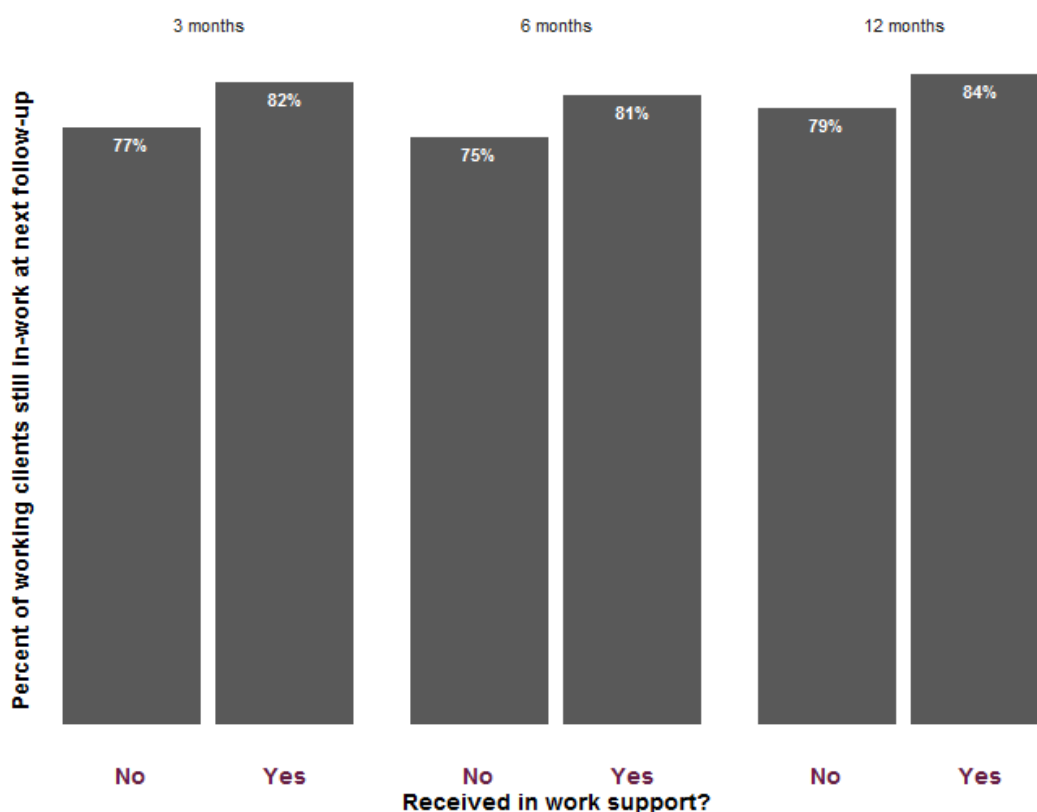
Source: CDF (November 2016).

2.2.   Models of in-work support

There are two main models for delivery of in-work support in TM:

1. *Model 1*: Key workers (i.e. individuals providing one-to-one support for TM beneficiaries throughout their journey from pre-employment, to employment entry, to sustaining and ideally progressing in employment) provide in-work support for TM beneficiaries and employers.

2. *Model 2*: Responsibility for employment-related in-work support for TM beneficiaries and employers is passed to a member of a separate 'skills and employment' team dealing with employer engagement, work placement and in-work support, although a key worker may continue to offer some other types of social and emotional support to the TM beneficiary.

Model 1 is characteristic of smaller partnerships and in more sparsely populated areas, where there are smaller volumes of work-ready beneficiaries and where face-to-face meetings with beneficiaries and multiple TM / delivery staff members are more difficult. Model 2 implies more division of responsibility between staff and so greater scope for specialisation in specific roles. It is characteristic of larger partnerships and major urban areas.

Alongside these two main models (and associated variants) separate specialist support may be implemented for TM beneficiaries with specific needs / facing particular challenges (e.g. hidden disabilities, mental health conditions, etc.) where physical or work organisation adjustments may be needed in the workplace (see Case Study 1).

Case Study 1: TM Humber 'Making Our Business Yours' (MOBY) project

This project, launched in 2016, is explicitly built on an ethos of recognising the strengths and skills that TM Humber beneficiaries possess, and on making adjustments in recruitment processes and workplaces so they become more accommodating to those with learning difficulties / hidden disabilities. A central feature of MOBY is that it is seeking to have in-work support for those with learning difficulties / hidden disabilities built into the way that workplaces operate.

The idea of MOBY is to offer employers wraparound holistic support to ensure that they are comfortable taking on a TM beneficiary with a hidden disability. This support is being delivered through a partnership called Disability, which involves existing TM partners like Mencap and Jobcentre Plus and is seeking to streamline support for young people.

The aim of MOBY is to spread this more widely by working with employers to find the support, funding or information on good practice that they need. A lot of this is already available from organisations like Mencap, so part of the project is about raising awareness and signposting. However, an important aspect is to help overcome employers' fear of making the wrong moves or saying the wrong things, and also to reassure them that the adjustments required will not require massive investment or wholesale changes to the structure of their business. They are also encouraged to share the information with the existing workforce so they adopt a more understanding attitude.

## 2.3. Findings from qualitative research

Methodology

This section of the report draws on qualitative research undertaken in four TM partnership areas of different sizes, together with a meeting in a fifth TM partnership area. 27 interviews were conducted, comprising: seven TM beneficiaries, four key workers, four employers, two TM partnership leads, one business lead at a TM partnership, three delivery partners and six other TM staff members.

While it is not possible to extrapolate from this relatively small number of interviews in the case study partnerships to provide comprehensive insights across the full variety of actors involved in in-work support provision and receipt and all 21 TM partnerships, the case study partnerships provide a range of TM partnerships of different sizes.

Some of these interviews relate to single in-work support case studies (see Figure 3 and Case Studies 2, 4 and 5).

Figure 3: A single in-work support case study
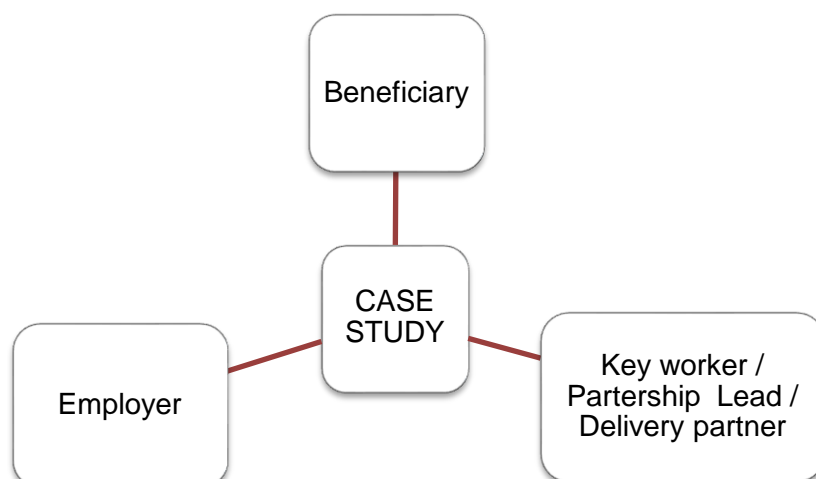
Beneficiary perspectives

The TM beneficiaries interviewed were overwhelmingly positive about in-work support. For some young people this was because they did not feel ready to 'be on their own' given the difficulties of moving into work. One reflected on it being "hard to keep hold of work" and doing so was "a long touch process".

There were five aspects of in-work support that they found particularly useful:

- *Practical support on employment entry and in the initial stages of employment* – this might involve provision of a smart / appropriate clothes for an interview or a specific job role, help with transport, financial support to help tide TM beneficiaries over the gap between coming off benefits and receiving their first wage and money advice given the change in circumstances on entering employment.

- *Advice on appropriate workplace behaviour and dealing with work-related issues* – typically this could involve advice on what it is reasonable for employers to expect from employees, understanding rules and how to deal with specific problems that they encountered in the workplace.

- *Managing working relationships* – relating to working with, and communicating and interacting with others in the workplace, including colleagues and customers.

- *Ongoing social and emotional support* – relating to non-workplace issues which nevertheless could impact on their ability to retain a specific job or sustain employment more generally.

- *Support in thinking about next steps* – in terms of what might be an appropriate job role / training to seek next (particularly, but not exclusively) for those on fixed-term contracts (see Case Study 2).

Case Study 2: Supporting a young person lacking confidence in employment and to next opportunities

Carla (TM beneficiary, pseudonym) was unemployed for a year after leaving school and college. She claimed Job Seekers Allowance and went on the Work Programme. Carla was unsure what she wanted to do in the longer-term and ended up on TM. Initially, Carla's TM key worker helped her to improve her CV and recognise her talents, and helped her in identifying and applying for work experience and suitable jobs.

Carla admitted that she "*suffered with low confidence*". This was, and continued to be, something that her Key worker supported her with when in paid work on a one year fixed term contract at a local college. Carla found her TM key worker approachable and someone she could turn to for help "*with queries*".

In addition to helping Carla with her confidence through "encouraging me to do things and advising me and things", an important element of practical support to help sustain employment provided by TM via her key worker was with transport to work: "*He helped me with a bike so I can get to work as well; I was struggling as cos I would have relied on my mum to take me*". (Carla, TM beneficiary).

Carla's employer (Employer C) was well aware of TM before taking on Carla and also had previous and current experience of upskilling and supporting adults into employment. In this respect, she may be regarded as a 'warm' employer, familiar with many of the issues faced by individuals moving into employment and the potential benefits of in work support. Carla's employer (Employer C) was very positive about how well Carla had integrated into the office team and as well as undertaking administrative tasks had proved "a really good asset" in delivering IT sessions to people unfamiliar with computers. She was aware that Carla's key worker had been offering Carla support with her confidence, but noted that: "*Since she's (Carla) been with us she's blossomed anyway so she's not really needed quite so much support.*" (Employer C).

Carla's key worker and her employer were both looking out for next opportunities for Carla at the end of her employment contract and saw this as an element of TM in-work support – sometimes involving all three parties together.

Key *learning points* from this case study include:

- As a TM beneficiary gains confidence in employment the need for in-work support diminishes.

- Effective in-work support for a TM beneficiary on a fixed-term contract can include help with next steps / progression in employment.

- Having an employer who knows about and is supportive of TM principles is helpful – for the TM beneficiary and the key worker.

Key worker and other TM staff perspectives

In-work support operated across a continuum from "*light touch*" to "*more intensive*", with the extent and nature of in-work support offered in practice tailored to the individual. Not every young person wants, or needs, in-work support. In some TM partnerships the nature and extent of in-work support varied by delivery partner. This may cause difficulties when seeking to 'sell' in-work support at a TM partnership level.

Typically In-work support is delivered to TM beneficiaries and employers by a key worker and / or a TM partnership staff member with specific responsibility for employer engagement. Whoever delivers in-work support the key issue is to ensure good communication between all actors concerned – i.e. the TM beneficiary, the key worker / employment engagement staff member and the employer.

A key worker / employer engagement staff member may deliver in-work support in the workplace – for example, in some instances face-to-face meetings can be beneficial to address specific challenges faced. Typically the TM beneficiary receives in-work support outside the workplace (via phone, face-to-face meetings, email, etc.).

Time spent on in-work support activities varied between the individuals being supported and the style adopted by key workers. One key worker indicated that in-work support might involve: *"… a five minute call … driving to see them at work … an hour meeting at work … an evening call to see how their day was …"* (Key worker). However, it is difficult to make a formal assessment of the time spent on in-work support activities as the process tended not to be formalised. In one of the TM partnerships where qualitative research was being undertaken measures were being put in place for a more formalised system of in-work support (see Case Study 3).

Case Study 3: TM Worcestershire: Introducing greater formalisation of in-work support

In 2016 a new employee, with previous experience of delivering the Work Programme, took over responsibility for the in-work support element of TM in Worcestershire. There were no formal processes in place to monitor and / or record progress with in-work support. She worked to rectify this situation by developing (in consultation with staff) in-work support documents for key workers to complete. The aim of the in-work support documents was to: (1) ensure that in-work support is recorded as an activity and monitored; (2) agree a plan and record contact with a TM beneficiary whilst they are in employment; and (3) help identify when TM beneficiaries no longer need support from TM.

There are three different forms:

- *Client In-Work Support Plan*: an updateable working document (which is filled in when the key worker contacts the TM beneficiary regarding in-work support). It evolves as the TM beneficiary starts work and sustains work. The plan records details of the TM beneficiary, the date they started work, their employer and their key worker. Any practical help needed is noted – i.e. travel-to-work finances, travel-to-work directions / methods, work clothes, other. The preferred type of in-work contact is recorded (face-to-face, phone (text or calls), email, other; and the preferred frequency of contact – i.e. weekly, fortnightly, monthly, or other. There is space to record other details / support requests and also an agreed plan of support and actions. In order to assist with sustaining and progressing in employment long-term employment goals (i.e. such as increase in hours, promotion, change in role, career, etc.) are recorded.

- *In-Work Support Contact Form*: This form records contact details, identifies support and training, TM beneficiary needs, problems and actions. Responses are recorded to questions on: (1) How is the role going? (2) Are there any changes to hours / location / contract? (3) Is there anything else the beneficiary needs to enable them to continue in employment? Specific actions and time scales are recorded.

- *In-Work Support Progress Chart*: This chart depicts the TM beneficiary journey whilst in work and also helps to identify when exiting the programme may be appropriate. The process begins when: (1) Job start date confirmed. Then the

process involves: (2) Key worker establishes in-work support plan with TM beneficiary; (3) Key worker ensures TM beneficiary is prepared for work (i.e. travel, clothes, address, lunch); (4) In-work support plan commences (according to frequency agreed); (5) Key worker contacts TM beneficiary on first day to see how it went); (6) Client continues in work – and in-work support plan implementation plan continues. The TM beneficiary is contacted also at two key outcome dates: (7) After 6 months of sustained employment; and (8) After 12 months of sustained employment – to discuss exit from TM.

Key workers and partnership leads reiterated that in-work support might involve "*help with wider life*" and dealing with work-related issues. They noted that it was particularly important to reiterate employer expectations – especially in cases where a young person has no other individuals whom they can ask about acceptable workplace behaviour or where there is a history of a chaotic home life (see Case Study 4). It can be difficult for some young people who have been out of employment for some time to adjust to being in a job and to adapt to "*rules and structure*" and in-work support can help in the adjustment process.

Case Study 4: Supporting a young person lacking key life skills to independent living, employment and career planning

Barry (TM beneficiary, pseudonym) came from a difficult background. At one stage he was living with his extended family who did everything for him. Prior to joining TM, Barry was 'sofa surfing'. With help from TM, Barry moved into a room in a hostel. He was clear from the outset that he wanted to be a youth worker and he volunteered at a youth project run by a small charity before getting an interview for a job there.

Prior to the interview Barry's key worker (who had known and worked with Barry before TM) had organised for Barry to attend short courses (such as mentoring for young people, first aid, drugs and alcohol, etc.) which "*would give him more skills for the job he wanted to do*". Then Barry's key worker "*got him his shirt and stuff for his interview*" and waited outside while the interview was conducted. Barry's key worker was then called in by the interviewer (Employer B) to ascertain that he was supportive of Barry: "*I let them know about my plans for support, trying to get him onto his level 2 youth work and stuff like that so they were really pleased cos they're a charity so funding's tight for them* … for them it was great to know that I was there to be able to support him with anything." (TM key worker)

Part of employment entry and in-work support for Barry had involved his key worker providing support with independent living and his appearance (which staff at Barry's workplace had picked up on) and life skills. Barry's key worker worked with him to keep his room tidy and with "all the basics that he's never been taught" (TM key worker).

A key feature of Barry's experience on TM was the intensity of relationships with both his key worker and Employer B, who in turn "*quite often communicate [with each other] concerning the young man*" (Employer B). Both were supporting him in his "*five year plan*" to do a higher education qualification in youth work. Barry's key worker had identified a specific adult education college that he felt would be appropriate for Barry at which to study an access to higher education course.

Barry spoke of having "*two supports*" who worked "*in synch*". Barry's employer (Employer B) supported him in work on an everyday basis and Barry's key worker supported him by funding courses (via TM) and helping with life skills: "*[Employer B] will deal with my skills side, so he'll develop my skills so I can become a better person and [Barry's key worker] will develop my emotions and my motive, it's hard to*

explain. It's like a ping pong table if you like, [Barry's key worker] on one bat and [Employer B's] on the other bat and I'm just being flung and they won't let me fall off the table if that makes sense. That's how I think of it anyway." (Barry, TM beneficiary)

Key *learning points* from this case study include:

- Investment in a TM beneficiary (in this case TM finance for a work-related qualification) can help the beneficiary value and hence commit more strongly to sustaining employment and training.

- Support with non-work life issues can be imperative in a TM beneficiary transitioning to behaviours and routines that are necessary for sustaining employment.

- A very committed key worker and employer can work together effectively in provision of in-work and associated wraparound support for a TM beneficiary but this can be very time-intensive.

In cases where a TM beneficiary faced specific challenges, such as those that might be associated with some hidden disabilities, the key worker could liaise with the young person and the employer to "*help understanding on all sides*". This might involve face-to-face meetings with all parties concerned (as outlined in Case Study 5) or more generally keeping open communication with the employer and the young person – in case difficulties arise at a later date once a beneficiary has seemingly settled in well to employment.

Case Study 5: Supporting a young person with hidden disabilities in employment

Andy (TM beneficiary, pseudonym) has multiple hidden disabilities issues. Prior to joining TM Andy spent a year looking for work after leaving school and college and then had a bad experience of an apprenticeship, which was poorly managed and he got no help. Subsequent part-time employment did not work out and then he did some volunteering.

When on TM Andy enrolled on a 'Get Into Retail' course (a free sector-specific training course for unemployed young adults with an interest in retail): he was one of twenty-five people who enrolled on a taster day and one of twelve offered a four-week work trial in one of the company's stores. Subsequently, Andy was offered a job.

When in the job, Andy struggled at various points, such as getting to grips with the number of people working at the store, understanding the demands of the store, knowing the products and having the knowledge (and confidence) to answer customer questions. His probation period was extended from the usual 13 weeks by an additional 13 weeks to help him familiarise with the environment better. Andy's key worker continued to meet with him to discuss work and non-work related issues providing support where needed. Andy could contact his employer (Employer A) by text and request a meeting to address work-related concerns.

During his probationary period, Andy admitted to finding the flexibility required over shift patterns in a retail-based role difficult to deal with as a "*very routine based*" person. When work colleagues changed he felt that they did not understand him and the challenges he was facing. At this stage Andy indicated to his key worker that he needed help. His key worker set up a three-way meeting in the workplace with himself, Andy, his line manager and the store management team. Andy felt that this

was helpful in giving him "*voice*" at a time when he was "*struggling*":

For his part, Andy's TM key worker described his role as a "*go between in a way between [*Andy*] and the employer*". From his perspective the meeting was about helping Andy's line manager and work colleagues understand Andy better and agreeing to implement actions (suggested by Andy) that would help Andy understand better what was expected of him. At the same time in-work support involved helping Andy understand the workplace: "*It's also making [*Andy*] understand that this is a workplace, they have their protocols and rules and you have to understand that they have ways of working and it's making the two work together.*" (TM key worker).

Andy's employer at the store (Employer A) noted: "*If [*Andy*] was employed off the street I don't think he'd be with us now, without support from me and [*Andy's TM Key worker*] I don't think his line manager would have kept him on after his probation. It's only cos we took the time and effort to sit down and meet with his line manager and discuss his issues and what we're going to do about it, how we're going to move forward, I don't think we would have got to that point.*" (Employer A).

Key *learning points* from this case study include:

- A key worker can help provide a trusted 'voice' to a beneficiary, when requested to do so, in liaison with an employer to help the employer understand challenges the beneficiary is facing and how they might be addressed.

- Employer commitment to an individual can pay off – with additional support from the employer and the key worker and the effort made by the beneficiary, the TM beneficiary met the required standard required by the employer.

In some instances young people did not want the employer to know that they had a key worker. Yet in general the key workers interviewed felt that in-work support could play an important role in sustaining employment. One key worker noted that he had recognised, from his experience of TM, the importance of in-work support. Increasingly he was advocating it to young people and employers.

Alongside the positive aspects of provision of in-work support, key workers and partnership leads emphasised the importance of not doing everything for the young person: "*You have to be careful to make sure you are showing them [young people] how to do things rather than doing it for them*". (TM staff member)

Moreover, there are limits to what in-work support can achieve: if a young person does not want to stay in employment, no amount of in-work support is likely to ensure that they stay in a particular job.

Employer perspectives

The employers interviewed were positive about TM and about the role of in-work support. One said that "[In-work support] *can only ever be a good thing*" (Employer). They pointed to examples of in-work support being crucial for young people sustaining employment. They felt that most employers – and particularly those with less experience of dealing with young people - would welcome in-work support: "*I think the majority of the employers would quite happily welcome any support that could be given to young people to make sure they progress. Sometimes it's the smallest things but some employers don't have the time to support with, but knowing there's somebody there to support somebody, that's a great asset.*" (Employer).

In terms of what good in-work support looks like the over-riding emphasis was on communication and the availability of a 'go to' person: "*I think it would be making*

sure you do keep contact with the young person but not too much, also keeping good communication with the employer and not neglecting the employer side cos that could easily happen. I think the good bit is communication on all sides to make sure that everybody's happy and knowing if barriers do come up they're dealt with straight away." (Employer).

2.4. Conclusions from qualitative research

Three key conclusions from qualitative research on in-work support are:

- *In-work support can play an important role in helping young people with the potentially difficult task of sustaining employment* – while some TM beneficiaries need intensive support at the pre-employment stage of the employment pathway in order to be ready to enter employment there are challenges associated with the immediate entry to employment and subsequently sustaining employment, especially for those with no / limited prior work experience and / or family support and limited preparation for the 'world of work' from school. Keeping a job is hard: "*it's one thing getting a job, it's another thing keeping it … it's quite difficult to see it through*" (Employer commenting on the basis of working with a TM beneficiary and key worker).

- *Key workers are an important 'sounding board' for TM beneficiaries* – for discussion of work-related matters and also other non-work issues that might impact on employment.

- *In-work support needs to be tailored to the individual* – the characteristics, life experiences and circumstances of TM beneficiaries vary and these variations need to be reflected in the nature and intensity of in-work support offered and provided.

Part 3: Key learning points

3

3.1. Key lessons for partnerships

1. **There is no one single 'best' model for organisation and implementation of in-work support.**

   There are two main models: (1) key workers (i.e. individuals providing one-to-one support for TM beneficiaries) provide in-work support for TM beneficiaries and employers; (2) responsibility for employment-related in-work support for TM beneficiaries is passed to a member of a separate 'skills and employment' team, although a key worker may continue to offer some other types of support. Model 2 is suitable for larger TM partnerships, especially in large urban areas where TM beneficiaries and employers are geographically concentrated and TM staff may more easily come together for face-to-face meetings. It may be more difficult to implement in smaller TM partnerships and more sparsely populated areas. In theory, Model 1 can operate anywhere.

2. **In-work support can play an important role as part of a broader integrated package of employment support.**

   Staying in work can be hard and individuals who face labour market disadvantage often need in-work support if they are to sustain employment. Since many of the TM beneficiaries who enter employment are engaged in jobs characterised by low barriers to entry and high turnover it is useful in some cases for in-work support to provide assistance with 'next steps' in employment / in-work progression.

3. **In-work support needs to be tailored to the individual beneficiary and employer**

   This has implications for the intensity of in-work support needed. Some individuals might benefit from practical support in helping with travel to work (e.g. an advance to cover costs of public transport), others might need advice on how to deal with new situations in the workplace as they arise, etc.

4. **Targeting of in-work support**

   Potentially any beneficiary could benefit from in-work support. If such support was to be targeted at particular groups of beneficiaries who need it more these would include those with particularly low confidence, hidden disabilities, learning difficulties or chaotic / complex lives.

5. **Good communication and co-ordination**

   Communication between all actors involved – i.e. the TM beneficiary, the key worker / other TM staff member(s), and the employer – is fundamental to efficient and effective in-work support. Some TM beneficiaries may be receiving support and advice from several sources (from within and outside of TM) and *it is important that all support workers are aware of each other* so as to obviate, as far as possible, duplication in support and contradictory messages.

6. **Clear roles for the key worker**

   It is important for a *key worker to provide a 'sounding board' for TM beneficiaries' work and non-work concerns* when in employment, but to re-iterate the (reasonable) expectations of the employer in doing so. It is important for key workers / other TM staff to *advise TM beneficiaries about courses of action* to take in particular circumstances *rather than to take action on their behalf*. There is only so much in-work support that TM can (and should) provide.

7. **A standard or bespoke model of in-work support?**

   Variations in the nature and extent of in-work support by delivery partner can cause difficulties when seeking to 'sell' in-work support at a TM partnership level. There is *merit in setting a minimum threshold of in-work support* across all delivery partners.

8. **Monitoring progress**

   There is *scope for greater formalisation of systems for monitoring and recording in-work support interactions and beneficiary progress in employment*. Greater systematisation would enable TM partnerships to measure more easily the time spent on in-work support, to assess its success (or otherwise) and to identify when in-work support might be withdrawn.

9. **Limits to in-work support**

   There are *limits to how effective in-work support can be*: if a beneficiary does not want to stay in employment no amount of in-work support is likely to ensure that they stay in a particular job.

3.2. Key lessons for policy

1. **Building a better evidence base**

   There is a need for a *better evidence base on in-work support*. This could be aided by: (1) setting out a common definition of 'in-work support' and other types of support at the outset of a programme in order to minimise differences in how support is recorded; and (2) promoting the formalised recording of in-work support, in order to assess what it entails, the time it takes, and to inform exit strategies from provision of in-work support in individual cases.

2. **In-work support is part of a package of support**

   There is *merit in looking at in-work support as part of a broader package of support* which may extend from pre-employment to employment entry, staying in work and in-work progression. Integrated support is particularly beneficial.

3. Beneficiary choice and employer commitment

Employment retention (and progression) is eased by: (1) individuals being in a job they like and which suits their skills and preferred hours of working, and that is relatively easily accessible geographically; and (2) employer commitment to supporting the individual in a particular post and sustaining employment of the individual employee. This suggests that the '*quality of the initial job entry*' is important, rather than placing a beneficiary in 'any job'. The *support of employers is fundamental for individuals' job retention*, since employers are gatekeepers to jobs.

4

Further reading

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