Evaluation of Access to Work: Individual Budget pilot strand

Jane Aston

A report of research carried out by the Institute for Employment Studies on behalf of the Department for Work and Pensions
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## Abbreviations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tr>
<td>AtW</td>
<td>Access to Work</td>
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<tr>
<td>CSIP</td>
<td>Care Services Improvement Partnership</td>
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<tr>
<td>DEA</td>
<td>Disability Employment Adviser</td>
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<td>DGF</td>
<td>Disabled Grants Facilities</td>
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<td>DWP</td>
<td>Department for Work and Pensions</td>
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<td>IBSEN</td>
<td>National evaluation of the Individual Budgets Pilot Projects</td>
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<td>ICES</td>
<td>Integrated Community Equipment Services</td>
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<td>IES</td>
<td>Institute for Employment Studies</td>
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<tr>
<td>ILF</td>
<td>Independent Living Fund</td>
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<td>MGD</td>
<td>Ministerial government department</td>
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<td>NDPA</td>
<td>New Deal Personal Adviser</td>
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<tr>
<td>RDC</td>
<td>Regional development centre</td>
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<td>SP</td>
<td>Supporting People</td>
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Summary

Introduction

This report presents the findings of a qualitative evaluation of the provision of employment support and Access to Work (AtW) alongside Individual Budgets. It was one of three strands of an AtW evaluation which was commissioned by the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP), and carried out by Institute for Employment Studies.

Individual Budgets were piloted in 13 local authorities across England, and a separate evaluation of these has been carried out for DWP.

AtW was aligned, but not fully integrated, with Individual Budgets, and so AtW funds were not received by service users as part of their Individual Budgets. Alongside some of the processes involved in obtaining an Individual Budget, additional employment-related support was being piloted by DWP and Jobcentre Plus (referred to as ‘the employment option’). The employment option centred around employment marketing leaflets from Jobcentre Plus; a four-page leaflet and a more detailed booklet.

Methodology

The evaluation was based on in-depth interviews in three of the Individual Budget pilot areas; Kensington and Chelsea, Norfolk, and Oldham. Thirty-eight interviews were carried out with four key groups of stakeholders:

- Individual Budget pilot leads (4);
- other key staff involved in delivering Individual Budgets and supporting service users (12);
- Individual Budget service users (10);
- Jobcentre Plus staff (12).
There were a number of issues which arose during the fieldwork, including a low level of buy-in to this strand of the research from most of the key stakeholder groups, timing issues around the employment option and Individual Budget processes, and the timing of the evaluation itself. These issues resulted in the total number of interviews being fewer than had been planned, and they also impacted on the results of the evaluation.

Individual Budgets

The process of obtaining an Individual Budget in all three pilot areas began with an assessment process, which determined the total amount of funds, or allocated budget, available from the various funding streams. Once the allocated budget was known, a support plan was put together, which set out the ways in which the service user would like to use their Individual Budget. Support planning would typically be as user-lead as possible, with support from a care co-ordinator or support broker, and with input from family, friends, key workers and other advocates as appropriate. The support plan had to be approved by the local authority and the organisations holding the relevant funding streams. On approval, the funds were paid out on a regular basis to service users, who could be supported to use them.

There was a wide range of support funded through Individual Budgets, for example, paying for driving lessons, going to the gym, funding decorating or other home improvements, and paying for a computer and broadband, as well as more traditional forms of social care support, such as paying for carers.

Alignment with Access to Work

In all three areas, there was little or no use of AtW in combination with an Individual Budget, so the research team were not able to explore how the alignment of Individual Budgets and AtW worked in practice.

There was also some confusion among staff about how AtW was aligned with Individual Budgets, with few being clear on how this process would work.

There were a number of reasons why take-up of AtW alongside Individual Budgets had been low, including:

- relatively low take-up of Individual Budgets themselves;
- AtW is for people with a job offer, and many Individual Budget service users have been out of work for some time;
- not enough publicity about AtW combined with Individual Budgets;
- AtW may be better suited to people with some sorts of impairments rather than others.

Staff generally supported the principle of providing information and options around employment for service users, but saw it as a fairly minor part of their job.
Considering employment as an option

Employment materials were sent by DWP to Individual Budget staff in autumn 2007, although by early 2008, staff knowledge of their purpose was patchy. Some staff had given the materials to service users who had employment as an aspiration in their support plan, but not all staff interviewed had seen the materials. Staff generally saw their role as signposting to relevant sources of employment support, such as Disability Employment Advisers at Jobcentre Plus, or local voluntary organisations, rather than in supporting service users to pursue employment, although there were exceptions to this, for example amongst staff working with service users with learning disabilities. In contrast, staff working with mental health service users thought that any discussion of employment should be initiated by service users themselves. Nonetheless, it was thought that moving towards employment was an appropriate goal for many service users.

Individual Budget staff thought that Jobcentre Plus needed to be more proactive in making links with social services. Jobcentre Plus staff interviewed were aware of the need to present employment options appropriately and supported employment materials reaching service users via their Individual Budget support staff. Pathways and WORKSTEP providers were very positive about providing additional information and support to help Individual Budget service users consider employment.

The employment materials

The employment materials consisted of a leaflet and a booklet, available in standard and easy read formats. Few Individual Budget and Jobcentre Plus staff knew much about the contents of the employment materials, and not all staff and service users interviewed had seen them. Most staff thought that they were a useful resource, although they would not change their general approach to signposting regarding employment issues. Staff working with mental health service users questioned the extent to which the materials would be seen as relevant by their service users. Most staff thought that the materials had been sent too late for them to have made full use of them with their service users. Some staff questioned why the materials were specifically for Individual Budget service users, when the information they contained was quite general and could be used more widely.

Some service users thought that there was too much information presented in the booklets in particular, and that it looked quite daunting. Staff and service users generally preferred the leaflets to the booklets, and the easy read versions to the standard versions. Service users said that they found it useful to know a little about the programmes outlined, and staff and service users liked the stories in the back of the standard booklet. Staff commented on how the pictures had been improved from earlier versions of the materials they had seen. There was general agreement that the materials were accessible, but that some service users, for example, those with learning disabilities, would need support to use them.
Conclusions

This strand of the research presented considerable challenges, due to reasons including the low take-up of Individual Budgets and AtW, and the timing of the employment option. Fewer interviews took place than planned as a result.

Individual Budgets were viewed in a positive light by all staff as they promoted independence and raised aspirations. Most staff agreed with the principle of providing employment information and signposting service users to sources of employment support, as long as this was initiated by the service user themselves.

Take-up of AtW alongside Individual Budgets had been very low and the evaluation found few examples. As a result, the research team was not able to look at the alignment model in practice. Low take-up was attributed to a low take-up of Individual Budgets, and the funds being unsuitable for people looking for work. The research also found low understanding of AtW, and its alignment with Individual Budgets, amongst Individual Budget staff.

There had been little activity on distributing the employment option materials to service users. A more thorough and wide-reaching brief from DWP or Jobcentre Plus on the employment option may have been useful. Improving links more generally between Jobcentre Plus and social service staff was thought to be important in supporting service users in the future. Individual staff hoped that Jobcentre Plus could be more proactive in this area.

Not all staff had seen the employment materials but a few had used them with service users. Service users had generally found the information in the materials interesting. Staff and service users tended to prefer the leaflets to the booklets, and the easy read to the standard versions. The materials were felt to be less relevant to mental health service users.

The impact of aligning AtW with Individual Budgets appeared to have been minimal, both in terms of take-up and the extent to which the process was understood by many of the key actors. There was also little impact of the employment option, although some staff were more aware of the range of specialist disability employment services that were available. Some service users thought that the information may be useful to them in the future.

The potential for providing employment information as an option was viewed positively by staff, but it was thought that the materials would have a greater impact over the medium and long term. To bring about greater impact in the future, more effective mechanisms for cascading information through to Individual Budget support staff would be needed. This could include providing workshops and increased partnership working with Jobcentre Plus.
1 Introduction

1.1 Background

The Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) commissioned the Institute for Employment Studies (IES) to undertake a qualitative evaluation of Access to Work (AtW) provision, involving customers, employers and a range of other stakeholders. This research project, in its entirety, consisted of three strands:

- an overall evaluation of AtW, the core evaluation;
- an exploration of the effects of the decision that ministerial government departments (MGDs) should pay for their own adjustments;
- a consideration of employment support (including AtW provision) within Individual Budget pilot areas.

This report presents the findings from the research into the provision of employment support, and AtW, within the Individual Budget pilot areas. The research has examined how AtW is working alongside Individual Budgets, and how the pilot areas are taking forward promoting the consideration of employment as an option to their Individual Budget customers.

1.1.1 The Individual Budget pilot programme

Individual Budgets were offered to customers of social care in 13 participating sites. Individual Budgets were to extend beyond the resources available for social care and were to include resources from a number of funding streams – Integrated Community Equipment Services (ICES), Disabled Facilities Grants (DFGs), Supporting People (SP) and, from DWP, the Independent Living Fund (ILF) and AtW. Once the Individual Budget teams had decided which of these funding streams and which customers to include in their particular pilot project, they had to develop an approach to implementation. The pilots opted for a range of criteria. Some chose to offer Individual Budgets to one user group at a time; some chose to introduce Individual Budgets to one team of care managers/social workers at a time; others chose to roll out by locality; and others had different arrangements for new referrals compared with existing service users. The Individual Budget
pilot programme aimed to give people who use public services more choice and control in deciding what support or services they receive. It was a cross-government initiative led by the Department of Health, working closely with the DWP, Communities and Local Government and the Office for Disability Issues.

Individual Budgets brought together a number of different funding streams and, once the total amount available through those streams had been determined by whatever assessment process applied, let people use the money in a way that best suited their own needs and situation. After the assessment process, Individual Budget service users were given the support to plan what they wanted and to organise it, from a broker, advocate, family and/or friends.

Individual Budgets were piloted in 13 local authorities across England. The implementation was being supported by a team from the Care Services Improvement Partnership (CSIP)\(^1\).

The income streams included in the Individual Budget pilot were:
- council-provided social care services for adults;
- SP funding;
- ILF;
- DFG;
- ICES.

AtW was aligned, but not fully integrated, with Individual Budgets, and so AtW funds were not received by service users as part of their Individual Budgets.

1.1.2 National evaluation of the Individual Budget pilot

An independent evaluation of the Individual Budget programme was commissioned by the Department of Health and carried out by the National Evaluation of the Individual Budgets Pilot Projects (IBSEN) consortium, between April 2006 and March 2008.

The IBSEN evaluation aimed to identify whether Individual Budgets offer a better way of supporting disabled adults and older people than conventional methods of resource allocation and service delivery and, if so, which models work best for which groups of people. The evaluation had five main dimensions:
- experiences and outcomes for users and carers;
- the cost-effectiveness of Individual Budgets in comparison with standard approaches;

\(^1\) CSIP was established in 2005 by the integration of a number of initiatives supporting the development of health and social care services. CSIP is a partnership of four national programmes delivered through eight regional development centres (RDCs). The RDCs and national programmes are jointly commissioned by the Department of Health and the Strategic Health Authorities. See www.cisp.org.uk/
• implications for social care and other agencies (such as health) and the impact on service providers;
• how services purchased through Individual Budgets are commissioned, managed and co-ordinated;
• the implications for social services and the social care workforce, including workload, training, legal and professional issues.

A draft report was submitted to the Department of Health early in April 2008, and was then subject to an independent peer-review. At the time of writing, the Department of Health had announced that ministers would consider the report’s recommendations once the review is complete. The final report is expected to be released in winter 2009.2

1.1.3 Individual Budgets and considering employment as an option

Alongside some of the processes involved in obtaining Individual Budgets and AtW having been brought closer together, additional employment-related support was being piloted by DWP and Jobcentre Plus. This additional employment support, which will be referred to as the ‘employment option’ throughout this report, centred around employment marketing materials from Jobcentre Plus:
• a four-page leaflet entitled If I have an Individual Budget, is going to work best for me?
• a more detailed booklet entitled Is work for me? Information for people with an Individual Budget.

Both the leaflet and the booklet were available in standard and easy read formats, resulting in four separate ‘employment option’ products.

In November 2007, DWP and Jobcentre Plus gave briefings in the areas included in this research, on the employment marketing materials, their purpose, and how staff could use them to support service users. This might involve sending the materials to all service users, distributing them during meetings between service users and care co-ordinators, and/or going through them with service users in more depth. In addition to providing service users with the employment materials, it was envisaged by DWP that this might be accompanied by a discussion about the possibility of employment between all or many service users and their care co-ordinators.

Hence, the employment option involved a greater focus on providing information and support to Individual Budget service users on their options for employment. The marketing materials included information on the range of specialist disability employment services available through Jobcentre Plus. One of the reasons for the

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2 See http://php.york.ac.uk/inst/spru/research/summs/ibsen.php for details of the IBSEN team and the national evaluation.
employment option was the expectation that there would be very few people receiving both an Individual Budget and AtW.

The employment option was originally intended by DWP and Jobcentre Plus to run from the time that the materials were received, towards the end of 2007, until the end of March 2008.

1.2 Research aims

The main aims of the AtW evaluation were to:

• examine customers’ experience of AtW (in MGDs where adjustments are no longer funded through AtW, this will involve the examination of the customer experience of workplace adjustments funded by MGDs), including the experiences of customers in Individual Budget pilot areas;

• examine issues arising from interactions between AtW and other services;

• inform policy-making on the development of AtW and employment-related support within the Individual Budgets;

• identify areas where service could be improved.

1.2.1 Aims of the Individual Budget strand

The Individual Budget research strand explored how Individual Budgets and the provision of employment support, including AtW, were working together. The specific aims of this research strand were to explore:

• how Individual Budgets were being delivered in each area included in the Individual Budget strand of the evaluation;

• alignment with AtW;

• the provision of additional employment-related support to service users;

• delivery of the ‘employment option’ to individual service users, which was being piloted by Jobcentre Plus;

• feedback from service users and staff on the employment option materials;

• outcomes and impact of alignment of Individual Budgets and AtW;

• outcomes and impact of the employment option;

• the salience of employment support to this customer group.
1.3 Our approach – Individual Budget pilot strand

This study was entirely qualitative, based on in-depth interviews, and did not offer an impact evaluation or provide any quantitative data on service users who received Individual Budgets and employment-related support, or on the staff who supported them.

Research on the Individual Budget strand was carried out in three of the Individual Budget pilot areas, where the employment option was also being piloted:

- Kensington and Chelsea;
- Norfolk;
- Oldham.

The Kensington and Chelsea Individual Budget pilot involved service users with physical disabilities, sensory impairments and learning disabilities. The Norfolk Individual Budget pilot included service users with mental health problems only, and the Oldham pilot included all of these service user groups.

1.3.1 Sampling and fieldwork

The research consisted of a total of 38 in-depth interviews with four key groups of stakeholders:

- four Individual Budget pilot leads;\(^3\)
- 12 other key staff involved in delivering Individual Budgets to service users, including care co-ordinators\(^4\), development workers and support brokers in both public sector and voluntary sector settings;
- ten Individual Budget service users;

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\(^3\) In two of the areas, the pilot leads were the Individual Budget pilot managers. In a third area, the manager had left post, and so the research team were initially directed by DWP to a staff member working in one of the Individual Budget delivery teams. The research team later also interviewed the acting pilot manager in that area.

\(^4\) In some areas, this role was called care manager. For clarity, in this report, the term ‘care co-ordinator’ has been used throughout.
• 12 telephone interviews with Jobcentre Plus staff, including New Deal Personal Advisers, Disability Employment Advisers (DEAs), and Pathways to Work\(^5\) and WORKSTEP\(^6\) providers.

DWP supplied the research team with contact details for pilot leads, and pilot leads supplied the research team with contacts of other key staff to interview.

DWP circulated recruitment materials to pilot leads, who were asked to distribute these to their care co-ordinators, so that they could tell service users about the research and see if they would like to take part. The recruitment materials consisted of:

• information sheets;
• opt-in consent forms;
• disability access forms;
• reply-paid envelopes to return the consent forms and disability access forms of service users who opted in, to IES.

Service users were offered £30 as a thank you for taking part, and this was explained in the recruitment materials. Where service users opted in to the research and agreed to be interviewed, care co-ordinators were asked to send the consent forms and disability access forms to IES, so that interviews could be arranged.

Contact details of suitable Jobcentre Plus and other related staff to include in this strand of the research were obtained from the AtW Business Centres and Jobcentre Plus district offices.

Fieldwork for the Individual Budget research strand was undertaken between January and May 2008.

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\(^5\) Dorsett, R. (2008) *The Pathways to Work evaluation: Synthesis Report*, DWP Report Number 525, CDS. Pathways to Work is a programme which provides extra support for people with a health condition or a disability, to help them move into work or closer to the labour market. People claiming Incapacity Benefits for the first time, or people who claim Incapacity Benefit again after a break in receiving benefit, are automatically considered for Pathways to Work. The programme started in 2003 in a limited number of areas, and has been gradually rolled out across Great Britain. Pathways to Work is delivered by Jobcentre Plus in partnership with voluntary and private sector providers.

\(^6\) Purvis, A., Lowrey, J., and Dobbs, L. (2006) *WORKSTEP evaluation case studies: Exploring the design, delivery and performance of the WORKSTEP programme*, DWP Report Number 348, CDS. WORKSTEP provides support for disabled people who face complex issues in finding and/or keeping a paid job, but who, with the right support for them and their employer (such as mentoring or job coaching) can develop a successful career.
1.3.2 Ethical clearance

During the early stages of the research, it emerged that as the work involved interviewing social care service users, a potentially vulnerable group, it would be necessary to obtain ethical clearance from a number of sources before the fieldwork phase of the research could go ahead. This process involved submitting draft research materials, information for service users, service user opt-in consent forms, and the IES disability access form for ethical clearance.

Ethical clearance was obtained from Oldham Council, Norfolk Primary Healthcare Trust, and the Association of Directors of Social Services. The last of these was received in mid-January 2008, and only then could the fieldwork begin. As a result, the fieldwork on this research strand took place several months later than was originally planned. These unforeseen delays had an impact on the substantive findings from this strand of the evaluation, as the fieldwork took place later than the planned piloting of the employment materials, and some months after original DWP briefings on the employment option to Individual Budget staff. Other issues arising during the research which impacted on the substantive findings are outlined in Section 1.3.3.

1.3.3 Issues which arose during the research

The numbers of interviews achieved were considerably fewer than had been originally planned, particularly the numbers of interviews with service users. From information gleaned during the interviews with pilot leads and other staff, this appeared to be for a number of reasons, including a rather low level of buy-in to this strand of research from most of the key groups with whom the research aimed to engage, and timing issues (which were touched on in Section 1.3.2). These issues, which impacted on the numbers of interviews achieved, and the substantive findings from this evaluation strand, are outlined below.

1.3.4 Timing of the employment option alongside the Individual Budget

The employment option was not operating until the Individual Budget pilot was nearing completion. This was because it was not part of the original pilot, but was added later at Ministerial request. By the time the employment option was ready to be implemented at the pilot sites, most service users were beyond the point in the process at which care co-ordinators might have a conversation about employment, or go through or hand out materials.

1.3.5 The briefings to Individual Budget staff

Employment option materials were sent out by DWP on behalf of Jobcentre Plus in the autumn of 2007 (although some staff in the three areas had seen earlier

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7 DWP also checked whether ethical clearance would be needed from the National Health Service’s medical ethics body, but were advised that this would not be necessary.
drafts of the materials, when they were being developed) and during November 2007 when Individual Budget leads and other staff were briefed on their purpose. Staff were also briefed by DWP on the process for recruiting service users to the research (see Section 1.3.1). However, only after receiving ethical clearance could the recruitment materials be used with service users. This appeared to have been too long after the materials had been sent, and too long after the briefings, for the process of recruiting service users to have worked as well as had been anticipated. The briefings may have been too early, given the eventual timing of this research, or perhaps they were not with the right staff, possibly due to staff changes and/or issues of internal communication within local authorities. During the initial stages of the fieldwork at least, the information contained in the briefings did not appear to have reached many of the staff working with service users who could have facilitated the recruitment process.

Most of the staff we interviewed did not know about, or remember, the DWP briefings. In addition, they did not seem to know about the ‘employment option’ in any detail, or what and who the employment materials from Jobcentre Plus were for. This meant that when the IES research team went into the field and started interviewing Individual Budget staff, much of the employment option activity which they were expecting to find did not appear to have been happening. This included the distribution of employment materials, which was found to be much more limited than had been anticipated, and the opt-in process for recruiting service users to this strand of research.

There were resultant difficulties in recruiting service users to the study as a result of low numbers of consent forms being received. As this became apparent early on in the fieldwork stage, the research team tried to boost the numbers of service users opting in to the study by asking pilot leads to remind their staff to collect service user consent forms and return them to IES. However, this still resulted in only ten usable opt-in consent forms being returned to IES by the end of the fieldwork period.

### 1.3.6 Employment issues a lower priority than mainstream Individual Budget duties

Most Individual Budget staff viewed providing employment advice as a very minor part of their job as there were other, more basic issues which they saw as more pressing for them to address, including, for example, ensuring they had suitable personal care support, ensuring people were living in suitable conditions, and assisting with disability and health issues. They thought that it was appropriate to address these basic support issues before service users would be ready to think about employment. When service users asked them for employment support and advice, care managers would generally refer their service users to more specialist

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8 There were several more opt-in forms returned, but the telephone numbers supplied were found to be incorrect. Letters were sent as an alternative method of recruiting these service users, but no replies were received.
employment advice, typically to a DEA at Jobcentre Plus (also see Section 3.3.1). As a result, it appears that the employment option materials were given a relatively low priority. Some staff were not aware of the materials prior to the interview for this research strand, and many were not fully aware of their intended purpose.

These issues undoubtedly contributed to small numbers of staff agreeing to be interviewed as part of this research, and similarly small numbers of service user consent forms being sent to IES.

1.3.7 Confusion about the employment materials

There was some confusion among staff interviewed in all three pilot areas regarding the purpose and timescale of the employment option, and what this research was about.

Most staff who had come across the employment materials prior to the interview for this research were not aware that they were being piloted for a limited amount of time. Instead, they were under the impression that the materials would be available indefinitely, and that they could use them as they saw fit.

In a number of cases, it was our research which reminded pilot leads and other staff about the employment materials. In some instances, staff asked the IES researchers what the materials were for. For example, there were reports of stacks of the materials being in offices, but no-one was sure what they should do with them.

1.3.8 The national evaluation of the Individual Budget pilot

The national evaluation of Individual Budget pilot by the IBSEN consortium (see Section 1.1) had been conducted in all three of the pilot areas covered by this strand of research, and its results confirmed that staff workloads had been heavier as a result of the Individual Budget. Individual Budget staff had therefore been subject to additional time pressures in their core work.

The IBSEN evaluation itself also took up the time of Individual Budget staff and service users, with many being interviewed once, and some being interviewed twice. The national evaluation reported that Individual Budget staff criticised the fact that additional research (the AtW evaluation) had been funded when results of the national evaluation had not yet been released, and due to the further demands on their time that additional research would present.

1.3.9 Small numbers of service users receiving Individual Budgets

It was reported by pilot leads that there were relatively few service users on the Individual Budget pilots in two of the areas. In each of these areas there were about 25 service users with Individual Budgets up and running, with a similar number some way through the assessment and support planning processes. Hence, there were fairly small pools of service users from which to recruit for this research, particularly when considerations such as recruiting service users who were in a position to consider employment as an option for themselves at present or in the
future were taken into account. The third pilot was bigger. However, there were still difficulties in this pilot area in getting service user consents, for the reasons outlined above.

1.4 Structure of the report

The structure of this report is as follows:

• Chapter 2 briefly outlines the ways in which Individual Budgets were being delivered in the three case study areas, to provide context for the rest of the report.

• Chapter 3 looks at Individual Budgets, and their alignment with AtW. It covers staff understanding of alignment, take-up of AtW alongside Individual Budgets and why this has been low, and how well AtW and Individual Budgets fit together.

• Chapter 4 provides feedback on the employment materials, from staff involved in delivering Individual Budgets, and from service users.

• Chapter 5 examines the ways in which the provision of employment-related information and support, which was being piloted by DWP and Jobcentre Plus, operated alongside Individual Budgets.

• Chapter 6 presents our conclusions.
2 Individual Budgets

This chapter briefly outlines the ways in which Individual Budgets were being delivered in the three case study areas, to provide context for the rest of the report.

In all three areas, service users obtained their Individual Budget with the support of their care co-ordinator. However, others could be involved in the process, including family, friends, and other local authority staff, and voluntary sector organisations, depending on the support needs and circumstances of each service user.

2.1 Assessment

The process of obtaining an Individual Budget began in all three areas with an assessment process, variously referred to as a mediated self-assessment questionnaire, resource allocation system, and a needs assessment with a self-assessment questionnaire. This generally involved the service user filling out a questionnaire which would then be mediated by their care co-ordinator. In one area, a service user and the care co-ordinator would each fill out the assessment questionnaire, and would then discuss the differences between them to reach an agreement or compromise between them. This initial assessment process would determine the total amount of funds, or allocated budget, available for the service user’s Individual Budget, from the various funding streams. After the level of funds available had been agreed and signed off by the local authority, the support planning stage could begin.

2.1.1 Assessment of work-related needs

Each area had a slightly different model of assessment, and the extent to which this initial assessment covered work-related needs varied. However, this was usually, at most, a relatively minor part of the assessment process. This was because there was a key focus on the basic support and care required, which needed to be in place before most service users would be in a position to think about the possibility of employment.
2.2 Support planning

Once the allocated budget available for a service user was known, a support plan would be put together. This was sometimes likened to a ‘life plan’, and it set out the ways in which the service user would like to use their Individual Budget.

The exact process and actors included in the planning of support varied across each area, and within each area, according to the support requirements of each service user. However, typically, the support planning stage would be as user-led as possible, with support from a care co-ordinator, and with input from family, friends, supported housing staff, and key workers, or other advocates, as appropriate. In one area, while care co-ordinators facilitated the assessment process, support planning was carried out by a support broker, also based within the local authority. Some service users required more support to put together their plan than others, but every effort was made to make the process as person-centred as possible. There were usually alternatives to working through a support plan with a local authority care co-ordinator or support broker; for example, service users could usually choose to be referred to voluntary sector agencies who would support them through this process.

If possible, all parties involved in support planning would meet and work together on the support plan. This might start with a discussion of the service user’s general aspirations and life goals for the future, including for example, education, housing, friends and leisure time, and employment, if appropriate. From this, ideas would emerge about the kinds of support which would best help the service user in working towards these aspirations. In one area, the initial meeting to plan the ways in which the Individual Budget could best be spent was called a ‘planning live’ day.

The time it took to complete a support plan varied greatly depending on the needs and circumstances of the service user. For example, it could be completed in a single session, or could take a number of sessions over a period of several weeks. In some cases, service users would write all or most of the support plan themselves, while others would require some support, and in other cases, the plan was put together by advocates on behalf of service users.

Once the support plan had been completed, it had to be approved by the local authority and the organisations holding the funding streams for the intended Individual Budget. Some of the more unusual requests for support were occasionally questioned – for example, a request to use some of the Individual Budget to purchase a large television. However, on further examination, the request could usually be fully justified by the circumstances of the service user, and in practice very few requests were not granted.

On approval of the support plan, funds would be released from the various funding streams, and would be held by the local authority to be paid out on a regular basis to service users. Service users could arrange to identify and buy in the support funded through their Individual Budget themselves, or they could be supported to do this, for example by their care co-ordinator or support broker.
2.3 Support funded through Individual Budgets

There was a very wide range of support being funded through Individual Budgets. This included paying for going to the gym, paying for holidays and outings, paying for decorating or other improvements to service users’ homes, paying for an education course, driving lessons, babysitting, or beauty treatments, buying a computer and paying for broadband, as well as the more traditional forms of social care support such as paying for carers.

2.4 Ongoing reviews

Once the Individual Budget was fully operational and service users were receiving regular payments and purchasing their support, reviews were organised to ensure that the process was operating effectively, and that the support outlined in the plan was meeting service users’ needs. Reviews typically involved a face-to-face meeting involving the service user and their care co-ordinator, with other people included as appropriate – for example, family, friends or key workers who had assisted at the support planning stage. At the review meeting, the suitability of the support being funded through the Individual Budget was discussed, particularly if there had been any changes in the service user’s support needs and circumstances since the original support plan was written.

In one area, there was a full three-month review, with ‘lighter touch’ reviews at the six and 12-month stages if no problems were identified, to check that planned outcomes were being met, and to approve continuation of funding. In another area, the timing and nature of the ongoing reviews was decided on a case-by-case basis at the support planning stage.

2.5 Funding streams

The income streams which could be included in the Individual Budget pilot were:

- council-provided social care services for adults;
- Supporting People funding;
- Independent Living Fund;
- Disabled Facilities Grant;
- Integrated Community Equipment Services.

The extent to which each of these contributed to service users’ eventual Individual Budgets varied. In most cases, this was due to the particular requirements of the individual concerned.
2.5.1 Alignment with Access to Work

There was an intention to align some of the processes involved in obtaining Access to Work (AtW) and Individual Budgets, rather than to fully integrate the funds received through AtW with the monies from the various Individual Budget funding streams. Hence, AtW funds would be applied for as part of the Individual Budget application process, although AtW funds would be paid separately from Individual Budget funds.

The funds from the various streams were combined into a single pot of money for each service user, and this comprised the Individual Budget. It was held by their local authority and paid out regularly. Service users purchased the support outlined in their support plans, using these regular payments. It was intended that when AtW funds were applied for alongside an Individual Budget, the application for AtW would be completed as part of the Individual Budget application, but the AtW section of the form would be passed to the AtW Business Centre. At this point, the AtW application would then be dealt with by the AtW Business Centre. Once an application had been approved, funds from AtW would be paid to employers to fund adjustments or to purchase equipment. Where AtW customers received ongoing support for travel to work, or used AtW to pay for support workers, the money would be paid directly to the service provider, or the service user would pay for the support, and then claim the money back from the AtW Business Centre.

However, in all three areas there was little or no use of the AtW programme in combination with an Individual Budget, and so the research team were not able to explore how this process worked in practice. (Alignment of AtW and Individual Budgets in practice is explored in full in Chapter 3.)

2.6 Jobcentre Plus staff, Pathways and WORKSTEP providers’ awareness of Individual Budgets

Three of the four Disability Employment Advisers (DEAs) interviewed were aware of Individual Budgets, although they had picked up this information fairly informally, for example through contact with social services to build closer relationships between local authorities and Jobcentre Plus. They generally understood that Individual Budgets aimed to put people more in control of the money they received for support, so that they could spend the money as they saw fit. One DEA had not heard of Individual Budgets. None had worked with any Individual Budget service users, but they said that if they did, they would refer them on to the most appropriate Jobcentre Plus programme operating in that area. It was pointed out that if Individual Budget service users were in a Pathways to Work area and received Incapacity Benefit, they would be referred straight to Pathways, and hence might not have any contact with a DEA.

Three Jobcentre Plus personal advisers were interviewed; an Incapacity Benefit Personal Adviser and two New Deal Personal Advisers (NDPAs). None had heard
of Individual Budgets, although one was aware of the concept of putting people in control of their budgets. The NDPAs in particular did not come into contact with disabled customers very often, but said they might refer them on to a DEA, depending on the nature of the customer’s impairment.

Of the two Pathways and two WORKSTEP providers interviewed for this strand of the research, three had heard of Individual Budgets. One had been involved in the pilot of Individual Budgets but had not worked with any service users receiving Individual Budgets. Another had worked with a small number of Individual Budget service users, although they commented that Individual Budgets were clearly in their infancy at that point.

The concept of Individual Budgets, which put people in control of their social care arrangements, was generally viewed as positive for service users as it promoted independence. There were, however, a few concerns raised by interviewees about the ability of some service users – for example, some people with mental health conditions or learning disabilities – to deal with and manage their Individual Budgets.
3 Alignment with Access to Work

This chapter turns to Individual Budgets, and their alignment with Access to Work (AtW). It covers staff understanding of alignment, take-up of AtW alongside Individual Budgets and why this has been low, and how well AtW and Individual Budgets fit together.

3.1 Access to Work alignment with Individual Budgets

There was some confusion among interviewees about how AtW was aligned with Individual Budgets, with few staff being particularly clear on how this would work in practice:

‘It’s difficult to understand how AtW is aligned with Individual Budgets.’

(Care co-ordinator)

As a result of the lack of clarity amongst staff, and because the research team found no examples of service users who received AtW and an Individual Budget, it was not possible for the research team to explore the process for obtaining AtW alongside an Individual Budget in the three areas visited.

One staff member who worked for a voluntary sector organisation which supported people through the support planning stage of the process said that she had hoped AtW would be more fully integrated with Individual Budgets:

‘I was disappointed. I thought that AtW would become a funding stream, and it wasn’t.’

(Development Officer)
3.2 Take-up of AtW alongside the Individual Budget

3.2.1 Extent of take-up

Prior to the commencement of the fieldwork on this strand of the AtW evaluation, it had been recognised by the pilot areas, and by the Department for Work and Pensions, that take-up of AtW in combination with an Individual Budget, had been extremely low.

Given this, it was not surprising that this research found few reports of AtW take-up alongside Individual Budgets. Two were from a WORKSTEP provider, where AtW had been used to fund the purchase of a computer for the service user’s home. In both cases, the service users worked for the local authority, and the computers were purchased to allow them to work from home some of the time. Both service users had an Individual Budget which funded personal care support at home and at work.

None of the other Jobcentre Plus, Pathways or WORKSTEP staff were aware of any other Individual Budget service users who received funding through AtW. Similarly, none of the Individual Budget staff interviewed were able to provide any information on service users who received AtW funding. Most said that there were few, if any, service users to whom this applied in their pilot areas.

One support broker commented that he had helped people to apply for AtW prior to the introduction of Individual Budgets, but had not done so for any Individual Budget service users. In the past, he had mainly helped people with physical disabilities, rather than people with learning disabilities, to apply for AtW. In the same borough, another member of staff commented:

‘I haven’t dealt with any Individual Budget and AtW applications, so I’ve used the leaflets for people who aren’t on Individual Budgets… There hasn’t been an uptake of AtW and Individual Budgets in the borough; partly due to the confusion over roles.’

(Manager of a centre supporting disabled people into employment)

As a result of low take-up, the research team was not able to interview any Individual Budget service users who received AtW funds.

3.2.2 Reasons why take-up has been low

A number of reasons were given on why take-up of AtW alongside Individual Budgets had been so low. These included:

- low take-up of Individual Budgets themselves;
- AtW is for people with a job offer, and many Individual Budget service users have been out of work for some time, and are not close to the labour market:

  ‘There are only a few people [receiving Individual Budgets] who might benefit from AtW.’

(Support broker)
• not enough information and publicity about AtW, and/or about AtW combined with Individual Budgets (although volumes of service users eligible for both are still likely to be low);

• AtW seems better suited to people with some sorts of impairments than to others. AtW was seen as less useful for people with mental health conditions than for people with most other conditions, due to the way their support needs tended to fluctuate over time.

In addition, it would seem, from this research at least, that a relatively poor understanding of AtW amongst staff implementing Individual Budgets, and how Individual Budgets and AtW are aligned, may have contributed to the low take-up. While numbers of Individual Budget service users who were also in a position to apply for work were still likely to be small, low staff understanding could have compounded the low take-up.

3.3 How does AtW fit with the Individual Budget

3.3.1 Staff views

While staff supported the principle of providing information and options around employment for service users, few had had the time to go through or seek out the available information, and brief themselves about AtW in any detail:

‘Care managers are pushed for time, and don’t always have the time to learn how to use AtW and other related services.’

(Support broker)

‘Care managers look at the most immediate needs, so, for example, AtW is only looked at when other forms of support are up and running. So there’s a lack of awareness about the options.’

(Support broker)

This, together with few applications having been made for AtW combined with an Individual Budget, meant that Individual Budget staff were able to provide very little information on how well AtW and Individual Budgets fit together from a practical point of view. The research team often had to summarise the key features of AtW in the interviews before staff were able to provide any comments at all. After this, staff typically thought that Individual Budget service users needed most employment support before they found a job, and in this respect they thought that AtW would not be a particularly good fit for most of their service users.

More generally, having a discussion about and providing support for employment options was not seen as a traditional role for care co-ordinators, and it was reported that while many care co-ordinators were in favour of providing some information on employment as an option for service users, others did not expect work of that nature to be part of their job.
3.3.2 Service users’ views

Few of the service users interviewed for this study had heard of AtW. One mental health service user had never heard of AtW and thought it would be useful if it provided support to obtain work.

Another service user with mental health conditions was aware of AtW but thought that it would not fit with his circumstances as it was more geared towards people with physical impairments:

‘A lot of Jobcentre Plus help but you have to fit into their boxes. But if you don’t fit into their boxes, like with the type of work you want to do, then they aren’t so good at helping you.’

(AtW service user)

3.4 Contact with AtW Business Centres

Few staff had had any substantial contact with AtW Business Centres. Where there had been contact, this was usually just a telephone call, although a small number of staff recalled a visit from someone from their nearest Business Centre with regard to AtW and Individual Budgets some time ago, near the start of the Individual Budget pilot.

3.5 Jobcentre Plus staff, Pathways and WORKSTEP providers’ views

All of the Disability Employment Advisers (DEAs) interviewed had had some degree of involvement with AtW, but since they did not know much about Individual Budgets, none were entirely sure how AtW fitted with them. Some questioned whether they did fit together at all, as they said they appeared to be two entirely separate processes.

However, AtW was thought to be a very relevant source of funding and support for Individual Budget service users. One DEA raised the issue that AtW customers need to have a job offer before being eligible, and that many Individual Budget service users would require access to funds to support them at an earlier stage than this. Other Jobcentre Plus staff interviewed had far less involvement with AtW, and would usually refer customers interested in AtW to a DEA.

WORKSTEP and Pathways providers reported finding Individual Budgets and AtW rather disjointed, as they were based in two entirely separate departments. One thought that Individual Budgets were mainly providing pre-work support, while AtW provided in-work support, hence the relationship between the two was rather confusing. Two wondered whether anything could be done to make the process feel more seamless, particularly to customers who were entering work for the first time or after a long break from work, as entering work could be more stressful than staying in work.
4 Considering employment as an option

This chapter looks at the ways in which the provision of employment-related information and support, which was being piloted by the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) and Jobcentre Plus, operated alongside Individual Budgets. This additional employment-related support is referred to as the ‘employment option’ in this chapter, and throughout this report.

4.1 Roll-out and operation in the pilot areas

The original intent of the employment option is outlined briefly in the Introduction (Section 1.1.3).

4.1.1 Distribution of the marketing materials

Three of the four pilot leads interviewed reported that they had received packs of the employment materials in November or December 2007. The pilot lead in one area reported that other Individual Budget staff also had the materials and had started to give them to some service users, although there had been little activity on this. The lead in another area reported that all care co-ordinators had copies of the employment materials, and they had already been using them with some groups of service users. However, it appeared from later fieldwork conducted in the area that the employment materials, and their intended purpose, may not have had quite such a wide reach in practice.

The interviews with other Individual Budget staff were conducted during March and April 2008. From these, it appeared that in some cases, the employment materials had been sent directly from DWP to local offices where development workers and care co-ordinators were based, and in other cases they had been forwarded by pilot leads. It was typically reported that the employment materials had been sent from DWP without a covering letter or accompanying instructions. This was seen as problematic, especially in some local offices, where staff reported that they were unsure of the purpose of the materials, and were unaware that...
they should be using them with service users as part of a pilot scheme. Some staff thought that DWP should have been clearer on this.

‘We were sent a pile of leaflets, but not any information on what to do with them. [The pilot manager] said to give them to people who’ve expressed an interest in employment. Maybe DWP need to be clearer about what they want us to do with them. A box in the post isn’t adequate.’

(Individual Budget development worker)

‘No information was given on what we should do with them [the materials].’

(Support broker)

A number of staff interviewed reported that they had not seen the employment materials until they were shown them by the research team, while others, including some pilot leads, reported that they had seen the materials when they were being tested out in summer 2007 but they had not looked at them since (even though some had copies in their offices). A small number of staff interviewed had given out some of the employment materials to one or two individual service users. However, most staff admitted that they ‘had not done much’ with the materials at that point.

One of the pilot leads, who had recently taken over as acting pilot manager after the original manager left the post, said she had not received any of the employment materials. In fact, she reported not having seen them at all until one of the research team sent her electronic copies so that she could provide comment and feedback on them for this study. Having seen the materials, she thought that they would be useful and requested further copies for her care co-ordinators and other staff, although not necessarily for use specifically with Individual Budget service users. Unfortunately, according to the telephone helpline given on the employment materials, by this point (April 2008), the pilot had ended and there were no more copies available for distribution. In this pilot area, DWP had, for the purposes of the employment option, initially made contact with another member of the local authority staff who worked directly with service users. However, this staff member was located elsewhere in this area, did not work with all groups of service users, and was waiting for some feedback sessions with service users before the materials were sent to staff working on the other service user teams. The extent to which the materials eventually reached all Individual Budget service user groups, or the staff who worked with them, was unclear in this area.

4.1.2 Working with service users

During the first few interviews carried out for this strand of research, which were with pilot leads, it emerged that there was no clear or single strategy for using the employment materials with service users, and that distribution of the materials to service users had scarcely begun. As a result, the research team adapted their questioning to ask about pilot leads’ intentions for using the employment
materials, rather than about what they had done with them up to that point. Pilot leads usually reported that the materials would be given to service users who had employment as an aspiration in their support plan. The member of staff who worked with service users with learning disabilities hoped that the materials would be distributed as widely as possible to help raise the aspirations of this group.

One pilot lead commented that the extent to which the materials would be followed up with a discussion by care co-ordinators and service users would depend on the individual and how they reacted to the employment materials when they received them, as well as their distance from the labour market. This decision would be left to the care co-ordinator.

Another pilot lead reported that they had run workshops for staff after they had received the employment materials, to discuss how they should be used with service users. Some care co-ordinators and a Disability Employment Adviser had attended these workshops, although from this research, it appeared that the key messages from the workshops had not reached all care co-ordinators. During later interviews with staff in this area, it was found that some Individual Budget staff were more aware of the materials and their purpose than others.

There had been little activity regarding using the employment materials with service users in the early stages of the fieldwork for this study, and according to the interviews with staff and service users at least, this did not appear to have changed greatly during the later months. Partly this was due to the materials not being seen to be relevant to many service users at that time.

‘Very small numbers get the materials…One service user mentioned going back to work so we left the materials with him and left the decision with him.’

(Support broker)

4.2 Staff briefings

DWP had made and maintained contact with the three areas during the summer and autumn of 2007. In October, DWP and Jobcentre Plus started to give briefings to Individual Budget staff in the areas included in this research, on the employment marketing materials, their purpose, and how staff could use them to support service users. However, very few staff interviewed remembered these briefings taking place, or having attended them.

Some staff interviewed said that they would have liked some briefings or practical workshops on how to use the materials, and what their role was expected to be.

‘I’ve mentioned that there is support available to some people with learning disabilities or physical disabilities. But I’m unclear about the process and whose role it is to do anything.’

(Manager of a centre supporting disabled people into employment)
4.3 Goodness of fit with Individual Budgets

4.3.1 Individual Budget staff views

There was general support for the principle of providing employment information to people receiving Individual Budgets who had expressed a desire to move towards employment or self-employment. Staff involved in supporting service users to obtain and use their Individual Budget rarely saw themselves as being key providers of such information and support. Instead, they saw their role as signposting service users to others who could supply this, typically DEAs within Jobcentre Plus.

Staff generally thought that it was not their role to ‘promote’ employment as an option to service users, or to suggest it to people who had not themselves identified employment as an aspiration. They saw their role as being able to respond to requests from service users who had expressed an interest in moving towards employment, by supporting them to work towards this, and signposting them to others for more specialised employment-focused advice, information and support. Staff reported that the degree to which all care co-ordinators supported the principle of helping service users move towards employment varied. Some were less willing than others to suggest or discuss employment with their service users, on the basis that they did not want to ‘promote’ this to service users who had not mentioned it themselves.

However, there was a notable exception to this. This was given by a member of staff who worked with service users with learning disabilities. He fully supported the idea of promoting employment as an option to the service users he worked with, and hoped to see a bigger push towards promoting education and employment opportunities to this group. He explained that the options for people with learning disabilities which had traditionally been available through the local authority had been rather limited, with leisure activities being given greater prominence than looking at the options around education and employment. As a result, some service users in this group had rather limited expectations of what was possible for them, and had low aspirations for themselves as a result. Individual Budgets were seen as a potential way to redress this, and while employment would never be a realistic option for all service users, it was felt that with the right support, many service users with learning disabilities would be able to move towards and into employment, and that this should be encouraged wherever possible.

Staff who worked with mental health service users usually had a very different view about the best way to work with those they supported when it came to employment aspirations. They did not feel it was appropriate to broach the subject of employment with service users who had not mentioned it themselves. In fact, it was thought that to do so could potentially cause a relapse or deterioration in service users’ mental health as a result of placing them under additional pressure that they were not ready for. Staff working with this group thought that any discussion of the possibilities for employment should be initiated by service users considering employment as an option.
themselves, particularly as some service users had serious mental health conditions, and were unable to engage in a discussion about employment when they were very unwell. However, the idea of moving towards employment in the future was still felt to be appropriate for many service users, and very appropriate for some, but it was seen as important to carefully judge the timing of any discussion around this.

There were some negative views about Jobcentre Plus and DEAs expressed by a handful of staff, based on their prior experiences of working with service users who had tried to access support and services through these routes. These were usually based on a perception that Jobcentre Plus did not understand the service users and their barriers to work as well as they needed to, in order to support them into appropriate and sustainable work. More generally, staff thought that Jobcentre Plus needed to be more proactive in making links with social services to bridge the gaps in understanding.

4.3.2 Service users’ views

Some of the service users interviewed were unsure whether they received an Individual Budget. Three service users interviewed were in employment, but the employment option had not helped to bring this about, as two had been in supported employment for a year or more. Another service user had recently entered employment, but seemingly not as a result of any information provided through the employment option.

Several of the service users had mental health conditions and said that, while they did not feel ready to consider work at that time, they hoped to move towards employment, self-employment or voluntary work in the future, depending on whether it would be financially viable for them.

Several other service users interviewed had learning disabilities, and were not able to comment in any depth on how suitable work was for them now or in the future. However, one was still at a special school but hoped to get a job in retail when he left; another was interviewed with his carer, who thought it unlikely that he would ever be able to work.

4.3.3 Jobcentre Plus staff, Pathways and WORKSTEP providers’ views

DEAs and other Jobcentre Plus staff generally supported the idea of promoting employment as an option to people receiving Individual Budgets, particularly as some thought this group could be lacking in self-confidence and could be wary of trying new things. It was felt that this group of service users might need some proactive support from Jobcentre Plus to help them to consider and look for paid work or voluntary work. They thought that information from Jobcentre Plus on employment options should initially reach service users via Individual Budget information routes, or through Individual Budget support staff.
One DEA pointed out the risk of frightening people who do not feel well enough or ready to look for work, and so the fact that this would be an ‘option’ rather than a ‘requirement’ should be made clear.

Pathways and WORKSTEP providers were very positive about providing information and support to help Individual Budget service users consider employment, especially when it focused on people’s abilities, and what they could do at work, even if for some people, this would just be for a few hours a week.
5 The employment materials

This chapter summarises feedback on the employment materials, provided by staff involved in delivering Individual Budgets, from Jobcentre Plus staff, and from service users.

5.1 The four products

The employment option centred on four different employment marketing products, designed by Jobcentre Plus:

- a four page leaflet entitled ‘If I have an Individual Budget, is going to work best for me?’;
- a more detailed booklet entitled ‘Is work for me? Information for people with an Individual Budget’.

Both the leaflet and the booklet were available in standard and easy read formats, resulting in four separate employment option products, or ‘employment materials’.

Copies of the employment materials can be found in the Appendix.

5.2 Awareness

Few Individual Budget staff interviewed knew much about the contents of the materials, or any detail about the specialist disability employment support and programmes they detailed, before they were shown the materials in the interview. A number of staff reported having seen the employment materials before this, but this was often some considerable time ago – typically during summer 2007, when Jobcentre Plus was testing out early versions of the materials with some staff and service users, and they had been asked to provide feedback. None of the staff interviewed had given much recent thought to the employment materials prior to being shown them in the interview. Most staff had heard of some of the programmes mentioned in the employment materials, but they typically did not know about them in any detail.
Only one of the four Disability Employment Advisers (DEAs) interviewed was aware of the employment materials: they recalled seeing them on the Jobcentre Plus intranet, rather than having seen any hard copies. None of the other Jobcentre Plus staff had been aware of the employment materials prior to their interview for this study. Three of the four Pathways or WORKSTEP providers had not seen the employment materials before the interviews for this study. However, once they had been told about them, they reported that the materials would be useful for them.

Some service users interviewed had seen the leaflets, some had not, and some were not sure whether or when they might have seen them. Those who had seen the materials prior to the interview did not remember much about them, and had to be shown them again in order to give any feedback. Two service users had copies of the leaflets at home, but had not yet looked through them in any detail.

5.3 Usefulness

When they were shown the employment materials in the interview, most Individual Budget staff thought that the materials were a useful resource for staff, to advise them of the additional support that was available for those they worked with. Some staff also thought that the materials would be useful for some of the service users they worked with, depending on their circumstances, aspirations, and current distance from the labour market. However, they did not think that this was restricted to service users in receipt of Individual Budgets. Staff typically reported that they would use their judgement on a case-by-case basis when deciding which service users the materials would be useful for, and which version would be most suitable.

Some staff reported that moving on to thinking about employment was a big step for their service users, as it was also a move towards independence. Where their service users were interested in finding out more about work, they would refer them to a local voluntary sector agency for support, or to a DEA at Jobcentre Plus.

‘If someone isn’t in work but would like to work, we would refer them to Jobcentre Plus.’

(Support broker)

Staff did not think that the employment materials would change this process, (indeed, the materials were intended to raise awareness of the available options, rather than change this) as face-to-face support was so important for their service users, but they could still think of potential situations in which the materials would be a useful addition. Staff working with mental health service users in particular questioned the extent to which the materials would be seen as relevant by their service users, as most pictures portrayed people with a physical disability.

The timing of receiving the materials was thought to have been quite poor by a number of staff. Most service users had their support plan in place by the time the materials were received. It was felt that if they had been sent six months earlier, they could have been made use of more widely (although, as outlined in Section
1.3.4, this would not have been possible due to the timing of the Ministerial decision to pursue the employment option).

‘We didn’t get them until Christmas or January and most people had moved beyond the planning stage by then. Six months ago we could have used and tested them. It feels like this was rushed.’

(Individual Budget development worker)

Some staff questioned why the materials, and the booklet in particular, had been designed specifically for people receiving Individual Budgets when, aside from the title on the front cover, there was very little about Individual Budgets in it. While the intention from Jobcentre Plus had not been to design materials containing information about Individual Budgets, but about the services Jobcentre Plus could offer to Individual Budget service users, it seems staff thought that the titles used for the materials did not reflect this. They thought the current titles could mislead service users, as the materials were actually about employment support services in general, rather than those for Individual Budget service users in particular. There was a suggestion that the materials could be re-designed to be a resource for many other people, not just service users in receipt of Individual Budgets.

One New Deal Personal Adviser (NDPA) praised the materials but suggested that they were less relevant to an NDPA’s usual work than they would be to, for example, the work of a DEA or Incapacity Benefit Personal Adviser. She suggested that they could be made available in libraries, Citizens Advice Bureaux and through local disability organisations to help promote employment as an option for people receiving Individual Budgets. A WORKSTEP provider had similar views, and also thought the materials would be useful when they were working with disabled customers and going through the different forms of available support. DEAs thought that the materials should be distributed by social services and Individual Budgets teams rather than through Jobcentre Plus, as social services staff were more likely than Jobcentre Plus to come into contact with Individual Budget service users at an appropriate stage.

A number of service users thought there was too much information presented in the booklets in particular, and that some service users could find it rather daunting. They generally preferred the leaflets to the booklets, and the easy read versions to the standard versions, as they were shorter and easier to understand.

5.4 Length and content

Many Individual Budget staff thought the materials were too detailed, particularly the booklets. Staff typically saw themselves as signposts to information and support on employment issues, rather than direct providers of it. They thought the materials would work best as signposts, which gave service users interested in employment some basic information about where they should go to find out more; and in most cases this would be a DEA. As a result, interviewees questioned the extent to which their service users would require the level of detail provided in the existing materials, and particularly the booklets.
Individual Budget staff thought that the leaflets, both the standard and easy read versions, were most useful, as they were short and concise, providing brief information only, but could perform the function of signposting interested service users to Jobcentre Plus and to DEAs, to find out more. Several staff reported that they thought the easy read version of the booklet and the leaflet were less daunting for all service users, not only those with learning disabilities, and more accessible for staff too. A number of staff liked the individual stories included in the back of the standard booklet, as they were memorable, good illustrations of real people, they acknowledged the critical role that confidence can play, and they incorporated a social model of disability. One member of staff commented on the ‘Jobcentre Plus speak’ throughout the materials, and suggested that the stories focused too much on the names of particular Jobcentre Plus programmes, rather than focusing on what they did for the service users involved. Another member of staff commented that it would be useful to have some information about DEAs and care co-ordinators working together to support service users, or to advocate service users going to Jobcentre Plus with their care co-ordinator.

Jobcentre Plus staff also thought that the materials were quite long, but that there was a lot to cover. The use of pictures to break up the text was thought to be good. One WORKSTEP provider did not like the illustrations used in the easy read booklet; she felt they were childish and could be viewed as patronising. The signposting to sources of further information and advice as well as to the support programmes was thought to be clear and well presented. The personal stories in the standard booklet were also well received, as they provided examples of people’s success after overcoming difficulties.

Service users reported that they found it useful to know that various employment support programmes existed, but they, like Individual Budget staff, pointed out that they contained too much detail. The stories in the back of the standard booklets were well received, but there were comments that none were about a service user with a long-term mental health condition.

5.5 Layout, colour, pictures and photographs

There was positive feedback from Individual Budget staff on the use of colour and the layout of the employment materials. The use of colour was thought to be helpful in directing people through the booklet. Those working with people with learning disabilities thought that the photographs in the standard booklet were very good, and that their service users would be able to relate to them. However, those working with people with mental health conditions questioned the extent to which the photographs would be seen as relevant by their service users.

Individual Budget staff who had seen earlier versions of the materials commented on how the final versions had been improved, particularly the photographs, which had been made more relevant to a wider range of people. There were occasional comments from interviewees that the photographs in the standard booklet were more suitable than the illustrations in the easy read version.
Jobcentre Plus staff also thought that the materials were clearly presented and informative, with a layout that was easy to navigate around and find what you were looking for. Again, the easy read formats were thought to be particularly good; they presented lots of information, in a format that was easy to understand, with good use of colour.

Service users had less to say about the layout, colour and use of pictures, but were broadly positive. Some praised the pictures that showed a range of people with disabilities, in work situations.

5.6 Accessibility

Most Individual Budget staff interviewed thought that the materials were reasonably accessible, and there were no reports of serious concern about this. One staff member admitted that designing accessible materials to suit people with a wide range of impairments was very difficult, but that there was nothing in the materials which was fundamentally inaccessible or inappropriate. However, he said that support workers would still need to go through the easy read materials with service users as they were too complicated for most service users to read on their own.

‘It’s interesting for me, but overload for someone with a learning disability – there are just too many words.’

(Development officer)

‘You can’t over conceptualise for people with learning difficulties, like the question: “How do I decide if work is right for me?” It’s more a case of: “do I work or don’t I?”.’

(Manager of a centre supporting disabled people into employment)

However, several staff said that they would refer to the easy read versions first if they wanted to get a general overview of the range of employment support that was on offer, and because of their clear layout and use of bullet points.

There were no comments from Jobcentre Plus staff or service users on lack of accessibility. They did not think that the materials contained anything inappropriate, or irrelevant, although as mentioned before, most people tended to prefer the easy read versions, for reasons of simplicity.
6 Conclusions

This chapter presents our conclusions from the Individual Budget pilot strand of the Access to Work (AtW) evaluation.

This evaluation was entirely qualitative in nature, and like all qualitative studies, its results were not intended to be representative of all service users and staff, nor should they be interpreted as such. In addition, the Institute for Employment Studies (IES) research team were presented with considerable difficulties when conducting this research (outlined in Chapter 1) which meant that we interviewed fewer staff and service users than had been our original intention. Nonetheless, the research team believe that a reasonable spread of opinion was achieved amongst the Individual Budget staff included in this evaluation, and their views can be considered to be indicative of many others working in the field. The number of service users and Jobcentre Plus staff interviewed was lower, and we are less confident that all of the issues pertinent to these groups have been covered in this evaluation. Although the views gathered from these representatives offer some useful insights, we suggest that the views of service users and Jobcentre Plus staff are treated with more caution, as there may be other views amongst these two groups, which the evaluation team were simply not able to capture in this research.

This strand of the research presented considerable challenges in arranging and conducting the fieldwork, as a result of the low take-up of AtW and Individual Budgets, and the low level of awareness amongst many staff contacted of the employment option and the employment materials. This was exacerbated by the eventual timing of the employment option, the timing of the fieldwork for this strand of the research (due to having to wait for ethical approval), and the fact that staff and service users had been recently involved in the national evaluation of the Individual Budgets Pilots Projects (IBSEN). As a result, fewer interviews than had been planned actually took place and, in some instances, the people interviewed were not those who had been originally targeted to take part in the research (this applied particularly to service users).
6.1 Individual Budgets

Individual Budgets were viewed in a positive light by all staff, including Jobcentre Plus and related staff, as they promoted independence and thinking ‘outside the box’. In this way, it was thought that they could, in time, raise the aspirations of many service users in the medium and long term, and that this could include raising aspirations about employment. However, most staff working on the Individual Budget pilots reported that supporting service users to obtain and use their Individual Budgets had increased their workload, and the IBSEN evaluation had also contributed to this.

6.2 Alignment with Access to Work

Prior to the commencement of the fieldwork on this strand of the AtW evaluation, it had been recognised by the pilot areas, and by the Department for Work and Pensions, that take-up of AtW in combination with an Individual Budget had been extremely low. Unsurprisingly, this research found few reports of AtW take-up alongside Individual Budgets. The few examples given involved service users who were already employed, and had possibly received AtW in the past.

As a result of the low take-up, it was not possible to interview anyone who had received AtW and an Individual Budget, or any care co-ordinators who had supported the process. As a result, the IES research team was not able to ascertain the extent to which AtW was aligned, or explore the exact process for obtaining funding from this stream alongside an Individual Budget.

Low take-up of AtW was partly attributed to a low take-up of Individual Budgets themselves, and the funds being unsuitable for people who were looking for work. It was also attributed to a lack of information and publicity about AtW, and how AtW worked together with Individual Budgets. This research found low understanding of AtW amongst some staff, and of how the two worked together, which backed this up. Few Individual Budget staff saw providing employment support as central to their role in supporting service users, and in general they had not had time to brief themselves on this issue. Finally, AtW would appear to be less suitable for people with fluctuating conditions, such as mental health problems, who constituted a significant proportion of service users in these pilot areas.

From the information gathered during this study, AtW does not appear to fit particularly well with Individual Budgets. There were very few service users who were eligible for AtW, as they did not have jobs, and most service users would require support prior to getting a job. In addition, AtW may be more suitable for service users with some impairments and conditions than for those with others. Some Jobcentre Plus and related staff commented that Individual Budgets and AtW appeared to be two entirely separate processes, that did not seem to fit together at all. Some, along with a number of Individual Budget staff, wondered whether and how AtW could be made more relevant for Individual Budget service users.
6.3 The employment option

Most staff thought that the government was right to promote, or at least to provide, information on employment as an option for people on Individual Budgets but that, in this instance, it had not been done effectively.

Amongst Individual Budget staff, there was general support for the principle of providing employment information to Individual Budget service users who had expressed a desire to move towards employment or self-employment. However, Individual Budget staff rarely saw themselves as being the main agents of change, but rather as being able to signpost service users to further sources of advice and information, when asked. Some staff were very clear that it was not their role to ‘promote’ employment in any way, although others disagreed with this. This seemed to vary, at least in part, according to the exact job role and the service users they worked with. Staff who worked with service users with learning disabilities were keen for employment to be presented as a realistic option to many of their service users, particularly those who had not had such options provided to them before, but for whom it was likely that some form of work would be possible in the future. Staff working with mental health service users advised that any discussion with their service users about employment should be prompted by the service users themselves, rather than be introduced by their care co-ordinators.

Jobcentre Plus and related staff agreed with the principle of providing employment information and proactive support to Individual Budget service users, as they thought that this group could often be low in self-confidence, and wary of trying new things. They thought that Individual Budget support staff should supply this information to service users initially. The fact that this was an option rather than an obligation should be made clear, to avoid scaring people, and to avoid perpetuating any negative perceptions of Jobcentre Plus.

There had been very little activity in promoting the employment option by the time of the initial fieldwork with pilot leads. It appeared that the IES team making contact with staff, and conducting the first few interviews in each area, may have brought about at least some of the resulting activity with the employment materials, as staff were not usually aware of the exact purpose of the materials when we first contacted them, nor did they know that they were being piloted for a limited amount of time. It is difficult to determine the extent to which the employment option operated as a result of the instructions and briefings from DWP, or as a result of this strand of research prompting some of the activity in this area, both in terms of awareness and distribution of materials to staff and, in turn, service users.

There was no clear strategy for distributing the employment materials across the three pilot areas, although it usually centred on whether employment had been mentioned in the support plan. It later appeared that the decision about who would receive the materials had been left to care co-ordinators to decide, based on service users’ support plans and their circumstances at that time.
A more thorough and wide-reaching brief to staff on the employment option and materials from Jobcentre Plus would have been very useful on this occasion. However, improving links between social care services and Jobcentre Plus more generally was thought to be important by many Individual Budget staff. This would help Jobcentre Plus to better understand the service users receiving social care, and the barriers to work that they faced, and equip Jobcentre Plus to support service users more effectively. Individual Budget staff thought that Jobcentre Plus had an important potential role to play, by being proactive in building more links and understanding between the organisations involved in providing social care support to potential Jobcentre Plus customers.

6.4 The employment materials

Not all staff interviewed had used the employment materials or were aware of their purpose. Most knew of their existence, and had seen them, although they had rarely paid particularly close attention to them. A small number of staff interviewed had given some of the materials to one or two service users, although they had not gone through their contents for their own information beforehand, and they did not go through them with the service users either, preferring to signpost rather than promote.

Spontaneous awareness of the content of the employment materials amongst Individual Budget staff was very low, although many were aware of the materials, and some had them in their offices. Once they had seen or reminded themselves of the employment materials, they were usually seen as a positive move in principle, although some questioned the detail included, especially in the booklets. Those who had seen earlier versions of the materials commented how much they had been improved, particularly in the use of photographs.

Regarding accessibility, most staff thought it was difficult to design materials to suit people with a wide range of impairments, but there was nothing fundamentally problematic with any of the materials. The easy read versions were usually thought to be too complex for most people with learning disabilities to use without support. However, for their own information, staff often preferred them to the standard versions and thought they could be better than the standard versions for many of their service users too (including those without learning disabilities), as they appeared less daunting.

The materials were thought to be less relevant to mental health service users than they were to many other groups. This was due both to the pictures in the materials mainly depicting people with physical disabilities or sensory impairments, and the fact that the support services were seen to be less suitable for people with mental health conditions. The changing nature of those conditions over time was pointed out by staff and service users, and they also thought that the available services did not appear to be flexible enough to accommodate this.
Service users generally found the information in the materials interesting and potentially useful, although none were in a position to take any of it further at that stage. They were very positive about the layout and design, although some thought the amount of information the materials contained could be daunting. No service users who had received the materials had had a discussion with their care co-ordinators about the range of employment support on offer, although some would have liked this. Staff and service users tended to comment positively on the stories in the back of the standard booklet, as they provided some real life examples. However, some saw it as desirable to include a story on someone with a more explicit long-term mental health condition.

From the feedback from staff, it was clear that the employment materials could be used as a resource for social care staff to help them to advise and direct service users. They could also be of use to a wider range of people than those receiving Individual Budgets. However, staff thought that the employment materials would support the way they worked, rather than change it. They said they would still refer people interested in working to Jobcentre Plus or a voluntary sector agency, but the materials could be used in addition to this.

There was low awareness of the employment materials and the employment option amongst Jobcentre Plus and related staff, although those who had seen the materials were generally impressed with them. Some of the information about Disability Employment Advisers (DEAs) in the employment materials was pointed out to be inaccurate, particularly in the areas where the Pathways to Work programme had been introduced.

6.5 Impact of AtW alignment with Individual Budgets

There appeared to have been minimal impact from aligning AtW and Individual Budgets. This was true in terms of take-up, and also in the extent to which the process was understood by many of the key actors.

Ways to increase impact in the future could include:

• more publicity for AtW, and the ways in which AtW could work with an Individual Budget;

• adapting AtW to make it better suited to people with fluctuating needs, particularly those with mental health conditions.

A number of staff and service users thought that AtW should be adapted to provide some pre-employment support to service users, as most Individual Budget service users did not have a job and were therefore not eligible for AtW. However, a number of Jobcentre Plus programmes already exist to provide support at the pre-employment stages, for example Workprep and Work Trials, together with assistance from DEAs or other advisers.
Uptake of AtW alongside Individual Budgets may increase as the pool of Individual Budget service users grows. However, there will still be a fundamental question about how AtW fits with Individual Budgets in its current form.

6.6 Impact of the employment option

There has been very little impact as a result of the employment option, aside from some awareness-raising amongst staff on some of the employment support programmes on offer for service users. It was thought by many staff to be too early to assess impact, although the pilot was drawing to a close at the time of the research. They reported that it had had little or no impact on their service users. Despite this, the employment option was seen, in principle, by most staff interviewed, to be a step in the right direction in providing more information and greater choice to service users, and in promoting independence.

In line with this, the employment option had not had any impact on any of the service users interviewed. However, a few service users reported that, although the materials were not relevant to them at that time, they were glad to know there was additional support available to them in the future.

The potential for future impact of providing information on employment as an option was viewed positively by most Individual Budget staff, and most Jobcentre Plus and related staff. The materials were seen to have the greatest potential impact over the medium and long term, rather than having much immediate impact in the short term.

To bring about greater impact in the future, including greater penetration of the literature, the following would be needed:

• buy-in at senior management levels in local authorities, to providing information to service users about employment as an option;

• effective mechanisms for cascading information down to the appropriate Individual Budget support staff, possibly involving briefings to include a wider range of staff;

• providing workshops on the literature to Individual Budget staff, and providing guidance on how to use the literature with service users, together with sufficient time for staff to remind themselves of its contents when they are working with service users;

• increased partnership working and liaison between Jobcentre Plus, Individual Budget and Social Services staff and health services staff, to ensure that all relevant groups working with individual service users had the latest and most appropriate information;

• ways to ensure employment issues do not get lost in the changing social care agenda, and its competing priorities;

• more assistance or promotion of available services to help people into self-employment may also be particularly suitable for some service users.
Appendix A
Is work for me? Information for people with an individual budget: Standard version
Is work for me?

Information for people with an Individual Budget
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1 Introduction

Who is this booklet for?
If you receive an Individual Budget and you are considering going into employment, this booklet is for you. It will also be helpful to people who provide information, advice and support relating to Individual Budgets – this may include partners, friends and relatives, support brokers, care managers, care co-ordinators, occupational therapists, members of supported employment teams, or linked employment officers.

What does the booklet cover?
If you receive an Individual Budget, this booklet provides information if you:
• are not sure if work is for you;
• would like help in deciding what type of work you want, and in preparing for and getting work; or
• have got employment and need help to stay in work.

What is the purpose of the booklet?
This booklet provides:
• an introduction to the support you can get from us at Jobcentre Plus if you have an Individual Budget;
• information on the relevant support you can get from other organisations, including your local authority;
• basic information on issues you may have concerns about, such as the financial effects of moving from benefits to work, or making your disability known to an employer; and
• details of useful contacts.
Why is this booklet aimed mainly at people with an Individual Budget?

• If you have an Individual Budget, you have more choice and control over the care and support you receive. As a result, you may have higher expectations of yourself. More and more, you may see work (including self-employment) as a realistic option, now or in the future.

• We have developed this booklet after consulting disabled people, including people with an Individual Budget, to highlight the help we can provide to help you prepare for, get and stay in work.
2 I am not in employment and I am not sure if work is for me

I am not sure I am ready for work

Deciding whether you are ready for work is not always easy.

The Royal Association for Disability and Rehabilitation (RADAR) has produced a booklet called ‘Doing Work Differently’. In that booklet, RADAR suggests that:

• ‘Sometimes managing an impairment is a full-time job in itself – especially at first or in new circumstances – and if that’s your situation, that needs to take priority.’

It also suggests:

• ‘Think about how your impairment is likely to develop and what impact this and your treatment options may have on all aspects of your life including how they might affect your job if you were to take one. This sort of thinking will set you in good stead when you decide you are ready for work.’

We have published these quotes with permission from RADAR.

Who can I talk to about this?

• If you have a partner, friend or relative, a support broker or a care manager, you can discuss your situation with them.

• If you want more advice about the employment services we provide, your care manager or care co-ordinator can arrange for you to speak to the right person in Jobcentre Plus.

• If you want information about the employment services that your local authority provides, your care manager or care co-ordinator can help you.

• If you are worried about your benefits you can get information in the next section of this booklet about:
Permitted Work (this is when you earn a certain amount of money without affecting your entitlement to benefit);

- how your benefits are affected if you find work but again become unfit for it; and

- how we can help you work out whether or not you would be better off in employment.

Only you can really decide whether it’s time to prepare for and find work. However, you can always ask your Jobcentre Plus office for information or advice about working, including being self-employed.
I am not in employment and I would like help in preparing for work and getting work

What should I do first?

The different stages in Individual Budgets – self-assessment, planning, living your life, and review – might trigger your expectations and ambitions about going into employment. If you have never had paid work or your situation has changed greatly since you last worked, where should you start?

Start by considering your work-related aims and your experiences.

Think about how you would answer the following important questions:

- What paid or unpaid work experiences and what leisure experiences have you had?
- What are your strengths?
- Why do you want to work?
- What can you offer an employer?

When you have done this, start thinking about your disability and what support you may need to be successful.

At first you may want your partner, friends or relatives or support broker, to support you in considering if work is best for you and in thinking about the above questions.

What do I need to think about when considering moving from benefits to work?

If you are considering moving from benefits to work, you need to know exactly how much you will gain or lose each week by taking a particular job. Our advisers can help you by looking at the full range of income-based benefits and tax credits available and working out whether you would be better off in a particular job. This is known as a ‘better-off calculation’, and shows you exactly how much you will gain or lose each week by taking a particular job.
You also need to know how you will be supported if things go wrong. The ‘linking rules’ in incapacity benefits may allow you to return to the same level of benefit you were receiving, depending on how long you were at work.

Even with the security of the linking rules, moving into work can be daunting for many reasons. There are a number of ways you can try out work before leaving incapacity benefits. For example, you can do as much voluntary work as you want for charities and voluntary organisations. Volunteering is one of the main ways you can build up your confidence and gain valuable work-related skills after being out of work for a while.

If you currently receive Incapacity Benefit, it is possible to earn a certain amount of money without affecting your entitlement to benefit. This is called Permitted Work. You can do some part-time or temporary work without your benefits being affected. This gives you a chance to receive a steady income while you adjust to working a limited number of hours a week and before you think about full-time work. This option could be a vital way of gaining the confidence to make that last step into work. If you receive any other benefit as well as Incapacity Benefit, you must check how Permitted Work will affect your payments.

You can also choose to do a work trial. This is an opportunity for you to find out how well suited you are to a particular job with an employer. You will continue to receive your benefits while you take part in a work trial.

To find out more about how work – including voluntary work and training – would affect your benefits, contact us.

Getting a job or earning money will not affect whether you are eligible for an Individual Budget. However, as everyone’s Individual Budget is made up differently, check with your local authority to find out exactly what might apply to you.

Can my local authority help?

You should also consider approaching the people who provide care or support for you or who are working with you on your Individual Budget. This might be your support broker, care manager, care co-ordinator, a member of the supported employment team, or a linked employment adviser. They may help you in considering if work is best for you and help you prepare a plan for at least the first steps of preparing for work.

Local authorities vary in the range of employment-related services they provide. However:

- they generally provide information on organisations that offer advice and support on employment for disabled people; and

- some provide advice and support to disabled people who face barriers in preparing to go into work and provide ongoing support to people who are working.
The employment support services vary but usually offer a combination of:

- helping you identify your abilities and interests;
- helping you find your preferred job, sometimes by contacting employers;
- helping you prepare effectively for the recruitment process;
- assessing the workplace, your co-workers, and the support you might need; and
- making sure you and your employer receive the right support.

**Can Jobcentre Plus help?**

A Disability Employment Adviser (DEA), usually based in a Jobcentre Plus office can provide specialist support on employment issues.

Your DEA can do the following:

- Carry out an employment assessment that can help identify your abilities and strengths, and if your disability or health condition affects the type of work you want to do. As part of the assessment, you will agree an action plan to help you achieve your aims. Having an employment assessment will not affect your benefits.
- Provide a job-matching and referral service to let you know about jobs that match your experience and skills. If you feel it’s appropriate, the adviser may be able to approach the employer for you.
- Refer you to a specialist programme, such as Work Preparation or WORKSTEP.

You can contact us to speak to a DEA.

**New Deal for Disabled People (NDDP)**

If you are claiming a health-related benefit (such as Incapacity Benefit), you may be able to get help finding and staying in work through the New Deal for Disabled People programme. Our advisers can also give you more information on this.

**Preparing for work**

**Work Preparation**

To qualify for the Work Preparation programme, you must be in contact with a DEA. The programme is put together to meet your needs and to help you overcome any difficulties you might face when you return to work. Work Preparation helps to increase your confidence, and the amount of time you feel able to work, and find out what skills you have. It also helps you find out
what kind of work you are suited to and lets you find out if you are ready to go into a working environment. Most people take part in the programme for 6 weeks. It does not usually last for more than 13 weeks.

**WORKSTEP**

If there are significant difficulties that stop you from working, WORKSTEP may be able to help you to settle into an organisation. The WORKSTEP provider helps you find a job, introduces you to your manager and colleagues, and stays in touch to make sure that everything is going smoothly. You, the WORKSTEP provider and your manager agree a development plan that will help you to do your job well and develop in it.

More specifically, if you want to find a job where you have the support you need and the opportunity to develop and make progress, you may benefit from finding out more about WORKSTEP. To find out whether you’re eligible for help, contact a DEA through us. The DEA can help you decide whether WORKSTEP is right for you. If it is, the DEA will refer you to a WORKSTEP provider who will:

- work with you to design an individual development plan, including particular arrangements for you to learn your job and develop as an employee; and
- arrange a tailored support package to help you make the most of your potential.

This might include:

- support through a job coach or job trainer;
- giving advice and help to the people you work with and helping them understand your disability;
- proposing steps for you to go into mainstream employment, if this is right for you; and
- regularly reviewing your progress.

**Residential Training Colleges**

The Residential Training Programme aims to help you if you have been out of work and you face more complicated, disability-related difficulties, in getting a job.

The programme provides guidance, learning in the work place, work experience and training.

The programmes take place in college accommodation where you stay away from home. If you cannot get the training you need in your local area, you might be able to go to a residential training college.

A residential training course usually involves practical and directed training that is structured to give you the opportunity to develop and practice a wide range of vocational (work-related) skills. You also get support from specialist staff, and the training takes place in buildings that are designed to meet the needs of disabled people.
Voluntary work

You may want to consider voluntary work before taking part in services and programmes related to work, or getting paid work. If you are interested in voluntary work, talk to your care manager or contact a DEA through us.

Getting work

Programme Centres

Programme centres can provide free help with job applications, practical advice on searching for jobs, and looking at what might prevent you from getting or keeping a job. Programme centres provide stamps, stationery, newspapers and access to the internet. Many offer programme modules to develop your interview skills, phone techniques, and experience in researching, applying for and getting a job. To find out whether there is a centre near you and if you can use its services, call us.

The Disability Symbol

Look out for employers using the Disability Symbol. If an employer uses this symbol, it means they are positive about employing disabled people and will be keen to know about your abilities. Employers who use the symbol have made commitments to employ, keep and develop the abilities of disabled staff.

Job Introduction Scheme

If you find a job you would like but you or your employer are not sure whether it would be suitable, the Job Introduction Scheme (JIS) might be able to help. The scheme offers to help the employer pay your wages or other employment costs for the first few weeks (the ‘JIS period’) until you and your employer are both sure the job is right for you. The scheme can apply to any full-time or part-time job lasting at least 26 weeks. Ideally, at the end of the JIS period, you and your employer will both feel the job is right for you and you will be able to do the job confidently. The Disability Employment Adviser will refer you to the scheme if it is appropriate for you.

Other help

Other sources of help for getting work are set out in the ‘Useful contact details’ in section 5 of this booklet.
Should I declare my disability when applying for a job?

This question causes concern for many disabled people who are applying for jobs. Under the Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) 1995, it is illegal for employers to discriminate against disabled people in their procedures for recruiting and choosing employees. While it is not against the law to ask questions about a person’s health and disability on an application form or to issue a separate health questionnaire, it is illegal to use the responses to discriminate against anyone.

We tell employers that they should:

• include positive statements about their policy towards disabled people if they include health and disability questions on application forms;

• check the wording and language so it does not give the impression that the employer will use the questions to exclude disabled people who are applying for a job;

• only use questions about disability and health if they are relevant to the job advertised; and

• ask disabled people if they need any particular adjustments to be made so they can fill in the application form, go to an interview or do the job.

Not all employers follow good practice. If an employer is using an application form that is less than perfect, you may feel reluctant to tell them about your disability. In the end it’s up to you, but you should remember the following points:

• If you are asked (in an interview or on an application form) whether you have a health condition or disability, answer in a straightforward way. Make the distinction between a health condition and a disability. If necessary, explain how your disability would affect you in a work environment. If it would not affect you, say so. Talk about your abilities and why you think you are the right person for the job.

• You must tell an employer about a disability if it might present a health and safety risk to yourself or other work colleagues.

• If you sign a declaration saying that you do not have a disability but you do, this may affect your job at a later date.

• If you don’t mention a disability while you are at work but you are later dismissed for a reason relating to your disability, you may have difficulty making a complaint under the DDA. If you need more advice about declaring a disability or if you think you may have been illegally discriminated against, contact a DEA through us, or get in touch with the Commission for Equality and Human Rights – see the ‘Useful contact details’ section 5.
4 I have found employment and I need help at work or to get to work

Can Jobcentre Plus help?

Access to Work
You may have heard of Access to Work because it is part of the Government’s Individual Budgets initiative.

The Access to Work programme aims to remove the practical barriers that you may face in work, allowing you to enjoy the same career opportunities as your colleagues.

Access to Work advisers are available to work with you and your employer to find the most appropriate help for you.

Access to Work can offer help in a variety of ways, including providing the following:

• Support workers to offer personal support to meet your needs at work or in getting to work. For example:
  • a counsellor if you experience anxiety, panic attacks or mental-health difficulties (the support worker may be useful in helping you develop ways to manage these at work);
  • a job coach to support you if you have learning difficulties or mental-health difficulties and need help in the early stages of learning a job; and
  • a British Sign Language interpreter.

• Aids and equipment to help you do the same job as a colleague who is not disabled. For example, specialist software to support you if you have sight problems.

• Help with travelling to work if you cannot use the available public transport or you would have to pay extra costs in travelling to and from work because of difficulties relating to your disability. This help could involve either paying for a taxi or giving you a grant towards the cost of making adaptations to a vehicle.

• Adaptations to premises and equipment to help you enter and get around the building or workplace. (Employers will be expected to contribute if making the adaptations would generally benefit the business, firm, other employees or customers.)
Why should my employer keep me on?

Usually employers want to be fair to their employees as their business can benefit from keeping valuable staff.

It may well be more cost-effective to keep you than to recruit and train a person to replace you. The costs of replacing you and the temporary lost production for the business, may well be greater than the costs of making adjustments to allow you to do the job or to get to work.

The Disability Discrimination Act and other laws protect employees from being unfairly dismissed. Keeping to the law is an essential part of responsible business practice. Disability discrimination cases can be very damaging to a business’s reputation.
5 Useful contact details

Jobcentre Plus

At Jobcentre Plus, we are experienced in helping people find the right job or training. If you need financial support, talk to us about the benefits you may be able to get. We can also provide ‘better-off calculations’ and advice on linking rules and Permitted Work.

If you want to contact us by phone, you can find our contact details on our website or in your phone book. When you phone, ask for a Disability Employment Adviser and make an appointment.

Calls to 0800 numbers are free from BT land lines and phone boxes but you may have to pay if you use another phone company, a mobile phone, or if you are calling from abroad. Calls from mobile phones can cost up to 40p per minute, so check the cost of calls with your service provider.

From 1 August 2007, calls to 0845 numbers from BT land lines should cost no more than 4p a minute with a 6p charge for setting up the call. You may have to pay more if you use another phone company or a mobile phone, or if you are calling from abroad.

Textphone numbers are for people who find it hard to speak or hear clearly. If you do not have a textphone, some libraries or citizens advice bureaux may have one. Textphones do not receive voice calls, or text messages from mobile phones.

Website: www.jobcentreplus.gov.uk

Jobseeker Direct

This is a Jobcentre Plus service where you can search for and apply for jobs by phone.

Phone: 0845 6060 234 (8am to 6pm Monday to Friday, and 9am to 1pm on Saturdays)

Textphone: 0845 6055 255

Website: www.jobcentreplus.gov.uk

New Deal for Disabled People (NDDP)

Phone: 0800 137 177

Textphone: 0800 435 550

Website: www.newdeal.gov.uk
For information on any of the New Deal programmes, phone the New Deal helpline on 0845 606 2626 (textphone: 0845 606 0680). Lines are open between 7am and 11pm, 7 days a week.

You can also find out which NDDP Job Brokers are working in your area. Go to the website at www.jobbrokersearch.co.uk

**Benefit Enquiry Line**

This is a confidential phone service for disabled people, carers or people representing them.

**Phone:** 0800 88 22 00 (8.30am to 6.30pm, Monday to Friday and 9am to 1pm on Saturdays)

**Textphone:** 0800 24 33 55

Other help, including useful tips on writing CVs and application forms:

- Online – visit www.jobcentreplus.gov.uk for details of vacancies. Even if you’re not looking for a job straight away, you could look at opportunities like work programmes or training.

- On the phone – contact us on 0845 6060 234 (textphone: 0845 6055 255) to find out about jobs in your area.

- Jobpoint touch screens – when visiting your Jobcentre Plus, why not try out a Jobpoint touch screen? Search through job vacancies, print off the ones you’re interested in, and follow instructions on how to apply.

**Disability organisations**

You can find a full list of support organisations on the disability pages of the Government’s Directgov website.

**Website:** www.direct.gov.uk/disability

**Royal Association for Disability and Rehabilitation**

**Address:** 12 City Forum
250 City Road
London
EC1V 8AF

**Phone:** 020 7250 3222 (Lines are open 9.00am to 5.00pm Monday to Friday. Calls will be charged at standard landline rates.)
Disability Rights Commission
(Commission for Equality and Human Rights (CEHR) from October 2007)

**Phone:** 08457 622 633 (Lines are open 8.00am to 8.00pm Monday to Friday)

**Textphone:** 08457 622 644

**Website:** www.drc-gb.org

**Fax:** 08457 778 878

**Address:** DRC Helpline
Freepost
MID02164
Stratford upon Avon
CV37 9BR

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General information

Citizens Advice

A network of local offices provides free and independent advice on legal issues, money, benefits and other problems.

**Phone:** look in the phone book for the details of your nearest office

**Website:** www.citizensadvice.org.uk

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Government

Directgov

This is a Government website which has a detailed section for disabled people, people with health conditions, and carers. It contains a directory of helpful voluntary organisations including how to contact your local council.

**Website:** www.direct.gov.uk/disability
Self employment

Learning and Skills Councils (LSCs) in England and Wales offer a wide range of information, advice and training on setting up your own business. You can find the details of your nearest LSC in the Yellow Pages under 'Business Enterprise Agencies'. In England, Business Link is also a good source of help for small businesses. Visit www.businesslink.gov.uk or call 0845 600 9006.
Appendices – Is work for me? Information for people with an individual budget: Standard version
This is a real-life example of a person who used Jobcentre Plus services to prepare for work, or to find or keep a job.

Chris’s story

“I’m deaf, but I can still work. I knew this, but proving it to other people was really hard. Now I’ve done just that.”

“I was just like any other 26-year-old,” explains Chris McTaggart. “I loved cars, had a busy social life and wanted to get on in life. But what was really getting me down was the trouble I was having finding a regular job like my mates – people wouldn’t give me a chance because I’m deaf.”

After school, Chris went to Newcastle College to learn car mechanics. He can lip-read but had to give up the course because there wasn’t a sign language interpreter available to help him keep up with the other students. “I ended up claiming Severe Disablement Allowance and Disability Living Allowance. I applied for jobs, went to interviews, but time ticked by and nothing happened. I was really sick of not working just because companies weren’t interested in making a few changes. It was really getting me down.”

continued over…
After a two-week trial in a Grounds Maintenance Team, Chris eventually found a way out through WORKSTEP, a Jobcentre Plus programme that helps support disabled people into work. “My adviser arranged for me to start on a two-week trial at ‘Nature’s Landscapes’, a Council team that looks after the green spaces around council properties. It was great because my benefits didn’t stop during the two-week trial, which gave me time to decide if I liked the job. I did – and as Nature’s Landscapes had some jobs and really welcomed disabled people, I applied with WORKSTEP support. I got the job and started working full time.”

“Thanks to Access to Work, I also get the interpreter support I really need to do my job.” Access to Work, another Jobcentre Plus scheme, helps disabled people overcome barriers to work. “They pay for a British Sign Language (BSL) interpreter to help me during any training I get for operating equipment like strimmers and chainsaws. They also pay for a BSL interpreter to come to important meetings so there’s nothing that I miss out on.”

Chris loves the job, and has been there ever since his two-week trial. “Finding a job wasn’t easy, but it’s was worth it. It’s great to be working. I’ve bought a new car and am able to lead my own life. That’s all I ever wanted to do.”
This is a real-life example of a person who used Jobcentre Plus services to prepare for work, or to find or keep a job.

**Ashleah’s story**

“When I started working my employer didn’t know about my situation. But now they do, I’m getting support from Access to Work. It really helps.”

Since 2003, Ashleah Skinner has been living with the effects of one knife assault and a number of street robberies. Now aged 19, he’s working part time – and the Access to Work and WORKSTEP initiatives are helping him regain his confidence.

“There was one incident where I was threatened with a knife,” Ashleah explains. “One in school, as well as a number of street robberies. They affected me deeply – I became so afraid of it happening again that I only went out six times over the next two years. I’ve been treated for severe anxiety, agoraphobia and depression.”

With counselling, Ashleah gradually became confident enough to leave his home more regularly, as long as he was accompanied by his Nan or cousin. It was on a trip to the supermarket that he picked up an application form. “I’d been on Jobseeker’s Allowance for about four months when I was in Sainsbury’s and saw they were looking for people,” Ashleah says.

continued over…
“I filled in the application form and got an interview by myself. And the interview went a lot better than I thought it would.”

In fact, the interview went so well that Ashleah was offered a full-time job, working on the shop floor and the checkout. But there were some initial difficulties: “Jobcentre Plus didn’t know about my situation at the time, and neither did Sainsbury’s. I found full-time work quite overwhelming and it was hard for Nan, who was accompanying me to and from work.”

When Ashleah spoke to his employer he was able to reduce his hours to 16 a week – and he found out about Access to Work and WORKSTEP, two Jobcentre Plus initiatives aimed at helping disabled people overcome barriers to work. “Access to Work now pays for my travel to and from work,” says Ashleah. “It’s a real help and it takes some of the pressure off Nan. I’m also joining a WORKSTEP programme, which I’m looking forward to because the extra support and supervision will help me at work and in day-to-day life in general.”

This is one of a series of real-life examples included with the Jobcentre Plus booklet ‘Is work for me? Information for people with an Individual Budget.’

Plain English Campaign crystal mark does not apply to these examples.
This is a real-life example of a person who used Jobcentre Plus services to prepare for work, or to find or keep a job.

Matthew’s story

“I lost a job I loved. I never thought that I’d see my old boss years later and get a second chance to work with him again.”

To Matthew Hubbard, work is not just a job; it’s changed his life. He’s proved that learning disabilities are not the issue if you are ambitious and determined.

“I left special school and looked for work but it took time,” says Matthew. He eventually did find a job at 17, at a company in Leicester that assembles, packs and ships goods.

“He was a very nervous lad, he found it really difficult to interact with people,” explains Shaheed, a manager who met Matthew at his first job and helped him settle in. “But then sadly it all fell apart.”

The company made them both redundant in 2004. They went their separate ways. For Matthew, this meant signing-on for benefits to help him survive. His Disability Employment Adviser put him in touch with Employment Opportunities for People with Disabilities, a national charity with expertise in helping people find and retain work.

continued over…
By sheer stroke of luck, Shaheed had started up his own contract packing company in 2005, Doolicraft Ltd. But it was two years before Matthew and Shaheed made contact through the Work Preparation programme, which helps disabled people decide what kind of work they want to do, and builds their skills and confidence.

Matthew jumped at the opportunity to go on an eight-week placement with Doolicraft. Shaheed agreed wholeheartedly. “We were able to provide the right support and Matthew quickly learnt the ropes – he soon became a good member of the team.”

Shaheed is keen to make Matthew a permanent member of staff, as soon as the company can afford it. “He has the skills we need, he’s great for morale and a real asset.”

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Geoffrey’s story

“The one thing that I really wanted was a job. I had no paid work for 24 years. Now I’ve got one, my confidence is back and I have pride in myself.”

So says Geoffrey, a 54-year-old Salford man who now works part-time at his local hospital as a member of the cleaning staff. It’s been a long, hard road to get there. Geoffrey hasn’t had a paid job since his parents died in the 1980s and had to rely on benefits.

“I’ve done lots of voluntary work, but what I really wanted was to earn my own money and be independent,” explains Geoffrey. But year after year his learning problems with reading, writing and memory have stopped employers giving him a chance.

Last year, he had a breakthrough. His Disability Employment Adviser at Jobcentre Plus referred him to Work Preparation, a six-week work placement on a programme organised by the Oaklea Trust in partnership with the Salford Royal NHS Foundation Trust. “I worked in the catering department. It went well. The hospital liked my work.”

continued over…
Then another setback: there were no suitable vacancies at the hospital for him. Geoffrey refused to give up; the six-week placement had convinced him that he could do the work. He carried on applying for jobs, encouraged by his Jobcentre Plus adviser. For months, it was the same old story as employers refused to give him a chance.

Then another breakthrough. Salford Royal NHS Foundation Trust was making changes to its domestic cleaning services. The hours would suit him, and the duties could be monitored carefully until he was capable of working on his own. Geoffrey applied, attended an interview and was offered a 16-hour a week post.

Now, with his Jobcentre Plus adviser’s invaluable assistance, he has a bank account and a washing machine to save him hand washing his clothes, as he used to. He pays his own rent and council tax and feels part of life.

“This job has made an awful lot of difference to my life,” says Geoffrey. “I have regained my confidence, self-esteem and pride in myself. I’ve even bought a second-hand typewriter to practise my reading and writing.”

This is one of a series of real-life examples included with the Jobcentre Plus booklet ‘Is work for me? Information for people with an Individual Budget.’

Plain English Campaign crystal mark does not apply to these examples.
This is a real-life example of a person who used Jobcentre Plus services to prepare for work, or to find or keep a job.

Dalpreet’s story

“I was low in confidence and self esteem for years. I hadn’t worked since I left school so I guess it’s not surprising. But I was determined to do something about it.”

Twenty-one-year-old Dalpreet Brom, who has poor eyesight and learning difficulties, did more than that. Thanks to his determination, he overcame his lack of experience and earned himself a coveted ‘jobseeker of the year’ award as well as a fulfilling full-time job – with the help of the Job Introduction Scheme from Jobcentre Plus.

It wasn’t an easy journey; Dalpreet knows about rejection. “People were afraid to take me on, even just for a work trial. They think that you can’t learn if you have learning difficulties. It’s not true.”

Looking for opportunities, Dalpreet turned to his local Jobcentre Plus office. “I think my determination must have worked,” he says. “Soon my Jobcentre Plus adviser told me about a job at Myona in Birmingham; they supply industrial cleaning products.”

continued over…
“They were a disability aware company, so I thought they might not reject me straight away. I was very keen and put myself forward for it at once.”

He was right. Dalpreet started at Myona on a two-week work placement as a Data Input Clerk through the Job Introduction Scheme. This scheme allows disabled people to spend up to 6 weeks trialling a job to see if it is suitable for them, and offers to help the employer pay the person’s wages while they are on the scheme.

“The only setback was that the type on the PC screen was too small for my poor eyesight. I spoke to my Jobcentre Plus adviser and they asked Myona if they would get a specially adapted monitor with large type, which they did.”


“Winning the award was the icing on the cake – the best prize of all was getting a permanent job,” explains Dalpreet. “I feel so much more fulfilled now.”

This is one of a series of real-life examples included with the Jobcentre Plus booklet ‘Is work for me? Information for people with an Individual Budget.’

Plain English Campaign crystal mark does not apply to these examples.
When I got made redundant, I was determined to get more work experience and found that Jobcentre Plus could support me in my search.”

Caroline enjoyed her job in a cattery but her boss couldn’t afford to keep her on. So the 23-year-old South Londoner turned to Jobcentre Plus, who she knew through previous experience could help her increase both her confidence and her experience.

“When I went to Jobcentre Plus, they arranged for me to get some more work experience by working in a charity shop,” Caroline explains. “But I needed paid work really, and that’s when a Jobcentre Plus adviser told me about Access to Work.”

Caroline has a learning disability and sometimes finds it difficult to learn new tasks. So her Disability Employment Adviser used the Access to Work programme to pay for an intermediary organisation – Bromley Jobmatch (Mencap) – to give her some extra support. “Jobmatch helped me with interviews,” Caroline says. “Ian is my support worker. He came to the interviews with me, to help make sure I expressed myself clearly.”

continued over…
The interviews were a success and Caroline was offered both jobs. “I went for the one in the Poundland store as it’s closest to where I live in Bromley,” she says. “I started in October 2005 and Ian stayed with me as I learned different parts of the job. It went really well over Christmas and I stayed on. I help stock the shelves and make sure the food is rotated on the shelves. It gets very busy sometimes but I don’t mind because everyone here is really helpful. Now I’d only see Ian if there was a problem.”

So would Caroline recommend Access to Work and Jobmatch to other people? “Yes, I would,” she says. “Jobmatch is really helpful for people with disabilities who might need some more support in an interview or at work. Ian made sure I was doing the job properly in the beginning, and now I’ve proved to myself that I can do the job, I feel much more confident.”
“My knees were so badly damaged I had to leave the Army. But I was determined to run my own business. What surprised everyone was what I ended up doing.”

Lainy Cain experienced the punishing physical effects of Army life, so much so that the 33-year-old had to quit. She never dreamt that she would overcome her physical disability and build boats, single-handed.

Lainy decided the jobs on offer at Jobcentre Plus were mostly unsuitable because they involved travelling to work. “At times I am in too much pain to travel, so looked at self employment. The idea of becoming my own boss excited me.” But why building boats?

“I learnt carpentry from my father, a skilled boat-builder in Hull,” explains Lainy. “I grew up watching him work and just picked up the skills.”
Lainy was determined to start a boat-building operation and raised the start-up money she needed. But she was worried about losing benefits if the work didn’t pay enough. Lainy’s Jobcentre Plus adviser explained that under permitted work rules she could work for less than 16 hours a week without losing any Income Support. “It’s great for me,” says Lainy. “I only need to work when I am well enough. I can ‘clock off’ early if my knees hurt too much and I know that my benefits are not affected.”

Lainy started her business in May this year. “It’s going brilliantly,” she concludes. “I’ve finished my first boat for sale. It would have taken so much longer to get started without Jobcentre Plus and their advice.” And the name of the boat? “A friend came up with a name and insists I use it,” she says. “It’s ‘Triumph’…”

This is one of a series of real-life examples included with the Jobcentre Plus booklet ‘Is work for me? Information for people with an Individual Budget.’

Plain English Campaign crystal mark does not apply to these examples.
Remember that this leaflet is a guide only. It is not meant to say exactly what your legal rights are. While we have tried to make sure that the information in this leaflet is correct at the date shown below, it is possible that there may be incorrect information or some items may be oversimplified. Also, please remember that the information in this leaflet is likely to become less accurate over time, for example because of changes to the law.

www.jobcentreplus.gov.uk/individualbudgets

Jobcentre Plus is committed to applying the principles of equal opportunities in its programmes and services.

You can contact us if you would like this information in large print, on audiotape, in Braille or in Easy Read (information that is easier for people with learning difficulties to read and understand)
Appendix B
If I have an individual budget, is going to work best for me: Standard version
If I have an Individual Budget, is going to work best for me?
Who should read this leaflet?
This leaflet is a short introduction to the information, advice and help available to find or stay in work. It is aimed at:

• people who have or are about to get an Individual Budget;
• their partners, friends or relatives; and
• support brokers and care managers.

Do I have a choice about finding work?
Yes, you do. We will work with you and your local authority to help you decide whether work is right for you. We can also provide services to help you prepare for work, find work and stay at work. This includes self-employed work.

What if I am not sure whether work is right for me?

• If you have a support broker or a care manager or someone who helps you (such as a partner, relative or friend), you can discuss your situation with them.

• If you want more advice about the employment services that are available, your care manager can arrange for you to speak to the right person.

What if I want to work but I feel I am not ready for it yet?

• Your support broker, care manager, partner, relative or friend may be able to help you prepare for work.

• You may be able to get more help from one of our Disability Employment Advisers (DEAs). They will also be able to give you advice about suitable employment programmes such as Work Preparation and WORKSTEP.

• The Work Preparation programme can help you to cope with being at work and help you achieve your career aims. This usually includes going on a short unpaid work placement.

• If you need longer-term support, your DEA may refer you to a WORKSTEP programme. WORKSTEP can help you find a job and will support you for as long as you need it.
• If you can’t get the help you need locally, you may be able to go to one of our residential training colleges. These colleges give you extra training and work experience to help you find a job.

What if I want to work but I need help finding a job?
• Your support broker, care manager, partner, relative or friend may be able to help you look for work, as well as us.
• If you are claiming a benefit (such as Incapacity Benefit) for health reasons, you may be able to get help through New Deal for Disabled People. A network of job brokers at your local Jobcentre Plus office provides support and services to help you find reliable paid work.

What if I need help to stay in work?
We have a programme called Access to Work. You may have heard of Access to Work because it is part of the Government’s Individual Budgets initiative. Access to Work can remove the practical ‘barriers’ that disabled people may face in work. For example, it provides funding:
• for special aids, adaptations and equipment for the workplace;
• for support workers; and
• to cover the costs of travelling to work.

Where can I get more information?
We have a new booklet called ‘Is work for me? Information for people with an Individual Budget’.

It gives more information about all the services and programmes in this leaflet and provides advice on other issues you may be concerned about, such as how work may affect your benefits or how you make your disability known to an employer.

You can get the new booklet from:
• your care manager or care co-ordinator, when you discuss your Individual Budget with them;
• your local council’s Individual Budgets staff;
Jobcentre Plus is committed to applying the principles of equal opportunities in its programmes and services.

Part of the Department for Work and Pensions

CLUSDEV/INCAPBN 26 (October 2007)
Appendix C
If I have an individual budget, is going to work best for me: Easy read version
If I have an Individual Budget, is going to work best for me?

This leaflet gives some quick information about the help and advice people with an individual budget can get to prepare for, find or stay in work. More details are in our booklet.

**Individual Budgets**

This is when you have been put in charge of the care and support you get, and have control over the money to pay for it.

**Who should read this leaflet?**

This leaflet is for

- people who have or are about to get an individual budget
- their partners, friends and relatives
- support brokers and care managers

**Who decides if work is right for me?**

You decide if work is right for you.

If you want to talk to someone to help you decide, ask at your Jobcentre Plus or local council.

Your Jobcentre Plus or local council can also

- help you get ready for work
- help you find a job
- help you keep your job

And this includes self-employed work.
Self-employed work

This is work done by the person who owns a business. Self-employed people do not work for an employer.

This paper tells you more about the information, advice and help you can get.

I can’t decide if work is right for me

If you can’t decide if work is right for you

• talk to your family, friends or support workers

• ask your support worker to arrange a meeting for you with your Jobcentre Plus or local council

I want to work but am not ready yet

If you want to work but are not ready yet

• talk to your support worker

• talk to the Disability Employment Adviser at Jobcentre Plus, they can tell you more

The Disability Employment Adviser can also tell you about programmes to help you get a job. For example, Work Preparation and WORKSTEP.

Work preparation

This is where Jobcentre Plus

• helps you find out what kinds of work you like or are good at

• helps you feel good about what you can do
• shows you what it is like to work
• helps you learn new things to help you do your job

Work Preparation can help you feel confident about going to work. It can also help you do well in your job. And you usually get to spend a short time doing a real job.

You can usually keep your benefits during Work Preparation

WORKSTEP

This is where Jobcentre Plus helps you find a job where you will have the support you need for as long as you need it. WORKSTEP also helps you do well in your job and learn new things.

I want to work but need help to find a job

If you want to work but need help to find a job
• talk to your support worker
• talk to Jobcentre Plus about WORKSTEP
• talk to the Disability Employment Adviser at Jobcentre Plus. They can tell you more. And they can help you decide if WORKSTEP is right for you

I have a job but need help at work

If you have a job but need help at work
• talk to Jobcentre Plus about Access to Work
• talk to the Disability Employment Adviser at Jobcentre Plus. They can tell you more. And they can help you decide if Access to Work is right for you. They will also tell you how to contact the Access to Work centre
Access to Work

This is where Jobcentre Plus gives help to disabled people so that they can work.

For example, Access to Work can

• help with the cost of special equipment for your work
• help you with the cost of getting to work
• help with the cost of making changes to a building so that you can work there
• help with the cost of someone being with you at work

I want to know more

If you want to know more, have a look at our booklet Is work for me? Information for people with an Individual Budget.

• tells you more about all the things in this leaflet
• tells you about other things you may want to know about. For example, if you want to know about how work may affect your benefits

You can get this booklet

• from your local council’s Individual Budgets workers
• from our Freephone – 0800 707 6571 – open from 8am to 6pm on all days except weekend
• using our Textphone – 0800 055 6023 – Textphones are for people who find it hard to speak or hear clearly. If you do not have a textphone, some libraries or citizens advice bureaus may have one. But you cannot talk or text to Textphones

This booklet is also available on the internet at www.jobcentreplus.gov.uk/individualbudgets. The booklet is also available in large print, on a tape or in Braille on request at Jobcentre Plus.
Appendix D
Is work for me? Information for people with an individual budget: Easy read version
Is work for me?
Information for people with an Individual Budget.
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1. About this booklet

Who should read this booklet?

This booklet is for you if

- you are thinking about work and already get an individual budget
- you are thinking about work and want an individual budget
- you give advice and support to people who have an individual budget. For example if you are a friend, relative or a care worker

Individual Budgets

This is when you have been put in charge of the care and support you get, and have control over the money to pay for it.

People who get an individual budget helped us write this booklet.
What is in this booklet?

This booklet gives information for people who get an individual budget and

- are not sure if work is for them
- want help to find out the kind of work that is right for them
- want help to prepare for work
- want help to find work
- already have a job and need help at work or help to get to work

Why we made this booklet

We made this booklet to:

- tell you about the help you can get from Jobcentre Plus
- tell you about the help you can get from other services
- tell you about things in case you are worried. For example you may not want to tell the people you want to work for about your disability
- tell you about who you can contact for more help
2. I am thinking about working

You might start thinking about working for lots of reasons. For example it might be because you feel the time is right.

Where do I start?

Start by asking yourself

- what do I want from work?
- what have I done in my life so far?
- what work have I done?
- what other things have I done?
- what am I good at?
- why do I want to work?
- what can I do to make these things impress an employer?

**Employer**

This is a person or company that pays other people to do work for them.

Then think about your disability and any help you might need to make work a success.

And if you want to, talk things over with your carer, family and friends.
What else do I need to think about?

Working while I am getting benefits

Sometimes you can do some work while you are getting benefits. This is called permitted work.

Permitted work

This is work you can do while you are getting a disability or health benefit.

But the rules about permitted work are hard to understand. To find out how much wages you can get without affecting your benefit, ask Jobcentre Plus. And it’s best to find out before you start working.

If you cannot tell Jobcentre Plus or your local council before you start work, you must write or phone them about it as soon as you can.

You can find out more about permitted work

- by contacting Jobcentre Plus. Our details are in the phone book and on our website
- from our website at www.jobcentreplus.gov.uk

Wages and working do not stop you getting an Individual Budget. But you should always let your local council know that you are working and getting wages.

Am I better off in work or getting benefits?

If you are thinking about work, you will want to know if you will get more money in work than by staying on benefits. Jobcentre Plus has a computer that works this out for you. The computer works out what you get now and what you might get when working.
This is called a better-off calculation. It shows if you will be better off or worse off if you get a job.

If you are interested in having a better-off calculation done for you, ask for more information at Jobcentre Plus.

What if I have to stop working because of illness or disability?

The amount of Incapacity Benefit goes up when a person is sick or disabled for a long time.

So it would not be fair if someone lost the higher amount because they tried working or training but had to stop again because of their illness or disability.

To make things fairer, special rules apply if someone tries working or training but has to stop and get Incapacity Benefit again.

The special rules are called linking rules.

**Linking rules**

These are rules that make sure no-one is worse off if they try working or training but then reclaim Incapacity Benefit within a time limit.

If a new claim is made within the time limit the person will get the Incapacity Benefit they had before they tried working or training.

But it is hard to work out which of the time limits will apply. To find out which applies to you, ask at the office that pays your benefit.
Can my local council help me get ready for work?

Yes, people at your local council can help you get ready for work.

Ask your care worker if they think work is right for you. If they say it might be, ask if they will help you get ready for work.

You might want to think about doing voluntary work or go to college before starting work.

Voluntary work

This is work some people do without getting paid. For example many people who work in charity shops do not get paid.

Some councils have other services for disabled people who are looking for work. For example someone from your local council may

- help you work out which jobs you can do
- help you find a job you’ll like
- go with you to see
  - the place where you will work
  - the people you will work with
- check that you and your employer get the right amount of support
Can my local Jobcentre Plus help me get ready for work?

Yes, people at your local Jobcentre Plus can help you get ready for work. They can help you decide what job is right for you… and then help you get it.

Ask at your local Jobcentre Plus about

• Disability Employment Advisers
• work preparation
• WORKSTEP

Information about these is on the following pages.

And see page 20 for information about how to get in touch with Jobcentre Plus.

Disability Employment Advisers

Jobcentre Plus’s Disability Employment Adviser knows a lot about work for disabled people. For example

• the adviser can give you an employment assessment. After it is done, you will get an action plan to help you get the job you want

Employment assessment

This is a service to help you work out which jobs you can do and how your disability affects those jobs. It does not affect benefits.
• the adviser can look out for jobs that match what you can do. And if you want, the adviser can contact the employer for you

• the adviser can offer you other help such as the **New Deal for Disabled People**

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**New Deal for Disabled People**

This is a programme to give advice and help to people with a disability or health condition.

If you join the New Deal for Disabled People, the Job Broker

• can help you look for work

• can help you work out what job is best for you

• can tell you about how work will affect the money you get

• can help you prepare for job interviews

• can give you information about how the law can protect you in work

• can give you advice and support when you are in work

And if you get a job and it doesn’t work out – you may be able to go back onto the benefit you were getting before starting the job.

If you want more information about Disability Employment Advisers, ask at your local Jobcentre Plus. Find out their address and phone number at [www.jobcentreplus.gov.uk](http://www.jobcentreplus.gov.uk) or in your local phone book.
Work preparation

You may get work preparation activities if you have not worked for a long time because of disability or illness. The activities, which usually include going on a short unpaid work placement, help you to learn how to deal with any problems that may happen when you go back to work.

Work preparation

This is a set of activities for people who have not worked for a long time because of a disability or illness.

The activities

• help you to feel confident about yourself
• help you to increase the hours you feel able to work
• help you to find out what you can do
• help you to find out if you are ready for work

If you are interested in work preparation, ask for more information from the Disability Employment Adviser at Jobcentre Plus.
WORKSTEP

You may be able to join WORKSTEP if a lot of things are stopping you from working.

WORKSTEP

This is for people with lots of things stopping them from working.

A WORKSTEP adviser will

• help you find a job
• go with you to meet the new people you will work with
• make a plan to help you do your new job well
• arrange for support to help you learn and do your new job
• talk to you to make sure everything is OK after you have started work

If you are interested in WORKSTEP, ask for more information from the Disability Employment Adviser at Jobcentre Plus.
What happens when I’m ready to look for work?

You can get help when you are ready to start looking for work too.

Application forms and interviews

There are lots of books that give tips about filling in application forms and doing well in interviews. Have a look at the books in your local library. Ask at the library if you cannot find the books you want.

If you have a computer, look on http://www.jobcentreplus.gov.uk/JCP/Customers/Jobhuntinghelp/index.html for tips about interviews and filling in application forms.

Programme centres

Many Jobcentre Plus offices have special places called programme centres.

Programme centre

This is a place run by Jobcentre Plus where people can get

• help to find jobs

• help to apply for jobs

• help when they are going back to work

Programme centres have stamps, writing paper, newspapers, phones and computers for people looking for jobs. And some give lessons to

• teach people about interviews

• teach people the best way to use the phone
• teach people about the best ways to apply for jobs

To find out if there is a programme centre near you, ask at Jobcentre Plus.

The disability symbol

Some employers use the two ticks symbol (some call it the disability symbol). This shows they look after their disabled workers.

Look out for employers who use the two ticks symbol. It means they are happy to give jobs to disabled people and they want to know what you can do.

Job Introduction Scheme

If you find a job but you or the employer is not sure the job is right for you, the Job Introduction Scheme might help.

Job Introduction Scheme

This is money the Government pays to your employer to help them pay your wages for a few weeks until you are both sure the job is right for you.
When the Job Introduction Scheme money finishes, you can usually keep the job if your employer is happy with the work you have done.

If you are interested in the Job Introduction Scheme, ask for more information from the Disability Employment Adviser at Jobcentre Plus.

How else can Jobcentre Plus help me find a job?

There are other ways Jobcentre Plus can help you find a job. When you visit Jobcentre Plus you can

- **use the internet** – go to www.jobcentreplus.gov.uk to look for jobs and courses

- **use a phone** – call Jobseeker Direct to find out about the latest jobs. Phone them on 0845 6060 234 – our textphone number is 0845 6055 255

- **use our touch screens** – use a Jobpoint screen to look at lists of jobs. And you can print out those you like
Self employment

Some disabled people decide to be self employed when they start work.

Self employed

This is when someone works for themselves in their own business.

Self-employed people do not have an employer, but other people may work for them.

If you are thinking about being self employed and live in England or Wales, you can get help from your local Learning and Skills Council. You can find them in the Yellow Pages phone book under ‘Business Enterprise Agencies’.

And if you live in England, you can also get help from Business Link

- on your computer at www.businesslink.gov.uk
- by phone on 0845 600 9006
Should I tell an employer about my disability?

Many disabled people think about this when they apply for a job.

A law called the **Disability Discrimination Act** says employers must not treat people unfairly because they are disabled. This applies to all employers except the army, navy and airforce.

**Disability Discrimination Act**

This is a law to make sure disabled people are treated fairly.
But employers can ask questions about health and disabilities as long as they don’t use the answers to treat people unfairly.

When you apply for a job, you usually have to fill in an application form. A good job application form

- makes it clear that disabled people can apply for a job
- tells you how the employer treats job applications from disabled people
- includes questions about disability and health only if this is important for the job
- asks you if you need any help to fill in the application form, go to an interview or do the job

But not all employers have good job application forms. And if you get a bad application form you may not want to tell the employer about your disability.

In the end you must make the decision to tell the employer or not. But remember

- if you are asked about your health or disability, answer clearly
- be clear about whether you have an illness or a disability
- say how your disability might affect you at work. And if you think it will have no effect, say so
- tell the employer about what you can do. And tell them why you think you are the right person for the job

If you are worried about telling an employer about your disability, you can talk to the Disability Employment Adviser at Jobcentre Plus. And if you want them to, they may contact the employer for you.
But you should also remember

- you must tell the employer if your disability might be a danger to
  yourself or other people at work

- if you say you don’t have a disability when really you do, this could
  affect your job later

- if you don’t mention your disability and then lose your job because
  of your disability, you may not be able complain. This is because
  the employer cannot be expected to make changes to help you do
  a job if you have not told them about your disability

What if I think I’ve been treated unfairly?

If you think you have been treated unfairly by an employer, talk to the
Disability Employment Adviser at Jobcentre Plus. You can also talk to
the Commission for Equality and Human Rights.

**Commission for Equality and Human Rights**

This is a group set up by the Government to look after the rights
of different groups of people. One of the groups is people with
disabilities.
3. I have a job – can Jobcentre Plus help me?

Access to Work

Jobcentre Plus has a special service to help disabled people who are working or about to start work. This service is called Access to Work.

Access to Work

This service is for disabled people who have a job or are about to start a job. It helps make sure they can work as equals with other people.

It does this by giving advice and paying for things that help disabled people work as equals with other people.

How do I apply for help from Access to Work?

If you want to apply for help from Access to Work, phone the Access to Work Centre. You can get their number at Jobcentre Plus.

What help could I get?

Access to Work can

- pay for things that help you do the same job as other people. For example, special computer programs for people who cannot see very well.

- pay for changes to the building where you work so that you can use it
• pay for
  • someone to be with you while you get to and from work
  • someone to be with you at work so you can do your job
• pay for getting you to and from work if you cannot use a bus or train
• pay for someone to be with you at a job interview if communication is hard for you. For example if you are deaf

The rules also allow for other ‘one-off’ support payments.

More information about Access to Work

If you want more information about Access to Work, talk to the Disability Employment Adviser at Jobcentre Plus.

Contacting people who may be able to help me

Before you make a phone call

Phone calls can cost a lot of money, so please read the following information. Or you can check the cost of calls with your phone company before you phone.

0800 numbers: If the phone number starts with 0800 and you are calling from a BT phone or phone box, calls cost nothing. Sometimes these calls are called Freefone. But you may have to pay if you use other companies’ phones or phone boxes, a mobile phone, or if you are calling from a foreign country.

0845 numbers: If a phone number starts with 0845 and you are calling from a BT phone or phone box, calls cost no more than 10p for the
first minute, then 4p a minute after that. But you may have to pay if you use other companies’ phones or phone boxes, a mobile phone, or if you are calling from a foreign country.

Textphone numbers: Textphone numbers are for people who find it hard to speak or hear clearly. If you do not have a textphone, your local library or citizens advice bureau may have one. But you cannot talk or send texts to Textphones.

Jobcentre Plus contacts

Jobcentre Plus local offices

At Jobcentre Plus we can help people find the right job or course. If you need money, you can talk to us about benefits. And you can ask us to work out if you would be better off working than getting benefits. We can also tell you about the linking rules and permitted work – if you do not know what these are, see the Word list at the back of this booklet.

Phone: If you want to phone Jobcentre Plus, our numbers are in the phone book or on our website. When you phone, ask to talk to a Disability Employment Adviser.

Website: www.jobcentreplus.gov.uk

Jobseeker Direct

Jobseeker Direct is a place where you can search for jobs and then apply by phone. Jobseeker Direct is part of Jobcentre Plus.

Phone: 0845 6060 234 – 8am to 6pm on weekdays, and 9am to 1pm on Saturdays. Closed on Sundays

Textphone: 0845 6055 255

Website: www.jobcentreplus.gov.uk
New Deal for Disabled People

Phone: 0800 137 177

Textphone: 0800 435 550

Website: www.newdeal.gov.uk

If you want to ask about any New Deal programme, talk to the New Deal helpline.

Phone: 0845 606 2626 – 7am to 11pm every day

Textphone: 0845 606 0680

You can also use a computer to find out if one of our job-finding teams is working in your area. Go to www.jobbrokersearch.co.uk

Benefit Enquiry Line

These phone numbers are for disabled people, carers, or people acting for a disabled person.

Phone: 0800 88 22 00 – 8.30am to 6.30pm on weekdays, and 9am to 1pm on Saturdays. Closed on Sundays

Textphone: 0800 24 33 55

Other help

You can get other help, including help to fill in forms to apply for a job, from the following places:

- **Website:** go to www.jobcentreplus.gov.uk to look at jobs. If you are not ready for work yet, you can look at courses
• **Phone:** 0845 6060 234 to find out about the latest jobs

• **Textphone:** 0845 6055 255 to find out about the latest jobs

• **Jobpoint touch screens:** Try the Jobpoint touch screens at the Jobcentre Plus office. The touch screens show lists of jobs. And you can print out information about jobs you like and how to apply

## Disability groups

### Directgov

The Directgov website has a special section for disabled people, people with health problems, and carers. And there is a list of disability groups and information about how to contact your local council.

**Website:** [www.direct.gov.uk/disability](http://www.direct.gov.uk/disability)

### Royal Association for Disability and Rehabilitation

**Address:** 12 City Forum  
250 City Road  
London EC1V 8AF

**Phone:** 020 7250 3222 – 9.00am to 5.00pm on weekdays

**Fax:** 020 7250 0212

**Minicom:** 020 7250 4119

**E-mail:** radar@radar.org.uk
Commission for Equality and Human Rights

Phone: 08457 622 633 – 8.00am to 8.00pm on weekdays

Textphone: 08457 622 644

Website: www.drc-gb.org

Fax: 08457 778 878

Address: DRC Helpline
         Freepost
         MID02164
         Stratford upon Avon CV37 9BR

General information

Citizens Advice

Ask at the Citizens Advice office for free advice about the law, money, benefits and other problems.

- Phone: Look in the phone book for the number of your nearest Citizens Advice office

- Website: www.citizensadvice.org.uk
Self employment

Learning and Skills Councils

If you live in England or Wales, ask your local Learning and Skills Council for advice and information about courses.

**Phone:** Look in the Yellow Pages phone book for the number of your nearest Learning and Skills Council. It is listed under **Business Enterprise Agencies**.

Business Link

If you live in England, Business Link gives help to small businesses.

- **Phone:** 0845 600 9006
- **Website:** www.businesslink.gov.uk
Word list

Access to Work

This service is for disabled people who have a job or are about to start a job. It helps make sure they can work as equals with other people.

It does this by giving advice and paying for things that help disabled people work as equals with other people.

Commission for Equality and Human Rights

This is a group set up by the Government to look after the rights of different groups of people. One of the groups is people with disabilities.

Disability Discrimination Act

This is a law to make sure disabled people are treated fairly.

Employer

This is a person or company that pays other people to do work for them.

Employment assessment

This is a service to help you work out which jobs you can do and how your disability affects those jobs. It does not affect benefits.

Individual budget

This is when you have been put in charge of the care and support you get, and have control over the money to pay for it.
**Job Induction Scheme**

This is money the Government pays to your employer to help them pay your wages for a few weeks until you are both sure the job is right for you.

**Jobcentre Plus**

The part of the Government that helps people find jobs, or pays them if they cannot work.

**Linking rules**

These are rules that make sure no-one is worse off if they try working or training but then reclaim Incapacity Benefit within a time limit.

If a new claim is made within the time limit the person will get the Incapacity Benefit they had before they tried working or training.

**New Deal for Disabled People**

This is a programme run by Jobcentre Plus to give help and advice to people who get a disability or health benefit.

If you join the New Deal for Disabled People, the adviser

- can help you work out what job is best for you
- can tell you about how work will affect the money you get
- can help you prepare for job interviews
- can tell you about voluntary work
- can tell you how the law can protect you in work
And if you get a job and it doesn’t work out – may be able to go back onto the benefit you were getting before starting the job.

**Permitted work**

This is work you can do while you are getting a disability or health benefit.

**Programme centre**

This is a place run by Jobcentre Plus where people can get

- help to find jobs
- help to apply for jobs
- help when they are going back to work

**Self employed**

This is when someone works for themselves in their own business.

Self-employed people do not have an employer, but other people may work for them.

**Voluntary work**

This is work some people do without getting paid. For example many people who work in charity shops do not get paid.
Work preparation

This is a set of activities for people who have not worked for a long time because of a disability or illness.

The activities

• help you to feel confident about yourself
• help you to increase the time you feel able to work
• help you to find out what you can do
• help you to find out if you are ready for work

WORKSTEP

This is for people with lots of things stopping them from working.

A WORKSTEP adviser will

• help you find a job
• go with you to meet the new people you will work with
• make a plan to help you do your new job well
• arrange for support to help you learn and do your new job
• talk to you to make sure everything is OK after you have started work
Remember that this booklet is a guide only. It is not meant to say exactly what your legal rights are. While we have tried to make sure that the information in this booklet is correct at the date shown on the cover, it is possible that there may be incorrect information or some items may be oversimplified. Also, please remember that the information in this booklet is likely to become less accurate over time, for example because of changes to the law.

www.jobcentreplus.gov.uk/individualbudgets

Jobcentre Plus is committed to applying the principles of equal opportunities in its programmes and services.

This product is also available in large print, audio and Braille on request at Jobcentre Plus.

Part of the Department for Work and Pensions