Evaluation of the New Deal for Disabled People
Innovative Schemes pilots

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A report of research carried out by the Tavistock Institute on behalf of the Department for Work and Pensions (formerly known as Department of Social Security) and Department for Education and Employment
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Access to Work

The Access to Work programme provides practical advice and support to disabled people to overcome work-related obstacles resulting from disability. Through the ES it pays a grant towards any costs that result from disability. Examples of what it can help pay for include:

- a communicator if you are deaf/hearing impaired in interviews etc;
- special equipment to suit particular work needs;
- suitable alterations to the working environment;
- a support worker for practical help at work.

BA
Benefits Agency.

Benefits

Participants in the NDDP Innovative Scheme pilots were eligible to receive one or more of the following benefits:

- Incapacity Benefit
- Severe Disablement Allowance
- Income Support with a disability premium
- Jobseeker’s Allowance
- carers receiving Invalid Care Allowance

In addition, the pilots targeted those who were at risk of moving onto benefits due to disability or ill-health (including those receiving Statutory Sick Pay).

BSL
British Sign Language.

Cohort
The group of clients accepted onto schemes within the time frame of the individual tranches of schemes.

A co-operative

A co-operative has a structure where the members are the owners and decision makers. (A social firm is a business which uses a market orientated production of goods and services to pursue a social mission in this case the employment of disabled.)

DDA

DEAs
Disability Employment Advisers within Employment Service.

Disabled people
The report uses the term disabled people to include people with a long-term illness in accordance with the preferred usage of the term amongst disability organisations. The client group are those with a disability and long-term illness who are currently receiving: Incapacity Benefit, Income Support with a disability premium, and Severe Disablement Allowance, Jobseeker’s Allowance, and carers receiving Invalid Care Allowance, and those who are at risk of moving onto benefits (including those receiving Statutory Sick Pay for more than 8 weeks) as a result of sickness or disability.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Acronym</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>DSS</td>
<td>Department of Social Security.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DfEE</td>
<td>Department for Education and Employment.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ES</td>
<td>Employment Service.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EFD</td>
<td>Employer's Forum on Disability.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eligibility</td>
<td>The criteria by which a disabled person may enter the Innovative Scheme set either by the DSS (see disabled people) or by the scheme itself (see selectivity).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ES</td>
<td>Employment Service.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ESF</td>
<td>European Social Fund.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EU</td>
<td>European Union.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FEFC</td>
<td>Further Education Funding Council.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Generic</td>
<td>Referring to the whole class or group (general) i.e. covering the whole range of disabilities or skills.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Host organisation</td>
<td>The organisation within which the Innovative scheme is located and delivered (see also lead organisation).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lead organisation</td>
<td>The organisation which holds the contract with the DSS and which manages the delivery of the Innovative Scheme.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LEAs</td>
<td>Local Education Authorities.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Matching</td>
<td>The process through which clients and job opportunities are matched to ensure the sustainable employment. This could be clients to jobs or jobs to clients.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mediating</td>
<td>The action taken by an intermediary to resolve issues, in this case between employers and clients/employees, particularly useful for job retention.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mobilising</td>
<td>Engaging clients and employers to actively participate in the scheme, supporting them in acquiring new information, knowledge or skills, opening up new opportunities.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mobilising, Matching, Mediating and Supporting</td>
<td>The model proposed by the report as the process and actions schemes need to undertake in order to achieve successful outcomes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pan-pathway</td>
<td>The incorporation of all the necessary pathway activities and processes within the scheme i.e. mobilising disabled people, employers and matching, supporting and mediating between the two.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Partners</td>
<td>Used mainly to refer to organisations that were working with, or supporting, the lead organisation in the delivery of the scheme who were named on the project application forms as partners. However, other organisations became involved in scheme activities at a later date, and were also sometimes referred to in quotations as partners.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pathway</td>
<td>The necessary route that a particular client would have to travel in order to move into employment. This report identifies the different processes and activities of schemes which were offered to help clients on the journey i.e. mobilising, matching, mediating and supporting.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Regional Disability Service

The Regional Disability Service is part of the Employment Service. The service is delivered in nine regions/countries. Each region is managed by a Disability Service Manager who oversees a number of Disability Service Teams (based mainly in Jobcentres) consisting of a Disability Service Team Manager or Leader and a number of Disability Employment Advisers (DEAs). They deliver employment support and advice to disabled people and employers. The Regional Disability Service increasingly works in partnership with external organisations of and for disabled people in the delivery of employment support to disabled people and employers.

Seamless/Seamlessness

The provision of a joined up service that followed the client through the scheme and moved the client onto each next stage.

Selectivity

The extent to which a scheme selects clients on the basis of disability, job readiness, age or other criteria.

Social firm

A social firm is a business which uses a market orientated production of goods and services to pursue a social mission, in this case the employment of disabled. (A co-operative has a structure where the members are the owners and decision makers.)

Specialist

The extent to which the scheme, organisation or partnership specialises in a particular disability, or a particular process or method for getting people into work.

SRB

Single Regeneration Budget.

Support in employment

The support offered to both clients and employers to effect the transition into employment and help sustain that employment in the long term.

Supporting

The support available to the client throughout the scheme and within employment. The support can be either formal or informal.

Targeting

The action of aiming at a specific group e.g. to engage and mobilise specific groups of disabled people, and/or employers.

Targets

The number of people the scheme expected to accept, and the number of people the scheme expected to get into work or to retain in employment. The targets were initiated by the schemes and/or negotiated with the DSS.

Therapeutic earnings

Earnings received by claimant carrying out therapeutic work under conditions agreed by doctor and DSS (see below). The claimant must earn no more than £58.50 a week, after any allowable deductions. If earnings are below the limit, Incapacity Benefit or Severe Disablement Allowance are not affected. Income Support, Housing Benefit and Council Tax Benefit may be affected.

Therapeutic work

Therapeutic work must be done on the advice of a doctor. It must either help to improve, prevent or delay deterioration in the condition causing incapacity and be less than an average of 16 hours weekly; or be part of a treatment programme in hospital; or be done within a sheltered work environment.

TECs/LECs

Training and Enterprise Councils (LECS – Local Enterprise Councils in Scotland), now known as Local Training and Skills Councils.
Tranche

The set of schemes working within a specific time frame. This report represents evidence from two tranches of schemes 1998-1999, and 1999-2000 which together represented the Innovative Scheme Project.

12 month/52-week linking rule

A person who leaves an incapacity benefit is able to reclaim their previous rate of benefit if they fall sick again within a period of 52 weeks (12 months). The rule is designed to help people return to benefit after trying to work and means that a person does not have to re-qualify for the higher rates of benefit that are paid after extended periods of incapacity. To get 52-week linking a person has to have:

- been incapable of work for more than 28 weeks;
- stopped receiving a benefit dependant on incapacity;
- started work, or Work Based Learning for Adults (Training for Work in Scotland) administered by Employment Services, within one week of leaving benefit; and
- told the Secretary of State up to one month after their benefit ended that they had started work.

52-week linking applies to Incapacity Benefit, Income Support, Housing Benefit, Council Tax Benefit, and partners of Jobseekers.

Work

For the purposes of N D D P programme, outcomes in terms of participants obtaining ‘work’ implied that these were now in paid employment of at least 16 hours a week.

Work Based Learning for Adults (WBLA) in England and Wales, Training for Work (TfW) in Scotland

Work Based Learning for Adults is available locally through Training and Enterprise Councils (in England and Wales) and Local Enterprise Companies (in Scotland), and their Training Providers (it may also have its own local name). Work Based Learning for Adults is a positive way to train or gain valuable work experience that is directly related to the job you want to do and aims to:

- help unemployed people move into sustained employment;
- help long term unemployed people to gain the occupational skills needed to fill recognised local skill shortages; and
- enable long term unemployed people to make a success of self-employment.

Basic Employability Training is available for people who need extra help before they start job-related training. Similar training is available in Scotland through TfW.
Introduction

The New Deal for Disabled People (NDDP) - Innovative Schemes project was set up in late 1997 to identify and test different approaches to helping disabled people move into or remain in work. Twenty-four schemes were commissioned over a two year period, representing a wide range of different approaches. The Evaluation Development and Review Unit (EDRU) of the Tavistock Institute was commissioned to undertake an evaluation alongside this programme. The evaluation methods included a two-stage visit to every scheme, analysis of documentary material, case studies of a small selection of schemes and emerging issues, and secondary analysis of monitoring data.

Background to the Innovative Schemes

The ‘Innovative Schemes’ were recruited from across different sectors of provision: voluntary and independent sector (twelve); public sector (seven); and private and commercial firms (five).

Lead organisations decided to apply for NDDP funding for a variety of different reasons, often related to their interest in developing new areas of work on behalf of their clients, or because they had identified gaps in the existing provision.

The background of the lead organisation was an important influence in the approach that they took towards the provision of employment support to disabled people and the kind of activities that they opted to provide. Most of the lead organisations had previous experience in either the employment field or in disability services. Some worked in both fields and a few had experience of neither.

Service delivery: activities of the schemes

In the course of the evaluation programme, a ‘pathway model’ was developed which helped to map out the different kinds of activities in which the schemes were involved. This model was developed by the Tavistock Institute to aid the evaluation and helped to distinguish different points in the ‘pathway to work’ at which schemes might intervene. This tool, although not used by the schemes themselves, indicated the need for both ‘mobilising and supporting’ and ‘matching and mediating’ activities to take place with both clients and employers:

- Mobilising/supporting activities focused on encouraging active participation and involvement of sick and disabled people and employers, working towards increasing work opportunities for disabled people.
Matching/mediating activities focused specifically on finding suitable employment opportunities for scheme clients. Mediation was particularly important in a few schemes, which helped people to retain employment following the onset of disability or ill health.

Figure 1  Pathways to employment: A general model

To provide clients with a smooth ‘pathway’ from the benefit to employment schemes often had to fill gaps in service provision.

Very broadly, there were three approaches that different schemes adopted towards providing support into employment and retaining jobs:

- Working primarily with the individual client through training and support.
- Working to smooth the journey between benefit and employment by working with employers as well as clients; many schemes here were engaged in raising employers’ disability awareness as well as negotiating jobs or work placements.
- Setting up a prepared route to specific areas of employment or employers.

In addition, rather than getting people into work, some schemes focused primarily on job retention.

Although there was no one pattern to the approaches taken, schemes did follow a broadly similar sequence of activities:

- Recruitment and making links with referral sources.
- Assessment of clients’ whole situation - not only ‘work readiness’.
- Planning a programme of activities, which might include, as relevant, personal preparation, acquiring general skills, specific training, job seeking skills, work experience (etc).
- Providing and/or accessing these.
Making links with employers, supporting job seeking and the transition into work.

Providing individual support for clients through the schemes and into work.

Through their activities the schemes were able to provide a new service - or package of services - which ‘felt’ different to clients in comparison with past experiences. The hub of this seemed to be a highly individualised and flexible approach and an understanding of the needs and experience of disabled people.

**Developing partnerships**

In order to complement their own experience, and networks, and provide a broader range of services, lead organisations had put together partnerships with between two and 35 partners. Partners were an important source of additional resources - in terms of premises, funding, staff and giving the scheme credibility in areas in which they had not worked before. Partnerships were also seen as an important way of improving the level of co-ordination and mutual understanding between the different agencies which had contributions to make to people seeking employment.

Unanticipated difficulties and changes such as a downturn in a local labour market or delays in recruiting clients following the start-up of schemes often had an impact on partnerships - these could affect the commitment of partners to the scheme. Another problem was (sometimes unavoidable) delays in finalising contracts which resulted in some schemes missing crucial deadlines.

In spite of these difficulties, the experience of working in partnership was often a very positive one. Many partners commented on how valuable it had been in terms of learning about issues related to the employment of disabled people, benefits for their clients, or in developing better networks and communication with other agencies.

Working in partnership required:

- considerable investment of time and resources;
- having a clear vision and sense of mutual benefit;
- good leadership skills;
- clarity about the roles of different partners;
- flexibility to respond to changes taking place in the schemes;
- opportunities to address difficulties with partnership relations.

**Managing schemes**

There were two broad management tasks: managing the activities of the scheme and managing the wider relationships, particularly partners, potential referral agencies, potential employers and other disability agencies.
Managing activities of schemes: The role of frontline staff emerged as crucial in building trust as well as delivering training, managing the ‘pathway’ and providing individual support. On the whole, an individualised and flexible approach was most favoured by scheme managers and staff and this was echoed by clients’ comments.

Internally, schemes generally operated with one manager and a team of staff. Some of these were specialists, but the majority worked generically with clients, supporting them through stages in the pathway to work. Where specialist skills were required, staff were recruited or seconded from other agencies to meet skill requirements. Staff recruited from the Employment Service brought valuable knowledge about the benefits system and facilitated links with the service.

Managing wider relationships: Management of schemes with multiple partners, across several locations was particularly challenging. Partner organisations often had very different agendas, expectations and cultural orientations. These differences were mediated and managed through steering or advisory groups, or on a one to one basis.

The skills and experience of managers was often key to how well schemes were able to manage both internal and external relationships. It was their primary task to ensure that the scheme stayed in focus and on target.

Key strengths of management staff included:

- commitment to the overall vision of the scheme;
- leadership skills and ability to direct the scheme;
- staff co-ordination and support;
- knowledge/experience of working with disabled people and disability agencies;
- experience of work in the field of employment, and with employers.

Client groups

Between them, schemes covered work with a whole range of eligible clients. Some targeted those who were more job-ready and thus easier to place; however others targeted those who were some distance from the labour market. Clients with more complex needs tended to require a longer period of time to progress and support. Some groups (e.g. people with learning difficulties, mental health problems and brain injuries) were found to sometimes require quite specialised support.

Clients appreciated the level of support which schemes provided and the sense of progression towards employment which did, all the same, allow people to move at their own pace. The work focus established by schemes was welcomed, however intermediate or unanticipated benefits like social gains were also highly valued.
Schemes worked directly with employers to achieve job-outcomes, raise awareness and include them as partners in the scheme. Scheme staff developed an understanding of employers as ‘clients’ or ‘customers’. This involved using employer’s ‘language’ and responding to their individual business needs. Employers found that their fears about employing disabled people diminished after involvement with schemes.

The approach to engaging employers varied according to individual employers’ willingness to become involved with schemes. Three ‘types’ of employer were identified by the evaluators:

- ‘closed’ employers – these had a limited understanding of disability issues and were unwilling to change their approach, but would engage in non-threatening activities;
- ‘open to change’ employers – these understood disability issues and viewed disabled people as employable;
- ‘engaged’ employers – these were committed to strategic change, and often contributed time, money and knowledge to the schemes.

Scheme staff deployed a range of strategies to find work opportunities for clients and raise awareness of disability issues. Closed employers were generally more amenable to taking on clients for work placements or other non-threatening activities; employers who were open to change were more likely to participate in awareness training sessions, or be amenable to schemes which were helpful in solving recruitment or retention problems. Engaged employers were often already acting as partners in schemes or were encouraged to provide advice and information.

Success for schemes could be measured in a number of ways. However, as this was an employment-related programme, the effectiveness of enabling clients to find work was a central criterion. Initial targets for numbers of clients supported into work often proved to have been unrealistic, so achievement of their own targets was not a useful criteria against which to judge scheme’s success. An alternative measure was the relationship between the percentage of clients actually recruited who moved into employment and how selective the schemes were.

Of the most successful schemes, five were selective on job readiness criteria, and four were not. The main reasons for their success were:

- comprehensive pathways being established from the point of entry into the scheme through to employment. These included, for the most part, intensive one to one staff support and guidance;
- employment opportunities being integral to the scheme i.e. there was a job to go to; and
- carefully targeting opportunities in the local labour market where there were skills gaps or labour shortages.
Schemes which appeared apparently less successful were all generally less selective in terms of job-readiness. The main reasons behind schemes coming below the average respective cohorts were:

- working with a client group with complex needs;
- having long start up times due to lack of experience in the field, having to build up a referral and employer network and having weaker partnerships;
- working over multiple sites which necessitated a spread of resources;
- weaknesses in the client pathway - primarily at the transition from scheme to work which in turn related to poorer links with employers;
- weaknesses in more than one of the above areas.

Activities were most easily absorbed into existing organisations if:

- the size and capacity of host and partner organisation was sufficient to enable these to sustain their activities;
- the activities were sufficiently close to the existing vision or core activities of the organisation enable the activities to be supported through existing sources of funding; and/or
- the host or partner organisations had the experience and knowledge to attract funding from new sources to support the activities.

Funding was also widely seen as an obstacle to replication. Although most were keen to see their activities replicated elsewhere - in other locations and with other client groups - the time/resources demands of their client groups meant that strongly employment outcome related funding was likely to be problematic. ‘Matching’ type activities were likely to be easiest to fund from this kind of funding. ‘Mobilisation and support’ of disabled people and employers, however, was likely to continue to face difficulties, because the outcomes, in terms of numbers of people placed in employment, were generally longer term, and less clear cut. If funding for future projects is to be funded primarily on outcomes into employment, then this will need to be based on a realistic assessment of targets.

Nevertheless, in at least five schemes some replication of activities was already taking place mainly by lead organisation/parties. There was also evidence of considerable transfer of more general learning - basic principles into host agencies and their partners, and into the employers with which they were working.
The evaluation of the Innovative Schemes generally confirmed good practice principles derived from earlier work in this area - that support provided to disabled job-seekers needs to be flexible and empowering, to allow choice, and to be realistic in terms of the local labour market.

However, the broader vision opened up by the schemes suggested that other principles also need to be taken on board in setting up, or commissioning schemes of this kind in the future. The importance of ‘mobilising’ activities carried out by schemes (both in terms of the mobilisation of the client group towards employment, and mobilisation of employers in terms of wider disability awareness) should be underscored. In this context, the learning emerging from the schemes, about working effectively in partnership with other local agencies, and with employers, is particularly key. Without such background activity, the potential for schemes undertaking effective job ‘matching’ activities will continue to be limited. Schemes will be forced to focus on the most ‘job-ready’ clients, and the most ‘disabled-ready’ employers.
1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Setting the scene

The New Deal for Disabled People (NDDP) Innovative Schemes is part of a programme of new Government initiatives aimed at helping people move into, and remain in, work. NDDP is a joint initiative from the Department of Social Security (DSS) and the Department for Education and Employment (DfEE) and is targeted specifically at people with disabilities and long term health problems, particularly those receiving benefits on the grounds of incapacity for work. In 1998, two pilot schemes were set up to test different approaches for the NDDP, a Personal Adviser Service (PAS), and a series of Innovative Schemes. The DSS took the lead in managing the contracts for the Innovative Schemes, and on managing the evaluation of both pilots.

The 12 PAS pilots and the Innovative Schemes were launched at the same time. The PAS pilots have been part of a separate evaluation which is being carried out by a consortium of research organisations. The final report of this research will be published in summer 2001. An interim report on the Personal Adviser pilots was published last year.

The Innovative Schemes had a very open brief to identify and test a range of different approaches to helping disabled people find work. Following a competitive tendering exercise, contracts for funding were awarded to twenty-four schemes around the UK, in two tranches. Since the Innovative Schemes had been set up to pilot and demonstrate new ways of working, careful evaluation was required in order to ensure that lessons emerging could be captured and shared with others. The evaluation unit (EDRU) of the Tavistock Institute was commissioned to undertake an evaluation alongside the programme. An interim evaluation report was published in late 1999. This reported on the progress of the first tranche of schemes, and drew some initial conclusions about the lessons emerging. (See Appendix A for a summary of findings at this stage).

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1 NDDP is a programme directed at people with disabilities and long-term illness in receipt of a range of benefits. We use the term ‘disabled people’ throughout this report in accordance with the preferred usage of this term amongst disability organisations in the UK. However, we accept that some of those assisted by Innovative Schemes would not consider themselves ‘disabled people’ in the conventional usage of this term.


This chapter sets out to briefly introduce the approach taken towards the evaluation of the Innovative Schemes programme. In doing this, we also found it useful to outline a model which emerged during the course of the evaluation, which provided an important tool in understanding of the activities being evaluated.

1.2 This report

In this, the final report on the Innovative Scheme evaluation, an overview is provided of all twenty-four schemes funded. Some of these were still in progress at the time that the evaluation drew to a close, so it does not necessarily represent the final word on their experience, although a number of the first tranche of schemes had concluded their activities. In the second half of the evaluation, we were able to explore in greater depth a number of issues which emerged during the first year.

The report is intended to have a broad audience, including those who might wish to set up such schemes in the future, policy makers making decisions about funding, as well as researchers in the field. We have set out to chart this area of work, providing a map of the many different approaches that schemes took to supporting disabled people into work. As we worked at this task, a general framework or ‘model’ emerged of the pathway of disabled people moving towards employment, and of employers moving towards disabled people. This model is presented in this first chapter, and provides an important underlying theme which runs through many of the later chapters.

In the remainder of the first half of the report, we provide a description of the schemes and different aspects of their work. Chapter 2 provides a broad overview of the schemes and their activities, which is likely to be particularly useful to those are seeking an overview of the different approaches that might be taken towards employment support. It also provides a description of the organisations that set up the schemes and their partnership arrangements, which would be useful to those in a position to fund services, in considering what kind of organisations might develop new services, should these be required.

Chapter 3 goes into greater detail about the organisation and structure of schemes and their partnership arrangements, and considers the management and staff that such activities require. It explores some of the difficulties that schemes encountered as they set themselves up, and particularly in their partnership arrangements, and how these were overcome. It also examines what approaches schemes took to the consultation of disabled people, and their relationship with the Employment Service. This chapter would be particularly relevant to an organisation setting up a scheme, when considering what structure and management arrangements are required.

4 One of the schemes failed to become established and data from this scheme is not included in terms of outcomes. However, the early stages of the scheme produced some very useful information concerning partnership arrangements.
Chapter 4 describes in greater depth the activities of the schemes, and the ways in which they addressed the pathway to employment. It examines different approaches that schemes adopted towards providing support at each stage in the process. Again, this would be a useful chapter to an organisation wishing to set up an employment support service for disabled people, and considering the options, in terms of different kinds of activities they might support.

Chapter 5 explores the relationship between schemes and employers. Many schemes made a feature of addressing employer’s, as well as disabled client’s, needs as a way of opening up new employment opportunities, and providing support not only to disabled people wishing to return to work, but also people who were at risk of losing their jobs through disability or long term ill health. This chapter would be particularly relevant to organisations that have not worked with employers before, and are considering extending their activities into this area.

In the second half of the report, we synthesise the learning that was derived from the schemes in relation to how to address the needs of their clients, and the success they achieved in terms of moving them into employment, and in sustaining their activities in the longer term.

Chapter 6 takes a closer look at the clients of schemes and their characteristics. It incorporates information about clients' views about their needs and the kind of services they wanted, with a profile of four sections of the client population that had special needs, needs that were not always fully addressed by generic projects. The four groups are people with mental health problems, people with learning difficulties, people with rehabilitation needs, and people with multiple disabilities. The chapter discusses the implications of client needs for the general approach adopted by schemes of this kind.

Chapter 7 addresses the issue of 'success' of schemes, particularly in terms of the main objective of the programme; supporting disabled people into permanent employment. Success in this respect has to be set carefully in the context of the individual scheme, its particular client group, and the approach that it had adopted to providing employment support. Particularly relevant to this is the degree of selectivity taken by the scheme in recruiting clients - some being more selective in terms of 'work readiness' than others. The chapter also looks at other aspects of success, particularly in terms of the meeting the expectations of different stakeholders involved in the programme: clients, managers and staff, partners and employers.

Chapter 8 takes this theme further in terms of the ability of the schemes to maintain their activities when NDDP funding came to an end, and the extent to which the lessons and models being piloted had been taken up by other agencies. This chapter is particularly relevant to funders and
organisations concerned to see permanent services established in this area, and considering the implications of this in terms of organisational capacity and available sources of funding.

Finally, Chapter 9 draws together the conclusions from the previous chapters, revisiting the original evaluation questions and reflecting on the cumulated evidence, in terms of the viability of schemes of this kind in the future and the kind of policy developments which might be required to support them. It also addresses the question of ‘good practice’, and how far the learning arising from the schemes supported a growing body of knowledge in this area.

1.3 The evaluation strategy

The Innovative Schemes were very varied in structure and orientation, and were set up to provide an opportunity for experimentation and exploration. It was decided that a qualitative approach would be most appropriate for the evaluation of such a programme, an evaluation approach that is as concerned with description and learning as measuring success according to pre-set criteria. It enables factors contributing to different outputs to be explored and good practice principles identified from the experience of schemes to be derived, rather than seeking to prove, through quantitative measurement, the link between a specific input and a specific output.

What constitutes ‘success’ in a field like this will perhaps always be a contested territory, since different stakeholders will engage in activities of this kind with different expectations and needs. It was decided early on, that a stakeholder approach to the evaluation should be adopted, which would allow the views of different participants in the programme - the Government Departments setting up the programme, the organisations running the schemes and their partners, clients taking part in their activities and employers who sought to employ these - to be incorporated.

There was no question that, in a programme designed to support disabled people into employment, the numbers of clients obtaining employment had to be seen as one of the criteria by which the success of schemes should be measured. However, given schemes had very different client groups and varied economic and social environments, it was clear that any hard figures on employment outcomes had to backed up by a thorough understanding of the particular orientation and context of each scheme. This included an understanding of the organisation that set up the scheme, and its partnership arrangements, as well as the wider environment, in terms of the local labour market, the existence of other schemes and services for disabled people and the availability of other agencies which might refer, or be in competition, for clients.
We were also aware that the field of disability employment was already quite well developed, and that a good deal of learning had already taken place as to what did or did not work in relation to supporting disabled people into work, and what constituted ‘good practice’ in this field. The commissioning departments were keen to see guidelines for good practice emerging from the programme, and it was important for these to build on earlier work in the field.

These three ideas were influential in the development of the main tool used in the evaluation – an ‘audit framework’ which was used as the basis for qualitative interviews conducted with those involved in schemes towards the beginning and the end of their operation. This framework was developed following a review of past work in relation to good practice. Questions used in the interviews were based partly on this framework, and partly around a set of key ‘evaluation questions’ which were identified at the start of the evaluation. These questions were:

- How effective are the Innovative Schemes in achieving their objectives?
- What aspects of scheme organisation, design and management account for what has been achieved?
- How are the outcomes and processes of the Innovative Schemes assessed by different stakeholders, including disabled people?
- How replicable and transferable are schemes in whole or in part?
- Are schemes likely to be sustainable with or without NDDP funding?

Interviews were undertaken with a purposive sample of managers, staff, partners and clients, as well as with employers who had become involved in the scheme, either as partners, or through providing work or work experience to clients of the schemes.

In addition to the two stage ‘audit’ of schemes, qualitative information was sought from schemes around a number of issues which emerged as warranting more in depth study. These included issues related to:

- work with employers;
- partnership relationships;
- training activities; and
- sustainability and the transfer of learning.

Guidelines for good practice were derived, amongst other sources, from:

We also had a number of opportunities to test out findings and lessons emerging from the evaluation with those involved in scheme activities and with representatives from the government departments involved: the Department of Social Security, and the Department for Education and Employment.

This took place through workshops convened by the evaluation team (for scheme managers, staff, partners and clients) and through participation in seminars and conferences related to the future direction of policy and practice in this area. A fuller account of the methodology is available in Appendix B.

As the evaluation developed, it became apparent that a more robust ‘framework’ was needed in order to understand the range of activities taking place in the schemes, how these related to the situation of disabled people within the labour market, and the obstacles that stood between them and paid employment. The schemes were extremely varied, both in terms of the kind of organisation hosting them, their partner relationships, and the activities that they were providing. The challenge this posed for evaluation was twofold:

- How to set up reasonable and relevant measures of success which would capture the notion of ‘movement towards’ employability and employment, as well as measuring placements ‘in work’.
- How to make useful comparisons between projects, recognise generic possibilities on the one hand and specific areas of learning on the other.

It was in seeking to understand more about the processes and activities involved that we developed a general model of a pathway towards employment. The model provided a basis both for describing the schemes, and as we will explore in later chapters, making some comparisons across all the schemes, looking at the different models being tried out, and examining fundamental questions about ‘what works and for whom?’

The model sought to incorporate a number of different elements. Firstly, it had to contextualise the activities of the schemes within a wider framework – of a range of different influences and organisations that impinge on disabled people and the labour market into which they are seeking to integrate.

Secondly, the model needed to be dynamic, incorporating the idea of moving people with a disability or long term illness towards, and into, work. In this respect the model needed to be inclusive, i.e. one which assumed that disabled people were job seekers or could be helped to become so. This was broadly in line with one of the principles underlying N D D P and other ‘Welfare to Work’ programmes: that work is a key
factor in reducing social exclusion. It also fitted well with thinking about the progress into work by other excluded groups.\(^6\)

However, it was important to incorporate the idea that employment opportunities are also dynamic. As well as fluctuations of the labour market, some employers might also be on a journey towards increased inclusion of disabled people, particularly in relation to new requirements under the Disability Discrimination Act 1995. In this respect, the model was congruent with the work of the Employers Disability Forum (EDF)\(^7\), which outlines a number of different stages through which employers might move, in relation to disabled people. The EDF model is described in some detail in Chapter Five (5.2). It incorporates the idea that disability employment support schemes can adopt a range of different approaches when dealing with employers, and this might have implications for the attitudes of employers towards the employment of disabled people.

Thirdly, the model needed to capture the idea that progress towards employment might be a very individual and, for some, quite a complicated undertaking involving a number of people and agencies over a period of time. It needed to provide a framework for unpicking the role of different agencies that might become involved, and different services which might be required by disabled people at different stages of their journey to work. Also the way in which these might relate to one another and how any ‘gaps’ in the pathway could be filled to ensure that disabled people did not ‘fall out’ of the pathway, once they had started on their journey towards employment. Once this had been laid out, it would be easier to see the specific role of each Innovative Scheme – in relation to the pathway as a whole, and in relation to different obstacles or gaps which commonly confront someone moving along it.

Finally, we wanted to suggest a model that was generic, which could help to inform and analyse mainstream and commercial labour market processes as well as the rather specific work of the Innovative Schemes. We might expect the schemes’ experiences to highlight particular circumstances where more specialised help or new types of service were needed. And this might address issues not only for disabled people but also other groups within the labour market, for example older people, ex offenders, people with a difficult domestic situation or social responsibilities.

A generic model would also indicate the range of individuals, agencies and interests involved in labour market processes. In particular it would

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\(^6\) An excellent example of this is the ‘comprehensive pathway approach’ used to examine employment initiatives for young people Employment and European Social Fund, 1998: ‘Building a policy partnership with young people.’ The Adapt And Employment Community Initiatives Innovations no 6.

\(^7\) Memorandum by the Employers Forum on Disability to the House of Commons Select Committee on Education and Employment. July 1999.
locate employers and employment opportunities in the system and help to highlight the kind of links and relationships that exist between such commercial interests and other stakeholders. To be generic the model had to be capable of showing where these different interests came into play and to clarify in what ways they might be able to help in overcoming barriers to work for disabled people.

1.4.2 The ‘Pathway’ model described

The model, which emerged during the evaluation, is presented in Figure 1.1.

Figure 1.1 Pathways to employment: A general model

The two principal characters in this model are the disabled person and the employer who, as we have noted, are potentially on a journey towards one another, particularly with the assistance of the kind of intermediary agency represented by the NDDP Innovative Schemes. However, a number of obstacles lie between these two key characters. These might be conceptualised as either individual, or as structural and systemic. (These two views reflect the widely discussed ‘models of disability’ which are often characterised as the ‘medical’ or the ‘social’ model of disability8.)

This journey takes place within a wider context, which is outlined on the left and right sides of the model. This includes factors such as the economy, the political and social environment, as well as other stakeholders such as families and informal carers, disability or employer organisations, campaigning groups, and government departments.

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8 The medical model (Johnson 1994) tends to start from the assumption that the condition belongs to the individual and requires ‘treatment’. The social model sees disability as ‘the disadvantage or restriction of activities caused by a contemporary social organisation which takes no account of people who have physical impairments and learning difficulties and thus excludes them from mainstream social activities’. (Oliver 1995)
The disabled person

Starting from the disabled person's viewpoint, the obstacles to employment might be individualised in terms of the difficulties created by a particular set of impairments or health problems, by their attitudes and expectations regarding employment, or by their preparedness for employment in terms of skills, qualifications and experience. Solutions identified might be to provide special training opportunities, or career advice. Alternatively, the obstacles might be seen as systemic, the product of a set of social structures, attitudes and behaviours which result in particular obstacles for people with impairments who wish to enter the labour market. These might be traced to the wider context - to economic, political, cultural and social forces which lead to the individual disabled person approaching employment in a certain way. A whole range of factors might come into play, such as the kind of education and training accessible to people with impairments, service and family attitudes towards disabled people's employability, the availability of accessible transport and housing, or the conditions of receipt of benefit. Solutions might be seen to lie in changing the attitudes of more traditional disability services, in establishing more accessible transport services, or in changing the terms and conditions of benefit.

The broad category of 'disabled people' is often divided up according to the main impairment which leads to 'disability': for example people may be classified as visually impaired, physically disabled, or as having learning difficulties. However, this categorisation does not necessarily indicate much about the individual's capacity for employment. Each disabled person has their own history, and their employability might relate as much to their past employment experience, family situation, their qualifications and training, and attitude towards work, as it does to their particular impairment or health problem.

Although there is some evidence to suggest that people with different kinds of impairment do encounter slightly different obstacles in terms of employment, many of the obstacles - such as employer prejudice, disincentives to work built into the benefit system or difficulty in accessing suitable training, are faced by many disabled people regardless of the nature of the impairment or illness. Individual impairments and social factors can interact to create a unique set of circumstances for each individual: a factor reflected in the growing adoption of an interactive or transactional model of disability.10

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9 A useful summary of the obstacles encountered by different disabled groups is to be found in Barnes et al 1998 Disabled People and Employment, a review of research and development work, Joseph Rowntree Foundation. Statistical evidence of the differential employment rates of people with different impairments can be found in the Autumn 1996 Labour Force Survey also quoted in the Bidding Pack.

10 Transactional or interactive models see individuals and their environment as influencing one another in positive and negative ways: they emphasise that behaviours do not have a single or unique cause, but draw attention to the large number of variables that are interacting in any one situation. Llewellyn A and Kogan K: 'The Use and Abuse of Models of Disability' Disability and Society, Vol 15, No 1, 2000. pp 157-165.
In the employment field, it is common to merge together a number of these factors within a broad notion of ‘job readiness’ on the part of the disabled person. For example, a model put forward to the House of Commons Select Committee on Education and Employment by the Employers Forum on Disability clustered disabled people into five groups according to responses in the Labour Force Survey, which related to the individual’s closeness to the labour market. This model is described in Chapter 6, and proved to be particularly helpful when we were examining the selectivity of schemes - i.e. the extent to which they were selecting the most ‘ready to work’ applicants for their activities, or seeking to work with all comers, including many people who had not previously considered employment as an option.

**The employer**

The willingness or ability of an employer to employ disabled people might be ‘individualised’ in terms of their particular attitudes, policies and practices and the solution seen in terms of advice, information and support. Alternatively, the reluctance of employers to consider disabled people as suitable job candidates might be seen in the context of general economic pressures within a particular industry, or specific pressures such as rapid change taking place, or the introduction of IT. It might be seen in terms of wider employment legislation (e.g. health and safety) or equal opportunities legislation (e.g. The Disability Discrimination Act, DDA), or the lack of information and support available to employers wishing to open up new opportunities for disabled people. Solutions might be seen in terms of setting up consultation and training services for employers seeking to make changes in line with DDA, or changes in legislation.

**Intermediary agencies**

Between the disabled person and the employer there are a number of ‘intermediary agencies’ which potentially provide a role in bringing the two closer together. These might be generic ‘job finding’ agencies, such as the Employment Service, commercial recruitment agencies (e.g. Manpower) or generic vocational training or guidance agencies, as represented by colleges of further education or career advice services. These may be more or less accessible to, and able to cater for the needs of, disabled job seekers.

There are also a number of intermediary services which specialise in the support of disabled people. These include disability organisations or rehabilitation services, which seek to help disabled people improve their quality of life or return to ‘mainstream’ society following illness or injury, as well as specialist supported employment services (e.g. Remploy, Disability Employment Advisers (DEA) within the Employment Service) and training agencies specialising in the education and training of disabled people. These agencies might be more or less attuned to the realities of the labour market, the needs of employers, and interested in the employment-related needs of their clients.
Making interventions in the ‘pathway’

A new disability employment service as represented by the Innovative Schemes might intervene in this situation in a number of ways. We have summarised these in the model as, mobilising, matching, mediating and supporting.

Mobilising: Represents the activities of seeking out, engaging, preparing and encouraging – either, or both, disabled people and employers, in relation to their path towards one another.

Mobilising disabled job seekers: Conveys the idea that people may need help in a range of tasks involved in being or becoming what is termed in mainstream employment fields, ‘job-ready’. And within NDDP, this includes people who do not really consider themselves to be ‘job seekers’ as such or to be capable of work. Engaging these in new employment-related activities and exploring that point of view might be a first step in mobilising someone into job seeking. Other aspects of mobilisation include providing opportunities for personal development, acquiring generic work skills, preparation for particular areas of employment, vocational guidance, career counselling.

Mobilising employers: Employers too, may require help in opening up new employment opportunities for disabled job seekers. Employers facing skill shortages might seek help in accessing new labour markets, advice on training or, as in the case of the DDA, assistance in understanding and meeting new legislative requirements. Again, the first stage might involve ‘engagement’ of the employers in some task related to supporting disabled people into employment, followed by more active involvement in modifying policies and practices to make them more accessible to disabled employees.

Supporting: Associated with all of these activities are a range of formal and informal supports that help to keep someone going. Whether it is the individual disabled person setting out on the ‘pathway’ or an employer considering the recruitment of disabled people, there is a wide variety of ways in which their efforts might be supported and encouraged. In terms of NDDP Innovative Schemes a supporting role might be significant not only in maintaining and helping to co-ordinate the different activities and elements which make up the ‘pathway’ but also in helping those involved to sustain commitment and confidence over time. This might include aspects which are not directly work related - like home circumstances, domestic responsibilities or personal problems - which can be the source of barriers and considerable difficulty as well as crucial sources of encouragement.

Matching: This refers to the activities involved in bringing potential employees and jobs together. The essential feature is that of collating and making available up-to-date information about work opportunities and vacancies. At its simplest matching is about good information systems,
but agencies also provide advice and active support for job seekers and employers; they build up knowledge about the local employment situation, also about specialised developments, training requirements, new legislation; they assist people in their selection of suitable opportunities, advise on options/alternatives and advise employers about the where and how to recruit for new skills, etc.

In some agencies and services, job matching might extend into aspects of mobilisation, of supporting individuals and helping to overcome any difficulties. It might include working with an employer to help repackage a work opportunity, or to explore the possibility of providing additional support for the disabled person.

Mediating: The notion of mediation is included in the model since there are situations where the role of the intermediary is to assist employer and employee in resolving a problem. Where, for example, an individual’s job is under threat because of a change in their circumstances or in the work environment, it can be to the benefit of both parties to find a way round the problems which enables continued employment. Job retention activities could ensure that where a job was at risk, it is possible to make some accommodation. An impartial intermediary might provide information, advice, access to resources or specialist help as well as facilitating negotiation.

In describing a ‘pathway’ model we are proposing the idea that, in order to link employer and job seeker successfully, a number of different kinds of intervention might be necessary – including mobilising, matching, mediating and support.

The ‘pathway’ notion is used to emphasise that for most people, there will be a number of different elements at play. Without this awareness, specific services, supports or advice may not fit together, there may be gaps or confusing overlaps, and there may be problems in synchronising services or maintaining them over time. The more complex or specific the situation faced by an individual, the more likely it is that links may need to be specifically organised: i.e. a ‘pathway’ has to be created for the one person or employment situation. Generally speaking, the pathway for each person will be quite individual; not everyone will need to go through all the steps on the pathway. However, all clients will go through some of them.

On the whole the Innovative Schemes were acting as intermediary agencies, specifically for people facing highly individual circumstances. Some schemes focused on one or the other ‘end’ of the pathway - specialising in the mobilisation of disabled people or of employers. Others tended to focus their activities on the ‘matching’ activities in the middle. However, many sought to bridge the whole ‘pathway’ by incorporating all elements - mobilising disabled people, employers and matching, supporting and mediating between the two.
1.5 Conclusions  The NDDP Innovative Schemes project set up by the DSS in collaboration with the DfEE represented an important opportunity to learn about the best way in which disabled people could be supported into employment, and what kind of organisations, and structures, were required to supply this support. In evaluating the project, the research team was anxious to ensure that the learning accumulated by the schemes was captured and disseminated in a way that would enable others to draw upon it, and the present report is one contribution to sharing this learning.

Underlying the general learning that arose from the project, we were able to detect a broad ‘model’ of the different elements that were involved in supporting people with disabilities and long term health problems into work, which could be seen as a ‘pathway’. Different schemes were addressing different aspects of this pathway, in different ways. The rest of the report provides a description of how well schemes were able to address these different aspects, and with what success.
This chapter provides a descriptive overview of the Innovative Schemes. The main purpose is to identify their key features and their various approaches to overcoming barriers to work as a basis for understanding the detailed analyses and commentaries on how the Innovative Schemes worked, which is covered in later chapters.

The broad characteristics of the twenty-four schemes are presented in Tables 2.1 and 2.2. The names of the schemes have been removed to preserve their confidentiality. In the rest of this chapter we describe:

- how the Innovative Schemes were shaped by the NDDP programme;
- key features of the lead organisations;
- the partnerships they formed to run schemes; and
- the characteristics of the schemes: how they defined their work and what they did.

Table 2.1 Summary of tranche 1 schemes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scheme</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Scheme A: A private health company, working with an employment agency and other local companies, provides a complete package of rehabilitative therapy combined with in-work support to help people move into or stay in work. Participants have musculo-skeletal problems and depression.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scheme B: A large employer, working in partnership with a carers' association and the Employers Forum on Disability is providing jobs in their call and data processing centres. The scheme includes pre-employment training and mentoring and the opportunity to gain an NVQ in customer service. The scheme is open to people with all types of disabilities, and carers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scheme C: Three national disability organisations, plus a business organisation and local TECs are providing comprehensive support including personal effectiveness training, work experience and in-work support to employers, work colleagues, and clients. It is open to people with all disabilities, with one part of the scheme focusing on the needs of a local ethnic community.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scheme D: A partnership between a disability consultancy, several commercial companies, a TEC, the local authority, an Employers Network on disability and the Employment Service, providing a job retention scheme. This includes a new process for employability assessment, together with a training package aimed at increasing the individual's motivation to return to work. It is open to people with any disability.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scheme E: A partnership between the local college, business partnerships, Development Partners and local Social Work Department. Provides a simulated work environment to prepare clients for work with a major local employer, leading to real jobs with the employers, and a number of other employers identified including a call-centre. Based in a rural area, it is open to participants with a variety of learning and physical disabilities.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scheme F: A TEC operating in partnership with an organisation of disabled people and three local Health Authorities providing a pre-work four-week course with ongoing support for those who have left work because of mental health problems.</td>
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</table>
Scheme G: An organisation for disabled people providing training in confidence building and personal skills, and offering some participants a one-year contract a wide range of local employers. The scheme also seeks to raise awareness among local employers about the positive action they can take to increase the numbers of disabled workers. Scheme is open to people with all types of impairment.

Scheme H: A local college working in partnership with Social Services and three disability organisations has developed a retail outlet in the heart of the local community offering work experience. It provides retail, catering and production experience for participants, anticipated to lead to permanent jobs. Scheme is open to people with all kinds of disability.

Scheme I: An organisation for disabled people has brought together employers, policy makers, educators, families and people with disabilities to tackle the barriers to employment faced by young people with learning difficulties. It demonstrates that people can work successfully together and can make a positive contribution to business with individually tailored support, peer mentoring and work experience.

Scheme J: A national disability organisation working in partnership with a number of commercial organisations, and two community colleges. Provides on-line home based training supported by volunteer buddies on specially adapted IT equipment. Work placement and support is provided by partner organisations. Scheme is open to people with all types of disability.

Table 2.2 Summary of tranche 2 schemes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scheme</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Scheme K</td>
<td>A charitable settlement working in partnership with a number of commercial organisations, Social Services and the Employment Service provides a simulated call centre where clients train for jobs with scheme partners. The scheme includes counselling, guidance, work taster and work experience. It is open to people with all types of disabilities, and carers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scheme L</td>
<td>A national disability organisation working in partnership with health authorities, trusts, Social Services and private sector employers to provide employment support to help people with severe mental health problems return to sustained employment. It includes work skills training, vocational job profiling and job match activities. It also seeks to improve job retention rates by supporting new employees and their employer. It is open to people with severe mental health problems.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scheme M</td>
<td>A regional branch of a national disability organisation working in partnership with a local health trust, local city councils, a local TEC and several large local employers. Has developed and marketed a job retention service. Also offers early intervention support to employers and a range of work and retraining options. The scheme is open to people with all types of disabilities.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scheme N</td>
<td>A regional partnership between a national charity, the Employment Service, TECs, Colleges, and business enterprise agencies is providing support to disabled people to assist them enter self-employment. The scheme supports clients in developing business plans and secures start-up funding. One to one business mentoring has also been provided. The scheme is open to people with all types of disabilities.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scheme O</td>
<td>A local college in partnership with the local authority, the NHS trust, local health support groups and a disability organisation is working to provide re-training for people with heart and circulatory problems, or mental health issues. The scheme helps clients manage their condition and re-enter employment.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scheme P</td>
<td>A commercial organisation and a voluntary organisation working in partnership with a disability information network to provide people with the skills to work from home. Teleworking skills are provided to enable people become self-employed tele-workers. The scheme also offers vocational qualifications, business start-up support and mentor provision. The scheme is open to all types of disability.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Scheme Q: A college-based project working with a number of local and national employers (including the Employers Forum on Disability, the Employment Service and the Institute of Personnel and Development) to provide help for people who are at risk of losing their job due to chronic ill health. Personal mentoring and training is offered to them to retain their employment, or find employment elsewhere. The scheme also provides a hotline service of information, support and guidance on disability issues to employers throughout the South West of England. The scheme is open to people with all types of disabilities in the region.

Scheme R: A national disability organisation working in partnership with a number of local colleges, disability organisations and a commercial organisation to provide one-to-one vocational support to profoundly deaf and severely deaf students. The project builds the self-reliance of deaf job seekers, develops practical techniques for the inclusion of deaf people in the workplace and supports the line managers of deaf staff. Strategies are developed to break down the communications barriers that this group often experience, enabling them to become more self-sufficient and gain and sustain employment.

Scheme S: Two national disability organisations working in partnership with the Employment Service, local hospitals and local employers to deliver a programme to support adults with acquired brain injury, retain or secure new employment. The project creates pathways between medical rehabilitation, vocational assessment, job coaching and supported employment.

Scheme T: Two national disability organisations working in partnership to test and develop a concept of natural support in work for people with learning disabilities. Natural supports are co-workers trained to provide appropriate support, which enables the client to sustain employment. A key element of the scheme is the delivery of disability awareness training in the workplace by trainers with learning disabilities. The scheme is open to people with moderate to severe learning difficulties.

Scheme U: A city council working in partnership with other local councils, a local college, the Employment Service, two hospitals and a national disability organisation. Offers assessment, mentoring support, job search and interview skills to clients with learning difficulties, brain injury and mental health problems. Provides training, work tasters or placements and a client tailored job club. The scheme runs in three locations, covering both rural and urban deprived areas in Scotland.

Scheme V: A local TEC working in partnership with two commercial employers to provide 160 jobs for local disabled people in an organisation. The scheme provides intensive one to one support and tailored training for clients and employers.

Scheme W: The scheme led by a local council, co-ordinates a local partnership of public, private and voluntary sector providers. The scheme provides support to disabled people to help them move into sustainable jobs. Contact workers with a mentoring role work closely with GPs, hospitals and training organisations to organise pre-employment training, work experience placements and work-based support. The scheme is open to all but the focus is on people with mental health and learning difficulties.

Scheme X: A regional disability organisation working with a significant employer network co-ordinated by a business organisation. Supports retention and return to work of people with mental health problems. A specialist employment agency with telephone helpline facilities provides personal advice, information and referrals to local employment officers. It aims to reduce employers' payroll sickness costs while providing stress workshops and improving employee mental health awareness.
2.1 Shaping the NDDP programme

The key objective of the NDDP programme was to move disabled people, currently on benefit\textsuperscript{11}, into work - or along the way towards employment - and to reduce the risk of people in work losing employment through injury or illness - job retention. The Innovative Schemes were a series of individual projects which were relatively short term, experimental and aiming to provide practical demonstrations of how the barriers facing disabled people could be tackled: the emphasis was on exploring new ways of working.

The way Schemes were designed, set up and run were framed by the NDDP requirements in terms of funding criteria, terms and conditions. In particular it is helpful to note:

- NDDP was based on the assumption that the ultimate goal for clients was a movement into employment. Other activities might be instrumental in this goal, but were not, in themselves, sufficient objectives for the purposes of the programme.
- Schemes were selected according to their potential for achieving this objective and each scheme agreed, after opportunity for negotiation, to specific targets for recruitment and for work placements.
- Schemes were also selected for their understanding of the barriers facing disabled people and innovation in addressing these.
- Innovative Schemes had assured funding for one year. After that projects might be able to secure an extension but this was not guaranteed. The challenge, therefore, was that they could achieve something worthwhile in the year - at least providing an indication of the potential of their particular approach and services, and how the work might be extended, transferred or replicated.
- Funding was linked, in part, to outcomes: Innovative Schemes were able to claim monies in relation to work placements and people staying in work.

2.2 Key features of the lead organisations

The schemes were set up through the initiative of lead organisations (referred to as ‘host organisations in the original bids). Although they were often working in conjunction with one or more ‘partners’ (see 2.3), it was, in most cases, the vision and commitment of the lead organisation which significantly shaped the schemes, sustained them though the project period and, in many cases, pursued their continuation.

The features of the lead organisations which emerged as significant are outlined in this section. These include:

- the sector (voluntary, statutory or private) in which the organisation was located;
- their organisational focus and background experience; and
- their motivation for applying for NDDP funding.

\textsuperscript{11} See glossary for description of benefits which clients of NDDP Innovative Schemes were entitled to receive.
2.2.1 Sector

The DSS selected schemes to ensure that a range of different types of organisation were involved and that these covered statutory, voluntary and commercial sectors.

- Voluntary organisations: (twelve)
  
  Half of the lead organisations were in the voluntary sector and, in most cases, they were already involved in the provision of services for disabled people. Of these, ten were organisations ‘for’ disabled people: one locally based, one regionally based and eight national organisations. One scheme was run by a national voluntary organisation in close conjunction with the Employment Service, and one by a university settlement. Only one of the schemes was run by a voluntary organisation ‘of’ disabled people.

- Public sector organisations: (seven)
  
  Of these, three were colleges of higher education, two TECs and two local authorities.

- Private sector organisations: (five)
  
  These included a major national employer, two employment agencies, an organisation providing private health care services, and a training agency. The last of these was an organisation set up and run by disabled people.

2.2.2 Organisational focus and background experience

The general orientation and experience of the lead organisations was also important. There were three broad categories in terms of their main purposes:

- Providing disability services: (eleven)
  
  The primary purpose was to provide services for disabled people and these included assessment, rehabilitation, personal development, vocational training, advice and support.

- Education and training: (eight)
  
  These organisations provided education and training and these included: general public sector colleges (three), an independent foundation (one), a university settlement (one), a voluntary training organisation (one) and Training and Enterprise Councils (two).

- Employment services: (five)
  
  These were organisations which specialised in finding people employment, some specifically for disabled people or excluded groups. Included here was one direct employer.

The lead organisations could, then be broadly categorised according to how far they had an established track record in the two main fields of disability services and employment:

- Established track record in finding people employment: (three)
  
  These were two local authority based (of which one was an established partnership) and a national charitable trust.
Established track record in working with disabled people: (eight)  
Some of these were voluntary agencies providing disability services but included a private health organisation and a training agency.

Experience of both but not necessarily well established: (eight)  
Here, the lead organisations had some experience of working to help disabled people into employment and so could draw on some first-hand knowledge of both areas.

No prior experience in either field or only marginally so: (five)  
The organisations here included three colleges, a commercial company and a TEC: all had an interest in employment but from rather particular perspectives, not directly about helping people into work.

About a third of the lead organisations therefore had some direct experience of both the main fields and so could, at least to some extent, apply this experience from the beginning. However, some were less well placed and the level of prior experience did influence how effectively and how quickly they were able to establish partnerships and set up the schemes.

All the organisations setting up schemes had a primary interest in trying out new ways of supporting disabled people, although most were also motivated by the possibility of other benefits and this added to their commitment to the NDDP projects. Given that funding for the Innovative Schemes was originally for one year only, it was to be expected that the organisations most willing to ‘have a go’ and to sustain their interest might be those which were investing in the projects for additional reasons.

The kind of additional benefits are typified below: some organisations, of course, had multiple interests:

- **Organisational development**
  In some cases it was clear that involvement in NDDP presented a developmental opportunity for the organisation. These included: obtaining local recognition; increasing status and reputation; extending the compass of work e.g. from local to regional in scope; contributing to a review of policy or services; expanding networks; and gaining new experience as a basis for diversifying the business. In one case, a college, initially cautious, came to realise that the scheme was of considerable value in promoting the image of the college and was then keen to ensure that the work would continue after the end of NDDP funding. There were also organisations which saw themselves at the forefront of their particular field or service provision and were
interested in disseminating best practice both throughout their own organisation or to a wider audience.

‘The new elements to the existing employment support projects are provision of a job club and developing an employer database. In general, the scheme has provided an opportunity to extend and establish best practice frameworks systematically across the different local projects. Best practice outputs from the project are anticipated. A Training Pack of four modules being published with ESF funding is being revised as an output of this project. Projects generally are expected to develop in response to local needs but also to pool their learning and extend and systematise good practice.’ (Manager)

- **To develop or extend their services**
  
  Motivation here was to learn about how to enhance or develop practice or to extend existing services as well as trying out new approaches and ideas. This included setting up new services; reaching new clients; developing new ways of working; and enhancing the quality of services. Some also sought to influence local developments, for example: developing stronger links between local agencies and professionals; setting up local networks; and seeking to develop practice in mainstream agencies.

  ‘As most funding available is output-related these days then this restricted what we could offer clients and which clients we could offer things to. This scheme offers the chance to be able to offer more and over a longer time period …..’ (Manager)

  ‘Arguably we are one of the most experienced projects in the country. Quite simply there was an identified need for somebody in the middle to co-ordinate employment services to tie in parents, to tie in nurses, to tie in doctors, social workers, care managers, employers, government employment service programmes.’ (Manager)

  ‘We realise where the gaps lie and wanted to do something to show how, through working in partnerships, we could devise a smooth pathway for clients.’ (Manager)

- **To provide direct benefits for individual disabled people**
  
  Here schemes were motivated more by specific objectives for individual disabled people working in the relatively short term than by longer term or strategic development. These kind of benefits included: helping people with severe or multiple disabilities to realise some level of involvement; recruiting people for specific (created) job openings; increasing the number of individuals helped in the area; providing access to employment advice; and support for rural and isolated communities.

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12 See glossary for definition of ESF.

13 Output related funding only represented a proportion of funding available for this scheme. This allowed the scheme to be more flexible with services it could offer.
• **Indirect benefits for disabled people**

Here the idea was, in addition to running an Innovative Scheme, to use the opportunity to explore the labour market experience and needs of disabled people at a more strategic level - e.g., to inform campaigns for policy change, lobby for resources, demonstrate specific aspects of job seeking for a particular group.

‘The scheme has grown out of a deep concern about the general lack of public awareness about the existence of, and needs of, people with hearing impairment and the more specific lack of accessible services and support in education, careers and employment.’  (Manager)

‘(Our) aim is to advise key policy makers at a local and central government level about issues related to people with learning difficulties - with the objective being to create a culture of lifelong learning amongst this group, who traditionally have been told that they cannot contribute to society as a whole.’  (Scheme Bid Documents)

2.3 Partnerships

Although the experience, and profile, of the local organisation was an important element in the establishment of the new schemes, in many cases it was the partnerships established, rather than the host organisation alone, which had helped shape the orientation of the scheme. Partners also provided schemes with additional resources - in terms of money, accommodation, staff, experience, networks, credibility and identity. The Bidding Pack had encouraged organisations to form partnerships when applying for funding.

It was left open to schemes themselves to define what was meant by a partner. The term appeared to have been used in a number of different ways. In bidding documents, schemes distinguished between ‘partners’ and ‘associates’ although the distinction between the two often became increasingly unclear as time went on. In many cases, the whole arrangement was quite fluid, with new ‘partners’ taken on board as work progressed, while in others partners that had initially been named as having a major role in the scheme becoming less active, or dropped out, as time went on.

Many of the schemes elaborated ambitious plans for partnerships in their initial application, nominating between two and 35 different organisations as partners. The average (mean) number of partners was 10. A few schemes appear to have felt that they had to form partnerships in order be funded under this programme. In some cases the lead organisation was too small to manage the scheme on their own account, and sometimes they sought to extend their focus through partnerships - e.g. from a single disability to a multiple disability focus. Generally partnerships had been entered into in a very positive framework, in order to enable the scheme to span a range of experience and knowledge, and draw on a wide network of contacts.
Most schemes had a selection of different kinds of agency in their partnership. Table 2.3 shows the range of different agencies involved and the frequency with which different types of organisation had been chosen as partners. The Employment Service and employers were the most popular choices, although many schemes also teamed up with other statutory agencies such as Social Services, TECs and health services. Schemes tended to bring together a range of organisations - between two and ten different kinds - the average (mean and median) number of different types of organisation was five.

**Table 2.3 Types of organisation nominated as partners in initial bids**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of organisation</th>
<th>Number of schemes nominating different types of organisation as partner*</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Employment service</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employers</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organisations for disabled people</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local authority departments (often social services)</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TECs</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NHS/ hospitals, health authorities etc</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organisations for employers</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Training organisations</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Colleges/schools</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employment agencies</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organisations of disabled people</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*This is based on 24 schemes and 242 partners. Some schemes had more than one partner in one category of organisation.

Organisations were expected to play a variety of roles in the schemes in their capacity as partners. From bid documents, we were able to identify at least 13 different roles (see Table 2.4) that partners were expected to play - the most common of these being either to provide employment opportunities or referrals, or to run one or more of the schemes activities. Many any partners were expected to play more than one role.
Table 2.4 Partner roles identified in initial bids

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Types of role</th>
<th>Number of schemes* identifying at least one partner in this role</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>To provide employment opportunities</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Running scheme activities</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provision of referrals</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Providing expertise</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Providing staff</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Promotion of scheme</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Steering group member</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Offers work placements</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Advice on 'good practice'</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provides funding</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Involved in evaluation</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provides equipment</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Representation of disabled people</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* There were 24 schemes overall. Partners often played more than one role.

Partners were also recruited to complement the existing experience of the lead organisation and to enable the scheme to provide a smooth link between the world of disability and the world of employment. For example, a disability organisation might team up with an employer, or a co-ordinator of employers (a local TEC, or the Employers Forum on Disability) in order to extend their experience in relation to the labour market and employer requirements. Or a commercial organisation might team up with a disability organisation in order to gain access to referrals and to expertise in relation to a particular area of disability. Partners also offered practical resources to the scheme: premises or equipment, additional funding, staff on secondment, or specific skills such as evaluation.

In addition to specific roles, partners were also brought on board as part of a broader agenda pursued by many of the schemes - that of influencing policy and practice in other agencies, and providing a forum for debate and discussion around issues of disability and employment. In this context, many of the schemes sought to bring together a broad range of organisations and to work with agencies which had little previous experience - either in terms of disability (where these were employment related agencies) or of employment (disability organisations). Managing a partnership which brought together organisations with such a diverse range of experience, and organisational cultures, proved to be quite a challenge: this is discussed in Chapter 3 (3.4).

2.4 The characteristics of the Innovative Schemes

We turn now to the main characteristics of the schemes themselves, in terms of their particular approach to innovation, their outcome objectives, their client focus, and how they planned to intervene in the ‘pathway’ to employment.
All the schemes were selected because they proposed some form of innovation which was defined by the DSS as:

‘Completely new, or adding new features to, or extending, an existing scheme to a new participant group.’ (Bidding Pack:1)

In some cases, the innovative aspect involved finding new activities, or programmes of activities, through which clients progressed towards finding employment. In many cases, however, it was not just the activities themselves which were innovative, but the framework within which they were provided - the overall culture or ethos, or the way in which different organisations were brought together in partnerships, as discussed above.

The range of approaches, which broadly matched the interests of the lead organisations, included:

- Providing a new service, either specialist or non specialised.
- Acting to co-ordinate existing services and agencies rather than create new ones. Included here are schemes which sought to change the approach of mainstream agencies.
- Delivering a service in a new way or using new practice approaches.
- Creating new work opportunities.
- Pioneering recruitment links, creating new jobs, or by promoting self-employment, home-working.

Innovative Schemes were aiming to achieve the overall objective of employment. However, many recognised the potential benefits for disabled people becoming more involved in the labour market even if this fell short of the NDDP definition of work placements. Some schemes were therefore prepared to pursue intermediate goals even though these would not contribute to their placement targets.

- **Full-time and permanent work for disabled people including self employment**
  
  Such schemes were aiming to fit jobs and workers either by selecting and training suitable people for specific work openings or to work with employers to make suitable accommodations for the individual. Some of them applied certain criteria for recruiting people onto the scheme - for example a skill level or a willingness to work in a particular setting - like a call centre or at home.

- **Some involvement in work** (including work as a social benefit)
  
  Schemes in this category were more focused on helping disabled people to achieve the best they could - even if this was at therapeutic earnings level, part-time or voluntary work - and at a level that they could

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14 See glossary for definition of ‘work’.

15 See glossary for definition of ‘Therapeutic Earnings’
sustain. For some disabled people any form of work could represent a staging post, a mark of progress - for many a realistic time span for moving into full time work might extend over a long period. They also recognised that, for some clients, full-time work could never be an option but involvement in some work, however little or occasional, or in voluntary work, could bring them great social benefits. This was essentially an individualist approach where the level of employment achieved might vary considerably across a scheme’s total ‘intake’ of clients.

- **To enter and progress in work**

  Here, in addition to supporting people into work, and helping to overcome these ‘into work’ barriers, some schemes were concerned that getting employment should not be an end in itself. Once in a job, schemes wanted to ensure that these were sustainable, and that employers and workers actively considered the longer term prospects and possibilities for advancement. Although this was beyond the immediate brief of the projects, workers wanted to challenge the assumption that disabled people could not develop: for them, overcoming barriers to progress in work was an important aspect of employment.

- **Individuals become self-sufficient in seeking work**

  A slightly different approach was taken by a few schemes where it was considered that helping the individual to become self-sufficient - to access services and facilities for themselves - was the best way forward. Here schemes aimed to equip people with the skills, knowledge and confidence to seek employment on their own. As well as helping them to obtain employment in the short term, schemes wanted to ensure that the individual could do so again, understanding the kind of difficulties involved but better able to access mainstream services and find the kind of support, advice, training etc they required.

- **Retention of employment**

  Here the emphasis was on ensuring that people stayed in employment. All schemes in this category defined job retention to include people staying with the same employer, or if need be, obtaining suitable work elsewhere, as well as helping someone to retain a specific post. In one scheme the employer was seen as the client at least as much as the individual disabled person, since preventing job loss was to their mutual benefit.

2.4.3 **Clients**

The main criteria laid down by scheme contracts was that scheme clients should be in receipt of disability related benefit\(^\text{16}\):

‘Our key focus will be the group of people with a disability and long-term illness who are currently receiving: Incapacity Benefit, Income Support with

\(^{16}\) A small number of schemes were addressing work retention rather than finding new work opportunities. Their clients did not all fit these criteria, and some had negotiated an agreement to work with a small proportion (10%) that fell outside these criteria.
a disability premium, and Severe Disablement Allowance, Jobseeker's Allowance, and carers receiving Invalid Care Allowance, and those who are at risk of moving onto benefits (including those receiving statutory sick pay for more than eight weeks) as a result of sickness or disability. (Bidding Pack)

Within this broad categorisation, many of the schemes were involved in some forms of specialisation. The most common of these were either in terms of the broad characteristics of their client group, in terms of their impairment or health problem, or in terms of the particular employment focus of the scheme. In addition, some schemes had sub-sections of the wider population in which they were particularly interested, and had built up specific experience and skill in these areas. For example, a few schemes wanted to target disabled people from minority ethnic communities, or within a particular age group, or to recruit from rural and isolated areas.

**Schemes which specialised according to impairment**

Ten schemes specialised in terms of impairment, or health problems, experienced by their clients:

- Mental health problems  three schemes
- Learning difficulties  three schemes
- Musculo-skeletal including back pain  one scheme
- People with heart problems  one scheme
- People with head injuries  one scheme
- Sensory impairment  one scheme

**Specialisation by employment opportunity**

Eight of the schemes were either linked to a very specific work opportunity, or focused much of their work within a particular employment sector. The most common sectors targeted by schemes were IT, tele-working and call centres (there was some overlap between these areas):

- Call centres  two schemes
- IT  two schemes
- Tele working  one scheme
- Production line work  one scheme
- Shop/ café/ garden centre  one scheme
- Exhibition centre  one scheme
- Self employment  one scheme

Although such schemes had an explicitly open recruitment policy, in practice, the nature of the work opportunities targeted implied some selectivity - the scheme was likely to be most attractive to those interested,
or able, to pursue such opportunities. Schemes also tended to recruit accordingly, although some of these schemes did explore other work opportunities for those uninterested, or unable, to take up employment in the targeted sector.

**Open recruitment**

The rest of the schemes had an open recruitment policy in relation to both impairment and employment. They wanted to attract people from all groupings and to create, as far as possible, a fully inclusive service for all disabled people. They also sought to find a range of employment opportunities for their clients. However, there was, in some cases, some implicit selectivity that took place, with some schemes targeting those closest to being ‘job-ready’ while others specifically avoided selectivity of this kind, deliberately seeking to engage with people with complex difficulties who were a long way from being ready for employment. In some cases, the lack of selectivity, or the availability of other employment services in the area catering for disabled people, meant that schemes became, in effect, specialists in helping the least ‘job-ready’ clients.

Selectivity, or lack of selectivity, had considerable implications for the schemes, in terms of the amount of staff time required to work with clients, the time that clients took to move through activities, and the ability of the scheme to achieve employment-related targets. It is an issue which will recur throughout the next few chapters of the report, although it is addressed in some depth in Chapters 6 and 7.

Schemes were asked in their original bids to explain what they saw as the main barriers facing the client group(s) they intended to help. Most schemes had a broad awareness that the situation was complex and might not be explained by any one factor. In this respect, nearly all the schemes referred to the kind of difficulties arising from individual and family circumstances, social and cultural influences, the employment system, the structure of the benefit system, from employers, and from policy level and institutional arrangements.

However, many felt that influencing higher level structures and policies would be well beyond their scope: such intervention implies work at strategic and national levels. On the whole, therefore, most Innovative Schemes focused their activities at individual and local levels.

The categories below are ‘ideal’ types which highlight the main approaches taken and the main modes of working using the ‘pathway’ model discussed in Chapter 1 (1.3). These were:

- **Focus mainly on working with individual disabled people**
  These schemes saw the main issue as focusing on the individual client. They were mainly involved in mobilising activities but most included job matching within this and provided support for the individual as part of the process.
Some of the schemes in this category were not attempting to make links with wider aspects of the employment pathway - like involving employers. Others were aware of interconnecting issues and questions of integration across the whole pathway but, while not necessarily believing that work with individual clients was the whole answer for their target group(s), did consider that this could achieve some good results.

**Focus on working across the ‘pathway’ and at different levels**

A number of schemes sought to create a seamless and coherent set of services which included all aspects of the ‘pathway’ to employment. As well as focusing on individuals and mobilising clients, schemes here also worked at different levels, variously mobilising and supporting mainstream services, employers, families and informal carers. They did so either:

i) By ‘doing-it-all’ in the sense that they either provided the services themselves or were directly accessing other services for their clients and/or

ii) By acting as co-ordinators to link the existing services of mainstream agencies and partners etc to achieve a coherent service and/or

iii) By working as agents of change - to get existing (e.g. mainstream) services to adapt/develop policies and practices in relation to disabled people

All schemes in this category were typically flexible in their approach, seeking to create a pathway that, as far as possible included employers as well as meeting specific individual needs. Work with employers was often at a more strategic level, trying to promote local awareness of disability employment issues and to mobilise employers to open up job opportunities.

In ‘pathway’ terms these schemes were involved in all modes: mobilising individual clients and employers, matching people and jobs and supporting individuals through the process.

**Creating a pre-determined pathway**

These schemes developed routes into specific areas of employment by working with one or more employers to provide more-or-less guaranteed jobs for a number of people. These schemes, in contrast to the two models above, provided a fixed, rather than flexible, pathway. The route to work required clients to meet certain criteria: clients were selected accordingly and provided with relevant training. The objectives tended to be relatively narrow in that schemes did not expect to extend into other areas nor necessarily engage in developing local services or system(s).

**Focus on job retention**

A few schemes focused primarily on assisting clients to retain their employment. As well as individualised help with, e.g. mental and/or physical rehabilitation, a key part of the work here involved mediation and negotiation/brokerage between employee and employer with the aim of meeting an employer’s needs as well as the interests of the disabled person.
Job creation
As an adjunct to their work, some schemes did develop ideas about creating suitable jobs for a known population of disabled people. In one case, the project had taken the initiative to set up a new laundry service and was pursuing other ideas. The same scheme and others were promoting and discussing ideas with local employers to expand openings for disabled people.

2.5 Conclusions
The Schemes were strongly influenced by the lead organisations which, usually, took the key responsibility for designing, initiating and sustaining the projects.

The selection of the lead organisations was successful in recruiting a range of backgrounds and experience from the voluntary, public and private sectors.

The key areas of experience were from employment on the one hand and disability services on the other. Some lead organisations had experience in both areas; a few in neither. These differences did have an effect on how effectively and quickly schemes were able to set up, an issue explored in the next chapter.

Partnerships, comprising between two and 35 members, were set up to complement the experience and networks of the lead organisations. Partners were also an important source of additional resources, of advice and could provide credibility in areas which were new.

All disability groups were included across the 24 schemes. Many had an open policy and recruited clients regardless of impairment, but some (10) specialised in specific impairments, while others (eight) specialised in preparing their clients for particular kinds of employment. In addition to this, there appeared to be some differences between schemes in terms of their selectivity of clients according to ‘work readiness’ criteria.

The way that the schemes understood the barriers facing disabled people was usually comprehensive and sophisticated: they recognised many interacting factors including individual, social, cultural, economic and institutional. Schemes designed the projects and focused the work a) according to what they considered was most important, and b) what they considered to be realistic in a relatively short-term project with, in most cases, limited resources.
The range of approaches adopted by schemes included:

- Focusing mainly on working with individual disabled people.
- Focusing on working across the ‘pathway’ and at different levels.
- Creating a pre-determined route into work.
- Focusing on job retention.
- Job creation.

Considering the schemes as a whole, it was the mobilising activities – of clients and of employers – which emerged as a key feature of their planned approaches, in which the level of individualised support for clients was generally expected to be quite high.
Innovative schemes learned a great deal about ways in which disabled people could be supported into employment. In addition to the learning that was derived about specific activities, many lessons also emerged about the delivery of these activities. The subject of this chapter is the learning which emerged in relation to organisation and management.

The task of managing a scheme was two-fold. Firstly, there was the task of ensuring that a specific service was delivered to clients in an effective manner and that service targets were met. Secondly, there was the task of managing a wider set of relationships with other parts of the ‘lead’ agency and with referral agencies, partners, the Employment Service, potential employers and other disability services in the area. This was particularly important if the schemes were to act as an intermediary between the many different and diverse organisations with which the disabled person might engage in their pathway from benefits to employment.

The chapter starts with an examination of the organisational structures of the schemes. These were quite varied, reflecting the way in which partners were involved in scheme activities, and whether the scheme operated across one site or several. We then look at management and staffing issues, including the qualities and skills required of staff running services of this kind. Finally, the partnership arrangements of the schemes are explored in greater depth than was possible in the last chapter, and some of the challenges that working with a number of different partners representing very different kinds of organisations, described. Some of the solutions which schemes found to the difficulties arising are described, with feedback from schemes and partners about the contribution that working in partnership had made to the ability of schemes to respond to the needs of their client group.

As noted in the previous chapter schemes were set up by one lead agency, usually working in conjunction with between two and 35 partners. There were two key elements which helped determine the nature of their organisational structure. One was the extent to which services were being provided on one, or several sites. The other was the extent to which the lead organisation was providing services with support from partners, or services were being delivered via one or more of the partners. Table 3.1 gives the number of schemes in each of these categories.

### Table 3.1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Organisational Structure</th>
<th>Number of Schemes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>One site</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Several sites</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Partnership model</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lead organisation alone</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 3.1  Numbers of scheme by delivery partners and sites

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Delivery by</th>
<th>Single organisation</th>
<th>Partners/Associates</th>
<th>All</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Single Site</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Multi-site</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Single organisations delivering services**

In six schemes, the structure of the organisation was relatively simple: activities were being delivered on one site by one organisation. Partners were important in these schemes for their referrals, advice and expertise and possible employment opportunities but were not involved in the actual delivery of the scheme. The management of the schemes was seen as an internal matter for the lead organisation rather than a wider partnership responsibility. Steering groups usually took on a purely advisory or monitoring role.

**Partners delivering**

In fourteen schemes, partners were involved in the delivery of some of the scheme’s activities; in most cases it was one major partner participating in the actual delivery of the scheme, although others might be playing a minor role. The most usual activities for a partner to deliver were training or education elements. If the lead scheme was itself a training organisation, then partners were usually involved in delivering another element such as job matching activities. Where partners were delivering activities, the management of the scheme was more likely to be shared with partners usually through their involvement in a steering group although it could also be a primarily operational relationship, conducted through bilateral meetings between partners.

**Multi-site**

Ten of the schemes were operating across more than one site: this required a high level of co-ordination. Bringing staff and management together in these schemes often involved a large amount of travel, particularly if opportunities were to be provided for staff to learn from each other and identify good practice. Various structural arrangements were put into place to ensure communication between sites. In addition to joint staff meetings, three schemes had established a dispersed steering group structure so that each site had its own local steering group as well as the central one. Two of these schemes changed to local steering groups after finding the central group neither particularly efficient nor effective.

**Multi-site, multi-partner schemes**

Local management structures and local steering groups were particularly important where there were local partners involved in the delivery of activities within a dispersed structure. Multi-site/multi-partner schemes
could take two forms: either the same partners were delivering the same or similar activities across the sites, or different partners were delivering different activities across the multiple sites. In the latter situation, local steering groups or other mechanisms for co-ordinating activities at a local level were essential.

### 3.2.1 Building on prior experience

We noted in the previous chapter that organisations setting up the schemes varied widely in their level of experience of supporting disabled people in employment. This was closely related to the extent to which this had previously been a core activity of the organisation (see Table 3.2).

Several of the schemes were set up by organisations which were already running a similar or related service and which had, through these activities, identified a ‘gap’ in provision for their existing client group which they had not previously been able to fill.

‘[W]e have lots of experience finding jobs but [the] focus of New Deal funding is helping people to keep their jobs. This is an area [the scheme] has been wanting to expand into. It was a recognised gap. In the past, we have had referrals and requests to help people return to their jobs but we didn’t have the mechanisms in place to attend to the problem.’ (Manager)

These schemes came to Innovative Schemes with a good awareness of the needs of their client group, but often lacked experience in relation to the specific area of activity in which they were seeking to move. For example, some had considerable experience of a particular group of disabled people, but relatively little experience of employment-related activities.

Five schemes were set up by organisations that had seen NDDP as a way of expanding their experience by working with a new client group. These organisations all had experience of working with disadvantaged clients and helping people back to work, although their experience with disabled people was sometimes limited.

‘[T]his is a commercial organisation and has a prime focus on tele-working, but not specifically disabled people.’ (Manager)

### Table 3.2 The context of Innovative Schemes within lead organisation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Focus of the organisation</th>
<th>Experience of placing disabled people into work</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Central core activity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disability</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education and Training</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employment</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Eight organisations built the Innovative Scheme directly upon existing services and structures. The intention here was to improve and to extend these central activities, and core services.

‘The project was established out of a perceived gap in the work potential for people with learning difficulties and services that support their movement into regular jobs ... the New Deal scheme complements and builds on the work we undertook in the past.’ (Manager)

Where employment related-activities with disabled people had been a core activity of the organisation setting up the new scheme, the necessary systems and networks required by the new activities were usually already in place. They often had a track record in the area and benefited from good links with employers and referral agencies. A high profile or strong local identity also tended to facilitate a good relationship with clients, referral agencies and employers.

The nine organisations that had some experience with employment schemes for disabled people (usually through short term funded contracts) also had some experience to draw upon. However, relevant experience had sometimes been lost as those staff who had built up knowledge and expertise left at the end of the contract.

Schemes which had not previously worked in the field usually had neither the experience nor the systems in place, and needed to invest considerable time and resources to building up networks, establishing their credibility with referral agencies and building up management systems and staff skills. These tended to have longer start-up times. There were exceptions to this: schemes which had very focused activities that were put in place relatively quickly in spite of the absence of previous experience or infrastructure. However, this was the exception, rather than the rule.

3.2.2 Location of scheme in relation to lead agency

Some of the schemes were very closely related to the wider functions of their organisation, often sharing premises, staff, line management and facilities with other parts of the organisation.

‘It fits in excellently because it’s part of the personnel function at the Local Authority ... anything like this usually goes under the social services banner but it’s actually perfect to go under Human Resources because everything we are dealing with is actually a human resource issue - contracts, CVs, application forms, interview techniques. All these things are personnel issues.’ (Manager)

Others were located within the lead agency in a physical sense, sharing premises with the rest of the organisation, but with relatively little overlap in terms of activities and staff. Some schemes were almost completely independent of their lead agency - in a new location, with new staff and sometimes new managers recruited specially for the scheme.
Exactly where schemes were placed within an organisation, and how central they were seen to be within the organisation was important, in terms of their access to a larger pool of advice, support and resources (including, in some cases, staff) to call upon. It could also give an indication of the level of organisational investment and support the scheme was given.

‘The scheme has been seen as mainstream service development within the regular management arrangements of [the organisation], rather than a one-off project which is harder to integrate. A recent restructuring of the organisation means that commitment to successful schemes of this kind are championed by senior managers.’ (Manager)

In many cases, the manager of the new scheme already had a management role within the lead agency, and this provided a useful link to other activities taking place.

‘I think what was important was being able to contact and work with other areas of [the agency] that I manage.’ (Manager)

The importance of having the line managers of staff fully engaged and committed to the scheme was particularly well demonstrated by a few projects in which this was not the case. For example, in one scheme, with activities delivered in multiple sites through partner agencies, the manager commented:

‘The lesson arising, which applies to all parties, when you put a consortium together, you have to have the senior management on board, as you need their support, particularly if the people further down the line change. Often, key staff didn’t have time to do what they promised to do and senior management can really hinder what is going on.’ (Manager)

How far disabled people were consulted about the design of the scheme, and had a continuing involvement in its planning and consultative structures, depended to a large extent upon the orientation and background of the lead agency. Organisations which operated on the basis that the client was the focal point of their activities were more inclined to actively involve and consult disabled people at all stages. Schemes which focused more towards employers or specific labour markets also believed in meeting client needs, but tended to prioritise consultation with employers over consultation with disabled people. More particularly:

- Organisations ‘of’ disabled people by definition had disabled people on the management board, and were also most likely to have a high number (if not all) of disabled staff, have regular consultation with disabled people, have full access to the premises and activities (e.g. hearing loops, material in Braille etc.) and include disabled people in the monitoring, evaluation and quality assurance processes. They were also the most likely to track participants through the scheme with regular contact.
Voluntary organisations 'for' disabled people tended to be developing their involvement of disabled people at all levels, and two organisations were interested in recruiting disabled mentors. They also consulted disabled people on the scheme at both planning and delivery stages through fora and questionnaires. They had also instituted feedback mechanisms for quality assurance purposes.

Public sector organisations had equal opportunity and consultation policies to which they sought to adhere. They tended to have involved disabled people less at the planning stages of programmes, having people within or external to their own organisation who represented disabled peoples' interests instead. Colleges were monitored externally and had some internal quality assurance in place which usually involved some kind of consultation process with students, including the disabled students involved in scheme activities.

The private sector organisations did not have disabled people on the management board. However, the key aim of one scheme was encouraging disabled people to join the general staff. Consultation tended to be mainly through external consultants on disability rather than by participants, and evaluation was more likely to be external. Nevertheless, some had excellent disability practices in place, for example, in relation to accessibility.

Although several of the schemes had representation of disabled people in their management committees or steering groups, in most schemes it was the one-to-one relationships that staff had with clients which fostered informal feedback. Staff in a few schemes reported that clients did not actually want to be involved in the management and delivery of the scheme, but simply wanted employment. One scheme reported that their clients, who had suffered injuries through accidents, did not want to be reminded of this traumatic period and as a consequence were not interested in belonging to advisory groups.

Other schemes, on the other hand, noted the benefits of having disabled people involved, whether on advisory boards, or on the staff, or sometimes as volunteers and mentors. This helped to increase the empathy and understanding that the scheme as a whole and individual managers and staff had with the clients. Disabled people then felt valued and had role models which helped them visualise their own pathways into work.

3.3 Project management and staffing

The prior experience of the lead organisation went some way to ensuring that the managers and staff of the new scheme had appropriate knowledge and experience for their new activities. In some cases new managers and staff were recruited especially because they brought with them appropriate skills, knowledge and contacts. In other cases, such people were seconded from the lead organisation, or from the partners.
A number of qualities emerged as being particularly important in terms of the project manager:

- **Commitment**
  
  The majority of project managers had been behind the original bids for Innovative Schemes, and so had seen the gap in services for disabled people, had thought up an idea and had mobilised partners and, in some cases, senior managers to support the scheme. Managers were, therefore, very much committed to the success of the scheme.

  In a few cases where managers had not been involved in the bid, but had been brought in afterwards, these could lack the commitment to the scheme which was required to keep staff and clients motivated. (See also list of qualities viewed in staff, below – the importance of commitment and dedication reflects the need to constantly confront the limited expectations of clients, employers and other services, about the employability of some disabled people.)

- **Partnership co-ordination, management and leadership**

  Both the staff teams and the partnerships required a degree of leadership and direction which had to be provided by the project manager. Partnerships and referral agencies needed to be co-ordinated and problems that arose needed to be sorted out quickly and decisively.

  Schemes which operated over a number of sites, or with different partners delivering, in particular needed directing in order for the services to be consistent, and for staff to understand how services were to be developed.

- **Staff co-ordination and support**

  Effectiveness in the recruitment, management and support of the staff team was another key attribute which emerged. When asked which management and organisational factors contributed to the scheme, many people attributed success to a clear management structure with regular meetings and being able to identify individual and collective team strengths.

- **Knowledge and experience of working with disabled people and agencies involved in disability**

  Managers often provided a central resource in terms of experience of the disability field, particularly where they were already working within, or had been recruited from, a disability organisation. This usually meant that they were familiar with the particular needs of their client group, and with other agencies working within the field which could be an important source of client referrals.
Experience of work in the field of employment, and with employers

Managers often also provided a key link between the scheme and wider employment related networks, as well as work with individual employers. This was particularly true for the wider, developmental, work with employers, rather than the day to day work in relation to particular client placements.

3.3.2 Numbers of project staff

The number of project staff working on each project varied greatly from scheme to scheme. Most schemes appeared to have between four to six dedicated full time-staff, but identifying the exact number of staff working in a scheme was not always easy. In very ‘embedded’ schemes, staff might be working part-time on the scheme, and part-time in other activities of the lead agency (or their partner). Most of the schemes with larger staff teams fell into this category. This gave the scheme considerable flexibility, and helped to ensure that it had access to a wider range of expertise and experience. However, where staff were only involved in the scheme part time, other commitments could detract from the work on the scheme.

Given the difficulty in working out the exact (full-time equivalent) of staff working in each scheme, it was also difficult to make an exact estimate of caseloads. This could vary between one member of staff to seven clients, to one member of staff to 45 clients. However, overall proportions of staff to clients could also be misleading, since not all the staff were working closely with clients: some had supporting managerial and administration functions. Variations could also arise according to the model of working. Some schemes were quite selective in the clients that they took on, and then worked intensively with a small number of clients until they were placed in work, while others held larger case loads, working with some intensively, and providing more general support to others.

Overall, there did not appear to be any direct link between the ratio of clients to staff, and the proportion of clients that were able to find employment, although the difficulties in estimating numbers accurately made it difficult to test this out conclusively.

3.3.3 Staff roles

Staff often undertook quite generic client support roles within a scheme. A typical staff member might be involved in all aspects of the work with clients, from recruitment and assessment, through to support in employment. Their role included co-ordinating client pathways, provision of advice and guidance, job profiling and matching and offering support in employment.
However in some schemes there was a degree of specialism:

- **Client training**
  Many of the schemes provided some kind of vocational or prevocational training to clients. This was the area in which there were most likely to be designated specialist staff, or an associate agency with its own staff (eight schemes). In two schemes, training was to have been delivered by a designated trainer, but because of staff losses and difficulties with a training partner, training was covered from within the existing staff group. This was seen to have some positive advantages, as it allowed a certain degree of seamlessness and continuity for clients.

- **Support for clients in employment**
  In most schemes, client support was a continuous process, often undertaken by one member of staff on a ‘case management’ basis. However, in five schemes the client support role was separated into two parts: staff support from entry into the scheme, and support whilst in work. In two schemes, support in employment was undertaken by volunteer mentors or buddies, in another, it was a designated staff role. In two schemes, this role was undertaken by a partner organisation.

- **Employment development**
  Staff were working with employers in a number of different ways. Some of these were specifically client related (starting with client needs and finding an appropriate employer) while others were more generic – marketing the scheme to employers, seeking to generally influence their policies and practice, not specifically related to an individual client’s needs. (There is a fuller description on work with employers in Chapter 5). In some schemes the more general, marketing and development role was fulfilled by the project manager, while specific client-related activities were undertaken by staff. However, two schemes had specific staff who undertook disability training with employers.

- **Strategic development**
  Where schemes were keen to embed their activities into their lead organisation or partners, or to disseminate their learning to a wider audience, staff had been employed to write guidelines, develop employer databases and develop good practice. These schemes were more likely to have undergone evaluation, either internally or through a commissioned agent.

In some schemes there were additional specialist services through their partner organisations. For example, one scheme also bought in counselling from a partner for clients suffering from depression.
When asked to list essential qualities of staff working in schemes, managers and staff frequently mentioned the following as being important:

- Dedication, commitment and understanding of their role.
- Awareness of disabilities, or of specific disabilities.
- Understanding of workings of the Employment Service and the Benefits Agency (e.g. about benefits, Access to Work budgets etc.)
- Open to learning about organisations working with something missing and willingness to be flexible.
- Understanding of employers and how to work with them (personnel background seemed important here).

On the whole, these appeared to be important qualities for staff to have across all schemes.

One of the most outstanding qualities mentioned by all schemes (and a quality which stood out for the researchers visiting the schemes) related to the personal commitment and dedication of the staff, rather than to any specific knowledge or skill that they brought to their work.

‘(We are) absolutely dependent because of the personality of people (staff) involved. That is a fundamental issue. You can have an organisation that will say that they can do a lot but without the individuals who can make it happen they will not do a lot.’ (Manager)

‘(The) problems of the scheme were overcome by sheer strength of personalities and dedication in the delivery team.’ (Manager)

However, knowledge and experience were also important, particularly where staff needed to relate to a wide range of people and agencies. Staff often had to be able to pick up the relevance of a very specific impairment or health problem, or a particular benefit issue, work closely with people with communication difficulties, as well as talking knowledgeably with employers and referral agencies.

Some schemes also wanted staff with specific skills, for example, language skills – be that ethnic minority languages or British Sign Language, or staff that had experience working with specific groups of disabled people. Schemes that specialised by impairment were keen on staff with appropriate backgrounds. This was especially the case in schemes working in the mental health sector, where the stigma attached to mental health problems meant that staff needed to be able to explain the issues carefully to potential employers. However, at least two schemes decided in favour of employing staff with general ‘people’ skills rather than recruiting staff with a background in learning difficulty. This is because they wanted to take a fresh approach to the issue, and were concerned that those with a background in this area would come in with assumptions about the unemployability of people with learning difficulties.
Schemes also specialised to some extent by function or role, so that they recruited staff with specific backgrounds such as working with the Employment Service, working in the fields of finance, personnel, marketing, training or development. This often provided a range of skills within the team.

One method of staff recruitment which appeared to be particularly successful was secondment. Secondees came from the private sector and partner organisations. Some of the most successful secondments (in four schemes) were made from the Employment Service, with the secondees being Disability Employment Advisers. These brought with them considerable experience of the benefits system, as well as knowledge of the Employment Service (ES), and played an important role in cementing a good relationship between the scheme and the local job centre.

‘All three Employment Case Managers were seconded from ES. We couldn’t have done it without the DEA backgrounds of the Employment Case Managers. They knew their way around the ES, they were able to access resources, they knew about things like Access to Work. Their knowledge was phenomenal and if we just appointed new staff, it wouldn’t have worked as well.’ (Manager)

In a further three schemes, there were other staff who had been recruited on a permanent basis to schemes who had previously worked for the Employment Service.

‘We were very lucky to get someone as the Employment Officer who had worked for the Employment Service, and had contacts with the DEA.’ (Manager)

3.3.5 Staff training and support

Because the activities of many of the schemes were quite new ones, staff often needed training, in order to extend their skills and prior experience. Schemes that were closely embedded into a large organisation were often at an advantage here, being able to draw on the staff training resources of the larger organisation.

Schemes mentioned a number of different kinds of training that had been provided to staff. This included:

- Induction training – performed in organisations with a background in disability and or placing disabled people into employment.
- A detailed package of training, for example on particular impairments, disability awareness, the process of empowerment, legal issues, the DDA, benefits, caseload management and vocational assessment/profiling.
- Disability awareness training.
- Generic training - health and safety, personal safety, first aid etc.
There were some schemes which provided little or no training for staff – in some cases these had adopted a policy of recruiting staff (or obtaining staff on secondment) who already had suitable skills. Alternatively, it was believed that the new staff could pick up the skills and experience that they required on the job, with suitable support and coaching from the manager or from more experienced staff. While this appeared to work well in some cases, it could take some time for a new member of staff to acquire knowledge across all the areas required to support an individual client. In such cases, the availability of back-up and support was central to clients accessing appropriate support.

In addition to more formal training, most schemes had staff meetings regularly – once every one or two weeks, and talked informally in between times as problems arose or when they needed to discuss a specific case. This was important in terms of staff support and supported mutual learning between different staff.

In one scheme, working with clients with severe mental health problems, a more formalised system had been set up for staff supervision and support. This was seen as an important element to good practice in working with this client group, in order to maintain staff morale and performance standards and reduce the possibilities of stress and burn out. It was also a product of the scheme being well integrated into mainstream services which had similar supervisory structures where an emphasis was placed on developing ‘reflective practice’.17

3.4 Developing partnerships

As has already been noted, partnerships were an extremely important aspect of the overall design and structure of schemes. One of the first tasks for each scheme was to build up their working relationships with their partners, and to establish how to get the best benefit out of the arrangements for all concerned.

Disability organisations and the local authority based schemes had a head start in having existing networks and experience of working with certain agencies and in most cases had established a mutual respect and trust. Schemes with little background and experience of working with different organisations and agencies also found that these linkages were crucial, but had to build these up. This could take a considerable amount of time and investment of resources.

Seventeen of the lead organisations already had some experience at partnership working before they set up their scheme: in some cases the partnerships put together for the scheme were built upon existing

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networks, or on partnerships established for other purposes. However, in many cases the partnerships represented a new departure for the lead organisation. Some of these had never worked in this way with other organisations before, while others were setting up new working relationships with a kind of organisation with which they had not worked with before.

‘Working in partnership is not something that we have been keen on doing up to now. We are an independent minded company and we have got on with things ourselves. We do have sub contractors, colleges and so on. This has been a steep learning curve. A good learning curve and experience.’

(Manager)

Overall, there appear to be three main orientations in relation to the role of partnership within the scheme: strategic, operational and client oriented.

Within the strategic role, partners played a major role in the management of the scheme, usually forming part of a steering or management group. This was usually the arrangement where partners were making a major contribution to the scheme by way of provision of services, provision of resources (funding, premises) or staff, and where the partnership itself had a major part to play in the overall character of the scheme. Where partners were contributing major resources, the scheme had some accountability to the partners as well as to their major funders, the DSS and DfEE. In these schemes there was usually a formally constituted steering group with some responsibility for advising on the overall direction of the scheme.

‘Steering group meetings have been very valuable particularly for those places where services are just being established. They are also useful for bringing expertise from various disciplines and sectors towards an operational issue.’

(Manager)

In an operational role, partners might be involved in some of the activities, such as the delivery of training or job search activities, but as a subcontractor - the lead organisation remaining firmly in a managerial role. (Schemes occasionally had subcontractors who were not also partners, although in most cases these were either brought in at a later date, or named in the original bid as ‘associates’). In such cases, partners might be a part of an advisory group, but this did not have such a clearly delineated ‘steering’ role, and sometimes there was no formal committee structure at all. All negotiations between scheme and partners were undertaken on an individual basis.

‘We deliberately avoid it being a management group, that wasn’t the original idea. We don’t need another tier of bureaucracy. The idea is to have a mixture of referrers and partners who deliver services to share ideas/feedback. We discuss possible solutions to the barriers they have come up against and strategies on raising awareness of the project.’

(Manager)
In the 'client oriented' model of partnership, most liaison between the scheme and its partners took place in the context of work with individual clients - partners usually providing referrals to the scheme, or providing work opportunities or jobs, rather than activities more central to the operation of the scheme itself. Again committee structures, if present in this arrangement, were largely advisory - an opportunity for the scheme to keep partners informed about progress and to talk about issues arising in relation to individual clients, rather than discussing the overall direction of the scheme.

Informal co-ordination of partners. Partners become involved on a case-by-case basis. Partners receive a copy of the follow-up letter that is sent out to a client when a client is referred to that partner. This is so [the] partner knows they can expect to hear from a client and understand the context in which the partner may be involved. So the partner knows what the client expects of them.’ (Manager)

The different forms of partnership could operate beside each other within one scheme; some partners being involved in an operational or one to one capacity, while others were more strategically involved. Structures had sometimes evolved as the scheme progressed rather than being apparent from the start. Some lead organisations had hoped that their partners would take a more strategic role than they actually did, the partners confining themselves to specific roles such as provision of referrals. In other cases, lead organisations were disappointed in terms of the operational role of their partners who nevertheless continued to play a valued advisory role.

There have been changes to the partnership structure. Some partners dropped off, some continued to be called partners but did not carry out intended contribution, for example supplying referrals.’ (Manager)

Sometimes new organisations emerged, not listed on the original application, who had more to offer than the 'formal' partners, and these were brought into the structure as well, sometimes replacing those which failed to deliver on their original commitments. Some schemes evolved a 'two tier' structure, with an inner core of strongly committed partners and an outer ring of less committed ones, who only attended meetings occasionally.

Some of the original partners have not participated as much as we would have liked. They have not attended meetings or shown much interest. We have identified the strong partners and worked with them.’ (Manager)

In six schemes, either no formal meeting of partners were ever set up, or meetings were set up in the early days but abandoned as being more costly in terms of time and energy than appeared justified in terms of benefits to the scheme. Other schemes started off by having quite frequent meetings with their partners, but these tailed off over time.
In three of the schemes operating over several sites, local steering or advisory groups rather than one centralised one were felt to be the best way of mobilising local networks and contacts.

‘For future, we would change the organisational structure so that programme becomes more locally managed, giving authority to the regions. The chain of command was too long.’ (Manager)

One scheme had both a national and a local advisory group. The manager reported that the national meetings were not so well attended.

Maintaining the partnership side of activities, and ensuring that these continued to have momentum and focus often proved to be more time consuming than had originally been anticipated. A few of the schemes, as has already been noted, opted to discontinue regular steering group meetings, and to work with partners one to one.

A number of schemes encountered difficulties, particularly during start up, with partners being unable to deliver on expected resources or contacts that had been promised during the planning stages, or other changes in circumstances which made it difficult for them to deliver on promises made at the bidding stage. Some were unable to provide referrals that had initially been promised, others (employers) were unable to provide work opportunities anticipated. Without this involvement in the scheme partners sometimes withdrew, sometimes reformulated the rationale for their involvement (in terms of playing an advisory role, or because of the learning they derived from their involvement). In other cases, the schemes became less committed to partners who were unable to deliver on promised clients, jobs or resources, and didn’t invest energy in retaining the contact.

Partners were also sometimes lost because of internal restructuring of their organisation, or because a key contact left the organisation or was moved to another position. This highlighted the importance of getting commitment to the partnership at a senior and strategic level within the organisation. There was also at least one example of partners being unwilling to commit themselves on paper to the formal contract because of concern about their liability should things go wrong. A manager comment on this difficulty was that it had been hard to get organisations (particularly employers) to make legal commitments to a scheme while they were still at an embryonic stage of involvement, and not yet clear as to the benefits to themselves of being involved. It was a case of trying to formalise matters at too early a stage in the project development.

A major difficulty was the wide range of different agendas and expectations that partners brought to the situation, which did not always fit comfortably with those of the lead organisation or the general direction of the scheme.
‘As it turned out, partners had different views on expectations for (the scheme) as well as different views on what each was to deliver. We attributed this to poor communication, politics, and suspicions about the personal development training.’ (Manager)

‘I think that the partners wanted the training specifically geared to the Call Centre. That was right but some of the participants did not want to work in call centres - we had to offer, if you like, various bits of training to facilitate them. Some of the participants were interested in consolidating the IT skills that the training provided itself. Although we are providing call centre training, we are ‘still offering diverse training tailored to individuals’ needs.’ (Staff member)

Where agendas and expectations were not directly met there was some disillusionment between partners. Also commonly mentioned were cultural differences between organisations:

‘A lot of groundwork is necessary with potential partners who all use different languages and have different expectations.’ (Manager)

One partner was somewhat critical of the way that the scheme ran their meetings, something which highlighted the differences in their way of working:

‘Meetings were ‘not very efficient’: it’s a totally different environment. There could have been fewer meetings with more structure. This points up difference between commercial culture which tends to be task and action focused and development/educational setting where ideas and thoughts and people getting together is important.’ (Partner)

Another difficulty mentioned by some of the partners was a loss of motivation or direction - they could no longer see what their role was within the scheme, or what benefits it brought to themselves. Partners’ initial motivation for involvement could be quite varied, from the totally altruistic - seeing the scheme as being of benefit to the client group they represented - to the purely ‘self interested’ - such as seeking to expand their work into new, and potentially lucrative, areas.

There were also examples given of organisations that were more used to working in competition with one another, rather than co-operation:

‘We are encountering a problem with voluntary sector organisations who see us as competition in seeking referrals, though being complementarily was the aim. Relationships with the voluntary sector have shown reluctance from them to support the scheme through our success in the bidding process, despite the scheme being tailored to complement their provision.’ (Manager)

Difficulties appear to have been particularly prevalent in schemes which had the most complex structures - operating across multiple sites, and having large numbers of partners. The main difficulty arising was that of maintaining the overall focus and co-ordination of the scheme, and providing sufficient opportunities for mutual learning.
'They were too spread out geographically, it was a nightmare to manage - there is no point in having a project all over the country, it needs to be run in a cohesive area, where staff can work together, support each other.' (Staff member)

The difficulties that were experienced had left some managers, staff, and also several partners dissatisfied and frustrated. It was particularly frustrating for partners who felt that they had something to offer, but that their contribution had been undervalued:

'We came on board as an equal partner in the scheme. However, we felt that they did not really take us seriously - because we are a voluntary sector organisation. They don't value the voluntary sector - the view is that we will be 'grateful do-gooders and not very bright' .... I am not invited to steering group meetings - and am not sure how often it meets. .... It is very hard to get them to communicate with me. They are very hung up on hierarchies and only want to speak to [our] Chief Executive which is not appropriate.' (Partner)

'Partners were allowed little input. I felt embarrassed having sold the scheme as a partnership, asking them to commit time and money. Some said they got little return for this and it led to frustration.' (Staff member)

3.4.3 Facilitating the partnership

Those involved in managing partnerships usually had to put considerable effort into working with partners to maintain direction and commitment. This was often done through sharing tasks and presenting case studies and success stories at meetings. Communication was particularly important, both formal and informal, through joint meetings and through one to one contact. It was important for the manager to have an understanding of partners' different orientation to disability/employment issues, and understand why difficulties were arising; often these related to the wider context. This helped to avoid a 'blame' culture.

Supporting the motivation of partners that came with very different levels of commitment could be particularly complex, although the most usual key to motivation was success - the scheme achieving its desired objectives. This meant that the scheme was seen as producing the promised benefits to its client group, and also having a good local profile, which meant its good reputation reflected on all those involved, including the partners, raising their profile in the locality and within this area of work.

One scheme had appointed a staff member with a specific role in facilitating the partnership. The difficulty of the task was illustrated by her describing her role as 'one of the most frustrating jobs of her life'. However, she had also derived a lot of satisfaction from her work:

'I enjoyed working with the partners. The job as broker was to help "glue it all together". This helped partners to understand better what they were doing. It became something like "organisational mentoring". I would
advise on the best way a partner could proceed with commitment also what to do with other partners advised on both personal and strategic levels'.
(Staff member)

Those involved gave some indication of what they had learnt from the process. These included:

- **The importance of leadership**

  This involved someone (the lead organisation) having a clear vision of the way ahead, and a sense of mutual benefit that partners could derive from the partnership.

  ‘All these things [other services] are around but somebody needed to be in the middle to co-ordinate and tie in all these services - almost like a broker in some senses. Somebody needs to make it happen, to be a catalyst. But, it is also about being the leaders of a partnership. The word partnership gets bandied about a lot but partnerships are nothing without leadership.’

- **Clarity of role for different partners**

  The role of each partner needed to be spelt out from the start, although there was also a need for flexibility as the scheme unfolded - some partners may need to change roles, or the scheme may need to change some partners.

  ‘If I did it again, I would have much tighter plans for partner contributions.’
  (Manager)

  ‘We originally had three TECs involved, but we never found a role for the TECs, and the TECs never found a role for themselves. One by one they dropped out. This was a shame: they couldn’t find how their world and ours connected.’
  (Manager)

- **The opportunity for negotiation/exploring areas of difficulty**

  Structures needed to be created to provide opportunities to explore differences or points of overlap. These structures provided the time and space in which differences could be resolved or compromises negotiated.

  ‘They [the partner scheme] operate in a very different kind of way. The systems are similar but different. They are an operational organisation rather than strategic, we are strategic. They would say, “we haven’t got this or that”, we have had to compromise. There have been issues but these have always been resolved.’
  (Manager)

Although partnerships often proved difficult and time consuming to manage, the value of these arrangements were widely accepted, both by those involved directly in the schemes (managers, staff) and by the partners. In spite of their steep learning curve, those involved felt that the effort had been worthwhile:

‘Working in partnership was hard, and disappointing. But we are still talking and managed to maintain the relationship.’
(Manager)
‘In terms of the partnership, having ventured once, we would feel more comfortable with doing it again.’ (Manager)

Schemes, and their partners, saw the benefits of the partnership arrangements that had been put together in terms of direct benefits to the clients of the scheme - in smoothing the transition between services and ensuring a better level of communication between them.

‘We have brought together existing services. The partners know that once we have got clients then we can help them get jobs and they know that the client will be well treated, they will not be lost into some system where they can end up being stitched up and losing their benefits. There is a lot of trust between partners and mutual respect.’ (Manager)

‘Participants have benefited from a joined-up service, not having to be passed on like a baton from hand to hand. They benefited from a structure of services and this system was explained to them.’ (Manager)

The partnerships were also seen as providing opportunities for those involved to extend their networks and links with other organisations working in the field. They had helped raise the profile and status of the organisations involved, and facilitated them in their wider roles.

‘For us, involvement in such a scheme has highlighted our profile as even though we are a big organisation we are not well known. It was good marketing to be involved with (the other partners).’ (Partner)

Schemes also saw the partnerships as having an important role in enabling them to influence the practice of other organisations working in the same field and employers who might provide jobs. (There is more on the influence that schemes were able to have on employers in Chapter 5: 5.7.) On the other side, partners appreciated the opportunities which the partnerships provided for mutual learning, as well as the benefits they provided for their own clients.

‘We wanted to bring some real issues and new ideas “in from the outside world” - a way of connecting the business to the community ... the partnership is a loose one in terms of actual decision-making or sharing expertise - more a question of mutual benefit through association.’ (Partner)

One relationship which was particularly important for many of the schemes, was the relationship with the Employment Service. The Employment Service was a formal partner in 20 out of the 24 schemes, and four schemes also had staff seconded from the service. A good relationship often resulted in a lot of client referrals, and also provided schemes with an alternative resource for referrals of clients, who were not appropriate for their scheme.
However, the relationship was not always an easy one. Where it worked well, it was often based on the prior experience of the scheme of working closely with the service, or because the scheme had made a good connection with the Regional Disability Service\(^\text{18}\), which helped in generating support at a local level. In addition, some staff had a background in the Employment Service, or were seconded from it, which gave both direct knowledge of the system and local contacts.

Good relations with the Disability Service could mean that staff were able to refer clients back to the service if they did not meet the scheme’s selection criteria or were not successful within the scheme’s activities.

‘Those not succeeding at any point are offered feedback and are referred back to the DEA [Disability Employment Adviser] for support.’ (Manager)

In a few cases joint work took place between the scheme and the Employment Service. For example an employment worker from a scheme could visit the Disability Employment Adviser (DEA) with a client, in order to translate, and give moral support.

In cases where the partnership was not so successful, dissatisfaction with client referrals was apparent. A number of schemes reported that the local Employment Service / DEAs had not referred as many clients as expected, particularly in the early stages, or they had sent unsuitable clients.

‘Referrals from DEAs have been very disappointing. The DEAs have been very unhelpful, in spite of some initial interest from the local agency.’

(Manager)

Some schemes felt that DEAs saw their scheme as a source of competition, and this had affected referral rates and partnership building.

‘We have a target: if we get someone into work we count them, it is hard for the DEAs to understand, DEAs are reluctant to let us have clients: they have targets too. We need to be thinking partnership, but targets are divisive.’

(Manager)

The levels of competition and collaboration were likely to have been affected by the levels of DEA provision across the country, with areas of high levels of DEA service provision being more competitive. Areas of low service provision would be more likely to welcome the new service provided by Innovative Schemes. However the culture within the local office or the Regional Disability Service, was also a factor:

‘Our clients were more multiply disabled than we had expected; this is the reality of the target group... We had a very involved Regional Disability Service manager who really put himself out to help, was very enthusiastic,

\(^{18}\) See definition in glossary.
but took the attitude that the DEA's shouldn't refer clients to us: we should be finding a new client group. So we didn't get much cooperation from the DEA's at least initially. However, very few of our clients were 'virgin' clients: they were not sitting at home, and most had been round the system many times. We were just the new kids on the block. The DEA's had given up on them; they either referred them on as having failed, or the clients referred themselves. We haven't always achieved success with these clients either. We picked up people with significant barriers to finding employment.' (Manager)

Difficulties of this kind appear to have been resolved by some schemes, by building up good personal contacts with their local DEA's and by ensuring that their local office was fully informed about their activities and how they were seeking to work with clients. But this could take time to achieve.

A key factor was how rigid or flexible the local Employment Service and/or Benefits Agency office was willing to be.

One important area was information about and access to special budgets such as Access to Work19, which could facilitate a client's return to work.

'We were able to supply a special chair for a client. The chair was funded by Access to Work .... [a client] is now employed, with the help of ESA Access to Work which is funding her travel to and from work ... support services have been provided through Access to Work - large screens, deaf alerts for fire alarms.' (Manager)

A few schemes reported difficulties, either in getting hold of Access to Work payments, or because of the time delay between applications and the grant coming through. The involvement of the Regional Disability Service was crucial for at least three schemes, where a good relationship with that service had assisted the relationship with the local Employment Service office and ways were found around these difficulties.

Another concern expressed by clients related to the potential impact of involvement with the scheme on their benefit status. Clients were concerned that by taking part in the scheme, this would indicate to the Benefits Agency that they were available for or capable of work, and could lead to a loss of benefits. This was frequently reported to be an obstacle for people considering joining the schemes.

'One of the biggest issues has been the twelve-month linking rule20. To receive Work Based Training for Adults21, some clients had to go off Invalidity

19 See definition in glossary.
20 See definition in glossary.
21 See definition in glossary.
Benefit, go on Job Seeking benefit for a day and then go on to training. But if that doesn’t work out, the DSS won’t allow a client to go back on the same level of benefit, i.e., they have a lower income. For some people this can be a significant loss of money.’ (Manager)

Many of the schemes changed their structure and shape as activities progressed, either as a result of learning on the ground, responding to the needs of clients that were referred, or in response to changes in the partnership relationships. Changes were also the result of learning about what was achievable and manageable, within a relatively short time frame, and with tight outcome targets.

As is often the case in innovative programmes, for some schemes the first few months involved a steep learning curve, during which changes or modifications had to be made to initial plans.

‘Because all this learning has had to take place, the scheme is behind schedule. We thought it would take us six weeks to get going, it has taken us till now [twelve weeks later]. It is all about learning.’ (Staff member)

A slow start up was noted particularly in schemes which lacked previous experience, or had few existing organisational structures in place, or no prior history with their partners. However, even most experienced organisations could encounter unexpected obstacles, and projected timescales had often been unrealistic about the amount of development work that would be required, including networking with other agencies, before activities could be started.22 The most common causes of difficulty in the early stages of schemes were:

- partners failing to deliver, or withdrawing;
- loss of momentum between bidding and completion of contract;
- difficulties in finding suitable premises or staff;
- difficulties in recruiting participants; and
- activities taking longer than anticipated.

Partners failing to deliver or withdrawing

The difficulties encountered by schemes who lost partners, or whose partners were unable to deliver on promised resources, has already been noted, above.

Loss of momentum

The time factor could be particularly important here: at least four schemes

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22 Although there was some evidence that second tranche schemes had learned much from the experience of the first tranche schemes, this does not appear to have reduced the time that it took them to get going, as many encountered similar difficulties to the first tranche schemes. Difficulties arising from the time gap between compiling their bids and receiving a contract were particularly mentioned in the second tranche schemes.
noted a loss of momentum because of the time lapse between the bidding process and the final signing of contracts with commissioning departments, which was reflected in a loss of interest on the part of partners.

‘The scheme lost its steam a bit waiting for the green light [the decision making/contract signing]. A surge of work was done when [we] put in the bid and in galvanising people into action, but the momentum was lost with the partner organisations.’ (Manager)

The late signing of contracts had other impacts on schemes, and their subsequent activities. In at least two schemes, important deadlines were missed: in one case, the start of a new college term with its opportunities to recruit clients, and in another case, the recruitment timetable of a major employer had been missed.

‘The project was expected to get going in March. There followed a delay to the project which essentially meant it was unworkable. The main recruitment was in September, October, and November. By February it was unworkable. We had missed the boat.’ (Manager)

**Difficulties in finding premises and staff**

Other delays arose as schemes had difficulties finding suitable premises, mobilising resources and recruiting staff. In some cases this was related to loss of partners. For example, in one case a partner was to have seconded a manager to the scheme but when the company restructured the agreement fell by the wayside. In other cases, schemes found it difficult to recruit suitable staff to undertake the work.

**Difficulties in recruiting participants**

However, the most widely reported problem in the early stages of schemes was the difficulties that many schemes experienced in recruiting participants. Referrals were not forthcoming from expected sources, such as the Employment Service (DEAs), other disability services, or health professionals. This usually meant that additional resources had to be deployed to market the scheme more widely, through mail-shots, liaison with other agencies, media coverage and workshops.

‘We are having difficulties with referrals from GPs, employers and hospitals. We spoke to the DEAs right at the beginning and they loved the idea of the project but have not referred anyone to it. We need referring agencies to actually sell the programme to clients. There has been some organisational learning, although that does not mean it has been helpful for the scheme as people are still not referring.’ (Manager)

**Activities taking longer than expected**

Other activities that were found to be more time consuming than schemes had expected were finding and co-ordinating volunteers (i.e. people recruited to provide mentoring and support to clients on a voluntary basis), contacting and working with employers, and the general co-
ordination of partnerships. This usually meant that some initial time had
been allocated to these activities, but results were not produced within
the time span allotted, and considerably more time had to be allocated
from the staff budget. An alternative course was to cut down on the
activity, or find other ways of achieving the same result.

‘A lot more work than expected has gone into raising project awareness to
attract volunteers and in co-ordinating volunteers. A great deal of time and
effort was put in to prepare clients to enter the scheme, more than intended.’
(Staff member)

‘Employer liaison activities can and have taken up a lot of time, which now
has to be reduced. We were acting as an advocate for clients; the only contact
now is by telephone. The reason I got involved in these activities is that I
like to follow through clients [ie people with disabilities] from start to
exit. Now we leave this to the individual.’ (Staff member)

In some cases, early learning led to changes to planned structures and
activities, or the overall orientation of the scheme. These have included:

- changes in the approach to supporting people in work;
- modification of recruitment and assessment processes;
- restructuring of training activities;
- changes in time scale of activities; and
- a refocusing of activities away from more developmental activities,
towards a tighter employment focus.

**Changes in approach to supporting people in work**

This included the three schemes that had to reconsider their plans to
establish social firms\(^{23}\), as these turned out to be difficult to set up within
their existing organisational and policy framework. Other schemes felt
that they were unable to invest as much time as they had hoped in direct
work with employers - preferring to work through providing support to
the client. (Other schemes continued to provide a considerable level of
support to employers.)

**Modification of recruitment and assessment processes**

Difficulties in the recruitment of clients, and a greater understanding of
the needs of clients led some schemes to change their client recruitment
and assessment processes. As has already been noted (see above under
difficulties in recruiting clients) some schemes had to invest more time
than had initially been anticipated in supporting clients through the early
stages of their involvement in scheme activities. Assessment and training
processes were also sometime adapted to take account of the profile of
the client group recruited.

\(^{23}\) See definition in glossary.
Changes in assessment processes are discussed in depth in Chapter 4 (4.3.2), but often involved a movement from a formal assessment to a more informal assessment over a longer time span.

**Changes to training activities**

Training activities were also sometimes adapted. For example, a four day disability awareness training was found to be too long for employers to be willing to release staff to attend, a planned 12-week employment preparation training for clients was found to be inappropriately long for many of the clients recruited. In other cases, the planned training proved to be too short for the needs of the client group:

'We discovered ten weeks was too short. We needed more in-class preparation time for both the independent living and partner students. We underestimated the amount of pressure employed students would feel given the expectations to perform at a work site.' (Manager)

Other changes to training were made because the demand for this was lower than expected, and with insufficient numbers in the scheme at any one time requiring the training, this had to be delivered on a 'one to one' rather than 'group' basis.

**Changes in time scale of activities**

Each scheme had its own programme of activities with different expectations as to how long each would take, or how long clients would take to pass through them. However, early estimates by schemes about the amount of time required at different stages often proved hard to maintain, and activities had to be readjusted accordingly. This could lead however to gaps and bottlenecks as clients moved more quickly through some activities than others, often getting stuck at later stages prior to actual movement into employment. This could have implications for the deployment of staff at different stages of the scheme.

'We have shortened time in Phase 1 due to lack of interest in [testing out] courses, and clients move into Phase 2 quicker than originally intended. But, there is definitely a bottleneck in Phase 3 where there are currently 16 clients putatively ready for work. (Manager)

The time required for individual clients to move through activities could be highly varied, making it hard for schemes to have clear cut ‘programmes’ with specific time scales attached.

'The training is for six months maximum at the end of which it is hoped that they will go into self employment or employment. Some will go through in a fortnight, some will take much longer. There are individual action plans which are all very different.' (Staff member)
Although some schemes were able to maintain quite rigid time scales (a rehabilitation scheme, for example, had a three week programme of training but would then provide follow up support for a more open ended period of time) many found that they needed to adjust time expectations to the situation of each individual clients. It was not unexpected for clients with a range of issues and little employment experience to require up to a year or more of support before they would be able to cope with employment unaided.

The amount of staff time required by individual clients, and the amount of time it took for clients to move through schemes was closely related to the kind of referrals that were being sent to the scheme from other agencies, and the selection criteria that the scheme adopted.

‘One problem that arose with one of our main partners - Social Services - was that they referred people with a high level of dependency, whereas we wanted to concentrate on people who are employable.’ (Manager)

Re-focusing of activities

Another change, often noted towards the end of the life of the project, was a shift in emphasis, from more developmental activities, to a clear focus on individual clients and helping these to move into employment. In part, this arose from a concern that initial employment targets would not be met – a great concern to those schemes where outcome funding made up a significant part of their overall budget. However, in one case the shift arose from a discovery that this was not the most difficult part of the whole process:

‘In some ways, our focus on jobs hardened over time. Early on our attitude was, we know we have to get people jobs, but there were a number of different outcomes which were equally valued: further education, voluntary work. Our attitude changed because they feared that getting people jobs would be the most difficult part, but in reality, there were other things which were more difficult. Finding clients in the early days were the hardest part, after that, everything came quite easy. Finding jobs for people was not as hard as we feared. Finding employers was hard work.’ (Manager)

However, concern was expressed that the focus on targets could unbalance the overall direction of the scheme, and detract them from the more developmental (mobilising) aspects of their work which had fewer immediate outcomes in terms of clients moving into employment.

‘The measure of the success of my position became ‘how many delegates got into work’. How liaising and maintaining partners became interpreted as client jobs, I do not understand. I feel that (the scheme) reverted to the traditional work placement model. The focus for my job became skewed: getting people into work rather than building partnership relationships.’ (Staff member)
Schemes were set up in most cases to provide a pathway for clients, between their present situation and employment and this involved many schemes in bringing together a very diverse range of organisations in ambitious partnership arrangements. Although the specific activities of the schemes might have been run by the lead organisation on its own, partners provided schemes with access to wider networks and contacts. This gave them access to referral agencies and employers, the opportunity to influence other local organisations, and to improve co-ordination between different services.

To manage these complex arrangements schemes needed robust structures, and considerable skill in those engaged to manage them. Managers needed to have a clear sense of direction and leadership, a strong commitment to the overall ideal, and the ability to manage staff and partners effectively. However, the structures also needed to be flexible enough to deal with changes which emerged as the schemes developed – changes in pace, changes in the partnership relationships and in the profile of their client group.

The schemes also needed staff who had a range of skills, an understanding of the particular difficulties faced by their clients as well as an ability to engage with a variety of other agencies in supporting them. They also needed commitment and an ability to cope with the frustrations of work in this area, and managers needed to be able to ensure that staff were suitably trained and supported in their work.

Some schemes clearly managed to hold all of this together better than others. One striking feature to emerge across the schemes was the importance of prior experience: of the disability field, of employers and employment-related activities, and of working in partnership. Without this experience, the learning curve was a steep one, schemes took a long time to get going. They were more likely to encounter unforeseen difficulties, and have to make changes in their approach, or structural arrangements, to cope with these. In particular, a number of schemes were struggling with unexpectedly low rates of referral, and difficulties in meeting employment targets which had been set too high.
4.1 Introduction

This chapter considers how the schemes worked with their clients - the kind of services, supports and opportunities they provided. In many ways, the route to employment is a highly individual experience for the disabled people involved. The way that schemes recruited clients, planned with them, arranged various activities and services for them was the hub of their work.

However, it is important to recognise that some schemes were not just working with individual disabled clients. An important part of many of the schemes was working with other agencies to ensure that the pathway was a smooth one, or working with employers to open up new employment opportunities.

In Chapter 1 we described a model in which different elements in the pathway to employment are identified. Developed during our analysis of scheme activities, this provided an important organising framework for understanding the range of activities provided by the schemes. This chapter has been broadly organised around this framework. After an introduction to general issues around the idea of a 'pathway' into employment, the chapter introduces various activities through which clients might pass as they move along the pathway, from recruitment into the scheme, to placement in employment. It then discusses some of the cross-cutting issues related to tying these various stages together, ensuring that appropriate support is available at each stage and motivation is sustained.

4.2 Some overall issues about the 'pathway' to employment

Using the pathway to employment framework we have identified Innovative Schemes as intermediary agencies which provide a range of activities, including mobilising disabled people and employers, as well as matching, supporting and mediating between the two.

A consistent theme to emerge from the schemes was that there was no one pattern or model of how clients might make the transition into work, and how specific elements of the pathway might be addressed. Although schemes faced similar tasks and challenges, the differences in their work focus, contexts, clients' needs, target groups, experience and resources meant that the work involved different types of response, variations in timing, making adjustments and working with a variety of individuals. Schemes used a range of generalised and individualised approaches - often creating a programme of activities for one individual or one particular set of circumstances. Each client and each employment opportunity presented a different set of requirements and, as we note
4.3 The activities involved in creating pathways to employment

Later in this chapter (4.3.3 and 4.6), one hallmark of the schemes was their capacity for flexibility and making new links.

Each of the schemes provided various activities, courses and supports. The particular cluster of activities varied from one project to another, according to the main focus of their work. However, in most cases, the chronological sequence of the activities provided by schemes was more or less the same:

- Mobilising (disabled people): issues of publicity and recruitment;
- Assessment;
- Agreeing and designing a way forward;
- Basic preparation and general orientation for work;
- Preparation and core skills training for specific or particular areas of work;
- Moving into work, including job search skills, actual job seeking and negotiations between employers/employees;
- In work: supporting clients and employers.

Individually, clients varied greatly in the amount of time required in passing through these different stages, and the process was not necessarily sequential in the way described above. It might require looping through some stages several times. Schemes had to be flexible and even where they had pre-planned courses or activities these did not always or necessarily ‘fit’ the needs, wishes or abilities of their clients.

4.3.1 Mobilisation: recruiting clients onto a scheme

Referral routes and eligibility

Schemes spent considerable time in the early stages contacting referral sources and attempting to plan referral routes. In order to do this, they had to advertise that they were ‘in business’, although in some cases the scheme had become known about locally through the process of putting together a bid and negotiating with potential partners. Some had specifically invited partners to join them on the basis that these were expected to provide referrals. (See also Chapter 2 (2.3) and Chapter 3 (3.3).) Links with the Employment Service and other mainstream services were also important in ensuring that schemes were known about.

Most expected that referrals would come mainly from the ES and the DEAs but this was not always so: for example, specialist disability teams in health and social services, local voluntary agencies and occupational health professionals were also sources. In the majority of cases clients were referred to schemes by a third party but there were some that expected and encouraged clients to refer themselves.
As was noted in Chapter 3 (3.5.1) several of the schemes experienced difficulties in recruiting clients, especially in the early days. These included:

- Competition from other employment initiatives operating in the scheme area. (For example, NDDP PA pilots.)
- Clients' fears about losing benefits.
- Poor co-operation from partners and other agencies who promised referrals. (See also Chapter 3 (3.5.5).)

One scheme attributed their low levels of recruitment to the fact that they were being advertised as a service for ‘disabled people’. The target client population did not identify themselves with the ‘disability’ label. Another scheme commented that clients were disinclined to go for call centres because of the poor publicity that work receives.

The amount of staff time and effort devoted to getting referrals varied across schemes and there were tensions about how much staff time could/should be used in this way. An obvious problem was how schemes which were new could earn a good reputation that would encourage new clients to approach them, or other agencies to make referrals. Agencies that already had a reputation for their work with disabled people were at a marked advantage here, and some already had an established ‘client’ base on which to draw. Where the activity was a new one to the lead organisation, more effort usually had to be devoted to reaching out to other agencies and to disabled people, sometimes with the consequence that work with clients got off to a slow start. A few schemes used advertising campaigns in local newspapers, radio or television but mostly they relied on word of mouth, giving talks, contacts with mainstream agencies and some advertisements. Several of the schemes which focused on rehabilitation-related work or job retention devoted considerable time to building up links with health services and health professionals. Work retention activities also required good links to be established with employers.

4.3.2 Assessment

Once potential clients had been contacted, all schemes undertook some form of assessment, both of their eligibility for scheme activities (and whether they met the criteria\(^\text{24}\) for NDDP funding), and to obtain basic information and to establish the client’s work skills, experience, interests and, where relevant, physical capabilities. In most schemes the assessment was carried out in an informal discussion using either pro formas, which they had developed or tools from other sources. In general, the schemes encouraged a holistic approach - covering personal, social, family and practical aspects as well as directly work-related issues - but on a fairly informal basis. In at least three of the schemes refining and validating assessment tools were a project focus but, for the most part, client

\(^{24}\) See ‘Benefits’ in the glossary.
assessments remained ‘non-clinical, flexible and client led’. Some schemes did use more standardised methods of measuring performance to assess physical capabilities or basic social and work skills but most avoided any kind of quantitative tools, i.e. psycho-metric or other psychological, social or occupational measures.

**Examples**

Scheme T. The support workers often assessed the interests and capabilities of learning disabled clients by going out and doing ‘something they really enjoy’ as an unthreatening way of seeing how they coped with a number of everyday situations.

Scheme E. New clients were interviewed fairly informally but did complete a systematic assessment form covering a range of social, personal and work skills, experiences and preferences.

Scheme S. One-to-one assessment was carried out by the Employment Case Manager over multiple visits and in various settings – clinic, hospital, client’s home, etc. The aim was to find out the client’s return to work needs: the necessity of workplace adaptations; a reduction in hours; lower skilled work, etc. Clients might be referred for special assessments – medical, psychological, occupational, etc. – as appropriate.

Scheme J. Client assessment was integrated with the referral procedure. A referral form was completed by the referral agent and signed by the applicant. The application was then passed on to a ‘Referral Committee’ who considered an applicant’s potential for employment, their vocational training needs, work experience, their interpersonal and daily living skills.

There were some indications that schemes that took time to get to know the clients and involved them most fully in discussions and reviews over time were most successful in moving people forward.

**4.3.3 Agreeing and designing a way forward**

Following assessment, most schemes drew up a plan of action. The few that had developed a pre-determined ‘pathway’ into specific employment openings for selected clients still had to plan with clients how they would prepare for this work through, for example, relevant training.

The pathway through a scheme was defined by the set of activities the client would undertake. In most schemes an individual package of support and training was worked out, based on courses run by or accessed by the scheme. It was staff who tended to take the lead in proposing how the client’s pathway might proceed: clients were involved as much as possible, but often they did not have the knowledge, experience or confidence to take the initiative. An important point was that, although individual
clients in the same scheme might follow broadly similar paths, there were issues about pace and timing, which could mean that they were moving at different rates.

Some schemes offered a prepared set of activities which allowed clients to select from a range of employment opportunities. In others, all clients followed common elements from a pre-set package of activities, often related to skills training or which addressed particular problems or needs.

Schemes did differ in how they guided clients forward. Some encouraged them to explore options - for example, by using work trials - before deciding on what kind of employment to pursue. Others promoted the idea of selecting a particular field of work first and then helping clients to prepare specifically for that. For some clients, options were limited by the local labour market. An early decision was how far the client required work-related training or experience or whether this needed to be preceded by opportunities for personal development or more general work preparation.

In all cases it did appear that clients expected and welcomed the clear emphasis on making progress towards employment. However, it was unclear how far schemes introduced the idea that the activities which constituted what we describe as the pathway might have to be completed in a specific period of time or that the project might not continue after a certain date. There were some indications that uncertainties arising from the pilot nature of the Innovative Schemes affected client commitment and confidence.

Most schemes saw it as part of their responsibility to maintain the ‘pathway’ by providing continuity and ongoing support for clients. Even where clients were expected to become self-sufficient, they were encouraged to ask for help as and if needed.

**4.3.4 Basic preparation and general orientation for work**

Most schemes provided activities which helped clients with basic preparation and orientation for work. The main aspects of this were personal development and issues relating to self confidence and self awareness, and developing a general understanding of work and employment issues.

**Personal development**

Activities here were aimed at helping clients to enhance their emotional or physical wellbeing. A majority of schemes included some elements of personal development in their activities, although schemes varied in how far this was delivered in a formal and structured way, or just implicit in the day to day contact between clients and staff. Some schemes saw personal development as essential preparation for more specifically work-related training and so delivered it to all their clients. Such training...
aimed to address issues of self confidence and belief in the possibility of working by promoting such aspects as personal growth, physical health, self belief, assertiveness, dealing with family and carers' attitudes to work, and awareness of disability rights.

These activities were mostly provided by schemes 'in house' either because such training was not widely available externally or was not suitable. In a few cases, it was 'bought in' from one of their partners, but specially tailored to the needs of their client group. The content, pacing and overall approach of this kind of opportunity usually required careful tailoring for disabled people.

Also entailed in personal development was a degree of empowerment – helping clients to overcome the low expectations of themselves and others, including families, carers, medical advisors, careers guidance professionals, schools and colleges. One scheme also helped clients to address any discrimination they might encounter in the workplace.

**Examples**

Scheme A provided a three week rehabilitation programme delivered by specialist staff (Pain Nurse, Physiotherapist, Occupational Therapists). Clients were trained on stress management, sleep management, and were taught strategies and exercises to carry through the therapy after completing the course. Carers were also encouraged to take part in the training in order to assist clients in the home.

Scheme D developed a personal development programme especially for NDDP clients. The course was divided into three phases and was delivered in small groups. The first phase concentrated on the cognitive underpinnings of behaviours that were adverse to finding employment. The second phase paired a client with a Mentor Coach who, through telephone contact over a four week period, helped interpret the cognitive model for the individual. At this phase clients set behavioural goals for themselves in an effort to change their adverse behaviours. The final phase was group based over three days. During this time clients were encouraged to identify personal and career interests from which an Action Plan would be devised. At this point the client would decide whether or not to pursue further job search activities.

In Scheme F personal development training was delivered over a four week period. The course was designed to provide an experience which enhanced clients' self-confidence and personal awareness. Self expression was encouraged through drama and role playing. The programme was loosely structured so as to enable those people unfamiliar with work discipline to develop skills for the workplace, such as good time keeping and reliability, fitting other activities into leisure time.
Developing a work orientation

A slightly different aspect of basic preparation was helping clients to think about work in realistic terms and ones which related to their own experiences. For example, some disabled people had never considered work, had ideas about work derived only from television or relatives, and so had no direct experience to draw upon. Before some clients could even think in terms of work focused courses or what skills they might acquire, they needed help just to think about work as a real option.

For some schemes, especially those recruiting people with little or no work experience, this early preparation was found to be crucial. This was the period when such clients could be supported in changing quite fundamental attitudes and beliefs about what they could and could not do: one barrier which several schemes referred to was that of self-oppression.

Here schemes aimed to help clients with a variety of skills and general work focused preparation. Activities included: self presentation; vocational guidance; helping clients to sort out what they wanted to do and what they could realistically aim for; CV preparation; knowing where to look for vacancies; understanding what employers are looking for; filling in application forms; interview rehearsals. Most schemes offered some form of structured training in preparation for work which included these aspects. A few provided this on a more ad hoc and one-to-one basis. In some schemes, these activities were included in the personal development courses.

Acquiring core skills

Many schemes identified problems here to do with low literacy or little formal education. A key task was to build clients' skill base by offering training in, for example, literacy, numeracy, vocational skills and training for a variety of trades. (These might include - telesales, call centres, data processing, catering, hospitality, retail sales, assembly line work.) In about half the schemes training could lead to vocational qualifications and here training courses were accessed from external agencies, independent training providers and colleges as well as some elements being provided in house.

Work experience

The use of work experience, also commonly described as job tasters or work placements, was quite widespread, and some schemes came to regard this as an increasingly important part of their work with clients. This usually involved a period of several weeks in a job, which was usually unpaid. It was not necessarily offered to each client however - some clients were offered further training within the scheme if it was agreed that this would be more suitable for the individual than a work experience placement.
Work experience was used for a number of reasons. It provided clients with:

- the experience of a work routine and norms, often for the first time, or for several years;
- a no risk/low risk approach to test the appropriateness of a work sector.

This helped contribute to the client’s confidence and experience, as well as identifying new areas which might need to be addressed, or new skills which needed to be acquired if the client was to continue in this area of work.

Work experience could also provide a means of circumventing normal recruitment processes which could militate against some disabled clients, especially those with learning difficulties, or those with confidence problems. This was because the procedures which organisations used to ensure fairness for candidates, such as the need to fill in an application form for a relatively low level job were occasionally impossible for specific clients.

‘We have found in the past that people with learning disabilities have difficulty in completing application forms. Work experience helps to avoid this through providing skills in a practical way.’ (Manager)

Work tasters also offered benefits for employers since they provided employers with:

- a no risk/low risk approach to test out the client;
- a no risk/low risk approach to test their own readiness to employ a disabled person.

Many of the schemes saw the work placement as a valuable tool for supporting the integration of a client into work. Employers had an opportunity to get to know the individual, and to overcome any initial prejudices they held about the impact that their impairment had on their ability to undertake certain tasks. In several cases, staff expressed the view that this was the single best way of finding more sustainable work for the NDDP clients:

‘Still, the most effective means of clients securing employment was through work experience . . . . the foot in the door technique.’ (Manager)
However, in at least three of the schemes there were questions over how much time staff could spend on these activities as there was no outcome funding attached to it. One manager said:

‘For the individual there needs to be more experience of work tasters, work experience and work shadowing - short periods. There are no great expectations of their doing anything, but it can give them a sense of what the work is. People need to have a sense of how work has changed, but it is difficult, as they get no money for access or support for work placements.’ (Manager)

Several of the schemes used their partner employers for work experience placements. Other schemes used their own existing contacts with employers:

‘We have a good base of and a good relationship with a range of employers whom we have been to in the past. It is not difficult for us to get a work placement for someone with a disability.’ (Manager)

However, a few of the schemes reported that it was often actually harder to set up a work experience placement in organisations with whom they were establishing a relationship, than for other clients to find a regular job. Larger organisations presented particular barriers if they had recruitment policies requiring clients go through a rigorous application and interview process. In one case a client had three interviews for work experience and was then turned down. Other organisations (often but not always smaller ones) had less formal procedures.

**Preparation for specific employment**

Some scheme activities were geared to specific job placements where openings had previously been negotiated with, or initiated by, employers. Here training was geared to ensuring that clients satisfied certain requirements and the courses were packaged to cover the relevant ground. Two main examples were, keyboard and computing skills and call centre training.

In other cases, project organisers chose the main employment areas in which training would be delivered through consideration of potential opportunities in the local labour market. In one scheme, skills training concentrated on trades offered by four ‘supported co-ops’ – retail sales, catering, woodworking and horticulture. The training was followed up with learning-on the-job within a supported work environment.

Two of the schemes specialised in training for remote tele-services work. However the training became an issue as it became evident that some clients were not satisfied with the direction it was taking them. One of the schemes responded to clients’ interests by offering a more flexible vocational training programme. If clients were not suited to tele-sales, they were given the option to take training off-site, or they were provided with assistance for setting up an independent business.
More specialised needs such as qualifications for specific work areas were met by accessing mainstream courses. Here the task for the scheme was negotiating with colleges, finding and accessing specific courses rather than employers in the first instance. Some schemes were a little cautious about formal qualifications on the grounds that disabled people have been ‘sold’ these as the answer to getting employment when lack of qualifications might not have been the most difficult barrier.

4.3.6 Moving into work

A key activity for all schemes was helping the client into open employment. There were several elements to this: job search activities, finding a suitable job and being recruited.

Job search activities

All schemes (with the exception of those which focused on job retention or on self-employment) offered some form of preparation for job seeking or work re-entry. These activities concentrated on presentation skills, CV preparation with assistance in transferring a CV to a computer, interview role playing, assistance in locating job opportunities, finding out what employers were really looking for, and filling in job applications. Such skills might be developed through role play and group discussion as well as ‘live runs’ though individual sessions also played their part. Clients often preferred sessions which developed their practical skills:

‘Lots of disabled people have been ‘trained to death’, they are not wanting to go through any more training programmes, so they tended to work more one to one, doing the same kind of thing, looking at CVs, mapping out an action plan etc. … the staff were planning to do a personal development course, looking at barriers, legislation, job applications etc, but there was not much interest in this… People don’t have to do the training, it is optional.’

(Manager)

Staff from some schemes were prepared to accompany clients to job interviews to provide support or specific help with, for example, communication. One scheme timed job search skills training closely to an actual job interview.
Examples

Scheme U provided job search guidance through a Job Club which aimed to build relevant social skills and client confidence. Job coaches provide one-on-one assistance with CVs, job applications, interview strategies, identification of training opportunities and job placements. At the Job Club, clients shared problems and solutions for dealing with the job market.

Scheme R supplied a Transition Worker linked to a further education college. Client-students accessed this worker for job search support regarding job applications, CV preparation, interview skills and communication. The Transition Worker helped match clients to employment opportunities and secured special communications help during job interviews.

Placement into work

Placing clients into jobs was a major activity of the schemes. In finding work opportunities or helping clients to find work appropriate to their interests and abilities, schemes had to find a balance between their clients’ hopes and fears and the realities of the local labour market. In striking this balance some schemes were more ‘client-led’, starting from their client’s interests and abilities, while others were more ‘employer led’, starting from the development of specific local work opportunities and helping their clients to fit in to these. In either case, an important part of the role was supporting some negotiation between the two and seeing what accommodation could be made if the ‘fit’ was not exactly right.

Client-led activities

The majority of schemes started, to a large extent, from the wishes and needs of the client, and helped to find suitable work opportunities in the locality to fit these. This afforded the client the greatest degree of choice and flexibility.

‘We ask the candidate what is their ideal job and what we have to do to facilitate that. We will support them if necessary - a lot of it is building up trust between the parties.’ (Manager)

Following this approach also gave clients control over their own lives, in many cases for the first time - a feature that clients regularly noted in interviews. Scheme staff, though, noted that they often had to tread a fine line with individual clients in terms of the expectations they had of themselves and what schemes could achieve with them. Expectations could be both too low, and too high:
‘The main thing about expectations is that these were mostly too low, or too vague, rather than too high. This they had often picked up from rehabilitation, or from career guidance professionals. Guidance people often had low expectations of what disabled people can do. We are taking their aspirations seriously.’ (Manager)

In contrast:

‘Some clients had unrealistic expectations, they expect it done by yesterday. Some people thought it would be easier to get what they wanted than it was, for example, media jobs, one wanted a job in animation, after an ‘O’ level in art. There was a danger of the scheme getting into an Anneka Rice ‘fix it’ role.’ (Manager)

In one case, the philosophy of the scheme was to empower the client to look for a job themselves. Scheme workers tended to take a minimal supporting role in this.

‘I used to liaise more with employers, but this also took a lot of time. Clients now do this for themselves. It also fits in better with the ethos of doing things for themselves. We did not want clients to slip back into the role of having things done for them.’ (Staff member)

Working in a client-led way was often very time consuming, and several of the schemes noted the amount of time required had not been taken fully into account in initial plans. This was particularly the case if scheme staff were going out into the community and trying to find suitable employers and encourage these to create work opportunities for their clients – whether for short term work placements, or for permanent employment. Several of the schemes had a network of employers (including their partners) that kept them informed about work opportunities arising. Others undertook regular work search activities on behalf of their clients, through searching newspapers, or through their connections with the local jobcentre.

Employer-led

A smaller number of the schemes had direct links for accessing jobs with specific employers as a part of the way the scheme operated. There were variations in the ways these operated.

The approach to finding work was different in each case. In one case, for example, the scheme was led and initiated by the employer which ring-fenced 50 jobs for disabled people and carers. In two others the scheme provided training or support, which would lead to work with either a single employer or a pool of employers. While the majority of positions were in call centre work, there was scope within the scheme to offer alternative training based on the clients’ wishes.
This approach was successful in providing jobs for disabled people. The close links between scheme and employers afforded opportunities for staff to discuss the needs of employers with clients.

Staff in employer-led schemes remarked that this direct link between the disabled person and employer was one of the most successful aspects of the scheme:

‘We have developed a wealth of experience from the scheme and are successful in getting people into work. We also have successful business partners who are 100 per cent behind us.’ (Manager)

However, having a relatively small pool of employers to work with could also lead to problems. Sending employers the right people for the work available was important for the success of the scheme. It was reported on more than one occasion that inappropriate referrals were made to employers, and this in turn had a detrimental effect on employer motivation to engage with the scheme.

‘I would say one small negative thing about the scheme. Sometimes they have sent us people who are clearly inappropriate for [this kind of work] and that has annoyed us. I think that because they are not recruiting enough people and they have targets and quotas to meet, they can be tempted to send people who are not suitable.’ (Employer)

It was also argued by one organisation of disabled people that guaranteeing jobs (as in the first example) was patronising to the disabled person:

‘You must either take them on merit, or not at all. What is more, when jobs are ring fenced, they tend to be entry level jobs, with certain type of work, usually low skilled, and are the jobs with the least impact on the organisation.’ (Partner)

**Negotiating the match**

Scheme staff could also devote considerable time to working with a potential employer to broker a good match between client and employer needs. By working closely with employers, staff were able to discuss issues and allay fears.

‘We do not assume what an employer or an employee needs. We ask. We then provide a custom made package of support. We ask what an employer wants – they are a client too. We then ask what assistance does a candidate need to get a position. We are not about education and training. We look at how to address the skills gaps in the workplace.’ (Manager)

In one case a scheme worker acknowledged that the lead organisation had moved considerably in their understanding that the employer had needs which needed to be taken into account as much as those of the client.
We have learned the value in dealing with employers’ problems - the employer perspective and where they are coming from. We realise that the process entails a lot of negotiation.’ (Manager)

With knowledge of the kind of support available, such as Access to Work budgets, scheme staff were often able to inform employers of ways in which they would be able to adapt the work place to meet the needs of the disabled person. In some cases they were also able to make an offer of ongoing support (see below) during the early months of employment, which could provide additional reassurance to both client and employer.

The majority of scheme managers and staff viewed the on-going support of clients in employment as an essential component of their activities if the client was to retain their employment status. In all the schemes where support was offered, clients had the choice of taking up the support service offered to them. There were differences between schemes in terms of: the timing and nature of support offered; whether support was formal or informal; whether support was offered to client, employer or both parties.

Support into work

Many clients were anxious and lacking in confidence when they started a job, and the support given to clients and employers when they had found work was often vital to the long-term sustainability of employment.

Activities here covered a range of mostly practical support and preparation which was important in smoothing this transition into work. This included: help with personal support and negotiations with the employer; checking transport and access arrangements; ensuring that the workplace was prepared with suitable adaptations or technical supports; and that employment requirements were covered and understood by managers and work colleagues, where relevant. In most cases this kind of support was provided through individualised work with a mentor or buddy.

Ongoing support

In a few of the schemes there were no formal mechanisms for supporting clients once they had entered mainstream employment. Instead there was a more informal system whereby clients were able to contact the scheme if any difficulties arose, or former clients were encouraged to drop in and let the scheme know how they were getting on. In one case, the scheme was clear that it did not want to foster too much client dependency but would offer informal support if asked.

In other schemes, ongoing support was formally agreed and offered to all clients. Formal support usually implied regular meetings held with the client through staff directly employed in the scheme. Support could
continue for long periods, or could tail off once the employee was established in their job - the level of support was driven by the needs of the clients.

A typical model was the following:

‘Sometimes it is just induction, sometimes it is ongoing. Sometimes they are called in to help with a probationary review meeting, or for formal supervisory meetings. One person was happy but wanted to do more than the [agreed] 10 per cent of her job and the employers brought us in.’ (Staff)

A few schemes were clear that while they offered support to the client, the general philosophy was to encourage them to take control over their own lives:

‘Overall what we have tried to do is to build people’s confidence so that we have empowered them to do the work themselves.’ (Manager)

Elsewhere ongoing support was at a higher level. The following example came from a scheme which worked primarily with people with learning difficulties. Here, the worker who was attached to a client maintained regular contact with the client/employee and the employer to ensure the placement was successful. The worker could offer additional on-site support when and if the need arose. In this case, contact with the employer was also a feature of the intervention and was both proactive and reactive: employers were encouraged to contact the consultant for advice.

In several cases, although support was offered to a client, they had no wish for their new employer to know they had participated in a scheme and did not take up the offer.

Usually, in-work support was intended to be available for a limited period of time, ranging from a few days to a few months depending on the individual need of the client. This was for a number of reasons: wanting to help the client progress to greater independence; to allow other, for example, informal or work-place supports to take over; and because of pressure on scheme staff.

**In work mentors**

Rather than providing support from scheme staff, one scheme developed mentoring by work-place colleagues. The scheme recruited, trained and supported mentors from within the work place for each client and this was set up prior to the individual starting employment.

‘[W]e wanted to test a more inclusive approach through using a more natural form of support. Employers know their own organisations and jobs better than a job coach ever can.’ (Manager)
In most cases, a considerable amount of staff time was spent, not just with the individual client, but in making a search of the local environment to identify possible work opportunities, sometimes also developing new opportunities through work with individual employers. Two special approaches to this were schemes involved in helping clients to become self employed, and schemes which were seeking to create new work opportunities through setting up social firms.

Staff involved in finding jobs with and for clients needed to be aware of local labour market conditions. This was important as local conditions varied considerably. For example, in several areas there were skills shortages. These areas provided schemes with a rich source of potential job opportunities.

A particularly good source of new opportunities identified by several of the schemes was in call centre operations. Not only was this a growth area, in terms of employment opportunities, but also one in which employers were reporting difficulties in recruiting staff. Turnover was often high. A number of the schemes were directly involved in either placing clients in call centres, or in training them to be job ready for this type of work.

This development, however, did not go unchallenged. In two projects staff expressed concern about the nature of call centre work, particularly over the low skill level of the work and the danger that it could create employment ghettos for disabled people. Staff in these schemes therefore avoided channelling clients into these opportunities. But other schemes argued that these concerns were misplaced:

‘Some people call the Call Centres the modern sweat shop. As part of what we are trying to do we are trying to show people that they are not sweat shops, they are working with their staff. All the firms we have chosen on the scheme are social firms.' (Manager)

There were also differing opinions about the extent to which labour market conditions were the main factor in preventing a disabled person returning to work. In a few places schemes reported that where there was high unemployment, or where large local employers were undergoing significant re-structuring, there were difficulties in finding clients sustainable work. However, one scheme took a very different view to this, after considerable success in finding work opportunities in an area of high unemployment:

‘We expect to be able to demonstrate that levels of unemployment are not the deciding factor in getting people into work. The main factors are the levels of support and organisation.' (Manager)

25 In this context, the respondent understood a social firm to be a company with good employment policies.
Several of the schemes expressed concern that there had been a growth in the use of temporary contracts and employment agencies for recruitment of staff. Temporary contracts often put off clients as a switch from benefits to temporary work was conceived as being too great a risk to take, in the event that work would be unavailable in the longer term, and benefits would be lost or be reassessed at lower levels.

The increase in the use of private employment agencies to contract workers was also noted. This was particularly the case with call centre work. One manager reported that

‘We have found that [they are] generally not helpful and are difficult to work with.’ (Manager)

A number of reasons were put forward for these difficulties. The main concern was that it was felt that agencies themselves were fearful of taking on and placing disabled people because of the perceived risks associated with them, and that they would be ‘left with them’ on their books. Elsewhere there was concern that the employment terms used by agencies did not match those of other employers and it was difficult to influence agencies’ own practices. Elsewhere again, there were problems in gaining access to the right person to talk about disability issues. In one case, a scheme had planned to include an agency in the partnership, but due the lack of continuity in contacts with staff at senior level, the link was abandoned.

Another scheme, seeking to replicate its experience in a new area, had difficulties in negotiating what was a significant contract for the agencies, due to agency concerns over taking on disabled people. The scheme also had their own concern that the staff of the agencies involved in selection and recruitment were not of a high calibre. However, with persistence, most of the problems were ironed out, although the company did insist on doing their own interviewing.

4.4.2 Self employment

The core activity for two of the schemes was supporting clients into self employment. In one case the primary focus was on teleworking, in the other a mentoring system was developed. Both reported the wide range of ideas that clients came up with during the course of the programme, and that several clients realised that self-employment was not in fact appropriate for them. They also both noted that it took several months for clients to be ready with viable business plans. This had an impact on scheme targets.

Good knowledge of financial institutions and/ or links with them were a feature of both schemes. This was considered important as they were a source of business loans and other financial advice and support. Another feature was the close links with other related Innovative Schemes that were developed over the course of the programme. These were in relation to referrals, funding, or providing computers.
Two schemes explored the possibility of developing a ‘social firm’ – a social enterprise run on commercial lines. In one of these the exploration was seen as a ‘pathfinding’ exercise. Scheme staff reported that the participants had all learned a great deal about the process of setting up a social firm and would continue with the development of it into the future.

The partnership of the other scheme decided relatively early on to abandon the vision of the social firm. It was replaced by a proposal to set up three co-operatives in different sectors. The co-operatives established provided clients with real work experience with a view to moving into mainstream employment, where appropriate. The difficulties of establishing this type of initiative were expressed by this scheme. These lay predominantly in the problem of reconciling financial arrangements with the lead organisation which was located in the public sector. Also identified were differences in expectations of the partners from the outset, and competition for funding from another similar local project working with a different client group.

Elsewhere a similar type of supported environment was established to support clients into mainstream employment, where appropriate. Located at the local college, this ‘enclave’ had close links with an employer and provided skills training and work experience. These employer links were seen to be a contributory factor in the success of the scheme.

For several of the schemes, the activities described above did not exactly ‘fit’ with their orientation, as their primary task was job retention rather than finding new work opportunities for their clients. The clients concerned were already in work and were in danger of losing their employment due to injury, disability or sickness. This could include people with mental health problems, a progressive disability or health problem as well as those who had suffered an accident at work or elsewhere.

Seven of the schemes included working on job retention issues: for four schemes this was their main focus. Others noted that this was an area into which they would like to move, or that, over the lifetime of their own scheme they had received several enquiries from employers which they had acted upon. There were varying levels of success within this. Job retention was highlighted by schemes as an area ripe for development and increased opportunities.

In terms of NDDP Innovative Scheme contracts, an outcome for job retention cases was achieved if a client retained their original job.

See ‘Social firms’ in the glossary.
However, the definition of job retention preferred by the Innovative Schemes was a broad one. They also interpreted job retention in the following way:

- Return to the job in which the client was working when the injury, disability or sickness occurred.
- Placement into different work within the same organisation.
- Return to work in a different organisation.

Innovative Schemes were more comfortable with the broader definition since they also recognised that in some cases it was extremely difficult or even impossible for an employee to return to the same type of work:

‘The project is not about retaining employees at any cost. It is about supplying the information about the service so that the client can make informed decisions. The crux of the retention service is to provide information on viability to both the employee and employer. Most employees do want to return to their previous employer.’ (Manager)

Having said this, all agreed that a negotiated solution or settlement with the original employer was the ideal for both sides and better employment practice.

Identifying candidates

Candidates for job retention were identified in a number of ways. In some cases it was primarily by making links with employers and asking them, in turn, to identify those at risk of losing their jobs. In the case of larger organisations this would be done mainly through the personnel or human resources departments, or even, in some cases, through occupational health services. Elsewhere, the service was open to individuals to identify themselves to the scheme who would then take up their case.

Services offered

Schemes usually offered a range of services, including:

- An independent brokerage service.
- Information, advice and support about employment law, the benefits system, job analysis, job restructuring.
- Training, retraining, work experience.
- Support to clients and/or employers.
- Coordination of a range of services surrounding disabled people, and/or employers.

Much of the scheme’s work in the area of job retention cases involved working directly with employers as well as clients, although schemes differed in this respect: there were those with strong initial links with
employers and others that had weaker links. In one scheme in particular, there was a strongly held belief that the success of the scheme would be enhanced with the active involvement of employers from the outset. National and key local employers were approached and agreed to act as partners in the scheme that was hosted by an independent college. The involvement of employers was crucial in advising the scheme from the beginning: they also gave it status and authority and helped to establish its credibility with other local employers. Subsequently some of these partners were users of the services offered.

Other schemes adopted a more low-key approach in terms of how they approached employers. Although in essence it was not dissimilar to the approach outlined above, the main difference lay in the emphasis on the inclusion and activities in partnerships. A key task for these schemes was to publicise the service and educate employers about the benefits of job retention.

One scheme took a different approach altogether. Theirs was conceived as a signposting service with a strong focus on the co-ordination of services, particularly those within the health sector and with the Employment Service, in order to provide a smooth pathway for clients to return to work.

'This is very much the tenet of the whole project - co-ordinating services for clients with acquired injuries and making the pathway back to employment a smooth one.' (Manager)

The focus was on getting referrals from hospital services, rather than primarily through the employers themselves. The scheme acknowledged that its profile with employers was low at the start of the scheme. Additional services, such as job coaching and work experience placements for clients with brain and other injuries to return to similar work were also offered.

The scheme learned over the lifetime of the project that there were few specialist services for the client group they were working with and, in fact, they carried out much of the intervention and support work themselves. They worked closely with the 'end employer' so that the rehabilitation service had an end point to work towards.

Common themes raised by job retention schemes

A number of common issues were raised by schemes. These can be grouped as factors relating to the successful operation of the scheme - over and above the activities that they offered - and those that inhibited success. They were: early intervention, the schemes' independent role and employer co-operation.
Early intervention: All the schemes involved with job retention as a core activity noted that early intervention was the key to success for both employers and clients. Definitions of ‘early’ were not clearly articulated. However, schemes were clear that this should be as early as possible, to include responding to first signs of difficulty, providing support alongside any remedial treatment where possible and certainly before Statutory Sick Pay ends.

There was considerable frustration amongst schemes that their contracts with the DSS inhibited such early intervention. Clients were taken onto the scheme only after they had been in receipt of Statutory Sick Pay for eight weeks. In all cases this implied a considerable delay especially where people received additional company-related benefits which itself delayed receipt of Statutory Sick Pay. Job retention schemes were allowed to take on 10 per cent of clients who had been on benefit less than 10 weeks. One scheme manager had found this difficult since, with very early intervention, they could:

‘Alleviate anxiety, contact employers and make good links with the health professionals concerned. We worry employers will get rid of employees if the support is not available from early on.’ (Scheme manager)

This theme was echoed in several other schemes.

An independent role: All schemes noted that their independence from the employer and employee acted as a catalyst for using the service on both sides. As one scheme manager put it:

‘The scheme has worked hard with both employers and employees on a case by case basis. The key is that the staff do not take sides, they are brokers with knowledge about the kind of options that might be available and how to access a wide range of help and services.’ (Scheme manager)

Employer co-operation: It was recognised that employers were the key partners in any job retention intervention. If the referral came from a client or hospital service the willingness of the employer to co-operate was critical. As one manager noted:

‘If an employer was reluctant, we wouldn’t take the employee onto the scheme.’ (Scheme manager)

Educating individual employers and securing their co-operation was also a key activity of the scheme. We discuss the mobilisation of employers though awareness activities in more detail in Chapter 5 (5.3.2).

Employee co-operation: In most cases, employees were happy to work with job retention schemes. On occasions though, schemes acknowledged that they had to fight to gain the co-operation of employees. Staff at one scheme admitted clients were refusing to co-operate with scheme efforts to help them re-enter the workforce - clients repeatedly refused job tasters or simply did not turn up. This could result in an inefficient use of resources.
Schemes also noted that where employers and clients were involved in legal disputes, a lot of scheme staff time and effort was being devoted to a no-change situation.

4.5 Progression and integration

At the heart of the NDDP IS programme was the idea that clients should move towards employment. As well as providing opportunities for training, acquiring skills and promoting personal development, schemes also had to ensure that there was a sense of progression through the activities and stages and that clients were able to integrate these experiences.

4.5.1 Maintaining a sense of progression

The need to establish a suitable balance between providing support and continuity on the one hand but ensuring that clients maintained a sense of progress towards employment and greater self-confidence was recognised by many schemes. Some schemes monitored progress through more-or-less regular individual reviews but others relied on the close day-by-day working between clients and staff to pick up on any issues or difficulties. Completing a training course or package of activities did provide some indication of an individual’s progress but the real test was the client’s motivation and confidence to move forward.

There were clients who were not able to complete the ‘pathway’ in the sense of gaining employment. In this event, schemes were usually able to be flexible about pacing, allowing clients to take a course little by little or redoing the whole or part of a training package. This enabled people for example to take time out if necessary without losing their place, to reinforce some aspect of skills training, to have another go at something they found difficult - without losing momentum altogether.

There were, however, circumstances where this was not realistic, and although schemes wanted to help, some clients could not be supported through a period of re-thinking or adjustment due to staffing or the time run of the project. Staff in several schemes were very aware that their work raised expectations and were anxious about how to help people who did not get work. In a way, this aspect of ‘follow through’ was not fully a part of most schemes’ work and clients would be referred back for example, to the DEA.

It is relevant to note here that, across the schemes, a little less than a quarter of the clients obtained employment (see Chapter 6.6.3). The question of how to respond to and support those who were unable to do so - either in the short or longer term - is therefore a significant one.

4.5.2 Providing continuity across the pathway

Many schemes aimed to provide a ‘seamless’ service for their clients whether this was provided ‘in house’ or by using an array of services from other agencies and partners. In most cases some degree of continuity came from clients being supported along their pathway by designated staff, variously called support workers, mentors, employment advisers, buddies, who provided one-to-one support. This individualised attention
and availability was the main method for ensuring that clients’ experience of their programme of activities - which could include services provided by other agencies and ‘outsiders’ as well as those provided directly by the scheme - was reasonably coherent, manageable and suitably paced.

This was evident for schemes that took a strictly one-to-one approach which amounted to an individualised programme for every client. However, schemes that offered more structured activities (often delivered in groups) included additional support elements like key workers and mentors. These support staff picked up after the formal training was delivered and helped to tailor the content and translate the learning for individual clients’ circumstances.

**Examples**

**Scheme I** had an employment consultant who worked one-to-one with the client through the scheme and on into employment. They conducted a vocational assessment to determine a client’s support needs. Once a job was secured the consultant carried out an in-depth job analysis. This involved the consultant doing the job himself or herself, identifying the skills needed and what training would be supplied by the employer and, therefore, what additional training would be required for the client to do the work to required standards. The client then received one-to-one training and the consultant remained at the job site until the client was able to work independently.

**Scheme R** provided a Transition Worker to assist students in accessing employment opportunities following a mainstream education course. This staff member helped to identify job vacancies, assisted with CV preparation and job applications, coached on interview skills, arranged job interviews and accompanied clients to interviews when necessary.

Through all this, however, there were tensions between providing suitable supports on the one hand and over-protecting clients on the other, inadvertently replicating some the difficulties which disabled people can face because of the low expectations of others. Schemes did have to make judgements here: against the benefit of supporting clients and allowing them to progress at their own pace there were issues about staff resources and about encouraging greater self confidence and independence. What was suitable for one person might not be helpful for others: what was beneficial in the short term might become a problem of dependence in the longer run.

But clients’ views (see Chapter 6 (6.4.1)) affirm the value of support throughout the employment pathway which is not only work focused but also takes account of more personal and social issues.
4.6 Conclusions

Although schemes were working in very different ways and with various client groups, some general aspects of their experience do emerge:

- **Responding to client needs**: Many had made changes to their activities in response to clients' needs. Changes were made in the training offered, for example, to provide some courses which were structured rather than more self directed or open learning to assist less confident learners or to add to the range of training.

- **Level and continuity of support for individual clients**: Generally, clients required higher levels of personal support and help than many schemes had expected. This was not only about the level of individualisation but also about the understanding and empathy of scheme staff. It seemed that schemes were providing a service - or package of services - which 'felt' different for clients. And it did seem to be this above all which distinguished the schemes from other services which clients had experienced. The degree of reassurance and encouragement as well as more structured training which clients needed in order to overcome previous poor experiences and low levels of expectation was anticipated by many schemes. It took time to build trust and this meant that continuity of support from the same member of staff was important. Included here was learning the value of support continuing on into employment.

- **Staffing**: Associated with increased client needs were staffing issues. Some schemes realised that they were not adequately staffed to meet client needs either because of numbers or because they required staff with more specialist knowledge or experience. Schemes found it important that their staff team covered employment, disability and benefits expertise and knowledge.

- **Inefficient use of resources**: It was observed that scheme staff were devoting time to individuals in excess of and beyond their job descriptions. Staff at three of the schemes admitted they continued to assist ineligible clients because they could not turn anyone away, which could be seen as an inefficient use of scheme resources. It was suggested by one scheme partner that schemes need to establish an 'exit strategy'.

- **Flexibility**: A similar theme to emerge was the importance of flexibility. Schemes did, on the whole, expect to have to adapt and adjust their approaches and practical supports and training to 'fit' individual requirements and circumstances.

- **Training and preparation for work**: Although formal and informal training opportunities were important they seemed to work best when provided within the framework of individual support.

- **Working with employers**: It was felt that, in principle, employers should be included as part of the pathway rather than be seen as part of the problem. Thus, many schemes expended considerable time and resources in making links with employers, sometimes involving them as partners or in activities aimed to increase their awareness of disabled people. But in most schemes the main contact with employers was on a one-to-one basis in relation to individual clients.
Overall, the pathway analysis has helped to demonstrate that there are many different elements involved in becoming ‘jobready’. It has highlighted the complexity of the tasks facing those who seek to help disabled people into employment and helped to identify where gaps, discontinuities or time difficulties occur within practice and development.
5 WORKING WITH EMPLOYERS

5.1 Introduction

Working directly with employers to achieve job outcomes was a key feature of the NDDP programme. While disability services have been embracing this concept in their more recent work, this was the first time a national programme attempted this kind of work in a coherent way. From the outset there was a great deal of talk in schemes about wishing to avoid the ‘revolving door’ of training programmes or other job-related schemes – with the disabled person going from one training scheme or job search activity to another without finding work. To achieve this it was felt that better links needed to be made with employers; for many schemes this was an aspect of their work which evolved as time progressed.

Work with employers was undertaken in three main ways: by drawing in employers to provide work opportunities; by raising the general level of awareness of employers about disability issues; and by including them as active partners in the organisation of the schemes.

In describing schemes’ work with employers, this chapter draws on a model for understanding the work of the schemes developed by the Employers Forum on Disability. This incorporates the notion of employers being at different stages in relation to disability issues, and of disability organisations needing to orient themselves differently to employers, according to the approach of the employer. This closely reflected the experience of schemes, who had learned a great deal about working with employers during the two year project, as had many of the employers with whom they worked. The model was further developed by the research team to take into account factors emerging from this evaluation.

The chapter describes the activities of schemes in relation to the links they made with employers to find work opportunities, heightening awareness about disability issues, and including employers as partners within the organisation of the schemes. It also examines the impact that these activities had on employers and how employers experienced the work of the schemes.

5.2 The employers’ journey

A useful categorisation of working with employers was produced by the Employers Forum on Disability (EFD) (Select Committee on Education and Employment 1997-8 EFD Minutes of Evidence). The evaluation team has developed the model further to incorporate issues emerging from the research. In the model, employers are categorised in three different ways – as a target, as a customer of services and as an active stakeholder.
The model indicates that the knowledge, understanding and activities of employers vary in relation to the employment of disabled people. This variation in turn suggests different ways of working on the part of disability agencies and policy makers.

Table 5.1 presents the main ideas in summary form and we draw on it in later sections of this chapter to highlight a number of key points concerning employers and the schemes’ work with them. These points, and others, are taken up in later sections of this chapter.

Table 5.1 The employers’ journey (adapted from Employers’ Forum on Disability, 1997-98)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Employer as ‘Target’ journey</th>
<th>Employer as ‘Customer’ journey</th>
<th>Employer as ‘Active Stakeholder’ journey</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Employers are ‘closed.’ They:</td>
<td>Employers are ‘open to change.’ They:</td>
<td>Employers are ‘engaged.’ They:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do not know the issues; do not know or understand the business case or how to set policy and procedures</td>
<td>Understand the issues and the business case</td>
<td>Understand and value the wider benefits of partnership and are committed to strategic change</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rarely meet other stakeholders</td>
<td>Find it easier to access disabled applicants and relevant services</td>
<td>Establish own networks/forums to facilitate negotiations with potential partners</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Are often defensive, reluctant to engage, do not see disabled people as potential employees</td>
<td>View disabled people as employable as anyone</td>
<td>Contribute time, know how, jobs, money, people</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Where they are motivated to engage, this is based on business needs</td>
<td>Adopt positive action/publicise success stories individually</td>
<td>Can work with job-ready candidates</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Are motivated to engage, based on business case, equal opportunities</td>
<td>Are active in finding and adapting jobs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Are motivated to engage, based on business case, social responsibility, active equal opportunities</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Mode for disability agencies/policy makers:
- Mobilising potential limited - focus on selling the business case
- Matching opportunities - potential in limited numbers

System impact:
- Impact on employer policies and practice likely to be low
- Inactivity rate for disabled people in labour force remains largely static
- Little pressure for fundamental change

A key message from the EFD model is that employers vary across a number of dimensions. These include the extent to which they understand disability employment issues, their motivations to become engaged with employing disabled people, and how engaged they already are with the wider community.

The model also suggests a dynamic relationship between employers and schemes. Employers may move from being a provider of a work placement to a full partner with the scheme. This requires a shift in attitude and behaviour which itself constitutes a journey for the employer. In some cases, this also demands a shift in attitudes and behaviour of the disability agencies themselves: from the perception of an employer as a target
through to seeing the employer as much of client or customer as a disabled person. Treating the employer as a client and customer of services offered by the scheme was a central learning point identified by this evaluation.

5.3 Variations in employers

Innovative Schemes were clear from the outset that they had a number of tasks to achieve in relation to job matching, raising employers' awareness and including employers as partners. What they uncovered, often during the course of their work, was a very wide variation in employers. For example, their levels of understanding of disability issues were broad, or they were located in very different local labour market contexts. Broadly, there were three different types of employers:

- Closed
- Open to change
- Engaged

These differences corresponded largely to the analysis undertaken by the Employers Forum on Disability. The EFD model focused on the levels of understanding of disability within employers and the extent to which they were engaged with the wider community. Our own work indicated that the employers' motivation to engage with an intervention such as the NDDP Innovative Schemes programme was also an important dimension.

5.3.1 Closed employers

Closed employers were those in which the level of understanding of disability was very low. They knew little, had limited interest in disability issues, and furthermore were reluctant to engage in the subject of employing disabled people. A number of factors were identified for this, the most common of which was described as 'fear of the unknown.' Nearly all Innovative Schemes reported that they encountered employers like this who were difficult to engage.

Fear was usually translated into a lack of willingness to participate, by providing either jobs or referrals to the scheme (i.e. job retention schemes). One scheme worker, trying to persuade employers to send employees on a job retention scheme, commented:

'People are very cynical - I have spoken to a lot of people in companies from personnel to Chief Executives to occupational health. We ask if they have any one off sick and on SSP and explain that participating would be free, but they still don't want to send anyone. I can't understand it.' (Scheme worker)

Another dimension to the lack of understanding by employers lay in the nature of disability. Schemes reported that many of the employers with whom they spoke talked of disability only in terms of physical disability and wheelchair access. Other, less visible disabilities, particularly mental health problems were not noted.
Local labour markets in which employers were located also had an impact on their willingness to engage with a scheme. Closed employers were often encountered in areas of high unemployment, as one manager reported:

‘There have been a lot of large scale redundancies in the area which means that employers are looking at ways of letting people go. Also there has been a lot of restructuring in companies. When we would approach them, they sounded interested in the concept, but then we would not hear back from them and it’s because there were a lot of changes within the company, reshuffling. And we were told this (re-structuring meant it was an inopportune time for us to talk to them.’ (Manager)

Another type of employer was one that understood what the general issues were, or may have had a positive experience of employing a disabled person. These employers were more open to change and often had equal opportunities policies in place, though these were often more ‘paper policies than active ones’.

Their motivations for engaging with a scheme varied. One was the identified need to widen their workforce to secure a more stable and mature staff group:

‘Why in [that region]? Because there is a high volume and high turnover of temporary staff. A lot of staff are not permanent and many are students. We wanted a more mature workforce for customer facing jobs and believed this to be one way in’. (Employer)

Elsewhere the driver was the recruitment policy:

‘The agreed recruitment policy was ‘Diversity in Action.’ This meant diversity in all areas – no age bar, looking for people from ethnic minorities, people with disabilities and so on. The workforce was designed to reflect the customer base. This was always to include special needs groups – this is what you should do – a workforce aged 16 to 76 of all types.’ (Employer)

‘Open’ employers were more likely to be located in areas of local skills shortages.

A third type of employer was increasingly proactive in their stance towards disability. These employers were also willing to engage with the wider community in bringing disability issues to the fore; they often had a social responsibility remit.

One example was an employer-led scheme:

‘We already had links with [a large voluntary organisation]. The Chief Executive is the President of it. One of our senior Human Resources directors has a strong belief that carers are the equal opportunities issue of the future and pushed the involvement.’ (Project Manager)
In another case, a large retailer had been involved in a supported employment initiative in a number of local stores and committed themselves to two years of funding with the project. The success of working with this employer provided a model for others in the sector.

Engaged employers tended to be larger companies or organisations with structures in place to support disabled people. Some of these were located in the public sector.

5.4 Scheme activities in relation to employers

Within the Innovative Schemes project, schemes were engaged in three main groups of activities in relation to working with employers:

- Finding work for clients.
- Raising awareness of disability issues.
- Including employers as partners.

These activities themselves are sufficiently numerous to outline them in some detail.

Motivating employers to become partners to schemes was generally the task of the project manager. In addition to this, other staff had a role as part of a wider employment remit, which often included work-related activities such as job search, writing CVs, or supporting clients when they were in work (often called Employment Officers, Employment Consultants etc). Occasionally specific staff went out to raise awareness of disability issues within employers, although often these were project managers. In a small number of projects there was a realisation over time that the skills needed for engaging employers were specialist skills, that some staff were better at it than others.

5.4.1 Finding work for clients

Schemes reported that, by and large, responding to individual need necessitated a specific, targeted approach with employers. It required finding suitable work opportunities to match client interests and abilities.

Schemes set about finding these in a number of ways. These included:

- Use of previous positive relationships.
- Cold calling.
- Employer visits.
- Mailshots.
- Employer banks.
- Databases of local employers.
- Wage subsidies.
Use of employers with whom they had a previous positive relationship

Those schemes which had been in existence in some form or another in the past, and had experience of working with employers, often called upon these in the first instance if the work they offered matched client wishes. This often proved to be a rich source of work opportunities, either in the form of work placements or real jobs. In several cases these opportunities came from employers partnered with schemes.

In a few of the schemes there was an awareness that they could not however use the same employers over and over again, especially if they were using a client-led approach:

‘We can’t expect the same employer to keep on taking employees from us, we have to keep pulling in new firms all the time. Different employers will be good for different people and therefore we have to tailor job matches.’ (Scheme worker)

Cold calling

Staff in all schemes (except for those with which there were ring-fenced job opportunities, or where jobs were explicitly linked with identified employers) said that they routinely called on new employers to find work for their clients. There was clearly some success with this as the majority of schemes found work opportunities for clients in a wide range of employers, often not known to them before. Where employers who were approached declared from the outset an interest in disability issues, or prior personal experience, the task was made easier. Indeed, in one scheme, the manager reported that it was in fact easier to find jobs or work placements for clients than it was getting referrals to the scheme.

Cold calling employers was often reported as very time consuming, as employers were often fearful of addressing the issue and needed considerable encouragement to take on clients, even for work placements.

Employer visits

Where employers indicated a willingness to engage in the work of the scheme, but needed more time to go over what this implied for them, scheme workers set up face-to-face meetings.

This enabled them to go over the issues in some detail: sometimes a positive experience of meeting with the scheme would lead the employer into providing more opportunities. The downside was that these meetings were also often time consuming for staff, especially in the more rural locations where employers were long distances apart implying greater travel times.
Mailshots

A few undertook extensive mailshots, but of these only a few thought they had been useful. Mailshots were used to publicise the scheme for job retention referrals as well as for placements and jobs. The outlay and organisation for mailshots often cost the scheme in terms of time and money, often with poor results. Any positive responses needed to be followed up, which also took time. It was widely agreed that a more effective strategy was to talk to individual employers.

Employer banks

Allied to the use of mailshots was the setting up of ‘banks’ of employers who had previously been alerted to the possibility of taking on clients for work opportunities. There was some debate within schemes about the usefulness of creating and maintaining such banks of employers. In one case, where there were local skills shortages, the scheme found the bank to be very useful. The majority believed, though, that employer expectations were raised and in some cases then let down because the schemes had no one to send to them. In part this was a problem of timing, for schemes set about talking to employers before clients had progressed through the scheme activities. In part, though, there was a realisation that a client-led approach demanded a more targeted approach with employers. This tended to lead to a better match between the employer and client, as the following manager noted:

‘It is easier to start with the individual and then look for a suitable employer for them. You always have the individual in mind. Employers don’t keep jobs available if they don’t know who they will get. They prefer an individual focus. We had a much more relevant relationship with the employers and found fewer unsuitable jobs (jobs that employers could not fill in other ways such as trolley filling in out of town retail outlets) when tackled on an individual basis.’ (Manager)

Several schemes set about creating banks of employers and then changed tack when they realised that there would be a delay in using them, or that the kinds of employers coming forward did not necessarily match the work opportunities favoured by the clients.

Developing a database of local employers

One of the main outputs of one of the schemes was the creation of a database of local employers which was regularly updated and available to all workers. Details of types of employer, recruitment policies and other relevant information was included in this database. This gave staff access to information on an on-going basis and was considered to be one of the most useful tools developed within the project.
‘We now have one hundred and eighty employer contacts on the database. This means we have the contacts and it’s easier when a service user comes in. Whether the links are good or not the information is there and there is no need to reinvent the links, they are there for everyone.’ (Scheme worker)

Other schemes already had existing databases, often developed by former DEAs or other Employment Service staff. These staff had found databases to be a useful tool in their prior work. These people might also have access to other sources of information through their prior contacts, though in some cases there was perceived to be competition between the ES and the Innovative Schemes for job outcomes.

Wage subsidies

A small number of schemes were able to offer employers wage subsidies to those taking on staff. These were used sparingly, and the first tack appeared to be to take clients on without their use. However, they were considered very useful for placing some clients with employers. Amongst schemes without this pool of money, a few felt that it would have been a helpful way of pulling in employers concerned that they would not be able to provide clients with sufficient support in the outset.

The majority of schemes undertook a range of the activities outlined above, although using known employers and cold calling individual ones with specific clients in mind were the most common. It was clear that there were varying levels of success in terms of engaging employers for work opportunities. This depended on a wide variety of factors – in particular, prior knowledge and experience of scheme and staff in this field; the individual skills of staff in contacting, talking to employers and their persistence with them; the employers approached and their prior understanding of disability; and issues relating to local labour markets.

While some staff were clear about what worked best for them and their schemes, many had not evaluated their own strategies.

5.4.2 Raising awareness of disability issues

Hand in hand with matching clients to jobs, most schemes were also concerned with more awareness raising of disability issues with employers. These activities were more concerned with a general mobilisation of employers. The development of a range of initiatives which drew in employers as ‘customers of services’ rather than ‘targets’ for finding work opportunities was central to this work. The main activities included:

- General publicity/Launch.
- Giving talks/holding meetings.
- Inviting employers in to events.
- Employer awareness sessions.
- Disability audit, health and safety checks, information provision.
Employer helpline.
Information/training packs.
Charters/Awards.
Employer fora.

**General publicity/ Launch**

Using local and national media to promote the scheme and give information about services offered was considered a useful first step in engaging employers. Similarly, in a few schemes employers were invited to initial launches of the scheme work, in order to give them early access to information about the scheme.

**Giving talks/ holding meetings**

In some schemes project managers and staff gave general talks about the work of the scheme either to individual employers (in connection with specific clients, or more generally), or occasionally in breakfast meetings of employers held locally. A few used these opportunities to raise awareness about support services in the wider community as they had found that employers were often sympathetic but had no idea of what services were available to support them in employing people with disabilities.

**Inviting employers in to events**

In one or two cases, employers were routinely invited to events held by the scheme clients as a way of attracting interest, increasing awareness about specific disabilities or encouraging employers to see employing clients as less of a threat, and more of an opportunity to be exploited. These included, for example, inviting employers to drama performances, to workshops, or work preparation courses. In some cases employers were also invited to talk about their own work. These activities also had the useful spin-off of reducing the clients' own fear of employers and 'reducing the gap' between the two parties.

**Employer awareness sessions**

Seventeen of the schemes undertook some kind of disability awareness training activities with employers. In negotiation they offered training courses or shorter, one-off sessions. In some cases the training offered was general disability awareness, in others it was specific to the disability that the scheme worked with - for example, on how to support people with a brain injury, or support in deaf awareness.

In several cases the training was delivered when a client was in post or about to take up work. Disability awareness training was viewed by schemes and employers as one way of helping established staff to support newly employed disabled people. A few schemes noted that it was harder
for schemes to get support for general awareness training when there was no client in post.

Even where the employer felt they were open to disability issues, or may have had prior experience of employing disabled people, it was clear to scheme staff that more could be learned. As one manager put it:

‘Some employers may need educating and informing further. We always try and deliver the Disability Awareness Training.’ (Manager)

Time constraints were often an issue for employers. Employers were not always able or willing to release numbers of staff to attend training courses. One scheme manager noted that:

‘We had to shorten the length of training courses from four to two days as we couldn’t get people to commit to that amount of time.’ (Manager)

The implementation of the Disability Discrimination Act was beneficial for second tranche schemes, as employers were now more concerned with the need for training in order to understand the legislation and the impact it would have on them. Several schemes reported this emerging preoccupation and capitalised on it: when they provided Disability Discrimination Act training, they could often add a slant on employing individuals and publicise their own scheme activities.

**Disability audit, health and safety checks, information on adaptations and equipment**

Practical support to employers was also considered to be a way of raising awareness in employers. There was some uptake of these services, again often where clients were being placed in a job. However, as with disability awareness training, there was some optimism that there would be greater take-up as the scheme became better known.

**Employer helpline**

An employer hotline was developed in one of the Innovative Schemes. This was designed to enable employers to access up-to-date information on legislation, practical issues and local services – including that of the schemes. The scheme in question was particularly concerned with job retention issues.

**Information/training packs**

In two cases information packs were developed which provided employers with specific practical advice for supporting disabled people in work, and/or who to approach for help. These could be given to employers to use - ‘useable by any employer, anywhere’ - or delivered in conjunction with scheme staff. These were reported to be in use and well received.
A Charter for Employers/ Awards for Employers

Other imaginative ways of encouraging employers, such as giving awards for employer good practices, or developing a good practice charter, were also initiated to draw employers into awareness about disability issues. Schemes noted that the disability legislation was a driver for employers and played on this in their work.

Employer fora

The creation of a forum of employers concentrating specifically on employment issues was a way of raising awareness of disability issues and a way, too, of drawing on the expertise of employers. These fora were established in four of the schemes. In one case a stakeholder body of 15 partners was brought together to tackle the employment objective collectively. The manager noted that this also helped with networking. Several of the schemes noted that such a forum would be beneficial to their work; in one of these it had been put forward in the bid to DSS/ DfEE, but not funded.

5.4.3 Working with employers as partners

In a sense, all those involved in the partnership structure within NDDP were potential employers of NDDP clients and could bring employment perspectives to the table. However, schemes themselves tended to categorise employers involved within the partnerships as being those from the private sector, larger local employers such as local authorities, and employer-led organisations (such as the Employers Forum on Disability, Training and Enterprise Councils) who represented employers directly, giving them access to a larger number of employers or advice about employment related issues.

One way of securing the working relationship of employers was by including them in the partnerships created to deliver the NDDP activities. In their original bids, 20 Innovative Schemes included employers of all types within their partnerships. Fourteen of the Innovative Schemes included private sector employers in the partnerships that they set up to deliver the NDDP programme, 13 of which were large employers and only one specifically included Small and Medium Sized Enterprises (SMEs). Nineteen included large public sector employers such as the local authorities or local NHS Trusts.

Most schemes were clear about the roles that these employer partners could take in the scheme and many had high expectations of them. These were often, but not always, fulfilled. In a small number of cases the inclusion of employers or employer-led organisations was perceived as essential in giving the scheme wide credibility with private sector employers in the local area.
The main roles that employers/partners undertook were:

- Sharing management and decision-making.
- Providing advice, expertise and support.
- Providing referrals and work opportunities.

**Sharing management and decision-making**

A few schemes identified a clear need to include employers in a strategic role within the partnership. These tended to be the schemes with the closest connections with employers vis-à-vis accessing work opportunities. In one of these, the employer directly led the scheme. They were invited to sit on the advisory or steering group of the scheme and take a full part in it. Two issues emerged from these schemes: even where the employers had taken a central role in setting up the scheme and shaping the direction it took, once it became operational they generally took up an advisory role helping with the strategic direction the scheme should take. Secondly, even though employers were included as full partners (on the assumption that they were aware of disability related issues,) it was quickly acknowledged that they still had a lot to learn:

> ‘I think that things are definitely improving but we still have a long, long way to go yet. And these business partners that we have taken on board are learning as well, I have to say. And they were originally seen to be ‘social firms’ but they are still learning.’ (Manager)

**Providing advice, expertise and support**

More often employer partners provided practical support for schemes. For example, they could support other partners in specific job-related issues arising from the work of the scheme - such as job restructuring - or in the development of training packages. They could also provide an invaluable source of advice on day to day issues relating to employers and employment:

> ‘There are employers on the steering group but theirs is an advisory role. We ask them how best to approach something, not what to do. For example, for publicity, we asked them where in a company is best to focus presentations.’ (Manager)

The usefulness of including employers on the steering group came to the fore in one scheme:

> ‘We are also learning from our contacts with employers. In many ways, when we started, we believed that we needed to produce in-depth training materials and to run defined courses. Employers have told us that the training materials help, but that training needs to be shorter. Working with the beneficiaries is already starting to shape the service delivery.’ (Manager)
This type of intervention was echoed in a few other schemes, and confirmed the importance of including employers at a strategic level. Learning could also be two-way, as the following example indicates:

‘Achievements? The idea that employer issues must inform the training - and rehabilitation work has been endorsed. A more modern view of the potential of disabled people has now been taken on.’ (Manager)

Providing referrals, work opportunities

Elsewhere, the provision of referrals to the scheme (for job retention), work experience placements or jobs was the primary role of the employer partners in the schemes. Many of the employers did this, although often they did not attend scheme steering group meetings if they existed, sometimes because of lack of time or real commitment. Lack of inclusion within steering groups may have been a missed opportunity for the schemes to learn from employers.

5.5 A journey to engagement

One of the interesting ideas to emerge from the work of the Employers Forum on Disability, was that of employers travelling along a journey from little or no engagement with disability issues (‘closed’ employers) to greater involvement as active stakeholders in the wider system (‘engaged’ employers). In many cases this necessitated the beginnings of a culture change within the employing organisation. In reviewing the evidence from the evaluation it was clear that, at different levels, schemes were beginning to understand and address this issue. It was also clear that schemes were learning a great deal about employers and how best to work with them. The central learning point for the schemes was that employers could and should be treated as customers and clients with needs as distinctive as the disabled people they were working with.

5.5.1 Strategies to engage closed employers

The majority of employers encountered by the schemes were those categorised earlier as ‘closed.’ One way of encouraging such an employer was to encourage them to participate initially in non-threatening activities, which would have a low cost and no or little risk to the employer. Persuading employers to provide work experience placements, or rooms for training were examples of these activities. It was often hoped a successful placement would encourage an employer to take on others and possibly hold some training sessions. In a few cases this was indeed the case. It was also believed that positive experiences of the scheme would slowly lead to cultural change within the employer organisations.

‘For businesses the scheme will open the door to getting more staff. This scheme allows businesses to dip their toe into getting disabled clients onto the staff and to see if it works. Once employers have a greater understanding of disability then they may open their doors wider as they have to get over the fear factor.’ (Partner)
Other examples were inviting employers to the scheme for presentations or performances and giving general informal presentations about disability issues, rather than full disability awareness training course groups. These confidence building activities were seen as central to the work of the schemes. Another way of encouraging employers was by persuading them that it would be a good public relations exercise. Two employers, at least, noted that this was a good reason to be associated with an Innovative Scheme:

‘There is a certain amount of self-interest and altruism. Obviously we get beneficial publicity if we are seen as a caring employer who employs people with a disability.’ (Employer)

‘It is also a good public relations exercise - there has been a lot of interest from press and visits from Ministers.’ (Employer)

The next step in the employer journey was to persuade those who had some experience of working with disabled people to provide work or undertake disability awareness training. As one manager put it:

‘The easiest employer to sell to is one with an existing culture of acceptance to employing disabled people. These may already have taken on people through work preparation or have worked with the local TEC.’ (Manager)

Schemes also approached the more open employers with a view to ‘selling’ a range of services such as disability awareness training sessions, disability audits or advice on health and safety. They had some success in these activities and schemes also found there could be spin-offs - making themselves known to employers sometimes resulted in the employer calling the scheme for advice on other related issues. For example, several schemes reported that employers asked for information on job retention even though it was not part of their remit.

5.5.2 Strategies to engage employers open to change

In terms of the Employers Forum on Disability model, a final goal is to have employers behaving as full partners with agencies working with disabled people. In terms of the Innovative Schemes project, including employers as scheme partners was one way of encouraging them to become active stakeholders. Many of the schemes felt their inclusion have been successful, and as we reported earlier, they felt that partners were learning valuable lessons, as well as providing useful advice. In a small number of cases, the active involvement of employers was seen as central to the success of the scheme. One manager hoped that these ‘enlightened employers’ on the steering group would act as messengers to others:

‘What we are hoping is that by taking on these major companies it will filter out. They will spread the gospel about employing disabled people.’ (Manager)
Even when they were not partners, engaged employers could be used in several ways - for what they could offer to the scheme in relation to providing placements and by using them as a source of useful information and advice. In one case the scheme manager found that a local employer had more interesting and innovative ideas than some of the other agencies associated with the project:

‘[This employer] wanted to bring some real issues and new ideas ‘in from the outside world’ - a way of connecting business to the community, a value added in their area, being a good employer. I was surprised at this approach.’
(Manager)

The advice from this employer was seen as invaluable to the work of the scheme.

5.5.4 The process of culture change in employers

Overall, there was some success in encouraging employers to undertake a journey into unknown territory, and great success in working with the different types of employers. However, optimism was tempered from within the schemes with a note of caution. The process of culture change within organisations was slow and the lessons learned from one intervention were not always enough to effect wider change. As one manager put it:

‘Staff have noted fairly generally a lack of awareness and/ or ideas among employers about how to tackle a situation where an employee’s abilities have changed and they cannot perform their work in quite the same way, for whatever reason. And yet the experience is that there are employers crying out for help but, when told about the scheme, do not take it up, or do so for one situation without extending this into general HR policy and practice.’
(Manager)

Raising awareness of disability issues was in part designed to encourage culture change within employers. Schemes embraced this work with enthusiasm and there was widespread agreement amongst schemes that the activities it entailed were both useful and important. However, raising employer awareness, especially where an employer’s knowledge base was limited from the outset, was often time consuming with poor short term returns in terms of clients placed into employment or mobilising the employer into action.

It was generally agreed amongst schemes that a year-long programme was too short to undertake this kind of detailed work:

‘We were unrealistic to expect that we could do any in-depth work [with employers] in a one year project. You have to spend an awful lot of time on this kind of work.’ (Manager)

Allied to this was the fact that there were no ‘outcome’ targets associated with raising awareness activities. In some cases, as the programme progressed, less emphasis was put on these activities, as the main thrust became to achieve targets in terms of job outcomes.
Schemes noted that employer interest increased as the schemes became more widely known locally.

‘We have now changed the model of partnership allowing now for a variety of different ways for employers to be involved, with the idea of a pathway from weak to stronger involvement.’ (Manager)

Once a scheme had established its credibility over the lifetime of the programme, it could have carried out further work on instigating a culture change with the employer.

In addition to the differences already outlined in employers, schemes also had the added factor of dealing with differences in employer size. These also had implications for the work of the Innovative Schemes.

Large employers

Several schemes expressed the view that larger employers were more disposed to employing disabled people as they had the infrastructure already in place to facilitate any necessary changes or support functions. As one manager put it, ‘large companies generally have a personnel department which takes an interest.’ In many cases this proved to be the case and larger employers were flexible, made changes to the structure of a job, and sometimes paid for any adaptations themselves.

However, other schemes noted that there were also barriers within larger organisations. One example was in the rigidity of equal opportunities policies - often in the public sector - which militated against some clients, especially for those with learning disabilities, or confidence problems (which accounted for many). For example, these clients were reported as being unable to take an advocate with them to the interview. This sometimes proved to be too great a barrier to involve these employers further.

In other cases, it was reported that communication flows within larger organisations were poor, or that involvement depended on an individual within the company structure. When this person moved on, the good relations that had been built up disappeared with them, sometimes with the result that referrals were no longer forthcoming or that a commitment to provide a seconded worker to a scheme was reneged upon.

‘The bid was based on a certain level of commitment from the partner organisations. One partner promised to second a project manager, but the person who made this commitment moved to another job, the level of commitment dropped and the funding disappeared. It is very personality driven.’ (Manager)
Schemes often reported their frustration in these aspects of working with larger organisations.

**Small and medium sized enterprises**

There were similar debates within the Innovative Schemes about targeting small and medium sized employers. On the one hand they were perceived as:

‘Most caring, and providing a family environment, although not structured.’

(Manager)

On the other hand, there were also reasons for concerns over targeting smaller employers. One scheme manager reported that in his area over half the local employers were small and medium sized enterprises, that often these were inaccessible to disabled people and according to the legislation they do not need to alter their premises. In another area where there were many small factories, the manager noted:

‘Employers need to have good sick policies. But locally, with the type of industry there is they cannot afford to pay. And they don’t care. They can get more people to replace those who go off.’ (Manager)

Key staff in smaller employers were also reported to have little spare time or capacity to attend meetings, or provide the necessary support facilities for clients, either in terms of changes in job structure or on-going supervision.

5.6 Staff learning about employers’ needs

There was also evidence to suggest that staff were learning about employer needs through their involvement in this scheme. Although many managers and staff working in schemes had prior experience of working with employers, others did not. Just as employers were fearful of disability issues, it appears that some staff had been equally wary of employers when they began their work. Working closely with employers served to demystify some of the issues:

‘We have learned that employers are only human. They have needs as well as the disabled person. There is no one out there to help the employers. They need help, particularly with the Employment Disability Act [sic].’

(Manager)

Additional exposure to employers in steering group meetings or in attempting to ‘sell’ them disability awareness or other training added a new dimension to managers’ and staff’s experience. They learned that negotiation with employers often yielded the best results. One worker put it in the following way:

‘The style of approach should be to work in relationship with employers and then respond to whatever emerges from discussions, not provide a pre-determined, pre-designed service.’ (Scheme worker)
Finding the right person to talk to in an organisation was also an issue. In larger organisations it was widely agreed that the correct departments to approach were human resources or personnel as these identified work placements, for example, as a routine part of their work. These were also more likely to have an understanding of disability issues. Scheme staff quickly learned that they needed to talk with someone with a decision-making role within an organisation to facilitate a speedier response.

Sometimes, when talking to a national employer, schemes noted that it helped to have the support of a senior policy person. In this way, policies were filtered down and cascaded to local retail outlets. However, others said that they tended to talk to local managers of stores for positions and this personal approach worked well. Talking to employers about filling work opportunities often required staff to ‘talk the same language’ as the employer. Staff in several of the schemes were able to articulate a simple business case argument: for example, several members of staff articulated that ‘they want labour and a good match between employer and client’.

The evidence from employer interviews suggests that not all staff had taken these points on board. One employer felt that they were being encouraged to take a client on ethical grounds, rather than on business grounds. Another suggested that the positive case for employing a disabled person should be put forward to employers - that clients would be reliable and committed:

‘In terms of working with disability agencies I don’t want to know from them what I should be doing, what I ought to do. It is better to be faced with the positives. For example, with attendance levels, there is very little sickness. People with Spina Bifida or Cerebral Palsy literally drag themselves to work. This is a stable and energetic workforce. Those people with mental health problems are absolutely dedicated to their work. It has lived up to all my expectations - disabled people are not out of the ordinary.’ (Employer)

Even where schemes were not going to continue, staff could take these lessons with them into the future.

5.7 Impact of scheme activities on employers

A variety of employers were interviewed in this evaluation. All had had some contact with schemes and they were asked about their experience of the scheme and its impact on their organisations. The largest group of twenty-two were employers who had taken on clients in jobs or on work placements, but had received no additional disability awareness training. A smaller group of nine employers were interviewed who had also received awareness training. Eight of the total number of employers were partner employers to the schemes. The majority of employers could be classified as being ‘open to change’, with 15 employers stating they already had equal opportunities policies in place, with two of these having already employed disabled people.
The majority of employers interviewed were satisfied with their experience of the scheme in relation to the services offered and their interaction with the schemes. Satisfaction could lie across a number of dimensions. ‘It has been most successful in terms of support in recruitment and continued advice, and continued support for the employees. I have a high regard for scheme staff. I am surprised at how quickly they were able to set things up. They give a quick response to any enquiries.’ (Employer)

It was clear that the enthusiasm of scheme staff in their work often had an impact on the employers with whom they were working. ‘I was really impressed with the scheme. Everyone is really passionate about it and it rubs off. I got very enthusiastic too.’ (Employer)

In one employer-led scheme there was also considerable satisfaction that the local managers in the company had embraced the concept of the scheme because of their positive experience of how it had worked. There had been some initial scepticism, but as the human resources manager pointed out: ‘Managers now praise the scheme. It is rare to have an equal opportunities policy praised by managers.’ (Employer)

In general these kinds of positive experiences could lead to the employer taking on more people with disabilities in the future. Nine of the employers said explicitly that they would take on more clients from the scheme if they had appropriate opportunities, with several others implying this in their responses.

However, employers’ comments also highlighted areas in which difficulties could arise. The importance of the need for good communications between the scheme and employer was highlighted in a couple of cases. In one, it was a matter of the style and content, for example: ‘I would also suggest a less aggressive approach to selling the idea of hiring New Deal candidates. Aggression, as in accusing employers of their negligence in providing opportunities for special populations, puts people off. [It could be] more of a practical, collaborative effort: “This is what disability is about. What can we do to work with disability in your organisation?” An educational approach.’ (Employer)

Elsewhere the issue was different. One employer commented on the lack of information about the general workings of the scheme: ‘I would like to have a bit more information about the scheme host - its operations, its background, some explanatory literature, that sort of thing. I feel in the dark about some things.’ (Employer)

Another employer mentioned the lack of continuing contact with the scheme after the placement had ended. This suggests that employers
were potentially interested in the general work of the scheme, but the opportunity for further involvement was missed by lack of attention to the support needs of the employer on the part of the scheme.

**Recruiting employees**

In the main, the employers interviewed were positive about the potential recruits they had received from the schemes, which they considered to be appropriate and generally fitting the profile of the work of the employers. In some cases these referrals had come from a personal connection between the scheme host or referral agency and the employer organisation. One employer had a very good experience of the referral system. She said that an unusual element was that the employer worked very closely with the partners (who would be sending potential recruits) prior to receiving any referrals. These partners were invited on-site to walk the course, see the limitations and the environment. This meant that the partners would have a very good idea of what the work would be like, and would therefore send the most suitable candidates. The employer was very satisfied with the service.

There were a few negative comments about schemes in relation to referrals. One was the suitability and quality of referrals: one partner felt that the emphasis within the programme on outcomes had led to the referral agencies making unsuitable referrals, and another felt that the referral agencies had not sufficiently understood the work of the employer, which also led to unsuitable referrals. This points to the need for the schemes to ensure that the needs of the employer are both widely understood and met.

**Support in work**

A few mentioned that the support they were given by the scheme was useful in retaining their employee once they were in post.

‘I am very satisfied with the support and resources supplied by the team.’

(Employer)

Another, who had taken on a young man with learning difficulties, also felt it was invaluable, and believed she had probably received more support than the employee himself. The flexibility of the scheme in supporting both the client and the employer was considered to be very important:

‘There have been no problems being involved with this scheme. I feel I can contact [the client’s] consultant any time and he is willing to help. [The scheme] is very supportive and is nice to have as a back-up for managing the client. They have supported him into a job with a decent wage and he continues to be supported in the position. He has developed skills, and has also developed at a more personal level.’ (Employer)
This kind of support could be invaluable to an employer who was interested in employing disabled people, but did not see themselves as able to support the employee on an on-going basis. For these employers, the costs of support were too high.

5.7.2 Personal impacts

Of the employers interviewed, 14 mentioned that being involved with the Innovative Schemes had increased their awareness of and understanding of disability issues. This increased understanding could be across a number of dimensions:

- Issues relating to specific disabilities and their practical needs.
- Disability issues more generally.
- Increased knowledge of services.

The majority of those interviewed mentioned that they now understood better what the issues were in relation to specific disabilities, such as people who were hearing impaired, or people with learning difficulties. This was as a direct result of employing a disabled person or retaining an employee with that disability. One person, supervising a client with learning difficulties, said this had a direct impact on her work:

‘Personally, I have learned a lot. He has helped with my management skills. I need to explain things to him in more simplified terms which brought me to recognise how important it is to explain things in an employee’s own terms. It is important that I put more effort into ensuring my employees comprehend the task.’ (Employer)

Understanding the practical needs of people with disabilities was also increased by employing a disabled person. At least two employers who had employed someone with a hearing impairment felt that they now understood their individual needs better. One felt that it led to her seeing a broader picture of individual needs. The intervention of a scheme also led to better understanding of what workplace adaptations were needed for specific employees. Several of those interviewed said that, after employing a disabled person, they could now see that a lot of their barriers to work were around the lack of confidence of the employee rather than anything relating to their disability.

A smaller number said that they also now had a grasp of what the issues were for disabled people more generally and the implications this had for their organisations. This was usually as a result of having participated in training activities. For example, in one of the employers, the manager interviewed had not had much exposure to disability issues prior to her
employer participating in the scheme. She attended some short disability awareness courses at work:

‘I was concerned I would have to treat disabled people differently and was worried about this. But the disabled people running the training were open and honest and I was helped to look at the person first, not the disability. I now feel a lot more confident in interviews and in supporting disabled employees.’ (Employer)

Seven of the nine who had received disability awareness training reported that it had made a personal impact on them. One employer, who had taken on a client from the scheme identified that he could have benefited from additional training:

‘Although the support worker visited the employee, I felt that we could have benefited from some more support as employers. I am not sure what form the support would have taken though. Particularly in terms of learning more about disability issues in general, having our awareness raised.’ (Employer)

This suggests that the wider understanding of disability issues engendered by disability awareness training is likely to underpin the experience of having employed a disabled person. Several employers mentioned that they were now more aware of the services that were available - including that of the Innovative Scheme, in helping a disabled person return to work or be retained in work.

‘The scheme is serving as a catalyst to other support services that employers can access for employee support. They have made me more aware of these support services. Working with the retention employee, the scheme has helped to identify needs and offer solutions. The scheme has offered advice.’ (Employer)

Helping employers to navigate their way through the maze of services involved in supporting disabled people to return to work was considered to be a very important part of the work in a number of schemes.

5.7.3 Impact on a wider group of staff

The impacts of employing a disabled person within employer organisations also extended to wider groups of staff.

For example, where two employers had employed profoundly deaf people, a small number of staff had begun to learn signing in their own time.

‘Everyone in the office had adjusted to having a deaf employee. All staff took deaf awareness training in response to this. The secretary seated across from [the employee] is studying BSL [British Sign Language].’ (Employer)

Employer representatives also noted that where they had encouraged staff to undertake disability awareness training, the messages were taken up by larger numbers of staff. In a few cases this had encouraged a wider debate. In one employer all eight hundred staff had received some
awareness training, and disabled people were working in every small team.

‘We found that most of the staff were very positive, but that there were a lot of old attitudes left over. This was often a generation thing – some ages were not used to thinking and discussing these issues. From managers down it has opened up the issue.’ (Employer)

Although the evaluation could not address this directly, this wider awareness of disability issues was believed to be a contributory factor in a slow process of cultural change within employer organisations.

5.7.4 Impact on the organisation

There were some indications from the evaluation that policies and practices were likely to change as a result of having participated in the Innovative Schemes. Fifteen employers said that they now had greater awareness of the strategies an employer could take to support disabled people in work, or to retain them in existing jobs. These could be translated into action within an organisation, and in some cases this was already happening.

‘We now ensure all the information is in one place. We have formalised procedures, ensuring that all the checks and balances are in place. The project has also enabled us to think more positively about getting long-term sick people to get back into work.’ (Partner)

In two organisations there were also practical changes implemented in recruitment or interview practices:

‘The impact has been mostly learning. For example, how to go about offering vacancies to disabled people, how to conduct an interview.’ (Partner)

Elsewhere, involvement in a job retention scheme had a deeper impact on the organisation and others in which it was involved. In this case the employer said that:

‘Involvement with the scheme has triggered the review of policy and practice in the NHS Trust, to the setting up of a staff advisor in the training company, and thoughts about how to provide support etc. in the county council.’ (Employer)

One of the employers who had taken on a client for a work placement provided a good example of how a relatively non-threatening activity could be used as a learning experience for both parties. This employer hoped to gain an increased understanding of the issues involved and the changes that were needed in the workplace by providing a work placement for a scheme client.

‘Taking people who are looking for work on a work placement helps us and the person concerned to gain an understanding of what is required.’ (Employer)
Whilst change could occur in one part of an organisation, sometimes translating this into widespread change was not always possible. One occupational psychologist reported:

‘There has been an impact within the Occupational Psychology department - it has influenced service delivery and service development. Within the Trust as a whole, I don’t think so. The Trust does not really understand the bigger issues in this area.’ (Employer)

However, despite these many positive developments, the practical and cultural changes required in an employer organisation to support disabled people into work could be difficult to achieve. As one partner employer put it:

‘Employers find it very difficult to admit to institutionalised discrimination and therefore all schemes like this end up as token employment of disabled people. Employers won’t change their structures unless it is in their interests to do so. And with many disabled people it is not.’ (Partner/Employer)

There were indications that practices were not likely to change in all employers as a result of being involved with the scheme. Five said that their policies were likely to change and seven employers said that their policies would not change following work with the schemes. Five of these seven were employers who prided themselves in having equal opportunities policies already in place, another was a very small company with few employees.

Initially we analysed the interviews from employer partners separately from the other employers in order to ascertain whether involvement in the partnerships appeared to have a different, or additional, impact on these employers. On the whole they demonstrated that they had a very good understanding of the work of the scheme and that in general they were open to recruiting disabled people.

In one case, although the interviewee had not received official awareness training from the scheme, he demonstrated that he had become more aware of disability issues as a result of his participation in steering group meetings and having employed disabled people. This learning was couched in terms of what he now realised he did not know, even though he had prior experience of employing disabled people.

Elsewhere working closely with the scheme had a real personal impact on the partner employer:

‘I found being involved in the project very enlightening, totally absorbing. It makes you realise how little you know about disability. I took it back to my colleagues: it gave me the confidence to stand back and ask what the person wants from me, able to listen to the disabled person. It broadened my horizons. I thought I was open minded before but I was trying to fit the person in with the company. It gave me the chance to explore more, and ask what do I have to do to support him?’ (Partner)
The problem of being an individual within the partnership and trying to effect change more widely within the organisation was highlighted. One partner had spent some time trying to encourage the managers within his social services department to be more involved in the training but this had not been successful.

5.8 Conclusions

It is clear that a great deal of learning has taken place over the course of this programme in relation to working directly with employers.

The employer's journey model provided a useful way of interpreting what was occurring within schemes. Most importantly, for this evaluation, was the suggestion that employers varied, that both employers and disability agencies were travelling on a journey to greater mutual understanding and the success of different activities was likely to be variable according to the strategies adopted. The findings from the evaluation largely bore out these ideas. The model also provides a useful tool for future programmes in helping to plan what is likely to work with any given employer, and which activity or strategy is likely to be most appropriate and ultimately successful.

Three main types of employers were identified in this evaluation – closed, open to change, and engaged. Employers also varied by size. These differences were important as schemes could potentially adapt their strategies for gaining access to them according to these differences. Scheme staff worked hard to find work opportunities for clients and raise awareness about disability issues more widely. While some staff were clear what worked best for them and their schemes, many had not evaluated their own strategies.

The varying levels of success in terms of engaging employers for work opportunities depended on a range of factors. These related on the one hand to the skills and experience of scheme staff, for example their prior knowledge of employers, or their skills in talking to employers. On the other hand, the type of employer approached was also likely to be a factor, for example, attempting to persuade a closed, or small employer to undertake disability awareness training from the outset was likely to prove time consuming and ultimately disappointing.

Some schemes did in fact have good knowledge of employers, and capitalised upon this. In others, prior knowledge was more limited and a great deal of time was spent in making new contacts. Schemes could do well to follow the example of a small number of schemes, by undertaking frequent scanning exercises and by keeping up to date databases of information on local employers. These could include known type of employer, recruitment policies, named contacts etc.

The focus on short term targets (job outcomes), militated against in-depth individual work with employers, although many did deliver
awareness training sessions. A one year programme was considered too short to effect real cultural change within an organisation.

Schemes used their employer partners in different ways to achieve different ends, providing referrals, jobs, or for support in making decisions. Many included employers on their steering groups in an advisory capacity, which appears to have been a factor in shaping services for a number of schemes. Not including them in this capacity may have been an opportunity lost in schemes to learn more about what employers could offer, as well as what schemes could offer them.

One of the most useful aspects of the amended Employers Forum on Disability model was the idea of the journey to greater involvement. There were indications that schemes were able to lead employers along this journey, by engaging them in non-threatening activities, using their language and responding to their needs. However, the process was slow, and schemes were often not able to continue working with these employers in the longer term. In providing a range of services to employers such as disability awareness training sessions, or solving employer recruitment problems, it was also clear that many schemes were beginning to treat employers more as potential clients or customers of services rather than as targets.

On the whole employers' experience of the schemes was positive. Individual awareness of disability issues was increased after participation and the 'fear of the unknown' so often reported by Innovative Schemes diminished. Impacts on employers in terms of personal awareness of issues and services, and the potential for organisational change increased when disability awareness training was also held. However there were suggestions that change was limited to changing policies and practices. Real and prolonged cultural change is likely to need ongoing interventions with employers.
In this chapter we look in some detail at how the schemes responded to the wide range of clients with whom they worked. As we described in Chapter 2, the schemes differed considerably in how far they specialised and worked with clients with specific impairments, had an open or inclusive policy of accepting any disabled person.

What emerged from experience across the schemes, however, was that it was not always easy to make clear distinctions: disabled people could not always be categorised into a particular grouping; there may be little homogeneity within a grouping; specific needs may not be the most important; some people face multiple impairments; some with good previous work experience may not be at all ready for work, and so on.

In addition, in Chapter 4, we recognised that schemes differed in the way that they selected people according to their level of work experience or work-readiness. For example, as we noted, some recruited people for jobs which were already established and others selected people for particular work areas (e.g. call centre work). In both cases schemes were looking for people suitable to follow those paths. Other schemes recruited people first, worked closely with them to prepare for and seek employment on a one-to-one basis.

Learning from the schemes

What emerged from this variety were two broad sets of issues:

- About the relative selectivity of the schemes and, in terms of the labour market, the implications of working with either more or less work-ready clients or, as was true of some schemes, both.
- About how schemes provided specialised support for clients with specific impairments or responded to a wide range of clients, some of whom would have specialised needs.

It seemed important to take a closer look at these issues, highlighting as they do the two key elements of the NDDP programme: working with disabled people and doing so in the context of the labour market. We did this in four ways which the chapter covers in sequence:

- We considered the selectivity of schemes in terms of clients' work readiness.
- We gathered client perspectives and comments about their experiences of the schemes.
- We looked at what schemes had learnt about the needs of specific groups of disabled people.
- We then drew together a series of general points to highlight the generic implications to emerge.
To do so we conducted some further work which included: carrying out an additional analysis of our data from specialist schemes; interviews with a number of scheme managers to obtain further information and comment; and obtaining information from some leading organisations in particular fields of disability. We also invited the relevant scheme managers to comment on the draft mini-reports on the needs of specific client groups which we prepared as a basis for this chapter.

6.2 Selectivity and work readiness

The overall employment focus of NDDP meant that schemes might have been oriented towards clients who were motivated and reasonably ready to move into work but, in practice, schemes varied in the level of ‘work-readiness’ of the clients they targeted. This had important implications for the kind of activities in which they engaged and their overall success in achieving employment targets established.

The ‘Iceberg’ (Figure 6.1) model of unemployment of disabled people provides a way of identifying how Schemes focused their work. This model, developed by the Employers’ Forum on Disability and submitted to the House of Commons Select Committee on Education and Employment, clustered disabled people into five groups. These drew on responses to the Labour Force survey and were: ‘in employment’; ‘looking for work’; ‘would like to work’; ‘do not want to/unable to work’ and ‘attending a day centre’.

**Figure 6.1: Disabled People and Work - ‘The Iceberg’**: Select Committee on Education and Employment Minutes of Evidence from the Employers’ Forum on Disability 1999

The term ‘disabled people’ includes all individuals who said that they had a long-term (expected to last more than a year) health problem or disability
This set of distinctions was helpful in considering whether schemes were, on the whole, selecting the most work-ready, i.e. those coming into the top segments of the ‘Iceberg’ or were targeting the harder-to-place at the lower sections. Some schemes were relatively unselective having no particular criteria about work experience and were open to all comers across the range of work readiness. The range of selectivity across the schemes can be summarised as follows:

- **Clients ready or more-or-less ready for work** (nine schemes)
  Schemes here selected people who had work experience and skills or had the capacity to train for work in the relatively short term.

- **Clients who had worked but might need to acquire or renew skills** (eight schemes)
  Some schemes expected to train people in various ways but were, on the whole, working with clients who had some work experience and who were relatively motivated, if not very confident, about work.

- **Clients who had not worked or had little work experience** (nine schemes)
  Here schemes were aiming to reach people who had little sustained work or who had been on the margins of employment.

- **Clients who were not sure they could or wanted to work** (two schemes)
  A few schemes also did target people who had never worked and those on Incapacity Benefit who saw themselves as quite unable to do so. Client motivation here might be low or intermittent here and there were implications for the project in terms of the time span available to support people whose progress was likely to be slow.

As can be seen from this list, some of the 24 schemes were working with more than one group. However, across the 24 schemes rather more focused on the ‘top’, more work-ready clients than those lower in the ‘Iceberg’.

In terms of assessing the achievements of the Schemes, it is important to understand the differences in the nature of the work, the amount of time implied and the time frames involved in assisting clients nearer the ‘top’ and those lower down the ‘Iceberg’. There are also significant differences involved in working within a fairly narrow range of work readiness rather than a broad range of experience. A rough analogy might be the difference between ‘mixed ability’ school classes and ‘streaming’: in the same way there are significant staffing, time resource and pacing issues for employment projects.

But from the clients’ point of view, this analysis helps to emphasise that some of those coming into employment schemes may well be doing so tentatively. Some would have little or no first hand experience of work on which to build their expectations and aspirations and could be fearful about the changes and demands involved.
Eighty-nine clients were interviewed during the audit visits to schemes. These interviews highlighted the factors that clients saw as being particularly important about their experience. Their views were generally positive.

**What clients were looking for**

Most clients wanted work and had tried to find something suitable. Many had been out of work for a long period, some had a lot of experience but had left work due to disability. Schemes seemed to offer a way forward and clients were positive about the help they had had - even if this had not resulted in employment. The aspects which they identified as important included the following:

- Additional help and information in order to find work. A key point was that many clients felt they had previously lacked detailed preparation for seeking work.
  - ‘I have been applying for jobs for over a year. I wanted new advice and information so as to be able to approach it in a different way.’

- To move towards work by gaining confidence. An underlying theme was that people felt lacking in confidence - in themselves, in the possibility of work, in the possible attitude of employers towards their disability. Trying to find work but failing had led many to be despondent and demoralised: the scheme offered a possible way ahead by encouraging them, and enabling them to regain a belief in themselves.
  - ‘(I hope to get) confidence! It has been eight and a half years since my accident. I was at a low ebb and had little faith in my abilities.’ (Client)

- To gain work experience. Some clients were clear that what they needed was work experience and to explore work as a possibility: this was also a way of obtaining/constructive help without the pressure of going for a job right away.
  - ‘The biggest obstacle to getting work is lack of work experience - training and qualifications don’t count much if you haven’t got the experience.’ (Client)

  - ‘I felt there was no other way of finding out whether and how my health [serious eye problem and mental health] would hold up being busier. I’ve been ill for a long time and want to know if I can move forward without being more ill.’ (Client)

- To move into work. Others were wanting to move into work but realised that they required support to do so.
  - ‘I have been unemployed for two years and saw this as a route into a job. I don’t want to stay in call centres though and would only use it as a stepping stone to other work.’ (Client)

But, failure to achieve this could be the cause of some frustration:
- ‘I thought that the object was to get a job, but at the end of the day it’s a job that you want, and if it doesn’t deliver, then you wonder what it’s all for, get negative about it all.’ (Client)
A unique approach

Many clients considered that the schemes offered a unique service and approach and many were in a position to compare the scheme with their experiences elsewhere. The main aspect which set NDDP schemes apart from other training and job preparation experiences was the support and empathy clients received. Some commented on their poor experiences at Jobcentres and with DEAs - which for some centred on their lack of disability awareness and knowledge. Schemes were seen as not only providing a structured route to employment, which was welcomed, but also support and guidance from people who understood about disability. In summary, therefore, the characteristics of the schemes which were most appreciated by clients were:

- Level of support: Clients felt that they were known as individuals and that non-work aspects, like their family and social responsibilities, were understood. The schemes were generally seen as being focused on and tailored for them as individuals - with sensitivity, willingness to listen and lots of encouragement. This included people who felt they had been pushed very hard - but appreciated it.

- Understanding of disability issues: This was highly valued including the fact that some staff were themselves disabled: clients referred to the lack of stigma and that staff had realistic expectations.

  ‘You can talk about the illness, talk about things you don’t say in other places so it’s de-stigmatising. I’ve got more insight and feel there are positives to having been ill.’ (Client)

  ‘It is a good step in getting back to work and because they know about severe and enduring mental health here, it’s a very supportive environment to look at things from.’ (Client)

- Gaining confidence: This was a recurring theme through the interviews with clients. Schemes had helped them to regain self confidence, to restore hope, to see work at least as a possibility and this was highly valued as a social as well as a work-related benefit.

  ‘It helps to make you feel capable of doing something. When you are out of work for a long time your confidence goes, and you feel it is not worth doing anything. When you come in here it makes you feel worthwhile. I think it is a good idea because disabled people may not think they have anything to offer. You need information, and you need somewhere like this where you can feel normal, like other people.’ (Client)

  I have grasped the idea that I don’t simply have to endure things, that what is important is what I believe. You have to have positive thinking, motivation, and drive.’ (Client)
• Understanding employers and employability: Generally, opportunities to understand the employment system were appreciated - one aspect of this, for example, was learning about self presentation, the kind of information employers want and need to know and, perhaps, what they do not.

• Work training: Training was on the whole very personally focused and because there was also personal support as an integral part of the activities - training, mentoring, job tasters etc - clients felt more able to ‘have a go’ at what, for some, had seemed a huge challenge. Empowerment training was welcomed. A number of people liked the fact that they were in small groups for the courses.

‘It [the training] was so good, I feel a lot better after doing it, from the bottom of my heart. It let me explore myself, take a step back, see what I want to do, where I want to go, how I am going to get there. [It] breaks it down into small changes, small steps to move forward.’ (Client)

One or two did comment that the training elements had not been very helpful while still being positive about the scheme itself.

• Work preparation activities: Although these aspects of the schemes were mentioned, the emphasis of clients’ comments were much more on the personal support they had received and that this, above all, appeared to have made a difference to their general attitude to work and level of motivation.

‘They have organised my interviews; taken me too. And provided communication support at interviews; helped me to produce CVs; and to look for jobs. Now that I have a job (18 hours per week as a cleaner in a sports centre), they are now helping me to apply for tax credits; and have told me that I can call on them at any time.’ (Client)

‘Role play helped and when we worked together acting out work scenarios, it helped a lot, building up confidence. Having a friendly approachable atmosphere made all the difference but the drama was really great.’ (Client)

• Getting work: About a quarter of clients interviewed had got permanent jobs, several expected to get work or become self employed and the rest were completing their training. Those who had work attributed this in good part to their scheme. Some had been surprised to get work, others felt generally more confident that they could in the future, some were amazed to be able to work one day a week. Thus, clients were reporting different levels of achievement but the overall indication was that the schemes had established and maintained a clear work focus and this had been welcomed.

‘[My contact workers] helped me learn how to look for jobs. With [one of her contact workers] communicating for me (i.e. signing) it meant that I could apply for jobs. Without them I could not have got the job I have got.’ (Client)
‘Being in work is brilliant. I feel that I am doing something useful again. A useful member of society again. It felt as if I have been reintegrated. I don’t take the anti-depressants any more.’ (Client)

**Remaining concerns**

Having entered the schemes a few clients indicated that they had some remaining concerns about both being able to find work at the end of the scheme or being railroaded into certain employment opportunities that they were unsure about, for example call centres. Others felt that expectations that they ‘ought to get work’ would be placed upon them having been through the scheme although they remained anxious about working and effects on their health. Again some felt that the lack of flexibility in the benefits system would mean they could be less well off.

However the schemes have ultimately given clients the choice of employment:

‘[The] scheme has been a tremendous help. [It has] helped me learn about myself, my body limits and has helped change my attitude about finding work, I now consider employment an option.’ (Client)

The comments from clients provide a general overview of the things which they wanted from schemes and what they most appreciated.

An underlying question for the evaluation was how and how well the different schemes - i.e. those which specialised and those open to all - responded to clients' special and individual needs as well as providing the general, common-to-all aspects involved in job preparation and finding employment. We identified four groups of disabled people whose needs did require some specific or specialised help. These were:

- People with mental health problems.
- People with learning difficulties.
- People with rehabilitation needs following accident and injury.
- People with multiple disabilities.

There were a number of common issues faced by all schemes in relation to these client groups since their employment needs were usually complex, involving physical, psychological, emotional and social adjustments.

The four groups between them make up a significant proportion of the total population of disabled people turning to disability employment schemes (although no statistics are available broken down according to these exact categories). Their prevalence makes it particularly important that information is available to those running such schemes about the particular needs of these groups, about the kind of support that has been found to be effective, and about the implications this has for the organisation and staffing of schemes.
6.4.1 People with mental health problems

**Characteristics of the client group**

People with mental health problems are widely viewed as being one of the groups most disadvantaged within the workplace, and have an employment rate of only 18 per cent, compared with 47 per cent for all long term disabled people in Great Britain (Spring 2000 Labour Force Survey).

There is, however, considerable variation within this overall population, from those suffering from short-term or relatively mild psychological disturbance, through to people with long-term and severe problems. As the following sections note, mild to severe psychological disturbance (depression, anxiety, or behavioural problems such as aggression) could be the consequence of other disabilities, (particularly where services and support for the person with the disability are limited or inappropriate) or even the side effects of medication.

It is also helpful to recognise that individuals joining employment schemes were at different points or stages in their mental health 'career' or trajectory. For example there were:

- those with past problems who were mainly facing barriers associated with having a history of mental ill health, of gaining personal confidence, coping with new demands;
- those with ongoing, cyclical or chronic problems where the issues of relevance to employment were, in addition, about regaining health, stabilising or learning to live with their condition;
- those poised at the onset of potential mental health crisis where appropriate support and help might avert more severe problems.

It was this that broadly differentiated the three mental health schemes and, therefore, their approaches, although there was some overlap between them.

**Approaches**

There were three schemes which catered specifically for people with mental health problems. In addition many inclusive and other specialist schemes reported that they had a number of clients with mental health problems, sometimes in conjunction with other disabilities. Schemes providing services for other specific groups also recognised clients with, for example, depression, anxiety problems. Mental health problems were common across the schemes and emerged as highly significant in responding to clients’ individual employment needs.

The range of support on offer through the three main 'mental health' projects was common to all three, including preparation for work, help in finding work, ongoing help once in work. There was however considerable variation in the approaches of the three projects which
between them provide a useful account of what could be achieved with the target group.

- Scheme F was based in a TEC. It was mainly dealing with those whose mental health illness or crisis was in the past. It developed a service for those who had previously suffered a mental health crisis but, in the main, their health was either stabilised or they no longer needed medical or supportive mental health care. Typically clients had suffered a single breakdown and subsequently lost confidence in their capacity to work in open employment but on the other hand many had high levels of education and social skills, which made them suitable for a wide variety of employment prospects.

Referrals came mainly from Employment Advisers to whom clients had gone looking for help in getting back to work.

'The task for this project was to find a way to lift the confidence of this group to overcome their self-generated barriers to accepting work.' (Manager)

Of particular relevance for this group was work preparation which eased clients back into working life through providing the structure of a timetable of focussed work-preparation activities. These included a drama module designed to build confidence and presentation skills: this made a key difference to many clients who reported radical upturns in their confidence as a result. Other modules covered issues such as curriculum vitae preparation, self-presentation and other issues common to job finding. Drop-in facilities were available and work experience placements were a crucial element of the activities provided.

With this group it appeared that the organisation did not need to be clearly identified with mental health, although staff did have experience in this area. On the contrary, the project and its partners felt its neutral location was destigmatizing for clients and employers.

- Scheme L was developed from a project which was already offering services to clients with severe and enduring mental health problems. The scheme included those whose condition limited their capacity to work and those who were stable and able to work without particular limitations.

Referrals were mainly from health and social services professionals. These came via the lead organisation's already well-established employment projects across the region.

The scheme approach was that clients and staff worked closely together through the assessment and then dealing with the full range of issues relevant to work-getting and maintenance.
A key issue reported here was that:

‘The client groups’ chronic, often severe and enduring problems set particular challenges to sustaining focus and energy among staff.’ (Manager)

So that providing appropriate staff support was an important element in running the project.

This scheme developed a social firm\(^{27}\) by exploring the potential for clients to set up a consultancy for users of mental health and this was broadly successful. It was considered a particularly appropriate opportunity for this client group since a social firm could accommodate flexible working arrangements for those who might have their working lives interrupted by periodic illness or who found themselves discriminated against by the needs of conventional employers.

- Scheme X, amongst other targets, highlighted the needs of people in work whose mental health was under threat. The lead organisation here had been successfully running telephone helpline services for people with mental health problems prior to NDDP and extended this to include employment issues and new user groups.

‘In this project, they sought to address the needs of people who were in work, who were considered or considered themselves to be at risk from a mental health crisis.’ (Manager)

The project experienced difficulties in the flow of receiving referrals and offering support into work. There seemed to be two main factors at work. One was that because people whose mental health was threatened were often overloaded they were sometimes not able to see that they were in need of help and their needs went unrecognised by colleagues and employers. A further difficulty arose because people referred often needed a period of respite from work to recover from the stresses leading to their difficulties and so were not immediately able to consider working. Raising awareness among employers and establishing themselves firmly in the minds of those who were likely to refer themselves or others therefore became a key activity within this project.

**Support for employers**

All three projects found that continuing support from the project was useful to employers as well as service users. For example, project staff could mediate early misunderstandings or provide mental health awareness training to staff. Such training helped to combat staff misapprehensions concerning their own safety. Thus, employers also had needs and were clients of the scheme as much as individual disabled people.

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\(^{27}\) See glossary for definition of ‘social firm’. 
A problem was that many clients chose not to disclose their status to employers because of their fears of the consequences and this highlights the relevance of working with employers to raise awareness and understanding of mental health issues.

**Support for staff**

The importance of supporting staff was noted by a scheme working with people with severe and enduring problems. Here, a formalised staff supervision and support system had been set up. This was to maintain staff performance and morale and reduce the possibilities of stress and burnout. It was considered to be an important element to good practice in working with this client group and followed mainstream service practices.

**Key features to emerge**

Working with people with mental health issues did emerge as a specialist field where the knowledge and experience of staff was crucial for the success of the schemes.

From the range of approaches and activities outlined, some of the particular points to emerge include:

For clients:
- the potential value of a structured course which helps clients adapt to the routines of work life;
- flexibility in meeting the needs of individuals in the group, e.g. the drama module to help overcome deficiencies in confidence;
- a ladder of continuing support through work experience into work placement;
- a mix of individual and group support to prepare clients for re-entry into working life; groups can provide both support and a degree of ‘rehearsal’ for work relationships and workplace dynamics; and
- social firm initiatives, which provide useful additional alternatives for people, where long lead times and continuity of support is available.

For schemes:
- agencies with a good track record of working with mental health problems are likely to be preferred for clients with ongoing and potential problems;
- a more neutral location which has less association with mental health issues might be preferred by those whose difficulties are in the past;
- staff need to be able to formally represent their agency and client group to employers;
- staff need to be able to represent clients’ interests and needs;
• tools for helping staff maintain standards;
• training for staff to raise their levels of motivation and confidence; and
• awareness of and support for staff in dealing with the impact of working
with mental health problems.

For employers:
• working with employers to raise awareness of mental health issues in
the workplace.

About referrals:
• a good match is needed between the expectations of the referrer, the
needs of the user group and the support on offer. The positions
occupied by these different schemes helped determine the kind and
level of referrals they were able to attract.

6.4.2 People with learning difficulties

Characteristics of the client group

People with learning disabilities are not a homogenous group. At one
end of the spectrum are people with such a mild form of disability that it
is scarcely discernible while at the other end are those whose disability is
both immediately apparent and seriously limiting. It follows that if
movement into employment is to be pursued then it must fit with
individual need and ability. In one scheme which originally planned to
include people with a learning disability in their client group the nature
of the work, which demanded high levels of concentration and other
cognitive skills, meant that they could not become involved to the extent
anticipated.

In cases such as this, where the client was unable to fit the job or was
deemed to be not ‘job-ready’ the common tendency was to refer him/
her for training or specialist provision. It is for this reason that people
with a learning disability have been especially susceptible to finding
themselves on the carousel of training and employment: they enter
employment for a brief period then return to further education or training.
This cycle of activity led one respondent to refer to the fact that such
people are ‘trained to death’ which promotes discontent among those on
the receiving end.

Notwithstanding the prejudices of potential employers, those who do
engage with the more severely learning disabled people are faced with
particular difficulties in ensuring their support and safety in the workplace.
In some cases, these might create prohibitive economic consequences
for smaller organisations. In addition, the occasional erratic or aggressive
behaviour to which some people with a learning disability are susceptible
can bear implications for the physical and emotional well-being of the
existing workforce.
While bias and discrimination amongst employers have been identified as the greatest barriers to employment facing all people with a disability (Preece 1995), an historical lack of understanding about the nature of learning disability means that this group of people suffer more than many in this respect. It is still not unusual for employers to have preconceptions about the suitability of people with a learning disability engaging in any form of paid work which means that schemes faced a considerable challenge in overcoming prejudice.

In this programme, these attitudes were often compounded by the client’s family since many believed that learning disabled people had little or no possibility of entering the labour market. It is not, therefore, surprising that low expectations and low self-esteem were a feature of this group, and that their presumed ‘unemployability’ was in perpetual danger of becoming a self-fulfilling prophecy.

Further problems for this group were: that they had little prospect of any improvement in their condition; few had qualifications or any expectation of gaining them; many had problems with numeracy and literacy; few had previous employment experience; few were able to use private transport and some could not travel independently on public transport.

The unemployment rate for people with a learning disability is higher than that for most other groups of people with a long-term disability. However, the benefits of employment, to both the individual and to the employer, have been well documented (Mencap, Leeds Training and Enterprise Council, 1998). For the former they include more money, increased self-esteem, higher status in society, personal development and wider social contacts. For the employer, hiring someone with a learning disability may stem from a mix of self interest and altruism but the benefits can be considerable: it enhances their corporate image, provides access to an untapped pool of labour, affords beneficial local publicity to be seen as a caring employer, and reduces staff turnover as people with a learning disability are typically loyal and reliable.

**Approaches**

There were four schemes which predominantly focused on introducing people with a learning disability to employment. Two of these were linked to colleges of further education with established training programmes for people with a learning disability.

Scheme H developed from the role of the college and the local Social Services department in providing education, training and other activities for disabled people, and the previous lack of success in people moving on into employment. The project aimed to provide real work experience with learning programmes and to follow up the training with real work opportunities, clients either finding work in the open employment market.
or in one of the co-operatives which were set up within the project.

Scheme E arose from the lack of opportunities for students with disabilities to progress from education to employment. Originally intended as a social firm, the scheme became largely dependent for employment opportunities on an ‘enclave’ set up by a major local employer.

Scheme I was a registered charity which offered a supported employment service using one of their consultants in the workplace to train and support the employee.

Scheme T was operated by a major national charity providing a range of services for people with a learning disability in conjunction with its sister organisation in Scotland. This used an existing employee within an organisation to train and support people with learning disabilities.

Referral and assessment

Traditional recruitment procedures, largely dependent on the ability to fill in a form, are not easily accessed by people with a learning disability who may not have well-developed literacy skills. Outside referrals to these four schemes came largely through the DEA, or the college to which schemes were attached. Self-referrals were also accepted.

The Employment Service and Benefits Agency also provided a small percentage of referrals – in one scheme it was estimated that about 35 per cent of clients came from the Employment Service. Some schemes were disappointed not to have received more referrals from such sources, especially the Benefits Agency.

However, as new schemes became more established, they undertook advertising in the wider community which brought in referrals from other sources, such as carers’ associations. One scheme which had been running in a previous capacity for several years had become a victim of its own success in this respect: its reputation, particularly among the families of people with a learning disability had grown, largely through word of mouth, to the extent that they had a permanent waiting list of potential participants.

The schemes’ own assessment processes were geared to meet the ability of the applicant, being far less dependent on the written word and incorporating significant others in his/her life (such as a parent, DEA or social worker) in the initial meeting.

The work of the schemes

The underlying philosophy of schemes working with people with a learning disability was that those who wanted to work were capable of doing so. This meant addressing the difficulties outlined above in respect
of a) the clients, b) their families and c) potential and actual employers.

Clients:
The underlying goal for schemes working with this group was empowerment of clients. This was achieved through the gradual build-up in their self-confidence and self-esteem, by means of training and/or work experience so that they felt themselves valued as individuals and developed respect for others.

Having regular and guaranteed access to one person for support and training was in all schemes a crucial element for the client.

Families:
On occasions families were concerned that an individual’s moves towards employment would reduce the family benefit income. These would not support the individual’s participation in a scheme or a move to work. One scheme reportedly worked only with those families and informal networks that supported the client's own decision to work: otherwise, they felt, their efforts were wasted. Others, however, were willing to become involved with families who had become benefit-dependent, to allay their initial anxieties over a potential loss of reliable income. Overall there was little evidence of deliberate and pro-active contact with families being made: rather, they were a part of the holistic approach towards the learning disabled person and therefore automatically included where appropriate.

Employers:
The most suitable jobs for people with a learning disability were typically found in the service sector – hotel and catering, supermarkets, banking, insurance. This meant accessing larger businesses with a progressive employment policy. However, even the most enlightened employers might not be as confident as they appeared, so that investment of time in supporting them proved to be a necessary activity.

Time was also invested by schemes in changing the attitudes of employers towards people with a learning disability and in promoting disability awareness. For this task, unremitting enthusiasm was often the deciding factor. One scheme manager commented in respect of involving employers, ‘my enthusiasm overspills and I think that this motivated them also.’

Key features to emerge

A range of features emerged as important when looking at the success of the schemes:
• One-to-one support appears to hold the key to success of these schemes. There was recognition that training and placing people with a learning disability in employment and maintaining them there required support to both the employee and the employer. Though different models were in place in different schemes - mentors with and without a learning disability themselves, job coaches, consultants or ‘natural supports’ - there was no evidence that any one model was more or less effective than another.

• Support for employers. A critical factor was that a designated person was available not only to help the client through the various stages but also to reassure the employer that the scheme was not, to quote one manager ‘simply dumping a difficult person on them’. Altering employers’ perceptions of the potential of people with a learning disability and securing job placements for them occupied a great deal of staff time in each of the schemes. Their experience suggests the importance of developing stronger links between schemes and the business community.

‘An absolutely brilliant set-up’ was how one scheme was described by an employer working with them. Training for staff was ‘beyond what was promised’ and the regular and reliable support was a crucial factor. His summary was that ‘They need to continue doing everything they are now doing’.

• Access and transport. In one scheme a significant contribution to success was the fact that people with a disability were automatically entitled to free travel, which was helpful in two ways. Firstly, when they were offered a work place they did not have to apply to the ES for assistance with travel costs, which could be a lengthy process, delaying the start of their employment. Secondly, if they felt more able to work for shorter periods of time spread over three or four days, rather than full-time for two days, for example, then they were able to experiment with this arrangement without incurring additional travel costs.

• Other benefits. Schemes reported that, for clients, there was more to success than simply being in employment: being in work that they found interesting and stimulating, which fulfilled their potential and which released them from the ‘unemployable by reason of a learning disability’ yoke could have a major impact on their lives. The extent of this was highlighted by the comment of one worker who pointed out how for many people ‘disability fades into the background when they’ve been through the scheme’.

• Attitudes to work. Schemes such as these demonstrated that it was possible to foster new attitudes in which people with a learning disability expected to work and families and employers recognise their potential to do so. However this carried implications: true integration into the workforce of people with a learning disability in a non-discriminatory/non-stigmatising way was not easily achieved.
• Clients' motivation. Another critical factor was that of motivation, both in terms of what clients brought with them and what was engendered by the scheme itself. While schemes working with this group were client-focused, they recognised that the road to employment success lay not in molly coddling but in motivating their clients.

• Staff and recruitment. A vital component was the recruitment of staff with extensive reserves of commitment to and enthusiasm for the cause. They needed to be able to communicate equally well with the disabled person and the actual or prospective employer. Moreover they needed to have the inner resources (or, in the words of one manager, 'a thick skin') to withstand the constant rejection they faced when trying to find workplaces for clients. Concern has been expressed that, as schemes become more successful and more widespread, recruiting staff of the calibre of those currently in post might become more difficult.

• Inter-agency co-operation. Although partnerships worked well on the whole, it was clear that greater departmental and inter-agency co-operation was needed to maintain the successful trends. There needed to be greater integration between the education and employment services so that accessing work was seen as part of a gradual process beginning not at the point where the individual was about to leave the education system but several years in advance. In that way an expectation of paid employment rather than benefit dependency could be inculcated from a relatively early age.

• Benefit arrangements. There was a danger that 'the benefits issue' could become a major stumbling block to successful integration of people with a learning disability into regular employment. In one area, the scheme manager had succeeded in establishing an efficient working relationship with the local Benefits Agency such that they were able to expedite decisions about changes from therapeutic working hours to 'normal' working hours for clients who succeeded in being offered employment. This was important because the slowness with which such applications had previously been processed had jeopardised job offers made by employers who needed someone to begin work quickly.

• Employment funding. This was generally restricted to the first six months of employment with the assumption that a client would either retain the job or return to training. Although not ideal for any group of people with a disability it could cause particular difficulties for this group who, as we have noted, were especially likely to find themselves on the carousel of employment and training.

• Learning about time spans. The one-to-one input needed to ensure their success meant that such schemes appeared to be highly resource intensive and potentially costly. However, whilst this may be the case at the onset of an individual's progression into employment, the level of input required soon diminished. It was estimated that within two or three months most clients were able to cope with only background support and employers were no longer anxious.
Characteristics of the client group

The clients involved in rehabilitation were by no means a homogeneous group and the severity of their conditions were variable. However it was possible to identify the key issues associated with particular client groups.

Musculoskeletal injury or disability as the result of either an acute traumatic event, a congenital condition or developed as a result of a virus or neurological disease. Clients might have been experiencing secondary problems such as sensory or psychological difficulties. All these factors could significantly affect the personal, social and work areas of life. Musculoskeletal problems included restricted mobility, reduced strength and range of movement, fatigue, pain, inability to use parts of the body, problems with co-ordination and balance. These difficulties might lead to a reduced ability to tolerate certain physical conditions or to carry out certain tasks.

Brain injury as a result of an acute traumatic event such as an accident or an assault, or of a non-traumatic event such as a stroke, haemorrhage, tumour, viral infection or a neurological disease. Brain injury might result in fluctuations of mood, memory loss, might have affected motor functioning, impaired the capacity for insight and self awareness and altered the individual’s attitudes and personality. Periods of anger and even violence could also have resulted from brain injury: an important implication was that these episodes might lead to clients being labelled as ‘difficult’ because the real cause of this kind of behaviour was not understood. The related problems of social interaction and relationships often meant that they were a difficult group to find work for and were considered far from job-ready. The loss of their memory also meant that skills built up over the years had gone and had to be re-learnt. One of the features of this kind of injury was that the progress and extent of recovery could be highly unpredictable.

Secondary problems. In addition, it was generally recognised that employees who had been off work for a long time, or whose injuries were severe were more likely to have developed secondary problems - i.e. not those directly caused by the original injury - like psychological difficulties, depression, lack social skills or confidence.

The individuals affected by these conditions reacted differently to their situation which could relate to the type and severity of the injury, the functional implications, how the individual had adjusted, the experience of pain and the attitude the individual bought to managing his/her situation. Many clients within the schemes were self motivated and wanted to prove that they could manage the situation but others required specialist help and a great deal of support. Building up confidence and self esteem was crucial, especially where it had been eroded through time spent out of the workforce, or due to the withdrawal of support from GPs, family and employers at too early a stage in the rehabilitation process.
Most physical recovery took place within six months but improvements in cognitive and social adaptation could be slower. (Eighty per cent of the recovery process takes place in the first six months following injury, with the remaining 20 per cent of recovery being achieved over two years). Depending on the nature of the disability, clients required rehabilitation, pre-vocational training, often vocational training and support in employment for several months. The path to recovery was also not always straightforward and relapses could occur. A significant issue, particularly with brain injury, was that some clients denied they had a problem and had difficulty in accepting the extent of the injury or how it was affecting their work prospects.

Although often categorised under these general headings, clients in these schemes were highly varied in their impairments, needs and experience.

**Approaches**

There were five schemes which either specialised in physical rehabilitation services for disabled people or which dealt with a number of people with similar requirements. Each approached the work in a rather different way.

Scheme S provided a service which co-ordinated the process of rehabilitation and recovery (for primarily brain injured clients) to enable clients to retain their previous jobs, either retained by the same employer or in some cases find new work opportunities. It involved employment services (seconded DEAs) working closely with medical professionals throughout the rehabilitation process, providing solutions to practical legal and financial problems and offering family support. Work place adaptations, task analysis, vocational training and support workers or job coaches were also supplied where necessary in order to facilitate a smooth return to work.

Scheme A provided a three week intensive physical rehabilitation course for clients with musculo-skeletal injuries. The course included pain management and employment advice, guidance and job search skills, and was closely tied to employment requirements. After the course finished clients were expected to find work themselves although contact could still be kept up with the employment worker.

Scheme O initially intended to include an element of sports rehabilitation for those with cardiovascular problems alongside some holistic health treatments, training and work placements. These were to be offered over an extended period. Suffering from a limited number of referrals, it changed its target group to people suffering from stress and mental health.

Scheme Q provided a holistic job retention service to employers who had employees who were in danger of losing their jobs. Employers were
initially marketed to find clients and the lead organisation - a college - then worked with clients and employers to look for ways in which they could be retained within the organisation, either in the same job or in a different one, or work part time or have a graduated return. Clients could be offered vocational training, and employers the possibilities of work place adaptations. On occasions, retention with the original employer was not possible and a new employer was sought, if appropriate.

Scheme M offered a similar job retention service to both clients and employers wherever possible, although clients were also helped to find other work opportunities elsewhere.

**Referral and recruitment**

The main sources of referrals varied depending on the focus of schemes but included hospitals, employers, GPs, DEAs, and social services and some self referrals. Schemes which focused on self referrals wanted to recruit motivated (and job-ready) clients, whereas other schemes relied on referrals and were less selective. One scheme did exclude people with more problematic mental health issues: these clients tended to be referred to DEAs. The other four schemes worked with most clients, which worked best when they could refer within the scheme partnership for appropriate help, whilst keeping the client on the caseload.

Referrals were initially slow in most of these schemes. There was a complex series of issues here: schemes had no proven track record and/or their approach was thought to be at odds with established rehabilitation practices and/or employment services and employers were used to referring people for medical help first.

One factor was the close involvement of doctors, medical specialists and other professions in the general health field including occupational therapists and occupational health workers. They had traditionally attended to the medical aspects of treatment, recovery and rehabilitation: other aspects, like social and economic rehabilitation had typically come into the picture only after physical rehabilitation was well under way. This separation of functions over time meant that clients were less likely to be referred early on.

After leaving hospital and losing their jobs, clients had often been pointed in the direction of the Benefit’s Agency and Employment Service, either with the aim of receiving benefits or in order to find work. The DEAs at the Employment Service provided an employment and retention service but, due to the diversity of disabilities they encountered, often did not have the time or the specific knowledge to deal with particular conditions or injuries. Apart from DEAs there were few employment services specifically aimed at the group of clients requiring rehabilitation.
Traditionally the employment needs and the medical needs had generally been separated and few substantial organisational links were made between them.

**Key features to emerge**

The following aspects emerged as important for schemes working with rehabilitation and job retention, some of which highlight points made earlier in Chapter 4 (4.4.4).

- Early intervention. This was seen as important for this group as it provided a better basis for successful reintegration into the work place. Once a client had been diagnosed with a serious condition they might stop thinking about the possibilities of work and could quickly adjust to a life on benefits. In relation to job retention, engaging employers early on in the process and offering advice and support meant that the relationship between employee and employer had not yet broken down, and investment in the employee’s recovery paved the way for a successful reintegration. Conversely, there was good evidence that any delay in addressing these issues could lead to frustration, loss of self esteem, anxiety, and depression. It was recognised, however, that there could be a danger of starting too soon and giving the client unrealistic expectations, although with careful assessment this could be prevented.

Early intervention was, however, hampered by the eligibility requirements of the NDDP contracts, which did not allow clients to receive help before the eight week period of Statutory Sick Pay had ended. Although some flexibility was allowed (schemes were allowed to recruit 10 per cent of clients who did not conform to the eight week rule), eligibility criteria remained a difficulty for some retention clients.

- Assessment. Assessments were required at different levels, in order to understand the holistic needs of the client and their living and working environment. For clients who were undergoing rehabilitation the following two sets of assessment were crucial:
  - Assessment of the client’s physical and psychological situation including medical and occupational health assessments: i.e. the medical and physical factors affecting employability.
  - Assessment of social, emotional, economic and legal situation: i.e. factors influencing client’s personal as well as their working lives.

In most of the schemes that were addressing the needs of this group, the aim of assessment was to build an overall picture and to devise a programme that met individual needs. However, because there were typically a number of different people and agencies involved in making a comprehensive assessment, not all schemes had access to all the specialist knowledge required to make a full assessment of this kind. Although the schemes may not have been in a position to assess the client on medical terms, their staff did benefit from working alongside health professionals.
Review of progress. Since rehabilitation might take up to two to three years in some cases it was important to recognise that any initial assessment might become obsolete as the client improved his/her condition. The process of recovery therefore required ongoing support and assessment.

Taking a holistic approach. Physical rehabilitation was only part of the return to employment, and clients’ mental and social concerns needed to be included in both assessment and their preparation for work. Family and carers were important sources of support but they could also construct barriers through over-protectiveness or because of benefit/family income concerns. By including the family, through the assessment interviews, rehabilitation, and by offering them support groups they were better able to encourage the client through rehabilitation and back into work.

Ability to provide/refer to specialist provision. Schemes sought to provide clients with a comprehensive service. This generally consisted of a mix of the following:
- Medical services which provided for the medical and physical (including work site and job task analysis) requirements of the client which might include consultants, physiotherapists, pain nurses, occupational therapists, psychologists etc.
- Emotional adjustment services which confronted any frustration, anger, loss of confidence, anxiety and depression, or post traumatic stress which might include psychotherapy or counselling.
- Vocational services which looked at the retraining of skills, procedural learning, compensatory strategies in order to work effectively.
- Employment and welfare services which offered retention, work preparation and job search, benefits knowledge and employment law.

Co-ordinating services. In order to provide clients with a tailor-made package schemes needed to take a strong co-ordinating role. Although all the schemes claimed to provide continuity of service throughout, this was difficult to achieve due to the range and variety of agencies and professionals involved. Close co-operation between different organisations working with the client could help prevent multiple assessments being done but communication difficulties between services were cited as major barriers to a successful reintegration of people with rehabilitation needs into the workplace.

Working with employers and the return to work. Employers were not always aware of employment law and their responsibilities in relation to health and disability issues. Employers tended to be reluctant to ask questions about their employees’ special needs; they needed support in understanding both general and specific needs.
Gradual return to work. The possibility of organising a gradual return to work was important for this particular client group as a return too early could have a detrimental affect on the client's health. However employer pay systems and benefits could cause problems. To facilitate a gradual return the employer had to understand the individual's rehabilitation process fully. The client needed to build up the number of hours worked gradually, gaining confidence, and being given time in some cases to relearn skills, and time to adapt to the working environment. If a client took on too much then hours could be reduced until they felt ready to take on more. Some clients preferred to work part time or job share. The loss in wages could be compensated for (to some extent) by the Disabled Person’s Tax Credit.

The length of time spent with a client. Many of these clients had complex needs as their entire life had been severely disrupted, and needed to be able to recover physically, mentally and socially. They also had financial and legal issues to work through. Clients could therefore require a high degree of support and specialist advice and services. To be able to do this well clients and schemes needed time, and employment workers needed smaller caseloads to handle the complex relationships both with the client and with the employer. This led to lower achievement in terms of targets. However if handled well the return to work was likely to be sustained in the long term.

Overall, there was recognition that schemes and their staff did require specialist knowledge and experience of the issues facing these groups and the whole rehabilitation process. The complexity of rehabilitation suggest that a co-ordination and partnership approach to employment was required which could fulfil all of the client's needs.

During our analysis of the schemes, it was clear that many were working with people with dual or multiple disabilities. The previous sections contain a number of references to clients facing multiple or complex disabilities.

Although our main analysis did not provide a very clear or comprehensive picture there were a sufficient number of comments from staff and anecdotes about clients' experience to suggest that there might be a number of significant issues here about how to respond to the needs of people with multiple disabilities.

To explore this further:

• we identified several schemes which had worked with a number of people with multiple disabilities and looked at the data we had on these;
• we also looked at the twelve schemes which had an inclusive policy of accepting people from all groupings; and
• we contacted four inclusive schemes (two from each tranche) to discuss their experience in more detail.
From these discussions, a number of points emerged which, although based on a relatively small and unsystematic data base, draw on the commentaries of people with highly relevant experience and ideas.

**Characteristics of the group**

From the information gathered we drew up some ideas about the kind of issues which clients were facing and clustered impairments into four broad categories:

- Conceptual and intellectual: to include people with learning disabilities, particular forms of brain injury.
- Physical: to include musculo-skeletal, heart and respiratory, motor neurone and neurological conditions; chronic illnesses; degenerative diseases.
- Psycho-social: to include chronic and acute mental illnesses; anxiety; depression; personality and affective disorders; social problems and anti-social behaviour.
- Perceptual and communication: to include sensory impairments.

The indications were that the impairments of people with dual or multiple disabilities usually came into more than one of these categories. We recognised that some of these conditions were secondary: for example they might be engendered by the individual failing to cope positively with a prior disability, or be the side-effects of treatments received for the primary disability. But the implications for helping people into employment would be much the same.

**Indications of the incidence of multiple disability**

There were clear indications that the incidence of dual or multiple disability was common across the schemes. A major difference between them was that some, as we noted earlier, were more-or-less selective in their recruitment of clients while others had an open or inclusive policy of wanting to work with any disabled person.

The four open recruitment schemes which we contacted, reported that a significant number of people had dual or multiple disabilities. These were not always revealed or noted at the start but, as clients progressed in the programme, other disabilities became recognised. One, for example, quoted that of 130 people registered with the scheme (NDDP and the short-term extension period) 65 per cent had dual or multiple disabilities; another reported ‘a significant percentage’.

The indications were that the most common connection was that between some form of acquired injury or illness and mental health problems. Our respondents were able to say with some confidence that, for example, clients who suffered traumatic injury or who faced severe or long term impairments were quite likely to suffer from depression and/or anxiety.
In more severe cases, poor understanding, inadequate or delayed support could lead to the individual trying to express themselves in aggressive, violent or other anti-social ways. The longer the individual went on without the right kind of recognition or help, the more likely it was that they would come to feel hopeless and useless.

There were two underlying points here:

- That the recognition of 'less obvious' impairments was an important element in understanding the situation of and responding to the needs of all disabled people.
- That if people's needs were not recognised and they were not helped at an early point, this could lead to secondary and quite severe disabilities like mental health problems.

**Were multiple disabilities recognised?**

In discussion with Innovative Schemes there were some questions about what constitutes a 'disability'. What emerged was that, depending on how the scheme was set up, clients and staff might not recognise some conditions as disabilities in the context of the scheme. For example, someone facing a clear set of barriers associated with being a wheelchair user might not discuss their dyslexia; a client with severe depression might not consider acute bouts of arthritis of direct relevance. But these are both combinations of impairments which would have a significant influence on what the individual could take on as employment.

There were a number of reasons why some disabilities might go unrecognised in the context of employment - at least at the beginning of a programme:

- **Masking**: the presence of a major disability might 'mask' the significance of a known but somewhat lesser condition which might, all the same, be highly relevant when considering appropriate employment opportunities.
- **Denial**: an individual might shy away from considering an impairment a 'real' disability and simply not define themselves as such. The side effects of prescribed drugs might come in here.
- **Non-disclosure**: equally, a client might not wish to disclose that they had additional disabilities - there were issues about feelings of shame, fear of discrimination or social censure: this kind of 'coming out' could be problematic and only possible if the individual felt safe to do so.
- **Not recognised or defined as a disability**: service providers might not discover the presence of an additional condition. Some social problems (like drug abuse, drinking problems) might come under this heading.
What flowed from this was the notion of a series of ‘lesser’ conditions which tended not to feature among the traditional ways of referring to and grouping disabilities. In reality, these were not so much ‘lesser’ disabilities but, for a variety of reasons, somewhat less likely to be recognised or less likely to be revealed.

We listed some conditions which might come into this category:

- Dyslexia
- Asthma
- Arthritis and rheumatism
- ME and Chronic Fatigue Syndrome
- Immune deficiency
- Crohn’s Disease
- Mild learning disability
- Hearing impairment
- Visual impairment
- Memory problems
- Diabetes
- Tinnitus

This is not to suggest, in any way, that these conditions are not generally recognised or taken seriously. But in the context of employment, disabled people tend to be thought about, and services organised within, certain broad categories (with certain sub-categories): physical disabilities, learning difficulties, mental health problems and sensory impairments. These sets of assumptions may then over-define both the services provided and the individuals involved and may, as we noted above, contribute to project failures in recognising or taking account of other conditions - at least not right from the start.

**Approaches**

The comments here are based primarily on discussions with the four inclusive projects. Of these, three were continuing (following the ending of NDDP funding) on broadly the same lines as before but all described changes and developments they had made in order to meet the wide compass of needs presented by their clients more successfully. The managers commented that the requirements of the NDDP contract, (which now no longer applied), had curtailed their ability to respond to more complex disabilities. For example, the one year time frame had meant it was difficult - unethical even - to recruit people who they knew would take time to progress. Also, the benefit criteria meant that they were unable to help people at an early point and so try to prevent some of the secondary difficulties.

The kind of considerations which were referred to are included below. Although it should be stressed that not all schemes had necessarily made quite the same changes, each did broadly confirm the general issues involved.

**Referrals and recruitment**

The points made here were not only about attracting clients but also, and
as important, being able to engage and retain them. The overall message was that the more complex the disabilities and the longer someone has been out of employment the more difficult it was for them to trust and believe in a new experience like an NDDP scheme. The staff reported that most clients found the early days quite challenging; those who were most confident and motivated were able to use the staff and other supports to overcome initial concerns and get down to using the opportunities provided quite quickly. But others – especially people who had little or no experience of employment - required a slower and highly sensitive approach. People with dual or multiple disabilities, were likely to come into this latter category.

It was recognised that motivation could be a fragile thing: schemes had become aware of how easily people could become discouraged and how helpful it was if at least some staff of such projects were themselves disabled. Two managers referred - to the importance of disability awareness and sensitivity to disabled people’s experience. One commented that clients appreciated the fact that the project was ‘non-aligned’ - i.e. it was not a part of statutory agencies like the NHS, Social Services or the Employment Service – and this had been important in enabling them to ‘have a go’ at something new.

Important points for recruitment included, therefore: detailed orientation about the scheme and what would be involved; individualised contact and support through the referral and application stages; sensitive pacing; disability awareness and culture.

**Assessment**

Linked with recruitment was the question of assessing the client’s situation: all expected to undertake an initial assessment but the timing, degree of formality and standardisation varied. There were several points here:

- All thought it important that assessment included all aspects of the client’s life including their history - to build up an holistic understanding of their situation and their own views, expectations and concerns. One scheme pointed out the importance of helping the client to tell his or her own story and to feel an equal partner in the thinking and planning that went on. The more complex the disabilities the more likely it was that the client had become demoralised and would find it hard to visualise a future which included work: ideas about themselves would only change slowly.
- For some clients it was only possible to gain a realistic picture over a period of time.
- More standardised assessment procedures - social skills, vocational profiling, assessing job skills etc - were valuable but not necessarily right at the start. It was important to help people talk about themselves: it was generally thought that a shared approach in which the client took at least equal responsibility for thinking, assessing and planning was the right way forward.
A degree of trust had to be established before clients were willing and able to work with staff in a really open way. Examples were given of clients who, after four or five weeks, had revealed more information about themselves - including other, less obvious disabilities which actually worried them more than their 'main' disability. They had only felt safe enough to discuss this once they had built up some trust in the scheme and the staff. It is relevant to note that many of the staff on this scheme were themselves disabled people.

The overall message was that assessment should be an interactive process and take place over time. Overly formal and standardised tests and questionnaires could prevent the client from thinking and talking about themselves in an exploratory way and could cast them into a passive role in a process which really required them to be active and self-promoting. It was in this climate that realistic assessment was more likely to be possible and all the concerns of the client taken into account.

The finding that secondary disabilities may go unrecognised has obvious importance in the field of employment.

**The right supports**

The schemes reported that they had had to adapt their projects in various ways to accommodate people with dual or multiple disabilities. In all the projects close one-to-one support was provided by a dedicated member of staff - variously called mentor, buddy, contact worker, employment adviser - it was through them that clients received highly individualised support and it was through them that the project could be flexible and provide continuous review and appraisal of progress.

In particular, preliminary orientation was important to ensure that people were taken forward slowly; people could drop out in the early days because they found projects too challenging. The fact that many staff were themselves disabled and that disabled people in work came to give talks all helped to build a confident culture for each group of clients.

**Work orientation and finding work**

Work tasters and, work experience were cited as highly useful for people with complex and multiple disabilities. These provided a way for people to find out what they could do without the pressure of a 'real' job and with good support and opportunity to discuss what was happening. They also allowed the clients to gain confidence and begin to build up a CV.

Projects stressed the importance of ongoing appraisal or review. A regular time to discuss progress with their mentor or buddy was a way of ensuring that a sense of progression was maintained however slow the client's movement. Maintaining clients' motivation through the programme through encouragement and reassurance was an aspect underlying the formal training and other activities.
An interesting point here was projects, and their clients, often ‘got it wrong’ in terms of what they thought would be of most concern to employers. One example was of a woman with a learning disability who thought this would be her main problem in getting work: in the event it was her hearing impairment which most worried the employer.

**Key features to emerge**

Key features for scheme employment projects providing services for either a wide range of disabilities and/or meeting the needs of people with multiple disabilities included the following:

- **Recognising multiple disabilities.** One of the most crucial aspects to emerge was that schemes began to think about the possibility of people having more than one disability. The challenge was that of providing an accepting environment which enabled people to talk about themselves and to explore their employment options in a realistic way.

- **Responding to a wide range of needs.** There were issues for inclusive schemes about trying to take on too much initially both in numbers of clients and range of disabilities. As one manager reported, ‘Giving everyone a chance was a bit unrealistic – but we’ve learnt a lot about how to meet a range of needs’. The commitment to provide a service for all did mean that schemes had to extend their contacts with other agencies, acquire more resources or equipment and add elements to staff training (see below).

- **The capacity for flexibility.** A key implication was about having the capacity to be flexible – in terms of the overall programme, in timings, in pacing, in the content of training and courses, in the styles of delivery etc. while also maintaining the integrity of the programme. Mostly this was ensured by having clear programme aims and ideas and staffing arrangements which allowed close one-to-one support. One scheme, for example, had recruited an additional ‘buddy’ and had a ratio of about one staff to five clients.

- **Time frames and pacing.** One of the main issues for providing services across a range of disabilities was that people moved at different rates, they might need to work in phases or repeat aspects of work preparation etc. The logistical problems of providing any type of service on this basis are self evident but the schemes emphasised that this aspect of supporting their clients was crucial: although there were issues for staffing, the success of it could only be based on understanding and working in close collaboration with the individual. Again the point was made that there had to be trust between staff in the project and between staff and clients if the right balance between a challenging and an overwhelming experience was to be achieved.
Similarly, it was pointed out that projects had begun to work out the kind of time it took to help someone into employment, depending on their disabilities and general situation.

'We know the length of the journey now - when we started we probably misled ourselves - as well as the clients.' (Manager)

The answer was that it took longer than expected (although individuals varied greatly) but a project could predict within broad limits how long was required to progress through to employment or a higher level of participation in the labour market.

- The significance of psychological aspects. A constant theme coming through from specialised and open schemes alike was the importance of the client's social, emotional and psychological reactions to their disability. Recognising underlying issues about, for example, depression, feelings of uselessness, anxiety, anger was a first step to assisting clients. As one manager commented:

  'Our clients come to see that one of the main barriers which they face is their own way of looking at things - it's self oppression.' (Manager)

- Staff expertise, knowledge and skills. Schemes reported that they had to extend their training in various ways so that staff were equipped to recognise and work with a range of disabilities - clients sometimes had multiple needs, including learning difficulties. For example, one project sent all the mentors on a child psychology course at the local college because it was realised that the staff did not fully understand the implications of the low mental age of many of their clients. As the manager explained:

  'We've realised that we need to understand our clients at a deeper level - their behaviour and the way they express their feelings can be quite child like' (Manager).

Another scheme had set up day seminars on a range of disabilities in conjunction with other community based workers - on, for example, Asperger's Syndrome, different forms of learning disability - in order that staff could recognise and deal sensitively with a range of disabilities.

- Time costs. Providing staff training and support was reported to take up a great deal of time - much more than was anticipated. This was emphasised by the four projects contracted as a central consideration in setting up and running a project for people with complex needs: the more complex the disabilities the greater the amount of staff time and staff training required, all adding up to a major cost.

- Specialisation. Schemes had had to make decisions about how to focus their work. And where to draw the boundary between their work and that of mainstream services. In one sense, the schemes taking all disability groups were trying not to specialise but equally there was evidence that they were dealing with many highly complex clients for whom the mainstream services had not been able to provide appropriate support into employment. Their specialisation was, arguably, people
who were likely to be most hard to place into employment – the lower sections of the employment ‘Iceberg’. For example, two managers thought that their kind of projects should, in time, deal only with the most severely disabled and that mainstream agencies could become far more inclusive than they were currently.

- **Links with employers.** Links with employers were seen as important but again, these were mostly conducted on a one-to-one basis in relation to an individual client and their placement into work. Here, the key aspect was to ensure that both the client and the employer had as full a picture as possible of the client’s skills and needs. The more complex the disability(ies) the less likely it was that clients could compete in the open labour market. Although schemes favoured preparing clients to be fairly self sufficient in job seeking, it was acknowledged that careful preparation of employers was needed for many and that there was a role for scheme staff in this.

- **Understanding relationships and group dynamics.** A rather different set of issues arose from the fact that clients with complex, long standing or multiple disabilities tend to spend longer associated with employment projects. An unexpected consequence for one project, for example, was that staff were having to deal with a range of behavioural and inter-personal issues. As clients became established so relationships were formed with positive (people supporting each other) and problematic results (antagonisms and rivalries). One manager reported: ‘We’ve had two weddings and an engagement - but we’ve also had some sparks!’

Overall, most of the issues involved in supporting people with dual, multiple or complex disabilities into work stem from the unique combination of skills, needs and capabilities which each client brings. There are no blueprints, no easy assumptions that could be made: each person has to be responded to and planned with as an individual.

The managers we spoke to confirmed that there were issues to be explored further about people with multiple disabilities and that there are a number of implications for running projects. As one commented:

‘The more I think about it - the more I see there’s a lot to this. My first reaction was that we did have some people with mental health alongside other problems. But now I realise we have, for example three people with hearing impairment as well as another disability - and there are others.’

(Manager)

This chapter has sought to draw lessons from the Innovative Schemes with a particular focus on client needs. It did so by looking at how schemes recognised and addressed different levels of work-readiness, what was important from clients’ perspectives, and how schemes responded to the needs of specific groups of clients. Particular issues were highlighted in each section and some of the implications for setting up and running employment schemes were identified.
But looking across the sections, we recognise that there were a number of common themes and issues running through the analysis and these we now summarise. The importance of these is that, although they were identified in relation to more-or-less specific areas of need, the significant similarities and overlaps strongly suggest that work with disabled people does have certain generic features. What follows are points which were identified or were strongly implied in all sections above.

**Overall approaches**

**Disability awareness**

The issue of disability awareness and the extent to which schemes were able to understand the experience, the interests and the concerns of their clients as disabled people emerged as important. Clients recognised and valued that some schemes ‘felt different’ from other services they had encountered: staff referred to the importance of ‘empowering’ clients.

**Clients as partners**

An underlying theme was that of working with clients: encouraging clients to be active participants in the assessment of their situation and planning their programme of preparation (etc) for work. Schemes were, in a sense, thinking about clients as partners.

**Attitudes to work**

Schemes referred to the significant barriers to employment arising from long established assumptions made about the employment potential of disabled people - or lack of it - by clients themselves, by their families and carers, by schools or colleges, by employers, by mainstream agencies. The challenge to the schemes, and a key element of their work, was to change these attitudes. And one of the biggest was to help clients overcome their lack of confidence - in themselves, in the possibility of working, in employers and in employment services generally.

**Flexibility**

The point was made several times that disabled people generally and specific categories of impairment are homogeneous groups. A key aspect of providing services was that the issues they face are usually unique: the particular constellation of physical, social, emotional and practical issues presented are complex and also liable to change. There could be no ‘blueprint’ for service provision and so schemes across the board - specialised as well as those with open recruitment - were learning how to respond to a variety of people and situations.

**Mainstream and specialised provision**

Many schemes were working out how far they could work with, complement and co-ordinate the various services provided by mainstream
agencies in order to a) ensure a 'seamless' service for clients and b) understand more about where the boundary between mainstream and specialised provision should lie.

The fragility of the pathway

Overall, an underlying message was that the 'pathway' for individual clients could easily be disrupted. Even apparently trivial events could break links, lead to misunderstandings or erode motivation and confidence. The points noted earlier about one-to-one support and ongoing review of progress, highlight the importance of this point.

Practical aspects

Assessment

This fundamental task emerged as crucial, not only in obtaining good information but also in beginning to engage and motivate the client in the challenge of seeking work. It was seen as a process which needed to include an understanding of many aspects of the client's experience - not only those most closely related to employment. It might take some time to build the kind of trust required to do this. And it might involve quite detailed collaboration with other services - like medical and social care services.

Communication issues

Some clients required more specific help than others in communicating their ideas and wishes (for example, people with learning difficulties could find written materials a problem) but there was recognition that clients generally needed to gain confidence in self presentation.

Staff resources

Not surprisingly the more complex the client's needs, the less work experience they had or the longer since they had been in work, the greater the staff resource required in terms of more time spent in individualised support (for clients and employers), or over a longer period of time, or more specialised knowledge and experience, or all of these.

Support for staff

Similarly, the more demanding the level of involvement, the more training and support staff themselves required to ensure their continued commitment and quality of service.

Access to specialised services

However well staffed, well resourced and with good partnership links, most schemes did require access to specialist services of some sort at some point. These were part of being flexible and able to respond to individual and changing client needs. Part of a scheme's work was, then, about
accessing resources or new sources of support. The general point from this was how schemes balanced their direct work with clients with development, networking and co-ordination activities.

Working with employers

A strong theme was that of working with employers not only to negotiate and support job placements for clients but, more particularly, helping to raise their awareness of both general and specific issues about the employment of disabled people and to provide general and more individualised support.

Time frames and pacing

Again, the more complex or specialised the needs of clients, the slower the progress to employment would be and it might involve highly individual pacing and adaptation of courses or other work preparation activities.

Benefit system

There were many references to the effects of the benefit system on the willingness of disabled people to consider work across the board: generally the issues were the fear of losing benefit or entitlement through working and/or not being able to earn sufficient to match benefit levels. But there were specific issues about not being able to intervene at an early point to enhance the likelihood of job retention.

Overall, the main message to come through was that most Schemes needed to address clients’ needs at a very individual level. To do so they required a level of expertise and specialisation within their own staff team, they often needed to access additional services and, in all this, retain a fairly high degree of flexibility.
A central question to the evaluation was ‘What works?’ in terms of supporting disabled people into employment. There were a number of ways in which this question could be answered - some of which have been explored in earlier chapters.

In terms of the outcomes for clients, earlier chapters have indicated that schemes viewed a number of different outcomes as very positive. Many clients with considerable levels of disability were accepted into schemes who had not worked for years. Schemes had been able to mobilise these clients to become engaged in a number of work-related activities. However, the terms of the NDDP programme required that the ultimate test of ‘success’ of schemes was placing clients in sustainable employment. (Sustainable employment being defined as work lasting for 26 weeks or more.) Monitoring data provided by the schemes gave regular information on how many of the people with whom they were working had obtained paid work (of over sixteen hours a week), and this provided an opportunity to make comparisons between the schemes.

In this chapter we explore the idea of ‘success’ from a number of different angles. Firstly, the figures from the monitoring data are examined across all schemes, in order to make some assessment of the relative ability of different schemes to move their clients into employment. This, however, revealed the complexity of the situation. Crude figures could only give broad ‘indicative’ results in terms of ‘success’ and it was unfortunately not possible within the qualitative research strategy adopted, to distinguish between clients who may have found work despite any intervention, and those who had only found work because of the Innovative Schemes. However, having drawn some broad conclusions it was possible to pick up these indications and examine schemes which had different levels of ‘success’ with different client groups, and draw some general conclusions as to which factors appeared to best predict their results. In doing this, we revisited some of the tentative hypotheses that we formulated at the time of the interim report regarding the background and experience of organisations and staff, selection of clients, the seamless service, support, and working with employers. The resource issue is also addressed.

Finally, we address the question of ‘outcome’ measures in terms of satisfaction with the scheme and alternative views of success. The views expressed are those of the different groups of stakeholders in the programme - disabled people participating in schemes, scheme managers and staff, partners and the employers who were working with schemes or who had provided placements for their clients.
Schemes initially set employment-related targets for themselves within their bids. In some cases these appear to have been selected somewhat arbitrarily and came in for considerable criticism as they were found to be increasingly unrealistic. Most experienced schemes, particularly in the second tranche, appear to have been much better at making an accurate assessment of what they would be able to achieve within the given time period. There were also suggestions that organisations felt pressures, or believed that there was pressure, to try to achieve high targets, in order to receive DSS funding.28

‘Targets (are) ridiculously high and there is no admittance that disabled people do not necessarily work at the same speed as other people. I feel strongly that organisations such as [the lead organisation] should set dearer boundaries than they dare set presently as they are colluding more than they realise by setting such high targets. This then puts them under tremendous pressure to attain these targets.’ (Partner)

Schemes gave employment targets of between 20 per cent and 85 per cent of those that they recruited moving into employment. The average (mean) target was 47 per cent in the first tranche and 63 per cent in the second tranche. Realistic and low targets were either achieved or came close, whilst unrealistic targets were essentially unachievable and became a burden.

Given the variability of the targets that schemes had agreed with the DSS, the achievement of targets did not seem to be a very good measure of success. Overall ‘crude’ percentages, in terms of number of clients recruited who had moved into employment, were also problematic, given the variety of schemes. These were operating in very different labour markets, with different levels of prior experience, and providing very different kinds of activities. Most particularly, they were working with different kinds of client groups, had different eligibility criteria, and operated with different levels of selectivity. Specialist schemes had eligibility requirements related to their specialism so accepted clients on basis of their particular impairment (mental health problems, learning difficulties etc). Although some schemes operated an ‘open recruitment’ policy, taking all comers, others appeared to be selecting according to the level of ‘job-readiness’ of those applying to join the scheme. In some schemes, the selection criteria were not specifically spelt out, and indeed had not always existed, but became apparent during conversations with managers and staff partly as the result of the realisation that selection was necessary to achieve job outcomes. In other cases, particularly in schemes that were targeted at particular employment opportunities, the criteria were more explicit (i.e. they had to have some interest, and ability, to work in IT, call centres etc).

28 It should be noted however that: targets presented in bids were negotiated on both sides prior to signing contracts; whilst schemes have been encouraged to meet targets, they have not been penalised if they do not; and that the schemes all received fixed monthly funding that is not related to job outcomes.
We decided to combine two elements together, in order to get some idea of the relative success of schemes in relation to the target group with which they were working. First selectivity and second the employment placement rate of clients that had been accepted onto the scheme (see Figures 7.1 and 7.2).

The selectivity (represented by the horizontal axis) of schemes was assessed by calculating the number of clients accepted into the scheme, as a percentage of the overall number of applicants. There are, of course, a number of cautions which need to be noted here. Schemes were not always selecting on the basis of job-readiness, and the overall percentages were affected by various factors such as the level of demand for the scheme and the number of applicants that they were able to attract, and the targeted marketing strategy. However, levels of selectivity did, in many cases, give a useful ‘proxy’ indicator of the extent to which schemes were choosing clients they felt they were most able to place into employment. In most cases, the qualitative data supported the conclusion that the more selective schemes were (i.e. the lower their percentage in terms of the proportion of numbers of applicants recruited into the scheme) the more likely they were to be operating towards the top of the employment ‘Iceberg’, discussed in Chapter six. These were generally schemes which were more focused on ‘matching’, and having to expend less of their resources on ‘mobilising’ and ‘supporting’ disabled people.

The second calculation, represented on the vertical axis in Figures 7.1 and 7.2, was the percentage of clients recruited onto the scheme that moved into employment. This was a percentage of the overall number of clients worked with, and was not related to their agreed target figures. Again, these figures need to be treated with caution. One reason why the results from tranche one and tranche two schemes have been separated is because tranche two schemes had not yet come to an end when this report was written, and had had less time to achieve employment related results. There are other factors which also need to be taken into account. A small number of schemes (Scheme Q, Scheme M, Scheme S) were focused on retention, rather than moving unemployed people into work, and although one retention equals one new job in the figures the activities are not comparable in same way. There was also a difficulty created by schemes which, faced with a slow start-up and low recruitment levels, decided to be less selective in order to meet their initial employment targets. This could produce better results in terms of scheme recruitment targets. However this could also lower success in terms of job outcomes, when job outcomes were measured against the numbers of people recruited.
In Figures 7.1 and 7.2, the relative position of each scheme is mapped on these two dimensions. The mid line represents the average, per tranche, of the percentages (percentage placed into jobs and percentage of those who applied who were accepted onto schemes) rather than the overall average. The average of the percentages cancelled out the great variations in the numbers of applicants and entrants from scheme to scheme, and was considered a fairer measure. From figures collected up to the end of July 2000 the average percentage of applicants in both tranches who
were accepted onto the scheme was 68 per cent. The average percentage of clients placed in employment by June 2000 was 39 per cent in tranche one and in 26 per cent in tranche two (discounting Scheme V which was discontinued as an Innovative Scheme). Tranche two was still running in June 2000 and would not have reached final employment targets.

Schemes ‘above the line’ were above average in terms of their ability to place clients into employment, and those ‘below the line’ fell below average. Schemes to the left of the midline were more selective in terms of candidates, and schemes on the right of the midline were less selective - more likely to have taken ‘all comers’.

There were nine schemes above the average cohort line in terms of placing people into employment. Five of these schemes were selective about the clients they worked with and four were unselective. The remaining 14 schemes were below the cohort average but were by no means all unsuccessful. Some achieved success on their own terms, and met their targets. Nearly all had implemented something new and had learnt a great deal in the process.

This mapping gives us two sets of successful schemes i.e.:

Cell A: These schemes were selective and achieved a high percentage of placements; they could be designated ‘mid range’ successful.

Cell B: These schemes were low on selectivity and achieved a high percentage of placements; arguably the most successful schemes.

The charts also give us two sets of less successful schemes i.e.:

Cell C: The lower mid range of success: those which were low on selectivity and achieved a low percentage of placements.

Cell D: Those which were selective and achieved a low percentage of placements: arguably, the least successful of schemes.

By taking examples from the Cells A and B we can demonstrate both some of the factors which accounted for the success of schemes and the generic strengths that identify them as a group. By looking more closely at schemes that appeared less successful by our criteria we can also make judgements as to the reasons why.

Three schemes from tranche 1 and two from tranche 2

All five of the schemes in this category selected clients on the basis of ‘job readiness’. Two of the schemes were focused on specific labour markets with which the project was integral. The other three schemes selected clients on the basis of who they were most likely to get into work.
the schemes demonstrated great commitment to the client group and offered a seamless pathway into employment for those accepted onto their scheme. The background and experience of the lead organisations was important, with two of the schemes existing prior to N D D P. Strong partnerships could also provide advice and support where needed.

In the following two cases we can pinpoint success as related to the pathways for clients being centred on particular job opportunities where there were skill shortages.

**Scheme B**

The scheme was led by a large national company providing opportunities within its business units and including a number of call centres. The company was highly mobilised, with the scheme being devised and promoted from the top down (Chief Exec and group HR Director). Fifty jobs had effectively been ring-fenced for disabled people, in order to recruit a more stable and mature staff base, as long as they were suitable for the jobs offered (high selectivity). The company was not only aware of its own expertise, but also of its limitations and had established good partnerships with two national organisations to provide advice and awareness training, and the regional disability service which provided many referrals and expertise - equipment etc. Scheme B demonstrated an ‘openness’ to learning both at the human resource level and at staff level. Both existing company staff and the clients were well prepared for the environment/job. For example, team leaders and managers were expected to go on disability awareness training, whilst clients underwent training – primarily around positive reinforcement and preparing for change and work. They demonstrated good working practices through flexible working opportunities and regular working practices project meetings to sort out problems.

The project also benefited from being resource rich, since N D D P funding could be concentrated on quality training for staff and participants, rather than being diverted by the need to focus some funding on mobilising employers.

**Scheme K**

This scheme was working primarily with a number of call centre employers who were looking for employees. The partnership was primarily made up of these employers who had a role in directing the scheme. The scheme was selective in that it sought clients who were appropriate for the call centre industry, then trained them in IT and call centre technology. Many of those clients then went to work within the call centres.
The next two cases also provided a seamless pathway although not to specific work opportunities. This approach required greater one to one support for the client, and in one case high levels of support in employment were offered if required. Both schemes had developed existing services rather than creating new ones which allowed a short start-up time, the use of existing personnel and resources. They also had effective partnerships and networks, and plenty of referrals to work with.

**Scheme I**

Scheme I offered a desirable service for clients: they were offering the chance of employment – real jobs for real rates of pay, and as such had a long waiting list. The organisation having previously offered a similar service for the same client group had a great deal of experience and the start-up time was short. Staff had a great deal of experience with this specialist group and those who were newly recruited had an extensive induction period. There were high numbers of staff offering an intensive one to one service for clients with a high level of support into and in work. The organisation had a reputation for success within local area, trust and support from referral agencies, and the respect of employers. They worked with clients in order for them to gain independence, and with employers to educate them about this client group and in order to advise/adjust jobs to suit clients.

**Scheme W**

A similar scheme existed prior to NDDP funding. The scheme was well embedded within the organisation and had excellent links with local partners and agencies. There were some clear routes into certain job markets where there were skill shortages. They had a large number of referrals due to good marketing and word of mouth but selected on job-ready criteria. They provided one to one support for disabled people and helped them into work. There was a designated NDDP staff NDDP team but as the scheme operated within the structure of the personnel department extra resources, advice and support were available if required.

7.3.2 High placement levels but low selectivity (Cell B)

The schemes in this cell managed a higher than average number of clients placed into work and were either non-selective or only a little selective. The fact that these schemes were working with a greater range of clients who were potentially further down the ‘Iceberg’ (i.e. were less job-ready) demonstrated what was possible in terms of supporting people who may traditionally have been considered ‘unemployable’, into work, given the appropriate help and support.
As with two of the cases in the Cell A examples, two of these schemes were focusing on specific opportunities within the local labour market, which accounted for some of their success. These schemes also offered a great deal of one to one support and sometimes training which allowed clients to follow a seamless pathway to employment.

**Scheme E**

The scheme provided a specialist recruitment service for disabled people, particularly those with learning disabilities, in an area which is otherwise geographically scattered. It effectively provided brokerage between clients and industry (training, job placements and employer awareness of disability). The scheme operated within a tight-knit local community and had good partnerships, particularly with local employers. The local employers had skills shortages particularly in routine work which they saw could be filled by the service being provided by the scheme. The scheme was led by a manager with experience of employers and disability, was well respected, and who had great energy and commitment. Hence they had had good referrals from local agencies.

**Scheme U**

This scheme was based within a similar existing scheme and therefore had a great deal of previous experience and knowledge on disability and employment and specifically on finding disabled people work. They were hosted by the local authority which meant they could effectively utilise a wealth of resources and this gave them a head start in co-ordinating agencies and being able to talk with employers. In fact they had high numbers of referrals and the trust and respect of the organisations and environment they were working within. There were high numbers of staff working within the lead organisation, who were utilised, (although only four were funded by the DSS), which meant staff could work with a client until they found employment. Support was provided to clients for as long as necessary and to employers, along with wage subsidies, as and when needed.

Scheme M was one of three schemes focusing on retention issues. It had the highest success rate in terms of getting people back to work.
Scheme M

The organisation had little experience of job retention but wanted to develop into the area having recognised a gap in services. They had previous extensive experience of working with disabled people and getting them into work and in working in partnerships with other organisations and employers. They carefully targeted employers and provided an early intervention service that included a range of work and retraining options. As a large organisation they had access to other resources including managers, and as a result were well staffed and could provide both clients and employers with a one to one service. All the staff were trained comprehensively in disability, vocational assessment and legal issues.

Taking cells A and B together we can see some common features regarding their successes in finding clients work:

- The schemes provided an integrated and seamless pathway for clients from the moment they entered the scheme until they were in work. Some continued the support further for both employees and employers if it was necessary.
- Staff were both committed and experienced. They had good relationships with referral agencies due to their backgrounds and experience and the level of trust they had built up.
- Schemes had good relations with employers – some having employers as integral to the partnership and/or the scheme.
- The employment opportunities offered to disabled clients were closely allied to labour and skills shortages in their areas, particularly in call centres and low skilled work.

7.3.3 Lower levels of job placements (Cells C & D)

The distinction between selective and non selective schemes in cells C and D (the ‘less successful’ schemes) was less clear cut than in the ‘successful’ schemes, mainly because the criteria for selectivity in these schemes did not relate so clearly to ‘job-readiness’. For example, in one scheme, clients were turned away in order to keep caseloads small enough for staff to be able to work effectively. However, the division does reflect to some extent the way schemes were marketed, the appropriateness of referrals and their ability to cope with the numbers of clients applying for the scheme.

The examples selected in this group of schemes have been chosen to demonstrate a number of different reasons why schemes could come below average in terms of the number of work placements.

Working with difficult client groups

Clients with severe mental health difficulties were arguably the most difficult client group to place in employment owing to the stigma attached
to mental health and problems associated with the instability of certain conditions (see Chapter 6). The needs of clients had to be understood, and staff had to have a good knowledge of mental health in order to explain mental health to employers and to make them aware of possible issues.

**Scheme L**

This scheme worked with clients with mental health problems who wanted to get back into work. The scheme was strongly embedded within local offices and the organisation more generally. The scheme provided support to the local projects in the form of tools, training materials and a database of employers. It was directed from the centre and staff at all levels were supervised and supported. They provided clients with help and support towards and into employment. The organisation understood the client group well and this was reflected in their planning. They had estimated placing 20 per cent of their clients into work. This was exactly what they achieved. This target into employment was considered high by partners used to working with this client group but was actually less than the majority of the Innovative Schemes.

**Long start-up times**

Schemes which had existing services based on finding disabled people employment required little or no start up time. However, schemes which were introducing a new concept, client group or way of working often had to spend time setting up the structures, recruiting staff and in some cases a project manager. Where lead organisations were also new to partnerships or had not worked closely with the relevant agencies then relationships of trust and respect needed to be established before clients were even referred into the scheme. Where employers acted as clients (especially in retention projects) a great deal of introduction and persuasion was required in order to mobilise them to be part of the scheme.

**Scheme Q**

The organisation behind Scheme Q was well respected, had a good national steering group and built up an enthusiastic local partnership. A great deal of effort was spent in liaising with local employers, raising awareness of retention issues and trying to get employers referring to their project. Start up was hence slow. However, the scheme also achieved success at a different level in that the awareness raising sparked off changes to employment practices and policies of local employers.
Working over multiple sites and the spread of resources

A number of schemes were working over multiple sites and in some cases had different partners delivering over different sites. This meant the management and co-ordination of schemes was more difficult and took a larger amount of time, and resources were sometimes spread too thinly. As a result caseloads could be overwhelming or support activities to the central client–adviser role were not carried out. In addition some of the schemes had national partnerships which did not always translate well to a local level.

**Scheme R**

The scheme had a strong national partnership but the local partnerships were not always very strong. Referrals were slow to start as traditionally profoundly deaf people have not been expected to find work after leaving school or college. Instead they have been encouraged by their families, and schools and colleges to pursue further qualifications which were hoped would ultimately lead to employment opportunities. At each site there was one staff member employed to work with the client caseload. The scheme began on four sites but moved to six in order to extend to a more national coverage which further extended resources at the co-ordination level. The spread of resources meant less support was given to individual staff to allow them to fulfil roles other than the one to one staff: client relationship. As a result there were fewer linkages made with employers.

**Scheme C**

This scheme had multiple partners delivering on multiple sites which required a good deal of co-ordination by a manager who worked part time. The delivery partners had a degree of autonomy in how they worked with clients and this factor took some of the pressure off the management. Having single advisers on sites meant less direct support although advisers did meet regularly for mutual support and to swap best practice. Some indicated that they did not have enough support from the senior managers in their lead organisations, and one of the advisers who had specialist language skills believed that the burden of providing this specialist service meant there was less time to do additional activities which could help clients find employment. Despite these difficulties the scheme managed to reach 80 per cent of its employment target.

**Scheme weaknesses - gaps in the pathways especially into employment**

The main gaps in the pathways of schemes occurred at the end of the training period when clients were faced with finding work. There were two reasons for this – either the service did not exist or the relationship
with employers or the level of support given at this stage was not enough to meet the needs of the client group.

**Scheme J**

This national scheme was part of a larger project by the organisation which provided recycled computers to disabled people. On its own terms the scheme had been very successful, it very nearly achieved its allocated job target, and the scheme was sustained after NDDP funding ended. The scheme had a large number of applicants and clients were selected on an eligibility criteria which was not job readiness. Training was being provided ‘virtually’ by colleges through the Internet with local volunteers (buddies) supporting. However the buddy system which was supposed to operate locally and provide the one to one support was not universally available. Only limited support was offered to make the transition from the training into work following the loss of a key partner early in the scheme, although this difficulty was rectified at a later stage. However, on the whole clients were expected to be self motivated. Tracking the clients who had actually got work had also been difficult to achieve.

**Multiple difficulties/ weakness**

Two of the schemes combined within themselves a number of the difficulties described above.

**Scheme O**

The scheme was offered by a college (department of sports science) with no direct background or experience in either disability or employment. Although initially the scheme was to address cardiovascular disabilities and stress through using sports therapy and holistic therapies (existing experience of) the project moved towards clients with mental health. The scheme had no committed partnership, and began with only one real staff member who was only working part time, although college staff were used from time to time. The scheme offered various educational pathways to follow but did not address the transition from education into work until perhaps too late. Many of the client group were reluctant to take up the work placements on offer for two reasons: they did not want to jeopardise their fragile health; and they were uninterested in working ‘for nothing’ or even losing out financially (fear of losing benefits or not getting back on the same benefits if things did not work out) especially if this interfered with responsibilities such as childcare.
Scheme X

The scheme was not well integrated within the lead organisation and the partnership was underdeveloped. The scheme took some time to set up as recruitment of staff was problematic. The manager was not the originator of the bid and the direction of the scheme was not well clarified with reference to meeting the needs of the client group or providing a gap in services. As the scheme was being delivered across a number of sites, staff were working very much on their own. Referrals were slow due to low numbers coming through the expected channel. The scheme intended both clients and employers to contact the scheme but there was little evidence of either effective mobilising, or matching of clients to employment opportunities.

The reasons behind schemes being less successful than others can be summarised by the following:

- Little knowledge about disability and/or employment.
- Poor links with local agencies which is not addressed in partnership.
- A lack of support from the lead organisation.
- Low numbers of staff.
- Inexperienced staff.
- The transition from scheme to employment not being well supported.

Any one of these factors could cause scheme difficulties but factors combined together led to poor performance.

7.4 Factors affecting success

Factors which affected the percentages of clients within the schemes finding employment were tentatively laid out in the interim report and are developed in this section. We also make some comments on the costs of schemes to the DSS and the resources necessary to achieve successful outcomes.

7.4.1 Confirming hypotheses in the interim report

In the interim report we put forward a series of hypotheses for what makes a successful employment scheme. These hypotheses have generally been confirmed following the analysis of both tranches of schemes, drawing on information which has already been described in earlier chapters. To recap on the main elements contributing to success within

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the short scheme timetable, these were related to:

- **The ability to set up a scheme in a short time**
  In Chapter 3 the centrality of the experience and background of the lead organisation and/or an active partnership was described. Schemes which existed prior to N D D P or schemes which were set up by organisations that had employment placing as a core service were the quickest to achieve results. This relates to having the networks in place and relationships established with agencies for referrals, having to recruit and train new staff, and having established links with employers.

- **The provision of a unique service in the area**
  Where the scheme had identified a gap in provision there were no shortages of clients ready for such a service, and no competition from possible referral agencies such as a PA pilot scheme or other employment schemes for disabled people. This made it easier, and quicker, to recruit clients.

- **Committed and experienced manager and staff**
  In Chapter 3 we report on the importance of the role of managers and staff. Their experience and skill was key to the service they could provide to the client group, particularly in terms of accessing resources and the links they made in order to get referrals and work with and support employers. Understanding the client group was also key to providing a client-centred approach to their work and being able to overcome barriers to employment. Equally important was having an understanding of employers and working with them as clients.

- **Comprehensive pathways**
  As has been noted in earlier in this chapter, schemes which provided a seamless service from entry into the scheme, through training, rehabilitation or one to one guidance and support, into employment had a greater chance of being successful. One or two schemes fell down at the transition from the scheme to employment due to a lack of resources or lack of knowledge and expertise in dealing with employers.

- **Degree of individualised support and follow through for participants**
  This issue, highlighted in Chapter 6, was central in terms of the numbers of staff employed for the scheme and the back up resources available if required. The ability to provide clients with a greater degree of individual support (i.e. smaller caseload) and follow through to employment was important. Schemes which were delivering on multiple sites often spread their resources too thin. Those schemes in which the N D D P team was part of a larger team focusing on the same type of outcomes found the extra support from a greater number of staff invaluable.
• Schemes integrated within the larger organisation/partnership

Where the scheme was well integrated into the lead organisation and/or the partnership and had the support of senior managers, it was more likely to succeed since scheme managers could call on advice and support and personnel from other parts of the organisation or partnership.

• Selectivity of clients

Those who selected on the basis of job readiness were generally more likely to achieve employment outcomes, although there were striking exceptions to this.

• Focus on particular labour market opportunities

The schemes which offered job opportunities for the client group as part of the scheme or which focused on specific labour market shortages or skills gaps were the most successful in terms of placing clients in jobs.

• Links with employers

Schemes which had good existing links with employers or who employed staff with specific competencies in working with employers (for example personnel qualifications or Employment Service experience) were better placed at finding opportunities for clients.

7.4.2 The cost of schemes

Calculating the overall costs of a scheme of this kind, whether successful or unsuccessful, was far from easy.30 The funding received by the schemes from the New Deal for Disabled People varied between £18,000 and £300,000, with an average contract of just over £200,000. From the financial information available from the Department of Social Security price summary tables, and using the expected number of participants and numbers into work we made rudimentary calculations of expected costs for the Government.31 These calculations were made by dividing the overall costs by the number of people that the schemes hoped to recruit, and by the numbers that they expected to place in employment. At the beginning, the majority of schemes estimated the costs would be between £2000 and £3000 per participant successfully placed into work, or between £320 and £2400 per participant recruited. This worked out as an average of £2,800 for every client they expected to get into work, whilst for every expected participant the amount was closer to £1,300.

In many cases the initial calculations provided by schemes relating to outcome funding were based on estimates of target numbers into jobs. Since schemes often found it difficult to accurately judge targets, these estimates might ultimately prove to be unreliable. Certainly, anecdotal

30 Internal analysis is being carried out by the Department of Social Security on the actual cost per job for the Innovative Scheme pilots to the Government.

31 Scheme costs that are being financed by the Government. Schemes may have received additional funding from other, non-governmental sources, which may also have been used to cover costs. It has not been possible to carry out analysis of other sources of funding or total scheme costs since such financial information is held confidentially by schemes.
evidence from the schemes suggests that actual costs were often higher than estimated, as confirmed by the comment made by the partner of one of the schemes:

‘There was a concern about the costs - as a provider we were offered £1,200 per person. But we know that it costs £2,500 - £5,000 for a year’s work usually.’ (Partner)

There was little evidence that cost to the Government, on its own, was a factor which determined success. There were large variations in the costs of both the successful and the unsuccessful schemes, whether calculated as overall costs, or as a ‘cost per participant’. One of the reasons for this could have been the amount that the schemes were able to bring to the activities for themselves in addition to the contract, whether as resources - premises, seconded staff and back up administrative support, or as additional grants. Certainly many of those who spent less per participant than they intended had institutional resources to rely upon (Scheme U, Scheme W). Whereas those who did not have additional resources and who over-recruited in an attempt to reach their targets had a resources over-stretch as the costs of the scheme had to be distributed across a wider number of clients (Scheme J, Scheme D). Under-recruitment (due to targeted marketing) in some cases (Scheme I, Scheme K) allowed more resources to be spent trying to get these clients into work and this appeared a successful strategy.

7.5 Stakeholder assessments of the success of schemes

The discussion above is based largely on an ‘objective’ measure of success derived from the analysis of monitoring statistics, supported by the qualitative data collected from schemes. However, those involved in the schemes, whether as providers or recipients, had their own views on success and failure, relating to their personal satisfaction with the performance of the scheme, and are not necessarily related to the outcome measurements. These views are summarised below.

7.5.1 Client perspectives and comments

Eighty-nine clients were interviewed during the audit visits to schemes. These interviews highlighted the factors that clients saw as being particularly important about their experience and this was covered in detail in Chapter 6. Clients’ views were generally positive and reflected their desire to find employment or to gain greater skills or work experience. Clients generally needed an individual approach to offer help and information about seeking work, to provide an opportunity to explore work as a possibility, to build up confidence, and to find work experience or employment which suited their particular skills and abilities.

Innovative Schemes offered a service which clients saw as essentially different to experiences elsewhere. Clients appreciated schemes because of their understanding of disability/particular disability, the level of support and training they offered and the fundamental belief that as clients they had something to offer. The scheme knowledge of employers and employability also gave clients the confidence that they were being
prepared for real work opportunities. Although not all the clients interviewed had found work the majority were optimistic and were pleased with the confidence they had gained through being on the scheme. Clients who were still unclear about whether they could work without it adversely affecting their health felt that they had at least been given the choice of employment.

7.5.2 Managers and staff

Thirty-five managers and 48 members of staff were interviewed during audit visits. Their intimate involvement in schemes put them in a good position to assess the strengths and the weakness of the service that they were able to provide. Given their, general, high level of commitment to their scheme, most of these were positive about what they had been able to achieve within a limited time frame. The difficulties inherent in this area of work were also apparent to them, and several of those interviewed made it clear that the going had often been hard.

Schemes assessed their success on different levels:

- The meeting of targets and getting clients into sustained employment.
- Making a difference to clients lives, in terms of greater independence, or movements along a pathway to possible employment.
- The provision of a seamless service to clients.
- Capacity building of the lead organisation – the extension of services, the ability to help their disabled client group.
- Raising of the profile of the organisation in terms of employment projects.
- The partnerships and networks created.
- Changing attitudes, in particular of employers but also of disabled people.

Inevitably, there was some disappointment, and even disillusionment, from those who were involved in schemes which they viewed as successful, which were having to close down because the funding had come to an end, and no further funding was forthcoming. Other sources of frustration related to the stress created by unrealistically high targets set in the early stages, and difficulties that had arisen during the course of the scheme, usually as a result of partners failing to deliver on promised resources, referrals or work opportunities. Few of those interviewed were overtly critical of the scheme, what it was trying to do, or the way in which it had been managed. The main criticisms expressed related to lack of leadership and co-ordination from the centre (two schemes), lack of communication between different parts of the scheme (two schemes).

7.5.3 Partners

Forty-eight partners in the schemes were interviewed. These varied in their views of the schemes in which they were involved, variations which echoed their differing expectations outlined in Chapter 3. One or two were disappointed that the scheme had not fulfilled its initial promises, and had not fulfilled their particular expectations. There was also...
frustration from one or two partners who felt that they had been 'sidelined' in the partnership, or where the overall partnership arrangements had not worked out as planned.

However, on the whole these were exceptions. The majority felt that the scheme had positively benefited their client groups, had provided them with excellent opportunities to learn about a new area of work, and to enhance their networks, and general profile.

7.5.4 Employers Twenty-three employers were interviewed. Described in great detail in Chapter 5, we note here that employers were generally satisfied with their experiences of the schemes and the services they offered particularly in terms of:

- filling skills shortages;
- providing support for clients and employers whilst in work;
- advice on disability issues particularly related to the Disability Discrimination Act (DDA), specific disabilities and services offered by other agencies; and
- providing disability awareness training.

Involvement with Innovative Schemes either as employers or as part of the partnership steering group could bring about other benefits, for example, changes to employment policies and practices and service delivery.

'We've learnt something as an organisation - now taken on a staff advisor - as an associate - to provide staff confidential support. The point was that it needed to be someone outside the company.' (Employer)

'The big issue is persuading managers that people who come into the DDA can be successfully (as in benefiting the organisation) retained/re-deployed. [The scheme] has broadened our outlook.' (Employer)

For managers with disabled staff there were often other benefits for example, improved management, communication and problem solving skills. Where employers had employed staff through the scheme there were also impacts on the wider staff group especially where they had been given disability awareness training. In the longer term if sustained this could lead to a slow process of cultural change.

7.6 Conclusions Our analysis of monitoring statistics revealed that nine of the schemes had achieved 'above average' success in supporting disabled people into employment. Of these, five were selective on job-readiness criteria, and four were not. The main reasons for their success were:

- targeted marketing in order to attract the appropriate clients for the services provided by the scheme;
- comprehensive pathways from the point of entry into the scheme into employment, which included on the most part intensive one to one staff support and guidance;
• employment opportunities being integral to the scheme i.e. there was a job to go to; and
• carefully targeting opportunities in the local labour market where there were skills gaps or labour shortages.

Schemes which appeared apparently less successful were all generally less selective in terms of job-readiness. The main reasons behind these schemes coming below the average for their respective tranches were:
• working with a 'difficult' client group;
• having long start up times due to a lack of experience in the field, having to build up a referral and employer network and having weaker partnerships;
• working over multiple sites which necessitated a spread of resources;
• weaknesses in the client pathway - primarily at the transition from scheme to work which related to poorer links with employers;
• multiple weaknesses.

There appeared to be little link between the cost of the scheme (to the Department of Social Security) and its success, with organisational and staff experience, organisational support, and actual service provision being the key factors. However certain client groups required greater staff knowledge and support to get back into employment, which had an impact on cost, as did the provision of a service over a wide geographical area.

Success was assessed not only in terms of numbers into work but also the individual effects and benefits the schemes made to disabled people's lives. This was best described by clients themselves, and scheme managers and staff, and focused on the support, understanding and opportunities offered by schemes. Lead organisations also viewed success in terms of the learning involved and the capacity building achieved. The schemes also variously managed to change attitudes of clients, employers and partners alike with some resulting in changes to employment practices.
8.1 Introduction

Given the experimental nature of the Innovative Schemes, an important element of the learning arising was in terms of the potential for replication. This was one of the criteria by which they were selected:

‘Schemes should demonstrate that a successful scheme could either be replicated in other regions of the country or could be applied equally successfully to other conditions.’ (N D D P Bidding Pack, DSS 1998)

An analysis of bid documents reported in the interim report showed that schemes were, in their initial design for their activities, optimistic about the possibility of sustaining their activities once N D D P funding had come to an end. They were also keen to show that models that they were demonstrating could be replicated; either in whole or in part, by other organisations and for other client groups. However, at the time of the interim report, there were already indications of concern from the first tranche schemes that activities were taking longer to set up than expected. Several voiced the view that a one year pilot was not long enough to demonstrate clearly the value of what they were trying to do either because of the length of time that it took to establish activities and referral networks before schemes were fully functional, or because of the length of time that it took for clients to pass through their activities.

Sustainability - continuing their activities once initial funding came to an end, and transferability - others learning from and replicating their experience, proved to be closely related issues. For example, if pilot projects have been enthusiastically embraced by the organisations setting them up and integrated into mainstream services, this gives an indication of their potential for replication. It demonstrates that the activity is seen to be useful, and supportable, by mainstream services. However, difficulties in attracting further support, by a pilot service that appears to be well received and successful, can indicate that there are cultural, economic or practical obstacles to replication. Most crucially it could indicate that the new activities did not sit easily within existing funding sources.

In practice, only the first tranche schemes had come to the end of their N D D P funding by the time that the evaluation was completed, so the experience of how well activities of this kind could be sustained in the longer term was limited. However, there was considerable learning emerging across all schemes about how far lead agencies and their partners were keen to continue the activities, and the kind of obstacles that would prevent activities of this kind being integrated into mainstream services. This chapter explores these issues and begins to draw together some lessons for the establishment and support of employment schemes for disabled people in the longer term.
8.2 The sustainability of scheme activities

8.2.1 Operating on short-term funding

The schemes funded under NDDP knew from the start that their funding was time limited. Initial contracts with the DSS/DfEE were for one year only, although it was not entirely clear, at the time that they put in their bids, as to whether this funding would be extended if the schemes were successful.

Some of the schemes appear to have been quite content to run for a year as a short-term experiment, while others were clear from the start that it would be difficult for them to demonstrate the effectiveness of their services within a one year period, and hoped to attract further funding from one source or another.

‘This proposal will pilot five programmes that will tackle root causes of why people are propelled into a life of dependency in the first place. It will effect changes that will establish a new culture. (However) Creation of a new culture will not happen in one year, nor will it be sustained should funding cease. In order to have a lasting impact, continuation funding for five years is necessary.’ (Bidding Pack)

The limitations of the one year funding became more apparent as time went by, and many schemes found that they took longer than anticipated to become fully functional. As has been noted in Chapter 3 (3.5.1) many schemes found it harder to get referrals than they had expected, and clients often took longer than anticipated to pass through the activities set up. Some schemes had barely achieved their target recruitment levels when they were having to turn people away, because they knew that there was insufficient time to see clients all the way through the planned activities.

At the other end of the life of schemes managers, staff and particularly partners expressed frustration that the scheme activities were ending as activities became fully established and referrals were flowing in. The hard work put into establishing the scheme, building up networks, with referrers and employers, was potentially leading nowhere.

8.2.2 Anticipated sources of support for the continuation of schemes

Initially, schemes were optimistic that, once they had demonstrated their worth, the activities would be continued by the organisations setting them up, and that it would be relatively easy to find ongoing funding once the initial DSS funding came to an end (see Table 8.1 for numbers of schemes anticipating different sources in their initial bids).
Table 8.1 Anticipated sources of future funding

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source of support</th>
<th>Number of schemes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Support from lead organisation or partners</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alternative statutory funding</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employer contributions</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self sustaining from commercial activities</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Insurers/pension fund managers</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participant contributions</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marketing their ‘model’ of service</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Outcome funding</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of schemes*</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Several schemes mentioned more than one anticipated future source of funding.

The most frequent expectation, at the time that they made their bids, was that activities would be continued either by the lead organisation and one or more of their partners (eight schemes) or that further funding would be found from one source or another (seven schemes). Some hoped that they would be able to demonstrate the value of their activities such that statutory agencies would be prepared to switch funding from other mainstream services (health, social services) to support their activities.

‘It is expected that partners will become so involved in the project that they are likely to increase the investment they are prepared to make at this stage’. (Application form)

Other anticipated sources of funding included European funding, Lottery funding, money from the local Single Regeneration Budget (SRB), or the local Training and Enterprise Council (TEC). There was an expectation that schemes might have to be reworked to fit existing budgets, and sometimes anxiety that it might be difficult to raise the ‘matched funding’ required by some funding sources (European Social Fund (ESF) and Lottery funding).

‘It may be possible, once we have run the programme and reviewed its efficacy, to convert the programme into a specialist pre-vocational training programme funded by mainstream Training and Enterprise Council monies.’ (Application form)

Some clearly hoped that the DSS, following the success of their activities, might come up with a new programme of funding.

A few schemes hoped that they would be able to make their activities self sufficient, or self financing by the end of the pilot period, by demonstrating their value to local agencies and in several cases, local employers, such that these would be prepared to fund their activities.

‘If funding should cease, the scheme would be re-worked to suit the corporate market.’ (Application form)
‘It is envisaged that the demonstration project will be the flagship that employers will wish to see continue, in order that they can offer opportunities to further disabled people, and an increasing number of new employers will wish to become involved as word is spread.’ (Application form)

A few schemes had set out to undertake cost benefit analyses to this effect. Two schemes (job retention projects) hoped that insurers and pension funds could be persuaded to fund their activities, and another hoped that clients who had been successfully helped by the scheme would contribute a percentage of their future income to help others in a similar position.

8.2.3 Sustainability - the reality

The experience of the first tranche schemes, and the emerging experience of the second tranche schemes, suggests that some of this initial optimism was misplaced. Although many of the schemes had an extension to their initial DSS contracts (often an extension in time, to take account of slow start up, rather than an extension in funding), the opportunity to continue activities, once funding came to an end, proved to be quite limited. Most of the first tranche schemes were reasonably successful in demonstrating that they were providing a valuable service for their clients, and, as was indicated in the last chapter, reasonably successful in placing a proportion of these into paid employment, even if they had not achieved their initial targets. However, finding further funding remained a continuing problem.

Two of the first tranche schemes had been successful in finding new sources of funding. In one case this was ESF funding, in the other, a mixture of funds from statutory and charitable sources, with a Lottery grant being sought to make up the final 30 per cent which had not yet been covered. All the sources mentioned were, once again, short-term, but the managers were reasonably optimistic that the activities would be continued into the foreseeable future.

Table 8.2 First tranche schemes: Outcome after funding came to end

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Outcome after funding came to an end</th>
<th>Number of schemes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Continued (mainstreamed) by lead organisation or partners</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Much reduced service continued by lead organisations or partners</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Found alternative funding (ESF, Lotteries)</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Closed but has continuing influence on lead/partners</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total number of schemes in tranche one</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Six of the first tranche schemes had become absorbed, either as a whole, or in part, by their lead organisation, or by one of the partners. In all cases, the organisations that absorbed them were relatively large and already had an employment focus. Four were statutory organisations (two colleges of further education, two TECs); the remaining two were a large national charity, and a private rehabilitation company.
However, in only one case the activities carried on more or less intact. In this case, it was actually expanded: it was seen as prestigious to the organisation and additional resources were made available from a special fund. In most cases the lead organisations were still seeking further sources of funding to continue the activities. Two were being continued in a more or less skeletal form, awaiting hoped-for further funding. The activities of one scheme had been incorporated into two other similar projects in the lead organisation.

One scheme, run by a large charity, had failed to find any further funding, in spite of looking for this. At the end of NDDP funding, the scheme was closed down, and staff relocated by partner agencies or made redundant. Some of the activities had been absorbed into the partner organisations, which continued to support some of the clients, but at a much reduced level of input. This had caused some concern to staff and partners:

‘But now there is bewilderment that the project is coming to an end; there is nowhere to send people any more. They are trying to put people back where they were before, but they are often unwilling to go, because these were routes that didn’t work before. They have had an exit strategy for several months: they didn’t take on anyone who they felt could not be made job ready in the amount of time left.’ (Staff member)

The remaining scheme which had also been closed down, had only ever been designed to deliver a certain number of people into jobs for the lead organisation. Once this was achieved, there was no further need for the project, although the model was now being replicated in other locations by the lead organisation.

Second tranche schemes had not come to the end of their funding when the evaluation came to an end. In most cases NDDP budgets had been continued for three months, and some schemes were clearly hopeful that funding would be available in the future under a roll out of NDDP. However, overall their experience appears to be broadly similar to those of the first tranche schemes. Several had begun to seek out alternative sources of funding and two had been successful in attracting ESF funding.

Two of the schemes were expecting to be absorbed into the mainstream of their lead organisations - in both cases large charitable organisations with an active interest in employment issues for their clients.

The remainder were either actively seeking, or anticipated having to seek, further funding from one source or another, although in some cases they doubted the chances of finding core funding unless new funding sources became available. This led to considerable uncertainty over the future for their activities:

‘I don’t know. It will depend on how well partnership works, and how existing partnership activities can help to sustain the project.’ (Manager)
The most frustrating part of the wind down of the schemes towards the end of their funding, was the loss of experienced staff, the systems established and the networks that had been carefully fostered. In particular, there was concern that, should further funding sources come available, there would be no one left in post with the experience to apply for this.

‘It would be tragic if there was no one here to put in the bids, it would be such a shame to lose the team, the expertise built up.’ (Manager)

Even if the lead organisations were successful in getting funding for a similar scheme in the future, work would still have to be put in place to build up an experienced staff team again. There could be the additional problem of referral agencies and employers, having been unable to use the scheme for a while, looking elsewhere.

8.2.4 Funding issues

As is apparent from the above analysis, funding for many schemes was seen to be the key to future sustainability.

The most common source of funding which three of the schemes had been successful in winning, was ESF funding - under employment-related initiatives. However, these schemes reported that they had had to adapt their schemes to meet this funding criteria, by extending the client base beyond disabled people, to other disadvantaged groups. Another scheme reported having looked towards the European Community as a potential source of funding, but had dismissed it as leading to a distraction from the main aims of the scheme.

‘We considered EU funding but thought that it would distract from the main focus, by moving sideways into setting up international partnerships.’ (Manager)

None of the first tranche schemes that had the idea that their activities could become self funding, (through selling services to employers or through other commercial activities), found that this was not possible in practice. Either they found the market for their activities was just not there (employers might have appreciated their service, but were not prepared to pay for it) or did not generate sufficient revenue to support the level of activity required.

‘For the scheme, it was much more important to get people into work, than to get the £ 1,000 that they were asking from employers to broker the arrangement. We did try to get money out of employers, but it was a waste of time, and it put some employers off. The scheme had anticipated receiving around £ 30,000 from this source in the 1998-99 budget, but actually only brought in £ 3,000. So we had to make good this shortfall in the budget by doing consultancy. However, even this didn’t really fill the gap.’ (Manager)
One second tranche scheme did remain hopeful, however, that insurance companies would be persuaded to pay for retention activities, and had succeeded in securing some funding from this source.

Because the schemes were about employment, there appears to have been a view amongst some of the potential funding agencies that this was an Employment Service responsibility:

‘Difficult to explain to potential new funders, who take the view that the ES should pick it up, that the work should be mainstreamed.’ (Manager)

One scheme found that potential funders took the fact that the DSS had not continued their funding, (although N D D P itself had still not come to an end) as an indication that there was something wrong with the scheme:

‘One of the difficulties is that the government hasn’t said it doesn’t want to fund New Deal any more – they are funding second tranche schemes, so this counts against us when applying for local funding – why are they not funding us to carry on? Which is seen as an implied criticism of the scheme. They are not operating under the same policy boundaries as the DSS.’ (Manager)

Where lead agencies and their partners were continuing to run the activities, it appeared to be a matter of finding money from one source or another, and piecing these together. This could take some creativity and require a good knowledge of the different kinds of funding available, and the conditions attached to these.

‘Under New Deal, the work element was funded, the scheme has now had to get this part funded, through the Local Education Authorities: they talked to the Minister and helped to sort this out, found out that their clients were entitled to funding.’ (Manager)

Existing mainstream funding had not proved easy to bend to this new kind of activity, which seemed to straddle existing departmental responsibilities uncomfortably. Even when mainstream services had employment in their brief, this did not necessarily imply that funding for schemes of this kind was possible from their budgets.

‘I am learning how ineffective community care plans are. If I look at all the community care plans for (this area), they all mention employment but not one single person will get a job out of them because they do not put any resources into it.’ (Manager)

Alternatively, the funding proved difficult to extend to the group of people who took longer to work with, or who had support needs which required additional activities. Two of the colleges that had set up schemes found it difficult to continue to support the activities out of mainstream educational funding.

‘It is possible that we could get Further Education Funding Council (F E F C)
money for the students, but we do have to focus on where the funding lies at any particular time and may lose some of the flexibility of the course as it currently stands. The problematic areas are usually the focus on an individual and his/her needs as this always incurs extra expense, and we don’t get funding for the softer stuff even though it is well worth it for these particular groups. Having said that, the FEFC is looking at different ways of funding over and above the goals and the supply of specific support. The FEFC is beginning to recognise the need to support claims for social needs rather than purely learning needs. The FEFC also need time to change their funding methodology, but this will be eighteen months or years away.’ (Manager)

### 8.3 Replication and transfer

As pilot schemes, a key idea behind the Innovative Schemes was that they would be demonstrating new approaches to support for disabled people, which would be taken up, if successful, by others. Schemes were asked to provide information in their initial bids about how their activities might be transferable to other areas in the future, and most were optimistic that the models that they wished to demonstrate, would be transferable to other areas and to other client groups. When interviewed towards the end of their funding, most of those involved in schemes remained keen to see their ideas replicated in other areas. This was particularly the case where they felt that clients had benefited greatly from what they had to offer.

In the interim evaluation report, we sought to unpick a number of different elements involved in transferring learning from a pilot project to other sites or other client groups. We distinguished between **What** it is that might be transferred to others, from **Where**, or to what kind of organisation, might the learning be transferred, and **How** (i.e. by what mechanism) the transfer is likely to take place.

Previous research has shown these elements can be closely inter-linked.32 For example, if learning is transferred from one organisation to another which is very similar, and operating in a similar environment, then it is more likely that the whole model can be copied intact. However, if the new location is very different, then a general principle or broad idea might be taken on board, but not the whole ‘package’. Experience from NDDP Innovative Schemes indicates similarly that the ‘where’ of transferring ideas might also be influential in terms of the ‘what’ and the ‘how’.

### 8.3.1 What is replicated: the content of transfer

Innovative Schemes were generally demonstrating two different sets of innovation. On the one hand there were the specific **activities** that they set up – a particular kind of training, provision of mentoring support, innovative ways of working with employers. However, as has been indicated in earlier chapters, the individual elements of the scheme were not always particularly innovative. More important in many cases was

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the second aspect of innovation - the way in which a set of activities had been put together, or the underlying ethos within which the activities were being operationalised. In many cases it was the partnerships that had been put together, demonstrating new ways in which organisations operating at different stages in the client’s ‘pathway’ to employment could work together, that was innovative. Or it was the very idea that a whole range of activities should be co-ordinated by one organisation ensuring a smooth transition from one stage to another.

How far the whole model, or way of working, could be shared with and replicated by others, was often unclear. Generally, when talking about replication, it was broad principles that managers talked about rather than specific activities or models. Such principles included many of those identified in early chapters as being a key to successful work in this area. They included:

- An individual and flexible approach to the work: identified as a key element by many of the managers interviewed.
- Key worker: variously described as a ‘case worker,’ ‘employment worker’ or ‘personal adviser’, identified by seven managers as a key ingredient.
- The quality of front line staff and the team work: identified by four managers.
- Specialist staff skills: identified by three managers: specifically mentioned were rehabilitation or linguistic skills.
- Focus on employment and employability: a clear focus on employment, and the employability of the client group was a feature which was also identified by several schemes:
  ‘It is important to make it very clear to clients from the outset that the primary goal of the scheme is employment, those who cannot commit to this are not accepted onto the scheme and it offers the opportunity for people to pull out of the scheme at the right time.’ (Manager)

This point was closely related to the importance of having the right culture in the organisation running the scheme, identified below:

‘In order to replicate the scheme, there needs to be the right culture - a shift from a care culture to a culture of expectation for work. There needs to be an acceptance of the notion of employment for learning disabled people. They need to work on the attitudes of employers, schools, parents and clients. It is important to maintain a business approach, avoiding the scheme acting as a social agency.’ (Manager)

Several of the managers were able to give quite specific lists of preconditions that would be required for their schemes to be replicated, usually combining a number of the features mentioned above. A particularly good example of such a list was the one enumerated by the manager of a scheme for people with learning difficulties - however, the general points could easily have been extended to other client groups:
8.3.2 Where the schemes could be replicated

In terms of where, or in what kind of organisation their activities might be replicated, managers often identified the importance of the wider organisational culture and framework within which the scheme might be delivered. Echoing the theme running through the previous chapters, several highlighted the importance of prior organisational experience, having a good organisational structure in place, possibly with other similar projects alongside which would support the scheme staff and provide the opportunity to share experience (two schemes), and the importance of good partners (two schemes).

‘We have learnt that, as different organisations, we are not separate islands. We have learned from our contacts with other voluntary organisations and employers.’ (Manager)

Closely related to this was the importance of having good networks in place (six schemes). Good links with employers and an understanding of employer needs were identified by three schemes. Close links with the employment service and DEAs, and with health and social service organisations were identified by two schemes, and with organisations for disabled people, by one. Having credibility with employers, with disabled people and with the Employment Service was seen to be crucial.

‘You can’t just beam in an organisation that knows nothing about the area - it needs to be well connected and needs to develop a high level of involvement with the health trusts and with the Employment Service.’ (Manager)

In this respect, three managers identified the importance of the scheme operating in the independent sector. One, for example, identified a difficulty in the fact that the majority of organisations for their client group being located in Social Services departments. Staff emphasised the importance of the service being separated from a Social Service environment to maintain a business approach and to avoid acting as a social support agency.

The importance of independence from the Employment Service was emphasised by the manager of another scheme, because their client group were suspicious of help from this source:
The delivery agency should have no [direct] connection to traditional government routes like DSS and the ES, but they should maintain some links. This is because clients are disillusioned with the system. An independent organisation having good links with these services is required.

(Manager)

One person stressed the importance of activities of this kind taking place in the charitable, rather than the commercial sector, because there was little chance of anyone making money out of the activities.

'The scheme is best suited to a charitable organisation, with a network of knowledgeable organisations ... it is not a big money-making venture so it is better suited to a charity.' (Manager)

One scheme, based in a College of Further Education was convinced that this was the best location, because of the educational links that this provided.

Finally, there was the view that the best kind of organisation for running one scheme was an organisation of disabled people (rather than an organisation for disabled people), because the staff involved would have a deep and empathetic understanding of the experience of their clients, and be able to provide role models:

'It would need to be an organisation of disabled people because of the ethos and assumptions on which it is based. If they were committed to disability equality and the programme was delivered by disabled people, then it might not need to be a disabled people's organisation. However, when talking with people about the barriers that they face in finding employment, one is constantly drawing on, if not one's own experience, then the experience of one's colleagues.' (Manager)

A few schemes had comments to make on the wider social and economic conditions that would be required for the scheme to be replicated. One, for example, noted that it would only work in an area in which there was a wide range of employment opportunities, another indicated that, although the scheme (a rehabilitation scheme with close links to specialist hospital units) was suitable for an urban area, it would be much harder to sustain in rural areas because the population would be so dispersed. One scheme accepted that there were a number of local environmental features which were unique, which could make replication in another area difficult.

'Although (the model) has been used elsewhere, the particular circumstances - an employer which had been unable to find other staff because of its need for workers, compared to a relatively small local workforce - are unlikely to apply in many other parts of Great Britain.' (Manager)

8.3.3 Transferring the learning

As pilot projects, most of the schemes were mindful of the need to share their learning with others, and many had already implemented some kind of dissemination activity.
There was considerable evidence that the schemes had been very successful in disseminating their learning sideways to the agencies with which they were working: sharing information about their activities within their own, and their partners' organisation. This was mentioned by seven schemes. In most cases, what they were demonstrating was very broad principles: that disabled people did make valuable employees, that disabled people were able to obtain employment and be motivated to move beyond traditional sources of support and 'containment'.

'There has already been a lot of organisational learning from the (project worker) sitting in on outpatient clinics with the A and E consultant. The (project worker) has picked up a lot of knowledge about the client group, whilst the consultant had learnt about the possibilities of work and retention.'

(Manager)

Five of those who specifically mentioned this were part of national voluntary organisations, with many local branches. The other was a college of further education where the scheme was being discussed by other departments.

Schemes also shared their learning through other networks. One scheme was a member of the Association of Supported Employment, which had made an official visit to the scheme. Three schemes were closely involved in the Employers Forum on Disability, which also provided a useful platform for sharing their experience with others. One scheme was already sharing their experience through a European Union funded transnational network.

Others described themselves as more generally 'talking to people' whenever the opportunity arose.

'This concept is one of the ways ahead. We have one of the best schemes around and have had hundreds of visitors over the past two years. I think we are a blueprint for the rest of the country.' (Manager)

One particularly mentioned talking with the local TEC, and with the Employment Service, while others were rather less specific, as one noted, being 'prepared to talk to people if they ask'.

Three schemes had run or had plans to run a workshop or conference about their scheme. Several had received coverage in the disability media, or within their lead or partner organisation's newsletters. Others had specifically made materials available for others wishing to follow their experience: three mentioned having training materials available, three mentioned their evaluation reports. Other materials produced included a detailed handbook of guidance on setting up a similar scheme, web-based materials and open learning materials.
Four schemes indicated that they had no specific plans for disseminating information about their scheme to others. One of these had more or less come to an end, and had few staff resources available for such activities, and three remained uncertain about the future, and how the remaining stages of their activities would be managed.

Several people interviewed towards the end of their NDDP funding expressed concern that learning was being lost as schemes came to an end or were relocated. One scheme (already involved in helping other branches of their organisation in replicating their experience) identified the lack of time, staff, and knowledge that would be required to support this new activity, particularly as most of the staff that had worked directly with their scheme had now left the organisation, leaving very few to pass on their experience to others.

One person suggested that there was a need for a national ‘repository’ of experience which could draw together the lessons of schemes like her own:

‘There should be the responsibility of the Disability Commission to be the repository for best practice in job seeking and employment. This could be made available on a web site.’ (Manager)

By the time final interviews took place, there was a surprising amount replication either already in hand, or being planned. Four organisations - two national voluntary organisations and two commercial organisations, were already involved in either replicating, or planning the replication, of their scheme activities in other locations in which the organisations were operating. In the most comprehensive of these, an organisation involved in call centres in a number of locations around the country was seeking to establish similar schemes in five of these locations.

In another two areas, colleges of further education were looking with interest at schemes (also run by colleges) with the idea of replication, and in two areas, partners were already replicating the experience of the scheme within their own organisations, or setting up complementary activities along similar lines.

However, experience was already showing that replication of a scheme in a new area would involve substantial changes to the original model. One of the first tranche schemes, set up on a number of different sites, soon found that activities had to be considerably adapted to fit the local conditions, both in terms of different economic environments, and in relation to the lead organisation delivering the activities in the different locations.

There were a few schemes which were already working in multi-site settings, where a similar model was being adopted in different geographical
areas, and in different organisational frameworks. One manager commented the need to make minor adjustments:

‘Testing out replicability is at the core of this project, it is essential that we have good systems of case management and job coaching, but other elements are more flexible and reflect the systems and procedures of the different (hospital) partners. We could therefore transport the systems and tweak the edges.’ (Manager)

Similarly, one of the schemes which set about replicating their experience in another part of the country, through a subsidiary, found that changes had to be made, in order to fit the scheme to the priorities of the local agencies, and to fit in with the availability of local partners.

In the other locations, discussions were currently in hand, although in at least one case, replication had not been possible because a similar activity was already taking place, and key partners could not see the point of having another, slightly different scheme (and did not understand the nature of the difference between the two).

8.4.1 Obstacles to replication

Although generally upbeat about the value of replicating their schemes across the country, a number of schemes remained cautious about the feasibility of this in practice. A number of obstacles to replication were identified.

Lack of funding

The most common obstacle identified (by six schemes), was a lack of available and suitable funding sources. As has already been noted, several had found this to be an obstacle to continuing their schemes.

A general issue identified by three of the schemes was the amount of time required by the client group with which they were working, and therefore the additional costs incurred by schemes working with these groups. A closely related difficulty was the failure of funding agencies to understand the special needs of the client group with which they were working, and the fact that these were not catered for well within existing, more generic, services. An example of this was people with hearing difficulties.

The policy framework within which funding was allocated was also reported not to be particularly accommodating to the kind of activities that some of the schemes were demonstrating. Two such activities, identified by three of the schemes, were the support of disabled people in self employment, and work in the field of job retention. Both of these were just emerging as new policy issues which sat uncomfortably within a more traditional ‘benefits versus employment’ policy framework.
‘The funding mechanisms are immature and policy makers guarded ... they are only just beginning to recognise the need to fund work surrounding the retention of clients in work.’ (Manager)

Another difficulty identified was the nature of the funding available – often short-term and insecure, which presented difficulties in getting the kind of activities which they were demonstrating fully established. Two schemes highlighted the importance of start up funding, and sufficient time to get going. Two identified the need for security of funding in the longer term (so they could attract and retain good staff).

‘You need to be fairly certain about future funding. Uncertainties can have a dysfunctional effect on staff morale, referrers’ belief in the project etc.’ (Manager)

Funding in arrears was also noted by two schemes as presenting difficulties, particularly for small organisations:

‘We are an organisation of 30 to 40 staff. If funded in arrears, then we are always in debt, which had to be managed, so it was difficult to justify spending any money at all. We were running a debt of around £10,000-11,000. Larger organisations running schemes didn’t have this difficulty to contend with.’ (Manager)

**Lack of suitably experienced staff**

However, difficulties in funding were not the only identified obstacles to replication. Three schemes identified a lack of staff with appropriate skills to work in schemes such as theirs, as a potential difficulty. In two cases it was staff with generic employment support schemes, but with sufficient knowledge of their client group. In one case it was very particular skills - in cognitive behavioural therapy, that were in short supply elsewhere. Here, the uniqueness of some of the staff, and particularly managers, involved in the establishment of the scheme and the strength of their commitment to the scheme, could also potentially provide an obstacle to replication of their experience elsewhere.

‘There can be no doubt that a, perhaps the, key feature of (the scheme) is the Manager. Her energy, commitment and doggedness are referred to and admired by all: she is the central character in the story in the scheme’s initiation, ongoing work and future development. The key question which no one could easily answer is if the scheme would survive without her.

Nearly everyone - staff, clients, partners, referrers, and employers thoroughly approved of the work and see it as a most valuable initiative for both employment and social reasons. But it remains unclear whether someone else could develop the contacts and networks which she has and be able to attract the same loyalty and enthusiasm’. (From field note on scheme)
'It wasn’t the project organisation/structure but the individuals that contributed to success. Those involved in delivering the service on the ground were very knowledgeable of change processes for people with disabilities. A talented team. The project relied solely on delivery agents.' (Partner)

Organisational obstacles

On the more practical side, managers also identified the immediate obstacles which might prevent an organisation replicating their experience. These were generally the converse of the points that they identified as being essential ingredients of a successful scheme. A lack of suitable organisational structures, a lack of partners, and a lack of good local networks were the three most frequently mentioned difficulties which might face organisations wishing to replicate their experience. Two schemes identified the potential problems posed by other services or schemes existing in their area which might be in competition for funding, or for clients.

8.5 Conclusions

Schemes began their involvement with NDDP feeling optimistic, both about the possibility of continuing their experiments in the future, and having their experience replicated by others. Experience has shown that finding continuing funding for activities of this kind has often been problematic, and there remains no clear-cut funding source through which schemes of this kind can be supported. Those schemes which were able to continue were either supported by the organisations which originally set them up, from their mainstream funding, or were able to obtain further, short-term funding from another source. Even when the lead organisations continued the activities, this was often in an attenuated version, or remained under considerable threat of closure if additional funding could not be found.

On the whole, the findings to date indicate that the pilot schemes could be absorbed into existing organisations if:

- the size and capacity of lead and partner organisation was sufficient to enable these to sustain their activities;
- the activities were sufficiently close to the existing vision or core activities of the organisation to enable the activities to be supported through existing sources of funding;
- the lead or partner organisations had the experience and knowledge to attract funding from new sources to support the activities.

Some schemes had clearly been successful in attracting new funding, although this was generally from short-term sources, and often required some change to the activities to meet the new funding criteria. There was considerable evidence to support the conclusion that new funding sources would be required if schemes such as these were to enter the ‘mainstream’ in the longer term.
These issues are as relevant to the question of transfer as they are to the continuation of the present schemes. Where the innovative element of the scheme relates to the organisation, the ethos or the values of the scheme, then it is possible that the learning will be transferred to other organisations without there being any major resource implications. Voluntary organisations may learn the value of working more closely with employers when supporting disabled people seeking employment. Employers may, following the demonstration provided by schemes, see the value of adopting new approaches to the recruitment and training of disabled people. Existing services for unemployed people (including the ES) may choose to adopt new approaches to the assessment of disabled people in terms of their employability, or see the value of building closer partnerships with voluntary agencies.

However, serious obstacles to replication of the schemes as a whole appeared to remain, the most important obstacle being the lack of funding to set up activities of this kind. Finding sufficient resources from existing funding streams appeared to be particularly difficult where the client group with which schemes are working required considerable time, and a great deal of one to one support from staff, to enable them to move forward into employment. Other obstacles to replication identified were a lack of organisational capacity and established partnerships, and a shortage of suitably qualified and experienced staff.

Experience from NDDP suggests that new funding sources will be required. What kind of resources will be required to support difficult aspects of the schemes is explored in the next chapter.
In this chapter, lessons from the earlier chapters are drawn together, with a particular eye to the future – to the potential for supporting schemes of this kind within a future policy framework. In doing so, we briefly revisit the original questions set out for this evaluation, and the ‘pathway model’ within which we located the activities of the Innovative Schemes.

9.1 Evaluation questions and issues addressed

In the original brief for the evaluation of Innovative Schemes, the DSS/DfEE expressed a desire to learn what kind of activities and structures ‘work’ in terms of supporting disabled people into employment, and what lessons, in terms of ‘good practice’ principles would emerge from the schemes.

The ‘what works’ question was translated into a series of specific evaluation questions:

- **How effective are the Innovative Schemes in achieving their objectives?**
- **How are the outcomes and processes of the Innovative Schemes assessed by different stakeholders, including disabled people?**
- **What aspects of scheme organisation, design and management account for what has been achieved?**
- **What principles of good practice emerge from the schemes?**
- **Are schemes likely to be sustained, with or without NDDP funding?**
- **How replicable and transferable are schemes in whole or in part?**

In answering these questions, it was important to take into account that there were a number of different orientations that schemes took towards the overall tasks of helping people move towards employment. These included:

- a focus on working with individual disabled people - mobilising activities;
- a focus on working across the ‘pathway’ and at a number of levels (this included both mobilising both clients and employers, as well as matching activities);
- creating a pre-determined pathway;
- a focus on job retention; and
- job creation - including mobilising work with employers.

In the sections below, we have sought to provide an overview of the answers that we found to the evaluation questions, taking into account the different orientation of schemes particularly in relation to ‘sustainability and replication’ and the potential for funding under future policy initiatives.
9.2 How successful were the schemes in achieving their objectives?

Success was a relative concept - relative in particular to the kind of client group that the schemes were working with, and relative to the segment of the ‘pathway into work’ that they were addressing. For example, although many clients wanted to move into employment in the longer term, in the shorter term many were a long way from meeting this goal. This was particularly true of the clients of schemes with an open door recruitment policy, or schemes which were oriented at client groups that were particularly difficult to place into work. Movement into vocational training, becoming more positive about their chances of finding work, or finding part-time work with therapeutic earnings, represented a big step forward for some clients.

At the time that the evaluation came to an end, many of the schemes had not achieved the employment related targets that they had agreed with the DSS. There was feedback from many schemes that the targets initially agreed had proved, in practice, to be unrealistic. Prior to the start of the programme, there was not a great deal of evidence available about what employment targets were reasonable for different client groups. Organisations that had considerable experience of their client group tended to set lower, but more realistic targets and to achieve these. Overall, the first tranche schemes (second tranche schemes had yet to come to an end) achieved an average target of around a third of the clients that joined the scheme moving into employment. However, this target needs to be adjusted carefully for different client groups.

There were some schemes that had achieved results which were above this average, but most of these were relatively selective in who they accepted onto the scheme. There were also a small number of schemes that were able to produce quite high employment related outcomes with client groups which were far from being ‘job-ready’ at the time that they entered the schemes. These schemes were generally (but, surprisingly, not all) already very experienced in their fields, and quite focused in their activities.

Schemes had often set themselves broader targets than just placing their clients into employment. In other words, they had in mind other outcomes which might also constitute a notion of ‘success’ in relation to addressing the obstacles that disabled job seekers face. Innovative Schemes were, for example, in many cases contributing to awareness raising and cultural change at a very local level, an objective which was closely in accord with other elements of the NDDP agenda. In looking at the broader picture, it was important to take into account the agendas of all the stakeholders involved in the programme. This brings us to the second evaluation question.
9.3 How are the outcomes and processes of the Innovative Schemes assessed by different stakeholders, including disabled people?

A programme such as N D D P has a number of different stakeholders (organisations setting them up, the government departments funding them, partner organisations, clients and employers) who all have a different ‘investment’ in the activities being organised. Evidence from discussions with different stakeholders in N D D P schemes suggested that although employment was important to most of these, there were also other outcomes that were being sought. The following are outcomes which were also being sought by different groups:

For the disabled person:
- Social benefits.
- Some economic benefits.

For the organisations running schemes of this kind:
- To be better equipped to meet the issues involved.
- Improved liaison with other local services and employers.

For local services:
- Better co-ordination and understanding of the issues.
- A better understanding of the gaps between services.
- More effective referrals between local agencies.
- Reduction of the negative effects competition.

For local employers:
- An increased ability to meet D DA requirements.
- Awareness of disability leading to better recruitment practices.
- Awareness of disability leading to better job retention.
- Learning that support services (including technical support) exist and how to access them.

There is considerable evidence in earlier chapters that schemes had had some success in meeting their wider objectives, although success in meeting these did not always translate directly into increasing the number of clients moving into employment, at least, not in the short term.

For example, many of the organisations setting up schemes had identified a lack of co-ordination between local services as a major reason why many disabled people were ‘falling through gaps’ in the system. The feedback from schemes, from their partners, and from employers suggests that many of the schemes had made an important start in addressing these issues, through putting together partnerships of key agencies, and in seeking to bring about some cultural changes in the different organisations involved. Partnership working of this kind could be a powerful means by which differences between organisations, and the gaps between them, could become more apparent.
Where successful, the network, and partnership building activities of these schemes were usually valued by all involved, and helped establish a smoother transition for disabled people from one service to another. However, there were sometimes few immediate results from partnership building activities of this kind, in terms of employment outcomes.

The same difficulty applied to work with employers. Many of the schemes were working at establishing good connections with employers, and in the process, were sometimes succeeding in influencing their policies and practices in relation to employing disabled people. Work with individual representatives of a local employer was best backed up with more systematic work - running disability awareness training with staff, even when this related to the placement of only one client with the employer. Again, this was time consuming work, and efforts expended in building partnerships and useful relationships might have led, in the longer term, to new opportunities being opened up. Employers were often very appreciative of this work, but in the shorter term, this did not always benefit the scheme which was putting in the time and resources, but did not always have suitable candidates available at the time that the employer was seeking to recruit.

The organisations, and their partners, that set up the schemes were often very appreciative of the learning that they had derived from the schemes, and the opportunities that these provided to help their clients in new ways. Most expressed a wish to continue with work of this kind, and those that were able to, had incorporated some elements of the schemes' orientation to employment issues into their work. However, there was frustration on the part of some of these organisations that they were unable to continue the work because of lack of funding, and sadness that the staff and managers who had built up experience had had to leave the organisation when funding came to an end.

However, it is the benefits to disabled people themselves which are the ultimate ‘test’ of the success of schemes of this kind. Feedback from a small selection of clients (see Chapter 6) suggests that even where involvement in scheme activities did not lead to permanent or full time employment, many clients appreciated the time and effort that had been invested in helping them, and derived benefits in terms of improved confidence, optimism about the future, and greater clarity about their employment prospects. Voluntary or part-time work, sometimes with therapeutic earnings, meant that some, even if not a great deal better off financially, felt that they were making a contribution to society, and were no longer, as some described it ‘on the scrap heap’.

9.4 What aspects of scheme organisation, design and management account for what has been achieved?

Investigations of this point are made in Chapters 3 and 7. Overall, the key elements that emerged from analysis of the most successful schemes (in terms of achieving employment related outcomes) were that they had:
comprehensive pathways from the point of entry into the scheme into employment, which included, for most schemes, intensive one to one staff support and guidance;

employment opportunities being integral to the scheme i.e. there was a job to go to; and

careful targeting of opportunities in the local labour market where there were skills gaps or labour shortages.

Schemes that achieved lower employment related outcomes were all generally less selective in terms of job readiness. The selective schemes had accepted client groups on the basis of whether they fitted the scheme profile. The main reasons behind these schemes coming below the average respective cohorts were:

- working with a client group with complex problems;
- having long start up times due to a lack of experience in the field, having to build up a referral and employer network and having weaker partnerships;
- working over multiple sites which necessitated a spread of resources;
- weaknesses in the client pathway - primarily at the transition from scheme to work which often related to poorer links with employers;
- multiple weaknesses.

On a more general note, the previous experience of the lead organisation setting up the scheme had an important influence, both in enabling the scheme to set itself up quickly (important in terms of achievement of outcomes within one year) and in enabling them to set realistic targets both for numbers of clients they were working with, and for the numbers that they could place in employment.

For schemes that had a central focus on mobilising and supporting clients, evidence from this evaluation suggests that key factors supporting success lay in their track record/credibility with referral agencies. Experience with working with the group of disabled people targeted clearly counted for considerable importance here, as did having ‘credibility’ with disabled people themselves.

Networks with referrers and other disability organisations were also important for schemes working across the pathway, but these also needed to have good links with employers and employer organisations. Their credibility with employers was particularly crucial: this meant having a good understanding of the local labour market and of employer requirements, and ensuring that support was on hand, either for the client or for the employer, if problems should arise following a placement. The same applied to schemes which were seeking to work in the area of job creation and employer mobilisation. Good co-ordination was central to working both across the pathway and in job creation areas. This required very good managerial skills, and often also required a wide range
of skills on the part of staff. Managers and staff had to be able to work effectively in partnership with a wide range of organisations, operating with very different sets of expectations and orientation to disability issues.

Those working with a predetermined pathway needed more specific networks established, and usually had a good link with one particular employer, or one employment sector.

We started our evaluation with a review of previous work in the field related to good practice, and found that most of principles identified in previous work related to work with individual clients. In the interim report, these principles were briefly enumerated.

### Principles of good practice - from the interim evaluation report

Schemes needed to:

- Be participant centred - flexible enough to cater for individual needs, and start from clients' own expressed needs and wishes
- Cater for any special needs, in terms of providing special adaptation, translation, etc
- Take account of the role of family or informal support networks in which the client is involved, where relevant
- Be empowering - allowing the participant choice, building their self confidence and ability to make their own choices
- Provide appropriate role models - through employing disabled people (with similar disabilities), involving buddies or mentors
- Support a seamless path from one aspect of job search to another
- Motivate participants to move on from one stage to another
- Take into account the realities of the local labour market - participants are given realistic information about local employment opportunities, local employers are consulted

Our interviews with schemes, as well as our analysis of 'successful schemes' generally supported these as some of the most important elements which needed to be taken into account in working with disabled job seekers.

In particular, it is essential for schemes working with a very varied client group, with a very broad range of issues, some of which might be only tangentially work related, to be flexible and client centred. Empowerment is a key factor when working with a client group that has lost confidence in their acceptability in the job market. Flexibility was particularly required in steering clients through a range of different tasks and activities, according to their particular needs. Flexibility was also required to ensure that the pace at which people passed through activities met their particular capacities, which could vary tremendously.
The question of choice is a little more complex. As is noted above, some schemes operated a more or less pre-determined pathway towards employment. The main choice here, for clients, was whether they wanted to enter this particular pathway. Most schemes, however, operated a range of choices for clients, and sought to help them to navigate the available choices.

The extent to which the pathway was 'seamless' did depend to some extent on the success of schemes in weaving together mobilising and matching activities, whether these were all within one scheme, or through the co-ordination of a wider network of services, and facilitating a smooth path from one to another. Similarly with the motivating of clients to move from one stage to another. Schemes working across the pathway were particularly successful here, and the availability of a worker to accompany the client on their path was often key.

Schemes were usually working hard to ensure that their activities matched the realities of the labour market. The work undertaken with employers, and the involvement of employers, and employment organisations, in the partnership was very important to this. Some, particularly those developing call centre related work, were very closely tied into a particular local labour market.

There were clearly dangers with this aspect of schemes if clients were given insufficient choice or support; there was always a danger of people being pushed into unsuitable or dead-end jobs, just for the sake of achieving employment related targets. Although there was no strong evidence from the Innovative Schemes in this evaluation that this was the case, it might be relevant to consider some kind of 'quality assurance' mechanisms or complaints procedure in the future, to guard against bad practice in this area. (This point came up in a number of the workshops that we attended.)

In view of the wider approach that schemes were adopting, there seemed to be other, more system oriented, good practice principles that were emerging. For example, the work with partners was particularly important for schemes that worked across the pathway. In this respect, some useful 'good practice' principles can be drawn out from the experience of the schemes in terms of good principles of working in partnership.

These include having:

- considerable investment of time and resources;
- a clear vision and sense of mutual benefit;
- good leadership skills;
- clarity about the roles of different partners;
- the flexibility to respond to changes taking place in the schemes and to the individuals involved; and
- opportunities to address difficulties.
Many of the schemes were also seeking to work closely with employers, and here, too, some more broad ranging principles of good practice can be derived from their experience. For example, organisations seeking to replicate their work will do well to heed the model developed by the Employers Forum on Disability in terms of:

- ensuring that they approach employers as potential ‘clients’ for whom they are offering a service, or as a potential partner in relation to the task of placing people into employment;
- developing mechanisms for identifying employers needs;
- recognising the breadth of employers needs, and taking these seriously, thus ensuring that referrals are appropriate;
- responding appropriately to employers - in terms of their different levels of interest in and awareness of the issues; and
- creating opportunities for discussion, in which points of mutual interest can be established.

In Chapter 8, it was suggested that the methods of working demonstrated by the Innovative Schemes had considerable potential for replication elsewhere. Some of the activities of the schemes had already been absorbed into their lead organisations or their partners. This mainly happened if these were reasonably large, and had a general orientation and interest in employment issues. There were already a number of examples of new projects being established replicating the activities of the schemes in other sites, although usually some changes had to be made to fit these to the local circumstances.

However, the absence of targeted, core or long-term funding was identified as a major obstacle to maintaining or replicating activities of this kind within the current funding climate. Where additional funding had been found, it was from European Social Fund, or other short-term, funding sources. We were aware of plans to establish new source of funding, both for job retention and ‘job broker’ projects in the future. This form of funding is likely to make a major impact on the ability of organisations to establish activities of this kind in the future.

A note of caution, however, needs to be sounded about the potential for finding funding for many of the activities that the Innovative Schemes had piloted, from these sources.

The time consuming nature of the work with many of the clients of these schemes, particularly the need to work in a flexible and client-centred way, is likely to continue to be an obstacle to schemes finding funding in a very ‘employment focused’ climate. If such schemes are to be funded according to ‘employment outcome’ principles, then a very careful assessment will need to be made of what is a realistic and achievable employment outcome for different client groups. Outcome funding will also need to be based on a careful assessment of the ‘real costs’ of projects of this kind.
It was the more selective schemes that were closest, in principle, to the kind of 'job broker' activities which are being considered for the extension of NDDP. While schemes providing a more specific 'matching service' are likely to be very fundable under such a model of funding, care needs to be taken to ensure that the 'mobilisation' activities required to support such activities, are in place or are funded and provided elsewhere. There were three aspects to this kind of work.

The first was to find new ways of reaching out to and attracting disabled people who have become disengaged from the labour market. In the process, it often included reaching out to, and influencing the organisations that were working with disabled people, to ensure that employment was firmly on their agenda. This helped to ensure that care, support or rehabilitation services did not perpetuate stereotypes of disabled people being seen as unemployable.

However, the employment related outcomes of work of this kind were very long term – both in terms of the individual clients with which they were working, who could take over a year to become more 'job-ready' and in terms of the work with disability services to change the prevailing culture.

The second important aspect of mobilisation was in the area of co-ordination, building links between agencies to ensure that these were working closely together and understood one another's role in the overall pathway. Work of this kind helped to identify where 'gaps' lay at a local level, and to enable steps to be taken to fill these gaps. Again, the results of this kind of work do not immediately produce employment outcomes for individual clients of one scheme, but may produce a sea change in terms of outcomes across a range of services operating within an area.

The third aspect, mobilisation, was work with employers, to help these to become more aware of disability issues, and the potential of disabled employees. Sometimes this went hand in hand with other kinds of job creation activities, like creating new forms of work in conjunction with local employers. Again, the results were generally seen to be long term – work with employers was often slow, the results might not necessarily benefit the clients of the scheme undertaking the work. Many of the schemes in the present cohort found that they had to switch attention away from this work, in order to achieve their employment targets in the short term.

All of these mobilisation activities are potentially time consuming, and will also need to be funded from some source, if long-term solutions to the high level of unemployment of disabled people are to be found. They produce the essential 'background' conditions against which other, more focused matching activities can take place. Without them, matching activities will only be able to work with the most job-ready of disabled job seekers, and the most disabled friendly of employers.
SUMMARY OF INTERIM EVALUATION REPORT

The interim report on the N DDP - Innovative Schemes evaluation was written in June 1998. At this stage, the first tranche of 10 Innovative Schemes had been set up, and the evaluators had completed the first round of visits. This enabled some tentative conclusions to be drawn concerning the characteristics of schemes and the factors which were contributing to their success.

The characteristics of schemes

The first 10 schemes were addressing the barriers faced by people with disabilities who seek employment in a variety of ways. Most of the schemes incorporated a range of activities, which included:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>No of Schemes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Assessment:</td>
<td>all schemes (in some form)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal Development Activities:</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vocational Training:</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vocational Guidance:</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Job Search / Job Matching:</td>
<td>all schemes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work Experience:</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supported Employment:</td>
<td>4 schemes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Support and Retention in Employment:</td>
<td>7 schemes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employer Training/Mobilising Employers:</td>
<td>most schemes (in some form)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The way in which these different activities were undertaken differed from scheme to scheme, and some of the more innovative activities, such as provision of computers to people with disabilities could not be easily incorporated within the categories outlined above. However, in many cases the innovation to which the schemes laid claim lay not in the individual activities, but in the way in which the service had been organised and the manner in which the activities undertaken.

Many of the schemes have sought to establish innovative partnerships, which have brought together organisations as diverse as a local Training and Enterprise Council (TEC) and an organisation of disabled people, and a commercial company with an organisation for carers. Another important area of innovation for at least six of the schemes was closer work with employers, some of whom were either the main initiator, or a central partner in the scheme.

Getting started

Some schemes experienced delays in establishing themselves, with much learning taking place as new partnerships were established and new activities were being developed. Schemes appear to have been particularly

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successful in setting themselves up when there was:

- the existence of pre-existing organisational structures and activities close to that of the project;
- the existence of strong networks and committed partnerships which provide referrals, services, support and resources and are less likely to renege on promises or drop out. (New partnerships may also bring fresh perspectives and an expansion in local provision, even if they take longer to establish);
- a manager with strong personal commitment, vision and experience (plus strong administration and communication skills); and
- recruitment of staff with previous experience, skills and contacts.

### Recruiting participants

Several of the schemes were surprised at the difficulties they had in recruiting participants for their activities. Sometimes local agencies have been slow to refer participants, in other cases referrals have been unsuitable, because local agencies have misunderstood the nature of the scheme, and in particular, failed to take seriously their employment objectives. Fear of losing benefits was widely reported by scheme staff as having deterred some participants from taking part in scheme activities.

Although still at an early stage in the evaluation, the research to date suggests that schemes were particularly successful in recruiting participants where they:

- provided a unique service in the area – either in terms of client group or in terms of activities;
- were able to draw on an established client group within its own organisation or that of one of its partners;
- had a pre-existing good reputation with local agencies or good pre-established contacts with potential referral agencies (known, experienced or seconded staff were often an important element); and
- were flexible and creative in their approach to recruitment.

### Successful approaches

Once recruited, most schemes reported a relatively low drop out rate of participants, although many reported that participants were taking much longer to pass through their activities than had originally been anticipated.

According to staff and participants interviewed, some of the main factors which contributed to the success of activities include:

- Informality in the assessment processes.
- Ability to match time and pace of activities to the differing capacities of their participants.
- Sufficient time for staff to really get to know the participants and their abilities.
- An emphasis on abilities, rather than assessing disability.
- A good manager and staff with appropriate experience and understanding of disability.
Feedback from participants (although numbers interviewed have been quite small to date) suggests that activities have generally been regarded favourably. The benefits of participation, apart from improving their hopes of finding employment, were reported to be an increase in confidence, enhanced social contact and greater levels of motivation.

Finding employment

By half way through the period of N D D P funding, schemes recorded a relatively small proportion (15%) of participants as having moved into employment. This is in part because of the slow start up in some schemes, and the fact that some participants moved through schemes more slowly than expected. Several schemes began to see that the initial targets they had set themselves were rather ambitious. However, there were big variations between the schemes in the proportion of participants they had been able to place in employment. The most obvious characteristics of schemes in terms of their clients finding employment are the extent to which:

- schemes themselves can provide either employment, or work experience;
- schemes have close links with employers;
- suitable employment opportunities are available in the local areas;
- clients who have been selected on ‘job-ready’ criteria.

Learning about ‘good practice’

A part of the task of the present evaluation is to identify what constitutes ‘good practice’ in relation to disability employment schemes of this kind. One approach to ‘good practice’ that the evaluation adopted was to build upon previous understandings of what constitutes good practice in the area of employment for disabled people.

We found that most of the schemes were implementing the elements of good practice identified by earlier literature. These included:

- Being participant centred - flexible enough to cater for individual needs, and start from clients’ own expressed needs and wishes.
- Catering for any special needs, in terms of providing special adaptation, translation, etc.
- Taking account of the role of family or informal support networks in which the client is involved, where relevant.
- Being empowering - allowing the participant choice, building their self confidence and ability to make their own choices.
- Providing appropriate role models - through employing disabled people (with similar disabilities), involving buddies or mentors.
- Supporting a seamless path from one aspect of job search to another.
- Motivating participants to move on from one stage to another.
- Taking into account the realities of the local labour market - participant are given realistic information about local employment opportunities, local employers are consulted.
How far these aspects were operationalised within the schemes was varied and will be subject to exploration in greater depth later in the evaluation. Many of the schemes had also taken the notion of good practice, in seeking to establish new partnerships, bringing together different sectors of experience, and seeking to work closely with employers. An early overview of the general notions of good practice which arise from this suggest that:

- working in collaboration with a range of local (or national) agencies, helped to ensure that local services for disabled people seeking employment were effectively co-ordinated and learning is shared between them;
- schemes working closely with local employers began to influence local prejudices, encourage commitment, and open up opportunities for employment, or work experience, further down the line;
- schemes working in close collaboration with (or established by) organisations of disabled people helped to ensure that their activities were aligned with a realistic view of the barriers which face disabled people when seeking employment.

Most of those interviewed in the schemes were keen to see their activities continue into the future. A few schemes had hopes of becoming self-supporting, and some saw continuity in terms of having created a change in culture within partners, or other services which continue beyond their own existence. However, the majority assumed that some form of statutory funding is required if activities of this kind are continued.

Several of the schemes commented on their difficulty in finding funding for similar services prior to NDDP.

The main factors to influence sustainability of schemes in the longer term include:

- the size and capacity of the organisation or their partners to fund the project themselves;
- the proximity of the NDDP innovative scheme to the core activities and interests of the organisation or their partners;
- the availability of other funding sources and the knowledge and experience to access these;
- a change in national policy and introduction of programmes in which schemes can participate.

The NDDP schemes were intended to pilot models of practice which, where successful, could be adopted elsewhere. As yet, we can only be tentative about the conditions under which transfer of learning from the schemes to other organisations might take place. However, schemes in their original bids have suggested a number factors that will be important:
• The availability of other organisations, with a similar ethos and commitment, who are interested in providing similar services.
• The availability of other organisations with a willingness, and ability, to question their current practice and approach.
• Diverse opportunities for the schemes to share their learning with others; different organisations are likely to obtain information through different channels.
• Resources, including support and funding for organisations which seek to put this learning into practice.

Conclusions The first tranche of NDDP innovative schemes were generally well established by mid-1999, and explored a number of different ways of supporting disabled people into employment. For many, there has been a great deal of learning in the early stages, as early obstacles have been overcome. The next stages of the evaluation will explore in greater depth the emerging conclusions concerning the factors which contribute to successful practice.
This final evaluation report on the 24 Innovative Schemes funded under the New Deal for Disabled People, is based on information from the following sources.

An audit of all schemes was undertaken, through interviews towards the start, and end of their life, based on qualitative interviews with a range of different stakeholders. The audit was intended to be both descriptive, describing the work of the schemes and the organisation and environment in which it had been set up, and normative insofar as it is intended to compare Innovative Schemes with broader understandings of good practice derived from past research as well as the norms of important stakeholders. Audit visits to schemes included interviews with:

- the manager of the scheme;
- staff within the scheme (usually employment advisors, trainers, and administrators);
- mentors or buddies (where appropriate);
- scheme partners; and
- participants.

A list of interviews is attached.

Content of interviews

The content of the interviews varied with the particular role the interviewee had in the programme. However, they all followed schedules derived from an audit framework which had been developed early in the planning for this work based on a prior review of literature relating to good practice in disability employment schemes.

Documentary sources

Initial bid documents, on which the selection of the schemes was based, have been particularly useful as a baseline for tracking the development of the schemes. Other material was collected from each of the projects where it was readily available.

Thematic case studies

Data from the schemes was elaborated in the second round of interviews with additional questions relating to a small number of themes which had emerged as particularly interesting, in the early stages of the evaluation.
The themes were:

- Work with employers.
- Training activities of schemes.
- Relationships with partners.
- The sustainability and replicability of the schemes.

Additional information was obtained relating to these themes from documentary sources, and a small number of additional interviews.

The material from these thematic case studies appears in Chapter 3 (relationships with partners) Chapter 4 (training activities), Chapter 5 (work with employers) and Chapter 7 (sustainability and replicability).

**Scheme based case studies**

In addition to the thematic case studies, a more in-depth analysis was undertaken of the work of four of the schemes, which represented different types of organisational bases, and different areas of work. The focus of these studies was the relationship between the scheme and their wider environment, and the pathways that clients followed as they progressed through the scheme. While not written up directly in the text of this report, these case studies were influential in helping to formulate the ideas for Chapter 4.

**Analysis of monitoring data**

Schemes were required to give monthly updates to the Department of Social Security, giving numbers of clients recruited into schemes, their progress through activities, and the numbers obtaining employment. This, combined with some information derived from bid documents, provided the basis for analysis of schemes’ success in supporting clients into employment, in Chapter 6.

**Dissemination activities and workshops**

As part of the process of validating the learning emerging from the evaluation, the research team hosted two workshops with representatives from the schemes. One of these, in 1999, was for first tranche schemes, and presented the findings that went into the interim report. The second, for both first and second tranche schemes, in June 2000, provided the opportunity to test out emerging findings which have been presented in this final report. In particular, the second workshop provided an opportunity to discuss our emerging ‘pathway model’ and the feedback we received about this in the workshop was helpful in our subsequent use of the model in the analysis of data. In addition to these workshops, members of the evaluation team were also involved in a number of other meetings and workshops. These included attendance at a steering group meeting of Innovative Schemes, attendance at three Innovative Scheme quarterly meetings, and presentations at two seminars/workshops relating to future policy and practice in this area. In addition, the researchers also met with the N D D P PA Pilot voluntary sector resource group: this forum provided an opportunity to discuss the methodology adopted with
representatives from a number of disability organisations, not directly involved in the N D D P Innovative Schemes.

Issues of confidentiality

Research work which involves in-depth and usually qualitative data such as that collected in face-to-face interviews tends to identify sensitive material. Such material poses some problems of confidentiality. It was therefore important to be cautious when presenting material attributable to a particular Innovative Scheme. For this reason most of this report is presented in thematic terms although each of the Innovative Schemes are mentioned and some specific information on each is provided. For the purposes of the published report, each scheme has been given an initial, rather than being identified by name.
Table B1 Interview breakdown by Innovative Scheme: First tranche schemes

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<tr>
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<th>Interviews</th>
<th>Total Number of interviewees</th>
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<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>1 project manager, 4 staff (liaison officer, pain nurse, physiotherapist, administrator), 3 clients, No partners active in project</td>
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<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>1 project manager, 1 human resources manager, 4 staff (team leaders, trainer, administrator), 4 clients, 2 partners</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>1 manager, 1 trainer (and manager from partner organisation), 3 clients, 2 partners</td>
<td>7</td>
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<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>2 project managers, 2 staff (one of whom had also been a participant), 2 partners (joint interview), 3 participants (group interview)</td>
<td>9</td>
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<tr>
<td>E</td>
<td>1 project manager, Other college managers, 4 staff (job buddies) (group interview), 16 participants (2 group interviews), 3 partners, 3 employers</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>1 project manager, 2 staff, 2 clients, 2 partners</td>
<td>7</td>
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<tr>
<td>G</td>
<td>1 project manager, 1 director, 1 trustee, 5 staff (group interview), 6 clients, 1 partners</td>
<td>15</td>
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<tr>
<td>H</td>
<td>1 project manager, Other college managers, 3 staff (group interview), 2 partners, 4 clients, Attendance at steering group meeting</td>
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<tr>
<td>I</td>
<td>1 project manager, 3 staff (employment consultants and manager), 2 clients, 2 partners</td>
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<tr>
<td>J</td>
<td>1 finance director, 1 project manager, 2 staff (buddy co-ordinator, administrator), 2 clients, 1 partner</td>
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<td>Total</td>
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## Interviews for second tranche schemes

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| K      | 1 project manager  
1 member of staff  
1 partner  
4 clients (2 joint interviews) | 7 |
| L      | 2 managers  
5 staff  
2 partners  
4 clients | 13 |
| M      | 1 manager  
3 staff  
4 partners  
4 employers  
2 clients | 14 |
| N      | 2 managers  
3 partners  
7 clients (2 group interviews)  
4 mentors | 16 |
| O      | 2 managers  
1 member of staff  
2 partners  
2 employers  
6 clients (individual and joint interviews) | 13 |
| P      | 2 managers  
2 staff  
3 clients | 7 |
| Q      | 1 Chief Executive  
1 Principal of College  
1 College chair of governors  
2 managers  
3 partners  
4 employers  
1 client | 13 |
| R      | 1 manager  
2 staff  
2 partners  
3 clients | 8 |
| S      | 2 managers (joint interview)  
1 Chief Executive  
2 staff  
3 partners  
2 employers  
2 clients | 12 |
| T      | 3 managers (2 joint interviews)  
2 staff (joint interview)  
2 employers  
1 partner  
2 clients  
2 volunteers (joint interview) | 12 |
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<td>U</td>
<td>1 manager</td>
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<td></td>
<td>3 staff (group interview)</td>
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<td>2 clients (joint interview)</td>
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<td>W</td>
<td>2 managers</td>
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<td>4 staff</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3 partners</td>
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<td></td>
<td>4 staff (2 joint interviews)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>1 employer</td>
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<td></td>
<td>2 clients</td>
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<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
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Note: The differences between schemes represented the different staffing and partnership arrangements and available clients.
### OTHER RESEARCH REPORTS AVAILABLE:

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