

# Self-Directed Support

## Jobs

Many people who need support have often spent their days at day centres. But more and more people now have jobs. There are specialist organisations that support people to find and keep a job.

These days, getting a job can mean that you are better off than being on benefits.

This factsheet discusses the good things about having a job and tells you how you might find one.



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# The basic facts

## Why have a job?

People have different reasons for getting a job:

- it can feel good to do something other people need and value
- it can be enjoyable
- some jobs pay well
- some people want recognition
- some people want to be a member of a team they like
- other people just want to contribute – put something in.

## Finding the right Job

Having a job is not just about money.

If you have the right job, you:

- do things you like and things you're good at
- work in places you're comfortable, with people you like
- work the number of hours at the time of day you want
- work the days of the week you want
- earn enough money
- can get there easily.

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# More information about jobs

## What about benefits?

What if you're on benefits? If you get a job will you be better off?

This is different for everyone. It depends how much the job pays – and what your benefits are. It depends on lots of other things, too – like if you pay rent. These days most people can be better off right away. Many people work and keep some benefits.

You can find out if you'd be better off by seeing a benefits adviser – ask your council. Also, you can use a benefits calculator. See the information at the end of this factsheet.

## Customised Employment

If you've had a problem getting a job the usual way, then maybe Customised Employment might work for you.

It's a way of matching your skills to jobs that an employer needs doing. You lead the way. You show the employer how jobs can get done in a different way – using your skills.

In Customised Employment, you start by thinking about yourself

### You need to figure out:

- your dreams – what you really want to do in your life
- your goals – the things you want to achieve on the way
- the things you are good at
- employers you can start with
- who can help you to think about these things – friends?
- family? who else?
- what you need to be successful in a job

Then you make your Customised Plan. This plan is like a map to help you find your job.

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**The plan says:**

- what you're good at and what you're interested in
- what you need to succeed
- what you can offer, with a task list – a list of the things you can do for an employer.

You can use lists and photos. Put them together in a booklet or even a computer presentation – powerpoint. That way you can show who you are and what you can do well. This is what helps you present to employers.

**Negotiate**

In Customised Employment, you match your plan to jobs that an employer needs doing. From this plan you and the employer can make a job description. This job description is just for you and right for the employer too.

**When you negotiate with the employer, you try to agree:**

- what you have to do in the job
- terms of employment – things like pay, holidays and sick leave
- services and support you need to do the job well
- what you both expect from you working there.

The employer doesn't have to customise a job description. It's not the law. It's up to the employer. So keep practicing and looking for one that thinks it's a good idea.

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## More detail – people who can help

Your local Job Centre can put you in touch with a Disability Employment Advisor.

**Your Disability Employment Adviser can offer you things like:**

- an employment assessment to find out what work or training would suit you
- a referral to Work Preparation, a programme to help some disabled people
- a referral to a work programme for disabled people, like the Job Introduction Scheme, WORKSTEP or Access to Work (which pays for equipment you need to work)
- a job-matching service – the DEA can let you know about jobs that match your experience and skills
- information on employers that have the ‘two ticks’ disability symbol.

**Supported Employment organisations can offer things like:**

- help with filling in forms
- an assessment to see what help you need
- support on the job
- a job club
- practice in doing interviews.

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## An example

### Wendy Perez

My name is Wendy Perez. I'm a consultant and trainer. I help people and organisations to work better – especially to work in a person-centred way.

I work for Paradigm – a consultancy organisation. I work with people who have learning difficulties, families and staff teams.

I have personal experience. I know what it is like to be on the receiving end of bad services. I know what needs to change. So I want to help other people who have learning difficulties to make the changes they want in their lives.

I hope I inspire people.

### How I got the job

I started like anyone else – I filled in an application form. Then I went for an interview. There were more than 50 other people. None of them had a learning difficulty. In the interview, I had to do the same things as everyone else, to show that I could do the work.

I had another meeting with someone from Paradigm to talk about the work. Then they asked me to do a workshop at their annual conference – to find out what I could do.

Finally, I met Paradigm's Director. He offered me the consultant project worker job three days a week. Then, about 4 years ago, Paradigm employed me as a full member of staff. I do the same work as all the other consultants.

### How my job works

We have funding from Access to Work Scheme. Two people from Paradigm support me as mentors. Some of the funding pays for someone to help me with admin – things like my diary, booking tickets and hotels.

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In my work, I come up with the ideas for the training programme that I deliver. Sometimes I work with other consultants and sometimes on my own. There is no difference between me and any other consultant. I do the same work. I just need more time and support.

People with personal experience make good trainers because we know what questions to ask. It works for Paradigm and other organisations should do it too.

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# There is a lot of information about Self-Directed Support on In Control's website: [www.in-control.org.uk](http://www.in-control.org.uk)

Free to download from:

[www.in-control.org.uk/workandjobsfactsheets](http://www.in-control.org.uk/workandjobsfactsheets)

These are the factsheets on getting a job:

- What's a great job for me?
- Get your job in four steps
- Finding the right job
- What about benefits?
- Customised Employment
- Customised Planning
- Negotiating with employers
- Using Supported Employment
- Writing an ad.

Benefits and Disability Employment Advice:

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

## About the **in Control and me** project

A three-year project to produce accessible information for everyone who wants to direct their own support.

The project has worked with individuals and families to decide what information should be produced. This information will reach over 11,000 people a year through the national learning disability helpline. The In Control website will also have an online advice area.

More information: Lisa Dunne: 07984 111315.

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