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**Creative recruitment solutions- changing lives one job at a time.**

In the UK the numbers of people with a Learning Disability and or Autistic Spectrum conditions remain alarmingly low, with only 6% of people accessing paid employment. However, 68% of people state that they would like a paid job. This paper aims to support the organisation to identify a range of creative recruitment solutions that can help to reduce this inequality, while also meeting recruitment needs in a meaningful way.

Evidence shows that the recruitment process remains the greatest barrier to individuals with a disability accessing employment and this paper provides the opportunity to remove these barriers and provide genuine equality of opportunity.

**Supported Employment**

Supported Employment provides specialist individual support to Individuals and Employers, using the only model that has an evidence base to help people with a Disability into employment. The place, train and maintain model focuses on the strengths and talents of individuals and matches these to the business needs of employers, supporting people to layer up skills within the workplace and providing the ongoing support to all partners. Supported Employment providers value the Employer as an equal partner and the support available should be ongoing.

We believe that anyone can work, the right person, in the right job, with the right support, if they are motivated.

There are many business benefits to a truly diverse workforce and there are a range of ways to encourage and support more people with a disability to apply and succeed within the organisation. Understanding the full range of options, enables Employers to consider the best fit for each individual and the route that best matches their business needs.

Ways into Work have specialist trained Employment coaches who are responsible for Supporting the individual on their caseload, they will know the person well and can provide both practical on the job support but also ongoing advice and guidance.

**Study Programs**

Study programs are a range of opportunities that support young people still in Education that have Employment at the centre. Undertaken well, they provide an excellent opportunity for young people to gain experience within workplace and layer up the skills needed to help them achieve their future career. All study programs are aimed at young people aged 16-24, the young person remains on roll within their school or college and have a work placement at the heart of the education. There are three partners within Study Programs, the host Employer, the Education provider and Supported Employment provider.

Supported Internships are one of the better-known Study programs- young people are embedded within the workplace for a minimum of three days a week and all education should support the learning needed for this placement. Project Search sites provide the learning space on site and therefore young people attend the workplace five days a week and they undertake three rotations to give a wider experience within the workplace. The aim of ALL study programs should be to gain a paid Job and therefore although they generally last a full academic year, there needs to be flexibility to reduce this if a job becomes available. Ways into Work have experience of setting up and supporting a range of study programs from small personalised programs for one person to larger formal Supported Internships.

**Supported Apprenticeships**

With a high focus on Apprenticeships as a route to employment, Supported Apprenticeships enable individuals who may not have been able to access or cope with a more generic approach, to flourish. Maynard recommendations have been approved and therefore young people with an Education Healthcare Plan only need to be working towards entry three functional skills, rather than level one and Employers can access up to an additional £1500 in cash. Supported Employment services can provide the wrap around support needed to make sure the young person is not only layering up the skills in the workplace but also gathering the evidence needed for their portfolios. Ways into Work has experience of working with a range of providers to support individuals to access Supported Apprenticeships and have experience in the Health and Social Care sectors.

**Creative Recruitment**

Working interviews and work trials provide an effective alternative to the traditional routes to recruitment, giving people the opportunity to demonstrate their competencies rather than having to articulate them.

Many organisations proactively share their anticipated and current vacancies and proactively promote Supported Employment as one of the routes to accessing talented employees.

Sharing vacancies with a Supported Employment provider enables them to undertake the matching process and make sure candidates that are a good fit are put forward. If an individual meets the minimum criteria the department can be supported to consider a working interview or work trial. Ways into Work can facilitate this process, working with HR and departmental managers to manage these processes. If successful and the person demonstrates their competencies they will go through the rest of the recruitment process and Ways into Work can support this.

Ways into Work can support with the Induction process.

**Job Carving**

This is a process that can be effective in accessing the skills and talents of people who have more complex learning disabilities, while also meeting the business needs of an employer. Working with the business to analyse Job descriptions and identifying if all tasks need to be undertaken at that grade and if appropriate carving off essential tasks that could be undertaken by someone with a Learning Disability and freeing up other team members to focus on other more complex aspects of the role.

A recent example: Large Gas network company deals in high volumes of data that must be provided as to the regulating body. This task is essential to the organisation, requires accuracy, is highly repetitive and a task that other team members didn’t enjoy. As a result, they identified higher numbers of inaccuracies.

Working with the organisation Ways into Work helped to carve this role out of a full-time admin role, creating a 20 hour a week Data assistant post at a grade 6 and still enabling them to recruit to a 25-hour senior admin post. The individual doing the role is highly motivated, loves the repetitive nature of the work, meeting the accuracy targets and other team members have identified a greater level of satisfaction.

**Recommendation**

Identify the routes that would best meet the objectives and aims of Hampshire Hospitals Foundation Trust.

* Get strategic buy in around the commitment to increase the numbers of people with a Learning Disability.
* Start small with departments that have high levels of vacancies, staff turnover or interest in Employment for people with a learning disability.
* Ways into Work can provide briefing sessions for potential managers to increase understanding and confidence in the model.
* Promote success stories across the organisation to win the hearts and minds of other departments.

About learning disability

There are 1.5 million people with a learning disability in the UK. Unemployment among people with a learning disability is extremely high – it is estimated that up to 90% of people with a learning disability known to social services are out of work.

For those who do work, many are poorly paid, excluded from opportunities for promotion, or in jobs that do not match their skills or support needs. Many work very few hours a week and do not get the opportunity to build up their hours. When things are done right, people with a learning disability thrive in the work environment. When things are done badly, a lot of potential and talent goes to waste.

A learning disability is caused by the way the brain develops. There are many different types and most develop before a baby is born, during birth or because of a serious illness in early childhood. A learning

disability is life-long and usually having a significant impact on a person’s life. Learning disability is not mental illness or dyslexia.

People with a learning disability find it harder than others to learn, understand and communicate. People with profound and multiple learning disabilities need full-time help with every aspect of their lives – perhaps including eating, drinking, washing, dressing and toileting.

The person as an individual

If someone has a learning disability, it doesn’t mean that they can’t learn. In fact, although a person with a learning disability will learn more slowly than some people, they will often learn more carefully and may perform tasks better than others over time.

People with a learning disability often need support to learn new tasks or to understand new situations. As a learning disability, can be mild, moderate or severe – some people can do more complex tasks while others will need more basic responsibilities.

Top tips:

* let your team know that you have a person with a learning disability joining you; make sure that everyone is positive and welcoming and allocate a “workplace buddy” to help them settle in
* when expected to perform a variety of tasks, stagger progression for people with a learning disability; once confident performing one task, they can go on to learn the next
* once the individual has developed their skills in several particular areas, they can then be supported to gain promotion and extend those skills
* include people with a learning disability in all the social aspects of work – give yourself a chance to get to know them properly
* bear in mind that some parents can be a bit over-protective and may contact you directly. Be polite and involve them if you can but don’t divulge any information that might be personal to the worker as this falls under the Data Protection Act

Mental Health and Work

Mental ill-health or distress is the biggest cause of sickness absence from work, reduced productivity and staff turnover. Stress is the root cause of a lot of mental ill-health, especially anxiety and depression, but there are a wide variety of causes and types of mental illness. In practice, it can be hard to determine when ‘stress’ turns into a ‘mental health problem’.

Work-related stress is now the biggest occupational health problem in the UK

Nearly 3 in every 10 employees will have a mental health problem in any one-year – the great majority of which will be anxiety and depressive disorders

Mental health problems account for the loss of over 91 million working days each year

The person as an individual

1 in 6 adults experience the symptoms of mental health problems at any one time. It could be me or you. The vast majority of people with mental health problems are diagnosed and treated by their GP and treatment may be offered in the form of medication or talking therapies or a combination of the two. Most of these people are capable of continuing to work productively.

Individuals may be encouraged to develop a coping strategy as part of their care. This often involves noting signs of a possible relapse and taking pre-emptive action to avoid it e.g. cutting down on work or social activity, being careful about drinking alcohol, taking exercise and finding time to relax. It is important that managers support the employee at this first warning stage. Small and inexpensive adjustments can often prevent a more costly period of illness.

Top tips:

* do not worry about definitions and diagnoses, this is unlikely to be helpful
* talk to the person; understand their problems or issues and work based on the person’s skills and capabilities
* most people who have on-going mental health problems can continue to work successfully – often with no support or only minimal support. Where support is needed, managers and employees can often work together to ensure that it is flexible to suit varying health needs
* establish a relationship of trust; it may then be possible to informally sound out how the person is doing without having to take special measures
* use a holistic approach to promoting the mental and physical well-being of your staff
* if a person has experienced a period of sickness absence and re-entry, it may be helpful to agree when they have reached the stage of ‘business as usual’; at this point the most appropriate response is to use normal management processes to review their performance, needs and work planning

Autism and Asperger syndrome

Autism is a condition which affects the way a person sees the world, processes information and interacts with other people. People who have autism typically find it difficult to develop social relationships, to communicate with ease and to think in the abstract. Although a minority of people with autism have learning disabilities, others have average or higher than average intelligence and are often highly educated. People who fall into the latter group usually have a form of autism called Asperger syndrome. Autism covers a wide spectrum of conditions that together are known as Autistic Spectrum Disorders (ASD).

The person as an individual

Remember that each person with an ASD is an individual. These guidelines provide hints and ideas, but you will need to work with the employee (and if appropriate, their supporter) to find out what particular difficulties they may encounter and what adjustments and techniques will help them in the workplace. Once settled in, people with autism and Asperger syndrome often become highly valued staff members and many managers who work with them find that the skills they develop thus – particularly in prioritising work and in communicating what they expect from staff – benefit the workplace as a whole.

People with autism and Asperger syndrome often have numerous (and sometimes exceptional) skills which can be applied to many tasks, particularly those that require attention to detail, follow clear procedures or are highly structured.

Points to note - people with an ASD;

* may have difficulties in transferring skills and knowledge to new tasks or environments
* may not always be able to tell when you are joking or being sarcastic
* may say or ask things which other colleagues may judge to be inappropriate
* may find it harder to master a task immediately and might need repetition; but once the task is learnt, they are likely to perform it consistently well
* are often highly meticulous; they may become very anxious if they are unable to perform perfectly

Top Tips:

* provide clear and structured training
* have a mentor or ‘buddy’ in the workplace
* ensure that instructions are precise
* ensure the day is structured with clear priorities e.g. a regular timetable for tasks
* back up verbal instructions with written ones
* ask the employee to repeat back instructions they have just heard
* break a large task up into steps
* compile information about the job and workplace into a file
* give support with social conversations e.g. provide some suggestions for topics of conversation so that the person with an ASD gains a better understanding of what people expect from socialising with colleagues
* explain 'unwritten rules’ e.g. making tea, to avoid any misunderstanding and help the person with an ASD fit in with their colleagues
* for reviews; brief, frequent one-to-one sessions are better than long sessions
* give feedback which is honest, constructive and consistent