

Fact Sheet 11: Jobsupport service model for people with moderate intellectual disability

Jobsupport is a specialist open employment provider which began as a demonstration project in 1986 for people with moderate intellectual disability. Jobsupport operates throughout Sydney and in the northern suburbs of Melbourne.

Jobsupport's approach to training people with intellectual disability is based on an applied behaviour analysis model developed in the United States. The early demonstration set out to show that with the right type of supports people with higher levels of intellectual disability could succeed in the open labour market.

Jobsupport's contemporary service is specifically designed for people with moderate or higher intellectual disability who require structured task analysis and instruction, and an individually customised job.

Key elements of the Jobsupport model

1. Structured job search—it is rarely if ever possible to place a person with moderate intellectual disability through an advertised vacancy. Jobsupport targets large employers with sufficient volume of routine work to customise, or create, a job specifically for the person with moderate intellectual disability. Job creation is about building and selling a compelling business case to the employer. This provides a benefit to employers by addressing high staff turnover, job task avoidance, or releasing experienced staff from performing routine tasks. Structured job search draws on Jobsupport's extensive employer database built up over many years; 70 per cent of placements are achieved through initial telephone qualifying, 30 per cent through repeat business.

2. Job analysis—the consultant spends somewhere between a day and a week at the employer's site to establish the employer's needs and work out how to customise a job: tasks to be performed; standards to be met for tasks; and to determine supervision and occupational health and safety requirements. The resulting 'Support Agreement' between the job seeker, employer and Jobsupport is a written document that outlines the agreed tasks, standards and supports required for the job, and how this will be monitored to ensure job quality.

3. Training—employment consultants complete a Postgraduate Certificate in applied behaviour analysis and are mentored by Jobsupport managers with experience in practical application of the method. The training of people with moderate intellectual disability is delivered at the work site to the agreed criteria set out in the 'Support Agreement', i.e. the so-called 'place and train' model of support. On average, the initial assessment, job analysis and job customisation to achieve a good job/worker match takes 140 hours. On average, the onsite training over the first six months in a job takes 260 hours.

4. Ongoing support—even slight changes in the work environment (e.g. staff, equipment, or process changes) are a real threat to employment because the person with moderate intellectual disability lacks the ability to adapt. Ongoing support involves regular contact with the employer/supervisor and employee to ensure the job standards in the 'Support Agreement' are maintained, and onsite retraining provided when required. Ongoing support is provided to the employee and employer for the life of the job.