

Supporting Disabled People Into Employment: Review of Northern Way and Access to Employment Projects in Bradford District

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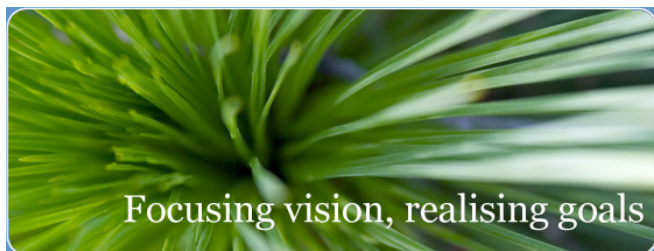
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*Strategic research and development
for the public and third sector*



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Disclaimer:

This report has been prepared on behalf of the City of Bradford Metropolitan District Council. All the conclusions and recommendations are the authors' and do not necessarily reflect the standpoint of the above organisation.

Acknowledgements:

We would like to thank the staff and clients of the projects who gave up their time to take part in this evaluation and who contributed so openly and honestly. Particular thanks to those organisations who were also being evaluated by ECOTEC but did not complain!

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1. Introduction

- 1.1. The City of Bradford Metropolitan District Council (CBMDC) is responsible for the one of the largest local authority districts in England. The district faces specific challenges with respect to economic development, not least due to its industrial history, its demographics and the higher than average number of super output areas in the district which feature in the most deprived quintile according to the index of deprivation.
- 1.2. CBMDC has a tradition of delivering economic development services for its population aimed at tackling economic deprivation and disadvantage. More recently the Council has introduced an Access to Employment programme, launched in February 2007, aimed at providing additional support for those facing multiple barriers to accessing employment. In addition, the Council has been able to take advantage of initiatives occurring on a wider geographical basis, the Leeds City Region and the Northern Way are two such examples. The latter has provided additional opportunities for CBMDC to participate in projects that focus on helping disabled people and those with long term illnesses to find employment. The Northern Way, in particular, has been a source of funds to pilot services aimed at 'marginalised people'.
- 1.3. The Northern Way is a unique initiative, bringing together the cities and regions of the North of England to work together to improve the sustainable economic development of the North towards the level of more prosperous regions. Formed as a partnership between the three northern Regional Development Agencies (Yorkshire Forward, Northwest Regional Development Agency and One NorthEast), it also works with local authorities, universities and the private sector.

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- 1.4. Through Yorkshire Forward, CBMDC accessed Northern Way funding to address low employment rates for those suffering long term illnesses and disabled people in the District. The programme ran in two phases; the first phase in 2006/07 funded six projects. A further six projects received funding in the second phase, two of the organisations receiving second phase funding had received funding in 2006/07. One of the organisations receiving Northern Way funding also received Access to Employment funding to run the project for a second year. This evaluation concentrates on the projects which ended in March 2008. For ease of reference the term NW/A2E projects is used throughout the report.
- 1.5. All of the projects were contracted to deliver specific outputs (see table 1) against which they were monitored, however, the CBMDC's longer term objectives for the outcomes for the projects were less easy to measure. The Council's aim was to use the projects as a learning experience both for themselves and for the organisations delivering the outputs. This report therefore, assesses the success of the projects in terms of meeting their contractual obligations but concentrates on the learning points that have emerged from the programme as a whole.

Table 1 Total Outputs achieved by NW/A2E projects in Bradford

Output	07/08	06/07	total
Employment Support	158	61	219
Skills Assist	142	39	181
Business Support	34	0	34

- 1.6. There are of course many learning points that emerged from the projects that are detailed below. However, there are two points that we would like to highlight here. The first is the high number of people that the projects were able to help in a very short space of time. The client

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group is notoriously difficult one with which to engage for mainstream employment and skills providers, yet the agencies running the projects were able to quickly get access to relatively large numbers of people who wanted to improve their employment opportunities and/or skills. The projects have demonstrated therefore, that the third sector can provide a valuable route to reach out to disabled people and those with long term illnesses.

- 1.7. The second point relates to the length of the projects. Despite their success in reaching out to the client group, all the projects reported difficulties encountered as a result of the short time scales available to deliver the outcomes. The main difficulty being the amount of time required to build trust and to move clients from their base point to a positive outcome. The characteristics of the client group are such that many individuals (especially those dealing with learning disabilities, mental health issues and any disability which has kept them out of the labour market for a prolonged period) require long term support. Short interventions such as the Northern Way projects can provide valuable information about what works and what does not, but of themselves should not be seen as part of the provision of services for the client group. Therefore, these projects should not be judged on their hard outcomes, but rather on the soft outcomes and the lessons that can be taken from them to improve long term, mainstream provision.

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2. Methodology

2.1. Introduction

2.1.1. CBMDC commissioned the evaluation research in order to discover how well the projects had met the aims of the Northern Way employment programme (see below) and their own Access to Employment strategy, and to identify the lessons that had been learnt. The objectives for the evaluation determined that the research should be largely based on a qualitative methodology.

2.1.2. While it is important to assess the extent to which the projects achieved their output targets and to consider issues such as value for money based on unit costs per intervention, these types of measures are most valuable when being used to compare performance and to judge the results of similar interventions one against the other. In the case of the NW/A2E projects, the interventions are not similar and the target group does differ between projects making comparisons difficult.

2.1.3. The evaluation was designed to uncover all changes resulting from any aspect of the projects (e.g. including the application process); it includes intended as well as unintended effects, negative as well as positive, and long term as well as short term effects.

2.1.4. The research consisted of two phases. One phase consisted of background research to understand the purpose for the projects, the overall objectives for the programme and the commissioning process. This was largely accomplished through desk research and telephone interviews. The second phase consisted of primary research with the project managers, the frontline staff and beneficiaries of the projects. This consisted of face to face interviews, telephone interviews and group work.

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2.2. Measuring Impact

2.2.1. As the Northern Way employment programme provided the bulk of the funding for the projects, its objectives were taken as the starting point for the assessment of the outcomes:

- To establish effective mechanisms to engage with marginalised people who face multiple barriers, working in local communities and settings where mainstream provision is unable to reach.
- To develop clear and appropriate signposting and pathways to existing forms of support including careers advice, training, mainstream job support and employment opportunities.
- To enhance engagement activities with employers, improving HR practises and occupational health provision in order to improve recruitment and retention
- To work with health professionals to improve condition managements in order that individuals are better able to cope with the health conditions that led them to leave employment and can find appropriate ways to manage in a work setting

2.2.2. These objectives are similar enough to those of the Access to Employment strategy to allow read across to both initiatives. The evaluation therefore sought to answer the following meta questions-

- Has activity within the projects increased access to employment advice and support?
- Has the activity increased access to employment?
- What is the impact of participation for individuals/ communities?
- What are the lessons learnt for the organisation / stakeholders.

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2.2.3. At a more detailed level the evaluation assessed:

- how resources that contribute to the programme or activity including income, staff, volunteers and equipment were utilised?
- how effective was the management of the programme or activity in delivering agreed objectives and reaching targets?
- what the organisations did with the inputs in order to achieve the targets – e.g. advice, training, counselling?
- what were the direct products of a programme of activities including agreed output targets, indicator outputs and soft outcomes for organisations and beneficiaries?
- whether the project contributed to strategic objectives for Northern Way, CBMDC and the organisations involved?
- could the same impact have been reached through different programmes or activities? What has been the benefit of delivery outside mainstream services?
- what are the needs of the sector? Which specific needs are the different organisations best positioned to address?

2.2.4. The data from the interviews was written up and analysed based on the emerging themes and grouped into the following sections to ensure the information could be easily digested.

- Setting the Baseline
- Positive Outcomes for Beneficiaries
- Negative Outcomes for Beneficiaries
- Impact on Beneficiaries
- Positive Outcomes for Organisations
- Negative Outcomes for Organisations
- Impact on Organisations

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- Bradford MBC Support
- Engaging Employers

2.2.5. The conclusions and recommendations which emerged from the lessons learnt from the projects have been compiled under four headings:

- Processes
- Capacity and capability
- Engaging beneficiaries
- Engaging employers

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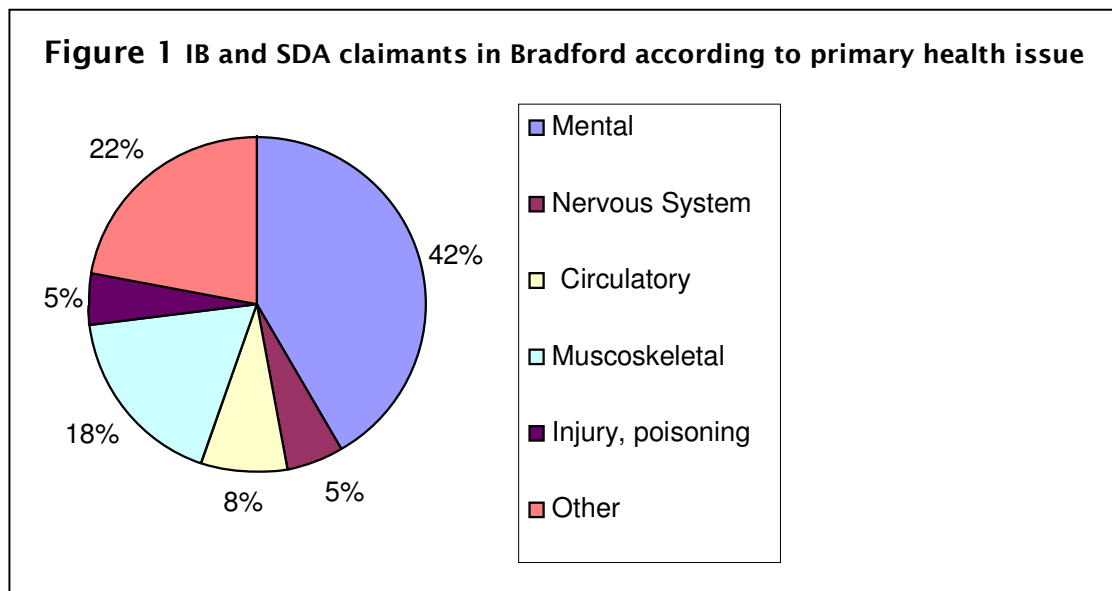
3. Employment and Disability

3.1. Disability characteristics and statistics

- 3.1.1. The term 'disabled' covers a large range of mental, physical, and emotional conditions, which may affect the individual's capacity to be employed, and their needs regarding support, quite differently. Understanding the characteristics of this client group therefore is extremely important in order to ensure services are properly designed. At present, a lot of information exists in different places, about different segments of the group but there is no single authoritative source of data at national or local level.
- 3.1.2. There is no official statistic that counts disabled people (based on the definition in the Disability Discrimination Act of 1995) and therefore proxy statistics are used to estimate the size of the client group. Disabled people exist in all parts of our communities (representing 20% of the total working age population) but they are less likely to be economically independent than their non-disabled counterparts (50% as compared to 81%). One statistic that is sometimes used as a proxy is the number of people receiving Incapacity Benefits (IB) and Severe Disability Allowances (SDA).
- 3.1.3. Department of Work and Pensions (DWP) data for IB and SDA claimants in Bradford reveals that in May 2007 over 24,000 people were in receipt of benefits, representing about half of the total number of claimants for workless benefits. Of the IB and SDA claimants, three quarters had been in receipt of benefits for over two years and over half for more than 5 years. This is a very significant statistic because the longer people remain on benefits and out of employment, the greater the issues they face in trying to resume economic activity and therefore the more in depth, the support they require.
- 3.1.4. DWP also collect information about the primary health issue for claimants (Figure 1), which show that over 40% cite mental health problems as their primary issue. This data conflicts with the information from the Labour

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Force Survey¹, which reports that nationally, in 2001, the most common condition cited by disabled people was musculoskeletal problems (34.8%), followed by chest/breathing (13%), heart, (11%) and mental health (9%). The difference between the two data sets is likely to be explained by the fact that DWP are collecting information about the primary cause **preventing** claimants being able to work. In many cases where the claimant has been without employment for a long period, this may have to do with stress and anxiety rather than the actual physical condition which caused them to become workless in the first place..



3.1.5. Understanding these variations within the client group is essential in order to know where the greatest effort needs to be placed. When the word disabled is mentioned, most service delivery organisations immediately think of people in wheelchairs, and people with sight or hearing difficulties. In fact, these represent quite a small proportion of all disabled people. The changing proportion of disabled people according to age is also significant. The DWP's claimant statistics show that in Bradford over a third of the claimants are aged between 50 and 59 years old. This is a time of life

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when, traditionally, people have been looking towards retirement rather than facing new employment challenges.

3.1.6. DWP reports their claimant counts against the pre 2004 ward boundaries rather than super output areas. However, there is strong (but not direct) correlation between number of claimants and the more deprived areas of Bradford. The link between deprivation and employment restricting disability is causal in both directions, a topic too broad for this research, but suffice to note that many disabled people are suffering multiple deprivations that affect their aspirations and opportunities for employment.

3.1.7. As mentioned above, disabled people form a varied group and their needs vary depending upon the nature of their disability. Disabled people also have differing rates of employment according to the nature of their disability. For example people with sight and hearing difficulties (each representing less than 2% of the client group) have employment rates of 44% and 68% respectively. While people with learning disabilities and with mental health problems have unemployment rates of about 80%. 60% of employers readily admit that they would not employ someone with a history of mental illness.

3.2. Government Policy

3.2.1. The government's current strategy is to try and reverse the rise in inactivity and, in particular, Incapacity Benefit claims. The overarching aims of these policies are to make work relatively more rewarding and to help people obtain work that is tailored to their individual needs. The Government has put in place a multi-layered approach to helping IB claimants find suitable employment:

- New Deal for Disabled People (NDDP);
- Access to Work scheme providing individuals with equipment and support they need to start or remain in employment;
- Deprived Areas Fund (DAF);
- Pathways-to-Work programme and, more generally, the Jobcentre Plus

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system.

- 3.2.2. The NDDP and Access to Work schemes have been in place for some years and are not aimed specifically at IB claimants. The DAF was introduced in 2007 and is currently available to City Strategy pathfinders (it will be subsumed into the Working Neighbourhoods Fund in due course). The Pathways-to-Work programme, launched in Bradford in the Autumn of 2007, is aimed at IB claimants coming on to the register since its launch and is open to previous claimants on a voluntary basis. Pathways to Work introduces a mandatory element in that participants must see a personal adviser regularly.
- 3.2.3. Under Pathways-to-Work, Jobcentre Plus (through their contractors) and the NHS work together to refocus people on their ability and aspirations for a return to work. The programme offers to all claimants: a personal adviser; NHS rehabilitation support; local partnership with the NDDP; a £40 a week return to work credit for one year; and GPs and employers' involvement to prevent discouragement from working.
- 3.2.4. The programme was piloted before being introduced to the Jobcentre Plus districts with the greatest proportions of the working age population on Incapacity Benefit. The target is to get 900,000 claimants back to work by October 2008. In the original pilot areas outflow rates from IB increased on average by 8% relative to the national average.

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4. Research Findings

4.1. Introduction

- 4.1.1. The research assessed the 2006/07 projects separately to the 2007/08 projects as the first round of projects had completed by March 2007 and the evaluation started in March 2008. Annex 1 contains a summary of the 2006/07 projects and their outcomes. It is risky to draw too many conclusions from the management information and reports submitted for these projects but the available data does seem to support the findings from the evaluation of the 2007/08 projects. Two of the latter projects had also received funding in 2006/07 and their experiences from that round are incorporated into the findings below.
- 4.1.2. The projects are also part of an overall evaluation of the Northern Way employment programme across the three RDA regions being undertaken by ECOTEC. For example the project led by Bradford Alliance for Community Care, called the Employment and Disability Partnership, is featured in the Interim Report as best practice case study (ECOTEC, 2007, p5) and three of the 2007/08 projects have been chosen for that evaluation. Some of the projects have also carried out their own internal evaluation or commissioned independent evaluation themselves.
- 4.1.3. The quantitative evaluation of the projects is relatively straightforward. Projects were set targets and most of those targets were achieved or indeed surpassed, for example one of the first round projects, the Cellar Project, nearly doubled its target, and another achieved a 50% improvement on its target. The Council maintained a close working relationship with the project managers and the performance of the projects was closely monitored. A total of 12 projects were funded for about £475,000 and helped about 400 individuals with support or training aimed at improving their chances of finding employment, and 34 firms received support regarding employing disabled people. Added to these agreed output targets have been other outputs such as over 100 workers from public sector and third sector organisations operating in the care community or employment support

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have been engaged in awareness raising and training.

4.1.4. In addition to the quantitative measures of targets and outputs achieved through the NW/A2E programme other measures of success considered in this evaluation are the more qualitative outcomes that relate directly to the benefits for intended beneficiaries of the programme. These tend to be less tangible and therefore less easily counted than outputs and include factors such as increased self-esteem, self-confidence and an individual's sense of increased wellbeing and inclusion. Research evidence shows that enhancement in these areas provides people with experiences that are essential if they are to move forward out of exclusion and unemployment into participation, positive activities and employment. In assessing the quality of outcomes the evaluation work explored the costs and benefits to both individuals and organisations.

4.1.5. The qualitative research was carried out on the six projects receiving funding in 2007/08 (see annex 2 for project summaries) led by.

- Mind Bradford
- Bradford Alliance on Community Care (BACC)
- Bradford District Care Trust
- Mind the Gap
- DISC
- Bradford Chamber of Commerce and Industry

Of these, five projects provided services direct to beneficiaries as all or part of their project and the sixth was a research project focussing on the attitudes of employers towards employing disabled people. This latter project, led by Bradford Chamber of Commerce and Industry, was included in the research but most of the analysis below refers to the other five projects

4.2. Setting the Baseline

4.2.1. All five organisations involved in delivering services reported using a

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variety of similar assessment exercises to establish the baseline position of each potential beneficiary at the start of their involvement with the programme. For example DISC used the Rickter self-assessment tool, which utilises neuro-linguistic programming to enable service users to score themselves on a range of issues and the worker to complete a similar measurement of the client from their perspective. The difference between these scores provides the basis for motivational and challenging work with the client. These are based on a neuro- linguistic programming model that addresses and measures the client's status within key issues that may affect employability.

4.2.2. DISC found this tool excellent at creating personal drive and motivation.

The following topics were addressed with beneficiaries:

- Confidence/motivation/self esteem
- Relationships/ family conflict and breakdown
- Personal skills - working with others/problem solving/attitudes to authority /communication skills/time management
- Dealing with stress/behavioural difficulties
- Drug\ alcohol misuse/relapse awareness and prevention
- Money/debt management/benefit advice
- Ill-health and disability (including mental health)
- Offending history and disclosure
- Skills issues - basic skills/learning difficulties/vocational skills
- Housing issues

4.2.3. Similarly people attending the service at Bradford District Care Trust's Rehabilitation and Recovery Services are referred into this service by a mental health professional and are assessed and monitored in relation to their medical condition. However in the Vocational Service project people were assessed and assigned RAG status related to their employability potential e.g.

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- Red - in-house supported activity at the centre
- Amber – able to attend mainstream activities outside the centre with staff and other service users
- Green - able to attend mainstream activities independently

4.2.4. A programme of support and activities was then designed to move people through the various stages.

4.2.5. These frameworks provided project workers and beneficiaries with a baseline for individual action plans, milestones and progression routes that were tailored to help people overcome their personal barriers as well as meet individual potential and ability.

4.3. Positive Outcomes for Beneficiaries

4.3.1. On interviewing beneficiaries from the projects it became quickly evident that each person has individual needs that arise from complex life histories and they are individually positioned across an employability continuum that ranges from people unable to contemplate work to those “ready for work” and needing support to move on.

4.3.2. All the projects in the program utilized a user lead approach to project delivery. Although time consuming initially, this required them to identify each person’s specific needs and create a bespoke solution or pathway for them to follow so that progress towards goals can be monitored and evaluated through time. For example, the Work in Mind projects provided services such as training; personal support needs, and in-house volunteering opportunities. Their aim was to raise skills and experience levels as well as improve self esteem and confidence so that employment or access to mainstream services in the “real world” becomes a more realistic option for people in the future.

4.3.3. Importantly organisations involved in the projects had specific expertise in working with target groups that enabled them to respond directly to the needs of potential beneficiaries. For example Mind the Gap, an organisation working with people to access skills and support in the creative sector are

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uniquely placed to provide targeted and focused support in this field, where as Mind in Bradford specializes in working with people with mental health needs and DISC has expertise in dealing with substance abuse and learning disabilities.

4.3.4. The case studies below illustrate some of the different outcomes for people who have participated in the NW/A2E programme and their response to service provision. Overall the projects developed appropriate frameworks in line with the objectives of the NW/A2E intervention, specifically:

- to develop pathways to support people into and during employment. Local people will be able to access support and enable informed decisions to be made re: appropriate education, training and employment opportunities;
- to identify barriers and develop solutions to accessibility and the accessibility needs of socially excluded people. Partner involvement will catalyse the identification of barriers to employment from the different disadvantaged groups. Activities will seek to remove barriers through a mixture of brokerage and mentoring activity and through direct work with employers.

4.3.5. As each person was starting with different potential, ability and aspirations the case studies below illustrate the variety of ways in which barriers were identified and pathways out of social exclusion towards employment were achieved through the program.

4.3.6. The examples include:

- Progression to positive activities / volunteering
- Progression to training
- Progression to employment
- Progression to self employment
- Progression to employment support

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4.4. Progression to Positive Activities / Volunteering

4.4.1. Many participants in the program, starting out as socially excluded and workless, have been successfully engaged and progressed to taking part in positive activities or volunteering. In many cases in order to achieve this step people required confidence building, counselling and in some cases practical help with housing and benefits before they felt confident enough to participate in the activities. There is no doubt that their journey to employment will take significantly longer than the six to nine months support available through the NW/A2E programme. However many have made significant progress from inactivity to participation as a prelude to future employment.

Case Study 1

George

George an unemployed lone parent was referred to Working Support at DISC by Job Centre Plus in November after becoming unemployed following a heart attack. Previously he had worked as a mechanic but his illness had left him unable to return to such a physically demanding job. He went straight to DISC on the day he was referred and says he hasn't looked back since.

At DISC he worked with a specialist advisor and a volunteer mentor. Working Support arranged a placement for him at the Keighley Furniture workshop at Springfield Mills doing woodworking and then as a volunteer with the Grassroots Project run by Keighley Volunteer Centre. Grass Roots offer DIY and gardening to older people and disabled people. Working Support funding also enabled George to take driving lessons and he will be taking his test in a few months. As the project closes Working Support have arranged for him to continue to participate in the workshop and ultimately he is hoping to take up part-time employment with the Keighley Furniture project when a vacancy becomes available. George says that Working Support has given him a new lease of life and it is the best thing

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that has happened to him. He has pride in his work now and has noticed the impact that it is having on his relationship with his children. He now feels more motivated to do things with them and has more confidence caring for them.

“When I first came to DISC I was out of it altogether I felt like a cabbage at home, really down in the dumps and I thought I’d never work again. Since I came here I have got the confidence to get on with stuff. There is always someone here to talk to, always someone here to give you advice. I have gone from doing nothing much to being the busiest person I know. All the staff are brilliant. It’s given me a new lease of life and it’s the best thing that has happened to me since the heart attack – I feel proud now I can get out and do things with my kids

4.4.2. Although George has not moved into paid employment as a direct result of NW/A2E support it has enabled him to overcome his depression and social exclusion and progress to a point where paid employment is now a viable option for him in the future.

4.5. Progression to Training

4.5.1. A second case study highlights the positive benefits for the majority of beneficiaries who have undertaken some form of training as part of the NW/A2E programme. Training opportunities were wide ranging and tailored to meet individual needs providing people with the chance to overcome personal obstacles and also embrace new opportunities. It is important to remember here that many are vulnerable people who are not ready to access mainstream training, rather a positive learning experience in a secure environment may be a precursor to moving on to further mainstream training – all felt they had made significant progress.

Case Study 2

Ruth

Ruth was referred by Job Centre Plus to Working Support in February 2008. At Working Support she has received counselling and support to increase

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her self confidence and she has just started Level 1 & 2 training in catering at Springfield Mill. Ruth has also undertaken computer training through the scheme.

“Its been wonderful coming here, no-one makes negative judgements of me, when I went to the Job Centre it made me cry - I felt as though they were laughing at me, because I look OK - I could see they had me down as a benefit scrounger, they don't understand that things have happened to me - and I am not well. I used to work full time but I can't do my old job any more. I think they were trying to push me into something so that they could tick one of their boxes.

(Ruth, NW/A2E beneficiary)

4.5.2. Ruth reported very negative experiences with mainstream services - she felt that they failed to recognise her mental health needs and were only interested in ticking boxes. Through Involvement with the Working Support service she is now confident enough to start training and spoke positively about the possibility of moving into employment in catering such as school meals once her training is complete. Being able to link between the Working Support team and the Springfield Mill training opportunity in the same building was a key factor in Ruth's success. It is doubtful that she would have gone to another unfamiliar environment to take up training in such a short space of time.

4.5.3. Beneficiaries of the training courses provided by the BACC led project also reported distrust of mainstream services and institutions. The timing was particularly bad for advertising the courses as they coincided with a lot of negative press about Government initiatives to 'force' people on Incapacity Benefit (IB) back into work. Take up of the training places, advertised as being for people on IB only, was at first very slow for this reason. Once permission had been gained to widen the eligibility to the training and the misconception was addressed, attendance was good.

4.6. Progression to Employment

4.6.1. Projects were able to report very positive outcomes for people

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progressing into paid employment, frequently following on from training and experience of unpaid / volunteer activities. Mind in Bradford and Disc in particular reported positive outcomes. One lady (who asked to be kept anonymous) who attended the Mind sessions and was successful in obtaining full time employment described how the service had helped her regain sufficient confidence to attempt joining the labour market once more, and then continued support to tackle her anxieties as she progressed through the various stages of finding and starting and work:

“Now, I’m going to be helping people like me who can’t manage without some help. Before, when I was working, before I had to stop, I was working in a shop. I never would have believed I could do a job like this. ... I feel like my whole life has changed again, but this time for the better.” NW/A2E Beneficiary

Case Study 3

Craig

Craig was referred to Working Support by Job Centre Plus in September 2007. Craig explained that he been evicted from a hostel because he became angry and abusive – coping with frustration was an issue for him and that he was currently homeless.

When he arrived at DISC he expressed an interested in catering and his Working Support Advisor enrolled him on the NCFE Level 1 Award in Catering at Springfield Mill. He has now completed Level 1 and Level 2 and is planning on progression to Level 3. His training has enabled him to obtain paid employment at Wetherspoons while he continues with his training.

Craig was totally positive about the support he had received from Working Support.

“Everyone has been brilliant – I never thought I could get a job I was written off at school, and I love doing the cooking”,

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(Craig, NW/A2E beneficiary)

“Craig has come on in leaps and bounds; he has good ability with catering skills, has helped other members of the team and will do very well”

(Sheila Hastings, Catering Tutor)

4.6.2. Craig is a great success story for the DISC service however his situation demonstrates the need for on-going support as the project closes his progress is currently threatened by his homeless situation.

4.7. Progression to Self Employment

4.7.1. This example illustrates the benefits of the flexible opportunities that the programme created and how the user led approach successfully realised a personal ambition that has taken one beneficiary out of worklessness and into self employment.

Case Study 4

Dianne

Dianne was referred to DISC via Job Centre Plus. At DISC she received some therapeutic treatment as well as training that included CLAIT and a sixteen day full time dog grooming course leading to her setting up as a self employed dog groomer.

“It has been a hard time for me, but thankfully having been referred to DISC you have made my life more tolerant and made all my dreams come true. I have my own business now doing what I love and that will really change my life. A big thanks!

(Dianne, NW/A2E beneficiary)

4.8. Progression to Employment Support

4.8.1. Very few of the individual projects were set up to provide employment support and as most services were closing at the end of March people gaining employment through the scheme were referred to other agencies

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for any further support. However one of the projects, the Mind the Gap Actors Agency, was set up specifically to provide support for *working* actors. It is a unique service providing an employment agency service based on a “real world” model. Initial beneficiaries are Mind the Gap company members and people living in Objective 2 priority 3 areas of Bradford. The driver for the project was that members of the company were successfully finding work only to discover there were gaps in support that made it difficult for them to undertake the work.

4.8.2. Two actors from the company shared their experience for the evaluation:

Case Study 5

Edmund

Edmund successfully auditioned for a part in “Cold Blood” a murder drama for ITV in 2006 but soon found that the opportunity presented him with a host of problems - there was no infrastructure in place to ensure he had an appropriate contract, support him on set during filming or advice as to how working would impact on his benefits.

Now as a member of the Agency when Edmund was recently offered an opportunity in a Radio 4 drama the Agency was ready to help him with the contracting process so that he was able to undertake the role with appropriate support and give him benefits advice

“After Cold Blood I didn’t know if I could do Radio 4 – I need support in the studio and help so that I didn’t loose my benefits through working. The Agency was able to make sure that the contract was legally sound and that support costs were built in. So I could go and take the part”

(Edmund, NW/A2E beneficiary)

4.8.3. Similarly Kevin, who had been with the company for 10 years, is now accessing more work after the Agency has helped him with a C.V., professional photographs and a show reel of his work so that he now has a professional portfolio to showcase his work and promote his skills in the

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same way as any other actor.

4.9. Negative Outcomes for Beneficiaries

- 4.9.1. As part of the evaluation process beneficiaries were asked to share any negative experiences that resulted from participation in the program. All respondents at DISC and Mind in Bradford said that the only negative for them was that the projects were short term and just as they had found sympathetic support that they felt confident in accessing it was disappearing. Similar concerns about where such support would be found in the future were expressed by the trainees for the BACC courses.
- 4.9.2. Limited timescales impacted significantly on beneficiaries especially at the point when the projects were gaining visibility and recruiting increasing numbers of people who were entering the programmes in the final quarter. Although people were signposted to alternative provision they did not accrue the full benefits of the schemes.
- 4.9.3. Service users in this position expressed a significant degree of disenchantment as a result – seeing services for vulnerable people as “here today and gone tomorrow” and not a priority for service providers. This highlighted the reality that it takes time to move vulnerable people across barriers to employment and there is a need for a longer term view that recognises this.
- 4.9.4. People expressed this negativity even though in all cases organisations had provided an exit strategy for them; but some people, having taken first steps were not ready to move to another new scheme in an unfamiliar environment and feared falling backwards without the support of the scheme. Typically respondents said that they would not call on mainstream employment, support or training services if they found themselves in difficulties once the projects were closed.

Steve

“I don’t know what I will do now this is going I have only been coming for a couple of months and am getting myself sorted. I have got a flat now and

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am doing woodwork for the flat and driving lessons - they have got my birth certificate and passport for me as I had identity issues. They have arranged for me to go to SACAR (A self help agency for people with Aspergers) but I won't go to Pathways, I didn't like it there - I could see they were making negative judgements.

(Steven, NW/A2E beneficiary)

Daryl

I'll just go back to what I was doing before - now this has gone - I hope they will put on some new courses, I learnt to do proper handwriting and go on the computer but I couldn't go to a college I am not ready for that yet"

(Daryl, NW/A2E beneficiary)

4.9.5. In contrast respondents from organisations such as Mind the Gap who applied for and received continuation funding separately for a further year through the Access to Employment programme, reported no negative outcomes. In contrast they felt they had already benefited significantly and were able to express greater confidence in their future, acknowledging that they would need the ongoing support of the Agency.

4.10. Impact on Beneficiaries

4.10.1. These findings suggest that people participating in the Bradford NW/A2E projects have had very positive experiences and report beneficial outcomes from the experience. The services provided have been able to respond flexibly and sympathetically to individual needs across a wide range of support and training requirements. People who were previously disengaged and socially excluded have progressed via training and support and individualised packages to inclusion and enhanced employability.

4.10.2. However the short term nature of the projects has had negative impacts and service users expressed a somewhat cynical view that they are weary of being passed from one short term project to another:

"No-one really cares outside here - it's all just to meet government targets"

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so they can pat themselves on the back and get a pay rise”

Steve (NW/A2E beneficiary)

4.10.3. These attitudes alert us to the danger of people becoming fatigued and isolated again as they struggle to keep pace with the constantly changing support services landscape.

4.11. Positive Outcomes for Organisations

4.11.1. This section of the report considers how effective the management of the program and activity was in delivering agreed objectives in terms of project delivery and impact on participating organisations and support from Bradford MBC.

4.11.2. All participating organisations felt that they had benefited from the NW/A2E initiative across a range of indicators. It had enabled organisations to:

- Gain expertise/knowledge in new areas such as employment support and vocational guidance with potential to extend their core offer
- Pilot new models of service delivery
- Inform policy reviews and strategic planning
- Bid for funds not previously accessible
- Enhance partnership working and networks
- Raise their profiles - with beneficiaries, other organisations or the council

4.12. Expertise/knowledge in new areas

4.12.1. All organisations in the programme reported capacity building benefits in terms of new knowledge and skills as a result of the NW/A2E intervention. In the main they were organisations that historically provided support and training activities with little in-house experience of employment and vocational service provision. In most cases the need to extend existing services to include employability was driven by requests from service users. Further prompted by the focus on Incapacity Benefit

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claimants by central and local government and mainstream employment services; organisations such as Mind in Bradford and DISC saw the NW/A2E initiative as an opportunity to access resources to begin to meet this need.

4.12.2. The Chamber, on the other hand, experienced the opposite knowledge transfer experience. Already well versed in the 'everyday' business needs of its members and other similar enterprises, the Chamber was keen to widen its sphere of experience to include more specialist issues such as employing disabled people. It also wanted to broaden its exposure to an area of work (understanding the needs of disabled employees) more normally associated with third sector organisations rather than mainstream business support ones.

4.12.3. Mind the Gap Actors Agency were positive that the initiative had brought expertise and skills to the service that were previously lacking. Specifically in order to facilitate membership of the agency they had to gain experience of contracting and employment law, as well as the benefits system in order to advise actors of the potential impacts of working on low income families in relation to benefit readjustment. As a result of this input they are now able to create contracts around permitted hours work rules so that benefits are not affected when actors are working and feel that they are now able to offer an enhanced service to company members.

4.12.4. Similarly Bradford District Care Trust found that although the Vocational Services Project is effectively finished the workers from the project will take the skills and knowledge they have gained back to existing day care services.

4.13. Piloting new models of service delivery

4.13.1. With the exception of projects such as Mind the Gap Actors Agency, which had continuation funding, the time and budgetary constraints of the NW/A2E constrained their ability to develop meaningful service offerings. In reality, the programme provided organisations with sufficient resources to develop initial pilot projects with the potential to inform future policy direction and resource allocation rather than

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establishing an ongoing sustainable service.

- 4.13.2. For example the Vocation Services project at Bradford District Care Trust piloted an early intervention model based on patients RAG status (see above, para 4.2.3) that would link into existing vocational services in both the Trust, as well as other services such as Remploy and Bradford Council Volunteer Service. Although the project was embedded in mainstream vocational services provision it provided an opportunity to develop a model of service delivery that has been tested and shown to be successful. Jane Foster, Project Manager at the Trust was adamant that they were not in the business of creating new institutions but needed a process that moved people on. Jane based the project design on existing vocational services – but wanted to demonstrate to the Trust an improved and more equitable model providing quality services.
- 4.13.3. The outcome is that the experience from the project now has the potential to inform a policy review of Day Services as well as strategic planning with the aim of incorporating the early intervention model into the Trusts core offer. Similarly Mind the Gap were finding that there was a lot of interest in the project from mainstream employment providers aware that their own services were not adequate to meet the needs of disabled actors. The Agency has the potential to be promoted as a model of best practice and set standards in the industry.
- 4.13.4. The BACC led Employ Disability project, which had several strands of activity, succeeded in testing new training provision for disabled people. The training was aimed at raising the levels of knowledge of participants about their rights as employees and job-seekers and also to give them the confidence to make demands in an assertive manner. Because the content of the training was accredited as well as designed during the project, the courses could be replicable by other agencies, which also adopt the social model approach to disability, or in other locations. Part of the success of the courses was attributed to the fact that they were delivered by disabled people, which contributed to creating a safe space for trainees where they felt safe to ‘come-out’ and discuss their needs.

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- 4.13.5. The awareness and training events run for public sector employers are likewise replicable in other locations or for other issues (e.g. race awareness) and with other employers in the public sector. These two projects demonstrated the lack of knowledge about employment rights for disabled people both amongst employers and disabled people themselves.
- 4.13.6. Other organisations subscribed to the idea that the projects had been pilots or bridging opportunities – a chance to test their ability to deliver a quality service that would extend their core offer to include employability guidance and support. Mind in Bradford also reported that the project had impacted on the attitudes of both service users and the organisation, success has provided a new focus for activity such as further development of the Drop In as a hub for training and therapeutic activities.
- 4.14. Bidding for funds not previously accessible
- 4.14.1. An additional benefit highlighted by projects was that participation in NW/A2E (Stage 1 and/or 2) now put them in a better position to bid into funding streams in the area of employability which they had not been able to access previously. For example Mind in Bradford is looking for opportunities to use the successful outcomes from the pilot to underpin future funding applications and the Mind the Gap Actors Agency are also seeking to supplement their reduced levels of continuation funding through employability linked funding sources.
- 4.14.2. The consortium led by BACC was one that formed after receiving funding in the first round to deliver residential events aimed at raising awareness about employment issues for disabled people for healthcare professionals. Following the success of these events, they bid for additional funds to follow up the outcomes. The consortium is actively pursuing other funding opportunities and/or seeking to influence strategic partnerships in Bradford to ensure that elements of the project survive for the benefit of disabled people and employers in Bradford.
- 4.14.3. The research project for which Bradford Chamber was the project manager was actually carried out by Bradford Resource Centre (the

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interviews with employers) and Diverse Matters (the employer audits). Although they had been sub-contractors rather than partners in the bid, the Bradford Resource Centre felt their involvement would open further opportunities for them to bid independently for similar projects in the future. It gave them valuable insight into some of the issues to be considered when bidding for public sector contracts.

4.14.4. With regard to future funding, positive developments include partnership working across the city with opportunities for involvement in the District Care Trust's Employment Support Forum and links with Pathways and Job Centre Plus. A new development involving a consortium of fourteen of the Mind organisations in Yorkshire will enable Mind in Bradford to bid into higher level funding opportunities.

4.14.5. Overall the projects agreed that they felt they were closing too soon but that after delivering successful projects and armed with the knowledge from "lessons learnt" they were now in a position to build the pilots into ongoing services with the proven capability to reach the most vulnerable and excluded people who fall outside the net of mainstream employment services. The biggest issue was identifying funding streams that would allow them to continue providing these valuable services.

4.15. Partnership working and networks

4.15.1. Enhancement of networks and partnership working resulting from linkages with mainstream and third sector organisations involved in employability, training and vocational guidance were seen by all the participating organisations as a major benefit from taking part in NW/A2E.

4.15.2. Specifically activities such as referrals from Jobcentre Plus, Pathways to Work and Bradford District Care Trust and the transfer of specialist knowledge and skills between sectors were identified as capacity building and providing pathways to enhance future service delivery. Partnership working between third sector organisations and individual projects was effective and provided opportunities for integrated support as well as volunteering and work placements for beneficiaries.

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4.15.3. The first project led by BACC created a network of people working in the care professions whose interests overlapped but who were being brought together to jointly consider the needs of disabled people for the first time. The Employ Disability project emerged from this networking by responding to the demands of those involved for greater integration of their work, and the recommendations for additional engagement. Based on its previous experience, the Employ Disability was able to quickly build further opportunities for the original network to meet and also to extend the networking to other workers and employers in the public sector.

4.15.4. Where linkages were weakest was between the organisations involved in the NW/A2E program as a cohort. A more formalised consortium may have facilitated a joint approach to activities such as employer engagement where individual projects struggled to deliver. The opportunities for networking between the projects was severely hampered by the lack of time available to each project (see below) and the different start dates for the projects.

4.16. Raised profile

4.16.1. Another aspect of the projects considered successful by the organisations themselves was the opportunity it gave them to raise their profile in this arena. For most organisations the projects represented a first. Perhaps in terms of the type of engagement (i.e. employability) or because of the client group (i.e. disabled people) or because they had not been involved in similar contractual relationships before.

4.16.2. For organisations regularly working with disabled people, such as Mind or the BDCT, recognising their own potential role in supporting their clients' journey towards employability was the first step. Then having the means to demonstrate their own capability in this area through the project was the next crucial step.

4.16.3. Likewise, for the Chamber, their participation in the project has given them the opportunity to demonstrate that the broadest interests of businesses are of concern to them. Indeed going beyond this that they have

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a wider role to play in ensuring Bradford has a successful but also equitable economy.

4.16.4. The Employ Disability consortium put together to deliver the round one and two projects and led by BACC represents disparate interests that otherwise would have been unlikely to come together. Yet are pursuing the project aims together even after the funding has finished. Their successful delivery of the two projects has given them enhanced status to promote their case and to speak to the Bradford Strategic Disability Partnership with authority.

4.17. Project delivery and negative impacts on organisations

4.17.1. All the organisations involved in the programme reported negative pressures on project delivery as a result of:

- limited timescales
- lack of experience in bidding for project funding
- administrative load
- lack of clear pathways to sustainable future funding mechanisms.

4.18. Limited timescales

4.18.1. Delays at start up together with recruitment and project set up activities had significant impact on the time projects had available for delivery. The problems were mainly caused by the relatively complicated application process enforced by the funders. The insistence that the projects funded by Northern Way should be tendered under the Access to Employment process created difficulties for some of the smaller third sector organisations. As well as testing their capacity to bid successfully for such funding, a number of the original applicants pulled out whilst at the contract negotiation stage when they realised the administrative burden they would be obliged to take on. They felt the additional work caused would not be worth the amount of funding they would receive for such a short period of time. This was an issue referred to constantly by all the projects as recorded below.

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- 4.18.2. The decision by some of the applicants to withdraw their bids at such a late stage left the Council with a dilemma. They had to decide whether to risk running a smaller number of schemes or to run another commissioning round knowing that any successful applicants would have a very short amount of time to deliver their projects. Given their experience of the success of the 2006/07 projects, the Council decided to move ahead with a second commissioning round in a bid to make the most of the funds allocated to it.
- 4.18.3. In most cases available time for 2007/08 projects was limited to between six to nine months rather than the original twelve. In one extreme case, the Chamber's research project, delays in getting permission from the Northern way Secretariat to allocate the funding meant the project had to be delivered in six weeks. As the project manager for this project said "One thing I've learnt is how much you can achieve by email and over the telephone...it's amazing what you can achieve when everyone's willing to work together"
- 4.18.4. Although there had been some re-profiling of outputs in response to this, the projects found that the contracted timescales impacted negatively on projects – they had only just begun to establish a presence as they were closing. The temporary nature also could impact negatively on the clients' perceptions of the services and the service providers and reinforce their existing beliefs that their needs are not taken seriously. Indeed, this attitude was not restricted to the clients.
- 4.18.5. One of the front-line project members expressed frustration about the way everything was done on the last minute, which made it feel as though the matter was not being taken seriously. An attitude he finds typical of organisations (public and private) when it comes to disability issues. "The needs of disabled people are always seen as peripheral to economic development and skills and training". He was very disappointed at the lack of strategic direction for the project. He had no idea where it came from or what would happen to the results.

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- 4.18.6. The time limitation was frustrating for the organisations in relation to employer engagement as well as for the direct service delivery beneficiaries. The BACC project strand focusing on public sector employers made very good progress in working with particular individuals, raising their awareness but also enthusiasm and commitment to the issue of employing disabled people. They were very concerned that without any follow-up this level of energy could quickly dissipate, especially once the individuals touched by this project moved on.
- 4.18.7. The short duration of the project was an issue for another strand of the BACC project – the development of a web-site for shared resources. Lack of experience in developing web-sites was an issue for the project both in its planning and in its early stages. The web-site was successfully completed and included some innovative aspects, such as icons specifically designed with accessibility issues in mind. However, the web-site was fully launched in March 2008, meaning that unless new funding can be found to maintain and keep it up to date it could quickly fall into disuse.
- 4.18.8. Nevertheless, despite time limitations, all were able to deliver the required targets in terms of outputs for beneficiaries. And this in itself is a testament to the capability of the sector to quickly reach out to, and engage with a client group that the mainstream struggles to access. However, projects with employer engagement elements failed to achieve the agreed outcomes and targets, all citing a lack of time as the main reason for the short fall. Extensions to twelve months would have enabled better scoping and more efficient project management throughout the programme.
- 4.19. Lack of contracting experience
- 4.19.1. For many of the organisations, this was their first experience of project management through such a formal process as the Northern Way application and funding regime. Even though they learnt a lot from the process, it was painful while they were going through it and some suffered financially as a result. Bradford Resource Centre, for example, which sub

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contracted with the Chamber to carry out forty interviews with employers, seriously underestimated the time required and as a result were not paid for nearly two thirds of the time spent on the project.

4.19.2. Had the organisations been more experienced in working with similar funding streams, they might have been able to predict better some of the problems that would arise and agree more realistic output targets. Without previous knowledge it is easy to underestimate the full costs, for example, of providing fully accessible training for multi-disabled groups which is much more expensive than either for non-disabled or groups of clients with the same disability.

4.19.3. Lack of experience was sometimes also compounded by the general lack of resources in the sector which means organisations are reluctant to turn down any potential funds. One project manager joked that had they realised beforehand what would be involved they wouldn't have bothered applying.

4.20. Project Administration

4.20.1. Reporting, monitoring and financial procedures had a significant impact on administrative capabilities and caused the greatest pressures on projects. In the main there were limited resources available for these tasks – both in terms of the allocation of resources through NW/A2E funds and the availability of existing capacity within organisations. This was especially difficult for smaller organisations such as Mind the Gap, Mind in Bradford, and BACC, which struggled to juggle limited staffing resources to meet the administrative challenge.

4.20.2. Mind the Gap reported that the administrative load together with meeting service users needs resulted in more hours work done than the funding provided for in order to meet outcomes and targets as well as administrative requirements and other activities had to absorb the shortfall. The BACC described the management arrangements as a 'nightmare' for which they had to set up completely new reporting systems that did not mesh with their own systems.

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4.20.3. At the other end of the spectrum larger organisations such as Bradford District Care Trust found the complexities of internal defrayed payment procedures out of step with the requirements of quarterly evidencing for financial claims and that this caused a major drain on resources that were needed to meet service users needs.

4.21. Future Funding

4.21.1. Having the opportunity to develop new services through the NW/A2E funding opportunity is one of the positive outcomes from the program. However having established successful services through NW/A2E, future developments remain uncertain. Changes in structural funding and at regional and local level such as the primary providers funding model employed by regional agencies are all impacting on smaller third sector organisations. Advice on accessing sustainable funds and progression to self funding models would enable continuity of provision to target groups. In order to achieve progression they expressed a need for support and advice at regional and local level i.e. from Yorkshire Forward and Bradford Council as to how they might resource the services into the future. One project manager suggested that without continuation funding opportunities the projects were a poor investment for Yorkshire Forward if they were seeking to establish projects that can move people into real employment.

4.22. Impact on Organisations

4.22.1. The experience of participating organisations suggests that they have responded to the outcome and target requirements of the NW/A2E program and have successfully created services that have actively engaged workless and disabled people effectively. Such successful outcomes underline the appropriateness of the user led approach that all the participating organisations employed and provides further evidence for the implementation of this engagement model.

4.22.2. In addition where projects have adopted a holistic approach to employability to include support, not just with vocational issues, but also with health, condition management, housing and benefit issues people

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have been able to overcome some basic obstacles that prevent them from accessing positive activities and/or employment. These findings support the need for services for vulnerable people to be much more closely integrated so that they can deliver a much more complete and appropriate service.

4.22.3. Organisations have benefited from enhanced skills and knowledge and the opportunity to extend their core offer. NW/A2E has also enabled them to build new partnerships with mainstream and third sector organisations and bid into employability related funds.

4.22.4. Any dissatisfaction expressed in relation to the programme relates to the lack of time and inappropriateness of reporting, monitoring and claim procedures. The latter were viewed as disproportionate for such relatively small funds and failed to recognise the limited resources of most third sector organisations. Project managers felt that there was also a focus on outputs and targets rather than outcomes and quality of service and this was inappropriate for the type of service and target groups that they work with. As one project manager said “Using a performance management system based on dogmatic inflexible targets is counter-productive ... it leads to engendering of distrust not engendering of trust.”

4.22.5. One of the objectives of the NW/A2E intervention is the development of the community and voluntary sector to support the re-integration of socially excluded people as part of the process of tackling deprivation. However, there is broad agreement that many of the limitations of the NW/A2E program are symptomatic of wider funding and policy agenda’s impacting on the sector as a result of central government policy:

“the government needs a voluntary and community sector that is strong, independent and has the capacity where it wishes, to be partner in delivering world class public services. To help achieve this, the government will increase funding to build capacity across the sector and increase community participation” HM Treasury

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4.22.6. Although central government has ambitions for the voluntary and community sector to have a greater role in mainstream services, organisations feel that current funding structures, characterised by short term projects are limiting their ability to do so. Welcome as the NW/A2E intervention has been there is a view that much more needs to be done to develop the sector so that it makes more than a token contribution to supporting employability in Bradford (and the region). In addition a sea – change in the perception of the sector in relation to economic activity rather than as primarily contributing to social cohesion is required if it is to be drawn into delivering mainstream public services on anything other than a piecemeal basis.

4.23. City of Bradford MBC Support

4.23.1. Project managers all agreed that they had valued the high levels of support that the projects had received from the team at Bradford Council. They were especially grateful for help and advice with the project monitoring, reporting and claims process that they had found so onerous and time consuming. Additionally it was felt that there had been a flexible approach on behalf of CBMDC (and Yorkshire Forward) to spend and this had helped to deliver a user led approach to services – examples were that they had been able to fund driving lessons, dog grooming training and therapeutic treatments that had significantly enabled progression for service users.

4.23.2. The way Bradford MBC has responded to the opportunities presented by Northern way has been highlighted in the main evaluation of the Northern Way employment programme

“A more specific illustration of this latter example of added benefits is available through reference to the Bradford pilot. In this instance the experience of working as part of the Northern Way programme has helped to inform the development of the local Work and Skills Board in the area. The need to decide how to use the Northern Way funding gave the impetus to develop a strategic funding group focussed around employment and

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skills. Allied to the recognition that the service infrastructure in the area was slightly disjointed, this group and the work it undertook has in turn helped pave the way for a more joined up structure of service delivery under the auspices of a new Work and Skills Board.” (ECOTEC, 2007, p45)

4.24. Enhancing Engagement Activities with Employers

4.24.1. Several projects were also charged with responsibility for enhancing engagement activities with employers, to raise the profile of the business benefits of employing local people from hard to reach groups. Involvement included various support activities to encourage employers to make appointments and offer work placements, and activities to support improving HR practises and occupational health provision in order to improve recruitment and retention.

4.24.2. DISC, Mind the Gap, BACC, the Chamber and Bradford District Care Trust all included elements linked to engagement and awareness-raising with local employers around the benefits of employing a diverse workforce.

4.24.3. Most of the projects involved in employer engagement report difficulties in achieving basic outputs, targets and objectives. The BACC Employ Disability project was an exception, although there were difficulties in the initial engagement of some employers the end results were very successful. Unlike other projects that were targeting mainly smaller private sector employers, the BACC project focused on influencing larger public sector employers, which brought its own problems. The complex organisational structures of larger employers meant that finding the right person with whom to engage was not always straightforward. However, once the right connections were made, the consultants delivering this aspect of the service found the participants to be very keen to be involved.

4.24.4. The Chamber research focused entirely on employers but through interviews and audits – although not typical methods of engagement these do have the effect of raising awareness of the issues for disabled people. Bradford Resource Centre carried out the interviews and managed to

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complete 36 in the very short time available to them for the project, a shortfall of only 4 from their target. They were surprised by the time and effort it took to identify willing employers and make appointments for the interviews, and disappointed by the drop out rate. It was the latter that hampered their achievement of their targets. Only three out of a target of five audits were completed as well. Again this shortfall was largely due to the time constraints, as Diverse Matters were confident that more employers could have been identified to take part in the audits.

4.24.5. DISC offered a one to one service for local Keighley employers that included:

- Information Advice and Support
- Awareness and Information Sessions
- Displays and notice boards
- Improved reputation as a good local employer
- Team meeting talks
- Training sessions
- Focus Groups

The service included advice and information on topics such as:

- Prejudice and perceptions
- Diversity and equality
- Personal safety
- Rehabilitation of offenders
- Employment contracts and disability
- Drugs awareness and the workplace
- Hidden disabilities

4.24.6. Overall they worked with twelve local employers but found it hard to recruit companies to the scheme – partly because of the nature of local

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businesses which are typically small piecework based manufacturing and also because of the reduced timescales for project delivery. DISC reported that although manufacturing companies were hard to reach several third sector organisations had expressed interest in getting involved. However they could achieve a great deal more in relation to employer engagement if the service had had time to become established and had a permanent local presence:

“By the time we had begun to get a presence – the project was over”

Pauline Gill (DISC project manager)

- 4.24.7. Similarly Bradford District Care Trust found this element of their project frustrating. They held an employer lunchtime event at Bradford City Football Club and personally invited local companies to a short program of activities that included presentations by Mindful Employer, the Cellar Project, the disability advisor from Job Centre Plus and personal testimonies from service users. However although the event was nominally successful overall they felt that response was disappointing for the substantial amount of work involved in organising and promoting the event.
- 4.24.8. Mind the Gap worked in partnership with Job Centre Plus to provide individual packages for agency members and found that this was especially beneficial as it provided a two way flow of knowledge and expertise. Mind the Gap were able to access vital information and Job Centre Plus gained greater understanding of the barriers faced by people with disability in the labour market. In addition they felt that they now had a model that would facilitate future awareness raising with employers especially in relation to supporting employers to understand and provide for the needs of disabled actors – but that a great deal of work was needed to place this at the heart of mainstream best practice.
- 4.24.9. However the general consensus of opinion amongst the NW/A2E participating organisations was that the employer engagement elements of the programme needed much more groundwork and a much bigger separate project than anything that could achieve in the limited timescales

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of the NW/A2E intervention. Although they had similar reservations in relation to the benefits of NW/A2E to individuals most were of the view that, overall, these pilots were worthwhile and had some value for future development. In contrast, the feedback on employer engagement in the private sector was that they had barely begun to scratch the surface and activities generated through NW/A2E had little value in terms of immediate or longer-term impacts.

- 4.24.10. To move the agenda forward significantly organisations were of the view that legislation requiring companies to employ a quota of disabled or socially excluded people is needed rather than the current voluntary “buy in” to schemes such as the Diversity Business Standard and other similar incentives.

5. Lessons Learnt and Recommendations

5.1. Introduction

5.1.1. In many ways it has been difficult to evaluate the 'programme' of Northern Way funded projects in Bradford. Mainly because the processes underpinning the programme resulted in a series of isolated projects being run over different timelines. Although we have drawn a series of conclusions about the performance of the projects and what can be learned from them we believe that the most important lessons here concern the way funders operate. There is no doubt in our minds that, with better planning and a more flexible approach, more could have been achieved and that the projects could have had a longer lasting impact.

5.1.2. Despite these reservations about the programme as a whole, the individual projects performed well to deliver real impacts for the individuals they assisted. Indeed the real success of the programme lies in the ability of these mainly third sector agencies to quickly reach out to the client group in a way that makes them feel safe and is sensitive to their needs and their fears. The projects have developed support and training models that are replicable **but** only if adopted using the same principles of delivery, for example, putting the clients needs first and prioritising quality of delivery over cost.

5.1.3. Looking again at the stated aims of the Northern Way programme:

- to develop pathways to support people into and during employment. Local people will be able to access support and enable informed decisions to be made re: appropriate education, training and employment opportunities;
- to identify barriers and develop solutions to accessibility and the accessibility needs of socially excluded people. Partner involvement will catalyse the identification of barriers to employment from the different disadvantaged groups. Activities will seek to remove barriers through a mixture of brokerage and mentoring activity and through direct work with employers.

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It is clear that these objectives have been achieved for the duration of the projects. The real test of their success is however, what happens next? The duration of the projects was insufficient to allow any significant inroads into the client group in Bradford, therefore the ultimate value of the project can only be judged on the lasting impact the projects may have on the way employment services are delivered in future in Bradford. Will the lessons be learnt or lost?

5.1.4. The most important message emerging from the projects is that this client group – traditionally considered hard to reach by the mainstream employment bodies – can be effectively engaged by third sector agencies and public sector agencies that already have a relationship with them. These agencies can be used to prepare clients for interaction with mainstream employment bodies, but from the point of view of cost effectiveness should only duplicate those services for clients with the greatest need that the mainstream would struggle to meet.

5.1.5. In the following sections, we have set out the main lessons emerging from the evaluation and our recommendations.

5.2. Lessons learnt: organisations and processes

5.2.1. As a learning process for the organisations involved in the projects the programme was a success although not always as planned. Several of the organisations gained valuable experience of applying for funding, planning and managing projects and of monitoring target based delivery. It gave them insight into the costs of such delivery and the need to budget carefully for all aspects of delivery and project management.

5.2.2. The relationships developed, either to deliver the projects or as a result of the delivery, were recognised as a positive aspect of the programmes by all involved. Not least the relationship with CBMDC where either it had not existed previously or had been on a different footing. All project managers expressed their willingness, indeed eagerness, to contract with the council again in the future due to close support received from the Council during the whole process.

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- 5.2.3. For the organisations which had no previous experience of delivering employment support, the projects provided them with delivery models for the future, evidence of their capability to use in funding bids and the confidence to apply for funding as it becomes available.
- 5.2.4. Managing the projects also allowed the agencies involved to learn from aspects of the projects that did not work so well. Chief amongst these related to the time and planning required to set up and run a successful service whether that be providing training to clients, designing a web-site or engaging employers.
- 5.2.5. Leading on from the last point, some project managers noted that after this experience they would be much more careful about the conditions under which they accepted funding in the future. Although their natural instinct is to accept any funds that can be used to help clients, they realised the need to balance the hidden costs of running such projects against the long term benefits for clients.
- 5.2.6. The process for the Northern Way funding – from application through to payment and monitoring was a cause for disquiet amongst all the project managers. Some of the issues were related particularly to that programme but others have a wider currency, for example ensuring all interested parties are aware of the availability of funds well in advance, adapting management arrangements in accordance with levels of funding and facilitating communications between project managers.
- 5.2.7. Even though project managers interacted with CBMDC, the Council was not the ultimate funder and therefore was not able to control the processes governing the funding. Indeed the Council faced similar issues in their dealings with Yorkshire Forward and through them the Northern Way Secretariat to secure funds, obtain approval of projects etc.. This multi-tiered structure for the programme's management caused delays and additional bureaucracy for the agencies, which being small organisations with limited funding, struggled to cope. Given the amount of funding and duration of projects a more streamlined approach to application and

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monitoring would have been more appropriate. Project managers were very appreciative of the instances where CBMDC was able to be flexible and this was a major help in building trust.

5.3. Lessons Learnt: Helping Clients/Engaging Employers

- 5.3.1. Most of the organisations involved in the programme had previous experience of supporting disabled people but not in relation to employment. Therefore their learning was centred around, but not exclusive to, the delivery of employment services rather than reaching out to the client group. There were some instances where, for example because of the subject matter of training courses, agencies' traditional methods of engagement had to be adapted.
- 5.3.2. As noted above the projects had most difficulty in engaging employers and consequently this is an aspect where they felt they had much to learn. Employers, like disabled people, are not a homogenous group so should be approached differently depending upon their characteristics (e.g. private sector/public sector; large/small; manufacturing/service). When considering the best approach account also needs to be taken of why employers are being engaged and what outcomes are required.
- 5.3.3. Three lessons were highlighted by all projects delivering services to clients: first, that all clients required individual assessment of their needs and individual plans to move them towards being employment ready; second, that people move at different rates but that most people require a long time before they are ready to move back into employment or even into mainstream support; and third, it is very expensive to provide training for multi-disability groups (i.e. groups that do not share the same disability).
- 5.3.4. Taken individually, each of these issues, if taken into consideration when designing services, would add considerably to unit costs. When added together they illustrate why mainstream services are not successful for this client group and why so much more funding is required to bridge the gap between existing provision and effective services for disabled people.
- 5.3.5. Other lessons emerging include that

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- many people feel very safe in their current situation and have often had bad experiences of being at work. Even if their benefits are not very high, they understand exactly what is due to them and are very scared about having to change situations, about moving on to a new situation with which they are unfamiliar. This makes them fearful and distrusting of those agencies they associate with movements to force them off benefits and into work;
- there is a popular misconception, especially amongst employers, that disabled people all have high maintenance requirements, that they are very aware of their rights and are belligerent in demanding those rights. On the contrary, the clients on the projects had very little knowledge about their rights and very low confidence about asserting them;
- employers involved in the projects, even large employers in the public sector with professional HR facilities, on the whole had little awareness about the needs or rights of disabled people seeking employment or already employed by them; none of the projects engaged with disabled employees and therefore their voice is not heard here;
- many disabled people who do want to work are constrained as much by a loss of confidence in their own abilities and their reception in the workplace as they are by their actual disability;
- employment support for disabled people cannot stop at the point at which they are successful in a job interview. Many individuals still require moral and emotional support and advice through the point of starting work and becoming accustomed to their changed life circumstances. They may also need more tangible support, for example in applying for and managing an Access to Work application;
- attitudes amongst disabled people towards mainstream providers are generally negative and reflect a belief shown by many beneficiaries that their needs are not considered; this is particularly true of people with learning disabilities who feel they are at the 'bottom of the heap';
- the language used by the mainstream to describe disabled people can

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alienate some people – especially those who do not consider themselves disabled but do require specialist help or have the right to additional support;

- the use of the medical model of disability by certain agencies can also hamper their effectiveness in supporting disabled people toward employment as it focuses on the disability rather than the problems in society that occur because of the disability;
- focusing on the needs of individuals is important but ultimately fruitless if there are no jobs to which those individuals can apply. The reduction in the size of the third sector is a double edged sword in terms of reducing the availability of support for individuals and the availability of posts in a sector with a good record for employing disadvantaged people.

5.4. Recommendations

5.4.1. The projects reveal a need for up-skilling of the third sector in relation to applying for funding, planning and managing delivery, managing target driven projects and managing budgets when paid in arrears or on delivery of targets. If the 3rd sector in Bradford is to contribute positively to this agenda then support should be provided for general contracting and specifically on contracting with CBMDC.

5.4.2. Where partnerships were already developed or were created for the projects the results were positive. Small agencies could benefit greatly by the continuation of networking but with limited funding cannot create the opportunities for themselves. Existing opportunities for networking with Bradford should be supported and promoted to help strengthen the capacity of the sector.

5.4.3. Some agencies had better relationships with mainstream providers and clearly benefited from these. Network should be enhanced to include mainstream providers, for example A4E the contractor for Pathways to Work.

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- 5.4.4. If the public sector is to really take advantage of the benefits offered by working with the 3rd sector it must be prepared to make changes. Where possible, depending upon the source of the funding, the processes and target regimes for funding should be adapted to accommodate the needs of 3rd sector organisations.
- 5.4.5. The CBMDC should review its own strategic objectives for dealing with the 3rd sector and consider whether its own processes support those objectives.
- 5.4.6. Providing effective employment support for disabled people can be a very expensive business. It requires either that more money is allocated to it, or that provision is rationed so that it is focused on a smaller number of people who are have greater chances of succeeding in finding a job.
- 5.4.7. Agencies supporting disabled people towards employment need to recognise they are starting from a very different point and that their emotional needs have to be handled sensitively. Their attitudes and beliefs must be changed before they can be helped to move on.
- 5.4.8. Lack of awareness was evident in all parties and was a hindrance to effective support. There should be an ongoing programme raising awareness of needs and rights for disabled people (prospective job-seekers and employees), employers and agencies.
- 5.4.9. Based on the evidence from the projects, the most effective service would be delivered by a true partnership of 3rd sector and mainstream providers. The 3rd sector would reach-out and prepare disabled people for job-seeking then provide a bridge for them to the mainstream services. Ideally these services would be delivered in a 'safe' location such as the offices of a 3rd sector agency.
- 5.4.10. Disabled people are used to hearing/reading about the help available to them but often find that it falls short of the help available to non-disabled people or falls short of their own needs. Any organisation that wants disabled people to believe that it takes them seriously must prove that through its actions rather than its words.

DISABILITY AND EMPLOYMENT: BRADFORD NW/A2E PROJECTS

Annex One

Organisation	Bradnet
Project Name	Disability Empowerment Project
Target Groups	People with learning disabilities and those who are deaf who are born in the UK, reside in the Bradford District and are aged 18-25. The target group will comprise disabled people in receipt of Incapacity Benefit and/or Disability Living Allowance.
Description of Project	The project shall undertake intensive person-centred work with disabled people to provide them with the confidence, capacity and dignity to seek and retain meaningful employment. The proposed project will be an integral part of Bradnet's overall services of empowering disabled people to achieve choice and control over their lives from a social model perspective. It will identify disabled people who need our support by a combination of methods: firstly, by supporting existing service users known to us through a progression of support. Other disabled people will access the support through a variety of means: they may be referred to us by Bradford Social Services when individuals request support in this regard but which cannot be provided by Social Services.
Budget	£35,000
Project Start Date	01-Nov-06
Project Finish Date	31-Mar-07
Outputs achieved	Partially
Employment Supported	Target 30; Achieved 24
Business Support	N/A

**DISABILITY AND EMPLOYMENT:
BRADFORD NW/A2E PROJECTS**

Organisation	Bradford Alliance on Community Care (BACC)
Project Name	Employment and Disability Partnership
Target Groups	Health Care Professionals, Social Care Professionals, Employment advisors, Community Workers, Community Projects, Voluntary Organisations, Disabled People.
Description of Project	To Improve support to disabled people to access employment opportunities. To assist community & voluntary organisations to support employment initiatives and employment options for disabled people. BACC will manage a process of evaluation and practice dissemination through individual organisation and partnership action plans as integral part of the 2 residential courses. A toolkit will be produced from training programmes of each separate residential course and be available through the project website and to the individual trainees. To deliver learning events that will further develop programmes that share knowledge and practice between individuals who have disabilities, 3rd sector organisations, employment and training organisations and professionals, health and social care professionals.
Budget	£96,000
Project Start Date	October 2006
Project Finish Date	March 2007
Outputs achieved	Yes
Employment Supported	
Business Support	2 events for people employed in caring, employment and business support professions were held catering to about 80 people

**DISABILITY AND EMPLOYMENT:
BRADFORD NW/A2E PROJECTS**

Organisation	The Cellar Project
Project Name	The Cellar Project
Target Groups	People with mental health difficulties over the age of 18 throughout the Bradford district.
Description of Project	<p>Within the above context of the Cellar Project as a whole, we intend the following:- Enable courses for members: up to 21 people will be able to take courses in reflexology, aromatherapy and reiki, 4 identified people will be able to extend their training by us being able to provide their fees to external providers in CLAIT, ECDL, keyboard skills at the Yamaha School and 1 member will be able to complete the third and final year of becoming a Certified Homeopathy Practitioner. ·</p> <p>Run/extend courses re catering and related professional skills. These will equip people with professional certificates (these courses will also be open to Mind) and we will help provide practical work experience within our café/conferencing facility.</p>
Budget	£24,000
Project Start Date	26 th February 2007
Project Finish Date	31 st March 2007
Outputs achieved	Yes
Employment Supported	Target 15; Achieved 29 Certified Skills Courses
Business Support	N/A

**DISABILITY AND EMPLOYMENT:
BRADFORD NW/A2E PROJECTS**

Organisation	Bradford Trident
Project Name	Trident One Stop Shop
Target Groups	People with special circumstances (health and disability issues).
Description of Project	The 'package' has 2 phases, the first being development in the remainder of 2006/07 to establish the delivery infrastructure and commissioning arrangements utilising commissioned Consultancy support to hit the ground running in the first instance. The second phase will concentrate on service delivery. We will seek to engage and support the hardest to reach at the neighbourhood level picking up on the successful elements of the Connexions Personal Adviser role in order to support case loaded clients out of 'worklessness' and into employment, learning or volunteering (inc Social Enterprise via tie in with the emerging "Enterprise Seekers", "Business Counsellors" and Skills Broker service - under local LEGI funding). This will be driven by a dedicated Manager and team of suitability qualified personnel.
Budget	£14,000
Project Start Date	01/11/2006
Project Finish Date	31/03/2007
Outputs achieved	
Employment Supported	12
Business Support	N/A

DISABILITY AND EMPLOYMENT: BRADFORD NW/A2E PROJECTS

Organisation	Mind in Bradford
Project Name	Volunteering in Mind
Target Groups	People suffering mental health problems.
Description of Project	Mind in Bradford is a user led service providing help and support for those suffering mental health problems. As a key, user led organisation for the past 15 years our ethos and values remain the same - to empower people facing the challenge of mental distress and help rebuild a quality of life through self help. Over the years a number of our members and volunteers have been successful in gaining employment, be it short term, part-time or even for therapeutic benefit. Indeed up to press we have supported 12- 16 people back into full or part-time paid employment, of which 5 are now staff members within our organisation. The aim is to encourage a positive attitude amongst service users, provide an opportunity to gain new skills, brush up on old ones, gain confidence, become involved and feel empowered and energised about rebuilding their lives. Many of our service users are struggling with the effects on their lives following break down and other mental health problems.
Budget	£11,000
Project Start Date	October 2006
Project Finish Date	March 2007
Outputs achieved	Yes
Employment Supported	Target 10; Achieved 10 Certificated Skills Courses
Business Support	N/A

DISABILITY AND EMPLOYMENT: BRADFORD NW/A2E PROJECTS

Organisation	Work-Able, Skills for Work, Bradford Council.
Project Name	Workable
Target Groups	Incapacity Benefit claimants.
Description of Project	This project is intended to promote the participation of IB claimants in positive work focused activities that encourage and support their return to work. The project will enable all participants to gain skills for work, including IT skills, employability skills and work experience. The project will enable IB claimants seeking work in the public sector to participate in a 2 day workshop to improve their skills in applying for public sector jobs, at the same time, enabling Bradford Council to promote its equality practices in the employment of disabled people. The project will also fund some awareness raising amongst Council employees relating to the employment of disabled people, particularly IB claimants. Each IB claimant accessing the project will have a personalised action plan with clear learning objectives, a job goal and progress steps that optimise capabilities address barriers and enable systematic reviews that acknowledge progress. All project participants will leave with a moving on plan and current curriculum vitae.
Budget	£15,000
Project Start Date	October 2006
Project Finish Date	March 2007
Outputs achieved	Yes
Employment Supported	Target 10; Achieved 15
Business Support	N/A

**DISABILITY AND EMPLOYMENT:
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Annex Two

Organisation	Mind in Bradford
Project Name	Work in Mind
Target Groups	People with mental health issues.
Project description	Providing training, personal support needs identification and in-house volunteering opportunities to people with mental health issues who are claiming IB and are long term unemployed. The aim is to raise skills and experience levels as well as improve self-esteem and confidence so that work is a more realistic option.
Budget	Allocated £38059.00 Actual £36,818
Start date	October 2007
Finish date	March 2008
Output Targets achieved	Partially
Employment Support	Target 25 Achieved 20 (3 into paid employment)
Business Support	Na
Skills assists	Target 35 Achieved 55
Recognised certificates gained	28 / 2

**DISABILITY AND EMPLOYMENT:
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Organisation	Mind the Gap
Project Name	Actors Agency
Target Groups	Learning disabled actors living within the Bradford District.
Project description	Mind the Gap Actors' Agency will provide learning disabled actors with the advice and support necessary to access mainstream acting employment opportunities. The Agency will offer casting directors the guidance needed to employ learning disabled actors into professional roles and will advise and assist with all elements of the support required to ensure that these employment routes are accessible.
Budget	Allocated yr 1 £58,400 Actual yr 1 £58,400
Start date	July 2007
Finish date	March 2008 (for NW funded element; 2 nd yr to March 2009 funded by Access to Employment)
Output Targets / achieved	N/A
Employment Support	15 by March 2008
Business Support	N/A
Skills assists	N/A

**DISABILITY AND EMPLOYMENT:
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Organisation	DISC
Project Name	Working Support
Target Groups	Long-term incapacity benefit claimants / businesses and potential employers.
Project description	The project will reduce the numbers of long-term Incapacity Benefit claimants in Bradford, through tailored support to businesses and potential employees utilising Volunteer Mentors. Working Support will provide beneficiary's access to a Specialist Advisor and a Mentor. Businesses will be offered assistance and advice on recruitment opportunities.
Budget	Allocated £140,000 Actual £95,000
Start date	August 2007
Finish date	March 2008
Output Targets / achieved	No. Should have been re-profiled from original bid as project was re-focused on Keighley and only had 8 months to run
Employment Support	Target 150 Achieved 97
Business Support	Target 20 Achieved 9
Skills assists	Target 105 Achieved 58

DISABILITY AND EMPLOYMENT: BRADFORD NW/A2E PROJECTS

Organisation	Bradford District Care Trust
Project Name	Vocational Services
Target Groups	<p>People with disabilities, specifically people accessing Mental Health Services and who are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Currently unemployed ▪ At risk of losing employment / training ▪ At disadvantage due to barriers to employment.
Project description	The Specialist Vocational Service supports individuals to return to education, voluntary work, work placements and paid employment for individuals within Bradford District Care Trust's Rehabilitation and Recovery Services.
Budget	Allocated £73,854 Actual £62,422
Start date	August 2007
Finish date	March 2008
Output Targets achieved	Yes
Employment Support	Target 30 Achieved 40
Business Support	Target 5 Achieved 23
Skills assists	N/A

**DISABILITY AND EMPLOYMENT:
BRADFORD NW/A2E PROJECTS**

Organisation	Bradford Alliance on Community Care (BACC)
Project Name	Employ disability
Target Groups	All organisations and projects in the Bradford district which support disabled people along their pathway towards employment, including information, advice and guidance, education and training, employment support and business (self employment) support. Health, social care and voluntary workers in the Bradford district who work with disabled people. The full range of disabled people, as defined by the broadest social definition, including people with sensory needs, learning disabilities and those experiencing mental distress.
Project description	The Project supported unemployed disabled people into economic activity through: a) further strengthening the networking, referral and disability equality practice of employment/business support, health and social care professionals; b) developing /delivering innovative equality/assertiveness skills training to enable disabled people to overcome barriers to working.
Budget	Allocated £90773 (inc Capital grant £6435) Actual £90481
Start date	October 2007
Finish date	March 2008
Output Targets achieved	Yes
Employment Support	N/A
Business Support	N/A (44 employer representatives attended training sessions)
Skills assists	Target 20 Achieved 33

**DISABILITY AND EMPLOYMENT:
BRADFORD NW/A2E PROJECTS**

Organisation	Bradford Chamber of Commerce and Industry
Project Name	Research Project
Target Groups	Employers
Project description	Research into the levels of awareness of employers about employing disabled people and the suitability of their premises/processes.
Budget	Allocated £9500 Actual £9500
Start date	February 2008
Finish date	March 2008
Output Targets achieved	Yes
Employment Support	N/A
Business Support	Target 40 employer interviews 5 employer audits Achieved 36 interviews, 3 audits
Skills assists	N/A