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The Agency is committed to supporting participants who want to start thinking about how to get a job.

This might include funding capacity building supports to help participants build their work skills if they need extra help because of their disability

As part of this commitment, the Agency commissioned and undertook research to learn what works to help people with a disability to find and keep a job.

Two thirds of all participants have a cognitive and/or psychosocial disability, so the research has focused on supports for:

- people with autism
- people with intellectual disability
- people with psychosocial disability.

The research consists of two phases:

1. An evidence review of 161 published articles, reports and data by 34 experts (academics and senior government and non-government executives who have disability-related expertise).
2. A mixed methods research study which includes interviews with participants, focus groups, and an online survey with NDIS frontline staff.

The first phase, an evidence review led by the University of Melbourne, has now been completed.

What approach did we take for the evidence review?

The University of Melbourne worked in partnership with the University of New South Wales and Brotherhood of St Laurence to carry out this evidence review.

In this phase, the University of Melbourne:

- reviewed 161 journal articles or reports and found evidence on 14 different types of employment programs that help people with disability find and keep a job
- looked at supports that are designed to increase employment for people who are of working age (16 to 64 years). This might be in open or supported workplaces.

The review found 14 different types of employment programs that help people with disability find and keep a job. These were grouped into three categories:

- supply side: programs designed to build the skills of an individual looking for work so they become (more) ready and able to find a job. These types of programs can also provide support employers to employ a person with disability
- demand side: programs designed to create work opportunities for people with disability
- bridging: programs that match a person with disability to appropriate work opportunities and provide support to both the person and their employer to access and maintain that employment
- Some employment programs may sit in more than one category.

What did the review find?

Most of the research related to building the capacity of people with disability or the employer for people with psychosocial disability. And, most of the supply-side activities were vocational programs which teach a person with disability work-related skills that prepare them to find and keep a job.

The review found many programs that were successful in helping people find a job.

Download the Plain Language Summary (DOCX 656KB) or visit the University of Melbourne website for the full review.

Employment support for people with psychosocial disability

Most evidence of benefit was found in Individualised Placement Support, a program for people with psychosocial disability
Individualised Placement Support combines vocational training and employment support with mental health support.

The evidence suggests that Individualised Placement Support works best when extra support is provided.

Extra support may include:

- career advice that builds a person's knowledge of job opportunities and looking for work. This is sometimes called a Job Coach
- career mentoring that helps people with psychosocial disability to find a job and feel positive about work
- online support for young people with psychosocial disability to progress towards a work or study goal.

Employment support for people with autism

For young people with autism, there was some evidence that showed programs that integrate 'work training' into a person's final years of school can help improve work readiness.

Employment support for people with intellectual disability

We did not find any research trials focused on employment programs for people with intellectual disability.

What does this mean for participants?

The research tells us that employment supports and services need to take a life-course approach.

If you are a participant, this means thinking about supports across your employment life span and starting conversations about employment early at home, school, and with your NDIA planner.

If you are discussing employment with your NDIS planner, you may find it useful to chat about how to access the following supports:

- individualised Placement Support for people with psychosocial disability
- job Coach that combines Individualised Placement Support with intensive employment assistance support for people with psychosocial disability
- combining cognitive behavioural therapy with traditional vocational programs for people with psychosocial disability
- mentoring programs for people with psychosocial disability
- work-integrated training for people with autism.

It may also be worth considering areas of emerging practice such as:

- structured, work integrated vocational programs
- work integrated social enterprises
- customised employment, particularly for people with intellectual disability.

Not all of these supports are funded by the NDIS, but your planner can work with you to connect you to other services who can assist.

What are we doing with these findings?

The findings have informed the Agency’s targeted approach to delivering the Participant Employment Strategy in 2021-2022 and will continue to do so.

We will use this research to develop useful resources for participants and staff that can help them have conversations about finding and keeping a job and the types of support that can assist.

You can learn more about work and study and how the NDIS can help by visiting Work and study supports .

Transcript for 'NDIS Employment Research: We need to start talking more about careers'