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Pathways to employment for NDIS participants with intellectual disability, on the autism spectrum and with psychosocial disability.

This second phase was undertaken by the NDIS to explore participant experiences when trying to find and keep a job, specifically for those with intellectual disability, Autism Spectrum Disorder, and/or psychosocial disability.

We conducted this research project to:

- understand and explore participants' experiences and the pathways to paid employment
- explore the barriers and enablers to finding and keeping a job, specific to these NDIS participants
- identify the information and supports required by participants (families, carers or supporters) to help them develop employment goals and get ready for work.

Transcript for 'NDIS Employment Research: Finding a job for the school leaver'

What approach did we take for this research project?

The research included:

- In-depth interviews with 85 NDIS participants (families, carers or informal or formal supporters) aged 14 to 44 years;
- Focus groups and interviews with 37 NDIS service delivery staff (NDIS planners or delegates, local area coordinators, partners in the community and subject matter experts)
- Responses from 142 NDIS service delivery staff to an online survey.

Participants were recruited into the research via the NDIS Participant Engagement Group, NDIA website, peak bodies, social media and other organisations.

Due to COVID all interviews and focus groups were conducted via video online, telephone, or email, depending on the participant's choice.

To ensure the research was relevant to our target audience we engaged three NDIS participants, one from each disability cohort and consulted with them on the methods, research tools, analysis, and this report, along with consultation with NDIS participants and providers.

This research project was funded by the NDIA and approved by Monash Health Human Ethics Committee (RES-20-0000-276A).

What did the research find?

Participants reported that having a job increased their social connections and gave them a sense of purpose.

Participants told us that having a paid job made them feel proud, challenged and enthusiastic. Work that was meaningful and having welcoming and supportive colleagues was important.

Participants told us they found work through:

- Government and non-Government funded employment services
- Work experience or work placements
- Participating in your community through clubs and groups or volunteering
- Their own or their family's networks.

Both participants and NDIA staff reported the lack of inclusive employment options as the greatest barrier to participants finding and keeping a job.

Participants identified a number of barriers to finding a job, these included:

- A feeling that their disability and needs were not always well understood
- A lack of clarity around what funding and supports were available
- A lack of post-school training and education options appropriate for people with intellectual disability, Autism Spectrum Disorder, and/or psychosocial disability and a lack of clarity about what supports and services are available to support these
- A lack of self-confidence that they are employable people.

The key enablers identified by participants to help them to find and keep a job were:

- person-centred employment planning and supports
- having the right supports and the people that support them know and understand them
- having supports to meet base level needs (such as daily living, stable accommodation, mental and physical health) so participants have the energy and time to find and maintain a job
- having accessible transport so you can get to job interviews and work
- starting conversations and planning early (e.g. while in school)
- role models and a person's own and informal networks and supports.

Read the report

- Achieving a sense of purpose report (DOCX 5.2MB)
- Achieving a sense of purpose report (PDF 5.5MB)
- Achieving a sense of purpose report summary (DOCX 4.6MB)
- Achieving a sense of purpose report summary (PDF 1.7MB)