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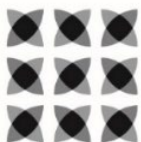
Rapid evidence scan

Good Sammy Open Employment Trials

Prepared for: Paul Ramsay Foundation and Good Sammy Enterprises

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Glossary

ADE	Australian Disability Enterprises
CSI	Centre for Social Impact (UWA)
DES	Disability Employment Services
GSE	Good Sammy Enterprises
NDIS	National Disability Insurance Scheme
OE	Open employment
SPRC	Social Policy Research Centre (UNSW)
RTO	Registered Training Organisation
UWA	University of Western Australia
UNSW	University of New South Wales, Sydney

Summary

Good Sammy Enterprises (GSE) is a social enterprise, specialist disability employment provider in Western Australia. GSE is trialling new models of employment support to assist people with disability to secure open employment in the community. The Social Policy Research Centre (UNSW) and Centre for Social Impact (CSI) UWA are evaluating the GSE open employment trials. The purpose of this rapid evidence scan is to answer the question, How can Australian Disability Enterprises (ADEs) transform to support open employment of people with disability?

The question of how ADEs are transforming towards open employment is important given the evidence about low paid work and good practices for inclusive employment in Sections 2 and 3. The evidence about the focus for transformation includes:

- Working with employers to raise awareness, build disability inclusion confidence, and provide tailored support to employers and workplaces to adapt practices, policies and create inclusive workplace cultures
- ‘Place and train’ models of employment support, where the emphasis is on job placement in a preferred workplace, and second, providing tailored employment support to the person with disability and the employer
- Ensuring people with disability in open employment have ongoing support (including practical workplace adjustment, transport, job development, coaching and mentoring) so they continue to develop in their role, in confidence and feel socially included and belonging in paid work
- Supporting young people in their final years of schooling to have work placements that reflect their interests and employment goals

Good practices to support open employment are about building inclusive employment, working with employers to build their inclusion capacity, changes to policies and practices, addressing attitudes and individualising support to the person within their work position and workplace. A range of providers offer all or parts of these practices to support the inclusion of people with disability in workplaces, including ADEs, Disability Employment Services (DES), Registered Training Organisations (RTO), advocacy and vocational trainers. One role in the transformation for ADEs is to prioritise their strengths to deliver pathways to open employment relative to the types of support offered by other providers. In that way people with disability and employers will receive complementary types of support.

1 Introduction to rapid evidence review

Good Sammy Enterprises (GSE) is a social enterprise, specialist disability employment provider based in Western Australia. GSE is trialling new models of employment support to assist people with disability to identify their strengths and interests, gain skills and accreditation and facilitate people with disability to secure open employment in the community.

The Social Policy Research Centre (UNSW) and Centre for Social Impact (UWA) are evaluating the GSE open employment trials. The evaluation examines the process, impact and outcomes of the employment initiatives. The evaluation is from November 2023 to February 2026.

Purpose and scope

Evidence scans provide a rapid gathering of empirical recent research to assist stakeholders involved in improving a particular social system understand what research is available, and how this information can inform activities and objectives.

The purpose of this rapid evidence scan is to answer the question: How can Australian Disability Enterprises (ADEs) transform to support open employment of people with disability?

2 People with disability and employment

The rate of paid work by people with disability remains persistently low (AIHW, 2022). People with disability are twice as likely to be unemployed or work fewer hours compared to people without disability (AHRC, 2016; AIHW, 2022; Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2020). Most people with intellectual disability in Australia in paid work continue to work in disability specific employment settings (NDIA, 2020; Wilson, Crosbie, Qian-Khoo, & Campbell, 2022). Often people with intellectual disability who secure work in open employment do not have sustained work opportunities (Meltzer, Robinson, & Fisher, 2020; Ruhindwa, Randall, & Cartmel, 2016).

The primary barriers to open employment for people with intellectual disability fall into two categories, structural and systemic, also attitudinal. Since the 1980s, policies and programs have directed people with higher support needs to work in ADEs, where they work mostly in segregated settings and receive far less than the full national minimum wage (Disability Royal Commission, 2023). The Disability Royal Commission report also found that to achieve inclusive employment, the Disability Employment Services program needed to undergo reform, the public sector should increase inclusive employment opportunities, and government needed to leverage their power to encourage inclusive practices in the private sector. Research with employers finds that negative attitudes persist, such as low expectations and disability awareness, limited inclusion confidence (knowledge about how to adapt workplaces) (Burke et al., 2013; Nota, Santilli, Ginevra, & Soresi, 2014; Tan, Wilson, Campaign, Murfitt, & Hagiliassis, 2019). These attitudes pose core barriers to open employment and inclusion. Other barriers include people's experiences of discrimination, feeling isolated, being unsupported or bored at work, all resulting in people with intellectual disability not starting or discontinuing open employment (Meltzer et al., 2020, Meltzer et al., 2016, Ruhindwa et al., 2016).

A consequence of low open employment rates and income is that many people with disability have lower wellbeing and quality of life. Economic disadvantage and limited economic participation are common. These barriers reduce people's opportunities for social connections, affecting how people take part in broader social and community life (ACOSS & UNSW, 2023; Campbell, 2020).

This status quo is contrary to people's preferences. When asked, people with intellectual disability say they want to work for the same reasons as people without disability, including to make social connections, self-fulfilment, contribute to society, earn an income and be financially independent (AHRC, 2016; Meltzer et al., 2016; Robinson, Hill, Fisher, & Graham, 2020; Sharpe, Hutchinson, & Alexander, 2022).

The positive impacts and outcomes of open employment for people with disability and the enterprises they work for are also well evidenced. They include economic and social benefits to the employee, coworkers, managers and customers (Cimera, 2009; Hartnett, Stuart, Thurman, Loy, & Batiste, 2011; Hernandez & McDonald, 2010; Kober & Eggleton, 2005; Lindsay, Cagliostro, Albarico, Mortaji, & Karon, 2018).

The policy context shaping employment of people with intellectual disability in Australia is slowly changing. The introduction of the National Insurance Disability Scheme (NDIS), shifted funding and policy directions ways from segregated employment. The aim was to create new employment opportunities and redesign employment support. In addition to reasonable adjustment requirements on employers, the NDIS has the potential to facilitate high levels of support in all workplaces. These changes are potential pathways for open inclusive employment for all people with disability who want paid work (Wilson, Crosbie, et al., 2022).

The changes to funding and support are showing slow improvements to employment participation rates (Wilson, Crosbie, et al., 2022, p.1). Young people with intellectual disability are more likely to be in open employment compared to people with disability employed by an ADE (Inclusion Australia & PWDA, 2022). Young people with disability, especially people with intellectual disability or autism remain marginalised from open employment compared to their non-disabled peers. In 2020, less than half of NDIS participants had employment related goals in their plan (NDIA, 2020; Wilson, Crosbie, et al., 2022).

Once connected to an ADEs, most people with disability remain in disability specific employment, with few people shifting to open employment (Kregel et al., 2020; NDIA, 2020; Wilson, Crosbie, et al., 2022). Of the young people in ADEs, Wilson and colleagues conclude the data demonstrate ‘little movement into open employment’, with only 4% of 15-24 year olds moving from ADEs to open employment in the community after four years in the NDIS (NDIA, 2020, p.109; Wilson, Crosbie, et al., 2022, p.1). Similarly, a recent evidence review found ‘clear evidence that placement of individuals with ID [people with intellectual disability] into segregated employment settings, such as Australian Disability Enterprises, rarely leads to subsequent community integrated employment’ (Kregel et al., 2020, p.V). The disability employment reforms introduced in the context of the NDIS intend to address this problem (Wilson, Qian-Khoo, et al., 2022).

3 Building and achieving disability inclusive employment

Most people with intellectual disability want paid work with the right support to do so. The implication is that it is crucial to consider how to create and maintain inclusive employment. This section reviews the evidence on what works in creating inclusive workplaces and how to best support people with disability to gain and keep open employment.

3.1 Inclusive workplaces

Employers often frame benefits of a diverse workforce in economic terms, a business case with direct monetary value of diversity, a competitive advantage, and other benefits of inclusion that arise for employers and customers (Broughton & Strebler, 2008; Lindsay et al., 2018). Some organisations use diversity and inclusion initiatives to shape workplace culture and recruitment from underrepresented or marginalised groups, and to be more socially responsible (Nishii & Leroy, 2022).

Research evidence confirms that key to creating and sustaining disability inclusive employment are the values of employers, corporate and organisations, workplace culture and workplace practices (Alexander, Gendera, Robinson, Fisher, & Howe, 2023; Chen, O'Neill, Phillips, Houtenville, & Katz, 2023; Ellenkamp, Brouwers, Embregts, Joosen, & van Weeghel, 2016; Gould, Mullin, Parker Harris, & Jones, 2022; Nishii & Leroy, 2022; Vornholt, Uitdewilligen, & Nijhuis, 2013). This evidence identifies the characteristics, practices and values within workplaces that lead to more inclusive and diverse workplaces for people with disability and sustained employment outcomes:

- upper level management commitment and leadership
- targeted recruitment and talent pipelines
- inclusion training and capacity building across the entire organisation, with a focus on supervisors and managers
- linking key stakeholders, across the organisation (e.g., disability champions) and connecting with external partners
- hosting awareness campaigns to change understanding and attitudes
- communicating inclusion goals internally and to the public and partners

- strategic planning and identifying specific goals for inclusive employment in the workplace
- increasing disability leadership and representation at all levels of the organisation

Gould, Harris, Mullin, and Jones (2020) in the US found that the availability of inclusive employment has progressed, but businesses are generally slow to integrate disability into their diversity and inclusion plans. This evidence has prompted interventions that promote ‘progressive action learning’ within a workplace, building change over time, and address leadership of people with disability and power sharing in work inclusion programs (Fraser-Barbour et al., 2023; Shaw, Wickenden, Thompson, & Mader, 2022). These initiatives are aimed at addressing the ongoing policy and societal challenges to affect employer attitudes and willingness to invest in diversity and inclusion.

3.2 On the job support and training

Inclusive workplaces can complement individual level supports for gaining and maintaining paid work. The support can include person-centred planning, job placement support, on the job training, ongoing support (coaching, mentoring), transportation services, and social inclusion initiatives (buddy systems).

Internationally, this combination of inclusive workplaces and individual support has been demonstrated to improve open employment outcomes for some people with intellectual disability and higher support needs (Cheng et al., 2018).

Strong evidence is available about how to achieve better employment outcomes for people with intellectual and psychosocial disability. ‘Place and train’ models of employment support (Hoffmann, Jäckel, Glauser, Mueser, & Kupper, 2014; Kregel et al., 2020; McLaren, Lichtenstein, Lynch, Becker, & Drake, 2017). These models emphasise *first* direct job placement and *second* support to the person with disability and employer – demonstrate greater effectiveness to achieve and sustain employment outcomes compared to traditional vocational rehabilitation. The randomised controlled trial led by Burns et al. (2007) established that individual placement and support - particularly together with rapid job search on the basis of the person’s preference and continued support to the person and the employer from an employment specialist – had higher employment success compared to participants who were placed with a provider focusing on vocational services (Burns et al., 2007).

Work experience is the strongest predictor of future employment outcomes. Investing in employment related skills building in the final years of secondary schooling appears to have moderate impact on outcomes, unless accompanied by work experience (Weld-Blundell et al., 2021; Wilson, Crosbie, et al., 2022, p.5).

4 Transforming ADEs to support open employment

How ADEs are transforming their support for open employment of people with disability is important given the evidence about the problem and good practices in Sections 2 and 3. The evidence about the main activities for ADE transformation include:

- Working with employers to raise awareness, build disability inclusion confidence, and provide tailored support to employers and workplaces to adapt practices, policies and create inclusive workplace cultures
- ‘Place and train’ models of employment support, where the emphasis is on job placement in a preferred workplace, and second, providing tailored employment support to the person with disability and the employer
- Ensuring people with disability in open employment have ongoing support (including practical workplace adjustment, transport, job development, coaching and mentoring) so they continue to develop in their role, in confidence and feel socially included and belonging in paid work
- Supporting young people in their final years of schooling to have work placements that reflect their interests and employment goals.

Australia has few evaluated and published open employment initiatives that have been introduced or trialled in ADEs. A small scale pilot study, documenting ADE pathways into open employment is ‘IncludeAbility’ (Crosbie & Wilson, 2023, p.5). The main findings from the 3-year evaluation emphasised the need to address complex employment barriers for people with disability in large companies. The steps to address were about the operating environments, culture, fostering commitment at all organisational levels, creation of safe spaces and trusted partners to support large organisations in their inclusion changes. Employers require ‘long term, sustained support to build their disability confidence and create employment opportunities for people with disability’, which implies the need for a collaborative approach with government (Crosbie & Wilson, 2023, p.5).

Transformation is occurring slowly. In their review of ADEs, Wilson, Qian-Khoo, et al. (2022) identify that since the NDIS related reforms, some ADEs have closed. Other ADEs are offering work in integrated industry and community settings. Some ADEs

are ‘advertising “linked employment” pathways beyond the ADE, though the outcome of transition remains miniscule’ (ibid. p.16).

Good practices to support open employment are about building inclusive employment, working with employers to build their inclusion capacity, changes to policies and practices, addressing attitudes and individualising support to the person within their work position and workplace. A range of providers offer all or parts of these practices to support the inclusion of people with disability in workplaces, including ADEs, Disability Employment Services (DES), Registered Training Organisations (RTO), advocacy and vocational trainers.

One task in the transformation for an ADE is to work out its strengths in generating pathways to paid work relative to the types of support offered by other providers. This contribution could then mean people with disability and employers could use complementary types of support to improve rates of open employment.

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