

Consultation Response: **Shared Apprenticeship – A Proposed New Regional Delivery Model**

Submitted on 4.3.2022 on behalf of the Engage to Change Project

About the Engage to Change Project

Funded by the National Lottery Community Fund, Engage to Change sets out to find employment for young people with a learning disability, autistic spectrum conditions, or specific learning difficulties aged 16-25 in Wales. It uses a supported employment methodology and job coaching. Project partners are:

Learning Disability Wales, a national charity representing the learning disability sector in Wales. Learning Disability Wales works with people with a learning disability and their families, Welsh Government, local authorities, disabled people's organisations and the voluntary sector to create a better Wales for all people with a learning disability. Learning Disability Wales is the lead partner for the Engage to Change project.

Other project partners are: two supported employment agencies, **Agoriad Cyf** and **Elite Supported Employment** and the **National Centre for Mental Health (NCMH)** at Cardiff University, our evaluation partners.

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Our Feedback:

1. We see moving the Shared Apprenticeships into other sectors beyond Engineering and Construction as a positive development, as this will be more inclusive for people with a learning disability and/or autism. It will enable more opportunities and enables opportunities for development into all regions across Wales, reducing "postcode lottery" opportunities.
2. The introduction of a Supported Shared Apprenticeship is an extremely positive step closer to National Jobcoaching Strategy which we strongly endorse. This proposal will increase access and enable start-up training and apprenticeships in supported environments, such as social enterprise, third sector organisations and SME's. This may be crucial to enable many people to progress into open employment, providing them with realistic workplaces, whilst working to the structure of an apprenticeship at their pace and level of understanding / interpretation. The inclusion of Job Coaches is essential and extremely positive to not only increase access but to aid the maintenance of

Apprenticeships by supporting the participant, employer and training provider. It also recognises the need for skilled Job Coaches who are linked to a supported employment service. This ensures that their services will not be undervalued. This is important since we have experienced that unskilled support workers being payed minimum wage will not be able to offer appropriate support. This link is recognised in terms of the goal being sustainable employment for the participant at the end of the Apprenticeship programme.

3. There are Pros and Cons of one RSAG and different LCH for Supported Shared Apprenticeships. The pro is that it will enable concentration and flexibility in the initial start-up phase of such a programme, but this could be viewed as negative longer term. Therefore, there should be a longer-term strategy here about the scheme could be integrated into the standard RSAG and LCH moving forward i.e. becoming part of mainstream provision.
4. The new proposal allows for the wider involvement of SME's, Social Enterprise and the Third Sector, which is likely to increase opportunities for disabled people (based on our E2C experience of employers).
5. We are unsure about how realistic the proposed exit strategy is for Shared Apprenticeships and Supported Shared Apprenticeships and whether they will be able to continue after an initial 3-year period of Welsh Gov funding.
6. Stats – the figures proposed look realistic and initial funding proposals look healthy and would fit with E2C's proposals to WG to make this more sustainable with Access to Work funding. We are also confident that the proposal It also enables the retention of skilled E2C staff for these programmes as well as the availability of skilled support for participants, training providers and employers – again reducing the “postcode lottery” of opportunities.