

STRONGER TOGETHER

West Berkshire Partnership

Building Better Opportunities

Participation Consultation

Whitley Researchers and University of Reading

March 2017

Stronger Together Partnership - Elevate West

West Berkshire

Building Better Opportunities

Stronger Together is a partnership of agencies and organisations in West Berkshire assisting those people furthest from employment to engage in a range of effective and attractive opportunities to overcome barriers, generate an income and improve their life chances.

Our partnership will offer services, activities and events open to all eligible participants across the west Berkshire area. We will focus our activity into the most deprived neighbourhoods using the nationally recognised Indices of Deprivation. The communities we have targeted feature in the worse 5% in the United Kingdom for education, training and skills.

The partnership includes a diverse range of community based education and training agencies including voluntary organisations and statutory providers. One of the grassroots partner agencies – the Whitley Researchers – has agreed, together with the University of Reading to undertake additional consultations with potential beneficiaries. This report provides clear evidence of need with recommendations for further action.

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We would like to say thanks to all the respondents who participated in our questionnaire survey and to all the agencies and organisations who sponsored the consultations. This research would not have happened without their efforts:

Amersham Rd Community Centre

Blagdon Nursery

Brighter Berkshire

Christ the King Primary School

Communicare

Crisis Resolution Team

Lidl Supermarket

Morrisons Supermarket

Newbury College

New Directions

Over 50s Whitley

Reading Borough Council – Elevate Team

Reading Community Learning Centre

Reading Job Centre

Reading Voluntary Action (RVA)

Ridgeway Junior School

Royal Mencap

Smart Works

Sure Start Whitley

Volunteer Partnership Centre

Whitley Park Primary and Nursery School

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1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Whitley Researchers were commissioned to undertake this research consultation by the Stronger Together Partnership and the Building Better Opportunities (BBO) accountable body Reading Borough Council Elevate team. The Whitley Researchers worked in partnership with the University of Reading.

Beginning on the 20th February the research was fully completed with the production of this report on the 17th March. In total 21 organisations gave permission to allow their clients, users and learners to engage in the consultation – 100 interviews were conducted using a structured questionnaire administered by the researchers.

Three quarters of respondents were female and almost half of all respondents were in the 31 – 45 age bracket. Overwhelmingly, most respondents had worked at some point but 14% had never worked and nearly one third were long term unemployed. Younger people featured markedly when considering those who had never worked and were less involved in volunteering.

Three quarters of respondents had children living at home and almost one third were single parents – childcare was a major concern when considering employment options. In multicultural Reading less than half of respondents saw their competence in English as excellent. Word of mouth was the most common way that people found a job – use of on-line resources and employment agencies also featured strongly.

Regarding the things that hold people back two thirds of women but only 16% of men mentioned care duties. However, two thirds of men and one third of women referred to health or confidence problems. Common to men and women was mention of lack of skills as a barrier – just below half of all respondents. Only one third of respondents going to one organisation for employment support were referred to another.

Overall, respondents were aspirational – 81% cited a job they could imagine doing and overwhelmingly (85%) said they felt they would have more to offer an employer if they had more support which represents a high level of demand.

The report concludes with a set of recommendations which are aligned with the BBO key objectives. However, there was a request to include an additional report based upon returns from Royal Mencap which provides services for those with learning disabilities. This is included within Appendix 1.

2. INTRODUCTION

2.1 Building Better Opportunities (BBO) is a jointly funded project with contributions from European Social Funds and Big Lottery. It aims to tackle poverty and social exclusion for the most disadvantaged people. The application process consists of two stages: Stronger Together was successful in Stage 1 and is now completing its application for the Stage 2 process to be submitted by the 27th March. Our participation consultation aims to provide a robust additional evidence base to support a successful conclusion to the final application stage.

2.2 Our research inquiry - evident in our questionnaire - has focused on the key BBO project outcomes including helping participants to better understand their strengths and capabilities, knowing how to access services and information to access jobs; identifying barriers to work for the most disadvantaged; encouraging partner organisations to work together more effectively and enthusing more employers to take on people who are affected by multiple disadvantages.

2.3 Additionally, our locally based community research approach, which is intended to be a key grounded feature as Stronger Together develops, should assist in identifying and measuring wider benefits to the community. These could include some assessment of the quality and sustainability of the jobs accessed by participants and measuring the progress made by participants as they follow their chosen pathways to self-improvement.

3. METHOD

3.1 The Whitley Researchers in partnership with the University of Reading adopt an action research method – local residents work together with university students to create a participatory research network. The Whitley Researchers use their personal networks and local knowledge to engage more members of the community; projects are run with communities rather than about them.

3.2. The participation consultation was commissioned by the BBO project accountable body Reading Borough Council (Elevate) and its partner local voluntary service agency Reading Voluntary Action (RVA). Whitley Researchers were given a clear remit and access to a network of community based voluntary groups and statutory providers. (See page 2 for the list of agencies). This highly varied network offered engagement with a wide range of potential beneficiaries in the most deprived communities in west Berkshire.

3.3 The adopted method used one-to-one interviews which offered a more intimate setting to best understand people's experiences and feelings. The researchers constructed a questionnaire (see Appendix 1) designed to meet the project remit. Questionnaires were administered and completed by the researchers in a structured interview with the eligible target respondents. Occasionally, researchers met with groups of people and their findings are included in this research report.

3.4 The participation consultation was initiated in late February and field work completed by the 10th March. A target of 50 one-to-one interviews was agreed at the outset. However, by the 10th March 90 interviews had been completed.

4. OUR RESPONDENTS.

The analysis is based on 90 surveys, around half the surveys were carried out in the community (outside shops and schools, in a cafe, or linking with unemployed people known personally to the Whitley Researchers team). The rest were carried out either at the job-centre or with clients of the Stronger Together partner organisations.

In terms of the personal characteristics, 24 males and 76 females were interviewed. 20% interviewees lived in RG1 (central Reading), 46% in RG2 (Whitley) and 34% in other areas.

The age spread of interviewees was as follows:

| | |
|-----------|-----|
| age 18-23 | 11% |
| age 24-30 | 17% |
| age 31-45 | 47% |
| age 46-65 | 23% |
| age 66+ | 2% |

Most people (86%) had worked at some point: only 14% of those surveyed have never worked, and these were mostly young people. Of this 86%, we had a reasonably even split between length of time out of work, although 31% were long term unemployed (more than 4 years).

How long since last worked

| | |
|--|-----|
| Never worked | 14% |
| More than 4 years | 25% |
| More than a year but less than 4 years | 21% |
| Less than 12 months | 19% |
| Currently working (but not necessarily satisfied with their job) | 21% |

Of those who have worked, most (73%) have also worked more than 2 years in the same job. The 27% who had not kept the same job for 2 years were mainly from the younger age groups (and especially if they had young children to raise). Only 6 people over the age of 30 had not kept the same job more than 2 years.

We asked people about the kind of jobs they had had. 47% talked of low skill manual labour, 15% of skilled manual labour, and 38% of office based jobs.

59% of our respondents had volunteered at some point in their lives, and 31% in the last 12 months. This leaves 41% who have never volunteered. 58% were part of some kind of organisation, club or group. 23% mentioned neither volunteering nor organisation. Again, it was the younger people that were less connected through groups and volunteering. Working people and the long term unemployed were both likely to be volunteering. It was the people out of a job more than one year and less than four that had the least connections in this area.

5. CHARACTERISTICS THAT MAY BE EXPECTED TO LIMIT JOB PROSPECTS

42.5% interviewees lived with a partner, 75% had children living at home (21% had more than 3 children), and 31% were single parents. Not surprisingly then, childcare was a big concern when considering employment options.

In multicultural Reading, speaking the English language can be a barrier to employment. We asked people about their confidence in reading, writing and speaking English, and only 47% saw their English as excellent. This included native speakers who rated their English as less than excellent due to problems with reading and writing. The spread of responses the question of English was as follows:

Confidence in speaking, reading and writing English

| | |
|-------------------|-----|
| Very little/basic | 8% |
| Get by | 12% |
| Good | 33% |
| Excellent | 47% |

Qualifications can also limit one's work options, but our interviewees were not universally unqualified (see table).

Highest qualification

| | |
|---------------------------------|-------|
| No qualifications | 17% |
| Secondary school qualifications | 26% |
| Post-secondary qualification | 28.5% |
| Degree or higher | 28.5% |

Those in employment tended to be persons who were slightly more qualified, and those out of employment for more than one year and less than four tended to be least qualified. However, there was no correlation between educational attainment and a person's confidence, sense of prospects for the future or desire to upskill. Also, some people were highly qualified but lacked English skills.

35% had done extra courses besides these more academic qualifications, the majority of which were for practical skills. Only 10% reported neither education nor courses. Again, these people were most likely to still be out of work after a year, but not long term unemployed.

The most common way of that people had found their job was by word of mouth (40%). Who you know then is very important. Online (25%) was next. Agents (like the job centre) accounted for only 15%. The full breakdown of where people said they found their jobs is reported below:

Where found the job

| | |
|-----------------------------------|-----|
| Word of mouth | 40% |
| Online | 25% |
| Agent | 15% |
| Other adverts | 7% |
| Self employed | 5% |
| Asked for the job in person | 5% |
| Got job following work experience | 3% |

Because we expected word of mouth to be important, we asked people who were out of formal employment about friends they had who were employed (see table).

Out of the last 3 adults under 65 years of age who
you ate and drank with, how many were employed?

| | |
|------|-----|
| None | 9% |
| 1-2 | 52% |
| All | 39% |

It was not surprising to find a strong and statistically significant relationship between having employed friends and length of time out of employment. The 9% who responded 'none employed' tended to be the long term unemployed. The 39% who said 'all employed' had mostly been employed themselves within the last 12 months. Connecting and being involved in groups can help in this: we found that people who were part of groups or who had volunteered were significantly more likely to have employed friends. These people are also more likely to be cheerful about their prospects for the future.

6. STRENGTHS AND SKILLS OF USE IN A JOB, AND BARRIERS TO EMPLOYMENT

We asked people to list their personal strengths or skills of use in a job. Some thought of personality strengths, some focused on their skills, many found it hard to think of any and needed prompting. 36% did not manage to come up with 3 strengths (strength).

Regarding the things that hold people back (people were given 3):

66% women and 16% men mentioned care duties: childcare, care for dependent adults or other family pressures. Some explicitly mentioned cultural pressure in which it was not expected that women should venture beyond these duties of care. But most rather referred to their duties keeping them home, and particularly the costs and hours available of alternative childcare making work difficult. Single parents found childcare more of a barrier than a parent living with a partner.

63% men and 36% women mentioned health or confidence problems. The crisis of confidence was by far the bigger issue, with only a few people mentioning physical

ailments. It was interesting to note that this was more of a problem for unemployed men than women.

43% mentioned skill as a barrier, frequently referring to skills in the English language (less than 50% rated their confidence in English as excellent), but also mentioning IT skills and the costs of training fees. Men and women both mentioned skills as a barrier. Those out of work more than a year but less than four years were particularly limited by skills, in their own perception, in terms of extra courses and in terms of formal qualifications.

19% mentioned transport as a barrier (not being able to travel to the workplace so easily). Men particularly cited transport.

15% mentioned the whole process of applying for jobs as being a barrier. Men and women were equally effected.

12% mentioned the terms of benefits payments as a barrier or low paying jobs making it not worth working. Men were particularly likely to cite this as a problem.

6% said their age was a problem (men and women) and 5% said internet access was a problem (especially men).

The long-term unemployed seemed to have adjusted to their situation and were less aware of problems with skills and confidence than those who were more recently unemployed.

7. EXPERIENCE OF HELP BY OTHERS

56% persons said they had been helped by someone else in finding a job or upskilling. 16% mentioned the help of an individual; 44% mentioned the help of the job centre; and 49% mentioned the help of an NGO (some mentioning more than one source of help).

35% mentioned getting help in upskilling. 63% mentioned getting help in the job application process; and 30% mentioned getting help in the job search process. 25% of those talking about the kind of help they went in for spontaneously added that the help had also been a personal encouragement to them.

46% mentioned some kind of disappointment with the service, about half because of not actually getting a job at the end of the process, but also because of the help not being responsive enough to the specific requirements of the individual. Disappointment was directed particularly towards the job centres (63% mentioned some disappointment over help from the job centre as opposed to 38% mentioning some disappointment over help from other organisations). This is not to suggest that job centres necessarily do a worse job than other organisations, but the lack of 'have to' about the relationship between charities and their clients may give enable these charities to meet needs that the job centre

cannot. The more personal and case specific the help, the less people were likely to report disappointment.

There is a correlation between length of time since last job and whether the person has ever sought help in the job seeking process, with people most recently unemployed being the most likely to be going for help

Those who were helped by the job-centre tended to be gloomier about their prospects improving than those who had never been there, although getting help from charities left people more upbeat.

People getting help were people who were also more connected generally (volunteering and being involved in organisations) though in this survey we cannot distinguish whether it is the involved people who go for help, or whether getting help encourages engagement more generally. Either way, the who positives go together.

Only 33% of persons going to one organisation were referred also to another. Of those who *were* referred, the majority (67%) took up the referral whilst the remainder were unable or unwilling. All but one of the people taking the referral reported that it was helpful to them. This implies that there is likely to be scope for improving services as partner organisations link up, getting to know what else is on offer and referring people to where they can get the most suitable help.

8. PROSPECTS FOR TH FUTURE AND HELP WANTED

81% persons could cite a job they could imagine doing (the majority of which sounded plausible!). Of the 19% who could not, some simply did not know. Some could not see past their present childcare responsibilities, and some could not see past their ill-health. Working through options with these people (and with the less plausible suggestions of the others) is important, since knowing what you want is one of the primary steps in making progress.

85% respondents felt they would have more to offer an employer if they had more support, which represents a great deal of demand. Regarding the sort of things people mentioned as wanting help for, 51% mentioned the need to gain confidence 62% mentioned the need for help in upskilling or gaining work experience and 58% mentioned wanting help managing the process of job hunting and coping with other demands on their time.

67% people are not even sure where to get support into work if they should want it, with 36% declaring they have no idea whatsoever. Those who are sure they know mentioned the job-centre, various persons, looking on-line and various organisations.

41% persons do not see their employment prospects getting better over time, mainly because of problems with health, confidence and lack of skills. A few

mentioned that the jobs they used to do no longer exist and/or they were too old to see themselves starting again now. 59% persons *do* see things improving however. 77% because they can see their skills, confidence and experience improving, 21% because they see childcare demands decreasing as their children move on through school, and one person because they see new businesses starting up in Reading.

People from Central Reading were least likely to see any prospect of improvement in their situation. Those outside of Central Reading and Whitley were most likely to hope for better.

Women were more hopeful than men for the future.

People who were older (46-65) were less likely to think their employment prospects would improve.

People with poor English had hopes for improvement because of improvements in their language skills.

However, on the whole, there was surprisingly little correlation between a particularly disadvantaged group and that groups expectations for the future. Being a single parent, having little education, not having attended other courses, poor English, length of time out of work or never having worked for more than 2 years in one place seemed to make little difference to hopes for the future, which is a positive sign.

Those most distressed (in terms of unhappiness with prospects and poor skills) tended to be those unemployed for more than a year but not long term unemployed. We find that these people are also least likely to be in volunteer positions. For the long term unemployed however, volunteering may be a substitute for working – there are more volunteers in this category, which may be a contributing factor to their less distressed outlook. People who are part of organisations however are also likely to be more cheerful about their prospects for the future. Becoming less isolated and mixing with employed people appears to help.

Finally, survey participants were told that a local community workshop is opening in Whitley to offer participants a range of tools and equipment to work with and to support access to employment and further training. 55% persons wanted to be part of this, and most of these gave their contact details straight away. 14% were not sure, and 31% did not show interest, saying that it was not their thing, or that their health issues were a barrier, or that they were happy with things as they are.

9. HOW THIS RESEARCH SHOWS OUR POTENTIAL TO MEET THE BBO PROJECT OBJECTIVES

1. Helping participants to better understand their strengths and weaknesses

A significant number of those interviewed were unclear about kind of job they could do, which is a first step to forwarding the employment process. Moreover, the people surveyed found it much easier to come up with barriers to employment than to come up with their strengths. Building confidence is something that charitable organisations were seen to be good at: connected people tended to be more confident about their prospects for the future, and a quarter of the people talking about the type of practical help they were getting from others spontaneously talked about how this helped to build their confidence as well. Of the 59% respondents who saw their future prospects improving, 77% of these saw the improvements coming because of improvements in their skills, confidence and experience, which are areas that BBO partners can help them work on. Indeed, around half of those interviewed mentioned confidence building as being something they would like help with.

2. Knowing how to access services, and information to access jobs.

85% of respondents (men and women alike) said they would have more to offer an employer if they had more support, but only 56% had ever received help, whilst 67% persons were unsure where to get all the help they need. We also see the demand for these services in the fact that well over half of those interviewed were interested in being part of a new community workshop in Whitley, in which training and support into work will be available, with most of these people actually providing their contact details on the spot. Alongside upskilling and the need to gain confidence, help in managing to access jobs and services was a key wish expressed by respondents and indeed, help with the job application process was the most frequently mentioned service that respondents had obtained from BBO partners. Charities clearly have a role over and above what the job centre can offer, with clients expressing less disappointment and a more upbeat outlook when provided with this personalised support. Their generalised connections are also seen to improve.

3. Identifying barriers to work for the most disadvantaged.

Our survey revealed that the biggest barrier to work for women were care duties (66% women mentioned this, and 16% of men). The biggest barrier for men were health problems, especially a crisis of confidence (63% men mentioned this, and 36% of women). Lack of skills was mentioned by men and women equally (43%), Transport, the job application process, benefits payments and internet access were also mentioned. These needs are the areas that the BBO partners seek to address and to inform people about. We note that the long term unemployed are the least likely to have ever had help

into employment, indicating that there is untapped potential to gain through reaching out to this group.

4. Encouraging partner organisations to work together more effectively

Almost everyone that had been referred by one organisation to another found the referral helpful. Since, currently, only 33% persons going to one organisation had been referred on to another, it can be seen how this partnership between organisations is going to help people obtain the tailored services that they seek. The BBO partnership is enabling the organisations to get to know what everyone else offers and to then refer people appropriately.

5. Enthusing more employers to take on people who are affected by multiple disadvantages

We note that 41% persons did not actually see their prospects improving, mainly because of feeling discouraged and/or unable to get work. Certainly, one of the key disappointments people expressed was not actually getting a job at the end of the job seeking process. We also note that word of mouth is the most common way of finding a job (40%) and so the job that charities might do in linking potential employers to employees is key.

10. RECOMMENDATIONS

Following our previous research on transport, our recommendations focus on practical solutions that work together to '**ease, enable and empower**' local people's pathway into employment:

- **Ease** solutions by working with existing provision and providing the information needed to develop these services to address needs identified in the research.
- **Enable** people to help themselves more through the provision of additional or enhanced services and support networks
- **Empower** people, community organisations and local agencies to target support to where it is needed most.

EASE:

Referrals – participant referrals between services can reduce barriers to work. Consideration needs to be given to making this process as supportive and seamless as possible to ensure that participants continue to engage with the programme.

Everyday barriers:

- cost and availability of transport is a concern. The WCDA community transport project provides an opportunity for partners to look at working together to provide solutions e.g. reduced bus fares; moped and bike schemes. Etc.
- skills – provision of outreach IT and job search skills through community clubs and activities.

Confidence in using language – research showed that over 50% of respondents had some concerns about their use of English. The issue is often lack of confidence, rather than skill deficiencies. Partners should continue to develop innovative ways of increasing confidence in speaking, reading and writing by encouraging local people to tell their stories through newsletters, video and film, provide peer support for CV writing and opportunities to work in social media.

ENABLE:

Care, both for children and other family members, was a major concern when considering employment options, particularly for women, and a review is needed of local provision. Caring for family members is time-consuming, stressful and limits opportunities so the partnership should take a 'whole family' approach to working with participants in order to understand the extent to which caring responsibilities are a barrier to work. We know that the solution is not simply providing 'more' childcare places as the excellent Whitley Park scheme has low numbers, so agencies should consider supporting families with subsidized places and working across stakeholders to alleviate pressures associated with health, care for the elderly and understand socio-cultural barriers to

accessing current provision. Bringing employers, schools and care providers to this discussion might open up more flexible working arrangements for parents with children.

Well-being and social connections - activities that build confidence, self-esteem and word of mouth connections are essential in supporting people into work. Friendships, social activities and community spaces that encourage people to engage with friends and the wider community help build connections to work. The WCDA workshop might provide a hub for encouraging men to participate.

Linking with employers – the partnership should consider commissioning research to understand employer’s labour market needs and attitudes to participant employability. The project should seek to identify ways of enabling local employers to offer work experience and apprenticeships, particularly for young people, and practical ways of linking people into jobs.

Young people – young people need opportunities for work experience and volunteering. The partnership should work with employers to understand their attitudes to employing youth and offering work experience and apprenticeships.

EMPOWER:

Shaping pathways to work - The Stronger Together partnership should offer a range of opportunities for participants to actively engage in designing and supporting local service provision and the BBO programme. This might be done by encouraging participants to help out with everyday activities, being ‘champions’, offer ‘peer support’, take part in celebration events or community research, or providing leadership through working with committees and trustees. Participants could be represented in regular evaluations of the programme through ‘citizen panels’.

Helping others – over 50% of the respondents said they had been helped by someone else in finding a job or upskilling. Support through friendships and social networks are as important as agency support in raising confidence and emotional well-being. Providing people with low cost social activities and trusted places to meet for a chat are essential in developing the peer support and social networks that will help people into work. Regular celebration events will also foster well-being.

11. RESEARCHERS – VIEWS AND REVIEWS

“Engaging with people through survey is always interesting. I have carried out surveys into financial exclusion before and had assumed people would not want to discuss such matters but I was surprised that people were really happy to talk about such issues, giving them time for reflection and also getting their experiences off their chest. To then carry out a short survey on work related matters I thought I would get even less resistance by people to participate. This was not the case however, but this was certainly to do with the environments where the surveys were carried out. It is useful to have the flexibility (to some extent) of when I carry out the interviews”.

Rachel Churchard

Using this research obviously benefits the recipients but being a part of the process empowers us as residents – we feel as though the whole project belongs to us.

Mo McSevney

“Being actively involved in the forefront of this research into unemployment in South Reading was incredibly rewarding. Being able to interact with individual’s first-hand through one-to-one interviews and questionnaires was a great way to get people to talk more about their employment prospects. I found it really interesting to understand the struggles and apprehensions of mothers returning to work post-maternity leave and how their feeling of isolation and potential prejudice in the workplace can act as a barrier to their future employment. The project reiterated the desire of people in South Reading to want to work and I feel that this research really provided a basis for helping people to realise their employability and how with help and guidance, their work prospects are great. People seemed really interested in receiving help with finding jobs and the interviews have provided some really interesting feedback”

Becky Heil

Every time I undertake a research project I thoroughly enjoy the experience and it makes me feel I have ‘come alive’. It feels great to be part of this researcher’s team.

Sonia Duval

I became a Whitley Researcher after I heard about the work they had done in conjunction with Reading Buses to provide a bus to the hospital. I was very excited when I saw how the Researchers were able to make a positive change and was keen to find out how I could get involved in finding out more about a community I have lived in for the past 10 years. The project is important to me as I have children who will be affected by changes in the employment market and know how the workshop will be beneficial to a wide range of people and will help improve living conditions for many families for years to come, including mine.

Carla Allamby

APPENDIX 1: SUPPLEMENTARY REPORT

Analysis of surveys conducted with clients of Mencap

11 surveys conducted at Royal Mencap were examined separately from the rest, due to the special needs of this people group with learning disabilities.

Those interviewed were one third male and two thirds female, of ages ranging from 26-65 years. Only 3 out of the 11 interviewed rated their confidence in English speaking, reading and writing as excellent, which is more reflective of their learning disabilities than their nationality.

The interviewees were mostly single and none had children. The majority had no formal qualifications or low levels of qualification, although a few recalled having done some kind of extra course.

As with our other survey respondents out of work, the overwhelming majority had worked at some point in their lives, although for half of them this was more than 4 years ago. Only 2 had worked in the last 12 months. Only one third of those who had worked had worked in the same place for more than two years, which is much less than those from the main survey.

Word of mouth, the help of organisations and job centres featured in helping these people find work, although, unlike those from the main survey, no one found their job online.

No respondent had last eaten and drunk with friends who were all employed, and for the majority, none of them were employed – people with learning disabilities are less likely to have employed friends than those in the main survey.

The respondents were mostly forthcoming about their strengths and weaknesses. Regarding barriers, all of the respondents mentioned health/confidence, which is linked to their disability, and exceeds the barriers faced by those in the main survey. The job application process was the next most common barrier, closely followed by lack of skills. Travelling to work, having internet access and benefits changes were also mentioned by one or two as a barrier to work.

Since the surveys were carried out at a charitable organisation, it was not surprising to find the respondents well connected. Every respondent had volunteered at some point, although just under half in the last 12 months. The overwhelming majority were also active in organisations, as well as having received help in the job seeking process. The help received was mainly in job searching and the job application process. As with those in the main survey, confidence building was mentioned as a side-effect. However, no-one mentioned upskilling, unlike the 35% who mentioned getting help in this in the main survey. Probably because of their learning disability, people were helped with tasks like using the computer rather than being taught how to do it themselves.

Most people were satisfied with the help they got, although not getting an actual job at the end and not having tailored one-to-one help were complaints that mirrored the complaints of people in the main survey. Exactly as those in the main survey, only a third of people getting help in one organisation were referred to another. And as with the main survey, people tended to take up these referrals and found them helpful.

Everyone could image a job they could do, and as in the main survey, most of their suggestions were realistic. The overwhelming majority also felt they would benefit from more help, as in the main survey. More of them felt they knew where to get that help than those in the main survey, all because of their links with the charities that were supporting them. Just like those in the main survey, the sort of help that was wanted was with managing the job application process, upskilling and confidence building. But the job application process was the biggest barrier faced.

The split between those who saw their employment prospects improving and those who did not mirrored the split in the main survey. Those who felt their prospects would improve mainly put this down to the level of support into work they were getting.

There was broad interest in the proposed workshop in Whitley, although one said that transport would be a problem, two said that they did not like group activities, and one said she was already getting enough support.

Overall, we can draw many parallels between supporting people with learning disabilities into work as with anyone else, although support needs are higher and the capacity to upskill is lower.

APPENDIX 2 – THE QUESTIONNAIRE

Building Better Opportunities - STRONGER TOGETHER PARTNERSHIP - Beneficiary Research
WHITLEY RESEARCHERS in partnership with the University of Reading

Building Better Opportunities is funded by Big Lottery and the European Social Fund. Stronger Together is a partnership of agencies across the West of Berkshire hoping to access funding from Building Better Opportunities to support people's access to work related training and employment. This consultation will reveal whether our proposals are fitting to local need. All the information is and will remain confidential. We do not ask for your name or date of birth but do ask for your postcode or the approximate area you live in so as to map responses.

Researcher name _____

Date _____

This survey is about helping people into employment. If you are not currently in paid employment, would you answer a few questions please?

| | |
|---|--|
| Postcode _____ | Number of children living at home _____ |
| Male/Female _____ | Qualifications/training (tick all that apply) |
| Age band: 18-23, 24-30, 31-45, 46-65, 66+ | <input type="radio"/> GCSE or other secondary school qualification |
| Confidence in speaking, reading and writing English | <input type="radio"/> Post-secondary academic qualification (e.g. A-levels, BTEC, other college courses) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Excellent | <input type="radio"/> Any other training or courses to help upskill since formal education. Example(s) _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Good | <input type="radio"/> Degree or higher |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Can get by | <input type="radio"/> None of the above |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Basic | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Very little or none | |
| Living with a partner Y/N _____ | |

1a. Have you ever worked in a paid job?

- Never (skip to question 2)
 Yes
- More than 4 years ago
 - 1-4 years ago
 - Less than 12 months ago
 - Currently working

1b. What was/is your most recent job? _____

1c. How did you get this job? _____

1d. Have you ever worked for more than two years in one place? Y/N _____

2a. Have you ever done volunteer work?

- Never (skip to question 3)
 Yes
- in the last 12 months
 - have not volunteered in the last 12 months, but have done so in the past

2b. What volunteering did you do? _____

3. Think of the last 3 adults under the age of 65 that you shared food or drink with. Were they employed?

- All of them had paid jobs
 1 or 2 of them had paid jobs
 None of them had paid jobs

4. Did you attend any organisations or groups in the last 12 months?

e.g. sports clubs, religious or civic meetings, learning or recreation programmes Y/N _____

5. What do you regard as your personal strengths or skills of use in a job?
(Skill = something you can do)

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

6. What top 3 things hold you back?

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Examples of possible barriers (to pick 3 in rank order)

Poor health Child care Care for dependent adults Training fees Internet access Language
Family pressure Don't feel up to it Lack skills Benefits changes Transport The job application process

7. Have you ever received help in finding a job or upskilling?

No (skip to question 7)

Yes:

Who from (name person or organisation) _____

What help was on offer? _____

What were the key things that helped? _____

Anything that you hoped for but did not get? _____

Anything you did not really need? _____

Did one organisation ever refer you to other organisations that could meet different needs

No (skip to question 7)

Yes. Did you go?

No. Why not? _____

Yes. Was this helpful? _____

8. Are there jobs you know of that you could imagine doing?

No. Why not? _____

Yes. Examples _____

9. Do you think you would have more to offer an employer if you had more support

No

Yes. What are the top 3 things that might help you?

1.

2.

3.

e.g. Confidence builders, practical help or new skills can be included

10. Do you know where to get support into work if you wanted it?

No idea

I have some ideas but would need to know more

I know exactly where: _____

11. Looking to the future: Can you imagine your employment prospects getting better with time?

No. Why not? _____

Yes. Why? _____

12. A local community workshop is opening in Whitley to offer participants a range of tools and equipment to work with and to support access to employment and further training. Would you be interested in taking part in this workshop?

Yes. Please can we take your contact details?

No. Could you tell us why this is not for you? _____

Don't know