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## **Why are certain Employment Support skills important?**

### **Dlaczego niektóre umiejętności wspierania zatrudnienia są ważne?**

**Key words:** skills, competencies, training programme, employment, disadvantaged/disabled people.

**Słowa kluczowe:** umiejętności, kompetencje, program szkolenia, zatrudnienie, osoby ze szczególnymi potrzebami/osoby niepełnosprawne.

#### **Streszczenie**

Wiele czynników wpływa na możliwość zdobycia i utrzymania pracy przez osoby niepełnosprawne czy ze specjalnymi potrzebami. Obejmują one kontekst polityczny i legislacyjny, programy dostarczane przez organizacje rządowe, pozarządowe i firmy ubezpieczeniowe, stan medyczny i kliniczny, stopień upośledzenia tych osób, a także ich umiejętności i kompetencje niezbędne do zatrudnienia. Każdy z tych przypadków jest interesujący, ponieważ może w pewnym stopniu wpływać na poprawę możliwości zatrudnienia osób niepełnosprawnych. Znalezienie optymalnego „wzoru” lub podjęcie „działań interwencyjnych” w każdym z tych obszarów powoduje wzmożoną aktywność. Analiza dowodów sugeruje, że poprawa umiejętności osobistych doradców zawodowych będzie bardziej efektywnie i skutecznie wpływać na wspieranie osób poszukujących pracy. W artykule przedstawiono uzasadnienie dla wyboru umiejętności, które mogą być przydatne do pracy doradców osobistych i ich klientów, a także podsumowano wyniki międzynarodowych badań z programu rozwoju umiejętności.

#### **Abstract**

An number of factors influence how and whether disable or disadvantaged people are supported to find, win and keep jobs. They include the policy and legislative context, the programmes provided by government, NGOs and insurers, individuals' impairment, medical and clinical condition, their skills and employment-competencies. Each of these are of interest and can be influenced in some degree, with the aim of improving the employment opportunities of disabled people. Finding the optimum 'design' or 'intervention' in each of these areas attracts much activity. However, consideration of evidence and the logic of personal interventions to support people into work suggests that improving the skills of personal employment advisors would be equally if not more effective.

This paper sets out the rationale for deciding which skills are likely to be useful to personal employment advisors and their clients, and summarises results of international trials of a skill development programme.

#### **1. Policy Instruments. Programmes, policies and legislation**

There are a variety of policy instruments and legislative arrangements adopted around the world. Within Europe it is normal for there to be some form of anti-discrimination legislation. The supporting penalties and incentives facing employers widely vary. In some countries, quotas are imposed, with various combinations of fines for under-achievement and tax relief for over-achievement. Other countries do not impose quotas, but rely on anti-discrimination legislation. Aside from any debate about the merits of these policies, we can see differences between policies do not make an

unambiguous difference to employment rates in different countries. (OECD, 2010)<sup>1</sup> (see Figure 2.9: Estonia has a rising disability reciprocity rate and the UK has stable disability reciprocity rates and neither have a quota policy; Slovenia has a stable rate, but France's is rising fast; both of the latter have strong quota policies).

The impact of policy changes, while useful and deserving of effort, is not enough. We should be focussing efforts to direct change on individual behaviours. The importance of individuals' choices cannot be overlooked nor replaced by legislative or broader policy initiatives. The skill of an advisor in supporting changed behaviour and informed choice among individual clients and among employers is significant. Programmes around the world often have similar components, some activities being present in most programmes (Corden & Thornton, 2002)<sup>2</sup>: the case-management relationship; employability assessments; individual employment plans; pre-employment services; job placing; adjustments to work and workplace; in work support and post-placement monitoring; sustaining employment; job retention.

These activities have to be done well if they are to be effective: so they provide a useful set of topics for advisors' skill-development programmes.

### **Standards**

In the UK there three significant documents that set out standards for the provision of rehabilitation services. (VRA, 2007)<sup>3</sup>, (BSI, 2010)<sup>4</sup> (UKRC, 2010)<sup>5</sup>. These do not aim to analyse or fully to describe rehabilitation skills. Where they do list relevant or essential skills they state the skill, and mention its importance, but do not describe how to do it well nor indeed what the skill actually is. So they act as useful but not exhaustive guides to what must be included in skill training, without containing the information as to how the skills should be developed or applied. Some basic principles are listed in these standards:

- ethical standards, respectful and client-centred activity, evidence-based practice are present, in various guises, in all the standards,
- the standards also share a concern for adequate recruitment, referral, and induction of clients, with sufficient supporting information to enable clients to make informed choices about the service,
- early initial assessment, goal setting, case co-ordination, clear communication, service user involvement, ethics, commitment to outcomes, duty of care, consent, disclosure, evidence-based practice and interpersonal skills (BSI, 2010),
- appropriate qualification, competence to practice, ability to interpret legal and policy areas, interpersonal skills (UKRC, 2010),
- advising individuals and employers, supporting clients into work, assessment of workplaces, job matching and job retention, 'psycho-social' aspects, counselling, legislation, communicating, advocating, mediating, negotiating decision making and reporting (VRA, 2007).

The British Standards Institute has a clear statement that may be taken as underpinning the skills identified by each of these lists: "The quality of the rehabilitation process and the outcome will depend in large measure on the levels of trust generated by the inter-personal skills of the service user and provider (listening, empathy, optimism, reassurance of competence)" (BSI, 2010).

The foundations of effective vocational rehabilitation and employment advice are in the skills to:

- communicate effectively,
- establish a trusting relationship between client and employer and advisor,
- place the client at the heart of the decision making process,
- use an approach directed towards employment goals and based on evidence of effectiveness.

## **2. Welfare payments tend to discourage employment**

In a just society, welfare payments are made to those in need, including people out of work. Disabled people are given easier access to (usually) higher payments in many countries, because they are seen as permanently disadvantaged and less able to compete in the labour market. Even in countries with

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<sup>1</sup> OECD (2010). *Sickness, Disability and Work, Breaking the Barriers*. OECD publishing.

<sup>2</sup> A. Corden & P. Thornton (2002), *Employment Programmes for Disabled People: Lessons from research evaluations*. HMSO.

<sup>3</sup> VRA (2007), *Vocational Rehabilitation Standards of Practice*. London: Vocational Rehabilitation Association.

<sup>4</sup> BSI (2010). *PAS 150 Providing Rehabilitation Services Code of Practice*. British Standards Institute.

<sup>5</sup> UKRC (2010). *Rehabilitation Standards*. London: UK Rehabilitation Council.

a legislated minimum wage, the cumulative effect of welfare payments is, in many instances, to bring individual or family income for non-earning families close to what they could achieve in employment. The marginal rates at which income is lost through tax and reduced welfare payments on entry to low-paid work can be close to 100% and sometimes over 100%. This is a disincentive to work, which puts many low-paid or low-skilled individuals in an ambiguous position as far as seeking work is concerned. (Seebohm & Scott, 2004)<sup>6</sup> (CESI)<sup>7</sup>. This effect may be discerned among clients who report uncertainty about their post-employment income. It is however, not as great as might be expected, and motivation is sustained through long periods of unemployment for very many individuals. (Gallie & Pagan, 2000)<sup>8</sup>.

Comparable circumstances and arguments apply to those with insurance claims for compensation for loss of earnings following injury or illness. Compensation for injury may even have a damaging effect on claimants' perceived health (Gabbe, Cameron, Williamson, Edwards, Graves, & Richardson)<sup>9</sup>.

The motivation towards employment and work is therefore often weakened among people who are less skilled or likely to take up lower paid work, although the effect has been exaggerated in support of welfare-reduction arguments by politicians across the EU and in the OECD. (Howell, 2005)<sup>10</sup>.

Motivation to work is a key factor in encouraging people to seek work and leave or reduce welfare payments. The skill of motivating clients is important for advisors. Without it they will find it difficult to overcome the 'drag' of welfare payments and the concern over health and disability issues. (Resnicow, DiIorio, Soet, Borrelli, Hecht, & Ernst, 2002).<sup>11</sup>

### 3. Health and Work

For those with disabilities or injuries, the prospect of work may include perceived risk to health and comfort, and will in some cases include definite practical problems (for example transport for those with mobility problems). The relationship between Health and Work is widely misunderstood, with important consequences:

- disabled clients and their prospective or existing employers may be fearful of bad consequences upon taking up work,
- advisors may over-estimate the impact on health and the associated problems on returning to work,
- medical staff often advise clients (patients) against work without any knowledge of the work they do. (Waddell & Burton, 2006)<sup>12</sup>.

Advisors will therefore:

- need to be personally committed to work as part of a positively healthy life, and to recovery and self-management of conditions by clients who take up work,
- need to persuade clients that suitable work is good for health and well-being,
- challenge inappropriate thinking about work after building sufficient trust with the client, and
- when working, as they should, with medical staff, should be able to point to the evidence for the beneficial effects of work. (Hasluck & Green, 2007)<sup>13</sup>.

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<sup>6</sup> P. Seebohm & J. Scott (2004), *Addressing Disincentives to Work*. Social Enterprise Partnership.

<sup>7</sup> CESI. (n.d.). *Promoting Social Inclusion in the Labour Market - Making Work Pay*. Retrieved August 2011, from Centre for Economic and Social Inclusion: [http://www.cesi.org.uk/NewPolicy/policy\\_guides/making\\_work\\_pay\\_policy\\_guide](http://www.cesi.org.uk/NewPolicy/policy_guides/making_work_pay_policy_guide)

<sup>8</sup> D. Gallie & S. Pagan (2000), *Welfare Regimes and the Experience of Unemployment in Europe*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

<sup>9</sup> B. Gabbe, P. Cameron, O. Williamson, E. Edwards, S. Graves & M. Richardson (n.d.). *The relationship between compensable status and long-term patient outcomes following orthopaedic trauma*. Medical Journal of Australia, 187(1):14–17.

<sup>10</sup> D. Howell (2005), *Fighting Unemployment, The Limits of Free Market Orthodoxy*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

<sup>11</sup> K. Resnicow, C. DiIorio, J. Soet, B. Borrelli, J. Hecht & D. Ernst (2002), *Motivational interviewing in health promotion: It sounds like something is changing*. Health Psychology, 21(5):444–451.

<sup>12</sup> D.G. Waddell & D.K. Burton (2006), *Is Work Good for your Health and Well-being?* The Stationery Office.

<sup>13</sup> C. Hasluck & A. Green (2007), *What Works for Whom Research Report no 407*. Department for Work and Pensions.

#### 4. Disabled people are more likely to be unemployed than non-disabled people

Employment rates among people with disabilities is lower than among those without disabilities, and both inactivity and unemployment rates are higher. (OECD, 2010) (OECD, 2004). People with disabilities are also likely to have lower educational attainment levels than non disabled people, and not only as a result of the inclusion of learning impairments in the figures. Once employed, they are likely to have lower earnings than the non-disabled. However, this picture is far from complete:

- many disabled people, including those with ‘severe’ impairments, are employed (Simpson & Cunningham, 2005)<sup>14</sup>; it follows that employment is possible,
- there are no clear divisions between ‘employable’ and ‘unemployable’ people (Berthoud, R, 2006)<sup>15</sup>: it follows that policy cannot divide the disabled population into differing target groups accurately, at least as far as employment is concerned, though different levels of support may be useful for different groups,
- it also follows that advisors should never categorise a client as unemployable, and should adjust their support and activities to the individual, and not to a notional ‘standard’ service.

An associated matter is that medical diagnosis or health conditions are weak predictors of employment potential in individuals. While more severe conditions undoubtedly play a larger part than others in contributing to unemployment, it remains the case that almost no conditions, other than the most catastrophic, lead to unemployment for everyone who suffers them. Medical diagnosis and assessment is only as one factor among many in employment support activities. Unfortunately, access to disability-linked welfare payments rely in large measure upon medical assessments. It may be that the medically-based evaluation for access to welfare is a contributory factor in de-motivating individuals who seek it.

These observations lead to some helpful decisions about the skills of employment advisors:

- Since employment is possible, advisors should enable their client to choose and to wish to be successfully employed in suitable work: motivational skills and methods are important (Miller & Rodnick, 1991)<sup>16</sup>, (Graham, Jutla, Higginson, & Wells, 2008)<sup>17</sup>.
- In order to gain employment, it is necessary to look for a job and to be ‘active in the labour market’. Advisors should be able to teach clients about job-search skills,
- In order to succeed in gaining a job, it is necessary to enter the competition for the job. Advisors should be able to mentor clients through the competition process,
- A person’s self-efficacy for job-search and for job-competition is predictive of their willingness to try and their persistence in the face of failures (Bandura, 1997)<sup>18</sup> (Eden & Aviram, 1993)<sup>19</sup>. So building clients’ self-efficacy for job search, competition and achievement is a significant skill for advisors.

Self-efficacy is enhanced by four main processes, which in order of beneficial impact are:

- Practical success (‘mastery’ experiences),
- Valued examples (‘vicarious experiences’) – seeing a trusted person succeed,
- Persuasion & discussion,
- Social support and emotional state – working with the group or team (Bandura op.cit).

These are the tools which must be used to build clients’ efficacy and hence their success. (Strauser, January 1995)<sup>20</sup>. But these may not occur in that order during work with a client: more often we find that the sequence is:

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<sup>14</sup> J. Simpson & S. Cunningham (2005), *Successful Job Search*. Excerpta Medica then Elsevier Science, vol. 1282, pages 1191–1194.

<sup>15</sup> R. Berthoud (2006), *The Employment Rates of Disabled People*. University of Essex, Institute for Social and Economic Research. Department for Work and Pensions.

<sup>16</sup> W. Miller & S. Rodnick (1991), *Motivational Interviewing*. London: Guilford Press.

<sup>17</sup> V. Graham, S. Jutla, D. Higginson & A. Wells (2008), *The added value of Motivational Interviewing within employment assessments*. Journal of Occupational Psychology, Employment and Disability, vol. 10, No 1/52.

<sup>18</sup> A. Bandura (1997), *Self Efficacy- The Exercise of Control*. W H Freeman & Co.

<sup>19</sup> D. Eden & A. Aviram (1993), *Self-efficacy training to speed re-employment: Helping people to help themselves*. Journal of Applied Psychology, 78, 3, 352–360.

<sup>20</sup> D.R. Strauser (January 1995), *Applications of self-efficacy theory in rehabilitation counselling*. Rehabilitation.

- Persuasion & discussion: the introduction of the client to a programme and to their advisor, when the use of motivational methods is important to maintain and strengthen their commitment,
- Valued examples, such as may occur for example in group job-seeking classes, or by discussion of opportunities for work. Working in groups of clients can be significantly motivating and empowering for individuals, and is often an effective use of expensive advisor-resources (Machin & Creed, 1999)<sup>21</sup> (Price & Vinokur, 2011)<sup>22</sup>,
- Practical success in implementing real-life steps towards employment. The achievability of these steps is critical, for while distant and challenging goals may be temporarily exciting, failure at too-difficult tasks is discouraging and can weaken self- efficacy. Failure is to be avoided, even at the expense of longer and more gradual work,
- Social support and emotional state may occur at any time, with variable impacts. Home life may discourage or encourage job-seeking activities, and emotional state may vary and cannot be left out of consideration, though it is notable that expressed emotional state may not indicate intention and ability to act.

Each of the considerations above have a direct bearing on the way a skilled advisor works with the client and with their employer. The skills are central to the advisor's effectiveness, and learning how to apply the skills is not a matter of learning a procedure: it consists of being able to apply the concepts in the context of positive and non-judgemental relationships. Although they are often familiar to experienced advisors these relationships are nonetheless unique to each client and to each employer. The skilled advisor is able to provide:

- a relationship that is motivating and empowering for the client from the first introduction onwards,
- a working relationship which enables the client to map out an achievable plan full of successful steps and with minimum risk of failure,
- persuasive evidence and valuable experiences that encourage the client towards suitable work,
- support to the client to enable them to include social and emotional support (not only from the advisor) in their plan.

## 5. Competing for work

Nothing in the experience of unemployment and welfare reciprocity makes a person competent to compete for work. No amount of motivation or exhortation is sufficient to enable them, if unskilled at job search, to achieve work.

Advisors must be able to deploy resources, their own or other's, that will teach the client the necessary skills, provide needed information, and enough practice to be competitive in the particular segment of the labour market they wish to enter. Skilled advisors can both provide some if not all the skills teaching and support that is needed, and can locate and harness other support.

## 6. Working with employers

A client who achieves suitable and successful employment is always associated with an employer, ideally one who is happy with the outcome. (Needels & Schmitz)<sup>23</sup>. With few exceptions (recruiting family members for example) there is always a competition for jobs, though not always one that is openly advertised or canvassed.

Employers choose among similar candidates for a job that is available. Candidates must have relevant competencies, and those competencies may be diverse. Skill at the work is one, but social competence in the workplace figures, as do previous experience, education, age (despite legislation to the contrary in some countries), contacts, social status or background. There is a very great diversity in the combinations of these and other factors, such that each job may be treated as unique within a broad

<sup>21</sup> T. Machin & P. Creed (1999), *Changing Wonky Beliefs Training programme*. Retrieved August 2011, from <http://www.usq.edu.au/users/machin/cwb.htm>.

<sup>22</sup> R. Price & A. Vinokur (2011, August), *The Jobs Project for the Unemployed*. Retrieved August 2011, from <http://www.isr.umich.edu/src/seh/mprc/jobsupdt.html>.

<sup>23</sup> K. Needels & R. Schmitz (2006), *Economic and Social costs & benefits to employers of Retaining, Recruiting and Employing Disabled People*.

cluster of similar occupations. Routes into as well as out of work vary between occupations and between employers. (Imber & Wlodarczyk, 2007)<sup>24</sup>.

A skilled advisor will work with the client to establish how such factors affect their competitiveness for work. When clients have to change occupations (perhaps after injury for example) they may also face changes to the social, economic, behavioural aspects of their working experience. The advisor must be skilled in gaining the trust of the client to explore all aspects of their life, in preparation for and in taking action to make personal and domestic as well as employment changes.

Advisors may also be called upon to work with employers to identify job opportunities, to develop and run recruitment campaigns and projects, and should as a minimum be skilled in researching and participating in the life of their local labour market. Employers are their customers, and they need the relevant customer skills.

## **7. Up- and re-skilling clients**

When disabled clients change jobs they may need to learn the skills of their new occupation. Often this is part of a programme to increase their employability by enabling them to compete at a higher level in the labour market, for more stable and better-paid, or less physically demanding work. After re-training the client is expected to compete in a new occupation. They will need to have the relevant social skills, knowledge of how the sector recruits, and of the nature of competition. Without these additional competencies, they may be less not more competitive than before re-training.

A skilled advisor is able to learn about new sectors of the economy, to work with employers in the new sector and to help the client acquire the relevant abilities and behaviours. Many aspects of the client's life may be affected by the change, and the skilled advisor is able to help the client evaluate, plan for and effect the changes.

## **8. Synthesis of a training programme**

This analysis has examined some of the rationale that helps decide on the key skills of advisors. We believe these skills to be the main and most important elements of any teaching programme for advisors. But they are not the only ones, and the list is neither detailed nor comprehensive. They are enough, however to map out the main learning and assessment Units of a training programme for advisors. Examination of the sources listed in previous sections suggest strongly that the skills needed by advisors are as follows.

### **Skills of Advisors**

Advisor themselves should have certain skills, beliefs and behaviours that underpin all the work they do. They should:

- be personally committed to work as part of a positively healthy life, and to recovery and self-management of conditions by clients who take up work,
- provide an ethical, safe and professional service that respects the goals and serves the needs of the client and employer,
- consider that every client is employable,
- adjust their support and activities to the individual, and not to a notional 'standard' service,
- enable their client to choose and to wish to be successfully employed in suitable work.

The key skills of the skilled employment advisor are:

- to build clients' self-efficacy for job search, competition and achievement.
- to provide a relationship that,
  - is based on skilful listening, appreciation and communication,
  - is trusting, positive, non-judgemental, motivating and empowering for the client,
  - enables the client to map out an achievable plan full of successful steps and with minimum risk of failure,
  - is supportive during set-backs and temporary failure or adjustments,
- to provide persuasive evidence and experiences that encourage the client towards suitable work,
- to enable the client to include social and emotional support in their plan,
- to motivate clients towards suitable work,

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<sup>24</sup> D. Imber & F. Wlodarczyk (2007), *Mapping Effective Responses to Job Retention*. Cardiff: Healthy Minds at Work.

- to persuade clients that suitable work is good for health and well-being,
- to explore all aspects of clients' lives, in preparation for and while taking action,
- to help the client identify and make behavioural changes that impact on their personal and domestic lives as well as on employment,
- to support changed behaviour and informed choice among individual clients and employers,
- to challenge inappropriate thinking about work,
- to establish how diverse factors involved in work affect clients' competitiveness,
- to help the client evaluate, plan for and effect changes that lead towards and achieve suitable employment,
- to teach clients about job-search skills,
- to deploy resources that will teach the client necessary skills, and provide needed information,
- to enable clients to assess and select job-goals,
- to enable clients to be competitive in the labour market they wish to enter,
- to mentor clients through the competition for work,
- to advise clients and employers, assisting them to make effective adaptations during job-entry or return to work,
- to recruit clients from among the relevant community,
- to work with groups of clients from a community helping them support each other in job search activities,
- to work with other agencies, co-ordinating their activities and support in creating an effective joint action in support of the client's goals and actions,
- to work with employers to identify job opportunities,
- to develop and run recruitment campaigns and projects,
- to research and participate in the local labour market,
- to learn about new sectors of the economy.

### Grouping Skills for Assessment and Training

These skills fall more or less into two different groups: Units and Training Packages. Units are coherent groups of skills that can be assessed together and form a significant element of an advisor's job. There are skills common to all advisors and essential to all practice; these are therefore in a compulsory Unit (1 below) for any qualification. But other advisors may not be required to undertake every element, so other Units are dependent on the job in question. Achieving a Unit requires demonstration of many skills. Within our project TRAVORS2 (TRAVORS, 2011)<sup>25</sup> we have defined the Units as:

Unit title	Key learning outcomes
<b>1. Professional skills and ethics</b>	1.1 Understand the disability employment context in one country and how own organisation relates to it 1.2 Understand & apply the principles and ethics underpinning client self-determination 1.3 Demonstrate use of approaches and skills to support client and employer self-determination <b>All candidates must achieve this unit. Outcomes can either be demonstrated through realistic simulation following training, or in the workplace in conjunction with one or more other units.</b>
<b>2. Engaging with client communities</b>	2.1 Engage with organisations to improve employment opportunities for disabled people 2.2 Engage potential clients through publicity, outreach and involvement with local or specialised communities

<sup>25</sup> TRAVORS. (2011, July). *TRAVORS2*. Retrieved August 2011, from Training in Vocational Rehabilitation Services: <http://www.travors-2.eu/>.

<b>3. Enabling clients to obtain work</b>	3.1 Work with clients to carry out initial assessments 3.2 Support clients to plan and make progress towards obtaining work 3.3 Support clients to undertake job search, job preparation and return to work
<b>4. Supporting clients in work</b>	4.1 Support graduated return to work 4.2 Assist clients and employers to select and implement appropriate adjustments
<b>5. Supporting employers to employ disabled people</b>	5.1 Develop employment opportunities for disabled people 5.2 Support employers to recruit disabled people
<b>6. Case management</b>	6.1 Work effectively with other professionals and co-ordinate their inputs 6.2 Ensure that clients are received appropriately and their eligibility established 6.3 Make and maintain relevant records 6.4 Review cases and identify learning-points from them for improving future practice

Advisors may be able to acquire Units on the basis of their existing skills, and could be assessed without undertaking any learning. However, in many or even most cases, skills will need to be taught through direct skill-training to support the learning required for a Unit and as needed for the advisor to fulfil their job role. A training programme will typically include a range of skill development activities and in-work practice, and would be designed to suit the level of the advisor (from novice to expert) and the circumstances of their work. In TRAVORS2 we have developed a ‘library’ of training materials that can be used and adapted to the needs of any learners.

### Trails of the approach

In TRAVORS, we have trialled this approach in the UK, Czech republic, Lithuania, Turkey and Slovenia. Trials covered 79 learners and their 17 employers. The evaluation report notes that:

‘The training trials took place across a wide range of VR contexts, with the quality and effectiveness of training provided by partners receiving almost universally excellent feedback. While it has not been possible to assess the longer-term impact of the training on practitioners’ effectiveness at work, employer feedback and participant questionnaire scores indicate that it has been widely successful in raising their skill levels. This was reported across all participant groups and experience levels, while being particularly marked for participants such as social workers, insurance assessors and vocational tutors for whom VR is a secondary role.’ (Lester, 2012)<sup>26</sup>.

We now look forward to more opportunities to support those who help disabled people into employment in the open labour market, using the principles and skills we have identified.

### Conclusion

There is abundant evidence gathered over a long period of time and in various settings, which identifies the skills that make an employment advisor effective in their work, with both disabled and with non-disabled people. Examination of the evidence produces long and consistent lists of skills that could be taught through carefully structured skill-development processes, including training programmes.

Effective application of these skills in work will contribute to better quality services. The skills are likely, when properly applied, to lead to larger numbers of clients working in suitable jobs, and to services that are professionally and ethically valuable. Development and application of skill training programmes can make a valuable contribution to achieving the quality of services that are set out in professional and other standards, and to implementing effective programmes and policies.

Within TRAVORS, we have carried out trials of this skill-training structure under independent evaluation. The trials took place in five countries, offering comparison in widely different policy, legislative and economic contexts. Employer feedback and participant questionnaire scores indicate

<sup>26</sup> S. Lester (2012), *Evaluation of the transfer of innovation and partner training trials*. Taunton: TRAVORS2.

that it has been widely successful in raising their skill levels. This is a good basis for further collaborations and skill development.

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