

December 2020

Values into Action Scotland (VIAS)

A report for the Disability Employment Gap
Public Social Partnership.



introduction

Values into Action Scotland (VIAS) was commissioned to undertake research for the Disability Employment Gap Public Social Partnership (PSP) in which the Scottish Union for Supported Employment (SUSE) is the lead partner.

The PSP model is an innovative approach that seeks to design creative solutions to complex issues using combined resources; piloting new ideas and methods to inform the work of the Scottish Government as it seeks to address the disability employment gap by 2038.

VIAS has been commissioned through the PSP to seek to identify the barriers perceived by employers and supported employment providers and pilot a series of responses that might address these barriers.

Specifically, the research in December 2020 has been asked to ascertain:

- employer knowledge about supports and services available to help them recruit and retain under-represented groups
- employer understanding about how to accommodate these under-represented groups within their workplaces
- employment and employability providers understanding about how to support these under-represented groups to achieve job outcomes.

Upon completion of this research VIAS would then be able to design a pilot programme, to run from January to March 2021, that would:

- offer a programme of 360-degree capacity building, including evaluation/mystery shopping, consultancy, and training, both for:
 - employers, and
 - employment/ employability providers
- establish a national employer information hub during 2021.

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Executive Summary & Key Findings

This research was undertaken at a time of great economic and social disruption due to the COVID -19 virus.

The employment position of disabled people remains unacceptably low and there seems to be few existing national or local interventions which are having a significant impact.

There are local interventions that are successfully supporting disabled people into work. However, a more strategic national response is required in order to meet the policy expectation of halving the disability employment gap by 2034.

The findings from this initial research have revealed a positive response from both employers and employability support providers on the benefits of employing disabled people in the workplace.

This research has also identified two groups - one group of employers and another group of employability support providers - that are both enthusiastic and willing to participate in a further pilot study. Both groups are diverse in terms of their size and geographic spread.

There is a call for additional funding from providers and employers. This merits further investigation in the context of current unprecedented funding and intervention from government.

The study has identified common areas of need in terms of disability awareness training, accessible information and communication tools and techniques.

Advice on recruitment, staff support in the workplace and accredited staff training were all raised as areas requiring attention.

The pilot study will take forward the issues raised in the initial research and advise the PSP on future practice.

Rationale for this study

Disability employment has been a priority for both the UK Government and the Scottish Government for some time.

In the policy document Creating a Fairer Scotland the Cabinet Secretary outlined the approach to fairness and equality in future employability programmes:

"Throughout this programme of work, our first priority is to make sure that as the powers are devolved those in need of support can access person-centred services which address their barriers to sustaining high quality employment".¹

This inclusive policy while welcomed is required to be turned into action to have any meaningful impact. Understanding what is required to achieve inclusion is necessary if the policy intent is to be delivered.

"Inclusion is often defined as the extent to which everyone at work, regardless of their background, identity or circumstance, feels valued, accepted and supported to succeed at work."

Chartered Institute of Personnel Development CIPD²

The national disabled people's organisation in Scotland, Inclusion Scotland, published a report in December 2020 following a survey of 164 disabled people.³ The report highlights views on the Scottish Government's Policy - A Fairer Scotland For Disabled People Delivery Plan published in 2016.ⁱ

Inclusion Scotland asked about the policy ambition for disabled people to have - Good incomes and fairer working lives. From the 164 disabled people surveyed:

- 44% said employment opportunities and working conditions for disabled people had got worse
- 25% said they had stayed the same
- 7% said they had got better
- 24% said they were not sure.

Any labour market analysis or research into employer knowledge and/or provider capability must acknowledge the current economic environment after the impact of COVID-19. We have yet to discover the long-term impact the virus will have on the economy. What we can look at now is the numbers and types of jobs that we know have been affected by the virus in 2020.

A recent report by the Office for National Statistics (ONS) Office for National Statistics - VACS02 Vacancies by Industry⁴ (see Figure 1) highlighted the changes in vacancy levels by industry for the period August to October 2019 to August to October 2020.

¹ Creating a Fairer Scotland - A new future for Employability in Scotland Scottish Government March 2016

² Assessing the Evidence
- Building Inclusive Workplaces CIPD September 2019

³ Disabled People's Views of the Fairer Scotland for Disabled People Delivery Plan, Inclusion Scotland December 2020

⁴ Office for National Statistics ONS
- VAC SO2 Vacancies by industry - 10 November

figure 1

Vacancies by Industry (thousands seasonally adjusted) Aug-Oct 2019 and Aug-Oct 2020

Sector	Aug - Oct 2019	Aug - Oct 2020	Change %
Mining/Quarrying	2	1	-50.0%
Manufacturing	51	40	-22.1%
Electricity, Gas, Air Conditioning	3	3	0.0%
Water Supply, Sewage Waste, Remediation Activity	3	3	0.0%
Construction	25	27	8.0%
Wholesale, Retail, Repair of Motor Vehicles	128	60	-53.1%
Transport & Storage	32	30	-6.25%
Accommodation & Food Service Activities	92	30	-67.3%
Information & Communication	43	25	-41.8%
Financial & Insurance	31	18	-41.9%
Real Estate Activities	12	10	-16.6%
Professional Scientific & Technical Activities	83	49	-40.9%
Administrative & Support Service Activity	53	35	-33.9
Public Admin & Defence, Compulsory Social Security	23	29	-17.3%
Education	48	39	-18.7%
Human Health & Social Work Activities	138	119	-13.7%
Arts Entertainment & Recreation	17	9	-47.0%
Other Service Activities	19	12	-36.8%

This ONS information compares the vacancies advertised between August to October 2019 with the vacancies advertised between August to October 2020.

There are clearly sectors where the number of vacancies has substantially decreased, e.g., the Arts, Entertainment & Recreation, Accommodation, and Food Service.

The Construction sector increased the number of vacancies over the year and the Electricity, Gas, Water and Sewage sectors remained stable.

As some of these sectors may be slow to return to pre-COVID 19 employment levels careful thought should be given to the training and skills programmes being offered to disabled people as they prepare for work.

There are many sectors where people with disabilities have traditionally found employment, such as accommodation & food services, wholesale, retail, administration, health, and social care. Many of these sectors may struggle to return quickly to pre-COVID 19 levels and many local employers may require to adapt their business model, reduce employee numbers or even be forced to cease trading.

In future, renewables, construction, gas and electricity provision and air conditioning will be more likely to have vacancies in a post-pandemic period.

Undoubtedly there has been a significant impact on the economy which, in turn, adversely effects recruitment in the short- to medium-term.

In November 2020 Skills Development Scotland in their COVID 19 Dashboard reported that many businesses (81.8%) reported a decline in gross profit levels in Q2 2020. Estimates suggest a further fall in profitability is expected in Q3 2020.5

In Q3 2020, an estimated 17.4% of Scottish businesses may reduce staff numbers.

Currently, 81% of the general population have paid employment. This contrasts with disability employment rates where:

- 45% of the general disability population have paid jobs
- 33% of people registered blind have paid jobs
- 32% of people on the autistic spectrum have paid jobs
- 42% of people with hearing loss have paid jobs
- 4% of people with learning disabilities have paid jobs.

There is clearly much to do to address this significant gap.

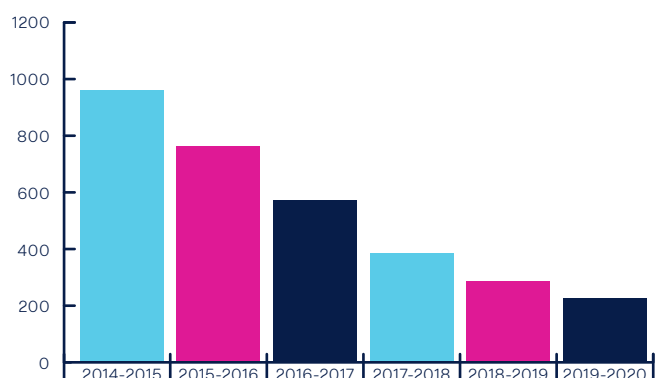
2.1 UK Government Response

The demand for employment support comes at a time when the DWP spend on employment programmes has steadily decreased. Figure 2 highlights the spend of £954 million in the financial year 2014-2015 steadily declining to the 2019-2020 spend of £226 million.

In 2018/19, total expenditure on Access to Work was £129 million, which included payments for 36,240 people to help them to stay in employment. It is the DWP's most expensive, but arguably most successful, programme. However, according to Centre for Social Justice⁶ research in 2017, only 25 per cent of employers know what Access to Work is and understand the help they can get from the service.

figure 2

Public spending for the Department for Work and Pensions Employment Programmes (£m)



⁶ The Centre for Social Justice, Submission: work, health, and disability consultation. CSJ/YouGov polling, 2017

2.2 Scottish Government Response

The Scottish Government has a devolved employability programme - Fair Start Scotland (FSS). Almost one-third (33%) of all types of condition reported by those joining FSS were mental health conditions. Long-term illnesses, diseases or conditions accounted for around 19% of all types of condition reported, whilst just over 16% were physical disabilities. A learning difficulty accounted for almost 10% of all types of conditions reported by participants.⁷ (Figure 3)

figure 3

Long-term health conditions reported by FSS Participants



- Mental health
- Long term illness, disease or condition
- Physical disability
- Learning difficulty
- Other condition
- Developmental disorder
(for example, autistic spectrum disorder or Aspergers Syndrome)
- Deafness or partial hearing loss
- Learning disability
(for example, Down's Syndrome)
- Blindness or partial sight loss

The national programme will need not only to recruit disabled individuals but also support them into work. The new voluntary approach of the Fair Start model requires significant encouragement not only to join the programme but also to continue with the programme, as demonstrated in the Work First data in September 2018 (Figure 4).

figure 4

Participant journeys on Work First Scotland
Figures in brackets are as of 28 September 2018
Referred to Work First Scotland

- (6,939) Start on Work First Scotland**
- (4,432) Receive pre-employment support from service providers and/or specialist agencies**
- (1,788) Work First Scotland Early Leavers**
- (1,692) Enter employment**
- (1,133) Sustain employment for at least 13 weeks**
- (795) Sustain employment for at least 26 weeks**

Taking all job outcomes into consideration, the employment rate is 24%, looking at the jobs sustained over 26 weeks the employment rate drops to 11%. With the considerable investment the government has in the programme this performance has much room for improvement.

⁷ Scottish Government Work First Scotland & Work Able Scotland 2018, Quarter 2

Methodology

The research for this report was conducted in three stages:

3.1 Stage One - a review of literature

The consultant undertook a systematic review of the available literature from both national and international sources.

3.2 Stage Two - a survey of employers and employability providers across Scotland.

The surveys were circulated by the national body SUSE throughout its membership and was promoted across local authority areas using existing networks by partnership organisations. Falkirk Council also ran an article in their E-Zine to promote the research and recruit participants to the survey.

3.3 Stage Three - the recruitment of five employability support providers and five employers to join an action research pilot.

Considering the small group of participants in the pilot study the methodology chosen to take forward the pilot to the next stage was an Action Research approach:

- This would allow the research to be participative and collaborative
- This piece of qualitative research is both situation and context based
- The participants can identify a problem, identify a solution, deliver that solution, and then reflect on the outcome.

The approach of PLAN – ACT & OBSERVE – REFLECT produces a cycle of research that seeks to involve the participants, empower them to identify solutions and improve the position that was originally identified as a problem.

This methodology seems to be in keeping with the values expressed by the Disability Employment Gap PSP.

Employer knowledge about supports and services available to help them recruit and retain under-represented groups.

The UK Government has introduced several interventions designed to incentivise employers to recruit and retain disabled people in employment.

Positive About Disabled People Two Ticks was introduced in 1990, this was followed by Disability Confident in 2013 and the Fit For Work assessments in 2014.

All these approaches have had limited impact on the disability employment rate, either because of a lack of standards set for employers or lack of demand for the service by disabled people.

In 2014 Kate Nash Associates carried out research with 55 employers and over 2,511 disabled employees to look at information sharing in the workplace.⁸

This concluded that:

Disabled people often looked for clues or indicators as to how inclusive or supportive their work environment was before they shared information suggesting that inclusion is not simply about workplace adjustments but how organisations value and celebrate difference.

Employer understanding about how to accommodate under-represented groups within their workplaces.

Reed Partnership and Disability UK surveyed over 300 people in the UK involved in recruitment, human resources, and leadership positions in businesses on their views of the challenges disabled people face entering employment in the report *Disability and Employment*.⁹

The main findings from the report are highlighted in Figure 5.

figure 5

The main findings from the report include:

- 1 in 10 employers do not feel confident that their organisations would be able to support an employee with a disability
- 84 percent of employers told us that disabled people make a valuable contribution to the workplace, however more than one in 10 worry that disabled people are more likely to take time off work
- One in five employers consider the cost of modifying equipment makes it expensive to employ disabled people, and almost half of respondents said that additional funding for adaptations would help businesses to retain disabled people in employment
- Almost a third said that businesses are worried that disabled people will claim discrimination if the job does not work out.

Disabled people have struggled against the ways that their capabilities are perceived by others.

The DWP and NHS England as detailed in Figure 6a. produced a report that highlighted the experiences of people with hearing loss in employment¹⁰.

This same report highlighted the support that could make a substantial difference to employees with hearing loss with limited cost to the employer (Figure 6b).

figure 6a

- Almost three – quarters (74%) of respondents felt that their employment opportunities were limited because of their hearing loss.
- 70% agreed that their hearing loss sometimes prevented them from fulfilling their potential at work.
- Just over two-thirds (68%) agreed that they sometimes felt isolated at work because of their hearing loss.
- Two-fifths (41%) had retired early due to the impact of their hearing loss and struggles with communication at work.

figure 6b

- **Adjusting the layout of a meeting room and using good lighting to help the person with hearing loss to see everybody clearly- this is important for lip reading.**
- **Modifying a job to take the needs of a person with hearing loss into account.**
- **Moving a person with hearing loss to an office with good acoustics – where sound is transmitted well.**
- **Providing communication support for meetings, such as speech to text reporters**
- **Installing equipment for employees with hearing loss such as amplified telephones and flashing -light fire alarms.**
- **Providing a portable hearing loop, or other listening device, for employees with hearing loss to use during a training course away from the office.**
- **Giving staff time off for audiology appointments.**

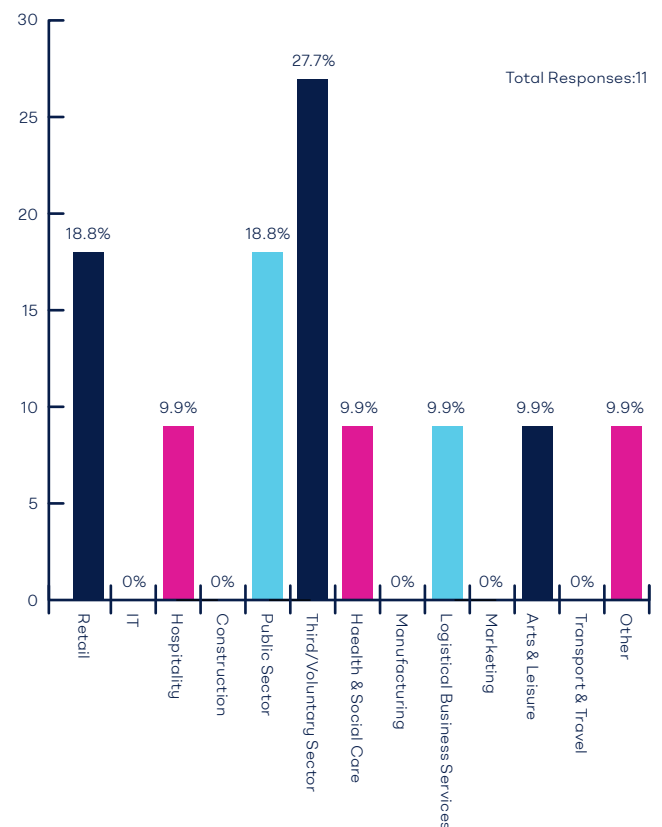
5.1 Employer Survey responses

A survey of 11 employers was undertaken across Scotland in December 2020. The purpose of this survey was to identify the specific barriers employers identified when employing disabled people in their organisations. This information would be analysed to form the basis of a pilot study to run from January to March 2021.

Question 2, identified the industry sectors that replied to the survey: the largest number was in the third/ voluntary sector - 27.2%, followed by health and social care, public sector, and retail at 18.1%. Importantly, hospitality, manufacturing, logistics and business services were also represented at 9% each. This breadth of sectors was welcomed as it enables the pilot to work with a range of employers in a variety of business settings.

Q2

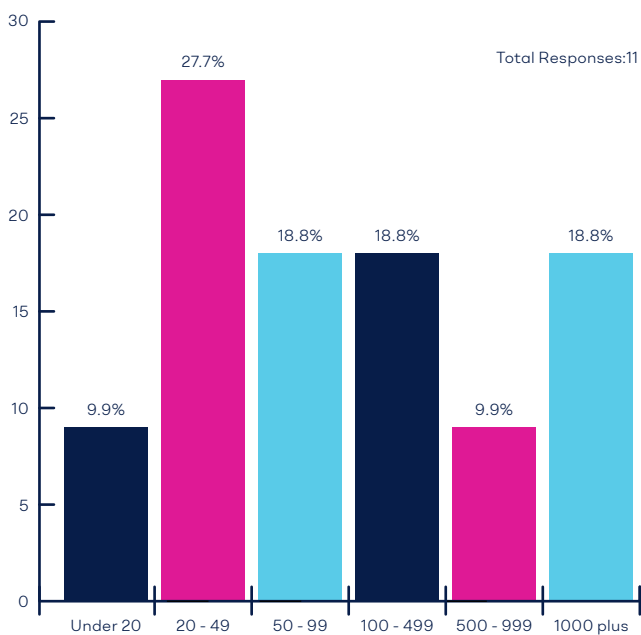
What sector would you describe you operate in?



An objective of the research highlighted in **Question 3** was to engage with employers not only across a range of business sectors but also to engage with businesses of different sizes from smaller businesses to larger employers. The marginally largest group of three employers in the survey employed between 20-49 employees. This was followed by two employers that employed 50-99 employees, 100-499 employees, and one employer that employed 1000 plus employees.

Q3

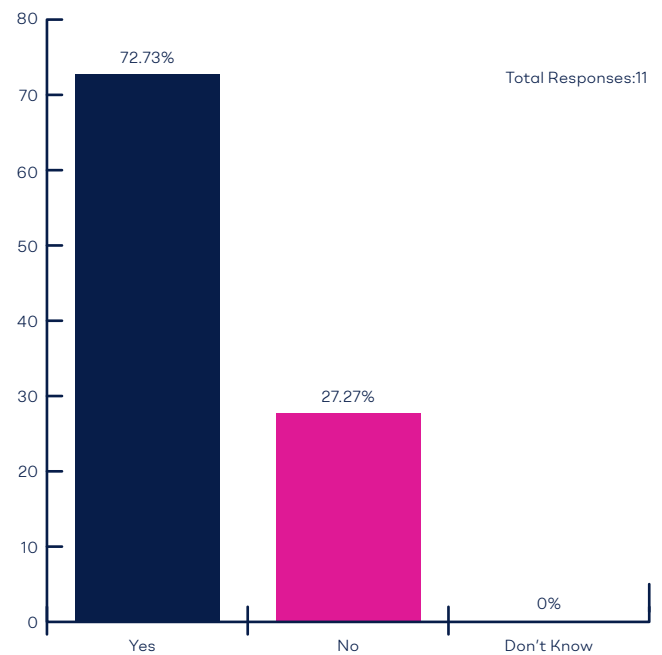
How many people do you employ?



In **Question 4**, 72.73% of the respondents already had disabled people in their organisation. Is this because the respondents to this questionnaire already have a diverse workforce or is there more information required to see if there is a difference between public sector and private sector employers?

Q4

Do you currently have disabled people working in your organisation?



In **Question 5**, some of the larger employers were not able to give an accurate number of disabled employees because of the way data is collected by occupational health departments. The survey does include employers who have employees with autism, significant sight loss, significant hearing loss and learning disabilities. Interestingly, the largest number was employees with learning disabilities, a group which has the lowest employment rate in the country.

Q5

If you do currently employ people with disabilities?

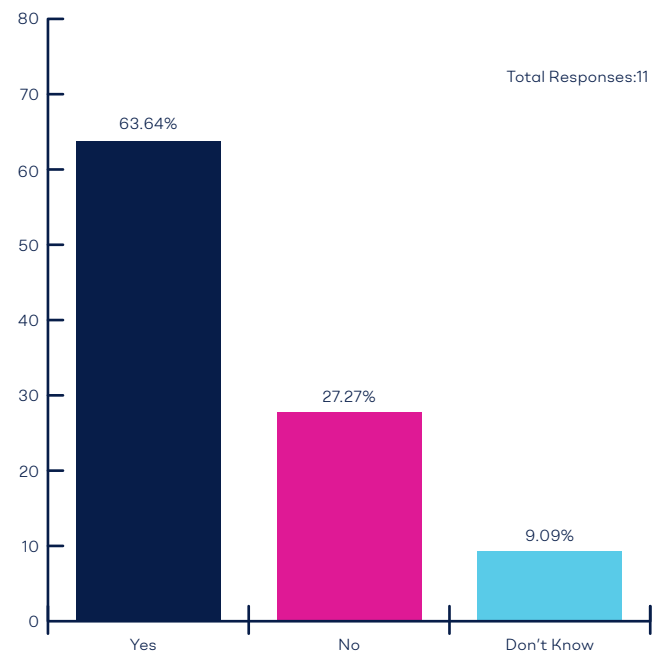
Answer Choices	Average	Total	Responses
How many people with learning disabilities do you employ?	3	20	8
How many people with significant hearing loss do you employ?	0	2	6
How many people with significant sight loss do you employ?	1	3	6
How many people with autism do you employ?	1	8	6

Total Responses: 8

In **Question 6**, we asked about the collection of data on diversity, 63.4% of the employers did collect data which was an interesting response and may reveal data sources that are being collected by employers that could be of interest nationally. The lack of accurate data has often been regarded as being problematic in terms of the allocation of resources.

Q6

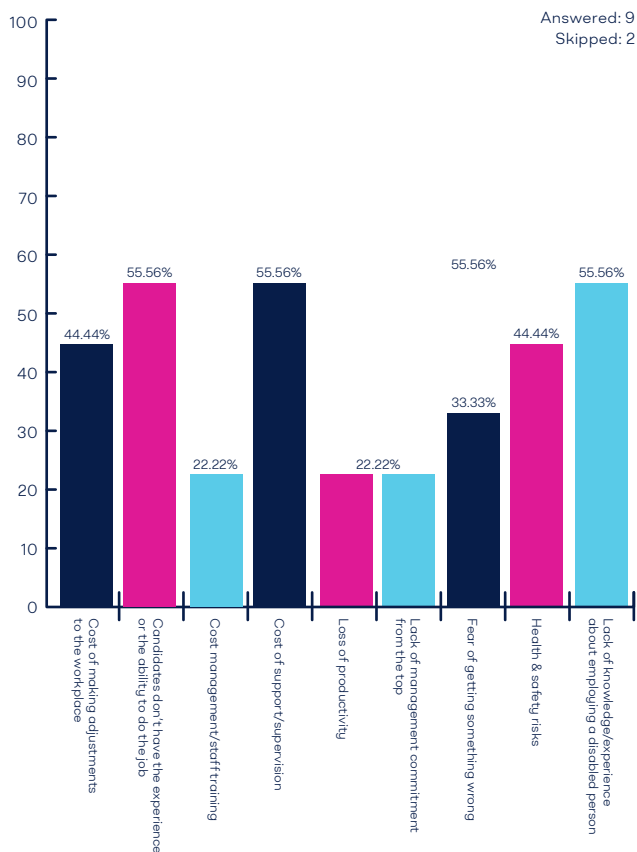
Do you routinely collect data on diversity?



In **Question 7**, the employers thought the most noted barriers to employing disabled people included: lack of knowledge, cost of supervision and lack of experience or ability to do the job at 55.56%. This would need to be built into the pilot programme as a priority. Responses also highlight the importance of the cost of making adjustments - 44.44%. It would be interesting to find out if the employers concerned about this issue knew about Access to Work funding. Health and safety concerns and the fear of getting things wrong were also highlighted. Interestingly, neither lack of management training and backing, nor the loss of productivity were as high a priority, both at 22.22%.

Q7

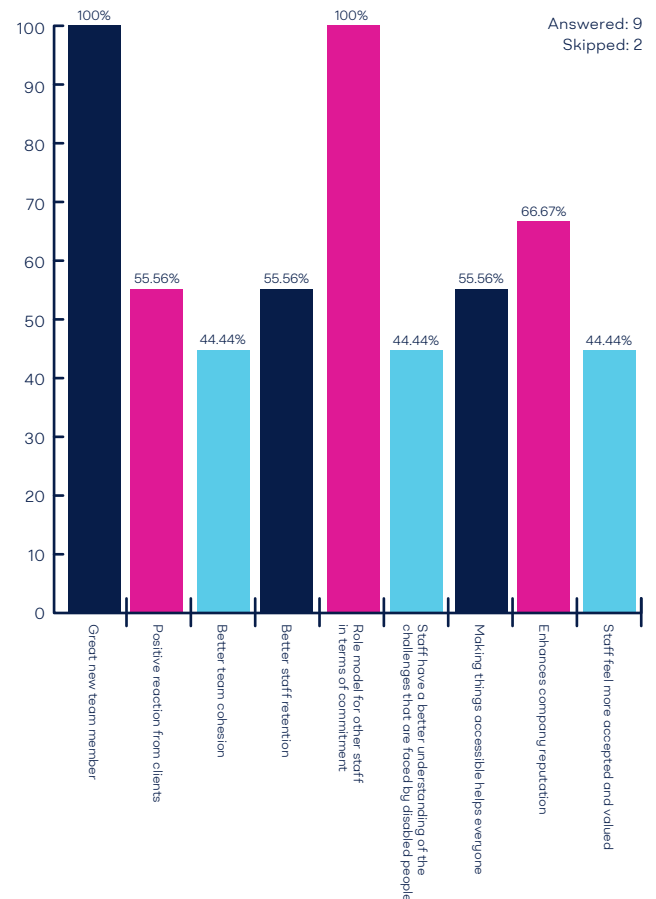
In general what do you think are the barriers to employing people with disabilities?



All those who responded (100%) to **Question 8** agreed that employing a disabled person added positively to their team and helped existing staff to understand the needs of disabled people. This impact on staff was also recognised by 66.7% of the respondents as employers thought that staff felt more valued and accepted. More than half of those who responded thought that company reputation and client perception would be positively impacted. There were only 44.4% of the respondents that thought staff retention and team cohesion was improved. The question on accessibility scored 44.4%. The pilot might want to drill down further to see if employers were aware of the ways in which information and corporate communication could be made accessible.

Q8

If you have employed a disabled person what have you perceived as a benefit to the organisation?



The responses to **Question 9** identify some of the needs that require to be incorporated into the pilot programme.

Specifically: Recruitment and Selection, Funding and Adaptations, Support to Communicate, Disability Awareness, Support for Employers including Legal Responsibilities.

Q9

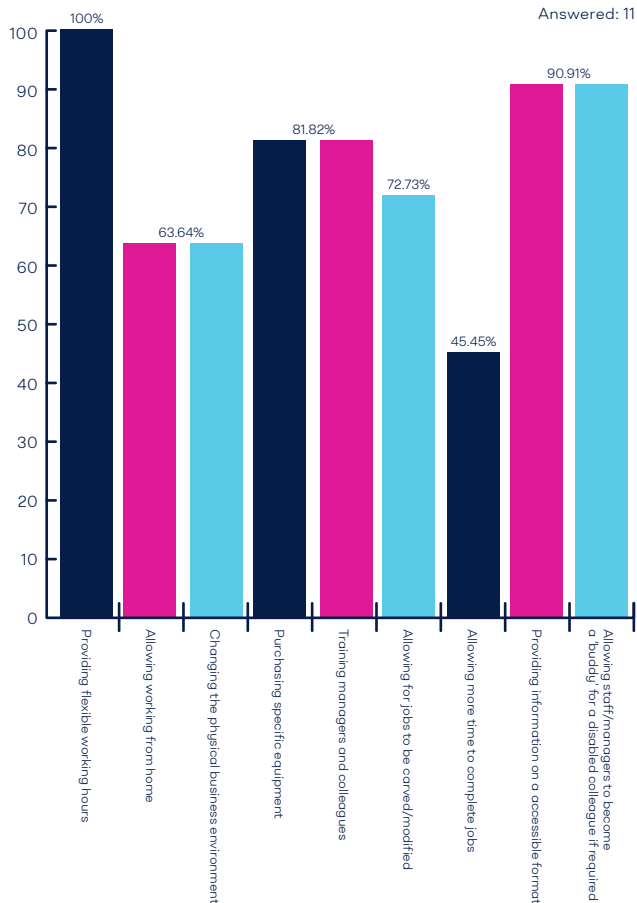
What information or advice would you find helpful when employing a disabled person?

#	Responses	Date
1	Job coach involvement with recruitment selection.	15.12.2020
2	Access to training for supervisors and colleagues of the individuals.	14.12.2020
3	Not all disabled people need support however those that do, the employer need to know where to turn to. Most disabled people who do not retain a job is due to the employer being unaware of how to get the support that is required.	14.12.2020
4	Based on an audit of potential roles, what physical changes would be needed at the facility as well as what operational processes would need to be looked at? What augmented welfare facilities might be required if any. What are the implications to our insurances and other liabilities?	14.12.2020
5	Open 2 way communication.	13.12.2020
6	Available grants to adapt an old building.	11.12.2020
7	Information relating to the specific person's disability to enhance their working experience and improve productivity.	11.12.2020
8	Not sure.	11.12.2020
9	We are at an early stage of our inclusive cultural development - we were unconsciously incompetent about employing disabled people but we are becoming more conscious of our limitations by working with organisations such as Supported Enterprise Services in North Lanarkshire. They, and others, have enlightened us on the advantages this specific diversity group could bring to our company. We need help with developing our people to enable them to help support our current, and future, disabled workforce - yes we recognise that we have much to learn but our current people have a huge potential to give too. Help support our organisation to get the most out of employing a disabled person. Help us develop us to develop them, more effectively. Share best practice on training, technologies and workplace innovations to support disabled employees towards sustainable employment and become real assets for our company and increase their contribution to our society. Create employer focused groups, action learning sets, working together to learn from each other, to help promote employing and developing disabled workers. Employing a disabled person is a rewarding journey of discovery for both the company and the disabled person - the more supported this journey is, the greater the benefits.	10.12.2020
10	Disabled people are employed by Falkirk Council regularly and we have just been awarded the SUSE inclusive Workplace award. We have a GIS scheme in place for disabled people and if they are the best person for the job they are appointed.	10.12.2020

All the employers that responded to **Question 10** were willing to offer flexible hours. There was also considerable support for a “buddy system” and accessible information - 90.91%. Training staff and purchasing equipment had support from 81.82%. Working from home was only acceptable to 63.64%. This is worth further analysis as it may be related to the sector, e.g., retail and care. Changing the physical environment also was supported by 63.64%, the least popular choice was allowing time to complete jobs, which is worthy of more investigation to see if this is related to certain industry sectors.

Q10

Which of the following would you find acceptable for an employer to support a disabled person in the workplace?

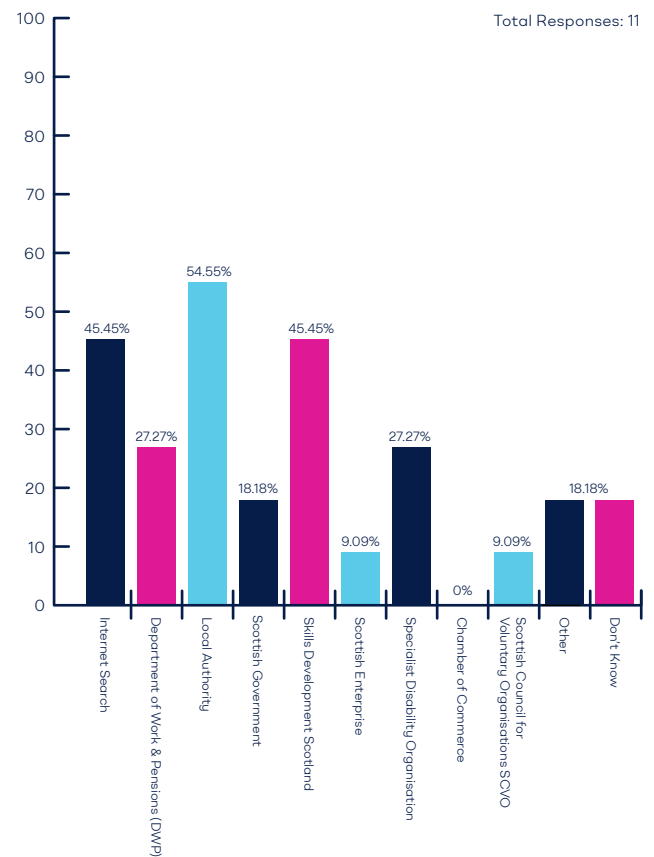


When seeking information on employing disabled people in **Question 11**, there was no main single source that employers chose. Local authority information at 54.4% was marginally more popular than the Internet and Skills Development Scotland at 45.45%. Interestingly Specialist Disability Organisations and the Department of Work and Pensions (DWP) who have a lead role in this work, only attracted 27.7% of respondents. The Scottish Council for Voluntary Organisations (SCVO) and Scottish Enterprise was chosen by only 9% of employers.

The pilot might explore this area further to see if a more accessible national source of information might be more helpful to employers.

Q11

Where would you look for information on the employment of disabled people?

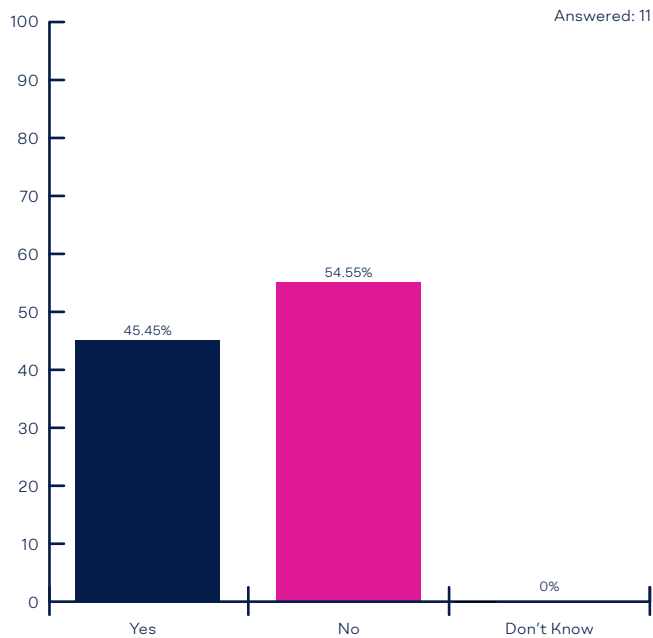


In **Question 12**, the responses highlighted that more than half the employers (54.5%) had not received support from an external agency. Considering the number of employees with disabilities employed by this group of employers, further insight would be needed into these responses. The support in some cases may have come from internal supported employment provision by the employer themselves.

For those employers that responded to **Question 13** and had used external support to recruit, the response was incredibly positive with 80% of the employers that did use an agency stating that the external support was highly effective with one employer highlighting that the support was extremely effective. More analysis on which sectors were likely to seek support might be relevant.

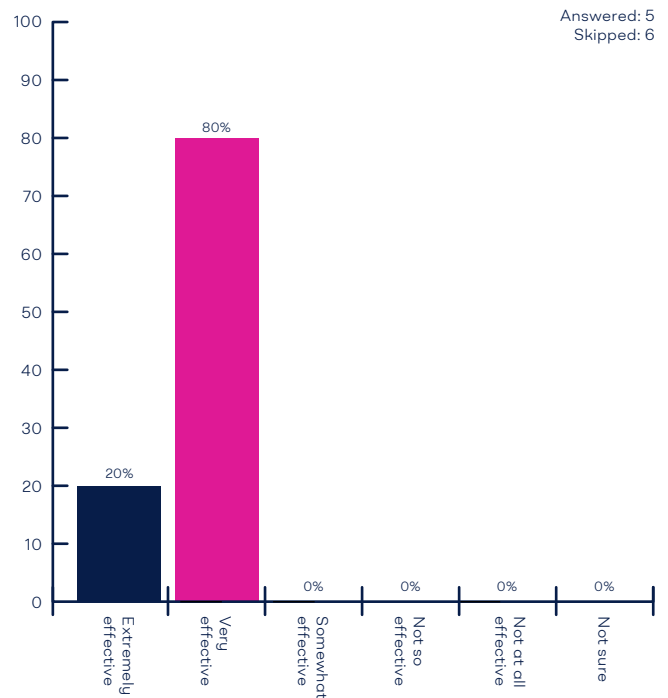
Q12

Have you received advice and support from an external agency to employ a disabled employee?



Q13

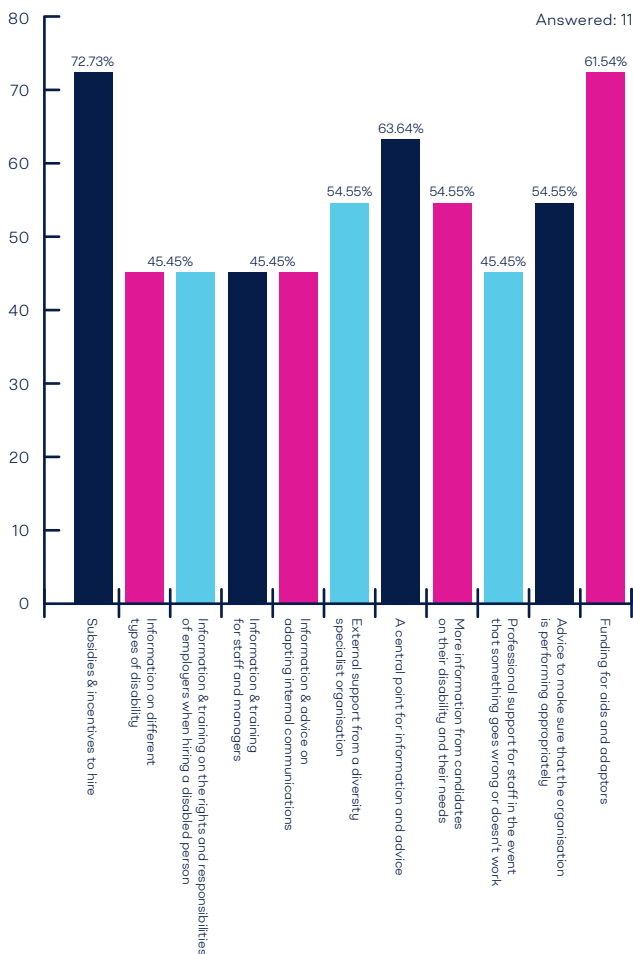
If you answered yes to question 12, how effective has using the external agency been in the recruitment of disabled people in your organisation?



In **Question 14**, funding was ranked highest as the most useful support to employers at 72.73%. A central advice source was ranked highly by 63.64% of respondents, followed by information from the candidates themselves and advice from a diversity specialist organisation to ensure that the employer was behaving appropriately (54.55%). The remaining respondents were keen to find out more on disability awareness, rights and responsibilities, staff training and support at 45.45%. The design of the pilot project might seek to address these information and advice requests in a central location.

Q14

Which of the following would you find useful in employing a person with a disability?

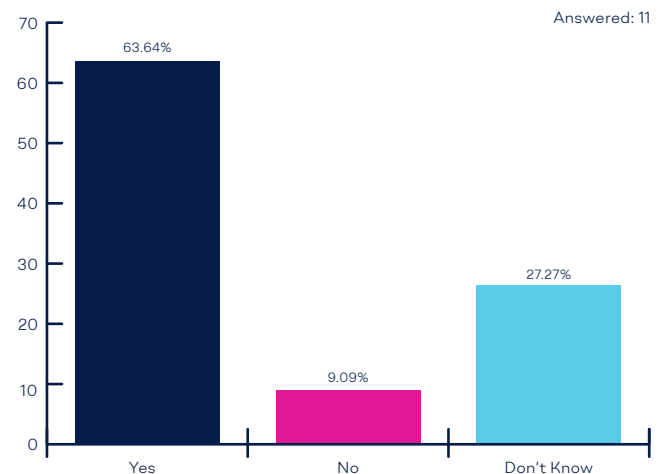


In **Questions 16 -19** we asked respondents if they were interested in joining the pilot study, would they have staff they could identify who would benefit from the study and would they be happy to be contacted about joining the study. Seven businesses were interested, six of those businesses could identify staff now who would benefit. In total eight of the businesses were happy to be contacted about joining the pilot study.

Early contact with these businesses will be crucial to ensure that the momentum generated by the study is not lost.

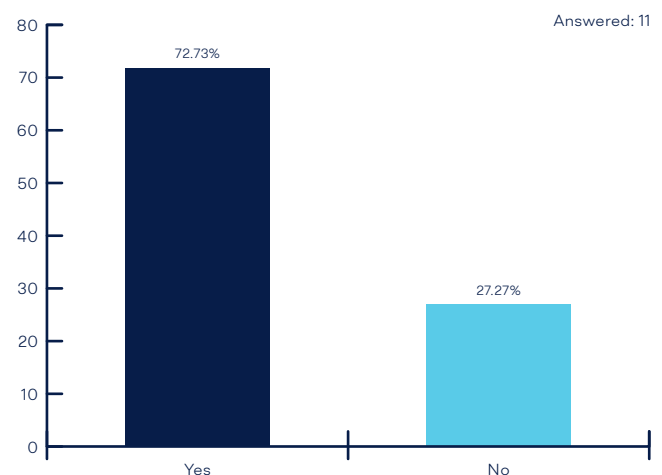
Q16

If there was a service to provide advice and practical support when recruiting staff with a disability, would you be interested?



Q19

Are you happy to be contacted to discuss involvement in the pilot study in early 2021?



Employment and employability providers understanding about how to support these under-represented groups to achieve job outcome.

In 2010 the Scottish Government and the Scottish Union of Supported Employment launched the Supported Employment Framework.¹¹

The Framework (Figure 7) outlined the 5 Stage Approach which is recognised as good practice today:

figure 7

Engagement by Supported Employment Service	Helping disabled people most disadvantaged from the labour market to make informed choices on their own future.
Vocational Profiling	Identifying skills and preferences for work, giving work experience that will help the individual make their own vocational choices.
Job Finding	Identifying the preferred job through employer engagement, also providing support to the employer.
Employer Engagement	Finding out about the workforce environment, co-workers and the supports a person might need.
On/Off the job support aftercare	Providing backup to the employee and the employer, developing independence in the workplace, and addressing career progression in due course.

The report by the Scottish Commission for Learning Disability (SCLD) in 2016 -Mapping the Employment Landscape for People with a Learning Disability in Scotland - identified the number of supported providers in Scotland.¹²

Of the 32 Scottish local authorities supported employment was available in 26 local authorities.

The annual budgets in 2014/15 varied across different authorities:

- Up to £90,000 – 3 local authorities
- £100,000 to £199,000 – 4 local authorities
- £200,000 to £299,000 – 5 local authorities
- £300,000 to £399,000 – 1 local authority
- £400,000 plus – 2 local authorities.

The report also noted at the time a growing trend for supported employment services being transferred to economic development and employability services from local authority social work departments.

Beyer and Beyer highlighted the benefits to employers of supported employment.¹³

Good, supported employment remains a rare commodity in the UK. If employers are to realise the benefits of employing people with a learning disability, then job coach supported employment needs to be more widely available. Such coaches are needed to deliver the advocacy, job matching and tailored training that employees need, and to assist employers with the advice and on-going point of reference that they report as being so valuable to their efforts in creating a diverse workforce.

Research conducted by SCLD in 2014 looked at good practice in supporting students with learning disabilities and autism into work.¹⁴

The report highlighted the Critical Success Factors required to move students into work as detailed in Figure 8:

figure 8

Critical Success
Close partnership between employers, colleges and supported employment
Building students confidence and raising their own expectations
Learning that is tailored to individuals' required job skills
Support for employers
Availability of diverse work placements
Job coaches trained in systematic instruction

¹¹ Scottish Government A Working Life for All Disabled People The Supported Employment Framework for Scotland 2010

¹² Mapping the Employability Landscape for People with Learning Disabilities in Scotland – Glasgow University, TERU Cambridge Policy Consultants 2016

¹³ A systematic review of the literature on the benefits for employers of employing people with learning disabilities Stephen Beyer, Dr Annie Beyer – Mencap 2017

¹⁴ A Natural Progression – A Good Practice Handbook for Colleges on Supporting Students with Learning Disabilities and Autism into Work.

In 2017 Beyer and Beyer citing Kregel (1999) noted that "workers with developmental disabilities have a positive impact on the overall productivity and profitability of the business or company that employs them. Many employers continue their commitment to workforce diversity as a strategy for increasing the productivity and competitiveness of their company. Workers with developmental disabilities are hardly a burden to business or industry. On the contrary, the presence of workers with disabilities actually increases the ability of a company to contend with its competitors." Kregel (1999, p4)

In a comprehensive study of employers' attitudes in Healthcare, Hospitality and Retail Administrators, Hernandez et al (2008) reported the main benefits to them as employers to be low absenteeism rates and long employment tenures.

Sitlington and Easterday (1992) interviewed 84 employers from a wide range of industry sectors about employing people with a learning disability. They were asked to identify factors that would positively influence their hiring people with a learning disability and identified the probability of regular attendance, and probability of staying in the job longer, by the worker as a major benefit.

There is little evidence in the literature on the financial cost of not retaining staff with a disability. While we know that some employers fear additional sickness absence will be an issue; even when there is an increase in absence the cost of replacement might be significant.

In Figure 9, an RNIB case study, based on an employee with a hearing impairment that required a cochlea implant to sustain her job, highlighted the cost of supporting a member of staff in the workplace compared to replacing her.

Employers must be clear that the cost of replacing a worker will almost certainly be significant. In future we must look at how we maintain disabled workers in post, to benefit both the employee and the employer.

figure 9

Costs	
Salary of fulltime employee	£24,000
Annual hours worked	1,820
Salary per hour	£15.56
Cost of sickness	
Higher average sickness absence (see Note 1)	£1,109
Cost of providing reasonable adjustments	
Occupational health case management	£150
Equipment	£1,000
Management Time	£500
Support functions, (HR, IT etc)	£1,000
Total Costs	£2,650
Costs of Replacement	
Recruitment administration	£246
Business disruption (see Note 2)	£3,268
Induction and training	£750
Sub total	£4,264
Cost of termination	
Termination Costs (see Note 3)	£6,535
Total cost of replacement	£10,799
Retention benefit	£8,148

Notes

- Note 1.** This is based on average sick rates of 7.2 per cent for disabled employees compared to 3% (131 X hourly rate divided by 2 as full pay is not paid for all sick leave)
- Note 2.** Business disruption is calculated as six weeks salary, i.e., the time it might take to typically replace the employee
- Note 3.** Termination costs are estimated at 12 weeks' notice.¹⁵

¹⁵ RNIB 2011 Vocational Rehabilitation – the business case for retaining newly disabled staff and those with a long-term condition

6.1 Employability Providers Survey responses

A survey of 13 employability service providers was undertaken across Scotland in December 2020.

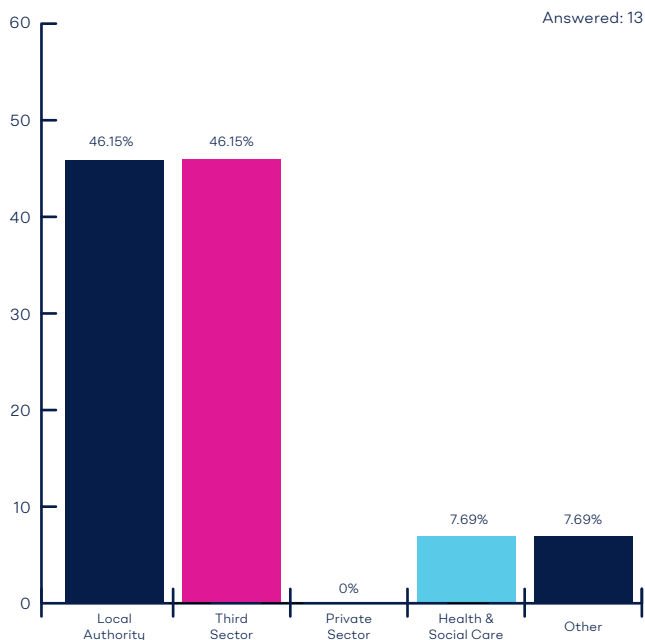
The purpose of this survey was to identify the specific barriers identified by employability service providers as they support disabled people. This information would be analysed in conjunction with the employers' responses to form the basis of the pilot study to run from January to March 2021.

Not surprisingly, the majority of support providers were in the public sector, either within a Local Authority or the Third Sector. When finalising the membership of the pilot project, recruiting a private sector provider would give a valuable perspective

46.15% of providers employ less than 20 staff. Four providers (30.7%) employed between 50-99 staff. Only one provider employed over 1000 staff.

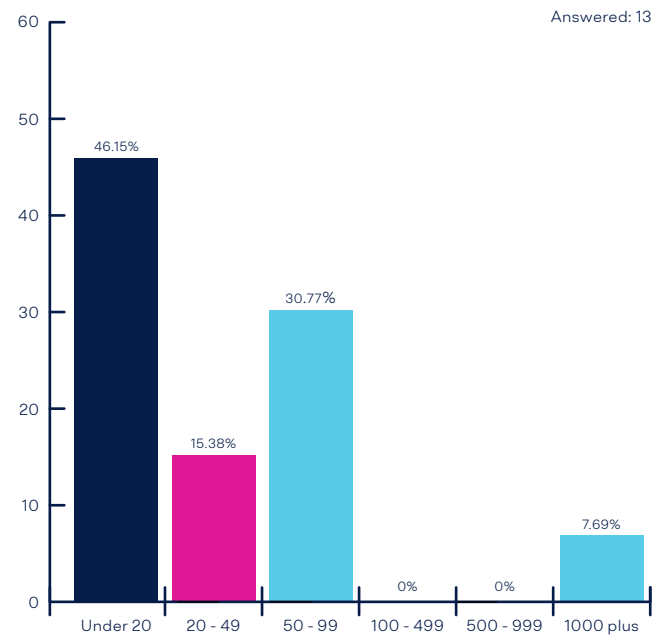
Q2

What sector would you describe you operate in?



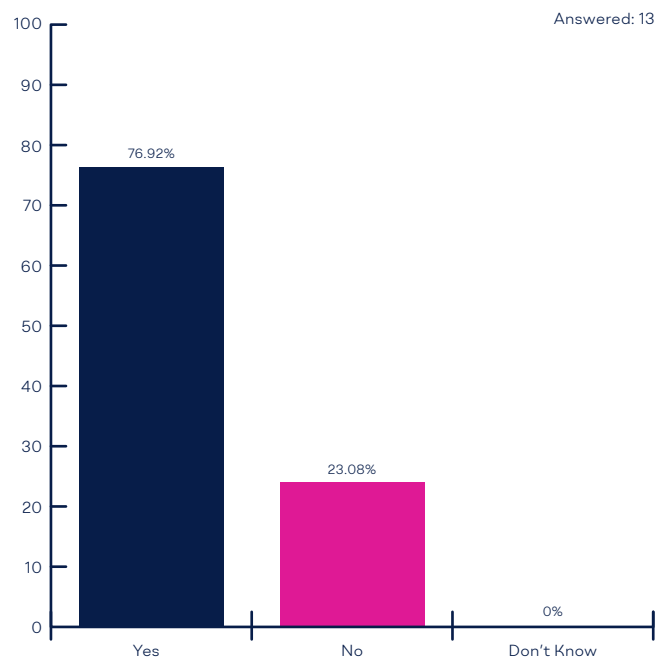
Q3

How many people do you employ?



Q4

Do you currently have disabled people working in your organisation?



Interestingly, the profile of the disabled employees within the provider organisations mirrored that of the employer survey with 57 employees identified as having learning disabilities. There are also 39 employees with significant hearing loss. The providers also confirmed that at least 6 autistic people were employed.

Q5

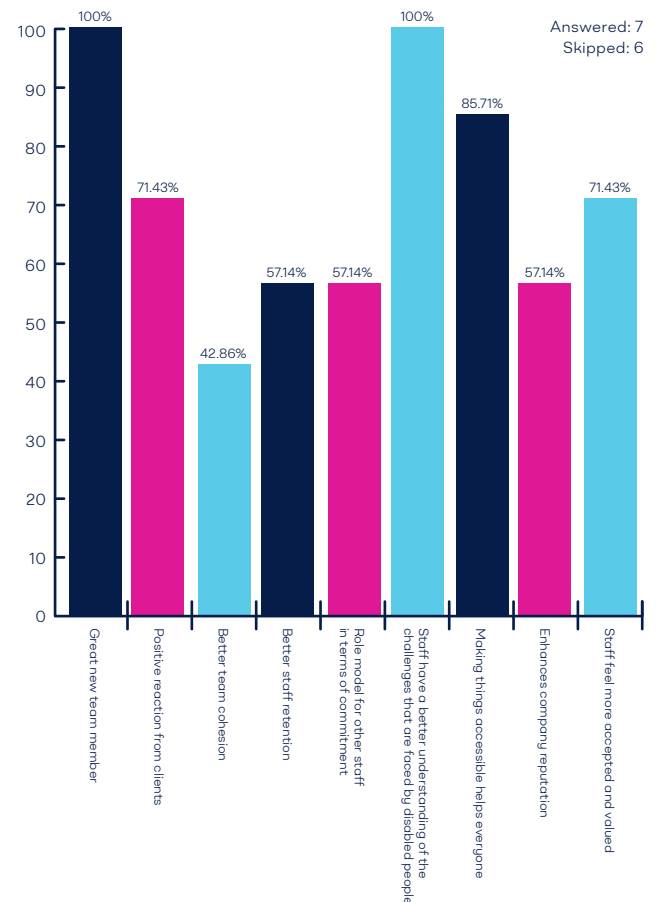
If you do currently employ people with disabilities?

Answer Choices	Average	Total	Responses
How many people with learning disabilities do you employ?	8	57	7
How many people with significant hearing loss do you employ?	6	39	7
How many people with significant sight loss do you employ?	0	0	7
How many people with autism do you employ?	1	6	7

Both the employers and the providers agreed that a significant benefit to employing a disabled employee was the addition of a great team member. Staff had a better understanding of the challenges faced by disabled people with all the respondent agreeing. Where there was a difference of opinion, the providers rated making the workplace accessible (85.71%) and getting a positive reaction from clients (71.41%) were ranked in the top three responses. Employers ranked these benefits less favourably with workplace accessibility at 44.44% and positive reaction from clients at 55.56%.

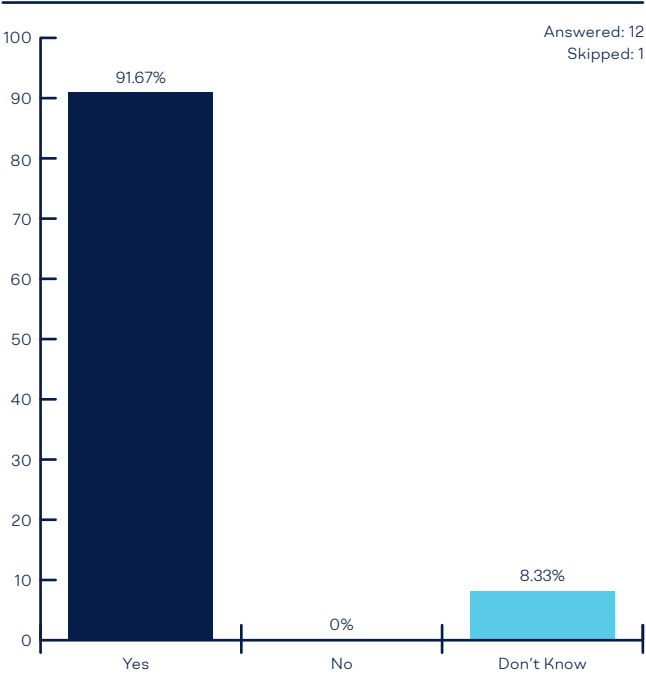
Q6

If you have employed a disabled person or supported a disabled employee what have you perceived as a benefit to the organisation?



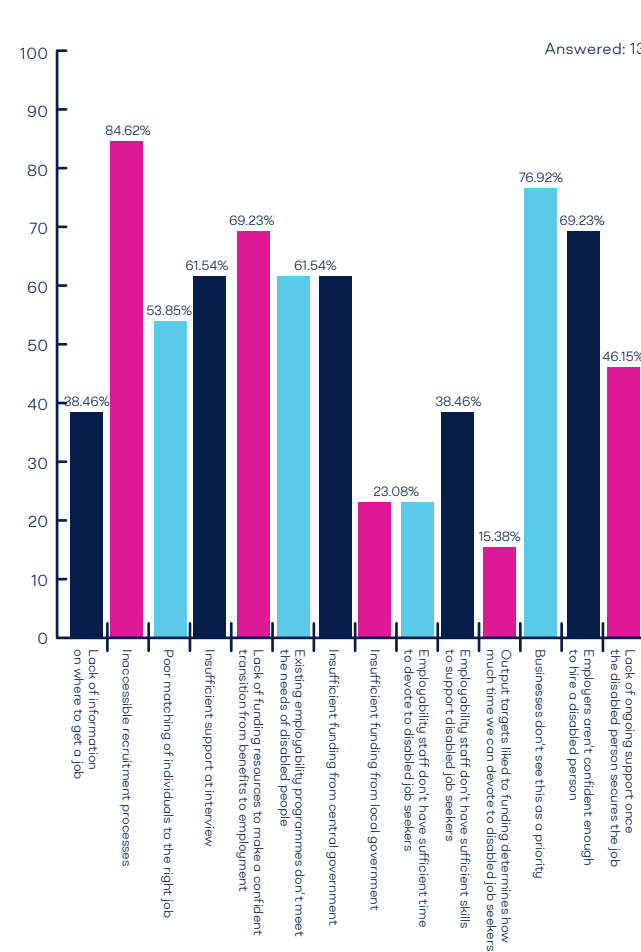
91.67% (11 out of 12) of the providers collect data on diversity. It would be of interest to ascertain some details on the nature of what is recorded and whether these individual provider approaches may be of interest to others.

Q7
Do you routinely collect data on diversity?



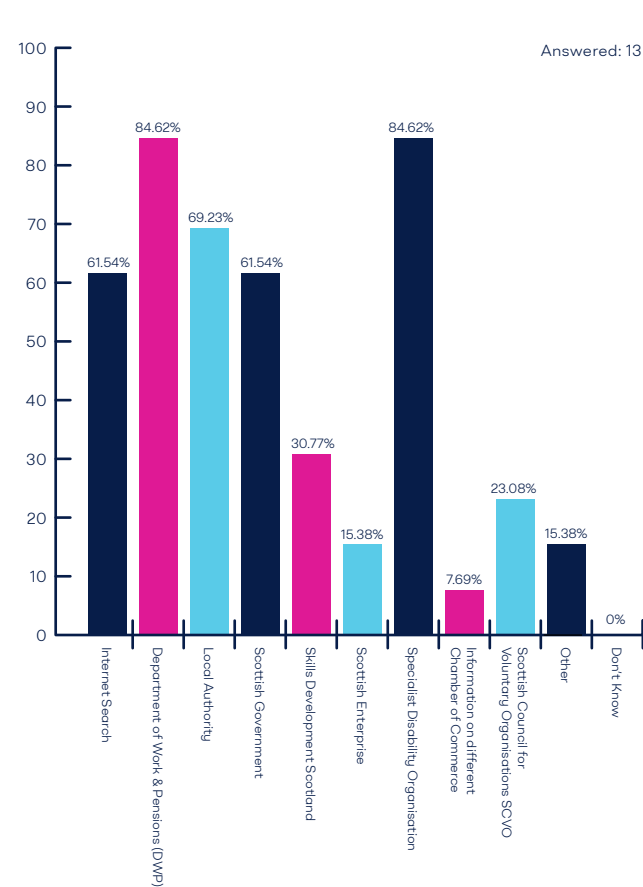
Providers ranked inaccessible recruitment highly at 84.62%, providers thought that businesses did not see this as slightly less of a priority at 76.92%. Interestingly, employers did not think commitment from management at the top was a significant problem (22.2%). Providers did see both lack of funding to transition out of benefits and funding from central government as issues, ranking them between 61.54% and 69.23%. This correlates with the employers who also raised lack of funding for adjustments and cost of supervision as issues. Employability programmes were thought not to meet the needs of disabled people and employers lacked confidence in employing disabled people at 69.23%.

Q8
In general, what do you think are the barriers to supporting people with disabilities into employment?



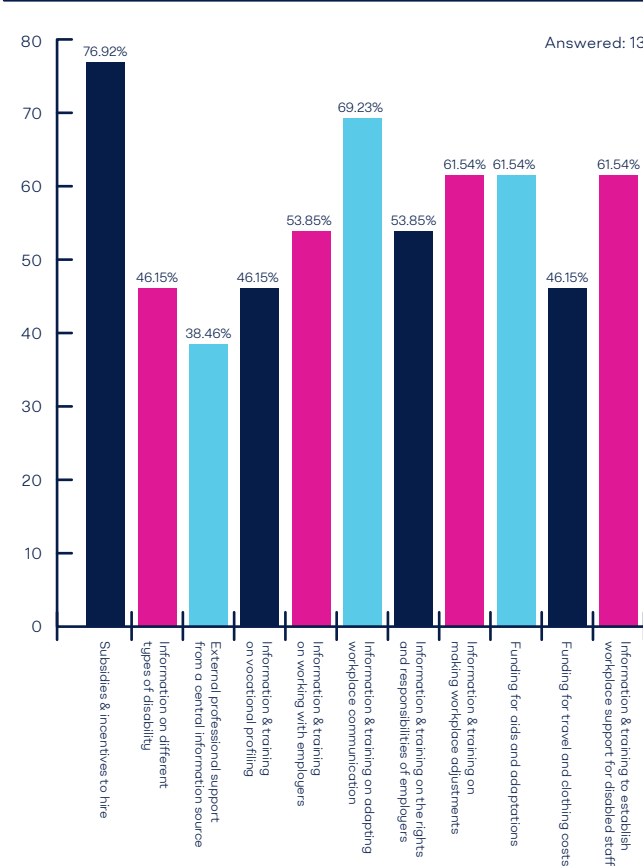
In terms of seeking information, employability providers ranked the DWP and Specialist Disability Organisations the highest at 84.62%, followed by Local Authorities at 69.23%. Employers thought Local Authorities at 54.55% and Skills Development Scotland at 45.45% were the most appropriate places to find the information, with the DWP at 27.27%. There is no clear national provider of information on the employment of disabled people.

Q9
Where would you look for information on the employment of disabled people?



Once more there was consensus between the employers and the providers in prioritising incentives to hire: 76.92% employability providers; 72.73% for employers. The pilot might want to test if this has been influenced to any extent by the Job Retention Scheme (furlough) and/or represents an acknowledgment of a changing relationship between government and business. Or, is this a necessary incentive that would make the decision to employ a disabled worker a realistic choice? Providers were also keen to have funding for adaptations, training on workplace support, adapting workplace communication and reasonable adjustments, all at 61.54%. There was noted support for staff training on working with employers, rights and responsibilities of employers, vocational profiling, and information on the types of disability. The interest in having a central information point was higher from employers at 63.64% than providers at 38.46%.

Q10
Which of the following would you find useful supporting a disabled worker in the workplace?



There were comments on the need for more information on the use of Access to Work funds and more detail on the funding available to employers. Training for staff on coaching, and supporting people with communication needs were also noted. Disability awareness training, establishing, and understanding company policies and providing flexible working practices was also highlighted.

Q11

What information/advice on the recruitment and retention of disabled workers do you think is required for employability organisations that is not currently available?

#	Responses	Date
1	I think this is in place within our organisation and easy to access from other agencies.	11.12.2020
2	It's less about advice and more about support / coaching etc.	10.12.2020
3	This is difficult to answer as a well established supported employment provider who provides support to disabled employees as well as employers. mainstream employability providers may require more information on equality act, disability awareness, Access To Work, companies reasonable adjustment policies, flexible working policies etc.	10.12.2020
4	Fear! Recruitment at any level is fraught with risk and inconsistent practices (online algorithm based recruitment is good example). Employers want reassurance that hiring someone with a disability will not leave them with an overwhelming HR issue. The vast majority of employers want to diversify their recruitment but lack the confidence to do so. We all have an increased role in these post COVID times to advocate on our clients behalf and promote and praise employers who grasp inclusive and fair recruitment practice. We know who they are. Let's get them to encourage their competition and suppliers to do the same.	10.12.2020
5	Overview of process to be followed to support reasonable adjustments and Access To Work supports	10.12.2020
6	Information and advice that is delivered by disabled people themselves with lived experience	10.12.2020
7	As a service within a local authority we already have this	10.12.2020
8	Additional trainings on specific disability for employability organisations, on regular basis	10.12.2020
9	How to access Access To Work; how to provide communication support; how to support staff with communication support needs	10.12.2020
10	Information regarding what support is available to employers and what aids they could/should look at getting. Also how to conduct interviews that are disabled friendly.	10.12.2020

Several responses referred to qualifications and the need to have a career pathway. Recommendations included: disabled people leading in the delivery of training; specific training on different disabilities; accessible communication; TSI; employer engagement; dealing with challenging behaviour; engaging with young people and their families.

Q12

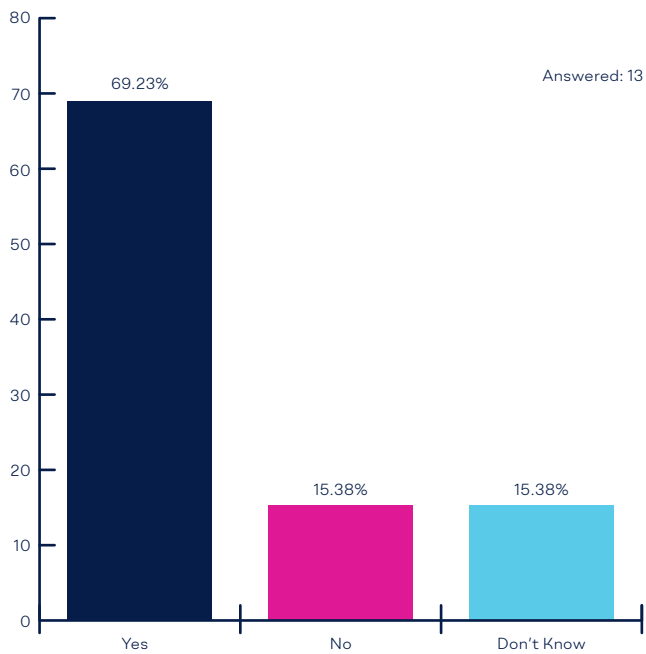
What training/support would improve the performance of staff working in employability organisations as they support disabled people in the workplace?

#	Responses	Date
1	All of the training mentioned above but to include TSI, employer engagement, dealing with difficult employers, dealing with difficult families, training to support younger kids to start thinking about work and how to get families onboard and financially prepare for this.	11.12.2020
2	More thematic qualifications, qualifications in communication as well as language/other topics, peer support/mentoring/coaching.	10.12.2020
3	A recognised industry qualification. A mapped out career development pathway which provided training on all aspects of disability.	10.12.2020
4	Life experience in different fields can help insight into supporting multiple barrier clients. We can't all be social workers, teachers and counsellors but experience as parents/carers or personal experience of disability can help with perspective. I will always advocate for professionally recognised qualifications. Skills Development Scotland insist on it for all their practice? Step up from the existing offer. Not necessarily a statutory requirement but a useful recognition of the complexity and challenge of the jobs we all do.	10.12.2020
5	PDA supported employment delivered in a more vocational manner with underpinning knowledge sessions - not necessarily current written assessment format. Use of inclusive comms as the norm and not just for disabled people.	10.12.2020
6	Disability Equality Training delivered by disabled people/DPO's.	10.12.2020
7	TSI, vocational profiling, awareness raising on specific disabilities, employer engagement, job market, dealing with conflict/challenging employers.	10.12.2020
8	Additional trainings on specific disability for organisations, on regular basis.	10.12.2020
9	Deaf awareness training; inclusive communication training; accessible information training; how to apply for Access To Work.	10.12.2020
10	Information sessions regarding different disabilities, and showcasing people with disabilities who are currently working and what changes were made for them and also what they are able to add to a business.	10.12.2020
11	To be giving the necessary time and resources. Training on benefits and how this affects the employee when they start employment.	10.12.2020

Of the employability provider organisations nine were interested in gaining more practical advice and of those eight were happy to be contacted about joining the pilot study.

Q13

If there was a service to provide advice and practical support for staff working with job seekers who are disabled, would you be interested?



The Potential Solutions

Disabled People's Organisations (DPOs) have long argued that disabled people are not valued in their ability to contribute to society.

As the language we use is particularly important, we perhaps need to be clearer what we mean when we say inclusion.

The results of this survey perhaps mirror some changes that have been highlighted in more progressive businesses where inclusion is seen as a positive step for businesses, not a responsibility or a quota set by others.

What is clear is that to progress this work we must be clearer on where to access information, provide resource where it is required and meet the training and support needs identified in this survey.

*"Organisations need to take a systemic approach to inclusion, appreciating that inclusion isn't about allowing 'different' people to 'fit in'. Instead, inclusion is about creating an environment where everyone is appreciated for being individual."*¹⁶

"Many successful companies regard Inclusion & Diversity as a source of competitive advantage. For some, it is a matter of social justice, corporate social responsibility, or even regulatory compliance. For others, it's essential to their growth strategy".
Mc Kinsey¹⁷

Katie Jacobs from the Chartered Institute of Personnel Development (CIPD) reported earlier this year that 20 million people were working from home during COVID -19 compared to 1.7 million prior to the pandemic. She argues that true flexible working rather than enforced working can boost job satisfaction, support well-being and diversity, helping organisations attract talent.¹⁸

Any return to the workplace for people with disabilities will have to be managed appropriately if social distancing measures continue to be in place, thus ensuring that the return to the workplace is practical and desirable.

¹⁶ Building Inclusive Workplaces – CIPD 2019

¹⁷ Delivering Through Diversity – McKinsey January 2018

¹⁸ Katie Jacobs – CIPD – Making Sure Hybrid Working is Inclusive September 2020

Whilst the pandemic has been a shock to the employment market across the globe, we should look at the positive opportunities that may inform the next stage of improving the disability employment gap.

In Figure 10 there is detail of a recent research study by Leonard Cheshire. The charity reported the positive steps that employers were undertaking to adapt working practices to accommodate disabled people in the workplace.

While we have much work to do, employers are recognising the need to meet the needs of all employees.

figure 10

Over half (56%) of employers said they currently offer part-time working hours at their organisation. Other benefits employers say they offer include:

-
- **Flexible working hours (e.g., different start times, shorter hours) (53%)**
 - **Time off work to attend disability-related medical appointments/ treatment (50%)**
 - **Flexible role duties that take into account the disability (e.g., no late nights, long distance travel or physically intensive work (38%).**
 - **Breaks during the working day (37%)**
 - **Working from home (36%)**
 - **Time off work due to the impact of a disability (34%)**
 - **Adapted office furniture (e.g., a specialist chair or adapted desk) (31%)**
 - **Specialist IT equipment (30%)**
 - **Work trials in place of/alongside formal interviews (30%)**
 - **Physical adjustments to the building (21%)¹⁹**
-

In supporting both employers and supported employment organisations we must be clear collectively what we are looking for and our joint understanding of what an inclusive workplace looks like.

- Leaders must demonstrate by their actions that inclusion is important
- Fair policies and practices must be initiated and understood by all
- Ideas should be shared and valued throughout the organisation no matter where you are in the structure
- Everyone should feel that they belong, and their voice will be listened to
- Hiring people who are not all the same, celebrating the talent and individual perspective people can bring benefits to the organisation.

¹⁹ Reimagining the workplace: disability and inclusive employment
- Leonard Cheshire February 2019

Recommendations for the next stage of the pilot

Following on from the research study a three-month pilot will be undertaken by a consortium led by VIAS.

A programme of support and coordination will be delivered to the recruited group of employers and employability providers covering the following areas:

Disability Awareness

Training will be delivered to both employers and providers on learning disability awareness, autism awareness, hearing loss awareness and sight loss awareness.

This would consist of 4 sessions on each area to the identified employers/providers.
16 session x £800 = £12,800

Accessible Communication

Providers and Employers would attend two sessions each. One session would be on the principles in accessible communication. The second session will be a practical workshop where participants bring along in-house policies and practices to seek advice and guidance.

This would be 8 sessions x £800 = £6,400

Funding

The sessions on funding would be delivered uniquely tailored as the needs of employers and providers are different.

This would be 4 sessions x £800 = £3,200

TSI/ Supporting People in the Workplace

Specialist support would be required to deliver TSI training to both employers and providers.

This would be 6 sessions x £1,000 = £6,000

Responsibilities in the Workplace including Legal Responsibilities.

This session would be delivered to both groups, specialist support would be required.

This would be 2 sessions x £1,000 = £2,000

Recruitment and Selection

This would be delivered to both groups separately; specialist support would be required.

This would be 4 sessions x £1,000

Employer Engagement

This would be delivered to the providers only.

This would be 2 sessions x £800 = £1,600

Central Information Resource

Information needs will be gathered throughout the three-month pilot.

This will be collated, shared with the other work-streams and fed back to the steering group for further action.

There would be a research cost of
6 days x £400 = £4,200

Evaluation Co-ordination & Management

VIAS will take the lead role in the evaluation, co-ordination and management of the pilot.

This would be 30 days x £400 = £12,000

The total cost is £49,200

References

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- Reimagining the workplace: disability and inclusive employment – Leonard Cheshire February 2019

