

The **Really Useful Book** of

Learning & Earning

2008

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EUROPEAN UNION
European Social Fund



Leading learning and skills





Published by the National Institute of
Adult Continuing Education
(England and Wales)
21 De Montfort Street, Leicester LE1 7GE
Company registration no: 2603322
Charity registration no: 1002775

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Cover design by Creative, Langbank
Designed and typeset by Creative, Langbank
Printed and bound in Great Britain by Ashford
Colour Press

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Acknowledgements

The Really Useful Book of Learning and Earning is the result of partnership working and we would like to acknowledge the organisations and individuals who have helped in the development of the original idea and in putting together the content.

Thanks to the **European Social Fund** (ESF), the **Learning and Skills Council** (LSC) and the **National Social Inclusion Programme** (NSIP) for funding this work.

The ESF is a European Union initiative that promotes employment opportunities for everyone. The ESF helps people who need additional support to enter jobs, improve their skills and develop their potential at work. It funds projects which support people who might find it hard to get a job, for example people who have been out of work for a long time, lone parents, people with disabilities and people from black and minority ethnic groups. **For more information about the ESF visit the website www.esf.gov.uk**

Thanks to the **Disability Rights Commission** for allowing us to reproduce their work. On 1 October 2007 the Disability Rights Commission closed and its work was incorporated into the new Equality and Human Rights Commission. The new commission brings together the work of the

three previous equality commissions and also takes on responsibility for the other aspects of equality: age, sexual orientation and religion or belief, as well as human rights. Visit www.equalityhumanrights.com

Thanks to **Bristol Mental Health Employment Forum, New Policy Institute** and the **Mental Health Foundation** for allowing us to reproduce their work in this book.

Thanks also to the following people who contributed their ideas and expertise:

Neil Lowther – National Social Inclusion Programme

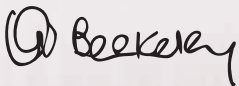
Simon Francis – National Social Inclusion Programme

Judy Scott – Health and Social Care consultant and Incapacity Benefits Expert

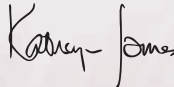
Caroline Law – NIACE

Catina Barrett – NIACE

Sue Southwood – NIACE



Viv Berkeley



Kathryn James

Development Officers, NIACE

Disclaimer

The information contained in this book is correct at the time of going to print. We know that at times information can vary according to region. If you are unsure please contact your local Jobcentre Plus office.

Who is this book for?

The Really Useful Book of Learning and Earning is aimed at disabled people who are not working but would like to.

What is its purpose?

It was written to offer information, advice and guidance to support disabled people into work.

Many people, not only disabled people, need to retrain or learn a new skill to get a job. This book offers real stories, from real people about how they managed to get back to work. Some of them used learning as a way of returning to paid work.

How it can be used?

This book is full of information and advice to help you on your journey into learning or work. It also has lots of space for you to keep your own notes and records. We hope this book helps you:

- Understand some of the barriers some disabled people face when looking for employment and how they can be overcome
- Create your own action plans to help you achieve your own goals

- Keep a record of appointments and things you need to do using the diary starting on page 24
- Develop your skills to help you when job hunting, writing your CV and going to interviews
- Find local learning opportunities that are right for you
- Understand more about different benefits and how taking up work could affect them.

Realise your own potential and take positive steps forward in your life!

Myths about disabled people and work

Over the next few pages there are some myths (things that are not true) about disabled people and work.

• Disabled people don't want to work

One fifth of the working-age population are disabled. Of these, 40% are currently working and another 20% would like to work.

Plenty of disabled people want to work but may not be able to because of a lack of skills and qualifications, fears about coming off benefits or employers seeing their disability as a problem.

• People will be no better off financially if they work

Whilst this may have been true in the past, there are now many benefits designed to make getting into work easier and to support people financially while they are in work. It is important for people to get accurate welfare rights advice so they can make the right decision for them.

• Working is too stressful and will lead to a deterioration in mental health

There is evidence to suggest that unemployment is more damaging to mental health than working. Lots of people develop mental health problems such as depression whilst claiming Incapacity

Benefit for physical health conditions. Whilst most jobs are stressful at times, the positive social, financial and personal benefits that work brings are likely to outweigh the stress.

- **Employers find it too expensive to employ disabled people**

Many disabled people can work successfully with no changes being made to their workplace and at no extra cost to their employer. Some disabled people may need some reasonable adjustments to be put in place in the workplace, to enable them to work effectively. However, often these are very simple and cost nothing, or very little. In fact, for two out of three disabled workers there are no extra costs involved in their employment. For the remaining third the average cost is just £76.

Access to Work is a Jobcentre Plus initiative that can provide information and financial support to employers to allow them to make reasonable adjustments, to support the employment of disabled people.

- **People with mental health difficulties shouldn't work with children or vulnerable adults**

Many people with mental health difficulties work successfully with children and vulnerable adults. What is important is whether a person has the skills and experience to do the job effectively.

- **Employers don't want to employ disabled people**

While some employers might have negative ideas about employing a disabled person, the majority do not. 75% of employers in small companies don't think that employing disabled people will cost them more money. 80% disagree that disabled employees will be less productive than non-disabled employees. 85% of companies are happy to be flexible about their hours if the employee has the right skills and enthusiasm.

Remember, it is illegal for an employer to discriminate against a disabled person.

- **Learning something new won't help me get a job**

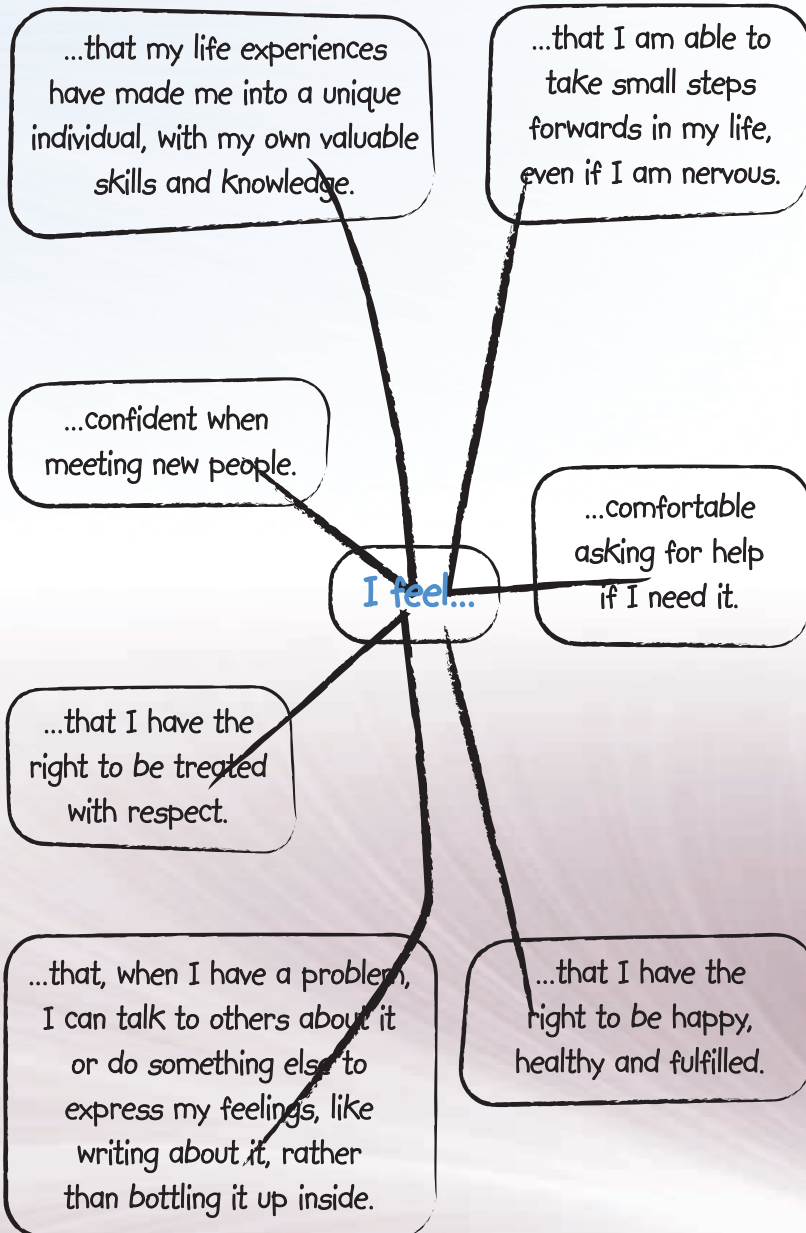
Employers want to employ people with skills and knowledge – taking up learning is a great way to gain new skills and increase your knowledge. Some jobs also require certain qualifications. The better qualified you are and the more skills you have, the more likely you are to find a job. Taking up learning can also help you develop your social skills, problem solving skills and confidence – all things that employers value in an employee.

Personal skills and positive statements

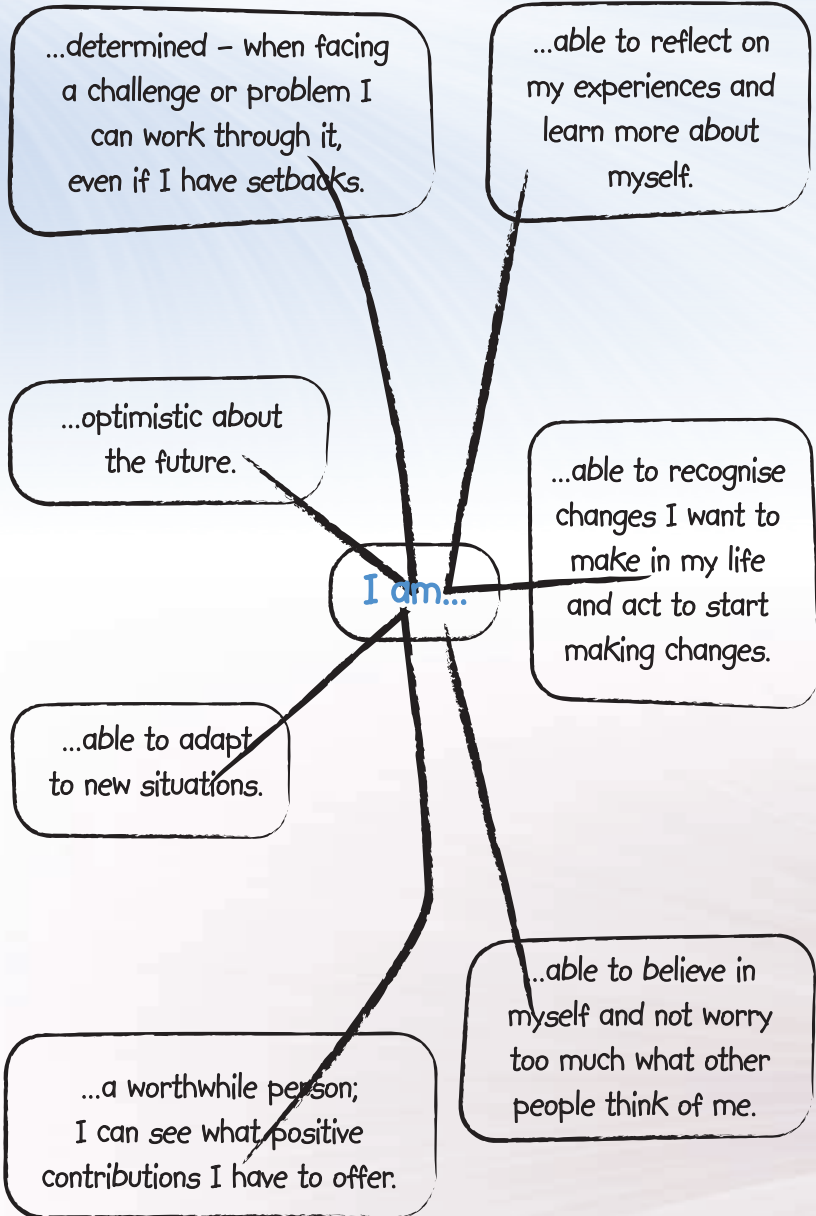
When you have been out of work or learning for a while it can be hard to think about what you are good at or what interests you.

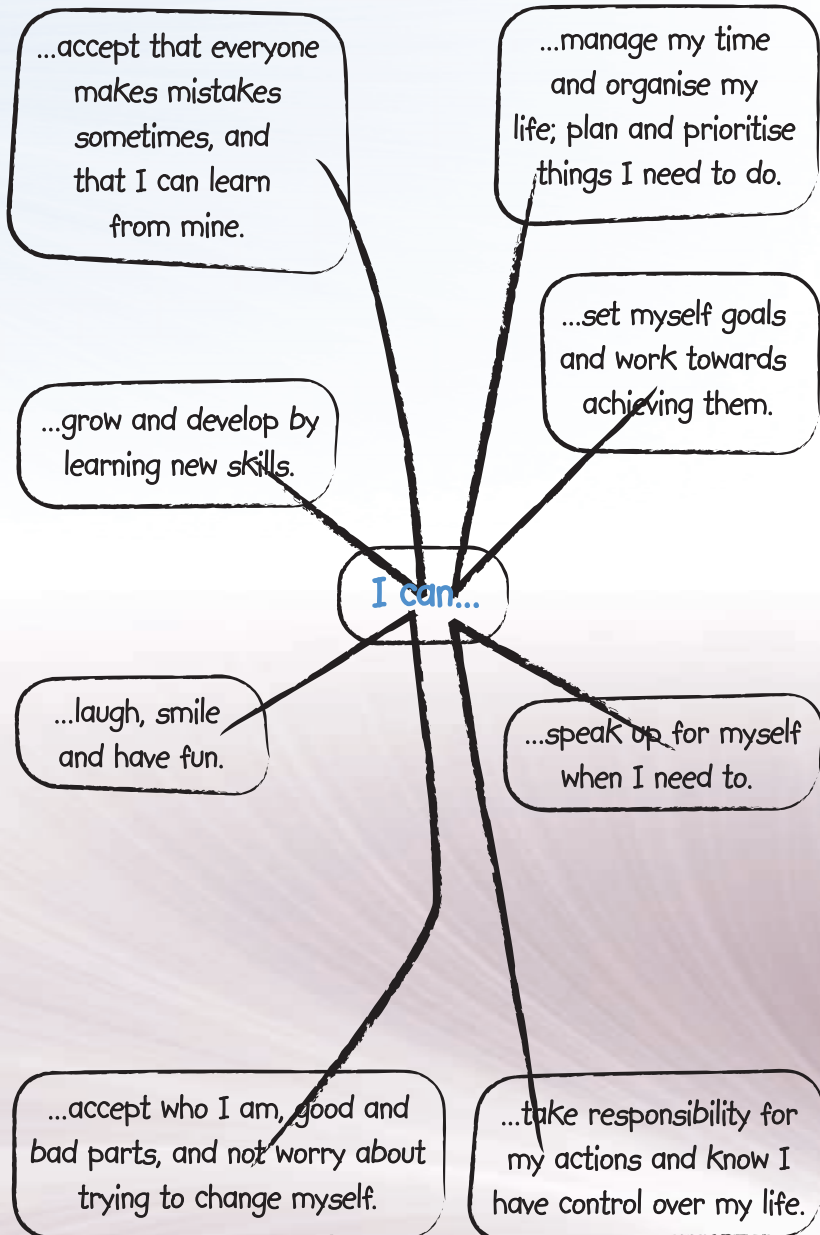
Look at the statements on the following pages and think about which ones apply to you. Don't worry if not many do, they may be a useful starting point for setting out an action plan based on your strengths.

Think about how you feel...



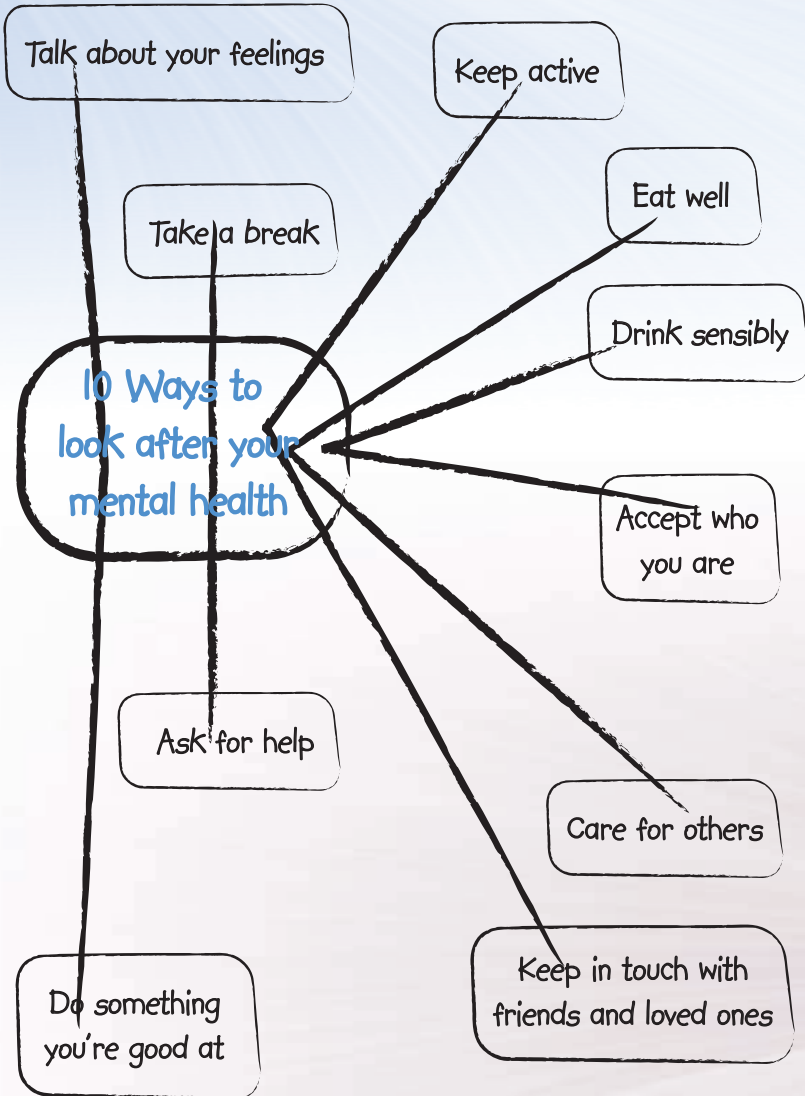
Concentrate on the things you can do...





10 Ways to look after your mental health

This mind map is based on the work of the Mental Health Foundation



Action planning...

Think about the statements on pages 13, 14 and 15. What steps forward do you want to take?

Use the next five pages to create your own **action plans**.

There are several blank action plans. Plans can change over time for lots of reasons, so you may need more than one.

What do you want to achieve?

Think about doing things you enjoy as well as things that seem a bit more difficult, so you can reward yourself.

What actions do you want to take over the next few months?

Look back at your action plans over the year to see how you are getting on.

'A goal without a plan is just a wish'

Antoine de
Saint-Exupery

Action planning...

What are you going to do? Why?

How are you going to do this?

When are you going to do this by? Write a reminder in the diary pages so you don't forget!

Action planning...

What are you going to do? Why?

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What are you going to do? Why?

How are you going to do this?

When are you going to do this by? Write a reminder in the diary pages so you don't forget!

Action planning...

What are you going to do? Why?

How are you going to do this?

When are you going to do this by? Write a reminder in the diary pages so you don't forget!

Using a diary

A diary can also be really useful to help you make changes in your life and make positive steps forward.

You can use it to:

- Write in appointments with your local Jobcentre Plus or college, so you don't forget.
- Book in time to do things you enjoy.
- Look back and remind yourself of all the things you've done over the year. This can be useful when applying for jobs.
- Make lists of all the things you want to do. Cross them off once you've done them.
- Feel more organised and in control of your life!

January 2008

1	Tue	17	Thu
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16	Wed		

'Tackle new things and meet new people...'

Richelle was a full time Mum to six children and hadn't been in work for a long time. When she was younger Richelle had wanted to work with children. As her own children got older Richelle decided she needed to brush up on her skills and get some qualifications.

Richelle enrolled on a Play Work course with the ESF and LSC Learning to Learn project. She was really nervous and didn't have a lot of confidence, partly due to having a hearing impairment. She was especially nervous about meeting new people and on the first day of the course she nearly didn't go. However, she forced herself to try it and it turned out to be a great decision. Taking up learning, developing new skills and meeting new people has increased Richelle's confidence a huge amount. Richelle also gained lots of qualifications in childcare.

While on the course, Richelle got a part time job as a Sessional Youth Worker. When a full-time, permanent job was advertised Richelle didn't think she had enough skills or experience for it. However, people she worked with persuaded her to apply for it and she was successful. Richelle now works full time as a Trainee Play Development Worker and loves her job.

February 2008

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15	Fri		

'New Opportunities'

Teresa worked in the catering industry. Whilst at work she had an accident. She broke her hip and was unable to go back to work. Since then she has been living on benefits.

In 2007 Teresa registered with Shaw Trust's 'Confident to Work' programme. The programme is part-funded by ESF money. She wanted to regain her confidence and self esteem and saw the course as a way of doing this.

Since attending the Confident to Work programme everyone involved with Teresa has noticed a dramatic change in her. Her confidence is on the up and her health has improved.

After the course Teresa attended her first job interview at Euriest for a catering assistant position. She is also soon to start voluntary work for the British Heart Foundation.

Teresa feels that the course has changed her life, by opening up new opportunities for her.

March 2008

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12	Wed	28	Fri
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15	Sat	31	Mon
16	Sun		

Mick's story...

Mick had been a prison officer for 13 years but after recovering from head and neck cancer he was unable to return to work in a prison environment.

Mick met with a Disability Employment Adviser. She found him 13 weeks' voluntary work on the Opportunities Scheme at Addenbrooke's Hospital in Cambridge. Mick was successfully employed at the hospital and has since been promoted.

The scheme Mick accessed was run by Addenbrooke's Hospital and was co-financed by the ESF and Jobcentre Plus. The scheme ran for two years finishing in October 2007. To date, 111 participants have benefited from the scheme; 47 participants have been employed within the Trust, in a variety of administrative or clinical roles, such as Health Care Assistants. Participants gained hands on work experience. They learnt employability skills and received support in submitting job applications and preparing for interviews.

Mick never let his illness hold him back. His determination has not only prompted a career change but he has also set up a head and neck cancer support group at Addenbrooke's hospital.

April 2008

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Pathways to Work

The Pathways to Work initiative aims to deliver additional support and help to people with health issues and disabilities. It will be in place across Great Britain when the new Employment and Support Allowance (ESA) comes into force in October 2008.

ESA will replace Incapacity Benefit and Income Support as the main working-age benefit for new customers with health conditions and disabilities. Pathways to Work will help assess individuals and identify and overcome the barriers such as mobility issues or training needs standing between them and the workplace.

Through a series of meetings with an adviser, an action plan will be developed for getting the individual into work and informing them about extra help and support. Pathways to Work will provide additional support to customers who are close to the labour market so they can consider work, and will deliver help to those who are not yet ready for work.

The initiative will put people in touch with healthcare and other professionals who can show them how to manage a health condition or disability, and may be able to provide financial assistance to make work more of a realistic opportunity.

May 2008

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16	Fri		

'Enough was enough'

Jim, an ex-miner, had worked for 10 years for British Coal in a variety of roles. He injured his shoulder and had to leave work, claiming sickness benefit for 10 years.

One day he decided enough was enough! He wanted to return to work. He registered with a number of recruitment agencies and got a few contracts. However he developed pneumonia in 2006. This was a huge blow for Jim as it meant that he could not continue working. He started to feel very low and had little motivation.

Jim has now fully recovered and has joined the InBiz ESF Job Search programme. He is learning about CV writing and interview techniques and his confidence is beginning to come back. He is determined to find full time employment in the local area and has enrolled onto a Level 2 Literacy and Numeracy Course to improve his skills.

June 2008

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'It's never too late to learn...'

Before taking up learning Lynne had very little confidence and spent all her time at home, feeling isolated.

Taking up a 'Pathways to Learning' course, run by ESF and Jobcentre Plus, was a stepping stone for Lynne. It increased her confidence so much that she went on to enrol on a counselling course. Through learning Lynne was able to meet new people, develop her communication skills and has formed new friendships. She now describes adult learning as a doorway to a purposeful life, which allows people to change direction and have a chance to improve themselves.

Lynne volunteers at two organisations which she really enjoys – it gets her out of the house and meeting new people. As someone who is visually impaired, Lynne now supports others and is a phone buddy at a local organisation for visually impaired people. In her other voluntary work, Lynne visits schools, talking to children about disability awareness.

'I wanted a purpose to my life...to get rid of a sense of inadequacy and feel useful.'... 'It's never too late to learn new skills.'

July 2008

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12	Sat	28	Mon
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16	Wed		

'I am not alone...'

Trevor had been unemployed for a long time. He had health problems, depression and eventually had a nervous breakdown. When Trevor became depressed the only thing that kept him going was his hobby – collecting and growing tropical plants.

Trevor decided he needed to move forward and find a new focus in life. He decided to get involved in learning about something he was really interested in – horticulture. Trevor enrolled on the 'Growing Onwards' programme. This was a horticulture programme, part funded by the ESF, for people experiencing mental health difficulties. Although Trevor worried he was too old to learn something new, and that it would be very hard, he found it was really enjoyable. It helped him to get out and about, meet new people and learn more about things that really interested him.

He also gained qualifications, including a First Aid Certificate and Level 2 Literacy. He is currently working on completing a NVQ2 in Amenity Horticulture.

Trevor now volunteers at Growing Onwards three days a week, supporting other learners at the project. He is much more positive about his future and is looking for paid work. He says that after learning 'you're not afraid to actually go for jobs as you've got qualifications. It has made me realise I am not alone with the issues I have to deal with.'

August 2008

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16	Sat		

'You're never too old to learn'

Phil was made redundant after having worked at Rover for over 20 years. He was out of work for two years, when one day he saw a leaflet at his local Jobcentre Plus advertising an **ACTIVATE** course, which was funded by the **ESF**.

Phil found that this course was not the same as other courses that he had been on, and he found the tutor very helpful. The tutor showed Phil how to fill in application forms, how to make the best of himself and gave him mock interviews. Then they looked at the type of jobs that would suit Phil and together decided a porter's job, in the local hospital, would make the most of Phil's people skills. So he had a three week placement as a porter, which he enjoyed very much.

Phil has had another placement since then, and applied for two jobs. He asked **ACTIVATE** for further help to fill in the forms and he has now been successful in finding a job.

'It just goes to show that you can teach an old dog new tricks.'

September 2008

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14	Sun	29	Mon
15	Mon	30	Tue

'I can achieve'

Mark returned to learning because he wanted to help his son with his schoolwork and he wanted to gain new skills for himself. 'I also wanted to improve myself,' he says. 'I always felt that I could achieve more, but I didn't know where to start.'

Mark says: 'I left school without being able to read and write, and felt that I was thick. I had no self-confidence and had a fear of communicating with groups of people.'

Mark contacted Dyslexia Action and they gave him some tests to do. Mark found out he had severe dyslexia. He realised the work he was doing wasn't right for him, and he wanted to find a new career.

Mark's real passion was the outdoors and he had always wanted to be a Mountain Leader. With help from his tutor at Dyslexia Action, Mark started working towards this. He has now got lots of qualifications, including his Summer Mountain Leader's award and a Level 1 Youth Worker's award. Mark is now a fully qualified mountain leader and is teaching other people!

'Adult learning has enabled me for the first time to have goals that I know, with effort and work, I can achieve.'

October 2008

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12	Sun	28	Tue
13	Mon	29	Wed
14	Tue	30	Thu
15	Wed	31	Fri
16	Thu		

'Think about the things you CAN do'

Sheila found it difficult to meet new people because of her rheumatoid arthritis. She had little self-belief. She says, 'If you've never been housebound you won't know the feeling of isolation and eventually fear of going out and having to meet people'. After moving to a new area Sheila decided to make a fresh start. She took up a First Steps to Learning Course, funded by the ESF and LSC.

Sheila had never used a computer before. Learning new IT skills opened up new opportunities for Sheila and she has since taken up digital photography. Sheila got plenty of support in college. She uses a Power Chair (a type of wheelchair) and staff made sure she was able to access everything – there was a ramp on the entrance to the college, a lift, access to all the rooms and an accessible toilet.

Returning to learning has made Sheila more independent. It has given her more of a belief in her own abilities and a sense of pride in her achievements. Before taking up learning Sheila felt she lacked confidence to talk to other people.

However, she started to enjoy her class each week and being able to see and talk to the same people. Now she feels confident to meet and talk to new people, and she is eager to take up many more learning opportunities in the future.

November 2008

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15	Sat	30	Sun

Changing for the better

Wendy had been wanting to get back to work for many years, but caring for a sick and dying mother, at the same time as going through a divorce, left Wendy a single parent, dependent on benefits. Wendy developed severe depression which led to anxiety attacks, lack of confidence and low self-esteem. Only her son kept her going. She is a very capable lady, she just didn't realise it!

After some encouragement from her son Wendy joined Kennedy Scott, a training provider partly funded by the ESF and LSC. They work with people on health related benefits. They offer a tailored service for disabled people or those with health issues, providing them with the support and opportunities for skills development they need to overcome any employment barriers they face.

Wendy had help with compiling a CV, interview techniques, application forms and job searching.

With a lot of renewed confidence and self-belief, Wendy had two interviews with two different companies and was offered two jobs.

December 2008

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16	Tue		

Look back at what you have done over the year.....

List the things you have achieved this year:

List the things you want to do in 2009:

Direct payments

Direct Payments are local council payments for people who have been assessed as needing help from social services, and who would like to arrange and pay for their own care and support services. The aim is to let you have much greater choice and control over how your needs are met. Whether you can receive a direct payment and the amount you receive will depend on the assessment your local council makes of your needs.

People use their direct payments in a whole range of different ways such as to employ personal assistants, to have short breaks or outings, to do college courses or to help with transport. Here are a few examples of how direct payments have been used:

- Six people with learning disabilities used their Direct Payments to set up a small business making and selling cards, gift wraps, second-hand books, videos, CDs and tapes. By

'pooling' their Direct Payments the group can afford the salary of a Project Coordinator to work three days a week, to help them run their business, organise their production, sales, marketing and business support.

- A group of five people used their direct payments to set up a creative arts group. The group employs two trained artists to work with them to explore their own creativity, and help them turn their ideas into reality.
- Two people with mental health problems set up a business. Direct payments paid for six months rent of a small premises to get them started.
- One person who received a one-off payment used it to buy a computer and bike and to learn how to use them.

To find out more contact your local council or go to www.directgov.org

Getting started?

Think about...

- Using your local library – it is full of useful information, such as self-help books, the Internet and newspapers.
- Visiting your local NextStep office – they are there to support you (www.nextstep.org.uk)
- Planning – contact your local learning provider and ask for the name of the learning support manager.
- Asking at your local library if they are part of the 'Books on Prescription' scheme. This scheme involves GPs writing prescriptions for books, such as self-help books. One advantage is that it allows you a longer loan time.
- Things you enjoy, things that make you laugh, things that make you feel better about yourself. This could be a starting point for what to do next... taking the next step.
- Logging on to some of the websites recommended at the end of this book.

- Volunteering – helping others often makes us feel more positive about our own lives. Make contact with your local volunteer bureau.
- If you need a push to get you going, research has shown that learning can have huge benefits to both your physical and emotional health.
- If you're nervous about taking up learning, ask a friend if they want to join you. It might be just what they need to give them a new lease of life too!
- Don't be afraid to give something new a try. You might look back in a few months and realise it's the best thing you've ever done!
- If you're not sure a certain course is for you, see if there is a 'taster session' available. This can be a good way of seeing if something is suited to you before signing up.
- Think about compliments you've received in the past from the people who know you best. They can give you a good idea of where your strengths lie.

Hints and tips for job hunting

Completing application forms

- Set aside plenty of time
- Take an extra copy of the application form to use as a draft
- Read the instructions carefully before you start
- Use a black pen
- Complete all sections neatly and accurately
- Be positive
- Proofread and check spellings
- Get someone else to read it through and give you honest feedback
- Photocopy the completed form when you've finished, so you have it as a reminder if you get an interview

What to include in a CV

- Name and contact details
- Personal statement
- Qualifications
- Skills
- Work experience
- References

Writing a personal statement

A personal statement is useful for a CV, application form or covering letter. It is two or three sentences that sum up the type of person you are.

- Use positive language
- Include your strengths
- Think about the aspects of your personality that make you a good employee, such as paying attention to detail
- Draw attention to your skills and experience
- Be honest

Transferable skills

These are skills that you can use in lots of different jobs. Employers value these skills in their employees:

- Following instructions
- Speaking and listening
- Working as part of a team
- Working without supervision
- Using a computer
- Supervising and managing
- Writing clearly
- Working to deadlines

- Handling money
- Working with the public
- Planning and organising
- Giving instructions

Dealing with 'gaps' in your career

People have gaps in their work history for many reasons, such as looking after children, caring for family members, redundancy or ill health. It is important to explain these gaps positively. List all the things you did during that time, such as:

- bringing up children
- running the home
- caring for family members
- learning new skills
- voluntary work
- membership of any groups, clubs, teams or committees

Before the interview

- Find out as much as you can about the job
- Read the advert several times – read between the lines so that you get a good sense of what kind of person they are looking for
- Re-read your application
- Match your own skills to the job
- Look up the company on the Internet and find out more about it

Interview questions to think about

- Why do you want this job?
- What relevant experience do you have?
- What relevant skills do you have?
- What are your strengths and weaknesses?
- What would you like to be doing in five years' time?

Remember

Think about what sort of person they're looking for. The clues will be in the wording of the advert and the job description. Try to practise a mock interview with a trusted friend.

During the interview

- Shake hands confidently
- Look interested
- Keep good eye contact
- Speak clearly and show you're listening
- Listen to the questions carefully and do your best to answer
- If you don't understand something, ask for clarification
- If you're not sure, ask for the question to be repeated
- Refer to your notes if you need to
- Ask when you will find out if you have been successful

Remember

You are allowed to be nervous!

After the interview

If you're successful

- Thank them for the offer
- Make sure you understand the terms and conditions of employment
- Agree a start date

If you're unsuccessful

- Treat it as a learning experience
- Don't be disheartened (statistically, people apply for many jobs and are interviewed many times before they land the job they want)
- Ask for feedback – this is really hard but is worth doing

Keep records

- Keep copies of your application to refer to if you are invited for an interview
- If you are not invited for interview, it does not mean your application wasn't good – keep it to refer to for future applications

Websites and helplines

The following pages are full of useful information about organisations that can offer support and information.

ASSIST – Assistance, Support & Self-help In Surviving Trauma

Support for people experiencing Post Traumatic Stress Disorder.

Web: www.traumatic-stress.freeserve.co.uk

Tel: 01788 560800

Basic Skills

Information about literacy, language and numeracy qualifications available to people who are looking to gain the skills they need for employment.

Web: www.basic-skills.co.uk;

www.ocr.org.uk; www.edexcel.org.uk

Basic Skills Agency at NIACE

A national organisation for teaching literacy and numeracy to people of all ages.

Web: www.basic-skills.co.uk

Benefit Enquiry Line

Confidential advice and information for people with disabilities, and their carers and representatives, about social security benefits and how to claim them.

Tel: 0800 88 22 00

Campaign for Learning

The Campaign for Learning works to build motivation, create opportunities and provide support for learning in families and communities, workplaces and schools.

Web: www.campaign-for-learning.org.uk

Care Services Improvement Plan (CSIP)

CSIP supports positive changes in services and in the wellbeing of vulnerable people with health and social care needs. The site includes a knowledge community where people can share stories and advice.

Web: www.csip.org.uk

Commission for Equality and Human Rights

A national organisation that works to reduce inequality, eliminate discrimination, strengthen good relations between people and protect human rights. It brings together the work of the Disability Rights Commission, Commission for Racial Equality and the Equal Opportunities Commission.

Web: www.cehr.org.uk

Citizens Advice Bureaux

Practical, reliable, up-to-date information on a wide range of topics, including benefits, housing, employment and debt, consumer and legal issues. There is not a national CAB helpline, but you should be able to find your local CAB under 'C' in your local phone book.

Web: www.adviceguide.org.uk

Department of Health: Mental Health

Government materials and documents about mental health services and programmes.

Web: www.dh.gov.uk/PolicyAndGuidance/HealthAndSocialCareTopics/MentalHealth/fs/en

Depression Alliance

An organisation that offers information and advice about depression, carries out research into depression and campaigns to raise awareness of the realities of depression.

Web: www.depressionalliance.org

Email: information@depressionalliance.org

DRINKLINE

Advice for people worried about their own drinking, or a friend's or family member's drinking.

Tel: 0800 917 8282

Dyslexia

These sites contain material about dyslexia, including information around assessments and learning.

Web: www.dyslexiaaction.org.uk;
www.bdadyslexia.org.uk;
www.adult-dyslexia.org

Eating Disorders Association

Lots of information about eating disorders, including how to find support in your area.

Web: www.edauk.com
Tel: Adult helpline 0845 634 1414
Tel: Youth helpline 0845 634 7650

Feeding Minds

Advice about how changes in diet can help improve mental health.

Web: www.mentalhealth.org.uk/feedingminds

FRANK

Information and advice about drugs.

Web: www.talktofrank.com
Email: frank@talktofrank.com
Tel: 0800 776600
Textphone service for deaf people:
text FRANK to 0800 917 8765

Jobcentre Plus

Jobcentre Plus aims to support people to find the right kind of jobs for them. They also provide information and advice about claiming benefits. The Jobseeker direct line can support you when looking for employment.

You can find the details of your local Jobcentre Plus in your local phone book under 'J'.

Web: www.jobcentreplus.gov.uk

Tel: Jobseeker direct: 0845 6060234

learndirect

Information and advice about hundreds of local and distance learning opportunities, including how to access your local learndirect centre.

Learndirect also has a team of bi-lingual advisors

Web: www.learndirect.co.uk

Tel: 0800 101 901

Mental Health Foundation

Support, research, development, and awareness raising about a wide range of mental health conditions.

Web: www.mentalhealth.org.uk

MIND

A broad range of information about a wide variety of mental health conditions.

Web: www.mind.org.uk

Tel: Mind info line 0845 7660163

Moving on Up

A website for young people aged 14 and older from Black and Ethnic Minority communities who have a learning disability, supporting change and transition to adulthood.

Web: www.movingonup.info/en/

Nacro's Resettlement Plus Helpline

Information and advice for prisoners and ex-offenders.

Email: helpline@nacro.org.uk

Tel: 0800 0181 259; 0207840 6464

National Autistic Society

Information, advice and support for people with autistic spectrum disorders, and their family and friends.

Web: www.nas.org.uk

Tel: 0845 070 4004

National Institute of Adult Continuing Education (NIACE)

NIACE promotes adult learning through supporting the development of more and different adult learning opportunities.

Web: www.niace.org.uk

National Social Inclusion Programme (NSIP)

NSIP has brought together the work of government departments and other organisations. It works to challenge attitudes in order to enable people with mental health difficulties to have better opportunities to achieve their goals.

Web: www.socialinclusion.org.uk

NHS Direct

If you have an urgent query about your health you can get advice from the NHS Direct Helpline. The NHS Direct website provides health information, and can also be used for less urgent queries.

Web: www.nhsdirect.nhs.uk

Tel: 0845 4647

Project Spear

A website about self-harm, designed to support people to help themselves.

Web: www.projectspear.com

Rethink

Working to help everyone affected by severe mental illness, including schizophrenia, to recover a better quality of life.

Web: www.rethink.org

Royal National Institute for the Blind (RNIB)

RNIB is the UK's leading charity for blind and partially sighted people offering information, support and advice to over 2 million people with sight problems.

Web: www.rnib.org.uk

Tel: 0845 766 9999

Royal National Institute for the Deaf (RNID)

RNID is the largest charity in the UK representing the 9 million deaf and hard of hearing people in the UK.

Web: www.rnid.org.uk

Samaritans

A 24-hour phone line offering emotional support.

Web: www.samaritans.org.uk

Tel: 0845 790 9090

SANE

SANE works to raise awareness and respect for people with mental illness and their families, to improve education and training and to secure better services.

Web: www.sane.org.uk

Tel: SANELINE: 0845 767 8000 (1pm – 11pm)

Sign

The National Society for Mental Health and Deafness.

Web: www.signcharity.org.uk

Skill

Skill, the National Bureau for Students With Disabilities, works to promote opportunities for young people and adults with any kind of disability in post-16 education, training and employment across the UK.

Web: www.skill.org.uk

Tel: 0800 328 5050

The Telephone Helplines Association

The Telephone Helplines Association holds detailed information on over 1,200 services across the UK and internationally. It has over 400 members including most national helpline services such as the Samaritans, Shelterline and

Childline as well as many local and regional services.

Web: www.helplines.org.uk

UK National Drugs Helpline

Information and advice about drugs.

Web:

www.urban75.com/Drugs/helpline.html

Tel: 0800 77 66 00

Valuing People Support Team

Valuing People is the government's plan for making the lives of people with learning disabilities and their families better. This website gives information and advice to people with learning difficulties, including resources about work and education.

Web: www.valuingpeople.gov.uk

Volunteering England

Volunteering England promotes volunteering as a powerful force for change, both for those who volunteer and the wider community. This website offers a range of resources for anyone who works with or manages volunteers as well as those who want to volunteer.

Web: www.volunteering.org.uk

Wider Benefits of Learning

The Centre for Research on the Wider Benefits of Learning has research briefings on the benefits of learning including benefits to health and well-being.

Web: www.learningbenefits.net

Work and Health

Free, impartial advice on work and health.

Web: www.workplacehealthconnect.co.uk

Would you like help in obtaining a job?

Information about the support available from Jobcentre Plus

Q: Can Jobcentre Plus help anyone who is not in paid employment?

A: Yes. **The Jobcentre Plus** service is able to help anyone wanting to take up employment and needing help. There is a wide range of work related help available from Jobcentre Plus and other organisations that work with Jobcentre Plus. If you have a disability or health condition and want to work there is a lot of help available to support you in preparing for work or find a job.

Q: Can I access any support that is just for people who have a health condition or disability?

A: Yes. You can obtain a range of specialist help if you are receiving benefits because of a disability or health condition. The main benefits that allow you to access specialist help are:

Incapacity Benefit

Income Support (paid because of a disability or health condition)

Severe Disablement Allowance

However, the list of benefits used for qualifying purposes can vary between different types of

support. Please check with Jobcentre Plus about your eligibility for any provision you are interested in.

Q: What if I want to work but not yet ready to take a job?

A: At Jobcentre Plus **Personal Advisers** have been trained to work with people who have a health condition or disability. You can speak to them about the sort of job you want and what you can do to get ready for work or look for a job. They will be able to give you information and advice and might suggest you attend a course that can help you get ready for work. There are courses available through Jobcentre Plus to meet a wide range of needs. These include:

- **Employment Assessment** – to provide help and advice on the type of work or training that is right for you
- **Work Preparation** – to prepare you for a return to work following a long period of unemployment
- **WORKSTEP** – provides supported employment opportunities for people with additional needs
- **Programme centres** – which provide advice

and guidance on how to look for a job

- **Training courses** – to help obtain new skills you may need to do a job.

The Personal Adviser can refer you to organisations that run courses in your area to help you prepare for work or look for a job. This includes organisations that focus on supporting people who have a health condition or disability.

If you live in a **Pathways to Work** area you may also be able to access the **Condition Management Programme**. If you have a disability or health condition this programme can help you find ways to manage it.

Q: What is Pathways to Work?

Pathways to Work is a service providing a range of work focused help for people with a health condition or disability. Anyone receiving an incapacity benefit can access the service on a voluntary basis, although most new claimants will have to attend a number of work focused interviews to discuss what they could do to prepare for employment.

Since December 2006 the service has operated in 40% of the country and by April 2008 contracted providers will be delivering the

Pathways to Work service in the rest of the country. Advisers will be able to offer you a range of support to help you prepare for work or find a suitable job.

Jobcentre Plus will be able to tell you if **Pathways to Work** is available in the area you live.

Q: Will I always see the same Personal Adviser?

A: Jobcentre Plus recognises they can provide better help and support if you see the same Personal Adviser. Their aim is that you speak to the same person to discuss your work needs. However, this may not be possible every time, for instance if you need to speak to someone urgently about a work related matter.

Q: What if I think that my health condition makes it hard to find suitable work?

A: By talking with a Personal Adviser you might find you have abilities and talents you were unaware of. They might help you to discover you can do different types of work from what you have done before.

If you are receiving a benefit because of a health condition or disability you can ask to see a **Job Broker** from the **New Deal for Disabled**

People service. This is an employment programme especially for people with a health condition or disability. Organisations have been chosen to deliver the New Deal for Disability service that can help you prepare for work or look for a job that is right for you. Types of support they can help you to access include:

- **Training or further education** – to help you obtain skills for the type of job you want to do
- **Work trials** – short term employment to see if a job is suitable for you
- **Job clubs** – to provide support and companionship in preparing and searching for a new job
- **Job search and interview skills** – learn how to find the right job for you and to prepare for a job interview.

There is usually more than one provider to choose from and Jobcentre Plus can provide details about which organisations deliver New Deal for Disabled People services in your area.

Q: Can I get help to find a suitable job?

A: Your Personal Adviser will have details of many local and national job vacancies. They can help you look for a job that is right for you.

Q: How much I will be paid when I am working?

A: The wage for each job will vary but all employers must comply with the **National Minimum Wage**. This can change every year. From October 2007 an employer must pay at least the following amounts for any paid job you do:

£5.52 per hour – for people aged 22 and over
£4.60 per hour – for people aged between 18 and 21

£3.40 per hour – for people aged under 18

Remember this is the legal minimum and many jobs will be paid at a higher rate.

Q: Are there any extra benefits I can claim when I am working?

A: Depending on your circumstances you may also be able to receive some additional financial support whilst you are working.

If you are working at least 16 hours a week you might be able to claim **Working Tax Credit**. This gives you extra money on top of the wage from your job. If you are eligible for Working Tax Credits the amount of money you may get will depend on your earnings and other circumstances. It can include an amount

that is paid to people who have a health condition or disability and move into work of 16 hours or more.

There are some benefits that can give you some extra income to help when you start a new job.

If you are on **Housing Benefit** or **Council Tax Benefit** you might be able to receive **Extended Housing Payments**. If you start work of at least 16 hours a week that is expected to last for five weeks or more you can receive an extra four weeks of Housing Benefit and Council Tax Benefit when certain other benefits stop because you're going back to work.

Housing Benefit is being replaced by the **Local Housing Allowance** and Extended Housing Payments will continue to be available.

You might be able to receive the **Job Grant**. This is a one-off tax-free payment when you, or your partner, stops getting benefits and starts work of at least 16 hours a week, that is expected to last for at least five weeks. Job Grant doesn't reduce other benefits or tax credits you may be entitled to because you start work.

You might also receive a **Return to Work Credit** if you:

- Live in a **Pathways to Work** area; and
- Start work of over 16 hours a week; and
- Are earning less than £15,000 a year

If you meet all the conditions for receiving Return to Work Credit it provides you with a regular extra payment of £40 a week for up to 52 weeks after you start a job.

Q: Can I still receive existing benefits as well as my wage?

A: If your condition or other circumstances have not changed when you start work you can still receive some benefits you were already getting, even if you are being paid from your job. The benefits you can still receive are:

- Disability Living Allowance
- Attendance Allowance
- Industrial Injuries Disablement Benefit
- State retirement pensions
- Bereavement Benefits
- Child Benefit

However, if you are being paid for a job it will affect the amount of any of the following benefits you are getting:

- Child Tax Credit
- Council Tax Benefit

- Housing Benefit
- Pension Credit (if you are over 60)

If you are receiving any of the following benefits, because of a health condition or disability, they will stop when you start work.

They are:

- Incapacity Benefit
- Income Support
- Severe Disability Allowance

Your Personal Adviser will be able to do a **'Better Off Calculation'** with you. This will help you find out what your total income is likely to be (including earnings, benefits and tax credits) if you decide to take up a particular job opportunity.

Q: Can I just try work first?

A: Some people find it hard to move directly from benefits into employment even if their goal is to work full time. If you are on benefits for a health condition or disability you can test whether work is right for you at the moment in the following ways:

- You can do as much **Voluntary Work** as you like, but you cannot be paid for this. You can receive reasonable expenses, for example to reimburse the cost of any travelling you have to do.

- **Permitted Work** is a scheme that allows you to do some work and still be able to receive benefits. You can normally:
 - Work for less than 16 hours a week and earn no more than £88.50 a week (from October 2007) for a fixed period of up to 52 weeks *or*
 - Work and earn, on average, no more than £20 a week for as long as you are on benefit or receiving National Insurance credits.
- If the permitted work is supervised by someone whose job includes providing or finding work for people with disabilities (this is known as **Supported Permitted Work**) or your disability is accepted as meeting the benefit entitlement rules without having to undergo a medical assessment (this is known as **Personal Capability Assessment Exempt Permitted Work**) you may be able to do Permitted Work for less than 16 hours a week and earn no more than £88.50 a week (from October 2007) *without any time limit*, as long as your circumstances remain unchanged.
- A **Work Trial** may allow you to work for up to 15 days and continue to get any benefits

you are receiving. At the end of the trial period you can decide whether to take the job or remain on benefits.

Q: How often does the maximum amount you can earn under Permitted Work change?

A: The maximum earnings limit for Permitted Work changes if there is an increase in the National Minimum Wage. This means the maximum you can earn when doing Permitted Work may change each October.

Q: Do I need my doctor's permission to try Permitted Work?

A: No, you do not need permission from your doctor to start Permitted Work. You will not be asked to undergo a medical test because you start Permitted Work, but any medical test which is already due to take place will go ahead as planned.

Q: Do I have to let Jobcentre Plus know about starting Permitted Work?

A: Yes. You must let Jobcentre Plus know as soon as possible when you start or are thinking of starting Permitted Work.

Q: If I earn up to £88.50 a week as allowed by Permitted Work for 52 weeks what can I do after the period ends?

You can still earn up to £20 a week for the next year. You can do further periods of Permitted Work earning up to £88.50 a week in the future, but there must be a gap of at least 52 weeks between one period and the next fixed period of Permitted Work of less than 16 hours a week.

Q: How will trying work affect my benefit payments?

A: Earnings from Permitted Work will not affect the amount of **Incapacity Benefit**, **Severe Disablement Allowance** or any **Disability Living Allowance** you receive. However, any earnings from work can affect other benefits you receive. A maximum of £20 from earnings (called an **Earnings Disregard**) is ignored before the amount of any

- **Income Support**
- **Housing Benefit**
- **Council Tax Benefit**

you receive begins to be reduced.

Remember that your average hours of Permitted Work must be less than 16 hours a

week or your entitlement to benefit because of a health condition or disability will be at risk. You may want to talk to a Jobcentre Plus Personal Adviser about how the hours of work and amount of earnings you receive will affect the benefit payments you currently get.

Q: What if I start work but need help to carry out my job?

A: Under the **Disability Discrimination Act** employers have a **duty** to make **Reasonable Adjustments** if a disabled person is likely to experience difficulty in doing their job because of their disability or health condition.

Reasonable Adjustments means making changes to remove obstacles for doing your work. This might, for example, include things like:

- Providing large print materials
- Being flexible over working times
- Making the workplace easy to use

However, employers do not have to make changes that are impractical or they cannot afford to make them because of high costs.

Whether the duty applies to you will depend on the type of disability you have, how long it is expected to last, and the type of changes that would be required.

The **Access to Work** service can provide information and may be able to help with some of the employer's costs for making adjustments or other costs that you have working that are caused by your disability. Your Personal Adviser can refer you to the Access to Work service.

Q: What if I stop claiming benefit when I get a job – but after a period of time find I can't continue working?

A: The **Linking Rules** automatically cover you when benefits stop because you start a job or training. If you were receiving benefits because of a health condition and find you cannot continue with a job or training the Linking Rules allow you to start claiming the same level of benefit again – so long as you still qualify for benefits because of your health condition or disability. To be covered by the Linking Rules you must:

- Start the job or training within one month of leaving benefit, and
- Leave the job or training and re-claim benefit within 104 weeks of originally leaving benefit.

If you used to receive Incapacity Benefit, Severe Disablement Allowance, Income Support, Housing Benefit or Council Tax Benefits and

your condition has not changed you will be able to claim these again at the same rate as before (if you are covered by the Linking Rules).

Q: How can I learn more about the sort of help and support that is available?

A: There is a lot of support now available and we have not been able to cover everything you may need to know in this book. To find out more about what help may be right for you talk to a Personal Adviser. They will be able to:

- Tell you more about the things highlighted **(in bold)** in this section
- Talk about any other available support that might be suitable for you
- Check whether you are eligible for any help you are interested in
- Give you leaflets or extra information and answer any questions you may have about support that could help you take up work
- Refer you to other sources of advice and support, such as a Disability Employment Adviser, who can discuss any complex needs you may have.

All references to benefit rules were correct in October 2007, but may be subject to change in the future. Please check with Jobcentre Plus.

Really Useful Book of Learning and Earning – tell us what you think!

Fill in the boxes below and tell us your contact details on the other side of this page. We will enter you into a prize draw and you could win a £20 voucher.

What do you think of the Really Useful Book of Learning and Earning?

In what ways did you use the Really Useful Book of Learning and Earning? (Please tick all that apply)

- As a diary
- To help me create an action plan
- To help me take up a learning activity
- To help me take up voluntary work
- To help me with job hunting
- To understand more about benefits
- To record telephone numbers and addresses
- Other – please tell us:

What are the most helpful bits of the Really Useful Book of Learning and Earning?

What are the least helpful bits of the Really Useful Book of Learning and Earning?

Your name: _____

Your address: _____

Your e-mail address: _____

Your phone number: _____

(We may use things you have said in your feedback form in publicity materials and reports, but we will not use your name or any identifying information.)

Thank you for telling us what you think.

Please send this to Caroline Law, NIACE, Freepost LE3 066, Leicester, LE1 7ZR by **31 December 2008**.

Terms and conditions for the free draw

- You must be aged 16 years or older and live in England to enter this prize draw.
- NIACE employees or relatives of NIACE employees are not allowed to enter.
- To enter, fill in the feedback form and send it to Caroline Law, NIACE, Freepost LE3 066, Leicester, LE1 7ZR.
- You do not need to use a stamp.
- We cannot be responsible for any forms that are lost, delayed or damaged during submission or in the post.
- No purchase necessary.
- Please send your response after 1 January 2008. We must receive all responses by 31 December 2008. You may only enter the prize draw once.
- One draw will be held at the end of each month from January 2008 – December 2008. All entries received within that month will be entered into the draw for that month only.
- One winner from each month will win a £20 voucher.
- There is no cash alternative.
- The draw will be witnessed by an independent observer.

- We will contact the winners by telephone, e-mail or post within 30 days of winning.
- A list of winners and the counties they live in is available on request, but this will not include addresses, email addresses or phone numbers.
- For a list of the names and counties of winners, please write to Caroline Law, NIACE, 21 De Montfort Street, Leicester, LE1 7GE.
- The National Institute of Adult Continuing Education (NIACE) is registered under the Data Protection Act 1998 (Registration Number Z7412510). Personal information supplied to NIACE may be stored securely and used in relation to NIACE's work. At no time will we divulge personal information to other organisations without your express consent.
- We may use things you have said in your feedback form in publicity materials and reports, but we will not use your name or any identifying information.
- The promoter is NIACE (National Institute of Adult Continuing Education), 21 De Montfort Street, Leicester, LE1 7GE.



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Leading learning and skills

