

# THE BUSINESS CASE FOR EMPLOYERS FOR EMPLOYING PEOPLE WITH A LEARNING DISABILITY: A REVIEW OF EVIDENCE

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# Introduction

- Employers are often regarded as the primary barrier to people with a learning disability gaining employment
- Some of the main concerns of employers are that employing a person with a learning disability may:
  - require them to make costly changes to the work that people do and the workplace
  - lead to lower performance
- What evidence is there of the benefits and costs of employing people with a learning disability from the perspective of employers?
- We present a systematic review of the literature carried out for Mencap in 2017

# Possible costs to employers? <sup>1</sup>

- Provision of personal support on the job
- Provision of equipment for a disabled person
- Modification to the workplace
- Change of location of job
- Redesign of work duties
- Offering more flexible working patterns or working hours
- Allowing special leave or additional time off work
- Greater risks of accidents and insurance claims
- Poor reactions of customers
- **Higher supervision costs**

# Possible benefits to employers?<sup>1</sup>

- Access to a larger pool of potential recruits for businesses that are experiencing recruitment difficulties
- Disabled people remaining in post longer, have lower absenteeism and good punctuality
- Retaining employees saves on recruitment and training costs
- Improved employer loyalty and commitment
- People with a disability making more reliable workers and saving employers costs from lower accidents and insurance claims
- Improving access to disabled customers
- Improving staff relations and personnel practices, possibly linked to increased overall company productivity
- Making the business more representative of the community, and fostering the public image of a fair and inclusive employer

# Employer rated benefits

- Employers operate a hierarchy in views of employability of disabled people
- Where studies have looked specifically at employer views of people with a learning disability they have shown lower expectations of employability (600+ employers) <sup>2,3,4</sup>
- There are some positive feelings towards people with LD however:
  - 72% of employers would give people with learning disabilities special considerations <sup>4</sup>
  - Most employers accepted the potential of people with developmental disabilities to become work force members (3263 employers) <sup>5</sup>
- This often falls short of a commitment to employ
- For **learning disability**, there is a significant relationship between previous working experience and viewing the “work performance and employment costs” of these employees positively <sup>6</sup>

# Employer rated benefits

- Employers with **experience** of employing people with a learning disability have positive views of their employability and performance:
  - attendance, arriving to work and returning from breaks on time
  - accepting authority, and being accepted by the public <sup>7,8,9,10,11,12,13</sup>
  - dedication, involving job coach assistance<sup>14,15</sup>
  - lower turnover rates; willingness to learn; job satisfaction; unlikely to cause trouble; friendliness; honesty; hardworking; strength; timekeeping; reliability; appearance; dependability; motivation; and sickness record <sup>16</sup>
- Respondents with experience of employing people with “developmental disabilities” identified advantages at double the rate of employer’s who had not <sup>17</sup>

# Employer rated benefits

- Direct observation or accounts of performance, rather than higher level perceptions of employability, show many more benefits to employers
- Findings confirm that it is positive contact in the workplace itself that determines positive attitudes towards the employability of disabled [and PwLD] people, and of positive attitudes to disabled people themselves, rather than personal contacts or experiences of disability (341 companies) <sup>18</sup>

# Employer rated benefits

- Using detailed measures yields more positive outcomes <sup>19</sup>

	Disabled (49% PwLD)	Non-disabled workers
Overall Satisfaction?	X	✓
Workplace climate?	✓	X
Work speed and rate?	✓	X
Work accuracy and quality?	630	199

- Employers were generally satisfied with the performance employees with mild learning disabilities in 20 out of 25 work related attributes, including reliability, good work motivation and work safety <sup>20</sup>
- Job match recognised as important to these outcomes by employers <sup>19</sup>



# Employer rated benefits

- Level of support counts in impacting on employer perceptions <sup>11</sup>

SUPPORT MODEL	Positive employer assessment	Higher compared to non-disabled
Supported competitive employment services (including job coach services)	Work behaviour ✓ Attendance ✓ On time arrival and departure ✓ Safety record ✓ Acceptance by the public ✓	Staff turnover ✓ Overall assessment ✓
Only job placement services	✓	Staff turnover ✓ Overall assessment ✓
No known services	X	X

(260 employers)

Scores of consistency (on a “never” 1 to “always” 5 scale) were mostly in the 3.2-4.7 range for all levels of learning disability <sup>23</sup>

# Employer rated benefits

- Research on what might be influencing whether employers would employ a worker with a learning disability found:
  - Task performance alone is not the main factor underpinning success for the employer
  - Having a high probability of **regular attendance and a high probability of long-term employment** (e.g. staying in the job) are important
  - The availability of **on-site training** and the on-going availability of a **person to call** for assistance important (84 employers) <sup>15</sup>
  - Physical **presence of employment specialists** at the job site a strength of supporting programmes for employers (e.g. not just any support is helpful) <sup>24</sup>
- Employees with a learning disability more likely to receive higher ratings of work performance when employers perceive a **good job-employee match**<sup>21,22</sup>

# Economic Benefits

Summary of comparative costs of recruitment, sickness and days off <sup>25</sup>

Cost area	Performance: Learning disability/ co-worker	Net saving for person with learning disability	Net cost for non-disabled co-worker
Length of stay in job	3.48/1	\$23431	-
Lateness episodes	3/20	-	-
Absence/ Sickness episodes	0/8	-	\$5.462

1: Based on cost of hourly rate cost of recruitment and interviewing

2: Based on \$ per hour for staff time organising replacement

It takes 14.88 person hours, involving multiple managers, and costing \$227.66 for each successful new worker search. Staying longer saves money.

## Matched pairs method



# Economic Benefits

- Summary of relative performance of people with disabilities and non-disabled co-workers for employers hiring under Disability Services Act. <sup>26</sup>

	Disabled performance expressed as a percentage of average non-disabled worker performance
Absent days	62%
Accrued absent/sick costs	34%
Recruitment	13%

50% of people in employment services administered under the DSA had a LD

- Costs of employing people with a disability (including people with a learning disability) compared to “average employees” for 643 Australian employers
  - Recruitment costs were lower- \$141 vs \$1079, a net saving of \$938 due to reduced job turnover
  - Sickness rates- 8.3 days for people with disabilities compared to 9.7 days for non-disabled co-workers, yielding net cost savings of \$473

# Economic Benefits

- Employers with experience of employing people with a learning disability rated them more positively than non-disabled people in relation to **low job turnover rates** <sup>16</sup>
- Employing individuals with IDD was said to have contributed to higher productivity, **lower absenteeism**, **higher job retention rates**, and increased customer loyalty <sup>27, 28</sup>
- By employing people with a learning disability employers are more likely to generate cost savings by staying in jobs longer with reduced recruitment and training costs when compared to other workers.

# Workforce Cohesion

- Employers are willing to provide additional time to training and supervision to obtain reliable, dedicated employees, increased workforce diversity and a positive image for corporate social responsibility <sup>11,13,14</sup>
- Employers seem willing to allow some flexibility in performance by employees with a learning disability to achieve reliable attendance and low staff turnover <sup>11,23,36</sup>
- To benefit from their greater dedication to work <sup>14,41</sup>

# Workforce Cohesion

- Perceptions of workers with learning disabilities by co-workers were positive, largely due to their ability to perform a valued role within the organization, and due to their impact on social climate.
- The study found that workers with learning disabilities were able to contribute most successfully to the team when work tasks were tailored to their skills, and when they were provided with clear job expectations.
- In the cases studied, workers were involved in work tasks that brought them into frequent contact with other workers and the public. Workers and supervisors in these settings saw the workers with learning disabilities as contributing positively to both the work output and social climate of the workplace. <sup>29</sup>

# Workforce Cohesion

- “Humanising” a workplace and contributing to the social connectedness of workers:
  - co-workers can become invested in the success of the individual, this leads to greater social integration of the individual and to better relationships and cooperation between co-workers themselves <sup>30</sup>
  - impact on company morale as an important factor in deciding to employ people with a learning disability for some employers <sup>13</sup>
- Employers do report the major benefits of employment of people with Developmental Disabilities as:
  - having a more diverse workforce, better co-worker partnerships (all rated by over 20% of employers) and improved attitudes in the company (10% of employers).
  - employers with experience of hiring identified twice the number of advantages of hiring people with Developmental Disabilities than employers with no experience <sup>17</sup>

*“Many employers continue their commitment to workforce diversity as a strategy for increasing the productivity and competitiveness of their company....the presence of workers with [developmental disabilities] actually increases the ability of a company to contend with its competitors.” <sup>31</sup> (p4)*



# Public image benefits

- Positive reputational effects for employers from hiring people with visible disabilities have been identified.<sup>32</sup> These effects include:
  - improving the company's image with customers and investors
  - building sustainable relationships through client-employee contacts.
- Consumer surveys of attitudes towards companies that hire people with a disability reveal <sup>33</sup>:
  - 75% had had direct experience of a person with a disability in a work environment and had positive experiences as a result
  - 92% of the consumers interviewed felt more favourable towards companies that hired people with disabilities
  - 87% specifically agreed that they would prefer to give their business to companies that hire people with disabilities
  - Almost all the respondents believed that companies hiring workers with disabilities cared about their workers
- Only 2% of consumers had people with a learning disability in mind when they feedback.....but many included any worker with a work challenge....results are relevant to learning disability

# Workforce Productivity

## Job Carving and assisting the productivity of others

- Much has been written about job carving, techniques and its benefits, with many anecdotes about its effectiveness
- We have found little in the way of hard research that evidences this:
  - A study of 126 employers, found that people with a learning disability freeing skilled workers was “somewhat or very important” as an incentive for 59.2% of employers to hire people with a learning disability <sup>13</sup>
- **We need a lot more data on this aspect of employer benefit**

# Additional costs in employing people with a learning disability?

## **Additional support supervisors**

- In one study (100 employers), 78% of employers reported that people with with learning disabilities need longer training than most workers <sup>34</sup>
- A number of studies report that employers with experience of employing people with a learning disability feel additional supervision and training costs are a concern <sup>14, 16, 35</sup>
- One study estimates the cost of additional supervision to be low at between \$0.02-\$0.34 additional cost per hour. <sup>25</sup>
- **However, we have seen that employers are open to providing extra supervision and training time and effort to help integrate people with a learning disability into their workforce <sup>11, 14</sup>**

# Additional costs in employing people with a learning disability?

## Workplace accommodations

- Estimates of costs of workplace modifications and changes to staff training and supervision through employing a person with a disability, including a learning disability (2024 records) show <sup>26</sup>:
  - 65% rated these to be cost neutral
  - 15% identified an overall financial cost
  - 20% identified an overall financial benefit
  - Overall, benefits exceeded costs, with a majority of modifications being cost neutral
- The most common accommodations needed by PwLD <sup>13</sup> :
  - extra attention (36% of employers)
  - a job coach (26.8%)
  - longer to do a job (13.4%)
  - flexible hours (8.9%)
- These are generally low cost employer responses or can be externally funded

# Cost of safety risks?

- Accidents are low

	Disabled performance expressed as a percentage of average non-disabled worker performance
Occupational Health incidents	12%
Costs of occupational Health incidents	26%
Worker compensation incidents	18%
Worker compensation incident costs	4%
Accumulated insurance costs	4%

- Roughly half of employers with an experience of hiring people with a learning disability reported no problems with safety <sup>13,16</sup>
- An 8-year analysis of workplace insurance claim records for workers with and without disability in a Canadian social enterprise supplying work crews to manufacturers and packagers there were 3.5/100 FTE injuries for PwLD vs 10.3/100 FTEs for non-disabled workers <sup>37</sup>
- Employing a person with a learning disability does not result in an increase in health insurance rates or workers' compensation claims<sup>11,13,36</sup>

# Importance of supported employment

- Employees with a learning disability are more likely to receive higher ratings of their work performance when employers perceive a good job:employee match <sup>38,39</sup>
- Employers are more likely to employ people with a learning disability if they had on-going availability of a person to call for assistance and the availability of a person for on-site training <sup>15</sup>
- 117 employers thought using job coaches, or having disability professionals provide assistance, to be the most helpful way to help them employ more people with a learning disability <sup>40</sup>

*“...from the employer’s perspective, supported employment is viewed as a program that capitalizes on the strengths of workers with disabilities and is easily integrated into the workplace. Furthermore, the presence of the job coach at the worksite is viewed by the employers as a positive experience.”<sup>9</sup> (p22)*

# Implications for practice

- We know that some people may need more input from supervisors and take a little longer to learn a job
- However, employers are willing to provide this additional time because they are able to obtain reliable, dedicated employees, increased workforce diversity, and maintain a positive image of corporate social responsibility through being flexible.
- The data we have confirms that people with a learning disability generally do stay in work longer, are sick less and are reliable time-keepers
- The combination, taken with estimates of what it costs to find, interview, recruit and train new staff, can lead to significant employer savings
- Workers with a learning disability appears to add significant value to companies by increasing morale, productivity and improved attitudes among coworkers, and delivers greater company diversity.

# Implications for practice

- In taking employer evaluations of people with LD, those with experience of employing people will be more positive
- Questions on more specific aspects of work yield more positive responses than general measures of satisfaction from employers
- Evaluations where employer respondents supervised disabled people on a regular basis reported them to have average or above-average performance
- Front line supervisors are more likely to indicate they are generally satisfied with work performance and report fewer concerns about hiring people with disabilities

*In evaluating employer perceptions, focus on companies with experience of hiring, ask supervisors close to experience of people's performance in the company and ask about specific aspects of work*





## A systematic review of the literature on the benefits for employers of employing people with learning disabilities

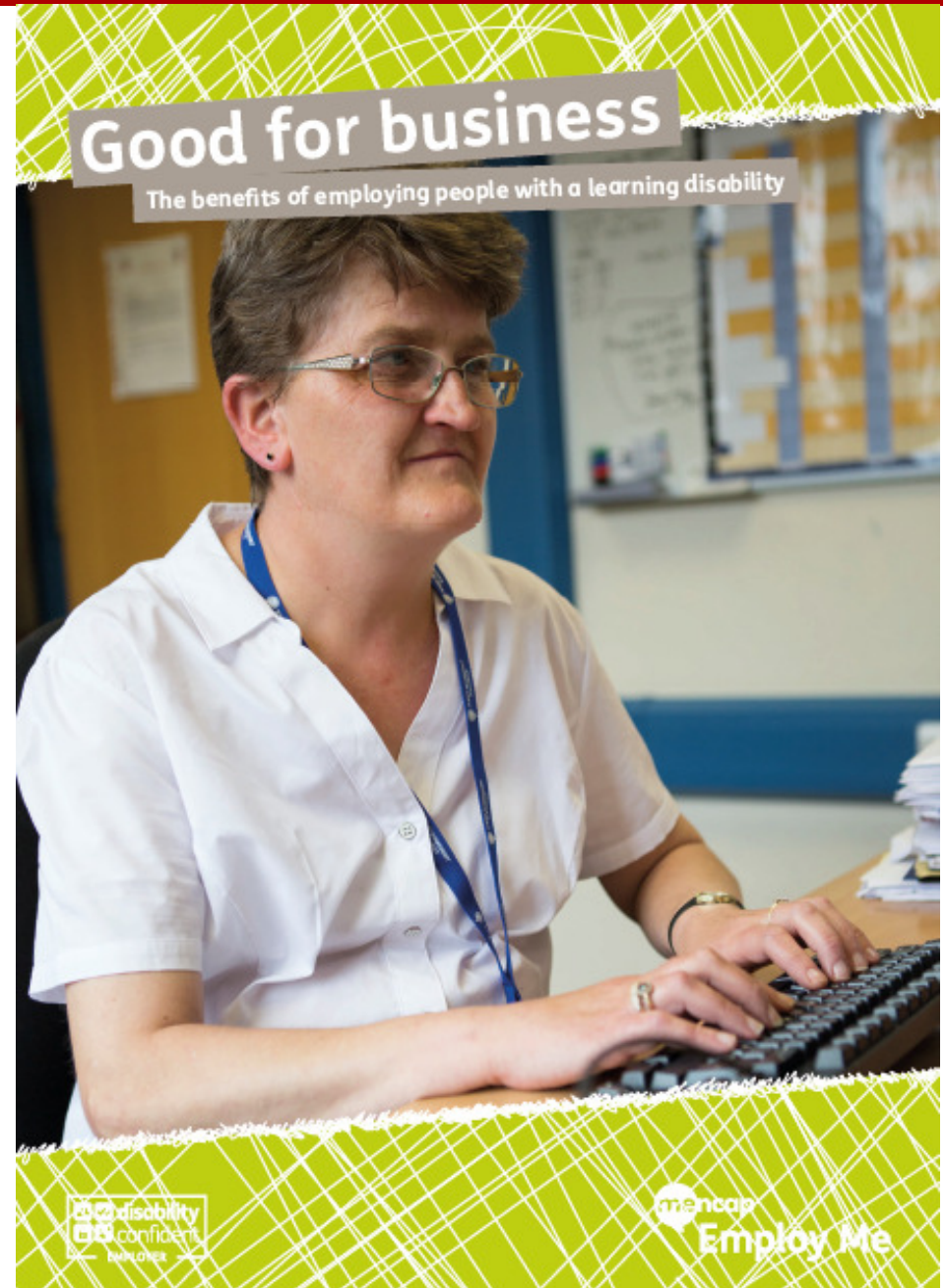
Dr. Stephen Beyer & Dr. Annie Beyer

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