

Annual Report 2015-16

This annual report is presented to the BASE 2016 AGM. It describes the operations of the British Association for Supported Employment from 1 April 2015 to 31 March 2016, and beyond where this is appropriate to the report.

National Executive Committee

The NEC consists of nominated representatives from each of the regions, with a facility to co-opt additional people as required to support the NEC with specific activities or issues.

The current NEC membership is as follows:

Paul Wilson	(Chair)	North West
Alistair Kerr	(Vice Chair)	Scotland
Robert Elston	(Treasurer)	South East
Dean Atkinson		Midlands
Matt Britt		South West
Harry Corrigan		Midlands
Laura Davis		South East
Rachel Jones		North West
Holly Kelleher		North East
Petra Kennedy		Wales
Rhys Toone		North East
Vikki Walters		South West
Kathy Melling		Co-opted
Nerise Oldfield-Thompson		Co-opted
Melanie Walls		Co-opted

At the AGM, Alistair Kerr steps down as Vice Chair to focus on a separate and rapidly evolving Scottish employment sector. Alistair's contribution to supported employment in Scotland over many years has been immense, and I know he will remain a vital figure in the industry as Scotland develops its own employment solutions as part of the devolution agenda.

During the year, we were pleased to welcome Holly Kelleher as the representative of the North East Region, who has already added much to BASE and to the work of the NEC. The NEC will shortly be joined by Alison Thwaite representing the North West region.

I want to thank the three members of the NEC who were co-opted onto the committee for 2015-16: Mel Walls with a remit to help us drive the supported business agenda; Kathy Melling supporting us with the transitions agenda; and Nerise Oldfield-Thompson, who, along with Kathy, continues to support the development and delivery of the accredited supported employment qualification.

I want to thank all the NEC members for their commitment over the past year. Their commitment remains vital to the work of BASE, as without them, we could not function. With that commitment in mind, I also need to thank those organisations who employ our NEC members and who continue to support their work for and on behalf of BASE.

After 3 years as Chair and many years on the NEC, I will be standing down at the AGM, and it is with much pleasure that I commend the nomination as Co-chairs of my colleagues Laura Davies and Matt Britt. Both of them have many years of experience in Supported Employment, and both have the unanimous support of the NEC to take on this shared role.

Staff

BASE continues to be led with passion and commitment by its Chief Executive, Huw Davies. His expertise in supported employment is respected across the welfare to work sector, and he remains the cornerstone of our organisation.

Huw is ably supported by a team of Associates who are commissioned to undertake specific pieces of work on BASE's behalf, by Gillian Parker who continues helps us maintain an up-to-date and well-connected on-line presence, and by Samina Mahrukh who joined us during the year to provide administrative support for BASE.

Membership

The association had 177 member organisations during 2015-16.

These are challenging times for many of our members, with a number of supported employment services under threat. Despite this, our membership level has remained high, and we continue to welcome new members to the organisation.

As an association, we continue to hold regular regional network meetings across our 7 membership regions as a way of providing consultation, debate, presentations and feedback for our members.

Our 2015 annual Conference was attended by around 150 delegates and was a great success. We received very positive feedback about the event and about the practitioner awards which continue to form a key part of the conference.

The BASE website, with its supported business procurement section and its searchable knowledge hub, remains a major source of information and advice, providing members with access to an extensive body of best practice information, research, reports and links.

In addition to the website, we continue to issue regular e-newsletters which we know are valued by members in providing succinct updates, briefings and insights on issues affecting the sector.

Further to our work to inform, support and advise our members, we continue to receive a substantial number of enquiries from employers, disabled jobseekers and family carers. We have been able to provide guidance and signpost them to appropriate support.

Collaborations and partnership work

As most people know, the Government made an unambiguous commitment as part of its Disability Confident campaign to halve the disability employment gap. That gap represents the difference between the percentage of people with disabilities who are in work and that of the working age population as a whole. This difference is currently around 27%.

BASE commended this ambition. We recognise that halving the disability employment gap would be a remarkable economic and social accomplishment. To achieve this ambition – in other words to close the gap - would mean one million additional people with a disability or a health condition in work. That's one million people receiving the right help to achieve their ambitions to find the right job and build a career.

As BASE members come together for the 2016 conference, the process of commissioning the new Work and Health Programme is under way, with the Go Live date around a year away.

The Work and Health Programme will be around one quarter of the size of the two combined programmes it will replace, Work Choice and Work Programme.

Negotiations with DWP about the new programme, and the potential for additional initiatives, have been extensive, and BASE continues to work in partnership with DWP, other government departments and a range of other stakeholders to make the prospect of halving the disability employment gap a real and achievable one.

At the same time, pressures on local government funding mean that non-statutory provision such as supported employment services are under pressure as never before. Since 2010 there have been steadily fewer locally funded employment services with fewer resources.

In response to these various factors, BASE has been in discussion with DWP for several months regarding the funding of locally commissioned supported employment services that provide support to those individuals who might not be able to access the Work and Health Programme. We have submitted proposals for the use of national funds to reward the sustained job outcomes achieved through local provision.

BASE has also been working on a couple of externally funded projects. Employment is Everyone's Business was a project funded by the Department for Education and was jointly delivered by BASE and NDTi. The project, concluded earlier this year, has produced a series

of guides on best practice around including employment within Education Health & Care Plans for young people moving from education into employment.

Our current European collaboration sees BASE working with partners from several European countries on an Erasmus project to develop a set of transferable quality standards for the profession across Europe.

Alistair Kerr's work in Scotland has been at the heart of the Scottish Supported Business Framework and the work to bring together Scottish supported businesses and public sector procurement functions. Mel Walls has also worked tirelessly to develop a shared agenda for BASE and the Supported Business Alliance as supported businesses look to shape a future sitting outside the new Work and Health Programme.

In responding to the challenges faced by supported businesses, BASE has recently submitted proposals to DWP setting out both how best to support legacy customers within supported businesses, and how supported businesses can be utilised by DWP and other commissioning agents to bring a range of positive benefits to the sector.

Training and consultancy

BASE's not for profit community interest company, Inclusive Trading CIC, continues to deliver a range of bespoke and off-the-shelf training and consultancy services on behalf of BASE. We deliver an extensive programme of training in support of the accredited Certificate for Supported Employment Practitioners which has been developed by BASE.

In total, we have now delivered Certificate training to over 238 staff across 18 venues.

Finances

BASE relies financially on the income it draws from three main sources: membership subscriptions, training & consultancy activity, and conference revenue. I believe that our prudent financial strategy, along with the success of our trading arm over the last year, is clear to see in our separate Treasurer's Report for the last year.

The Year Ahead

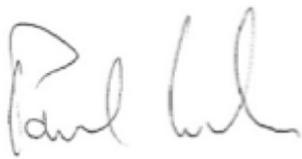
As we gather in Manchester, the employment sector is once more going through major changes which will affect both BASE members and the wider industry.

A changing commissioning landscape, the increasing importance of devolution to the regions, a shift in tone around the role of the Work Capability Assessment, the crisis in local authority funding, the challenge of creating a new role for supported businesses, the potential of DWP collaborating with local authorities to capacity-build local employment services, all have the potential to make their mark on our sector.

DWP are now in the process of commissioning a single Work and Health Programme, predominantly for people with disabilities and health conditions. How well the new programme can meet demand, and how those people who are not able to access the new programme can be supported to find the right job and build careers, are issues that will dominate discussions over the next year.

The equation as ever is a simple one. How do we ensure the availability of high quality, personalised services for each person facing significant barriers to gaining and retaining employment?

In our discussions with DWP, with local commissioners and with other stakeholders, BASE will continue to argue that specialist employment support is essential in a fair society to give everyone an equal chance to succeed.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Paul Wilson'.

Paul Wilson
Chairman

October 2016