

Chairs Report 2019-20



This annual report is presented to members as part of the BASE 2020 AGM, describing operations of the British Association for Supported Employment from 1st April 2019 to 31st March 2020 and beyond, where appropriate, to this report.

NEC (National Executive Committee)

Julia Green (Chair)
Matt Britt (Vice Chair)
Robert Elston (Treasurer)
Dean Atkinson (Midlands)
Rachel Jones (North West)
Petra Kennedy (Wales)
Alistair Kerr (Scotland)
Alex Seddon (South West)
David Stenning (South East)
Ramsay Taylor (North East)
Kathy Melling (Co-opted)
Nerise Oldfield-Thompson (Co-opted)
Melanie Walls (Co-opted)

Our NEC is presented as a full board, with seats in all geographical areas occupied. We would like to formally welcome Alex Seddon and welcome back Alistair Kerr who take seats in the South West and Scotland respectively. It is really important to us as a members' organisation to have board representatives reflective of our member localities and ensure quality communication pathways between board and members, as it is this communication that drives our priorities, planning and calls to action.

As always, a huge thank you is extended to our board, who continue to support, advise, guide and steer with both passion and determination.

For 2019/20, we co-opted Mel Walls, Kathy Melling and Nerise Oldfield-Thompson to our NEC board. Mel represents our supported business agenda, Kathy is lead on education and transition and Nerise our accreditation lead, works alongside Kathy to also develop and deliver our accredited and non-accredited BASE training. Our co-opted members continue to go above and beyond for BASE and we remain appreciative of their support and contribution.

Our Chief Executive, Huw Davies continues to lead BASE in challenging and contributing to policy, legislative change and reform. He continues to build on strategic partnerships to strengthen conversations and influence. Huw has played a vital role in BASE's adaptation and reaction to the challenging past months. Thank you Huw.

Gillian sits at the heart of our digital platform presence, supporting members to also get better in this ever changing, challenging, competitive and ever so necessary world of social media. Your patience with us is appreciated and we truly value your advice.

Key Themes

Membership continues to be strong and we've seen an increase in new providers, particularly local ones, which is fantastic. The involvement and contribution of this variety of organisations ensures we stay up to date and relevant within our sector and we are excited to see new faces, teams and organisations at our regional meetings. As members, your feedback is not only welcomed but necessary to drive us forward, ensuring as a collective we continue to challenge and progress, promoting best practice and creative thinking, smashing through barriers and striving towards real change.

Our finances remain stable and Robert will describe this more thoroughly in his Treasurer's report.

Demand remains strong for our training and consultancy services and, to date, over 500 practitioners have enrolled on our accredited certificate course. BASE's not-for-profit community interest company, Inclusive Trading CIC, continues to deliver a range of training and consultancy services on behalf of BASE and we are continually reviewing delivery and opportunities to expand our offer. 2020 has required us to adapt to the online environment and BASE held a series of well-attended online workshops through the summer. All regional forums have also been moved online. We've established regional Linked-In discussion groups and this has encouraged greater levels of engagement.

We have continued our close engagement with DWP and have sought to build on the Proof of Concept (POC) to establish a way of funding locally commissioned provision. The proposed Trailblazer is still uncertain but we are hopeful it will lead to delivery across 20+ local authority areas. BASE has been very active in seeking improvements to Access to Work processes and we have also engaged with DWP Commercial to try to influence the department's procurement methods.

We continue to enjoy excellent collaboration with the Department for Education to ensure study programmes deliver strong and sustainable outcomes. Along with other stakeholders such as Preparing for Adulthood, we have sought clearer definition of Supported Internships, a focus on workforce development, the adoption of quality standards, and better data recording so that we can identify areas of best practice. We have supported the department's work to ensure that learners are not disadvantaged by the Covid-19 measures which have been necessary.

We have continued to work closely with the Supported Business Steering Group to ensure that the changes to DWP funding of Supported Businesses are appropriate and sustainable. This support included assisting with finances and communications and we are confident that the Steering Group will achieve its aims.

There is a growing recognition that our sector needs a framework for quality assurance to demonstrate how services can meet customer needs. The SEQF accreditation and kite mark is now up and running and we are keen for the sector to use this framework to demonstrate what 'good' looks like.

What's Next

This time last year my thoughts turned to the impact of Brexit and the uncertainty that would bring to our sector. A year on and a new, unexpected and unprecedented challenge in the form of Covid-19 has presented us with a whole new world to work within and adapt to. Our members have shown creative and innovative ways to support their local communities and people who have been hardest hit in lockdown as a result of Covid-19. We remain in awe of how selfless people can be when faced with adversity and what true community spirit looks like.

The stigma of working from home has at last been addressed and we all know working from home should not be said with “air” quotations and seen as a symbolic nod to working. We work harder, longer and have juggled home schooling, caring responsibilities, PPE and food parcel deliveries with the day job. We shop locally because small local shops were quick to react to people shielding and those unable / reluctant to go out or secure delivery with larger retailers.

Care and retail recruitment not only rocketed but the recruitment process became easier. Lengthy on-line psychometric tests and application forms were replaced with more informal face to face conversations and a ‘you can start Monday’ approach. People were judged on what they could do in the role and not how well they could talk about what they could do.

In a world of restrictions and complexities that remain difficult to navigate, I have to remain optimistic that there are also positive changes and that accessible recruitment practices and working from home will create job opportunities for the very people we support. I also know that as furlough schemes end and restructuring picks up pace, many more people will be faced with unemployment and the barriers that brings over the coming weeks and months. BASE will continue to work tirelessly to drive quality, influence and consult on policy and legislation and ensure that people with disabilities and complex barriers to employment are given the right support at the right time.



Julia Green
Chair