



# KF

## PROJECT PAPER

Number 55



### THE EMPLOYMENT OF PEOPLE WITH MENTAL HANDICAP

Progress towards an ordinary working life

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**An Ordinary Life** (Project Paper No 24, reprinted July 1982, price £1.50) an account of the principles involved in developing comprehensive locally-based residential services for mentally handicapped people and a guide to planning such services;

**Bringing Mentally Handicapped Children out of Hospital** (Project Paper No 30, November 1981, price £1.25) describing the alternative services in the community required to relocate the remaining children and young people in hospitals;

**Better Services for the Mentally Handicapped? Lessons from the Sheffield Evaluation Studies** (Project Paper No 34, August 1982, price £1.50);

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**An Ordinary Life: issues and strategies for training staff for community mental handicap services**, edited by Ann Shearer (Project Paper No 42, price £2.50);

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# THE EMPLOYMENT OF PEOPLE WITH MENTAL HANDICAP

Progress towards  
an ordinary working life

Jan Porterfield and  
Chris Gathercole

King's Fund Centre

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## Foreword

Last autumn, the King's Fund published *An Ordinary Working Life: vocational services for people with mental handicap* as a further contribution to its cumulative programme of activities encouraging the development of comprehensive community-based services for people with all kinds of mental handicap. While recognising the enormous gulf between opportunities currently available and the employment sought by most adults, *An Ordinary Working Life* argues that vocational services should start from the principle that people with mental handicap have the same rights as other citizens to valued, rewarding and unsegregated employment. The challenge is to use our initiative and skills to find ways of realising this principle in practice.

This project paper, the sequel to *An Ordinary Working Life*, describes how an impressive range of employment initiatives in different parts of Britain are addressing this challenge. Written by Jan Porterfield and Chris Gathercole, two members of the AOWL working group, and based on a survey conducted by Jan with financial support from the Joseph Rowntree Memorial Trust, the paper provides detailed accounts of a sample of schemes demonstrating how people with mental handicap, including some with severe handicap, can be integrated into ordinary work settings. It discusses the design of different schemes, with particular reference to job-finding and the preparation and support of people with handicap at work. It identifies the sources of financial support for vocational services which public and voluntary initiatives have succeeded in mobilising. It gives careful attention to the perspectives of service-providers, employers and fellow-workers on how these schemes are operating. Most important, it offers a sensitive report on the achievements of people with mental handicap and describes their views on the differences which opportunities to share in the world of work have made to their lives.

There is much in these examples which should prove encouraging to people elsewhere who are keen to explore alternatives to the traditional patterns of day services. At the same time, the authors recognise that developing vocational services consistent with principles of *An Ordinary Working Life* is far from easy in the circumstances of current labour markets. Drawing on the experience of those most involved, the paper summarises useful advice on setting up good schemes and offers contact addresses for readers who wish to pursue particular issues in more detail. As with the *An Ordinary Life* initiative as a whole, therefore, this paper is based on the premise that further progress is most likely to be made through widening the informal networks linking innovators in different localities and building on existing experience to create better quality services in future.

David Towell  
1985

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# Contents

Introduction	6
Employing a person with severe handicaps	9
Work-experience from training centres	12
Bracknell Training Centre, Bracknell	12
Bishopstoke Adult Training Centre, Eastleigh	18
A youth training scheme	24
Harington Scheme, London	24
Employment Services	28
Pathway Employment Service	28
Shaw Trust, Wiltshire	39
Blakes Wharf, London	44
Outreach Project, Greenock	50
Geoffrey Rhodes Centre, Newcastle-upon-Tyne	59
Cooperatives	64
Gillygate Wholefood Bakery, York	64
Welsh Initiative for Specialised Employment (WISE), Swansea	67
Conclusions	68
Appendix   Addresses of schemes described	75
References	76

## Introduction

This is a report of the findings of a descriptive study of vocational services for people with mental handicap. The study was undertaken to complement *An Ordinary Working Life* (King's Fund Centre, 1984) by providing practical illustrations of some of the ideas expressed in that project paper.

*An Ordinary Working Life* outlines requirements for the design of vocational services for people with mental handicap. It was based on the following principles:

Employment services should not exclude people who are thought to be too disabled to work.

Whatever support is needed to enable a person to work should be provided.

The personal choice of the worker should be the priority determinant in the search for work.

The service should maximise contact between a disabled worker and non-disabled people.

The service should ensure an adequate income.

The aim of this study was to describe and review developments in Britain in vocational services for people who are mentally handicapped, including those with severe handicaps, which demonstrate ways in which *integration* of handicapped people with non-handicapped people in work settings may be achieved. The focus is on employment and unpaid work-experience. Several services and schemes are described which are preparing people for work, helping them find jobs and supporting them after they become employed.

The schemes reported here have mainly been developed within the past five years. With the exception of Pathway, they are not widely known.

The word employment is used here to refer to paid work; and work refers to both paid employment and unpaid work experience.

Because the period for the study was short, we wanted to find, as quickly as possible, many different schemes and projects which were promoting integrated work. We started by contacting everyone we thought might know of the kind of innovation we were looking for. These initial contacts were very helpful but needed to be followed up carefully to determine whether they met the criterion of helping people with mental handicap to make progress towards working in *integrated* employment.

When initially contacting each project by telephone, an attempt was made to determine what they did and the degree of handicap of the people involved. This may sound fairly easy but definitions of mental handicap and the degree of handicap varied greatly. Although the telephone contacts were useful in sorting out services which definitely did not meet the criterion, visits to most schemes were needed to understand clearly who their clients were and what they were trying to achieve.

Fifteen services or schemes were visited during 1984 by Jan Porterfield. Most of the visits are



described in this report. The use of first person narrative refers to Jan's visits.

Although an attempt was made to structure the visits, following the structure largely depended on other demands on staff time. She usually interviewed the person with major responsibility for the service and met and talked to other members of staff. On most visits she was able to meet people with mental handicap who were using the service and often she visited them in their place of work. On some visits she was also able to talk to employers and co-workers about various aspects of working alongside a person with mental handicap. Many services provided written information which was used in preparing this report.

Among the places and people visited were a cooperative bakery, work-experience schemes operating within ATCs, Youth Training Schemes, employment services especially for people with mental handicap, a development officer with the Shaw Trust, two Pathway employment officers and a person who became employed with the help of her residential staff.

It has been inspiring to meet people with quite severe handicaps working alongside others, to hear accounts of how the quality of people's lives improved because of their jobs, to discuss with non-handicapped colleagues the benefits they received through knowing a person with mental handicap. All of this emphasises the value of integrated work to people who are mentally handicapped and to society as a whole.

This project was not, nor was it intended to be, a comprehensive survey of all vocational services in Britain which are helping people with mental handicap. It was not possible to visit all the services we heard about and there are probably many which did not come to our attention. This paper gives an overview of the ways in which some services are trying to promote integrated employment opportunities.

None of the projects visited fulfilled all of the exacting requirements outlined in *An Ordinary Working Life*. All of them, however, were making progress towards those goals and all provided lessons based on practical experience. We do not suggest that readers attempt to copy any of these projects. Rather the important dimensions of their practice as outlined in *An Ordinary Working Life* should be studied so that better services may be designed.

Using the term 'people with mental handicap' to describe the consumers of the service reported here presents problems. It is, of course, the term currently used to describe the people met, but many of them did not like being labelled in this way and were trying to fit into society and leave their 'career in mental handicap' behind. The term is used in the title of this paper and in the text, however, because it conveys some indication of the impairment of the people visited. We apologise to anyone who is offended by this terminology. Most of the schemes and services asked that people using their service should not be identified by name and so pseudonyms have been used throughout.

Each service was sent a copy of the report describing the visit for comment and/or clarification. This final report includes amendments based on those comments.

None of the people met would claim to have all the answers. All felt that they were trying to meet the needs of the people they served, some with more success than others. All the job finders seen were happy to discuss their problems as well as their successes. All were very committed to helping people with mental handicaps to find and keep jobs.

We hope that the following accounts of visits to innovative schemes and services will encourage disabled people, their families, and staff of existing services, by showing what is already being done. We also hope that these examples will stimulate positive and creative action to establish many more initiatives which will promote integrated employment.

All the staff of the schemes described would be happy to give advice to others. A list of addresses is given in the Appendix, page 75.

## Employing a person with severe handicaps

Employing people with severe handicaps presents a special challenge. In the following example, Susan Walker and the residential staff who work with her prove that given time, effort, skill and the commitment to continuing support, a person with severe and multiple handicaps can get a job and benefit greatly from the experience.

Susan Walker lives in a staffed house with six other women who have been labelled as mentally handicapped. Before coming to live in the house in November 1981 she had lived in a locked ward of a mental handicap hospital for 30 years since the age of seven. Susan was labelled as severely subnormal. She cannot hear, does not speak, is completely blind in one eye and has some sight in the other which can be only partially corrected by wearing glasses. She has a history of problem behaviours in the form of tantrums – mainly slapping her face, throwing things, pulling other people's hair. Staff in the hospital said that she refused to leave the grounds and therefore never took her out. While in hospital she spent a great deal of time pushing a doll's pram around the grounds. Staff of the house where Susan now lives had no difficulty in getting her to leave the hospital grounds, and although she brought the pram with her when she moved, she never used it again. Susan's life has changed in a number of significant ways since she moved into the house. One very important change which is of special interest in this report is that Susan has a job. She works part-time cleaning a pub and receives the going rate for her work.

When Susan moved into the staffed house, application was made for her to attend the local adult training centre, but staff at the centre had difficulty in dealing with her problem behaviour and said they preferred that she did not attend. Staff of the house tried to think of interesting things that she might do during the day as an alternative to attending the centre. In the months that she had lived in the house she had participated in and seemed to enjoy doing cleaning tasks. So despite all of the obvious difficulties, they decided to try to find her a cleaning job.

Surprisingly, perhaps, they did find her a job working a few hours a week for a contract cleaning company. A member of staff went with Susan to her job and helped her to learn the tasks and checked on the quality of her work.

Unfortunately, she became upset in front of the directors of the firm whose building she was helping to clean. The cleaning company felt that they could not risk employing her because of the expensive equipment in the building.

Although the staff were very disappointed, they decided to try again. This time they found her a job cleaning a pub. She started this job in December 1982, initially working for about two hours, two days a week for £3.00 per week, as a supplement to the regular cleaner. When this cleaner left in July 1983, the landlord offered Susan the job for the going pay rate, with the understanding that staff from the house would cover if she was sick or needed to be away. About a year later her contract was renegotiated so that staff no longer cover her absences. She now works two hours a day, five days a week (9.30-11.30 am Monday to Friday). She is paid £17.00 a week, the same rate as bar staff. Susan is accompanied to and from work by a member of staff or volunteer who stays at the pub while she works. This

support is needed because of her deafness and poor eyesight. This is a substantial commitment in terms of staff time, and volunteers are being sought to go with her each day, but staff feel that it is important because she benefits so much from doing the job.

I visited on two occasions. On my first visit, Susan was in bed with flu and could not go to work, a very rare occurrence. I did not meet her but had a chance to talk to the person in charge of the house about her background and the job. On my second visit I was able to accompany Susan and Rosa, a member of staff, to the pub where I watched Susan work and talked to the landlord, John.

On my second visit, I arrived at the house at about 9.00 am; Susan was washing up the breakfast dishes. Before we left she made me a cup of coffee which we drank in the lounge. Although she has no speech we communicated with smiles and a little Makaton.

Soon she seemed to realise that it was time to go and, without reminder, went upstairs to get her coat, walking stick and dusting cloths. Susan, Rosa and I walked through the town centre to get to the pub. Susan pushed the button at the road crossings but it was difficult to tell whether she could see the 'green man' or traffic.

When we arrived at the pub, John was busy talking to a delivery man. Susan went straight in, took off her coat and got to work. She had been taught the job sequence and how to do each task by staff of the house following the approach described by Bellamy, Horner and Inman (1979). This careful teaching had taken about six months plus two months of 'fine tuning', but Susan now knows the routine and works very independently. Susan washed all the tables, chairs and surfaces, vacuumed the carpets, cleaned the toilets, washed the floors, polished the tables, chairs and bar, and put beer mats and ash trays on the tables. She worked very quickly and with no reminder of the next task. Rosa occasionally pointed out a corner that she'd missed because of her sight. While Susan worked I took photographs, after asking her permission by showing her the camera and getting her nodded agreement. After I'd taken a few, Susan came to get me when she started a new task, pointing to the camera and obviously posing.

While she was working I also had the opportunity to interview John who was accompanied by his three-year old son, Thomas. John is not the real landlord, but he and his partner own a small brewery and this and another pub. John is filling in while waiting for a newly employed landlord to take over. Another landlord initially employed Susan although John was aware of her employment and has known her since she started work at the pub.

John said that at first Susan wasn't paid for her work and she had been taken on to get a little free cleaning and also to help her out. (Staff later told me that John may not have realised that she was paid at first.) Later, when she was employed as the cleaner it was definitely on merit. John said she cleans the pub very well. 'The pub gets a good going over. It's much cleaner than the average pub.' John reported that there were still occasionally times when Susan would get upset and perhaps break her spectacles, once she broke an ash tray, but these were very rare and not of concern to him. There had been a time in the early days when she'd pulled the hair of the young daughter of the previous landlord but the family was very understanding and neither they nor the little girl had been overly upset by the incident.

John said he felt there were many benefits in employing Susan. He had seen her develop and gain confidence. 'I can tell when she's enjoying herself. She's a good worker.' He also felt that he and his family had benefited from knowing Susan and that his four children seemed to

have gained insight into other people's handicaps by knowing her. The regular customers know Susan and many have commented that they think it's very good to have Susan working there.

When Susan finished cleaning she put on her coat, gathered up her materials and came to John for her pay, which she gets each day. She has recently been learning to write her name so that she can sign for her money. Susan signed her name and John gave her the thumbs up sign and said 'good'. Susan smiled brightly, gave him the thumbs up sign and waved good-bye. John said, 'She doesn't like to hang about. She likes to get on with things.'

As we walked back to the house, Rosa said they often stop in town for coffee or to do a bit of shopping but today they needed to get back because on Thursday, Susan goes to her father's home for lunch with her sisters. Susan has recently purchased new curtains for her room with money she has saved from her earnings and is also saving for a holiday.

Watching Susan clean the pub, get her pay and walk cheerfully home to meet her sisters for lunch, I couldn't help thinking of her previous life pushing a doll's pram around the hospital grounds day after day. The fact that Susan has a job is certainly a credit to the staff of the house who persevered against what would seem to most people to be insurmountable odds. It is also in large part due to the pub landlord who was willing to give Susan a chance to show what she could do. But the real achievement has been made by Susan, who with the opportunity, help and support, is doing a real job and getting paid for it.

If this is an unusual story it is only unusual in the support which Susan has been given. The staff at her house have persisted when others have given up. Susan herself is not exceptional. Given the kind of support she was given, many, many very severely handicapped people who are now thought to be totally unemployable could be enjoying a job and benefiting from it as much as Susan is.

## Work-experience from training centres

Work-experience refers to unpaid work, which may be part-time, often one or two days a week, or full-time. It is usually for a limited period of weeks or months. It is designed to give people opportunities to experience the world of work so that they can learn to make informed choices about the employment they wish to seek.

There is a great deal that can be done by existing day services to help people with mental handicap get work-experience and become employed. The following examples illustrate how staff in adult training centres approached this task in different ways.

Of course work-experience can be promoted from other settings and is included as part of some of the schemes described in the chapter on employment services. In addition some schools include work-experience as part of their leaver preparation at around 14-16 years. Some colleges of further and adult education also include work-experience schemes.

### **Bracknell Training Centre**

#### *History and aims*

The work-experience scheme at Bracknell Training Centre was started by Vicki Pagliero in 1979. Vicki had been instrumental in starting a similar scheme at Ashleigh Training Centre, Basildon, Essex a few years earlier.

The aims of the Bracknell work-experience scheme are:

- to give real work-experience to all of the trainees attending the centre;
- to prepare more able trainees for open employment;
- to give less able trainees new experiences and opportunities for interaction with non-handicapped people;
- to give centre staff a goal to aim for with all their trainees;
- to reduce the daily attendance of trainees currently attending the centre thus enabling people from the waiting list to attend.

Since 1979, 66 people have had work placements of one day per week, 17 have had half day a week placements, 17 have had two days a week placements, two have had placements of three or more days a week and six have left the scheme for full-time employment.

#### *Work-experience officers*

When Vicki Pagliero started the scheme, she devoted half-time to it and half-time to other centre duties. Now the centre employs a full-time work-experience officer (WEO) whose responsibilities include: contacting employers, assessing and preparing trainees for work, supporting employers and other employees. When Vicki left to have a baby, Rosemary Trodd took over as WEO — a post which she held for two years. Rosemary is now assistant manager at the centre.

The current WEO is Anne Witt who had been in post only a few months at the time of my visit. Previously Anne had worked as a teaching assistant in a junior training centre, as recruitment officer for GEC and as an adult training centre instructor. She has training in developmental psychology and has a degree in education.

Berkshire Social Services Department has now established WEO posts in each of its six adult training centres.

#### *People in the scheme*

There are currently 34 people taking part in work-experience. Four have half day a week placements, 19 have one day a week placements and 11 have two days a week placements. Eleven of the 34 have Down's syndrome, six have epilepsy (all controlled), two were brain damaged in childhood (from vaccination and measles), one was described as having psychiatric or social problems and the others had undefined mental handicap.

Several people in the scheme have histories of problem behaviour. One man who works in a hotel and one woman who works in a grocery shop, have violent tempers involving shouting, swearing and smashing things. Both of these people have never exhibited these problem behaviours at work although they do occur at other times. Neither has received any special help in reducing the frequency of their difficult behaviour. Another woman who complains constantly, does not complain at the playgroup where she works. Clearly the opportunity to work can have a marked effect on undesirable behaviour.

Most of the people in the scheme are encouraged to travel to work independently. For some this step is only encouraged once they are settled at work. Twenty-six of the 34 people in the scheme either walk or travel by ordinary bus. The centre pays the fares.

#### *Placements*

A wide variety of work placements (for example, luncheon clubs, playgroups, hotels, manufacturing firms, shops, estate agents) have been used by the Bracknell scheme. Only one person is placed with an employer at any time.

Some people work a full day (for example, 9-5, 9.30-4.30, 8.15-4.00), but those who have not yet been taught to travel to work independently must rely on centre transport and work a shorter day (for example, 9 or 9.30 - 3 or 3.30).

The initial work placement is one day per week for 12 weeks. At the end of this time the WEO meets with the person, employer and other appropriate centre staff to discuss the placement and the next step. The employer completes a work-experience assessment form. Often the person and employer want to continue the placement and perhaps extend it to two days a week instead of one. The person may also want to try another job. Occasionally it may be decided that the person is not ready for another work-experience and he/she goes back to attending the centre full time. This is usually for social reasons, such as being too bossy. Some placements have not been continued because of lack of work or no member of staff being available to supervise.

One woman who had been through the scheme and had been working full-time in a grocery shop for three years was made redundant. She found herself another job in a hotel doing the washing up.

Employers are usually given only information about the person that relates to tasks they can and can't do in the work place, such as not being able to read instructions. The WEO leaves to the employer the information that will be given to work mates. One of the work mates usually acts as helper for the person, giving any training and helping when necessary. The WEO usually spends the first day with the person and then pops in as she feels necessary. The WEO also gives the employer her phone numbers at the centre and at home so she can be contacted if there are any problems.

People doing one day a week work-experience receive no pay, as this is considered to be part of the programme of the centre. People doing two or more days a week are paid £4.00 a week in line with DHSS regulations on benefits.

#### *My visits*

I visited the centre on two occasions. On my first visit I interviewed Rosemary and Anne about the scheme. On the morning of my second visit, Anne took me to meet three people at their work-experience placements. In the afternoon I had a group discussion with five people involved in the work-experience scheme.

*Alan Gillespie* does one day a week in the kitchen of a hotel which is part of a large national chain. His duties include operating the dishwasher, tidying up and sweeping floors. Alan is 42 years old and lives in a group home attached to a hostel. He has been diagnosed as 'subnormal with an over-riding mental illness'. He has a history of alleged bad temper but he has never displayed this temper during any of his work placements. Alan became involved in the work-experience scheme in 1979 and has had several placements (for example, shop assistant, cleaning cars) and held a full-time job in a hospital kitchen for one year. This job came to an end when Alan's employer said he felt that the job was putting Alan under too much pressure and that he was becoming upset. After that Alan returned to the centre and started doing work-experience again.

Norma, the kitchen supervisor at his present placement, told me that she was delighted with Alan's work. He had gained a great deal of confidence in the time he'd worked there, she told me. On previous placements it had been reported that Alan needed constant supervision, but Norma said he had needed no special supervision there. She told me that he worked very independently and often takes initiative by finding jobs that need to be done. He had learned to clean the food waste disposer, a complicated task, by watching others. Norma told me that Alan was very well liked by other workers. He is shy, but chats to people about the centre and things he does at home. I was then introduced to Alan who was busy running dishes through a large commercial dishwasher. He stopped briefly to chat with me about his job. He said that he liked the people at the hotel and his job. He hopes that he will be able to work more days a week in the future.

*Fred Lambert* Anne took me to meet Fred who does work-experience two days a week at a company which produces cardboard boxes and packaging. Fred is 35 years old and lives in a hostel for people with mental handicap. He has Down's syndrome and very unclear speech. Fred started doing work-experience in 1980 and has had placements with several firms, mainly doing odd jobs and making tea. At his current placement he works on the production line doing stacking and packing of cardboard products. There are about 200 workers on the factory site. About 50 of these are in Fred's workshop. Fred loves working at the factory and often stays beyond his shift. Over a year ago the company didn't have much work and there wasn't anything for Fred to do. He was placed in another small factory. When the company



got more work, they asked if Fred could come back and he was happy to return.

Bert, the factory superintendent, told me that they had trained Fred on the job. He was a bit slower at picking things up than the average employee and his training had taken longer but once he was trained he worked very well. Bert doesn't allow Fred to use some of the more dangerous machines for his own safety. Bert told me that Fred was well liked at the factory and that he gets on well with everyone despite his speech difficulties. He uses signs and gestures to get his message across when others don't understand his speech. Although Bert reported that Fred is treated as an equal by the other men, my feeling after a brief visit was that he may be treated as a bit of a pet. Although Fred was very friendly and smiled at me a lot, I found him hard to understand and therefore was not able to interview him.

*Alice Perkins* does work-experience two days a week in a small local shop, stocking shelves and pricing goods. She is 28 years old and lives at home with her parents. Alice had her first placement in 1979 in a department store restaurant. She left this placement after a month because she was too shy to cope with it. Her next placement was with a playgroup where she stayed for a year. Her playgroup placement was very successful.

Alice is attractive and well-groomed. She is still very shy and lacks confidence. I was told by the shop manager that Alice rarely spoke to him and often would not answer customers who asked her questions. Although this placement may not be ideal for Alice, it is very convenient for her father to take her to the shop and pick her up after work. Her parents are worried about her travelling alone, although Anne feels that she is capable of doing this.

Alice was shy with me but answered any questions and told me that she liked her job very much. Anne told me later that Alice goes to the shop when the centre is on holiday and she does not have to go to work.

*Group discussion* The following comments were made by five people involved in work-experience.

June Richards who works in a playgroup for young children one morning a week:

'I wanted to work with children, I'd like to work more days – full-time at the playgroup.'

Karen Williams who works at a luncheon club for older people one day a week:

'I like washing up and talking to the old people. I won a raffle at the club. I'd like to work two to three days a week but still come to the centre as well – I'd miss the people here.'

Ted Sykes who works two full days and three half days at a riding stable:

'I felt better once I started to work. I enjoy doing hard work, outside. I've always loved stables. It's nice to be out in the fresh air and I get free rides. I didn't feel so good at the centre, there were too many people. I felt lost.'

Peter Lawson who works at a recreation ground, tidying up, one day a week:

'I like the job and the money. I'm building a bird aviary and the materials are very expensive.'

Maureen Richmond who works two days a week in the kitchen of a gardens merchant, cooking and washing up:

'In work-experience you get out and mix with people. It makes you feel more grown up. It's not the money, it's the independence. I want to be part of the people.'

All five felt that work-experience was a good idea. They were very surprised and concerned to find that it was not common in most areas.

#### *Advice for others*

Both Rosemary and Anne mentioned that most employers don't understand what mental handicap is and that this needs to be explained to them. They find the local press and letters to employers useful ways of introducing the scheme, but that the best way to encourage employers to become part of the scheme is through personal contact. Anne said she found it helpful to invite employers to the centre to meet some of the trainees.

Anne and Rosemary felt that it was important to involve parents or hostel staff from the very beginning so that they understand the scheme and its importance to the individual. Most families are very pleased when their relative does well on a placement and may allow more independence and responsibility at home.

They felt that it is essential to know the person well, both personally and in terms of skills. They emphasised the importance of talking to the people several times about the type of job they want and don't want to try. Neither Rosemary nor Anne had done much actual teaching of job skills, but they had done extensive work on self-help, social and travel skills. Anne is currently developing a three tier skills programme — pre-work-experience, extended skills and skills maintenance — which will enable her to match clients and jobs more closely and teach clients the specific skills needed for each job.

Important advice for schemes just starting out is to go slowly and try to ensure that the first few placements are successful so that the scheme establishes a good reputation.

#### *The future*

Plans for the future of the Bracknell scheme include the following:

- Working through the DRO to establish sheltered placements (SPs) of one person. This will enable the employee to be paid the full rate for the job.

- Establishing a network of local people and groups who are working towards integrated employment for people with mental handicaps so that they can cooperate and maximise resources.

- Working towards full integration of people with mental handicaps, in work and leisure activities.

- Helping to educate the public towards greater acceptance of people with mental handicaps.

The Bracknell work-experience scheme is helping people with mental handicaps to gain real work-experience and thus benefit from social contact with other workers. It is also helping many non-handicapped people to have the opportunity to get to know and accept mentally handicapped people. As Anne said, 'The best advert for integration is a successful placement'.

#### *Interview with Vicki Pagliero*

Vicki Pagliero was directly responsible for starting two work-experience schemes: at Ashleigh ATC, Basildon, Essex in 1976 and at Bracknell Training Centre, Berkshire. I was very

interested to meet Vicki because she had been responsible for starting the earliest work-experience scheme that I knew of.

On leaving school at 16, Vicki started working for a large, well-known cosmetics company as an office junior. The next year the customer liaison officer left and Vicki convinced the management to give her the job on a trial basis. She did a good job and held this very responsible post for 18 months, until the company moved its offices to London. Vicki did not want to make the move so she left the firm. She was unemployed for a short time before getting a job working for the DHSS at the supplementary benefits counter. She left this job to become a dentist's receptionist. The surgery was next to the site on which the Ashleigh Centre was being built. Vicki met the man who was to be the Ashleigh manager at a nearby pub and asked him about the centre. She had limited knowledge of mental handicap and was interested to find out about the people who would attend the new centre. The manager invited Vicki to go on holiday with a group who would attend the centre. She enjoyed herself so much that she applied to work in the centre.

She told me that as soon as she saw people at the centre doing contract work it seemed all wrong. 'I thought, why are they doing contract work here, when they could be doing it at the factory? If the more able people could work in real factories, staff would have more time to spend with less able people. Some people at the centre were working very hard for no more than £4 a week. It wasn't right.'

Vicki followed her instinct and asked the manager if she could try to get some people out of the centre and into the factories supplying contract work. The manager seemed sceptical but told her she could try. That was the beginning of the work-experience scheme.

Vicki told me that she worked very hard to get this scheme going because she was determined to succeed. She was often out by 6 am helping someone learn to use public transport to get to work. She also spent many evenings talking to groups such as Rotary about the work-experience scheme. One of the problems that she faced initially was the resentment of other staff at the centre who resisted the changes that work-experience was making in the centre. 'There were changes in the adult training centre because of work-experience. It couldn't be just custodial care anymore', she said. Changes needed to be made in the curriculum. People needed help in learning real work skills, how to travel, and social skills that would enable them to get along in their work places. This placed additional demands on other staff.

Vicki said that once she had helped a few people to get work-experience placements, others came to her and asked to have work-experience too. By the time she left, to get married, three years after starting the scheme, 68 of the 120 people attending the centre were doing work-experience placements of one to three days a week.

When Vicki moved to Berkshire with her husband, she was employed by the Bracknell Centre to set up a similar scheme there. She said it was just as hard to get this scheme started as it had been to start the Basildon scheme. Although she had the experience of the first scheme behind her, she still had to convince other staff and start making contacts with employers from scratch. As reported earlier in this paper, the Bracknell scheme is still thriving and has successfully survived two changes in work-experience officers.

I asked Vicki to try to explain why she had been able to see the problem so clearly and what had encouraged her to try to do something about it. She told me that she honestly didn't know but that she had always been 'cheeky'. Vicki obviously has a great deal of personal

charm. Her own work background was a bit unusual and probably very helpful because she had experience of industry, working with people and unemployment. She was also willing to work very hard and was extremely determined to meet the challenge of setting up a new scheme. Things are possibly a bit easier now for adult training centre staff who want to try something innovative, but the challenge is undoubtedly still there.

### **Bishopstoke Adult Training Centre, Eastleigh**

#### *History and aims*

A work-experience scheme was started at Bishopstoke Adult Training Centre in September 1982 by Diana Kent, an instructor at the centre, and Mary Ward, Pathway employment officer for Hampshire. Diana and Mary started their respective jobs at about the same time and met at an orientation course shortly after taking up their posts.

Mary's brief, as Pathway officer, was to help people with mental handicap find and keep jobs in open employment. Diana was interested in helping people attending the centre develop work skills and find jobs. Because of their common interest, Mary and Diana decided to work together to design and run a course 'to develop the skills of clients wanting to find employment and assessed by staff of the ATC as having potential in this field'. The initial scheme was run as a pilot for seven clients attending the Bishopstoke Adult Training Centre. There are now 15 clients from Bishopstoke and eight clients from Totten ATC involved in the scheme. Four clients who have been through the scheme are now in paid employment and about 17 others go out for work-experience at least one day each week. (Mary Ward also works with other centres, agencies, employers and individuals. Further information about her work as Pathway officer is in the chapter on employment services.)

The following aims are quoted from the first report on the scheme by Mary and Diana.

The aims of the Bishopstoke Work-Experience Course are:

- 1 To enable those clients who have potential but are not as yet employable to develop skills and experience. To encourage realistic self-assessment and to open up options for them.
- 2 To provide clients with a classroom based training in all skills and problems related to working life, and to maximise the gains clients make on work placements.
- 3 To offer and provide the client with a teaching programme in a different environment.
- 4 To enable clients to undertake work-experience placements on two levels.
  - i One day placements — for clients with undefined ambitions, poor self-assessment or lack of work-experience.
  - ii Long term placements — working with a single employer to provide both the client and those assessing him with an experience of sufficient depth and length to make a realistic assessment.
- 5 To provide an opportunity for individual and group sessions with the instructor(s) involved for clients to feed-back their experiences and maximise their learning from them.
- 6 To provide interaction between the clients and the community. To involve teachers, industrialists etc. not usually in contact with handicapped people. This is a two-way process of education/integration.

The aims of the *Pathway Employment Scheme* in relation to the work-experience course are:

- a To provide effective pre-work training to both minimise failing when clients are placed into employment and to open up options in job types related to the individual's particular strengths and likes.

- b To provide an in-depth assessment of the client's employability that can only truly be effective by involving local employers in these assessments.
- c To allow the client to make an informed and therefore more satisfying choice of work on leaving the training centre.
- d To provide a stepping stone to employment and therefore minimise anxiety and stress to the client which can undermine success.
- e To involve local employers and to assess their reaction to the clients, especially in regard to future job offers. To dispel prejudices and fears held by the working population about the mentally handicapped and to offer an opportunity for ordinary people to develop skills in relating to the mentally handicapped.
- f To enable a wider range of clients with more severe limitations to leave the training centre successfully. The level of I.Q. has not correlated with the successful employment of clients of the Pathway Employment Scheme in Hampshire.

#### *Selection of people in the scheme*

Clients can refer themselves to the scheme or be referred by a member of ATC staff. Each person who wants to join the scheme is assessed using an assessment based on the HANC (Hampshire New Curriculum, available from Hampshire Social Services, The Castle, Winchester) to determine whether he/she has employment potential. People are not automatically excluded if they do not show employment potential on the assessment; other factors such as motivation are taken into account. Agreement and approval of the family and residential staff for the person to join the scheme is sought as part of the selection process.

Priority is given to people in the following order:

- 1 those who have had jobs before or who are assessed as being very skilled (and are viewed as having been misplaced at the centre);
- 2 those who are quite skilled but need extra education, for example, in social skills;
- 3 those who would benefit from social skills training but who would not necessarily be aiming for open employment.

#### *The work-experience scheme*

The work-experience scheme consists of three modules.

- 1 *The teaching module* takes place one day a week for 13 weeks (or longer if needed) at a local community centre. This module covers many aspects of working life: discussion of different jobs and what they entail, self-assessment of job related strengths and needs, practice at filling in job applications, role playing of interviews, training in the use of public transport, understanding pay (for example, gross, net, deductions), training in domestic and social skills. Diana and Mary are the main teachers with local employers, specialist careers officers and teachers acting as visiting speakers.
- 2 *The work module* includes group visits to local work places, one day work-experience placements and advanced long-term placements. Placements are arranged on the basis of individual need and preference.
- 3 *The centre module* was included to give people in the scheme an opportunity to discuss their work-experience placements, practice skills, and role play difficult work situations.

### *My visits*

I visited the centre on three occasions. The first was very brief when I met Diana and talked to her about the scheme and proposals for a small shop which would be a joint-funded project run in conjunction with work-experience.

On my second and third visits, I talked to the work-experience group and Diana took me to visit several work-experience placements and two people who had been through the scheme and now have jobs in open employment.

### *Group discussion*

I met with 11 of the 15 people in the work-experience group. Four of those I met were doing work-experience (playgroup assistant, shop cleaner, gardener, handyman) and all but one had a good idea of the kind of jobs they would like to have. Two women in the group had recently been to a large supermarket for interviews and had done well enough to be put on the reserve list. This seemed to please them but one said she'd been very disappointed not to get the job.

People in the group generally agreed that the pay was not the most important factor about working. Comments about what is important included:

'It would help me mix with other people.'

'It makes you feel more independent. You can do what you want and not rely on someone else.'

'I've made friends.'

'It keeps you out of trouble.'

'Everyone should have a chance to work.'

Several people mentioned that they'd made friends at their work-experience placements.

### *People doing work-experience*

*Sharon Rees* I talked to Sharon at the centre. She is 30 years old and lives in a hostel for 30 people with mental handicap. She is shy, has a nice smile and speaks slowly and quietly. She attends the centre and does work-experience cleaning a local post office/shop for one hour each day. Sharon told me that she liked working in the shop and meeting the people there. She said she especially liked her boss and his 17 year old daughter who is her special friend. She said she loved going to work and didn't mind not being paid the going rate for the job. Diana explained to me that Sharon can earn only £4.05 a week and not lose benefits. So Sharon receives £4.05 each week from the shop and also is given items such as tights, writing paper and soaps.

*Rose Webster* Diana took me to visit Rose and her foster worker at the community centre playgroup where Rose has worked three days a week for 10 months. Rose is 28 years old and lives at home with her mother, who has problems of her own.

When we arrived, Rose was supervising two 4 year olds who were using a work bench and were busily hammering and sawing. Rose was very cheerful and friendly. She told me that she loved working with children and was enjoying her work-experience very much. Rose's co-worker, Chris, said that she was a real asset and had fitted in with others at the playgroup very well.

Diana told me later that before coming to the playgroup, Rose had been very depressed and had cried a great deal, but now she is very cheerful and confident. She also has a steady boyfriend and is beginning to discuss the possibility of getting married.

*David Whitaker* is one of the most interesting people I met in the course of this project. David is 30 years old. Not much is known about his background. He lived with his grandmother in a rural area of Hampshire until he was about 13. At this time he became known to the Social Services Department. He lived with two sets of foster parents and at a children's home and a hostel before coming to the hostel where he now lives. When Diana first met David, he had been attending the adult training centre for a few years. His speech and communication were very limited. He was one of six people with whom Diana worked as part of a project on communication for a course she was doing. Because Diana worked with David a lot and tried many ways of trying to get him to communicate, she noticed that he seemed to like books and started trying to get him to repeat the name of things pictured in books. The first book that Diana remembers David looking at was one on London history. He was obviously very aware because he could tell her all about London from just looking at the pictures. When she asked him what he'd like to look at he told her cars. From that point on they started discussing photographs in books and dealers pamphlets about cars and other machinery. 'once he started speaking, it came very quickly. He also began to gain self-confidence', Diana told me. She feels that he could speak before but hadn't because he hadn't needed to.

When Diana started the work-experience group, David joined because he liked her and had made so much progress with her help. No one really felt that David would ever have a job, but it was felt that he would benefit from joining the group.

From this point, David really began to develop. Within eight months he had moved from being very shy, someone for whom others spoke, and had become the leader of the group.

Through the work-experience scheme David started working as an environmentalist at the community centre where the class meets. His tasks include doing repairs, gardening, collecting rubbish, keeping the centre and grounds tidy. David has chosen to work at the centre for three hours every day although he is only paid 30p an hour which the Warden of the Centre, Ted Naseby, pays him from a special fund. Ted is hoping to get more money for David through community profits money from MENCAP. This would only be a one year stop-gap and Ted is also trying to get David taken on by the council. Ted described David's work as 'better than the average workman'.

David has become a real part of the centre staff. When I visited, David had just become personality of the month at the community centre. His picture and a description of his work appeared in the monthly newsletter. David is very friendly with everyone at the centre and is especially friendly with Ken, one of his work mates. He often goes to Ken's home and visits the garage where Ken's wife works in the evening to keep her company. She is helping David to learn to write his name.

David told me how much he liked the work at the centre. He said he especially liked working in the gardens and liked the people at the centre. He also told me that the money was important because it enabled him to buy accessories for his bicycle. In the process of my discussion with David I asked him about his working hours. He said he worked from 9 am to noon. Diana said, 'and then you come back after lunch'.

'Well, no, not any more' said David. It turned out that, without Diana knowing he had found another part-time job working in a local bicycle shop from 1.00 to 3.45 pm learning to repair bikes and helping out in the shop. For this he is paid £1.50 a week plus some goods from the shop and free work on his bike. When we left David, Diana went to meet Ginger, the owner of the shop, to make sure everything was all right. Ginger told Diana that he'd met David when he came in to buy things for his bike. David had started spending more and more time at the shop and Ginger had started paying him for helping out. By the time we arrived at the shop, David had come to work. Diana asked him why he hadn't told her about this job. When he wouldn't say she said, 'Is it because you thought I'd make you stop coming here?' David said it was. Diana told him that she wouldn't stop him and that she was very proud of him for showing so much initiative.

In less than four years David had changed from being someone with limited communication to a confident person who could find his own job. The problems of appropriate pay for his work still exist and this is very upsetting for his friends and those who work with him but despite these problems David is leading a very happy and interesting life.

#### *People who are now employed*

*Marion Montgomery* had also been through the work-experience scheme and has been working for Hampshire Social Services doing general office duties: collating, duplicating, filing and sorting post. Marion is 37 years old and had been attending the adult training centre for four years. She lives at home with her mother who has problems with being depressed and is very dependent on Marion. Marion is very short, well under five foot tall and is very concerned about her appearance. Marion had worked, before moving to Hampshire, in a crisp factory, laundry and soft drink factory. She didn't really like any of these jobs and told Diana that there was too much noise and pressure. Marion has a fine sense of humour, Diana told me, and her ability to see the funny side of life seems to help her. Marion told me that she was very happy at work and liked all of the people but she had not made any special friends and was sometimes lonely.

Marion is obviously well liked by the staff of the department. When she was posing for pictures, other staff joined in the fun and several told me what a great job Marion was doing. When I went back several weeks later I learned that she is taking on even more responsibility for internal mail.

*Harold Connor* had been through the work-experience course and now has a full-time job working for the Hampshire Police as a storeman, processing requisitions for uniforms and stocking the storeroom. Harold is 26 years old and had attended the adult training centre for nine years before getting his job just over a year ago. Harold has a number of problems in addition to being labelled mentally handicapped. He was a low achiever in the lowest stream at an ordinary school and had very bad school reports stating that he would not be able to work.

Harold did, in fact, get a job when he left school, as a porter. He kept this job for only a few weeks because he found the work too tiring and physically difficult for him. He lives at home with his mother who has a number of problems herself and although she cares about him, is not able to give him any help or encouragement. Although he has these problems he is very highly motivated and expressed a strong desire to get a job.

There are four people working in the store: the supervisor, Harold, Eric the tailor and Richard the storeman/driver. Harold gets on well with his colleagues and often goes to lunch with Eric.



Richard told me that they had all been a bit apprehensive before Harold came to work with them but now there were no worries. They had been told that Harold was a bit slow and didn't write very clearly but despite these difficulties they felt that Harold did a good job. Harold is now attending literacy classes to improve his handwriting. Richard explained that Harold wants to be able to do a better job.

As do all employees, Harold had a six month probationary period. He had no real problems during this period and received his letter of appointment from the personnel director personally. Richard said they'd all thought he would be very pleased but in fact he showed no reaction. He took the letter and read it, but then, folded it and put it in his pocket. The other staff were a bit disappointed that he wasn't more pleased. Richard said that he apparently hadn't really understood what the letter meant because the next day he was very excited and couldn't stop talking about the fact that he now had a real job.

Harold is always very concerned that he may lose his job. He has come to work when he has been very unwell and if he is too sick to come to work always rings to let them know.

Harold told me that having a job was very important to him. When I asked him how long he'd been working he knew the exact date he started. 'Since 20 June 1983,' he told me. He also knew his exact salary, net and gross. He spends some of his money on travel, mostly by train. He is taking driving lessons and is saving for a trip to America and Disneyland.

Harold said he kept in touch with people at the centre and would go to Diana if he needed help. He said that it was strange at first not to be at the centre. Working in the storeroom was much quieter and there was no arguing as there was at the centre.

Harold obviously fits in well at work and has a good relationship with his colleagues who like and respect him. As we left, Harold invited Diana to have lunch with him the next week to celebrate his first year of employment.

#### *Advice for others*

Diana offered the following advice to others involved in job finding.

- 1 Try to work with someone who can give you help and support. Job finding can be very isolated work. Diana said that she relies on Mary for advice and support.
- 2 Get to know your clients and their backgrounds well. This will help you find jobs that are right for them.
- 3 Get to know the parents, family or care staff. Be prepared to do a lot of work with families and staff.
- 4 If there is any problem between the client and employer, visit as soon as possible. Do not leave it for a few days. Most problems are minor if dealt with straight away, but if left they can grow into major ones.
- 5 Try to arrange at least one meeting where employers and parents can meet each other. Make it a social occasion — for example, a Christmas party or wine and cheese party.

## A youth training scheme

Youth training schemes (YTS) for young people aged 16-21 were established by the Manpower Services Commission (MSC) to help prepare them for work.

### Harington Scheme, London

#### *History and aims*

The Harington Scheme is a horticultural training centre for young people with serious learning difficulties. It is a registered charity and a company limited by guarantee and is recognised as a youth training workshop by the MSC. The scheme took its first group of trainees in August 1980.

The idea for the project came from Paul Crooks, activities organiser for handicapped young people at Bruce Grove Youth Centre in Haringey. It was developed by a local group of volunteers. This group, chaired by Dame Geraldine Aves, did the preparatory planning helped by professionals in horticultural therapy, architecture, the health authority and Haringey Borough Council.

The capital costs were raised by the directors of the scheme from many sources, including joint funding through Haringey Council and Enfield and Haringey Health Authorities, the MSC, the GLC, several charitable trusts, various companies, local bodies and individuals. It started as a youth opportunity programme (YOP) and now operates as a youth training scheme (YTS) with the running costs provided by the MSC.

#### *My visit*

The Harington Scheme site is across a field behind Furnival House, a large mansion which now serves as a nurses' home. The site is very attractive, if a little hard to get to. By 9.30 am, everyone was busily working on a variety of tasks: watering, planting, pricking out. Wayne Turp, manager of the scheme, provided a written site guide and invited me to wander around the scheme using the guide to give me information. Later in this report I have used excerpts from this guide to describe the scheme. Everyone was very friendly and keen to talk about the scheme and their own work.

After looking around for about an hour I talked to Wayne about the scheme and visited the plant stall run on Friday afternoons by trainees outside the Jackson's Lane Community Centre. The stall is located on a busy corner near Highgate Village and while I was there, only about 20 minutes, several people, including a local policeman, stopped to chat and look at the plants.

#### *The site*

The 2.3 acre site is owned by Islington District Health Authority who lease it to the scheme for a small rent. It includes a walled garden, glasshouse, orchard, vegetable plots, a poly-tunnel, classroom and office. All the garden construction and planting on the site is carried out by the trainees. In addition, trainees do some garden work for clients off site, for which the scheme has contracts.

### *People in the scheme*

Trainees are referred by local specialist careers officers and are selected by a small group with medical, social work and educational qualifications. Trainees are selected because they are thought to have work potential. They are eligible for admission up to the age of 20. There are 18 places for trainees in the scheme.

About 80 young people have been through the scheme and it is estimated that 15-20 of these have gone from it into full-time employment in jobs such as gardening, catering, cleaning. Some graduates have taken part-time or casual work in gardening and construction. Others have gone on to further training or have started attending an adult training centre. It is estimated that about 40 people who have been through the scheme may be on the dole.

Thirteen of the 18 trainee places had been taken up at the time of my visit. All of the trainees live within travelling distance of Highgate and walk or travel to the scheme using public transport. The trainees I met had a wide range of skills but I think might best be described as mildly mentally handicapped. All could speak and had good social skills, although some people were shy. Wayne told us that there had occasionally been people in the scheme with difficult behaviour, mainly being aggressive, and that this had been dealt with on an individual basis. He explained that there is quite strong peer pressure to behave in acceptable ways, with trainees being quite disapproving when someone acts up. A very few trainees have been excluded from the scheme for being regularly disruptive.

Trainees receive £25 a week as a training allowance.

### *Staff of the scheme*

The scheme is staffed by the manager, a senior supervisor, two workshop supervisors and two part-time instructors who do specific teaching in literacy, numeracy, and job finding skills. They are supplied by the Borough of Haringey Further Education Department and paid for by the MSC.

### *The training programme*

The training course is designed to last one year but trainees are occasionally allowed to stay for 15 months if it is clear that additional time could greatly increase their competence. Emphasis is placed on helping trainees learn skills and attitudes needed for work. There are three major parts of the programme.

- 1 In order to provide a wide range of activities, the scheme covers most areas of horticulture including glasshouse production, vegetable growing, fruit production, caring for private gardens, garden construction and landscaping.
- 2 Life and social skills instruction are provided to help trainees improve their numeracy and literacy. There are also practical sessions in using public transport and applying for jobs. These classes are held in a classroom on site. In addition to these classes trainees spend half a day a week at Haringey College for a specially designed class on computer literacy which is required on all YT schemes.
- 3 Trainees participate in work-experience away from the scheme to get experience in a different work environment. There are also monthly outings to places of horticultural interest and a week of training at Churchtown Farm Field Studies Centre, Cornwall. This

includes environmental studies, exploring wildlife, visits to a farm and fishing harbour and outdoor pursuits.

#### *Friends of the Harington Scheme*

Friends of the Harington Scheme is a group which helps the scheme in a number of ways including recruiting volunteers, some of whom work alongside those who need special encouragement and in other ways, maintaining local interest in the scheme, providing financial help, helping with the sale of produce.

#### *Harington Gardeners*

Harington Gardeners was established out of concern for trainees leaving the scheme who could not find work. The directors of the scheme felt that long periods of unemployment were particularly damaging for this group. Experience of the scheme had also indicated that there is a great deal of paid gardening work available in north London. Trainees leaving the scheme had the skills to do the work but lacked the organisational skills needed to become self-employed. The directors of the Scheme established the Harington Gardeners in October 1982. There is a paid manager and supervisor, and supervisors from the Land Use Volunteers. Small groups of ex-trainees working under supervision do garden maintenance, clearance and other contract garden work for which they are paid commercial rates.

#### *What do trainees say about the scheme?*

Following are some points of view about the scheme which were written by trainees.

'We have our own plots which we grow cabbages, potatoes, lettuces and that on. We learn all about different gardening tools and how to dig properly and plant things and use mowers. We also work in the greenhouse where we look after plants and give them the right temperature. We take seedlings from plants and make more plants.'

'We have a walled garden where our classroom is where we do reading and writing and maths. We have been bashing up bricks with a big mallet to make a path.'

'We've got an orchard where apple and pear trees are and our plots and we've got a poly tunnel where we grow tomatoes. We go one day a week on work-experience. Mine is the Markfield project which is a community centre for big kids. We sweep up, burn rubbish and do maintenance work.'

'Mine is working in an old people's luncheon club and before that I worked in the grounds of the Blind Association. I really like to work with old people so that is why I changed. We also go to Haringey College every Thursday to do computer and science. That is really good. Especially the computers. I like it here because there are so many different things to do and places to work. I like looking after other trainees who are less able than me. I will help anyone if they will let me.'

'I have only been here a few days and I like the girls working here. There should be more, especially pretty ones.'

'I like the atmosphere. The staff are good, and they're a laugh. They don't nag you unless you really get out of line. I've learnt a lot about things I've never done before like tending plants in the greenhouse the way they should be tended. Also I don't think gardening is women's work but I like the girls being here.'

'I think he's old fashioned — I like gardening and I work harder than some of the boys.'

'We play football and we're going to proper coaching one evening. We also go canoeing on Wednesday evenings. Last year we went on holiday to Churchtown Farm in Cornwall. We went pig farming and night hiking. It was a laugh. We went to the pub a few nights.'

'I like working outdoors. It's nice scenery. A good picture. It is a bit cold at the moment but it is really good in the summer. Better than being locked inside some place.'

'This is the sort of place where you can learn to grow up a lot and about getting on with people.'

'I am halfway stuck with the growing up bit. Most people end up happy when they come here.'

#### *Advice for others*

Wayne felt that the strong group of Friends of the Harington Scheme had been very important to the success of the project. These Friends had been able to help out in innumerable ways: fund raising, visiting, helping at the plant stall, showing interest, giving advice and support when requested. Wayne felt that this, together with the secure financial status and support structure provided by the directors, meant that staff felt secure in their jobs and did not have to worry about fund raising; this allowed them to concentrate on the trainees. He felt that this stable base was of great benefit to the trainees. Friends fund-raise on a small scale, mainly to cover costs of social and recreational activities for trainees. Directors of the scheme are responsible for main fund raising.

The other advice Wayne had is to concentrate on individuals and meeting individual needs. He said they had seen great improvements in trainees' confidence, skills and also in their physical development. Trainees looked and acted fitter, stood up straighter, after being in the scheme for a few months. I certainly found the trainees very pleasant, friendly and socially skilled.

## Employment services

Employment services which help people with mental handicap to find and keep jobs have had a good deal of success. Services described include two large-scale schemes organised by independent, voluntary bodies (the Pathway Employment Service (MENCAP) and Shaw Trust, Wiltshire), a scheme based on adult training centres, and two schemes organised by social services departments but not based in adult training centres.

### Pathway Employment Service

#### *History and aims*

The Pathway Employment Service is one of the national services run by MENCAP (Royal Society for Mentally Handicapped Children and Adults). It has been well publicised by MENCAP and operates in many parts of England and Wales. There are now 12 Pathway employment officers working in 20 counties or boroughs and this number continues to grow. Over 500 people with mental handicap have been helped to find jobs through the Pathway Employment Service, with over 100 in work-experience programmes which are used as stepping stones toward eventual open employment.

The Pathway Employment Service started in 1975 in South Wales. The idea for the service evolved from concern expressed by members of the local society of MENCAP in South Wales about employment opportunities for their sons and daughters.

Originally the idea was to establish a form of sheltered workshop. Money was raised for this project but this was not sufficient for the workshop and the idea received no backing from government agencies. Further discussions of parents in local societies resulted in plans for the Pathway Employment Service which was at that time a two-year project called the Pathway Employment Scheme. Valerie Cooper, who had worked for 13 years for local authorities and was the deputy manager of Bridgend ATC in Mid Glamorgan, became the first employment officer (then called placement officer).

The scheme was so successful that in 1977 MENCAP decided to continue it. Val became senior placement officer and an additional officer was employed. In 1981 Val Cooper became director of Pathway. At first Pathway was developed on the basis of MENCAP regions but it is now developed on a borough or county basis.

Local authorities buy the 'Pathway package' for £34,194 for the first year and £32,194 for subsequent years (London £34,732 for the first year, £32,732 for subsequent years) — 1984/1985 figures. This package is offered on a three or five year basis, although some authorities are now requesting a ten year package. The package includes *all* costs: the officer's salary, a part-time secretarial salary, national insurance, office accommodation, administrative charges, car lease and running expenses, stationery, postage, phone, reimbursement of wages for people with mental handicap and sums paid to foster workers and so on. This charge increases annually at the rate of inflation.

The following is from an information sheet – *The Pathway Employment Service: A unique MENCAP service which places mentally handicapped people into employment.*

The service aimed to expand the very limited number of opportunities for mentally handicapped people to take up meaningful employment. It recognised, however, that most mentally handicapped people would require supportive training to enhance their employment prospects, hence the idea of offering to pay a prospective sympathetic employer up to twelve weeks reimbursement of wages, *whatever the rate of pay*. The employer would also be asked to nominate a 'Foster Worker', who would receive a weekly gratuity, also for up to twelve weeks. The Foster Worker would provide the new Pathway employee with adequate supervision, instruction and become a supportive friend. . .

The main contributory factor to [the] successful operation [of Pathway] has been the number of interested, sympathetic and generous employers who were found by Pathway Employment Officers to participate in the service. A wealth of untapped good will has been unearthed amongst Employers and Foster Workers. In addition to those placed in 'open' employment, many mentally handicapped persons have been placed on 'work-experience' programmes.

Referrals of individual mentally handicapped people can be made to the Pathway Employment Officer by Careers Officers, Disablement Resettlement Officers, Heads of Special Schools, Adult Training Centre Managers, College of Further Education Tutors, Social Workers, Consultants in Subnormality Hospitals, Psychologists, Psychiatrists, MENCAP Local Society members and individual parents of mentally handicapped people (N.B. Since this information sheet was written several people with mental handicap have referred themselves to Pathway).

Once a referral has been made, the Pathway Employment Officer will assess the individual's degree of employment readiness and either seek a suitable employment opportunity, matched to the individual's wishes, level of ability and needs, or perhaps recommend an individual programme of intensive and realistic preparation for the world of work. Pathway has been deliberately designed to adapt itself to suit the needs of the individual rather than those of the masses. It is a personalised service, matched to the needs of the mentally handicapped individual. Finding suitable employment has not proved to be difficult but ensuring that mentally handicapped people receive appropriate training and preparation for work, both from those agencies currently responsible and from parents, has. However, all these factors and needs are catered for within the service.

A wide range of employment has been found for Pathway Employees, eg industrial assembly workers and operators, domestic assistants in a wide range of establishments, hotel porters, warehouse assistants, supermarket workers, sewing machinists, van drivers' assistants, general labourers, trainee gardeners, farm labourers, kennel maids, industrial cleaners, assistant greenkeepers and bakery workers. Wages range from £45 to over £100 per week, plus overtime rates.

Ages of Pathway Employees range from 16 years to 60 years of age. Intelligence quotients range from 45 to 68. Few Pathway Employees are able to read or write and very many of them suffer from additional handicaps, such as physical handicap, epilepsy, spasticity, hydrocephalus, severe speech defects, deafness and dumbness, parental rejection and over-protection.

Having placed a mentally handicapped person into employment, Pathway realises that it must also monitor the individual's progress in that employment and assess the total changing needs resulting from employment. For these reasons a consistent follow-up service is provided by the Pathway Employment Officer, not only to meet the needs of the individual but also those of parents, employer and Foster Worker.

Pathway has proved, in a positive, practical manner, that mentally handicapped people can benefit from open employment opportunities, providing certain good practices are adhered to. Life has certainly changed completely for many mentally handicapped people. . . since the introduction of the service. Employers who have participated in the Pathway Employment Service report that their Employees display highly valued qualities, such as punctuality, low absenteeism, willingness to work and learn and reliability.

### *My visits*

I met two Pathway employment officers – Mary Ward, the officer for the County of Hampshire based in Winchester and Paul Hook the officer for the City of Sheffield. I initially met Mary with the work-experience officer at Bishopstoke ATC (see page 18) and Paul with the industrial liaison officer at Crown Hill Workshop. The way that I met them indicates the close working relationship that Pathway officers have with staff of services run by local social services and health authorities as well as those in the field of employment (for example, MSC).

### *Pathway employment officers*

The 12 current Pathway employment officers come from three major backgrounds – business/industry, education services and mental handicap services. Paul worked in the engineering industry for 16 years before coming to Pathway. Mary worked as a social worker then as an ATC instructor, during which she completed the diploma course for teaching mentally handicapped adults. She then worked as an instructor in a mental handicap hospital, preparing people for moving into group homes, and joined Pathway in 1981.

Some Pathway officers work from MENCAP regional offices. Others work from offices in social services departments and elsewhere. All have part-time secretaries who play a vital role in keeping the officers in touch with employees and people with mental handicap.

New Pathway officers have six weeks' initial training with Val Cooper in Cardiff. During this training the new officer spends time with three to four established officers, including a week with each of two officers, usually someone working in a similar county (urban or rural) and the nearest officer.

All of the officers meet together, with Val, once a month to discuss how things are going and to share experiences and information. Although the officers have this frequent, regular contact, the two I spoke to feel they are working very independently and relied on people doing similar jobs (for example, work-experience officers, DROs) in their own areas.

### *People using Pathway*

Before visiting Pathway I had heard through the 'grapevine' that the service was for people who were only very mildly mentally handicapped. I found this not to be the case. Certainly the majority of people Pathway helps to find jobs would be considered to be mildly mentally handicapped; but others I met in Hampshire would be described as more seriously handicapped. Pathway officers take on people to help largely at their own discretion and many would be just as likely to help people who are substantially mentally handicapped. Because employers must start paying the person's entire wage after 12 weeks, however, Pathway probably does rely on the 'good will' of employers in taking on people who can learn to do the job very well. More recently the Pathway Employment Service has become involved in work-experience schemes which enable them to work with more people who are more seriously handicapped. Mary Ward told me of a man she worked with for 18 months in preparation for a job. I asked why she'd spent so much time with him when it would have been easier to find jobs for other people. She said that she didn't look at her job in terms of quantity, and neither did Pathway. 'My job is helping people who would have trouble getting a job in times of low unemployment. I also enjoy the challenge', she said.

It is difficult to generalise about 500 or more people, most of whom I have not met, but



from what Mary told me and from reading lists of descriptions of peoples' handicaps, I'd say that although most might be considered to be mildly mentally handicapped many others are less skilled and would be considered to be substantially mentally handicapped. As Mary told me: 'I get referrals from ATCs for people who are very skilled; but if they don't want to work they won't succeed. Motivation is much more important than skill.'

*Mary Ward, Pathway officer, Hampshire*

Mary Ward has her office base within Hampshire Social Services Department, near the centre of Winchester. Since Mary was employed as Pathway officer in November 1981, she has helped 50 people to find jobs and currently has 84 people on her 'waiting list'. She told me that she could have as many as 250 on the list but there would be no way that she could begin to help that many people so she won't take on any more. Mary currently receives referrals from 13 ATCs, 18 hostels, two large hospitals and their six satellites, area teams, DROs, careers officers and MENCAP establishments (for example, Pengwern Hall). Among the 50 people she has helped to find employment are two who were living in a health service hostel. Mary was employed on a three-year pilot scheme which is just coming to an end. This scheme was so successful that plans are underway to recruit two additional officers for Hampshire who will be geographically based.

The table (see below) is a breakdown of the hours Mary worked in a typical four-week period. She kept track of her time in this way to help make the case for employing additional geographically based officers in an attempt to cut down on her substantial travel time — which is not surprising considering the size of Hampshire.

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<b>Breakdown of hours worked in a typical four-week period</b>	<b>Hours</b>
Visiting and canvassing companies and introducing the Pathway Employment Scheme	24
Visits to support employer, support worker and client in placement	12
Accompanying client to interview and escorting client on first day of work and transition period at employer's discretion	9
All visits to hostels and ATCs including client contact	25½
Visits to clients not attending ATC or in hostel but also including home visits to clients attending ATCs	2
Contact with other professionals, visits to DROs, specialist careers officers and social workers	4½
Work-experience course for Bishopstoke Training Centre, includes teaching time on course and also visits to employers, specialists etc involved on the course	18
Talks and publicity, includes compilation of publicity material	10
Meetings including monthly Pathway employment officers' meeting, south east regional MENCAP meetings and meeting with social services	9
Office	21½
Travelling	43
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>178½</b>

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In addition to all of these duties, Mary was instrumental in getting the Bishopstoke ATC work-experience scheme started and supports many people throughout Hampshire who would otherwise be receiving little encouragement for their efforts to help people with mental handicap get jobs or work-experience.

Mary has a very friendly, easy-going manner. She is also very committed, hard-working and, despite her apparently casual approach, very organised. For example she has a 'pop-up' system of cards which prompts her to contact potential employers to remind them about Pathway. There is a card for each employer with details of who to contact and how often. These cards are arranged by month so that Mary is reminded to contact employers at regular intervals. I asked how she kept track of all the employers, staff, clients and families she works with. She told me that it wasn't a problem for her because she likes to work with large numbers of people.

Mary was very concerned that my report respects the privacy of the people I met on the day I spent with her. For this reason all of the people's names have been changed. I have used the names of the two companies we visited, Marks and Spencer and Giltspur Packaging, but not included their locations (there are several of both in Hampshire) to ensure anonymity.

*Visit to Giltspur* We first went to Giltspur where I met the operations manager, who I will call Sam; a section leader, who I will call Lynne; and two men whom Mary had helped to find jobs, who I will call George and Tim. Giltspur contracts for companies – mainly IBM – to package computer components and parts to be shipped to companies around the world. The factory I visited employs about 70 people. George and Tim are the only employees who have been labelled as mentally handicapped.

Sam told me that they decided to employ George and Tim because of Mary's persistence. 'When she first contacted me I was very busy. I was setting up this new factory, I'm a busy man. But she wouldn't give up', he laughed. 'I guess she used her feminine wiles on me.' Mary told me that the personnel officer at Giltspur had been very helpful and encouraged her to keep trying. Sam had not had any previous experience with people with mental handicap. His main concern was that they wouldn't be able to do the job but in the end he decided to give it a try.

Mary selected two people she thought could do the jobs on offer and discussed these with Sam. They were invited to the factory for an interview. Mary and staff from the hostel where Tim lived accompanied them to the interview which was very informal. Both were employed as packers and earn £62 a week after tax.

At first, the men worked with only their supervisor, Sue. She was especially selected to work with them because of her personal qualities. She was kind, but not too kind, and wanted to work with them. She was responsible for looking at the way the jobs were done and redesigning them so that Tim and George could do them. When they started work, just over two years ago, Sue did all the paper work and gave Tim and George tasks to do. When they started, the tasks were fairly simple – for example, putting one of each part in 1000 kits, sticking on labels.

Sue left after about a year and Lynne, the section leader, decided that Tim and George should be part of an ordinary section, and took responsibility for them. Since then they have never looked back and George who is 24, now reads the complicated printouts on which the orders come and the nine-digit part numbers. Tim, who is 42, must still have the orders read

for him but now also works much more independently.

I asked Sam if there had been any complaints from other employees about George and Tim. Sam told me that he had not found any problems in employing people with mental handicap but had found many benefits. 'Tim and George have blossomed. It's helped them a lot to be removed from a sheltered environment to the real world. They've gained confidence and made good relationships with other employees. I don't think of them as handicapped — well, handicap comes way down on the list. They aren't as limited as I thought. I think they are less handicapped from just being with other people', he told me.

Sam also saw benefits for himself as an employer. 'I know they will be here and that they will work hard. When they're at work they do the task they're given. Their high level of conscientiousness is noticeable. They have determination to get the job done, more than non-handicapped members of staff. Their work is sustained. They're proud to have a job and want to keep it. Tim especially is very meticulous. He's found many errors that no one else would have spotted.'

I asked Sam if he felt he'd learned any lessons that would be helpful to other employers who were starting to employ people with mental handicap. He said: 'I was sceptical at first, but it worked. I think we did it the right way. We made certain that we had genuine jobs for them to do. We also set specific tasks and goals. Sue would say "Get this done by tea time". We were lucky and they were lucky. We had the right people on the shop floor. We put in lots of thought and preparation.'

After our conversation, Sam showed me around the factory. The work looked very complicated to me with thousands of parts all with their nine-digit codes in containers ready for packing, huge shelves of parts and bits, computer printouts, order forms and so on. Sam assured me that it was quite simple really. We then went to Tim's work place where he was packing a component. Some of these components do not work properly if touched and had to be wrapped in special folders and marked with orange stickers. Others could be touched. Tim was doing this sensitive job with great skill.

Tim told me that he was 42 years old and had lived in a mental handicap hospital from the time he was 16 until he was 30. He then moved to a hostel. He had attended an ATC for four years before coming to work at Giltspur. I found Tim a little hard to understand and was glad to have Lynne and Mary there to help me. Tim has a very good sense of humour. He told me that he liked the job very much and that he had not been worried about coming to work. When I asked him 'What do you like about the job?' he replied 'good people'. I asked if the pay was important to him. When he didn't reply, Mary asked 'Would you come to work if you didn't get paid?' He laughed and said 'No'. With the help of Lynne and Mary I learned that Tim spent his money on holidays, horse-riding ('I fell off last week') and snooker. When I asked if he was a member of a union, Lynne told me Giltspur was a non-union company. Tim said 'Pity'. I asked why and he said, 'We could go on strike for more money'. When I asked what was different about working for Giltspur as opposed to going to the ATC, he said, 'You learn more here'.

Again with the help of Lynne and Mary, Tim told me how he'd moved from the hostel to lodgings to be closer to work. He had been very unhappy there and had told Lynne. He was paying too much for his room and food and getting very poor meals (for example, lettuce sandwiches). He was also constantly told off and was very miserable, which is very unusual for him. Lynne took matters in hand and got it sorted out for him. There were apparently

several meetings in the Giltspur conference room, with professionals from many disciplines – adult placement officer, community nurse, housing officer, and so on. The solution was for Tim to move into a family home where he is now very happy. At the end of this explanation, Tim said 'Lynne is my friend'.

*George* told me that he was 24 and had started working at Giltspur in July 1982. Both *Lynne* and *Mary* thought this was incorrect, but by checking *Mary*'s files later we found that he was right.

*George* told me that he had lived in a series of children's homes and foster homes. He now lives with the foster parents he started living with when he was 16 or 17. These people have fostered many people over the years. There are now several people, fostered children and a few adults who have grown up in the house, living there. *George* attended an ATC for three years before coming to work at Giltspur. I asked *George* the difference between the ATC and Giltspur. He said, 'I'm happier. I get more money and there are more women here'. When I asked for more information he said, 'At the centre I got low wages – 80p a week. There were too many bosses – "do this" then "do that". I've got freedom here. The instructors (at the ATC) treat you like you're six year old kids. *Lynne* treats me like an equal.'

I asked *George* what he liked about work. He said, 'I've got good friends here. We go to football, play darts. I went to the Christmas dance.' I asked what he didn't like. He said, 'Cold air in winter'. *Lynne* confirmed that the factory was hard to heat and it was often cold in winter. I asked if he'd been nervous before coming to work. He said 'When I first started, the job seemed complicated. I was nervous at first I was going into the outside world. I knew I'd have to cope with money, I was nervous of people.'

I asked what advice he'd give to someone in an ATC who wanted a job. He said 'I'd say keep busy, try and try again. I was very keen to get a job. Some people are happy to stay in the centre. They picked me to come out because I had a good report. I wouldn't go back to the centre. I'd say "On your bike". People think there's something wrong with you if you go to the centre.' I asked *George* about the future. He said, 'I'd like to keep working here. Also get a flat on my own. See more of life.'

*Lynne* Then I talked to *Lynne* about her role in helping Tim and *George*. She told me that she had had no experience in working with people with mental handicap. *Mary* told me that although *Lynne* had no experience she was a 'natural teacher'. When the manager from *George*'s former ATC visited he was amazed at what *George* could do and had told *Lynne* she could have a job at his centre any time. *Lynne* told me that she liked working with Tim and *George* 'because they respond so well and will do what you say. They want to learn'. *Lynne* said she'd pushed Tim and *George*. 'I knew they could do more – I wanted them to get out of the junior school and join us in the senior school. I knew they could do a wider variety of jobs. It's harder to teach Tim because he's older but he has learned a lot. *George* is doing very well.'

*Lynne* told me that she needed more patience to teach Tim and *George* than a non-handicapped person. 'I'm not patient with myself but I can be patient with them. I try to think how they would think. If they don't understand I re-explain in a different way.' *Lynne* said that she enjoyed working with *George* and Tim. 'It gives me more job satisfaction. When I feel down it helps me think my job is worthwhile.'

I asked *Lynne* if there had been any problems in working with Tim and *George*. She said, 'I

was worried about how other people would accept them — but it's been OK. One person asked George about being "mental" but he handled it alright. I told this man to treat them normally. They're here to lead a normal life.'

When I asked Lynne if she had any advice for other people supervising people with mental handicap at work she said, 'You must have a supportive management. The manager here has been good, very supportive, understanding and always backs me up. When we were helping Tim get a better place to live we had all sorts of people in and out of the conference room but Sam never complained. A lot of managers wouldn't have allowed it, but he backed us up.'

*Visit to Marks and Spencer* Mary and I next went to see Sylvia who was doing work-experience at a Marks and Spencer store. We first met with the staff manager, who I will call Rosemary. Rosemary told me that this M & S store had started providing work-experience to people with mental handicap through the Pathway Service in October 1983. Since that time three people have been through the scheme. Mary explained that Val Cooper had decided to contact M & S at a national level to ask if they would be willing to provide jobs or work-experience. This contact received a positive response. Local stores in relevant areas received a letter from the national organisation stating that they would be contacted by a Pathway officer and encouraging them to participate in any way they could.

Shortly after Rosemary received the letter she was contacted by Mary and they discussed the possibility of a work-experience scheme with Kate, the staff restaurant supervisor. Kate was enthusiastic about the scheme and very keen to help out. Kate, Rosemary and Mary worked out a scheme which was very flexible and designed to meet the needs of each individual who comes to it. Unfortunately, Kate was not in the store when I visited. Each person who enters the scheme is selected by Mary in consultation with Rosemary and Kate. Mary informs them of the person's training needs and areas that may need particular work or encouragement. Each person learns jobs done by staff in the restaurant — for example, using the dishwasher, laying tables, cleaning, using the floor polisher. M & S standards are very high and there are clearly defined procedures for each task which helps with teaching. Kate does all the teaching herself, mainly by demonstration and verbal instruction. Only one person received training at any time. During the training period, M & S reimburses people for their bus fares. Hours and days worked can be very flexible but so far people have worked five days a week from 9 to 4.30.

The three people who have been through the scheme have gone to jobs in open employment. Jane started what was to be a six-week course but left after four weeks for a job in Tesco's staff restaurant. Sylvia was just finishing the third week of her six week placement when I visited. It was expected that she too would go to a job in open employment. Subsequently Sylvia started work as a catering assistant in a large general hospital. The supervisor from the catering department had visited M & S to see Sylvia at work and this had convinced him that Sylvia could do the job. 'It helps people tremendously to get a good reference from M & S. The store is obviously respected. If someone does well with us other employers know they will be very well trained', Rosemary told me.

Don was the first person in the scheme and he stayed for three months before he got a job at a local hospital in the catering department. Don was much more handicapped than Sylvia and Jane. He was also very moody, talked too much and was overfriendly with people, hugging strangers and so on. His work skills were very good but he needed a lot of help in relationships with people. He is now doing very well at his job and has maintained the standards he learned at M & S. When he left M & S for his job, Rosemary was a little concerned that he

would want to visit the women he'd worked with at the store. She mentioned to Don that employees were not allowed to receive visitors at work. Don has respected this rule and has not tried to visit his friends at the store. He has, however, maintained contact with them outside work and he and Sylvia are going to attend Kate's wedding in a few weeks.

*Rosemary* said that they hadn't had any problems in running the training scheme. At M & S there is a lot of consultation with staff in all areas of work and Rosemary felt that this was very important in a project like the one they were running. Rosemary felt that the personal relationships between all of the people involved had made it work. 'We ask for input from the ladies on the shop floor. Kate and I have a good relationship and I have a good relationship with Mary. Good communication is important right down the line', she said.

Rosemary felt that it was important to involve only staff who wanted to be involved. 'When I asked Kate about it, she was very keen. Now when one person leaves she says "When's the next one coming?"'. All the staff are eager to have more handicapped people come here.' She also felt that Mary had selected the right people for them.

Rosemary said she felt that the scheme was of great benefit to people who received training. She felt that they had gained confidence and skills which had enabled them to get jobs. She also felt that the experiences people had through the scheme helped them fit into society.

Rosemary also told me that employees at M & S had benefited from having contact with people with mental handicap for it had made them aware of the needs of disadvantaged people.

Rosemary's most important advice was to treat handicapped people like everyone else. 'We expect them to achieve the same standards as other staff and so far they have.'

*Sylvia* Rosemary took Mary and I to meet Sylvia who was working in the staff restaurant. Sylvia brought us coffee and we chatted in the dining room while Rosemary returned to her office. Sylvia was kitted out in the same uniform as the other women working in the restaurant. She needs dentures which she refuses to have because she told Rosemary 'they are for old people'. Rosemary and the other staff are working on this because it would improve her appearance so much. Rosemary had required, however, that Sylvia get glasses before she came to work because her sight was so bad it was unsafe. (Jane had also been required to get glasses.)

Sylvia is 22 years old and lives in the same hostel as Don. She lived with her parents until last year. She had attended an ATC for three years. At the ATC she was disruptive, lost her temper and bothered other people unnecessarily. When Sylvia expressed a desire to go to Marks and Spencer, the hostel staff and Mary told her that she'd have to work for her chance. Weekly goals were set for her. She had to control her temper and not seek continual attention for specific periods of time. When she had achieved these goals she was given the opportunity to go to M & S for training. She was told that she would have to come up to the usual standard of behaviour expected by M & S. At the time of my visit there had been no problems.

I asked Sylvia how doing training at M & S was different from the training she got at the ATC. She said 'At ATC I'm in a workshop. I'd rather do this sort of job. This is better because you're being trained to get a job.'

I asked why she wanted a job. She said 'You get more money if you have a job. I'd like to

leave the hostel. Having a job would help. I want a place of my own. It's better than ATC. I get bored there. I want to be with people who aren't handicapped. I'm not handicapped.'

I asked what advice she'd give someone who was coming to M & S for training. She said 'I'd say it was a good deal and tell them what I've been doing. I'd say work hard to come here.'

*Discussion with Mary* During the brief time I spent with Mary, we discussed many issues related to job finding. I have distilled part of what she said because I feel that her comments will be useful to others involved in helping people with mental handicap to find jobs.

*Job finders* We discussed the fact that job finders typically come either from business/industry or from a background of working with people with mental handicap. Mary feels that both backgrounds are appropriate and that both have advantages.

Mary feels that it is important for job finders to be open-minded about job possibilities for clients and consider all types of work. They should not be put off by high technology industries (such as computer firms) because many of the jobs in that industry can be done by people with mental handicap. It is important to look at the actual duties involved in each job being considered. Mary said she would advise new job finders to *avoid general canvassing of employers, to find out what jobs are available*. She feels that this approach is off-putting for employers. She has found that they respond much better if she talks to them about specific individuals and their abilities and needs.

*Determining who will succeed in work* Mary feels that severity of intellectual impairment does not indicate how well a person will do in a job. She feels that it is very important to get people away from a mental handicap environment because they are influenced by negative aspects of that environment. She has found that behaviour problems seen in a mental handicap environment often do not occur in the work place. She feels that part of the reason for this is that many employers don't have negative expectations of people with mental handicap. They expect people to do well and very often they do.

*Supporting people in work* Mary said that the amount of ongoing support must be determined for each individual. She has found that she needs to give some people much more support than others and that the level of support needed does not always relate to the degree of handicap. Other factors, such as support given by the family and work mates, will affect the need for support from her. She has also found that clients with mild mental handicap may need more support as they develop on social and personal levels.

Some people will go into a job and need very little support, but job finders must give an open-ended offer of support because many people will need this. Job finders must also be careful to give the support the person needs without giving too much because this creates an overly dependent relationship between the person and the job finder.

*Families* The majority of Mary's clients live in their parental home and many are much more dependent on their families than other people of the same age. In these situations she works very closely with the family. She has found many families to be very supportive of their relative's entry into work. Relationships in the home can alter, however, as the person changes and develops adult attitudes and becomes more skilled. The job finder must be aware of the possibility of this situation arising and try to help families to cope with it. There is sometimes conflict between parental concern for the person's security, as represented by attending the day centre, and the role of the job finder who is negotiating for the person to take a risk.

*Choice* Mary feels that job finders need to provide their clients with information and experiences which will enable them to decide whether they want jobs and, if they do, what jobs they want. Job finders must try to offer objective advice and experiences which will enable people to make informed choices; they should not, of course, make decisions for clients. This is sometimes difficult when a person's priorities are different from the job finder's. For example, one of Mary's clients does a very dirty job, working in a factory which prepares frozen chickens. The factory is cold and wet (due to cleaning). The man doing this job is well paid, and since money is a strong incentive for him, he has made this choice. Another of Mary's clients has chosen to work part-time in an old people's home for lower wages because she wants to work with people. She is willing to accept lower pay to do a job which she enjoys.

*Paul Hook, Pathway Officer, Sheffield*

Paul told me that Sheffield Pathway operates differently from other Pathway Schemes because of the freedom the city council gives him. He isn't restricted to finding people jobs in open employment but is able to use other schemes such as the MSC's sheltered placement and community programmes schemes.

Paul worked in engineering for 16 years and feels that his industrial background has been a great help to him in his present job. 'The big problem with health and social services is that nobody has been in industry. They don't seem to understand that time is money and that you have to work in the way that is most efficient', he told me.

Paul knows a great deal about various MSC schemes and programmes and how to combine these to benefit people with mental handicap. He feels that his industrial orientation helps him to work out good ways of using the money and programmes which are available. For example, under the enterprise scheme, MSC will pay £40 of up to ten people's wages for businesses being set up for the first time. Paul hopes to use this to help start a cooperative of non-handicapped and mentally handicapped people. For this project he would plan to use an existing factory unit which Sheffield city council provides rent and rates free for one year. He also plans to use sheltered placement schemes with MENCAP acting as the sponsor and a local authority grant of £7,000 to get started, since MSC pays in arrears.

It may take a while to get the cooperative started, but when the idea was presented to the city council's joint team of officers, they were open to it, as was MENCAP. If the project comes off Paul hopes to start the cooperative with non-handicapped people and later bring in mentally handicapped people until there is a mix of about 60 per cent non-handicapped and 40 per cent mentally handicapped workers.

In the past two years Paul has helped 57 people to find jobs; 12 of these are in community programmes lasting only one year. The rest are on sheltered placement schemes or in open employment. He sees temporary employment as useful because he finds that it's easier to help someone get a job who has a work record and references. 'Firms would rather take on someone who has a job than someone who doesn't', he said.

Paul feels that it is very important for job finders to have an industrial background and know how to talk to employers in their own language. He feels that MSC and its programmes are a big help but you have to know how to use them. 'It's easy to get information but harder to know how to use it. I'm always looking for options.'



## Shaw Trust, Wiltshire

### *History and aims*

The Shaw Trust was started in March 1982, to help people with physical and mental handicaps to become employed. The idea for the Trust grew from the concern of professionals working with people with handicaps that, as a result of the declining economic situation and changing industrial activity, many people with severe handicaps were having difficulty getting any kind of employment.

The Trust was developed with the help of a three-year grant from the Joseph Rowntree Memorial Trust, and additional smaller grants from Wiltshire County Council and several other funding bodies. This money was used to establish a small office in Devizes, Wiltshire and to employ a development officer, Ron Whitehouse, who later became general manager.

For the first year Ron ran the job-finding component of the Trust with administrative support from a part-time secretary. With success, the staff of the Trust has grown substantially and in September 1984 the move was made to much larger premises in Melksham. The stated aim of the Trust is 'to promote the social and economic integration of the severely handicapped into society, largely, though not exclusively, through permanent employment initiatives' (from the Shaw Trust information leaflet).

The Trust began by using the Manpower Services Commission's sheltered industrial group (SIG) scheme (now called sheltered placement scheme) as a means of enabling people with handicaps to become permanently employed. More recently the Trust has used the MSC's community programme scheme which provides for temporary employment (that is, for one year). The Trust is also considering an initiative 'for the setting up of business operations of a self-determinate nature, within the handicapped person's own community' (from the Shaw Trust information leaflet).

The following quotes from Ron Whitehouse, general manager of the Shaw Trust, reflect the principles which he applies in his day-to-day running of the Trust.

'We should not automatically assume that people cannot become employed just because they are severely handicapped.'

'Nobody knows what a person can do until he or she is given the opportunity to try.'

'People need jobs to complete their integration into society.'

### *Sheltered placement scheme*

The Trust operates as a sponsoring organisation for people with handicaps under the MSC's sheltered placement scheme. (Other sponsors might be local authorities.) The former name of the scheme unfortunately gave the wrong impression of the way it works. The scheme provides 'sheltered' employment only because someone at the work place helps the handicapped worker settle in, and a sponsoring agency visits the work place occasionally to make sure the person is getting on well. People are employed in ordinary work places alongside non-handicapped people and not, as the name implies, in sheltered workshops. Employment need not be 'industrial', any type of job will qualify: office work, catering, gardening, domestic work, factory work, and so on. And a 'group' of handicapped people need not be taken on; many SIGs are only one person. Indeed a one person SIG ensures that the employee who happens to be mentally handicapped will mix with non-handicapped colleagues.

The disablement resettlement officer (DRO) in each local area will be able to deal with detailed queries as to how the scheme works. Basically, however, the *sponsor* (local authority, voluntary organisation) is the handicapped person's legal employer. The *sponsor* is therefore responsible for paying wages, national insurance and making tax deductions. The company or firm where the person actually works is called the *host*. The host pays a proportion of the person's wages based on his/her ability. For example, if the person produces 50 per cent of the cardboard boxes produced by other workers, the host pays 50 per cent of the wages. This may be fairly easy to calculate for manufacturing companies but is much harder for work such as gardening or domestic. This proportion is agreed between the *host* and the *sponsor* and may be renegotiated at any time. The *host* usually pays between 30 and 70 per cent of the wage paid to other employees for the same job. The *sponsor* makes up the wage to 100 per cent with MSC money. All the people employed under this scheme must be registered as disabled and fall within section 2 of the disabled register: not more than 70 per cent productive or less than 30 per cent productive.

#### *Staff of the Shaw Trust*

Prior to coming to the Trust, Ron Whitehouse worked in business and was, at the age of 27, managing director of a transport company. He describes himself as a 'professional manager with entrepreneurial traits'. He came to the Shaw Trust because of the challenge that developing the organisation presented. He also feels that his own physical disability has helped him to understand that a tough, realistic approach is necessary if people with handicaps are to get and keep jobs.

The Trust employs an ever increasing number of development officers (six full-time and one part-time to date) 'whose major task is to identify employment opportunities in the open employment sector and to match those with suitable handicapped persons in the local community' (from the Shaw Trust information leaflet). All the development officers have considerable industrial and/or commercial experience. These officers currently work in Wiltshire, Avon, Berkshire, Gloucestershire, Hampshire, Oxfordshire, Shropshire, Somerset, South Wales, Surrey, Sussex and the West Midlands. There are now four support officers who offer advice, support and guidance on work and personal matters to people helped by the Trust.

The development and support officers are supported by an administrative team: a full-time office manager; a full-time clerk-typist (employed under the sheltered placement scheme) who acts as receptionist, helps with the payroll, and does general typing; a part-time clerical officer who looks after the sheltered placement scheme work (applications, wages, contracts) and a part-time secretary. In addition to supporting the general manager and development officers, this team deals with the payroll for all the sheltered placement scheme employees. Some of these are paid weekly and others monthly, according to the pay arrangements at the host company.

#### *People helped by the Trust*

People with a wide range of abilities are referred to the Shaw Trust from a variety of people and agencies for example, DROs, careers officers, social services representatives. Just over 200 people with mental or physical handicap have been helped to find employment through the Trust.

About a third of these (35 per cent) are mentally handicapped. I will focus on descriptions of people with mental handicap for this report. Most of the people with mental handicap

have been assessed by the Trust and host employer as working at 40-55 per cent of a non-handicapped person's ability. The jobs they do include: stone masonry helper, farm worker, packaging manufactured goods, labourer, assistant gardener, domestic worker, catering assistant, warehouse assistant, trolley assistant, storeman.

### *My visit*

I met Ron Whitehouse, general manager of the Shaw Trust, at a workshop where he was speaking about the Trust. I was also able to spend a day with one of the development officers, Byron Aperghis.

The Trust is careful not to call special attention to people who have been helped to find jobs because this prevents them from fitting into the work place. My visits to work places with Byron were, therefore, fairly low-key. I was able to accompany him as he made routine visits to two employees, both of whom had been labelled as mentally handicapped, to sign their contracts of employment.

We first visited Joan White who works in a private home for old people in a small village. She lives in the village with her parents and several brothers and sisters. Previously she had attended an ATC and was referred to the Shaw Trust by a representative of social services. Joan works 39 hours a week and is paid £1.60 an hour, 60 per cent paid by the home and 40 per cent paid by the Shaw Trust. Joan does mainly domestic duties at the home, although she is learning to do some cooking. The woman in charge of the home, Shirley Jones, told us that she was a very good worker and got on very well with everyone. Joan was very pleasant and friendly. Shirley told us that she was much more confident than she had been and that she had opened a current account and was saving for a holiday. Joan enjoyed her work at the old people's home so much that she had told her employer that she wanted to work her hours over seven days a week. Byron told Joan and Shirley that the Trust and MSC had to be very careful about exploitation and that, even though she said she wanted to work every day, they would have to limit her to five days a week.

Joan signed her contract and was given a copy plus information on sickness benefit. Byron told Joan and Shirley that he would pop in for a brief visit in about two months to see how they were getting on.

We next went to see Paul Rowe who works as a storeman at a research site for a large oil company. Paul is 43 years old and lives in a group home which is supported by a charitable trust with four other people who are mentally handicapped. One of the other employees of the oil company is a support worker for the group home and helps people living in the house with budgeting and completing forms. Before getting his job Paul attended the same ATC as the others who live in his house.

When Byron and I arrived we first checked in at the gate and received visitors' passes which we were told to keep visible at all times. The man at the gate telephoned the personnel director, James Reynolds, with whom we had the appointment. We were then directed to James's office. Byron explained the purpose of the visit and discussed Paul's work with James who said he was doing very well indeed. Paul joined us and Byron went through the employment contract with him. He earns £120 a week, 70 per cent paid by the company and 30 per cent paid by the Shaw Trust. Paul told us that he was enjoying his work and liked the people he worked with. James asked Paul if he'd take me back to the stores with him so that I could see where he worked. As we walked Paul told me that he sometimes got worried about doing his job well but then he just slowed down and tried to relax. 'I'm alright if I don't rush, I

have epilepsy, but it's under control', he said. The stores were quite large and on two levels. Paul told me that he didn't worry about climbing the stairs because the railings were there to help him.

When I got back to James's office, I asked how Paul had been selected for the job. James told me that about a year before, the company had given a weaving loom to the ATC that Paul attended. A group from the company visited the centre to see their gift and Paul had been assigned to show them the loom. James said he remembered Paul because he was very nice and friendly. A few months later when the idea of employing a handicapped worker was presented to them by a representative of the social services department, he immediately thought of Paul. James said they were all very pleased with Paul's work and that he had fitted into the company very well. He also mentioned that the company wanted to do their part to help the community and the sheltered placement scheme enabled them to do this because it allowed them to employ someone without adding to the number of employees on their books. Like most large companies, this company had set strict limits on the number of people they could employ. This led to a discussion between James and Byron about the kind of jobs people with handicaps could do for the company. James admitted that he hadn't thought about it much and that he'd consider it further and get in touch with Byron.

#### *Advice for others*

Throughout the day, I discussed with Byron the work of the Shaw Trust and his own approach to his job.

Byron had been a development officer for about six months at the time we met. He had been employed for a number of years by a large American company as general sales manager in charge of their operations in the UK and Holland. Then about four years ago the company reorganised and he found himself without a job but with vast commercial and sales experience. Because he had had such a good job he was in a position to look for a job that he really wanted to do. He and his family had two houses, one in London and the other in Wiltshire. They decided to sell the London house and opt for the 'country life'. Byron was unemployed for a while and then saw the advert for development officer with the Shaw Trust. Although he had no experience of working with disabled people, he felt he had wide experience of business to bring to the job and applied. 'I didn't know much about disabled people, but I knew the problems a company might have in taking on a disabled employee', he said.

As development officer, Byron started by making contacts in the Swindon area. He got in touch with anyone he thought would be helpful — careers officers, adult training centre staff and managers, the disablement resettlement officer, people from social services and potential employers — anyone he could think of.

Like most of the job finders I met throughout this project, Byron sees his job as marketing and sales. 'I use the same approach that I'd use for selling any product', he said.

Byron usually makes his first contact with a potential employer by telephoning the personnel director of large companies or the person in charge of small ones. During this conversation he explains a bit about the Shaw Trust and asks to make an appointment to meet the key people. He is very rarely refused. At the meeting, he gives a short, informal presentation about jobs that disabled people can do and how the Shaw Trust can help. After this presentation, he says something like, 'I'm sure you'd like to employ a disabled person if you could. What problems do you think you'd have in doing this?'. Then he talks through the problems

they present with them and helps them see what the solutions are. If money is a concern, the sheltered placement scheme is there to help, but for some companies, possibly large ones, money is not the most important issue. Most have little or no experience of employing handicapped people and are afraid of the unknown. They often have misconceptions of what handicap is, particularly mental handicap, and may mention fear of aggression from the person. At this point Byron mentions the back-up service provided by the Shaw Trust and especially the work of the support officers. Byron feels that his experience in business is invaluable to him in this and all the other aspects of his job. He knows how to talk to business people and understands the way they think. Potential employers often ask him about his background and this experience gives him credibility with them.

This type of presentation is usually very effective, and following the meeting the employer often comes back to him with a proposal. He feels that the offer of finance plus the back-up service in case of problems is a big help in convincing people to have a go.

Byron finds it very useful to establish a good relationship with employers. 'If they can't help immediately, they may be able to help in the future', he said.

Byron finds that he can work intensively in only the Swindon area. He does help people in areas as far afield as Reading, but this is usually only after the job is lined up by someone else such as someone from social services.

Help given outside Swindon is usually with finance and the offer of support. He concentrates his 'creative' work on Swindon.

Not only does Byron know most of the employers in Swindon quite well, he is also supporting 27 people in work (he found 16 of these in the six months that he has been a development officer) and has a 'case load' of about 100 people for whom he is trying to find jobs. He meets each person referred, usually in their own home. 'You can tell a lot by going to someone's home. The kind of support they will get, what sort of person they are. I've been wrong though. Sometimes it's hard to tell', he said. He uses the first meeting with a person as an informal assessment. Byron told me that one of the first questions he asks a person is 'What's wrong with you?'. 'People must be able to talk about their disabilities', he said. Byron explains his role but doesn't promise miracles. He tells people that he will help them as much as he can, but that jobs are very difficult to find. Next he tries to get an idea of the kind of job the person would like to have. 'Most people don't know. They say "I don't care. I'll do anything"'. I tell them that isn't good enough. They must identify what they want to do and what they can do well. I get them to go to job centres and write down the jobs that sound interesting and to go through the newspaper marking jobs they'd like to do. I say, "You must help me. I need a good mental picture of you. We have to work together on this".' Byron then arranges to meet the person again in about two weeks time. He also gives them his office and home telephone numbers so that they can ring him if they see a job they would really like. If they let him know about jobs quickly, he can prepare the ground and help to arrange an interview. For people who are less skilled (cannot read, for example) the process is much the same, with family, friends or staff helping the person to think about and look for jobs.

Of his current referral list of about 100, Byron says there are about half that he cannot yet see a job for, he does not know what sort of job they might have. For the other 50 he knows the kind of job he has got in mind for them. He says he holds about 35 people's life stories in his mind at all times. These are people he feels he knows well and has a good idea of a job

they would like to do. He also has a few 'crisis people' for whom he is working very hard to find work. 'It's not that they are any more urgent. It's just my way of organising the work', he said.

Byron feels very strongly that he must focus on each individual person. 'I ask myself, "Where is the person going to be in 12 months?"'. It helps me think about the best job for them.' He also believes that he cannot provide all the services a person needs. His job is to help people get jobs and maintain them. If people have personal problems he refers these to one of the support officers. 'I rely on them and tell employers about them. Knowing that they're there reassures people'. Byron says that he finds the support officers invaluable. 'They are ready to go in and sort out problems. They don't need to go that often but it's good to have the back-up'. The kind of problems a support officer might deal with are: helping someone who is being teased at work; helping someone stand up for their rights; teaching people to open bank accounts and write cheques; helping someone be less cocky with colleagues.

Another part of Byron's job that he sees as very important is employer education. 'Employers can be over-protective. Many clients have over-protective parents. They don't need an over-protective employer. I talk to them about their approach. I told one employer he was being much too kind. He wasn't treating the person as a real employee. I told him that he should be helping the person to do a better job. I use straight talk and it usually works.'

#### **Blakes Wharf, London**

##### *History and aims*

Blakes Wharf is an employment service for people with mental handicap run by Hammersmith and Fulham Social Services Department. It was officially opened on 30 April 1984 and had therefore only been operating for two months at the time of my visit. The service is located on the first floor of a modern building, above a day centre for people with physical handicap. There is a manager's office, a large room which has been screened off to provide some privacy for staff desks, other meeting rooms, and a kitchen. These premises mainly serve as a staff base with most of the work with clients being conducted in non-segregated educational facilities and work places.

The idea for Blakes Wharf developed from discussions within the Social Services Department about the need for a second adult training centre in the borough. Through these discussions it was eventually decided that the needs of adults with mental handicap in the borough would be better met by an employment service.

Blakes Wharf is a joint funded project with three years' funding shared between the health authority and local authority. In the first year the health authority paid the revenue costs, but this commitment will gradually taper off until the local authority takes on the entire funding in the third year.

For several weeks prior to taking on clients, the staff of Blakes Wharf and representatives of the Social Services Department discussed the aims of the service and how these would be achieved. On the basis of these discussions they produced a *Policy Statement* outlining the agreed principles of philosophy and how these would be put into practice. I have included the entire statement because it is obviously very carefully worded and addresses many important issues concerning the employment of people with mental handicap.

## Blakes Wharf Employment Service

### Policy statement

The following represents a broad outline of agreed principles of philosophy and practice adopted by Blakes Wharf. It should not be regarded as a definitive statement, as we will regularly review policy in the light of experience and new developments.

### *Introduction*

Blakes Wharf Employment Service is a resource for people with a mental handicap seeking paid, open and valued employment. Achieving this end will be the basis of our activity, as we recognise that work fulfils important needs for a majority of people in society.

We would summarise these needs as follows:

- 1 Financial remuneration with a consequent widening in the range of personal choices that can be made.
- 2 Providing a structure and pattern to daily activities.
- 3 Providing a source of social relationships and role models.
- 4 Providing a sense of self-worth and of contributing to rather than taking from society.

Despite a frequently voiced wish to work in open employment, people with a mental handicap have differential access to work in the sense that they are disproportionately absent from the labour force.

Blakes Wharf will seek to redress this balance.

The principle of normalisation provides a fundamental rationale upon which our service is based, entailing the adoption of a model of practice which is community rather than facility oriented. Aspects of training undertaken will be directly related to the finding and maintaining of employment, rather than seeking to provide a total educational curriculum. It is recognised that learning is most readily done in appropriate situations and therefore that on-the-job training represents the best method of teaching work skills.

Blakes Wharf will seek to provide effective channels for the expression of personal choice and preference, and to provide real opportunities for developing self-confidence and independence through learning.

We recognise that individual clients have very varied interests, abilities and skills and therefore that an imaginative approach to job-matching is essential. It is anticipated that clients will be placed in a wide variety of work situations, demanding different patterns of activity.

### *Objectives*

Within the framework of securing open employment for our clients, the following objectives are identified:

- 1 Using an individualised programme design, to equip clients with self-help, social and work skills relevant to their chosen area of work.
- 2 To implement non-segregated training programmes, using community resources at all times.
- 3 To foster the independence and autonomy of each individual with regard to decision-making tasks, to enable clients to make informed choices.
- 4 To provide opportunities for clients to experience a wide range of work situations and to broaden the range of jobs typically available to adults with a mental handicap.

- 5 To enable clients to find and maintain paid and socially valued open employment.
- 6 To provide any necessary on-going training and support to workers in the job situation.
- 7 To liaise with employers, co-workers and other agencies, to enable workers to achieve job satisfaction.
- 8 To work closely with parents and other supportive bodies to enable the provision of a needs-related service, within appropriate situations.
- 9 To publicise our existence as widely as possible, to allow all interested to make use of our services.

### *Practice*

#### *Staff roles*

Blakes Wharf has a structure of responsibility that is typical of a work situation, with a manager, deputy manager, centre workers (4) and clerical officer.

Within these roles, however, it is anticipated that a large degree of flexibility will be required in order to implement an effective service. To varying degrees, all staff will be involved in work with clients, administration, liaison with employers, parents, etc.

As Blakes Wharf will not function as a traditional activity/training centre, actual duties performed and hours worked will vary from day to day due to the need to fit in with others' schedules.

Each centre worker will be designated a supervisor for individual clients and have key worker responsibility, although all staff will have responsibility for the implementation of programmes.

As the project develops, it is anticipated that each staff member will develop areas of expertise and responsibility, which for reasons of efficiency cannot be undertaken by everyone.

#### *Programmes*

Programmes will be dependent upon individuals' areas of need, and therefore each client will follow different patterns of activity in relation to others.

In drawing up programmatic goals, targets will be set for each person on a three-monthly basis, and agreement will be sought between all people involved with the client, and with the clients themselves. In particular, we will be working closely with parents and aim to involve them at each stage of the process.

Clients will attend Blakes Wharf on a sessional basis as this will allow more clients to be taken on than would otherwise be the case, and allow a more flexible system to be operated.

As many clients will be attending other establishments while also at Blakes Wharf, we will be seeking to work as closely as possible with other agencies. This will be necessary in order to implement effective programmes and to avoid duplication of effort. We also recognise that other establishments may be able to more appropriately fulfil certain non-vocational needs for our clients.

Regarding programme content, only those areas identified as being of importance to employment will be covered, as follows:

- 1 *Self-help skills* (eg, mobility, use of community resources, etc.)
- These are skills which will be taught in appropriate situations, rather than by a 'classroom' method. The actual skills required by each individual will depend upon their job placement and other daily activities.



## *2 Social skills*

It is recognised that the learning of appropriate social and communication skills can only take place where there are appropriate role models and that social skills are of equal, if not greater, importance in maintaining employment. Therefore, all aspects of clients' programmes will seek to maximise the amount of contact that each person has with appropriate role models. We will rely upon positive reinforcement of appropriate behaviour rather than the applying of negative sanctions to inappropriate behaviour.

## *3 Work skills*

It is not our intention to carry out work skills training in the traditional sense at Blakes Wharf. Training will be carried out at actual work sites, as it is recognised that workplaces vary greatly in the demands placed upon people. Behaviour change and development are considered to be most readily achieved in situations where the worker is motivated to succeed and where there are appropriate models at hand.

Many people with a mental handicap do not have access to the type of career choices provided in the 'normal' educational curriculum and are therefore not provided with opportunities for career choice.

An important aspect of clients' programmes will be to provide experience at first hand of a range of work options. Following on from this, clients will be encouraged to make choices based upon their interests and a realistic assessment of their strengths and abilities.

Where clients wish to undertake further skills training, we will be seeking to support them in non-segregated settings, to remove the stigma of 'special' provision and to maximise contact with other 'non-handicapped' trainees.

At all stages of job-searching, clients will be encouraged to be independent as far as possible. Programmes will be devised to create mechanisms for decision-making and choice, together with providing adequate information.

## *Job placements*

The starting point for the matching of individuals with job opportunities will be the interests and abilities of the individuals themselves. Initial job preferences are frequently based upon scant information and programmes designed to show a wider range of options will therefore be implemented prior to final job selection.

While the initial contact with an employer will be by Blakes Wharf staff, the clients will be fully involved in all other stages of the job-finding process, ie, applying for work, attending interviews, etc.

## *Work skills training*

It is anticipated that the type and level of support needed by clients when placed in employment will be very different in each case. The emphasis placed upon the fostering of independence will remain of paramount importance, however, as in all cases the aim will be the eventual withdrawal of staff support.

Before the client starts work for an employer, staff will be involved in task analysis of the job and from this draw up contracts or job descriptions with the employer, where applicable.

When the client starts work for the employer, staff will also be involved in the actual training of that client in work skills for as long a period as is necessary, although use will be made as far as possible of any training facilities offered by an employer.

Withdrawal from a supportive role will only be finally made with the mutual agreement of the employer, client and Blakes Wharf staff.

By being present on site with the client in the work situation, an opportunity will be given to avoid a crisis-intervention approach to problems and to sort out potential problems as they arise, either with the employer, client or co-workers.

### *Referrals to Blakes Wharf*

Blakes Wharf should be regarded as a needs-based service in the sense that support will be extended to people who are motivated to find open employment and who have a fairly realistic conception of what this might entail. We will not, therefore, be recruiting individuals who do not consider open employment to be desirable. Conversely, we will also not be recruiting those for whom our service is considered to be too restrictive and who might be better served by using less segregated services.

### *Application procedure*

This procedure will closely follow the format for a job application, as clients will be essentially self-referred. The procedure is as follows:

- 1 Visit to Blakes Wharf to discuss the types of service offered and to gain an overall impression.

We recognise that in the early stages many potential clients will not be aware of our existence and therefore the need to publicise our service remains an important priority at this stage of our development.

Potential clients will therefore be recruited through visits to the ATC, educational establishments, etc.

- 2 One reference may be requested prior to interview; the referee to be selected by the applicant.

- 3 Formal interview: The aim of the interview is for both parties to discuss the individual's interests and needs in a more structured manner and with particular relation to employment.

- 4 Following the interview, the applicant will be informed of a decision. Assessment of suitability for Blakes Wharf will not be based upon any necessary level of skill attainment but upon the wish of that person to find open employment.

Other factors, eg, the degree of parental support, may be considered if applicable.

- 5 Initial assessment period: The aim of the initial assessment is to determine the interests, abilities and skills of each individual in relation to possible employment opportunities.

Following the initial assessment, the client will be encouraged to consider their strengths and weaknesses with the supervisor.

### *Self-monitoring/evaluation*

The need to create effective methods for evaluation of our project is a priority and therefore clearly identifiable and measurable goals will be set at all stages.

In assessing our effectiveness, we shall be looking particularly at criteria such as the types of jobs that our clients will be placed in, their rates of pay, the job satisfaction that our clients receive, and the degrees to which pay and responsibility are increased.

May 1984

### *My visit*

On my visit to Blakes Wharf I met the staff, a social work student and three clients. In the morning I went with two clients, Angela Rowlands and Pam Wilson, and their key workers to visit a children's nursery. This visit formed part of Angela and Pam's programme of finding out about a range of jobs. Both had a fairly clear idea of jobs they'd like to do: Angela wanted to work in a kitchen, perhaps in an old people's home and Pam wanted to stock shelves in a supermarket. Although they both had ideas about the kind of work they wanted to do they thought it was a good idea to learn about other jobs. During the visit Pam and Angela both asked questions about the nursery, the children and jobs done by various

members of staff. When we left the nursery, Angela had to go to the Paddington Integration Project which she attends. Pam came back to Blakes Wharf with us where her key worker, Gill, talked to her about the nursery. They made a list of things Pam liked and didn't like about the nursery as a possible job for her.

While they did this I talked to Clive, the social work student, about his project of gathering information about work schemes. This project is part of his placement at Blakes Wharf and will be used to add to the library of information which will be kept there. The staff are keen to help others who are interested in work for people with mental handicap and think that they could act as a resource for others.

In the afternoon, I met with the staff group and Doug Watson, the community psychologist attached to the borough, who played a key role in establishing Blakes Wharf. We discussed their approach to service provision and some of the practical considerations they had made. An area of concern was the expectation of others that Blakes Wharf should be a centre for people to attend each day. They were resisting this pressure because they realised that if they tried to run a day centre they could not effectively provide the job preparation, job finding and support role for which they were established.

Staff were especially conscious of the time that would be needed to support people once they were employed and were keen to keep their own time flexible in order to be able to give this support when required.

We then watched a video of another member of staff, Peter, working with one of his clients on job interview skills. The tape showed several sessions over a period of weeks and had been used to help the client see herself and improve her replies to interview questions, her voice and manner. Over the short period of time she had made considerable improvement and seemed to enjoy using the video.

### *Staff*

The staff include the manager, deputy, four centre workers and a clerical assistant. Two staff, the deputy and one of the workers, had experience of working with people with mental handicap in an ATC. The manager had previously worked as a home care organiser for elderly people. One of the workers had worked with adolescents who had problems, one had been a customs and excise officer, and one had a psychology degree and management training and had been unemployed for a year immediately prior to coming to Blakes Wharf. The manager had wanted a good balance of centre workers and was very pleased to have found two men and two women who she felt had a good combination of experience, background and personal qualities.

### *Clients*

At the time of my visit, Blakes Wharf had nine clients. It is intended that staff will work with this small group, perhaps adding two to four others. As clients get jobs others will be taken on, but staff will continue to reserve time to support clients who have jobs, and contact employers.

Clients are selected, as described in the Policy Statement, because they express a desire to be employed. All of the present clients had come from ATCs except Angela who attends the Paddington Integration Project. I was told that clients of any skill level would be accepted for the scheme as long as they wanted to get a job. The three clients I met seemed fairly able.

All could hold a conversation and none had obvious physical handicaps, although one walked slowly and stiffly. I was told that one of the Blakes Wharf clients had quite a bad temper and a history of violent behaviour but that there had been no problem since he joined the scheme.

Each client's programme is tailored to individual needs, as described in the Policy Statement. Staff decide who will become key worker for each client on the basis of a feeling of good rapport and having common interests.

Clients receive no pay for attending Blakes Wharf but those from ATCs continue to receive the same money as when attending the centre full time.

#### *Advice for others*

Jane Middleton, the manager of Blakes Wharf, said it seemed a bit early to give advice since they'd only been operational for two months. On the other hand, she felt she had learned some things in the year that she'd been in post getting the service established. One important piece of advice which she had been given and had found useful was to *know what you want to do and not get side-tracked or pressured into doing something else*. It would be easy to start running a full-time day centre or help people sort out leisure time, but the role of Blakes Wharf is to help people find and keep jobs. She felt that this task was difficult and would certainly be made much more difficult if staff were trying to do other things as well.

Another thing she felt important was to make personal contacts, as many as possible, with anyone who would listen. Even if it is unlikely that someone will be able to help he/she may know someone who can. The advice is: *be visible and make the service known*.

Jane and the staff felt it important to learn from the experience of people who had been involved in similar services and had visited various schemes and attended conferences. They feel that an important part of their role is to keep informed and to act as a resource for others who are involved in trying to establish employment services for people with mental handicap.

Jane felt that it was important to change people's attitudes to people with mental handicap gradually, by giving them opportunities to meet and get to know each other. The Blakes Wharf approach has been to ask employers to allow one or two clients to visit their establishment to learn about the jobs done in the work place. In this way employers don't feel threatened or pressured and are able to meet people in a relaxed way.

This approach is already paying off. On the day I visited, an opportunity had come up for a client to apply for a job working in the post room of a college of further education. Several other employers were also expressing interest in taking on Blakes Wharf clients.

Blakes Wharf is a very professional service with clear aims and a highly motivated staff. Although the service has only been operating a short time it is achieving success and continuing to evaluate its present work and plan for the future.

#### **Outreach Project, Greenock**

##### *History and aims*

The Outreach Project was started in 1982 with Urban Aid, to help people with mental handicap become fully integrated into the community. The major focus of Outreach is on

helping people gain the skills and confidence they need to enable them to get and keep jobs in open employment.

The idea for Outreach came from the *Officers/Members Report in Social Work Services for the Mentally Handicapped in Strathclyde* which recommended development of 'new day services committed to further integration of people with a mental handicap through work-experience'.

The project is based at the Mearns Centre, a community centre in Greenock about 30 miles west of Glasgow. The Inverclyde area has a very high level of unemployment (21 per cent male, 12.3 per cent female, 17.4 per cent overall in July 1984). The Mearns Centre was originally a large Victorian school which was reclaimed by the Social Work Department as an intermediate treatment resource for youngsters considered to be 'at risk'. Since this resource was used only after school hours, the building was offered to a variety of organisations. The centre now houses a pensioners' luncheon club, several play groups, a tenants' association, and various hobby clubs, in addition to the Outreach Project.

The initial aims of Outreach were:

To provide additional training for those in need, with a different sort of training which would develop social skills and create opportunities to mix with non-handicapped people.

To take up space that would otherwise be under-utilised and make use of existing facilities.

To make a contribution towards reducing unemployment, together with providing opportunities for voluntary work.

In the two years the service has been in operation, its aims and methods of achieving these have been developed further. Outreach tries to facilitate integration through active adherence to the principle of normalisation. The service also tries to further integration in all areas of life: work, education, leisure, social, living situations. People using the service are actively involved in all aspects of decision-making and actively participate with staff in the administration of the service. Outreach also seeks the active support of families in helping their relatives to achieve increased independence. The service recruits volunteers to work with individuals. This helps them to integrate into social and leisure activities and to make friends with non-handicapped people.

Outreach offers people using the service:

- opportunities for integration and increased contact with non-handicapped people;
- opportunities to gain work skills;
- help and support in securing and maintaining a job in open employment;
- experiences which will encourage independence;
- opportunities to exercise control over their own lives;
- opportunities which promote personal development.

#### *Staff of the Project*

The Outreach Project employs two full-time staff: Lydia Powell, the project leader (appointed at senior instructor level) and Elaine Turnbull, instructor. Lydia is a qualified

social worker (CQSW). Fourteen months before coming to Outreach, Lydia was responsible for the services provided by the student voluntary organisation, Cardiff Universities Social Services (CUSS). Elaine is a qualified primary school teacher. Before joining Outreach, she worked for 3½ years as play leader in a hospital for women with mental handicap. Both attended PASS (program analysis of service systems) workshops after coming to Outreach and attribute many of their ideas to the principle of normalisation as defined at the PASS workshops (Wolfensberger and Glenn, 1975).

#### *Volunteers for Outreach*

Volunteers who are involved daily are often unemployed people who want to do something interesting. Some volunteers have been social work students looking for placements. Volunteers work alongside staff to give service users an integrated social experience. Some volunteers with special skills or interests have taken on extra tasks to develop special areas of interest – for example, investigating employment initiatives, recreational opportunities, new learning technology. Volunteer adult literacy tutors have been particularly helpful, many becoming friends not just tutors.

#### *Management structure*

Outreach has a steering committee consisting of the Inverclyde District social work manager, principal officer supportive services, the Mearns Centre administrator, one of the two Inverclyde adult training centre managers, the mental health adviser from Renfrew Division Social Work Department and a group work adviser. This group meets bi-monthly with the staff to provide support and advice. These meetings are also used for planning and evaluating the service.

#### *People who use Outreach*

Twenty-two people have used the service since it started in May 1982. There were eight people in the first group, eight in the second and six in the third. The majority of referrals (60 per cent) have come from ATCs, 25 per cent from social workers, 10 per cent from hostels and 5 per cent from the careers officers. Ninety per cent live with relatives and 10 per cent live in hostels. Most (85 per cent) are between 20 and 40 years of age. About the same number of men and women use Outreach.

People who have used Outreach so far could be generally described as moderately to mildly mentally handicapped. Many of the people I met were not easily recognisable as being mentally handicapped although some were extremely shy on first meeting.

People who have used the service have a wide range of skills in areas such as mobility and communication. Some are exceptionally motivated, others are uncertain and dependent. Only one person in the project is reported to be from a comfortable financial background. The rest are on very tight budgets. The background of nine people was of marked poverty.

Common characteristics of Outreach users were: the presence of a developmental disability; a poor or non-existent work history; uncertain likelihood of getting or keeping a job of their own choice; lack of independence in making decisions regarding control over their own lives; displaying characteristics of institutionalisation from residential and day care provision.

#### *My visit*

I spent 1½ days visiting the Outreach Project. I met five people at their unpaid work place-

ments and one woman who had returned to the ATC following her time with Outreach. At the Mearns Centre, I talked with two people doing work-experience and two people who had left Outreach for jobs in paid employment.

### *Outreach programme*

People join the scheme in small groups (six to eight people) and attend the project each day for six to nine months. During this time, staff and volunteers work with people individually and in small groups according to a programme tailored for each person. An individual programme plan meeting is held prior to the person's admission to the scheme to agree this plan with the person, his/her family, ATC staff and others as appropriate.

Programming concentrates on readiness for work skills and a range of social skills required for successful employment and further integration. The emphasis is on the individual and how he/she operates in group settings. An important element of this experience is individual contact with non-handicapped people.

The most intense part of the project is day-to-day attendance at the project's base, the Mearns Centre. It is here that all but a few have their first experience of unsegregated work. At this time people are introduced to the work behaviour and to the skills required. They also begin to show interest in specific areas of work and to identify areas that they are good at and those they need to learn and those requiring extra practice.

Outreach staff help people look at their work skills and abilities with the help of the work skills rating scale (Whelan and Schlesinger, 1980). The person's abilities are assessed prior to entering the scheme, half way through and at the end of the six to nine month training period. There are also informal group and individual discussions of the person's progress throughout this period.

People in each group decide what they are going to do to help them reach their individual goals. Each person usually spends some time with one of the staff of the Mearns Centre doing domestic work, making repairs, working in the pensioners' luncheon club or in the play group. This gives people who have never had a real job the opportunity to gain work-experience and confidence in a very supportive environment. It also gives people a chance to think about the kind of job they would like to have when they leave the project.

People take part in group discussions and activities such as shopping and preparing lunch for the group. More recently, users of the service have taken part in administrative and clerical tasks such as sorting out petty cash and incentive money for the group. Smaller groups plan outings to the Edinburgh Festival, Liverpool or London, for example. All of these activities are designed to help people gain confidence and skills.

People are encouraged and helped to attend classes in integrated adult education settings, such as colleges of further education. Often people are enabled to take advantage of these classes by volunteers who attend with them. This is not only useful because of the educational value but it is also a good way of fostering close personal relationships with non-handicapped people. People have attended classes in ornamental metal work, pottery, 'improve your English', woodwork, music appreciation, first aid, keep fit, adult literacy, adult numeracy, dress-making and computer studies.

Staff of the Outreach Project have found that mobility is crucial to independence. All the people who have come to Outreach learn to travel independently using public transport. The

two adult training centres have done a lot of work teaching people to use local buses and trains before they come to Outreach. Outreach staff and volunteers help people learn new routes and assist with travel costs.

Although the major focus of Outreach is on employment, staff also work with people on independent living skills, such as shopping, domestic tasks, and budgeting. In discussions with families and service users themselves, the issue of where people would live and how they would cope when families were no longer able to provide a home came up again and again. Several of the service users live in hostels and are very keen to have their own homes. Outreach staff felt that this issue was of such major concern that they could not ignore it. In addition to helping people learn independent living skills, they have worked closely with other agencies, particularly the Inverclyde Supported Accommodation Project to help people find their own houses.

People using Outreach are continually assessed by staff and are encouraged to assess their own abilities and job readiness. When a person is felt to be ready for work-experience outside Mearns Centre a placement is sought for the person. Staff try to find a placement in which the person has expressed interest. Sometimes this is not possible and the person must choose from a limited number of available placements. These placements are seen as a short-term measure to gain experience in a realistic work environment. Outreach staff are very aware of the potential for exploitation and have set out clear criteria for the appropriate use of unpaid work-experience. These are: to give the person a chance to prove to the employer that he/she can do the job; to give the person a chance to explore various jobs to gain first-hand experience to determine whether he/she is interested in doing the job; to give the person a chance to test and assess themselves in various work settings; and to establish a work record and references which will help him/her get a job in open employment.

Outreach staff have specified several considerations which act as safeguards against exploitation. These are as follows.

If paid employees are doing the same job at the same level of productivity, the Outreach person should be given the same pay.

There should be time limits for each placement and clear objectives, such as skills to be developed and type of paid employment being sought.

If the person is to demonstrate ability to do a job, clear criteria and an appropriate time scale need to be spelled out between the employer, the worker and Outreach.

The final goal is for each person to get a job that he/she enjoys in paid, open employment. People are helped to get jobs by Outreach staff who work with them on finding jobs to apply for, filling out job applications, and interview techniques. Outreach staff also may make initial approaches to potential employers to discuss the possibility of employing an Outreach graduate. Employers are assured of the initial and continued support of Outreach staff to themselves and the employee. Outreach staff may also become involved in writing clear job descriptions and redesigning jobs if necessary. Entry into jobs may be on a trial basis with Outreach staff giving a great deal of initial support. Once the person has the job, Outreach staff continue to provide support by making frequent contacts by telephone and calling in. They may provide counselling, moral support and encouragement to the new employee. They also ensure that the person continues to receive the best financial deal possible.

When a person feels, and is regarded by Outreach staff as independent, support is gradually decreased to an occasional social call. Outreach staff maintain contact with people who have



used the service, through social events and informal contact. They realise that no job is guaranteed forever and that people may be made redundant or outgrow the job and wish to change.

The kind of unpaid work placements and jobs that Outreach users have are shop work, serving at luncheon clubs for elderly people, caretaking, factory work, domestic work, and gardening.

People get paid £4 a week while attending the first phase of Outreach and £2 for the second phase for unpaid work-experience.

#### **Outreach placement results 4 May 1982 - 4 May 1984**

Number of service users	20
Number in paid, open employment	2
Number in work waiting for SIG funding	3
Number on work trial waiting for paid employment	3
Number in unpaid work-experience — 3 days a week	7 *
Number doing limited unpaid work-experience	2 **
Number receiving support but not in work or work-experience	3

\* 1 person was offered and wanted to take up paid employment, but this was vetoed by parent.

\*\* 1 person lacked support from family and 1 person in poor health

#### *The future of Outreach*

Outreach staff would like to establish increased liaison with referring agencies (adult training centres, hostels, families) to encourage them to design pre-Outreach programmes so that people are better prepared for Outreach. They are also concerned to evaluate and review the work they are doing continually to make improvements in their service. They already evaluate each day's work and are eager for advice and suggestions from people in the social work department and visitors to the scheme. Lydia asked me several times during my short visit for feedback and comment on the way the service was being run. They hope to get a small increase in their administrative support which would enable them to spend more time with service users and in job finding. They are very keen to work with a Pathway employment officer and report that the Scottish Society are currently sponsoring a submission for funding this post. They would also like to expand the service to include people who are more severely mentally handicapped. They are convinced that the way in which they work could be just as effective for these people as for more able people. They are interested in looking at ways of supporting people with more severe handicaps in work. They are interested in working with others to set up cooperative work schemes between people with mental handicaps and non-handicapped people.

#### *People doing unpaid work-experience*

*Sam McKay* is in his 40s and lives with his two brothers and two sisters. One brother and one sister have also been labelled as mentally handicapped. Sam has great difficulty in reading and writing. He attended an ATC for several years before coming to Outreach.

Sam does work-experience three days a week at Goodwill, a firm which reconditions second-hand furniture and appliances. He attends an ATC the other two days. Sam strips down upholstered furniture so that it can be re-upholstered. He has been at Goodwill for about 18 months.

Lydia and I arrived at Goodwill at 8.30 am to find Sam already hard at work. He greeted us very cheerfully and offered to show us the settee he was stripping. I chatted to him briefly about his job which he said he enjoys very much. He said he especially liked the people he works with. Sam was very proud of his new upholsterer's apron which had been especially made for all the men at Goodwill.

Later Lydia and I chatted to Albert, the manager, about Sam's work. Albert told me that Sam was a good worker, perhaps a bit slower than the others but very steady. He is always early for work and never in a rush to go home. He comes to work even when the ATC is on holiday. Albert and Lydia are trying to get Sam money from MSC under the sheltered placement scheme. He would like to work full-time and Albert would like to employ him. 'He's a hard worker, and everyone likes him', Albert told me.

*Gerry Colquhoun* is 31 years old and lives in a hostel for ten people with mental handicap. There are two other hostels across the road from his. The buildings were formerly an epilepsy colony. Gerry had a very difficult time as a child. He comes from a travelling family and his father had drink problems. He was in a children's home for a while and was then admitted to a mental handicap hospital, possibly because he was having psychological problems which could not be dealt with in the children's home. Lydia described him as very institutionalised and moody, but probably not mentally handicapped, although he had been given that label. After he moved into the hostel he started attending an ATC. Gerry is doing work-experience in a community centre as a handyman/decorator. He is in the second month of a three month trial.

When I met Gerry he was very shy. Lydia suggested that we go into the cafe to have a cup of tea while she talked to the centre supervisor. Gerry brought me the tea and I explained why I had come to see him. He said he wasn't very good with strangers but would try to answer my questions. Although he was very shy I found him easy to talk to and he was very thoughtful in all his answers.

He told me that he wanted a job more than anything. He said he'd really like to do factory work putting together electronic components, but he'd do anything. He said he wanted a job for the money and the independence. 'I want to show what I can do', he said. I found out later that Gerry goes to an evening class to learn about electronic components.

I asked what his pay would be if he was taken on at the community centre after his trial period. He told me that he didn't want to ask, 'in case I don't get it'.

Gerry asked me if I wanted to see what he'd been doing at the centre. He took me to see the projection room he had been painting and the doors of the craft room he had painted a few weeks before.

He then took me to meet Roger, the centre supervisor. Roger told me that Gerry had been a terrific worker. 'He started out moving chairs around, setting up for the meetings', he said, 'but he's really good at painting'.

Roger told me that he probably wouldn't be able to employ Gerry at the centre because he didn't have the money in his budget but that he was trying to get him a job with one of his friends in the building trade.

*Ruth Davidson* Next we went to meet Ruth who helps serve at a pensioners' luncheon club. Ruth has been doing work-experience at the club for about 18 months. She was offered a paid job on merit but her mother didn't want her to take it. Lydia said she was not really sure why Ruth's mother had been against the job, although she had talked to her about it several times.

Ruth is in her 30s and lives at home with her mother. She does work-experience three days a week from 11 am to 3 pm and stays at home the other two days. Ruth serves the food, lays and clears the tables, and so on. She is also learning to do some cooking. When we arrived at about 11.30 am Ruth was tidying up the work surface in preparation for serving lunch. She brought us a cup of coffee and I asked if she had time to talk to me.

Ruth was very friendly and pleasant. She said she liked her job very much and she especially liked the people. Pearl, her key worker, is her special friend. Ruth told me that she gets on well with the old people and would like to keep her job at the club. Ruth then introduced me to Pearl and went back to work. Pearl told me that Ruth was a very good worker although she did not work as hard if Pearl was away. 'She thinks I'm the boss', Pearl told me.

Pearl also said that she treats Ruth 'just like anyone else'. She can get her feelings hurt easily. 'She comes to me if anyone says anything unkind to her.' Ruth also goes to bingo with the other woman who works at the luncheon club.

*Debra Johnston* is about 30 years old and has been doing work-experience as a domestic in a children's nursery for about six months. She lives at home with her parents. She told me that she liked her job. She was shy but pleasant to talk to. She then took me to meet Betty the supervisor of the nursery, who told me that Debra had changed a lot since she started working at the nursery. 'When she first started working here she would never have talked to a stranger. If you just looked at her she'd cry', she said.

*David Robertson* is one of the most articulate and thoughtful people I met during the course of this project. He stutters slightly when nervous but this does not detract from the content of what he says. I met David at the Mearns Centre and talked to him about his job, Outreach and his philosophy on life. David was abandoned as a baby and lived in a mental handicap hospital until 18 months ago, when he left to live in a hostel. He is 31 years old. He is hoping to get a house with two other people from the supported accommodation group. He works at an old people's home as a gardener and is waiting to be fully waged under the SIG scheme.

David told me that the most important thing about getting a paid job was the money. 'It's a strain not to have money. I've never had any in my life — only pocket money. I'd save my money and have something to look forward to', he said.

I asked him if anything about having a job besides money was important. He said, 'I'd like to be in work and make other friends and that. You can go out and have a job and come home again, just like everyone else.'

I asked if Outreach had helped him. He said 'Outreach has definitely helped me. I used to be in ATC, it didn't do me any good. I wasn't getting anything out of it. We did crafts, silly

things. I didn't like it. I'd never go back. It wasn't that I didn't like to be with them (other handicapped people), but you were just left. The staff weren't very helpful. Now, I get £6.80 altogether. You can't live on it. You can't save. It's just sweet money.'

I asked David what he liked about doing work-experience as a gardener. He said, 'I like it very much. It lets me get out in the air. It occupies my mind. They're trying to get me a wage. I think it will be about £34 a week. This is my first job working outside, so it's hard to know what the pay will be.'

I asked if he thought less able people could work. He said, 'A lot could – but they'd need help, of course. I'd like to see them get out [of hospital]. When I was in the hospital I used to get mad, but I kept my temper because I wanted out. I knew that if I lost my temper they'd never give me a chance.'

*Richard Gordon* is 29 years old. He lives with his parents and does work-experience cleaning in an old people's home three days a week waiting to be employed under the SIG scheme. Lydia sat in on our conversation because Richard's speech is very unclear and I had trouble understanding him. Richard told me, through Lydia, that he had not had much practice speaking until he came to Outreach. His girl friend from the adult training centre used to speak for him, so he had no need to.

Richard had been attending an ATC before he came to Outreach. He said he had wanted to come to Outreach because he got bored at the ATC. Richard told me that he really liked the old people. Lydia said that the old people also liked Richard.

Richard has a very full life. He loves music and plays the piano, enjoys swimming, looks after his young niece and nephew and shops for his mum.

#### *People in paid employment*

*Brian Maitland* is 31 years old and lives at home with his parents. I chatted to Brian at the Mearns Centre. Brian had just finished a year on a community programme at an old people's club, which can only employ people for one year. He had earned £220 a month gross. He told me, 'I'm applying for lots of jobs. I'll do anything – clean streets, clean toilets – anything. You've got to be prepared to do any job when you're handicapped. I'd like to have a house. I'm staying with my parents but it's not like being on your own. My girl friend isn't allowed in my house and I'm not allowed in hers. I used to go to the adult training centre for 12-14 years.'

I asked him what was different about being in work. He said, 'Money. I used to work a full week for £2. At the adult training centre they treat you like babies. It's the same job day in, day out. We did contract work – folding pads – if you get it wrong they made you do it again and again. You could spend a year doing it. They have no time for you. The staff should give you more time. They call themselves "instructors" and us "trainees". Here (at Outreach) they treat you like a person. They don't treat you like aliens.'

*Stephen Thompson* is 22 years old. He had just taken over from Brian at the old people's club. This is what he told me. 'I think I'm going to enjoy the job. I set up tables and help in the kitchen. If we finish early I chat to the pensioners. Some are grumpy but you have to ignore that. You have to be there to look after them not them to look after you.'

I asked what his pay was. He said, 'About £220 a month before tax. I'll save £110 and use £110. I'll give some of that to my mum. I want to move into a house of my own or with a friend. I'll use the money to buy things for the house. To me working is the natural way of living. A way of earning money — a way of being happy. You need somewhere to go in the day — but not to the adult training centre.'

#### *Advice for others*

Lydia and Elaine started the Outreach service very quickly. Lydia was employed in February 1982, Elaine joined her in April 1982 and they had their first group with them in May 1982. I asked them if they would do that again. Surprisingly, they both agreed that they would. They said that although things had been a bit hectic at first, they felt it had been a great benefit to them and people using the service to work through things together. They felt it made the group stronger and had set a good precedent for the future.

They both felt that meeting employers and establishing a personal relationship with them to be very important. They invite employers and key workers to social events. Whenever they go to a potential employer they talk about one person who needs a chance to work. They find this is much more successful than talking about groups of people. They try to avoid describing people as mentally handicapped and instead discuss their good points and lack of opportunity to work. They have found that a good way into jobs is to offer a specific trial period of unpaid work-experience (for example, three months).

#### *Conclusion*

Although based on the principle of normalisation, the Outreach service has had to make several compromises which the staff are uncomfortable about. They recognise that their location is not ideal, located in an old building which is in need of repair and houses several other services for disadvantaged people. Yet the Mearns Centre provides a very good social atmosphere and a supportive work environment for people to have their first work-experience. Some of the unpaid work-experience placements and jobs are not highly valued, but again the Outreach staff recognise the compromise and view those jobs as a place to start.

I found the Outreach service very inspiring. Located in an area of very high unemployment and poverty, Outreach is achieving success in helping people with mental handicap to find jobs. The success of the project must be due in part to the staff — Lydia and Elaine — who are both highly committed and tireless workers who remain very optimistic despite the difficulties which face them.

The Outreach service dispels the myth that people with mental handicap will not be given jobs in times of high unemployment. Outreach puts people first and succeeds.

#### **Geoffrey Rhodes Centre, Newcastle-upon-Tyne**

##### *History and aims*

The Geoffrey Rhodes Centre is the third centre in the three centre system which forms the ATC programme in Newcastle-upon-Tyne. According to this system, trainees start attending the intake and assessment centre, Dame Catherine Scott, and move to the second centre, Westerhope, and then to Geoffrey Rhodes when they are assessed as being ready. The eventual aim is for people to leave Geoffrey Rhodes for jobs in open employment.

The Geoffrey Rhodes Centre simulates normal working conditions with hours, attendance

requirements and meal breaks, similar to those found in open employment. People usually enter Geoffrey Rhodes from the second centre when they are felt to be capable of dealing with the increased demands and are able to travel to the centre independently. An initial concern was that people would not move on from Geoffrey Rhodes because of the high level of unemployment in Newcastle and the difficulty of finding jobs for people with mental handicap. This is not the case, however, and the problem in movement is between the second centre and Geoffrey Rhodes. Recently a group of older people, who could not travel on their own, were transferred from Dame Catherine Scott Centre, because it was full, to Geoffrey Rhodes where places were available.

The Geoffrey Rhodes Centre was built for 150 attenders and 133 currently attend. The centre is staffed by a manager, deputy manager, employment liaison officer and 11 instructors.

#### *Employment liaison officer*

The employment liaison officer, George Twizell, started working at the Geoffrey Rhodes Centre in 1979 as senior craft instructor. Initially, he spent part of his time finding employment for people attending the centre. In 1980 he was made full-time employment liaison officer because he had been so successful in helping people to find jobs. Since he started, George has helped 102 people to find jobs; 96 are still employed. He has also enabled 32 people to work through sheltered industrial groups (now called sheltered placement schemes). As part of the centre's programme, there are also 12 people working in extended work situations, a form of work-experience, for which they receive no extra pay.

George's background is interesting and, I think, relevant to his success as employment liaison officer. He was in the Royal Navy and Royal Naval Reserve for 42 years, achieving the rank of Lieutenant Commander MBE RNR. Through this he has maintained contacts with many people in the business world. He became interested in working with people with mental handicap while working for a Cheltenham company. As part of his job he visited mental handicap hospitals and met and made friends with a young man who lived in one of the hospitals. On his visits George would take this man to lunch. When he saw the advert for craft instructor at the Centre he applied, was offered the job and accepted it, taking a cut in salary.

#### *Clients*

Because of the three centre system, people attend Geoffrey Rhodes Centre only if they are considered to have work potential – which means, in effect, that they have reasonable work skills and good social skills. The people for whom George has found jobs can therefore be described as having moderate or mild mental handicap. Some of them have severe epilepsy and two are physically handicapped. People have been found employment in a range of unskilled jobs – for example, labourer, handyman, kitchen assistant, domestic, road cleaner, porter, gardener. All of the 102 people who have become employed have been registered as disabled. All have joined appropriate trade unions. All receive the same pay as others doing the same jobs.

#### *The programme*

People attending the centre travel independently (apart from the older group mentioned above) and are expected to arrive on time. The centre operates an incentive scheme based on points with each point equal to one penny of their end-of-week pay. People attending the centre may receive points for attendance, punctuality, effort, behaviour and work rate. People can earn £4.75 a week, £1.75 of this is deducted for dinners, leaving £3.00 as the

maximum which can be earned. There is an added incentive of £1.00 a week for people in extended work situations, bringing their pay to £4.00.

There are several workshops — woodwork, pottery, packing, craft — in which people stay with the instructor all day to learn the job. Quality work is expected and, from the goods I saw, achieved. Once people can do a good job the work rate is increased.

People take part in extended work situations when they are considered ready to make the important step outside the centre. Placements are made in various social services establishments. Trainees work alongside appointed staff, assisting, for example, as domestics or kitchen assistants. The following guidance lists the important issues of extended work.

#### *Trainees on extended work situations*

- 1 Arrangements to be made in consultation with manager and trade union official, also head of establishment concerned.
- 2 Arrangements not to be changed without further consultation with all parties concerned.
- 3 Trainees to be supervised and not to be depended on as a member of staff.
- 4 Trainees to work to the Geoffrey Rhodes calendar and hours.
- 5 Trainees to return to Geoffrey Rhodes when requiring assessment in work habits.
- 6 Trainees to be monitored and assessed for open employment during training period.
- 7 Payment will be made from Geoffrey Rhodes Centre work sheets.
- 8 Trainees to be appointed only as supernumeraries to existing staff.
- 9 It is hoped that trainees in these positions are given the opportunity to apply for any vacancies that occur.

From extended work, or before if the right job comes up, people move into a real job for real pay. Real jobs are found by George, the disablement resettlement officer, and careers officers. George introduces each person to the job in the way he feels best for each particular individual and work place. He continues to support people as he feels necessary.

#### *Advice for others*

Some of the advice that George has for others is spelled out in the following information sheet.

#### **Work and the mentally handicapped**

Mentally handicapped persons given the right training in social skills and work skills/habits, can become excellent employees and useful members of the community.

The most important aspects of a person's success in obtaining and maintaining work is his/her attitude to others. Social competence is by far the most important quality. This could be defined as a reasonable personality, good general behaviour, pleasant appearance, willingness to cooperate and a good attitude to work. Other important skills are good personal hygiene and the ability to make good relationships and be accepted by others.

Work skills/habits can be taught through training, invariably jobs are lost because of social behaviour problems, ie, not being punctual, attendance poor and so on. Adult training centres are useful training

grounds for the handicapped. They are taught academic, social, living and work skills/habits, where the aim is to train them to be competent enough to be able to live and work in the community. This is done from an individual assessment carried out through careful programming in reaching the needs of the individual. Those persons who are capable of carrying out realistic work are introduced to the various agencies they would require in seeking and maintaining work, ie, Disablement Resettlement Officers, Manpower Services (Job Centres), Tax and DHSS offices, industrial visits etc. When they are fortunate in finding work, any initial settling in period should be monitored by a person especially appointed to look after the needs of the handicapped at this most crucial time, their welfare, union, tax and domestic problems sorted out as quickly as possible to overcome the first stages of employment. It is essential however, to notify potential employers of the correct diagnosis of the handicap of the future employee; one must be honest right from the start. People with mental handicaps are, in the main, slow learners, but with the correct training and encouragement can become valued workers once they know their jobs. It is usually found that the majority of mentally handicapped persons have a happy outlook on life; because of this they are willing to learn.

Some of the best types of employment available to the handicapped are in sheltered workshops, where they are taught a specific skill and through this skill they are able to produce or help to produce goods, receiving a living wage (union rate) for their labour. Another form of employment is through a sheltered industrial group (SIG) where a group of not more than six handicapped persons work together under supervision for the union rate of pay. Most of the jobs negotiated for the handicapped are those of road sweepers, catering assistants, kitchen assistants, domestics, gardeners, porters and general labourers.

Trade unions have been most sympathetic and helpful in their assistance and guidance at all levels.

Jobs are obtainable through the normal agencies such as careers offices, personnel departments, job agencies, but it is most important that the Disablement Resettlement Officer (DRO) is aware of each individual. The DRO can be of great help if training or advice is required.

Parents and relatives of the potential worker have to be involved from the beginning of the negotiations, for without their support, guidance and motivation the initial period can be quite a burden, not only because of the fear of going out to work for the first time, but also small problems, such as catching transport, getting up in the morning, etc, can be such a traumatic change and experience in the life of the handicapped.

Other advice that George felt would be helpful for others included the following:

*Make contacts*, as many as you can, even if you aren't sure how a job will come out of it.

Build relationships with trade unions. Explain what you're doing and why. Elicit union support. George has had good support from trade unions because he did this.

Build relationships with employers slowly. Don't rush in asking for jobs. Get to know people on a first name basis. George tries to find out about the employer before he meets him/her, by asking his friends who know the employer.

Use any means which you think will be helpful.

Invite potential employers to the centre so they can meet people with mental handicap. This is probably a good idea at Geoffrey Rhodes Centre because the building looks nice, quality of items made is good, and attenders are socially skilled. Showing employers around many centres might not be so helpful.

When making contacts go to the person at the top. If you can convince him/her, other staff will listen.

George Twizell has his own unique style of finding jobs which is difficult to describe because it is so flexible and relies so much on his intuition and personal skills. George cheerfully admits to using almost any means to get people jobs. He relies heavily on his friendly,



outgoing personality, his business experience, his huge range of contacts which is constantly growing, his energy and his optimism.

## Cooperatives

In a period of high unemployment, cooperatives provide a way of creating new jobs. A cooperative is a form of worker association in which the firm is owned and controlled by all the workers. It provides an excellent way of integrating handicapped people in employment.

Many local authorities have cooperative development agencies to provide expertise and advice on forming a cooperative and running a small business.

Mentally handicapped workers might be taken on by an existing cooperative, but the examples below describe cooperatives set up specifically to include people with mental handicap.

### **Gillygate Wholefood Bakery, York**

#### *History and aims*

Gillygate Wholefood Bakery (GWB) was founded in 1975 to provide food that is unadulterated by preservatives or over-refined, to create employment for disadvantaged workers, and to function as a cooperative owned by the people who work in it.

GWB has now expanded to include a shop and cafe. Plans are also underway for the Well Workshops, an independent, non-profit making organisation, which will be located adjacent to GWB and will expand the employment opportunities of disadvantaged workers. Since the Well Workshops are not fully underway, I have concentrated this report on GWB.

#### *The people*

There are 16 members of the GWB, most of whom are non-handicapped; a few casual workers and volunteers also help out. I asked various people at Gillygate how many workers would be considered handicapped. The common response was that it was difficult to say because we are all handicapped in some way and that handicaps tend to overlap. Two of the 16 members and two of the casual workers had been classified as mentally handicapped. A few other people could be considered disadvantaged in ways which are difficult to define clearly (for example, emotional problems, depression). One of the workers who has been labelled as mentally handicapped, Lynn Cooper, works full-time and lives at home with her mother a few miles from York. She travels by bus into work each day. The other, Steve Harding, works four hours a day, lives at a Juniper Communities hostel for people with mental handicap and rides a bike or walks to work.

#### *Location and building design*

GWB is located very near the centre of York (five minutes walk from the Minster) in an area that is generally described as on its way up. It is on a main road, slightly set back in Miller's Yard. Other businesses on the same road include antique shops, cafes, clothing shops, a chemist, a few small hotels and a car showroom. The building in which GWB is located was previously the stables for an old horse drawn bus depot which has been converted by the coop. On the ground floor is the mill where flour is stone ground, the bakery kitchen and ovens, the shop and cafe. On the first floor is the packaging room, where small packets of

beans, grains, dried fruit and so on are weighed and marked, the office and changing room/ staff room.

Other businesses in Miller's Yard are the Well Workshops, stalls of craft work and a small outdoor fruit and vegetable stall. All of these are located in premises owned by GWB and pay rent to the cooperative.

#### *My visits*

I visited GWB on two occasions, an initial fact-finding visit and a longer visit when I conducted a detailed interview with one of the workers and took photographs. GWB is a very attractive, inviting place. The stables have been beautifully converted, and great attention has been given to colour schemes, decorating and displaying the goods to be sold.

On one of my visits, I spent some time with Lynn as she prepared the cafe for the day. She was taking great care as she arranged the tables and chairs, put plants on each table, and put bread rolls in a basket. When I commented that the cafe looked very nice she said that this was a very important feature of GWB. Lynn told me that she did a variety of jobs including preparing salads, serving customers in the shop, and going to the bank.

GWB is a very busy place with people in and out all day. There were about 25 customers in to buy bread between 9.15 and 9.45 am. Many people were obviously stopping for bread and rolls on their way to work. Throughout the morning the shop was busy with a steady flow of people coming to buy goods or have a cup of coffee. At lunchtime the cafe was overflowing. All of the food looked and smelled very good. My own lunch of baked potato and salad was delicious.

The bakery was also a very active place. By the time I got there at about 10.30 am, four bakers were busy oiling bread tins, putting bread in the oven, preparing apricot and coconut slices. The bakers usually bake between 300-400 loaves each day which are sold in the shop or delivered by bicycle or collected by commercial contractors, and prepare other sweet and savoury snacks.

Steve Harding came in at about 11.15 am, to do his shift. He began by preparing vegetables for the pizzas and pasties. When he completed this task he mixed a recipe of 'super muesli'. He did this entirely on his own, weighing out 12 lbs of porridge oats, 6 lbs of barley flakes, and so on, all with great concentration and skill. At one point he went to ask about an amount but I was later told that this was because it was a new recipe. He then prepared to mix the muesli in a huge mixing machine, removing the kneading hook and replacing it with an attachment to stir. This appeared to be a complex task, but Steve did it quickly and competently.

Everyone else in the kitchen got on with their own job and left Steve to get on with his. Steve wasn't able to tell me much about his background. Later I was able to talk to Maureen Watson, of Juniper Communities where he lives, who was able to fill me in a little. Steve is 35 years old. He was taken into care when he was four and admitted to mental handicap hospital at 16. He did some work in the hospital, painting and carpentry. He moved to Juniper Communities in 1980 where he did some carpentry work with one of the staff. After about six months he started working at GWB, one day a week at first.

Initially, he was very shy and completely lacking in confidence. Now he is a very competent and organised worker. 'If we don't know where something is we ask Steve. He always knows',

I was told. He is also socialising much more and now stays to chat and teases other workers. In a few weeks he will be moving into his own flat. Although his speech was a little unclear I found him very pleasant and easy to talk to. He put a great deal of effort into explaining what he was doing and why. He agreed to have his picture taken to illustrate various aspects of work and he seemed to enjoy this very much. On several occasions he came to get me when he started to do something that I hadn't photographed.

#### *Pay and organisation*

GWB is a very cheerful place where all the workers are obviously respected and contribute to the running of the business. Most workers get the same wage as others working the same number of hours (£50 per week for those working full-time). Steve earns £10 per week because that is what the others had understood he could earn without losing his benefit. They have recently learned that he can earn more and are adjusting his wage. Decisions at GWB are discussed at meetings which all the workers can, and usually do, attend. Non-handicapped workers admit that some of the more skilled, articulate people make a major contribution to this process, although people with handicaps also make suggestions and contribute to the discussion. Some non-handicapped workers have special responsibility for workers who are handicapped and informally look out for their welfare. This may take the form of having lunch together occasionally to talk about how things are going, just keeping an eye on how the other person is working. Gill, the person responsible for Lynn, says she sometimes has a particular area that she works on with Lynn such as getting her to work independently without asking about things she already knows how to do.

#### *Community relationships*

GWB has very good community relationships. Because of its location and the attitude of people at GWB, there are lots of opportunities for people with handicaps to meet and get to know local people. On the day I visited, an interviewer from Radio York was taping a feature on GWB and a competition they had just held for local school children to design a new logo on the wholefood theme. The winner and three finalists were visiting the next day for lunch and a tour. Also on the day I visited, a woman representing a group of local artists visited in response to an advert placed in the local press about using one of the market stalls during the York festival week. I apologised to the woman I was interviewing about coming to visit on such a busy day. She replied that it's always a bit like that and that they enjoy having people around. GWB is also starting to work with a special school providing three-week work placements for one handicapped student at a time.

#### *Future and advice*

One of the major aims of GWB is to become more financially sound. They are now repaying a bank overdraft which was used to renovate the premises. They would like to be able to pay themselves better and be capable of continuing to employ people who aren't as efficient as other people.

The attitude of the non-handicapped people is to play down people's handicaps and to encourage them to work as independently as they can. An important lesson that they feel they've learned through employing people with mental handicaps is not to try to deal with all the problems alone, but to get help from people who have known the handicapped person in the past. Their other advice was that the attitude to work must change. People must be given time to do their jobs to the best of their ability.

GWB is an unusual, perhaps unique workplace. All the workers are viewed as having some-

thing to give. It is generally recognised that GWB is more than a work place; the workers all give support to each other and all benefit from the type of working environment which they have created for themselves.

#### **Welsh Initiative for Specialised Employment (WISE)**

WISE is an example of a service in the planning stage and was not visited for this survey. It was inaugurated during 1984 and grew out of a sub-group of the West Glamorgan Employment Forum, which expressed concern about the provision of day services in the county. It has also received support from the West Glamorgan Common Ownership Development Agency which promotes and develops workers' cooperatives. WISE currently has 120 members who are mostly parents of people with mental handicap.

WISE's aims are to:

- create, for people with mental handicap, opportunities for paid employment in small scale integrated settings;
- develop, in conjunction with statutory and voluntary bodies, adequate training programmes to help people with mental handicap achieve their full vocational potential;
- offer, within the limits of its resources, a service to anyone, however severe his/her handicap;
- encourage the development of similar initiatives in other parts of the country.

## Conclusions

The aim of this project was to describe developments in vocational services for people with mental handicap. It was not to *evaluate* them. However a number of issues arose which have implications for the future development of employment for people with mental handicap.

### *People who are in work*

One of the difficulties throughout the project was determining whether people who had been helped to find jobs were mentally handicapped and the degree of their handicap. As the project progressed, the definition of mental handicap became less clear. All the people described in this paper had been labelled as mentally handicapped. All had either attended special schools or adult training centres or had lived in mental handicap hospitals or hostels. Some people were obviously mentally handicapped, that is they had the physical characteristics commonly associated with mental handicap (for example, Down's syndrome). Others did not appear mentally handicapped at all.

Staff, employers and co-workers often spoke of dramatic changes in a person's behaviour, attitude and appearance after starting to work (for example, 'He's a completely different person now'). Several people mentioned that problem behaviours, such as attacking others, destroying furniture and having tantrums, which occurred with great frequency at the adult training centre, home or in the hostel, had *never* occurred in the work place. Other people were described as so passive, prior to working, that they would not do anything without being told. They were now working independently and making decisions without constant supervision.

Staff reported time after time, in virtually every visit, how people had gained confidence and skill in the work place. These changes in behaviour were described by staff and employers in very similar ways. When people are given responsibility, treated the same as other workers and expected to do well, they tend to meet these positive expectations.

Many of the people who had been labelled as severely mentally handicapped did not seem to be very handicapped at all. But, of course, when seen for this survey, they had been working for some time and *after* reported major changes in their behaviour had occurred. These changes in people's behaviour made description difficult for this report. Seeing them at work and not knowing their backgrounds one might conclude that they were not really mentally handicapped at all. If they had come from adult training centres then it might be thought that they must have been the most competent. In fact, *a high proportion of the people met who were employed, had been considered quite handicapped and were not expected, by most of the people who knew them, to succeed at work.*

The most inspiring person was Susan Walker who works part-time as a pub cleaner, despite being unable to hear, being partially sighted, labelled as severely mentally handicapped and behaviour disordered and having lived in a locked ward of a mentally handicapped hospital for 30 years (see chapter 2).

Another difficulty in writing the reports of people was in the descriptions of their backgrounds. Many of their employers and colleagues may read this report and might be able to

identify individuals even though pseudonyms were used. Any information which might be hurtful or embarrassing for them has been excluded. Several people had very damaging experiences and some continue to cope with families who cause them tremendous problems. One person was the product of an incestuous relationship. Another, as a child, had been locked in a yard and had been thrown food and was rarely spoken to. Several lived with parents with serious emotional problems. These difficulties are mentioned now to convince readers that many of the people met were severely disadvantaged. They were coping with very difficult and serious problems in addition to being labelled mentally handicapped.

A number of shared characteristics emerged. They were all certainly very nice to Jan, a stranger meeting them for the first time. They were very thoughtful in the answers they gave to questions. Many, but not all, did not see themselves as handicapped and had difficulty in understanding why they had been given this label. All were very motivated; they wanted to get out of their adult training centres and into work. Almost all mentioned money as the motivating factor for working, but most recognised other factors such as making friends with non-handicapped people, being like other people and being independent.

Most did not have a clear idea of the kind of job they would like to have eventually or an idea of their future. Many people in paid employment expressed the fear of losing the job they had and those doing work-experience were very concerned that they would not be able to get a real paid job. Staff often said that people would not want to work full-time because they would miss the social activities of the centre. But that is not what the workers said. Some people who had become employed returned to the adult training centre occasionally to see friends and staff but most said they wanted to put the centre behind them.

It is astonishing that they have overcome the odds against them, such as: being labelled as mentally handicapped; the low expectations of everyone around them; no encouragement to think of work as an option in adult life; lack of preparation for work at school; being institutionalised either in hospital or by attending an adult training centre; coming from difficult backgrounds. It would be difficult even for a highly intelligent person to overcome all of these disadvantages, but many people who have these disadvantages are succeeding. This will surely give those responsible for planning and providing services for people with mental handicap grounds for more optimism and higher expectations in developing employment opportunities in future.

### *Job finders*

Job finders help people with mental handicap to find work, either paid employment or work-experience. These include adult training centre work-experience officers, Pathway employment officers, Shaw Trust development officers, and industrial liaison officers. During the course of the project, 16 people who were or had been job finders were interviewed. They had many qualities and characteristics in common. Most spoke of job finding as a sales job and they had many characteristics usually associated with salesmen and women. The vast majority of job finders were attractive, well dressed, and had friendly outgoing personalities. None of the job finders could be described as shy. Most were non-stop talkers who expressed a great deal of enthusiasm for the work they were doing. Many had no previous experience of mental handicap services or working with mentally handicapped people and they did not see this as a disadvantage. In fact, many said they thought it was an advantage not to have the negative attitudes they found in many staff working in mental handicap services. Many of the job finders had experience in business or industry, and saw this as a distinct advantage because it enabled them to talk to employers in their own language. All were very committed

to the task of helping people with mental handicap to find jobs and showed their commitment by working long hours.

Many admitted to, and some bragged about, using devious means to help people get jobs. The kind of tactics they mentioned appeared to be the methods of a good sales person: male job finders taking attractive female colleagues along to help convince a male employer to give someone a job, finding out about employers' outside interests and talking to them about these and emphasising potential employees' good points.

All the job finders appeared to enjoy their jobs very much and many mentioned that they especially enjoyed the challenge. All spent less than half their time in their offices and those who worked from adult training centres said that they were glad not to be working in the centre all day. Although most job finders were part of a bigger organisation, most got support from people outside their own organisations who were also doing job finding. Several had good working relationships with disablement resettlement officers, and adult training centre job finders worked closely with Pathway employment officers.

All the job finders were optimistic, determined, practical and realistic, but there were interesting contradictions. For example, one job finder said that there were some people he would never try to find jobs for. These people he called 'the no-hopers'. Later he described finding a job for a man who had so many problems that no one ever thought he would work. When asked why he even tried to find a job for this man he said that another member of staff had especially liked the man and asked him to try and help. 'I did my best and I got him a job. I was wrong about him', he said. This job finder saw the man for whom he found a job as an exception. However, it became clear during the course of this project that no one should be seen as 'an exception' any more.

There were other contradictions in the language some of the job finders used to describe the people for whom they were finding jobs. This was particularly true of job finders who had come from business or industry. It was difficult to understand how people working in very innovative services and expressing a view that people with mental handicap are just like everyone else, could also talk about a 45 year old woman as 'this little girl' and a man of 33 as 'one of my best boys'. This complaint may appear to be fairly minor, and certainly much more derogatory descriptions are often used about people with mental handicap. It was surprising, however, to find people working in these very innovative schemes talking about adults doing real jobs in open employment as if they were children.

Most of the schemes and services described in this paper started because *one* individual was dissatisfied with day services for people with mental handicap. These people are innovators who saw the problems of day-time services for people with mental handicap (for example, not enough day centre places, segregated systems, people working for pocket money or doing recreational activities which other adults do in their leisure time). They had ideas for changing the services or starting new ones, *and* were able to convince someone in authority or a group with influence, such as a voluntary body, to help them put their ideas into practice.

#### *Work colleagues*

The work settings in which people were doing either paid employment or work-experience were very diverse — from very large factories and industrial concerns to small offices, shops, old people's homes and so on. All the work places visited, with the exception of one, provided pleasant working environments for all of their employees. The exception was a



small grocery shop which was very unfriendly. The shop was a work place for someone doing work-experience and she was not therefore paid for her work. This made the situation seem even worse. This woman had been working at the shop for over a year and had started working with a manager who had left and had since been replaced. The new manager had agreed to keep her on for work-experience. He was negative and unpleasant. When asked what jobs the woman did in the shop he replied 'Not much. They can't can they. She wouldn't even talk to me for six months. She won't talk to you, you know.' I later had a conversation with this woman who was shy but answered all my questions and showed me how she priced goods and stocked shelves.

Both employers and people working alongside a mentally handicapped person in all the other work places that I visited were very friendly to me and talked very positively about the worker with mental handicap. Most people mentioned how much the person had changed, gaining confidence and ability. Most of the people who worked alongside a mentally handicapped person knew quite a lot about the person's life, although some didn't socialise with the handicapped person outside the work place.

A few co-workers have become very friendly with the person and invited him/her to their home for meals or gone out together socially. In some places co-workers have become very concerned about the person's welfare and in one case had helped the person to find better living accommodation (see page 33). Many employers and co-workers said that they had found it had been of benefit to work with a person with mental handicap. Many felt that they had come to understand handicap better. Some said that it had made them appreciate how lucky they were. Others said they just liked the person.

No one expressed concern or felt that there were major problems in employing or working alongside someone with mental handicap. In some work places handicapped workers were over-protected or treated as pets. In others the handicapped person seemed to be treated as an equal, although being treated very kindly. Many of the job finders spoke of the need to educate and support employers. Many felt that some employers were overly protective toward the mentally handicapped employee but didn't really feel that they had the time to devote to working with them. Job finders were more concerned about issues of exploitation and were not so concerned with people being treated in a patronising way.

### *Jobs*

The kind of job the person does is very important and job finders must carefully consider many factors about each job. Does the person want *this* job? Does he/she know what the alternatives are? Can he/she do the job and if not how will he/she be taught? Are safety regulations being followed? Are the hours and pay appropriate? Can the person get to the work place easily? Will he/she be treated with respect by the employer and colleagues?

Many people, including some job finders, are also concerned about the image of people with handicaps which is created by the jobs they do. They feel that people with mental handicap should be encouraged to do jobs which will enhance their image in order to increase feelings of self-worth and help other people to see them as valued citizens. Some jobs are more valued by our society than others. For example, doctors, computer programmers and scientists are probably more generally respected than street cleaners and rubbish collectors. Most jobs would fall between the extremes of most valued and least valued and some jobs would be valued by some people but not by others. For example, working in a munitions factory might be seen as a very valued and patriotic job by some people; others would not even consider this sort of job because they feel it is morally wrong.

Since people with handicaps have so much stigmatising imagery surrounding them, services should do everything in their power to reduce such imagery and actively seek to improve the status of clients by association with positive imagery. Having a job, of course, is highly valued and conveys a message of making a contribution to society rather than being a receiver of aid and charity. Several people met during this project are doing jobs which create positive images: working in a police department store, packaging computer components, baking whole-meal bread, working on an oil company research site.

Jobs which may be perfectly acceptable for people who are not disadvantaged may be questionable for people with mental handicap because of the negative associations they create. These jobs include working with plants, animals, elderly people, and second-hand goods. Many service providers assume that horticulture is a natural area of work for people with mental handicap. This is often justified in terms of the slow pace of work and the lack of challenge that is thought appropriate. Work as care assistants with elderly people is becoming popular too with little realisation that the images of decline, sickness and death will not help handicapped people in their struggle for acceptance.

Some may argue that in these times of high unemployment, people with mental handicap should be grateful for any job at all. This attitude indicates the way that people with mental handicap are viewed by our society — as second class citizens who do not have the same rights as others. This attitude is also reflected by unemployment figures. The national unemployment rate in December 1984 was 13.4 per cent while unemployment among people who have been labelled as severely mentally handicapped is estimated to be greater than 95 per cent. There is therefore a great deal of catching up to be done and a strong case for positive discrimination in favour of people with mental handicap. Some job finders would agree that they should concentrate on finding jobs which will enhance people's image, but they would also argue that they must be practical.

Many job finders recognise that they are making compromises and that these compromises enable more people to benefit from becoming employed. These job finders would not go out of their way to find jobs which create negative images but they do not feel they can dismiss these jobs. I was especially aware of the conflict that this creates in job finders when I visited Greenock in Strathclyde where male unemployment was 21 per cent in July 1984 and rising. I had just visited someone working in a factory which recycled second-hand furniture for resale. The job finder said to me after the visit, 'It's not a very good image, is it? We know it isn't but there are so few jobs up here we feel we must compromise.'

Some job finders told me that they were aware of the images created, but that people actively chose to work in a garden, on a farm or in an old people's home. Others reported that some of their clients would do almost any job rather than return to the adult training centre. Most felt that this should be the person's choice and that their role should be to give people the information they need to make these decisions. It is of concern, however, that some job finders do not seem to be aware of these issues and continue to find as many jobs as possible in gardens, on farms and in old people's homes, instead of actively seeking jobs that would help to create more positive images. It does seem to be important for job finders to be aware of, and carefully consider, issues of image when looking for jobs and give people alternatives which will help them make informed choices about the kind of job they decide to do.

### *The future of employment for people with mental handicap*

In the past few years interest in employment for people with mental handicap has been rapidly increasing and many new employment services or schemes are being planned and developed. It may seem surprising that these developments are occurring now in times of high unemployment. Perhaps the emphasis by community-based services on looking at individual needs and the consciousness-raising activities of organisations such as CMHERA, the King's Fund Centre and MENCAP, may help to explain this.

As more and more people leave mental handicap hospitals and rejoin their communities and as better community-based services are provided, there will be increasing demands from people with mental handicap to take their place working alongside non-handicapped people. This does not mean that all people with mental handicap will want to work or that all of those who do will get jobs. It *should* mean, however, that they will have a fair share of the jobs which are available.

Employment services will face a number of challenges as they develop. One is how to keep a sharp focus on the central task of helping people to get jobs without getting sidetracked into non-work related activities. If other services are not being provided, employment services may feel some obligation to fill gaps. This would weaken the concentration on the main function. Rather than taking on these extraneous activities, vocational services should prompt other, more appropriate service providers, to shoulder their responsibilities.

Another major challenge will be to maintain the emphasis on full integration. The pressures to congregate and segregate handicapped people will continue. Vocational services must keep aware of those pressures and not lose sight of their primary task — to bring handicapped and non-handicapped people into personal relationships through work.

### *Summary of the findings of this project*

- 1 There are a growing number of services and schemes throughout Britain which are actively engaged in helping people with mental handicap to get jobs working alongside non-handicapped people.
- 2 Many people with mental handicap want to be employed and are able to do a job, given appropriate support.
- 3 Many people with 'problem behaviour' (for example, attacking others, tantrums, crying) do not have these problems in their work place.
- 4 Trying to predict whether someone will be able to do a job is hazardous. People need to have the opportunity to show what they can do in the work place.
- 5 Many people change dramatically after they start working: they gain confidence, are happier, are friendlier and gain skills.
- 6 Although some employers take on people with mental handicap out of kindness, many later acknowledge that employing a handicapped person makes good economic sense.
- 7 There is a great deal of misunderstanding and confusion about the benefit system. Staff, families and people with mental handicap are concerned that once people start working they

may be worse off financially or that it may be difficult to reclaim benefits if they become unemployed.

8 Some people with mental handicap are paid very low wages so as not to interfere with their benefits. Some employers 'top up' low wages with goods, free transport, free meals, and so on.

9 Most of the people with mental handicap who are in paid employment could be best described as moderately or mildly mentally handicapped.

10 There are, however, people with severe and multiple handicaps who are employed.

11 Most people with mental handicap need some help or support in getting and keeping jobs. Some need only minimal support for a short period. Others need a great deal of support throughout their working lives. The level of support must be decided on an individual basis and constantly reviewed to meet the person's changing needs.

12 Working alongside non-handicapped people is a very good way for people with mental handicap to become integrated into the community.

## Appendix Addresses of schemes described

Bishopstoke Adult Training Centre  
Church Road  
Bishopstoke  
Eastleigh  
Hampshire

Tel: Eastleigh 614879

Blakes Wharf  
147 Stevenage Road  
Fulham  
London SW6 *Tel: 01-385 9471*

Bracknell Training Centre  
Eastern Road  
Bracknell

Tel: Bracknell 423758

Geoffrey Rhodes Centre  
Algernon Road  
Newcastle-upon-Tyne

Tel: 0632 657317

Gillygate Wholefood Bakery  
Miller's Yard  
Gillygate  
York

Tel: York 24045

Harington Scheme  
c/o Furnival House  
Cholmeley Park  
Highgate  
London N6

Outreach Project  
Mearns Centre  
Mearns Street  
Greenock PA15 4QD

Pathway Employment Services  
Pathway Head Office  
169a City Road  
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Tel: 0222 482072

Shaw Trust  
Caithness House  
Weston Way  
Melksham  
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Welsh Initiative for Specialised  
Employment (WISE)  
10 St Helens Road  
Swansea SA1 4AN

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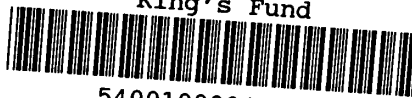
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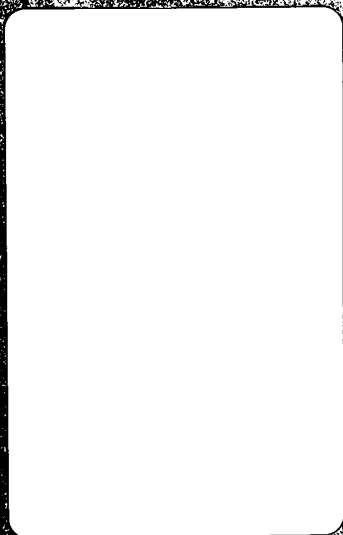


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