EXPLAINING THE EVIDENCE FOR REFORM SERIES

PAPER 3: SCHOOL LEAVER EMPLOYMENT SUPPORT (SLES) – RESHAPING THE APPROACH

HEADLINES

- The employment outcomes for young people with intellectual disability aged 15-24 years are extremely low.
- SLES was introduced by the NDIA in 2016 to support employment readiness of school leavers with a disability.
- SLES is focused largely on preliminary jobseeker support for those leaving school and offers little support to employers.
- SLES has a mildly positive affect on outcomes, though participants identify high levels of inadequate support.
- The design of SLES activities does not reflect international evidence-based transition and employment support practice for young people with intellectual disability that emphasises early engagement in transition and employment planning (from age 14), paid and unpaid work experience, customised employment strategies, and work integrated learning opportunities.

THE TRANSITION AND EMPLOYMENT SITUATION OF YOUNG PEOPLE WITH DISABILITY AGED 15-24 YEARS

A range of data highlights that young people with disability experience significantly higher rates of unemployment than their non-disabled peers, with young people with intellectual disability being particularly marginalised from employment in community-based settings. NDIA data (2020) shows that NDIS participants aged 15-24 have vastly lower employment rates than the Australian norm for this age as evidenced in the Longitudinal Survey of Australian Youth (LSAY) (NDIA, 2020). 16% of NDIS participants in this age cohort had an intellectual disability, 17% with Down syndrome, and 14% with Autism (NDIA, 2020). NDIA data (2019) shows that only 18% of participants with an intellectual disability aged 15-24 have employment, rising to 25% in year 2 of participation in NDIS.

Only 45% of NDIS participants aged 15-24 had work-related goals in their NDIS plans as of 31 December 2020, although this is higher for people with intellectual disability and Down syndrome. The number of participants with a work-related goal peaks at 18-20 years of age and then declines (NDIA, 2020). Of those in this age group who had been in the scheme for two years, only 21% felt the NDIS had helped them find a job right for them, and this proportion decreased the longer they had been in the scheme.

Of those with paid employment, somewhat more than half were in open employment by year three in the scheme: 39% in open employment on full award wages, 24% in open employment on less than full award wages. A bit less than one third of those employed (31%) were in ADEs (NDIA, 2019). Once in ADEs, where the primary cohort is people with intellectual disability, there is little movement into

open employment. 2020 data from the NDIS reports that only 4% of 15-24 year-olds moved from ADEs to open employment over a one year period (NDIA, 2020, p. 109).

WHAT ARE SCHOOL LEAVER EMPLOYMENT SUPPORTS

Since 2016, the NDIS has provided funding for up to two years to participants who are school leavers for 'school leaver employment supports' (SLES). These supports 'help participants move from school to work' (NDIA, 2022a, p. 7). SLES is based on the NSW Transition to Work program that aimed to disrupt direct transition from school to segregated disability day and employment services. The framing of the SLES, in a policy sense, is as an 'early intervention support' aimed at

> bridging gaps in mainstream services by recognising that many NDIS participants require significant investment early to gain generic competencies needed for work (NDIA, 2022a, p. 7).

In this context it is seen as a precursor to and feeder into DES, though some support activities overlap.

Funding is available in the final years of school and directly after leaving school. As described by the NDIS:

> Providers who deliver school leaver employment supports help young people prepare, look for and gain employment. They provide meaningful, individualised capacity building activities so young people can achieve their employment goals (https://www.ndis.gov.au/providers/working-provider/school-leaver-employment-supports).

SLES can be delivered individually or as part of a group, or a combination of both. During 2021, on average, somewhat more time was spent in group based activity (49%) than one on one (40%), and the remainder of time spent in distance/online delivery, noting that incidence of COVID-19 affected delivery modality of SLES activities throughout this period (NDIA, 2022a).

While the selection of employment support activities is meant to be individually relevant, the NDIS provide several different descriptions of possible supports, outlined in Table 1. The NDIS SLES Provider Reporting tool requires providers to list progress and hours of delivery across a range of areas, which go beyond shorter explanations offered to providers on the main website.

Table 1: Focus of employment supports in SLES

NDIS SLES Provider Reporting tool https://www.ndis.gov.au/providers/working-provider/school-leaver-employment-supports	For Providers: SLES webpage, 'How School Leaver Employment Supports work' section: https://www.ndis.gov.au/providers/working-provider/school-leaver-employment-supports
Assessments (of individual's capabilities, goals, progress and support requirements)	• discovery activities
Planning and reviewing progress	
Exploring employment options (including via workplace visits)	
Engagement with family/carer to support employment directions	
Engagement with other professionals/providers to support employment goals	

Building social, presentation and communication skills	• time management skills • communication skills • personal development skills
Travel training	• travel skills
Work skills training	• money handling skills • job ready skills
Employer engagement education and job customisation	
Work experience support of the participant (on the job)	• work experience
On the job support of participant (when initially employed)	

Using the terminology of the Typology of Employment Support Interventions presented in Paper 2, this list of supports largely sits in two domains: Building foundation skills; and Planning and preparation for work. Supports almost exclusively fall only on the supply side and have little engagement with building employer-jobseeker interactions or employer capacity.

EMERGING ISSUES WITH SLES DESIGN

NDIS report a range of SLES design issues that have emerged from consultation:

- There is tension between the programmatic appearance of SLES and the need to 'enable tailored supports based on individual needs and goals',
- The performance (skills, knowledge, experience, quality) of providers varies markedly and they need guidance on 'best practice milestones' so as to increase accountability to participants and their supporters, and for this to be linked to payment,
- 'Participants lack information to guide decision-making in selecting the right provider' and to navigate the complex disability employment system comprised of mainstream and NDIS employment supports,
- Support commences too late for some participants and needs to be available to all young people when they attain working age. Local Area Coordinators (LACs) and Planners need to support families and participants to connect to SLES providers (NDIA, 2022b, pp. 4-5).

Additionally, given that SLES is positioned as preparatory for entrance to DES, problems with access to and relevance of DES have also been a noted problem for people with intellectual disability who are either not well supported within DES or are ineligible to access DES. Extremely low levels of transfer of SLES participants in the data reported below (2%) highlight this issue. In this context, NDIS participants exiting SLES are left unsupported to secure and maintain suitable employment.

CURRENT SLES SCOPE AND PERFORMANCE

The NDIA's Provider data on SLES (NDIA, 2022a) shows 6,397 SLES participants throughout 2021, aged 15-24. Detailed data is available for only 4,530 of these, reported below.

COHORT

SLES participation appears to accurately reflect the NDIS participant cohort demographics for the age group 15-24 years old. Most SLES recipients have Autism (51%) or intellectual disability (36%), and a further 3% with Down syndrome, with most being male (67%). Similarly, the proportions of those identifying as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander (6%) or as from a Culturally and Linguistically diverse

community (7%) are roughly consistent with the overall numbers of NDIS participants from these categories in the 15-24 year old age group.

Most SLES participants are aged 18-20 (76%) (NDIA, 2022a), and most (89%) had completed year 12 (NDIA, 2022b).

SLES has higher participant numbers in the more populous states, with the lowest SLES participant numbers in the NT (fewer than 11) and ACT (70).

This data also highlights that, of those participants surveyed, the most common areas of functional impact in school settings were:

- learning (68%)
- mixing with people (65%)
- going out by myself (59%)
- managing emotions (59%)
- using money (58%)
- using public transport (53%)
- remembering things (52%)
- following instructions (51%)
- self-care (32%)
- talking (32%) (NDIA, 2022b).

This is useful data as it forecasts potential barriers to employment requiring targeted supports. For example, as more than half of SLES participants identify cognitive functioning related to common employment skills such as following instructions and remembering things, then employment supports need to be provided that match and support the requirements of the individual's workplace.

Data from a limited sample of survey respondents for the period 2018 and 2019, shows that 26% who had SLES in their NDIS plan did not use their SLES funding, frequently related to having no explanation of purpose of funding; funding not being suitable or at right time; and a range of other factors (NDIA, 2022b).

HOW PROVIDERS ARE SELECTED

The 2016-18 data highlights that the most common means of selecting a SLES provider is through support from the participant's parents (40%), followed by support from the school (33%), and meetings with a provider (28%). This is consistent with a study by Crosbie (2022), where family members explained their key role in supporting the decision to access SLES, and the role of the school in linking them to providers. Only 15% were supported by a LAC (NDIA, 2022b). This is a considerable burden for families who have been forced to undertake a quasi-formal navigation and support coordination role to manage selection of, and access to, employment supports, with some family members not having adequate skills or resources to do so (Crosbie, 2022).

THE TYPE OF SUPPORT PROVIDED

Around half of SLES support delivery is spent in skills building and training, including social, presentation and communication skills (around 23%); and work skills (24%). Very minimal amounts of time are spent on employer education and job customisation (5%), evidencing the almost exclusive focus on the Supply side of employment support provision (NDIA, 2022a).

Table 2: Types of support provided by SLES (actual)

Support type provided (% of hours per participant)	Oct-Dec quarter 2021
Assessments	3%
Planning and reviewing progress	6%
Exploring employment options	**10%**
Engagement with family/carer to support employment directions	4%
Engagement with other professionals/providers to support employment goals	3%
Building social, presentation and communication skills	**23%**
Travel training	4%
Work skills training	**24%**
Employer engagement education and job customisation	5%
Work experience support (on the job)	**13%**
Other (Field 1)	3%
Other (Field 2)	1%

Table adapted from NDIA (2022a), p. 17.

While the 2021 data (NDIA, 2022a) in Table 2 identifies the proportion of support time spent on each activity for each participant, data from an earlier 2018 SLES cohort identifies the proportion of the cohort receiving specific types of support. This data suggests that only a proportion are receiving effective support in these areas:

- 44% of these participants reported that their SLES provider helped them arrange work experience in a role they were interested in (and a further 18% in a role they were not interested in);
- 57% said they were supported on the job by the SLES provider during work experience, with a further 35% reporting that while they were supported, they needed more support than they were given, and 8% received no support. Support on the job is a potentially important element of SLES provision, given the wider context where NDIA participants aged 15-24 have identified that they are inadequately supported on the job when in open employment and are largely reliant on the employer to provide support (NDIA, 2020).
- 30% said that they were supported to undertake courses related to employment goals (NDIA, 2022b).

Around half of SLES participants are receiving support in relevant areas to their employment support needs.

OUTCOMES

Overall, the reported outcomes of SLES are moderate, with some elements echoing evidence from research, such as work experience as a predictor of employment outcomes (NDIA, 2022a). However, the modest SLES outcomes do not appear to have greatly impacted employment outcomes for this age cohort overall. NDIS data indicates that the rates of young people without work but wanting work remains consistent (at 51%) between entry and four years post SLES commencement (NDIA, 2020).

The NDIA reports that longitudinal data on employment supports from the NDIA Office of the Scheme Actuary, shows that of those receiving SLES at 2 years, 10% more are in paid employment than those in a matched comparison group (NDIA, 2022b). Similarly, modelling of NDIA data from 2020 shows that a higher proportion of NDIS participants who received SLES than those who did not were in non-ADE employment at the end of the one year review period, and fewer were in ADE employment (NDIA. 2020, p. 149). Almost double the proportion of SLES participants were in non

ADE employment two years after SLES than a similar group who had not received SLES (15% vs 8%) (NDIA, 2020). While the proportion of SLES participants with such outcomes is small, these results appear to indicate a comparative benefit to SLES participation.

In 2021, despite the majority of time being dedicated to skills training, progress was moderate (NDIA, 2022a). Across support areas, in the main, less than one third of participants achieved their goals or made significant progress. Around two thirds made 'some progress' at the reporting point at each quarter.

- For Social, presentation and communication skills: 1% fully achieved goals; 24% had significant progress; 69% had some progress; 5% had no progress.
- For Work skills: 5% fully achieved goals; 25% had significant progress; 64% had some progress; 6% had no progress.
- For Work experience: 3% fully achieved goals; 40% had significant progress; 52% had some progress; 5% had no progress.

This is echoed in earlier 2018 data that suggests that only 46% of SLES participants felt that all supports (23%), or most supports (23%), helped them in achieving employment goals, with 15% noting that no supports helped (NDIA, 2022b).

Of those who exited SLES in 2021, most (46%) did not have an employment outcome. **Non employment** outcomes included:

- 4% entered education or further study (9% in 2018 data, NDIA, 2022b)
- 10% undertook volunteering or other unpaid work experience (9% in 2018 data, NDIA, 2022b)
- 2% of participants were referred to DES (12% in 2018 data, NDIA, 2022b)
- 4% were referred to another provider (5% in 2018 data, NDIA, 2022b)
- 26% exited SLES (no other data provided).
- whereas the 2018 data shows 20% employed exited to **open employment** (NDIA, 2022b), 2021 data shows 27% exited to open employment (5% full time, 43% part time, 34% casual, 4% self-employed)
- 16% on full award wage (6% of these with assistance from DES)
- 10% on supported wage (7% of these with assistance from DES)
- 1% self-employed/micro enterprise (NDIA, 2022a)
- 6% exited to an **ADE/supported employment** (NDIA, 2022a). This is similar to 2018 data of 7% (NDIA, 2022b). Interestingly, this level of exit to an ADE is far less than the 23% of NDIS participants aged 15-24 having a job in an ADE (NDIA, 2020)
- the remainder are unknown (NDIA, 2022a).

However, other data shows an increase in employment outcomes over time since SLES exit, increasing to 33% in open employment, and 7% in ADEs across the subsequent two years post exit (NDIA, 2022b).

The majority of SLES participants worked 15-21 hours per week on exit. Hours worked by 2021 participants exiting SLES to employment were:

- 0-7/week 11%
- 8-14/week 24%
- 15-21/week 36%

- 22+/week 15% (NDIA, 2022a).

Most (29%) entered employed in hospitality and tourism, 19% in retail and consumer products, 16% in trades and services, and 9% in manufacturing and operation (NDIA, 2022a). This has some similarities with employment data for NDIS participants (including SLES and non SLES) aged 15-24 years, where 13% had employment in retail, 11% in hospitality (NDIA, 2022, p. 56), and around 1% had self-employment, though the categories and figures are not easily comparable. A key question requiring more data is whether SLES offers a full scope of employment outcomes, or overly narrows fields and types of employment.

Of those moving into employment, only 18% of SLES participants think they will be using NDIS Supports in Employment (NDIA, 2022a).

There is somewhat contradictory data in relation to the employer use of supported wages, for SLES participants exiting to employment. While the employment data (above) shows 10% of participants moving into open employment on supported wages, with a further 6% moving into ADEs (potentially on supported wages), SLES providers report that 37% (nearly three times that number) of employers say they will use supported wages for the participants' employment (NDIA, 2022a). Data from the NDIA in 2020 across all NDIS participants aged 15-24 (including those using SLES) who are employed, shows 12% being employed in open employment on a supported wage. In this data, 15% are employed in retail, 11% in hospitality, 6% in food/fast food, 6% in packaging/packing and 4% in cleaning on supported wages (NDIA, 2020, p. 57). This data suggests that the use of supported wage in open employment is higher in the 15-24 year-old cohort than it is for 25 years and above cohort, where it is 8% less (NDIA, 2020). Overall, it would appear that the use of supported wage in open employment for SLES participants is somewhere between 10-37% of those exiting SLES.

Taken together, the moderate utilisation of supported wages in open employment and the low utilisation of NDIS funding for supports in employment, raises questions about the extent to which young people are being equipped with adequate employment supports to maximise their productivity, linked to the level of wages paid, in open employment.

EFFECTIVE SLES ACTIVITIES (FROM NDIA DATA)

A range of NDIA data for SLES participants and for NDIS participants aged 15-24 identifies employment support activities that function as drivers of employment. Broadly these include:

- support to develop work skills (where participants showed significant progress toward or full achievement of their goals) (NDIA, 2022a)
- work experience and volunteering (NDIA, 2020, 2022a)
- employer engagement and job customisation (NDIA, 2022a)
- higher levels of one to one support (NDIA, 2022a)
- receiving assistance to find a job
- early employment discussions and planning with young people and families
- post school educational attainment (NDIA, 2020).

This data has a high resonance with international research evidence about the factors influencing open employment outcomes for school leavers with disability.

Other data suggests that outcomes are related to providers who regularly (i.e. once a fortnight) undertake progress reviews and have very good understanding of participants' support needs (NDIA, 2022b).

Participants felt services could be improved by providers arranging more work experience (52%), providing more skill building opportunities (42%), and spending more time helping to identify work goals (35%) (NDIA, 2022b).

INTERNATIONAL RESEARCH EVIDENCE ABOUT TRANSITION FROM SCHOOL TO WORK FOR YOUNG PEOPLE WITH DISABILITY

There is no information about the design principles of SLES as an NDIS funded program, nor about the design logic used by SLES providers in the selection and delivery of employment support interventions.

By contrast, there is substantial research evidence underpinning an internationally accepted best-practice model of school to work transition for young people with disability (Kohler et al., 2016). Seven best practice elements of transition planning and support provision for young people with disability have been repeatedly identified in research internationally. A much smaller body of evidence explores the elements most effective for young people with intellectual disability, identifying a more limited set. These are captured in Table 3.

Table 3: Evidence based best practices for transition for young people with disability (based on Papay & Bambara, 2014)

Best practice elements of transition planning and support for young people, related to post school outcomes	
All disability	**Intellectual disability**
1. Youth involvement in transition planning/strategies to foster self-determination	✓
2. Family involvement in transition planning	✓
3. Individualised transition planning	
4. Vocational education and work experiences	✓ (work experiences)
5. Independent living preparation (life skills instruction and experiences)	✓
6. General education and inclusion activities with peers without disability	
7. Interagency involvement and collaboration	✓

As depicted in Table 3, the transition practices that have been found to be particularly predictive of post-school outcomes, including employment, independent living, and quality of life, for young people with intellectual disability are:

1. youth involvement in transition planning
2. family involvement in transition planning and implementation
3. work experiences
4. life skills instruction and experience
5. inter-agency collaboration (Papay & Bambara, 2014).

There is a broad literature base to each of these elements, largely in the international context (US), that offers evidence about the types or ingredients of employment support practices related to these five broad areas.

YOUTH INVOLVEMENT IN TRANSITION PLANNING

Youth involvement in transition planning has been shown to have significant effect on post school employment outcomes (Papay & Bambara, 2014). Involvement includes individual education plans within secondary schools, commencing from age 14 (Kohler et al., 2017). Explicit teaching of self-

determination skills when included in school curriculum has been correlated with post school outcomes (Benitez et al., 2005), and has been the focus of an evidence-based practice model in schools - the Self Determined Learning Model of Instruction. The model has been linked to higher employment and community participation outcomes for young people with intellectual disability (Shogren et al., 2019). Self-determination development has also been integrated within career design activities for people with intellectual disability, and extended into 'life designing' activities with good results (Wehmeyer et al., 2019).

FAMILY INVOLVEMENT IN TRANSITION PLANNING

The expectations of families have been found to be one of the biggest factors affecting open employment outcomes for people with intellectual disability (Papay & Bambara, 2014). Likewise, family involvement in transition planning, including individual education plans and post-school goal setting, is a similarly positive factor. The involvement of families has been supported in a range of ways, discussed in the literature. This includes structured training, individualised planning sessions, follow up support to families of young people with Autism (Hagner et al., 2012); provision of training and information sessions, peer role models among families, and linking families to family support groups (Pleet-Odle et al., 2016).

WORK EXPERIENCE

There is a wealth of evidence about the value of work experiences for people with intellectual disability as a predictor of employment outcomes (for example, Papay & Bambara, 2014; Ju et al., 2015). Work experience is not a narrow concept and has been evidenced to include: job-tasters, internships, work sampling, work integrated learning, paid and unpaid work. Paid work experience, such as after school jobs, is a predictor of postschool employment for people with intellectual disability (Wehman et al., 2014).

> Likewise, Luecking and Luecking (2013) found that while work experience was the single most important predictor of later work for students with intellectual disability, the impact doubled if they had paid work (Crosbie, 2022, p. 87).

Work experience plays an important role on many fronts. Not only does it provide opportunities for young people to learn about work and develop soft skills (e.g. independence) (Lindstrom et al., 2014), it also influences parental and employer expectations about employment for people with intellectual disability (for example, Blustein et al., 2016). Importantly, work experience provides an opportunity to identify the young person's strengths as well as need for workplace accommodations (Dean et al., 2018). There is some evidence that poorly structured or supported work experience, such as school-supported activities, will not function as a predictor of later employment outcomes (Daviso et al., 2016).

LIFE SKILLS INSTRUCTION AND EXPERIENCE

A range of life skill areas have been found to influence later post school education and other outcomes (Papay & Bambara, 2014; Carter et al., 2011b). These include banking, food preparation and shopping, laundry skills, information technology skills, independent travel, self-care and communication skills.

INTERAGENCY COLLABORATION

Much research has focused on the role of collaboration between agencies involved in school to work transition (e.g. schools and adult services) and in the structures that support this collaboration

(Haber et al., 2016; Kohler et al., 2016; Meadows, 2019; Papay & Bambara, 2014; Sheppard et al., 2017). Evidence from the UK suggests that multi-agency/multi-stakeholder transition has increased outcomes for young people (e.g. Kaehne, 2013). In the US, collaborative transition models have brought together stakeholder groups via over-arching government 'employment first' approaches, for example through the development of consortia of key stakeholders, the provision of technical assistance to transition actors, and statewide employment targets (Molfenter et al., 2017). In Australia, Ticket to Work, (TTW) a transition program for young people with disability, incorporates local area networks of schools, employers, VET providers and others across Australia (ARTD Consultants, 2019). Data from TTW suggests increased employment and post school education outcomes (ARTD Consultants, 2016, 2019).

RESEARCH EVIDENCE ABOUT EMPLOYMENT SUPPORT FOR PEOPLE WITH INTELLECTUAL DISABILITY

Evidence about supported employment (as used in the US), customised employment, and work integrated learning is provided in Paper 2, as key approaches to the design of employment supports that foster employment outcomes for people with intellectual disability.

In addition to these approaches, University-based transition programs have evidence to support young people transitioning from school to work and independent living.

UNIVERSITY BASED TRANSITION PROGRAMS

The US has more than 305 colleges providing post secondary programs to more than 6,000 students with disability (Think College National Coordinating Center Accreditation Workgroup, 2021), with evidence that this approch increases employment outcomes for people with intellectual disability (Grigal et al., 2011). Students might be enrolled in 'mainstream' programs, in hybrid programs (a mix of segregated and inclusive activities), or in segregated programs offered on college campuses. In Australia, two programs have some evidence of positive social outcomes: the 'Up the Hill Project' delivered at Flinders University (Rillotta et al., 2020), and the 'Uni 2 beyond' program developed by Sydney University to include young people with intellectual disability in university (O'Brien et al., 2019).

RESEARCH EVIDENCE ABOUT THE TRANSITION AND EMPLOYMENT SUPPORT NEEDS OF AUSTRALIAN YOUNG PEOPLE WITH INTELLECTUAL DISABILITY

Crosbie (2022) recently undertook a study of young people with intellectual disability, their families and other stakeholders in the context of school to work transition in Australia. The barriers and enablers to school to work transition strongly align with the breadth of barriers to work (as described in Paper 2), and to the existing research evidence about best practice in transition and employment support (Papers 2 and 3).

In particular, young people and their families report a lack of transition planning, with a focus largely being on a decision about selecting the immediate post school activity. As evident in the NDIS data, schools and disability service providers were the main service providers discussing options with families, with families carrying the bulk of the workload for organising employment supports with little information. The focus on immediate 'transition' from one service environment (school) to

another (largely SLES, disability services or ADEs) denied a focus on longer life course planning and long term employment aspirations within a context of 'emerging adulthood' over a much longer period (e.g. 18-25).

Many young people in the study had utilised SLES, which was viewed, at least initially, as a positive option that offered the security of a structure whilst supporting development towards employment. However, families also reported frustration with poor communication about the goals of SLES and progress towards them, and extremely poor interfaces between SLES, DES and other supports. Many families felt a second transition 'cliff' looming as the SLES period drew to a close, with little sense of what would happen next or where to gain support. While some were connected to DES, others were not, and even where DES was an option, families noted that DES would not be providing a program of activities (as SLES had done) while a work placement was sought and the young person would potentially be at home doing nothing. DES was considered a poor option with little specialist knowledge of how to support people with intellectual disability, and insufficient time available to support individuals and businesses in the ongoing and intensive way needed. While SLES was considered a 'stepping stone' post school, the lack of employment outcomes at the end of the program meant that it was not clear what it was stepping to. Key informants reiterated family members' observations of the lack of appropriate employment services for people with intellectual disability in Australia, particularly customised employment.

Overall, families were left with the workload of investigating employment options, drawing on social networks to unlock opportunities or utilising information from other families about resources or programs available. Families and other stakeholders reported the difficulty and exhaustion of battling a system that assumed young people with intellectual disability would be 'non workers'. Families were identified as the primary employment support for young people, and requiring substantial resourcing and support themselves but with few, largely informal, avenues for obtaining this.

For young people with intellectual disability, their focus was firmly on normative, emerging adulthood roles, often modelled on their siblings, where employment and valued roles were an expected part of this future. In particular, young people emphasised the importance of meaningful work they liked doing, they felt valued in, and they felt had purpose. This was not necessarily associated with paid work, as many young people had unpaid or minimally paid roles they highly valued.

IMPLICATIONS FOR SLES AND EMPLOYMENT SUPPORTS FOR YOUNG PEOPLE WITH INTELLECTUAL DISABILITY

SLES has gone some way to addressing a gap in employment supports for school leavers and young people with intellectual disability, though has a narrow focus on only the concluding and immediate post school years. Evidence-based best practice in transition highlights the need to commence employment-focused transition planning, at age 14, and to extend the process through a longer period of 'emerging adulthood' (Arnett, 2007). The conception of DES as the natural pathway beyond DES is flawed for people with intellectual disability for whom DES does not offer appropriate employment supports, and who may be ineligible for DES. While SLES has some modest outcomes, they are not of the order of other evidence-based employment supports such as customised employment, supported employment, and work-integrated learning, nor does SLES draw on the evidence related to transition planning and practice. Re-modelling SLES to replicate evidence-based elements of employment support for people with intellectual disability would improve its outcomes

and suitability. A wider range of employment supports need to be systematically available to people with intellectual disability. SLES appears to provide virtually no employer-facing employment supports to meet the needs of young people with intellectual disability. By contrast, international evidence highlights that supported employment models from the US provide substantial time-unlimited support to employers, and significant work with employers to unlock work opportunities through job carving and customisation (Paper 2). Finally, families are shown to be the major employment support for young people with intellectual disability and need to be resourced and supported in this role.

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