Centre for Inclusive Employment

Navigating Relationships Across the Employment Journey

Strengthening relationships between families of people with disability and employment service providers.

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Acknowledgement of Country



Pictured:

'Welcoming Everyone Everywhere'

by Adam Bishop

A Wiradjuri man with disability who resides in Western Sydney.

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Who we are

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Pictured: Logos of Family Advocacy and NACBO

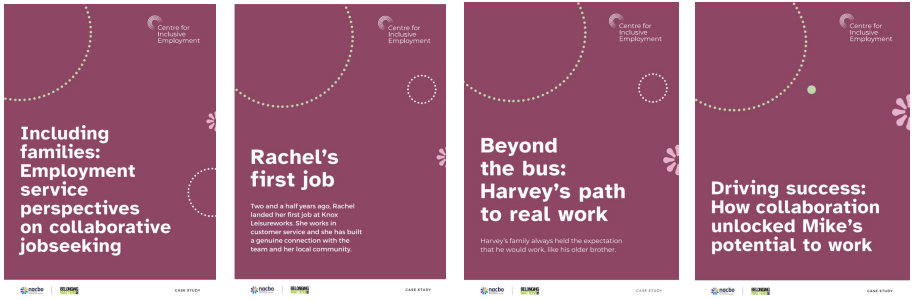
Presentation Overview

Right Relationships Project:

To secure better employment outcomes with and for people with disability by strengthening relationships between families of people with disability and employment service providers







Pictured: Eight resource covers, including an employment journey roadmap, resource guide and checklist, a conversation starter and four employment case studies

‘Right Relationships’

REFLECTIVE QUESTION: *(Share in the Chat!)*
When you hear the phrase '*working with families*,' what is your immediate thought/reaction?

Trust & Transparency
Clear communication and follow-through

Valuing different perspectives
Family, provider and person bring different knowledge



The person: voice, choices and employment goals

Shared Understanding
Roles and expectations are clear

Working with System Constraints
Being honest about limitations and finding solutions together

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Pictured: Lee and his parent, meeting with a professional

The ‘service gap’

Often, the definition of 'best outcome' is different between families and services/providers. Over time, some opposing assumptions have formed to limit the relationship

The Family's Lens
Perspective/Experience:

‘Services appear to be ill-equipped, under-resourced, and lack the specialised expertise needed to deliver successful employment for my family member.’

The Provider's Lens
Perspective/Experience:

‘Families inadvertently hinder independence, hold back employment success, and possess misaligned expectations of the job market.’



Pictured: Imagery of a crack, representing two sides

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Role Clarity

Person with disability must remain at the centre, ensuring their voice and preferences are guiding the process.

Person with disability and families

- Personal knowledge
- Family culture
- Advocacy
- Valued roles
- Community networks
- Support requirements
- What works

Working together

- Shared understanding
- Shared decisions
- Identify opportunities
- Explore warm leads
- Review progress
- Solve problems
- Navigate systems

Employment providers

- Train and support staff
- Engage employers
- Understand funding and systems
- Support employers
- Deliver effective services

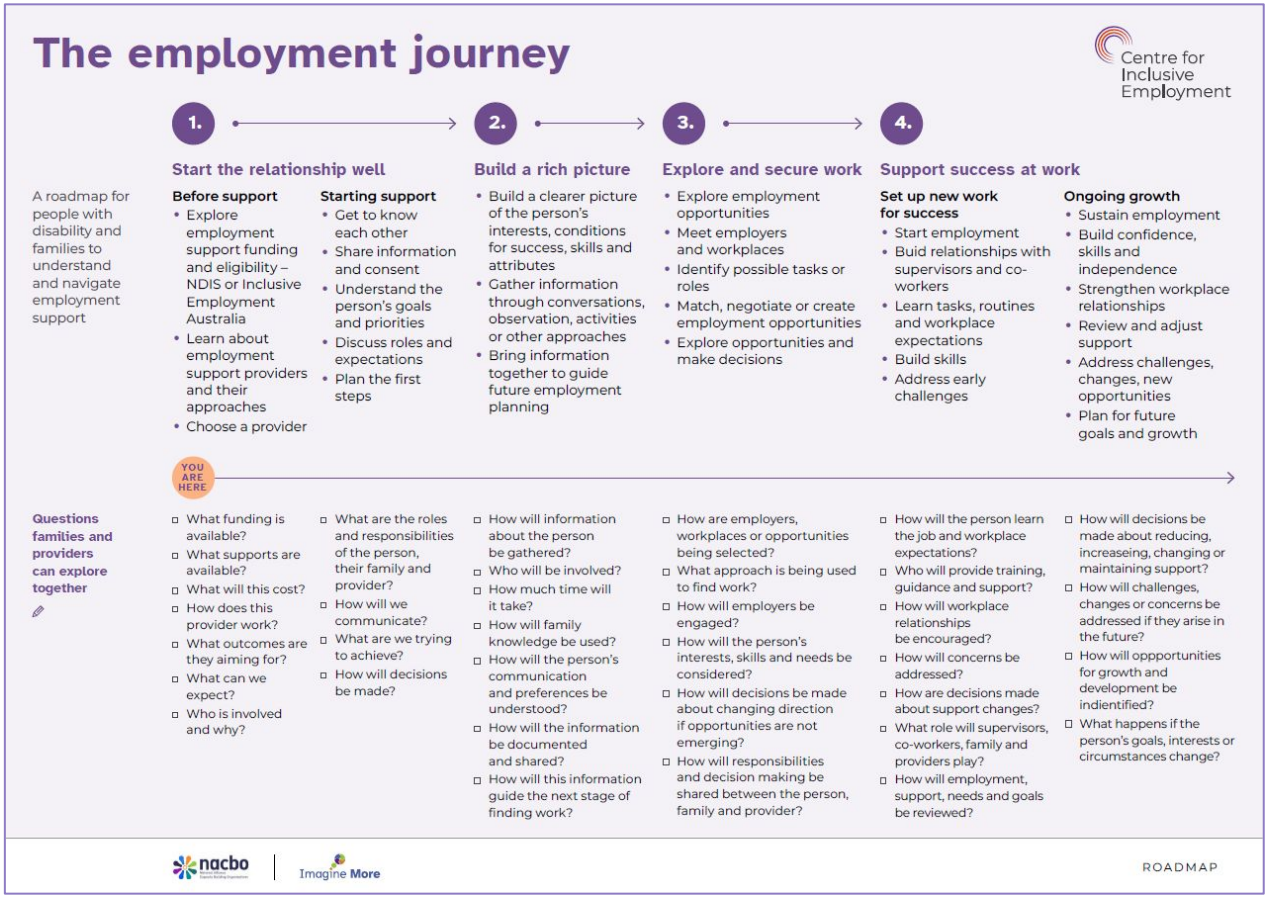
Harvey’s Employment Story

Harvey is a proud, paid employee at the local swim and fitness centre. He feels like a true team member, manages his own money and actively participates in his local community.

Behind Harvey’s success is a respectful partnership between Harvey, his family and the employment service. The employment service felt working alongside the family was an integral part of the picture when finding the right job for Harvey because the information they provided about Harvey’s skills and strengths enabled them to propose a customised role with the workplace.



Pictured: Harvey working at the local swimming pool and fitness centre, sharing brochures
Also pictured: Cover of “Beyond the bus: Harvey's path to real work” case study resource



Pictured: The 'Employment Journey' roadmap infographic

The employment journey 'roadmap'

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The Beginning of the Relationship

Focuses on the earliest interactions that set the tone for the entire relationship. This involves both:

- **Before Support: Building Trust & Making Informed Choices** -
  First enquiries, websites, referrals, eligibility discussions, and early conversations about service suitability
- **Starting Support: Establishing Shared Understandings** -
  Intake, planning, funding discussions, consent, family involvement and agreeing to first steps

What Providers Can Do:

Start conversations about strengths, interests and aspirations early

Waitlist? Share discovery documents to begin conversations about strengths and aspirations

Provide a Team Leader or Manager as a stable contact

Validate concerns about safety and social environments

Explain how information is documented

Explain funding and billing in plain language

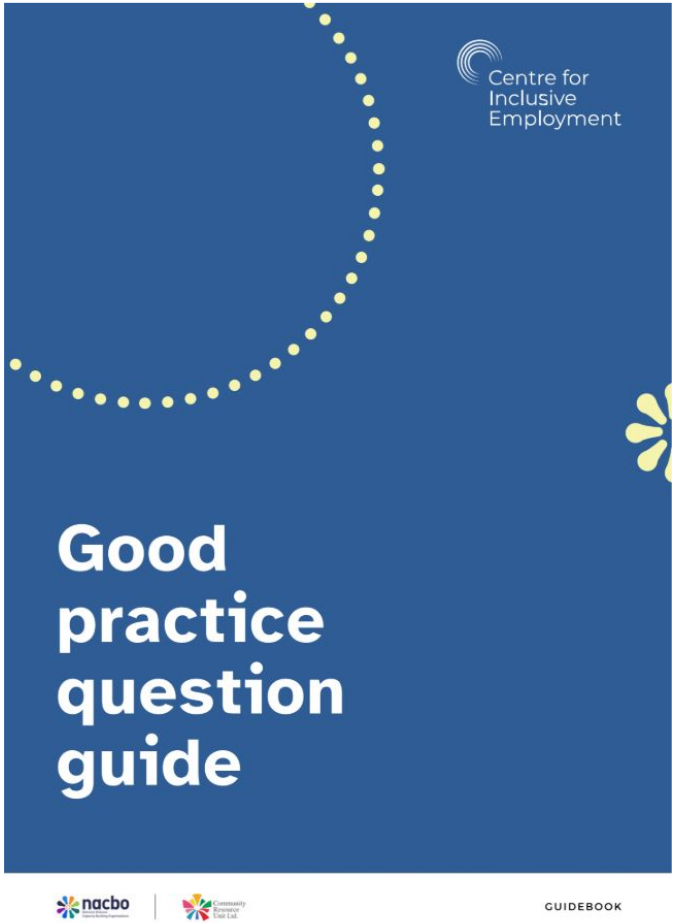
Visually show how employment earnings interact with the pension

Building a Fuller Picture of the Person

Focuses on how providers, people with disability, and families build a deeper understanding before employment decisions are made

What Providers Can Do:

- Explain why this stage takes time and give families some concrete timeframes
- Actively involve person and their family in building the picture
- Explore strengths, interests, contributions, and conditions for success with the person and family
- Maintain clear and open communication
- Focus on building understanding - help families see how gathering information supports achieving meaningful goals



Pictured: Cover Page of Conversation Starter

Conversation Starter

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Exploring Employment Opportunities

Focuses on how opportunities are explored and shared decision-making processes for matching and next steps

What Providers Can Do:

Ensure decisions are informed by a thorough understanding of the person, not just available vacancies

Utilise family, friends, personal and community networks to identify "warm leads"

Treat concerns as valuable information about fit, safety, and readiness - not resistance

Map tasks, transport, and daily routines before matching, to ensure sustainability for the person and their family unit

Create space for different perspectives and test assumptions about the person's known strengths and interests

Supporting Employment over time

Sustaining and maintaining a good match, workplace belonging, confidence, and opportunities for growth

What Providers Can Do:

- Create regular check-in; review progress and address emerging workplace challenges
- Communicate openly about support arrangements, changing roles, and future plans
- Support decisions are made collaboratively, drawing on family and person's observations
- Help build natural supports in the workplace; support to strengthen workplace relationships
- Continue exploring new opportunities, skills, and goals over time, drawing on the person's and family's insights about emerging interests

Rachel’s Employment Story

1

Challenge low expectations
One teacher believed in Rachel’s potential and encouraged her family to pursue open employment.

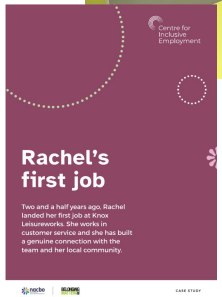
2

Use Discovery to find the match
Rachel, her family and the service identified her strengths, interests and conditions for success.

3

Family is essential
Rachel’s family shared vital knowledge, practised strategies at home and provided practical, ongoing encouragement.





Pictured: Rachel working at reception assisting visitors
Also Pictured: Cover of “Rachel’s first job” case study resource

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Working through differences together

- Take time to understand
- Address differences immediately
- Work through concerns together
- Keep person at the center
- Connect to additional employment supports

Different perspectives are expected. Shared commitment to the person is what matters.

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Right Relationships mean...



Individuals:
Well matched jobs
Increased confidence
Greater Independence
Community inclusion

Families:
Confidence to step back
Peace of mind
Reduced uncertainty
Trust in the journey

Providers:
Stronger relationships
Better employment outcomes
Higher quality services
Stronger reputation

Our Resources

Where to Find Them

📍 CIE Hub / Website

How to Use Them

👥 Team Meetings & Reflection

🎓 Staff Induction & Training

🤝 Working Directly with Families

📝 Apply strategies in Supervision & Coaching

🔄 Service Improvement & Review



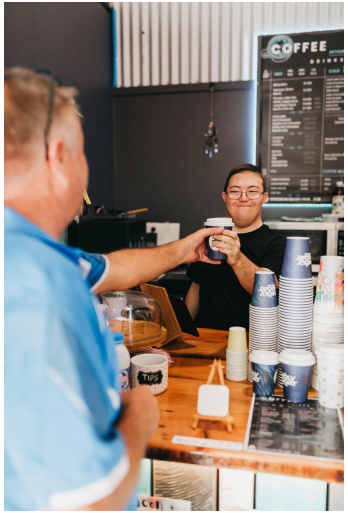
Pictured: Eight resource covers, including an employment journey roadmap, resource guide and checklist, a conversation starter and four employment case studies.



Pictured: Robbie delivering fresh produce as part of his job

Pictured: Millie showcasing her custom-designed tote bags





Pictured: Jacob serving coffee from his coffee cart business



CALL TO ACTION *(Share in the Chat!)*

What is one idea or step you plan to take as a result of today's session?

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Contact Us

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Resourcing Inclusive Communities
An initiative of Family Advocacy

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NACBO Organisations

belongingmatters.org

cru.org.au
thegoodlife.org.au

family-advocacy.com
ric.org.au

imaginemore.org.au

purpleorange.org.au

valuedlives.org.au

Pictured: Logos of six NACBO organisations - Belonging Matters, Community Resource Unit, Family Advocacy and Resourcing Inclusive Communities, Imagine More, Purple Orange, and Valued Lives.