Employment – a realistic goal for those with severe communication impairments?

OR Employment – an aspiration for those with severe communication impairments?
My personal experience with AAC

- “N” at 2 years
- “A” back at home with Mum and Dad
Introduction

• Benefits of employment
  financial independence
  increased self esteem
  
  Light, Stoltz and McNaughton 1996

• Low rates of employment, below 15%
  
  Bryen, Carey and Cohen 2005
UK perspective

• Challenges regarding changes in funding for those with complex needs - personlised budgets

• UK has few pwuAAC in employment. The reasons for this need to be researched and the opportunities for those living in the UK need to be explored.
Good job matches  McNaughton and Beukelman 2010

• Fulfilling work activity
• Appropriate time commitment
• Committed employer
• Obtaining needed supports
Research Questions

• 1 What current support is available to prepare PwuAAC as they leave School or College?
• 2 How could this support be improved?
• 3 The value of employment for those who use AAC
• 4 What other ways could PwuAAC be supported into employment

Preliminary findings presented today
Method

• Focus group
• Online focus group Joinson 2001, McNaughton, Symons, Light and Parson 2006
• Audio recording
• Transcribed verbatim
• Coding to allow identification of themes Attride and Stirling 2001
• Qualitative analysis
Participants

Criteria:

• 18-30 years old
• Use high tech AAC
• Able to give informed consent to participate in a focus group
Focus group

• Took place over 2 sessions:
  • Session 1, 2 attendees, therefore joint questioning
  • Session 2, 3 attendees, 5 potential but 2 chose not to take part
Questions

• When you were at school did you talk to people about what you would do when you left school?
  • Spoke to friends at school not teachers
• Did you do anything at school that helped you think about what you would do after you had left school?
  • Some schools had lessons where discussions about the future took place, but not all
• Did you do anything at home that helped you think about what you would do after you had left school?
  • Spoke to Mum/spoke to cousin
• Did you do work experience?
• clean laptops/ supported to look after babies in a Nursery/No/garden work with Dad
• “clean laptops rubbish”
• “Would like to do work experience in a garage or shop”
• “boring”
• Is getting a job something you are interested in?
• Easier to say Yes to this if they had a clear idea of what would be a good job for them “on reception here” “in a garage”, “no clear idea”
• OR are there other things you would like to do with your time since leaving school? What are they?
• Volunteering discussion
• What barriers have you discovered that make it difficult to get a job?
• Physical difficulties/transport requirements
• “I don’t let anything get in my way”
• What would you think would be helpful in getting a job
  • Work experience, friends to help me, driver
  • What could schools /College do to make it easier for you to get a job?
  • Work experience
• Have you considered self employment?
• One person said their talks to schools about their use of AAC was a form of self employment
• Do you know other people who use AAC, who work?
• 2 participants knew other students who had left college who had a job but no-one famous
Next steps

• Explore influence of parents employment experiences and expectations
• Discussion sessions/workshops alongside skill development to help develop opinions
• Work experience to allow opinions to develop about what they would like to do
What I learnt

• Lots of clarification around the questions needed for pwuAAC because often new ideas
• Questions with Yes/No answers are not the most helpful in focus group for encouraging discussion
• Practical issues – Health and Safety legislation changes
• Willing involvement
• Time it takes to organise and transcribe a focus group
• These ideas were new to many participants and parental expectations effects what conversations occurred at home
• Different experiences of people with acquired disabilities and congenital disabilities. Planning needed before other focus groups.
• Influence of parents employment experiences
• Lots of communication strategies used, so difficult to capture all of them equally in a group discussion.
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