Meaningful Employment For Persons with Intellectual Disabilities and High Support Needs through Small Business Enterprises

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Acknowledgements

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- Overseen by a Research Reference Group including people with direct experience of establishing & supporting Small Business Enterprises (SBEs) for persons with intellectual disabilities & high support needs, & people with experience in small business.
- The project was supported by Adjunct A/Prof Bob Jackson, Friederike Gadow, & Ross Boaden.
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Overview

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What are SBEs?

1. “Self Employment” is well-covered in the disability literature.
2. Our literature review revealed only two publications on SBEs.
3. SBEs reflect the growth of parents taking direct action to address the needs of their sons & daughters, e.g., ISL, Microboards, Circles.
4. SBEs are individualised & focused on adults with disabilities who have high support needs.
5. The person with disabilities has ownership & control of the business.
6. If the focal person’s support needs are too high, this lies with a person in close relationship, such as a parent.
7. The business generates income, but not necessarily a profit.
8. The business facilitates development & continuation of a range of relationships in the community.
Method

- Four case studies were identified in consultation with the Research Reference Group.
- Two were well-known examples – having been in existence for almost a decade.
- The other two examples were developing SBEs.
- Initial contact was made with key individuals in each SBE.
- Information was gathered through a range of sources, including observations & audio recorded interview with key persons from each SBE.
- Case studies & vignettes were developed for the Research Report & a journal article, verified by key person/s in each SBE
- Consent was obtained to use the SBE names & names of the focal persons, in addition to supplied photos (Curtin HREC approval number HR57/2016)
Cam Can Services

- Focused around Cameron
- In his mid-20s with a significant intellectual disability & requires very high degree of support
- Developed & maintained through careful planning that focuses on Cameron by members of “Cam’s Support Crew”
- Started in 2009 as a ‘waiting’ business
Developed around a clear set of principles

“All support/services will be customised & individualised for Cameron with a focus on expanding Cameron’s personal community & his social connections”

Started at a pace where Cameron was confident & capable

Substantial skills development, expansion of business, & social skills
JACKmail

- Focused around Jackson
- 30 year old with a profound intellectual disability affecting all aspects of his life
- A courier service developed by his mother following in-depth investigation & planning
- Has been operating for over 10 years, & Phillippe has been Jackson’s main support worker for more than 9 years
- Designed around Jackson’s likes, strengths & support needs
- Clear vision including meaningful job, valued & contributing role in the community
- Genuine business – real & reliable service fulfilling a specific need
- The business has grown a customer base in a specific geographical area - deliveries remain manageable & maximise revenue through a strategic route
- “There is a real difference between somebody giving you a job & having a job. Nobody was ever going to give Jackson a job. It didn’t mean that he couldn’t have a job, but it had to be a job that was his job.” (Sally, Jackson’s mother)
The Really Useful Recyclers

- Established in 2015 for Josh & Courtney, both in their late teens & on the autism spectrum
- Business that collects & re-uses newspapers that are turned into firelighters & artworks for sale
- Products are sold online, at markets, & by word of mouth
- Improved community involvement & confidence when faced with new tasks (such as new artworks)
Chirpy Bird Seed

- Established in early 2016 for Joseph
- Joseph is the proprietor, is in his late teens, & has an intellectual disability
- The business supplies quality seed mixes for “backyard birds”
- Received substantial support from experts from as far afield as the USA
- Challenges around regulations & permits, which limits retail options (cannot sell product from their home, but must be through deliveries, markets, or third parties)
Discussion

- All four case studies clearly developed & maintained a strong emphasis on the five participants
- The two mature & well developed SBEs have been “shaped” to fit the capacities of the focal persons – each person lives in an ISL arrangement
- Strong parental leadership, both in setting up & continuing the arrangements – an important safeguard
- Some challenges around the financial supports for the case studies with income from a range of sources
- Benefits from community inclusion & participation were emphasised by all arrangements & substantial positive outcomes were evident
- Further research related to female participants is warranted, as well as research to develop a ‘quality framework’ which may include specific Themes and Attributes
REFERENCES

- Cam Can Services: http://camcanandservices.org/index.html
- JACKmail: http://jacksonwest.org/jackmail
  https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=90PQjH7pD1U&feature=youtu.be
- The Really Useful Recyclers: https://www.facebook.com/thereallyusefulrecyclersWA/
- Chirpy Bird Seed: https://www.facebook.com/Chirpy-Bird-Seed-1721940888083039/


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