

Explaining Successful Intervention: A Model of Critical Success Factors

What are the critical success factors that distinguish successful from less successful initiatives or projects? The results propose that a combination of internal and external factors can make a qualitative difference to disadvantaged individuals' progress in learning and skills development, and to their access to employment. Critical success factors are described below and are also represented in diagrammatic form.

Projects: Projects that include the following components appear to be more able to make a significant impact on participants' ability to progress into employment:

- IAG (to ensure that the project is appropriate and that the participant has a purpose and objective)
- Learning and Skills Development (e.g. skills for life or IT classes, apprenticeships, employability skills such as CV writing)
- Work experience or work placements (providers need to work closely with employers to be able to give participants at least short-term work experience as well as interview practice with feedback from the employer)
- Financial support with travel, childcare and interview expenses (e.g. appropriate clothing)
- Continuing support (eg through mentoring) after a project ends to assist participants in their job search and to maintain their motivation.

Experienced **providers** and stakeholders already recognise the importance of combining these types of support. However, interviews with providers and project participants also highlighted that due to the exigencies of limited funding and high output targets not all elements are always included. Also, many projects offer only limited or no employer contacts. This particular issue applies across many projects that aim to support disadvantaged groups. Notably, it was in participants' opinions the single most important factor that would make a difference to their eventual progression into the labour market but seemed to be under-developed across the range of projects.

At the core of a 'model of critical success factors' are the **projects** that aim to support disadvantaged groups into employment. There is also a strong need for **employers** to take on board the diversity agenda and to look towards local people who are currently not in employment to fill vacancies. For many participants from disadvantaged groups there is also a need for **other support** from agencies outside the learning and skills system. In the attached diagram these are shown as additional pillars of support alongside the funding for the project itself.

Funding: Projects that target disadvantaged groups are funded in a number of different ways and funding is generally channelled through provider organisations.

Provider organisations: They deliver projects by agreement with the funders.

Participants: Project participants from disadvantaged groups demonstrate engagement through their participation. Wider levels of support suggested in this model help increase motivation and can lead to their full participation as citizens and in the labour market.

A Model of Critical Success Factors

Tackling Disadvantage, Disengagement, Discrimination



