

Building Agency and Trust in Employment Services

Snapshot 

What's the problem?

- Employment services are funded by the government to help people build skills, overcome barriers and find work.
- They are meant to provide person-centred support, recognising each person's goals, strengths and needs.
- But many job seekers report that services can feel focused on rules and "ticking boxes", making it harder to build trust and stay engaged.
- This can make it harder for people to move towards finding a job.
- That's why we tested practical ways to help employment consultants provide more person-centred support in everyday conversations.



What did we test?

We worked with job seekers, employment consultants and other experts to design a practical approach called ASPIRE, with:

- training for employment consultants
- a practical coaching book to support conversations
- small changes to the space that helped create a more welcoming space

We tested this in 2 employment services, and compared it to 2 other similar sites to see the impact on job seekers.



What did we learn?

- Our approach helped employment consultants understand what person-centred support should look like in real life.
- Good relationships between employment consultants and job seekers matter to them. They make people more likely to share what's happening in their lives.
- There were positive signs that what we tested helped job seekers feel more supported.
- But we also found bigger issues in the system that make it hard for services to support everyone well.
- And good relationships must be matched with practical employment support and support for other needs (like mental health and housing).



What now?

We recommend that the Department of Employment and Workplace Relations (DEWR):

- Test new approaches quickly and learn what works before rolling changes out nationally (we are calling this 'Test and Learn'). This helps services keep improving.
- Set clear standards for what good person-centred support looks like. Then give employment consultants the training and support they need to deliver it.
- Design services so job seekers can build trusted relationships with the same person throughout their journey.

