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**Centre for Disability Studies
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**Nova Transition To Work
(TTW) Program
Evaluation Report
2014**

Vivienne Riches, Marie Knox & Bruce O'Brien



AN AFFILIATE OF

THE UNIVERSITY OF SYDNEY

Evaluation Report on the Nova Transition To Work Program

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Outline of Report

1. Transition to Work	Transition To adulthood, Transition to Work aims and principles, Program context and evaluation context
2. Method	Process evaluation rationale, evaluation framework, ethics, data collection outline
3. NOVA TTW Program Results	NOVA TTW program procedures and processes examined against the Kohler and Field (2003) Taxonomy of best practice indicators <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Individual planning • Skills development • Family involvement • Program structure • Collaborative practice
4. System and stakeholder perspectives	Trainees, staff, graduates, parents and employers Case studies
5. Synthesis of evidence	All five areas of best practice addressed to some extent Motivation Stakeholder feedback
6. Conclusion	NOVA TTW program confirms that the processes being employed reflect best evidence based practice across a range of areas, including person centred transition planning, trainee development work, life and social skill areas, family involvement, program structure and collaborative practice.

Section 1: Transition to Work

1.1 Transition to adulthood

Transition is more than an event. It is a dynamic and interactive process that occurs as people move from one set of circumstances to another. The transition from school to adulthood for most people is one of the greatest life changes or transitions people with and without disability experience over the life course. Numerous changes take place at this time across multiple domains and functioning that require adaptation and adjustment, and typically these changes can impact on personal Identity, friendships and relationships, sexuality, living arrangements, further education and training, work and career, finances, health, recreation and leisure etc. Wehman (1992) described this transition as involving

“... the life changes, adjustments, and cumulative experiences that occur in the lives of young adults as they move from school environments to more independent living and working environments”.

This transition can be particularly challenging for youth with disabilities and their families, who often face additional challenges and who may require specific information, co-ordination and supports to achieve successful outcomes. Indeed, reports from youth with disabilities and their families, and studies from around the world have reported that transition outcomes for youth with disabilities continue to fall well below peers without disabilities in the areas of employment, post-secondary education and most quality of life domains (Beresford, 2004; Florian et al., 2000; Johnson et al., 1997; National Collaborative on Workforce and Disability, 2006; Parmenter, 1986; Riches, 1996). According to the World Report on Disability (2011, p. 119–129), overall, persons with disabilities experience worse educational and labour market outcomes and are more likely to be poor than persons without disabilities. Even in developed countries where programs and services exist, working-age people with disabilities were found to be twice as likely to be unemployed. When employed, they are more likely to work part-time. And unless they were highly educated and have a job, they had low incomes.

A recent Australian study (Foley et.al., 2013) surveyed families of young people with Down Syndrome aged 15-32 years and found about a quarter of the 150 who had left school were working in open employment, 40% were in sheltered employment while 10% were participating in training options and others in day recreation programs. Families of young people participating in sheltered employment tended to report poorer quality of life than those of young people attending open employment, after adjusting for personal characteristics behavior and income.

Those youth who do not gain employment or day program placement post school tend to be less engaged in domestic and community life and this can adversely affect health and behavior. Family quality of life is also affected by these outcomes. Youth with disabilities and their families have often reported feeling powerless during this transition (Cooney, 2002), the navigation of services and opportunities can be difficult and frustrating, and frequently, young people get placed on waitlists as they attempt to access adult services.

Recognition over the past decades of the need for additional support for youth with disabilities to increase confidence, competence and skills, especially work skills, and successfully navigate the transition from school to adult life has resulted in various school-based and post school transition initiatives in Australia. These initiatives are designed to

improve planning, coordination and collaboration between schools and adult services and agencies as well as provide training that will maximise the independence, productivity and integration of youth with disabilities into the community.

Halpern's Transition Model (Halpern, 1989) depicted in Figure 1 was helpful in identifying key stages in the transition from school to post school process for youth with disabilities. The school or sending environment is critical in forming the links or bridges to the ultimate outcomes most people desire post school - which are captured as the three major pillars that underpin community adjustment: employment, home or living arrangements and social and interpersonal networks.

For youth with special support needs there can be several pathways that bridge the gap between the school system and the desired community adjustment outcomes. These can be **generic or mainstream services** everyone accesses such as university or further education and training courses, an estate agency assisting the person to rent an apartment, and/or mainstream medical services to maintain physical health. **Short term or time-limited supports** comprise specialized short-term courses and programs including specialized vocational skills training courses, such as Transition to Work programs and Disability Employment Services. **Ongoing special services** include supported employment programs, day programs, supported living placements, specialized transport and so on.

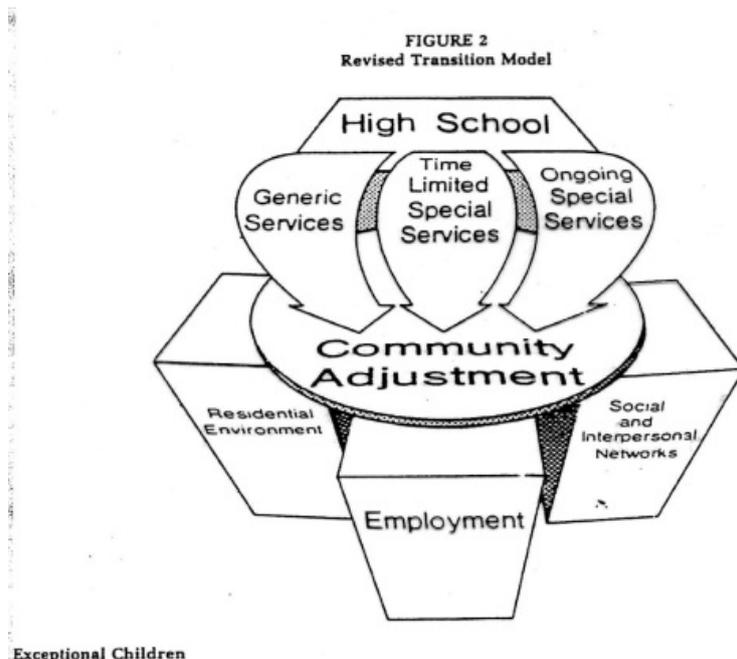


Figure 1: Transition Model (Halpern, 1989)

1.2 Transition To Work Programs

In NSW, the Department of Family and Community Services (FACS) Ageing, Disability and Home Care (ADHC) currently funds a special Transition to Work (TTW) two-year program designed to help young people with a disability gain employment after leaving school¹. The NSW FACS funded TTW programs were instigated in recognition of the need to provide additional support for students with disabilities who were not ready for employment on leaving school but for whom a time limited program could improve outcomes. To be eligible for the FACS funded Transition to Work program, a person must be a school leaver with moderate or high support needs who has completed Year 12 and has an intellectual,

¹ NSW FACS, Ageing, Disability & Home Care
http://www.adhc.nsw.gov.au/sp/delivering_disability_services/post_school_programs/transition_to_work#sthash.MAwB1y6X.dpuf

psychiatric, physical or sensory disability; is eligible for a service under the NSW Disability Services Act (1993); and is assessed as eligible by ADHC. The key objectives of the TTW programs, as outlined by FACS, are for participants to:

- Move to open or supported employment at the completion of their program;
- Perform satisfying and meaningful work, consistent with employment goals;
- Develop skills and qualifications necessary for the transition to sustainable employment;
- Sustain work and training commitments; and
- Have fair access to support and fair outcomes for people who are Aboriginal or from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds.

1.3 The NOVA Transition to Work (TTW) program evaluation context

The NOVA Transition to Work (TTW) program is a FACS funded program that commenced in 2005 and currently operates across 14 locations in the greater Sydney basin. The NOVA TTW program's stated aim is to guide jobseekers into paid work of their choice, and is available to eligible young people unable to immediately access other programs when they leave school due to additional support needs. It assists young people with disability transition from school to employment by teaching work and work related skills as well as skills to move to a more independent life.

In 2014, the Centre for Disability Studies (CDS) was contracted by NOVA to undertake a small, independent evaluation of the NOVA TTW program, to better understand the processes of the program and their contribution to its effectiveness and efficiency. The objectives of the study were to:

- Identify and describe key processes, facilitators and strengths of the program in achieving desired outcomes; and
- Document any barriers to achieving a smooth transition to employment for people with disability served by the Nova Transition to Work Program.

Section 2: Method

2.1 Process evaluation design

2.1.1 The systems model

A process evaluation design was chosen as NOVA was particularly keen to understand the impact of their processes, since outputs and outcomes (number of jobs obtained and maintained for a set time, rates of pay, working conditions etc.) are regularly tracked and reported by the organisation itself and by the funding body, FACS.

The primary aim of a process evaluation is to identify whether a program is operating as intended and, if not, which aspects might be improved. Process evaluation is critical because it informs which aspects of a program are most critical to its success, and in situations where programs are not achieving their outcomes, process evaluations can also inform whether this is due to failure of implementation or failure of policy.

The systems model approach (Gardner & Nudler, 1999; Parmenter & Fraser, 1980), depicted in Figure 2, allows various aspects of a system including its processes to be understood in the context of external factors in the environment as well as interactions within the system. The system consists of **inputs** (funding, personnel, buildings, equipment, furnishings and materials), the **processes** that run and drive the program (policies, goals, services, procedures, strategies, activities, resource allocation (staff, funding, equipment) and management), **outputs** (numbers of assessments completed, number entering apprenticeships etc.) and **outcomes** (jobs obtained, jobs maintained for a set time, rate of pay, working conditions etc.). The systems model also allows the evaluation to identify and examine interactions within the system, and different stakeholder perceptions of the impact across different levels or players in the system, that is on the people served, the organisation or service provider itself and the overall system, as well as those features that act as facilitators or barriers to a program.

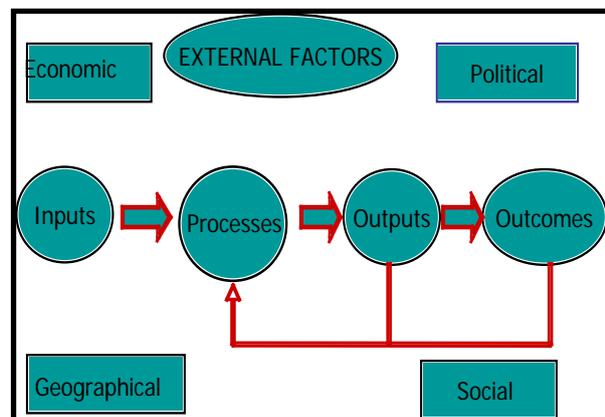


Figure 2: Systems Model

2.1.2 Evidence based practice (EBS)

Additional to understanding the system and the processes operating within the system, one way to evaluate processes is to examine these in the light of evidence based practice (EBS). Sackett (2000, p.1) defined evidence based practice as the integration of best research evidence with clinical expertise and patient values. Although this definition was made in the context of medical practices, whatever the field of study, EBS aims to integrate (a) clinical expertise, (b) best current evidence, and (c) client values to provide high-quality services reflecting the interests, values, needs, and choices of the individuals we serve. It is a continuing process, a dynamic integration of ever-evolving clinical expertise and external

evidence in day-to-day practice. Evidence-based behavioral practice (EBBP), for example, entails making decisions for service delivery or care by integrating best available research evidence with practitioner expertise and other resources and the choices and preferences of those affected, while in educational settings, Odom, Brantlinger, Gersten, Horner, Thompson, and Harris (2005) used the term “evidence-based practice” to refer to educational practices that have been demonstrated effective, based on quality research.

Several analyses of exemplary transition programs and research studies into best secondary transition practices have occurred (Kohler, DeStefano, Wermuth, Grayson, & McGinty, 1994; Kohler, 1996; Kohler and Chapman (1999); Kohler and Field 2003; Rusch, Kohler, & Hughes, 1992; Test, Fowler, Richter, White, Mazzoni, Walker, Kohler & Korterling, 2009). These confirm the current and continued usefulness of a taxonomy proposed by Kohler and Field (2003) that summarizes best evidence based practices for transition from school to adulthood into five major categories: student-focused planning, student development, family involvement, program structure and interagency collaboration (see Table 1). Rigorous correlational research has also been undertaken to identify evidence-based predictors correlated with improved post school outcomes in education, employment and independent living (Test, Mazzoni, Mustian, Fowler, Koterling & Kohler, 2009).

Table 1: Taxonomy of evidence based transition practices (Kohler & Field 2003)

Category	Practices included
Student-focused planning	Transition plan development, student participation in the planning process, and planning strategies
Student development	Life skills instruction, employment skills instruction, structured work experience, career and vocational curricula, assessment, and self-determination training
Family involvement	Family participation in transition planning, family training, and family empowerment
Program structure	Policy, philosophy, strategic planning, program evaluation, resource allocation, and human resource development
Interagency collaboration	Collaborative service delivery and inter-organisational frameworks

The NOVA TTW program and its processes were examined in the light of these five evidence based practice categories, since these practices have been deemed critical for successful transition for programs to achieve their desired outcomes.

2.2 Ethical standards

CDS is an affiliate of the University of Sydney and has an internal ethics application and approval process. Ethical approval was gained to ensure the process evaluation met ethical standards. Participant information sheets and consent forms were used for interviews with NOVA TTW trainees and external participants. Where relevant, information was read and

explained and opportunity given to discuss and ask questions before participants provided written consent. Sample forms are located in Appendix A.

2.3 Data collection

Both qualitative and quantitative data were collected and analysed with regard to the processes and program improvement as well as data relating to desired outcomes for trainees with disability. Data were collected through document and file review, direct observations, one on one interviews and focus groups.

Relevant documentation reviewed relates to the Nova TTW program aims and procedures; its establishment and framework; curriculum content and instructional methods; assessment methods; timetabling and implementation by staff working in and across a number of geographical sites in the Sydney basin; staffing and program participant; . Documents were gathered from the St Marys head office and observed being implemented in two local sites at Campbelltown and Hurstville offices. Documents reviewed comprised:

- NOVA TTW Program information provided via brochures and the NOVA website
- 2014 calendar (key dates for registration, start dates, enrolments, ITP meetings, assessments, case loaded to WPC & EC End dates & Gala)
- NOVA TTW Curriculum documents as powerpoint presentations:
 - about NOVA
 - Course Enrolment Certificate 1 in Work Education
 - NOVA Transition SEGMENTS – an overview of them all
- NOVA Transition Trainee Handbook
- Individual Transition Plan
- 22128 VIC Certificate 1 in Work Education Trainee record
- Trainee File – Sample with sections and contents
- Trainee Work Placements file - Sample with sections and contents
- Resumes & Career Portfolios Shadow File - Sample with sections and contents
- Resumes & Career Portfolios Folder - Sample
- NRS Level 1 Indicators
- Resources utilised in training e.g. Career Portfolios DVD ***Developing a Career Portfolio*** VEA Bringing learning to life Australia 2 mins www.vea.co.au

Observations occurred at two training office venues (outlets) at Campbelltown and Hurstville. Both outlets were visited on a Wednesday as this is a cross over day when a greater number of trainees is available. Outlet sites were selected by Nova TTW on the basis of convenience for CDS and NOVA TTW staff availability, and range and number of first and second year TTW trainees available. It is recognised that although the two sites were considered representative of the NOVA TTW program as a whole, variations may exist between sites that have not been captured.

The Campbelltown TTW office outlet visited on a Wednesday when two Job coaches and 14 trainees were present for varying amounts of time. Eight of these trainees who were involved in classroom activities throughout the day were interviewed. The other six were not available for interview as they moved off site to attend work placements or job interviews.

The Hurstville TTW outlet was visited when 6 trainees were present all day and three staff were available for interview.

Observations at both training sites involved trainees participating in group based activities, undertaking individualised work using computers and resources, and socialising at breaks and before and after hours.

Interviews and focus group

A total of 26 individuals were interviewed, 22 individually and 4 in a focus group. Of the 12 current NOVA TTW trainees interviewed, eight trainees who were verbal and had mild disabilities were interviewed at the Campbelltown outlet in a private meeting room, while a focus group with four trainees who had moderate intellectual disability and/or autism was conducted at the Hurstville training room with support from the TTW Coordinator.

A total of seven NOVA TTW staff were interviewed in private offices from across the St Mary's Head Office, and the Campbelltown and Hurstville offices.

Two CDS also staff conducted individual interviews with three TTW graduates who are now employed with the NOVA DES, two of their parents and three employers of these former trainees. Two of these interviews, one with a parent and one with an employer were conducted via telephone. These interviews were arranged by NOVA staff and occurred in the St Marys area. Selection was not randomised but was based on availability and willingness to participate, and therefore can only be considered case examples.

Table 2: Summary details for interviews and focus groups

Interviewee	Number	Details
NOVA TTW trainees	12	8 Individual interviews One focus group (n=4)
NOVA staff	7	1 Training and Development Manager 4 Job coaches 2 coordinators
Former TTW trainees	3	TTW graduates now employed and supported by NOVA DES
Parents	2	Parents or TTW graduates now employed
Employers	3	2 Managers, 1 Supervisor
Total	27	

3.0 Results

3.1 Overview of The NOVA TTW program

NOVA Employment has three main programs:

- (1) NOVA Employment - a specialist Disability Employment Service, founded in 1990 and funded by the federal Department of Education. NOVA Employment provides support to people with disability to find a job of choice and then provides time-limited post placement support until the person is fully competent in their work role.
- (2) NOVA Training - a Registered Training Organisation (RTO) established in 2002 that is accredited by the Australian Skills Quality Authority (ASQA). NOVA Training RTO is used to conduct nationally accredited certificate courses in employment services and skills, disability work, workplace training, and business.
- (3) The NOVA Transition to Work (TTW) Program was founded in 2005 and is funded by NSW FACS to support youth with disabilities find transition to employment.

NOVA TTW program runs three days per week from 9.30 a.m. to 3.30 p.m. Depending on the NOVA Employment outlet location, the program may run on Monday to Wednesday or Wednesday to Friday. The program goes for two years, unless the trainee gains a job placement earlier, and involves a minimum number of 140 hours over the two years. NOVA claims that many TTW trainees complete at least twice this number of hours, with additional work experiences and work placements, and additional events.

The target group is people young people with disability who are assessed at school by ADHC and who meet the ADHC criteria for entry to the TTW program. Many referrals have an intellectual disability, and/or autism, and some have other disabilities including hearing, and speech difficulties. Some trainees do not take up the funding straight away when they complete school - they may enter up to a year later after doing a TAFE course, taking some time off or trying some other program. In 2015 there were a total of 145 trainees across the outlets involved in either first or second years, with a staff ratio of 1:5/6 overall.

The management structure is clearly identified and communicated to all staff and trainees. It comprises a Chief Executive Officer, a Training and Development Manager and two coordinators, one for the job coach team and one for the work placement team (see Figure 3). Staff work in one of two teams – program development and growth or job placement. Roles and responsibilities are delineated and the organisation has KPIs around outcomes, staff retention, compliance, funding, network business, and networking with the community.

Staff qualifications vary, with the minimum being all staff have some experience with disability (short courses including social justice) and go through an induction process. Professional development is provided through forums, held usually twice per year. Staff are encouraged and supported to complete a Certificate IV in Employment Services, but more recently the move has been towards the Certificate IV in Disability. Job coaches take electives relevant to their roles.

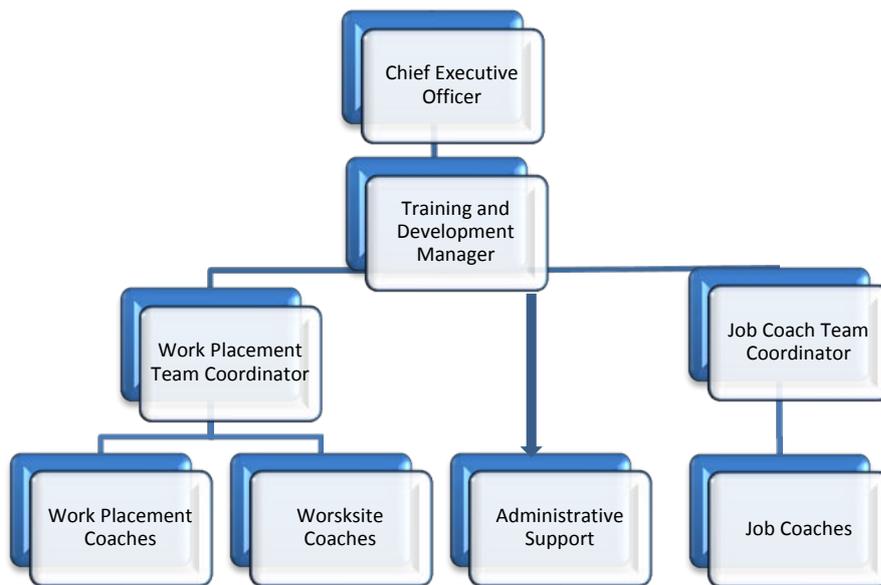


Figure 3: NOVA TTW Management Structure

Training rooms at the locations visited were well lit, and provide adequate and user friendly working environments. Group sessions are conducted around a large central table configuration while individual work stations with computers and online facilities are available for each trainee. Training rooms have a coffee making area where trainees practice their Barista skills. Additional breakout space and small staff office areas allow for privacy when required. At the outlets visited trainees, could go outside to nearby shops at break times and/or to separate areas to relax.

Trainees at the various outlets visited presented as calm and adult in their behaviour and they were appropriately dressed for work. All trainees are encouraged to wear black pants and white shirts as these fit any industry and mean they are ready dressed for a job interview at any time. On arrival in the morning, they quietly and efficiently organised themselves for the day. Those who were going out to work placements met their respective trainers while those staying in the training room sat quietly chatting at the central tables waiting to begin the day's sessions.

3.2 Program procedures

Once individuals secure their TTW funding from ADHC, they can choose the provider of their choice. Individuals and /or families may refer and register the person, who may meet staff at expos or they may ring in and set up a face-to -face appointment. Initial appointments can take several hours or more usually individuals attend two appointments during which time they are taken through the information provided in the trainee handbook, which explains the program in detail.

The program is highly structured and documented, such that all information is readily available to all staff and trainees alike, using the NOVAnet computerized system that enables staff easy access to all document files across each of the outlets on a regular basis.

The system is copyright and version control protected, and staff are authorized to only download and save slideshows to USB or desktops as required.

The program follows a structured timetable and procedures across the various locations with key events including Individual Transition Planning meetings, assessments of progress and Open Days clearly scheduled (as outlined in Figure 4). The day to day program is conducted by Job Coaches at NOVA employment offices in addition to community work placement sites and involves a work focused program consisting of group lessons and individualised activities.

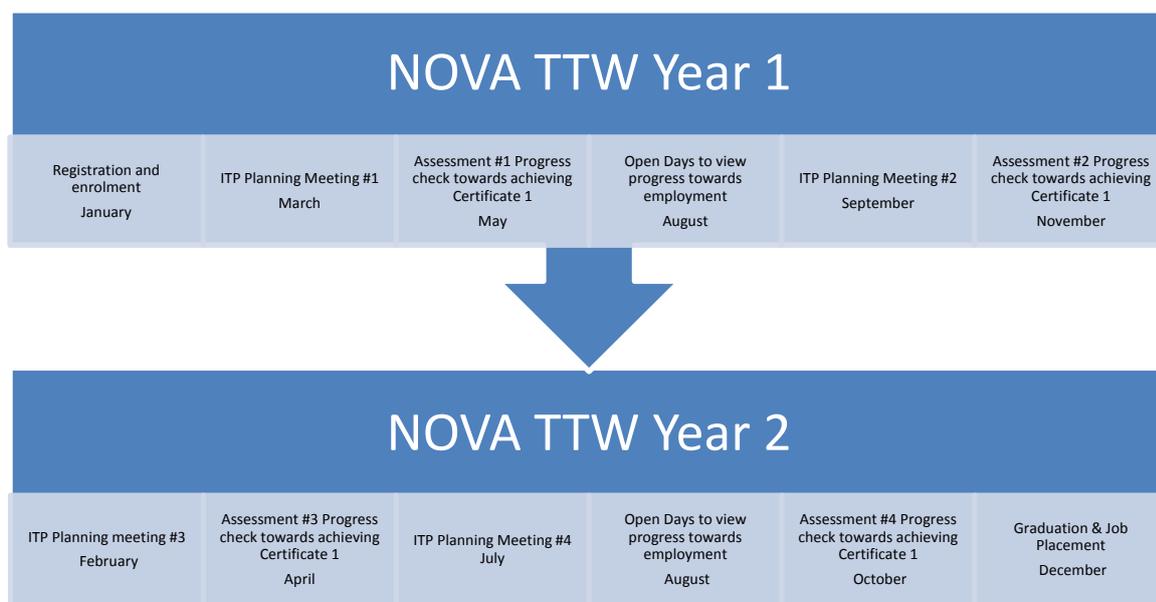


Figure 4: Key events in NOVA TTW program

Roles and responsibilities, general rules of conduct, explanations of the program sequence and tasks, timelines and administrative procedures are clearly outlined in documentation and reviewed with trainees on a regular basis. Trainees have their own handbook and files in hard and soft copy formats, and are empowered to use technology to develop skills and competence and to store their own data.

All information involving the overview of the NOVA TTW program, general information, individual transition planning information, aspects of the curriculum including the Certificate I in Work Education, assessment requirements and processes etc. are all clearly documented and provided to both staff and trainees in soft and hard copy, using standardized powerpoint slideshow presentations. Curriculum segments are scheduled to follow a clear timetable and are presented on a rotating basis.

The Trainee Handbook is provided to trainees at registration and details Information about the program and how it operates, regular procedures, program expectations (for example about dress code, attendance, holidays and leave etc), rights and responsibilities, Code of Conduct, and ways and mechanisms for handling problems and complaints and all contact information.

Training is carried out by Nova TTW staff at the training rooms and at work placements locations in the community. Trainee assessments are carried out by a NOVA RTO assessor with formal TAE qualifications (previously this role was undertaken by the job coaches and a

formal assessor was not required, but this procedure was introduced to provide greater independence and ensure greater accountability.

3.3 NOVA TTW Processes and evidence-based transition practices

The NOVA TTW processes were examined according to the five major areas of best practice identified by Kohler and Field (2003) and results are summarised in the following section.

3.3.1 Individual Person-Centred Transition Planning

Individual or person centred transition planning has been found critical because it builds a strong foundation by assisting young people and parents to plan for the future. Current evidence-based practice standards are that the individual transition plan (ITP) should be:

- Person-centred with goals aligned with the aspirations, preferences, and interests of the person/trainee;
- Strengths-based focusing on the abilities and strengths of the person, with options explored to maximize and develop his/her strengths;
- Have measurable goals based on age appropriate assessment (Test, Fowler & Kohler, 2013)
- Begin as early as possible, and be a reiterative process, where the person's transition plan is determined, implemented, and reviewed at least on an annual basis;
- Involve partnerships and collaborative decision making with the key people in the person's support system, such as parent/s, friends, peers, staff and other adult service agencies who can assist in thinking and planning for critical living, learning and working goals into adulthood and the steps required to get there to ensure a seamless post-program transition.

Nova TTW's individual transition planning process meets each of these standards. Every trainee has their own ITP file where they record their own employment related goals and track progress towards achieving them. Four ITP meetings are held over the two year TTW program, in March and September in year 1 and February and July in year 2. The Job Coach sets the dates for six monthly ITP meetings well ahead and trainees can choose and invite who attends from:

- Their Job Coach
- Their Work Experience Coach
- The TTW Coordinator
- Their parents/guardian/carer
- An advocate (relative or family member who will help them get a job)

The ITP is developed by and with the individual with support from the NOVA transition staff and family members. Preparation for each ITP meeting is built into the curriculum and documentation is clear and explicit. The first ITP involves the trainee being supported to complete information for a one page history profile, a personal profile, a one page learning and basic skills profile, a strengths and needs analysis, an exploring employment choices page (matching job choice to basic skills, ideal day and strengths). Additionally, a work readiness factors and check assists the trainee to prepare some possible achievable goals for work experience, skills development and life skills to build a working lifestyle and social

life. At the second ITP meeting an employment readiness review is included in the trainee preparation that explores job matching, and skills and lifestyle areas to support work readiness, and this begins to focus attention on job seeking ideas and strategies.

At the third ITP meeting, the trainee can choose to be case loaded to NOVA Employment to ensure a smooth transition to further support once employed and a referral to the DES is completed by the Job Coach if desired.

The first three ITP meetings focus on three goal areas (1) Work experience, (2) Work focused skills development, and (3) Life skills to build a working lifestyle and social skills. In each of these three areas, realistic and suitable goals are set for the next six months; steps/activities and assigned tasks to meet goals are determined; any support needed to participate is identified; and feedback from the trainee and others who attended the meeting is recorded, along with additional notes as relevant. The trainee, Job Coach and parent/advocate sign and date each page of the ITP, and copies are held by the trainee in their file (stored at NOVA during the program) and additionally by the parent if requested.

Assessments occur every five to six months. An assessor visits every trainee on four separate occasions during their TTW program and reviews learning and documented progress against set criteria. This includes attendance; ITP meetings; Individual Trainee Records (ITR) of work placements including hours across industry types (administration, basic use of a computer, retail and hospitality); Resumes and Career portfolios; learning about a working Lifestyle. A National Reporting Standards (NRS) Level 1 Indicators form is also completed to assess progress and maintenance of core skills. Assessment information is considered during the ITP meeting and assists and directs goal formation.

The fourth and final ITP meeting consists of a review of progress across goal areas, an exit plan for job seeking, work experience placements or job placement, actions and assigned tasks for each of the key players, timeframes and follow up plans.

Staff comments

Staff interviewed indicated the importance and value of the ITP meeting for trainees and parents and staff. One coordinator stated that trainees are individually prepared for the meeting and they set their goals they can present to their parents. According to this coordinator, the meetings also provide invaluable opportunities to check with parents and trainees regarding reported adherence to experiences and progress at home in living and work related goals and to verify the accuracy of reports on progress e.g. attendance at community social groups, and lifestyle independent goals such as using an alarm to get up in morning, or making lunch in a home where culturally the mother has always done this. Various staff commented that:

Parents like coming to ITPs ... all happy to come and hear what doing

It's a great place for parents to voice concerns and ask questions without being a big deal... (we) focus a lot on positives... show progression how far the trainee has come and set goals – it gives a point of reference between ITP achievements and goals to achieve while tracking progression.

One staff member noted that the first ITP seemed daunting for many trainees despite the preparation, as this was their first experience where they were truly involved:

Trainees at the first ITP are often worried they will be in trouble - it's unknown (you see) relief over faces afterwards - reassurance is needed up front but they now see as par for the course ... (at school) most have had IEPs which were teacher driven.

Trainee comments

Trainees interviewed individually and in the focus group were able to talk about and state their own ITP goals. The four trainees in the focus group shared their individual goals as follows:

- *...To make my own lunch 3 days for transition... and learn about 3 job choices and have work experience goals - work in cinema. Work focussed goal (is to) achieve and be on time to NOVA like travelling especially on the train.*
- *..catch public transport on my own, come on time to NOVA. Work experience is retail and I want to work at the Reject shop.*
- *..Mortdale next to house retail, Life skill goal ... help learning about computer.*
- *..make own lunch and get train instead of bus, and a factory building and make covers ... brown building.. put gloves on and get dirty.*

3.3.2 Student Development

The second evidence-based practice for successful transition involves skills development across life skills instruction, employment skills instruction, structured work experience, career and vocational curricula, assessment and self-determination training.

Clearly, foundation skills developed through curricula and extra curricula activities are critical for successful transition to adult life. A US National Longitudinal study on evidence based practices reports that improved transition outcomes post-school are associated with paid and unpaid work experiences, employment preparation, social skills training, self determination training and life skills training (NSTTAC, 2014). To date, 64 evidence-based practices to teach 26 different skills have been identified by research, with six in the area of student focused planning, one in family involvement, three in program structure but the majority of 57 are in student development (Test, Fowler & Kohler, 2013).

NSTTAC has now identified 17 predictors of post-school employment, education and independent living success from correlational research (Test, Fowler & Kohler, 2013). In the employment arena, these predictors include career awareness, community experiences, occupational courses, paid employment/work experience, parent expectations, parental involvement, self advocacy/self determination, self care/independent living, social skills, student support, vocational education and work study.

Unpaid and paid work experiences are by far the most important practices associated with good transition outcomes (Benz, 2002; Carter, Swedeen, & Trainor, 2009; Lindstrom, Doren, & Miesch, 2011; McDonnall & Cruden, 2009; Williams-Diehm & Benz, 2008)

The NOVA TTW curriculum and work experience/work placement program was examined against these predictors. Results in this section are discussed under (a) employment, (b) self advocacy/self determination, (c) support, and (d) self care/independent living and social skills.

a) Employment skills

The NOVA TTW program is delivered in segments that are related to getting ready for work (see also section 3.3.2). The schedule for segments is clearly set out and covers the various aspects of the program including the completion of Certificate 1 in Work Education. The program consists of interactive activities both in and outside of the training room. These activities are often held in groups but can also involve one-on-one coaching. NOVA believes in self-paced learning and caters to a variety of learning styles.

Certificate 1 in Work Education 22128VIC

NOVA TTW trainees are encouraged to enrol in and undertake the Certificate 1 in Work Education 22128VIC, a nationally accredited course developed for people with disability and offered through the NOVA Training Registered Training Organisation (RTO). Trainees who competently complete all parts of the Certificate are accredited the Qualification, while those who work towards the certificate but are unable to complete fully, graduate with a Statement of Attainment. The curriculum, designed for people with disabilities, runs over two years and involves learning underpinning work skills and social skills that prepare participants for all types of jobs, as well as job search training and work placements. The content includes food and hygiene skills, basic computer skills and customer service skills, and core and elective units comprise:

- Developing an individual vocational plan with support
- Understanding and compliance with Workplace Health & Safety requirements at work
- Participating in practical work placement with support
- Participating in vocational tasters/activities
- Job seeking skills and activities
- Developing personal management skills to support work life
- Developing interpersonal communication skills for the workplace
- Participating in basic workplace communication
- Working with time, money and directions in simple everyday situations
- Working with simple measurement and design
- Social skills and personal presentation
- Learning about different types of industries and jobs to inform personal choice and suitability

While theory subjects are covered in activities and five workbooks, NOVA TTW program uses experiential learning methods for other activities including word checks, work experience placements, industry visits and guest speakers. Reading and writing time is broken up with videos then practical application.

Trainees complete five workbooks and core skills for their Certificate 1 assessment as well as other relevant work related information is documented in the trainee files. Job interview skills are practiced using video and playback, and trainees spend approximately about an hour per week on completing and updating portfolios and job resumes.

Staff comments

Staff interviewed reported they find the curriculum based around the Certificate 1 integrates well with additional skills and being presented in defined segments, provides good holistic training. All expressed satisfaction with the course and its suitability in meeting the needs of the trainees.

The Certificate 1 qualification is considered valuable by staff, as it provides training in general employment skills (with Centre Link supplement) and several reported this is also viewed positively by many parents who value the adult learning component as similar to a TAFE course.

Staff believe trainees relate well to and see the relevance of ARSS (achievable, realistic, suitable & sustainable) goals. Staff commented on the applicability of customer service and barista skills, independent living skills especially travel training, budgeting and banking, as well as some numeracy, ironing a business shirt and cooking; technology for life including email etiquette; using the work photocopier and fax, mobile phones, and rules for “no facebook at work” for those literate enough and interested in using social media.

One newer staff member who stated the program does prepare trainees well for work noted areas of strength including trainees learning about how to get to work, what to wear, personal hygiene, emergency procedures, no bullying or harassing, rights and responsibilities and interview skills.

Several other staff commented on the importance of the news review, where trainees chat about the news. This is considered critical, as it gets trainees to watch or listen to news and talk about daily events, and/or enter a news page into their facebook feed. Trainees are then expected to have a new story each day so when they go to a work place they can converse about current affairs or have an item to talk about.

Other staff also commented on the fact that additional skills and behaviours are developed more informally and incidentally throughout the training, such as learning what questions and topics of conversation are/are not suitable or polite and wearing watches rather than checking time on mobile phones which can be misinterpreted in the workplace.

Trainee comments

Trainees in the focus group were able to explain what they were learning about despite limited communication skills among some:

learning about body language, and planning a one bedroom unit .. design and looking at housing and renting, help with independent living ... working on measuring.... (it's a) project about internet ... living in a house .. buying bed, x box and CD player in the project..

job seeking

learning to talk about computer, dream house

to check the mail, take garbage out .. timesheet and time management

Observation

First year trainees at the Hurstville outlet were observed in the morning session working on selecting their own ARSS goals (achievable realistic sustainable suitable). These were related to three job choices for work placements. After interacting over initial information presented by staff using powerpoint with trainee notes, trainees then went to individual computer stations to search the internet to find jobs in areas of interest that met their ARSS criteria. Trainees were supported to print out one job choice and come back together to discuss and check how realistic their selections. One trainee had selected working in cinemas as an usher but in discussion the fact he did not want to work weekends made this problematic. Expectations and requirements relating to working hours and conditions in the various choices were explored so another found working in hospitality meant having to work nights and weekends which was also not a preference, while they all found out that retail also requires weekend work. This activity did result in practical knowledge trainees then applied to their selections.

Work experience and work placements

Work preparation is recognised as critical and includes career awareness, community experiences, occupational courses, paid employment/work experiences, and vocational education and work study.

During the two year Transition to Work program, NOVA TTW trainees participate in at least 140 hours of work experience in at least 10 different jobs, so trainees learn about the many different jobs and industries available and choose which types of employment suits them. Minimum Work Placement KPIs are set at 70 hours actual work placements per year, not including related activities, as well as 8 employer interviews for work placements per year with different employers. They also attend several different industries and workplaces to observe what work is like across different industries. A unique aspect of the program is that trainees select not just one job choice, but three job choices across different industries, so they have alternatives to fall back on if their initial preference does not eventuate.

Work experience begins with trainees learning generic work skills across four vocational areas. This is managed through taster courses in four electives in the first six months of the program, with a minimum of five hours spent in the four mandatory vocational areas:

- Basic Retail
- Basic Hospitality – (food and hygiene)
- Administration
- Basic Technology (computing)

These four areas contain basic skills considered transferrable to other trades and careers with particular emphasis given to communication, teamwork, problem solving and self-management. These first work experience placements are in a variety of industries so that trainees get to know what's involved in different roles and practise basic work skills.

Staff reports indicate that this selection does provide trainees with exposure and experience upon which to base their informed job choices, and examples of subsequent trainee selections at one outlet visited included fitness, child-care², and bakery.

Following these taster courses, trainees can then customise and expand on these electives. Job Coaches work with interests and abilities of trainees to branch out to other industries using multiple placements, which also help further explore job choices. Trainees are accompanied by a Job Coach to work experience and placements until the trainee gains confidence and skills on site. Skills learnt and number of hours worked are recorded in the Work Placement file. It was noteworthy that all trainees observed and interviewed were highly motivated to work and gain employment.

While the Job coaches arrange and support work experience the work placement teams manage work placements for the second years and look for jobs that could lead to real employment. They may also look for apprenticeships or traineeships while others can do short courses at TAFE or elsewhere to gain additional skills, such as a fork lift licence, aged care certificate, an OH&S course or an industry certification or licence rather than a qualification. Employment consultants can also liaise with NOVA DES workplace co-ordinators, who the trainees get to know during their time at the TTW program, since offices are co-located. This facilitates later handover from TTW staff to the DES program when employment occurs, which makes for a very smooth and seamless transition to employment. The TTW program can pay or fund a particular short course especially if the trainee then transitions into the DES program. This also enables additional costs for work boots, or personal protective equipment to be purchased, or transportation costs may be covered.

Work experience or work placement often leads to a job, but the employment team also works on finding employment positions concurrently, so if a suitable job does come up in the second half of the second year or earlier, this can be secured. Staff reported that since the majority are under 21 years of age, they are employed on junior wages and employers generally are keen to employ NOVA TTW trainees and graduates and mould them to fit the company.

Trainee comments

One first year trainee interviewed stated his first job choice is now hospitality. He had done a retail taster for five weeks and did not like this because he said his Boss was rude and wanted him to work faster. He had recently completed a job interview with another employer who he described as nice and pleasant which was important to him. He was planning to do the next work experience there and was hoping he could get a job with the help of his Job Coach and Employment Consultant who he felt were very helpful, especially when the Job Coach stayed with him for the whole first day at his work experience. Although he had done other work experience, he stated he would not have succeeded getting a job straight from school, as he could be easily get upset and be distracted and he would get angry if bullied. He stated *I cant' afford to be distracted – the ITP goals helped.*

² The Child care selections is being explored with and for a person who has vision impairment not intellectual disability, as child care is not generally encouraged for trainees who have intellectual disability because of industry regulations and restrictions.

Another trainee reported that through work experience they had gained more skills including money handling, using the cash register and serving customers. This trainee stated they had gained industry knowledge, learnt what was right and wrong and was building confidence because they found they could do the work and learn.

Trainees in the focus group volunteered that what they liked about work experience was the actual work or job duties:

Best and Less ... tidying up cleaning up and cleaning but next do cinemas. And work experience at Rockdale - Target and Coles and community centre.

Rivers every Friday ... (I) tidy up shoes on shelf and do price tagging and hanging up clothes and tidy up.

... hairdresser ... cleaning the floor, mopping and towels... and cleaning windows. work experience at Coles: clean baskets, packing shelves .. called "facing up"

car washing at Arncliffe - machine wash - I get sponge to clean windows and doors .. outside the car.

Interviewing skills, Career portfolios and resumes

Other aspects of work preparation and career development relate to developing skills in job interviewing, building and maintaining career portfolios and writing resumes. NOVA TTW provides regular opportunities to develop all these skills. Job interviewing skills are practiced using role plays during group based training sessions, while further practice to build confidence is now being arranged in work places with employers in larger organisations (smaller businesses do not have the time) as part of work experience. This may occur in the week before work experience begins, or a day or two afterwards, depending on the employer.

Career portfolios and resumes are worked on every week. Trainees have hard copy files as well as soft files that are saved on their own usb sticks. They develop practice resumes for their three job choice areas, and learn to update and maintain their portfolios adding any new tasks learned, documents of accredited and non accredited training courses attended and completed, licences and certifications, workplace summaries, samples of work/duty statements, references from work experiences, and community involvement, including volunteer work, community groups and interests and hobbies.

Observation of a session at the Campbelltown outlet involved trainees revising information about career portfolios and then researching and completing more information individually using the internet, that was then entered into their various files. First and second year trainees interviewed at the Hurstville office talked about adding to their portfolios their awards and certificates from school, such as the Higher School Certificate Life skills and other certificates from TAFE, as well as photos from school work experience, as well as current work experience photos and references etc.

(b) Self advocacy/self determination

Self determination is a set of skills and knowledge that enable a person to make choices, set goals based on understanding their strengths and limitations, and initiate a plan of action. Indeed, self-determination involves the capacity to choose and to act on the basis of those choices, and to manage one's own time, identify and solve problems, learn how to access resources, self advocate and present oneself in job interview situations (Wehmeyer, 2001; Wehmeyer et al., 2012; Wehmeyer, Lance, & Bashinski, 2002).

A person must develop self-determination skills to become a self-advocate (Shogren, Palmer, Wehmeyer, Williams-Diehm, & Little, 2011). Because self- advocacy will, ultimately, be the way for many young people with disabilities to be heard and overcome the challenges they will face in life, learning these skills has proven critical.

“Self-determination is related to self esteem and confidence because in order to pursue your goals, you need to feel that you can do it! In addition, self determined people know how to find help when they need it. This help usually comes from their personal network.” (Timmons, Moloney, Dreilinger & Schuster, 2002)

Several trainees reported they used to be shy but attending NOVA TTW has boosted their confidence. Each of the trainees interviewed volunteered willingly to be interviewed and presented as confident and well able to talk about their work preferences based on their work experiences and what they were learning and had learnt in the program. They also expressed likes and dislikes, and reported how the program was for them.

Staff reported an increase in confidence levels amongst trainees:

...one of biggest things is confidence and self esteem - no bullying stops here – (they) look out for each other ... we see major changes in two years.

Trainee comments

Trainees were able to communicate that they enjoyed their work experience and other training sessions and the support provided to gain skills and competence, although two stated they were not as keen on written activity book work. All trainees stated that they were appreciative of both the support provided to them and the manner in which they were treated as adults:

If stuck on work or work experience...(staff member) will help. If training a bad day, someone will talk to me like an adult. I'm 18 and now being treated and acting like an adult .. not teachers but job coaches so treat as I don't fidget anymore... have learnt being adult is easier..

(staff are) ... helping me get more focused on career path. Helps focus on work more than school. Helped sort myself out... feeling more comfortable and confident.. I do get frustrated with schoolish parts – I like adult work... but I can take time out for break... like 10 minutes and can then handle better.

Since been here ... learnt budgeting.. now saving money, learning what didn't know - about life, get out there and do things haven't done...

Moving from school a big change ... this is more like work. At school had recess and lunch but here only 15 minutes or half hour break ... treated like adult not child. Classroom good as still see friends and mates, so comfortable, not shy.

Vocational taster – preferred hospitality because hands on... prefer to writing out stuff - I get distracted and bored.

I like doing resumes, meeting new people, making new friends.... Work related stuff is handy like interview practice – ways to do things and say things. I used to be shy but being here boosted my confidence ... My dream job long time in the future is to open my own business.... No dislikes ... but would like more variety instead of same things two days in a row.. mix it up .. lately lots of booklets – mix up variety.

(c) Support

Transition research has demonstrated that the right level and style of support for and with youth with disabilities is crucial for improving post school outcomes. Too much support and/or overprotection can result in increased dependency and reduced opportunities to develop skills and competence, while too little support may result in failure and withdrawal.

NOVA TTW trainees are encouraged to involve support persons who are interested in their progress and help advocate for them as necessary. Support persons can be a relative, a guardian, or a parent. Support people are invited to the six monthly ITP meetings to review progress towards their Transition Goals, and support person/s are also invited to attend the annual Open Day to view work and progress.

Support from home is considered vital, and parents are encouraged to support the trainee to focus on employment and back them up for things such buying and wearing appropriate work clothes, calling in if sick, and following up messages. If home support is absent, NOVA staff commented that trainees can struggle in these areas.

There are several NOVA TTW support staff allocated for each trainee. All trainees have their own Job Coach who has skills in task analysis, modelling, one on one instruction etc. The Job Coach helps them develop their ITP, and a personal career plan. The Job Coach also assists the trainee to improve pre-employment skills, learn about work options and possibilities, participate in work experiences, and access community activities and social activities. Job Coaches can also help arrange community activities, courses or work experience placements on days other than the three days attendance at the program. A Work Placement Coach supervises and arranges meaningful work experience for the trainee and looks for work for the trainee as soon as they are ready. Job Coaches and Work placement officers work as a team and communicate information readily.

The TTW Program Coordinator and Work Placement Coordinator for the outlet are responsible for overseeing the day-to-day operations. Trainees also are aware of and interact with other management at various times, including the Training and Development Manager, the Chief Executive Officer and staff from NOVA's Disability Employment Service.

One coordinator stated the level and type of support provided by TTW staff is critical and matched to individual needs. Successful training and job matching was attributed to the skills of Job Coaches and Employment Consultants who often have personal experience of children with special needs or extensive work experience with this population and who are

able to make things easier to understand for trainees, model skills, use role plays, discussion, question and answer techniques and also do 1:1 training to develop skills.

One Job Coach explained that typically, for a trainee starting a new work experience, she provides orientation to help the person settle in, through ensuring familiarity with the workplace, location of toilets and facilities, lockers where bags go etc., travel training to the placement when necessary, and reassurance and support handling normal anxiety and nervousness.

On site work behaviour support involves ensuring the person returns from breaks on time, is appropriate with interpersonal skills (not too chatty or too quiet), knows the right time to say things (during work/ lunchtime and breaks), if they arrive at work too early to go for a walk or to a coffee shop and not to hang around inappropriately, does not use the mobile phone during work, when finished for the day tells the employer they are finished and thanks them, lets others know they have finished for the day, and leaves and does not hang around the work place.

Work skill support involves setting up routines, breaking the task/s down (task analysis) for instructional purposes or simplifying tasks and supporting the trainee identify and concentrate on the task/s or activities. Where necessary job modifications can be arranged, and one example shared was developing colour coded cards for use by a trainee at a Nursing Home who could not remember codes for the entry and exit gates. Support staff chat with the employer regarding progress, and in cases where there is no continuity of work tasks, will negotiate and work with the employer to identify and provide continuity of work flow for the trainee. In one case this involved a trainee whose job was making salads but on occasions when the salad job is not ready, now keeps busy by washing cutlery.

While the amount of support required will vary by person and job, a usual pattern is to work alongside or shadow the worker 100% of the time on days 1 and 2, then reduce to 50% over the next days or weeks, then further reduce time to 15-20 minute visits. Checks can also be made on the person's non-work experience days to determine if any skills change or tasks require set up or modification.

Trainees interviewed reported positive relationships with staff and stated they appreciated the support provided:

Work experience- liked job choices (I) now choose administration... has helped me come out of shell, (I am) independent and now travelling on public transport except when no buses. People here are nice - trainees and staff... Employment consultant looks for jobs.... Job Coach on work experience stayed all day at first, then less – made me less nervous...

.. if not sure about job I can ask ... that's the biggest thing - got people to work with... trainees and staff, Job Coach are like friends - can have a conversation....

.. (staff) help me out, doing resume, I am more confident with work, asking me questions not presuming I know ..

(d) Self care, independent living and social skills

Many agree that social competence such as getting along with others and good interpersonal skills are critical to a successful life (Hillier, Fish, Siegel, & Beversdorf, 2011). Role-playing, counseling, and targeted instruction on certain social skills can help students develop appropriate skills (Wehman, 2013).

The NOVA TTW curriculum does address self care, independent living and social skills explicitly through formal training activities in the training rooms, through instruction and support at on site work experiences and placements where skills are practiced in situ, and through incidental learning. Emphasis is placed on communication skills, talking to people in person and on the phone, the importance of listening well, and being more independent using skills such as organising their day, travel training, and making lunch.

A staff member commented that many trainees enjoy thinking about moving out of home and learning skills to find rented accommodation, what is involved in setting up in a flat or house, and how to do this on a budget.

One trainee confirmed this by independently volunteering that while it was good to learn about work, he also liked learning about moving out of home, the life skills involved, skills to get a drivers licence (he is now on Learner Plates) and about loans. This young man explained that his parents had always saved, but he had not. He expressed pride and excitement that he is now saving to go on a Cruise, which he is looking forward to enjoying in the coming months. Other trainees commented on gaining greater independence in travel and one stated he had learnt about good hygiene, shaving, being professional and wearing good clothes.

Staff noted that a number of living skills, as well as social and friendship skills are developed throughout the program, especially interacting with peers and developing friendships. Often trainees have had restricted experiences and have not had the opportunity to learn skills and engage in activities in the community they are now appreciating. Staff provided a number of examples:

*Things guys 18-19 years old doing for first time - one had never poured himself a drink, not even water in a cup but by the end he is making barista coffee ..
.. never before eaten in a restaurant ... how to sit, talk, socialisation skills, .. important because jobs seen as very social
.. linking to community social activities and youth groups, bowling leagues, something fun without parents, travel training.
did go out together to movie and coffee organised themselves, making friends together
several are now facebook friends*

3.3.3 Family Involvement

One of the most important factors influencing transition outcomes for youth with disabilities is parent involvement (Grigal & Neubert, 2004; Lindstrom et al., 2011, Wehman, 2014). Parents can facilitate decisions and advocate for their son or daughter over time and are valuable consultants about their son or daughter (Wehman 2014). Yet the process of transition to adulthood can be experienced as difficult and distressing by many parents (Clegg, 2010). This is particularly the case if they are not provided information and skills to

support the young person with disability make this transition smoothly. After all, it is the family that will continue to support the person once school and transition days end and transition services cease. The family needs to be supported and trained as much as the person with disability in how and where to access services, advocate for rights and inclusion, and obtain needed support and assistance.

Starting early allows for family involvement to move from being crisis driven to being a true partnership in planning. Early involvement also allows trust and relationships to develop over time, but true and authentic family involvement does require meaningful two-way communication and follow up.

Some of the TTW parents already have good advocacy skills and are keen for their young people to succeed. These parents have usually been involved in selecting NOVA as their TTW program of choice, because of school provided information and their own ability to find information. One factor commented on by staff is that some of these parents choose the NOVA TTW because it has its own post school DES program to support adults in open employment after the transition period, and it does not operate a Community Participation (CP) program, as these parents usually want their son or daughter to progress into a job.

The NOVA TTW program recognises the important role parents and families play and encourages them to be actively involved at each stage of the transition process. Parents are encouraged to empower the young person to develop skills and competencies to the extent they can and not to be over protective. Parents are welcome to sit in at enrolment and registration so they have information about the program and trainees are encouraged to invite parents to be support partners, attending and actively participating in all ITP meetings, expos, open days and the final graduation ceremony. Information is freely available and feedback regularly conveyed to parents.

No formal parent preparation or training in advocacy skills is provided, and where parents/carers of families are reluctant or difficult to engage, staff report this does make trainee progress more difficult. There can be various reasons why families are not involved, and it would be worth further investigation to discover how the TTW program could provide relevant training or support to these families to better engage them in the process and hence improve outcomes.

While staff reported most parents who do engage are very supportive, some parents can be over protective or continue to have a “care mentality” despite signing the ITP and coming regularly to meetings. Staff reported the frequent contact with ITP meetings and feedback provided does afford opportunity to gradually extend these parents’ horizons. Staff reported they work gently and carefully with empathy to reassure parents and build trust so that parents will allow the young person to try new experiences and extend skills, for example with travel training, making lunches and socialising in the community after hours. One coordinator stated:

(it is) ... critical to reiterate to parents to stretch their child and get into the workforce, to live independently, .. and have the most fulfilling life they can have..

3.3.4 Program structure

The program structure includes areas such as policies, philosophy, strategic planning, program evaluation, resource allocation and human resource development.

The NOVA TTW program is governed and directed by The NSW Department of Family and Community Services (FACS) *Transition to Work Program Guidelines* (FACS, 2013) that set out the policy and operating requirements for the Transition to Work Program. These guidelines state that all aspects of service delivery in the Transition to Work Program are to be delivered in accordance with the following principles:

- Focus on employment outcomes
- Deliver training in a work environment
- Respond to changing work needs
- Person centred
- Build independence
- Responsive to Aboriginal people
- Responsive to cultural, linguistic and religious diversity
- Responsive to the needs of people living in rural and remote areas
- Strengths and partnership based
- Cost effective
- Continuous improvement

There are five key outcomes by which programs are judged and continue to be funded:

1. Young people move to open or supported employment by the end of their program
2. Young people perform satisfying and meaningful work consistent with their employment goals
3. Young people develop the skills and qualifications necessary for the transition to sustainable employment
4. Young people sustain their work and training commitments
5. Young Aboriginal people and young people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds have fair access to support and achieve job outcomes comparable to other young people in the program.

The NOVA TTW adheres to the above principles, and achieves the defined outcomes, and the Training and Development Manager is responsible for ensuring the program is compliant and meets the ADHC guidelines each year. The NOVA TTW Mission statement:

“ To provide a quality personalized program that assists young people with a disability fully develop their potential and participate in satisfying jobs of their choice within the general community”

is clearly stated on the NOVA website and in information provided to trainees in their Trainee Handbooks that are given to each trainee and their parents/family, and explained during the registration process.

The Guidelines clearly identify the general program structure and operating procedures, within which NOVA TTW has developed its own unique curriculum. This includes a clear program that is delivered in segments as follows:

Table 3: NOVA TTW Program Segments

Segment	Length time	Frequency
1. Weekly planning meeting	30 minutes	Weekly
2. Workbooks	3-5 hours	Weekly
3. News review	30 minutes	Weekly
4. Core skills and word check	1 hour 15 minutes 30 minutes	Weekly
5. Technology for life and work	1 hour	Weekly
6. Connecting with industry	1 hour 30 minutes	Fortnightly
7. Vocational Work Skills	1 hour 15 minutes	Weekly
8. Resume and Career Portfolio	1 hour 30 minutes	Fortnightly
9. Job Seeking	1 hour 30 minutes	Fortnightly
10. Work Placements	2 hours 30 minutes	Weekly or accrued fortnightly
11. Before and After Placements	1 hour 30 minutes	Fortnightly

Although the NOVA TTW program offers one curriculum across all outlets, two coordinators who each work across a number of outlets independently noted that there are inevitably differences in delivery across outlets because of the cultural and socioeconomic circumstances and variations between areas, as well as differences in trainee functional levels and lifestyles and Job Coach styles and personalities.

The program was described as being individualised and goal and strengths driven, yet part of the curriculum is delivered in a group setting. One coordinator explained that although there are 153 individuals with a myriad of goals, delivery at both the individual and group level was considered unique but workable, and effective in suiting the needs of all the trainees. In some cases a page of work that may take one hour for trainees in one outlet may take several weeks for trainees to complete at another outlet, due to the functioning levels involved. However, for a trainee who works at a faster pace than peers, extra work experience may be arranged, or there may be a focus on other goals such as getting a driver's licence, improving typing speed or developing higher level customer service skills.

Funding and staffing levels

All referrals come from school assessments by ADHC, and trainees and /or parents or carers select the TTW program of their choice. All trainees are then funded to attend three days per week, for 48 weeks per year over two years. While this was considered adequate funding for some, NOVA staff reported the hours can prove problematic for some who tire by the third afternoon, yet insufficient for others who desire and can work and cope with additional hours. These individuals are encouraged to do supplementary work experience on the other days, or find volunteer work, attend TAFE courses, or attend social groups so socialisation skills are kept up. Indeed, stamina can be an issue for some trainees, and staff commented that the program concentrates on building stamina by ensuring trainees attend a minimum of 16-18 hours per week. When it comes to employment placement, stamina is taken into account and while some trainees can be placed in jobs for 3-4 days a week, others require placements with hours and days to suit their stamina and other needs.

Staffing levels were considered adequate at an average of 1 staff to 5 or 6 trainees, depending on the outlet. According to one of the coordinators, the Job Coach and Employment Consultant ratio to trainees works well and can be used flexibly and adjusted each year as necessary. One outlet visited was reported to be operating well with 2 job

coaches to 12 trainees for the 2014 calendar year. NOVA as an organisation has developed its own KPIs for all roles, and the TTW program is working to meet these.

Professional Development

Staff qualifications vary, but most have a Certificate IV in Employment Services or Disability. Staff without this qualification are assisted to enroll and gain a Certificate IV. All staff undertake regular in-house professional development on an annual basis. An induction was held at the beginning of 2014, and staff also attend two or three forums during the year, at which content is tailored to meet current needs. Recent topics have involved facilitation model versus the caretaker model, presented by well known USA expert Dale Dileo, in addition to information on core evidence for Certificate 1 assessments, reviewing files and marketing. Staff are also supported to maintain and enhance their support skills through monthly support teleconference sessions.

3.3.5 Collaborative practice

Collaborative service delivery with inter-organizational frameworks and interagency collaboration is another essential evidence based practice component for successful transition. A collaboration model developed by Bigby, Frawley & Ramacharan (2014) identified important components of true and effective collaboration. Central is scaffolding for true inclusion, but additional key strategies include shared and distinct purposes for each player, that are equally valued, shared involvement and distinct contributions that are equally valued, working as a group with trusting relationships, and shared or dispersed power and flexible and adapted methods that are evidence based.

NOVA TTW staff reported that most referrals come from feeder schools where there has been good networking occurring over a number of years. One coordinator stated she had met the majority of teachers in the feeder schools, and this was considered valuable as it enables communication at an early stage regarding future trainee needs, especially around behavioural issues. Another TTW staff member commented that referrals from schools varied by area, but was growing in areas such as Hawkesbury and the Blue Mountains.

NOVA provides information and promotes both the NOVA TTW and DES programs in schools through personal contacts especially with Support Teachers in Transition (STTs) and through offering Taster courses and Open Days, and participating in school expos and running the STEP program for year 11 and 12 students. Taster days are offered at least once per term per outlet to allow school students in their final year/s to come to a NOVA outlet and sit in on programs. This provides a relaxed and fun atmosphere where actual activities can also be presented. Open days are also held across every outlet for both the TTW and DES programs once a year in August. Invitations are given to employers, work experience hosts, schools, trainees, parents, dignitaries, MP's etc. and at these days lunch is provided, awards are presented and people who have supported the program are recognised. Trainees if available may give a speech. NOVA DES support workers also run job clubs in some of the schools.

NOVA has within it three distinct entities, the TTW program, the DES program and the RTO that provides nationally accredited training to trainees and staff. These three entities do

collaborate and complement one another's service delivery, so that trainees can experience a seamless transition. This was particularly noticeable for trainees who graduate from the TTW program and move seamlessly to the DES program for ongoing support once employed.

Some TTW trainees gain a job in their last year in the TTW program and then continue independently in the workforce. Participants who have not been placed in employment can be referred to a range of specialist Disability Employment Services that provide support to find a job of choice as well as post placement support until the person is fully competent in their work role. The obvious choice for many is to transition to the NOVA DES since it is co-located and trainees have usually become well acquainted with their employment staff so transfer can be readily arranged and managed. Indeed, at the fourth and final ITP meeting trainees can indicate if they wish a referral to be made and their Job Coach can fill out the referral immediately and begin the process of gradual handover as appropriate. However, there was no evidence of referral to other providers, apart from TAFE courses.

All three graduates who were interviewed and who are now employed in different industries had transitioned to the NOVA DES during their final year, and all had found this to be a smooth and efficient process. In fact, all graduates, parents and employers interviewed found it difficult to remember and distinguish any differences between the TTW and DES support provided, as the transfer was made successfully.

3.3.6 Outputs and Outcomes

Limited documented data were reviewed regarding outputs and outcomes. Verbal reports were gained from several staff.

The Training and Development Manager stated that, for the cohort that commenced in 2012, several trainees had moved or dropped out, one moved to a full time TAFE course and one had to leave due to illness. However, 100% (60/60) of the 2013 second year cohort graduated, with all but two gaining jobs in open employment. Both parents of the other two graduates chose alternate pathways, with one moving to an ADE and one to a Community Participation (CP) program. Jobs were secured across a wide range of industries, reflecting individual preferences as well as market availability.

Staff were very positive about the prospective 2014 outputs and outcomes, with a number of second years from various outlets already finding employment by September of 2014. At 17th December 2014, 43 individuals had commenced employment in the general community. An additional six have job starts being negotiated to start in the new year. Four are still looking for work, but transitioned to the DES program, and seven moved into further education and training and will look for work when they complete their courses. In addition, a total of 50 NOVA TTW trainees successfully completed a nationally recognised qualification – Certificate 1 in Work Education.

The range of industries in which graduates are gaining employment is also noteworthy. Employment positions secured in September 2014 at one outlet already include Business administration, Hospitality/food production and an apprenticeship in carpentry.

4.0 Stakeholder Perspectives

Trainee perspectives

All trainees interviewed were positive about their TTW program and indicated they were learning new skills that would assist them get a job and live more independently. Not everyone liked everything and trainees were honest in their appraisals. One person stated that sometimes he did not like some staff, or hard work. However, all were clearly able to identify things learnt including:

- *work as a team*
- *work as a partner job searching*
- *cooking yesterday*
- *work together to find right program*
- *how to travel by public transport*
- *job tasks such as stacking shelves*
- *folding clothes, looking for job*
- *cleaning the cars - taking off dust and sand*
- *shaking hands, introduce selves ,*
- *remembering*
- *roleplays ... interviews.. practice*

Most trainees preferred their TTW program to school because they wanted to get a job, and they especially liked being treated in an adult manner. One trainee stated he liked school but preferred the TTW program “because I want to get a job and pay taxes”. Another stated he “wanted to get a job and earn money”. Trainees were able to identify specific aspects of the program they enjoyed most:

Computing- leaning about publisher, word documents and powerpoint

Publisher and computer too. Talking about the news .. talking about the world ..

Learning about job seeking and I do retail, hospitality and admin ... I like hospitality best

I learnt about the three job choices – hospitality, retail and factory work

Interview skills (I) can answer if have work experience like working at Coles Westfield Hurstville, stacking shelves, putting things away

I liked the picnic - social day - to see every outlet and meet other trainees

Staff perspectives

Staff reported they enjoyed working in the TTW program. Although they said the culture of organisation involved long hours, they generally like the culture and felt valued as staff members. One person stated that staff talents are acknowledged and recognised and promoted. Staff also feel supported in their teams and through the various professional development activities and networking opportunities where they had the chance to come together physically with others doing same job. One mentioned that teleconferences held monthly were helpful, while another commented that staff training contributed to a united front for NOVA, and that the internet and IT service (intranet and staff bulletins etc.) was helpful and that working in the program “feels a family thing”. Another staff member reported that other staff were friendly and she could go to others for help or advice when needed.

Staff commented on the fact that they gain satisfaction seeing the growth and development among the trainees, and that the program is practical with plenty of variety and interest.

Graduate, family and employer perspectives

Individual interviews were conducted with three NOVA TTW graduates who are now employed and supported by the NOVA Disability Employment Service, as well as three employers, one for each graduate. Two parents were also interviewed. These are presented as case studies. Names have been changed to pseudonyms.

Case study #1 Peter

Peter works at a local Macdonalds as a busboy. He has been there for about 12 months. He initially started at Macdonalds as part of his work experience and then continued on as an employee.

He works about 9-10 hours per week. Both he and his mother would like more hours; Peter because he enjoys the work and enjoys talking to the other people there ("I like working there"; "I like seeing the other people and talking to them"), his mother because it would get him out of the house and away from his play station ("he would just stay in his room on the play station"). He helps out at home, but mostly keeps to himself.

Peter says that from his time with the TTW, he has learned to look after himself, take responsibility, and take public transport. He has developed beginning budgeting skills and is saving for a holiday. Glenda said it "has brought him out of his shell".

Hi mother continued that the TTW has got Peter into the workforce, which would not have happened 10 years ago. The TTW people knew what to do to push him in the right direction. Peter has done a lot more than his mother expected. He did work experience at a sheltered workshop from school - but Peter was "not that bad", not as bad as the others at the workshop. She considered the workshop was not the best option for Peter – he "was capable of more".

Peter's goals from his ITPs were to get a job. Now that he has a job, his goal is to get a job 5 days a week. His mother commented that he needs consistency in job hours, not a job where the hours change from week to week – as he has now.

Glenda, his mother, also said that Peter would benefit from a social club where he could meet others. Peter commented that he liked the other people he went through the TTW program with, but does not see them anymore – he doesn't know how to contact them. Glenda commented that Nova took a long time to send her information on social groups in the area that might be suitable for Peter. She commented on the changes in staff members where information is not always passed on, nor information on the changes in the "right people" to talk to. She told of discussing the issues she had with various staff people and being told "that's not my section" and being passed onto others. This has also made it difficult for Peter as he does not know who to ask.

Glenda works most nights and therefore sleeps quite an amount of time during the day. She mentioned that at times, she could not always make the ITP meetings for this reason. She suggested some flexibility in the ITP meeting times to accommodate different family circumstances.

Overall, though, she was very happy with the TTW program and the subsequent support from Nova employment. Otherwise, she said Peter would be "sitting around the house doing nothing but playing on his play station".

Interview with Peter's Manager at Macdonalds

I was able to observe Peter at Macdonalds. He was a different person from the one I saw in the interview where he was quiet and at times needed to be encouraged to share his thoughts. At Macdonalds he was lively, chatting to co-workers, and fully engaged in the tasks at hand (from interviewer notes).

The manager indicated that Peter is the first employee that this Macdonald's outlet has had with Nova. She commented enthusiastically that *the support from both TTW and Nova Employment has been consistently good – good communication and proactive support. A quick response to any problems that arose. An attitude of nipping problems in the bud.*

Peter is a good employee. He is reliable and does "a good job". He has his regular customers who seek him out, and Peter gets compliments from these and other customers for his polite manner and his competence. He continually shows a willingness and eagerness to work.

The manager also commented that having Peter has been beneficial to her personally in that it presented a challenge to her and contributed to her own professional and personal development. *Having Peter as an employee is also good for the wider staff at this MacDonalds outlet in that it adds to their training knowledge and "it's good for business"*

We have found that Nova has benefited our business and "mutual learning". "We learn from each other".

Case study #2 Michael

Michael works at a Sebel Resort and Spa as a maintenance person. His work is quite varied, depending on the tasks that need to be done to keep the grounds and buildings of the resort in good order. He works 4 days per week, 9am to 2pm.

Michael started there on a work experience and then was employed subsequent to finishing the TTW program. He is very proud now that he is going for his "L's".

He spoke of the TTW program with affection, and said that the main thing it had done for him was to "make him more mature"; to develop some work skills, and take responsibility. He also told of the TTW program instilling in him the need to take pride in his personal appearance, and to "dress right for work". His appearance well reflected that learning.

He spoke of the uniformity of the bookwork in the TTW program – in that "it was the same for everyone", and provided little incentive for those who finished the bookwork before others. A TTW staff member mentioned that the TTW program has made the bookwork more individual since the time Michael was in the program.

Michael finds that Nova (both the employment arm and the TTW) are caring and understanding of his circumstances. He has made a lot of progress since being with them – he has moved out of home to shared accommodation, and aiming to live alone in the near future. He appreciated Nova accommodating his previous circumstances whereby, because of transport difficulties, he could work only from 9-3, and not in school holidays. At that stage he was living in the countryside where there was very little public transport – and he needed to come in with the school bus – the only available form of public transport.

Interview with Michael's manager at the Sebel resort

Michael's manager praised the work of Nova – both in the TTW and in the employment support. There was an attitude of "making it work". They took (and continue to take) a proactive approach to sorting out problems before they become big problems.

Michael initially wanted to work in the catering area, but Sebel felt he was not suited to that, or indeed not ready for it yet. So they worked with him and Nova for Michael to take up his present position. Each person is an individual, and Sebel considers this in determining person's job and tasks. The manager stated that the hotel has a culture of inclusion, and is very open to diversity which is in the

hotel's HR plan. Additionally, the hotel ensures that the tasks or the roles undertaken by employees are appropriate for them, including where relevant for people with intellectual disability.

Case study #3: Shane

Shane works at Doors Plus as an administrative assistant 5 days a week, 9am to 1pm. He has worked there for 3 years now, having first been a work experience person with the TTW and then progressing onto a paid employee position.

He is a quiet well-spoken young man. His appearance is immaculate – something he attributes to the TTW program with its emphasis on appropriate dress and grooming in the workplace.

It is now some 3 years since he was in the TTW program, and he indicated it was a bit difficult to remember back to that time when he was involved in the program. Some of the work skills he has and that he sees as important in his job are to always focus on the task at hand, to ask for another task when you have finished the previous task (he indicated his role involves many tasks in administration), and in a wider context to have goals in life.

The TTW helped him with the change from school to life after school. In particular he mentioned that the TTW program taught him “to say ‘good morning’ to people”). Shane is a shy person, and he found this pleasantry hard to do, but the TTW helped him.

He found the industry visits a particularly good part of the TTW, as they “helped you see other places, and gave you ideas” on different types of work. He also mentioned that he enjoyed hearing the guest speakers that the TTW had over the time he was there. They gave him “inspiration”. He also learned how to “do interviews”. He learned to work in a team (as a shy person, this was difficult for him at first), and learned to travel to work on his own.

The TTW and later Nova Employment helped him to work out what he wanted to do.

Shane stated that his NOVA Employment consultant “keeps me in check”. Shane also knows he can ring Nova to ask for help if he needs to

In a telephone Interview with Shane's mother a day following Shane's interview, she explained that Shane came into the TTW program 3 years ago. He had missed the closing date for applying to TTW from school, and so his mother got him into a TAFE Certificate 1 course at Mt Druitt TAFE. It was from here that he was able to apply late (likely facilitated by the TAFE teacher) for entry into the Nova TTW program. His mother says she is very proactive in accessing resources for her son.

She was very pleased with the TTW program for Shane. He had 250 hours of work experience in many varied work situations – e.g. K-Mart, the RSL, opportunity shops and many more. This variety exposed him to a lot of different work avenues, and allowed him to make choices that were right for him.

It also developed independence in him, especially around travelling by public transport. The TTW people taught him how to use the bus to get to work, enabling him to travel independently and not be reliant on others.

Near the end of his work experience with the TTW, Shane was offered the job at Doors Plus. They “kept him on”. He also upgraded to Certificate 3 in Business Administration at TAFE. His mother is especially proud that now he has a traineeship with Doors Plus. She repeated several times “I am so lucky to have Nova”.

The ITP process at the TTW was nothing new for Shane. Goal setting and achieving goals is part of the family ethos. Having goals is important as it gives Shane (and others) something to work towards.

Shane is a determined, resilient even stubborn person. Once he sets his mind to something, he will achieve it.

The TTW helped Shane with preparing resumes. They helped him develop a folder containing all the relevant material. They also helped him with communication skills. His mother reiterated that communication is an area of difficulty for Shane. "He finds it hard to express what he wants to say". He needs to be shown what to say and how to say it – it does not come naturally to him. "He finds it hard to get his message across". He has to learn and practise social interactions. For example, his mother will ask him "Did you say hello to everyone today?" This backs up a TTW staff comment made after the interview with Shane that the TTW had to teach Shane how to say "good morning" to the people at work. This was a stressful and difficult task for him, but eventually he "got it".

Shane's mother indicated that Nova could have focused on this area more for Shane. Perhaps, she suggested, speech therapy might have been useful for him. In a wider context, she suggested that the TTW program could be tinkered with to allow for some flexibility to meet individual trainee needs.

Shane's mother felt satisfied with her involvement with the TTW and the wider Nova program as a parent. She is in frequent contact with Shanes Nova support worker by phone. She does not have time to go to all the meetings, as she works. But she is very satisfied with the way that the support worker and other Nova staff keep her "in the loop" about Shane and his work, for example Nova will discuss with her Shane's regular assessments and his program more widely. There is good, open communication.

For Shane, having a job has given him a purpose, rather than doing nothing. He likes the job, and likes getting out of the house. The people at Doors Plus "are nice to him. He is accepted there as part of the group". "People give him a chance there". "They love him there"

Shane's mother's aim is for him to be independent and to be able to cope without his parents, to "stand on his own two feet".

His mother is very happy with Nova and wanted it known that Shane is happy too. She would like Shane to do things because he enjoys doing them, not because someone tells him to. For example, at the moment, he enjoys playing the piano.

Shane's mother is quite a "get doing it" person. She said if Shane hadn't accessed the TTW and Nova program, she would get something else for him. She would "make sure she got the resources that Shane needs".

Interview with Shane's supervisor at Doors Plus

Shane's supervisor outlined the wide varieties of tasks that are involved in Shane's role as office administration assistant. These include electronic archiving, scanning, filing, preparing documents for various uses, completing various paperwork jobs and the like. The supervisor tries to give Shane a variety of tasks to prevent boredom, but at the same time he recognises that Shane enjoys the repetitive nature of many tasks. The supervisor is about to do a regular review of Shane's tasks – along with the tasks of other team members whom he supervises.

Shane works in an office of 20+ people where he fits in well and is seen as an integral team member. Each member has a job to do and each job is needed to get the whole job done of the office. So each team member and their job are valued.

This supervisor was not involved in the early stages of Shane's time at Doors Plus – i.e. the TTW part (Shane has been there some 3 years). However, from what he has heard, the Nova TTW work was very good. There was no disruption to the office functioning (nor is there now with Nova Employment). Now Nova people visit from time to time to see "how things are going". They may come in particularly when Shane is starting a new task. However, Shane picks up things quite quickly.

The support for Shane both in the TTW and Employment has happened seamlessly. They have worked in the background, and not disrupted the routine of the workplace. They have gone about their work without intruding on the routine and workings of the office. It all happened and continues to happen seamlessly.

The Nova TTW has given Shane the opportunity to have a job and to be involved in the world of employment. He would not have had this if not for Nova. The assistance they gave him in the initial stages with his study (Tafe certificate courses) was also invaluable, as the courses enabled Shane to develop skills in the area of office administration – an area he enjoys and is competent in.

Having Shane in the office has benefited the other workers and the organisation more widely in that it has freed up time for the others to concentrate on their areas of speciality, and in general has freed up time across the whole work area.

Shane's supervisor has no complaints about Nova (both TTW and Employment). They have been available when any issues arose. For example, if Shane is given a new task they would sit down with Nova and work out what's required of Shane – then support Shane to learn the task. Also, Shane will contact Nova if he is uncertain of something. However, increasingly Shane is approaching the relevant Doors Plus staff member for advice or assistance.

We would use Nova again, depending on the position – perhaps a Shane-like position. He has been a good addition to the office. Gives him an opportunity to make a contribution, as well as giving Doors Plus an opportunity to make a contribution too. Shane has fitted in personally well with the other workers – who are mostly mature age people. He is seen simply as “part of the furniture”.

5.0 Synthesis of evidence

It is pleasing to see that an analysis of the NOVA TTW program and processes against the five areas of best practice identified by Kohler and Field (2003) reveal that all five areas are being addressed in full or in part. The curriculum includes practices that relate to the principles of secondary transition stated in Kohler's Taxonomy. The curriculum includes practices and activities that relate to the predictors of post-school outcomes including career awareness, work experience and work placement, parental involvement, self determination, self care and independent living skills, social skills, and support. The curriculum is effective for the population it is working with, and is individualised and adapted to fit the unique needs of each trainee, and there is positive evidence of customer and stakeholder satisfaction.

Although participating in the ITP process and learning self determination skills have been identified as a crucial best practices at the school level, many students leave school unable to self advocate or participate in decision making and goal setting, because this has often been teacher driven. Despite the existence of legislation and guidance on school to adulthood transition in countries such as the USA, Heslop et al. (2002) found that one fifth of young people left school without a transition plan and more than 40 per cent of children and young people aged 13 to 25 surveyed had little to no involvement in their transition planning as this tended to be organized and controlled by teachers.

In contrast, NOVA TTW was found to meet all evidence based practice criteria regarding individual person-centred transition planning and to actively empower trainees to participate and contribute their ideas, choices and interests to guide the plan. Nova TTW staff indicated that many trainees had not been active participants in their school-based ITP meetings when these had occurred, and consequently, they were often anxious about their first ITP meeting

despite reassurances, as they were uncertain if they were in trouble. Trainees were reported as displaying great relief when they found the ITP meeting to be a positive and helpful experience. Further, it was evident in the evaluation that the ITPs are driving the learning and employment goals and pathways for trainees. Parents/carers and family support personnel are encouraged to participate and work cooperatively with trainees and staff on addressing and achieving ITP goals, while assessment data are verified and used to assist in decision making.

When it comes to learning and development, supports and resources are essential. In a recent Australian investigation into the facilitators and barriers affecting course completions by apprentices and trainees with disabilities, Cocks and Thoresen (2014, p.13) found that both formal and informal support were the most important factors facilitating course completion among students with disabilities. The most common barriers to course completion reported by both those with a disability and those without related to a lack of resources, including poor training wages, the costs associated with training and lack of time. Support can be provided by individuals from disability employment service providers such as NOVA, group training organisations, TAFE (technical and further education) institutes, and the employer. Informal support — that from friends, family and co-workers — was also found to be important, particularly when formal supports were inadequate.

The learning and development experiences and activities provided by the NOVA TTW program and the support provided to the TTW trainees also meet a number of best practice criteria and overcome the barriers reported above.

The Certificate 1 course, supplemented with additional formal and incidental learning, addresses key competencies and skills for employment and independent living, as well as facilitating and enhancing self determination skills. Some trainees commented they were not as keen on some of the reading and writing activities and preferred work experience on the job to bookwork. Other trainees and some parents were pleased that training included theory and practical elements of the certificate course.

The use of a nationally accredited Certificate 1 course is not unique, as several other Sydney based TTW programs including JobSupport and House With No Steps also offer an alternate nationally accredited certificate 1 course. However, the ability to gain accreditation and/or attain competence in many work related entry level skills does provide an advantage, as some trainees do gain apprenticeships or traineeships while all gain skills that are employment and life skills focused and relevant. Moreover, job coach support, family support and financial resources are provided to enhance trainee learning and development to the greatest extent possible, and trainee completion rates are significantly high (90-100%).

Support to develop friendships and improve interpersonal communication and interactions was obvious through the curriculum but also evident in the ways trainees are socialising and communicating in formal and informal situations. Observation and stakeholder perspectives attest to the value placed on these and other independent living socialising and working skills that are developed among the young people. Another positive feature mentioned by several was the fact that relationships form between the first and second year trainees, with second years themselves becoming mentors. They also become positive role models when they graduate and the first year trainees see them going into work force achieving their goals. Additionally ex-trainees sometimes come in as speakers and an example provided was of a graduate who left two years ago who returned recently and shared he had bought a ute which he has now finished paying off.

Slight differences in delivery across outlets do cater to the cultural and socioeconomic circumstances and variations between areas, although no information was available or gained about the involvement of youth from Aboriginal or Torres St Islander backgrounds. Adjustments for the differing functioning levels of trainees as well as differences in Job Coach styles and personalities was seen as a constructive and enabling factor.

All trainees observed and interviewed appeared highly motivated. Lack of motivation can be a significant barrier to learning and employment, and it is unclear if all trainees were highly motivated before commencing the TTW program, and how much credit can be attributed to the program itself. Staff did acknowledge that they work carefully and positively with trainees at a slow and steady pace, showing them little by little what a good job they can do, and praising them for great things they do at work experience, and for their decisions with money and their lifestyle progress. One staff stated that this does take a while, and indeed most of the two years.

Feedback from stakeholders does indicate that while parents are supportive, more flexibility in timing for ITP meetings is desirable, and additional resources, if available, could be utilised to develop strategies to better assist parents and families who find it difficult to engage and support trainees through their program.

The limited number of case studies reported does indicate satisfaction from graduates, parents and employers alike. Several areas were identified by parents that could be improved but overall, they still reported extremely positive experiences and expressed satisfaction with the NOVA TTW and DES support provided.

6.0 Conclusion

Overall, the evaluation of the TTW program confirms that the processes being employed reflect best evidence based practice across a range of areas, including person centred transition planning, trainee development across work, life and social skill areas, family involvement, program structure and collaborative practice. Stakeholder feedback was positive and confirms that program practices and procedures are providing positive outcomes for trainees and graduates, as well as parents and employers.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A : Ethics forms

- a) Participant information sheet
- b) Participant consent form

NOVA TRANSITION TO WORK PROGRAM EVALUATION

PARTICIPANT INFORMATION STATEMENT

(1) What is the study about?

You are invited to participate in a study evaluating the NOVA Transition to Work program. We are investigating how The NOVA Transition To Work Program helps young people with disability prepare for and gain employment, and what are the strengths and weaknesses about this program.

(2) Who is carrying out the study?

The study is being conducted by Dr Vivienne Riches, Dr Marie Knox and Bruce O'Brien from the Centre for Disability Studies, Sydney.

(3) What does the study involve?

If you want to be in the study, you will be asked questions about your experience with the Nova Transition To Work Program.

(4) How much time will the study take?

The Focus group or interview may take up to 30 minutes.

(5) Can I withdraw from the study?

Being in this study is completely voluntary - you are not under any obligation to consent and - if you do consent - you can withdraw at any time without affecting your relationship with The University of Sydney and the Centre for Disability Studies.

(6) Will anyone else know the results?

All aspects of the study, including results, will be strictly confidential and only the researchers will have access to information on participants, except as required by law.

A report of the study may be submitted for publication or presented at conferences, but individual participants will not be identifiable in such a report.

(7) Will the study benefit me?

It is likely that the study will help Nova Transition To Work understand what it is doing well and improve on this. This may benefit other young people who attend the Nova Transition Program or other transition programs. However we cannot and do not guarantee or promise that you will receive any benefits from the study.

(8) Will the study benefit the researchers?

CDS is being paid to do the evaluation. There are no other benefits for the researchers.

(9) Can I tell other people about the study?

You can tell people about the study.

(10) What if I require further information about the study or my involvement in it?

When you have read this information Vivienne Riches is available to discuss it with you further and answer any questions you may have. If you would like to know more at any stage, please feel free to contact **Vivienne at 9036 3600**

(11) What if I have a complaint or any concerns?

Any person with concerns or complaints about the conduct of a research study can contact the Director Professor Patricia O'Brien at the Centre for Disability Studies at **+61 2 9036 3600** (Telephone); or ***patricia.obrien@sydney.edu.au*** (Email)..

This information sheet is for you to keep



ABN 15 211 513 464

Centre for Disability Studies
Level 1, Medical Foundation Building
92-94 Parramatta Road
Camperdown NSW 2050
Telephone: +61 2 9036-3600
Facsimile: +61 2 9036-3613
Email: vivienne.riches@sydney.edu.au
Web: <http://www.cdds.med.usyd.edu.au/>

PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM

I,.....[PRINT NAME], give consent to my participation in the research project

NOVA TRANSITION TO WORK PROGRAM EVALUATION

In giving my consent I acknowledge that:

1. The procedures required for the project and the time involved have been explained to me, and any questions I have about the project have been answered to my satisfaction.
2. I have read/ or had read to me the Information Statement and have been given the opportunity to discuss the information and my involvement in the project with the researcher/s.
3. I understand that being in this study is completely voluntary – I am not under any obligation to consent.
4. I understand that my involvement is strictly confidential. I understand that data gathered from the evaluation study may be published or presented at conferences. However no information about me will be used in any way that is identifiable.
5. I understand that I can withdraw from the study at any time without affecting my relationship with the Nova Transition to Work program, the researcher/s or the University of Sydney and the Centre for Disability Studies now or in the future.

.....
Signature

.....
Please PRINT name

.....
Date

Appendix B: Staff roles- TTW program

Job Coach

Every NOVA Transition program is run by a Job Coach. The Job Coach helps each trainee establish their interests, skills and goals. They also ensure their wellbeing during Transition. It is the role of the Job Coach to get the trainee ready for the workplace.

Each outlet has a ratio of one job coach to nine trainees. For groups of 10 or more there are two job coaches. Twenty trainees are allocated three job coaches.

Work Placement Coach

When trainees have completed work placements in a variety of industries and have narrowed down their job choice/s, they are assigned a Work Placement Coach. The Work Placement Coach looks for relevant work experience that has the potential of turning into a paid position.

Employment Consultant

Trainees are assigned a NOVA Employment Consultant (EC) at the end of their first year at TTW. During their second year, trainees work with both their EC and Job Coach to find and maintain suitable employment.

NOVA Transition to Work Coordinator

NOVA Employment is a Disability Employment Service that works with adults with disabilities to help them find and keep award-wage jobs.