

THE ATTACHED TRANSCRIPT WAS TYPED FROM A RECORDING AND NOT AN ORIGINAL SCRIPT. BECAUSE OF THE RISK OF MISHEARING AND THE DIFFICULTY IN SOME CASES OF IDENTIFYING INDIVIDUAL SPEAKERS, THE BBC CANNOT VOUCH FOR ITS COMPLETE ACCURACY.

TX: YOU AND YOURS - DISABILITY - 08.01.03

PRESENTER: Peter White

WHITE

So far in this week's series about employment and disability we've concentrated on the opportunities and often the lack of them for people working in open industry. But it's still true that for many people the reality of work is what used to be known as sheltered employment - supported work is now the preferred term. We're talking about workshops or factories primarily set up, often many years ago, for people who had disabilities which it was thought would mean they'd stand little chance in the open labour market. The factories often required a heavy subsidy, which might come from a local authority, a voluntary organisation, central government or all three. But increasingly there's been pressure from successive governments for such factories to pay their way and tender for work competitively. But the dilemma is obvious, is it practical to achieve that and still find room for those with more profound or complex disabilities in the workplace? In a moment we'll be discussing these issues but first two very contrasting stories of supported employment today.

WRIGHT

The first area that we're walking into is the surface mount area, this is the deluxe of electronics if you like ...

WHITE

It's Martin Wright's first week as plant manager of Rem

ral was low paid with the threatening large-scale redundancies, even though its existence was in doubt. T080ecc6666vuhle24ar5Mew a66666vubt9a Tm4)

I've been here 11 years and I like it here now and I probably wouldn't want to step out. If I went to somewhere like GEC across the road you get sort of more pressure on you.

WHITE

Regional manager, Roy Easthope, is at pains to point out that we haven't just been brought to a show factory. He says diversification of production is happening throughout the Remploy network.

EASTHOPE

We have changed the trades for many of our units - in Barking, for example, in Essex we used to be a carton and box manufacturer and a book binding centre, that now does recycling of computers and white goods and produces electronics as well. Those provide us with real challenges but I think it demonstrates that the company is moving and reflecting the needs of the industrial environment that we work in. They're certainly not sheltered workshops, we are operating commercial manufacturing concerns with true commercial and economic constraints.

WHITE

Typical of the new spirit abroad is the Kits Green Factory in Birmingham, which recently won the order to make components for the latest James Bond super car for Aston Martin. Yet just a few miles up the road in Wolverhampton things could hardly be more different. Here Beacon Industries is about to fall silent for the last time

after non-working blind people just couldn't go on footing its share of the subsidy bill - £800,000 over the past two and a half years.

SIDLEY

We have contact with towards a thousand visually impaired blind people each and every week here. We have a day centre that takes 350 people, we have 30 people that live in our sheltered bungalows

talked to some people at Rochester who understandably were very happy where they were, it's a good working environment and there's a good atmosphere - doesn't that mean though that clearly you can't tell people that they've got to move on necessarily, so isn't there a tendency for the workforce to stay fairly stable?

PARFFARD

Well more than half of the people we support are actually in open employment with their host employers, so a choice is available - when somebody's referred to us we have a conversation, as we will do with Alan, about what their aspirations are and where they want to go, now if somebody wants to go into retail we don't run retail stores but we do have partnerships with all the major retailers and we can find the best way of getting ready and feeling comfortable about working in a retail store. Now if they want to work in manufacturing and we have a manufacturing facility nearby then obviously we can provide a different sort of opportunity for them.

WHITE

We have been looking at people who do go into open employment and who are supported, we've been spending the day with someone who's been introduced into a mainstream job with the added support of a mentor to assist him during the early stages of the job. And the environment that he's working in could hardly be more mainstream.

ALLPORT

My name's Wayne Allport, I work at Manchester airport, I'm an airport assistant and I'm on trolleys. What we do is we push the trolleys, keep them outside and we make sure the floor's totally clean and it's like if people have got any problems we help them get them where they're going. I was working with my dad putting the [indistinct words] but I (during ist005 Tc -0.0005 Tw 0 -1.15Tm74rEMCAtMCl3e an job