

**DATE: 11<sup>th</sup> February 2010**

**Report:        Links to Work: Preparation and Supported Employment Service  
                    – Update on future of the service.**

**Ward(s)**        All

**Portfolios:**   Councillor Barbara McCracken – Social Care and Inclusion

**Summary of report:**

This report provides an update in respect of Links To Work as a response to the direction provided by Cabinet July 2009

1. Cabinet approved the approach to restructure Links to Work, specifically the reduction from 32 to 17 posts
2. Cabinet also directed that we should do all we can to maintain a service for those service users with a learning disability who currently attend Links to Work.
3. Cabinet instructed Social Care and Inclusion to explore opportunities available to the Council and its partners to provide sustainable employment opportunities to people with disabilities and for this to include a review of the future role of Links to Work.

**Background papers:**

Links to Work - Work Preparation and Supported Employment Service - Decision on the future of the Service – Cabinet Report July 2009

Health Social Care and Inclusion Scrutiny Panel – October 2009

Links-to-Work work Preparation and Supported Employment Service. Update on the future of the Service.

Health Social Care and Inclusion Scrutiny Panel – November 2009

Links-to-Work work Preparation and Supported Employment Service. Update on the future of the Service.

Health Social Care and Inclusion Scrutiny Panel – January 2010

Links-to-Work work Preparation and Supported Employment Service. Update on the future of the Service.

### **Reason for scrutiny:**

The Scrutiny and Performance panel requested this update to assess and understand the impact of the restructuring of Links to Work, specifically the impact of changes, the number of posts at risk and any impact on service users. **Reference; Scrutiny and Performance Panel update January 2010**

In particular the Panel requested an updated on the continued provision of services.

### **Citizen impact:**

The agreed approach is the development of future services designed to minimise the impact on service users who attend Links to Work.

Maintain a service to provide employment related activities, modernising the approach to maximise service user's strengths and develop social inclusion.

The proposals also facilitate the long term stability of the service which should re-focus on creating real employment and employment related experiences / activities.

### **Environmental impact:**

There are currently none.

### **Performance management:**

There are key performance indicators that are affected by the operations at Links to Work. *Reference; Scrutiny and Performance Panel update January 2010*

### **Equality Implications:**

Links to Work offers support, tackles inequalities and encourages independence through the acquisition of skills and progression to open employment. This service is intended to be in line with key government directions outlined in 'Our health, our care, our say – a new direction for community services', 'Putting People First' and 'Valuing People Now'. *Reference; Scrutiny and Performance Panel update January 2010*

### **Consultation:**

The panel requested an update to assess and understand the impact of the restructuring of Links to Work, specifically the impact of changes, the number of posts at risk and any impact on service users.

The Panel requested an updated on the provision of services. The agreed approach is the development of future services designed to minimise the impact on service users who attend Links to Work. This report highlights the work in progress to consolidate the future model.

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## **1. Current Position**

### **1.1 Impact of Change**

- 1.1.1 There are no significant updates other than that provided in the **Scrutiny and Performance Panel report of January 2010** in relation the to restructure Links to Work, specifically the reduction from 32 to 17 posts and the subsequent Human Resources Strategy.

## **2. Service provision**

- 2.1 Following the reduction from 32 to 17 posts agreed by Cabinet July 2009 immediate consideration has been given to reducing building / site capacity. The service currently operates from 3 sites; a reduction to 2 is currently being considered.
- 2.2 A review of the capacity of each site is in progress to establish suitability for future service delivery.
- 2.3 The consolidation of the service into two sites will enable staff and service users to re- establish the work streams that are vital to the future of Links to Work.
- 2.4 Human Resources and Organisation Development along with the Project Management Team have developed a staff training programme designed to meet the changing needs of the service, focusing on employment initiatives to meet local and government requirements and the need to develop a socially inclusive service creating better choice and opportunities for service users.
- 2.5 A formal reassessment of all service users has commenced to ensure that the transition and remodelling of the service meets their needs, this would include new individual profiles, a review of permitted earnings, appropriate referral routes and monitoring of placements.
- 2.6 The result of changes to the staffing structure removes the unacceptable levels of recurring deficit; however the service needs to establish a robust financial framework to ensure continued service delivery.
- 2.7 A review is underway to consider the viability of all work streams; this will identify opportunities to create potential Community Interest Companies. These could then be developed in partnership with the voluntary sector and provide real employment opportunities for our service users, in line with current Government Strategy.
- 2.8 Strategic Commissioning Manager to create a specification for employment services and test the market place to identify potential outsource solutions. Closer Links with existing mainstream employment services should be developed. Government funded services have the professional capacity to improve employment opportunities for vulnerable adults,