

Social Care

Agenda

Scrutiny and Performance Panel

Item No. 8

DATE: 27TH March 2014

Update on Employment Initiatives for adults with Disabilities

Wards(s) All

Portfolios: Cllr B. McCracken – Social Care and Inclusion

Report:

The Lead Commissioner last updated Scrutiny and Performance Panel on July 23rd 2013. Since this date there have been major changes locally, regionally and nationally affecting employment support services. Now the Council budget has been set we have completed an evaluation of the impact on Employment initiatives for adults with Disabilities.

We will be relaunching Recruitability Plus which will continue to be commissioned from Links to Work; this service has now supported over 20 people into paid work and has been our most successful initiative in terms of people into paid employment. The scheme has now diversified to include paid work placements in both the public and private sector; this includes Walsall Football Club and acknowledges that the public sector workforce is shrinking and opportunities will diminish.

The Community Hub at 17 Lichfield Street has become a major success. We would encourage members to visit the facilities which include an internet café and Personal Care Suite which is used by up to 30 people a day enabling them to remain in Walsall for their shopping, socialising and entertainment. We will now be developing the remaining space on the first floor into an Employment Hub, which following a Business Case and appointment of a charitable organisation will offer supported employment, advice and support, job coaching, enterprise development and Work Clubs. It is hoped this new service will be in place by October 2014 at the latest.

Following meetings with senior managers of DWP / Job Centres we will be developing a new partnership agreement and pathway that reflects the revised role of Disability Employment advisors in Job Centres, increases the number of statutory referral organisations for accessing Work Choice in Walsall through the DWP Prime Providers and accessing the wide network of Work Clubs in the Walsall Borough.

Through these commissioned partnerships we will enable adults with learning disabilities, physical and sensory disabilities, autism and those returning to work from informal caring the opportunity to enter paid employment.

Links to Work continues to provide employment opportunities for adults with disabilities incorporating, light industrial packing and assembly supporting local industries such as Squires, Yale, Author Hough's and Icon etc. (Walsall, Wolverhampton, and Telford). The Electrium Point site has given the service the opportunity to develop a much broader range of employment activities moving away from traditional industrial activities. Commissioners will now be working in partnership with In House provider managers to establish funding streams and move Links to Work back to a financially viable position that enables the service to transform into a group of social enterprises.

Working with our adult education partners we will continue to support and promote skills for Employability, IT skills for work, and Basic English and maths. These initiatives will sit within an employment strategy and commissioning intentions for Complex Needs and carers that will incorporate a range of commissioned prevention services that encourage co-production and the development of social capital to ensure Walsall residents lead healthy and fulfilling lives with least recourse possible to help from the state.

We have had to evaluate a number of services that were not performing well, decommission , make savings , respond to the end of regional funding and national initiatives and deal with the reduction in our own resources. This report acknowledges that all our intentions as outlined in the last update have taken longer than the three months we intended due to the changes in the social and economic landscape. However it is hoped that members are reassured by our positive intentions in delivering Employment Initiatives in 2014/15.

Recommendation:

That members note the contents of this report and are satisfied that it provides the assurance they require.

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