

14 July 2011

Title of the Report: Walsall's Employment Strategy Update

Ward(s) All

Portfolios: Cllr B. McCracken.

Executive Summary:

Due to poor performance Scrutiny have monitored the development of Employment Opportunities for adults with learning disabilities and in particular delivery against the employment indicator NI146. This has increased dramatically from 2 to 57 making Walsall one of the better performing authorities in the West Midlands and with a stretched target of 100 for 2011/12 to make Walsall one of the best performing in the country. Work on an Employment Strategy is progressing well and the key project of Recruit-ability Plus will be completed and mainstreamed by the end of September 2011. The Employment Strategy should be fully implemented by the end of March 2012 and will include all adults with disabilities in Walsall. The Council is also developing a complimentary initiative, the Adult Social Care Apprentice scheme to increase employment and a talent pool for adult social care. The success of all these initiatives relies on the promotion and support of all council departments to employ adults with disabilities and see the benefits they can bring to the Walsall Economy in these difficult times.

Challenge and progress

On 17th January 2011 a report was submitted to Scrutiny Panel, accompanied with a presentation by Ian Staples Joint Strategic Commissioning Manager.

The report outlined plans to improve the outcomes for Adults with Learning Disabilities linked to a National Performance Indicator NI 146. In 2010 the government had reinforced the need to improve employment for this vulnerable group in 'Valuing Employment Now' which gave guidance to local authorities on developing local employment strategies to improve outcomes for adults with Learning Disabilities.

Walsall's Performance was poor and the worst Authority in the West Midlands.

Paul Davies, Executive Director set a Target of 50 individuals to meet this performance indicator by the 31st March 2011. Key criteria included:

- Hourly Payment rate at Minimum National Wage or above.
- Individual must have a Learning Disability.

- Employee must benefit from a review process.
- Employment Opportunities could be between 0-16 hours or Full Time.

Some Key projects highlighted at the time to meeting this target and future investment in employment were:

- Recruit-ability Plus.
- Mencap Black Country Employment Scheme.
- Prioritise Resources including Project Support.

The count for year end 2010/11 was a total of 57 individuals meeting NI146 criteria.

This was made up of 30 Recruit-ability Plus, 20 Links to Work (either people in existing posts with reviews or existing placements at links to work where wages would be paid), 5 in Work Choice through Landau a social enterprise partner and 2 employed at Mary Elliot Social Club, a voluntary sector partner.

Recruit-ability Plus

The Recruit-ability Plus programme continues to be a huge success in giving Adults with a Learning Disability real paid employment opportunities. Reports from placements have provided evidence of the following:

- Visible increase in confidence and self esteem.
- Development of skills required for the post.
- The skills of individuals exceeded what was anticipated.

The Recruit-ability Plus programmes target this financial year is to establish a further two cohorts of 30, this will be on the basis of a 26 week placement for a maximum of 10 hours per person each week. Social Care will fund the first 13 weeks on the understanding that the placement provider funds the wages for the other 13 weeks. Funding on this basis will be a condition of the placement and demonstrates a level of future commitment and investment to take placements beyond the 26 weeks.

Leisure Services have recently offered 13 placements on this basis in Leisure Centres and other facilities.

The scheme will now expand to include adults on the autistic spectrum, physical disability and sensory impairment (without a learning disability). Improving employment opportunities for those individuals with Autism is a key target in the Government Strategy 'Fulfilling and Rewarding Lives' (2010).

The existing cohort are funded from an accrual and are not affected by any changes (i.e. they are fully funded by Social Care for their 26 week placement)

The new Cohorts 2011/12 will be as follows:

- Cohort One - 20 placements Learning Disability, 5 Placements Autism, 5 Placements Physical Disability and Sensory Impairment.

- Cohort Two -15 placements Learning Disability, 10 placements Autism, 5 placements Physical Disability and Sensory Impairment.

Recruit-ability Plus now sits under the remit of services offered by 'Links to Work', who continue to run a working group to monitor progress, with updates from all agencies and support in the process of matching individuals to placements. A new challenging target for NI146 of 100 has been set to move us from one of the best performing in the West Midlands to one of the best in the country.

Employment Strategy

Links to Work now host and develop the Employment Database which gives an overview of all partners activities, individual outcomes and monitors that all have reviews booked with ongoing support to ensure sustainability and prevention of placement and employment breakdown.

An overall aim of the Employment Strategy is to create Partnerships and collaborative working to improve the employment opportunities of adults with disabilities. Representatives from Commissioning and Strategic Development have already opened dialogue or are working with the following on projects: Remploy, Job Centre Plus, Economic Regeneration, Landau, Children's Services, Walsall College, Walsall Adult and Community College, and Connexions'.

The Mencap Employment Project concentrates on placements and employment for adults with a Learning Disability in the Private sector. Mencap are currently working with 25 individuals towards this goal. Mencap have a mandate to work closely with Walsall Council following a successful bid for a final release of regional funds for 2011/12. The bid will fund an additional Mencap worker specifically for Walsall to develop opportunities in partnership.

By the end of September 2011 it is intended that Recruit-ability Plus will be signed off as a project. Work will continue to deliver the rest of the Employment Strategy including an Employment Pathway and Partnership, Redesigned Links to Work, Social Enterprises, Job Coaching, Self Employment, Micro-Enterprise and Travel Training all of which sits within the models of Reablement and Self Directed Support.

Since last reporting to scrutiny a new initiative has been implemented entitled the Adult Social Care Apprentice Scheme

Adult Social Care Apprentice Scheme

Work has started with the development of an Apprentice Scheme bespoke for Adult Social Care. A provisional timescale has been established commencing 17th October 2011 with a first cohort of 60 Apprentices.

The 30 hour Per week Apprentice posts will have 2 year fixed term status and will be advertised Week Starting 4th July 2011. The scheme will feature one day per week of training at College to develop underpinning knowledge and understanding, working towards Apprenticeship (NVQ) in Health and Social Care. This will be provided by Walsall Adult Community College who we are working in partnership to deliver the scheme.

The initial 60 will be 50% 16-18 year olds and 50% over 19 year olds.

The aim of the scheme is over a two year period to develop at a local level the quality and expertise of the workforce available to Social Care sector both within the Council and Partner Voluntary agencies.

We have been in contact with Connexions and our colleagues in 'Transition and Leaving Care', Children's Services to make them aware of the scheme. In our role as 'Corporate Parent' this type of venture also helps to foster opportunities for those young people in the care system that may be interested.

Reason for scrutiny:

Walsall was not performing well against NI146 prior to April 2010 and is therefore not supporting adults with learning disabilities in making the most of employment opportunities in Walsall.

Scrutiny Panel need assurance that actions are underway and plans in place to create employment opportunities and improve performance against the employment indicators.

Recommendations:

Members scrutinise this report and satisfy themselves that the actions being taken are sufficient to demonstrate continuous improvement against employment performance indicators that promote the development of employment opportunities for adults with Disabilities in Walsall.

Members encourage the promotion and employment of adults with disabilities across the Council and its partners.

Members note the new Adult Social Care Apprenticeship scheme which supports:

- The development of employment opportunities for all of Walsall's communities.
- Continuously improve the quality and expertise of Care Workers available for all of Walsall Communities.

Background papers:

Valuing People Now 2009

Valuing Employment Now: Real jobs for people with learning disabilities 2010.

Recruit-Ability and Recruit-ability Plus Scheme, Walsall MBC 2005 and 2010

HM Government Strategy (Autism) 'Fulfilling and Rewarding Lives' (2010)

Resource and legal considerations:

In the long term by gaining economic and social independence through paid employment there will be a reduction in social care funding required to support people.

The costs of supporting employment are therefore an investment that will release a saving.

Citizen impact:

Adults with disabilities will no longer be socially excluded and will become valued citizens within their communities.

The Apprentice scheme will develop a pool of Carers in the future who will have been appropriately trained to provide future support and assistance to Walsall Citizens.

Environmental impact:

None.

Performance management:

Improvement in employment based indicators for Vulnerable groups.

Equality Implications:

Adults with disabilities gaining independence and no longer socially excluded. Through increasing support and opportunities for adults with disabilities we are preventing discrimination under the Disability Discriminations Act.

Walsall Council offering opportunities for Care leavers to gain employment and training in Walsall as part of its role as 'Corporate Parent'.


Creating employment opportunities in the borough of Walsall.

Consultation:

The Employment Strategy will be consulted across a range of stakeholders including service users, carers, professionals and agencies within all the service sectors.

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