

**Social Care & Inclusion
Scrutiny and Performance Panel**

**Agenda
Item No.**

17th January 2011

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**Title of the Report: Creating Opportunities for Adults with Learning
Disabilities in Walsall**

Ward(s) All

Portfolios: Cllr B McCracken – Social Care, Health & Housing

Executive Summary:

In 2009 a new three year strategy, 'Valuing People Now' was produced to improve the lives of people with learning disabilities.

The Delivery Plan for 2010-2011 identified six key priorities of which three have been identified as having the greatest impact on improving the outcomes for people with learning disabilities. The three were health, housing and employment. A National Indicator NI146 Adults with Learning Disabilities in employment has been formulated to improve the employment outcomes for this key group at risk of social exclusion.

Walsall is currently the poorest performing council in the West Midlands in relation to NI146.

A new initiative has now been put in place to increase the number of people in paid employment from 2 to 50 by the end of March 2011. This initiative is part of the development of an Employment Strategy to improve employment opportunities for adults with learning disabilities in Walsall.

The report outlines the components of the strategy and the actions and intentions to ensure successful delivery.

Scrutiny panel will need to consider whether the proposals will improve outcomes for NI146 and employment opportunities for adults with learning disabilities in Walsall.

Reason for scrutiny:

Walsall is not performing well enough against NI146 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 indicator NI146.

Recommendations:

Members scrutinise this report and satisfy themselves that the actions being taken are sufficient to improve NI146 and employment opportunities for adults with learning disabilities in Walsall

Actions & Intentions

1.1 Employment Strategy

Work has commenced on developing an Employment Strategy for Adults with Learning Disabilities. This will be completed through a task and finish group led by the Joint Strategic Commissioning Manager for Disabilities and monitored by the Learning Disability Partnership Board. This will be a partnership involving adults with learning disabilities, carers and a range of professionals.

The Strategy will have a range of initiatives aimed at improving employment opportunities and creating sustainable paid employment. The strategy will deliver locally the intentions set out within Valuing People Now 2009 and Valuing Employment Now real jobs for people with learning disabilities 2010.

The Delivery Plan for 2010-2011 identified six key priorities of which three have been identified as having the greatest impact on improving the outcomes for people with learning disabilities. These were Health, Housing and Employment. We have successfully delivered our Health intentions, are producing a revised Housing Strategy to deliver the remaining intentions and have now prioritised Employment.

1.2 **NI146** is the National Indicator for Adults with Learning Disability known to Social Services entering paid employment. The indicator previously allowed the counting of people who attended Links to Work and were paid permitted Earnings in the form of a weekly allowance. However, the indicator now counts only those in paid employment earning a proper wage.

The responsibility for supporting, coaching and managing employment opportunities for adults with learning disabilities had been with the employment team at Links to Work. Unfortunately the team were not achieving outcomes in terms of paid employment for adults with learning disabilities and as part of Links to Work restructure the team was disbanded.

These factors combined contribute to Walsall being the poorest performing authority in the West Midlands and an action plan has been completed to improve this Indicator.

1.3 Recruit-Ability Plus is an initiative which offers people with learning disabilities 6-month paid work experience. The programme aims to equip participants with Necessary work related skills and abilities to progress into other jobs or training.

The wider Recruit-Ability project was launched in 2005 and has been successful in supporting people with many different kinds of disabilities. We are now looking to improve the employment chances of people with learning disabilities within the borough. The council will offer a number of 6-month fixed term placements of up to 16 hours per week for individuals with learning disabilities under the new programme, called Recruit-Ability Plus.

The placements are centrally funded therefore there are no costs to the hosting service.

An additional worker for Learning Disabilities has been appointed to the Recruit-Ability Plus programme in Walsall to increase the number of paid work placements and improve our target to 50 people by the end of March 2011. This will move us from poor to moderate performance and along with the other initiatives that will be part of the Employment Strategy Walsall intends to be a high performing authority by the end of March 2012.

From initial expressions of interest from 55 people, 34 placements have been identified and a further 9 are currently being assessed. This will provide a minimum of 43 placements by the end of March 2011. In addition to project management, resources are being allocated from Links to Work, Day Services and Person Centred Planning teams to ensure the success of taster sessions, work placements and permanent employment. Individuals are paid a wage while on placement and count towards NI146.

1.4 Job Coaching and Mencap Partnership

In addition to Recruit-Ability Plus providing opportunities in the public sector, Walsall has lead on a successful bid for regional employment funding for a development worker to work across the Black Country including Walsall to provide support and coaching with work placements and paid employment in the Private Sector. The worker has been appointed and commenced this week. They will work closely with the Recruit-Ability Project Team to ensure we reach our target of 50 against NI146.

In addition to the above Walsall MBC and Mencap have submitted a new bid for a final release of regional funds for 2011/12. If successful this bid will fund an additional Mencap worker specifically for Walsall to develop opportunities in partnership with Recruit-Ability, Black Country Mencap, Social Care and Health professionals.

1.5 Further intentions to be developed through the Employment Strategy include:-

- Independent Travel Training
- Social Firms, Enterprises and Supported Employment

- Employment Pathway with Job Centre Plus and other stakeholders.
- Adult Education and Lifelong Learning – Vocational skills and interview skills.
- Transition – ‘Getting a Life’ more person centred and vocational training in preparation for paid employment for young people with learning disabilities.
- Job coaching and accreditation.
- Self Employment and Micro-Enterprise.
- Benefits advice and support
- Hard to reach groups – Ethnic Minorities, Forensic Clients, Severe Disabilities.

Background papers:

Valuing People Now 2009

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

Recruit-Ability Plus Scheme, Walsall MBC 2005

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

Environmental impact:

None

Performance management:

An improvement in NI146 Adults with learning disabilities in employment

Equality Implications:

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

Consultation:

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

Consultation specific to this scrutiny report has been with Social Care and Inclusion professionals due to the short notice.

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