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Update on Employment initiatives for adults with Disabilities

**Ward(s)** All

**Portfolios:** Cllr B. McCracken – Social Care and Inclusion

**Report:**

Employment can be measured in terms of paid work of at least minimum wage and either full time (16 hours upwards), part time, for a fixed term also known as temporary work or self employed. The people known to social services who fall into these categories are measured through a performance indicator and compared regionally and nationally. Walsall has developed a range of initiatives including the ongoing development of Links to Work to improve the performance and other outcomes in terms of a person's well being through paid work. This report provides an update on progression since the last report to scrutiny.

Nationally and regionally after a number of early successes the sustainability and effectiveness of initiatives have shown to be limited. This has been reflected in our experiences in Walsall. The latest research from the NDTi suggests that the only initiative that has been evidenced to be effective in obtaining employment is job coaching. Walsall has piloted two schemes, one with Mencap, 'Employ Me', which had two phases, firstly as part of a black country project and now a walsall specific project till the end of march 2014. The Black Country project saw 6 people from Walsall enter paid employment during a 12 month period at a cost of £3300 to the council per person, the current project achieved the same number at a cost of £6,600 to the council per person. Landau a charitable enterprise worked in partnership with Social Services and Remploy using the government work choice funding programme and enabled two people into paid work at a cost of £1275 to the council per person. The funding has now ceased due to a lack of referrals which was linked to 'job readiness'.

The problem with government funded schemes are that they encourage 'cherry picking' as there is a final large payment when someone has been at work 6 months which makes the majority of people social services come into contact with unsuitable for these schemes. This has also been evidenced by Disability Employment Advisers at Job Centres referring people to our job coaching schemes rather than work with them through their own work choice programmes.

The Recruitability Plus paid work placement scheme has only enabled 14 people into work over two years. However the Recruitability Plus scheme has been praised by individuals and their families. The challenge now is to capture the range of outcomes that these entire schemes deliver compared to the cost and outcomes of other interventions to establish their full value and effectiveness.

There are a number of components that are present in Employment strategies for people with disabilities, particularly partnerships with employees in the service and retail industries. Recruitability Plus needs to engage with health trusts as a key partner in addition to the council. Job coaching schemes have had success with Asda, Cooperative and others both in terms of placements and paid jobs. As reduced funding for the public sector impacts on the workforce there will be a need to take a more balanced approach with the private and voluntary sectors.

Enterprise through self employment, micro enterprise, social enterprise and social firms has been delivered through Links to Work.

## **Links To Work**

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 service has now consolidated from three sites to one. 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.

1. Data archiving / data recovery / data destruction, review of Iron Mountain corporate contract, consolidation, rationalisation and cost reduction.
  2. Development of a Community food distribution service, supporting WHG in distributing food to disadvantaged families. Recent developments have increased activity in this area. Several local supermarkets are now supplying food to be distributed to crisis food banks across Walsall. This has given the service the opportunity to develop work placements in warehouse management and stock control.
  3. Development of Recruitability Plus, Recruitability and Corporate Recruitability schemes. First launched in early 2011 the programmes have approximately 125 people (all of which have either a learning, physical, sensory, or mental health disability (including Autism) employed on the programme on initial 6 month and 12 month fixed term contracts.
- At present, we have approximately 75 supported employees employed on the programme across the council, as well as a number of external organisations who are now working in partnership on the programme.
  - As of July 2013; 14 individuals out of the 50 supported employees who have been through the programme have gained permanent, sustainable employment as a result of Recruitability/Recruitability Plus. A further 8 more people have sustained work but in a voluntary capacity, they no longer receive a service from ASC&I.

## **Next Steps**

It is important to develop partnerships with Adult Education, Colleges and Training organisations, in order to link training with employment opportunities. There is also a need to challenge the culture of families and individuals of the benefit of work as opposed to a benefit and dependency culture. This also links with mental health and well being and the benefits of employment. With children's services we have shared the getting a life pathways including the employment pathway which have been evidenced nationally as good practice and commences at year 9, aged 13/14.

As Community Services continue to develop we need to see more emphasis on Travel Training, Information, Advice and Signposting. There is evidence to suggest that charities and non- profit making organisations have more success in engaging with communities, developing enterprises and expanding social capital and community capacity. The expansion of volunteering is also important both in terms of self esteem, social capital and gaining valuable experience that can improve employment prospects. There have been changes in the benefits system but due to the phased nature of their introduction it is too early to establish their impact on our interventions.


Over the next three months we will use the learning from our interventions to produce a strategy that takes account of the changing employment landscape and funding moving forward.

## **Recommendations:**

### **That Members;**

- 1. Note the contents of this report.**
- 2. Officers return in three months with strategy, outcomes and plans for Employment Services.**

## **Contact Officer:**

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