



SOCIAL CARE AND ADULT SERVICES SCRUTINY PANEL

20 NOVEMBER 2008

FINAL REPORT

IMPROVING LEVELS OF EMPLOYMENT FOR PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES

PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

1. To present the findings of the Social Care and Adult Services Scrutiny Panel's review of Improving Levels of Employment for People with Disabilities.

AIM OF THE SCRUTINY INVESTIGATION

2. The overall aim of the Scrutiny investigation was to look at how the Council and its partners are working to support people with disabilities into paid and meaningful employment, to ensure that disabled people have the opportunities and support to enable them to enter the world of work.

TERMS OF REFERENCE OF THE SCRUTINY INVESTIGATION

3. The terms of reference for the Scrutiny investigation were as outlined below:
 - (a) To examine the barriers that people with disabilities face when seeking employment.
 - (b) To examine the support that is/or will be offered to people, both to assist them in finding meaningful employment and supporting them, where necessary, to stay in employment.
 - (c) To examine areas of innovation and examples of good practice.
 - (d) To consider the local labour market and how the Council works with its partners in order to increase job and/or self-employment opportunities.

- (e) To establish who the Council's key partners are and then consider how they work together in order to ensure that people with disabilities are supported into meaningful, sustainable employment.
- (f) To consider if the Council has the resources to deliver the Employment Strategy for People with Disabilities.

METHODS OF INVESTIGATION

- 4. Members of the Panel met formally between 7 July 2008 and 20 November 2008 to discuss/receive evidence relating to this investigation and a detailed record of the topics discussed at those meetings are available from the Committee Management System (COMMIS), accessible via the Council's website.
- 5. A brief summary of the methods of investigation are outlined below:
 - (a) Detailed officer presentations supplemented by verbal evidence.
 - (b) Debate with key officers.
 - (c) Visit to Ayresome Industries
 - (d) Discussions with North Lanarkshire Council
 - (e) Debate with key stakeholders
- 6. The report has been compiled on the basis of their evidence and other background information listed at the end of the report.

MEMBERSHIP OF THE PANEL

- 7. The membership of the Panel was as detailed below:

Councillors P Purvis (Chair), F McIntyre (Vice Chair), G Clark, D Davison, E Dryden, O Jones, J McPartland, H Rehman, M Whatley and E Briggs (co-opted member)

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Employment Strategy for People with Disabilities

- 8. The Council's Employment Strategy for People with Disabilities had been designed to enable as many people as possible with disabilities in Middlesbrough to enter and remain in paid meaningful work. People with disabilities should not be excluded from the labour market and the strategy targeted support to those people who were hardest to reach in order to help them into employment. That meant those people of working age with disabilities who were on benefits, particularly Incapacity Benefit (IB) and Income Support with Disability Living Allowance (DLA) and who were known to the Social Care Department.

9. The panel recognised that the agenda was a challenging one and that it needed to be developed in partnership with a number of stakeholders and in particular with local employers. However the key driver for the development of the strategy was the principle that people with disabilities should have the same rights to employment as any other person.

THE PANEL'S FINDINGS

10. The panel began their review by considering the main points of the Employment Strategy for People with Disabilities 2008-2010. The strategy had been prepared by the Social Care Department and included information from a range of key partners. The aim of the strategy was to support those who were the furthest away from the labour market into meaningful, sustainable employment. In particular those people who were known to Social Care and receiving care under the terms of the Fair Access to Care (FAC) policy and also those receiving secondary mental health services.
11. The majority of those people had been unemployed for over 5 years and needed dedicated support to help them to either enter or remain in employment. It was recognised that people with disabilities had the same rights and choices for employment as any other person and this principle was echoed in the 2006 Government Green Paper 'A New Deal for Welfare'.

Changes to Incapacity Benefit

12. As the panel undertook the review there were changes introduced to the benefit system. From November 2008 the new Employment and Support Allowance (ESA) would replace Incapacity Benefit and Income Support, which was paid on incapacity grounds. The ESA offered personalised support and financial help for those people not working due to an illness or disability. It was designed to give people access to a specially trained personal adviser and a range of further services. Central to the ESA was the new medical assessment which examined what people were capable of doing rather than what they couldn't do and that personal support that might be needed in order to enable them to work.
13. However, at the time of writing the report, there were approximately 10,000 people in Middlesbrough on IB, most of whom had been on benefit for over 2 years. That equated to 22.7% of the total working age population, with between 40-80% of those people declaring a mental health problem. **In Middlesbrough, there were about 2,000 people who were deemed to be in the hardest to reach category and for which the strategy would focus its attention on.**
14. The panel recognised the wider Worklessness agenda and its implications, however for the purposes of the review the Panel wanted to focus its attention **specifically on those people that the Employment Strategy for People with Disabilities was designed to help.** That therefore included the 2,000 people who were known to the Social Care Department who were from the hardest to reach groups. In 2007/08 the figures were as follows
 - 681 people with mental health problems
 - 641 people with learning disabilities
 - 581 people with physical disabilities
15. The key issues for the success of the strategy were outlined to the panel as follows
 - A commitment from all key stakeholders

- The provision of a bespoke Employment Support Service (Job Coaches)
- A Business Case which highlights the benefits to employers of employing people with disabilities
- A commitment to Job Carving (identifying gaps to create a bespoke job, carving tasks from existing jobs)
- A range of Social Enterprise schemes
- Champions across the Council, stakeholders, employers to ensure a proactive approach.
- Specialist Welfare Benefit Advice and Support
- Good public information

TO EXAMINE THE BARRIERS THAT PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES FACE WHEN SEEKING EMPLOYMENT

16. Once the panel had established what the strategy had been designed to achieve, Members wanted to know what barriers people with disabilities faced when trying to find employment. The panel learnt that there were a number of different barriers that disabled people encountered and people could have one or any number from the list below:

- Fear of losing benefits and benefit dependency
- Lack of suitable vacancies – there were many jobs that were not suitable for adaptation for people with disabilities for example, some people with disabilities who took medication found early mornings difficult and late starts might not suit the needs of the employer.
- Lack of support – there were a number of agencies that had been established to help people in this area although many of those agencies relied on external funding and may not have the longevity that the Council provided support could deliver.
- Low levels of confidence and self esteem, fear of change
- Lack of qualifications/skills
- Employers' perceptions of disability – stigma and discrimination related to their disability – which was outlined as one of the key issues that the work in this area will have to address and conquer.
- Working environments and lack of adaptations, lack of local flexible work – although some larger public sector organisations are open to the developments in this area some of the smaller private sector businesses have more difficulty in being able to provide work environments for people with disabilities.
- Lack of work experience
- Poor knowledge regarding labour market opportunities
- Lack of transport
- Loss of networks/contacts in the world of work
- Complex recruitment and selection processes
- Low wages, fear of exploitation
- Attitude of carers/staff, loss of income for family members
- Competition for vacancies with people who don't have disabilities
- Lack of effective joint working between agencies
- Health deterioration – employers may have the perception that people with disabilities would be liable to go on the sick regularly, however experience had shown that generally that had not been found to be the case.

17. The barriers listed above were identified by people with disabilities, through various methods such as discussions at social enterprise events and responses to Social Care Surveys.
18. The panel learnt that in terms of the barriers that people with mental health problems faced it was often the stigma and discrimination that they feared they may receive from employers. There were also a number of other reasons such as the lack of clear responsibility and effective joint working between agencies, inaccurate or missed diagnoses, lack of time or training among professionals, fears about leaving benefits and employers not knowing where to go to for help.
19. For people who had a learning disability, the panel was told that there was often an expectation that they would never be able to work. That could lead to a family reliance on the person with learning disabilities to claim welfare benefits, which their families then come to rely on. There could also be a tendency for the family to want to 'overprotect' the person with the disability. These reasons could all add to the barriers for people starting or returning to work and coupled with the discrimination, social exclusion and lack of overall opportunities could create huge barriers for people with learning disabilities.
20. For people with a physical disability, issues with access and transport to work could make opportunities even more limited. The complexity of the benefits system was an additional issue. There was a 'Permitted Work' rule that allowed IB claimants to give paid work a try without their benefits being affected. However for those on Income Support working hours were limited to less than 4 per week before there was a potential disruption to benefits.
21. However, the Council was working with clients to help them to ensure that they were no worse off if they found paid work by maximising the benefits that they were entitled to. In most cases people were better off in work through the use of Tax Credits.

TO EXAMINE THE SUPPORT THAT IS/OR WILL BE OFFERED TO PEOPLE, BOTH TO ASSIST THEM IN FINDING MEANINGFUL EMPLOYMENT AND SUPPORTING THEM, WHERE NECESSARY, TO STAY IN EMPLOYMENT

22. When the Employment Strategy was being compiled there were a number of factors that were identified that it was thought would help improve opportunities for people and those included:
 - impartial benefit advice
 - one to one with a specialist, personal adviser who supports the individual into employment
 - a dedicated specialist support team
 - early intervention for people with mental health problems -early support and intervention can help people remain in employment
 - other local provision to help IB claimants – e.g. support from Job Centre Plus
 - Return to work credits and financial incentives
 - In work support
 - Job Carving
 - Partnership working

- Innovative ways of helping sustain employment such as using Direct Payments

23. The panel learnt that Middlesbrough Council's Social Care department had a new service 'FORWARDS' which ensured that people with disabilities who wished to work received the appropriate support and opportunities to access real, sustainable jobs for real wages and included the kind of support as outlined above.

The process

24. A Social Care professional would refer people to the service. The person would then undergo an assessment by staff (job coaches), an initial visit would take place with the Employment Support Service, the client and their family/carers. A vocational profile will be completed and another meeting would take place with all parties to agree the clients CV and ensure everyone was happy with the chosen direction. Job searching would then take place, which could involve the job coaches cold calling employers, weekly job finding sessions, setting up interviews, work experience and interview preparations. People would be given job coaching to give them the opportunity to learn the job prior to starting officially. Help would also be given to complete benefit forms and the right level of support would be put in place based on the individual's needs. Monitoring, reviews and evaluation would take place and career development and ongoing support was provided where and when it was appropriate.

25. The importance of individual planning was discussed because the team was responsible for producing an individual plan for each person based around what was important in their life and what they wanted from the future. It supported individuals to make their own choices and decisions to improve their independence.

Job Coaches

26. The Job Coaches worked to develop real jobs and career opportunities for people. They did so through a range of initiatives and methods. Job coaches networked with employers, carers, service users and professionals both in the Council and the Council's partner organisations. They worked to develop jobs that had a range of hours to suit the needs of the individual and supported individuals to ensure effective job matches. That meant finding jobs and also working with employers to develop and shape existing positions to suit the needs of the individual. The Job Coaching service, at the time of writing the report, was relatively new, there were 3.5 officers who were dealing with about 40 cases. The team was very enthusiastic and optimistic about the future of the service and the number of people they could help. Even though the service was new they had identified future plans which included the transition from pre 16 to post 16 training and employment and employer engagement and additional funding had been identified in order to employ job coaches who could specialise in transition and employer engagement. As the review progressed it was noted that 4.5 new positions for job coaches had been advertised.

27. The team had strong links with other key organisations such as Job Centre Plus, Connexions and the Citizens Advice Bureau who were invited to their team meetings. Information was also shared between the team and Job Centre Plus. In order to publicise the service the team was developing leaflets that were targeted at employers and people with health problems.

28. The panel was shown the service's Service Specification, which outlined how they intended to provide the service including the operation, delivery, standards and monitoring processes.
29. Officers were asked what they thought would, in a perfect world, help with improving opportunities for people with disabilities. Officers had a number of ideas which included
 - That each employer should receive free awareness training such as the 'Mental Health First Aid' and practical and financial support from the Government (where appropriate) for the successful and sustainable employment of people with disabilities.
 - That the press would only give balanced and well-informed reports on individual cases involving people with mental health needs.
 - That Person Centred Planning is given to everyone including career and training advice.
 - That the result of the work would mean that fewer people with disabilities would need day care/services and more people would be in meaningful paid employment.

TO EXAMINE AREAS OF INNOVATION, EXAMPLES OF GOOD PRACTICE AND POSITIVE CASE STUDIES

30. In Middlesbrough, the Social Care Department's service 'FORWARDS' had been established to ensure that people with disabilities who wanted to work received the appropriate support and opportunities to access real, sustainable jobs. The FORWARDS team provided an example of a case study for a young lady who lived in Middlesbrough and how all the agencies worked together to provide a positive outcome for her. The details of that example are included in Appendix 1.

Supported Employment - Ayresome Industries

31. The panel was interested in the Council's supported employment business, Ayresome Industries. Members learnt that there had been some form of provision for disabled people in Middlesbrough since 1922, initially designed to help blinded servicemen after World War 1. In 1998 a scoping exercise was undertaken to consider whether Ayresome Industries should transfer to the third sector. However, following the Erimus Housing transfer the decision was made by the Council to retain Ayresome Industries and the contract for manufacturing PVC windows for Erimus was secured.
32. Members were informed that the organisation was cost neutral to the Council. Over the last three years the business had diversified. There was consideration being given to expanding into garden landscaping and recycling products.
33. The organisation had to operate alongside the commercial sector and their products had been awarded the British Standard Kitemark accreditation and operated to the same standards of other commercially run double glazing manufacturers.
34. The panel learnt that the company was owned and managed by the Council and that it manufactured windows and road sweeping brushes. The sheltered workshops offered employment opportunities to people with physical disabilities and mental health problems. The organisation offered training programmes and it was a

minimum requirement for employees to have an NVQ level 2. Which was noted as quite an achievement given the barriers faced by a number of their employees.

35. The organisation aimed to be more than just an employer. It offered help to its employees by providing advice on disability, welfare and benefit issues. Its primary aim was to support and develop people with disabilities. The company had a core staff and approximately 51 employees, who accounted for three-quarters of Middlesbrough Council's disabled employees.
36. Potential employees were referred to the organisation by both Job Centre Plus (JCP) and the Council's Social Care Employment Team. People would undertake a work placement to see if they were suitable for the role. Some employees stayed for open-ended placements which usually lasted 3-4 months and some employees had been there for a number of years. The organisation would also help employees move on to other organisations if they wanted to do that. Employees had moved on to working in a number of other organisation and roles including: warehouses, HGV driving, rehabilitation assistants etc.
37. The Job Centre Plus (JCP) Work Step Programme involved about 4 people per year, it was funded by JCP. Ayresome Industries were given progression targets to move people on to alternative employment.

Visit to Ayresome Industries

38. A number of the panel members visited Ayresome Industries to see the work of the organisation for themselves. The panel had the opportunity to visit the workshop and speak to employees.
39. The panel members who attended the visit found the experience to be invaluable in that it gave them a real insight in to the work that Ayresome industries did and gave them the opportunity to see first hand people with disabilities successfully engaging in paid and meaningful work.
40. The panel saw the support and the camaraderie that existed in the workshop and found that the business was more than just an employer to the people that worked there. Staff were available to give advice on welfare and benefits issues. The staff recognised that if they could support employees and help them to retain their employment it reduced the need for that person to be provided with a full time Social Worker.
41. The panel had heard that employees were often reticent about employing people with a disability because of the perceptions about sickness absence. The panel members were interested in levels of sickness at Ayresome Industries. The panel learnt that the average rate for 2007/08 was 7.7 days per employee, which to put it into perspective, was lower than the Council's overall average sickness figure. The panel also learnt that in the experience of the manger, people with disabilities wanted to prove that they could do their job and were not prone to sick leave or long absences.

Sharing Experiences

42. The panel was interested to explore whether or not the Ayresome Industries model could be replicated and to use the experience and knowledge in order to develop other Social Enterprises. The panel were advised that the advantage of Ayresome

Industries was that it was attached to the Local Authority and it worked closely with Erimus Housing and that the business had evolved over time. However the manager was more than happy for people to come and find out more about the operation of the organisation and to learn from their experience.

43. It was acknowledged that one of the difficulties for employers if they were considering employing people with a disability was the number of different agencies contacting them trying to find work for unemployed/disabled people. Personnel managers in large companies might receive a number of calls for a number of different organisations trying to find work which might be confusing and overwhelming. Again Ayresome Industries offered their expertise to potential employers of people with disabilities so they could share advice.
44. One issue that came out of the visit following a discussion regarding the present economic climate was the need for the business to be able to adapt and diversify to ensure that there was enough work and orders to sustain the business. If the business was to ever close it would have major implications for the employees and for Social Services.
45. One area of diversification that was pointed out as a possibility for developing the recycling of waste plastic. Waste plastic was not an in house service. At present Ayresome Industries sold waste plastic at £90 per tonne to a company that then ground down the waste and resold it to Ayresome Industries for them to make garden furniture etc at £400 per tonne. Members were advised that the company involved would be making about 30% profit. If Ayresome Industries could recycle its own materials it would be able to create more work for people with disabilities, staff would be needed to operate the necessary machinery and the recycled materials could be used to produce a range of additional items that could be sold.
46. Ultimately the primary objective of the company was to find people with disabilities meaningful paid employment. Where people came to the company and decided they either didn't like the work, or they stayed and then wanted to move on once their skills had developed then staff at Ayresome Industries would try and find alternative employment. Especially through the use of their contacts with organisations involved within their supply chain.

North Lanarkshire Council

47. The panel were keen to consider best practice. North Lanarkshire Council (NLC) had been identified nationally for their good practice, particularly in their success in obtaining paid employment for people with learning disabilities for over 16 hours per week. Unfortunately their officers were not able to attend the panel's meeting, however they sent useful information and DVD for the panel's viewing. It included some very positive real life examples of how the scheme has successfully found employment for people in their area and how companies had worked to accommodate the needs of the employee.
48. North Lanarkshire had also sent some statistical information regarding how employment can improve people's levels of income with the use of some benefits and tax credits. (details of which are attached at **Appendix 1**)
49. Also attached (at **Appendix 2**) is an evaluation of the costs and financial benefits of supported employment in North Lanarkshire that was undertaken by Cardiff

University. The report outlined how it had often been said that the greater the amount of welfare benefit a potential worker received, the more difficult it was to find that person a job. The assessment of the North Lanarkshire data suggested that assessing people's Welfare Benefits and increasing them could contribute to a move into employment. It was reported by managers of the project in North Lanarkshire that good welfare rights advice, employment for 16 hours plus and Working Tax Credit can help people take the decision to enter employment.

50. The Supported Employment Project in North Lanarkshire worked to the following principles and ethos

- jobs should be full time (16 hours plus)
- jobs should be in an integrated setting
- don't indulge in voluntary work or training for work
- service users should be paid the going rate for the job

51. North Lanarkshire Council outlined a number of benefits to employers which included

- You attract staff who really want to work
- You attract good calibre staff. Employers of people with disabilities testify to their dedication and hard work and consider them valuable members of staff
- You help create a diverse, inclusive workforce which is representative of the community you serve
- You build awareness amongst your staff of disability issues that will improve the services they provide to all disabled and disadvantaged people
- You will get experience of working with people with a range of learning styles and requirements. Many managers find that this helps them get better at tailoring jobs to people's strengths, thereby strengthening the team.
- Job coaching and on going support is available for each employee
- Advice, guidance and support is available from job coaches on recruitment, induction, training, supervision and monitoring.

52. As a result of watching the DVD the panel members had a number of questions that they put to North Lanarkshire Council, which are as follows

How did North Lanarkshire Council engage with businesses to get them involved in the project?

They approached it as if it were no different to you or I looking and applying for a job. The person was registered with a Disability Employment Advisor, and the vacancies at the job centre and within the local newspapers were checked on a weekly basis. The advisors helped people make their application by helping them fill in the application form. Once the application had been submitted the Advisor rang the employer to explain the application. They also explained the supported employment scheme with them and to discuss the hours that are in the job advert to establish if they would be suitable or could be adapted in any way to meet the needs of the client.

The advisors also split people into the sectors that both they and the client think would be most suitable. The advisors then looked at companies in the area and approached them to discuss supported employment.

The team of advisors also worked closely with their regeneration department and worked with them to contact companies in the area.

The teams had held lunches for interested organisations and companies where they asked people who have successfully found work through the project to come and tell their story. Which has had some success.

Do you help with the costs to companies to help them employ someone with a disability, either in terms of adaptations or employers training costs?

No, the project does not offer financial support but offers ongoing support to the employer and the client following a successful application. Which the organisations involved have said is more beneficial in the longer term.

The Council wanted companies to take people on because they want to, not because of any financial incentives.

A lot of jobs on the DVD were in the service sector, have you been able to engage other sectors

They work to engage medium size companies by getting to speak to the decision-makers within those companies. Larger companies were more difficult to engage with because they were tied up with red tape.

They work with the Economic Development Unit to find out about companies, they use the yellow pages and drive about the area to see which companies are operating or who have just set up. They would then approach them to tell them about the project.

What support is given to families, in particular, older parents whose adult children may have previously attending day care for a number of years?

The project tended to focus on college leavers to try and therefore avoid the day centre route before it becomes an option.

They hand pick 4/5 people who they thought would want something different from the usual day centre route. They then found that word of the success stories then encouraged other parents to want the same for their children.

Positive Case Studies

53. The panel heard a number of successful stories from watching the DVD on North Lanarkshire's experiences, they also saw this in action from meeting employees at the Ayresome industries. The main message to the panel was that both disabled people's fears and employer's fears were unfounded.
54. Disabled people would not be worse off if they chose to work instead of claim benefits, with the right help, support and benefits advice, working gave them not

only a wage, but self confidence, self esteem, the opportunity to become more independent.

55. For employers who were involved in the scheme in Lanarkshire they realised that they were not being asked to provide a charitable service, disabled people are just like any other employee in that they work for a living and receive a wage.

TO CONSIDER THE LOCAL LABOUR MARKET AND HOW THE COUNCIL WORKS WITH ITS PARTNERS IN ORDER TO INCREASE JOB AND/OR SELF EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES

56. Data compiled for the Employment Strategy for People with Disabilities showed that from Middlesbrough's population of 137,000 that there were 10,000 people who claimed Incapacity Benefit (IB) and most had been unemployed for over 2 years. It was thought that this was a conservative figure for the number of people who needed intensive support because some people had not paid contributions in order to receive IB and were on Income Support with Disability Living Allowance.
57. It was recognised as a crucial factor that the strategy needed to take into account the local Labour Market. It was obvious that for people with disabilities to enter employment then there needed to be local employers to take them on. Whilst finding suitable employers was an important role that was being undertaken by the specialist employment team within Social Care, it needed to be recognised that there would not be enough vacancies for 10,000 people claiming IB in Middlesbrough. Part of the solution to that would be to increase the number of sustainable vacancies by developing local sustainable social enterprises and opportunities for self-employment.
58. The panel had concerns about this question and of all the barriers that existed for disabled people entering the labour market; the barrier that was specific to Middlesbrough was the economy and the competition for vacancies. There was also a concern regarding the lack of entry-level employment opportunities.
59. The panel learnt however that the job coaches were proactive in trying to create employment opportunities and as the North Lanarkshire example showed it was possible for people with a disability to be employed and positively contribute to the local economy.
60. The panel learnt that the Strategy sat within a broader framework of national and regional policies and strategies designed to tackle unemployment and worklessness. On a general level the Department of Work and Pensions set out a long-term aspiration to raise the national employment rate to 80%. The Pathways to Work Programme helped new IB claimants by helping them to manage their condition through referral to the Condition Management Programme.
61. Two major regional policies, The Northern Way and the Regional Economic Strategy set out key priorities for investment to boost economic growth and create sustainable communities. More locally the Local Strategic Partnership had a themed group entitled the Economic Vitality Action Group which aimed to address the high numbers of people on working age benefit, particularly IB and support them into employment.

62. Area Based Initiatives were based in the most deprived communities and offered bespoke employment, training and guidance advice through a multi-agency partnership package.
63. There was also a number of other local initiatives aimed at helping people with disabilities. Those included supported voluntary work experience placements, which gave people an opportunity to try out work without jeopardising their benefits. Projects in the voluntary sector which helped meet the needs of the hardest to reach and those projects including the MIND catering training project and the MVDA volunteering projects. The Intermediate Labour Market programmes provided long term support and paid employment and training for clients with disabilities. Work had to have a direct social purpose. The work period was time limited with the aim of progression into full time employment.
64. Of course the success of the employment strategy would also require substantial input from employers within the town, both from the public and private sectors.
65. Within the Council there were 173 employees who have declared a disability.¹ This equated to 3%. The department with the highest proportion of employees with a disability was Social Care with 7% and the lowest Environment with 2%. The percentage of the top 5% of earners of the workforce who had a disability was 3% and the Council aimed to increase that to 4% by 2009. The percentage of the working age population in Middlesbrough who had a disability was 4.8%.
66. The Council's Corporate Management Team have recently agreed to amend Middlesbrough Council's recruitment and selection policy to include the principle of job carving thus making a strong commitment to helping people with disabilities to find work within the Council. The commitment included offering ring-fenced job carved posts to disabled applications referred by the Employment Support Team, FORWARDS. It was agreed that at least one job carved opportunity from each Department would be created within the next 12 months. A representative was to meet with FORWARDS to explore the ways in which Mouchel could also support the Council's policy.

TO ESTABLISH WHO THE COUNCIL'S KEY PARTNERS ARE AND THEN CONSIDER HOW THEY WORK TOGETHER IN ORDER TO ENSURE THAT PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES ARE SUPPORTED INTO MEANINGFUL, SUSTAINABLE EMPLOYMENT

67. In order to explore this term of reference the panel invited the key stakeholders to a panel meeting to discuss the following questions
 - How each service works to help disabled people find meaningful employment?
 - How well do the services work together? Are there any better ways of working or improvements that could be made?
 - What each of the representative think are the best ways of improving job opportunities for people with disabilities?

¹ People Strategy – As at June 30 2007

- What more could the council do to improve opportunities in this area?

68. The following stakeholders were invited

- **County Durham and Darlington Primary Care Team**
- **Job Centre Plus**
- **Learning and Skills Council**
- **Middlesbrough Citizens Advice Bureau**
- **Middlesbrough Council and representative of Middlesbrough Works**

69. Each organisation outlined their involvement with the work that was being undertaken to help disabled people access the world of work.

70. **Middlesbrough Works** were responsible for working with the Neighbourhood Employment Gateways to provide a person centred approach, using monies from the Working Neighbourhoods Fund. However it was stated that the focus was aimed at people with mental health problems rather than long term disability.

71. **County Durham and Darlington Primary Care Team** were working with the Council on the Mental Health First Aid project. The project was a tool to educate employers in order that employers had an understanding of mental health issues when they come to employing someone who may be vulnerable or retaining staff who have or may develop mental health issues.

72. **Learning and Skills Council's** (LSC) responsibility was one of preparing people in order for them to take up employment opportunities. They worked with partnerships in Middlesbrough in order to develop training opportunities. The LSC had worked with Remploy in order to undertake research into the barriers to employment in order to test new areas of delivery and provision.

73. The **Citizens Advice Bureau** (CAB) had a role in preparing people for work, it gave advice on benefits to illustrate that they would be financially worse off if they were to take up employment. The CAB could also help motivate people to go into the world of work. For example if people were struggling with debt, the CAB could give them advice to help get their finances under control and help them manage their money. Financial education could help people devise a household budget so that they would not be worse off if they get a job and start to repay their debts. The CAB also signposted people to social services and the team of job coaches.

74. **Job Centre Plus** (JCP) worked with newly incapacitated people to help them re-enter the world of work and their team of Disability Employment Advisors were specially trained to help people with disabilities find work and offer them step by step help.

75. One of the main issues highlighted by the CAB was that finding sustainable employment for people was just the beginning. One of the main issues facing people was discrimination, especially for people with mental health issues and visible disabilities. Firstly those people needed to be made aware of their rights, which the CAB helped with. Secondly agencies must work together in partnership with employers to tackle this issue and people's attitudes.

76. The representatives felt that there was adequate support out there for people however one of the biggest hurdles was changing perceptions of employers. Different approaches needed to be developed in order to overcome the stigma and to concentrate on the ability of the person not their disability.
77. Members were interested in how successful the first aid project had been, and were told that some progress had been made, yet there was still work to do. The PCT were working with large and small employers, but noted that some of the smaller organisations found it difficult because of resources.
78. When asked what were the best ways of improving job opportunities for people with disabilities the panel was told that the main improvement would be more support from employers. Members concluded that it would be vital for organisations to work together in order to change employers' attitudes and perceptions of disability and mental illness and provide the appropriate support to assist those with disabilities into employment.
79. The panel learnt that the job coaches looked at the best options to help individuals find employment. It was important to ascertain what type of job the individual was looking for and the hours that they wanted to work. Job coaches were in favour of work trials where people could experience the job for a week to see if it suited them. Word of mouth was an important way of improving levels of employment, it was agreed that success stories could be used in order to highlight the issue to other employers.
80. In response to what the Council could do to improve opportunities in this area it was agreed that Councillors also had a large role to play in both championing the cause and publicising and disseminating information about the service.

TO CONSIDER IF THE COUNCIL HAS THE RESOURCES TO DELIVER THE EMPLOYMENT STRATEGY FOR PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES

81. The Employment Support Service for people with disabilities is known as 'FORWARDS'. Its philosophy, policies and procedures were identified in their Service Specification. The specification outlined how the service would be delivered, the targets for improving employment outcomes for adults with learning disabilities and mental health issues, the organisational structure, the service design and its delivery.

National Indicators and Targets

For people in paid employment

	07/08	08/09	09/10	10/11
Learning Disabilities	5.3% (36 people)	8.3% (56 people)	10.5% (71 people)	12% (81 people)

Based on a total figure of 673 people aged 18-64 with Learning Disabilities known to the Council

	07/08	08/09	09/10	10/11
Mental Health	5.3% (74 people)	6% (84 people)	7.1% (99 people)	8.5% (119 people)

82. The panel thought that it was important to consider if the Council had the resources to be able to deliver the strategy. What the panel learnt was that the strategy's success was based on the assumption that the Council was working closely with its key partners in order to be able to deliver the strategy in partnership.
83. The panel learnt that the Department of Social Care had targeted significant resources in order to deliver the strategy. The department's focussed work would be enhanced significantly by overall strategic commitment from key stakeholders within current financial resources.
84. In order to ensure that the strategy was to be delivered the panel were informed that there was a number of key issues that would help implement the strategy successfully and which would not need any further financial resources. One of the main factors of its success would be that it was imperative that the strategy was owned right across the Council. The introduction of champions within the department would be useful to assist with engagement. CMT had looked at the issue of job carving and it was considered important that the issue of employing people with disabilities was built into the council's recruitment and retention policy. The Council could lead the way on the issue of job carving.
85. An audit of the Council's commissioned services was considered useful in order to identify services which Ayresome Industries could provide which would see working with the procurement team to look at the services that Ayresome Industries could provide. This would in turn provide work for the company and then increase the need for more employees.
86. The Council could also consider the internal organisational waste destruction policy that could be developed as a Social Enterprise at Ayresome Industries.
87. Council procurement processes could also include 'Social Clauses' which would mean an agreement by the company submitting the tender to have a target for the number of people they employ who have a disability. That would have a beneficial impact in enhancing job opportunities for people with disabilities with local employers.
88. This would also extend to the Council's partnership working with Mouchel. Negotiations regarding the contract extension could also be used to establish an enhanced target for the employment of people with disabilities as part of the Middlesbrough Partnership Agreement.
89. The department will also work with local employers via the Employment Vitality Theme Group to highlight the benefits to employers of employing people with disabilities.

CONCLUSION

90. Based on evidence given throughout the investigation the Panel concluded:

1. The panel endorsed the view that people with disabilities should have the same rights to employment as any other person and that the new and innovative ways of finding people suitable jobs, such as job carving, should be supported.
2. That the strategy would only work if there was a continuing commitment from all the stakeholders involved.
3. That the main concerns people had were the fear of losing benefits and being able to find suitable employment. The panel found that in gaining employment people could be better off both financially, with the right benefit advice and tax credits, and emotionally. The job coaches were working hard to ensure suitable employment was found and employers needed to play a major role. The way forward was not forcing companies to have a quota of people with disabilities to work for them, it was getting companies to change their perceptions of disabled workers and actively look at jobs, or elements of jobs that they could do. Companies didn't need to provide a charitable service or treat people differently, but provide opportunities for people to do an honest day's work for a day's pay.
4. That the FORWARDS Team would benefit from close working relations with the Council's Economic Development Team in order to identify potential new employers and share knowledge about companies in Middlesbrough.
5. The panel was impressed with the work and commitment of the staff and the employees of Ayresome Industries and thought that the organisation should be used to highlight how successful it can be to employ people with a disability and pass on their experiences to other employers.
6. The panel heard how the diversification of services provided by Ayresome Industries would provide more jobs for people with disabilities. The panel endorsed this course of action.
7. The panel felt that the Council had targeted significant resources in order to deliver the strategy but that it must be maintained in order to secure this important service. The panel also agreed that there were a number of key issues that would ensure the strategies success such as introducing champions to each department, auditing the Council's commissioned services, enhancing the role of Ayresome Industries, introducing 'social clauses' for companies the Council worked with.

RECOMMENDATIONS

91. That the Social Care and Adult Services Scrutiny Panel recommends to the Executive:

1. That a 'champion' be appointed in each Council department in order to push forward the initiative in the Council and improve awareness.

2. That a Councillor also be appointed as a 'champion'. Other Councillors should be made aware of the scheme in order to be able to signpost people to the FORWARDS service.
3. That the FORWARDS Team and the Council's Economic Development Team work closely to share information about new and current employers within the Town.
4. That the service returns to the panel in 6 months to discuss the progress and in particular the number of people who have been in contact with the service and the total number of jobs found.
5. That Ayresome Industries is used as an example of good practice for other employers. Employers should be encouraged to visit Ayresome Industries to see its operation in practice.
6. The Council, as an exemplar, should be seen to be leading the way in providing opportunities for people with disabilities especially in the use of 'job carving' to create appropriate work opportunities and that this should be a corporate policy.
7. That the Council ensures that the correct level of resources is directed to FORWARDS to enable its work to be carried out effectively.
8. That a press release be issued to publicise the work of the service to the public, potential users and businesses. The benefits of the mental health first aid should be highlighted and work should continue to be undertaken with employers to alter their perceptions of disabled employees and to get them to undertake the mental health first aid training course in their organisations.
9. In order to assist Ayresome Industries in being able to employ more workers, Ayresome Industries should be given the opportunity and assistance to develop their facilities to enable the organisation to recycle plastic waste.
10. That the Council also reviews its policy on commissioned services to identify services which Ayresome Industries could provide, including the internal waste destruction policy.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

11. The Panel is grateful to all those who have presented evidence during the course of our investigation. We would like to place on record our appreciation, in particular of the willingness and co-operation we have received from the below named:
 - Ruth Hicks, Head of Mental Health and Learning Disabilities, Middlesbrough Council
 - Gabriella Rea, Mental Health and Learning Disability Partnership Manager, Middlesbrough Council
 - Jonathan Darbey – Job Coach, Middlesbrough Council
 - Rebecca Gray – Job Coach, Middlesbrough Council
 - Debra Parkes – Project Manager, Middlesbrough Council
 - Catherine Bleasdale, Health Improvement Strategic Lead, County Durham and Darlington Primary Care Trust

- Lynne Wood, Operational Support Manager, Job Centre Plus
- Angela Wilson, Partnership Director Learning and Skills Council
- John Daniels, Chief Executive, Middlesbrough Citizens Advice Bureau
- Richard Horniman, Economic Development Manager Middlesbrough Council and representative of Middlesbrough Works
- Stephen Giles, Ayresome Industries
- Staff and employees at Ayresome Industries
- Maureen Cook, North Lanarkshire, Service Co-ordinator, Supported Employment

**COUNCILLOR PETER PURVIS
CHAIR OF THE SOCIAL CARE AND ADULT SERVICES SCRUTINY PANEL**

November 2008

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BACKGROUND PAPERS

The following background papers were consulted or referred to in the preparation of this report:

- (a) Forwards – Supported Employment Service for People with Disabilities – Service Specification, Middlesbrough Council, April 2008
- (b) Middlesbrough Employment Strategy for People with Disabilities – Middlesbrough Council June 2008
- (c) Supported Employment in North Lanarkshire, Presentation to Middlesbrough Council December 2007
- (d) Job Carving, Report to CMT, 25 September 2008, Middlesbrough Council

Case Studies

Mr A was referred in December 2002 by a lecturer from the local further education college which he attended, prior to his course ending in June 2003. Having autism it was important Mr A had a smooth transition from school/college to employment. As Mr A required a carved job it was September 2005 before he secured employment as a warehouse assistant. Mr A works 16 hours per week.

Name : Mr A				Last Updated:		11/04/07	
Address:							
Income prior to employment		Income Maximised prior to employment			Income in employment		
Income Support	£ 84.40	Income supp	£	Earnings	£ 89.60		
IB/SDA	£	IB/SDA	£	Tax Credits	£ 77.69		
DLA (Care)	£ 43.15	DLA(Care)	£	DLA (Care)	£ 43.15		
DLA (Mobility)	£ 17.10	DLA(Mob)	£	DLA(Mob)	£ 17.10		
Other (Specify)	£	Other(Specify)	£	Other (Specify)	£		
TOTAL		£ 144.65		TOTAL		£	
Less housing costs		£		Less housing costs		£	
TOTAL		£ 144.65		TOTAL		£ 227.54	
		DIFFERENCE IN INCOME		£		DIFFERENCE IN INCOME	
						£ 82.89	

Mr M was 20 years old when he was referred to the service and had no previous work history. Mr M has a hearing impairment and a mild learning disability and lives with his parents. Mr M started work on 8 November 2004 as a production line worker and works 40 hours per week.

Name: Mr M				Last updated:		03/04/07	
Address:							
Income prior to employment		Income Maximised prior to employment			Income in employment		
Income Support	£ 10.80	Income supp	£	Earnings	£ 214.40		
IB/SDA	£ 59.20	IB/SDA	£	Tax Credits	£ 49.06		
DLA (care)	£ 43.15	DLA (care)	£	DLA (Care)	£ 43.15		
DLA (mobility)	£ 17.10	DLA (mob)	£	DLA (mob)	£ 17.10		
Other (specify)	£	Other (specify)	£	Other)	£		
TOTAL		£130.25		TOTAL		£	
Less housing costs		£		Less housing costs		£	
TOTAL		£ 130.25		TOTAL		£ 323.71	
		DIFFERENCE IN INCOME		£		DIFFERENCE IN INCOME	
						£ 193.46	

CASE STUDY – MIDDLESBROUGH EXAMPLE

This is a case study regarding a young woman who had been referred to the Middlesbrough Citizens Advice Bureau project, in conjunction with the Middlesbrough Forwards Project based in Vancouver House.

The client was a single female, aged 22, with an enduring mental health disability who has been a service user for several years and is currently in secondary services receiving input from a Psychiatrist and Care Co-ordinator.

She was living in a specialist supported housing project for people with mental health problems, claiming housing benefit and incapacity related benefits, including DLA.

She has been attending MIND Jobclub under the guidance of the Job Club Support Worker who has been offering support & advice around employment.

With the encouragement of the Job Club Support Work the client felt able to apply for a job as a Support Worker at a locally based care home in Middlesbrough. The post was for 18 hours per week and paid £6.45 per hour.

A three way meeting was arranged between MIND, the client and the Job Coach to look at providing an accurate In Work Calculation to find out how her benefits might be affected if she were to take up this post.

The client was given an In Work Calculation from the C.A.B project showing that her total work income plus benefits would be approximately £485.08 per week.

There was a concern that the client was living in a supported housing project where the rent was £205.19 per week, and the client was unsure what percentage of this she would have to contribute herself if she were to take up employment.

This was an important consideration as there are a lot of people with mental health problems living in supported housing projects across Middlesbrough who are convinced they would lose all claim to housing benefit if they were to take up employment, and therefore be liable to pay the full housing costs themselves, which can be prohibitive in supported housing projects.

However, following contact with Middlesbrough Housing Benefits department it was shown that the client would still be eligible for approx. £179.28 per week housing benefit, thus making it beneficial for the client to take up employment.

The client was advised to go to Middlesbrough House to confirm the eligibility for Housing Benefit again, and this she did.

The client was successful with her application and took up the job opportunity and reports she is thoroughly enjoying her new working life.

This example shows that even difficult cases can be have a positive outcome when agencies work together to provide a dedicated professional service to assist those with disabilities back into employment.