

SOCIAL CARE AND ADULT SERVICES SCRUTINY PANEL

25 AUGUST 2009

**FINAL REPORT - UPDATE
REVIEW OF IMPROVING THE LEVEL OF EMPLOYMENT FOR
PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES**

PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

1. To provide the Board with information regarding the recent review of the previous investigation into Improving the Levels of Employment for People with Disabilities. If Members are in agreement with the report's contents then it will be submitted to the Executive in due course.

BACKGROUND

2. When the panel undertook the review its aim was for the investigation to consider how the Council was working with people with a disability to help them into paid and meaningful employment and ensure that people had the opportunities and support to enable them to enter the world of work.
3. The panel had focussed its attention specifically on those people that the Employment Strategy for People with Disabilities was designed to help. That included the 2,000 people from the hardest to reach groups who had mental health problems, learning disabilities and physical disabilities.
4. The Social Care Department's FORWARDS Team was responsible for providing a service to people with disabilities that provided appropriate support and opportunities in order to help people into real, sustainable jobs. Job Coaches were employed to support people through the whole process from helping with benefits advice, to finding work, helping people through the interview process and supporting them when they started work.

The Panel's Recommendations

5. The panel had recommended that a Councillor be appointed as a 'champion, and that 'champions' should also be appointed in each Council department in order to ensure that the Council was at the forefront of initiatives designed to help people with disabilities in to work. The panel also wanted the Council to be seen to be leading the way in providing opportunities for people especially in the use of 'job carving' (separating elements of a job and matching them with people's abilities).
6. The panel also wanted to see joined up working between the Council's FORWARD Team and the Economic Development Team to share knowledge about the town's business sector.
7. The panel was impressed with the work of Ayresome industries. Members were told that often employers were often uncertain about employing someone with a disability. The panel recommended that Ayresome Industries should be used as an example of good practice for which employers could go and discuss the issues and see its operation in practice and dispel some of the uncertainties people had.
8. When the panel undertook their review between July and November 2008, the FORWARDS Team was in its infancy and the panel wanted to receive an update on their work after a six month period. Therefore officers from the Team attended a panel meeting on 23 July in order to update Members on the current position.

UPDATE

9. The panel found that since the review had taken place the number of job coaches had increased from 3 to 6 people. This had enabled the team to be able to increase the specialised areas of work which now included
 - Transitions (Learning Disabilities) young people aged 16-24, leaving school and college etc
 - Affective Mental Health Services
 - Learning Disabilities Community Inclusion
 - Autism Spectrum
10. The Team had been able to increase their partnership work to provide a wider range of options to individuals seeking work. The Team was also working in partnership with other Council departments in order to assist with achieving job carving. However at present progress was slow and the successes had mainly been within the Social Care Department. A report on the progress of assigning 'champions' within each department was due to be submitted to CMT in August. The panel hoped that once the 'champions' were in place that this would help the FORWARDS team progress developments within the Council's departments.
11. It was pointed out that the Health Scrutiny Panel were considering Stroke Services in Middlesbrough and as a result of that review had considered how victims of stroke could be helped back to work. The

panel were interested to find out if there was a referral system and whether the FORWARDS team were involved. The panel learnt that the team did have links with the hospital but that those links needed to be revisited.

12. The panel learnt that in a recent document 'Valuing Employment Now: Real Jobs for People with Learning Disabilities' it outlined how one in five jobs in Britain were in the public sector. However employment of people with learning disabilities in the public sector is lower than in the rest of the economy. The report recognised that the Civil Service should lead by example and as of 1 April 2009 the Civil Service Commissioner's new recruitment principles would make it easier to adapt processes to recruit people with learning disabilities (among others). It would ringfence jobs as part of the departments' diversity commitments. As an example of this, the panel learnt that in Newham Council the Council's supported employment agency gets the first look at vacancies to assess if they are suitable for people with disabilities. The panel thought that the adoption of this practice would be a good idea in Middlesbrough.

RECOMMENDATIONS

13. Following the information received at the meeting the panel agreed that they would like to make the following additional recommendations:
 - i) That the FORWARDS service ensures that there is an appropriate referral system with the James Cook Hospital to enable the service to provide a facility to support people who have had a stroke back to work.
 - ii) That the Council considers the option of ensuring that any vacancies within the Council are submitted to the FORWARDS team prior to their publication.

COUNCILLOR PETER PURVIS SOCIAL CARE AND ADULT SERVICES SCRUTINY PANEL

BACKGROUND PAPERS

The following background papers were used in the preparation of this report:

- (i) Improving the Levels of Employment for People with Disabilities – Final Report, November 2008
- (ii) Valuing Employment Now: Real Jobs for People with Learning Disabilities, June 2009

Contact Officer:

Elise Williamson, Scrutiny Support Officer, Telephone: 01642 729711(direct line) Email: elise_williamson@middlesbrough.gov.uk