

Report to: Adult Social Care and Community Safety Scrutiny Committee

Date of meeting: 10 November 2016

By: Director of Adult Social Care and Health

Title: Employability and skills in relation to learning disability

Purpose: To inform the Committee of the current position in relation to people with a learning disability and supported employment activity.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Committee is recommended to consider the national and local performance data relating to employment of people with learning disabilities and note the service initiatives and employment support available in East Sussex.

1 Background

1.1 The first national employment strategy for people with learning disabilities was completed in 2003 in line with the first Valuing People (2001) National Strategy which sets out the need for people with learning disabilities to have access to work and employment opportunities.

1.2 In East Sussex, there have been a number of employment projects and initiatives to support adults with a learning disability. These work programmes support the delivery of the ESCC Employability and Skills Strategy (2016-18) and the key priority to: "support vulnerable people, including looked after children, troubled families and those with learning disabilities to find and keep either voluntary or paid employment".

1.3 In East Sussex in 2015/16, the number of adults with a learning disability in work was 284 (90 paid, 194 voluntary) set against a target of 261. The current performance (Oct 2015 to Sept 2016) is 289 (92 paid, 197 voluntary).

1.4 Comparator data for the percentage of adults with a learning disability in paid employment shows East Sussex at 7.0% and ranked 55 out of 152. The average national performance is 6.4% and the average comparator group performance is 6.3%.

2 Supporting information

2.1 The main supported employment provider is ChoicES, part of ESCC Directly Provided Learning Disability Service. Funding for this service reduced from £238,000 to £108,000 as part of the savings decisions made at Council in February 2016.

2.2 As a result, ChoicES needed to be restructured and a keener focus placed on achieving employment outcomes for people with a learning disability. ChoicES will support clients who are 'work ready' to identify their skills and interests so that individuals can be 'matched' with employers. Appendix 1 provides a brief example of the experience of a client who is supported by the ChoicES service.

2.3 Management of the ChoicES service has been aligned with the ESCC Community Support Service. This ensures that people, once settled in employment, can be supported by Community Support Workers, allowing specialist supported employment workers to maintain a focus on seeking new opportunities.

2.4 In the light of these changes, the employment pathway for people with learning disabilities has also been reviewed within the Directly Provided Day Services. This will provide skills development training that includes both independence and employability skills, for example, CV writing, interview skills and travel training, as well as work experience in community settings and in four Café Connect sites, in Uckfield, Eastbourne, Sidley and Hastings.

By way of illustration, Appendices 2, 3 and 4 show extracts from the Directly Provided Services promotional literature to explain the position of the Skills Development Pathway within the newly formed “Day Services East”.

2.5 Other supported employment initiatives include:

- Zest – this is funded by ESCC and has two elements: the car valet service (operated at County Hall, Lewes and St Mary’s House, Eastbourne) and Ready2Go – workshops that promote and support ‘work readiness’. (www.zestsussex.org.uk/our-work)
- Project Search – this is an intern project at Eastbourne District General Hospital and is a partnership of an education provider (Sussex Downs College) and an employer (East Sussex Healthcare NHS Trust). Each intake has 12 interns (individuals with learning disabilities and autism) who have the opportunity to experience three rotations in different departments within the hospital. A number of interns have moved into paid employment within the hospital. (www.sussexdowns.ac.uk/courses/project-search/)
- Plumpton College – also has a supported internship programme designed to help young people with a learning difficulty/disability into employment. (www.plumpton.ac.uk/department/foundation-learning/course/step-into-work-supported-internships-entry-level/1316)

2.6 Voluntary sector organisations in East Sussex that support employment initiatives for people with a learning disability include:

- Little Gate Farm (Hastings & Rother) has a supported employment programme and has worked closely with local employers to identify job opportunities
- Chalk Farm (Eastbourne) provide practical work experience within a working hotel and horticulture centre
- Autism Sussex continues to run a number of employment initiatives included bERKS Emporium, a greengrocer in Eastbourne and Café Des Arts in Rye.

2.7 People with a learning disability are supported to maintain their employment in different ways. For example, the majority of Project Search interns have moved into paid employment within the hospital. As a result they stay in touch with the Project Search team and the HR Department is an already supportive partner. The voluntary sector organisations maintain contact until individuals are confident enough to work independently. Other supported employment initiatives are delivered through models of social enterprise so that the employment remains supportive and responsive to the changing needs of clients.

2.8 As per the savings decisions made at Council in February 2016, funding for the following services ceased:

- Pathways to Employment (Autism Sussex)
- STEPS (Pepenbury) – an accredited retail course run from Pepenbury charity shops.

3. Conclusion and reasons for recommendations

3.1 It remains a key objective that people with learning disabilities (including young people in transition from Children’s to Adult Services) receive the right opportunities and support to access and stay in work including both paid employment and voluntary work.

3.2 The Committee is recommended to consider the national and local performance data relating to employment of people with learning disabilities and note the service initiatives and employment support available in East Sussex.

KEITH HINKLEY
Director of Adult Social Care and Health

Contact Officer: Debbie Endersby
Tel. No. 01273 481125
Email: Debbie.endersby@eastsussex.gov.uk

BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS:

None