

SLOUGH BOROUGH COUNCIL

Report to: Special Health Scrutiny Panel **Date:** 13th October 2011

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PART I **FOR COMMENT AND CONSIDERATION**

EMPLOYMENT SUPPORT FOR PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES

1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1 This report provides a summary of key issues pertinent to the discussion on the future of employment support for people with disabilities which were considered by the Health Scrutiny Panel on 20th September, 2011. On that occasion the Panel determined that it would defer making any recommendations to Cabinet until the Panel had visited the Speedwell Site. This special meeting has therefore been convened so that the Panel can further consider the options and recommendations being considered by Cabinet on 17th October (as set out in para 3 of this report), and determine whether it wishes to make any recommendations to Cabinet. This report draws together key points as set out in the paper considered by the Health Scrutiny Panel on 20th September 2011.

2. Supporting Information

2.1 Background/Context:

- 2.1.1 Over the last four years the Council has implemented an extensive change programme in Adult Social Care to improve outcomes for service users and through developing to improving the range services provided to local people.
- 2.1.2 As part of the development and improvement of service provision, a review of employment support for people with disabilities has been undertaken during 2011.
- 2.1.3 In undertaking the review the objectives and outcomes to be achieved through any proposed changes to current provision included:
- Increasing the number of disabled people eligible for Adult Social Care services benefitting from support to access employment, work experience, volunteering, education and skills development
 - Increasing access to mainstream employment for disabled people

- Delivering improved services within reduced costs

2.1.4 The review considered good practice examples from other areas and as well as the national policy context for provision of employment support for disabled people. Consideration has also been given to value for money issues and costs as well as the service quality and outcomes delivered. These have been balanced against the needs of individuals engaged in the current service and the anticipated future demands of service users.

Review Findings:

The review has highlighted a number of key issues related to the objectives and outcomes to be achieved which have informed the options considered and the recommendations for future provision.

2.2 Access to employment support for disabled adult social care service users

- 2.2.1 The current service model is providing a limited number of places and only supports a small proportion of eligible service users. As such there are opportunities to increase the number of disabled people eligible for Adult Social Care services benefiting from employment support through refocusing service provision.
- 2.2.2 There is relatively low turnover and throughput in both the Work Choice and Work Opportunities schemes. Within the Work Choice scheme, the scope for increasing opportunities for people to access the service is limited by the relatively small number of placements available within the contract, and further restricted as almost half of these are permanently occupied by long-term contracted staff.
- 2.2.3 The current Work Opportunities model has not had sufficient focus on achieving moving people on through the service and as a result increasing the number of people benefiting.
- 2.2.4 There is scope to increase throughput in the Work Opportunities scheme and increasing opportunities for more people to benefit from the support provided through a remodelling of the service which gradually reduces and withdraws support where appropriate as placements are secured and service users are settled.
- 2.2.5 The Work Choice scheme is only partially able to achieve progression into mainstream employment as almost half of the workshop operatives (14) are on long term contracts with the Council which compromises this objective. 24 of the 28 people in supported employment under the Work Choice scheme are based within the workshop at Speedwell rather than in mainstream employment.

2.2.6 The Work Opportunities scheme is therefore best placed to achieve the objective of increasing access to mainstream employment as all the placements arranged are in integrated, community based settings.

2.2.7 Skills assessments have demonstrated that, with appropriate support and advice, those currently benefiting from the services provided at Speedwell Enterprise would be able to access mainstream employment, work experience or volunteering opportunities.

2.3 Value for Money and unit costs

2.3.1 An analysis of unit cost information shows that the overall cost of the current Speedwell service at £555,000 supporting 60 disabled people across the Work Opportunities and Work Choice schemes has a unit cost of £9,250 per disabled person.

2.3.2 The Work Opportunities scheme is the more cost effective of the two employment support services currently provided, supporting similar numbers to the Work Choice scheme but at much lower cost.

2.3.3 Were the Council to redesign services and replace the workshop model with one based on the Work Opportunities scheme it is anticipated that up to 50% more people could benefit from the service at reduced cost.

2.4 National Policy review

2.4.1 An assessment was undertaken of the current employment support services and their delivery against national policy objectives. Important consideration was given to the recent government commissioned report 'Getting in, staying in and getting on – Disability employment support fit for the future' (June 2011). This independent review conducted by RADAR (the UK's leading pan-disability organisation) made a number of recommendations with the consensus view that "factories were not the model for the 21st Century¹. A number of recommendations were also made of the Work Choice Programme and important note was given to the trend 'away from the direct funding of supported business places, for example, phasing out the direct financial subsidy of supported places in local authority owned businesses'.

2.5 Options for future service delivery

A number of options have been considered during the review. These are summarised below

¹ These recommendations are now subject to consultation which closes on 17th October 2011

2.5.1 Option 1 - Maintain the status quo – retain existing service on the current site

This option would see continuation of the current service on the Wexham Nursery site providing the Work Opportunities programme for people with Learning Disabilities referred through the Adult Social Care team and supported employment placements provided in the workshop under the Work Choice scheme following referral from various sources including; Job Centre Plus, Shaw Trust and other Local Authorities.

2.5.2 Option 2 - Re-provide the existing service in a different location

This option would see the relocation of the existing service to an alternative site. It would involve additional costs in terms of revenue and/or capital. The service could be located in existing commercial premises (if available and suitable) or in a Council owned building which would require fit-out for workshop provision and adaptations for disability access and use.

2.5.3 Option 3 - Cease all provision of employment support for disabled people

This option would see the closure of both the Work Opportunities service and the Work Choice programme provided at Speedwell. It would involve redundancy of all support staff and workshop operatives. Service users currently accessing the Work Opportunities schemes as part of their assessed needs would require alternative provision to be made. This could be funded through Personal Budgets though it would mean some assessed needs would not be met.

2.5.4 Option 4 - Transfer Supported Employment contract to another provider

This option would involve the transfer of the current contract between Slough Borough Council and Shaw Trust to provide the Work Choice supported employment programme to another organisation.

2.5.5 Option 5 – Remodel employment services building on the benefits of the Work

Opportunities service This option would build on the Work Opportunities model to provide a more robust and comprehensive service with a greater focus on increasing throughput of the service and increasing the numbers benefiting from employment support. It would involve termination of the Work Choice contract and closure of the workshop. It would result in redundancy for 14 workshop operatives and some of the support staff. The Work Opportunities scheme would be remodelled from the current service relating only to service users

with Learning Disabilities to cover other client groups such as Mental Health and Physical Disabilities. The service would be accessed following assessment of needs and be provided as part of an individual's support plan to provide support for adult social care service users to access employment, work experience, training, skills development or volunteering. The service could be provided either directly by the Council or tendered out to another provider.

This option is recommended as it:

- Increases and maximises opportunities to achieve the objective of supporting people eligible for Adult Social Care services
- Has a focus on supporting people into open employment
- Enhances integration and engagement with the wider community
- Represents good value for money and improves outcomes for service users at reduced cost.

2.6 The proposed new service model

- 2.6.1 A preferred future service model has been identified. This could be developed in line with option 5 as summarised above.
- 2.6.2 The model is broadly based on the current Work Opportunities service but it is expanded to provide support to all disabled people of working age who are eligible for adult social care services.
- 2.6.3 The support will be tailored to individual needs and aspirations and will have agreed outcomes. As work, training or educational placements are arranged, the level and nature of on-going support required may change over time. The flexibility afforded by Personal Budgets will allow for individually tailored support to be put in place. This will also facilitate progression through the service thus freeing up opportunities for other service users to access the service and thus increasing the numbers of people accessing employment opportunities.
- 2.6.4 Access to the service would be through a referral from social care teams for adults of working age. These include the Community Team for People with Learning Disabilities, Physical Disabilities and Mental Health services
- 2.6.5 The service would need to develop partnerships to help to develop the work market and create in-roads and opportunities for people with disabilities to access mainstream employment and or voluntary work. This will include the establishment of a disability work forum made up of local businesses and mainstream employers as well as other agencies involved in skills development and employment preparation such as Job Centre Plus and adult education services. Such a forum would facilitate greater co-ordination across agencies and a range of

employment initiatives and would streamline access to employment opportunities. It would also foster greater understanding of disability in the workplace thus going some way to overcoming barriers that can exist in some areas, as well as highlighting some of the unique talent and commitment that people with disabilities can bring to the workplace.

2.6.6 The service would need to include provision of or access to a training work assessment space that would give individuals the experience of what it might be like to work in mainstream employment. The skills and of service users would be assessed for a short, time-limited period in a range of relevant work experience activities which would support the identification of the individual's aptitudes and strengths and planning of further skills development where required. Employment, education, training or volunteering placements would be arranged following this assessment period.

2.6.7 This model is designed to provide support to a wide range of disabled people to enable them to access the most appropriate employment, work experience, volunteering or skills development opportunities. The support will be flexible and tailored to individual needs to deliver clearly identified outcomes. It will also ensure that resources are effectively targeted to support the longer term aspirations of service users rather than funding disability specific facilities.

2.7 **Transition Arrangements: Supporting Staff with disabilities:**

2.7.1 If the recommendation to close the workshop is resolved, then substantial support will be provided to the support staff and workshop operatives to find alternative employment or other meaningful activity.

2.7.2 As part of the consultation process with staff, redeployment options will be considered for all affected staff in line with the Council's policies. Staff will also be invited to submit Expressions of Interest for voluntary redundancy or early retirement.

2.7.3 In addition, specific support to find other employment will be provided to workshop operatives both by Council staff and specialist workers from the Shaw Trust and Job Centre Plus. This will take place from the end of the consultation period until the end of March 2012.

2.7.4 Following formal consultation with all affected workshop operatives concerted work will be undertaken during the coming months to identify alternative employment opportunities as the most desired outcome. The individual needs reviews and skills assessments undertaken for each operative have provided useful background information and evidence to support this work.

2.7.5 In cases where alternative employment cannot be found, other arrangements for work experience placement, volunteering or training and skills development will be provided.

2.7.6 Options will also be explored for facilitating and maintaining contact between workshop operatives to sustain the valuable social contact that is valued by staff.

3. Recommendations being considered by Cabinet on 17th October 2011

- (a) That the Council implement a new model for the provision of employment support for disabled people and determine the current supported business on 31st March 2012.
- (b) That the Council facilitate the termination of the Work Choice contract with Shaw Trust to provide supported employment, with effect from 31st March 2012.
- (c) That formal 30 day consultation with affected support staff and workshop operatives and their trade union representatives be undertaken from the end of October to the end of November.
- (d) That comprehensive support be offered to displaced workshop operatives to assist them in finding alternative employment where possible or other suitable day time activities.
- (e) That support staff and other council employees affected will follow existing procedures and processes concerning redeployment and redundancy.
- (f) That the current Work Opportunities scheme continue to be provided directly by the council beyond April 2012.
- (g) That an extended Work Opportunities service for all disabled people of working age eligible for Adult Social Care services be implemented during 2012.
- (h) That the new service model is commissioned in line with procurement guidelines and legislation alongside other day opportunities services following consultation and market testing.
- (i) That the Strategic Director of Community and Wellbeing in consultation with the lead Commissioner be delegated to agree the provider of the new service following the tender process.

4. Conclusion

4.1 The review of employment support services for disabled people has considered a number of possible options for the future delivery of such services to facilitate and support access to mainstream employment, work experience, volunteering, training and skills development for disabled people, particularly those eligible for Adult Social Care support.

4.2 The review has taken account of national and local policy developments, as well as considering the impacts on service users, staff and other stakeholders.

Due consideration has also been given to financial issues to ensure the most effective use of available resources.

- 4.3 Throughout the review there has been considerable engagement and communication with service users, staff, their families and union representatives.
- 4.4 Health Scrutiny Panel is asked to note and consider the review findings and the options and recommendations for the future.