

NORTH LANARKSHIRE COUNCIL

REPORT

TO: Social Work Committee	Subject: Supported Employment Initiative - Progress to Date
FROM: Jim Dickie Director of Social Work	
DATE OF COMMITTEE: 7 March 2000	
REPORT AUTHOR: Archie Dempster	
REF: JD/AD/DH	

1 PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To advise the Social Work Committee on the progress which has been achieved to date with the supported employment initiative.

2 BACKGROUND TO REPORT

- 2.1 The Supported Employment Strategy was the subject of a previous report to committee in August 1998.
- 2.2 In January 1999 the North Lanarkshire Supported Employment Partnership was launched in the Council Chamber. In addition to the Council the partners are: the Employment Service, Lanarkshire Development Agency, the Benefits Agency, NHS Primary Health Care Trust, Levi Strauss Corp, Quickfit Insurance Services. It is currently anticipated that two additional partners will join the grouping in the coming months, Lanarkshire Careers Service and, Community Enterprise in Strathclyde. The Partnership meets quarterly and is chaired by the Director of Social Work, Jim Dickie. The Partnership is paralleled by a Nominated Officers Group which meets to a six weekly cycle.
- 2.3 In the formation of the Partnership body the participating organisations explicitly recognised the necessity of adopting a multi agency approach to obtaining and sustaining employment for people with disabilities. The Partnership also recognise that the opportunity to participate in the labour market and obtain a real job are key elements in promoting social inclusion and access to personal choice for people with disabilities - especially learning disabilities.

3 IMPLEMENTATION OF STRATEGY

- 3.1 The Department initially implemented the Supported Employment Strategy through the deployment of two separate projects:

ECHO (Employment Choice Hope Opportunity) based in and focusing on the Wishaw area.

P.E.P. (Partnership Employment Project) based in and centred on Bellshill and partly funded by the Scottish Office Social Inclusion Partnership Programme.

- 3.2 Each project employs job coaches who undertake profiling of potential job applicants, seek to match such individuals with suitable vacancies and then provide appropriate support in order to sustain the job in the initial stages.
- 3.3 The emphasis of both projects has been to seek suitable posts in which people would be paid the rate for the job and have the same employment rights and obligations as their fellow workers.
- 3.4 In addition to the projects noted above the Department also operate the Beltane Factory in Wishaw which currently employs some 26 individuals through contracts/places negotiated with the Employment Service Supported Employment Scheme. The Department also acts as 'host' employer for some six external contracts under the scheme.
- 3.5 Committee approval was granted in 1999 for the appointment of four additional job coaches. These posts have now been filled, induction training completed and staff deployed to locations in Area Teams.

4 PROGRESS TO DATE

- 4.1 To date some 16 individuals have been supported into employment via the two projects whilst some 33 people have had personal profiles completed. 15 individuals are currently being profiled (see Appendice for detailed analysis of current provision). In addition some 5 individuals have progressed into voluntary work partially due to concern at potential loss of benefit income. Work is currently being undertaken through the Partnership to address this issue.
- 4.2 The recently deployed job coaches are currently undertaking profiles on behalf of individuals in their areas and are identifying potential job opportunities in collaboration with local employers and members of the Partnership (e.g. Employment Service through New Deal for Disabled People Pilot).

- 4.3 The impact that obtaining employment can have on individuals, carers and families is an important product of the Strategy. Thus not only do those who get a job benefit, this also frees carers and family members to refocus their own lives and additionally assists in overcoming financial exclusion and dependency for those so effected. Allied to recent changes in the benefit and tax system (e.g. Disability Working Tax Credit) employment can now lift an individual significantly above the level of benefit income. This has an impact not only on household income but also on costs to the Exchequer both in addition to fostering social inclusion and the building of personal social networks.

5 FUTURE PLANS

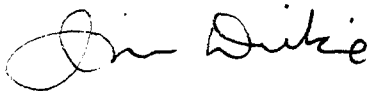
- 5.1 In the second year of the Strategy and Partnership it is the intention to continue to increase the number of people employed in the open economy.
- 5.2 A further challenge will be to negotiate increases in the number of people employed in partner organisations and particularly in large public sector bodies which, for historic reasons, constitute a larger proportion of employment opportunities in Lanarkshire than in some otherwise comparable areas. Work is currently being undertaken on this objective in collaboration with partners.
- 5.3 In terms of the Employment Service Supported Employment Scheme it is hoped to secure a higher number of such contracts, more accurately reflecting North Lanarkshire proportion of the Scottish population. This would consolidate the position of Beltane as a significant employment location and increase the number of people employed on external contracts. Such an increase would also allow for progression into open employment opportunities.
- 5.4 Considerable interest has been shown in the Strategy and Partnership at a local and national level. This has come from other local authorities and voluntary bodies, from the Scottish Executive and from National Policy Forums. This has been reflected in a number of presentations made by department staff and consultations entered into with government agencies and departments.
- 5.5 In addition to the above, and as part of a policy of positive action for promoting social inclusion, the department is working in partnership with the New Deal Strategic Partnership, the Employment Service and Lanarkshire Careers Service. The specific focus of this collaboration will be on supporting people during the initial "Gateway" stage of the New Deal process. It is proposed that this should include specific targets to find work placements to assist young people who are about to leave care or other supported settings to obtain employment, including that within the Council.

6 CONCLUSION

- 6.1 Considerable progress has been made in the past year in obtaining and sustaining Supported Employment for People with Disabilities. The reaction of employees and employers alike has been very positive. Whilst significant progress remains to be made within large public sector employers, the likely scope for a significant increase in the numbers employed in the coming year remains high.

7 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 7.1 Committee is asked to:
- a] note and approve the contents of this report
 - b] remit the report to Personnel Services Committee for its interest and consideration.



Jim Dickie
Director of Social Work
22 February 2000

For further information on this report please contact , Principal Officer (Strategy) (TEL: 01698 332063)

APPENDICE**ANALYSIS OF SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT ACTIVITY 1999
(REFERS TO ECHO AND P.E.P. PROJECTS ONLY)**

Total of project users	48
Ongoing profiling	15
Completed profiles	33
Total in employment	16
Public sector	3
Private sector	13
Voluntary work	5
Working more than 21 hrs per week	8
Working less than 21 hrs per week	6
Employed on I.S. disregard (therapeutic)	2