

REPORT

To: SOCIAL WORK COMMITTEE POLICY & RESOURCES (PERSONNEL) SUB COMMITTEE		Subject: SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT PLACEMENT SCHEME
From: DIRECTOR OF SOCIAL WORK DIRECTOR OF ADMINISTRATION		
Date: 23 August 2001 05 September 2001	Ref: JD/IW/GMCI/JMCF	

1 PURPOSE OF REPORT / INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 To advise the Social Work Committee of the establishment of a supported employment placement scheme, which will provide training and work experience for people with disabilities with a view to facilitating employment opportunities within the Council.

2 BACKGROUND

- 2.1 The supported employment initiative was launched by the Council in January 1999. Its primary purpose is to develop and assist people with disabilities to gain employment.
- 2.2 In the period since the launch of the programme, the Social Work Department in conjunction with its partners has assisted 40 disabled people into work, 28 of the jobs (70%) which have been found are within the private sector. This report therefore establishes a framework to increase the number of people with disabilities who can gain employment within the Council.
- 2.3 A report which sets out actions to achieve this objective was considered by the Social Work Committee on 25 January 2001. The report was approved in principle. However, it was continued to allow further discussion at a Member/Officer level to consider matters such as resource implications and the phasing of the proposal. This report addresses these matters. In particular, it is proposed to establish a Supported Employment Placement Scheme within the Council.

3 PROPOSALS / CONSIDERATIONS

- 3.1 As previously reported, the Council's recruitment and selection procedure is governed by the provision of the Local Government & Housing Act (1989) which specifies appointments on merit. More recent legislation, in the form of the Disability Discrimination Act 1995; requires that employers make "reasonable adjustments" in the selection and recruitment process so as not to discriminate against candidates who have a disability.

4 SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT PLACEMENT SCHEME

- 4.1 The Supported Employment Placement Scheme will be built round the National Training for Work Scheme administered by Scottish Enterprise Lanarkshire and for which Social Work has agreed a contract.

- 4.2 The Supported Employment Placement Scheme will operate in a manner similar to the Council's Skillseekers programme. Those eligible to participate will be people with disabilities who are in contact with the Social Work Department's Supported Employment programme and who have undergone a Vocational Profiling exercise which has determined their suitability to participate in the scheme.
- 4.3 Vocational profiling is the major tool for establishing the skills and abilities of people with disabilities. It also takes account of the individual's hopes and aspirations and their employment preferences.
- 4.4 It is proposed that the Supported Employment Placement Scheme will be founded on the basis of corporate response by the various Council Departments, where practicable. This will require individual Departments to make available placements on a supernumerary basis with support being provided by the Social Work Department's Job Coaches.
- 4.5 Supported Employment placements will have the capacity to run for up to one year. During this period individuals who are part of the scheme will be eligible to participate in any internal Council training courses which will enhance their general employability. Individuals on the scheme will have the right to access the Council's internal vacancy list, in the same manner that is currently agreed for Skillseekers, to allow them the opportunity to apply for basic grade entry posts. During this process, Job Coaches may assist with the application for employment and at any subsequent interviews which are held.
- 4.6 Consideration has been given to the establishment of a target figure which would be developed in respect of Supported Employment places. At this stage it is not felt to be necessary to follow such a course, as the number of applicants for the scheme will by and large be determined by the outcome of individual vocational profiles. However, it is hoped that at any one point in time, up to four people will be able to be engaged in the Supported Employment Placement Scheme.
- 4.7 Candidates on the training for work scheme are paid benefit plus. Therefore, during their placement on the programme they would not experience any financial loss.
- 4.8 The National Training for work scheme administered by Scottish Enterprise Lanarkshire provides payment of a £40 per week training allowance for up to one year. It is proposed that this allowance would be paid to the Department which hosts the training placement.
- 4.9 Where a training for work placement results in an individual gaining employment, there is an outcome related payment of £800. It is proposed that any such payments are placed in a "seed fund" which will help finance the cost of the operation, i.e. Job Coaching posts.
- 4.10 Under the New Deal arrangements, a short term employment subsidy of £75 per week can be claimed for up to twelve weeks. It is proposed that these payments should be made available to the Department offering the employment, to meet any exceptional costs associated with the engagement of the disabled person.

5 FINANCIAL / PERSONNEL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 In order to ensure that individuals on the work placement scheme are adequately supported throughout the period of their placement, it will be necessary to employ additional Job Coaches for this purpose.
- 5.2 It is proposed that two additional Job Coach posts graded at RW16 be established. In addition to undertaking the basic job coaching role, one of the officers would also have responsibility for liaising with Corporate Personnel Services and other Departments of the Council to ensure that suitable work placement schemes are developed throughout the Council.

- 5.3 Permission to develop the additional Job Coaching post was sought in the report on the Implementation of Budget Proposals 2001/02, considered by the Social Work Committee at a meeting on 18 June 2001. However the Job Coaching Posts were subject to a best value review exercise undertaken by an officers group who have subsequently agreed to the posts going ahead.

6 MONITORING

- 6.1 As part of a monitoring programme, there will be an annual report submitted to the Social Work (Planning and Administration) Sub and Policy and Resources (Personnel) Sub Committee detailing the number of people on the Supported Employment Placement Scheme and the number who have made the transition into full employment with the Council.

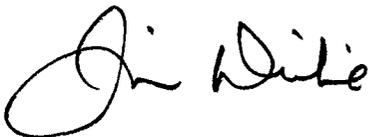
7 SOCIAL INCLUSION

- 7.1 As part of its Social Inclusion Strategy the Council is committed to developing strategies which improve employability. The adoption of this report, and the policy set out in the appendices, will ensure that every effort is being made to meet the milestones on employment for people with disabilities.

8 RECOMMENDATION

- 8.1 Committee is requested to:

- (i) Approve this report and the recommendations listed.
- (ii) To request the Director of Social Work and Director of Administration to bring forward an annual report outlining the progress and the outcomes of the Supported Employment Placement Scheme.
- (iii) To otherwise note the report.



Jim Dickie
Director of Social Work
6 August 2001



Director of Administration
6 August 2001

For further information on this report please contact George McNally, Manager Social Work Strategy, (TEL: 01698 332063)

SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT PLACEMENT SCHEME GUIDANCE NOTES

1 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 This information briefing is intended to accompany and support the committee report “**SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT PLACEMENT SCHEME**”.
- 1.2 The purpose of the document is to provide elected members and appropriate departmental officers with further supporting information on increasing employment opportunities for candidates with disabilities for posts within the authority.
- 1.3 The contents of this briefing summarises input from Social Work, Corporate Personnel Services and Legal Services who have reviewed existing corporate procedures together with current legislation and good practice guidelines. (Such as the Disability Discrimination Act and The Employment Service ‘Double Tick’ Scheme).
- 1.4 The document outlines the nature of supported employment, details the specific measures which the Social Work Department and Corporate Personnel Services will undertake.
- 1.5 Adoption of the measures detailed below will place a greater emphasis on equality and disability issues and, additionally, emphasise and communicate the Council's legal, business and moral obligation to open up its recruitment process to the broadest audience.

2 SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT PLACEMENT SCHEME

2.1 Purpose

- (a) The purpose of the proposed Placement Scheme will be to allow people who are disadvantaged in accessing the normal recruitment processes due to social exclusion to gain experience of working within the Council environment.
- (b) Participation in such a placement will allow trainees to gain practical experience and personal confidence within a work environment, thus increasing their potential to gain substantive employment by enhancing their employability and building skills in a real integrated work setting.
- (c) Additionally, and not insignificantly, such placements will allow trainees to gain a reference from their manager/placement Department and demonstrate the ability which can then be used to improve their opportunities of gaining substantive employment.

2.2 Links with Existing Council Policies and Government Initiatives

- (a) Training for Work provides a nationally recognised context for pre-employment training in a work based setting and it is suggested that the national Training for Work scheme provides the core of a training framework for candidates with disabilities within the Council.
- (b) These Supported Employment placements will parallel the existing Skillseekers placement scheme for young workers and it is proposed that up to four supported employment trainees will be in placements within the Council on a rolling basis.

- (c) This placement scheme will exist without prejudice to existing arrangements, such as ad hoc placements and other short-term work experience. Enquiries from external organisations looking for placements will continue to receive consideration on a case by case basis (including organisations such as Enable etc).
- (d) This placement scheme must not preclude candidates with a disability from seeking Council employment through the normal recruitment channels; or those who require additional assistance with interviews, adjustments to their work or work station etc, or who have accessed additional assistance for themselves through the Disability Employment Advisers of the Employment Services or via other agencies. In such circumstances the Council's Recruitment Policy will apply.

2.3 Obtaining a Placement

- (a) Participation in this placement scheme will contribute to the council's strategic collaborations on Welfare to Work and the continuing commitment to promote social inclusion through securing employment opportunities. Specifically, all Council Departments will be encouraged to identify, where possible, opportunities in suitable locations for the creation of placements, on a supernumerary basis.
- (b) Potential trainees will be identified from people who are currently attending social work resource centres. Referrals from Area Teams and other appropriate agencies and those profiled by the Supported Employment Project, will be eligible to participate in the scheme.
- (c) Trainees will be required to have successfully completed personal profiles and undergone a Council selection process for inclusion in this training scheme i.e. the completion of an application form and selection interview, supported by their Project Worker.
- (d) Project Workers will assist in the assessment of suitable placements and provide the trainees with continuing work-based support, as required. This will be supplementary and in addition to any support which may be provided by the host department.
- (e) The designated job coach will also liaise with Departmental and/or corporate training sections to secure appropriate training and/or qualifications, where relevant, during the placement.
- (f) Participants on the placement scheme will have the right to access the Council's internal vacancy list, in the same manner that is currently agreed for Skillseekers, to allow them the opportunity to apply for basic grade, entry-level posts.
- (g) At the same time, the wording used on the person specifications of basic grade posts will be examined and, where appropriate, revised, to allow a greater access by candidates lacking formal qualifications but having relevant work experience.

2.4 Funding the Placement Scheme

- (a) It is anticipated that placements would be conducted at no cost to the host department.
- (b) The proposed Placement Scheme will be self-financing and, by utilising the Training For Work framework, the Council will receive payment of £40 per placement per week together with an outcome related bonus for those candidates obtaining a job of £900 per placement.

- (c) The trainees on placement will participate in the national "Training For Work" scheme and will receive a "benefits plus" payment. The Social Work Department has a current contract for Training For Work from Scottish Enterprise - Lanarkshire. The programme is the nationally approved and recognised framework within which training for adults is delivered in Scotland.
- (d) The payment to participants is based on the recognised model established by the Wise Group (the Glasgow based organisation which has pioneered intermediate labour market initiatives for disadvantaged adults) and which seeks to both maximise and protect the benefit income of those on training programmes.

2.5 Obtaining Substantive Employment

If following on from the above placement scheme, a trainee was to obtain substantive employment with the Council the ex-trainee would be entitled to 'New Deal for Disabled' status. This would ensure that:

- (a) The post holder would claim the £200 grant towards start-up costs, which would be paid directly to them.
- (b) The Council could claim the £75 per week short-term employment subsidy for the maximum 12-week period to cover induction costs reaching up to £900.
- (c) The employees would have full access to all the Council's terms and conditions of employment pertaining to their post and applicable to their contract of employment, including the appropriate salary for the post.
- (d) The Council would further fulfil its commitment towards New Deal.
- (e) These new employees would continue to be supported by a Social Work Department Job Coach for as long as necessary.

1. INTEGRATING DISABILITY AWARENESS INTO THE EMPLOYMENT PRACTICES OF THE COUNCIL

- 1.1 It is anticipated that together with the "Double Tick" provisions detailed in Appendix 3 and those areas detailed below, when implemented, will increase the number of candidates with disabilities accessing the recruitment selection process and gaining and maintaining substantive employment within the Council.
- 1.2 **Council personnel policies** with regard to employment will be reassessed on a rolling basis and, where necessary, revised to strengthen and enhance the Council's commitment to improving, widening and maintaining employment access for people with a disability. All new personnel policies and procedures should automatically take into consideration their impact on and the requirements of disabled employees.
- 1.3 **Entry Level Posts** – by ensuring that entry level posts into the Council are appropriately advertised, including in local Job Centres, and that person specifications are broad enough in their application, candidates with disabilities who lack formal qualifications but who have experience or a demonstrable aptitude will have improved access to the Council's recruitment process.
- 1.4 **Disability and Employment** - the development by Corporate Personnel Services of an umbrella policy on disability and Employment will ensure that the Council's aims and intentions are fully developed and communicated to all levels within the Council.

This single policy document will detail the Council's aims and intentions with regard to existing employees with disabilities and the employment of people with a disability in general and provide guidelines and instructions for managers with regard to their obligations in relation to disabled employees and recruitment. It will also act as an 'umbrella' policy document cross-referencing the different sources of employment information and detailing the employment rights and services available to employees who consider themselves to be disabled.

- 1.5 **Corporate Training Courses** - are available across a range of employment policies and areas that have an impact on the employment of people with a disability and the perception of disability as a whole. These courses will be reassessed on a rolling basis and, where necessary, revised to strengthen and enhance the Council's commitment to improving the awareness of disability issues and providing appropriate information for managers and employees attending training courses. All new training courses on employment matters should automatically take into consideration their impact and needs of disabled employees and the Council's Training Officers will be provided with an awareness of disability issues to facilitate an understanding of their importance within this process.

Additionally, and where appropriate, the use of external specialist trainers for specific disability awareness raising courses may also be considered.

- 1.6 **Work Placements** – there are a variety of work placements utilised within the Council, the use of which may have an impact on employment opportunities for people with a disability. Whilst these placements do not have specific impact on the Supported Employment Placement Scheme, a framework will be developed to ensure that people with disabilities are not disadvantaged.

2. COMMUNICATING THE OBJECTIVES

- 2.1 To successfully implement the Supported Employment Placement Scheme and the provisions detailed above, it will be necessary to fully integrate all departments into the development processes, by way of their own personnel representatives or another suitable nominated senior officer.
- 2.2 These departmental representatives will act as liaison officers between Corporate Personnel Services, the Supported Employment projects and other groups to ensure that, amongst other initiatives, Supported Employment and the employment and retention of people with a disability, maintains a high departmental profile.

1 THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT AND HOUSING ACT 1989

- 1.1 Section 7 of the Local Government and Housing Act 1989 states 'Every appointment under (b) a local authority in Scotland shall be on merit'.
- 1.2 Whilst 'merit' is not defined, advice from the Head of Legal Services has indicated that this statutory provision, which was originally intended to eliminate the risk of political patronage, has the effect of precluding local authorities from acting non-commercially. Local authorities must appoint the person who is most suitable for the post in question and posts cannot be 'put aside' for specific categories of candidate ie people with a disability, single parents etc.

2 DISABILITY DISCRIMINATION ACT 1995

- 2.1 The Disability Discrimination Act 1995 came into effect on 2 December 1996 and brought about changes aimed at ending the discrimination which many people with a disability face.
- 2.2 The Act makes it unlawful for employers with 15 or more employees to discriminate against current or prospective employees with a disability or who have had a disability. Discrimination occurs when a disabled person is treated less favorably than someone else and the treatment is for a reason relating to their disability which does not apply to the other person.
- 2.3 The Act ended the quota system which had been in place for more than 50 years imposing a quota requirement of 3% of the workforce having to be registered disabled. It also terminated the requirement for people with a disability to formally register as disabled. In effect, this means that it is no longer lawful for local authorities to utilise positive discrimination to the advantage of people with a disability ie ring-fencing posts solely for candidates with a disability.
- 2.4 In term of employment rights, the Act states that it is unlawful to discriminate against current or prospective employees with a disability, because of their disability. Employers must make reasonable adjustments to the workplace, including fixtures and fittings, work equipment and employment arrangements, if these substantially disadvantage a disabled employee or prospective employee compared to a non disabled person.
- 2.5 For example, candidates with disabilities should not be disadvantaged when making applications for employment; this includes the completion of application forms, selection procedures, the interview and assessment tests. At each of these stages of the recruitment process, reasonable adjustments should be made to enable candidates with disabilities to fairly compete against candidates without disabilities.
- 2.6 In recruitment, the selection process must not favour people without disabilities, and people with a disability must not be offered employment on less favourable terms or refused employment because of a disability.

3 TRAINING FOR WORK

- 3.1 Training for Work is a national skills training programme for adults which parallels Skillseekers for youth training. Eligible participants are adults aged 25 and over who have been registered unemployed for six months or more or those who are deemed to have special needs and who do not meet the qualifying period.
- 3.2 Training for Work can last for up to 52 weeks and participants are paid a training allowance - essentially a 'benefit plus' arrangement.
- 3.3 The use of the Training for Work scheme can provide the Council with formal and recognised mechanism to enabling people with a disability to gain experience and an established employment profile in a work setting prior to making application for substantive posts either within the Council or elsewhere.
- 3.4 The Council, through the Social Work Department, currently has a contract to operate Training For Work with Scottish Enterprise Lanarkshire.

4 SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT

- 4.1 Supported employment can be defined as a way of offering intensive support to assist people with a disability, who are keen to work, access opportunities in the open labour market.
- 4.2 A Job Coach works closely with the applicant to build a full picture of their preferences, abilities, experience and the contribution they could make to a work environment. By building a detailed profile of the individual, over time, the Job Coach is then able to match and meet the individual's and prospective employer's requirements.
- 4.3 Once this profile is completed, the Job Coach approaches employers who would seem likely to offer those types of jobs identified as suitable and, once agreement is secured, the Job Coach learns the job using the employer's training methods, after which the Job Coach and the new employee work together. For local authority employers, employment is bound by legislation and any post secured for a supported employment client is expected to be by way of open competition.
- 4.4 The disabled employee is then provided with training and support by the Job Coach for as long as is needed. There is no cost to the employer for the support services of the Job Coach however, this training etc will be in addition to the employer's own induction and training systems.
- 4.5 Once employment is secured, the disabled person is paid the going rate for the job. In addition to the above, the job coach works closely with the other partners such as the Employment Service and the Benefits Agency to ensure that the supported employee is not disadvantaged by the effects of earned income on their existing benefits package or, that other benefits are claimed appropriate to a change of circumstances (eg Disabled Persons Working Tax Credit).

5 POSITIVE ABOUT DISABILITY (the ✓✓ Double Tick Symbol)

- 5.1 As part of its positive approach to employing people with a disability, the Council sought and was awarded the Positive About Disability Symbol by the Employment Service in November 1999.
- 5.2 By displaying this symbol on application forms, recruitment adverts and other council documentation, people with disabilities can identify North Lanarkshire Council as an employer who is positive about abilities rather than concerned with disabilities. It also shows the Council's commitment to good practice in employing people with a disability.
- 5.3 To qualify for the award of the symbol, the Council had to provide evidence to the Employment Service that policies and procedures are in operation to cover each of the following five commitments:
- (a) To interview all applicants with a disability who meet the minimum criteria for a job vacancy and consider them on their abilities.
 - (b) To ask disabled employees at least once a year what the Council can do to make sure they can develop and use their abilities at work.
 - (c) To make every effort when employees become disabled to make sure they stay in employment.
 - (d) To take action to ensure that all employees develop the awareness of disability needed to make these commitments work
 - (e) Each year, to review these commitments and what has been achieved, plan ways to improve them and let all employees and the Employment Service know about progress and future plans.
- 5.4 The commitments made by the Council are on-going and will involve considerable work, coordinated by Corporate Personnel Services, in ensuring that the Council continues to be positive about people with a disability.
- 5.5 As part of this on-going review, the Council has instigated an Employees' Disability Forum which meets on a quarterly basis. Discussions so far have covered such topics as access to buildings, disabled parking and interview arrangements for candidates with disabilities etc. However, it is envisaged that this Forum will eventually be capable of taking a much wider and active role in the integration of disabled employees into the mainstream of the Council ie appropriate input into training courses, opinions on the impact on disabled employees of revised policies etc.