

To: SOCIAL WORK COMMITTEE		Subject: SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT: VISIT TO THE BASQUE COUNTRY
From: DIRECTOR OF SOCIAL WORK		
Date: 23 August 2001	Ref: GMcL/LMcA	

## 1. PURPOSE OF REPORT / INTRODUCTION

- 1.1. To advise the Social Work Committee of the visit by officers of the Social Work Department to the Basque country in relation to the Council's Supported Employment Initiative.

## 2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1. In March 2001, two Officers from the Social Work Department, were presenters at a workshop, at the European Union of Supported Employment Conference in Edinburgh.
- 2.2. The title of the workshop presentation was "Partnership Working Leading to Inclusion". The information which was presented, promoted the Supported Employment Strategy which has been developed by North Lanarkshire Council. Among those present at the Workshop was, the Depute Minister for Labour and Employment in The Basque Autonomous Government.
- 2.3. Following the conference an invitation was submitted by the Basque Government to the Director of Social Work, requesting the officers who undertook the presentation at the conference in Edinburgh to visit the Basque Country. This action was approved by the Social Work Committee at its meeting on 24 May 2001.
- 2.4. The visit took place from the 16 to 20 June 2001. The Basque Government arranged for the officers to be accompanied throughout the visit by officials from Lantegi Batuak, the local organisation with responsibility for Sheltered and Supported Employment.

## 3. PROPOSALS / CONSIDERATIONS

- 3.1. Over the three days of the visit a full programme of events was organised. The programme included visits to two sheltered employment operations, and a visit to a Tool Making plant. A presentation was given by the officers of Lantegi Batuak on the history and development of supported employment in the Basque Country.
- 3.2. The Officers from Social Work Department in turn gave a presentation on the North Lanarkshire Supported Employment operation at the offices of the Basque Government in Vitoria. This presentation was attended by approximately 30 people, including officials from the Labour and Employment Department, local Authorities, and from the Supported Employment and Sheltered Employment Agencies. The Departments Supported Employment Initiative and Strategy were well received by all.

- 3.3. During the course of the visit there were a number of issues which impressed the North Lanarkshire delegation. One concept involved Supported Employment being developed in a manner which allowed a team of disabled people to undertake a specific area of production within a large operation. The company concerned was a Tool Making business which employed over 300 employees. Over a period of time, Lantegi Batuak, had negotiated with the company, areas of production work which could be undertaken by their users. This is a unique approach to the development of employment opportunities, one which has not previously been applied in the UK.
- 3.4. Another area of interest to the North Lanarkshire Officers was a service user assessment and monitoring system which had been developed by Lantegi Batuak. This tool with some modification could be applied in North Lanarkshire to improve practice when placing people in employment in both the public and private sectors.
- 3.5. During the course of the visits, as well as exchanging ideas and information there was discussion on applications for funding to the Equal Programme. EHLABE the Association of Basque Supported and Sheltered Employment organisations are in the process of applying for funding via their own National Government. Part of the bid is a Transitional Application, which will enable the exchange of information, training and personnel, in the area of Supported Employment with North Lanarkshire being one of their proposed partners.
- 3.6. In the period since returning from the visit North Lanarkshire Social Work staff have submitted an outline of a bid to the Equal Programme. If successful it would be the intention to have the Basque agencies as the Departments, Transitional Partners.
- 3.7. Irrespective of the outcome of the application to the Equal Programme, the Department believes that there are considerable advantages in maintaining contact and developing future co-operation with Basque organisations. By sharing information and ideas, it will help improve the Supported Employment operation. The officials from the Basque Supported Employment organisations would welcome the opportunity to visit North Lanarkshire Council. Such an invitation would be a further step on the road to cooperation and collaboration with partners, who share the vision and commitment to promote inclusion by developing employment opportunities for people who are disabled.

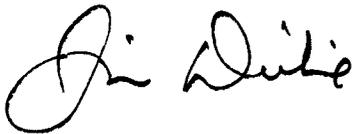
#### **4. FINANCIAL / PERSONNEL / LEGAL / POLICY IMPLICATIONS**

- 4.1. In the event that Committee approves the recommendation to extend an invitation to Lantegi Batuak to visit North Lanarkshire, there will be costs associated with travel and accommodation, However these can be met from the Social Work budget.

## 5. RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1. Committee is requested to:

- i) extend an invitation to representatives of the Lantegi Batuak to visit the North Lanarkshire Council Supported Employment initiatives;
- ii) request the Director of Social Work to bring forward a report advising of the outcome of the application to the Equal Programme;
- iii) to otherwise note the report.



**Jim Dickie**  
**Director of Social Work**  
**17 July 2001**

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