

To: POLICY & RESOURCES COMMITTEE SOCIAL WORK COMMITTEE	Subject: SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT SERVICE BEST VALUE REVIEW	
From: DIRECTOR OF SOCIAL WORK		
Date: 23 September 2003 30 October 2003	Ref: JD/GMcI/DH	

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT / INTRODUCTION

- 1.1. To advise Committee of the findings and conclusions of the Best Value review of the Supported Employment Service in North Lanarkshire.
- 1.2. To seek approval for the report and the Improvement Action Plan which accompanies it. A copy of the full report is available in the Members library.

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1. The Supported Employment Service operated by Social Work is an initiative designed to provide employment opportunities to people with disabilities. The scheme was officially launched in January 1999, in the intervening period it has assisted 65 people into employment, the majority of the service users are people with a learning disability.
- 2.2. The North Lanarkshire Supported Employment Service has proven to be innovative and dynamic. The service which is provided has been endorsed in Scottish Executive documents such as "The Same As You". The Council has gained national recognition and is considered to be at the forefront of services for employment opportunities for people with disabilities.
- 2.3. The Supported Employment Service was selected for a Best Value review, the review exercise has been completed over the preceding months. This report provides a summary of the scope of the review, the methodology adopted by the Review Group, the findings and conclusions arrived at as a consequence of the review.

3. SCOPE OF THE REVIEW

- 3.1. The scope of the review was concentrated into four main areas:
 - (i) Assessing stakeholder satisfaction with services;
 - (ii) Measure financial and social impact, which Supported Employment provides to service users;
 - (ii) Review the accessibility of the Supported Employment Programme; and
 - (iii) How the project improves its efficiency to get more service users into employment.
- 3.2. When conducting the Best Value Review, the Review Team which had been established to carry out the exercise, took cognisance of the relevant local and national policy documents and reports which impact on Supported Employment e.g. The Community Care Plan, Member/Officer Group Review of Day Opportunities, The Same as You, The Beattie Report and the Joseph Rowntree Supported Employment Framework Document.

4. REVIEW METHODOLOGY

- 4.1. The Supported Employment Service was awarded Charter Mark status in December 2002. As a consequence it was possible to incorporate into the Best Value Review the preparatory work and the Assessors recommendations arising from the Charter Mark application.
- 4.2. In a similar vein, the Service was successful in obtaining a COSLA Quality Gold Award in the field of Customer Focus. The recommendations made by the COSLA Assessor were also taken into account.
- 4.3. In addition to both these pieces of work, the Best value Review group as part of the review methodology, undertook a number of additional exercises:
- 4.4. Service Evaluation:
The purpose of the evaluation was to consider how the Service had evolved since its launch in 1999, and to enquire from Stakeholders how it could be improved and developed in the future. The evaluation consisted of an 'Air Your Views Night' for service users and questionnaires which were designed for employees and Job Coaches.
- 4.5. Benchmarking Exercise:
Benchmarking is considered to be a key element of any Best Value Review. Whilst there are a number of Supported Employment Organisations operating across Scotland, there is no standard approach or definition of Supported Employment. This presented problems in identifying suitable benchmarking partners. However, two partners with a number of shared principles were identified, Dundee Employment Unit and Fife Council.
- 4.6. EFQM:
An EFQM event was conducted in December 2002 the event was facilitated by colleagues from the Social Work Resources and Information Section.
- 4.7. Option Appraisal:
This event was facilitated by an independent consultant and attended by 30 stakeholders, where representatives were drawn from service users, employers, staff, carers and partners including the Department of Works & Pensions. The option appraisal looked at the comparison between traditional Day Services and Supported Employment.

5. FINDING & CONCLUSION

- 5.1. In order to ensure compliance with the stated objectives of the Best Value Review, account was taken of the findings of the Supported Employment Evaluation Report, the Charter Mark and COSLA Quality Award assessments, the Benchmarking Exercise, Option Appraisal, EFQM and Staff Evaluation.
- 5.2. In looking at the findings and conclusions emerging from the various elements of the Best Value Review the following points are worthy of note:-
 - 5.2.1 Public Information:
The overwhelming majority of service users, employers and carers believed information provided by the Supported Employment was of good standard.
 - 5.2.2 Supported Employment Staff:
Job Coaches were completely or very satisfied with their induction training.
 - 5.2.3 Chartermark Assessment:
'Service at the forefront of good practice'
 - 5.2.4 Continuous Staff Development:
Staff Questionnaire highlighted a high level of staff satisfaction, however, improvements were identified mainly with the SWIS and IT systems.

- 5.2.5 **Service Standards Improvements for Users:**
At an 'Air Your Views' event, a strong message from service users was to become more efficient in finding jobs within a shorter timeframe.
- 5.2.6 **Service Standards Improvements for Employers:**
A survey of 36 employers, with a 55% return, indicated a high satisfaction level with the service and the individuals whom they had employed.
- 5.2.7 **Maximise the Social and Financial Impact to Community:**
The COSLA Quality Assessment report indicated the methods employed by the service were of proven reliability.
- 5.2.8 **Benchmarking:**
In establishing benchmarking opportunities, it was difficult to identify suitable benchmarking partners due to the diversity of the approach to Supported Employment however with the assistance of the benchmarking partners which were chosen, a number of key points emerged from this exercise;

- North Lanarkshire are involved with service users who have more complex needs than our partners.
- The North Lanarkshire service has more success in getting people into real jobs, paying the wage for the job. One of the partners has comparable numbers to North Lanarkshire, however their service users are mainly engaged in permitted work, and the average hours of employment are less than 8 hours per week; the corresponding figure for North Lanarkshire service users being 27 hours.
- In financial terms the North Lanarkshire service costs less to operate than that of the benchmarking partners. The partners are engaged with service users who have a range of disabilities whereas the North Lanarkshire service concentrates mainly on people with learning disabilities.
- One of the partner organisations takes more advantage of monies which are available through the Workstep Programme operated by the Department of Works and Pensions to fund their operation.

- 5.3. The Best Value Review Group, in light of the responses from the various sources associated with the review, undertook an affinity exercise to categorise the improvements which would be required to achieve Better Value in the Supported Employment Service.

The planned improvements, therefore, fit into the four main headings associated with the objectives of the review (as noted on the attached Improvement Action Plan).

5.4. Increase Stakeholder Satisfaction

- 5.4.1. Improve quality of information for stakeholders.
- 5.4.2. Enhance stakeholder consultation.
- 5.4.3. Improve publication of information about the service, regarding complaints, outcomes, standards and budgets.
- 5.4.4. Fuller consultation with employers.
- 5.4.5. Establish training for employers.
- 5.4.6. Enhance IT and workplace skills of staff.
- 5.4.7. More timeous availability of job profiles.

5.5. Maximise the Social and Financial Impact to the Community

- 5.5.1. Clear link to be established with Departmental and Corporate goals.
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5.6. Expand and Improve Access to Supported Employment for People with Disabilities

- 5.6.1. Streamline the managerial systems.
- 5.6.2. Increase access to the Supported Employment Service.

5.7. More People with Disabilities into Work

- 5.7.1. Increase the number of service users in employment.

5.8. In addition to the main objectives of the Best Value Review, some other conclusions were reached.

6. OTHER CONCLUSION

- 6.1. The requirement to integrate the service within the Social Work Information System (SWIS).
- 6.2. Develop more systematic performance monitoring.

7. RECOMMENDATIONS

7.1. Committee is requested to:

- i) Approve the Best Value report and the further action proposed.
- ii) Otherwise note the report.



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11 September 2003

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A copy of the full report is available in the members library.