



Everyone has the right to a fulfilling and independent life and this includes people with learning differences and disabilities. Local solutions are needed to remove the additional barriers to ensure that people with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) have the same opportunities to work that others take for granted.

There is a strong social and economic case to improving opportunities for young people with SEND to leave education with jobs and sustainable careers. Getting secure paid employment has significant benefits for individuals including increased financial independence, strong social networks as well as physical and mental health benefits.¹ In addition, there are clear benefits for employers which includes increased staff morale, reduced staff turnover, increased productivity, reduced recruitment costs and reputational benefits.² Finally, this has benefits for us all with lower overall financial costs for their care and support, reducing the pressure on health and social care spending.

Current employment rates for the non-disabled population are 80% and less than half (48%) of disabled people are in employment in the UK (people aged 16-64).³ People with mental health conditions, a learning disability and / or autism fare even worse as their employment rates are significantly lower.

Only 32% of people with mental health problems and 24% of people with learning disabilities are in employment.⁴ According the National Autistic Society, only 32% of autistic people are in any type of paid employment.⁵

When people are known to services, the figures are even more bleak with only 7% of people with more severe mental health conditions and only 5.7% of people with learning disabilities in employment.⁶



The issue for Wolverhampton

Back in 2014/15 Wolverhampton City Council's investment in employment support was not resulting in many paid job outcomes. In fact, only 2% of known to adult social care had paid employment.

At the time that Wolverhampton began to look at how to improve its employment figures, there were significant pressures to reduce spending across the Council which underlined the need to reduce dependency on social care services through better employment outcomes in the city.

Challenges

Wolverhampton was in the 6% most deprived areas in the country. The recession had caused a significant increase in the number of people receiving key out-of-work benefits in Wolverhampton and at April 2014, 6.3% of the city's population were claiming Job Seekers Allowance, which was one of the highest rates in the country. Nearly one third of children in the city lived in poverty and almost 60% of all 0-15 year olds living in the city, lived in a deprived area.

The high levels of worklessness in the city contributed to the lack of ambition about what young people with SEND could achieve in relation to jobs. This was compounded by first, a lack of local provision, including supported internships for young people with SEND and secondly, a lack of understanding within the system about the evidence-base of what works.

What happened next

Wolverhampton was one of 4 sites that participated in a Department of Education funded project called Employment is Everyone's Business, delivered in partnership by the National Development Team for Inclusion (NDTi) and the British Association for Supported Employment (BASE) in 2015/16. Each of the sites committed to improving employment outcomes for young people by:

- Embedding vocational profiling in the curriculum, education, health and care plans and reviews as well as careers
- Developing post-16 study programmes and working effectively with employers to support young people moving into employment
- Ensuring young people with SEND are at the heart of their employment, economic, housing, personal budget and commissioning strategies.
- Work in each site was locally driven and designed in partnership with young people, families, education and social care practitioners, employment agencies and, of course, employers.

This happened at a time with the council was changing the focus of their social care services towards enablement, and moving from sheltered day centres to in-work support.

This enabled the response to pressures in adult social care to be a lever for change in education provision for young people with SEND.

A range of support was delivered to stakeholders in Wolverhampton, which included:

- Workshops to raise aspirations about the positive contribution that young people with SEND can bring to the world of work for all stakeholders
- Workshop for people delivering impartial careers, information, advice and guidance to young people with SEND on how to embed vocational profiles in Education, Health and Care Plans

- Workshop for those involved in writing Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCP) on how to write outcomes with employment as an aspiration
- Support to develop a supported internship offer in the city
- Support to develop a shared vision of an employment pathway for young people aged 1-25
- Support to write a service specification for and adult social care commissioned supported employment service
- Support to develop partnerships in education with the supported employment service.

Outcomes

All stakeholders agreed a vision for their employment pathway for young people with SEND. This was co-produced and made available as a colourful graphic. The aim of this was to inform provision and help to identify any gaps.

A supported employment service was commissioned in 2015/16 and this is now delivered by **Enable**. The service is available to anyone from age 16 who has a disability, is a Wolverhampton resident and wants to find paid employment. In addition, people must:

- Require employment support to prevent them from needing social care services
OR
- Be known to social work services now or in the previous 3 years or has an education, health and care plan
OR
- Be known to social work services and be in employment and need support to retain the job or to find more/alternative work.

This is resulting in more paid employment outcomes; by the end of 2018/19, 9.7% of those known to the Adult social care department were in paid jobs with 19 new people gaining employment in the year with another 54 retaining their jobs.

The council is leading by example and employing people with a learning disability. Below is a photo of Everton who is employed as a support worker in their Adult Social Care Enablement team. They also celebrated success through a campaign in July 2018 called 12 days of independence, and recorded short film clips to continue to raise the ambition in the

system. These can be found at <https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PL7QXo5I9k4BIDgGTwKBsYwZs09naNUOBJ>

As part of the programme of work, a supported internship offer was developed; initially, as a partnership between Nova Training, who were new to supporting young people with SEND with high needs and an employer, Heatun, part of the Accord Group (housing association). This has grown and supported internships continue to be provided by Nova Training in partnership with numerous employers. In addition, the City of Wolverhampton College now also has a supported internship offer.

The regeneration department of the council have run two successful events for employers in Wolverhampton to help them understand the business benefits of employing young people with SEND. This has helped employers to understand this untapped talent pool, with many more employers considering employing people with disabilities.

Interest continues to rise from both employers and potential employees. Wolverhampton is developing new opportunities and performance continues to improve with the number of disabled people successful in employment.

The Financial Case

There was a strong financial argument for Wolverhampton to change to find cost savings through reduction in social care spending which they achieved.

These can be demonstrated through 6 costed examples of people who were supported by Enable.

Ms W who has a learning disability has received carer support at an annual cost of £2,080. She was supported into work as a Stores Assistant at the Co-operative for 8 hours per week at a cost of £570. She no longer requires social care support.

Mr S also has a learning disability and received 12 hours of domiciliary care per week at an annual cost of £9,160. He was supported into work as a Community Support Worker for the council for 18.5 hours per week at a cost of £60. He now has Direct Payments to employ a personal assistant, which costs £2,797 per year.

Mr C has cerebral palsy and a learning disability. He previously received a package of care 7 days a week at an annual cost of £13,555. He was supported into

work as an assembly operative at Static Solutions for 15.5 hours per week at a cost of £660. He no longer requires social care support.

Mr H has autism and received intensive 24 hour support at an annual cost of £30,758. He was supported into work as an engagement assistant and workshop assistant at Enable and PS Motors, working up to 16 hours per week. He currently receives low level support including occasional assistance with job searching for additional opportunities so his social care support has reduced overall and now costs £26,026 annually.

Mr R has a learning disability and previously received supported living support at an annual cost of £25,116. He was supported into work as a domestic with Railway Safety Solutions for 10 hours per week. His social care support reduced and now costs £15,943 annually. He is currently receiving 5 hours per week Job Coach support, which is paid for by Access to Work .

Mr M has autism and a learning disability and prior to working received a package of care 7 days a week at an annual cost of £13,555. He was supported into work as a domestic with Railway Safety Solutions for 4 hours per week. His social care support reduced and now costs £1,936 annually.

Cost per year for social care before employment	Initial Employment support costs	Post -Employment Costs per year for social care	Savings for social care over 25 years
£2,080	£570	0	£51,430
£9,160	£60	£2,797	£159,015
£13,555	£660	0	£322,375
£30,758	£2,700	£26,026	£115,600
£25,116	£1,980	£15,943	£227,345
£13,555	£1,260	£1,936	£289,215
£94,224		£46,702	£1,164,980

Please note: savings do not take into account inflation in cost of social care per year.

Post-employment costs do not include follow on employment support where it is covered by Access to Work payments

These are just 6 examples of those that have been supported into work and demonstrate significant savings the council has been making.

Conclusion

The work within the council continues to transform and sees itself operating as 'one council' to serve local people, for which they were recognised when they won Council of the Year at the Municipal Journal Awards in 2017.

They aim to continue to rise to the challenge so they can continue in their endeavours to continue to deliver the best possible outcomes for local people.

There are many challenges for local areas to ensure that more young people with SEND leave education with jobs and sustainable careers.

It requires co-ordination across local government departments and can bring much needed savings. Plans for change need to be long-term to ensure that the benefits for everyone are sustainable.

Resources

To support local change, the Employment is Everyone's Business produced 3 guides. These can be found at <https://www.ndti.org.uk/our-work/our-projects/employment1/employment-and-young-people/employment-is-everyones-business1>

- Employer Engagement and the SEND Reforms Guide
- Engaging with Employers Guide
- How to Support Young People with SEND into Work

References

¹. https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/214326/hwwb-is-work-good-for-you.pdf

². <https://www.mencap.org.uk/sites/default/files/2017-06/2017.061%20Benefits%20of%20employing%20PWLd%255b1%255d%20%281%29.pdf>

³. <https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/work-health-and-disability-improving-lives/work-health-and-disability-green-paper-improving-lives#work-health-and-disability-facts-and-figures>

⁴. <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/work-health-and-disability-green-paper-data-pack>

⁵. <http://www.autism.org.uk/about/what-is/myths-facts-stats.aspx>

⁶. <https://digital.nhs.uk/catalogue/PUB30122>