



ADULT SOCIAL CARE AND PUBLIC HEALTH COMMITTEE

18 July 2024

REPORT TITLE:	SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT STRATEGY 2024-2029
REPORT OF:	DIRECTOR OF ADULTS, HEALTH AND STRATEGIC COMMISSIONING

REPORT SUMMARY

The purpose of this report is to present the draft Supported Employment Strategy 2024 - 2029 (Appendix 1) for approval.

The strategy has been co-produced with partners who are directly or indirectly involved in the support of adults with learning disabilities and or autism into employment.

This report will highlight the strategy's:-

1. Purpose, vision, mission, core values and outcomes underpinning the strategy;
2. Partnership development of the strategy between September to December 2023;
3. Links with and underpinning of other strategies and plans; and
4. Implementation plan, governance, and impact monitoring.

The report supports the Council Plan: Wirral Working Together 2023-27, specifically the 'Promoting Independence and Healthier Lives' and 'Early Help for Children and Families' themes.

This report is a key decision, and it affects all wards.

RECOMMENDATION/S

The Adult Social Care and Public Health Committee is recommended to approve the draft Supported Employment Strategy 2024-2029, as noted in Appendix 1 to this report.

SUPPORTING INFORMATION

1.0 REASON/S FOR RECOMMENDATION/S

- 1.1 In 2020-21, the proportion of adults with a learning disability in paid employment in England was 5.1%. In North-West England that figure lowers to 4.5%. In Wirral that figure lowers further still, to 3.1%.
- 1.2 Wirral has seen a marginal improvement in the percentage of adults with a learning disability in paid employment. In 2022/23, Wirral reported 4.4% against national average of 5.1%, with best performing authorities achieving 21.5% and the best performing authorities in the North-West achieving 10.5%.
- 1.3 Limited vocational planning for 14-year-olds with support and care needs results in the lack of supported employment opportunities for those young people. This often results in many young people entering adult social care provision post 18 or 25 without these options. Best practice studies carried out in Kent, Gloucester and North Lanarkshire have demonstrated the cost benefit of sustainable supported employment compared with tradition care provision.
- 1.4 There is a consistent correlation between paid employment and better physical, mental health and social outcomes. Research into the cost-effectiveness of supported employment for adults with learning disabilities has shown that supported employment is cost effective in helping people into and maintaining people in work.
- 1.5 The supported employment services which the Council provides, or commissions can play a pivotal role in job retention, progression, and career development. In doing so, people who are supported into work become ambassadors for the future employment of people with disabilities. There is strong evidence these services can enable improved independence and reduce demands for social care services.
- 1.6 People with learning disabilities and/or neurodiverse conditions are an untapped workforce resource with significant potential to thrive and contribute to Wirral's Economic Strategy 2021-2026 and the Wirral Local Plan.

2.0 OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED

- 2.1 To not approve the Supported Employment Strategy. Through commissioning and informal partnerships, Wirral has started to marginally improve, supporting adults with learning disability and or autism into paid employment. To carry on as is, this may result in further marginal improvement, however, this will not accelerate the significant improvements that is required in Wirral.

3.0 BACKGROUND INFORMATION

- 3.1 In March 2022, two groups were established to bring likeminded partners together who have an interest in supported employment across Wirral. These included: -
 - A multi-agency strategy group who recognised their shared purpose to ensure that their shared aims and goals are delivered.

- Supported Employment Panel who was operational and through a referral process would aim to identify the most suitable pathway or opportunity for individuals and support them into voluntary/paid employment or training.
- 3.3 In March 2024, the Adult Social Care and Public Health Committee approved the All Age Disability Strategy 2024-2029, following a significant co-production journey. One of the key priorities for people with disabilities is increased opportunities for sustained employment. Under the leadership of Adults Social Care, the strategy group outlined in 3.1 were tasked with the coproduction of a supported employment strategy noted in appendix 1.
- 3.4 In addition, Adult Social Care engaged Impower consultancy to evaluate the current supported employment landscape within Wirral to inform the Supported Employment Strategy development. The report identified the below key challenges:
- Lack of strategic leadership;
 - Limited signposting to resources;
 - Lack of outcomes framework;
 - Potential duplication; and
 - Lack of vocational plans for 14year olds
- 3.5 Impower research showed that there is some provision for supported employment. However, detailed analysis of the provision shows that the majority of providers have an age criterion of up to 25, with a few extending to 30. Therefore, many adults with support and care outside of these age ranges have limited opportunities to access support.
- 3.6 Commissioning of specific employment support for adults with a learning disability and/or autism is small. There are currently two providers in the care market who are commissioned, First Enable and Autism Together. The latter supports adults with a diagnosis of autism.
- 3.7 Wirral Evolutions, the largest provider of day services for adults with learning disabilities in Wirral. The service has implemented a small pilot through its vocation service, Best Bites hospitality and catering provision. The foundation of a sustainable supported employment service has been developed.
- 3.8 The purpose of Supported Employment Strategy is to support all partners to have an organised approach to maximising the employment opportunities for people who would otherwise struggle to participate in the job market. The aspiration should be that wherever possible people should be in (or working towards) 'good' jobs that confer the health and wellbeing benefits of work.

- 3.9 The Strategy outlines six ambitions to help more young people and adults with care and support needs to gain and retain paid employment in the open market, or gain another meaningful employment related activity by:
- Creating a climate of high expectation and aspiration
 - Ensuring effective transition from SEND (14-25) that young people are well prepared for work;
 - Ensuring there is a robust, outcome focused approach to commissioning of services to address current barriers to employment and lead to increased independence;
 - Engaging with the local business community to ensure employment opportunities for people with care and support needs are available to Wirral residents. To ensure business have the access to the right support at the right time;
 - Ensuring that all have access to good quality up to date information about supported employment opportunities and that there are well understood pathways to employment in place;
 - Ensuring that provision of supported employment opportunities is aligned to the Council priorities and maximises resources.
- 3.10 The strategy sets out 5 key objectives which are:
1. Ensure people with care and support needs have direct support to gain and sustain employment and clearly outline the role of the Council and its key partners to deliver this;
 2. Ensure job seekers are confident, prepared, and motivated to find work;
 3. Ensure employers are confident to employ people with care and support needs;
 4. Ensure the transition process from age 14 fosters a culture of high expectations and provides high-quality person-centred planning with clear pathways to employment; and
 5. Ensure the workforce has the skills, knowledge, and competencies to effectively deliver the supported employment offer.
- 3.11 The Supported Employment Strategy recognises the need for a cohesive approach and that weaknesses in current delivery mechanism are addressed and capacity is built into provision for adults over the age of 25.
- 3.12 These objectives will form the basis of an action plan for implementing the strategy which will detail specific actions, responsible organisations/officers for each action, milestones, and timeframe for delivery.
- 3.13 A robust performance framework will be developed and implemented by all providers which will monitor progress and impact. Oversight will be provided by the All Age Disability Partnership Board, reporting to Adult Social Care & Public Health Committee and Wirral Place Based Partnership Board as appropriate.
- 3.14 The draft Supported Employment Strategy is tabled at Appendix 1. There is also a draft Easy Read summary attached as Appendix 2.

4.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 There are no direct financial implications to this report, as the Supported Employment Strategy, through the coproduction of the implementation plan, will look to align, pool, or repurpose existing resources to ensure the deliverables are achieved in line with its vision and outcomes of this strategy.

5.0 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 The Council has a legal duty to assess the needs of people who may need care and support, to promote independence and wellbeing, and can apply discretion as to how to meet those needs identified.
- 5.2 Supported Employment Strategy is in line with statutory requirements, including The Mental Health Act 1983, The Care Act 2014, The Health, and Care Act 2022, Childrens and Families Act 2014 and the Equality Act 2010.

6.0 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS: STAFFING, ICT AND ASSETS

- 6.1 Recognising the current capacity challenges within the Council, resources have been realigned to support the deliverables of this strategy. Strategic responsibility has been aligned and absorbed into the role of Head of Operations of Day Services for Adult Social. In addition, there will be recruitment of a dedicated Supported Employment Development Officer. As the implementation progresses, if additional resources are required these will be subject to a separate report.

7.0 RELEVANT RISKS

- 7.1 There is a low risk that the strategy is not approved. This will be mitigated by the co-production journey of the strategy to deliver the best outcome for people with care and support needs and their families/carers.
- 7.2 There is a risk that Supported Employment Strategy implementation plan requires further resources. This will be mitigated by improved joining up priorities, better alignment of existing resource, seeking new opportunities for new funding sources and improved partnership working. There will also be in place, a balance of key performance indicators and outcomes, with the governance arrangements to monitor and report progress in a timely manner.

8.0 ENGAGEMENT/CONSULTATION

- 8.1 All members and stakeholders of the Supported Employment Strategy group were fully involved in the development of the strategy over the several months. This also included several workshops took place where partners drew on their expertise and experience.
- 8.2 Partners engaged and consulted within their own organisations to feed relevant information and feedback to the strategy development.
- 8.3 It is the intention of the Strategy group to coproduce its implementation plan.

9.0 EQUALITY IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1 An updated Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) has been produced and will continue to be updated as part of the implementation of the proposed deliverables of this strategy. This is located here: <https://www.wirral.gov.uk/communities-and-neighbourhoods/equality-impact-assessments>
- 9.2 This is an inclusive strategy to which equality and diversity is integral. Further consideration will also be given to the need for an EIA for any individual areas of work within the review where this is identified.

10.0 ENVIRONMENT AND CLIMATE IMPLICATIONS

- 10.1 Consideration will be given to environmental and climate implications in the planning and implementation of the review, and in its recommendations.

11.0 COMMUNITY WEALTH IMPLICATIONS

- 11.1 Care provider organisations employ significant numbers of Wirral residents who contribute to the local economy. People with a disability having greater opportunity to reach their aspirations for work, learning and volunteering will positively impact on the vibrancy and development of local communities and economies.

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APPENDICES

- Appendix 1 – Draft Supported Employment Strategy
Appendix 2 – Draft Supported Employment Easy Read Summary

BACKGROUND PAPERS

Wirral All Age Disability Strategy 2024-2029

<https://www.wirralintelligenceservice.org/media/1vbhksq/wirral-aad-strategy-2024-2029-final.pdf>

<https://www.wirralintelligenceservice.org/media/qd1ngwew/all-age-disability-strategy-easy-read-final-accchkd.pdf>

<https://lginform.local.gov.uk/reports/lgastandard?mod-metric=10672&mod-area=E08000015&mod-group=ADASSRegions&mod-type=comparisonGroupTypeee>

<https://www.base-uk.org/costbenefit-argument>

https://www.dfnprojectsearch.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/01/Scoping_Review_of_Economic_Evidence_Around_Employment_Support.pdf

https://www.dfnprojectsearch.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/01/Scoping_Review_of_Economic_Evidence_Around_Employment_Support.pdf

Wolverhampton supported employment for people with learning disabilities

<https://democracy.wirral.gov.uk/documents/s50102606/Enc.%205%20for%20All%20Age%20Disability%20Review.pdf>

TERMS OF REFERENCE

This report is being considered by the Adult Social Care and Public Health Committee in accordance with Section 2.2(a) adult social care matters (e.g., people aged 18 or over with eligible social care needs and their careers).

SUBJECT HISTORY (last 3 years)

Council Meeting	Date
Adult Social Care and Public Health Committee	4 March 2024
Adult Social Care and Public Health Committee	June 2023