

OPEN

Pathways to **social and job inclusion** for people with disabilities

Seminar Proceedings and development plan



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INTRODUCTION

Just under 20% of the working age population in the West Midlands are disabled, and over half of those individuals are unemployed. This is a higher than national average, and so the causes of this need to be addressed.

Key topics addressed during this seminar included preventing discrimination in the workplace, responding to mental health and depression, and how social enterprises can change attitudes to employing disadvantaged individuals.

It was concluded that more work needs to be done to raise awareness with employers around people with disabilities, and wider support needs to be put in place for people with disabilities to achieve and progress in the workplace. Research has proven that the vast majority of disabled people want to work or contribute to their communities but feel a whole range of barriers such as restrictive regulations in the benefit system, inflexible working conditions, and discriminatory assumptions and myths held by employers.

The workshop themes were set out as:

- **The use of social enterprise/social firms in supporting those with disabilities**
- **Mental Health and Depression Question**
- **Myth Busting and Awareness Raising**

KEYNOTE SPEECHES

Keynote Speech One – A Policy Perspective

Mary Dunleavy – Programme Specialist, NHS Regional Development Centre

The key points covered in Mary’s speech are outlined below; footage of the speech in full can be accessed here <http://www.wmleadersboard.gov.uk/open-seminars>

- Currently, 24% of people with mental health issues are in employment. The figure is lower for people with severe and enduring mental health issues, with just 5-8% being in employment. However, evidence shows that many people with mental health issues *do* want to do meaningful work.
- There is a strong association between poverty, unemployment and poor mental health. Due to the recession, it is expected that there will be a 26% increase in mental health issues.
- There is an unawareness of the prevalence of people with mental health issues, with 60% of line managers underestimating figures. However, 76% of line managers have previously managed at least one person with mental health issues; but only 13% have received training for this.
- Mental health issues are not unusual: 1 in 4 people will experience it during their lifetime, and 3 in 10 workers experience stress or depression per year.
- It costs the industry £4 billion per year due to absence from work caused by stress, depression and anxiety.
- A study carried out in the Yorkshire and Humber Region found that the cost of mental health in the region was £6.5 billion per year, equating to £2K per household or £600 per person.
- In December 2009, four new policy papers were published, looking at a more holistic approach to employment:
 1. ‘New Horizons’ (Department of Health) – This sets out a new approach with the twin aims of improving people’s quality of life and well-being, and improving the quality and accessibility of services for people with poor mental health.
 2. ‘Working our way to better mental health’ (Department of Health) – This is designed to improve well-being at work for everyone, with a focus on the working age population. It aims to deliver significantly better employment results for people with mental health conditions, supporting them into work, helping them to stay in work and assisting them to return to work more quickly after sickness absences.
 3. ‘Realising ambitions’ (Department for Work and Pensions) - Better employment support for people with a mental health condition’ – This aims to increase capacity and dispel myths, and establish effective systems to monitor outcomes and drive change.
 4. ‘Work recovery and Inclusion’ (NMH DU) - This sets out a series of actions to help meet the aspirations of people in contact with secondary mental health services, who want to work.

- It is vitally important to address what can be done to promote good working conditions.
- Individual placement support schemes have been shown to be the most effective model in getting people back to work. More needs to be done to support them to remain in work.
- It is also vital to combat stigma and discrimination for those with mental health issues who want to get into work.
- Mary felt that now is a good time to make changes, as there is a good idea of what works, and there is also ministerial interest at present. There is also a vast array of work occurring in the Region.
- She added that it is important to address all sectors in the solutions, including public, private and third sector.

Keynote Speech Two – A Grassroots Perspective

Marian Giles – Business Development Manager, Shropshire Council and Sarah Dillon – Disabilities Team Manager, Shropshire Council

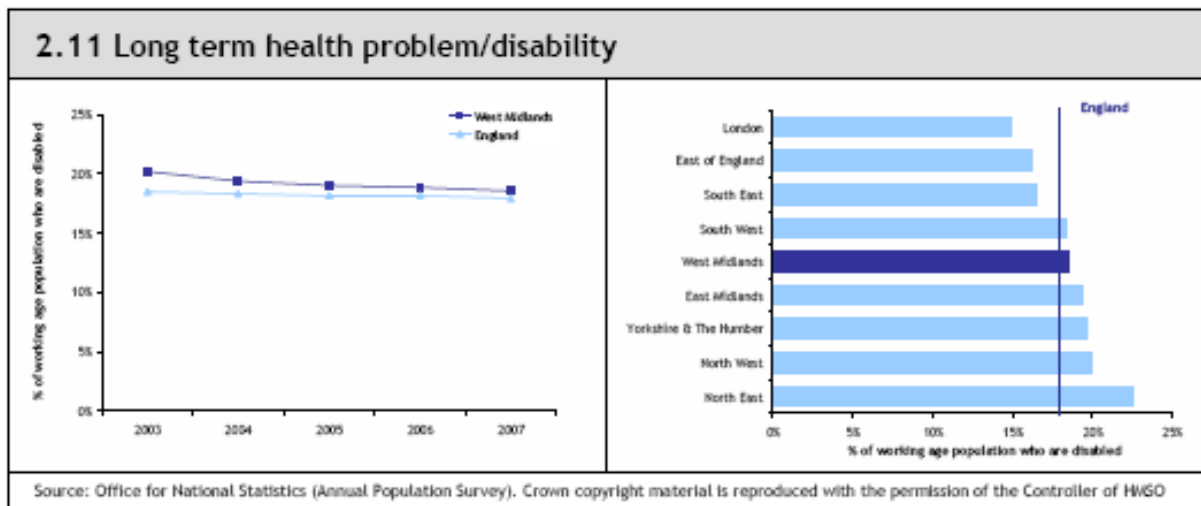
The key points covered in this speech are outlined below; footage of the speech in full can be accessed here <http://www.wmleadersboard.gov.uk/open-seminars>

- A service user questionnaire completed in 2009 showed that people with learning disabilities were interested in gaining the following:
 1. More work
 2. Skills for work
 3. Paid work
- There is a clear need to build learning disability issues into overarching employment strategies, as well as raising the expectations of people with learning disabilities, employers and the wider community, so that paid employment is perceived as a real possibility. People with learning disabilities need to *see themselves* as employable.
- There needs to be a re-focus on the world of work, and a wider area of options and work skills, including both paid and voluntary work.
- Social activity is an important step in the journey of getting back into work.
- Job coaching and support to maintain work can offer the necessary support for longer periods of time, if there are larger budgets available for this.
- There are a number of services in Shropshire, offering opportunities to people with learning disabilities. Examples of the type of work these services provide include:
 1. Greenacres Farm and Oak Farm – these deliver a range of learning opportunities and skills based activities related to the rural economy e.g. plant propagation, animal husbandry, food processing.
 2. Maesbury Metals – a small industrial project, which manufactures wrought iron items, and therefore provides the opportunity to gain employment skills.
 3. Patchworks – a workshop which manufactures a range of textiles for the home, for sale through a range of shops and venues throughout Shropshire.
 4. Oak Farm and Teas Rooms – provides voluntary work placement in the tearooms and shop with a view to progressing towards paid employment.
- Marian and Sarah then explained their vision for where the service is aspiring to be in the future. They plan to introduce service users to the potential for personal budget holding to achieve employment ambitions as well as meeting care needs.
- They want to increase the number of people seeing themselves as employable and progressing from using statutory services; this will require a change to hearts and minds.
- They want to develop opportunities for people with a learning disability to experience the world of work through self-employment, which will mean that they will need to support the existing day bases in becoming more entrepreneurial,

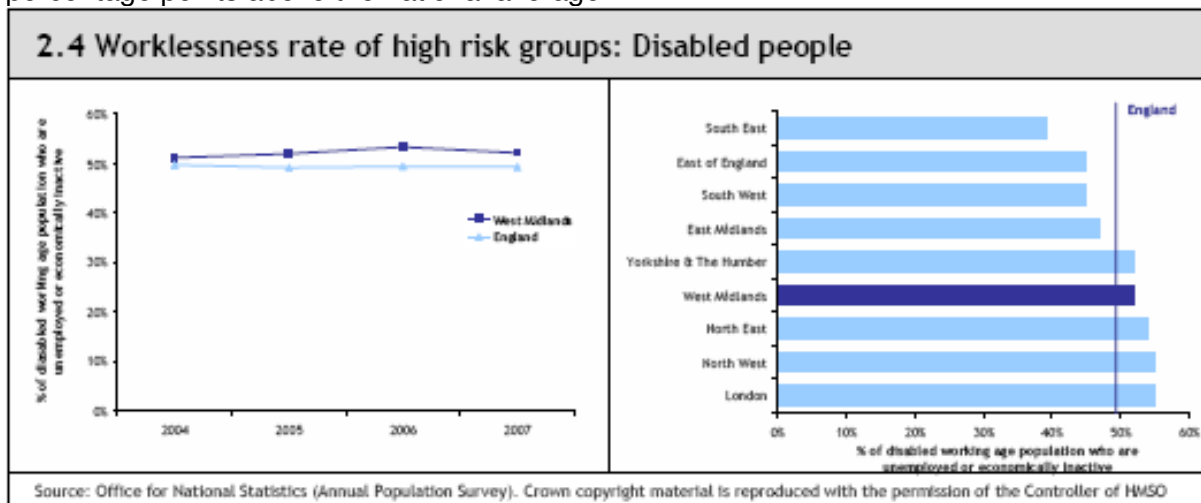
- and thus give individuals skills they could transfer to work. Finally to develop staff skills and expertise in supporting people with learning disabilities to access work
- Finally, to develop staff skills and expertise in order to support people into work.
 - Current initiatives taking place are as follows:
 1. The 'Valuing Employment Now (VEN) Action Plan', provides funding for a dedicated Employment Development Worker for day opportunities.
 2. There is a post for a person with a learning disability to work as an Employment Champion to encourage a change in the hearts and minds of service users and staff.
 3. Work is also going on to link to a local College to develop a Work Skills accredited training course.
 4. Finally there is a programme of partnership work with 14 smaller day bases for adults with a learning disability working with iSE to develop their entrepreneurial 'mission'.
 - Moving forwards, there is the requirement to 'future-proof' the services provided, and a cultural shift towards greater control for service users.
 - There is also a need to develop service user skills for self-determination and decision making, as well as the need to make the cultural shift to facilitate greater choice and control.



Just under 20% of the working age population in the West Midlands are disabled.¹ The region has above average rates of disability:

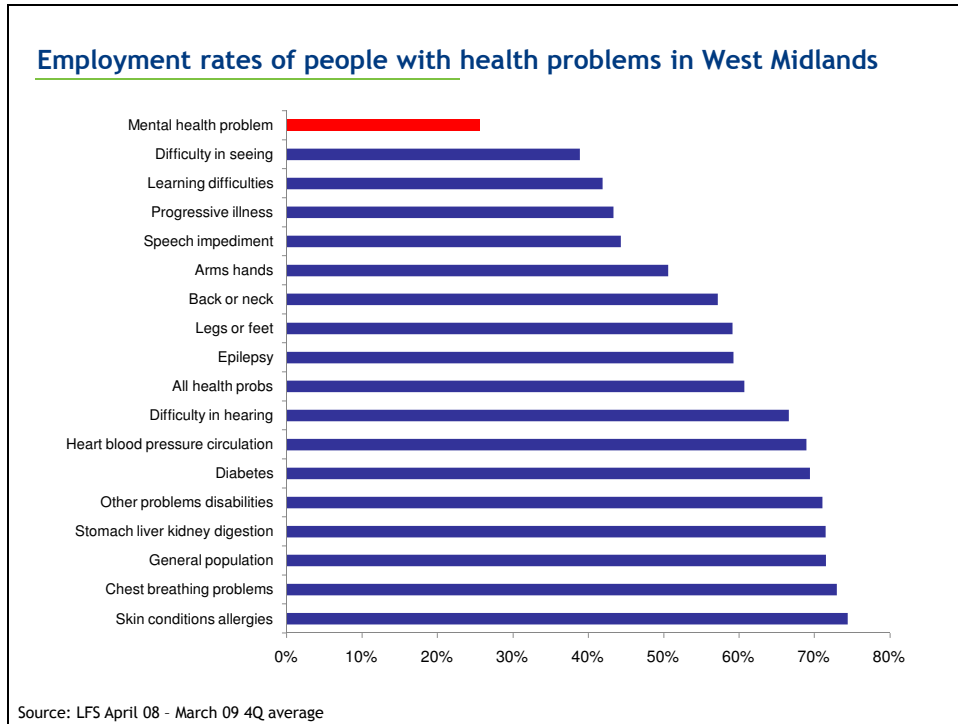


Poor health is one of the main contributing factors to worklessness, with high rates of worklessness among those reporting limiting health conditions. The region's rate of worklessness among those with long term health problems/disabilities is, at 52%, 3 percentage points above the national average.



¹ This definition of disabled includes people who are defined as disabled under the Disability Discrimination Act and people who have a work-limiting illness/disability. It is measured through a survey.

Employment rates for people with health problems vary considerably according to the type of health problem, from less than 30% to over 70%. People with mental health problems are particularly disadvantaged in the labour market:



WORKSHOP MATERIALS, DISCUSSION POINTS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

WORKSHOP ONE – The use of social enterprise/social firms in supporting those with disabilities

Facilitated by Andy Beaton – Senior Business Development Manager, iSE

Background context supplied in advance of workshop one

Social Enterprises are businesses that trade for community benefit and social purpose rather than personal profit. Like conventional businesses, they offer goods and services, operate in many different trade sectors and can adopt many different business models. What makes them different is that instead of trading to maximise profits for owners and shareholders, social enterprises trade to achieve social objectives such as:

- Offering services that are currently unavailable or too expensive for the local community to use
- Providing education, training and employment opportunities for [people who are disadvantaged in the labour market
- Improve the local environment
- Providing social care or other welfare services that improve the quality of life of their users

Social Firms are a specific variant of social enterprise. Their social purpose is to employ people who are especially disadvantaged in the labour market. This disadvantage may arise from physical or sensory disability, or from other factors that prevent clients from accessing opportunities in the labour market. The Social Firms sector in the UK comprises 151 businesses. Of these, 70 meet the Social Firms UK criteria as full Social Firms and 81 are regarded as emerging Social Firms.

Social Firms UK is the national support structure for Social Firm development in the UK and has approximately 300 members. The national company represents the interests of the Social Firm sector and plays a key role in lobbying and dissemination activities. Social Firms UK has adopted three core values that Social Firms subscribe to within their businesses, orientated around Enterprise, Employment and Empowerment:

Enterprise: Social Firms are businesses that combine a market orientation and a social mission ('businesses that support' rather than 'projects that trade'):

- At least 50% of the firm's turnover is earned through sales of goods and/or services.
- The firm has an appropriate legal status. It must not be governed or driven by individual profit (except for worker co-operatives). Remote shareholders must not extract unreasonable profit.
- The firm is trading and follows business processes, such as having a business plan in place.
- The firm has a constitution or written guiding principles that reflect its employment objective concerning disadvantaged people.
- The firm has a management structure that supports trading as the firm's primary purpose.

Employment Social Firms are supportive workplaces where the working environment is one

that provides all employees with support, opportunity and meaningful work:

- More than 25% of employees are people disadvantaged in the labour market.
- All employees have a contract of employment and market wage at or above national minimum wage.
- An equal approach is taken to the type of employment contracts used (permanent, fixed term, temporary) between disadvantaged and non-disadvantaged staff.
- The firm operates processes to engage employees in their own and the organisation's development.
- The firm has procedures and policies in place in respect of Equal Opportunities and Health and Safety.
- The firm is compliant with relevant employers legislation e.g. Disability Discrimination Act and National Minimum Wage.
- All employees have the opportunity to progress either within the Social Firm or into alternative employment as appropriate.
- Employees and stakeholders acknowledge the firm as a good employer
- The firm is acknowledged as a good employer through an external accreditation process.

Empowerment: Social Firms are committed to the social and economic integration of disadvantaged people through employment. A key means to this end is economic empowerment through the payment of market wages to all employees:

Feedback from Workshop one

The key points identified in the workshop were as follows:

Differences between Social Enterprise and Social Firms

- A Social Enterprise is any business that trades for a social purpose whereas a Social Firm is one type of Social Enterprise set up to create paid employment for people severely disadvantaged in the open labour market. Social Firms are businesses that are market led, inclusive, supportive and sustainable
- Social firms tackle stigmas against disadvantaged people, create jobs for those that are furthest from the labour market, and offer cost benefits to society and social added value to investors. In addition, they provide health improvements for disadvantaged people
- Social Firms are seen to be critical to employment creation because they reach those furthest from the labour market. The Regional Economic Strategy, as well as the City Region and Local Area Agreements all have a requirement for the creation of Social Firms within their plans
- There are 137 businesses trading as social firms in the UK, employing 1652 full time workers, 522 of which are disabled people. The average level of income from the sale of commercial products or services across the sector is 65% with the balance made up of grants and placement fees, and there are 841 trainees

on placement in the sector. There are Quality Assurance schemes in place for Social Firms and the i'SE are in the vanguard of their development and adoption

Personalisation agenda

- The introduction of the “personalisation agenda” and “individual budgets” will be very significant, it is important to establish their impact and to develop plans to respond
- Transport to and from work for disadvantaged people can be a major factor which must be considered when developing interventions
- How might Social Firms best respond to the personalisation agenda? This is both an opportunity and a threat. There is the issue of scale as each contract may be very small, so how does a Social Firm secure working capital and funding to expand? The current contract for support to develop Social Firms in Birmingham in £30 000, which is not sufficient to really make a difference or meet demand.

Procurement

- Procurement was discussed from a number of perspectives. The procurement toolkit prepared by Anthony Collins Solicitors was identified as being very useful. There was reference to the procurement framework being prepared by the Economic Inclusion panel, which will encourage the public sector to use their buying power to support social objectives. There is a problem with some clauses in tender documents, which require track records or Quality Systems that are not realistic or useful for a Social Firm to maintain.
- The size of public contracts was raised as an issue; often these are too large for a Social Firm to undertake and the cost of preparing a tender submission is prohibitive.
- The weighting and credibility given to social clauses in the tender assessment criteria must be set at the right level to achieve the desired outcomes. Related to this point was an observation that Social Firms need to make much more effort to define their social value or impact. However at the moment this can cost up to the £20 000 to carry out a full Social Return on Investment study. Unless more work is undertaken in this area the myth that Social Firms are expensive will continue to be circulated.
- Public sector spending will be subject to very tight constraints in future and the issue of excessive bureaucracy will be looked at closely as well as the cost of getting each person into a job therefore the sector will need to respond to these conditions
- Procurement is a significant issue and opportunity for Social Firms. How can Social Firms play a part in the delivery of public services when the contract conditions are such that only large companies with working capital and a long track record are considered? This lead on to the next point

- Social Firms can form partnerships and clusters within their sector with those they may have thought of as competitors, in order to respond to the opportunities that public service delivery offers. A key aspect of this is to market the Social Added Value that you can bring to service delivery as a Social Firm. The Public Sector need to provide more realistic opportunities and encourage these clusters to tender for their work

What could 'we' do locally/ regionally?

Procurement

- Social Firms could form clusters with others in the sector as well as supportive private sector firms to form consortia to bid for work. The example was given of a £9M contract from Working Neighbourhoods Fund in Birmingham awarded to a Social Enterprise/ Social Firm consortium. For this approach to work the sector needs to work with those who in the past may have been competitors. The Chamber of Commerce in Birmingham was an important contributor to this success as well as the i'SE
- Given the pressure on public sector spending and efficiency measures it will be very important for the sector to establish cost efficient Social Return on Investment study methodology that is at a reasonable cost, robust, and can demonstrate the full value added by a Social Firm.

Awareness Raising

- There is a need to promote the message that Social Firms are serious businesses that have the need for capital investment, and all other aspects of private firms

Benefits

- There is a greater role for the sector in providing supported placements and "seeing is believing" visits so that there is greater awareness among employers of the abilities of those with a disability. The example of Concept Catering was given where all chefs are visually impaired and are as effective as anyone else given the right support
- There is a need to empower the transition from benefits. This includes the provision of information to individuals, their care workers and wider support staff. This needs to give confidence and a safety net. There are schemes in place designed to help this but they are not well known or understood

Recommendations and messages to policy makers

- There is a need for greater levels of investment from Central and Local Government to support the cash flow and provide reasonable cost capital to set up and expand Social Firms
- There is a need for the public sector to have a much stronger understanding of the commercial and legal requirements of Social Firms. At the moment many of them think it is not much more than a day centre.
- In response to the question “How might a Local Authority kick start this clustering mechanism?” the group identified that the Working Neighbourhoods Fund briefing encouraged a clustering approach so this can provide an entry point. The group suggested that the next step could be for the Local Authority to facilitate sessions with their Social Firms/ Social Enterprises to promote a clustering approach and introduce organisations who can act as an honest broker. The final step could be for the Local Authority to present an emerging cluster with a market opportunity that they can bid for, such as a user led brokerage service.
- Social Firms/ Social Enterprises could do more to provide greater support for travel arrangements for their staff and seek to widen this support into the whole employment arena. This also relates to the essential transport requirement of some employees without which they cannot get to work at all. There was a suggestion of setting up a cluster of transport providers to put together a package and link this to the personalisation agenda. The question was asked, how best you market this service, more work is required on this. Travel training needs to include more information about community transport.
- The language used by the sector and policy makers needs to be very clear and accessible by everyone

WORKSHOP TWO – Mental health and depression
Facilitated by Tony Walsh – CEO, Council of Disable People

Background context supplied in advance of workshop two

Background information

It is illegal to discriminate against Disabled People in the workplace under the Disability Discrimination Act 1995. Yet despite this and the many advances that have been achieved since the introduction of the Act many thousands of people with mental health problems continue to experience discrimination in the workplace. Hundreds of thousands more, who want to work, are not able to secure employment for no other reason than discrimination by employers.

What are the issues?

- The World Health Organisation estimates that 1:4 people will experience some form of mental health difficulty at some point in their life.
- Lack of mental well being in the workplace is costing the UK £25.9 billion per annum in terms of sickness absence, presenteeism and turnover.
- Research conducted by the Mental Health Foundation found that almost half (47%) of people who had experienced mental distress had experienced discrimination in the workplace.
- Less than 40% of employers would consider employing someone with a mental health problem.
- Only 20% of people with mental health conditions are in employment.
- People with mental health problems have the lowest employment rate of all Disabled people of working age.
- At one million people, the numbers on incapacity benefit for reasons of mental ill health outnumber the total number on job seekers allowance.
- Someone who has been on Incapacity Benefit for more than two years is more likely to die or retire than get a job.
- Suicide rates amongst the long term unemployed are 35 times higher than amongst the employed.

In an age when the acceptance of difference and diversity has grown and has been legislated for, it is clear from the above that the stigma and misunderstanding of Mental Health is one area of inequality that remains to be challenged. The cost to employers, society, individuals and their families of failing to challenge Mental Health discrimination is immense.

If people experiencing Mental Health Difficulties are to enjoy the same rights as others within the work place it is essential that people experiencing Mental Health difficulties know what their rights are, that employers are proactive in ensuring mental well being in the work place and that appropriate policies are in place to prevent discrimination.

Feedback from Workshop two

The key points identified in the workshop were as follows:

People who experience mental health problems while in work

- There is often reluctance to for employees to admit that they are experiencing mental health issues, for fear that they will be stigmatised and their co-workers will treat them differently
- Irresponsible reporting of mental health problems in the media can often exacerbate this stigma and thus increase the incidence of bullying
- If work is the cause of mental health issues, employees may have time off to recover, but often become ill again once returning to work. This is a circular problem that can only be broken if the causes of illness are addressed and supportive tools are put in place
- The level of support employees receive from their employers and co-workers has a very significant bearing on their long term well being. Without support and flexibility from employers, there is a risk that those experiencing mental health problems will drop out of the workforce altogether
- Some people with a disability are reluctant to declare this situation when they apply for a job as they fear discrimination. However because they have not declared their disability at the application stage, the employer is not aware that the employee may require support. This can potentially lead to poor productivity, poor job retention and high levels of sickness.

Issues relating to employers and wider workforce

- Lack of HR expertise amongst small employers and organisations can lead to a lack of training, and therefore a lack of understanding and awareness of the issues. This then leads to a lack of support for employees with disabilities
- Often, limited funding is the cause of this lack of training, thus highlighting a need for government funding here
- If the issues are not fully understood, then employers may put pressure on employees, rather than recognising and making the necessary changes when things go wrong
- There are great losses to businesses due to people with mental health issues not being given appropriate support. Happy workforce = productivity = profit
- A participant expressed the view that Social exclusion may be greater in some industries and therefore these industries require particular attention. Further research is required to confirm this and to identify the specific industries.
- There is a great need to provide more support to employers, as often they do not

have the time or competence to implement what is needed

Issues relating to those with mental health problems gaining employment

- Large numbers of people with disabilities are unable to find work; this includes a large proportion of people with mental health issues. In addition to this, there is also a lack of available training and work experience opportunities for people with disabilities
- There is a need to ensure that the employer and workforce understand issues faced by disabled people, and are supportive to all new employees
- There is a need for robust mental health promotion
- Disabled people have real concerns about identifying themselves as disabled on job application forms, particularly if it relates to mental health, even though the Disability Discrimination Act requires that this must be identified at application stage in order to enable the employer to access support. Work is required both with employers as well as with disabled people and their advisors to break this deadlock
- Myths around Health and Safety are very common and employers may use this as a barrier. It is essential that this is not used as an excuse to cover up discrimination
- Disabled people fear they will lose their benefits if they take a job. More could be done to identify benefits open to them, particularly with young people
- People may be unaware of their rights under the Disabilities Discrimination Act
- Mental health issues are a 'hidden' disability, therefore making it potentially more difficult for people to exercise their rights

Wider policy context

- Mental health is a hidden disability which needs greater exposure to raise general awareness and generate a more positive social response, although it is recognised that changing attitudes towards mental health is a long term process
- Greater awareness could be achieved through examples of good practices that are widely celebrated and promoted; positive images and stories about what is working at the moment should be in the public domain
- The Disability Duties of Public Bodies, can act as a stick to promote change, but also a carrot to offer incentives as well; there a number of these but they need to be better marketed
- You cannot legislate for attitudes - access and inclusion is not just about ramps, but is also about the hearts and minds of employers.

- Legislation is the first step, but debates about social values are also required

What could 'we' do locally/ regionally?

Employers

- Positive action across the region should be promoted – this could be done with awards for employers who are carrying out positive action programmes, highlighting case studies of good practice, and a theme week on mental health promoting a joined-up approach across the region
- Healthy lifestyles and good mental health needs to be promoted within the workplace – this could include posters, support groups, yoga classes, health evaluations, positive case studies, mental health champions to support peers and so on
- This should also include promoting healthy routines in the workplace, such as taking a full lunch break and not working excessive overtime hours
- Employers who have staff with mental health issues should be supported, so that they can then offer support to their staff – this can be in the form of training for employers, the provision of a range of user friendly information, and free advice services
- There is a need to develop the business case for employing someone with a disability and promote this to employers

Volunteering

- Alternative forms of work (e.g. volunteering, flexi-work, one-to-one coaching, shadowing) can be a useful tool in assisting people back into the workplace
- There is a need to expand the range and intensity of volunteering opportunities as a door-way for disabled people to get back into full time paid work. Particular attention could be given to the issue of individuals who have experienced stress at work and therefore may be hesitant to go back
- Volunteering schemes, such as Time Banks, could be developed that help to grow self-esteem prior to returning to work
- Voluntary support officers could be made available to spend time with individuals to help them in their daily lives and thus increase their confidence

Awareness

- Offer seminars to employers to increase their understanding of issues. This needs to start at top of the company to create top-down awareness and commitment, and thus engage ALL of the workforce

- All training needs to be improved – this needs particular funding to be made available
- There should be easier access to information and advice – this could include training, awareness raising sessions within the workplace and the larger region, and a free counselling telephone service
- More peer support for those in recovery could be provided through initiatives to help set up support groups, and providing venues for groups to meet.
- Promote the messages to employers so that they realise they are losing money due to their lack of awareness and understanding around mental illness because they are not getting the best from their staff, and have higher staff turnover and recruitment and training costs
- Address it at employment seminars including proposing different types of contract with more flexible terms and hours

Recommendations and messages to policy makers

- Investment in publicity for mental health awareness, this must be ongoing funding, with components addressing employers, employees, those experiencing mental health issues, and finally the general public
- Continue to provide policy and programme support for a wide range of volunteering programmes and peer support networks, including support for Time Banks. This could also include a helpline for employers, to provide advice on how they could support their staff and a counselling service for employees experiencing difficulties
- Provide compulsory in-house HR training to reach all of the workforce, rather than selective seminars that are already preaching to the educated, particularly for middle management roles
- Engage with employer organisations as well as Trade Unions and the Third Sector to develop integrated programmes that work. This includes the strategic alignment of existing funding and support
- Monitor recruitment practices to ensure customers/services are not being excluded and thereby breaking the law
- Challenge social attitudes/ the media in a positive way providing well prepared case studies of good practice that promote healthy living
- Educate employers about how cost effective it would be to learn how to avoid a problem instead of fire fighting when it is sometimes too late
- Promote good practice by governmental policy – this could include making people more aware of what their rights are and addressing employment law

WORKSHOP THREE – Myth busting and awareness raising

Facilitated by Pete Millington – Information and PR Manager, Disability Resource Centre

Background context supplied in advance of workshop three

In 2008 Birmingham Disability Resource Centre published Action Research around the barriers that disabled people commonly experience when seeking employment. Amongst the key findings from the research included:

- Disabled people want to work but experience restrictive regulations within the benefits system
- Disabled people are more likely to enjoy fulfilling and sustainable employment when they work for a more flexible and supportive employer
- Communication support is vital to many disabled people and major barrier exists where it is not provided
- Many disabled people are not able to work because they need independent living support to be put in place first

In spite of continuing high levels of unemployment amongst disabled people, the qualitative research carried out with 200 disabled people in Birmingham, showed that most disabled people express an interest in engaging in some sort of social economic activity, whether that be volunteer work, work experience social enterprise, self employment or working for an employer but feel that a whole range of barriers, including the ones listed above, conspire against their aspirations to work.

In 2005 the national organisation RADAR (Royal Association of Disability and Rehabilitation) published an 8 point paper, which set out to challenge some of the myths around disabled people, benefits and employment (*Radar's Prescription for a healthy debate: dispelling 8 myths of Incapacity Benefit*). These 8 myths included:

- Myth 1: People on Incapacity Benefit are lazy and watch TV all day.
- Myth 2: People on Incapacity Benefit are fraudsters.
- Myth 3: People on Incapacity Benefit could get a job if they really wanted one.
- Myth 4: People on Incapacity Benefit are living a life of luxury.
- Myth 5: People on Incapacity Benefit already get lots of help from the Government.
- Myth 6: Employing disabled people is expensive; only big companies can afford to do it.
- Myth 7: Disabled people are less productive than non-disabled employees; they should stay on Incapacity Benefit.
- Myth 8: All we need are more ramps in the workplace, and disabled people will be able to go to work.

On each of these points, Radar offered research based evidence which argued that the majority of disabled people in receipt of incapacity benefit and / or income support and severe disablement allowance at that time wanted to either work or contribute to society through voluntary work, but required support. It continues to be very clear that the weight of evidence gathered from research carried out by disability organisations and other agencies is that the vast majority of disabled people want to either work or otherwise contribute to their communities and to the social economy but that successive policies,

initiatives, campaigns and legislative changes are still failing to achieve significant levels of sustainable, long term employment amongst disabled people. Research continues to show that many of the barriers are caused by discriminatory assumptions, anxieties, misconceptions and myths held by employers.

Feedback from Workshop three

Key Points

Pete set the context to the workshop by discussing the research carried out by the DRC and highlighting three examples from the research.

The group then had a general discussion on the topic and a list of myths and a number of suggestions how to “bust the myth” were made

Myths identified by the group

- Employing somebody with a disability poses greater Health and Safety risks
- People with a Learning Disability are unpredictable
- People with disabilities are not capable of doing certain jobs e.g. cannot be managers, but can only do menial jobs
- Differences between different types of disabilities and therefore what each individual is capable of doing are often not considered – there is a perception that all people with disabilities are capable (or not capable) of the same things. For example, only a small proportion of people registered as blind have absolutely no sight at all
- Low expectations and confidence of individuals about their own ability to work – e.g. difficulties in getting to an interview
- Barriers – the focus may be on the physical when it is really about prejudicial attitudes and assumptions
- Assumption that you can tackle all ‘problems’ with a tick box
- It is people’s own ‘fault’ that they are unemployed
- Disabled people have more time off sick and it is a cost to the employer
- There is often a perception that people with disabilities cannot earn enough to cover their health care costs, and so are better off not working
- Legislation makes a difference

Discussion

Health and Safety

- As long as adequate risk assessments are carried out, Health and Safety is not an increased issue for employees with a disability. There is a risk that this is used as an excuse to cover up discrimination
- Employers may also be fearful of employing people with disabilities as they may have the perception that they are more likely to have an accident at work and therefore will take action against them
- There is also an assumption that people with disabilities may not be able to communicate effectively in the workplace, for example if they have hearing impairments
- It is necessary to address those assumptions made by service providers, training providers and employers, which are based on myths and lack of awareness
- While you cannot ‘legislate’ for attitudes you can use the Equality Act 2006 and the Equality Bill to enforce the duty to equality in professional practice
- There is evidence that Building Regulations can be effective, and so there is a need to incentivise and help employers by making people aware of grants and funding for access to work

Public Service Employers Equality Duty

- The equality duties relating to race, disability and gender are laid out in law. Their application is guided by codes of practice issued by the Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC) 1. The EHRC is responsible for writing, developing and issuing the codes of practice which have been approved by Parliament. If public authorities follow these codes of practice, they are likely to comply with the law
- Each of the duties is broken down into a general duty which gives the broad outlines, and specific duties designed to help public authorities comply with the general duty. All of them must be implemented
- What are the general duties? All three general duties state that “due regard” must be given to:
 1. the elimination of unlawful discrimination
 2. the promotion of equal opportunities
- Each duty then builds on these objectives in a different way. The race equality duty requires the promotion of good relations between people of different racial groups

- The disability equality duty requires public authorities to:
 1. eliminate harassment of disabled people that is related to their disabilities
 2. take account of people's impairments, even where that involves treating disabled people more favourably than non-disabled people
 3. promote positive attitudes towards disabled people through compulsory training for employees
 4. encourage participation by disabled people in public life
 5. consult with disabled people
 6. Carry out equality impact assessment – disability equality scheme with measures to achieve objectives

Positive Views

The workshop identified the following opportunities to tackle the publics' perception and to develop a more positive image for disabled people

- Produce materials which set out the added value disabled people can bring to 'my' organisation and how they can become a valued part of its structure.
- Include more inclusive and positive images in posters
- Gaining employment can often have an effect outside of the workplace as well; for example, family members can see individuals in a different light if they are employed, leading to positive benefits for the individual, their family and the wider community, by offering them more independence and a better quality of life
- Positive risk management can enable vulnerable people to have more opportunities to promote appropriate levels of independence; this requires a balance between vulnerability and limitations
- Awareness that disability is not an illness and can be managed by the individual i.e. disabled people do not have more time off sick

Issues to consider

- The medical model of disability as a 'problem' dehumanises the individual and prevents wider society of thinking of people with disabilities in a positive way
- With care requirements employed people's income can get swallowed up by Social Services – this is a disincentive as the 'benefit trap' can make someone worse off after entering employment
- Access to work: when reasonable adjustments are made by the employer this can lead to delays in starting work, the employer must pay out money before getting it back, and there are a range of bureaucratic issues such as equipment, transport etc.
- Potential for Disability Officers at Job Centres to do more?
- There is a perception that disabled people are a 'problem' that needs to be

addressed so that they can fit into society, rather than seeking to change society to accept them

- There is a great misunderstanding of dyslexia

The key issues that were identified in the workshop and fed into the plenary discussions were as follows:

- Raise awareness of the diversity of meaning surrounding the words “disabled and disability”
- Bust negative myths and stereotyping of people with disabilities
- Explore ‘health and safety’ myths
- Address aspects of the benefits system which can lead to disincentives for people as well as a risk that if the job does not work out that the individual will be at risk and have to start again with their benefits claims
- Stigma and fear surrounding mental health
- Low aspirations
- Lack of work experience opportunities
- Fear of disclosing disability in job applications

What could ‘we’ do locally/ regionally?

- Enforce the equality duties within professional practice
- Incentives for employers to make reasonable adjustments to the workplace
- Compulsory training on anti-discriminatory practice, equality and disability for the public sector workforce in induction and continuing professional development
- Hold employer awareness raising events to dispel myths
- Social values within the workplace and the wider community need to be addressed, in order to quash the perception that people with disabilities are only capable of doing certain jobs
- Conduct a campaign based on partnership with organisations, champions and individuals with disabilities to look at the additional value they can bring to the workplace: the positive aspects of employing a disabled person should be highlighted – possibly via case studies and the sharing of best practice
- People should be assessed differently, in order to assess their individual ability

- Encourage councils to lead by example
- Careers events for post-16 people with disabilities
- A support service between the job centre/benefits agencies and support services
- Promote permitted work and local employer partnerships to third sector organisations as well as employers
- Develop a regional network to provide strategic guidance and scrutiny of impacts

Recommendations and messages to policy makers

- Increased promotion and development of effective incentives to employers
- Reduce segregation to reduce the perpetuation of discrimination
- Clearer policy and guidelines for workers on indirect discrimination and the equality duties
- Enforcing legal requirements and regulations e.g. construction and transport
- Guidelines for ensuring health and safety in the workplace that is more inclusive of people with disabilities and negotiation of guidelines with insurance companies
- Schools and day services for people with learning disabilities need to introduce advice and support around employment to support their future development
- Make the Disabilities Discrimination Act easier and more widely understood
- People's Champion to show effectiveness of employment
- Councils being more pro-active than reactive
- The Leaders Board HR Team could lead regional projects

Job Centres

- Greater funding for the Job Centre, so they are able to offer better services – there was a consensus that disability advisors could do more
- Simplify benefits information for people with learning disabilities
- Support and advice to people to disclose disability when applying for a job

Appendix 1

OPEN Project Case Study

Seminar: Pathways to Social and Job Inclusion for People with Disabilities

Case Study Title: Shropshire Outdoors

Organisation

Shropshire Outdoors is funded by the BIG Lottery 'Living Well in the West Midlands' portfolio. Shropshire Outdoors was developed through the Shropshire Big Lottery Wellbeing Partnership. Led by Shropshire County Primary Care Trust, members include Shropshire Council and Shropshire Wildlife Trust.

Participating organisations include:

- Mental health - Mind, Community Mental Health Teams
- Adults with Learning Disability (ALD) - Mencap, Shropshire Council ALD services in North, Central and South localities
- Physical Disability - Shropshire Enablement Team, Headway
- Countryside - Shropshire Council, Shropshire Wildlife Trust, Natural
- England, National Trust, Severn Trent, Severn Gorge Countryside Trust
- Community - Craven Arms Volunteer for the Environment (CAVE), Friends of Ifton Meadows
- Parish Paths Partnerships
- Walking for Health

Summary

The outdoor environment is widely recognised as a major contributor to health and wellbeing. However, it is also recognised that 'sedentary groups', including some people with disabilities, are infrequent visitors to the countryside - many do not have the opportunity to access the countryside on their doorstep.

Shropshire Outdoors began in December 2007 and is funded for three years. The project targets those with learning disabilities, physical disabilities and mental health problems and increases physical activity levels by providing 'green exercise' opportunities. The project also addresses barriers to countryside access.

The objectives

Shropshire Outdoors was developed to improve health and wellbeing; and to address health inequalities experienced by disabled people. The main aims and objectives of the project are to:

- consult with project users and develop activities based on their interests

- promote positive mental health and increase physical activity levels in the countryside
- increase the capacity of organisations and staff to deliver countryside activities for users
- create a sustainable legacy that enables users to progress to mainstream countryside activities
- provide material and resources to increase skills, understanding and enjoyment of the countryside
- develop opportunities for users to gain recognition of their achievements
- monitor and evaluate physical activity and its impact on health and well-being

The challenges

- A key challenge was to recruit and equip staff to meet the specific project aims. However, the benefits that countryside activities offer are well recognised within the health and social care sector, particularly in terms of social inclusion and health and wellbeing. This has generated interest amongst centre managers, service users, carers, occupational therapists and community support workers alike.
- Engaging project beneficiaries in regular physical activity requires ongoing support to ensure confidence is maintained and other barriers and concerns are addressed
- Providing green physical activities that meet the needs, interests and abilities of target groups. The level and intensity of countryside activities needs to be pitched at the right level and tasks needed to be both site and task specific.
- Monitoring levels of participation and the increase in physical activity levels is relatively straightforward. Less easy is the impact on beneficiaries' mental health and wellbeing. This requires an understanding of 'softer' outcomes, such as improved confidence and identifying new learning skills.

The solutions

The project:

- has met the challenge of building staff capacity by providing training to countryside staff in disability awareness. Training delivered includes 'Working with Vulnerable Adults' and 'Understanding Barriers to the Countryside' delivered by Shropshire Council Joint Training and Disabled Holiday Information.
- has embedded physical activity within service provision by providing partners with materials and resources such as educational resources, outdoor clothing and mobility aids. Beneficiaries have received mobility aids, waterproof clothing and learning resources and tools.
- provides green physical activities that meet the needs, interests and abilities of target groups by involving supporting staff and project beneficiaries in site visit and taster sessions and providing participants with the opportunity to contribute to the design of the programme.
- has engaged project beneficiaries in regular physical activity by consulting with, and enlisting the support of, partner organisations that were able to actively involve project beneficiaries. This included, for example, the production of 'easy-read' leaflets and consultation on how best to undertake evaluation.

- has promoted involvement in the John Muir Trust Award which encourages individuals to keep a record of their achievements by building up a portfolio, in order to monitor and evaluate the "soft" outcomes of the project. In Year 3, the project will also undertake a series of "video diaries" as a means of capturing the benefits that the project is having on health, wellbeing, social inclusion and the environment.

To date, Shropshire Outdoors has worked in partnership with 15 health and social care organisations from the statutory and voluntary sector.

£17,343 capital has been used to deliver upgrades at sites in Market Drayton, Craven Arms, Whitchurch and Shrewsbury. In Year 3, capital funding will be allocated to sites at St. Martins, Oswestry, Ludlow and Ellesmere.

The results

Project monitoring demonstrates that the project is making a significant contribution towards Shropshire Council Key Performance Indicators and is meeting project outputs contained within the project bid.

The project has delivered 670 physical activity event hours



152 beneficiaries and 17 health and social care staff are engaged in the project

35 beneficiaries progressed into countryside volunteering and services delivering self-guided outdoor physical activities for beneficiaries



37 countryside staff have attended training from Shropshire Council, Shropshire Wildlife Trust, Natural England, The Greenwood Trust and Severn Valley Gorge Countryside Trust

94% of respondents agree that they "feel better" after Shropshire Outdoor activities



76% agree to physical health benefits

70% have responded that they would like to get involved with other activities in the community



In some cases, participants have gained the skills and confidence to progress into mainstream volunteering

Living Well has shortlisted the Shropshire Outdoors Project as one of four projects out of the 30 Living Well projects. It has been put forward for the category of "Best Health project" category



Learning points

The Project has helped to raise awareness about disability by facilitating lasting partnerships between countryside and health and social care organisations.

Consultation with *Taking Part* has shown that the key ingredients to sustaining green physical activity are to provide:

- **Information** - on accessible countryside sites and progression opportunities in countryside volunteering
- **On-going consultation, training and support** - on achievable and accessible countryside activities

- **Communication** - maintaining links between delivery partners and participating organisations
- **Access to transport, materials and resources** - which help to sustain the involvement of participating organisations
- **Strengthening of staff capacity** - some project beneficiaries may require 1:1 support; this can lead to improved understaffing at Day Services

Comment

This project is included for its strong project design, which leads to tangible outputs and outcomes. The process equips providers in a very practical way to successfully enable people with disabilities to access new opportunities - learning is ongoing and leaves a strong (sustainable) legacy. Using social activities as a first vital step, people with disabilities can gain the skills and confidence to begin mainstream voluntary work.

Contact

For more information please go to the [Shropshire Outdoors](http://Shropshire_Outdoors) website or email countryside.access@shropshire.gov.uk. Alternatively you can call 01743 255061.