

## Notes from Employment Group Meeting 2<sup>nd</sup> May 2017

1. The Group received a progress report on the Sheffield Autism Employment Initiatives from Big Ambitions. Points made included:
  - A reminder of the 4 pathways – café on London Road, programmes run by Mencap and AS4E and programme run by Big Ambitions
  - Comment that initially referrals had been low, though they were now picking up
  - Sharing of success stories
  - Sharing of the approach to working with employers
2. There was discussion about other routes including
  - Work Programme and Work Choice, both soon to be replaced by the new Health and Work Programme, though we are still awaiting the details of who the provider for this will be.
  - Providers include People Plus (formerly A4E) Remploy, Work Company
  - Supported Internships for 16-25 year olds offered by Sheaf Training – 50% classroom based and 50% work placement training

CTS Traineeships – pre-apprenticeships through which participants gain basic qualifications

We were reminded that individuals could self refer to the autism specific programmes via the form on the SCC website.

It was generally agreed that the situation was still extremely confusing for autistic individuals themselves. There is work to be done to explain the options in plain English
3. It was reported that increasing numbers of employers were signing up to the Disability Confident Scheme (replacing the earlier Two Ticks Scheme). Most are at Levels 1 or 2 and it was currently unclear what exactly the criteria were for gaining level 3.
4. There was discussion of use of Access funding to pay for in work Job Coaches and the group expressed concern that no retrospective payments could be claimed. In the case of autistic employees this was potentially problematic since crises could arise unexpectedly requiring an urgent visit from a job coach – yet such a visit would not be paid for.
5. We also discussed work trials and the extent to which these were actually leading to jobs, as an alternative selection mechanism, and the extent to which they were simply 'work experience'. BA confirmed that for the majority of the cases they were dealing with these

were real jobs and that work trials were being used appropriately as an alternative selection process.

6. It was noted that The Sheffield City Region has been selected by the Government's Work and Health Innovation Fund, alongside the West Midlands, to design a pioneering health trial. Focusing on mental health and musculoskeletal conditions, the two conditions most commonly reported by those out of work, the pilot will work with local Job Centres Plus and GP surgeries in the region to see how to improve support services. This multi-million-pound, three-year programme to help people who are out of work and struggling to find jobs is being launched in the Sheffield City Region (SCR). On behalf of the SCR, the Department of Work and Pensions is inviting organisations to manage activities for 15-24-year-old NEETs (those not in education, employment or training) or at risk of becoming NEETs. **The project also covers work with people over 19 with 'multiple and complex' barriers to getting into employment.** Among them could be care leavers, young lone parents, ex-offenders or young people with learning difficulties, who are likely to require more intensive and tailored interventions. The Sheffield City Region wants proposals to help these people into education, employment, or self-employment.
7. The group had a lengthy discussion about one member's paper on first steps to gaining employment for autistic adults who have been out of the workplace for many years. It was agreed that it was important for such individuals to have sustained one to one support to take the first steps and that a volunteer mentoring scheme may be appropriate. However, it was also agreed that such mentors should not replicate the sorts of work preparation guidance also currently available through various existing schemes. The author agreed to redraft proposals.
8. A second paper on annotated resources for support with employment was provided but the meeting ran out of time to discuss this, so it will be on the next agenda. In the meantime, members to send comments to the author.
9. It was noted that Universal Credit is being rolled out in Sheffield and that the process is fairly complex for autistic adults. It was agreed that this should also be discussed at the next meeting with a speaker about it invited.
10. The next meeting of the group takes place on Tuesday 4<sup>th</sup> July, 1pm – 2.30pm in the Town Hall Room LG04

Please note that a new Chair for the group is sought and to be agreed from September onwards.