

ELLS(2) 13-06(p5)

Education Lifelong Learning and Skills Committee

A brief description of the Welsh Initiative for Supported Employment

The Welsh Initiative for Supported Employment (WISE Ltd) was established in 1984 by a group of parents of young people who had a learning disability. It was the first supported employment agency to be established in Wales, hence its name. The aim of the organisation, which is a registered charity, a community co-operative and a Company Limited by guarantee is to develop opportunities for integrated employment for people who have a learning disability and provide sufficient support and training for them to achieve the job of their choice. Since 1987 WISE has used the instructional technique known as Systematic Instruction, which provides tailored one-to-one support in the work place by trained Job Coaches, and has found paid employment for hundreds of learning disabled adults. Supported employment is defined as 'real work in an integrated setting with ongoing support provided by an agency with expertise in finding employment for people with disabilities.'

The organisation currently has 17 full time employees and 10 part time staff. The Management Committee of six volunteers includes two parents, who originally set up the organisation and one person who has a learning disability. The Board is assisted by a Social Services observer and calls upon the company's Accountant for financial advice. The agency's structure can best be described as a network, where all parties have input into management decisions. The process of decision-making is managed by the Director who liaises as a team representative with the Management Committee and contracting bodies. The work of the agency covers the geographic area of the City and County of Swansea and the County Borough of Neath Port Talbot.

Currently the core supported employment agency is funded through 3 contracts: Swansea and Neath Port Talbot Social Services Departments and Jobcentre Plus (for the Workstep and Work Preparation programmes). As need has been identified, the organisation has developed additional projects: the Schools Work Project, offers one-to-one supported work experience in the community for young people aged 14 to 18 years and is funded by the National Lottery; Basic Skills classes are funded by ESF; Volunteering and Community Education was funded originally by the Lottery and now by Swansea Development Fund and provides access to local volunteering or community education provision supported on a one-to-one basis for as long as is needed; and the Partnership for Employment project which is funded by ESF gives WISE additional staff resources to work with people who access Day Service provision in Swansea.

In the last 22 years WISE has developed a very good working relationship with Social Services and Jobcentre Plus and has accessed funding from a wide range of trusts and grant-making bodies. Last year our 21st anniversary celebration was attended by over a hundred people, forty of who were local employers.

We have been awarded Investors in People for a third time and recently achieved Level 2 of the

Green Dragon standard in Environmental Management. In September 2004 our agency was inspected by Estyn, Her Majesty's Inspectorate for Education and Training in Wales. WISE was awarded an overall Grade 2 (good features and no important shortcomings) with a Grade 1 for Guidance and Support in employment (good with outstanding features).

Each year we are contracted to work with the following number of jobseekers or clients:

Swansea Social Services Department: 37 new referrals; maintenance for 40+ existing clients; 17 new jobs

Neath Port Talbot Social Services Department: 12 new referrals; maintenance for 10+ existing clients; 7 new jobs

WORKSTEP: 51 placed clients, new jobs to be offered as clients progress.

Work Preparation: 50 jobseekers to undertake supported placements

Personal Development Programmes: 3 groups a year for a total of 20 Jobcentre Plus clients

Schools Work Project: 30 pupils have supported work experience

WAVE: 16 adults to enter voluntary work and/or community education

Basic skills: 35 students will be offered small group tuition at WISE

Clients currently in work = 101 + volunteering: 13

All others (excluding those in work) = 287

TOTAL = 401

Kaynie McClellan

Director

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