

Cynulliad
Cenedlaethol
Cymru

National
Assembly for
Wales



William Powell AM
Chair
Petitions Committee
National Assembly for Wales
Tŷ Hywel
Cardiff Bay
Cardiff
CF99 1NA

12 April 2012

Dear William

Petition from Mencap Cymru – more employment opportunities for people with a learning disability

On 27 April 2010, I wrote to Christine Chapman AM, the Committee's previous Chair, regarding the Petitions Committee's consideration of Mencap Cymru's petition to:

"urge the Assembly Commission and the Welsh Assembly Government to take a lead in employing more people with a learning disability, and to encourage other public sector employers such as the NHS and local authorities to employ more people with a learning disability."

Since that time the Assembly Commission has made a commitment to creating work opportunities for people who may experience difficulties entering employment.

From July 2010 to August 2011, we worked with Gofal to run a pilot supported work placement for an individual experiencing mental ill health. The emphasis of the placement was to provide training and valuable work

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Croesewir gohebiaeth yn y Gymraeg a'r Saesneg/We welcome correspondence in both English and Welsh



experience in order to enable the participant to apply for employment through the usual recruitment channels in the future. Prior to the start of the placement, Assembly staff worked hard to ensure that the placement would be safe, welcoming and effective. We will build upon this pilot to deliver more work placements which will be open to people with a learning disability.

Alastair Howells joined the Research Service for an initial six months from July 2010 following a direct request to our Human Resources Department. Alastair and his support worker initially requested that the placement be unpaid. Alastair was originally referred to the Assembly through the Pathways to Work Project, a scheme that helped people who were claiming Employment and Support Allowance or incapacity benefits to get work. Alastair was subsequently supported by Gofal's Pathways to Employment Project, a scheme which offers one-to-one support to people who have been experiencing mental ill health to take the first steps towards employment.

During this first six months, Alastair contributed to the work of the Research Service by adding to the value and quality of the briefings that were provided to Assembly Members.

The placement was extended for a further six months on a four hour per week and paid basis owing to the fact that Alastair had made considerable progress. Since undertaking the placement, Alastair's support worker has noted that his confidence and social skills have been significantly enhanced. This in turn has had a positive impact on Alastair in terms of his quality of life and his confidence to apply for paid employment elsewhere.

Below are testimonials from Alastair and his support worker on the impact of the placement:

Testimonial from Alastair Howells:

"I got great satisfaction from my work placement. I found the work very interesting. I now feel more confident meeting new people and am able to use this opportunity to build on my skills and social networks. In conclusion I had a great time working with all the staff at the Assembly. It really has been a worthwhile experience and I will take lots away with me. I have found the experience useful for my future career plans."

Testimonial from Julie Rees (Support Worker, Gofal)

"Having worked with Alastair for two years, the positive effect that this placement has had on him on a personal and employability level has been of tremendous value. I can see the huge changes in him: he's far more confident and has gained valuable social and employment skills that will enable him in the future."

The Assembly has also benefited greatly from Alastair's time with us, not only in terms of the work that he has done but also by providing a valuable learning opportunity for staff across the organisation.



We are building upon this positive experience to undertake further paid work placements in the future. The placement will be dependent on the capacity of the service area and the individual's abilities and skills level. If necessary, our HR and Equality Teams will work together with partners to ensure that the person undertaking the placement is supported and empowered to realise their capabilities.

A specific action relating to work placements for people from under-represented groups has been included in our new Equality Plan. Such placements will be available to people with a learning disability. We have recently advertised a work placement for this year with a number of representative organisations, including Mencap.

I am delighted that our work placement scheme demonstrates that the Assembly's petitions process is a valuable contributor to inclusive democracy and we are pleased to be able to provide employment opportunities to people under-represented groups.

If you require any further information please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours sincerely

Claire Clancy

Prif Weithredwr a Chlerc/Chief Executive and Clerk

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cc. Sandy Mewies AM, Commissioner for the Sustainable Assembly