

This report may be of interest to: Economy And Lifelong Learning Committee, Education Committee, Community Committee

The report will also be submitted to the Equalities Panel

## DEVELOPING MORE COHERENT SERVICES FOR PEOPLE WITH LEARNING DIFFICULTIES

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### 1. Purpose

1.1 To provide information about the Council's officer working group on services for people with learning disabilities/difficulties and invite Members to comment on issues they would like taken into account in it.

### 2. Summary

2.1 The paper outlines the actions being taken by officers to try and ensure more coherent services to a particularly vulnerable group within the community.

2.2 The Neighbourhood Services Directorate has appointed an officer – Karen Plunkett - for a six month period to review the services provided by the Council for people with learning disabilities. Karen Plunkett and Deborah Cooper, Economy and Learning Manager, have set up a working group with officers of other Directorates to make sure that the review does not happen in isolation.

2.3 The review is likely to lead to changes in service provision and will be based on the outcome of consultation with a wide range of service users and professionals both within the Council and beyond.

2.4 Some key issues are presented for comment at paragraph 5. Members' views are sought on additional issues that need to be taken in to account.

**3. Recommendations**

3.1 The Committee is recommended to:

- (a) note the work of the officer group;
- (b) comment on other issues that might be taken into account by the group;  
and
- (c) invite officers to report back on the findings of the officer group.

#### **4. Background**

- 4.1 The Neighbourhood Services Directorate has appointed an officer for a six-month period, from January 2000 to June 2000, to review the services provided by the Council to people with learning disabilities. A review of Neighbourhood Services provision was agreed by the Neighbourhood Services Committee in January 2000 (Minute NS 46/00 refers).
- 4.2 The officer appointed, Karen Plunkett, made contacts with colleagues across the Council as soon as she was appointed. As a result officers decided to set a working group to consider all the services that the Council provides to try and ensure that all the Council services worked together to implement the findings of the review. The remit of the group agreed by the officers is attached as **Annex A**. The list of officers involved is attached as **Annex B**.
- 4.3 The working group will have met three times by the time the Community Learning Committee meets. It has identified the range of services that the Council provides and the age range of users of services. The list is attached as **Annex C**. It has also identified the services that will be considered and these are attached as **Annex D**. The scope and range of services, and potential for greater integration is being considered.

#### **5. Issues and Choices**

- 5.1 **Responding to the interests of service users and professionals** The project officer is carrying out consultation meetings with service users and professionals as part of the process of the Neighbourhood Services review. This will lead to a reassessment of the services that are currently provided by Neighbourhood Services. This could also have an impact on the services in all the Directorates.
- 5.2 The findings will be passed through to other services that are currently reviewing services, such as the special educational needs team and the library service. The findings could also have an impact on external bodies such as the new Learning and Skills Council, which is expected to have a responsibility to ensure equality of opportunity for people with learning difficulties among others. Members' views are sought.
- 5.3 **Process for developing services from the review** The review and work of the officer group is expected to be complete by the middle of June. This is too late to have an impact on budget decisions about services to be delivered in the first half of 2000/01, but could have an impact on activity thereafter.

## **6. Implications**

### 6.1 Environmental

One of the aims of the review will be to look at the environment in which people with learning disabilities live.

### 6.2 Equalities

The review generally addresses issues of equality.

### 6.3 Financial

The financial implications of the review will be outlined in the review report. They cannot be quantified until later in the process of developing the Plan.

### 6.4 Legal

The Council has to meet a number of legal obligations in relation to people with learning disabilities/difficulties and these will be addressed in the review report.

### 6.5 Staff and Accommodation

None.

### 6.6 Other

None.

## **7. Conclusions**

- 7.1 The paper outlines the actions being taken by officers to try and ensure more coherent services to a particularly vulnerable group within the community. Members views are sought on additional issues that need to be taken in to account.

Background Papers:           None