

Modernisation & Development Newsletter

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Introduction

This is the first letter from the Modernisation and Development Team, revised slightly from the draft we showed to CLD Teams earlier. Our purpose is to keep you up to date with all the projects we are working on to modernise services in line with the Government's agenda and the principles of Valuing People.

The team comprises:-

Lisa Willcox, Modernisation and Development Manager
Di Button, Social Worker
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In this newsletter we highlight some samples of the work we are doing - future newsletters will provide updates on these schemes and explain other projects in which we are involved. If you would like more information on any of the projects featured, please contact any member of the team.

Learning Disability Bungalows

This is our largest current project comprising 10 new bungalows opening between 2008 and 2009.

Three bungalows have already been built in the south of the District for people with learning disabilities. The first two opened in April last year and each accommodates three young people with complex needs who left children's services and needed a "moving-on"





provision. Staff from Dimensions support the young people.

The third bungalow opened in mid-June and houses three women, some of whom have previously been out of area and looked forward to moving back to Wakefield and renewing their acquaintance with each other. The three are getting on well and have participated in choosing their new support staff, also from Dimensions.

The remaining 7 are nearing completion this spring and are catering for people from out of area, in transition or moving from other residential provision. We had got permission to use the final bungalow as a medium term tenancy to help people develop skills and move on, but it has now reverted to long-term use for a group who needed to stay together in their permanent move.



Tenants and their families have participated in choosing their staff teams and have been consulted at every stage of the process, which has involved bringing together social workers, housing and support providers to work in planning teams to get the bungalows ready.

The values we are working to include maximising dignity, status, choice and community participation in line with Valuing People requirements and these values have been encapsulated in our community engagement document and now form part of Dimensions' induction

Day Opportunities

Like other authorities we are modernising day opportunities for adults with learning disabilities in line with recommendations from Valuing People about people leading ordinary lives in the community.



Holly Street Modernisation

In Hemsworth work has been done to replace the large Holly Street Centre with smaller bases in local areas. This involves refurbishing a unit at Broad Lane, South Elmsall which will be ready in March, and building a new base on the site of the former Kinsley Youth Centre for August. Two new bases have already opened in Featherstone and in Havercroft.

Wakefield Day Opportunities (Waterton House)

In Wakefield a project is underway to build a new base which will be able to offer people with learning disabilities and more intensive support needs appropriate new facilities, so they can move out of their temporary base at Waterton House. The landsite had been identified on the site of Warren Court, but now could revert to Lawefield Lane which is the wish of the majority of staff and carers. Work is continuing on the design of the building.

Apartments to Develop Independence

We were developing a purpose built apartment building in South Kirkby, near the shops and post office in Mill Lane, for adults with learning disabilities. This has currently been put on hold by the developers due to the economic climate, but it is hoped this project could be revived before too long.

When it goes ahead, there will be 6 flats for temporary occupancy during which the tenant will receive support from staff on site to learn skills and develop independence. It is anticipated that the tenancy will last for 18 months to 2 years, to allow the tenant time to develop before moving on to a long-term tenancy elsewhere. In addition to the temporary tenancies there will be 2 ground-floor flats, with gardens, offering a permanent home to 2 people. One of the flats will be adapted to suit the needs of a person with significant physical disabilities, likely to be a wheelchair user.



Employment

The government has set targets for all adults to have access to employment including people with disabilities. We have therefore mapped current employment services and looked at models of good practice to try and establish local employment opportunities. Wakefield is one of a handful of LA's in Yorkshire who has signed up to meet the government targets and will shortly have an Employment Strategy to take this forward, and the Modernisation & Development Team is contributing to the production of this.



Thornes Park Nursery

It is now some years since the nursery at Thornes Park produced the bedding plants for Wakefield District, and the nursery is now dilapidated. This project, working in partnership with Groundworks, as well as the Parks and Environment sections of Wakefield Council aims to restore the nursery to produce bedding plants and vegetables. Phase 1 will provide work-type activity for people with learning disabilities attending Wakefield Day Opportunities. Phase 2 will see the commencement of a social enterprise which will offer the equivalent of two full time jobs to people with learning disabilities. It is hoped to secure bedding plant contracts to expand the project further in the future and create more sheltered employment opportunities.



Shared Ownership

The team is developing its knowledge in this area and hopes to be able to support care management colleagues who want to enable their service users to part-purchase their own home. This is a new initiative which is only just reaching this region so we hope more housing associations will engage with this option locally.

The team is working with one registered social landlord to purchase five flats for identified people who have to move out of their current properties. They hope to be in their newly built apartments in February and will continue to receive support from their current provider.

