Canolfan Cymru ar gyfer Anableddau Dysgu

Welsh Centre for Learning Disabilities

Report on the Situation of People with Learning Disabilities and/or Mental Health Problems in Relation to Lifelong Learning Opportunities in Merthyr Tydfil

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Part 1. Background and Framework for the Review

Section 1. Context and Background to Review

Merthyr Tydfil Borough County Council contracted the Welsh Centre for Learning Disabilities, Cardiff University to conduct a review to identify the opportunities that currently exist for people with learning disabilities and/or mental health problems, to access and progress through life learning routes within the region. The review was called for by the Lifelong Learning Project as part of the feasibility of establishing an integrated and holistic learning provision for Merthyr Tydfil. The contractors requested that the reviewers place an extra emphasis upon people with learning disabilities living within the Borough, based on a number of considerations. Although both of these groups can experience disadvantages in accessing mainstream community activities, the problems facing people with learning disabilities are often more acute, because people with mental health problems are more likely to be able to adapt to life in community settings without continued one-on-one support; are more likely to obtain educational and vocational qualifications; and are more likely to progress within their chosen fields of employment.

This review describes the life-long learning opportunities that exist, the extent that day services are enabling people to access learning opportunities, and the 'readiness' of learning providers to accept and support people with disabilities. This review coincides with the planned Day Service Review, which is currently scheduled to be undertaken. As such, it can provide and opportunity for added value, with the life-long learning review feeding into local day service strategy to increase service user's accessibility and usage of local life-long learning opportunities. It was also agreed that this review should place a particular emphasis on the life-long learning opportunities that exist for people with learning disabilities registered with local day services in Merthyr. The review still has important implications for people with mental health problems, especially those who have a dual diagnosis of mental health problem and a learning disability.

Historically, people with learning disabilities have been among the most disempowered members of our society, experiencing segregation and marginalisation from mainstream community activities[1], high levels of unemployment,[2] and often lead unfulfilled and empty lives void of 'meaningful' and engaging activities[3]. Recently, concern has arisen within the Borough about the extent that this group of adults are accessing and progressing via life-long learning routes within the local community, especially those most disabled, such as those accessing day services through the Sandbrook Day Centre.

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[1] Wolfensberger.W. (1972). The Principle of Normalization in Human Services, Syracuse University Press. Syracuse, New York.
[2] Pathways to Work (2002). Department of Work and Pensions.http://www.dwp.gov.uk/consultations/consult/2002/pathways/pathways.pdf
[3] Beyer, S., Kilsby, M. & Lowe, K. (1994). What do ATCs offer? A survey of Welsh Day Services. Mental Handicap Research, 7, 16-40.

One concept which has been widely used to assess the current situation in day service provision is based around the concept of 'model coherency'.[1] This gauges the extent that service provision is based around activities which could be considered 'typical' in terms of what the majority of the population do during the day. For example, most people work during the day, in paid jobs in community locations, and are taught by experts and co-workers in the job, and are managed by those with supervisory responsibility in the company. Similarly, learning usually takes place in a learning environment such as a college or workplace, with other mostly non disabled students and learners and it typically leads to some form of accredited qualification that is linked to the career aspirations of the learner. A coherent service, therefore, is one which reflects a 'Culturally Valued Analogue' (CVA), representing what is typical and valued by most of us in terms of what we do during the day.

Section 2. The Merthyr Context

Clearly, any recommendations from this review need to reflect the social and economic situation within the Borough. The extent of deprivation in the area is well documented. With approximately 58,500 people it is the smallest unitary authority in Wales and since the loss of coal mining as a primary source of employment, it has also seen the highest rate of population migration, compared to other areas of Wales, estimated to stand currently at 6.2%. Unemployment in Merthyr Tydfil is currently 7.9% (10.6% for males), double the UK average. The Welsh Assembly Government (WAG) has estimated that only 56% of people of working age in the Borough are in employment: the overall Welsh average is 70%. It is also estimated that only 32% of people of working age are in full time employment. In 1996, Merthyr was first in degree of poverty amongst Welsh Unitary Authorities.[4] [5]

In educational terms, Merthyr also experiences a number of social problems, with many members of the local community feeling alienated from mainstream academic and career progression routes. This is evidenced by the fact that Merthyr ranks 19th of the 22 local authorities in Wales in terms of achieving academic and skill-based qualifications. In 2001, the percentage of adults with no qualifications stood at 27%, compared to 21% nationally. Merthyr also has one of the highest rates of adult illiteracy in Wales, and it is estimated that as many as 33% of the population experience difficulties in basic reading and writing. The Borough has the third highest rate of criminal offences in Wales. Approximately 20% of the population have a long-term illness. Thirty-four percent of the working age population is classed as being economically inactive, this representing highest level of economic inactivity in Wales.[6]

The levels of deprivation in Merthyr may have a number of adverse effects when trying to develop life-long learning opportunities within the Borough for the client group. The culture of alienation and disengagement that exists within some communities in Merthyr, coupled with the low rates of academic attainment can reduce the expectations within

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[4] National Statistics, Census 2001.
[5] National Assembly for Wales, 2005, http://www.wales.gov.uk/keypubstatisticsforwales/
[6] Analysis of the Merthyr Tydfil 11 to 25 Learning Network, 2004.

families that their disabled son or daughter can progress into life-long learning opportunities to attain qualifications or develop skills that could enable them to progress into work. Similarly, the high levels of unemployment, coupled with the dependency of many on welfare benefits, can make families hesitant to pursue learning opportunities and a job. The extent of deprivation within the area has led to the introduction of a variety of community projects, funded through a combination of the European Social Fund (objective 1), and centrally funded initiatives through the WAG's 'Regeneration' scheme, the 'Communities First' initiative.[7]

Population of Client Group in Merthyr Tydfil
The population in Merthyr is around 58,000 people. If national predictions, based upon epidemiological norms are taken into account, then the predicted number of people with learning disabilities living in the Borough would be 1,740 people of all ages and with differing degrees of disability (3%).[8] Individuals with mild learning disability represent the largest proportion of this group (approximately 2.5% of the total population); moderate learning disability involves approximately 0.4% of the population, and severe and profound levels combined account for approximately 0.1%. Given these percentages, then we can predict that approximately 1,450 individuals with mild disabilities, 232 with moderate levels of disability and 58 individuals characterised as having severe and profound disabilities within the region. It is those individuals who have a moderate to severe disabilities who give the greatest cause for concern. Many people classified as having only a mild learning disability, are less dependant upon day services for provision, and have more opportunities to access mainstream learning and employment opportunities, compared to those with higher levels of disability.

Local Priorities for Learning
Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council, have a set of planned priorities, reflecting Central and WAG initiatives for adult life-long learning. The primary aim is to increase the potential for adults to have ongoing access to education and learning programmes in order to increase or diversify their skills, so that they are more able to meet the changing demands of local and national employers. Although the primary focus is upon raising literacy and numeracy skills, there is an increasing tendency to also focus upon ICT skills and an acknowledgement that there is a range of learning environments across a wide number of skill areas.

The National Institute of Adult Continuing Education (NIACE) employ the following definition of life-long learning:

"All learning activity undertaken throughout life with the aim of improving knowledge, skills and competencies within a personal, civic, social and / or employment-related perspective". [9]

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[7] Welsh Assembly Government (2005) www.wales.gov.uk/themessocialdeprivation/
[8] Fryers, T. (1993). Epidemiological thinking in mental retardation: issues in taxonomy and population frequency. Research in Mental Retardation, 19, 97-123.
[9] The National Institute of Adult Continuing Education - England and Wales (2002) A memorandum for life-long learning- www.niace.org.uk/Organisation/advocacy/memorandum/Default.htm.

The basic principle underlying these initiative focuses on person centred approaches to provisioning with unified aims and assessment criteria, flexible enough to meet individual needs, joint working and partnership in planning across local authorities, health organisations, the voluntary sector, service users and carers. There is also an emphasis upon transition, aspiring to achieve a smooth interchange for learners moving between service boundaries and sectors, in community living and in accessing the local wider community.

These aspirations are echoed by the corporate goals of the National Council for Education and Training for Wales (ELWa), which focus on developing essential skills, creating life-long learners, developing the ability to apply knowledge, encouraging learners and industry to work more closely together, and the development of learning communities.[10] They also identify a number of cross-cutting themes including sustainability of growth, equal opportunities, bilingualism and social inclusion.[3.] The touchstone for the development and co-ordination of the life-long learning approach in Merthyr is the Community Consortium for Education and Training (CCET). This brings together a number of key representatives focussing on 7 key areas of service development. These are:

- Skills for Business
- Learning through the Outdoors
- Work Based learning
- Arts, Media and Culture
- Further Education
- 16- 19 Learning Provision
- Adult, Community Learning

This review also needs to take account of the extent of employment provision for people with disabilities in the Borough. There are a number of reasons for this. 'Progression' forms one of the key themes of the review, and is ultimately gauged by the potential of learning experiences to lead to career development and progression into paid jobs. Career progression can also be viewed as an interplay between the demands of an ever changing labour market and the potential of life-long learning routes to support learning activities that can prepare people to meet those demands.

National and Local Policy Context
The extent that the aims of central policies are being achieved for the client group, is a primary focus of this review. The broad perspective highlighted in the definition for life-long learning suggests that learning opportunities should be extended to include the current day service provision offered to the client group. The activities undertaken within the day services, as well as the way that the service is positioned in terms of partnership working with other organisations to create progressive links into a wider, more

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[10] ELWa – National Council Corporate Strategy - April 2004.

community-based learning activities, is, therefore, of central importance. Specific policy frameworks have emerged with this in mind, including WAG initiatives, such as those recommended through the advisory committee for the "Fulfilling the Promises" strategy.[11] These stress the need to develop provision for people with learning disabilities that is client-focused, accessible, and flexible, and the need to develop procedures that make opportunities for learning and progression a greater possibility. The WAG states:

"People with Learning Disabilities should have equal access to government or other training schemes and other educational or life-long learning opportunities where this would help their personal development, career opportunities or to secure employment."

Similar concerns are expressed in the Social Services Inspectorate for Wales (SSIW), which recommends that within Merthyr *"the social services department should complete the implementation of the review of daytime activities so as to extend and improve employment, education and leisure opportunities for people with learning disabilities"* [12]

The SSIW places an emphasis on implementing support that is more conducive to enabling people direct access to integrated community activities. The framework also stresses the need to tailor approaches to be more responsive to change in local economic and employment conditions, so that any progression can be economically sustained and developed over time. This entails developing services for people with learning disabilities which enable them to develop skills that are useful to themselves and the community, and which break down the barriers that prevent them from accessing learning opportunities and obtaining paid work. The key touchstones of the document are full active citizenship, equal in status and value to other citizens of the same age. The central theme is one of 'equality' for people with disabilities and is stressed through the follow bill of rights:

The clients should have:
- *"an equal right to expect a high quality of life - in practice this means having exactly the same expectations of decent health, education, housing, safety and financial security, protection from harm, positive social relations and roles within family and community, employment opportunities, personal development, emotional well-being and civic rights;*
- *a right to decide for themselves and to join in all decision-making which affects their lives, with support if necessary;*
- *access to the support of their families and the communities, of which they are a part, and to general and specialist public services to improve their chosen quality of life."*

The SSIW make eight recommendations. These include the local authority proceeding with its objectives to develop a 5 year social care plan involving relevant stakeholders in policy development; complete the implementation of a review for day service provision so as to extend and improve the access of people with learning disabilities into education,

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[11] Learning Disability Advisory Group Report to the National Assembly for Wales (2001); Fulfilling the Promises, Proposals for a framework for services for people with learning disabilities.
[12] Inspection of Services for Adults with Learning Disabilties in Merthyr Tydfil. SSIW (2005).

employment and leisure activities; produce information in a number of formats so as to improve accessibility of information regarding policy for service users, family and other stakeholders; and the implementation of a transition policy to improve life chances of the client group at an earlier age.

The initiatives outlined above display much content overlap to those developed to guide mental health services, suggesting that access to centrally organised daytime learning provision, and accompanying employment related outcomes in many instances might be barred. The WAG document Adult Mental Health Services – A National Service Framework for Wales (2002) provides guidance for the provision of services for adults aged 18 to 65 who experience mental health problems in Wales. The framework builds upon the core themes of the Adult Mental Health Strategy for Wales, which stressed 'equality', that people with mental health problems should have access to services whatever their background or mental health problem; 'effectiveness' of intervention and the improved quality of life of the person; 'empowerment', the approach should be person centred and involve the active participation of the client; 'efficiency', that the services from health, social services, the voluntary and private sectors should work more closely together to improve cost efficiency and value for money. It should be noted that the minimum school leaving age for people with learning disabilities is usually 19 years, compared to 16 years for non-disabled school leavers. Therefore, the post-16 specification for this review will focus on the transition procedures starting in the local special school and identify how these procedures link into life-long learning opportunities at the point that the clients are referred to day services.

The WAG document "Stronger in Partnership" reinforces these last two themes and provides guidance for involving the person in the design, planning, delivery and evaluation of mental health services in Wales. The framework provides the following eight key standards:

1) Promoting social inclusion
2) Empowerment and support of service users and carers
3) Promotion of opportunities for a normal pattern of life
4) Commissioning equitable, accessible services
5 & 6) Delivering responsive, comprehensive services
7) Effective client assessment
8) Ensuring a well-staffed and supported workforce

The frameworks and guidance set by local and national policy initiatives, such as those just outlined, provide valuable yardsticks against which to gauge the current situation in the Merthyr Borough. However, there are other yardsticks that have proven validity, within the field of service provision for people with learning disabilities. These include the model coherency typified in approaches from the 'normal lives movement' and typified in the concept of Social Role Valorisation (SRV). As mentioned this provides us with the concept of a Culturally Valued Analogue (CVA) whereby we can judge the success of human services against how well they provide daytime activities that we as 'normal' and 'valued' members of our society typically undertake. In reality, human

services have seldom been able to deliver this expectation for people with learning disabilities and/or metal health problems. However, recent policy initiatives may have progressed support towards these aims. Clearly, the potential that human services have to fulfil these requirements largely depends upon the extent that these opportunities exist for people with disabilities; the extent that people are able to make choices built upon informed preferences of what potentially could be available and achievable in their lives; and the expertise to deliver hands-on support where it matters within ordinary community environments.

One final document that provides guiding principles within the field of learning disabilities is John O'Brien's 'Framework for Accomplishment' (1991). This suggests that services should aspire to deliver the five accomplishments in people's lives, and the extent of their delivery can be used as a gauge of the success of service delivery. These are being present in the community, relationships with disabled and non-disabled people, growth in competency, valued status and expressing choices.

Section 3. Review Questions

The review will focus on four main service areas, and the interplay between them, in terms of enabling the client group to access life-long learning routes in Merthyr:

1) Learning opportunities, as they exist in local day service provision for the client group.
2) Learning opportunities, as they exist through the formally established routes of local colleges.
3) The extent that less formal learning opportunities exist for the client group (e.g., through local community projects).
4) The extent that all these routes have the potential to allow the clients to progress their careers through employment.

The review will also highlight the current opportunities and services that exist for post 16 year olds in Merthyr Tydfil with a learning disability to encourage their life-long learning and progression into integrated community activities (e.g., paid and unpaid work, independent living and/or continued progressive life-long learning opportunities). In line with the tender brief the investigation will focus on the following areas:

a) What are the current funding levels and sources for funding activities for people with learning disabilities and how is this funding distributed across the types of opportunities offered to them.

b) The investigation will identify the type and profile of activities that exist within Merthyr for people with learning disabilities within the formal and informal further and adult education sectors and specialised services for people with learning disabilities. The profile will include activities offered by services from the education, employment, leisure and health oriented sectors.

This will allow the investigators to describe the balance of learning opportunities offered within Merthyr to people with learning disabilities, identify any gaps in

service provision, provide indications of the financial cost implications for each type of service, gauge the appropriateness of the current balance of activities against current local priorities, and provide an indication of the extent to which current activities are enabling progression.

The activity profile will include identification of any learning opportunities arising from therapeutic, leisure and arts activities; work oriented activities such as supported employment; work experience activities; work-based learning; and the extent that Information Technology is being used as a teaching and planning tool within each service sector.

c) The quality assurance mechanisms used within the activities will be identified, as will the ways that services measure the achievements of people with learning disabilities and the criteria used to gauge the success of the learning provision. These will be described and analysed to determine the extent that the quality systems used encourage progression.

d) Benchmarks shall be established to compare the current situation in Merthyr Tydfil with other Unitary Authorities in Wales and the UK, some, of which will be recognised leaders in life-long learning initiatives. The benchmarks will be established by identifying areas of good practice that exist with the UK and Welsh national boundaries. This will include research findings from NIACE as well as other documented examples of good practice that include work based learning, and curriculum development within the UK. The benchmarks will be used to identify areas of strengths and weaknesses within the borough, and identify good practice case studies.

e) The management arrangements within each service area will be identified. An analysis of the structures can be compared to benchmarks. Areas of good practice can be identified and potential areas for increased collaboration, cross- service development, and partnership working will also be highlighted.

f) The marketing methods employed within each service area will be identified within the overall management structure of each organisation. This will allow an analysis of the target population in terms of geographical boundaries, the type of people being targeted, and the extent that the methods of marketing cater for those who find it difficult to understand and interpret information communicated through mainstream marketing techniques (e.g.. written and spoken English and bilingualism for Welsh language speakers).

g) The investigation will ascertain the type and nature of support provided to the service users, through formal and informal routes. This will include the nature and type impartial advice, tutoring, and supervision and support procedures across an array of education, employment, and other relevant life-long learning opportunities. This will allow the investigators to identify any gaps that exist in

the areas of support being offered, and to determine the extent that the advice and support offered through the different agencies compliment each other.

h) Gaps in service provision will be identified and described against a number of criteria specified in the methods section, including the extent of provision relative to the number of people using each of the services as a whole; in relation to the number of Welsh language speakers; in relation to the aspirations and plans outlined in local and government policies; and in relation to cutting edge research and good practice benchmarks. The analysis will allow the investigators to make substantive predictions and recommendations for re-provisioning and reallocation of existing and new resource and to present the potential costs and benefits of encouraging greater uptake of life-long learning opportunities.

i) The investigation will report on the extent that the different service sectors are working in partnership with each other, and with other organisations and services set up to provide direct support, or provide generic services that could potentially be of benefit to people with learning disabilities in Merthyr Tydfil (e.g, college services, health services, employment services, parent organisations, local employer forums and day services,. The analysis will allow the investigators to describe examples of good partnership working as well as areas for potential development based on benchmarking, the research literature, and the views and opinions of local stakeholders.

j) The investigation will identify the barriers that prevent people with learning disabilities accessing learning opportunities and routes for progression as perceived by the main stakeholders and identified as gaps in the service provision. The analysis will allow the investigators to describe the barriers and offer recommendations based upon the views and opinions of the stakeholders. Areas of good practice will be identified in relation to government initiatives, the research literature and benchmarks.

k) The investigation will identify the physical environments in which the various activities are taking place. The quality of these environments will be will be gauged in terms of how conducive they are to promoting a good learning environment for learners with a learning disability.

The review will provide recommendations to inform a business plan for developing a life-long learning campus and for the future development of day service for the client group.

Section 4. Review Framework
From the above it is possible to derive a number of common themes that can provide a framework for this review. These cut across the three key areas identified so far: life-long learning through accredited and non-accredited courses; the extent of learning and progression opportunities offered through current day services; and the opportunities to

develop a wider learning campus for the client group, through local community initiatives and organisations.

1) Transition

This theme uses the life-long transition points and processes that lead to life changing events. Typically, these include the transition from school into further education and alternative learning opportunities into work. Those working within the human service field have tended to concentrate on the 'school into adulthood' transition procedures. Research has shown that an investment of resource during school years can greatly assist an individual to achieve a smoother transition from childhood into adult life. Other current transition areas within the learning disabilities field are the transition from day centre to education and/or employment. Research indicates that the key target areas are increasing teachers, parents and carers and the child's expectations about what they can potentially achieve when they leave school; develop person centred approaches which enable the child to become the driving force behind making important life changing decisions; and developing transition plans which include input from teachers, potential employers and care managers and the parents and carers.[13]

2) Progression

For the purposes of this review, progression can be viewed as the positive movement through the transition points towards attainment of personal goals and aspirations. This can relate to a number of areas including: the attainment of NVQ on successful completion of a course and/or gaining access to work-based learning in order to develop choice around employment. Clearly attainment on its own is insufficient. If services are succeeding in enabling progression one would expect to see the movement of people gaining qualifications into paid jobs that suit their qualifications; movement from one college course onto another course to attain a higher qualification; movement from a day centre into a college to learn basic skills; and the movement of people from college to use their newly acquired skills in integrated community activities including work, art, leisure and recreation.

Progression has tended to be measured in so called 'hard' (e.g. numbers progressing into work, or, onto new courses) and 'soft' outcomes (e.g. increased independence in daily living, or/and, increases in self-esteem, due to the completion of a basic skills course).[14] The review will also look at distanced travelled, both in terms of the progress that services have made in structuring support to enable progression, and in terms of the links and cross-service collaboration that exists to enable progress to occur across service boundaries (e.g. education, day services and local community projects).

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[13] Martin, J.E., Huber-Marshall, L & Maxon. P. (1993). Transition policy: infusing self-determination and self-advocacy into transition Programs. <u>Career Progression for Exceptional Children,</u> 16, 53-61.
[14] Dewson, S; Eccles, J; Tackey, N and Jackson, A. (2005) Measuring Soft Outcomes and Distance Travelled: Review of Current Practice. Department for Education and Employment, Research report RR219.

3) Integration

For the purposes of this review an integrated setting is one where the proportion of disabled to non-disabled people is less than 1 in 6. Day centres are, by their very nature, segregated settings, as are, for example, sheltered workshops. By this definition, individual activities are favoured over group activities, which, even though they often take place in the community (e.g. a group of clients in a classroom in the college, or, a arts and crafts group within the Neighbourhood Learning Centre) are by their nature congregated services. Group activities of this sort have been criticised for creating a negative image of people with disabilities by drawing negative attention from their non–disabled peers.[15] Research has also shown that organising groups of this nature can create barriers for social interaction between the disabled group and their non-disabled peers and often hinder learning potential of an activity. The yardstick of a progressive learning agenda is that it is moving towards mainstream activities, where the clients are supported, where possible, through 'natural supports'.[16] Where this is not possible, the use of peer supports, resourced through a diverse funding source to support the person in mainstream learning and employment opportunities may need to be considered.

4) Representation, Consultation and Empowerment

For the purposes of this review, consultation and representation are defined as the extent that service users and (where appropriate) carers and parents are involved in the strategic planning and development of services. Historically, day services have been criticised for compromising the needs of the service users with the needs of the service providers and funding bodies.[17] Specifically, 'representation' and 'consultation' in this review refer to the extent that clients and parents/carers opinions are represented in the planning and delivery of services. Research has shown that if the consultation and representation procedures are effective then the service options available to service users become more diverse and tailored more successfully to meet a variety of individual needs and requirements, including the development of a diversity of learning opportunities.

Research has also shown that the engagement of parents, especially those of a younger age, is crucial for taking the modernisation of day services forward, and that there are advantages and added value in creating effective procedures to allow the personal aspirations and interests of the clients to feed into care plan packages. This will also have a direct bearing on the types of learning opportunities favoured by the service users, which compliment personal and career aspirations. The review is also interested in the extent that those responsible for delivering services are represented in the planning process. As with parents, deliverer's involvement is a crucial part of a joint planning approach, in order to take account of the staff's expectations, opinions, current skill areas and expectations towards learning and work outcomes.

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[15] Wolfensberger.W. (1972). The Principle of Normalization in Human Services, Syracuse University Press. Syracuse, New York.

[16] These are non-disabled co-workers, peers, students, supervisors and other potential sources of support that exist within a learning or employment setting.

[17] Closing the Shop (1995). Stephen T. Murphy and Patricia M. Rogan. Paul H. Brookes Publishing Co., PO Box 1624, Baltimore.

The term 'empowerment' refers to the extent that the clients, carers and day service providers are provided with the information and means to become an effective contributor in the planning process. This can also be extended to local community projects, the college, local employers, and those running local leisure and sports facilities. It should be noted that, while for most of us our choices are based on an awareness of the options that are available to us and a knowledge that making choices will lead to changes in personal circumstances, many of the clients will have a limited awareness of the potential options available to them outside of those currently offered through the day services. A coherent approach to day service provision needs to reflect the wide diversity of opportunities that exist within the local community and extend beyond those activities currently offered through day services. Indicators of good practice in this area includes the extent that Person Centred Planning (PCP) is being employed; the extent that the options available to service users reflect their diversity of needs and aspirations (individualisation); and the extent that the service users, parents/carers, and those providing service, feel their opinions and views are being listened to and acted upon.

5) Accessibility

For the purposes of this review, accessibility refers to the extent that the activity settings are congenial for people with learning disabilities and mental health problems on a number of levels. These are as follows:

- The extent that a setting is accessible for people with physical disabilities
- The extent the activities are accessible to Welsh Speakers with a disability in Merthyr.
- The extent that the materials used in the setting are accessible. This includes the accessibility of software used in IT activities and the extent that signs and written materials are adapted to accommodate people with learning disabilities.
- The extent that marketing procedures and materials are adapted to be accessible to the client group. This includes the way that materials are presented and adaptation of procedures for presenting and selling the organisation to different sectors of the community.
- The extent that the activity setting can be said to be a learning environment. This includes whether or not the type of support offered through the organisation is conducive to the specific learning requirements of people with a learning disability and/or mental health problems. It also refers to the extent that the environments of the different service settings are conducive to learning. Clearly, formal college settings can be said to provide a typical learning environment, aimed usually at accredited learning routes and with support from tutors specialising in certain topic areas (e.g. basic adult literacy and numeracy skills and computer skills). The extent that these aims are fulfilled within the day service context and within alternative community projects is important in determining the extent that these environments are contusive to learning.

6) Extent of 'Meaningful' Engagement in Activities

This theme includes whether or not the activity produces a outcome which is coherent in terms of age-appropriateness; the extent that the activity can reasonably be expected to lead to progression for the individual; the extent that the activity enhances the image of

the person in question; and the extent that the activity is undertaken on the basis of individuality, rather than generic needs of the group or those of convenience for service provider.

7)   Accreditation

This theme aims to focus attention on the extent that the activities offered to the client group are accredited though formal qualifications such as OCN (run in Merthyr College from level 1 to 4), work-based assessments, such as National Vocational Qualifications (NVQs); the Duke of Edinburgh Award Scheme (DofE); City and Guilds and Modern Apprenticeships. Given that many of clients would struggle to obtain accredited qualifications above the basic entry level 0, other forms of assessment aimed at identifying the skills learned by the clients may also need to be considered. These may include the development of a C.V, or the development and implementation of a learning strategy to improve basic skills. Other methods for developing progression routes based on alternative accreditation include the implementation of vocational profiling procedures,[18] records of attainment to plot the skills learned during course of activities, and the development of 'Life-stories'[19] to develop IT skills and provide a focus for future planning.

8)   Assessment of Needs, Care Planning and Referral Procedure

Clearly, the care planning and referral procedures employed in the borough can play a crucial role in determining which clients gain accesses to the opportunities for life-long learning and in identifying each client's likely support requirements in doing so. The review will seek to ascertain the extent that the wishes and opinions of the carers and parents feed into the planning procedure; the extent that care plans reflect a diversity of individual needs and aspirations, including the flexibility of the service to respond to the range and diversity of individual support requirements. The review will also identify the extent that care plans are developed over time to reflect changes in individual circumstances and aspirations**.**

The care management procedure in operation in Merthyr currently reflects the Welsh Assembly Governments 2002, "Creating a Unified and Fair System for Assessing and Managing Care". This guidance issued under "Fair Access to Care Services", which outlines the eligibility criteria that all social care services must follow when making decisions about who is and who is not eligible to receive a social care service following assessment. At the time of this review these procedures were being introduced modified and updated to take account of local circumstances. As the care management procedures stand, once a potential need for services has been identified a comprehensive needs assessment takes place. These needs assessments are conducted by the care managers in

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[18] A method associated with supported employment, for collecting information about client preferences for work. It also provides a pen picture of the abilities of each individual, based on ecological assessment of performance in naturalistic settings, (e.g., work based learning). This increases the potential of finding jobs that suite/match individual choices and abilities.

[19] A method associated with PCP. It involves the individual developing a presentation, usually through IT, to provide a description of their life story by identifying the main stages and interests in their lives to date.

consultation with parents, the user, and where necessary, Occupational therapists, Community nurses and Psychiatrists.

The current eligibility criteria, as defined by Merthyr Borough is dependant on the extent an individual needs are in relation to their risk to loss of independence as laid out in Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council's Unified Assessment Eligibility Criteria 2005. The Borough's current threshold s for meeting an individuals need is above moderate. The assessment process records the carer's perspective and where agreed will trigger a carers assessment. The assessment information forms the basis of the care plan which is agreed by all major stakeholders, including the parents/carers and the user. Provider service plans are then developed, against a specified set of aims and objectives. The guidance specifies that the care plans should be updated and monitored to identify changes in individual needs, and to determine if the aims and objectives of the care plans are being met. In situations where the needs of the users are deemed as not being met, then providers are encouraged to adjust the service provision and record and notify those involved in the care planning process.

9) Partnership Working
This theme covers the extent that the different service sectors have established working relationships that improve the accessibility of progressive learning and career oriented activities. Partnership working is indicated by the extent that each service area contributes to a collective set of aims for the client group, and the degree that each organisation is situated in terms of delivering different aspects of the overall service. This includes established procedures for enabling access to formal and informal learning opportunities, paid employment options, and the extent that services enable general progression into community based activities to build up confidence and develop community-based skills and networks, such as voluntary work through Voluntary Action Merthyr Tydfil (VAMT).

Section 5. Review Methods
Identification of Key Stakeholders
A Steering Group was established to oversee the development of the review. This group provided an induction day for the reviewer during which the aims of the review were confirmed and a list of main stakeholders involved in providing life-long learning opportunities was produced. This included schools, colleges, planning departments attached to the council, those involved in delivering day services, and an array of community projects, funded through a variety of funding sources. The list also included contacts for local mainstream community projects, provided through European objective 1 money, and centrally funded initiatives through the 'Regeneration' budget such as those funded under the 'Communities First' initiatives. Although these projects were not set-up with people with disabilities in mind, they can be seen as presenting potential opportunities for establishing a wider portfolio of learning opportunities, and an increased diversity in daytime provision within more localised community mainstream settings. A sample of key stakeholders was selected to form the basis of a series of interviews. This list is presented in Appendix 1.

Interviews, Focus Groups and Observations.

Appendix 1 summarises the extent that interviews, focus groups and observations took place during the review. It shows that the reviewer undertook 27 in-depth semi structured interviews. The average duration of the interviews was one hour and ten minutes, ranging from 45 to 120 minutes. The interview format is presented in appendix 2 and was developed to focus attention around the areas identified in the policy framework documents. Eight interviews were conducted with senior managers representing local council and centrally funded organisations such as the co-ordinator of the life-long learning project, a service manager for day services, and 2 senior day service officers working within the new unified assessment framework.[20] Interviews were also conducted within organisations funded by public charity donations including representatives of People First, through the self-advocacy movement, and three parent advocates of people with severe disabilities attending the local day centre.

The reviewer also conducted 4 interviews with senior managers within the education sector including 2 interviews with course organisers in Merthyr College and a Business Development Manager at Biz Inc, which is a community based subsidiary of the college. An interview was also conducted with the Head Teacher at Greenfields Special School to identify some of the issues relating to the transition of people with learning disabilities from school into adult services.

The reviewer also conducted interviews within organisations that focussed on employment outcomes. These included Elite Supported Employment Agency, providing specialised one-on-one support to people wishing to access integrated paid employment; An Operational Manager of Career Wales; Merthyr Tydfil Institute for the Blind (MTIB), as the main WORKSTEP provider in the Borough and offering a number of sheltered workshop opportunities for people living within and outside of the Borough. This icludes activities such as making garden furniture and accessories, and the production of upholstery buttons. The Institute employs 56 individuals, 48 of who are described as having a mixture of disabilities. It is estimated that bout 10% of the workforce have what is described as a mild learning disability.

The Social Economy Development Manager responsible for co-coordinating the study examining employment opportunities for people with learning disabilities within the Borough was interviewed, as were Day service employees, including two Senior Team Leaders, operating from Sandbrook Day Centre and the old Ty Gwyn Centre, and the co-ordinator of the Coed Dderwyn Joinery, which although currently non operational, used to provide sheltered work experience in a joinery and woodworking workshop. A focus group was also conducted with 4 development planning officers operating from within Sandbrook Day Centre.

A Development Officer working within Voluntary Action Merthyr Tydfil (VAMT) was also approached. VAMT is a local charity organisation that has also managed to obtain Objective 1 funding from the Regeneration budget. The organisation offers opportunities

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[20] Inspection for Services for Adults with Learning Disabilities in Merthyr Tydfil (2003). Social Services Inspectorate for Wales

for people to take up voluntary work in order to gain work experience and develop mutual support networks within care sector areas, such as The Elderly, those with Mental Health problems and potentially People with Learning Disabilities. VAMT also co-ordinates a number of forums including a Children and Young People's Forum; an Arts Forum, aimed at raising the profile and developing a co-ordinated approach to arts programmes throughout the Borough; and a Community Transport Forum aimed at developing local driving skills and providing a means of transport for the voluntary activities it runs. The organisation also provides a Life-long Learning Forum, which meets twice yearly to provide an opportunity to respond to the CCET group. Interestingly, VAMT has also developed a Health and Social Care Forum, linking into the Health and Social Care and Well-being Strategy.[21] More recently, the organisation has established a Disabled People's Forum based in the VAMT buildings.

Six local community projects were also approached and interviews arranged. Although these projects sometimes focused on specific geographical locations and age ranges, they have two common characteristics and aims. First, each scheme aims to develop community participation through mutual support and the reengagement of adults and young people through a variety of learning and leisure activities. These aim to develop confidence by offering less formal learning environments than those associated with Schools, Colleges of FE and Universities. Therefore, such projects can be viewed as providing a vehicle for taking the first step forward into life-long learning and career progression routes for people currently considered disadvantaged. The interviews with project leaders aimed to identify the potential for developing mainstream learning opportunities for the client group, and to establish the extent that the projects are accessible to people with moderate and severe levels of learning disability. A full list of Communities First Projects is presented in Appendix 4.

Questionnaires
Those on the stakeholder list who where not targeted for interviews were sent a questionnaire. This is shown in Appendix 3. As with the interview schedule, the questionnaire reflected local and national policy concerns. In total 60 Questionnaires were posted with an accompanying letter of explanation. As of September 2005, 17 had been returned (28%).

Direct Observations
As Appendix 1 shows, observations were conducted in variety of educational, employment and community project locations. This was to determine the extent that the community settings in which the activities were based were accessible to the client group, and conducive to learning for those with moderate and severe learning disabilities. The letters NA denote those settings where observations would not have been relevant, such as council offices which have not been specifically set up as community activity locations.

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[21] Health and Social Care and Well-being Strategy (2004) Merthyr Tydfil Borough Council and Local Health board. www.wales.nhs.uk/sites3/docopen.cfm?orgid=263&ID=41492&E10AF9D8-BABF-4057-8A5240D299B2028F
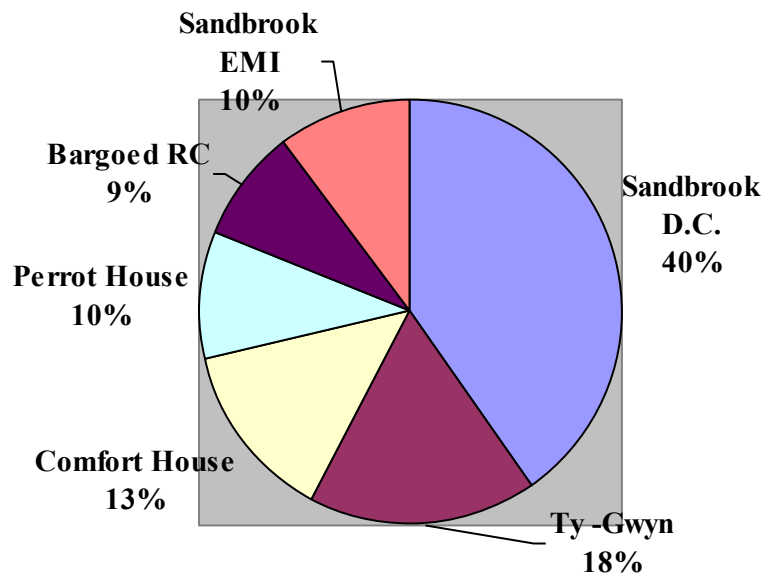
Section 6. Review Findings - Day Services

Description of Services

The main target group for this review are people with learning disabilities attending day services within the Borough, especially those attending Sandbrook Day Centre. Day Service provision is provided for 281 individuals with a variety of support requirements. This is in line with national predictions taken from the epidemiological literature, although Merthyr is reported to have a higher incidence of people with moderate and severe learning disabilities. This also reflects national data, suggesting a link between levels of high deprivation and increases in the proportion of people registered for day service provision. Interestingly, 54% of those registered for day services are female, going against the national trend, where the highest proportion of those with learning disabilities are male (ratio = 1.6).[22]

Figure 1 shows the percentage of all clients accessing day services in Merthyr, broken down by disability type. The largest proportion (40%) are accessing Sandbrook Day Centre, with 13% accessing Ty Gwyn. Comfort House, is set up to cater for people with mental health problems, and caters for 13% of the all clients, with Bargoed Resource Centre, Perrot Street and Sandbrook EMI, catering for older people with disabilities (29% of total population). When broken by age, the majority of those served are between 18 and 64 year old, this representing 57% of all those served and accounting 92% of those served through Sandbrook Day Centre and Ty Gwyn.

Figure 1. Distribution by Service of those Registered for Day Services

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[22] Emerson, E., Hatton, C., Felce, D., & Murphy, G. (2001). Learning Disabilities: The Fundamental Facts. London: The Foundation for People With Learning Disabilities.

Figure 2 shows the main disability type of those accessing services aged between 18 and 64. People with learning disabilities account for the highest proportion of those accessing the services (26%), although it should be noted that as many as half of those accessing Ty Gwyn could benefit from specialised learning disability provision.

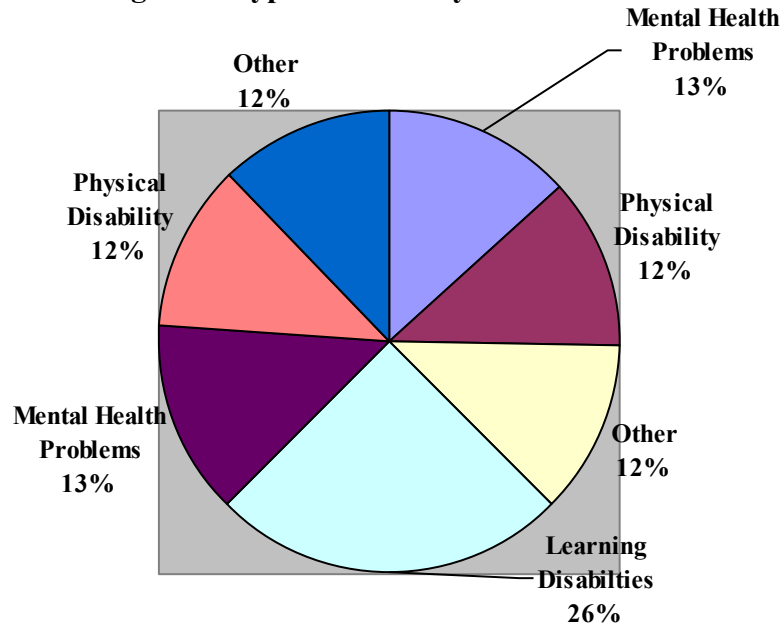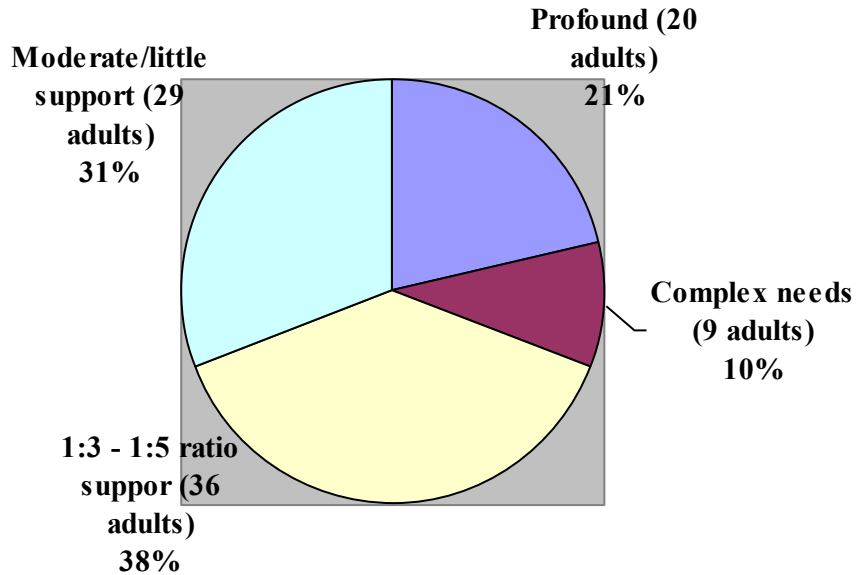**Figure 2. Type of Disability Served**

Figure 3 provides an indication of the levels of support required for those attending Sandbrook Day Centre. It suggests that 31% of the clients (29 adults) require only infrequent or minimal amounts of support, these individuals representing those most able to adapt independently without ongoing one-on-one support in activities. The largest proportion of clients are classified as needing moderate levels of support, requiring staffing/client ratios between 1:3 to 1:5. Figure 3 also shows that over a third of those attending Sandbrook are classified as having severe or complex needs (31%). This is higher than the national average for day centres, which stands at about 24% which may reflect a growing trend for those perceived to be more able to move directly from school into activities provided through the colleges.

Staffing Ratios
Staff to client ratios within the centre currently stand at 1 member of staff to 5.7 clients, when hands on support staff are taken into consideration. Although this reflects the current balance of support requirements of those attending the service, it represents a higher than average client ratio, compared to the Wales figures as a whole in the 1991 survey of Adult Day Centres (ATCs) with 5.1 being the average. This ratio fluctuates and is prone to increases due to staff illness and staff vacation. As of the 3rd August 2005, the ratio stood at 6.4 clients to each member of staff, due mainly to staff illness.

Figure 3. Level of Disability Served in Sandbrook Day Centre

Profound (20 adults) 21%

Moderate/little support (29 adults) 31%

Complex needs (9 adults) 10%

1:3 - 1:5 ratio suppor (36 adults) 38%

Activity Balance

An analysis of the Sandbrook Day Centre Activities Timetable reveals that the centre is operating what Beyer and Kilsby termed as a 'Recreational and Leisure Model' of day service provision.[23] Although some focus is placed upon therapy (Physiotherapy and Rebound therapy), the majority of activities contained in the timetables include Ceramics, Dance, Drama classes, Flower arranging, Crafts and Music. Although some of these activities take place in community settings, most of them take place inside the centre buildings. Although most of the externally located activities currently consist of segregated groups of individuals, (eg, Coed Dderwyn Joinery, Merthyr College, Cyfarthfa Enterprises and the Neighbourhood Learning Centre), some, such as four clients attending Community Education Courses, are integrated and utlise external tutor support. This underlines the potential for linking the activities provided through the Day Centres, with mainstreamed community based educational activities.

The Coed Dderwyn Joinery formed the main employment branch of the day services. This has recently stopped activity and a feasibility study is currently being conducted to progress the service. Through this programme eight individuals from Sandbrook attended the joinery, to learn basic woodwork skills and produce garden furniture for sale in local horticultural retail outlets. The staff client ratio within the joinery stood at 1:8, reflecting the fact that most of those who attended had only mild or moderate disabilities. The joinery had established links with MITB, where supervised groups would attend for a day or half a day a week, and Merthyr College, where some had gone on to obtain an OCN qualification. At the time of this review, a feasibility study was being undertaken to

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[23] Beyer, S., Kilsby, M. and Lowe, K. (1994). What do ATCs Offer? A Survey of Welsh Day Services. Mental Handicap Research , 7 ,16-40.

assess the potential for the joinery to develop into a training centre and intermediate labour market.[24]

The Day Centre has also made formal links with the Merthyr College, with over 30 individuals due to access courses there over the 2005/2006 college year. Two of the courses offered, 'Personal Development' Years 1 and 2 are run in conjunction with the day centre, with centre staff choosing those clients that attend these courses, and offering direct payment to the college to host the course and supply a course tutor. This is encouraging, the college route can be seen as a legitimate and typical route for our clients to increase their marketable skills and develop wider social networks. The day service also has established links with MTIB, and 8 individuals have attended the workshop for a period for one day per week. A further 5 people from the Coed Dderwyn Joinery have also undertaken activities within the workshop for one day a week.

Section 7. Links with Merthyr College

Recently, there have been progressive moves within the college to develop courses aimed specifically at people with learning disabilities under their Basic Adult Education programme. The college also has well-established links with most of the community-based organisations and is generally accessible to people with disabilities, complying to DDA standards. The interviewees within the College and Greenfields Special School, report a good working relationship and there are well established links between the school and mainstream college courses.

Some of the courses offered to the clients are mainstreamed, while others take place within segregated groups (which the college defines as 'discrete' courses). The Learning and Skills Act 2000 requires the National Council to have regard to learners with learning difficulties, and it has a duty to secure: proper facilities for education and training for learners aged under 19; and reasonable facilities for education and training for learners aged 19 and over. Despite of the potential ambiguity surrounding the term 'reasonable', this implies that it is the responsibility of the colleges to provide an appropriate level of assistance to ensure that people with learning disabilities are properly supported while at college. ELWa states:

"ELWa must have regard to the requirements of people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. A learning difficulty is described in section 41 of the Act as being where an individual has significantly greater difficulty in learning than the majority of people of the same age; a disability exists when a learner is hindered or prevented from making use of facilities of a kind generally provided by institutions providing post-16 education and training."[25]

For mainstream courses, the college can apply to ELWa for supplementary support costs, either staff costs (eg, tutor or support worker), or technical costs (e.g. special software, aids and adaptations). This is in addition of the sum provided by ELWa, for each student
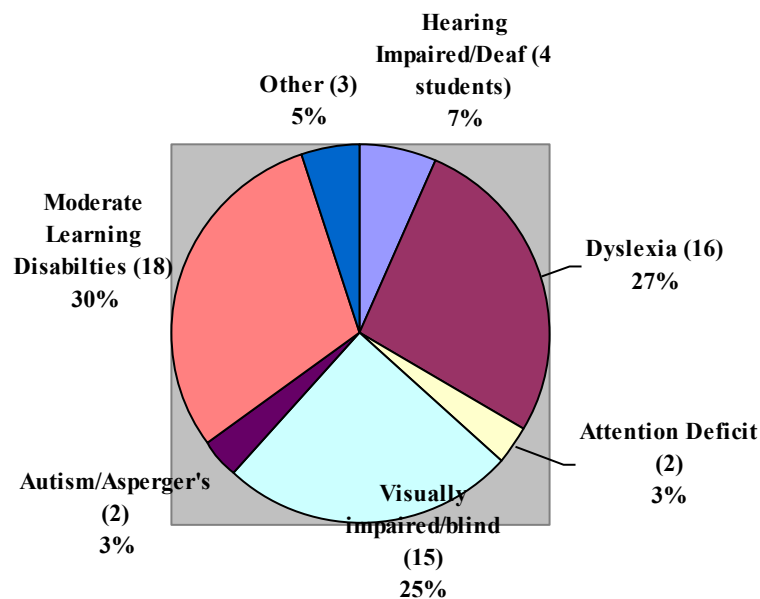
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[24] A congregated sheltered employment option involving the development of a viable business, where the profits are invested back into the business and employees are usually paid a wage.
[25] ELWa website http://www.elwa.org.uk/elwaweb/elwa.aspx?pageid=3962

attending, provided through the Recurring Funding Mechanism[26], based on performance indicators and local demographics. In some circumstances, supplementary support costs applied for by the college, have been calculated on the need for continual 1:1 support. Interestingly, ELWa defines this funding as a method whereby *"institutions may apply for supplementary funding to make mainstream provision more accessible for learners with learning difficulties, and/or disabilities."*[27] This could make it a potential funding source for some day service users. ElWa also pledge to take each case on its merit and it was reported that there are currently no limits imposed upon the extent that 1 to 1 funding is available. Exceptional funding is also available from ELWa. This covers support costs for so-called 'unstructured' time, such as support for an individual over coffee and dinner breaks, and, potentially, utilisation of the Student's Union facilities. This too may be a potential funding source for enabling each client student to more fully integrate into the mainstream social and leisure activities taking place in the college.

The courses offered to the clients through the college are mainly spread across the Merthyr College Campus and the Merthyr Tydfil Institute for the Blind Workshop, although the majority of activities for the client group take place on the college campus. The college caters for people with a range of disabilities. Figure 4 shows a breakdown of the types of disabilities of the students in mainstream college activities. It shows that the largest proportion of students receiving supplementary support are those described as people with Moderate Learning Disabilities (32%). These individuals, however, are likely to be at the milder end of the learning disability spectrum. This is evidenced by the fact that the majority of these students were considered to require only one hour of additional support per week, through the supplementary funding stream, and were accessing, what for many with a learning disability, would be relatively high level qualifications.

Figure 4. Type of Disability Served by Merthyr College Mainstream Courses

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[26] ELWa website NC/C/04/08F - ELWa FE Funding Allocations 2004/05.
[27] ELWa website FEF/CL/04/12.pdf - LLDD Supplementary Funding 2004/05.

The college offers the following courses under its Pre-Vocational and Basic Adult Education Programme which are set at entry Level 0, mainly made up of discrete groups of individuals. Skills Development is a 2 year course comprising 16 hours per week, aimed at teaching students some of the basic skills and to develop their confidence within a number of vocational areas; A Life Skills Course, at 16 hours per week, aimed at discrete groups, to develop independent living skills, self-advocacy and basic personal care skills; A 'New Opportunities' Course, aimed at developing basic numeracy, literacy, computer and communications skills, comprising 16 hours study time per week; A 'Gateway to Further Education' course that is part time at 2 days per week and covers topics similar to the full time New Opportunities Course; A 'Vocational Preparation Course', lasting 2 years at 16 hours per week and aimed at 16-19 year olds who are making the transition from school to adult life. Vocational skills are taught through a number of practical activities including Cookery, Painting and Decorating and First Aid courses.

The College also has a community based business development unit called 'Biz Inc'. This has 3 activity streams. Firstly, an income generation stream, for employers and organisations wanting to up-skill their employees. Second, an enterprises and business start-up programme, aimed at developing entrepreneurship within the Borough. Third, a Work Based Learning Programme, funded through ELWa, based within their Merthyr Offices on the High Street. This offers work-based learning through their high street office for students interested in developing office based work skills, and offering courses on Management and Leadership skills. Biz Inc has as yet developed no formal links with day services for people with learning disabilities in Merthyr.

As mentioned in the previous Section, a total of 33 individuals are scheduled to attend courses within the College over the next academic year. This represents about 1 in 3 of those attending Sandbrook. When the total number of person hours[28] are calculated for those expecting to attend college, then 443 hours are accounted for, this representing approximately 13% of the overall person hours offered within the centre timetable in Sandbrook.[29] This highlights the potential for the college to occupy large numbers of people for relatively long durations during the week.

Figure 5 shows a breakdown of the courses offered within the college as a proportion of person hours, with Work Preparation Year 1 (22%), and Personal Development Years 1 (20%) and 2 (20%) accounting for the largest proportion of course time for the clients. Relatively few individuals registered for day services are accessing mainstream courses. Most are accessing discrete (segregated) courses. Figure 5 also shows a breakdown of the predicted number of those accessing college who attend Sandrook Day Centre for 2005 – 2006, broken by the courses offered.

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[28] Total number of attendees multiplied by the total number of hours attending college
[29] given 100 attendees at 7 hours per day 5 days per week

Figure 5. Breakdown of activities as a proportion of person hours Provided through Merthyr College for Sandbrook clients

Skills development 1 (1 adult) 1%

Skills Development 2 (3 adults) 10%

Personal Development 2 (7 adults) 20%

Work Prep 1 (8 adults) 22%

Personal Development 1 (9 adults) 20%

Work Prep 2 (4 adults) 14%

Lifeskills 2 (2 adults) 7%

Lifeskills 1 (2 adults) 4%

GTFE (1 adult) 2%

The college is also developing links with the local special schools, where those considered to have the ability are accessing college as their first option on leaving school. This is following a national trend, where the college option is becoming a favoured alternative for many leaving school. As has been discussed, in many cases, access to college for many with learning disabilities has been into mainstream courses. These, however, have tended to be those perceived as more able. The local schools and college have also developed partnerships with Elite Supported Employment Service, which runs a work awareness course for 14 to 19 year olds and provides travel training for 4 individuals. More recently, 5 youngsters have received 1 on 1 support in integrated work experience placements, to develop their vocational ambitions and provide observable feedback on the skills and abilities of those clients in real work settings.

Section 8. Progression into Employment

Employment represents the most typical and highly valued daytime activity for the majority of adults in the UK and, despite high levels of unemployment, also in Merthyr. It is also clearly one of the most important progression routes linking learning with career development paths. It may be the case the work itself can be seen as a route to further accredited learning routes. The methods of 'supported employment' have acted as one of the main catalysed for change within Day Services within a number of UK local authorities as well as internationally for a range of people with learning disabilities. Supported employment involves enabling people access to integrated paid work through

a specialised focus on vocational profiling, job matching and employing a systematic approach to fading the support provided in the workplace over time. This focus on 'fading' support makes it a potential source for freeing up resource, while increasing the quality of lives of those of the users/employees.

The potential of the supported employment approach has yet to be realised in Merthyr Tydfil and progression from Day Centre and from College activities into employment are as yet rare. The main provider of supported employment in Merthyr has been Elite Supported Employment Agency, who have managed to secure 8 paid employment opportunities for people with Learning Disabilities, previously or currently registered for Day Services. These include a Lobby assistant in McDonalds, a Kennel Assistant, a Shop Assistant, a Cleaning job and a Production Operator in a factory. All jobs were paid and ranged from 4 to 38 hours per week, although many are limited to 4 hours per week due to their levels of Welfare Benefits, and are among those considered to more able among the day service users.

Nationally, the numbers of clients accessing paid employment has increased significantly with the introduction of the Governments' WORKSTEP Programme. This was introduced in 2001 to modernise their sheltered workshop programme. This offers incentives to brokers, (in Merthyr MTIB) to enable people with disabilities, or those employed within the sheltered workshops, to progress into paid integrated work. It does this by offering incentives to brokers, offering payments on completion of Vocational profiling and Job placement and offers ongoing incentives if the person remains in work for a certain period of time. The MTIB had made formal links with the day service, but these had involved groups of individuals accessing the workshop for limited amount of time. As yet none of clients accessing Sandbrook had accessed the WORKSTEP scheme, although it is possible to gain access without being a workshop employee.

Section 9. Local Community Based Learning Opportunities

Most of the projects in this review are funded through the 'Communities First Programme' which is the WAG's long-term strategy for improving opportunities and the quality of life for people living and working in the most disadvantaged communities in Wales. Such projects, therefore, aim to encourage progression into employment, rather than support people in paid employment. In this sense they are largely geared towards a pre-work approach to progression, with community branches feeding into different business sectors. The projects included in this review were as follows:

1) The Gates Project is run as a subsidiary of Glamorgan University based on the Gurnos estate within the Neighbourhood Learning Centre Buildings. The project offers courses for those aged mainly between 14 and 19 years, but has the potential to provide activities to adult learners. The project provides group activities through structured courses and one-day events. Activities provided include music groups, summer schools, filmmaking, computer assembly and IT skills. Accessibility would be an issue for some with mobility problems. The project has no special provision for Welsh speakers and is partly inaccessible for wheelchair users and those with mobility problems. The project currently

has made no special provision for people with learning disabilities and no formal links with Sandbrook Day Centre.

2) The Neighbourhood Learning Centre, also situated on the Gurnos, is funded through Objective 1 European funding. It covers the areas of Gurnos, Galon Uchaf, Dowlais, Pant and Penydarren, and offers IT skills training, Woodwork and supporting applicants on a one-on-one basis in a number of work placements within community jobs. The Centre also offers Hairdressing and Retail Skills activities, which are carried out within simulated environments within the Centre. The Centre sets targets for numbers of people accessing life-long learning opportunities, which stood at 227 over the 2003 to 2004 period. It also offers advice, guidance and information on life-long learning and career opportunities, boasting 227 local beneficiaries, of whom 18 have progressed into further life-long learning routes such as colleges or into paid work. [30]

The centre has no established formal links with services for people with learning disabilities, although a group of 8 individuals from Sandbrook did attend a segregated Arts and Crafts activity and a smaller group accessed an IT course based within the Centre grounds. The Centre has made no special adaptations to training and materials to accommodate people with learning disabilities. The building does not yet comply fully with DDA regulations and may be inaccessible to some with mobility problems.

3) The 3 G's Project is based in the Gurnos covering New Gurnos, Old Gurnos and Galon Uchaf (the 3 G's). Their aim is to *improve the quality of life for the people living in these areas*; and there is a strong emphasis on community support and involvement. To carry this forward the 3G's set up a place where people could access advice agencies like Credit Union and they work with the community on social projects including developing sports groups and healthy eating and First Aid training. The 3G's also arrange Fun days, including local interest trips and sports trips and produces a newsletter. The project has no established links with services for people with learning disabilities, and currently has made no special adaptations to training, materials and marketing to accommodate people them. Accessibility is governed by the location of the activities, although the main base located in the Gurnos is DDA compliant.

4) The Tydfil Training Consortium (TTC) Ltd was established in 1987 and became a registered charity in 1990. It aims to provide training and employment opportunities for young and unemployed people linked closely to local employer demands. The organisation has grown from employing two people in 1990 to 36 in 1999. It is a provider for ELWa and the Employment Service in the Merthyr. ELWa contracts account for 40 per cent of the organisation's work, and include the delivery of skill build, work-based training for adults, national traineeships and modern apprenticeships. TTC delivers its training through a network of host employers. In November 1999, there were 167 trainees accessing ELWa funded training through the company and 45 local employers were providing work-based training. The three occupational areas highlighted are Business Administration, Retailing and Customer service, and Foundation training for work. The

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[30] Performance MI Neighbourhood Learning Centre – 2003/2004

Centre has made no special adaptations to training and materials to accommodate people with learning disabilities.

5) The GelliDeg Foundation Group operates in collaboration with Oxfam and is funded through the Communities First WAG initiative. The foundation operates local forums for the elderly, runs a women's group and offers workshops including Carpentry and Plumbing, and offers advice for people wishing to reengage in learning and paid work opportunities. The foundation covers about 1,000 households in the GelliDeg area. The Centre has made no special adaptations to training and materials to accommodate people with learning disabilities.

6) The Aberfan and Merthyr Vale Youth and Community Project is a registered charity, which has received funding through the Communities First initiative. It runs various courses including Welsh, Astronomy, Counselling Skills, Sign Language and Art classes. Some of the courses are accredited through City and Guilds Levels 1 and 2. The project also offers basic IT training and has a full time tutor situated within the Megabytes Café complex in Aberfan, which also potentially offers work based learning opportunities. They also offer informal courses and have facilities for developing skills in the areas of Photocopying, Photograph Scanning, Digital Camera Courses, Internet Use, Checking E-Mails, and Poster and Business Cards Design. The Project has made no special adaptations to training and materials to accommodate people with learning disabilities.

Part 2. Emergent Themes and Issues

Section 10. Day Services
Congregation and Segregation

Although the links with the College are encouraging, the activity balance and locations of the activities provided for the client group suggest that it is currently operating an outdated form of day service provision, which falls outside many of the local and national policy frameworks. The service's emphasis on 'Arts and Crafts' activities is typical of services operating in the late 1980s and early 1990's and apart from the withdrawal of the Maxi Pax contract, the balance of activities and the locations in which they take place have altered little since the Welsh Adult Training Centre Review in 1992.[31] This was a consistent theme within the interviews, including the almost unanimous agreement from within the Day Service that things needed to change. The predominance of Arts and Crafts activities in mostly segregated environments, calls into question the meaningfulness of such activities, they are atypical in terms of what most adults do during the day, and they occur in non-naturalistic environments, which offer the clients very little chance of integration into community activities and little prospect in terms of progressing into learning or employment opportunities.

The extent that activities are segregated in the Day Service timetable is also a concern. Apart from a few trips into community locations, on a one-on-one support basis, virtually

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[31] Beyer, S., Kilsby, M. & Lowe, K. (1994). What do ATCs offer? A survey of Welsh Day Services. Mental Handicap Research, 7, 16-40.

all the activities offered through the service take place in segregated locations, mostly within the Day Centre buildings and where they have been externalised, such as in the college, or the Coed Dderwyn, the activities comprise of congregated groups, which create a negative imagery of those participating and has negative effects on the potential of the participants to establish wider social networks and access into mainstream leisure and employment activities. This clearly falls short of the key touchstones in the 'Fulfilling the Promises' document that clients should have access to the support of their families and the communities, of which they are a part and to general and specialist public services to improve their chosen quality of life. It also contravenes John O'briens framework for accomplishment, emphasising community presence, and the Welsh Office's 'Stronger in Partnership' principles that services should promotes social inclusion and opportunities for a normal pattern of life for people with learning disabilities.

Individuality and Meaningful Engagement

The balance of activities offered through the day service and the nature of congregated group activities undermines the extent that the service can claim to be individualised. The options available to somebody accessing the service are severely limited, mainly to Arts and Crafts and congregated college courses. This was a concern expressed by younger parents whose children were receiving special educational provision and were potential day service users. Although having the potential to occupy clients for long periods of the day, the options of perusing a career, and accessing mainstream community initiatives and leisure activities are poorly represented within the day service. This limits individual choices to those on offer from the day service and effectively rules out flexibility in terms of shaping day service provision to meet a variety of needs and choices based upon individualised action plans, with a diversity of activities and opportunities on offer. One result of congregated group activities is that little respect can be paid to differences in individual ability, making the activity less responsive to each individuals learning style.

Progression from Day Services

Most of those interviewed felt that progression from day services into community learning, work and leisure opportunities was poor. There are also currently problems perceived in the progression of individuals on completion of their college courses. This will be discussed in Section 11 and although the Joinery has established links with the College, and encouragingly, some people had achieved accreditation, the joinery has recently stopped operating.

Research has also shown that progression from sheltered workshops, such as the Coed Dderwyn joinery can also be problematic. Although they can develop skills and confidence, the final push into learning and employment opportunities rarely takes place. There are a number of reasons for this including that the skills learned in such places do not reflect a wide enough skills base and that such initiatives will inevitably hold onto people they perceive as most productive, which are more often those who are most able. The challenge for the workshop now is to become part of a varied range of day service alternatives. One route that it is surprising has not been pursued, is the WORKSTEP option, currently available through the MTIB, although, as will be discussed in Section

12 under employment themes, progression of those employed by MTIB into work is also slow.

Progression through the work based learning and community groups is non-existent. In many cases no formal links have been made with these projects and the opportunities they provide for mainstream community participation and learning opportunities may be being overlooked. These projects hold great prospects for mainstreaming into IT courses (The Gates Project, The Neighbourhood Learning Centre, The Aberfan and Merthyr Vale Youth and Community Project), work based learning (The Tydfil Training Consortium, The Neighbourhood Learning Centre, The GelliDeg Foundation Group, The Aberfan and Merthyr Vale Youth and Community Project), leisure and recreational activities (The Gates Project, The Neighbourhood Learning Centre, The 3 G's Project, The Aberfan and Merthyr Vale Youth and Community Project).

The potential to plug into these community-based projects is underlined by the fact that all are philosophically committed to being accessible to all individuals living within each initiative's geographic boundary. Many are also long-term, with the Communities First initiative rolling out over a 10-year period. This may enable the day service and the project teams to develop support mechanisms through partnership working over a sustained period of time. All of the projects run courses and activities aimed at developing basic skills, which although requiring some adaptation for people with learning disabilities, hold the potential to develop basic skills in areas as diverse as basic retail skills, hairdressing and computer literacy.

Most on the projects, had little knowledge of the support requirements of people with learning disabilities and many do not comply to DDA standards, emphasising the need for awareness raising and partnership working between day service staff and the community projects staff. All the projects have the potential for mainstreamed social integration and progression routes through learning and through paid or voluntary work opportunities. They may also provide an observational basis for some form of accreditation and the development of support plans based on direct observation and increased self-awareness on the part of the clients of their abilities and preferences and of the range of options available to them.

Staffing Ratios
Clearly staffing ratios and the high support needs of many within Sandbrook day service are an issue which raised a number of concerns. First, many during the interviews expressed their concerns about the low levels of client engagement in the activities being offered. Given low staff to client ratios and the high support requirements of those accessing the service, it would follow that 'holding' operations (large groups of adults) would be established so that the primary health and safety needs of those with profound disabilities could be met. This has further negative connotations for the meaningful nature of the activity, and the extent that such activities are tailored to individual needs and preferences. The services' use of a pool of casual staff to counter this problem has led to some criticisms. Some working in the Centre felt that this undermined their confidence, and made long-term planning, based on consistency of support less possible.

Concerns were also expressed by staff, especially from those working within the centre, that if staff client ratios fail to improve or get worse, then health and safety concerns of those accessing the service would rise. Interestingly, some staff felt one solution to this problem was to provide a separate form of provision for those most disabled. This had the potential to reduce client numbers, enabling more resource to be focused on those requiring higher levels of support. It is interesting because it mirrors some models of change, where those more able were supported into mainstream community activities involving work paid/unpaid and local leisure and learning facilities, freeing up resource to be redirected as described. It was unclear whether the team felt that the free up of resource implied the reduction of centre based staff to be used in a different role as community facilitators, or, if the freed-up resource would be used to increase staff ratios in Centre based activities. This, it was felt, would largely depend on the eligibility criteria used to determine who was and was not eligible for day service provision.

Learning Environment

As a learning environment the Day Centre scores poorly in most people's opinions and against what constitutes a coherent model of learning. The centre is noisy, many clients are disengaged in the activities being offered, the timetable holds limited scope outside of 'Art and Therapy' activities and some clients wondered haphazardly around the building. The Centre also had no client accessible computer units or Internet facilities. This is a concern given that the Internet is considered by many to be a gateway to the 'outside world', and that computer skills, in general, are considered to be a prerequisite for many leisure and work activities. One option being considered within the day service was to enable a group of clients to access the computer facilities in the local Children's Unit, while this could be seen as a welcome improvement, it conjures up age inappropriate imagery, and limits the potential to develop accessibility through mainstream community links, such as the local library, and many of the community projects mentioned in Section 9.

Low Levels of Centre Staff Morale

Staff morale within the service was generally perceived as low. Many providers in the service felt under pressure to deliver services with what they felt to be too little resource. Staffing ratios were perceived to be at the heart of the problem, with scarce support resource being drawn to those requiring one – to- one support or more, for mostly health and safety reasons, and away from those perceived to be more able and healthy. More recently, the service had come under pressure form parents and the local People First movement to improve the support offered, and increase collaboration, something that the team felt disempowered to respond to. Leadership and strategy planning was also perceived to need improving.

This feeling of disempowerment was also fuelled by the fact that some previous initiatives, set up from within the service, such as those involving the college and joinery had faltered. There was, in general, confusion about how the service should be developed, but there was a unanimous agreement among the team, that the service needed to be modernised. Some of the team felt that the service should provide activities only for

those most disabled in the Centre. This is an interesting suggestion that implies that more able users could access facilities outside of the day centre buildings. It was not clear how this could be achieved, but there had been the idea of establishing a satellite unit, offering activities on a more community-based and local basis. However, research has shown the satellite units can present the same challenges and problems as traditional day centres associated with congregation and segregation. [32]

The review suggests that the team had little knowledge of methods for supporting people in community-based services. This coupled with low expectations about the potential that such approaches may have to change things added to the general feeling of disempowerment. The Service providers in Sandbrook generally felt alienated from many parents and carers. They felt that many parents and carers primary demands were for respite not community involvement, and that those now being referred to the service were individuals with higher support needs, and those more difficult to place in alternative options, such as the College or MTIB. There was a general feeing that Sandbook was becoming a 'catch all' for those with higher support needs and that the service needed, therefore, to be more focussed on the higher support requirements of these clients.

Low Expectations
The review generally perceived the day centre staff to have low expectations about the potential of alternative approaches to day service provision. This could be due to a lack of awareness on the part of the team of the type of alternatives that are available, and the extent to which such alternatives are considered viable and implementable. Some staff felt they had not received enough input into the methods of community support; employment was viewed as the responsibility of an outside specialist agency; and there was a general conception that all community based mainstream activities, including college courses, were the responsibility of external organisations. Many of the staff felt that community support required the constant presence a staff member, even for many of those perceived to be more able in the client group. This goes against current models of good practice and suggests the need to increase awareness within the team and provide them with the opportunities to learn about methods for working with naturally occurring support networks to encourage a sustainable level of community presence. This may include the use of voluntary organisations, for helping out with transport and some support needs, the use of peer supports (pairing an individual with a peer mentor), the use of natural supports, as well as identifying potential external sources of funding.

Care Planning
The care planning procedures employed in Merthyr were presented in Section 4. Care Planning for many of those referred to the day service had all but broken down at the time of this review and are currently being updated. The centre staff complained that care plans had not been sent from the care planning department, and those that had arrived were not possible to implement due to staff shortages. There was some confusion about where the care plans for the clients were located, and some had not ended up in the day centre at all. There was also some confusion within the day service about who was

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Beyer, S., Kilsby, M. & Lowe, K. (1994). What do ATCs offer? A survey of Welsh Day Services. Mental Handicap Research, 7, 16-40.

responsible for updating the care plans. As a result, many of them had not been updated, making it difficult to gauge if the objectives and aims of the plan were being achieved and new plans with new targets established.

The lack of diversity offered through the day services may have restricted the potential of care plans to reflect a variety of individual needs and aspirations. This suggests the need to refocus the care plans on new areas that currently are not provided through day service provision. In this way, the care plans can be used to identify gaps in current provision, suggest areas for day service modernisation and identify how organisations outside of current day service provision can be utilised cost effectively to more fully resolve the problems of unmet needs.

Transition into Day Services
Transition policy begins at age 14 in line with the National Children's Framework, by identifying the potential need for social service support, and potentially the support from adult day services. At age 16/17 a review takes place to determine the best service for the client on leaving school and the responsibility for planning future care lies with the Care Managers. These are fed into the care procedures. In Merthyr, opportunities for provision are mostly limited to Sandbrook Day Centre and Merthyr College.

It is at this stage that 'direct payments' become available to users and parents/carers. Since November 2004, the Borough has had a duty to offer direct payments to all those potentially eligible to receive them. This includes adults receiving or eligible to receive community care services; People receiving carers' services and a disabled person aged 16 or 17. In 2005, the duty to offer direct payments will be extended to all people aged over 65 who are eligible for community care services. Some of the more able users had used these payments to provide a care package for supporting the young adult in full time mainstream courses in the college. Those clients more able, with learning disabilities are currently mostly being referred to the college, with the aim of accessing mainstream courses. The limited options available to those accessing day services, was a main concern for many younger parents, who were aware many of the negative views about the day service from some of their older counterparts.

Recently the Care Management Teams Transition worker left the authority. Recognising the increasing responsibility of the need to develop the role the authority has provided for five years, it has in employed a new Transition worker at a higher grade to reflect the developmental requirements. Part of the role will be to review the current process and protocols, which will include advice to social workers working with children from age 14.

Consultation with Clients and Carers
An interim report from Merthyr Tydfil People First Group completed in November 2004, is highly critical of the extent of user and carer representation and consultation in the development of day service strategies.[33] Parents and carers criticised the levels of engagement of users within the centre, and they felt the clients were often bored. The level of consultation and representation between staff and the parents was perceived to be

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[33] West, W (2005). Merthyr People first Report on User, Parent/Carer Views on Sandbrook House

very poor and parents generally felt disempowered, arguing that whenever promises were made for things to change from day services, nothing ever happened, echoing the feelings of the day centre staff. Parents complained that many of the facilities were under-used, such as the Hydrotherapy Pool. They also identified staff shortages as a problem and felt that the policy of employing casual staff on a temporary basis meant that the quality of service was reduced and led to inconsistent long-term support strategies. As with some day centre staff, many parents felt that provision for those most disabled should be separated from the provision to more clients to improve the quality of services for both these groups of clients.

The report also stresses a high level of dissatisfaction among users, who generally felt bored and unoccupied and frustrated about the lack of options provided through the current activity timetable. Users often felt disempowered from the planning procedures, feeling that they had little say about the activities offered in the timetable and were not consulted when changes were made about the running of services. These complaints reflect many of the shortcomings of Sandbrook and its outdated timetable. This could be seen as an inevitable part of the consultation process and it is positive in the sense that parents, who disagree with the current services offered, have a voice. The challenge will be to harness this enthusiasm so as to enable them to contribute more fully to the way the service is developed in the future. This also implies the need to raise parent and carer awareness of the potential options available to the clients through day service modernisation.

The report does not state the number of parents involved in the consultation, other parents, who are less vocal may feel more positive about the service. This indicates a need to canvass parent opinions from a wider perspective, taking a wider number of parent views into account. Some of the positive achievements of the service users may have been being overlooked. There are positives when individual achievements are considered. One service user received a "Learner of the Year" Award for his achievements in computer training earlier this year, gaining RSA qualifications in Word Processing. Another service user has recently learned to swim and is now able to swim a length of the baths unassisted. A third has recently been learning to write her name in one of the Community Education classes held at the centre. Whilst some of these could be regarded as small steps, they are nevertheless important to the individuals concerned, who are proud of their achievements through learning.

Partnership Working
The day service had formed a number of links with the local college and the local special school. However, partnership working with these two organisations was generally perceived as poor. Centre staff were critical at the lack of progression of users through the college and of a 'revolving-door syndrome', with users going from one course to another without progressing. Where users had obtained accreditation (eg, through the link with Coed Dderwyn Joinery), the qualifications gained were not supported by the users increased ability in the skill areas in question. One initiative called 'Opening Doors' had previously failed, because of a breakdown in communication about who was responsible for transport, to and from the college, and the role that the college and day centre should

play in supporting those with higher needs. Day centre staff also felt that additional burden was being placed on day services during the summer break, when the college closed. This was partially true; the community arm of the college Biz Inc is accessible all year around, although at the time of this review, no formal links had been established.

Partnership working with Greenfields School was also perceived to be poor. Issues arose around who was responsible for transporting and supporting those clients who were about to access the service. Those interviewed at Greenfields felt that the day service paid little attention to the transition plans created while the child was at school, preferring instead to make judgments about the user's ability based on their observations of the clients in the Day Centre, without due attention being paid to the effects that moving into a new environment could have upon the users confidence. This often meant that inaccurate information being fed into the assessment of needs and subsequent care plans.

Partnership working between the day services and local community groups was virtually non-existent. Some links had been made with the local neighbourhood-learning centre, but this extended the arts activities, to a segregated group of individuals within the learning centre. Most of the community organisations had no specific marketing techniques for the client group and little knowledge of the extent and type of support required. This implies the need for training and support for those in the projects and greater partnership working. This may enable the client access to the mainstream learning, employment and leisure and recreational activities offered by these projects, including those occurring over the summer period when formal college courses cease. Recently, the day centre had begun to establish links with VAMT, with a view to employing volunteers to counter transport and support issues. This is a progressive move that may also create possibilities for the users to access mainstream voluntary activities.

11. Merthyr College

As mentioned in Section 7 a total of 33 individuals are scheduled to attend courses within the College over the next academic year. While this represents a positive example of joint working, a number of themes and issues have arisen during the review.

Problems in Progression

The lack of progression through the formal college route of the client group was an issue raised by many stakeholders, including the college staff themselves. Few clients had obtained qualifications as a result of their learning and few had moved on to career development routes. Two issues arose from this. First, that clients would be stuck in a 'revolving door', taking endless number of courses without real progress being made. Second, that where students do not progress, there may be a tendency for them to fall back on the day service provision, increasing still further the client staff ratios and taking a step backwards in terms of being able to access learning routes as a means of progression. These issues highlight the need for continued monitoring of the client students progress and to create better contract monitoring arrangements between the day service and the college.

<u>Segregated Classrooms</u>
Although the college had enabled some of the more able clients to access mainstream courses, those with more moderate and severe disabilities, were congregated into groups. There is an open debate about the potential and practicalities of enabling mainstream access for this group. However, the group nature of the activities may lead to two issues. First, the potential for the clients to be a part of the wider 'college experience' is lost. The chance of a typical experience of college, such as exchanging ideas in the classroom, meeting new people, and socialising is lost. Second, we may question the validity of isolating people in this way, especially given the current difficulties in gaining accredited qualifications for this group. Once again this stresses the need for ongoing monitoring of the user experience in formal educational settings such as colleges.

13. Progression into Employment
<u>A Case for Supported Employment.</u>
The research suggests that supported employment could be an option for many of the clients currently registered for day services or leaving school or college. In Merthyr progression into this form of activity is rare for the client group. This may be partly due to the low expectations and awareness of the possibility of employment presented in Section 10, relating to day service staff. However, there was a general lack of awareness of supported employment as an option for the clients among parents/carers, advocates, and those running community based projects. Supported employment, therefore, represents an area for potential growth and development. It is also a growing development internationally, with an impressive 67% of those registered with day services in Australia accessing paid work, 37% in the USA, and approximately 32% in Canada. Clearly the cultures of the UK and Australia differ. Austrailia[34] has less of a benefits trap and the values of supported employment are written into their constitution. However, in the UK, there has also been a consistent growth in supported employment over the past decade. Prior to 1987, there were only 3 supported employment agencies operating and less than 100 supported employees. By 1991, there were 90 agencies supporting 1,500 people,[35] By 1995, although the rate of the growth of supported employment agencies had slowed to 101, between them they were supporting over 4,500 workers[36] Current estimates for the UK are around 6,500 people[37] although this has probably risen since the introduction of the WORKSTEP Programme.

Research in supported employment has shown favourable outcomes compared to traditional day services in the US and UK in terms of social integration into the community, increased levels of engagement, increased financial independence and

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[34] Lewis, G. (2003) Comparison of Supported Employment in US and Australia. Keynote presentation 5th European Conference of Supported Employment, Helsinki.
[35] Lister, T., Ellis, L., Phillips, T., O'Bryan, A., Beyer, S., & Kilsby, M. (1992). <u>Survey of Supported Employment Services in England, Scotland and Wales</u>, Manchester: National Development Team for People with a Learning Disability.
[36] Beyer, S., Goodere, L. & Kilsby, M. (1996). <u>Costs and Benefits of Supported Employment in Britain.</u> London: The Stationery Office.
[37] (Association for Supported Employment, (1999) http://www.afse.org.uk/

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increases in self-esteem and job satisfaction compared with traditional services. [38] [39] [40] [41] When personal benefits are taken alongside the financial ones, the arguments for Government and local investment into supported employment schemes becomes compelling.

Unemployment rates within the borough are clearly high. However, it is also the case that Merthyr has a high number of production and assembly jobs. Research has shown that the types of tasks involved in such jobs are well suited to the abilities of many people with learning disabilities. The repetitive nature of the core routines in such jobs means they are relatively straightforward to learn, and usually have a potential source of localised support through fellow co-workers and in-house supervision procedures. Of the 100 jobs on offer in Merthyr job centre in the two weeks previous to August 27th 2005, 28 were entry-level jobs that could be accessed by many, if direct support were provided during the initial stages of employment.

The Problem of Work Preparation.
Within Merthyr there is much emphasis on preparing people for work for a variety of activities and learning environments. These include the Coed Dderwyn Joinery, A Gardening Project, as well as Work-Experience and Life and Work Skills courses. Although these activities are perceived as preparatory stages for work, the push into paid employment has rarely taken place. Low levels of progression from school, college and day services reflects this point. The implementation of vocational profiling and planning, of job finding and job matching, and of establishing links with local employers, are mostly absent within most of the programmes. Where these activities are not established as linking activities between the learning activity and paid work, then the potential for enabling the clients to progress into open employment is hindered.

Problems can also arise if the approach fails to take into account the fact that many people with learning disabilities, especially those with higher support needs, have problems generalising the skills they learn in one setting to another setting. Without additional support, people will struggle to come to terms with subtle but significant differences in terms of the tasks, social culture, physical layout and employment demands of their new jobs. One consequence of this is that many people with disabilities have failed to hold onto their jobs, with the inevitable consequence of returning to segregated day centre programmes and a reduction in their confidence and self-esteem. The need for initial intensive one-on-one support, therefore, is of great importance in determining how

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[38] Chadsey-Rusch, J., Gonzales, P., Tines, J. & Johnson, J. R. (1989). Social ecology of the workplace: contextual variables affecting social interactions of employees with and without mental retardation. American Journal on Mental Retardation, 94, 141-15.
[39] Kilsby, M. & Beyer, S. (1996a). Engagement and interaction: A comparison between supported employment and day service provision. Journal of Intellectual Disability Research, 40, 348-357.
[40] Kilsby, M. & Beyer, S. (1996b). Engagement and interaction: a comparison between supported employment and ATCs,. Journal of Community and Applied Social Psychology, 6, 141-153.
[41] Wehman, P., Hill, M. Hill, J., Brooke, V., Pendleton, P. & Britt, C. (1985). Competitive employment for persons with mental retardation: a follow-up six years later. American Journal on Mental Deficiency, 23, 274-281.

successful the clients are at holding onto their jobs. Currently, Elite Supported Employment Agency fulfil this role in Merthyr. However, with the current levels of resource available, it is difficult to see how the agency can plug all the gaps and provide links to employment within the schools, colleges and day services.

Research also shows that many work experience placements, especially those run by local day services, often differ from those that typify normal working conditions. As much as 23% of the work-experience of these placements took place inside the centre buildings as opposed to occurring in the community; were supervised by professional care workers, rather than employees who do those jobs; were separate from the working community, often taking place in distant locations; and lacked many of the demand characteristics of normal open employment (e.g., performance criteria and punctuality). Many also fail to deliver the range of available employment options open to the individuals. In the case of the Joinery, and the MITB, the options for work-experience are limited to segregated factory and joinery environments. This implies a need to broaden the scope of experience to real work places, either by establishing more work based learning opportunities, such as those offered through the community projects, or by setting up job taster programmes (sometimes referred to as job sampling) within local employment settings. It is clear from these findings that those responsible for establishing work experience programmes need to have a clear set of objectives and policies around how progression is to be achieved and measured.

Section 14. Community Based Learning Opportunities

The review presented six community projects located throughout the borough. The findings suggest that these projects may provide accessible and integrated routes into life-long learning opportunities. These opportunities range from teaching basic IT skills, work-based learning, a chance to learn skills in simulated work settings, as well as host of leisure and recreational activities. Currently, day services have had few formal links with these projects and those responsible for running them. Accessibility within some of these organisations is poor for people with disabilities, and in most organisations, no special provision is provided for people with the particular learning requirements of the client group.

This type of community provision also has the advantage of being localised, meaning that particular projects are aimed at specific populations within the borough. This makes it possible to identify the number of clients present within each community, and, therefore, the likely support requirements of those wanting to access these projects/ This may result in smaller group activities; support provided to those dispersed within a project across varied community activities; or, direct support being offered from those running or participating in the projects. This again raises the issue of how support will be provided and there may need to be 'awareness raising' among providers, on how to tap into local social networks (family and friends), develop natural supports networks, or tap into external funding sources to diversify the support base away from direct day service provision.

Section 15. Conclusions and Recommendations

This review suggests there is potential in developing a life-long learning campus, by increasing the scope from formal educational routes, such as the schools and colleges, to a host of community initiatives located in the area.

While this would have benefits for a more integrated and flexible set of available learning alternatives, the accessibility of these projects, to those with learning disabilities is currently limited. A broadening of the scope of learning opportunities would be as potentially beneficial to this client group, especially where formal academic qualifications may not a viable option for progression. The increase of diversity in the learning campus should be extended to community based learning opportunities which enable clients to access work based learning opportunities to development basic skills in ecologically valid community environments. This implies a need to develop a range of accreditation procedures ranging from formal qualifications and assessment, through to the identification of learned skills and the potential for those skills to enable the client to progress in their careers and life long learning aspirations. The following recommendations are made to reflect this aim.

Overall Pattern of Day Service

The current pattern of day service provision in Merthyr is currently outdated and in need of modernisation. The current activity timetable reflects an 'Arts and Crafts' model of day service provision, typical of practice in the late 1980s. There are few options for the client group outside of these main activities, although potentially progressive links have been made with Merthyr College.

The majority of the activities offered through the services take place in segregated and congregated environments within the day service buildings. As such, they do not reflect the individual diversity of needs and choices that typify valued and meaningful day service provision, and lack the potential to enable the clients to broaden their social networks. The review concludes the following set of recommendations:

1. *That the day service review acts to modernise the service, developing a greater diversity of activities, than is currently on offer, especially those occurring in mainstream community locations.*

2. *That these activities should be based on valued and typical day time activities, that are valued within the community, such as those involving life-long learning, employment and community leisure activities. The pattern of activities should reflect and promote a pattern of day services that is more typical of those undertaken by non-disabled people, and are more likely to be valued by other members of the local community and by those who undertake them.*

3. *The review recommends that high client/staff ratios may be best tackled by investing more resource into community based day service activities, rather than increasing the number of staff delivering the current timetable of activities.*

4. *The review suggests there could be positive results from developing partnerships with a wider stakeholder base. This should be established for information sharing and the exploration of possible avenues for cooperation. This to include developing already existing links with the schools and colleges, establishing new contacts with local community projects and the college community branch 'Biz Inc'.*

Progression into Community based Projects – Mainstream Learning Opportunities

The review presented six local community projects offering an array of activities in mainstream community locations. While these are currently accessed by a wide variety of the local population, people with learning disabilities have rarely accessed them. Few formal links had been established between day services and these projects and the possibility of enabling people integrated access to these activities may be being overlooked. They may also provide the potential for localised forms of provision and community inclusion.

5. *The service should develop relationships with local projects to develop partnership working to find ways of enabling the clients to access these community run initiatives. This to include awareness-raising, methods of support, and working towards improving the accessibility of materials, buildings and support strategies.*

6. *Cooperation should involve the identification of the training needs of those providing the projects, as well as the establishment of learning and review plans and targets for progression.*

Expanding Learning Opportunities

Progression through the college route was generally poor. This in terms of the numbers of people obtaining qualifications on course completion, and in terms of the numbers of people progressing towards or into paid work. This raises the concern that academic attainment via formal accreditation may be inappropriate for many clients. This implies the need to explore alternative ways of accreditation, based upon the learned skills of the clients. This may be best achieved while they participate in community-based activities, including work based learning, work-experience, and community, leisure and recreational activities. This idea implies developing a record of each person's skills and preferences, to enable further learning or selective job matching for employment to take place.

7. *Day services should work with the College to help expand the diversity of learning opportunities to include work-based learning, and learning in community locations, and find alternative methods for accrediting/validating and recording learned skills.*

The review suggests that ways should be explored to enable more clients to access mainstream college courses and find ways for enabling the clients to more fully participate with the social aspects of college life. The review recommends that:

8. *The day services and the college work together to explore ways of enabling the clients to access mainstream college courses. This to include:*

- *The potential of direct payments and Supplementary Funding from ELWa to contribute to structured time support costs, and of the use of Exceptional Funding from the same source to provide support for some clients during unstructured time.*
- *The potential use of peer supports, volunteers and students attending the college to provide support as highlighted above.*
- *The potential to use direct payments to fund a more diverse pattern of day service provision.*

And in order to link college learning, work based learning and employment progression:

9. *The development of stronger links between the college, and work based learning initiatives, the day services and supported employment, so that community based and formal accreditation routes for developing employment opportunities are linked directly to the job matching and job targeting activities of the supported employment agency.*

Progression into Employment

The review concludes that few clients are progressing from day services or college activities into employment and that supported employment represents a potential growth area in Merthyr. It has been shown to have the potential to free-up resource and lead to clients leading more fulfilled and value lives. It is estimated that the cost of finding 6 adults paid employment and providing the initial support is around £70,000 per year.[42] If implemented according to the methods of supported employment, this would mean that following a 2-year period, the cost of enabling 12 people with paid full-time employment would stand at around £140,000. The cost for supporting these 12 employees in the following year would be considerably reduced, as job coaches fade their support and the employees become accustomed to the routines and demands of their jobs. Research has already shown that investment into this type of provision is cost effective compared to segregated workshops and factories, which often have limited progression rates and more often require continued subsidies for their existence.[43] The current level of investment in Elite Supported Employment Service in the borough, currently stands at £12,500 (excluding match funding).

10. *Increase investment in current supported employment provision to enable greater numbers of those currently using the day service to access paid integrated employment in the future.*

11. *Develop a direct contracting arrangement with ELITE and the day service establishing targets, review methods and costs over time.*

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[42] Elite Supported Employment Service
[43] Beyer, S., Goodere, L. & Kilsby, M. (1996). Costs and Benefits of Supported Employment in Britain. London: The Stationery Office.

12. *The day service review should explore the potential benefits of expanding current day service delivery, towards developing the capacity to provide in-house supported employment provision.*

The day service review should:

13. *Look at the likely costs and benefits of investing further in the approach to create progressive links into employment for those currently involved in learning or work-experience activities, for those currently in receipt of day service provision, and to develop further the links with the local school and college, as well as developing links with community based projects as they emerge as a potential mainstream learning routes for enabling career progression and access to paid integrated employment.*

14. *That the costs of supported employment should be directly compared to the costs of alternative types of employment provision, such as sheltered workshops and social firms, which often limit progression into integrated work and can be expensive to maintain.*

The review suggested that there were generally low expectations about the potential of the supported employment approach among service providers, carers and users. This was coupled with a lack of knowledge about the approach, and the potential that structured support approaches have to integrate people into community learning, employment and leisure activities, and to free up resources to decrease client/staff ratios. It is unlikely that any future plans for employment provision will succeed without the co-operation, support and contribution of these groups.

15. *The implementation of awareness-raising to promote good practice and knowledge of supported employment and effective community support within the stakeholder groups. This could include:*
   - *Presentations – Awareness-raising in the Values associated with Social Role Valorisation;*
   - *Training in Social Role Valorisation;*
   - *Presentations from practitioners and experts in Supported employment;*
   - *Presentations of models of good practice associated with day service change;*
   - *Training in Systematic instruction;*
   - *Training in Travel Training Techniques;*
   - *Presentations and training in developing natural supports;*
   - *Training in implementing person centred approaches*
   - *Access to accredited courses[44]*

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[44] For example, the Post Graduate Diploma in Supported Employment run at Cardiff University, and the Certificate and Diploma courses in Supported Employment run as distance e-learning courses and set at NVQ levels 3 and 4 respectively run by Norman Mackie and Associates.

The review also identified a problem of low morale among day service staff, who often felt under pressure from the criticisms of some parents, carers and users. Many staff felt disempowered to do anything about changing the service. The reorganisation of day services requires the complicity, agreement, creativity and practical experience of those currently responsible for the hands-on delivery of the day services. There is a danger that without clear guidance and strong leadership, the team may become more demoralised. Day service staff should not only be involved in the consultation between major stakeholders about practical ways to reorganise the service, but also be empowered with the tools for its delivery based on an awareness of the principles, and practical guidance from models of good practice. The review recommends that:

16. *Through joint working with other stakeholders, develop a clear set of procedures, with clear understanding of the roles and duties to be performed by day service staff in the change process.*

17. *The upskilling of current day service staff through investment in training in models of good practice.*

18. *To reinstate supervision and appraisal procedures to provide guidance to staff and to create a route to acknowledge their efforts and a two way dialogue between service deliverers and managers.*

19. *To explore and develop the potential of the WORKSTEP programme as a potential funding source for developing supported employment for the client group.*

Consultation and Representation
The review suggested that consultation between the day services, on the one hand, and the clients and carers/parents on the other has been poor. It is unlikely that any future plans for reorganising service provision will succeed without the co-operation, support and contribution of these groups. The review recommends:

20. *That day services implement a period of consultation between the day services team, care planners, parents, carers and users, with the aim of developing services that reflect more fully the range and diversity of user and parent choices, and that more fully match the diversity of opportunities that exist within local community settings. This to include:*
    - *Working with younger parents and carers from age 14, to develop a range of services that are responsive and reflective of individual choices, linked to the 14-19 Pathways initiative;*
    - *Utilisation and greater input into local parent and user forums, such as those set up in VAMT;*
    - *An exploration of the potential for supporting parents/carers to learn about models of good practice;*

- *Greater use of person centred planning approaches so that users may more readily inform care planners and service providers of their current and future support needs.*

General Recommendations for Day Service Review

The review suggests that there are number of areas that need to be developed alongside the implementation of recommendations that will result from the day service review. It is felt that the review should avoid developing strategies and plans for day service change, without all the major stakeholders being party to an agreement around the need to change and around the general change agenda. It would, therefore, be unwise to take forward an approach that was based purely upon the views of outside consultant experts, and purely on the evidence from models of good practice.

Current low expectations and underdeveloped partnership working may lead to the rejection of the ideas presented; is less likely to take account of local variations in culture and service provision; and could undermine the potential to develop in-house solutions to the challenges of modernisation, based on the expertise and opinions of the main stakeholders. Some stakeholders expressed frustration at the pace of change in the day services, others felt that further consultations and reviews would only stall the change process or lead to recommendations that were not acted upon. This increases the urgency for change to be implemented as soon as possible.

For reasons just presented the reviewers feel that the day service review should be run as a 'Participatory Action Research'[45] exercise, with the main stakeholder groups represented and feeding into the final review implementation plan. This could be run in conjunction with awareness-raising and forums, to reach solutions to the problems of modernising, based on joint working. This approach also has the advantage of immediate implementation of partnership building and awareness-raising and in providing a sense of joint ownership over the final review plans. The review concludes the following recommendations:

21. *That the day services review is implemented through Participatory Action Research methods, to enable all stakeholders to feed into implementation plans within the final review. This procedure to include Stakeholder meetings to:*

   - *Agree agenda and aims;*
   - *Present the results from this review;*
   - *To present values of good practice;*
   - *To present models of good practice*
   - *Identify barriers to good practice and establish joint problem solving*
   - *Identify potential training requirements*

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[45] Hughes, I. & Seymour-Rolls, K. (2000). Participatory Action Research : Getting the Job Done. *Action Research E-Reports, 4.* Available at: http://www.fhs.usyd.edu.au/arow/arer/004.htm

Appendix 1

Person interviewed	Method
1. Projects co-ordinator life-long learning	Interview
2. Partnership development officer VAMT	Interview
3. Gates Project development officer	Interview - Observation
4. Head of Faculty for Continuing Education	Interview – Observation
5. Acting Service Manager Day Services	Interview
6. Senior Manager Adult Learning MTBC	Interview
7. Centre Manager, Neighbourhood Learning Centre	Interview - observation
8. Leader of 3Gs development trust	Interview - observation
9. Tydfil Training co-ordinator	Interview - observation
10. Business Development Manager Biz Inc	Interview - observation
11. Social Economy Manager, MTBC	Interview
12. Operational Manager – Career Wales	Interview
13. Development Officer for Mental Health MTBC	Interview
14. Development Officer Ty Gwyn old Centre	Interview
15. Senior Team Leader Day Services	Interview
16. People First co-ordinator	Interview
17. Coed Dderwyn Joinery Co-ordinator	Interview -Observation
18. Head of Special Needs Provision Merthyr college	Interview -Observation
19. Senior day service officer –Ty Gwyn	Interview -Observation
20. Headmaster Grenfields School	Interview
21. Sandbrook Planners Focus Group	Focus Group - observation
22. Parent representatives	Interview
23. Carer Representative – Completed	Interview
24. MTIB WORKSTEP co-ordinator	Interview - Observation
25. Gelli Deg Foundation Group	Interview - Observation
26. Head of Assessment Care Management	Interview
27. Elite Supported Employment Agency Manager	Interview

Analysis of Learning Disability Services and Life Long Learning Campus in Merthyr Tydfil June 2005

Interview Schedule for Senior Key Stakeholders

Correspondence
Dr Mark Kilsby,
Welsh Centre for Learning Disabilities,
Applied Research Unit,
Meridian Court,
North Road,
Cardiff,
CF14 3BG

Questions for Key Stakeholders (Interviews and Questionnaires)

Name of Interviewee   **Date**

Job Title of Interviewee

Organisation of Interviewee

1. Organisation Details

Please describe the key roles of this organisation

Does the organisation aim to provide clients/students with accredited qualifications? If so what ones?

What are the key activities/services offered by this organisation?

Please provide information about the management and staffing structure of this organisation

Please provide information about the funding structure for this organisation

2. About those Accessing the Services

Please can you provide details of the numbers of clients/students currently accessing this organisation broken by the type of activities/services offered.

What are the age ranges and gender of those accessing the organisation's services?

What are the main referral sources of those accessing the service?

How many of those accessing the service end up with a qualification?

Where do most clients/students go on leaving the service?

How many of those leaving the service go onto obtain paid employment?

Does the service provide a provision for people with disabilities? If so, what form does this provision take?

How many of those accessing the service can be described as the following:

Having a Learning Disability

Having a Physical Disability

Have Mental Health Problems

To what extent is the provision offered to those with disabilities mainstreamed or segregated?

How many of the above end up with formal qualifications?

Where do most of the above go on leaving the service?

How many of the above on leaving the service go onto obtain paid employment?

3. Marketing and Recruitment

How is marketing and recruitment conducted within the organisation?

How is marketing and recruitment conducted for Welsh Language speakers?

How is marketing and recruitment conducted for people with Learning Disabilities?

How is marketing and recruitment conducted for people with Mental Health Problems?

4. Service Environment and Materials used

How accessible is the service environment for people with physical disabilities?

(what has been done?)

How accessible are the materials used for people with Learning Disabilities?

(what has been done?)

How accessible are the materials used for Welsh language speakers?

(what has been done?)

How accessible are the materials used for people with Mental Health Problems?

(what has been done?)

5. Advice, Support and Training Procedures

How accessible are the support and training procedures for people with learning disabilities?

(what has been done?)

How accessible are the support and training procedures for Welsh language speakers?

(what has been done?)

How accessible are the support and training procedures for people with mental health problems?

(what has been done?)

How adequate are the current materials and equipment to fulfil the roles and vision of the organisation?

(what has been done?)

6. Information Technology

Availability of IT provision within the organisation

How accessible is IT for those with Physical Disabilities?

(what has been done?)

How accessible is IT for those with Learning Disabilities?

(what has been done?)

How accessible is provision for those with Mental Health Problems?

7. Recent Changes in Service Provision

8. Relationship with other Service Sectors

Barriers to Access within the Organisations

Ways of overcoming Barriers

Visions for the Future

Examples of Good Practice

<u>Any Other Comments</u>

Questionnaire for Stakeholders – Life Long Learning and People with Learning Disabilities in Merthyr

Your Name:_____   **Date Completed:**_____

Job Title:_____   **Telephone No.**_____

Organisation:_____

1. Please provide an approximation of the numbers of clients you work with in your organisation and the age ranges within each of the following categories:

	Number	Age Range
People with Learning Disabilities[46]	☐	☐
People with Mental Health Problems	☐	☐
People with Dual Diagnosis	☐	☐
People with Physical Disabilities	☐	☐

2. Please describe the key roles and aims of the organisation:

3. Please describe your key roles and responsibilities within this organisation:

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[46]. **In this questionnaire people with learning disabilities are defined as those who were previously referred to as the 'mentally handicapped', and who, due to the severity of their disability, would have been traditionally considered to be incapable of participating in mainstream community activities (eg, those attending Sandbrook Day Centre).**

4. Please provide details of the main activities offered to your clients and indicate where the activity takes place and the size of the group(s):

5. Approximately how many of those leaving your move into the following areas?

Numbers

Paid open employment

Paid sheltered work   (eg, Remploy)

Unpaid work experience

College of FE

Day Services (eg, Sandbrook)

No service

Other Service – Please describe below

6. Please describe your own expectations that people with learning disabilities can obtain and successfully hold down an integrated paid job in the community

7. …can access mainstream community leisure activities on an individual basis (leisure centre, bingo hall, sports facilities, pubs and clubs etc) without continuing one-on-one support from a day service employee:

7. …can access mainstream college courses as a means to progress into paid employment.

9. …can access segregated college courses developed specifically for those with learning disabilities as a means to progress into paid employment.

10. How are the buildings in your organisation structured to allow access for people with physical disabilities including those using a wheelchair?

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11. How is your organisation structured to allow access for people who speak Welsh as a first language?

12. What do you see as the main barriers for people with learning disabilities to access integrated paid employment and mainstream life-long learning opportunities?

13. How do you feel these barriers can be overcome?

14. Please provide 2 examples of good practice within your organisation relating to people with learning disabilities.

15. Any other comments you wish to make.

Thank you for completing this questionnaire

Appendix 4

Merthyr Tydfil County Borough
COMMUNITIES FIRST
CONTACT LIST

Name of Partnership Board	Address	Name of Communities First Co-ordinator Telephone Number; Facsimile Number; and Email Address
Bedlinog/Trelewis	**Bedlinog Resource Centre** **Commercial Street** **Bedlinog** **CF46 6RF**	**Co-ordinator:** Miss Sherelle Jones **Tel:** **(01443) 710821** **Fax:** **(01443) 710823** **Email:** **Sherelle.jones@merthyr.gov.uk**
Cyfarthfa	**Gellideg Foundation Group** **Flat 2, Winchfawr House** **Gellideg** **Merthyr Tydfil**	**Co-ordinator:** c/o Colette Watkins **Tel:** **(01685) 383929** **Fax:** **(01685) 721556** **Email:** **colette@gellideg.net**
Dowlais	**Dowlais Community Development Forum** **20-20a Spring Street** **Dowlais** **Merthyr Tydfil** **CF48 3RR**	**Co-ordinator:** Mr Gareth Williams **Tel:** **(01685) 724930** **Fax:** **(01685) 377684** **Email:** **gareth.williams2@merthyr.gov.uk**
Gurnos and Penydarren	**3 G's Development Trust** **The Clinic** **Chestnut Way** **Gurnos** **Merthyr Tydfil**	**Co-ordinator:** Mr Robert Cornwall **Tel:** **(01685) 359999/350888** **Fax:** **(01685) 388469** **Email:** **robertcornwall@btopenworld.com**
Merthyr Vale	**Aberfan Community Centre** **Pantglas Road** **Aberfan** **Merthyr Tydfil** **CF48 4QE**	**Co-ordinator:** c/o Phil Rees **Tel:** **(01443) 694044** **Fax:** **(01443) 692506** **Email:** **kaye.watkins@merthyr.gov.uk**
Trefechan	**Number 16** **The Flats** **The Green** **Trefechan** **Merthyr Tydfil**	**Co-ordinator:** Mrs Alyson King **Tel:** **(01685) 383758** **Fax:** **(01685) 385689** **Email:** **alyson.king@vamt.net**
Treharris	**Clifton House** **4 Perrot Street** **Treharris** **CF46 5ET**	**Co-ordinator:** Mr Mark Symonds **Tel:** **(01443) 414000** **Fax:** **n/a** **Email:** **msymmonds@mtha.org.uk**
Troedyrhiw	**Communities First Office** **11 Bridge Street** **Troedyrhiw** **Merthyr Tydfil** **CF48 4JX**	**Co-ordinator:** Mr Gerald Powell **Tel:** **(01443) 693231** **Fax:** **(01443) 691968** **Email:** **Gerald.powell@merthyr.gov.uk**
Co-ordination and Technical Support Team (Central)		
Communities First 1st Floor, Room 203 Ty Keir Hardie Avenue De Clichy Riverside Court Merthyr Tydfil CF47 8XF Tel: (01685) 725225 Fax: (01685) 725274		Bev Owen – Senior Regeneration Manager **Beverley.owen@merthyr.gov.uk** Mel Jones – Communities First Programme Co-ordinator **Mel.jones@merthyr.gov.uk** Christian Ellingsen – Communities First Strategy Officer **Chris.ellingsen@merthyr.gov.uk** Sally McIntyre– Communities First Programme Officer **Sally.McIntyre@merthyr.gov.uk** Martine Jones – Communities First Administrator **Martine.jones@merthyr.gov.uk**