



Unit 11, Armagh Shopping Centre, Thomas Street, Armagh BT61 7AE

SUMMARY

The following is a submission by the Appleby Trust Ltd. It contains responses to points 1, 3 and 5 together with a number of recommendations.

The submission highlights the existing work undertaken by the company for the participant group which we feel represents best practice. This includes information on two social economy projects Print It Armagh and Print It Dungannon and a supported employment service in the community.

The information also highlights the close working relationship the company has with local special schools which eases the transition process for those young people about to enter the post SEN world.

Recommendations include

- More investment in the social economy sector to allow existing provision which works to expand into more geographical areas**
- The need for a more flexible service to be developed which is locally rather than regionally structured, allowing for the differing needs of the post SEN group to be met year on year and in each area.**
- Co-operation between government departments at a local level to manage personal care and health conditions to facilitate young people attending post SEN provision**

INTRODUCTION

The Appleby Trust is a charitable company which was set up together with its sister company Appleby Careers Project Ltd to support the vocational training needs of people with disabilities. We have been providing services in the Armagh area and beyond since 1998.

Currently we provide a number of different services to the participant group with moderate to severe learning disabilities, including two social economy projects Print It Armagh and Print It Dungannon and a supported employment in the community project

These services have been developed only through the insight of the Appleby Trust as a member of the voluntary and community sector into the needs of the participant group in the geographical area that the company serves which is the Southern Health and Social Care trust (SHSCT) and more relevantly the Armagh and Dungannon locality. We have had to fight hard to develop the services and secure reoccurring funding to have a sustainable future

Recommendations

- More investment in social economy type projects which provide vocational training opportunities... we are aware of an existing need in Banbridge
- Recognise the value of the input of the community and voluntary sector into providing services by making access to sustainable funding easier
- Recognise that each young person with a learning disability will have differing learning needs, flexible services must be developed that can adapt to their needs
- Co-operation between government departments to facilitate those young people with health conditions and or personal care needs to access services
- Investment in local small development as opposed to large regional models

To examine the current range of choice and opportunities available for those with learning disabilities on leaving full time schooling

1. In response to the inquiry the Appleby Trust provides a submission on the service that it currently provides to post SEN young people. As an organisation we can only speak about our involvement with the post SEN group in the context of the services we provide. Currently we provide a number of different services to the participant group with moderate to severe learning disabilities, these services have been developed only through the insight of the Appleby Trust as a member of the voluntary and community sector into the needs of the participant group in the geographical area that the company serves which is the Southern Health and Social Care trust (SHSCT) and more relevantly the Armagh and Dungannon locality. The operations of the Appleby Trust are fully consistent with and actively pursue the objective of UK public policy *“To enable people with a learning disability to lead full and meaningful lives in their neighbourhoods, have access to a wide range of social, work and leisure opportunities and form and maintain friendships and relationships.”*
2. The current services The Appleby Trust provides relevant to the inquiry include Print It Armagh, Print It Dungannon and supported employment in the community.
3. Print It Armagh was set up in 2007 and is a social economy project providing sheltered training in work skills for people with a learning disability whilst trading as a printing business. Print It can accommodate 6 persons with a learning disability per day from the SHSCT area for a two year period, this equates to thirty places per week, 30 people could be accommodated on a one place per week basis, in practice most people attend two or three days per week with the opportunity to attend five days per week if appropriate. Current funding is through sales, and an amount from the SHSCT which purchases training places, on an annual basis there will be a small deficit which is met through applications to trusts and foundations. From April 2014 the project will accommodate 9 people with a learning disability per day
4. Print It Dungannon is an additional social economy project operating as Armagh, which is funded through the Department of Employment and Learning and the European social fund. The project was set up in 2011 to provide support for 6 people with a learning disability per day for a two year period. In this financial year and the next, due to an increase in funding from Del the project can accommodate 9 people with a learning disability from the SHSCT area per day. The project receives 65% of eligible project funding from Del with the remainder made up of inkind support and cash contribution. The project is funded until March 2015 with the opportunity for continuation through the next round of ESF funding
5. A supported employment service in the Armagh and Dungannon locality with a capacity of twenty five persons with a learning disability who can be

supported in employment for a two year period. Effectively this service could provide 125 places per week if each of the twenty five people attend work placement five days per week. This aspect of the work is funded by the Southern Health and Social Care Trust, there is a small ongoing deficit which is met through application to trusts and foundations. The service works best when it is preceded by participation in a Print it program, Appleby Trust staff work with the participant and begin to transition them to supported employment from Print It. This will happen at the eighteen month mark of their two year period in Print It.

To research the best practice in post school provision for those with learning disabilities.

6. The Appleby trust provides a service which very much supports the training needs of the participants, the Print It service has been evaluated by the University of Ulster which found that close to two-thirds of both the participants and their carers 'agree strongly' with the statement that the participants benefit by working for the company. When those who 'agree' are also added then the percentage reaches a most remarkable value of more than 95%. Specifically no participant experienced negative effects, while in 97% cases participants report an improvement. More than two thirds of them also report that the greatest benefits come from doing interesting things, completing tasks and using existing skills and developing new ones. Furthermore, and perhaps equally important, the trainees and their carers agree that working for Print it has made a significant difference. For participants it results in a 53.33% rise in their well-being in comparison to not working. The carers record a roughly similar score reporting that on average the trainees in their care experienced a 48.3% increase in well-being. The participants report that the attributes which most increase their satisfaction from working in Print it are training to do new and interesting things, and developing new skills, all three scoring 55.33%. The carers also corroborate that the development of new skills is the biggest contributor to the improvement experience by the participants scoring it at 60.67%. Remarkably, two thirds of the participants 'strongly agree' with the statement that working in Print it made them happier, more confident, improved their lives and would like to carry on working in the same company. Of considerable importance here is that all carers report that if it was not for Print it the participants would not have had the opportunity to work, and confirm that the participants in their care would like to continue to work for Print it
7. The services provided by the Appleby Trust including Print it and supported employment were self-evaluated in 2011 to investigate the impact of employment experiences on mental health and well-being. All of the participants without exception experienced improved feelings of well being , including a 50% increase in independence, 75% improvement in self confidence and a 63% reduction in frustration levels. It is clear from the research that the lives of the participants have been made better by the experience of work, and are less likely to experience mental health problems because their lives are active purposeful and useful, their learning disability is not preventing them from having fulfilled lives.

8. The Appleby Trust currently works with three of the special schools within the SELB area, providing work experience activities for those pupils in transition year. While this activity is targeted at those young people in the final years at school, it does provide an example of best practice in preparation for transition to post SEN. The young people are able to experience services such as Print It and supported employment prior to leaving school. The evidence presented to support the service is anecdotal, but none the less very relevant. This has proven particularly effective for one recent referral, a young man with autism who found the prospect of leaving school very challenging, being able to experience Print It while still at school made the transition process less challenging. The key to the transition was that he was able to experience the post SEN world before he left school

Given the complex and interrelated needs of individuals in this group to identify the barriers to co-ordination across departments-regionally and locally- and make recommendations for improvement.

9. It has long been recognised that there is a need for government departments to work together, the responsibility for providing services for the post SEN group shouldn't be viewed as the sole responsibility of any one department, both DEL and Health in particular have their role to play. Neither is it the responsibility of the voluntary sector to seek out funding to meet the need and bridge gaps in statutory provision. In organising any new services for young people with special needs, the individual nature of their disability must be considered e.g. regional generic college programs will not work, as the young people who can access a program in a given year, in a given area will fluctuate, therefore any course which is dependent on numbers in order to be recommissioned may be full one year and half empty the next and then cancelled. Government departments must show more flexibility in their approach to designing services, working together to provide the participant with a meaningful week of opportunities.
10. It is clear that a closer working relationship between government departments and the voluntary sector in particular the social economy sector is needed to ensure that bespoke programs are created. Access to funding for the voluntary sector must be easier to obtain, it is very difficult and often time consuming searching for funding from Europe or trusts and foundations to bring great ideas to fruition. When we work with referrals to the various projects we operate, we hold future planning at the core of everything we do, there is a pathway for the young person to follow, we work on a person centred approach and together with the participant and their family have an end goal in sight which we work towards. Services must be flexible enough to be person centred to work.
11. What we provide we provide well, we are passionate in the belief that our participants deserve a fulfilling experience. As a company we are able to adapt our provision to suit differing levels of ability, through collaboration with community nurses, we can also cope with managing and monitoring health conditions such as diabetes which often precludes young people from

attending college courses, government departments need to show this level of flexibility and willingness to adapt and work together. We are currently negotiating with local health trust to work out how participants with personal care needs can access our services, through co-operation it is hoped that domicillary teams will call onsite to provide personal care to those participants who otherwise wouldn't be able to access the service. Services must have this kind of co-operation and flexibility built in.