

Committee for Employment and Learning Visit Report

Hawthorns Adult Centre, Carrickfergus

10 June 2015

Background

As part of its Inquiry into Post School Special Educational Need Provision in Northern Ireland the Committee for Employment and Learning agreed, to go on a study visit to Hawthorns Adult Centre. The visit was agreed by the Committee to see the post school SEN training provision carried out by Hawthorns.

Attendees

The following Committee Members attended:

Mr Robin Swann MLA, Chairperson
Mr Tom Buchanan MLA, Deputy Chairperson
Mr David Hilditch MLA
Mr Fra McCann MLA
Mr Pat Ramsey MLA

Mrs Cathie White - Clerk to the Committee for Employment and Learning
Mr Jonathan Lawless – Assistant Clerk to the Committee for Employment and Learning

Hawthorns Adult Centre representatives:

Mr Marc Carey, Centre Manager
Mrs Natalie Jackson, Locality Manager

Meeting

On arrival at Hawthorns Adult Centre premises the Committee received a presentation from Mr Carey and Mrs Jackson on the work of Hawthorns and in particular on the provision for individuals with learning disabilities on leaving full-time education.

The Committee was given a tour of the facilities and met with service users who avail of the facilities.

Background

- Day care is provided for up to sixty five persons daily aged nineteen plus who have been assessed as having a learning disability. Many of the service users also have an associated physical or sensory disability or complex needs. There are a number of service users with complex health or behavioural needs, including individuals with mental health needs, dementia and autistic spectrum disorder. Some of the members require one to one staff attention, supervision and assistance. Suction, drug administration and enteral / peg tube feeding is required by a minority of members.
- There are currently five established groups within the centre, each of which provides a varied and structured programme of care for service users attending the centre. There is an intensive support unit for service users with very complex needs and multiple disabilities; a special needs group/communication group for individuals with limited concentration or who have autism; a life skills group; a social skills group and a work skills group that undertake Asdan (Award Scheme Development and Accreditation Network).
- Service users are encouraged to develop their social, educational, vocational, recreational and work related skills and strong emphasis is placed on community as well as centre based activities. The principles of person centred planning form the current method of assessment.
- Hawthorns will be opening a new satellite facility which will provide a mixed package for 20-25 people who are not quite ready to leave the school environment and need a few more years.

Issues Raised

- Transport is an issue, the centre currently has 2 buses which remain solely for the use of the centre but are full to capacity and are used for multiple runs in the morning and afternoon.
- Funding is an issue and individual care plans which follow the people when they transition, which cover medical, financial and personal preferences would make the process a lot more fluid.