

Committee for Employment and Learning Visit Report

Ulster Supported Employment Limited (USEL) 5 March 2014

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 Ulster Supported Employment Limited (USEL), Belfast.

Attendees

The following Committee Members attended:

Mr Robin Swann MLA, Chairperson
Mr Fra McCann MLA
Ms Bronwyn McGahan MLA

Mrs Cathie White - Clerk to the Committee for Employment and Learning
Mr Vincent Gribbin – Assistant Clerk to the Committee for Employment and Learning

Meeting

The Committee received a brief presentation from the USEL senior managers and then an open round table discussion with senior managers and employment services staff regarding the transition period and the issues facing those with learning disabilities trying to enter training and employment.

USEL Staff

James Perry (Chairman)
Sam Humphries (Chief Executive)
Arthur Savage (Employment Services Business Development Manager)
Mary McCann (Business Manager Training Division)
Bob Kane (Employment Services Officer)
Tessa Montague (Employment Services Officer)
Teresa McFadden (Employment Services Officer)

Issues raised

- USEL has an Employment Service Division which helps people with disabilities into work throughout Northern Ireland.

- Steps 2 Work has a requirement for 30 hours per week – some people with disabilities cannot do this number of hours – Steps 2 Success will reduce this requirement to 16 hours per week.
- With the introduction of Steps2Success those with learning difficulties may fall between the gaps.
- The Skills Programme achieved 67% of people on the programme into employment.
- There needs to be a more joined up approach between Health, DETI, DEL, DE and SSA.
- Needs to be incentives for employers to employ those with learning disabilities.
- DEL only pay for someone to do essential skills once.
- Needs to be a single organisation that deals with those with learning disabilities from the age of 16.
- Workable NI provides a 2-3 year support to clients with disabilities and works with 650 companies.
- USEL operates Aspire Training which offers computer training in Belfast and throughout NI – 3 training centres in Belfast and 3 across NI offering over 100 courses.
- USEL is a Member of the European Platform for Rehabilitation.

The Committee then had a tour of the USEL factory and training area.