

Re: Committee Inquiry into post Special Educational Need Provision in education, employment and training for those with Learning Disabilities in Northern Ireland.

The Organisation 'Praxis Care' submits the following statement in response to Term of Reference:-

1. To examine the current range of choice and opportunities available for those with Learning Disabilities on leaving full time schooling.

Praxis Care does wish to be considered to give Oral Evidence to the Committee if required and Praxis Care has no objections to this submission being made public by the committee.

1. Praxis Care, registered as a charity in 1983, is a major provider of services for adults and children with a learning disability, mental ill health, acquired brain injury and for older people, including people with dementia. Praxis Care provides services in Northern Ireland, England, The Republic of Ireland and The Isle of Man.
2. Praxis Care assists adults and children with a learning disability or acquired brain injury to live in appropriate community settings, through offering a holistic range of care and diversional activity. Praxis specialises in services for adults and children who have complex needs, including challenging behaviours, which could not normally be met outside a hospital or institutional setting. These services include a range of residential and supported living schemes and the provision of work and training opportunities.
3. Praxis Care believes that every individual has a right to meaningful activity during the day and recognises that for some the development of self-help and other life skills may be limited. However, the organisation would aspire to enable each individual to develop as normally as possible and acquire skills relevant to adulthood and a level of self-reliance. Thus the organisation has sought to develop a range of projects which meet differing needs.
4. Praxis care currently provides Day Care/ Work Skills projects in Derry, Conlig, Kesh, Portadown, Lurgan and Hillsborough. Apart from diversional and educational activities carried out at a range of day care/ work skills projects, service users avail of work opportunities in Cookie Companies where cookies are made, packaged and sold to local shops. The service users also work in coffee shops. For individuals who prefer outdoor physical activity, Praxis Care has developed Horticultural Projects which fully utilise the skills of the individuals involved. These schemes enable individuals to take a full and active part in contributing to the economy and being integrated into the local community.
5. The Praxis Care 'Moving Up Project' funded by The Department of Employment and Learning (DEL) and The European Social Fund (ESF) aims to *'Enhance Training and Employment Opportunities for Service Users and Further Develop Social Enterprise Schemes within Praxis Care.'* Through this Project Service Users avail of;- Work Star Skills Assessments, One to one Career Guidance, Action Planning, Social Enterprise Working, Supported Work Placements, Access to Employment and Access to Accredited Training.
6. The Moving Up Project offers Service Users the opportunity to study NOCN Qualifications (at Entry Level 3 and Level 1) in the following subjects;- Employment and Social skills, Catering, Horticulture, Information Technology, and Independent Living Skills. Teaching classes and resources are structured to meet the learning needs of the individual. One to one support is available as well as flexibility in class size and length to suit the educational needs of the Service Users.
7. Future development plans of the 'Moving Up Project' include the opening of a Training Centre in the Portadown area which will provide additional teaching and training facilities for Service Users. Additional NOCN Qualifications will be offered at this location as well as individual assessments and support in accessing relevant work placements. Referrals can also be made to access additional Praxis Care services including availing of Social Activities, Day Care / Work Skills Opportunities, Accommodation Services, Counselling and Befriending Services.
8. The Praxis Care Core Value of 'Promoting Independence' remains at the heart of our work which states that *"Praxis Care will help every individual to become as independent as he or she can be, to reach their full potential, and be active citizens in their communities."*