

4.7 Vulnerable groups

The local authority, NHS and partners are committed to supporting vulnerable residents to:

- *Optimise life chances, health and wellbeing by reducing inequalities, maximising autonomy and prevention, and minimising dependence*
- *Ensure safety and protection, while enabling and managing risk*
- *Ensure the availability of accessible services that are empowering, socially inclusive and responsive to user preference*
- *Ensure a high quality workforce in adults social care and inclusion*
- *Deliver more efficient business processes that free up resources to give choice and control to users of services and that respond to changes in levels of need*
- *Ensure effective collaborative working to produce good outcomes for service users and support delivery of our shared objectives*
- *Explore and utilise any available external funding (European, Lottery etc.) to support local people into training and employment.*

Individuals within families with very complex and multiple problems are often inhibited from being able to access and maximise education and training opportunities and therefore the employment that potentially follows. The resulting worklessness and child poverty are symptoms that create a cycle of deprivation and it is therefore vital that we target resources according to need.

Vulnerable residents may be currently economically inactive for many reasons, but the majority in Walsall are those with health issues that prevent them from entering or sustaining employment. Support for these clients around training, re-skilling and employability is crucial and is currently provided through both mainstream and externally funded activity.

Indicators:

Adults with learning disabilities

Around 1 in 10 adults (aged 18-64) in the borough with learning disabilities were in paid employment at the time of their assessment or latest review - equal to 70 out of 665 clients, or 10.4%¹. This is slightly lower than the 12.6% in employment the previous year. The percentage of female adults with learning disabilities in paid employment (7.9%) was lower than for males (12.3%).

Adults with mental health problems

¹ Adult Social Care Outcomes Framework (1E), 2012-13 provisional data

Only 65 out of 1,425, or 4.4%, of adults with mental health problems aged 18-69 in contact with secondary mental health services in Walsall were known to be in paid employment at the time of their assessment or latest review². This figure is below the 7.8% employment for the previous year. For this group of residents, females were more likely to be employed, with 5.7% in employment compared with 3.0% of males.

Priorities for action:

If the barriers affecting the ability of the most vulnerable people in Walsall to be able to gain employment are to be overcome, then the statutory sector, independent sector and voluntary/community sector have to continue to work in partnership with our most vulnerable service users in order to ensure that the services being offered actually meet the needs of the people we are trying to help. The barriers are complex and the solutions are not easy, requiring innovative thinking that reaches across boundaries and professional disciplines.

Examples of initiatives attempting to do just that are:

- ***The 'Families with Multiple Barriers' project:*** *A multi-agency approach supports the new operating models in both Adults and Children's Services which promote independence and improved outcomes for the most vulnerable, including their prospects of gaining employment. The Early Health Strategy provides a clear direction for service delivery, outcomes and learning are maximised through the 'Families with Multiple Barriers' project (European Social Fund), which helps families to tackle and overcome their issues by supporting them into 'progress measures'. Issues include:*
 - *Coping with care responsibilities*
 - *Support with children with Learning Difficulties*
 - *Anti Social Behaviour*
 - *Financial Difficulties*
 - *Work Experience*
 - *Improving Health*
 - *English for Speakers of Other Language (ESOL)*
 - *Reducing Depression and Anxiety*
 - *Social Isolation*
 - *Risk of Homelessness*
 - *Parenting Skills*
 - *Domestic Violence*
 - *Basic and Functional Skills*
 - *Motivation and Confidence*

- ***The 'Supporting People' Programme:*** *This national government programme provides housing related support to the most vulnerable client groups, helping them to live independently in their own homes and linking directly into activity that*

² Adult Social Care Outcomes Framework (1F), 2012-13 provisional data

improves their economic wellbeing. The programme is delivered through a partnership between the Council, Health Service and Probation Service

- **Employment Strategy and pathway:** *The Joint Commissioning Unit is currently developing an employment strategy and pathway that includes newly commissioned services to improve opportunities for adults with learning disabilities, physical and sensory disabilities and autism*
- **Walsall Vocational Service:** *This service is delivered by Dudley and Walsall Mental Health Partnership NHS Trust and supports individuals with severe and enduring mental health problems to gain and sustain employment. Evidence suggests that employment can support an individual's recovery and can reduce the need for clinical interventions. The team are currently piloting the Individual Placement and Support approach as it is known to be more successful in supporting people to move into competitive employment and has a sound evidence base to support that understanding. The service has gained 'Centre of Excellence' status for this model from the Sainsbury's Centre for Mental Health*
- **Walsall Residential Service offering Crisis and Respite beds:** *This service supports people with severe and enduring mental health problems who are in crisis or perhaps need support on an ongoing basis to manage their mental health problems. It is delivered by Walsall MBC in partnership with Dudley & Walsall Mental Health Partnership NHS Trust. Service users can access crisis beds in times of need when a hospital admission is not required, or can access respite beds as an ongoing support mechanism to manage their mental health symptoms. In order to improve the economic wellbeing of individuals who are in crisis and therefore accessing this service, it links directly with specialists from Walsall's Vocational Service who provide employment retention advice or support for those seeking employment*
- **Young NEETs:** *The previous section outlines some of the issues and initiatives for vulnerable groups of young people who are not in employment, education or training, including those with learning difficulties and disabilities*