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# Valuing People: A New Strategy for Learning Disability for the 21st Century



**VALUING PEOPLE**  
Support Team

A briefing paper for staff working in  
adult and further education

This is the thirty-sixth in a series of briefing sheets which aim to provide an introduction to a variety of lifelong learning issues

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This briefing paper looks at the proposals set out for people with learning disabilities in the Department of Health White Paper **Valuing People: A new strategy for learning disability in the 21<sup>st</sup> century**. The first part summarises the ideas put forward in the White Paper. The second part looks at some of the implications of the White Paper for staff working in adult and further education.

## Part One: Valuing People

The Department of Health White Paper 'Valuing People' was issued in March 2001. It sets out Government proposals for improving the life opportunities of all children, young people, adults and older people with learning difficulties and their families. It emphasises the need for a fundamental shift in the attitude of a range of public services if this is to happen. In particular it focuses on the need for a partnership approach between all agencies – social services, health, education, employment, housing, the benefits agencies, transport and leisure services and voluntary and independent services.

The four key principles underpinning the White Paper are stated as being rights, independence, choice and inclusion. Its areas of concern include:

- better transition from school to adult services
- enabling people to have more control over their lives through advocacy and a person-centred approach
- better access to health services, education, training, employment and housing
- greater understanding of the particular needs of people with learning difficulties from a multi ethnic background
- the delivery of high quality services by a skilled, trained and qualified workforce
- more access to direct payments for people with learning difficulties
- greater involvement and support of carers.

## Implementation of the White Paper proposals

The main drivers for the implementation of 'Valuing People' are the Learning Disability Partnership Boards. These boards have the responsibility of updating Learning Disability Joint Investment Plans and drawing up local action plans containing proposals for implementing 'Valuing People'. Learning Disability Partnership Boards had to be established by 31<sup>st</sup> October 2001. The Chief Executive of the local council with responsibility for social services was responsible for setting up these boards. Membership should include representatives from statutory services (including social services, health bodies, education, housing and Employment Service); representatives from independent and voluntary organisations and at least two people with learning disabilities and two carers.

Throughout the production and implementation of 'Valuing People' there has been a very strong emphasis on including and listening to the voices of people with learning disabilities themselves. As well as being included on the Partnership Boards they were closely involved in the production of the original document. All papers relating to 'Valuing People' are also issued in a format accessible to people with learning disabilities. The Service Users Advisory Group worked with the Department of Health and produced a report issued with the White Paper, 'Nothing About Us Without Us'. In this report service users advise the Government about what they think should be in the strategy. The National Forum established after the publication of 'Valuing People' is responsible for ensuring the accessibility of information. The Valuing People website ([www.doh.gov.uk/vpst](http://www.doh.gov.uk/vpst)) provides valuable information on how to make information accessible to people with a learning disability.

Major priorities for the Boards include:

- devising a framework for introducing a person-centred approach to planning services
- improving transition between child and adult services
- ensuring that as many learning disabled people as possible take part in education, training and employment
- modernising day care services
- advising on the cultural competence of local services

- enabling more people with learning disabilities to benefit from direct payments whereby they can buy in and control their own support
- developing access to housing for people with learning disabilities
- developing advocacy services for people with learning disabilities.

In terms of operational change the White Paper states that by Winter 2002 people with learning disabilities who make substantial and long term use of publicly funded services should have a named person to act as their service co-ordinator.

## Staff training

The White Paper recognises that currently a large proportion of staff working in care services in this area are unqualified. A new Learning Disabilities Award Framework (LDAF) was introduced in April 2001. The Government has set targets that, from April 2002, all new entrants to learning disability care services should be registered for a qualification on LDAF and that by 2005 50% of all front line staff should have achieved at least NVQ Level 2.

## Resources

The Learning Disability Development Fund of £22 million revenue and £20 million capital was introduced in April 2002 to support priorities for service change. Both capital and revenue may only be used where deployed as part of pooled funds under the Health Act 1999 flexibilities. Although this money is specifically for social services and health authority there might be opportunities for education to be closely involved in any new projects developed to support service change. In addition to this £1.3 million a year over the next three years is being invested to develop advocacy services and £750,000 will be spent over the next three years to fund the development of a national learning disability information centre and helpline in partnership with Mencap.

## Designing services in collaboration with users

'Valuing People' places considerable emphasis on the importance of developing services in the light of person-centred planning and on modernising day centres. In brief, this means that the wishes and aspirations of individuals should be taken as the starting point and that holistic, individualised services should be created around

them rather than their fitting into pre-determined services. Since the publication of 'Valuing People' the Department of Health have issued three new documents under the general title, 'Planning with People - Towards Person Centred Approaches'. They include *Guidance for Partnership Boards*, *Guidance for Implementation Groups* and, as has been the case with all 'Valuing People' materials, an excellent *Accessible Guide* for people with learning disabilities all available on the website.

## Part Two: Implications for those working in adult and further education

Adult and further education providers have for many years responded to the needs of people with learning disabilities, and many colleges and adult education providers run a range of programmes and support for this group of learners. This provision can make a real difference to the quality of life of individual people with learning disabilities. However, too often it can exist in isolation. Many staff working in this area of education recognise the need for far greater inter-agency collaboration if the wishes and needs of people with learning disabilities are to be met in a holistic rather than a piecemeal way. The changes presented in 'Valuing People' open up the possibility of such collaboration happening but, for it to be effective, it requires education to be actively involved in the new developments both at a strategic and an operational level.

### 1. Education Representation on Learning Disability Partnership Boards:

It is essential that further and adult education providers are represented on the Learning Disability Partnership Boards and contribute to the plans which they have to produce. Many of the areas which are priorities for these Boards, such as modernising day services and developing strategies for employment opportunities, have key implications for post-school education. It may be appropriate role for a member of the Local Learning and Skills Councils (LLSCs). However, some LLSCs cover several LEAs in which case there is likely to be a need for representatives who are drawn from provider organisations as well. Education staff need to be clear who their representative is and need to be able to feed in their ideas as to how further and adult education can play a role in the strategic development of a holistic service.

### Questions for teaching staff

*Do you know who the education representative on your Learning Disability Partnership Board is? (You could find out by phoning your local Social Services). Are there clear lines of communication so that you receive information about the Board and so that you can feed ideas into it?*

### 2. Links with 'named person':

**Valuing People** states that by Winter 2002 people with learning disabilities who make substantial and long term use of publicly funded services should have a named person to act as their service co-ordinator. Further and adult education staff working with adults with learning difficulties need to be aware of who the named person responsible for co-ordinating services for the learners they work with are. They need to have the opportunity to work with these people in order to ensure that the work they are doing is in harmony with that carried out by other services that their learner is receiving. This has implications for education managers as they will need to ensure that teaching staff have sufficient time in which to carry out these essential liaison duties.

### Questions for teaching staff

*What steps could you take to find out who is the service co-ordinator for individual students you work with? How can you establish effective ways of liaising with service co-ordinators?*

### 3. Better access to advocacy services, health services and employment:

The Learning Disability Partnership Boards have a particular role to ensure that people with learning disabilities have better access to 'advocacy and self advocacy services, health services and employment'. Many further and adult education organisations are already doing considerable work in these areas. A recent NIACE publication 'Making the Jump – Transition to work' cites case studies of education providers working in partnership with other services such as Social Services, to support people with learning difficulties in the transition from education into employment. Education providers might want to ensure that the Boards are aware of this and work with the Boards to see how they can develop this area of work in accordance with any overall strategy.

### **Questions for teaching staff**

*If you are running learning programmes in these areas, are they able to be planned in conjunction with any overall Local Authority strategy? What steps might you take to facilitate this?*

## **4. Curriculum planning**

As we have seen 'Valuing People' emphasises the importance of designing services around individual's wishes and aspirations rather than their having to fit into pre-determined services. This emphasis on person centred planning is an approach which many people working in post-school education would welcome. It does raise issues for providers of further and adult education. The structure of current education provision which tends to be focused around the notion of specific, time limited programmes of learning does not always lend itself to adhering to a person-centred approach. This needs to be recognised if post-school education is to work more closely with other services in order to try and facilitate services which do genuinely respond to a person centred planning approach. There may in the future be a need for different patterns of provision which respond more appropriately to the needs and aspirations of people with learning disabilities. Time needs to be given to exploring these different types of provision.

The lack of collaboration between agencies in designing provision has also meant that there can be considerable overlap between what happens in education classes and what is delivered in Social Services day centres. Greater collaboration between agencies will mean that education has to define more clearly what precisely it is that education can offer to people with learning disabilities and how this fits into the holistic service envisioned in the White Paper.

### **Questions for teaching staff**

*How might your curriculum offer need developing to accommodate to a more person-centred approach? How does an education offer for people with learning disabilities differ from what other services can offer?*

## **5. Staff training**

Learning Disability Partnership Boards produced a workforce and training plan in the Summer of 2002. At a strategic level it is important that delivery of the Learning Disabilities Award

Framework should include elements which involve participants understanding the place which post-school education can play in developing services for people with learning disabilities. At an operational level it may well be that further and adult education staff would want support staff in their own organisation to take part in local training programmes; joint training can be a very effective way of enhancing inter-agency collaboration. It might also be the case that colleges or adult education centres felt they could usefully play a role in delivering aspects of the Learning Disabilities Award.

### **Questions for teaching staff**

*Are you aware of how the Learning Disabilities Award is being delivered in your area? Are there ways in which your organisation might be involved in this training?*

## **6. Involving people with learning disabilities in decision making and planning**

As has been shown above people with learning disabilities have been very active in contributing to the ideas put forward in 'Valuing People'. They are also strongly represented on the Learning Disability Partnership Boards. This means that both at a national and local level there are now many committees which are experienced at including members with learning disabilities and many people with learning disabilities who have considerable experience in attending committee meetings. It might well be that education providers wish to learn from this expertise and look at ways in which they can more fully involve people with learning disabilities at decision making level in their own organisation.

### **Questions for teaching staff**

*What steps might you take to encourage people with learning disabilities to be involved in relevant committees in your organisation?*

## **Working together**

From April 2003 to April 2004 Yola Jacobsen NIACE project officer, will be working as a special advisor on post-16 education with the Valuing People Support Team. This will be an opportunity to develop the role of post-16 education in the Learning Disability strategy. Valuing People Support Team website: [www.doh.gov.uk/vpst](http://www.doh.gov.uk/vpst)

## References and Further Reading

**Valuing people : a new strategy for learning disability for the 21<sup>st</sup> century.** Department of Health (2001a). Department of Health, 2001  
Available from Valuing People Support Team website: [www.doh.gov.uk/vpst](http://www.doh.gov.uk/vpst)

**Nothing about us without us : report of the National User Group.** Department of Health (2001b). Department of Health, 2001  
[www.doh.gov.uk/learningdisabilities/access/nothingabout](http://www.doh.gov.uk/learningdisabilities/access/nothingabout)

**Planning with people : towards person centred approaches.** Department of Health, 2002  
[www.doh.gov.uk/learningdisabilities/personcentredapproach.htm](http://www.doh.gov.uk/learningdisabilities/personcentredapproach.htm)  
Guidance for Partnership Boards, Guidance for Implementation Groups and an Accessible Guide  
Can be obtained free from the Department of Health

## NIACE Publications

NIACE has published a number of books and packs on education for adults with learning difficulties. Additional information about these publications can be found on the NIACE website: [www.niace.org.uk](http://www.niace.org.uk)

**Making the jump : transition to work : a guide to supporting adults with learning difficulties make the jump from education to employment and Making the jump : 'we can do a good job': a pack for adults with learning difficulties who want to work.** Yola Jacobsen. NIACE, 2002  
Making the jump set. ISBN 1862011435 £60.00.  
We can do a good job. ISBN 1862011443 £15.00.

**Our right to learn : a pack for people with learning difficulties and staff who work with them, based on the Charter for learning.** Yola Jacobsen (editor). NIACE, 2002. ISBN 1862010854 £100.00

**Charter for learning.** NIACE, 2000  
[www.niace.org.uk/Research/LDD/charter.htm](http://www.niace.org.uk/Research/LDD/charter.htm)

**Training for change : a training pack to support adults with learning disabilities to become trainers.** Jeannie Sutcliffe in collaboration with CHANGE. NIACE, 1998. ISBN 1 86201 052 8 £150.00 (discounted rate of £50.00 for organisations run by and for adults with learning difficulties/disabilities)

**All things being equal? A practical guide to widening participation for adults with learning difficulties in education.** Jeannie Sutcliffe and Yola Jacobsen. NIACE, 1998. ISBN 186201051X £8.95

**Still a chance to learn? a report on the impact of the Further and Higher Education Act (1992) on education for adults with learning difficulties.** Margaret Macadam and Jeannie Sutcliffe. NIACE, 1996. ISBN 1872941990 £5.95

**Enabling learning : a student-centred approach to teaching adults with learning difficulties.** Jeannie Sutcliffe. NIACE, 1996. ISBN 1872941915 £100.00

**Towards inclusion : developing integrated education for adults with learning difficulties.** Jeannie Sutcliffe. NIACE, 1996. ISBN 1872941907 £100.00

**Self advocacy and adults with learning difficulties.** Jeannie Sutcliffe and Ken Simons. NIACE, 1993. ISBN 1872941273 £7.95

**Integration for adults with learning difficulties : contexts and debates.** Jeannie Sutcliffe. NIACE, 1993. ISBN 1 87294 118 4 £7.95

**Adults with learning difficulties : education for choice and empowerment.** Jeannie Sutcliffe. NIACE and Open University Press, 1990. ISBN 0 335 09609 3 £18.99

NIACE, the national organisation for adult learning, has a broad remit to promote lifelong learning opportunities for adults. NIACE works to develop increased participation in education and training. It aims to do this for those who do not have easy access because of barriers of class, gender, age, race, language and culture, learning difficulties or disabilities, or insufficient resources.

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