

## **Refresh of the Welsh Government's Economic Contract - Consultation Response, Engage to Change Project, 5 March 2021**

### **About Engage to Change**

Funded by the National Lottery Community Fund, Engage to Change sets out to find employment for young people with a learning disability, autistic spectrum disorders, or specific learning difficulties aged 16-25 in Wales. It uses a supported employment methodology and job coaching. Project partners are:

Learning Disability Wales is a national charity representing the learning disability sector in Wales. Learning Disability Wales works with people with a learning disability and their families, Welsh Government, local authorities, disabled people's organisations and the voluntary sector to create a better Wales for all people with a learning disability. Learning Disability Wales is the lead partner for the Engage to Change project.

Other project partners are two supported employment agencies, Agoriad Cyf and Elite Supported Employment; All Wales People First, a self-advocacy organisation for people with a learning disability; and the National Centre for Mental Health (NCMH) at Cardiff University, our evaluation partners.

In our response we will mainly refer to parts b and c of the following question:

*Would the introduction of any of these proposals positively or negatively impact on the individuals that you represent:*

- b) Individuals who work for a business with an Economic Contract*
- c) Individuals seeking to enter employment with a business with an Economic Contract?*

### **Response**

We welcome the 'Refresh of Welsh Government's Economic Contract' and have the following points of feedback to offer:

- We are glad to see a strong focus on fair working conditions and particularly on creating a healthy, safe and inclusive environment. We would like to underline that inclusivity in working environments would include the environment to welcome and support people with a learning disability and/or autism as well as classic attempts to make physical environments more accessible. This applies to legal protection as well. We welcome the attention to legal rights, particularly those for equality of opportunity for people with protected characteristics, including disabilities. We hope that this would extend specifically to people with a learning disability and/or autism who may

need additional accommodation in the areas of recruitment, interview practice, supervision, and in-house training if equality is to be achieved for them alongside other disabled people.

- In order to ensure that workforces and recruitment become more inclusive for people with a learning disability and/or autism, we suggest integrating a range of measures into employment, namely work placements, internships / supported internships and apprenticeships.
- For public sector employees we would like to see particular emphasis on promoting the employment of disabled people, especially those who experience the highest levels of unemployment such as those with a learning disability or autism.
- We would like to see leadership in setting standards and demonstrating the promotion of well-being built into private sector contracts.
- We support the development of clear consistent standards through new indicators and would like to see indicators that report on employment of people with a learning disability and/or autism, with particular emphasis on the public sector reporting efforts in leadership in the employment of these people in the next five years. Furthermore, we suggest developing clear targets to measure social value within procurement that should be linked to the Well-being of Future Generations Act in terms of job creation, inclusive workforce, workforce development and environmental standards.
- A section within "social value" procurement that provides for how and when this will be reported, measured and monitored following contract award (this never happens at the moment, even when social value is scored).
- In the planned discussions with social partners, we urge Welsh Government to include Third Sector organisations representing disabled people and specifically people with a learning disability and/or autism.
- We strongly agree that the contract should be applied to other forms of support provided by Welsh Government. Welsh Government should be taking the lead under its equality duty responsibilities. The Economic Resilience Fund will be absolutely crucial to the reduction of the employment gap between disabled people and non-disabled people. This kind of contracting will be crucial in the next five years to achieving this goal.
- We particularly support the idea of developing case studies celebrating what companies have achieved and have seen this work well in the area of apprenticeships.
- We also strongly support the use of people with lived experience and external experts to deliver training and would like to see Third Sector organisations representing autistic people and people with a learning disability represented.
- In line with a 'Resilient and more equal Wales' (Well-being of Future Generations Act), Welsh Government should include local procurement and contract ringfencing, ie reserve contracting for small or medium sized

enterprises or social enterprises (Regulation 20), who are more likely to employ local people, disabled people and disadvantaged people than other providers.

- In order to maintain high standards, we suggest utilising other forms of accreditation like Disability Confident Status, Green Dragon, Living Wage Employer etc.

More information about the Engage to Change project can be found on our website: <http://www.engagetochange.org.uk/>.

Please contact Grace Krause at [Grace.Krause@LDW.org.uk](mailto:Grace.Krause@LDW.org.uk) for any further questions.