

This case study highlights the work being done by Wandsworth to increase the number of disabled people they employ. This began as an initiative in 2010 specifically to employ people with a learning disability and / or autism and has since been widened out to include all disabled people who are residents of Wandsworth.

This has resulted in over 80 people gaining employment opportunities with more than 20 people employed by the council and more than 10 people employed with external employers following their work experience with the council.

### Values

Public sector employers want competent and capable people in their workforce. It is also important to them to recruit a diverse workforce that reflects the communities that they serve as referenced in Valued in Public.<sup>1</sup>

People with mental health problems, a learning disability and / or autism are part of communities who can and want to work. They make up a largely untapped pool of talent that offers real opportunities for the public sector, ensuring their talents are used to their full.

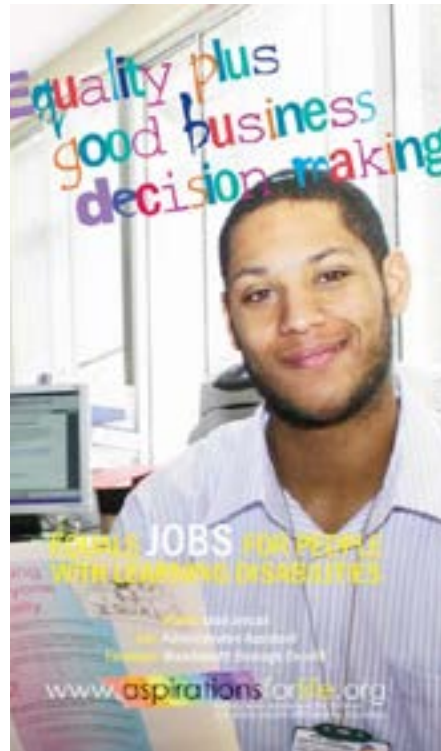
Employing disabled people can help public bodies lead by example and support them to meet their diversity targets:

- Demonstrating their commitments to tackling disadvantage and promoting socially inclusive communities
- Promoting employment opportunities for disabled people
- Enhancing their reputation with their employees, those that they support and the wider community

### What are the challenges?

Wandsworth Borough Council was keen to achieve council-wide objectives as part of their duty under the Equality Act 2010 and their responsibilities as part of the Public Sector Equality Duty. The council wanted to ensure that they were leading by example in employing disabled people, but also to ensure they were:

- Supporting disabled people to live as independently as possible
- Reducing reliance on statutory services and welfare benefits
- Improving individuals' health and wellbeing; and
- Raising aspirations for employment and developing disabled people's practical skills and work experience



*Leon Jordan was one of the first people with a learning disability to be employed by Wandsworth Borough Council. He continues to be employed by the Council and has had numerous roles which have allowed him to develop his career*

### Solution

Wandsworth Borough Council embarked on a pilot scheme in 2010/11 which was led by Adult Social Services and supported by their Housing Department.

The aim was to create a small number of jobs designed specifically for people with a learning disability which would be advertised solely with a supported employment provider.

There were seven roles specifically designed which included three posts in day services, two administrative posts in Housing, and two administrative posts in Adult Social Services Business Support. The pilot was deemed a success and all seven people were given permanent contracts of employment.

As a result of the success of the pilot, the decision was taken in 2012 to develop an in-house supported employment service, Workright<sup>3</sup>, which reported to the Head of their Human Resources Department.

The aim of Workright is not only to support people with a learning disability into employment within the Council, but also to support other disabled groups including autistic people, people with mental health problems and people with physical and sensory impairments.

In addition, Workright continues to support both line managers and disabled employees within the council.

The Workright team is now a team of three part-time staff. They continue to support existing disabled employees in both specifically designed jobs as well as other existing job roles.

In addition, they continue to support line managers to improve their disability confidence and understand the benefits of having teams which reflect the diverse communities of Wandsworth.

As job roles have changed within the council, they have supported individuals into new roles, which progresses their careers. New job roles continue to be designed and are ring-fenced in the first instance to be filled through Workright.

All staff appointed since the pilot continue to be employed by the council despite numerous re-organisations, as they recognise the benefits of an inclusive workforce which includes disabled people.

The success of Wandsworth Borough Council's endeavours has been due to strong senior leadership and ensuring dedicated resources to support recruiting managers, and this commitment support continues from the Director of Adult Social Services and the Head of Human Resources.

The Council sees the importance of the scheme in helping them to achieve their equality aims in employing more disabled staff, as well as providing employment opportunities for Wandsworth residents.

From their initial endeavours in 2010 until March 2018, Workright has supported:

- More than 50 work experience placements in the council for local disabled people;
- More than 20 disabled people to work for the council in challenging and fulfilling job roles;
- More than 10 disabled people to get jobs with external employers following their work experience with the council.

For further information about this case study, please contact Sally Gale, Workright Manager  
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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.base-uk.org/sites/default/files/knowledgebase/Valued%20in%20Public.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.londoncouncils.gov.uk/our-key-themes/economic-development/case-studies-economic-development-london/wandsworth-councils>

<sup>3</sup> [http://www.wandsworth.gov.uk/site/scripts/home\\_info.php?homepageID=149&recordID=48845](http://www.wandsworth.gov.uk/site/scripts/home_info.php?homepageID=149&recordID=48845)

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