

A HOME AND A JOB: DELIVERING BETTER OUTCOMES FOR SOCIALLY EXCLUDED ADULTS

1. Thanks Sue for the introduction and to ADASS for inviting me to speak at this extremely important event in Liverpool. Thanks Martin.
2. It's a great pleasure to be here with you all today and to have an opportunity to thank you for all you do in delivering our public services. I have only been in this job for 3 weeks but I have been delighted to see the passion and enthusiasm of colleagues in central and local government, and in the third sector, in supporting progress for those facing social exclusion.
3. This morning I want to talk about the Socially Excluded Adults PSA which commits us - *government*, working with a range of other stakeholders - to radically improve the life chances of socially excluded adults by helping them get back on track to a more successful life. And it's a high-level commitment – one of only 30 PSAs across government and the first ever PSA to focus on the

socially excluded.

4. The PSA is part of the national picture, but how does this translate on the ground?
5. I know that for local government at the moment the focus is your Local Area Agreement and the National Indicator Set.
6. Having the socially excluded adults PSA indicators in the National Indicator Set means that all local areas have to report on them, and be assessed on them through the Comprehensive Area Assessment. So there will be a new transparency about how life chances of vulnerable adults are improving in each local area.
7. So this PSA provides a new lever to prioritise socially excluded groups both locally and nationally. It is a new incentive to do more joint working across different services and to work together to address the complex problems vulnerable people often face. And it's an opportunity for local authorities to lead this work, thinking in new ways about how to work with others in the

statutory and third sectors.

8. I am delighted that two-thirds of local authorities have chosen national indicator 6 or 7 as a thriving third sector and strong volunteering culture will in themselves play a real role in helping to provide services to excluded adults.

CURRENT DOWNTURN

9. But inevitably at this time of economic uncertainty some will ask can we really afford to focus on the difficult excluded groups when the general rate of unemployment is rising and people are at risk of repossessions? I won't pretend it's going to be easy, I know that we're going through a difficult time, and that local authorities will face new pressures. But, even in these difficult times, we can't really afford not to look after those who are most vulnerable in our society.

10. The government, led by the PM, is doing an enormous amount of work to help get Britain through this downturn and this time we're determined that tough economic times will not be used as an excuse to forget about the

socially excluded. That was the mistake of the 80s and 90s which have left us a legacy of social exclusion.

11. And that's why it's crucial we use PSA 16 to make sure those disadvantaged groups are not left behind. It will help us at national and local level to prioritise vulnerable groups.

RATIONALE FOR PSA 16

12. Some people in society have a combination of problems and circumstances, such as poor mental and physical health, limited skills, unstable housing or an offending history. Their problems can cut them off from the choices and chances that most of us take for granted, and they may find themselves unable to participate fully in society.

13. One way of supporting these people is to help them to obtain the core foundations to allow them to develop and overcome their problems. And two crucial elements of this are a home and a job.

14. A home and a job represent the minimum of what most people need to enjoy ordinary productive lives. A job can provide financial stability, an opportunity to make a contribution to society; access to wider social networks and can build confidence and self-esteem. And a home provides the security, stability and independence to get on in life.

15. But for socially excluded groups, achieving and sustaining a home and a job is not easy.

KEY STATISTICS

16. The facts speak for themselves on this.

- Only one in ten adults with a learning disability is in employment.
- Only one in ten adults with more serious mental health problems is working.
- Nearly one in four prisoners leaves custody without a clear address.
- 13% of care leavers are homeless at age 19.

- Around 40% of rough sleepers in London have been in prison (2005)
- 30 to 50% of people misusing drugs also have mental health problems.

17. Helping these vulnerable groups gain the core foundations of a home and a job can be a big step forward that can help them get their lives back on track.

18. And the Socially Excluded Adults PSA is designed to do just that, to enable socially excluded adults to live a more stable and successful life.

19. The specific groups of adults we're working with are:

- People receiving secondary mental health services
- People with moderate to severe learning disabilities
- Young people who have experienced care
- Offenders under probation supervision

20. Individuals within these groups are particularly at risk of experiencing social exclusion, and may also be negotiating a difficult transition such as leaving prison or long-term care. While they can be highly vulnerable

during this transition period, they are also in contact with the services that could and should be making a difference in tackling exclusion.

21. Providing the right support at key transition points is a key way to help prevent long-term exclusion, by addressing problems before they escalate or become more entrenched.

22. Clearly, this PSA does not cover every socially excluded group, but it is the first PSA to cover a group of adults who have multiple problems, are likely to experience extremely poor employment and housing outcomes, and often do not receive the level of co-ordinated support they need.

23. I acknowledge that helping these groups is not easy and it would be much easier to focus on helping unemployed people with skills to get jobs and social housing. That's important too, but we need to think about the long term impact of not helping excluded groups now, particularly during an economic downturn. Without helping offenders into jobs or training, we know that

they're more likely to re-offend, and without helping them to access suitable housing, we know that they will find it harder to secure jobs. That is why the PSA focuses on housing and employment.

WHAT WE ARE DOING TO DELIVER PSA 16

24. So what does this all mean in practice? How can we help these excluded groups get back on the path to a more stable life?

Care Leavers

25. In my previous role as a minister at the Department for Children, Schools and Families, I became very familiar with the issues many care leavers face during their transition to adulthood. Substantial investment over the years has resulted in improved outcomes for care leavers, but we know that rapid transitions can have significant impacts on their achievements. For example, they may have to make career choices and/or decide whether or not to continue in education whilst also managing a move to their own accommodation. That's why the government wants to help young people make a

gradual transition from their care placement, when they are ready. After all, the age at which most young people leave home is 24 – not 16 or 18.

26. And while there are some local authorities across the country who are doing very well in finding suitable accommodation for care leavers and in ensuring they are in employment, education or training, there are others who have had less success. So we need to look at why these differences in outcomes exist to understand the reasons behind these variations. That's why the Care Matters Implementation Plan has gone on the road with regional conferences to help drive up standards across the piece.

Offenders

27. I also recognise that helping offenders is not always the most popular theory. But not only is it right on its own terms to try to rehabilitate offenders, it is also in the community's interests to help reduce re-offending.

28. And there are good examples of local authorities who

are getting it right, such as Tower Hamlets in East London. Tower Hamlets has been awarded a Beacon for its initiative 'Looking Out', which works with the housing charity St Mungo's and the Providence Row Housing Association. The scheme involves a dedicated resettlement development officer who works with offenders to identify their needs and draw up support plans, liaising with services and ensuring coordinated support is provided beyond the release of prisoners. It is a good example of a local authority thinking flexibly and innovatively about how to tackle exclusion, working alongside third sector organisations.

Learning Disability

29. I'm sure everyone in this room agrees with me that a person with a learning disability has the right to live their life as independently as possible. But despite over 60% of adults with a learning disability saying they want to work, only 10% are in paid employment, compared to 48% for disabled people.

30. As many of you will know, the Valuing People Now

strategy is committed to helping people with learning disabilities live more independent lives.

31. But we need to see more examples of local authorities like Leicester and Norwich which have agreed to adopt a US high-school transitions programme called Project Search, working with the charity Remploy. Leicester College and Leicester City Council, and the Norfolk and Norwich hospital are acting as host employers while a college tutor and job coach are working with them to run work placements. The interns are unpaid and remain on state benefits during the scheme and the tutor and job coaches are funded by the college. In the US, the model has had 80% success in securing paid full-time employment for this group.

32. So with some extra support before taking up a job, and providing some ongoing support after they start the job to both the employee and the employer, it is possible to raise the employment rate from the 10% it is now, up towards the 60% of this group who tell us now that they would like a job.

Adults with mental health problems

33. Sadly, I know from my own work as an MP, that there are still a lot of people with mental health problems, which is why it can be difficult helping them to access jobs or stable housing. And they may need more intensive preparation before being able to take up a job, and ongoing support, particularly as their health can fluctuate. So as with the learning disability group, we need to do all we can to help people with mental health problems live as independent lives as possible. That's why I am very pleased that the National Social Inclusion Programme is working hard to challenge these negative attitudes and stigma and improve the lives of people with mental health problems.

34. Local initiatives such as BEAT, which is part of Jobcentre Plus in Bodmin, Cornwall are working with community outreach services to try to change local perceptions about the services and support that Jobcentre Plus can offer for people with mental health problems. Through BEAT, clients also have access to debt counselling, housing advice, and education. Staff at

JCP also liaises with the local psychiatric hospital to ensure that the transition from leaving hospital and into the community is smoother.

35. The government needs to do its bit too. For example, the Department for Health is investigating how it can support the NHS to employ more people with mental health and learning disabilities and the Welfare Reform Green Paper is helping disabled people to get and sustain employment. Employment services are being urged to become more personalised to the clients' needs so that we can support people with mental health problems and people with learning disabilities into employment and to stay in employment.

Cross Cutting messages

36. Of course we recognise that some people will fall into more than one PSA 16 group and as a result, have even more complex needs. An individual with mental health problems may have been in care at some point in their lives, and may have an offending history, so we need to ensure that all their needs are assessed accordingly to give them the best chance in life. That's why a key focus

of PSA 16 is to improve the needs assessment of excluded individuals and this means service providers working closer together. This is particularly important when people are at key transition points, for example when young people move from being the responsibility of children's services to adult's services.

CONCLUSION

37. I recognise that delivering on PSA 16 will not be easy.

Things that are worth doing rarely are – but if government both centrally and locally – don't focus on helping the socially excluded often working with the Third Sector – who will?

38. And by way of setting a good example, I have asked my officials to look into how we can adjust recruitment processes in the Civil Service so that more people from disadvantaged backgrounds can apply to work in Government. And as a small first step, we are in the process of recruiting someone with a learning disability to work with us in the Social Exclusion Task Force in the Cabinet Office.

39. As part of our commitment to working with you to learn more about what really works at the local and national level, I am pleased to launch the Socially Excluded Adults Public Service Agreement Community of Practice, in partnership with the Improvement and Development Agency. This is an online forum where you can share best practice and tell us what is and isn't working on the front line, as well as have access to the latest policy information on PSA 16. As a new minister responsible for social exclusion, and the third sector, I want to hear from you, so please do join this important forum. You can find more information about it on the Cabinet Office website, the address for which I'm told is on the leaflet in your delegates pack.

40. Once again thank you for inviting me. Thank you for all you do.

[ENDS]