

7 April 2006

Margaret Hodge, Minister for Employment and Welfare Reform Launches Project Supporting People with Disabilities And Other Health Issues

Margaret Hodge, Minister for Employment and Welfare Reform today launches an innovative project which helps people into work. The project supports people with disabilities and other health-related issues in the London boroughs of Barking and Dagenham and Havering who wish to get back into employment, education and training.

The Thames Gateway Equality Access Programme is run by employment charity Tomorrow's People, which has a 21-year track record of success, helping more than 400,000 people out of long-term unemployment. The initiative is funded by the London Development Agency.

The project provides individuals with one-to-one confidential services, including basic skills assessment to explore options and training needs. A menu of modules is offered to clients including CV writing advice, intense job search, help with application forms, work placement, volunteer opportunities, confidence building, interview techniques and basic computer skills.

Tomorrow's People has been working with London Riverside to help revitalise and sustain the riverside areas of Barking & Dagenham and Havering. Additional partners in the project include Barking & Dagenham Council, Havering Council, the Disablement Association of Barking & Dagenham, Jobcentre Plus and St George's community centre, Havering.

There are approximately 19,000 economically inactive people currently claiming sickness and disability benefits in the London boroughs of Havering and Barking and Dagenham.

Margaret Strickland, Tomorrow's People Local Operations Manager, said: "We are delighted to be working in partnership with a number of key London organisations to provide this service. We believe this will make a real difference in transforming the lives of people who require specialist, often long-term help in their journey back into work.

"There are no quick fixes, everything we do is long-term. We begin with confidence building and then move on to retraining if necessary, then updating CVs and interview techniques. We stay in touch with the clients even after they are in work or training, giving advice and liaising between the client and their employer. Many have problems when they start working: facing the pressures of a new job, meeting new people, learning to fit in, but also how to assert themselves with colleagues."

Tomorrow's People will be based, one day a week, at St George's Community Centre, Harold's Hill, Havering and Tuesday-Friday at Comfort House, Goresbrook Road, Dagenham.

Maxine Jones, Director of Skills and Employment at the London Development Agency, said: "The LDA is pleased to have been closely involved in the development of the Thames Gateway Equality Access Programme. By providing a mixture of employer led training, personalised support, and work placements we are confident that Tomorrow's People will be able to give local people the skills they need to start and keep work."



Sally Lyons, Havering's Regeneration Funding Team Leader, said: "This project will offer people with disabilities in Havering a real opportunity to get back into work, education or training. We are delighted to support it."

Tomorrow's People has a 21-year track record of success, helping more than 400,000 people out of long-term unemployment. The project will follow the very successful model Tomorrow's People began in Kentish Town, North West London where for the last four years it has had an adviser based on site at a busy GPs' surgery. So far nearly 200 patients have seen the adviser in London, and of those who have completed the programme, 87% have returned to employment or are back in education or training. On average, 82% are still in work 12 months on.

Anyone requiring further information about the scheme should call Tomorrow's People on freephone 0800 6524599.

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Notes to Editors

For more information about Tomorrow's People, please contact, Michelle Eastty, Media Relations Manager, Tel: 01424 203752/ 07875412325

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The London Development Agency is the Mayor's agency for business and jobs. The LDA prepares the Mayor's business plan for London and mobilises the support and resources of hundreds of partner organisations to help build a thriving economy for London's people, businesses and communities. The LDA is dedicated to improving sustainability, health and equality of opportunity for Londoners. For more information visit www.lda.gov.uk

London Borough of Havering: Havering is one of the largest boroughs in Greater London, with a population of around 230,000. Half of the borough is in Green Belt. Havering's vision is to be the first choice destination for businesses and people seeking to live and work in London. For further information please contact William Van Heerden, Media Officer, on 01708 432001 or william.vanheerden@haverling.gov.uk

London Borough of Barking and Dagenham: The Council's plans for regeneration in Barking and Dagenham include the transformation of Barking Town Centre, the regeneration of Dagenham Dock as London's home for environmental industries, the re-development of South Dagenham, and the development of a new sustainable community of 11,000 homes at Barking Riverside. For further information please contact Nina Romain on: 020 8227 5335, nina.romain@lbbd.gov.uk, or visit the Council's website on: www.barking-dagenham.gov.uk