



- *equality information for providers*

Edition 5: November 2009

Welcome to the fifth edition of “EQUIP” the newsletter that keeps learning providers updated about their equality and diversity obligations.

Following on from the last newsletter this edition features articles and updates specifically related to learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities.



Mencap founder to appear on 1st class stamp!

Judy Fryd is to appear on a stamp as part of Royal Mail’s “Eminent Britons” collection. Fryd was the mother of a son with a learning disability and she campaigned for the right for every child in a similar position to receive an education.

www.mencapliverpool.org.uk

Did you know that national and regional research has identified that the proportion of people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is increasing year on year? In 2007 the regional participation rate for those aged 16-18 was estimated at 52.2%, compared to 74.5% for those without LDD. In the 19-25 age group it was 8% compared to 18%. (LSC NW research & data team)

A Framework for Progression Pathways to Employment for Learners with Learning Difficulties & Disabilities

As a development from the articles featured in the last two editions of EQUIP work has been continuing to achieve the outcomes that were identified in the research: “Report: Key Task 1 – Questionnaire Findings” HarperVenney Ltd May 2009.

Employers were asked to identify what their needs were in relation to learners with LLDD. The main aim was to identify how employment opportunities, including more work experience placements, could be identified for these learners. A cross section of employers were consulted through telephone contact, fac-to-face

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meetings and e-mail. The results were as follows:

- There was a need for more information around the specifics of a range of conditions and the implications this had for the workplace.
- Employers wanted to be kept regularly updated regarding what was required, particularly in relation to legislation, and given examples of best practice
- Better communication between employer and those arranging placements was also a need.

Within the context of best practice. Two WBL employers were engaged with to develop best practice case studies.

The employers are:

- **Training Plus Merseyside**
- **Cornerstone Training.**

The case studies demonstrate how a commitment to equality and diversity can enhance business practice and outcomes for employees, customers, clients and learners. They outline company details, awards and standards, workforce profile and trainee profile and provision.

The policies and procedures that are in place to support best practice are listed alongside the training and development that is in place for learners and staff. Plans for continual improvement are outlined along with the identification of challenges for the future.

Comments from learners and staff also feature.

These case studies can be accessed on:

www.harpervenney.com

Niace is organising a conference: Enterprise & Employment for People with Learning

Disabilities. The conference will address a number of issues including Living and Work and Mental Health strategies, Learning for Work and Employability and will also provide information on national policy initiatives.

Monday 30 November 2009 – Birmingham

Monday 7 December 2009 – York.

To download more information go to:

www.niace.org.uk or phone 0116 204 2833.

Case Study Corner

A profoundly deaf fashion designer had his first catwalk show at Liverpool Town Hall last September. Christopher King hopes to launch a new clothing label in his home city after nine years of studying and a number of industrial and commercial work based placements.

“My new collection is inspired by the 1950s rock and roll style, and I hope to have them ready for Spring 2010.”

After leaving Broadgreen Comprehensive School Chris studied at Ravensbourne College of Design and Communications. Extensive support was provided by the college welfare and communications staff and other staff who were familiar with British Sign Language (BSL).

Chris uses hearing aids and lip reads and his first language is BSL. Throughout the course he had the help of a communication support worker who had personal experience of art at that level.

The communicator supported Chris by delivering verbal information between him and the tutor, other students and technicians.

Chris relied heavily on text messages and emails from staff. He was keen to use texts between himself and staff but this raised questions about the appropriateness of sharing mobile phone numbers. A solution was for the college to provide mobiles to staff for this purpose only.

The open plan studio also caused some problems relating to noise and light, which made it difficult to lip read. Chris had to position himself carefully to maximise the natural light.

Group work posed some challenges because Chris was at first unable to communicate directly with other students and take part in group discussions. To mitigate this the college arranged a deaf awareness training session for his group.

Chris contributed to this as a BSL tutor and taught his peers some useful everyday signs.

A detailed case study of Chris and his achievements can be found on:

www.bicpa.ac.uk

What do you know?

Q: I know that we will be assessed in the future on the new Ofsted framework. Am I correct in thinking that if we have done well in past inspections, and have kept up the same approach to equality and diversity, that we should be all right? I just want to check that there are no major changes in requirements.

A: *The new Ofsted Framework does include some changes and has a much more evidence based approach to inspection. As you will know Section C4 focuses on equality and diversity and you have to be able to demonstrate the ways by*

which you “actively promote equality and diversity, tackle discrimination and narrow the achievement gap”. It is interesting to note that the equality and diversity assessment will have an impact on the overall grade to a greater extent than previously (ref page 65 of the Handbook). There is also a significant focus on consultations. You are expected to carry these out with all stakeholders and this is in line with a similar focus in other areas of public sector provision. It is also an area where there are significant weaknesses in general terms. You need to have accurate data with regard to your local community and be able to demonstrate how you have engaged with and addressed the needs of “vulnerable groups” and be able to evidence best practice. You will need to ensure that your employees and learners can display competence and knowledge regarding equality and diversity, including the legislation, and be able to demonstrate how you keep them updated. My advice would be to re-assess all your practice to ensure you are compliant with the new framework.

Q: We have been reviewing our recruitment and selection policies and procedures as part of a general updating programme of work. We are keen to ensure that we are offering opportunities to as wide a range of individuals as possible. I have learnt quite a bit about Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) lately and think we may well be able to accommodate someone with that condition. Have you any tips regarding what would be good practice in relation to a person with ASD?

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A: It's a good idea to conduct regular reviews of your policies and procedures because information can become outdated quite quickly. As you will know there are different levels of ASD but there are a number of initiatives that you could put in place. As you review your recruitment policy you need to consider the emphasis you put on certain skills and competencies and consider the way that you assess them. For example, an applicant with ASD is likely to take words and phrases in a literal sense, so you should carefully consider how you present information relating to the job role and be very precise regarding the words and phrases used. Your evaluation process may also need some adaptation. Body language and eye contact could vary from what might be expected and often imaginary situations or scenarios can cause a problem for someone with ASD. Once employed it would be a good idea to ensure that the individual has a mentor who could help them settle in. Regular checks on performance are also essential and any problems or concerns must be dealt with sensitively. Sometimes environmental factors can have a negative impact on someone with ASD. A very noisy or bright environment can have an adverse effect and flexible working options such as working from home may be required at times. Social situations and team building events may also present challenges so don't force people into situations that they are not comfortable with. The most important thing is not to make assumptions about an individual, listen to what they tell you and involve them at every level of development.

For more information on ASD visit:

www.autism.org.uk

www.aspiesforfreedom.com

Information Update!

The Autism Bill has now become the **Autism Act**. This will guarantee the introduction of the first ever adult autism strategy that will be published by April 2010. The accompanying legal guidance will be produced no later than December 2010. The **Equality Bill** is continuing it's progress through Parliament and is still on course to become an Act by 2010 with implementation beginning later in the year.

Need help and training with equality and diversity when preparing for inspection?

HarperVenney is offering an "Ofsted - Equality and Diversity Workshop" with follow up support and guidance if required. We cover equality, diversity and human rights legislation as well as the Apprenticeships, Skills, Children and Learning Bill 2009. Activities are interactive, useful and enjoyable. Joan Furnival Director of Training, North West Community Services said: "We have all participated in the workshop and really enjoyed the experience. It made staff more aware of what we do and the need to evidence best practice. I would wholeheartedly recommend it." Visit: www.harpervenney.com or email: consult@harpervenney.com

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