



Working to improve the lives of disabled people in Lancaster and Morecambe district

Changing Lives Employment and Disability Network

The Changing Lives Employment and Disability Network has now been established in Lancaster district. The network can be contacted at One Voice, The Cornerstone, Sulyard Street, Lancaster on 01524 382800 or through e mailing joanne.onevoice@btconnect.com

The advisory group for the network is made up of a number of organisations and individuals. The advisory group then reports to the Lancaster and Morecambe Disability Forum and of course to the Principal of Lancaster & Morecambe College. The work of the project has been supported and facilitated by Disability LIB at Preston Disc and funding was received by the college from the Equalities and Human Rights Commission.

Present advisory group members are as follows:

Lancaster & Morecambe Disability Forum

One Voice

Workspace

Harvesters Day and Resource Centre

Lancashire County Council Employment Team

North and West Lancashire Physical Disability Partnership Board

Lancaster and Morecambe Mental Health Users Forum

Furniture Matters

Lancaster & Morecambe College

The Adult College

Job Centre Plus

Since starting from scratch in August, 2008 the advisory group has met 5 times. The project has offered training in 'social model of disability' and the Disability Discrimination Act, has run a seminar on the Human Rights of Disabled people and offered an evening event with Laurence Clark, comedian and well known figure in disability rights. Another two training events are planned for early February.

However, much has already taken place behind the scenes of these public events. The project has undertaken a survey of organisations that hadn't already taken part in the initial Changing Lives research project. The survey intended to ascertain the kind of support that exists for disabled people. Access to buildings and services, specific services to disabled people, support to disabled volunteers and the need for training on disability equality and employment, the DDA and training on how to support disabled volunteers appropriately are all issues that needed researching.

What is the logic behind the Employment and Disability Network?

The Employment and Disability network never intended to duplicate any work that is already been undertaken to support disabled people into employment, education or volunteering in the district. It wishes to be a focus for all those organisations and agencies that exist to support

disabled and deaf people. The Employment and Disability Network now incorporates the Learning and Development Group that met at the Adult College to focus on making opportunities available to people who use or have used mental health services.

What is new about this network?

The steering group or advisory group is made up of a majority of Disabled people that have personal and professional experience of the barriers that Disabled and deaf people face when trying to access appropriate education and employment.

The network has also brought together organisations and individuals that represent the views and experience of people with physical and/or sensory impairments and mental health service users. Their commonality lies in the barriers they encounter; stigma, prejudice, lack of access, appropriate support and finance, lack of organisational and workplace flexibility.

What is has the Employment and Disability Network been doing?

The project has been offering training to network members to ensure a common understanding and agreement on the aims of the project.

It has created terms of reference and is working on a development plan.

It has carried out a survey on services available to disabled people as service users, as potential volunteers and as people searching for paid work. It will be producing a report.

It has run a major seminar on The Human rights of disabled people and has brought together disability groups and other organisations together from Lancashire.

It has identified potential services for disabled people to enhance their capacity to access education, volunteering opportunities and work. It has also identified the training needs of organisations and agencies with regard to disability in all its aspects.

It is looking at ways of ensuring that disability and mental health organisations sustain the work of the project once the Equalities and Human Rights Commission. The project will be based at One Voice and supported by the work of the current North and West Lancashire Physical Disability Board.