

Policy Bulletin #4 *ESF & People with Disabilities*

The Issue at European Union Level

Since 1997, the European Union has actively opposed discrimination in the labour market and has viewed ESF as an important tool to deliver this push for equality. EU laws provide a framework for the promotion of equality for people with disabilities. In turn, this contributes to the elimination of barriers to their full participation in the labour market, education, training and lifelong learning, in economic activity and in society.

To build on the 2003 European Year of People with Disabilities, the European Commission launched the European Disability Action Plan 2003-2010 to "*boost equal opportunities for people with disabilities*" based on 3 strategic objectives:

- effective implementation of the Equal treatment in Employment Directive
- mainstreaming disability issues across all EU policies
- improving "Accessibility for All"

The mid-term evaluation of this Plan was published in June 2009 by the Centre for Strategic & Evaluation Services and is available from www.cses.co.uk

Intensive work is now underway in Brussels, on consolidating policies beyond employment into the European Equal Treatment Directive. In plans for the 2010 The European Year Against Poverty, the European Commission has established as one of the key priorities "*addressing the needs of people with disabilities and their families*".

The Issue at UK Level

The England ESF Division of the Department for Work & Pensions draws our attention to the Office for Disability Issues as a source of support for public service communicators and practitioners.

At the outset, important social facts are noted:

- one third of people with disabilities face difficulties in accessing goods & services
- 10m adults in Britain have specific rights under the Disability Discrimination Act
- informing people with disabilities is key to achieving wider customer satisfaction
- research shows that better information increases satisfaction with public services
- the Disability Equality Duty is now law

The ODI goes on to identify 5 core *information principles*, underpinning good service and information design and delivery:

- ensure that people with disabilities are involved from the start
- provide information through a range of channels and formats
- ensure your information meets users' needs
- clearly signpost other services
- always define responsibility for information provision

The above package of principles can be applied to large-scale projects as well as smaller initiatives such as the design of leaflets, posters, recruitment campaigns, advertisements, films, events, websites or newsletters.

More broadly, the ODI is presently engaged in a major "*Right to Control*" Campaign with a Public Consultation closing at the end of September. The Government's vision is that by 2025 all people with disabilities in Britain should have the same opportunities and choices as non-disabled people to improve their quality of life and be respected and included as equal members of society. The Campaign is, in part, intended to guide the delivery of local services. For more information and Toolkit contact right.control@dwp.gsi.gov.uk

On the launch of the ESF England Programme, the DWP asked regions to comment on ways in which support for people, who are disabled, was being actively promoted. Regions were requested to provide examples of projects or case studies to illustrate specialist provision as well as the range of support offered to people with disabilities. The promotion of such support is a legal and regulatory requirement as the ESF Programme is committed to supporting some specialist provision as well as mainstream provision as part of the dual approach to mainstreaming.

In London, 14-20% households include a person with a disability and only 2% of people with disabilities have majority control of a business. In line with the England ESF National Programme, the ESF London Programme has specified the proportion of participants to be drawn from people with disabilities or health conditions under each of the main Priorities:

- Priority 1 (*Extending Employment Opportunities*) ~ 22%
- Priority 2 (*Creating a Skilled & Adaptable Workforce*) ~ 15%

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September 2009