

# **Disability Discrimination Act and Work Based Learning**



**Final report from: Tricia Howard**

**Name of project: Improve Our Literature to Show Benefits for Employers Engaging with Dr. B's**

**Organisation: Dr B's Training Restaurant**

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The main criterion for including projects on this website is that they are all developmental or case study research projects undertaken as part of DDA: improving work-based learning for people with learning difficulties and/ or disabilities. The overall aim of this project was to support work-based learning providers to respond to the DDA. Project reports do not necessarily reflect good or best practice.

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**Brief Description of Project:** To work with past/present employers and learners to create effective literature to engage new employers for work placement opportunities.

### **Introduction:**

Dr. B's is a successful training Restaurant and Coffee Shop trading in Harrogate for the past 20 years. We provide training in catering for young people aged between 16 and 24 with a wide range of learning needs. Most of our learners work towards an N.V.Q. to provide them with the skills and knowledge to enhance their opportunities for a successful work placement and/or employment. We offer all our learners support during their work placements and employment to assist their transition into the "world of work".

### **What we set out to do and why:**

Whilst working on this project we realised that it gave us the opportunity to look at the gaps in our resources and

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marketing materials that we use to engage potential work placement providers/employers. As a team we looked at the current materials and it then became obvious that all our marketing material was geared towards both training

and trading. We needed to develop some material to raise the awareness with local employers, particularly larger ones such as Morrisons and Marks & Spencers.

### **The "Product" we wanted to develop:**

After discussions amongst the staff team during staff meetings and our learners, in their monthly meetings, it was decided that we should work on developing a "flyer" that would be eye catching, colourful, not too wordy and instantly related to young people. (**Appendix "A"**). As we are a Barnardo's project we needed to incorporate both the Dr. B's Logo and that of Barnardo's. We wanted a bright colour and something that would stand out on the front of the leaflet. We decided to use a mobile phone being held in the hand of a young person, thrusting it forward from the leaflet with this text message displayed: "Help! Work placements needed urgently!". Short to the point and certainly eye catching was the opinion of both the staff team and our learners.

### **What we did:**

First we needed to contact employers such as a small business, medium sized business and a couple of larger ones

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that we had not previously had contact with. To do this we created a questionnaire to ensure we captured all the

required information and feedback. (**Appendix "B"**). We did this via telephone and one-to-one meetings. The staff team were addressed during our weekly staff meetings and most agreed it would be a great idea. . We would use the feedback gained from employers and our learners to create our flyer.

To involve our learners we knew that we would have to be innovative, interactive, interesting and not just "talk and chalk". We met them at their Learner Meetings to discuss what we planned to do and to ensure complete inclusion we developed a competition (**Appendix "C"**) and divided the learners into three mixed ability groups to work on the question "What makes Dr. B's special and why would an employer want to take a learner on work placement?" The standard of work from our learners was far higher than we anticipated especially as the head of each team had taken it upon themselves to ask, and be shown, how to use the project digital camera to include photographs in their project. There was also a prize given to the best team name from the three teams of "Revolution", "The Equalizers" and "Friends with a capital F". The winning team included comments from all of the team members together with photographs. All three projects were put to the staff team to vote for a winner. The prize for the winning team would be a trip to the cinema including nibbles with 3 members of staff including myself. The

evening out proved a great success and gave further opportunities for the learners to discuss what is so special about Dr. B's. It was during this trip that the idea of a mobile phone with a text message displayed was discussed and the learners thought it a brilliant idea to use on the flyer.

### **The difficulties we encountered:**

We are a small team of 9 full time employees working in a training environment in a busy Restaurant, Coffee Shop and additional outside functions, so time would be the most expensive commodity. Initially both Michaela Hill and myself started to work on the project together, attending meetings, gathering information and feedback and on producing the Interim Report. However Michaela Hill left Dr. B's in December to take up employment in Leeds working for another charity, which left me as sole Project worker and report writer. As December is our busiest time of the year the whole Project had to be put on hold until returning to work in January, when all our efforts were put into designing and producing the Flyer. The biggest frustration throughout has been trying to talk to the right person in the larger businesses, even when you have managed to research a named person who should be

able to help - either they do not return calls or are in the process of change e.g. Morrisons had just taken over a massive workforce and branches of supermarkets from Safeway and our local Marks & Spencer were in the midst

of a total restructure both physically re-designing all of their shop floors and in the staffing structure. This became extremely time consuming, frustrating and demoralising. Logs of telephone calls and conversations were kept and even when people promised to ring back, it was rare that they did. We didn't give up easily and continued to jump the hurdles to produce the goods. Morrisons and Marks & Spencer showed some interest in what we were trying to do. However one organisation's initial reaction was not encouraging the named person was the Human Resources Manager in charge of several stores so she felt she would be too busy and unable to make decisions at her level she would contact me again, but in spite of other telephone calls never did. The name Barnardos seemed to grab her attention briefly but she felt she needed instruction from someone above her but couldn't give me a name. Was all this part of a delaying tactic which would wear me down. They succeeded in doing so! Our local branch of Marks & Spencer was helpful but did point out that they had their own scheme of work placements entitled "Marks & Start" and advised that I download the information from the website to see if that would be of any help to us. The scheme was completely new to all of us and we failed to understand why we

haven't seen any advertisements for such a scheme in the past. However the Support Human Resources Manager did say she would like to see our leaflet on completion. I offered for her to come to our premises, but she felt too busy to spare the time. Our smaller and medium sized businesses were more helpful and agreed to meet personally to discuss our aims and their answers were recorded. Both of our named contacts, who we had previously worked with, agreed that they would rather meet with the individual for a discussion - they much preferred "face to face" rather than reading paperwork!

### **What worked for us:**

Involving our learners in the Project was so rewarding and the level of the work they produced far exceeded our expectations. Wow! They were so keen to be involved and even though the prize of a trip out was the "carrot" to dangle - they took their projects seriously so much so that team leaders were giving members of their teams homework particularly difficult as some have very limited basic skills, but all managed to become involved in their team. The comments from our Learners on the flyer were excellent, they all loved the front page and the fact that we had used their idea of the mobile phone text message. Involving the staff team sometimes proved more

difficult as the role of finding work placements for our learners is not the responsibility of the whole team and falls to just one or two members so their level of interest was different. However the general comments of the Flyer were all positive. Attending the seminars was useful to meet other providers experiencing some of the same problems is always a good discussion topic. One of the highlights of the whole Project was the fact that we were chosen to be part of the DVD being produced for the LSDA. Most of our learners were keen to be involved and we shall all look forward to seeing the end result. Finally the comments from employers: the flyers were sent out with covering letters to our named contacts, however replies were not forthcoming. I then spent time on the telephone contacting people to gather feedback. Our larger employers' commented that they felt it gave the correct message and provided it was delivered to the correct person would be of interest, however they would prefer a follow up telephone call as they would need prompting to contact us. Our medium sized employer loved the flyer, everything about it - colour, just enough content, liked the quotes but most of all loved the young person on the front pushing the message across from the mobile phone - extremely eye catching. Our small employer thought it was good but still preferred the personal contact and any paperwork that he received he would either shelve, or file in the waste paper bin. Fair comment from an extremely busy chef!

**What advice would I give to other providers working on a similar area:**

Think carefully when planning what you are going to do and then double the amount of time that you have set aside to do it. Catering is a notoriously pressured environment and particularly when training young people to NVQ standards whilst dealing with members of the public and the demands of the industry. We started the project with two of us working alongside each other sharing ideas and setting objectives, always easier than "going it alone" as I have done since the start of the New Year. Enlist the help of your colleagues and find the time to get them "on board" to share ideas if they too have a shared interest in the outcome. Be persistent; don't fall at the first hurdle and don't be put off when people don't want to talk to you. The payments that will be made to you will enable you to reach your goal and the end product will be your incentive.