

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



**Final report from: John Palmer**

**Name of project: Induction and appraisal for staff**

**Organisation: Landmark Training**

**March 2006**

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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## **What Landmark Training set out to do**

Landmark Training was keen to ensure that staff, as a key resource in the delivery of training to learners, had all the tools necessary to match up to the demands of pro-active policies on Equal Opportunities and Disability.

*Training* for staff is usually the first tool to be considered, and Landmark had already addressed this issue. We could see however that staff needed to be well aware of the company's policies as they affect them. The company needed to be aware of specific training needs rather than 'blanket' needs. This meant that we had to enhance the induction process used for new staff and the appraisal process for existing staff.

It is no longer enough for staff to simply be aware or have read the company's policies. To be fully inclusive, and especially for the benefit of those with learning difficulties or disabilities that affect learning, we need to be sure that staff have and use skills and knowledge relevant to their work and their role, and that they have the qualities needed to implement the policies.

The chance to focus on disability issues was particularly important as both the management and staff in general feel that the company is well placed on general issues relating to equal opportunities. Our record with disability issues and learners with disabilities is less clear.

## **The Intended Product**

The organisation's policies on Equal Opportunities did not need to be changed. The specific references to people with disabilities referred primarily to access but the comprehensive statements of Equality of Opportunity which already go beyond the specific discriminations identified in law embrace the wider needs of people with difficulties

Landmark Training has a very well organised and structured Induction process and a good appraisal system. We wanted to ensure that each of these processes included a strong focus on the needs of learners with disabilities. This would allow existing experience, knowledge and skills to be identified' and matched to the needs of the particular job within the company. Then any resultant training needs could be established for future action.

We needed to develop additions to each of the two processes so that they were addressed in a meaningful way. We had to go beyond mere box-ticking if we wanted to make an impact. The resultant two pro-forma documents have been developed and used but they will need to be further developed in the light of future experience.

## **What Landmark Training Did**

Firstly we collected all the information available within the company about the induction and appraisal processes. We had also just carried out some

valuable work on the ALI Diversity poster. This gave us a very positive springboard for discussions with selected staff about the best way forward for Inductions and Appraisals and as a result the two pro-forma documents now developed were drafted and tested. The Induction form has been tested on two new staff but the Appraisal form has not been tested. It has however been reviewed by staff who carry out most of the appraisals.

### **The Difficulties and Barriers**

One challenge we faced in this particular case study derived from the level of staff's experiences of disability. Few if any of our staff have a disability themselves. Their experiences of dealing with people with disabilities could be from amongst their friends or family, and therefore they may not wish to talk about it. Conversely staff who have no such experience may feel vulnerable when drawn into discussions which might see to be giving extra emphasis to such experience. That brought home the need to ensure that those who carry out inductions and appraisals are themselves properly equipped to deal with disability issues in situations where staff feel themselves under pressure!

A further problem showed itself during the progress of this case study. Providers of training under Government sponsored programmes are subjected to powerful stresses on their normal day-to-day routines through inspections and audits. Some larger companies may be able to absorb some of this pressure but most (large and small) providers are quite vulnerable to it. At such times it is not surprising that some functions which are seen as less critical to day-to-day operations may be (temporarily – we hope) suspended. If an organisation is well up with such processes temporary suspension is unlikely to be problem. It might be a different story if the processes have already lost their normal level of priority.

### **What worked for Landmark Training**

We found that using a structure to influence the discussion at Induction (and therefore also at Appraisal) was more useful than not having one, and also more useful than a simple box-tick process. It allowed individuals to express their level of ownership of the issues in the comfort of their own style of communication. They were more likely to communicate at a personal level rather than at any perceived 'official' level. Also it could be seen that by making a note of the discussion under the same headings we helped individuals see that the process was a rolling one rather than one that would have to be restarted every time. Even if the next interviewer was different the record would allow one process to build on the previous. It was also clear that the separate and specific attention given to disability issues at the induction stage raised the perceived level of importance attached to it.

### **Advice to other providers**

Preparation and flexibility seem to be key attributes. On the one hand staff will need skills to work with learners with identified disabilities and difficulties but on the other hand they must be ready to spot and respond to those who needs are far from evident. The range of needs is also very wide so the more that staff can be ready alive and alert to the needs and the issues the better they will be able to deal pro-actively with them when needed. This is particularly difficult if the number of learners with disabilities or difficulties is very small.

John Palmer  
Landmark Training  
14 March 2006

## Induction questionnaire

**Name**.....**Date**.....

**Job Title**.....

Welcome to Landmark Training. We value diversity; in our learners, in our staff and in our employers. As a new member of staff you will be bringing your own experience knowledge and skills to use in developing our learners. This particular part of the induction process is intended to identify and record them and plan how they can be used and developed to meet our learners' needs. Thank you for your contribution. This is not intended as a questionnaire, but more a structure for discussion during the induction process. If you have not yet seen a copy of Landmark's Equal Opportunities and Disability Policies please ask for one

<p>1 What experience do you have of dealing with people with disabilities?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Work Family friends school</li> <li>• Physical, Sensory Impairment, Mental ill health, learning (e.g. dyslexia)</li> </ul>	
<p>2 Give a measure (in your own terms) of the extent of your knowledge of the laws which are designed to help people with disabilities</p>	
<p>3 What skills do you have to enable you to work with people with disabilities?</p>	
<p>4 Describe any incidents which you have experienced which have enabled you to learn about working with people with disabilities</p>	
<p>5 What are your responsibilities in your new job towards people with learning difficulties or disabilities (use your Job Description to help you with this)</p>	
<p>6 Please consider what skills you might need to develop or what knowledge you need to acquire to enable you to carry out your responsibilities to people with disabilities in the year ahead.</p>	

7 Define the targets (preferably SMART) you need to achieve in order to meet the previous item	
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## Appraisal Questionnaire

**Name**.....**Date**.....

**Job Title**.....

You will know from our Equal Opportunities and Disability policies that we value diversity; in our learners, in our staff and in our employers. At your annual appraisal we ask you to review your role in relation to dealing with these aspects of our work, consider how your knowledge skills and qualities have developed over the past year and what your developmental needs in this area might be. Please use the notes below to prepare for the discussion with your manager and feel free to add any notes of your own to help. Your manager will make a copy for you of any final record arising from the discussion.

1 Have you had any specific experiences during the past year in relation to disability issues?	
2 Give a measure (in your own terms) of the extent of your current knowledge of the laws which are designed to help people with disabilities	
3 What skills do you have to enable you to work with people with disabilities?	
4 What are your responsibilities in your present job towards people with learning difficulties or disabilities (use your Job Description to help you with this)?	
6 Do you need to develop any of your skills or improve your knowledge to enable you to carry out or enhance your ability to meet the needs of people with disabilities in the year ahead.?	
7 If so, you will need to agree with your manager targets (preferably SMART) you need to achieve.	