

RESPONDING TO DIVERSITY:
**PROMOTING EQUALITY AND EXCELLENCE
IN THE NORTH EAST**



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Working in collaboration with the Northern Equality and Diversity Learning Providers Forum and the Learning and Skills Improvement Service (LSIS), Equality North East has collated a selection of effective equality practice and positive action case studies from the North East of England's learning providers and employers.

What is effective equality practice? Is this different from Positive Action? How is Positive Action different from Positive Discrimination? Does it really matter? There has been much debate about this during the project.

Firstly it should be noted that positive action is not the same as positive discrimination which involves preferential treatment for a particular disadvantaged group which does not meet the positive action conditions.

The Learning and Skills Improvement Service refers to the term 'positive action' as '*measures that may lawfully be taken to provide access to education and training to under-represented groups*'¹. Indeed learning providers, have a responsibility as well as a right to take positive action to counteract strong bias in participation rates in their programmes. For example, they should not accept the fact that traditionally, construction attracts predominantly men and hairdressing, predominantly women.²

This is where most confusion happens. Within technical terms, positive action primarily relates to those who are covered by the nine protected characteristics- Age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, sexual orientation, pregnancy and maternity, Race Religion and belief and Sex (EHRC (2010)³.

¹ <http://www.excellencegateway.org.uk/page.aspx?o=108330>

² <http://www.excellencegateway.org.uk/page.aspx?o=108330>

³ <http://www.equalityhumanrights.com/advice-and-guidance/guidance-equality-act-2010/protected-characteristics-definitions/>

Students and employees with protected characteristics may be disadvantaged for social or economic reasons or for reasons to do with past or present discrimination. The Equality Act (2010) contains specific provisions which enable education providers to take action to tackle the particular disadvantage, different needs or disproportionately low participation of a particular group, provided certain conditions are met.

These are known as the positive action provisions and allow education providers to take proportionate action to remedy the disadvantage faced by particular groups of students (or staff). Such action could include targeted provision or of resources or putting in place additional or bespoke provision to benefit a particular disadvantaged student group.

So where positive action specifically relates to the protected characteristics , effective equality and diversity practice covers everyone with all differing needs and/or with a past track record of disadvantage or low participation. Positive action can be applied to those with particular protected characteristics or to those who are peers in other ways such as young offenders.

For this project we have decided to take it back to basics. Learning providers have told us they would like to know what they can do to improve take up and successful completion of their services by those people known to be disadvantaged because of their disadvantaged social group or “protected characteristic” status ⁴.

For very large colleges, some of the examples may seem small and fundamental, but for other smaller providers a small change can have a huge impact. The examples which follow will be a mix of effective equality practice, (big and small) as well as the more tightly defined initiatives which fit in to the legal definition of Positive Action (Equality Act 2010).

The final section will include case studies referring to positive action in employment for both learning providers and other organisations. As a service provider and employer learning providers have a responsibility to recruit a wide and diverse range of employees as well as learners. Learning Providers should lead by example.

Within employment, The Equality and Human Rights Commission refers to the term ‘positive action’ as *‘the steps that you can take as an employer to encourage people from groups with different needs or with a past track record of disadvantage or low participation to apply for jobs’* ⁵.

⁴ <http://www.equalityhumanrights.com/advice-and-guidance/guidance-equality-act-2010/protected-characteristics-definitions/>

⁵ <http://www.equalityhumanrights.com/advice-and-guidance/equality-act-guidance-for-employers/recruitment/using-positive-action-to-recruit-a-wider-range-of-people/>

There is a clear link here between education and employment, in that the measures introduced by learning providers are going to remove many of the barriers faced by those wishing to enter the labour market. They are both interlinked and “by taking positive action many of these initiatives have a broader benefit as they are also contributing towards the promotion of equality of opportunity in society as a whole” LSIS (2010) ⁶.

WHAT DOES OFSTED SAY ABOUT EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY?

The following strengths and areas for improvement have been taken from recent inspection reports across the Ofsted Learning and Skills remit ⁷.

Common weaknesses found include:

- Insufficient action to effectively promote equality and diversity

Common strengths found include:

- Effective actions to increase participation by under-represented groups

These include:

- Ensuring that provider equal opportunities policies and procedures recognise the need for positive action if required to address under-representation in training or employment.
- Appointing staff from under-represented groups whenever possible by actively encouraging their applications for recruitment (while taking care not to positively discriminate). Examples include women in construction and engineering and men in beauty therapy. These staff act as role models to demonstrate the success possible for under represented groups. The same principles in the example for gender apply to appointing staff from minority ethnic groups or staff with disabilities.
- Using real learners as role models and success stories. Several providers have produced attractive posters of such success stories to reinforce the concept of “they did it, so can I”. If your own examples are not available, use famous people such as Michael Caines (black chef who lost an arm but whose restaurants have since become Michelin starred) to demonstrate success and role modelling.

⁶ <http://www.excellencegateway.org.uk/page.aspx?o=108330>

⁷ Learning and Skills Improvement Service- Excellence Gateway website-<http://www.excellencegateway.org.uk/page.aspx?o=108330>

- Providing classes targeted specifically at particular groups, such as silver surfers (or internet classes for older learners) or painting and decorating for women (aimed at encouraging entry to construction crafts offered at times that cater for dropping children at school).
- Using knowledge of the local area to help target recruitment. For example, making links with facilities that cater for and attract particular groups. These could be religious (such as mosques or temples), or be support groups (for single parents, the unemployed, those with low levels of basic skills, mental illnesses, physical disabilities, etc).
- Putting training in place for staff to better meet learner needs. One college trained a number of staff in sign language and over time became known as a centre where learners would be supported if they had hearing impairments. The positive action of training staff enabled support to be in place before recruitment increased.

For further information and more case studies, please visit the Learning and Skills Improvement Service- Excellence Gateway website ⁸.

⁸ <http://www.excellencegateway.org.uk/page.aspx?o=108330>

POSITIVE ACTION AND EFFECTIVE EQUALITY PRACTICE



CITY OF SUNDERLAND COLLEGE (COSC)

GENDER

BACKGROUND

City of Sunderland College (CoSC) found that there were gender and ethnic minority imbalances in learner participation in Hairdressing, Construction, Engineering and Childcare. The College decided to take positive action in all of these areas to attract non-traditional learners.

POSITIVE ACTION

The construction department now delivers various activities to promote construction to the under represented. They target year 9 pupils as they are ready to make their options for year 10 and 11 and the College believes that by intervening at this age it can inform their choices. Last year the Construction Dept delivered taster days and targeted females and schools with high numbers of students from ethnic minority backgrounds to promote Construction as a viable career option, hoping to influence their options towards a career in construction management. The College also works with CSkills to promote construction to females and ethnic minorities in local schools.

OUTCOME

The construction department now offers programmes for girls who are not in education, employment or training (NEET). It offered a level 1 group in Construction in January 2010, giving them experience in brickwork, carpentry and joinery and painting and decorating.

The qualification will be fast tracked to enable these learners to start on their chosen course in September 2010. Tutorial and basic skills are also embedded into their timetables.

EQUALITY NORTH EAST SAYS...

This is an example of positive action. City of Sunderland College (CoSC) found that female and ethnic minority learners are underrepresented on the construction courses and therefore they used positive action in the form of taster days etc to address this.

STOCKTON RIVERSIDE COLLEGE

A WOMAN'S PLACE

BACKGROUND

The government's new strategy for ESOL in 2009, 'A New Approach to ESOL', involved a National Institute of Adult Continuing Education (NIACE) project: A Woman's Place.

The aims were to facilitate local planning to meet the requirements of this new approach and to engage women from minority ethnic communities.

The college was successful in a bid for £1000 to help implement the project locally.

POSITIVE ACTION

The College went into the local community by contacting local primary schools to assess the need for ESOL for mothers, female relatives and friends of the children and they set up a class at one of the schools.

OUTCOME

There was a very positive response and the project proved very successful. The College found that there was a great need for the project within the local community. A class was set up in one of the schools and they have just recently set up a class in another school. The plan is to roll this out to other schools in the area from September.

The classes help to promote community cohesion by enabling previously excluded groups of learners to play a full part in their community.

EQUALITY NORTH EAST SAYS...

Although this action's primary motivation is not for a labour market outcome, it is to improve take up from an underrepresented group and has positive benefits which could improve their chances in the labour market. More importantly the action *"was to improve broader benefits as they are also contributing towards the promotion of equality of opportunity in society as a whole."*⁹

⁹ <http://www.equalityhumanrights.com/advice-and-guidance/equality-act-guidance-for-employers/recruitment/using-positive-action-to-recruit-a-wider-range-of-people/>

UNDERREPRESENTED BME LEARNERS

BACKGROUND

Prima training was set up in 2007 to train taxi drivers and increase the qualifications held within the industry. They have since moved into training other drivers (HGV, LGV, coach, bus drivers etc.) and are now offering courses to those outside the passenger vehicle industry, in subjects such as Retail, Business Administration, Hospitality, Customer Service and Leadership and Management.

The taxi and transport industry is a predominantly male, able bodied dominated sector and so Prima found that BME learners were underrepresented.

POSITIVE ACTION AND EFFECTIVE EQUALITY PRACTICE

Prima took a number of steps in order to address this underrepresentation:

Members of staff attended events held by the Asian Business Forum North East in order to understand how these services can be made more attractive to Asian people across the region.

They now actively market towards ethnic minorities with local BME groups and services and their contacts established through attending these events.

English is not the first language for some of the individuals, so Prima now offer one-to-one training to ensure that no-one is left behind, as they might be if they were in a group environment. This way more support can be offered as is required for the learner at no extra cost to the learner.

A Skills for Life programme has been introduced to help learners to further their literacy and numeracy skills. This has proved hugely beneficial for learners, especially those from an ethnic background.

Gateshead Council were also consulted and have provided an ESOL tutor to work with those learners less versed in the English language.

Research into new venues which will be more suitable for learners with specific religious needs such as a space to allow for any prayer time should they require it.

OUTCOME

Active targeting of ethnic minorities has resulted in an Asian taxi driver owner receiving training in NVQ and he has been encouraging all his colleagues to pursue training in NVQ.

Currently 23% of learners are BME with 11% of Asian heritage which is an increase of 13% over the last year.

EQUALITY NORTH EAST SAYS...

This is an example of positive action. Prima training recognised that they had an underrepresentation of learners and therefore actively targeted learners with a protected characteristic. Recognising that English is not the first language for some learners and therefore offering one-to-one training to ensure that these disadvantaged learners have the same opportunities is an excellent example of enabling everyone on to a level playing field.

STOCKTON RIVERSIDE COLLEGE

TRAINING EDUCATION AND SUPPORT SERVICES FOR YOUNG OFFENDERS (TESSYO)

BACKGROUND

The Training Education and Support Services for Young Offenders (TESSYO) team at Stockton Riverside College works in a unique partnership with the Intensive Supervision and Surveillance Programme (ISSP) offering specialist Education, Training and Employment (ETE) advice and bespoke provision across the Tees Valley. The team consists of ETE advisors who are all qualified to level 5 with relevant backgrounds in criminology, social policy and residential and Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties (SEBD) education, as well as holding specialist teaching qualifications.

The individual needs and voice of the service user are always paramount when considering the most appropriate package of ETE support, eg aspirations, geography, chaotic lifestyle, terms of licence, finance, travel and family.

EFFECTIVE EQUALITY PRACTICE

As a result of an active brokering service users can now access over 100 placements, moving away from the previous narrow stereotypical choice of organisations normally associated with young offenders. TESSYO staff work within the five expected outcomes of 'Every Child Matters' when performing their daily duties and report monthly on each service user.

The TESSYO team are in daily contact with ISSP staff ensuring that all service users are effectively engaged and progress monitored against the individual's learning plan. Through monthly practitioners meetings between SRC and ISSP, issues surrounding the contract delivery are raised and actions and solutions implemented, as well as the ongoing development of delivery strategies and evolving best practice. Staff retention and appropriate development within the TESSYO team has complemented this process.

OUTCOME

Since beginning the project, SRC have had around 500 referrals from ISSP, of these over 90% have engaged in ETE provision working towards recognised accreditation with high levels of achievement.

EQUALITY NORTH EAST SAYS...

This active targeting programme has been vital in raising confidence and self esteem for the individuals concerned leading to a greater degree of participation and engagement in education, training and employment, ultimately benefiting the wider community and meeting the aims of the wider Criminal Justice System.

NEW COLLEGE DURHAM

AUTISTIC SPECTRUM DISORDERS

BACKGROUND

New College Durham is one of the leading colleges of further and higher education in the North East, with their performance and success rates placing them in the top 10% of all colleges nationally.

In 2003 New College Durham was asked by the Learning and Skills Council (LSC) to develop some research on the provision of educational services to people with Autistic Spectrum Disorders. The results of the study showed that there was a need to build capacity in the Further Education Sector to increase participation rates in mainstream Further Education for students with ASD.

In their own organisation New College Durham found that they had an underrepresentation of learners with Autistic Spectrum Disorders including Asperger's Syndrome.

EFFECTIVE EQUALITY PRACTICE

From the findings of the study, NCD worked in partnership with Derwentside College, Bishop Auckland College, East Durham College, Finchale College and Connexions to secure funding to build capacity to increase participation rates in mainstream Further Education.

The partnership developed 'College Links Asperger Syndrome Support' (CLASS) which included four main action points. These are:

1. Develop training for staff to develop knowledge in order to fulfil the needs of students with ASD.

Training developed and delivered by Kay Bowes and Jo Gibbons from New College included:

- Half day ASD awareness training
- A full day awareness raising event
- A L2 short course accredited by NOCN
(Partners attended but did not develop or deliver)

2. The partnership developed teaching packs for staff in Colleges as well as half day ASD awareness training. They also developed social skills awareness support accredited by The Open College Network (OCN).
3. Raise the profile of the needs of students with ASDs and support available to students with Asperger syndrome who attend mainstream college by developing an information brochure for staff and parents/carers. The brochure was launched in December 2009.
4. Develop a social skills curriculum for students with ASD who are more than able to succeed in mainstream Further Education but need extra support.
5. Develop a social group for students to meet other students with ASD from other Colleges in a social setting.

The College has also made some small but very significant changes and adjustments to the College which have made a big difference. These include providing a quiet room between lessons and help with independent travel.

OUTCOME

NCD's Ofsted report said *"...Increasing numbers of underrepresented groups of learners achieve as well as their peers, for example learners with Asperger's Syndrome."*

CLASS Social Group is up and running successfully. It has approximately eight students from New College who attend weekly social gatherings. Students have recently enjoyed visits to Bishop Auckland Food Festival, bowling and a local Italian restaurant.

Three Students successfully trialled one module of a 30 week programme specifically developed for students with ASDs to help students who are not ready for mainstream Further Education (FE) courses to transition to higher education after a year. This will become a full time programme in September to help students who are not ready for mainstream FE courses. The College expects eight students to join this programme in September.

One of the College's student with Asperger's was supported while in College and during their transition to University. They have now completed their first year of an IT degree. Support included providing a quiet room.

Eight staff have attended the half day ASD awareness course. Seventy staff

attended the full day awareness event. Seventeen staff have successfully achieved OCN level two Asperger's Syndrome Awareness course.

EQUALITY NORTH EAST SAYS...

This is an excellent example of positive action. The College recognised that they had an underrepresentation of learners and of those learners they had were underachieving.

STOCKTON RIVERSIDE COLLEGE

ESOL CHATROOM

BACKGROUND

An LSC report identified that BME learners at Stockton Riverside College are less likely to progress onto level 2 and above programmes. Although there were various reasons why this was the case, one of the areas the College felt it could tackle was for learners whose first language is not English. The College heard from several people that the opportunity to practice speaking English outside of the classroom was minimal as they tended to speak in their own language when conversing with friends and family at home.

Some of the College's white, English students in the college had very little awareness of who the ESOL learners were and why they were in college. There were some learners who held negative views or stereotyped ESOL learners.

EFFECTIVE EQUALITY PRACTICE

In order to address the two issues, SRC decided that they would begin the ESOL Chatroom. The idea was to create a social setting where ESOL learners and English speakers could mingle and meet each other. It was hoped that this would create an opportunity to practice English and would enable the other learners to gain knowledge and understanding.

The first chatroom involved ESOL learners making food from their own countries and inviting others to share. The second Chatroom was an English high tea where the favour was returned. The events were open to both staff and learners and were very enjoyable. There are plans to expand the Chatroom to involve sport, dance and other activities in the future.

OUTCOME

ESOL learners had an opportunity to practice English outside the classroom and gained experience of a genuine cultural tradition. They were then able to share their traditions with others. Staff and students benefited from an increased awareness of different culture and in future will apply what they have learned to their personal and professional situations.

EQUALITY NORTH EAST SAYS...

This is an excellent example of addressing cross cultural differences in a simple and effective way.

STOCKTON RIVERSIDE COLLEGE

TRANSGENDER CODE OF PRACTICE

BACKGROUND

Stockton Riverside College (SRC) decided that specific training should be offered to staff regarding transgender as there had been a few misunderstandings about this subject and it had been noted by some of the staff that they had numerous questions about this area of equality.

EFFECTIVE EQUALITY PRACTICE

SRC held one hour long staff development sessions and decided that a written document would be appropriate to give guidelines. SRC were working on other Codes of Practice in relation to the equality strands and so developed another, specifically about transgender. Staff and learners were consulted on the document. The College found consultation with their own LGBT group, Pride@SRC, particularly helpful, especially as a trans person was part of the group. They also consulted Gires (Gender Identity Research and Education Society) and went to their training to ensure the document was useful and accurate.

The aim was to increase awareness of trans issues and support any trans staff or learners.

OUTCOME

One particular learner has found the process of support very helpful and has enabled them to work more effectively to maximise their success.

The process of developing the Code of Practice has supported the college's Single Equality Scheme, increased awareness of transgender issues amongst staff, student and governors and provided a forum for people to ask open and frank questions to establish myth from fact.

EQUALITY NORTH EAST SAYS...

This is an example of effective equality practice as the College recognised that they had a lack of knowledge regarding trans issues and therefore took action to address this.

DARLINGTON COLLEGE

BACKGROUND

After looking at its learner data, Darlington College realised one of the areas in which they have under-represented groups of learners are the usual gender stereotyping ones, ie females in construction and engineering, males in childcare and hair/beauty.

EFFECTIVE EQUALITY PRACTICE

In order to address the gender balance on certain gender stereotypical courses Darlington College took a number of steps including:

- Recruiting a number of positive staff role models as follows:
- A male tutor in health and social care
- A female tutor in construction
- A male tutor in hair/beauty
- A male member of staff in Childcare Centre
- A female learning adviser in electrical
- A female learning adviser in sport/uniformed services
- Holding an 'Embracing Diversity Week'.

Each November, the college holds an annual 'Embracing Diversity' week during which activities to bridge the gender stereotyping gap take place. Examples of this include female hair and beauty students learning to play football; male football students learning to do sports massage; female hairdressers learning bricklaying; male bricklayers learning hairdressing. This gives students the opportunity to experience something different and learn a new skill that they would not normally have the opportunity to do.

OUTCOME

Successful action has been taken to promote and recruit to non-gender typical courses e.g the number of males on Health and Childcare courses has increased. In Hair and Beauty there are four males on Hairdressing and one on Beauty Therapy. In Engineering, there are three female students on Motor Vehicle Painting; four on Motor Vehicle Maintenance, two on Fabrication/Welding and one on Electrical Installation.

EQUALITY NORTH EAST SAYS...

This is an example of positive action. The company saw under-representation and took action to address the balance.

PRIMA TRAINING LTD

FEMALE ROLE MODEL

BACKGROUND

Prima training was set up in 2007 to train taxi drivers and increase the qualifications within the industry. They have since moved into training other drivers (HGV, LGV, coach, bus drivers etc.) and we are now offering courses to those outside the passenger vehicle industry, in subjects such as Retail, Business Administration, Hospitality, Customer Service and Leadership and Management.

The taxi and transport industry is predominantly male, able bodied dominated sector. Underrepresented are women.

The company looked at what they could do to address this.

EFFECTIVE EQUALITY PRACTICE

Prima Training has recruited a female assessor to provide a visible female presence to learners of both sexes.

OUTCOME

Five female taxi drivers have been training, an increase of three from the previous year. In addition, there are currently 19 female taxi escorts training for NVQs and one female bus driver. The female bus driver has been successful in her NVQ and is now a role model for the company.

EQUALITY NORTH EAST SAYS...

This is an example of positive action. The company saw under-representation and took action to address the balance.

HMP HOLME HOUSE

SELF OWNERSHIP / EQUALITY REPRESENTATIVES

BACKGROUND

In 2009 (Jan-December) there were 95 reported incidents of racial or other types of discrimination within the prison. To address this problem, HMP Holme House designed an Equality and Diversity Scheme aimed at both staff and prisoners.

EFFECTIVE EQUALITY PRACTICE

The scheme is managed by an Equality Manager (member of staff) and 12 prisoner representatives. The prisoner representatives are based on all seven houseblocks within the prison, with their photographs displayed in all areas of the prison. Each prisoner representative is in custody for different periods of time and for different sentences. They encourage representation/involvement on the equality team from The prison's increasingly diverse population. They act as a point of contact and promote equality throughout the prison.

HMP Holme House encourage representatives to speak to a person directly if they feel that they have experienced discrimination. They report to the Equality Manager for further actions and advice.

All prisoner representatives have attended a local 'Challenge it, Change it' training course, which tackles equality issues and identifies through group consultation, 'best' practice in challenging discriminatory behaviour.

The scheme also has eight staff representatives who promote all of the individual strands of the scheme. They also provide support to prisoners representatives. A monthly meeting (2.5hrs in duration) is held in which outside agencies are encouraged to promote their equality work/best practice with the prisoner representatives. Any action points arising are then discussed by several prisoner representatives at a six weekly equality meeting. This meeting is attended by several senior managers.

Prisoner equality representatives have designed a diversity PowerPoint presentation and present this information to all new prisoners during their initial induction phase within the prison. This helps to view the prison equality policy from a prisoner's perspective and not through a figure in authority. All strands of

equality are discussed and those requesting support in any area are directed in the right area of internal and external support mechanisms.

The prison also invites external equality and diversity groups into the prison to talk to both staff and prisoners. These have included:

- A creative writer worked alongside a prisoner group and wrote literature based on equality and diversity. This was then read out to a group of 60+ prisoners by the writers themselves.
- A Forced Marriage/Honour Based Violence support worker gave a presentation on this area to the equality champions.
- An Imam gave a presentation on Faith and religious practice to the equality champions and several members of staff.
- A transgender speaker who held a focus group with both staff and prisoners.
- A Gypsy/Traveller group who talked to both staff and prisoners.

There are plans to present a theatre production called “from one extreme another” which will look at extremism and racism and give the points of views from both sides. This will be presented to two groups of 60 prisoners and staff at the same performances.

The Equality and Diversity Manager is also currently writing a Transgender policy for prisoners entering custody who have Gender Dysphoria, are going through the change or have gone through the change. This will help improve the custodial setting for transgender offenders.

OUTCOME

Since the introduction and promotion of ‘self ownership/equality representatives’ by prisoners within HMP Holme House, they have witnessed a significant decrease in equality complaints including racial discrimination.

- Jan to August 2009 - 67 reported incidents equality discrimination
- Jan to August 2010 - 39 reported incidents of equality discrimination

This is the first time that staff and prisoners have worked so closely together and in doing so they have been able to achieve an environment in which everyone understands the broad concepts of what discrimination, harassment, bullying and victimisation mean, as well as the importance of robustly and confidently challenging all forms of discrimination, prejudice, stereotyping, inappropriate language and behaviour.

By building upon existing levels of respect between staff and prisoners, HMP Holme House aims to lay the foundation for further developments and encourage a more cooperative prison environment in which all people play a part in trying to eradicate discriminatory behaviour.

Holme House is the first prison in the country to be recognised regionally for its commitment to equality and diversity. Unlike other criminal justice agencies, they do not have a budget for equality and diversity and all work carried out is completed by dedicated staff and prisoners on a voluntary basis, who feel passionately about equality and diversity.

EQUALITY NORTH EAST SAYS...

Although HMP Holme House is not a Learning Provider, the case study contains examples of excellent equality and diversity practices which could be transferrable to a Learning Provider.

NORTH EAST MARRIOTT

MARRIOTT ROUTE WAY PROGRAMME

BACKGROUND

Part of the Marriott's recruitment strategy is to look at innovative ways to bridge the skills gap. It aims to engage with partner organizations such as Job Centre Plus to recruit from within the local community and focus on key-need claimants such as lone parents, carers, incapacity benefit clients and ex offenders, as well as job seekers who are representative of the diverse pool of talent within the North East of England.

- Why employ people with convictions?
- 85% of employers are experiencing recruitment difficulties due to skills shortages and a lack of experience.
- 57% of ex – prisoners seeking work say that they have had difficulties because of their criminal record.
- 100k – The number of people typically released from prison every year.
- 76% of prisoners do not have a job to go to on release.
- £60bn is the total cost per year of re-offending by ex-prisoners

EFFECTIVE EQUALITY PRACTICE

The North East Marriott Hotels have forged a sustainable partnership with HMP Durham to work towards the successful transition of prisoners into employment. This partnership was inaugurated following their initial meeting in March 2008, as part of the North East Coalition.

This particular initiative was aimed at offenders on short term sentences who are close to release. Working with Newcastle College and HMP Durham, the North East Marriott Hotels support this group by delivering “Spirit to Serve” training, Interview skills, NVQ, Job ready qualifications at the end of which they will be better prepared for a return to the work place. This initiative is designed to help remove the barriers that prevent prisoners progressing into employment on their release from prison.

The North East Marriott Hotels offer all candidates who complete the programme a guaranteed interview on release.

Their innovative partnership has allowed them to deliver training workshops on site in prison, as well as carrying out formal interviews pre release. The

partnership has enabled them to work closely with all providers to ensure prisoners receive the appropriate 'job ready' qualifications and tools to meet the requirements of potential employers thus making them much more employable. Building and developing the relationship has gave the Marriott the ability to work with and identify key candidates for work trials in conjunction with the LEP (Local Employer Partnership) and in some cases to provide the opportunity to gain permanent employment.

The second phase of the initiative is to continue to work in partnership to develop a specific route way for chefs. This would involve approximately 20 ex offenders starting to work towards their NVQ level 2 in Food Preparation whilst still in prison and then once they are given a leaving date they would complete a six month work experience programme in one of the North East Marriott Hotels kitchens. Longer term they would look to open this out nationally across the UK wide estate of Marriott Hotels.

With this scheme individuals not only get a nationally recognised qualification but they also get six months 'hands-on' experience working in the Kitchens of a world renowned hotel brand like Marriott. This will enhance their employability.

OUTCOME

The Gosforth Park Marriott's partnership with the probation service and LEP has enabled 37 individuals to experience first hand interviews, and work experience through the "Marriott Route way programme".

Example –

Marc, 26 was finding it difficult to find work having left prison. However, Marc attended a work trials day and work experience placement at the Gosforth Park Marriott. Marc has been successful because he was willing to put the work in, which helped him gain the respect of his colleagues.

Marc says: "It's a great environment to work in and Marriott has given me the training I needed, so I could do my job properly. Straight away, I was given respect and recognition, which helped me feel part of the team. I'm very happy in my job and excited about the future"

EQUALITY NORTH EAST SAYS...

Although Marriott Hotels are not a Learning Provider, this is an excellent example of transferable effective equality and diversity practice.

GENTOO'S POSITIVE ACTION DAYS

BACKGROUND

Construction is a predominately white, male orientated industry. Gentoo decided to put together a programme of Positive Action Days as part of their partnership with Construction Skills.

POSITIVE ACTION

The positive action days are events aimed at girls and young people from BME communities to open up the career opportunities and progression routes within the construction industry. They offer training in completion of job applications, interview skills and CV preparation.

The day begins with a presentation about Gentoo incorporating a quiz with an opportunity to meet and chat to female role models about their career paths and roles within the organisation. A tour of the regenerated areas of Sunderland followed and the experience culminated in a school based work related project.

OUTCOME

One of the groups were 10 girls from St. Anthony's RC Girls School. The day was so successful that the girls have now been offered the opportunity of taking up a ten week work experience placement with the group.

EQUALITY NORTH EAST SAYS...

Although Gentoo are not a Learning Provider, this is an excellent example of transferable, effective equality and diversity.

BACKGROUND

ETEC is a charity which runs community based projects and provides training in various fields, one of which is Community Development. They formed a link with a local organisation called County Durham Equal Access Forum (Co.Deaf) which provides a range of specialist support services and advice to the Deaf community and organisations dealing with deaf issues. The link was formed when two learners from Co.Deaf started working towards the Community Development NVQ.

Whilst working with these learners ETEC found that as an organisation Co.Deaf did not have all the IT facilities or community development expertise it needed to assist its personnel and service users with hearing difficulties or to develop the organisation. In recognising this need, the following action was taken both to facilitate community learning for this vulnerable group and to strengthen ETEC's partnership working out in the local community.

EFFECTIVE EQUALITY PRACTICE

ETEC's Community Development Manager supported Co.Deaf in putting together a development plan for the organisation and also allocated to Co.Deaf a portion of funding ETEC had received for the purchase community learning IT equipment. Approx £1600.00 worth of equipment was purchased and donated to Co.Deaf to assist the organisation in a practical way. This included a projector and screen, Dragon software to transfer spoken words into text, a camcorder and tripod and an induction loop. Three members of the ETEC staff then held a session with the representatives from Co.Deaf to instruct them in the use of the equipment they had been given and in return, the Co-Deaf representatives spoke to them about the issues of communicating with deaf people and people with hearing difficulties which they then could disseminate to their ETEC colleagues to help raise awareness.

Following on from this, representatives from Co.Deaf attended ETEC's organisational staff development day where all staff received training on communicating with deaf and hard of hearing people.

OUTCOME

Both organisations gained a great deal from working together. ETEC gained a wealth of knowledge about working with D/Deaf, deafened and hard-of-hearing

people which will benefit the organisation positively when providing training to new learners with disabilities.

Co. Deaf and their service users benefited in a number of ways including:

- Screen and Projector used to facilitate an Age Concern Consultation Meeting with D/deaf members of the public - to show their presentation to a group of D/deaf people from their own laptop.
- Laptop webcam, together with projector and screen can be used to project BSL / English Interpreter signing information on a large screen to allow clearer view of the signs to a large group of BSL Users. They are now able to capture film of BSL signing to show to other BSL groups at a later stage or prepare and record BSL information to share with others.
- The portable loop system is being tried out with hard-of-hearing / hearing aid users and will be used at open and public meetings as well as at Co.deaf meetings where a loop system is required in order to allow hearing aid users to more easily participate at meetings.
- Co.Deaf was also able to access ETEC's community and organisational development expertise to formulate a plan for its future.

A member of Co.Deaf said:

“The major benefits of all of these items of equipment are ultimately linked to providing D/Deaf, deafened and hard-of-hearing people with access to information and events and improving their participation etc generally, thus the kit is very much appreciated. Thank you very much”

EQUALITY NORTH EAST SAYS...

This is an example of effective equality practice. In recognising there was a need for both knowledge within the learning provider and assistance with equipment within the partner organisation, action was taken both to facilitate community learning for this vulnerable group and to strengthen ETEC's partnership working out in the local community.

CITY OF SUNDERLAND COLLEGE

BACKGROUND

City of Sunderland College found they had a learner enroll on the College's 'Art and Design course who was a very talented artist. Although she had not been diagnosed with a specific learning difficulty and or disability they found she had significant difficulties with many aspects of literacy and numeracy. The learner also lacked confidence and found it difficult to adapt to new groups and surroundings.

EFFECTIVE EQUALITY PRACTICE

After discussions with the learner and her parents, the College put in place a number of adjustments to support the learner's development on the course, including:

- A letter sent out to all of the learners tutors informing them of the nature of her difficulties and making a range of suggestion's about how they could help the learner, prior to the start of term.
- Two hours a week one-on-one support with a specialist disability advisor/ specialist tutor to develop her literacy and numeracy skills as well as two hours a week specialist support from a subject specialist in her art and design classes.
- A referral to the College's educational psychologist for examination access arrangement who arranged for her to get a reader in exams as well as 25% extra time.
- A dictaphone was provided to help the student with her annotations so she could put her ideas down without having to worry about making spelling mistakes.
- Assistance and training from the College to show the leaner how to use the assistive technology available (Read and Write Gold and Inspirations) to help with her written work.

OUTCOME

The student received a Distinction in her art and design course, entry level 3 Maths (after being initially assessed at entry level ½) and she has completed entry level 3 literacy portfolio and completed the entry level 1 literacy course.

The student was awarded the prize for 'Outstanding Personal Achievement in Art and Design' from the College.

EQUALITY NORTH EAST SAYS...

This is an example of how making small adjustments to a disadvantaged learners programme can enable them to successfully complete their programme.

POSITIVE ACTION IN EMPLOYMENT FOR LEARNING PROVIDERS



As a service provider and employer, learning providers have an obligation to recruit a wide and diverse range of employees as well as learners. Learning Providers should show lead by example.

Within employment, The Equality and Human Rights Commission refers to the term *'positive action'* as *'the steps that you can take as an employer to encourage people from groups with different needs or with a past track record of disadvantage or low participation to apply for jobs'* ¹⁰.

There is a clear link here between education and employment, in that the measures introduced by learning providers are going to remove many of the barriers faced by those wishing to enter the labour market. They are both interlinked and *"by taking positive action many of these initiatives have a broader benefit as they are also contributing towards the promotion of equality of opportunity in society as a whole"* LSIS (2010). ¹¹

¹⁰ <http://www.equalityhumanrights.com/advice-and-guidance/equality-act-guidance-for-employers/recruitment/using-positive-action-to-recruit-a-wider-range-of-people/>

¹¹ <http://www.excellencegateway.org.uk/page.aspx?o=108330>

HMP HOLME HOUSE

'DISCOVERY DAYS'

BACKGROUND

In 2008, HMP Holme House became aware that they were underrepresented by Black and minority Ethnic (BME) employees. In order to address this inequality, the prison decided to provide a yearly "Discovery Day"; An initiative which encourages the BME communities to consider careers within the prison service.

POSITIVE ACTION

Advertising for the event is promoted through local BME Networks and employment centres to directly target BME communities. Representatives from HMP Holme House have also visited several mosques in the Cleveland area to promote this event.

During this day the following events occur:

- A guided tour of the prison. Attendees are encouraged to talk with prisoners and ask questions regarding their experience within the prison system. This allows participants to talk directly with an offender and promote the good work which offenders are carrying out within the prison. Prisoners also present the work carried out by themselves during all prisoner initial induction.
- An application form workshop. Managers discuss the application procedure with participants and show how to complete an application form.
- Interview Workshop. Applicants are shown interview skills and effective communication skills.
- Offer of three months employment. They offer this to participants through application to allow them to gain an insight into all work completed in a prison. The participant is given the opportunity to work within several areas of the prison and gain a flavour for all types of work carried out. At the end of the three month period the applicant can apply for any available jobs. Continued support is offered in relation to application form completion and interview skills.

OUTCOME

The first Discovery event in 2008 was attended by over 150 people from BME communities with six BME attendees being offered three month employment secondments at HMP Holme House.

The second event in 2009 was attended by over 150 people from their local BME community with offers of employment being given to six people. Contacts were made with the BME community and further employment opportunities have arisen since this event. To date, they are awaiting security clearance for three more BME employees.

Through the Discovery days HMP Holme House have employed 12 BME staff and are holding the event on an annual basis to promote employment opportunities with the local BME community.

The equality manager has designed a community engagement policy and attends regular promotional events throughout Cleveland, promoting Holme House and the National Offender Management System.

They are currently engaging with Middlesbrough BME network to identify further future employment opportunities for both the public and BME offenders on release.

EQUALITY NORTH EAST SAYS...

This is an excellent example of positive action which has resulted in increased employment opportunities for the local BME community.

NORTH EAST FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICE

BACKGROUND

Currently the Fire and Rescue Services of the North East which includes Cleveland Fire Brigade, County Durham and Darlington Fire and Rescue, Northumberland Fire and Rescue Service and Tyne and Wear Fire and Rescue Service employ in total 2694 people of which 88% are Operational Firefighters. From the 2396 Firefighters 3.8% (102) are females and 1.3% (31) are classified as being from a BME (black and minority ethnic) background. It is therefore evident that collectively their services do not represent the community which they serve and that the role of a Firefighter is still predominately occupied by white males. The overarching objectives to address this imbalance were:

- To alter society's current perception of and widen the appeal of a career as a Firefighter.
- To raise awareness that females and members of the BME community can be Firefighters.
- To make people aware of the different aspects of a Firefighters role.
- To encourage people to visit the website for more information.
- To encourage individuals from underrepresented groups to apply to become a Firefighter.
- To ensure a consistent message is being delivered from all four Fire and Rescue Services in the North East regarding the role of a Firefighter.

In order to help them address the disparity, a variety of positive action initiatives were implemented across the North East region prior to commencing a regional Firefighter recruitment campaign.

POSITIVE ACTION

A positive action (PA) Plan was implemented which included a ten month programme designed to inform, educate and develop potential applicants from underrepresented groups regarding the role of a Firefighter and the recruitment process.

The programme included:

- Interactive workshops which highlighted the stages of the recruitment process.
- Fitness sessions in which they could carry out simulations of the role related tests and offered one to one support from their Fitness Instructors.

The Firefighter role models used in the brand campaign were available to dispel any myths and discuss all aspects of the role. On average 80 delegates attended each monthly session throughout the region. Each session was evaluated and any improvements were made before the next event.

A regional brand campaign was designed and included female and BME operational Firefighters from the region as role models. The format and models were used in a variety of posters, leaflets, education literature including a recruitment DVD to promote the career. A bespoke microsite and specific web address were also created to direct all potential applicants to one site rather than four individual services sites and marketing initiatives were split into two clear attraction routes, one for females and one for BME candidates.

To promote the role to females, radio advertising on Real radio was used as well as tailored online advertising sites such as Hello and Okay. To attract BME individuals, radio advertising via Spice FM was adopted plus a targeted household leaflet drop to highly populated BME areas.

An employment conference specifically targeted at educating careers advisors, elders and role models in the BME community was held. The event included presentations regarding the recruitment processes used for both Firefighter and corporate (office based) positions and demonstrations relating to the activities of a Firefighter.

OUTCOME

In November 2010 a regional Firefighter recruitment campaign was launched and 4379 applications were received. As the focus of the Positive Action (PA) Programme and marketing activities was to increase the number of females and BME applicants, the statistics were compared to the 2008 campaign. This exercise saw a 76% and 122% increase in the number of females and BME individuals applying respectively.

35% of females and BME individuals applying to the role had been part of the PA Programme.

On analysing the pass rates at each stage of the process, the candidates who had been part of the programme had achieved a higher pass rate compared to those individuals who had not taken part. From previous campaigns females tend to have the lowest pass rate at the physical stage of the process. However the candidates who had taken part in the PA fitness events had a 52% pass rate compared a 35% pass rate for those who had not taken part in such activities.

It is therefore suggested that success can be aligned to the positive action Programme as out of the females and BME individuals who were successful through the whole process, 44% of these candidates had taken part in some or all of the events.

The organisation has benefited from implementing a brand campaign and bespoke marketing initiatives to attract their underrepresented groups as candidates who had applied to the recruitment campaign and were successful had noticed the vacancy from either the new website, Spice FM, Real Radio or via the leaflet drop.

Now that the recruitment process is complete they invited a number of females and BME individuals who were successful at interview to participate in a trainee course and will be our Firefighters of the future.

EQUALITY NORTH EAST SAYS...

We congratulate the North East Fire and Rescue Service on their positive action campaign and hope it continues to be successful.

NEW COLLEGE DURHAM

BACKGROUND

During 2009-2010 New College Durham held a year of 'Health and Well-being'. When they looked at their staff's monitoring data under the seven equality strands, they found that disabled people had a disproportionately high leaving rate. After consulting with staff they found that the support and access available to disabled people wasn't sufficient and needed addressing.

EFFECTIVE EQUALITY PRACTICE

New College Durham put a number of steps in place:

- An on-site Occupational Health Service was made available to staff which resulted in health and well-being assessments, blood pressure checks, cholesterol checks and guidance on a range of life-style changes.
- They also looked at the sickness policy and implemented a range of reasonable adjustments for staff.
- Counselling, mental health and well-being training is now mandatory for all staff.
- Mental Health and well-being tutorials and drop in sessions, in addition to the central counselling service are also available to all staff.

OUTCOME

There is now a higher retention of staff who have been diagnosed with a condition covered by the DDA. They have also achieved The 'Positive About Disabled People' Standard.

EQUALITY NORTH EAST SAYS...

This is an example of effective equality practice. The College successfully addressed the disproportionately high leaving rate of disabled people by taking effective measures.

ETEC

BACKGROUND

ETEC Development Trust is a charity which runs community based projects and provides training in various fields, one of which is community development.

ETEC currently has a volunteer who has cerebral palsy and is permanently in a wheelchair. He provides administrative support in the company's general office.

The General Office is located on the first floor but is easily accessible for wheelchair users via a single level entrance and lift. However, when this volunteer first started with ETEC, the General Office door was solid wood and not automatic so once he was outside the door it was very difficult for him to open it. Knocking would result in someone from inside shouting for him to come in, which, of course, he was unable to do and so the situation would remain until someone from the office got up and answered the door. This was frustrating and embarrassing for the volunteer.

EFFECTIVE EQUALITY PRACTICE

ETEC installed a glass panel in the General Office door so that when he knocked, staff could see that it was him and go to let him in immediately.

A special height adjustable desk was purchased for him and there are several other similar desks available in the organisation which can be moved around to accommodate individual needs as appropriate.

OUTCOME

Since this volunteer started working with ETEC, his confidence and self esteem have grown immeasurably and he is now much more sociable and cheerful and his chances of securing future employment are increased by his gaining work experience.

EQUALITY NORTH EAST SAYS...

This is an example of effective equality practice. A simple adjustment can change the life of a learner or employee.

BACKGROUND

NCT Ltd is a training provider, providing training and NVQ assessment primarily in the health and social care sector. It has expanded its portfolio to Customer Services, Business Administration, Advice and Guidance and Management.

When looking at their monitoring data, they became aware that they did not have a very diverse workforce. NCT became aware that its assessment team was not very diverse with 100% of the assessors being white British. Younger staff (under 25) were also underrepresented.

EFFECTIVE EQUALITY PRACTICE

In order to address these inequalities NCT is taking positive action by undertaking a number of steps:

- They are providing opportunities for people from underrepresented groups to undertake the A1 assessor's award qualification to provide them with opportunities to experience NVQ assessment and give them increased opportunity to apply for such posts.
- Reasonable adjustments are made when an individual has been off on sick leave to support them to return to work such as later starts and earlier finishes.
- The organisation offers flexible working.
- They utilised Access to Work to carry out ergonomic assessments on staff and obtain special seating and other necessary equipment to enable several staff to carry out their role.
- All staff have monthly one to one support sessions with their line manager and are provided with appropriate support in their role.

OUTCOME

NCT now have two people who have started the process of undertaking the A1 Assessor qualification. One person is from Malaysia and another from Zimbabwe and both have other full time jobs but both would like to progress to NVQ assessment. The director has met with both people and discussed their personal

development needs and has agreed to allow them to work with NVQ candidates through NCTs Assessment Centre which gives them the opportunity to undertake and achieve their A1 award.

NCT also has recently recruited a male administrator, who also has a disability. NCT has ensured he has been provided with suitable equipment to enable him carry out his job (also by working with Access to Work). He has regular support and coaching from his line manager to assist him become familiar with his new role. The employee also struggled with certain aspects of his job due to his disability, however he has been able to develop his skills. NCT provides flexible working practice to allow him to change his working days to enable him attend consultant and other appointments. This staff member lives in Teeside and wants to relocate to Newcastle, his travel expenses are very costly therefore NCT has also agreed to pay his travel expenses to enable him get to work for a six month period to give him time to relocate. If NCT did not do this, it would not be financially viable for him to work and he would likely still be unemployed.

NCT has ensured that the one person who is now 25 has equal access to training and to support from her manager. She also has a disability and had several periods of sickness last year and experienced some personal problems. Her line manager ensured she had regular support and offered advice and guidance to her to help maintain her motivation. She has overcome her personal difficulties and health problems and has had no recent periods of sickness.

NCT have also been able to provide male assessors to male students. There have been occasions when a male has requested a male staff member due to the nature of their work.

EQUALITY NORTH EAST SAYS...

Several employees have been supported to reach higher potential due to the good practice demonstrated by NCT.

