

**Project Name: Work Placements for undergraduates with a visual impairment: inclusive of the range of disabilities presented by VI learners**

**Amendment History:**

| Version No. | Date | Reason for Amendment |
|-------------|------|----------------------|
|-------------|------|----------------------|

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**Document Distribution**

| <i>Name</i>      | <i>Location</i> | <i>Responsibility</i>         | <i>Action/Information</i>    |
|------------------|-----------------|-------------------------------|------------------------------|
| Debbie Lambert   | LLN             | Manager of the LLN            | For information              |
| Geoffrey Elliott | UW              | Members of the Steering Group | To approve the proposal      |
| Chris Morecroft  | WCT             |                               |                              |
| Ian Peake        | HCT             |                               |                              |
| Mike Rookes      | OU              |                               |                              |
| Gail Rothnie     | UoB             |                               |                              |
| Donna Obrey      | LLN             | Project Officer for the LLN   | To track and monitor project |

**Background**

People with disabilities have faced substantial difficulties in accessing education and have experienced much higher unemployment than the non-disabled (Wolffe and Spungin 2002, Grewai et al 2003). In recent years opportunities for Higher Education has increased dramatically yet it remains uncertain whether obtaining a higher education will translate into a more successful transition into employment for these learners (Adams and Brown 2006).

Learners who are disabled are on average more likely to study on Foundation degrees and HND programmes than their non-disabled counterparts. Both pathways require a work placement to be completed as part of the 'learning experience'. This has raised a number of challenges both for the learners and the institutions who role it is to arrange the placements. It is therefore the intention of the project to raise awareness levels through a set of guidelines for HE and DSA assessors, an electronic information sheet for learners and a webpage for potential employers. A case studies methodology will be used to engage learner participation, and in disseminating and sharing good practice across the network.

Wolffe, K.E and S.Spungin (2002) "A glance at worldwide employment of people with visual impairments" Journal of Visual Impairment and Blindness, 96(4): 245-254

Grewai, I., S.Joy, J.Lewis.K.Swales. K.Woodfield (2003) 'Disabled for Life? Attitudes towards and experience of disability in Britain DWP

Adams and S.Brown (2006) 'Towards inclusive learning in Higher Education  
Routledge

Improving the life chances of disabled people (2005) DWP Office of the Deputy Prime  
Minister

### **Objectives of the Project**

To work with University of Worcester (and other regional universities) to investigate  
this. We have identified 3 aspects:

1. The university trying to facilitate the placement
2. The employer who will be offering the placement
3. The student who needs a meaningful placement that will contribute to the overall  
learning experience.

### **Aspects to investigate could include:**

- An audit of students with disabilities seeking work placements or who have  
undertaken work placements and their experiences.
- The support available within the university
- The perception of employers about issues around a disabled person in the work  
place undertaking a work placement
- What support mechanisms are available via the DSA?
- What experiences have been for students with a disability doing a work  
placement?

### **Project Approach**

We suggest a case study approach with 6 learners – 2 who have completed a work  
placement to review their experience, 2 who are expecting to undertake a placement  
2009/2010 and 2 who is currently undertaking a work placement (2008/2009).

### **Scope:**

#### **A Key Products from the project**

- Guidelines for use by regional HE providers to assist in arranging work  
placements for disabled undergraduates with a visual impairment
- Guidelines for DSA assessors to ensure that appropriate support mechanisms  
can be put in place for an undergraduate with a disabled learner with a visual  
impairment who may undertake a work placement as part of an HE/HND  
programme.
- An information sheet (electronic) for undergraduates planning to undertake a  
work placement providing guidance on support available
- A webpage offering information for potential employers offering a placement
- Case studies for dissemination
- "Success stories" for dissemination by HE providers to appropriate employers to  
highlight the sources of support available

#### **B Out of Scope**

- Provision of equipment or personal support whilst work placements are being undertaken

### **Constraints**

- Learners must have a disability
- Learners must be following a degree or HND programme that includes or included a work placement

## **Initial Project Case**

- The difficulties encountered by disabled learners with a visual impairment in finding work placements have not been widely researched. With the numbers of disabled students increasing on Foundation degree and HND programmes it is important that measures which could support a successful work placement are better understood and implemented.

## **Benefits of the Project**

- Greater understanding of the issues around work placements as part of degree courses which could enhance IAG for learners progressing to HE.
- Raising the profile of people of disabled learners with regional HE providers and employers

## **Key Assumptions**

- There are unresolved issues surrounding the offer of placements
- Students are prevented from completing a placement
- Employers and universities are unaware or unable to access support

## **Timescale**

- 1 year beginning in January 2009 as timing would be crucial – this would enable planning to take place for work placements for 2009/2010.

## **Costs**

One member of staff for 1 days per week for 40 weeks plus management and administration support, travel costs and administration costs

£

|                                       |          |
|---------------------------------------|----------|
| Project leader 40 days @ £125 per day | 5,000.00 |
| Administration, overheads and travel  | 500.00   |
| Total:                                | 5,500.00 |

## **How will the project be evaluated?**

- Number of placements offered
- Take up of placements
- Number of visitors to information webpage
- Feedback from universities, undergraduates and employers offering the placements
- Requests for awareness training

## **How will the project be sustained?**

- By identifying employers with appropriate placements
- Embedding IAG 'disabled' knowledge in HE provider placement teams

## **Initial Risk Log**

The following table summarises the risks that have been identified that may prevent the project being completed to the required quality, budget and timescale. The probability and impact of each risk has been graded as low, medium or high to indicate the relative importance attached to each element of risk.

| <b>Risks</b>  | <b>Probability</b> | <b>Impact</b> | <b>Containment Plan</b>   |
|---|--------------------|---------------|---|
| Not enough undergraduates at the right stage of their course – case study balance would be reviewed | Medium             |               |   |
| Lack of support from HE providers   | Low                |               |   |
| Lack of a clear structure within the HE providers to facilitate communication                       | Low                |               |   |
| Lack of appropriate staffing resources at RNC with availability at the key points required.         | Medium             |               | Ensure that project is carefully planned and points of high demand are identified |
|   |                    |               |   |

### **Project Team**

Ailsa Macleod (UK Projects Lead Project Officer)  
 Kay Smillie (Information Advice and Guidance Co-ordinator)  
 Sandie Foster - Divisional Manager UK projects  
 Jane Bigham - Assistant Director Partnership