

LETTER FROM THE CHAIR

As we start a New Year it is perhaps useful to reflect on the feedback, you as employers have given us over the last 12 months. The valuable feedback collected from our seminars during 2008 when analysed makes very interesting reading and constantly suggests that you have a desire to help the disabled into the workplace but are fearful/anxious about doing so.

Your feedback suggests that your main concerns are:

- anxiety regarding the unknown
- misconceptions of the impact or significance of certain conditions
- fear of failure and subsequent employment law issues
- what to say or not say to the disabled person, and
- how to present the disabled person to the existing workforce.

These concerns run along side the fact that you also express:

- a desire to help
- a need to fill existing vacancies or meet specific and often short term needs
- an interest in committing potential funds to support initiatives
- the ability to release internal experts to support readiness for work training and potential placements.

It therefore appears that the problem is not that you as employers don't care, but that you are anxious about getting involved in something that you have little or no experience of.

The JEND quarterly seminars are designed specifically to help employers become practically involved in helping disabled individuals gain employment, retain their job when they become ill or disabled and return to work once they have recovered or their condition is stabilised.

Disability does not discriminate, you can be born disabled or become disabled, professionals are not immune nor are certain age groups exempt. On this basis anyone of us could become disabled at any given time. Although JEND and the local support agencies have achieved a great deal by working in partnership with local employers there is still a lot to be done.

The economic situation both here and globally could easily become an excuse for not making a difference but JEND very much hope that during 2009 we will continue to work with a growing number of employers in order to make a difference to the quality of life of disabled individuals. With this in mind we are delighted to announce the seminar programme for 2009.

Sally Gallichan
JEND Chairman Tel: 07797 712432

Pause for thought

Here are some words of wisdom from our 2008 events that will hopefully inspire you during 2009:

A disabled candidate will have been tested time and time again to assess what they can not do therefore they are much more likely to undersell than oversell their abilities.

Many disabled individuals do not have to work but they want to and will go to great lengths to gain employment.

Routine and repetitive jobs can be very rewarding to those on the Autistic Spectrum who will often be able to maintain concentration for extended periods of time and produce very accurate work.

"Just because I have been physically ill does not mean I have also lost my ability to think."

Many disabled children attend mainstream schools and extra curricula activities. They are encouraged to work hard, take examinations and plan for their future. This is pointless unless employers are seriously working towards creating a diverse workforce. A disabled young adult who was asked about how they felt when they finished school replied, "It was a very difficult time. Almost overnight I lost my identity, my social network and my confidence. Nothing had prepared me to cope with becoming a 2nd class citizen."

We can not be complacent and assume that another employer will cater for the disabled. I challenge all employers to take it upon themselves to create a diverse workforce that does not discriminate against the disabled. Ignorance is not bliss nor is it an excuse.

UK figures published in 2008 state that there are around 3.5 million disabled people in employment in the UK. This equates to approximately 1 in 8 of all working age people in employment. This represents an employment rate for disabled people of 50%, whereas the working-age population as a whole has an employment rate of about 80%. Local employers can do more to provide employment opportunities to the disabled. JEND would like to ask all employers to make 2009 the year that you give a supported employment placement a try. **Remember no assignment is too short.** Call Skill Solutions today and start making a difference - 788900

Useful Websites:

<http://www.equalityhumanrights.com>

www.autismjersey.com

www.mencap.org.uk

Talent not Tokenism : the business benefits of workforce diversity

In today's global, knowledge economy, an organisation's success and competitiveness depends upon its ability to embrace diversity and to draw upon the skills, understanding and experience of all people. The CBI and TUC, supported by the Equality and Human Rights Commission have been working together to produce a guide to workplace diversity called 'Talent not Tokenism'. The guide provides advice on how to identify, nurture and promote talent. It contains good practice case studies of employers who have created a more diverse workforce and describes the benefits of doing so. *Published June 2008*

2009 Seminar programme

- 19 March AGM and Dispelling the myths around Learning Disability
- 18 June Managing Hearing loss in the workplace
- 24 September Mental Health - looking beyond the behaviour
- 19 November Stroke - the impact on the working population and possibly one of your employees

Book early, places are limited - contact yturmel@jerseymail.co.uk

Jersey Autism have launched their website which includes lots of useful information. Please visit the site and provide them with feedback: www.autismjersey.org

Where would we be today if enlightened employers hadn't given these famous people a chance?

Name dropping can be useful particularly when it helps illustrate a point. We need to focus on the ability not the disability if we are to capture unique talents. Here are just a few famous people - past and present with a recognised disability:

- Alexander Graham Bell / Edison - had learning disability (Edison couldn't read until he was 12 years old)
- David Blunkett - Britain's most famous guide dog owner
- Franklin D. Roosevelt - had Polio
- Abraham Lincoln (former U.S. President) - depression, Marfan's syndrome
- Janet Reno - (former U.S. Attorney General) - Parkinson's disease
- Winston Churchill / George Frederick Handel / Ernest Hemingway / Patty Duke (actress) / Buzz Aldrin / Robin Williams / Mark Twain - all had a bipolar disorder
- Ludwig van Beethoven - bipolar disorder and also deaf
- Marlee Matlin (actress) / Heather Whitestone McCallum (former Miss America) - deaf
- Magic Johnson (basketball player) - HIV
- James Earl Jones (actor) / Bruce Willis - stutter
- Stephen Hawking (physicist/mathematician) - Lou Gehrig's Disease
- Mike Wallace (TV commentator) / Drew Carey (actor) / Isaac Newton - depression
- Syd Barrett (Pink Floyd) - schizophrenia
- Cher / Tom Cruise / Walt Disney / Leonardo Da Vinci - dyslexic
- Florence Henderson (actress mother in Brady Bunch) - speech difference
- Christopher Reeve (Superman) - spinal cord injury

Dress Down Days

On behalf of the many disabled charities you have supported from funds collected on dress down days can I say A BIG THANK YOU! Another very practical way to support the valuable work charities is by donating good quality clothes and goods for sale in their various retail outlets. Donating goods is not just good for the charity it is also good for the environment so spread the word.

Local charities are always looking for volunteers please consider making a difference in 2009 and remember every contribution is useful as many hands make light work.

Thank you to PricewaterhouseCoopers for their desktop publishing support in the production of this newsletter.

Subscriptions Final Reminder

We are still awaiting payment of 2008 annual subscriptions please can we ask all members to make sure we have the correct contact details for subscription payments and that outstanding payments are paid by return to **Sean O'Flaherty | JEND Treasurer | O'Flaherty & Co, 2nd Floor, York Chambers, St Helier, JE2 3RQ**

Useful Websites:

- www.mind.org.uk
- www.mid.org.uk
- www.afse.org.uk