

Grampian Opportunities

Finding the way forward

Research Report

**Employment of Disabled People in Grampian,
with particular reference to the Voluntary Sector**

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Grampian Opportunities
1 High Street
INVERURIE
AB51 3QA

☎: 01467 629675

✉: info@grampianopportunities.org.uk

💻: www.grampianopportunities.org.uk



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Finding the way forward

“GO” Research

Employment of Disabled People – Good Practice in the Voluntary Sector

Qualitative research using case studies and telephone interviews explored three questions:

What good practice exists in enabling disabled people to take up and sustain employment opportunities – how do we spread this practice around?

- What are the external and internal barriers that exist to prevent the offer and uptake of employment opportunities?
- How best can Grampian Opportunities and its partners improve the overall situation within Grampian?

Grampian **Delivers** Opportunities

Findings highlighted:

- Good practice does exist in Grampian and is enabling disabled people to take up and sustain employment.
- Making reasonable adjustments where needed was reported as remarkably easy to implement.
- A diverse workforce increases awareness, develops understanding and promotes good staff morale.

The majority of those surveyed find, or anticipate, that having disabled employees is a benefit. A significant proportion of the voluntary organisations interviewed had disabled people in management and professional roles.

Findings also indicate a greater proportion of disabled people employed in the local voluntary sector than reported nationally. Adopting best practice, rather than seeking to implement minimum standards, emerged as a feature of the overall philosophy of the case study exemplars.

Grampian Opportunities was supported by a mentor, co-researcher and team of volunteers to carry out this study. Representatives from Grampian Society for the Blind and Aberdeenshire Disability Action also participated in the working group.

Volunteers designed the questionnaire, selected and carried out seven case study interviews, collated data from the fifty telephone interviews, participated in a focus group, analysed findings from the interviews and contributed to the writing and proof reading of the report.

Without this team effort the research report would not have been possible.

GO would also like to acknowledge the support of EQUAL and the Scottish Community Action Research Fund (SCARF). SCARF funding was provided by Communities Scotland and managed in partnership with the Scottish Community Development Centre (SCDC) to support community-led research.

Linda Singer, development worker
Grampian Opportunities



Contents

Page

Research Design	2
Research methods	2
Findings	5
Identifying good practice	5
Recommendations.....	9
Further research topics.....	10
Survey of Employers in the Voluntary Sector.....	11
Computers and Integration.....	19
Grampian Housing Association Ltd	21
Aberdeen Foyer.....	25
Aberdeen and North East Deaf Society	29
Momentum (Pathways and Transition).....	33
Grampian Society for the Blind.....	37
Princes Royal Sports & Community Trust.....	41
Community Benefits of the Research.....	44
Appendix 1.....	45
Appendix 2.....	46
Appendix 3.....	58
Appendix 4.....	60
Appendix 5.....	61

Grampian Opportunities

Research Report

Employment of Disabled People in Grampian, with particular reference to the Voluntary Sector

Introduction

Grampian Opportunities was formed in 2000 as a company limited by guarantee. Its remit is to act as a support and signposting service to disabled people wishing to access employment, training and educational opportunities in the Grampian area – Aberdeen City, Aberdeenshire and Moray. It is a “pan” disability service for people with physical and sensory impairments, learning disability and those with mental health problems. It employs one part-time development worker and one part-time volunteer coordinator. Individuals can access the service by self-referral or under the auspices of a service provider.

Disabled people are encouraged to become involved in the organisation by joining the Committee or through membership of short-term working groups. It works closely with other umbrella groups in the area – Grampian Employment Network (GEN), Aberdeenshire Disability Action (ADA) – and with local voluntary, public and private organisations.

There are numerous support organisations from all sectors working in the Grampian area to assist disabled people to find employment and training opportunities. These have been identified in a mapping exercise carried out for (GEN) in 2005. Some of these organisations provide paid or unpaid work experience opportunities for their clients.

The Focus of Enquiry was to research the employment of disabled people within voluntary sector organisations in Grampian.

In the course of this research the organisation sought to identify good practice and approaches to the common and different barriers facing different disability groups – physical disability, sensory impairment, learning disability and mental ill health. It was targeted to cover all types of employment – open paid employment, supported paid employment, work placements, volunteering opportunities and self-employment. The study was designed to examine all aspects of employment from recruitment through to progression within the workplace.

Research Design

The research was structured to comprise two separate studies: a telephone survey of 50 organisations in the local voluntary sector, plus more in depth case studies of 7 local organisations. The opportunity to highlight good practice was used to encourage organisations to participate in the survey.

A Research Working Group comprising disabled people and representatives from member organisations was formed. The group carried out the research, recruiting disabled people as paid or voluntary co-researchers at different stages, and sought external assistance as required.

A focus group review was undertaken by the project team, and representatives of the participating organisations.

Research methods

An initial review of research undertaken throughout Scotland and the UK was undertaken to expand on the discovery and data outlined in the Stage 1 SCARF project proposal.

A questionnaire was designed and pilot tested with selected local organisations.

1 Telephone survey

50 Voluntary Organisations employing at least one member of staff were contacted to take part in a survey by telephone questionnaire and interview. The purpose of this survey was to find out:

- The experience of voluntary organisations of employing disabled people.
 - barriers encountered
 - examples of good practice
 - innovative solutions to problems
 - negative and positive experiences
 - different experiences depending on type of disability
- The attitude of voluntary organisations about employing disabled people
- The level of awareness about the issues facing disabled people in employment
- The level of awareness about financial and in kind support for disabled people in employment

All aspects of employment from recruitment and selection to progression within the workplace were covered.

A questionnaire was developed and pilot tested on two organisations.
(see Appendix 2 for questionnaire)

The survey was then carried out by a single researcher over a period of weeks.

Make-up of Sample:

Surveyed Organisations

- 22 disability specific organisations
- 28 non-disability specific organisation

Size of Organisations

- 9 Large - 30 + employees*
- 11 Medium – 10 - 29 employees
- 19 Small 1 – 9 employees
- 1 - no employees

(* *May be branches of National Organisations*)

Geographical Area

- 23 organisations based in Aberdeen City
- 27 organisations based in Aberdeenshire and Moray

The results of the survey were collated using a spreadsheet and comments evaluated to enable analysis and extraction of examples of good practice and of barriers encountered. Expertise was sought from one of the participating organisations in the design of a simple database using a spreadsheet. Training was provided to a member of staff and a volunteer in using the software for database design and in data interpretation.

Basic statistical analysis was undertaken to derive baseline and trend information for comparison with the case study data and secondary data available from recent national research into employment and disability.

The findings were used to inform the questions asked in the next stage of the research.

2 Case Studies

The case study research took the form of a structured interview with a representative from the selected organisation. Wherever possible this was the member of management responsible for recruitment and staff development. The interview was usually undertaken by a working group member and the project worker, operating as co-facilitators.

The interview utilised the same questionnaire format as the telephone interview in order to enable comparison of the data obtained.

Selection of Case Studies

This phase sought to document what had already been reported by word of mouth to Grampian Opportunities by researching seven case studies. Members of the working group nominated several of the organisations as ones they wished to investigate as exemplars of good practice. The case studies were chosen to cover different types of employment

- Paid Work
- Work Placement
- Volunteering
- Self-employment

and different disability groups

- physical and sensory impairment
- learning disability
- mental ill health

Participants were asked to highlight the barriers encountered and give examples of how and if these were overcome. Particular emphasis was given to policies, availability of advice, quality standards and the overall ethos of the organisation. Examples of innovative or creative practice were documented, and interviewees given the opportunity to identify particular issues of interest or concern.

The case studies were written up by one of the interviewers in conjunction with another member of the project group, and audited by a third member to ensure consistency of approach. Each organisation was then asked to approve the draft and agree the content for circulation.

Issues arising from the case studies, and selection of common themes, were highlighted by the working group. A comparison with the data arising from the telephone survey was undertaken and key learning points were then extracted for further scrutiny and subsequent inclusion in the report.

The case study research findings were made available at the Scottish Union of Supported Employment (SUSE) National Conference in March 2007

Findings

Research confirms that good practice exists within the voluntary sector in Grampian to enable disabled people to take up employment opportunities.

Employment of disabled people

32 of the 50 organisations surveyed in the wider telephone study have disabled employees, comprising approximately 5.4% of their workforce of over 1800 people. This is a higher proportion than the 3% reported for Scotland's voluntary sector (SCVO data 2004). Interestingly, almost 30% of volunteers were disabled.

The entire case study group employed disabled people, although two of the larger organisations did not know how many. As such it is not possible to give an accurate proportion or comparison, it is certainly in excess of 9% of their workforce and as such significantly higher than the national average. This will be skewed by the fact that one organisation sought to be sufficiently proactive as to only employ disabled people, and another strove to employ service users wherever possible.

Types of employment

The roles and job types of disabled employees were very varied. A significant proportion, 32% of organisations, had such individuals in management and senior positions. In the case study group 85% had disabled people in management and professional roles.

Organisations recognised the benefits of accommodating employees who become disabled to:

- retain their skill and experience
- reduce recruitment costs
- lower staff turnover and maintain stability of workforce.

Identifying good practice

Research explored the challenges and benefits of employing disabled people with the aim of identifying any clear evidence of good practice.

Clear policies and practice guidance

Adopting best practise, rather than seeking to implement minimum standards, emerged as a feature of the overall philosophy of the case study participants. However some did indicate that ensuring effort was targeted most effectively and for greatest potential benefit was often difficult, especially for smaller organisations.

How to ensure that good practice at an individual level is reflected across an organisation and also how to ensure top down commitment is put into practice, is a dilemma many of the participants articulated. The research suggested a lack of joined up thinking about policies, processes and implementation. The suggestion was made that there may be a gap for an equalities audit type role to help organisations benchmark policies, procedures and practices.

Expertise in Recruitment and Employment

Very few of the organisations interviewed had human resource specialists or access to in-house expertise in employment issues. The nationally affiliated organisations reported support from head office, but smaller local organisations are particularly vulnerable in the area of employment law.

Accessible recruitment practices

One case study interviewee specifically requested guidance on accessible recruitment practices. This initial enquiry related to producing accessible information for people with a visual impairment.

Overall the research identified the need to consider advertising methods, clear job descriptions to ensure people know what is expected of them, and support at time of interview.

Advertising

A number of participants commented that although they do not currently have the Employers' double tick "positive about disability" standard, they would like to explore this and would view this as a public statement of commitment to good practice and equality of opportunity. The two case study organisations that hold this standard provide services for disabled people and consider adopting this quality benchmark demonstrates a public commitment to a positive ethos.



The benefit of adopting the disability symbol was reflected in a structured planning process that helped organisations focus on the needs of their disabled applicants and employees. Only six organisations in the telephone interview reported being part of the scheme but it was not always clear if the individual being interviewed understood the commitments.

Access to Work scheme

The potential benefits of the access to work scheme were highlighted, but also discussed was the difficulty accessing this support. The benefit of having a local face to provide information and advice about the scheme was considered to be important.

Supporting retention

Making adjustments in the workplace was reported to be very or fairly easy in the majority of situations where adaptations or support had been implemented.

In practice, supporting change can be fairly difficult, taking into account the needs of the disabled person, the impact on other employees and the effect on the organisation as a whole. This is particularly relevant when supporting one person in a small organisation over an extended period. Support can result in a direct financial cost but also a “people cost”. The employee’s own knowledge in how they can be supported in their work is key, but working with others and accessing external sources of support may be necessary to try and find a workable solution.

Quality information

There is an identified need for access to affordable sources of specialist employment information and support – ranging from signposting to factual information through to sources of peer support and networking.

Research focused on the needs of employers but it was also identified that information and support is needed for the employee, their colleagues, line-manager and governing body.

The value of outside contacts, particularly within the specialist sector or local area, to discuss issues with and from whom practical examples could be sought was emphasised by all who had benefited from such support. Finding that a situation was not unique, and something similar had been dealt with by another person was immensely helpful and reassuring.

A number of organisations identified that they subscribed to business services such as the Royal Bank of Scotland mentor services. Reference was also made to the Aberdeen Council of Voluntary Organisations’ (ACVO) Health and Safety specialist service which voluntary sector organisations can buy into. A number of people suggested replicating this to provide a similar scheme for employment information, support and advice.

Networking

Constant reference was made to the need for some form of network or contact system that voluntary sector employers could access without incurring significant costs in terms of not only finances but also time.

Participation in a local network of managers or personnel from similar organisations was cited by case study organisations as immensely helpful in supporting ongoing development and change. Sharing experience and knowledge on the practical implementation of their employment activity, and working together on policy development leading to shared action plans such as

pilot standards on diversity issues, clearly benefited a number of organisations. Talking to peers, drawing on the knowledge and experience of others through networks such as the Grampian Employment Network is felt to be particularly useful.

Particularly supportive have been local meetings which can involve speakers. Meetings and email communications, also promote discussions on relevant topics.

Where joint working had been possible it was deemed cost effective, personally and professionally stimulating, and the benefits derived were perceived to be long lasting for the individual and organisation.

Raising awareness and Planning for inclusion

Acceptance of inclusion as an ongoing process and the need to avoid unrealistic expectations on the part of both employers and employees was raised by a number of participants. Very few organisations reported providing disability equality awareness training to staff.

A number of organisations demonstrated a proactive approach in the use of environmental access audits to plan how to make the buildings they use more accessible. The desire for a fuller disability audit of their service was identified by some of these organisations, to enable them to benchmark current activity and prioritise any changes needed to improve their service.

Organisations require information about where and how to access high quality training and information on disability issues.

Recommendations

The research proposal aimed to identify how Grampian Opportunities and its partners could improve the overall situation within Grampian.

It would appear that there are certain key factors in the process of achieving diversity:

- listen and communicate with people
- use an inclusive approach into strategic planning
- ensure that policy translates into good practice
- increase knowledge and understanding of the issues
- seek funding to improve access
- ensure that the ethos is promoted throughout the organisation at every level

Quality Information

Organisations need to know where they can go to access quality information.

Legislation requires to be summarised and presented in a simple, non threatening format because it often needs to be applied by non specialists.

Organisations should have policy documents written in 'Plain English'.

Planning and Training

Adopting a proactive approach to planning and training will enable organisations to develop inclusive employment practices.

Monitoring and evaluation

Organisations should have systems to measure their performance and the effectiveness of their policies, procedures and practices.

Benchmarking current practice will support organisations to plan for change.

There is the potential to develop an equalities audit type role to help organisations evaluate their services.

Support Agencies

Organisations require access to specialist employment advice consequently it would be useful to identify who can provide this and explore the benefit of setting up an employment support agency for the voluntary sector.

Organisations require information on where they can access disability equality awareness training and advice on environmental access.

There are specialist organisations which can offer advice and information on specific topics and organisations would benefit from a greater knowledge of how to access this expertise.

Mentoring/ Peer support and Networking

Organisations require information on existing employment related support networks, events and training open to them.

The importance of access to a local forum involving people in similar positions where workers from different organisations can share experience and knowledge on the practical implementation of their employment activity can not be highlighted enough.

Further research topics

Further research is needed to identify audit tools to benchmark and monitor good employment practice in the employment of disabled people. Twenty two organisations reported having achieved liP (Investors in People), 4 had achieved Investors in volunteering, and 6 were recognised under the Job Centre Plus positive about disability scheme. How do these quality measures impact on the organisations ability to support disabled people in the workplace?

Further research is necessary to identify effective support mechanisms for a disabled employee, their colleagues and the organisation. This raises the question of how disabled people can share their knowledge and experience with organisations and individuals having to cope with disability in the workplace. Providing or signposting to information, acting as an advocate, peer support for disabled employee or line manager, coaching and mentoring have all been suggested as options to explore.

Grampian Opportunities is particularly interested in employment for disabled people. Three areas have been considered: disabled people into volunteering, disabled people into paid employment, and volunteering as a stepping stone to work. How effective is volunteering as a stepping stone into employment for disabled people?

Self employment and agency working was not covered by the research - How do recruitment agencies, place and support disabled people into work? Is there a need for a specialist recruitment agency?

The findings indicate a greater proportion of disabled people employed in the local voluntary sector than reported nationally. Research into other sectors and other geographical areas may assist in identifying the basis for this apparent trend.

Survey of Employers in the Voluntary Sector

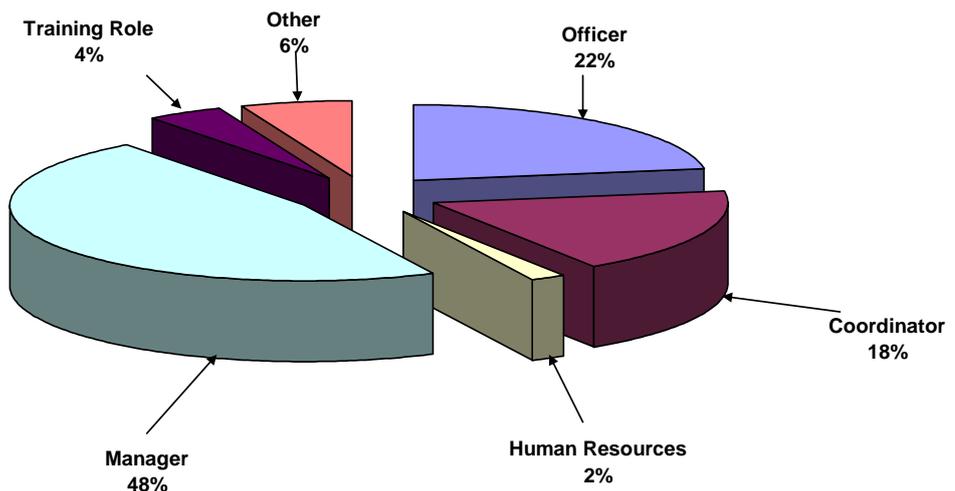
Fifty organisations agreed to participate in the survey which involved completing a telephone questionnaire. One person was assigned to carry out this task over a period of several weeks. Each survey took approximately 20 minutes. The employers that took part are broadly representative of the wide variety of organisations in the voluntary sector in Grampian Region.

Recruitment and employment

The wide variety of job title shows that organisations do not necessarily have a Human Resources manager. The worker may have a broad range of duties and responsibilities. This means that recruitment and employment is not their primary focus. A small organisation may have no in-house expertise in employment issues. Such expertise may be available from other sources and there is evidence of workers sharing good practice. A few organisations buy in support from the Royal Bank of Scotland mentor scheme.

Job Titles (chart 1)

Job Title of interviewees involved in recruitment



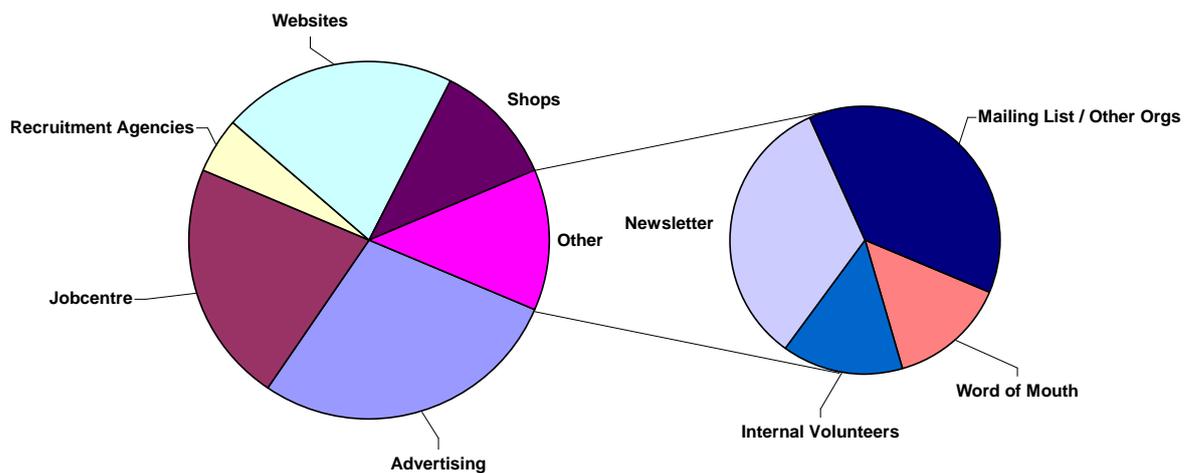
It appears that only the larger organisations may have a Human Resource manager. Sometimes this person is located at a central head office and becomes involved when required. It is fair to assume that such a manager may well be a specialist who has experience in employment issues. The impression is that having such backup is a benefit to local workers.

Advertising

The methods of advertising used by the vast majority surveyed are, in order of preference, local newspapers, Job Centres and websites; whilst some put up posters locally or use their own network or newsletters. Several organisations occasionally use employment agencies, especially for executive positions.

Recruitment advertising (chart 2)

Methods used to recruit new employees

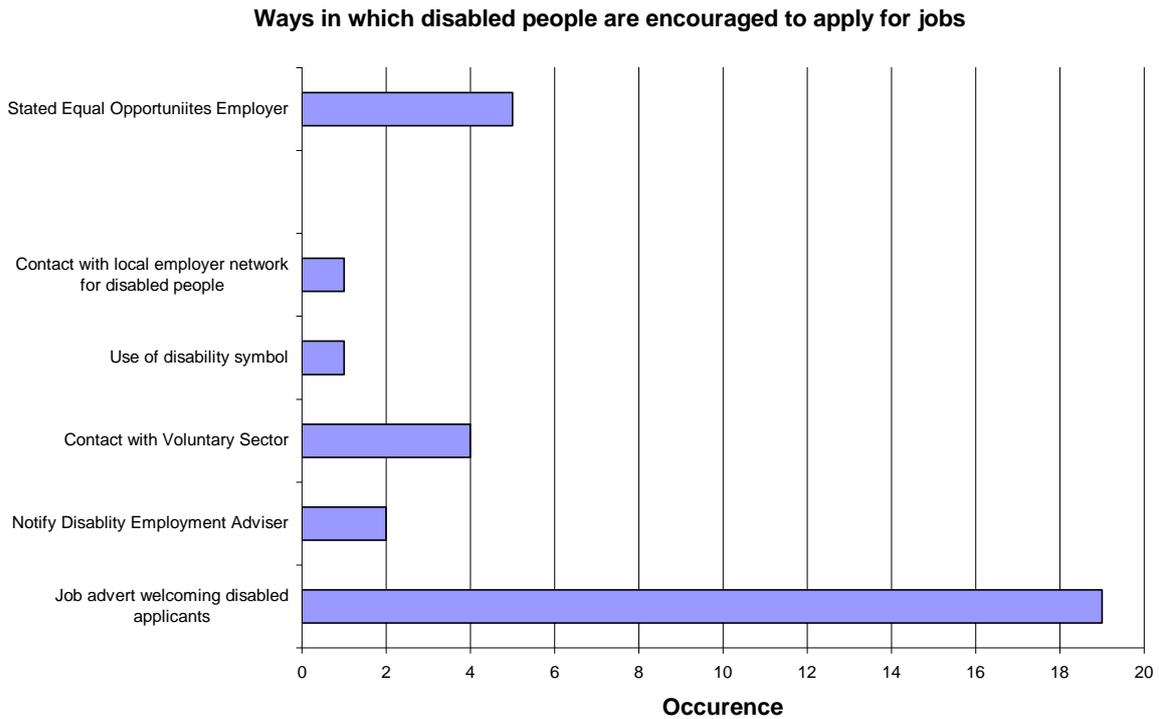


Encouraging applications from disabled people

Within the telephone survey, 50% stated they actively encourage applications from disabled people - the majority through the job advert. Six organisations indicated they were recognised under the Job Centre Plus "Positive about Disability" scheme, but only one confirmed they use the symbol in their advertising.

Five organisations stressed that they were an equal opportunity employer. Several say that they encourage disabled people to apply but the relevant information is held within the pack that is sent out to applicants and does not appear in the advert.

Promoting opportunities (chart 3)



To encourage applications from disabled people, several employers contact appropriate voluntary sector organisations and some use the Employment Services Disability Service Team or Disability Employment Advisors. No organisation reported contacting the Job Centres, Careers Service or any form of educational establishment.

Equal Opportunities and Inclusion

Just under 50% those surveyed said that they had no policy for or against employing disabled people. There seems to be some confusion about what equal opportunities is. Some organisations say that they ignore disability and treat everyone the same. This may demonstrate a lack of awareness of the requirement to accommodate diverse needs and reduce the barriers.

Equality is not about treating everyone the same – it is about each individual having an equal opportunity. Thus impairment is not ignored but an individual's needs are accommodated.

Policies and practice

Almost all the workers were able to recall what policies the organisation had. However there were a few who needed to refer to the relevant folder. The National organisations appear to have a well-developed range of policies to support their work. For the local organisation policy development appears to be linked to the age of organisations and the number of staff. Policies are often developed in response to a situation.

The overall concern is that some organisations have the appropriate policies but there is insufficient evidence of good practice in their implementation.

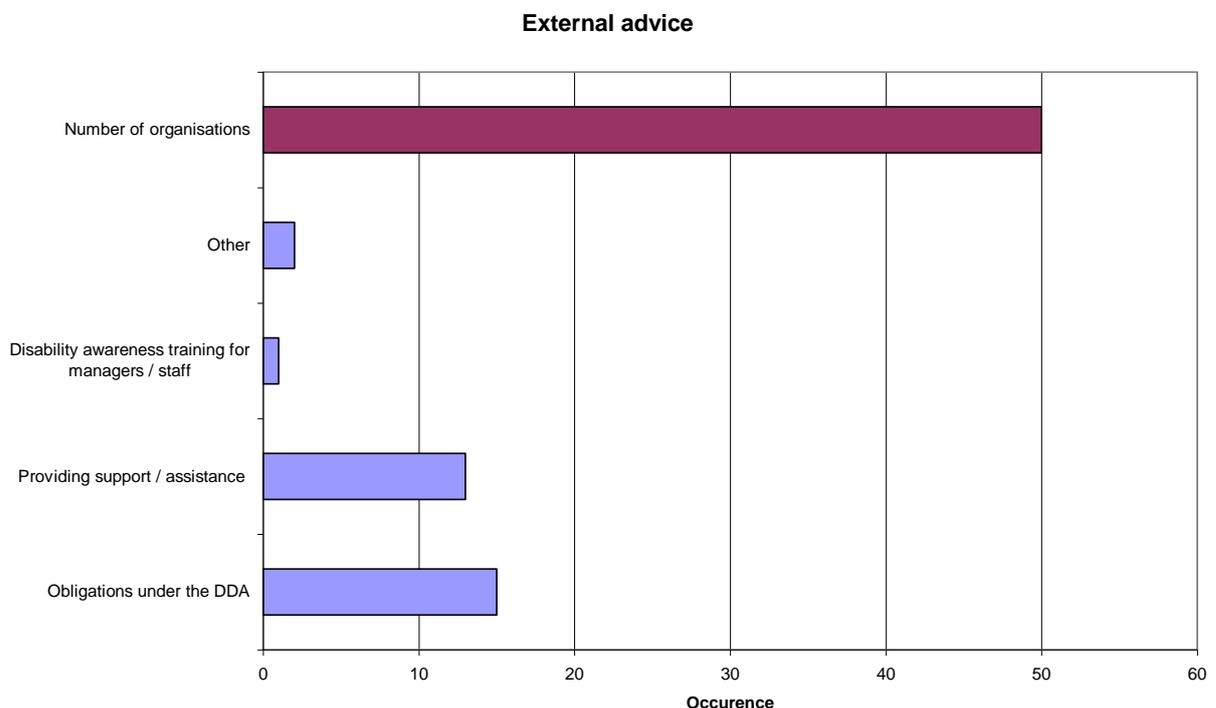
Good working practice is vital. Policies to support this should be living, breathing documents that inform the culture of the organisation.

Knowledge and Understanding

Just over half of those surveyed had sought advice from an outside agency about employing disabled people. Many had the information available in house whilst others did not feel the need to seek the information.

There was varied awareness of the Disability Discrimination Act and other related legislation. The minority of organisations seemed proactive in keeping up-to-date. The reactive approach of others could lead to unintentional discrimination. Only two organisations mentioned the Disability Rights Commission as a source of information.

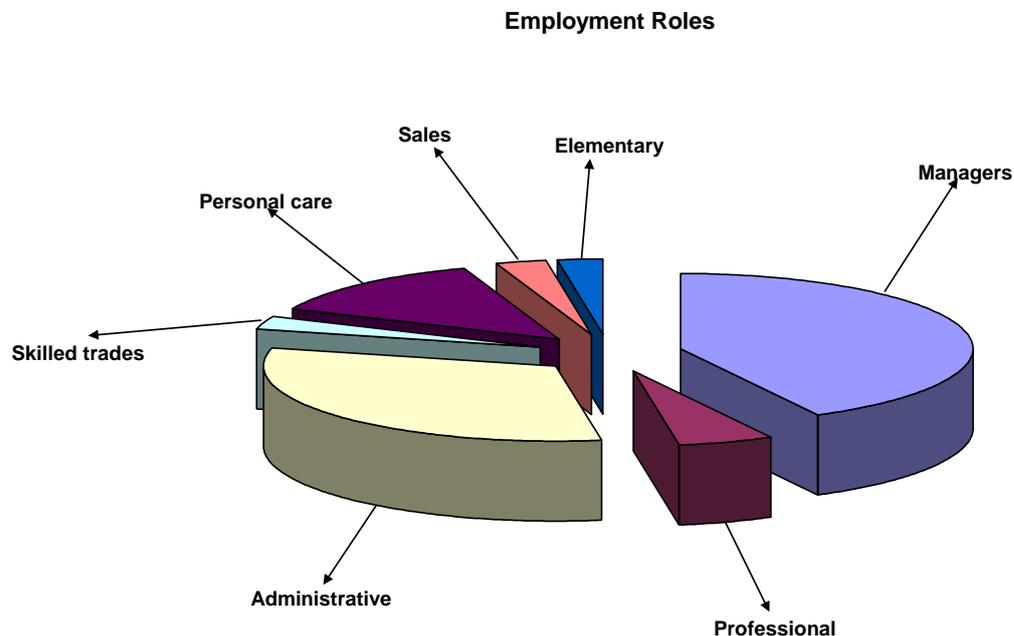
Specialist Advice (chart 4)



Smaller local organisations are particularly vulnerable in the area of employment law, whereas the nationally affiliated organisations tend to have support from head office.

Disabled people were identified in a full range of employment roles with a significant percentage in paid management positions.

Employment roles (chart 5)



Notions of Disability

There is evidence of very good practice – organisations that regularly consult all staff, volunteers and members, whether disabled or not. Where the approach is centred on the individual and his or her needs the resulting ethos is very positive.

Where there is a sense that having a diverse workforce achieves the goals of the organisation and meets its values, disabled people can be seen as positive role models.

Where it is not part of the ethos to view people as individuals this leads to a more institutional and paternalistic culture. There is still the view in some organisations that disability is the same as illness or being unfit. A few workers still equate disability with wheelchair users and such stereotyping can and does result in discrimination. It demonstrates that attitude is still a major barrier.

Once a wider definition of disability was discussed quite a number of workers realised that they had overlooked colleagues or volunteers who would be considered disabled.

Creating a supportive environment

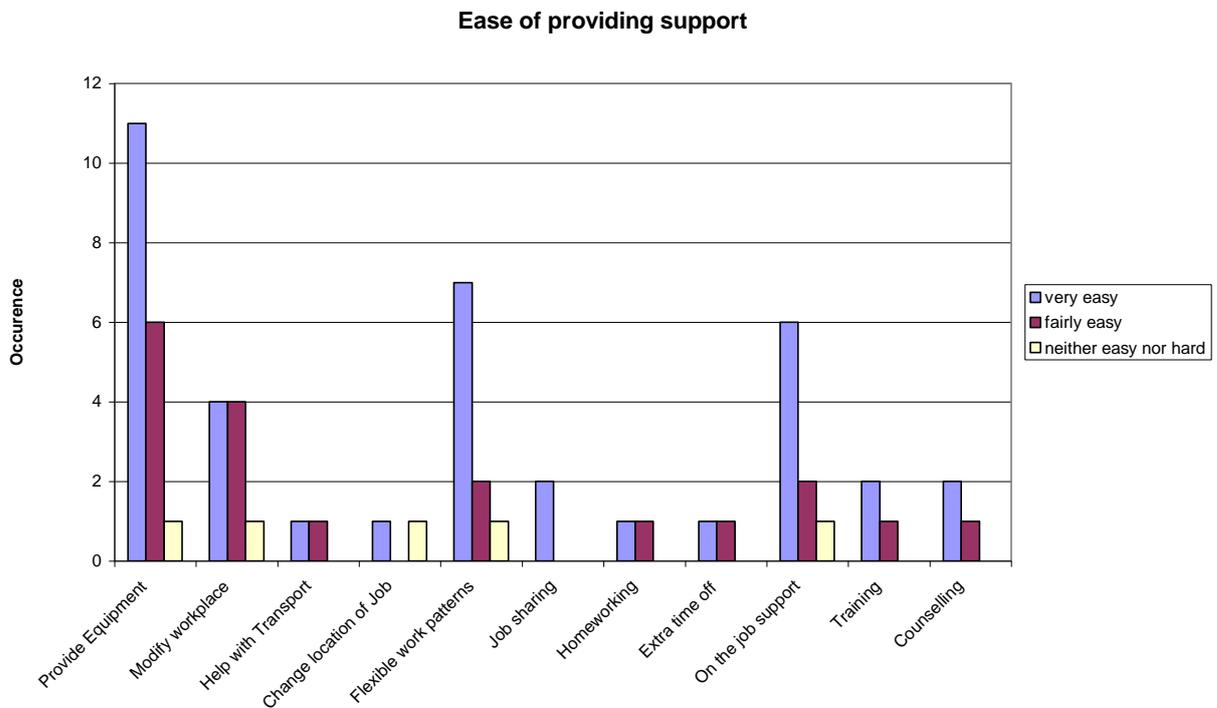
A few of those surveyed had been very proactive and had their premises audited but they were in the minority. Some acknowledged difficulties with old buildings that have no level access where adaptation would be impossible or costly. We are aware that it is very hard to find suitable premises that have good access.

However, most organisations had made some changes to the environment. Many adapted equipment, allowed for a flexible approach to hours or provided extra support or assistance. This was appropriate even where premises were not fully accessible. Many of the adjustments involved little outlay although staff time is a factor and has a greater impact on small organisations. Several had secured funding to adapt premises to ensure that they were accessible. This is especially so for organisations of disabled people where access is an integral part of what they are about.

Ease of making adjustment and support

Chart number 6 shows that where any commitment to make a reasonable adjustment was made it proved remarkably easy to implement.

Making reasonable adjustment (chart 6)



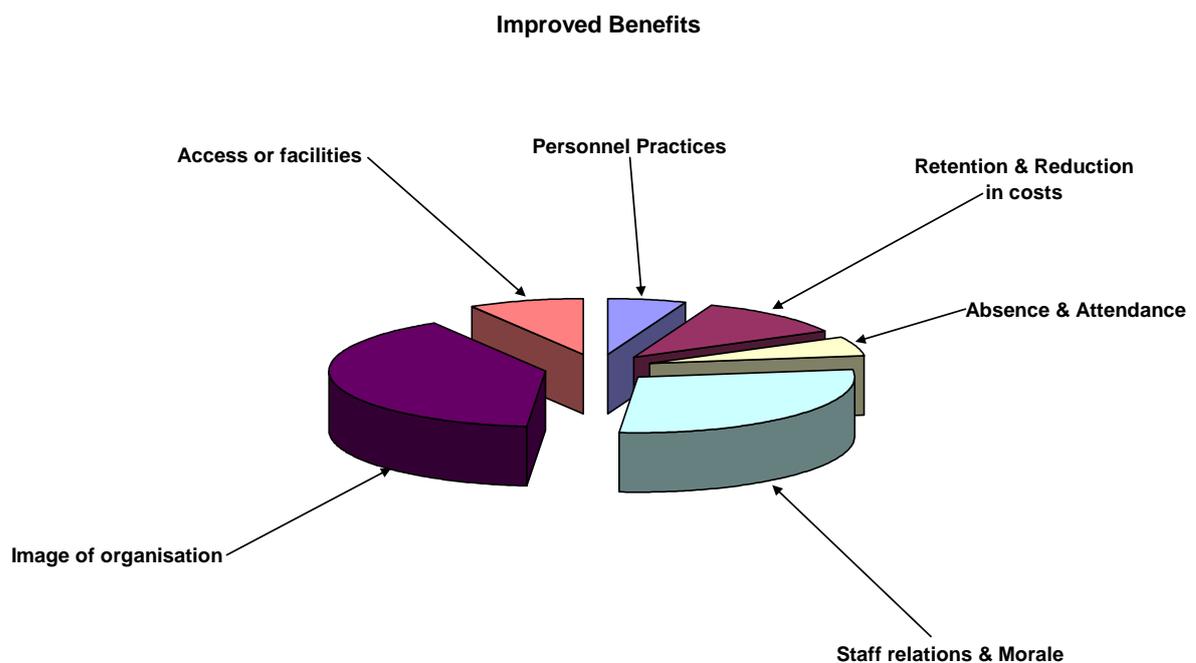
Added Value

The majority of those surveyed find, or anticipate, that having disabled employees is a benefit. There was some initial reluctance to answer the question as many view disabled colleagues as equals and feel that all staff can benefit the

organisation. Others felt that disabled people are no different from anyone else and that there would be no particular benefit in having disabled staff.

A wide variety of reasons were given as to what the benefits might be. Of the options listed, most workers felt that their organisation enjoyed an improved image, demonstrating that they are inclusive. Some were clear that being inclusive is not about improving image. Improved staff relations were also highly ranked and some qualified this by saying that having a diverse workforce increased understanding and fosters good staff morale.

Benefit of employing disabled people (chart 7)



It appeared that organisations fall into several groups.

Those that

- are of and for disabled people and have disabled staff and volunteers as a matter of constitution and policy
- see themselves as caring for disabled people and have few if any disabled staff
- have little involvement with disabled people as staff , volunteers or service users

Several organisations voiced a sense of feeling overwhelmed by the enormity of implementing the wider organisational responsibilities, of which equalities is one aspect. This is where good training would demonstrate that inclusion is a process – a process that is ongoing and will never be completed but can be tackled systematically.

Further comments

There were a large number of other comments. Here are a few:

“We would be missing opportunities if we didn’t employ disabled people. Discrimination is to be avoided but inclusion has its costs- perceived or real.”

“I can’t really see any benefit as non- disabled people are needed here. You need to be physically fit for this work.”

“We would miss opportunities if we did not include disabled people.”

“Education is important - employers need to be educated, stereotypes need to be overcome. Promote value of employing disabled people to all employers.”

“ We have a consistent approach throughout organisation and align volunteer policies with employees.”

“Thread of awareness should run through all policies”

“Missed opportunities if we don’t include disabled people”

“Emphasis should be on ability to do job not on disability”

“Insight and experience is an added bonus”

“It’s the person who works with us not the disability”

“More diverse workforce increases awareness and understanding”

Computers and Integration

Computers and Integration is a Company Limited by Guarantee and a registered Charity, operating in the North East of Scotland. The primary aim of the organisation is to provide access to computers and software training for people in the area. Expertise in assistive technology means they can offer services to people with physical impairments, older people and people with sensory impairments. The facilities in Inverurie operate with part time staff, volunteers, and a board of directors who oversee the daily running of the organisation. This board is composed of both volunteers and members, who have a wide and diverse range of both life and work experience behind them.

Recruitment and Employment

Computers and Integration employs a company manager who is involved in recruitment; there are currently eight staff the majority of whom are part time.

The organisation uses local press, job centre plus, website and word of mouth to recruit. They actively encourage job applications from disabled people by making specific requests to job centre disability employment advisors and ensuring job advertisements welcome disabled applicants.

The organisation positively discriminates in favour of disabled applicants and employs 7 disabled people. There are a further 25 volunteers, many of whom are disabled (including the volunteer management committee).

Disabled people are employed in a range of jobs, including volunteer opportunities, work placements, management and senior level, professional occupations, administrative, skilled trade as well as elementary (unskilled) occupations.

Policies and practice

The organisation has a range of policies and practice guidance. A strong commitment to Equality and Diversity underpins their operational activities.

Equality and Diversity Policy

Computers and Integration (CAI) recognises that many people in our society experience discrimination or lack of opportunity for reasons which are not fair.

CAI aims to create a culture that respects and values each other's differences. CAI sees these differences as an asset to our work.

All employees, board members, volunteers, members and member organisations must declare their support for the objectives of this Equality and Diversity policy.

Achieving Quality Standards

The company is accredited to national standards by British Computer Society and is recognised as an ECDL and CLAIT test centre.

Knowledge and understanding

External advice and additional support has been sought to ensure an understanding of the organisation's obligations under the Disability Discrimination Act 1995. Disability equality awareness training has been delivered to the whole organisation; management, staff, volunteers and members together, to promote a greater understanding of diversity.

ACAS support services were noted to be very helpful but one of the key sources of support highlighted was a local network of voluntary sector organisations. Job Centre Plus and legal advisors have also been fairly useful sources of information and guidance for this organisation.

Creating a supportive environment

The organisation has made adjustments and provided support during recruitment and employment of staff and volunteers. These steps were viewed as fairly or very easy. Some actions did have a direct financial cost to the organisation but some financial support has been secured.

The organisation has provided adaptive equipment, changed the location of a job, provided flexible working hours, allowed extra time off for health reasons, provided additional on the job support, altered work roles and tasks (eg by redesigning duties) and provided additional training. These steps were considered very easy to implement with other support such as modifying the workplace, helping with transport and using home working as fairly easy measures to implement.

Added Value

There were felt to be benefits for the organisation in recruiting and retaining disabled employees with fewer sick days and a high degree of loyalty shown. The view was expressed that "The standard of work produced by disabled employees is often noticeably higher, possibly as they have had to train harder to get their qualifications. Individuals may be overqualified for the job offered and show greater ingenuity and flexibility."

Developing People

Some members have become volunteers and some gone into supported employment within Computers and Integration; others into full time employment outwith the organisation. All have benefited from training in computer use and an increased level of confidence and self esteem.

Grampian Housing Association Ltd

Grampian Housing Association Ltd is an Industrial and Provident Society. The Company was set up thirty years ago and provides quality, affordable homes for those in housing need throughout North East Scotland. This includes shared ownership, development for sale and wider role activities e.g. a money advice service. The company is in partnership with a number of organisations including Aberdeen Foyer, local authorities, other housing associations and Grampian Community Care Charitable Trust.

One of the company's strategic objectives is to promote social and financial inclusion and they are tasked and supported by Communities Scotland to carry this out. Communities Scotland asks that the workforce reflects the community served by Grampian Housing, and performance in this area is closely monitored. The company is governed by a volunteer board of management and aims to see a board whose membership reflects that of the community served by the Association, whilst ensuring that there is the right mix of skills available to run the Association. Board Members can be drawn from the voluntary sector as well as the professions and some are nominated by local authorities.

The Board of Management delegates governance to a number of committees with responsibility for a particular service area. The main office, where Corporate Services are based, is in Aberdeen but a second office in Elgin supports front line service delivery in the Moray area and part of Aberdeenshire.

Recruitment and Employment

The Human Resource function is part of corporate services and the Director of Corporate Services is involved in the recruitment and of employment of staff. There are currently around 60 full time posts and a number of part time posts which include a mobile cleaning service. The organisation has only a small number of volunteers and these are primarily board members.

The organisation has no particular view or policy for or against recruiting disabled people. They would advertise a post and appoint on merit.

A wide range of methods are used to recruit new employees to the organisation, including advertising in newspapers, with Job Centre Plus, on staff notice boards and on their website supporting an online application process. (To support this, the organisation has considered the accessibility of their website.) They would use an agency to recruit temporary cover.

It was confirmed that the organisation has employed people with disabilities in the last five years. The number of disabled people working for the organisation is not clear but the manager knows that there are people employed who have diabetes, hearing impairment, and mental health problems. Currently disabled employees hold a range of positions. Paid roles include senior officials, professional occupations,

administration and cleaners. It was estimated that 20% of board members have a disability or health issues.

In response to age related legislation, the organisation has amended its application process. They have removed “dates you were at school” and would not state a minimum number of years experience required when advertising posts (which could discriminate against a young person). The question “do you have special needs or requirement” has been moved from the equalities form to the main application form.

To encourage unemployed disabled people return to work the organisation has offered work experience.

Policies and practice

A full range of written policies and practice guidance is in place. A recruitment policy has been adopted and the organisation collects a range of information to monitor their activity. The primary focus when monitoring activity tends to be on ethnicity but equality, based on gender, age, sexuality etc was felt to be equally important.

To support the implementation of their sickness and absence management policy the organisation is looking to develop improved systems. They plan to use statistical information to inform work in this area, and would aim to have a structured approach to return to work interviews recognising issues and responsibilities under the Disability Discrimination Act.

The organisation would work to keep employees who become disabled or whose disability worsens, recognising the skills and knowledge which could be lost. To support this retention they would consider all reasonable adjustments.

There are two policies covering Equal opportunities or diversity and these address two slightly different issues (a) service provision (b) employment (internal)

The Health and safety policy involves an annual review of risk assessment. The organisation secures health and safety services as part of a shared resource through ACVO (Aberdeen Council of Voluntary Organisations).

Training and development

The organisation is committed to its training and development policy with significant funds allocated to support staff to take up of training opportunities. Training is also made available to the Board and linked to skill audit, ensuring skills and knowledge is understood in context. Promoting disability awareness among employees generally is one of the issues covered with sessions on equalities, but daily contact with people in the social housing environment is a great educator to developing customer care skills (i.e. learn by doing).

A flexible working policy is in place for all staff and the organisation takes a positive approach to this.

Achieving quality standards

The organisation has achieved Investors in People and, although they do not currently have the Employers' double tick standard, would like to explore this and would view this as a public statement of commitment to good practice and equality of opportunity.

The organisation is subject to regulation by Communities Scotland which monitors standards of practice eg. governance, equalities issues, and skills. Individual staff are members of professional bodies which set standards and operate to codes of practice.

Knowledge and understanding

External advice about employing disabled people has been sought, with the organisation taking advice on the physical environment. An access audit provided guidance and responding to this the facility now has:

- contrast markings around light switches and pillars
- tread highlights on stairs
- a safe evacuation zone identified
- lever taps on basins
- disabled parking bays are identified.

Adaptation of premises is ongoing as part of the organisations long-term planning.

It was felt that employers seeking advice need to know that the provider of advice is approved or accredited. The services of ACAS were felt to be very useful including leaflets and guidance notes. Information from voluntary sector, disability organisations and private agencies was perceived as fairly useful.

The suggestion was made that there may be a gap for an equalities audit type role to help organisations benchmark policies, procedures and practices.

Networking

The view was expressed that managers would benefit from networking, which to a limited extent is already happening. Examples were given of personnel from similar organisations supporting each other, with a group undertaking shared development by facilitating consultation and promoting an understanding of issues within the local context, leading to shared action plans such as pilot standards on diversity issues. A housing equalities group is looking at service issues.

Creating a supportive environment

Equipment and personal support for disabled employees would be provided if needed, one example where this had happened was the provision of a digital hearing aid funded by the organisation.

They have made environmental changes to the premises as highlighted above. Support measures were felt to be fairly easy to implement but could have a direct cost to the organisation.

Home working has been tried but, this has proved difficult because of ICT security. The organisation would provide additional on-the-job support or assistance as needed and job sharing is an option.

Counselling can be made available and included within policies and procedures are ones related to stress management and one related to drug and alcohol use.

Added Value

Appointments are made on merit.

The organisation recognises the benefit of accommodating employees who become disabled:

- to retain their skill and experience
- to reduce recruitment costs
- to lower staff turnover and maintain stability of workforce.

Aberdeen Foyer

Aberdeen Foyer is an independent charitable organisation working to prevent and alleviate youth homelessness and unemployment. They provide supported accommodation and access to a range of education, training, employment opportunities and community health services for young people and their community.

Since the first accommodation site was opened in 1998, Aberdeen Foyer has housed and supported over 1000 young people including single parents, care leavers, ex offenders, those who have or have had drug or alcohol problems, learning difficulties or mental health issues.

The organisation provides a range of services and they also have a trading company, Foyer Enterprise, which encompasses the Foyer Restaurant and Gallery Foyer Graphics and Foyer Drive. These businesses generate income to support the work of Aberdeen Foyer, provide an interface with the wider community and offer training and employment opportunities for young people.

The ten years since its inception has seen the development of Aberdeen Foyer from an organisation with 5 members of staff - to a complement of over 140 paid staff, and 36 volunteers working across 17 locations.

Recruitment and Employment

The Human Resource Manager plays a key role in the recruitment and support of employees. Employment numbers have grown from five to 140 staff in only ten years. This has an implication on human resource management but a low turnover of staff was reported.

Approximately sixteen staff operate from the corporate office base, with around thirty staff in the main Aberdeen centre. The remainder of the current 140 paid staff fulfil a diverse range of employment opportunities across the other 15 locations supporting service users in approximately 70 tenancies, across the City and Shire, with staff roles such as support workers and homemakers.

Other roles include:

- Foyer learning - education and training posts.
- Health promotion activities - producing leaflets on healthy eating, coordinating breakfast clubs.
- Trained counsellor within the organisation.
- A Volunteer Coordinator supports volunteers in a range of activities including arts, music, kitchen work, and supporting service users.

Foyer Enterprises (trading subsidiaries):

- Foyer Restaurant
- Foyer Drive - driving school with lessons and mechanic training at reduced cost for clients (sell to public)
- Foyer Music - lease recording studio to groups
- Foyer Graphics - design and print leaflets/ mailing drops etc.

Policies and practice

A recruitment policy guides the recruitment process which includes an application form, self disclosure and health forms. The organisation has an equal opportunities policy and is keen to ensure their information and documents for recruitment are available in accessible formats.

The organisation uses a full range of advertising medium to recruit new employees i.e. newspapers, Job Centre Plus, internal communication, the use of their own and partners' websites. Internal communication is particularly used where service users have been encouraged to move into paid positions eg as support workers. Agencies were not used often because of recruitment costs but have been used for temporary staff positions.

They have no particular view or policy for or against recruiting people with disabilities but operate an open advertisement policy and would consider an application on the ability to do the job. The organisation would support reasonable adjustments and consider if any aspects of work could be covered by others in the team. They would also consider if hours could be adjusted to suit an individual's needs, but a final decision depends on the service needs of the organisation.

Some people employed in the organisation are known to have conditions which would be covered by the definition of disability. This information would be included in personnel files, but only if disclosed by an individual. This approach is reflected in any discussion with employees on their support needs. There is no policy on consulting disabled employees but it was stressed that staff can raise issues at any time.

The range of employment opportunities, in which people with disabilities are known to contribute, include volunteering opportunities, kitchen work, personal support worker roles, management level, and caretaker activities. The organisation has also been involved in delivery of New Deal, Gateway to work, Lifeshaper and Prince's Trust schemes. Three people have found employment with the organisation through these schemes.

The organisation has a health and safety policy and could demonstrate the use of staff training to minimise risk and further support a safe work environment.

Proactive approach

At an organisational level a professional audit was commissioned to ensure a new office complied with good environmental design, recognising the importance of planning and a proactive approach to create an inclusive environment.

To support development in the workplace, there is a training and development policy. The organisation is aware of legislation such as the Disability Discrimination

Act and the obligations this places on employers and service providers. Staff attended training sessions to ensure an understanding on current legislation and disability awareness training has been provided to staff by an external agency.

Where there is no written policy adopted, the organisation could demonstrate that in practice they would provide equipment to support disabled employees. Flexible working was felt to be a reasonable adjustment for all staff where work schedules could accommodate this, examples were given of time off to cover personal emergencies or appointments. This demonstrates good practice.

Employment contracts outline terms and conditions covering sickness and absence, and to improve on current practice, there is a policy in draft form which includes a return to work interview process. Counselling can be arranged for staff.

Achieving Quality Standards

The organisation has achieved Investors in People accreditation and is working towards SQMS (Scottish Quality Management Systems). They have also received a number of accolades and awards, resulting on one occasion in an exchange visit to Australia. They do not currently sign up to the Employers double tick “positive about disability standards” but they would consider adopting this to demonstrate a public commitment to this quality benchmark.

Knowledge and understanding

The organisation felt the ACAS helpline and Employment updates were very useful. General media reporting raised awareness of issues and the Job Centre Plus have been useful providing guidance on counselling and access to work support schemes.

Networking

The Human resource manager has access to a local forum involving people in similar positions where workers from different organisations can share experience and knowledge on the practical implementation of their employment activity.

Particularly supportive have been local meetings which can involve speakers and email communications, which can promote discussions on relevant topics.

Creating a supportive environment

Throughout the case study, interview examples of providing support demonstrated a “How can we help” approach. This has ranged from arranging for an interpreter to ensure a fair interview for an applicant with a hearing impairment, to ensuring lifts are repaired quickly. Parking is also monitored, and training has been provided for a team to raise awareness in order to promote a supportive work environment.

Adaptive equipment has not been required but staff highlighted an awareness of Repetitive Strain Injury and related conditions recognising the importance of safe working practices. Premises have been modified and by planning ahead the use of an audit should ensure the building is accessible for current and future staff needs. Meeting venues have been changed to allow wheelchair access.

Added Value

It was felt important to retain existing employees who become disabled. This recognised that they fulfilled a role and have been trained, and the organisation would want to keep those skills, in preference to incurring the cost of recruiting and training someone new.

The view was expressed that recruiting a disabled person may bring the advantage of added value because the individual might have relevant personal experience and knowledge.

Aberdeen and North East Deaf Society

The Aberdeen & North East Deaf Society was first established in 1895 and was originally known as the Aberdeen Deaf and Dumb Benevolent Society. (Please note that the terminology 'Deaf & Dumb' is no longer considered to be socially acceptable).

With changes in legislation local authorities became responsible for providing statutory social work services. The Aberdeen & North East Deaf Society became an agent of the local authority with a service agency agreement, to provide a professional social work service based on local authority guidelines, for the Grampian area.

Since then, and particularly in recent years, the work of the Society has changed considerably to ensure a wider range of services is provided and to promote the needs of all groups of people who are affected by deafness i.e. Deaf, Deafened, Deafblind, Hard of Hearing and those who experience Tinnitus and other associated conditions.

Although the work of the Society has changed considerably over the years, its aims remain the same- the provision of services for those people affected by deafness in the North East of Scotland, estimated to be one in seven of the population.

The Aberdeen & North East Deaf Society now provides services to Aberdeen City, Aberdeenshire and Moray. The Society's main office is based in Smithfield Road, Aberdeen, and there is a sub office in Institution Road, Elgin. Both venues have a Resource Centre for technical equipment: drop-in services and home visits are also provided in rural areas throughout the North East of Scotland.

Recruitment and employment

The Principal Officer is involved in the recruitment and employment of staff.

There are a total of 23 staff and, in addition to paid staff, there is a volunteer board involving seventeen people and a further six active volunteers.

Local press is felt to be as effective a way as any to recruit employees although the organisation may use journals such as Community Care or specialist journals for specific posts. To complement this, the organisation's website and the website of funders have also been used. Job Centre Plus would be used for some positions and a poster in the Elgin office proved useful when recruiting a caretaker.

The organisation reports no particular view or policy for or against recruiting disabled people explaining that they do not positively discriminate, but recruit for ability to do the job. A wide range of posts are held by disabled people including managers and senior officials, professional occupations, skilled trades occupations and volunteering opportunities.

Equal Opportunities and Inclusion

The Aberdeen and North East Deaf Society promote Equal Opportunities and Inclusion in all activities and it is understood that eleven staff (estimate 50 %) have a range of impairment and health issues which may impact on work. This includes diabetes, heart conditions, cancer, hearing impairment/ deaf, and stress.

Policies and practice

The organisation's policies are primarily modelled on Local Authority guidelines. They have an equal opportunities policy and strongly promote inclusion in all their activities.

At this time the number of disabled employees is not monitored but consulting with employees on their needs would be discussed at time of appointment and followed up as part of the regular supervision and support meetings arranged for all staff.

The Health and safety policy recognises the need for technology to ensure a safe environment for people with hearing impairments and the Aberdeen office has recently upgraded their fire alarm system to strobe lighting which will alert people who cannot hear the fire alarm. The organisation subscribes to the Health and Safety services provided through the Aberdeen Council of Voluntary Organisations.

Sickness or absence management procedures will support a phased return for employees who have been off work for a period of time. The process would be to keep in touch and plan a phased return to work with close support and supervision. It was recognised that during this time there may be additional costs to an organisation for example the organisation may not get paid if a worker is not able to deliver a service due to absence. It was noted that one worker off long term in a small voluntary sector organisation can increase the stress for all within the organisation.

A training and development strategy is in place and many staff, because of professional registration, must maintain a personal development portfolio for social work registration. Induction and training for all staff includes Health and Safety awareness, anti discriminatory practice, deaf awareness and ongoing training in specialist technology is available. The organisation provides training in house and works with others to deliver disability equality training.

Knowledge and Understanding

The organisation takes advantage of a wide range of information sources finding written information and guidance particularly useful. They have a legal advisor on their board and as an organisation subscribe to an employment advice service.

There is an awareness of the Disability Discrimination Act and the Disability Rights Commission. The need to challenge discrimination was stressed. It was highlighted that involving interpreters, at legal and other meetings, is important to ensure individuals understand decisions which impact on their lives.

Technical staff within the organisation focus on finding workable solutions and can provide guidance on equipment.

Local authority personnel can provide guidance and the organisation has used Access to Work, local authority support and fundraising to purchase equipment and make adjustments. These changes are designed to support and enable employees but are also for the use of board members and others involved in the work of the organisation.

Promoting Participation

Note takers and an electronic note taking service, videophone and a full range of telecommunication, voice recognition systems are used. Meetings benefit from the use of a telephone network (microphone) system and there are plans to keep up to date with modern technology to further promote participation and inclusion.

The view was expressed that providers of support services need to have an understanding of disability and how it affects an individual in everyday situations, they also need to have confidence in and knowledge of solutions.

A local contact gives a human face to the national Access to Work scheme particularly as they demonstrate knowledge and understanding of the issues.

Access to work support at time of interview.

A deaf person must be registered with access to work to qualify for interpreter support at an interview. The organisation can arrange an interpreter to attend but needs to know who will pay and short notice of an interview date can make this difficult to arrange.

Individuals trying to get back to work and registered with job centre plus will be covered but those in employment seeking to change job may not know of need to be registered. Registration with access to work can take 3 weeks.

The organisation will cover if an alternative cannot be found to ensure an individual does not have to pay and is not disadvantaged at interview.

Creating a supportive environment

The building was refurbished ten years ago to create an accessible environment for service users and staff. The organisation planned ahead to meet Disability Discrimination Act requirements. Within the building there is a lift, consideration has

been given to colour contrast, and there are communication systems in meeting rooms offices which meet a range of needs.

Access to work can help with the provision of equipment and/or personal support for employees and in addition the organisation can provide equipment if needed such as a portable radio aid, specialist telephone equipment, IT support or an interpreter.

The view was expressed that it was fairly easy to provide support or make changes but it was stressed that an individual should not have to feel grateful. It was felt to be easier to do this for others than it was to ask for support and adjustments to meet an individuals own needs.

There can be financial implications when introducing changes for disabled employees but support from Access to Work, financial assistance from a local authority equipment budget and fundraising are sources of support to make changes.

Transport for staff has never been an issue although service users report difficulties with driver attitude and communication skills on buses.

Networking can be difficult for individual with hearing impairment/ deaf with the need to know that other environments are adequately equipped to accommodate needs and support participation/ inclusion.

Working from home and flexible working is also an option but this must fit with the delivery of the service.

Added Value

The organisation aims for good practice generally and improved access or facilities would benefit all staff and customers.

The benefits of recruiting or retaining disabled staff were felt to depend on the individual. A knowledge and understanding of disability issues can promote an awareness that positively informs work practices. One benefit of employing an individual with a hearing aid is the practical ability to test equipment, but it is important to recognise that each case is unique – people are people!

Momentum (Pathways and Transition)

Momentum is a national organisation, comprising three main divisions: Momentum Care which provides services to allow people to remain independently in their own homes; Momentum Skills which delivers training and rehabilitation services and a Social Enterprises arm which connects people with hands-on job experience. Together these three divisions provide a continuum of services allowing people to access what ever support is most appropriate at any given time – from care, to work placements, to support to remain in employment.

Momentum works in the areas of brain injury, spinal injury, mental health, physical disability, learning disability, employment, care and supported living, social enterprises and community rehabilitation; delivering services across Scotland from Aberdeen, Inverness and Fife to Glasgow, Ayrshire and the Scottish Borders. Each project is managed locally, and needs to generate their own income.

Momentum Pathways is based in Aberdeen and provides a service to people with acquired brain injury. The Manager is also responsible for the development of a new brain injury service (Transitions) based in Aberdeenshire. Transitions aims to bridge the gap experienced by people with brain injury, following their discharge from hospital and before they progress to rehabilitation services such as those already offered by Momentum's existing brain injury service in Aberdeen. The Transitions service is a partnership with the Brain Injury Group (BIG) a volunteer led community group which supports people with an acquired brain injury and their carers.

Recruitment and employment

The national organisation is Momentum Scotland which operates from their Head office in Glasgow. They have around 400 staff; some posts are part time, such as employment support role(s) which may involve only a small number of hours per week.

The Momentum Pathways manager is involved in the recruitment and employment of staff for the two services they lead. Pathways and Transitions have 7 employees.

There is also a Momentum service for people with mental health problems based in Aberdeen and between these local services there are 3 employees recognised as disabled.

To recruit new employees to the organisation, different advertising methods are used, including local press, the organisation's own website and also the websites of partner agencies (NHS Grampian / Aberdeenshire Council) when working on joint funded projects. Private recruitment agencies are rarely used.

The organisation actively encourage job applications from disabled people through the use of “Positive about Disability” double tick symbol in their advertisements, they will use internal email to advertise posts, advise Job Centre Plus about vacancies and promote through local employer networks such as the Grampian Employment Network. The internal email system can be used to encourage service users ready to return to work to apply but this is felt to be best within a different project rather than in the project where they have been a service user because the change can create difficulties in adjusting to a new role.

Disabled people are currently employed within administration, training and manager levels positions.

The organisation has taken steps to recruit a disabled person. To retain an employee who became disabled they provided additional support. Changes included the provision of equipment such as an adapted mouse for the computer, adjustments to the job by reallocating duties, and the introduction of flexible working hours.

The organisation does not involve volunteers at local operational level and would want to ensure that support systems were in place to support volunteer involvement before committing to this. It was recognised that although the organisation would like to involve volunteers there is a time commitment needed to do this well and ensure supervision and support is provided.

Policies and practice

A full range of policies and practice guidance is in place to support the work of the organisation at national and local level.

Recruitment policies ensure the number of disabled employees is monitored. This information is held at head office.

When consulting with disabled employees on their needs it was felt that the recruitment and induction process would draw out some issues. Induction includes guidance that there will be regular “formal” monthly meetings (support and supervision) but issues of concern can be raised at any time.

An annual appraisal system is separate from support and supervision and has a work focus. Action plans which are an agreed outcome of the appraisal may include training needs and could also record the need for changes related to disability. It was also felt that risk assessments carried out under the health and safety policy would take into account any additional risks related to disability.

The organisation has an equal opportunity policy and a health and safety policy that would take into account any additional risks related to disability. Policies also cover training and development, sickness or absence management, redundancy and

termination as well as issues around encouraging the retention of employees who become disabled or whose disability worsens.

Positive about Disability

Disability awareness training is delivered in house for managers, staff and service users.

The organisation uses the “Positive about Disability” double tick symbol and to ensure an understanding of the organisation’s commitment to the standards information is provided to managers as part of their induction.

At the time of recruitment particular attention is given to applications where the candidate has indicated a disability. This will not guarantee an interview as the candidate would need to meet minimum requirements to qualify for interview. Any appointment is based on the best person for job and reasonable adjustments would be considered as part of this process. Decisions are recorded and the manager would be able to explain a decision if a candidate is not offered the post.

In addition to this the organisation is currently working towards Investors in people. This is being led at national level but this will include the local projects.

Knowledge and understanding

Talking to peers, drawing on the knowledge and experience of others through networks such as the Grampian Employment Network is felt to be particularly useful. To check their obligations under the Disability Discrimination Act the organisation has used the Disability Rights commission helpline. They also make use of locally available sources of information with access to legal advice on an informal basis.

Creating a supportive environment

The premises are already wheelchair accessible and are not likely to need modification to meet the needs of a disabled employee. The organisation would consider providing equipment and/or personal support for disabled employees and working links with the Job Centre Access to Work was felt to be useful in this area.

Flexible working is accommodated but needs to take into account the service delivery needs of the organisation. Counselling is available through a telephone helpline to all staff on an as needed basis.

Supporting retention

In practice, supporting change can be fairly difficult, taking into account the needs of the disabled person, the impact on other employees and the effect on the organisation as a whole.

This is particularly relevant when supporting one person in a small organisation over an extended period. Support can result in a direct financial cost but also a “people cost”. The employee’s own knowledge in how they can be supported in their work is key but working with others and accessing external sources of support may be necessary to try and find a workable solution.

Added value

The organisation delivers a service to help disabled people find and keep work and feel that demonstrating good practice and acting as a supportive employer may be seen as improving the image of the organisation to customers.

Whilst highlighting issues to consider, the manager would still say that recruiting a disabled person or retaining existing employees who become disabled has a benefit for the organisation. The investment in the employee, such as recruitment and training costs, and their ability to do the job is recognised and the manager would consider it is short sighted not to try and retain an employee.

Staff may also value the knowledge that the employer is supportive of their needs.

Grampian Society for the Blind

Grampian Society for the Blind is a social care organisation providing a service for people with a serious level of visual impairment. The client base currently stands at 2,500 across Grampian but this is estimated to be only 25% - 50% of the people who could be registered.

Established in 1879, Grampian Society for the Blind is an independent charitable organisation providing services for visually impaired people in Aberdeen City, Aberdeenshire and Moray. The Society's main office is in Aberdeen. Within this building there is a resource centre for aids and equipment, a hi-tech facility for clients to learn about specialised computer and CCTV equipment, a lending facility for large print books, talking books, audio described videos and music cassette and CDs. A fitness room is available for clients to exercise under supervision and a large meeting room with adjacent kitchen is available for clubs and groups. The organisation has a sub office in Elgin providing a satellite service; and two shops, one used as a charity shop and one used as a store and sorting base.

The work of the society changed about 40 years ago when the society started undertaking statutory social work for Aberdeen City, Aberdeenshire and Moray Councils. This work is carried out under service level agreements. The other services carried out by the society depend on income from fundraising, donations and charitable grant funding to keep existing services and establish new ones eg new IT service.

Recruitment and Employment

The organisation has a management team and interviews are carried out by the relevant team leader. The chief executive would be involved in management and senior level appointments but posts such as receptionist and cleaner are covered by Administration team leader. Current structures include:

- Board of 16 including 3 service user representatives and representatives from each of the three Councils
- 34 paid staff – including four readers
- Approximately 150 registered volunteers (large proportions with visual impairments)

The majority of staff work from the Aberdeen office, one member of staff is employed in the charity shop and other staff are in Elgin or work from home (home based workers cover coastal areas in North Aberdeenshire).

Applications from disabled people are encouraged through:

- specific requests to Job Centre Plus
- discussions with disability employment advisors
- using the positive about disability symbol on job advertisements
- circulating job vacancy notice to members.

The organisation currently has eight disabled staff.

Positions held by disabled employees include administrator, receptionist, ICT officer, Fundraising co-ordinator, Volunteer coordinator, Team Leader, Chief Executive, Social Worker. The last four posts recruited were Team Leader, Chief Executive, Receptionist and Cleaner. Three of these four posts recruited disabled employees.

The range of advertising used varied from advertising to membership, through job centre, local and national press. Experience has shown that advertising in professional journals is expensive and tends to attract only a limited number of candidates from outwith the area.

“Positive about disability”

A recent reception post was only advertised to members. Legal advice was sought to confirm this positive recruitment approach was acceptable. Eighteen application forms were requested, 12 returned and six candidates who met the minimum requirements were interviewed and appointment was made on ability to do the work.

Workstep agreed to part fund the position.

Policies and practice

One key achievement has been work with Job Centre Plus to achieve the ‘Positive about Disability’ kite mark (double tick symbol) which demonstrates a commitment to 5 key standards relating to employment practices. All advertising will now include this symbol.

The certificate recognising the organisation’s commitment is on display in the main reception area and the double tick symbol is now used on all recruitment materials. This symbol was felt to have merit when the commitments were fully understood and practiced.

The organisation has an equal opportunities policy and during the last year the chief executive has been working with the board to review and update policies and practices. The organisation buys into a health and safety service through ACVO and the needs of disabled employees are considered as part of risk assessment process.

An annual appraisal system ensures that at least once a year the employee’s have the opportunity to discuss any issues with their line manager. This is in addition to support and supervision sessions which are held on a six weekly basis.

Creating a supportive environment

Support has included providing adaptive equipment, modifying the workplace, supporting flexible working patterns (provided needs of clients are met) and allowing special leave to accommodate guide dog training, and arranging additional on-the-job support such as the assistance of drivers and readers.

Training is provided and support is available through a regular structure of support and supervision. A “can do” approach ensures the organisation responds quickly to resolve identified staff needs.

Regular training and an environment designed to meet the needs of disabled employees and users of the building is recognised as important, removing and not creating barriers in the workplace eg. high colour contrast and good lighting throughout building, option of lift or stairs, good practice in keeping corridor space clear, cupboard doors, and filing drawers closed when not in use, fire extinguishers recessed. Planning for ongoing improvement led to the replacement of a security entry system from small button to a fob operated control for ease of use.

An accessible environment is complemented by the belief that an organisation for disabled people, employing disabled people, will improve the image of the organisation.

Disability awareness training is delivered by the organisation and all staff have to attend a regular refresher to ensure an up to date knowledge. Professional staff have to maintain 15 days continuing professional development days training per year. Promotion, like all recruitment is on merit and ability to carry out the work.

The organisation tries to provide support to employees absent from work due to ill health and will keep records to evidence this. One current example included purchasing sessional cover to ensure an absent worker did not return to a backlog of work. Keeping on a reader when disabled employee is on extended period of absence is an expense to the organisation but also demonstrates commitment to support a return to work.

The organisation also has a policy of supporting paid leave for visually impaired staff when they attend the three week training period required by guide dogs for the blind. (A new guide dog may be required every eight years.)

In other situations reasonable adjustments and changes to jobs will be considered and access to work rules may be used to guide decision making.

Flexible working will be negotiable but the major consideration in this area is the delivery of services to clients. It was also stressed that flexible working relates not only to disability but childcare and other work life balance issues.

The organisation was recognised for the Employers Positive about Disability standard in November 2005 and would like to work towards Inventors in People in the future.

The organisation has used external information, support and advice to:

1. confirm the legality of positive discrimination to enable organisation to target and recruit disabled employee.(lawyer/ legal representative)
2. check the availability of financial support through Workstep (Social Work employment development officer)
3. clarify the rules on access to work support (Access to Work service, Member of Parliament)

The support and changes introduced may have resulted in direct financial cost or expenditure for the organisation but they were not felt to be significant because of the opportunity to use available support (WorkStep, Access to work) and resources (own funds). The organisation has a fundraising officer, particularly knowledgeable on grants, available to develop and support organisational and service delivery

Added Value

- Recruiting employees who are disabled is felt to have numerous benefits.
- People who have first hand experience of disability are able to communicate well with clients.
- It was felt that an understanding of disability supported improved personnel practices
- Promoted a genuine commitment to the “Positive about Disability” standards.

The Chief Executive spoke about studies which highlighted that attendance at work was higher than average citing loyalty and lower sickness records. Experience suggests that sickness records can vary from those who are never off to the possibility of an employee on long term sick leave.

The personal experience of the chief executive is that the organisation is a good employer of people with visual impairment and will work to support people with physical impairment, people with mental ill health and employees with childcare responsibilities.

Princes Royal Sports & Community Trust

The organisation was established in 1997 as an independent Company Limited by Guarantee with Charitable status. It operates from a sports facility which is shared with a Highland league football club. Another organisation also rents an office within the facility.

The organisation operates a programme of activity within the facility and across the Banff and Buchan area of Aberdeenshire, delivering programmes in schools, sheltered housing and other Council facilities.

Initial programmes targeted people who wanted to access sporting activities but this has widened to involve *all ages and all abilities* in a range of programmes to promote active lifestyles eg Busy Bees, Disabled Sports Group, Senior Fitness group, Sheltered housing activity groups, Cardiac Rehabilitation group, and Vale in the community – fitness through football programme

Recruitment and employment

The General Manager (facilities and programmes) is involved in the recruitment and employment of staff. There are 4 full time staff, 1 employee supported through New Deal, 5 part time staff and 6 volunteers.

Recruitment is mainly through word of mouth and promotion from within eg part time workers from school moving onto full time work.

Policies and practice

The organisation has an equal opportunities policy, but stressed that policies are inclusive and not specifically for disabled people. Their health and safety policy is complemented by undertaking and implementing risk assessments relevant to the activities and the needs of individuals taking part. This is seen as very important to the work of the organisation due to the type of activities and the fact that the work can be with children and vulnerable adults.

The organisation does not have a formal written recruitment policy, but aims to select the right people for the job. They use clear job descriptions to ensure people know what is expected of them. The ability to work as part of a team is considered important. Disclosure checks are essential.

Developing people

The organisation demonstrates a learning culture which extends to their recruitment of staff and volunteers.

A common example is someone coming from school on a work placement. This may lead to part time work during holiday programme, evening or weekend. The individual may move on to college and continue to work on a part time basis, eventually moving into a full time position.

All staff cover a range of tasks, without job demarcation, for example the manager will also clean toilets and views this as “equal opportunities in action”.

The organisation encourages people to develop their skills and to this end supports attendance at relevant training courses. (A lack of appropriate accredited training has been identified.)

Creating a supportive environment

Wages within the organisation are not as high as they may be elsewhere but the manager sees employment as a package and will support individuals to grow (and if appropriate move on). Clear aims and objectives are linked to tasks, expenses covered and training provided.

The organisation recognises that workers need to be multi-skilled and able to work well with people:

- Currently working with up to 400 school children
- Staff leading groups for people from deprived areas
- Covering the basics of healthy activity.

Work experience is offered to pupils from the special base at the school and for people referred by Council employment development workers. Successful outcomes were reported for people who were initially not expected to stay or achieve.

The same approach is used for both staff and people using the service when consulting with disabled people on their needs. Essentially “don’t fuss but ask if any support is needed”. This can be done informally with the individual and any carer/ support worker may also be able to give information. Staff are expected to use their initiative, speaking to people and working on key issues, being clear about team working, expectations and ensuring every employee (paid or voluntary) is part of the staff team, for example sitting with other staff at coffee breaks.

The organisation has no defined procedures on the provision of equipment and/or personal support for disabled employees but would look at providing this if the need arose.

Consideration has been given to the building layout, with good colour contrast throughout the building, a stair climber is available and staff have moved meetings

to downstairs rooms when appropriate. Flexible hours for staff or the use of facilities would be considered if this met the needs of the organisation, activity and individuals.

Achieving Quality Standards

The organisation holds an SFA (Scottish Football Association) development award for community work.

Added Value

The benefits of recruiting disabled people were largely intangible but can be described as a good feeling for staff, a personal “Buzz”, derived from seeing someone move from a belief that they are ‘no use’ to being part of the team.

“In work and in play - which is all the activities we are involved in - we are there for all ages and all abilities/ learning from each other.”

Community Benefits of the Research

Disabled job seekers were recruited as paid or voluntary co-researchers. In some cases they were supported or seconded by a member organisation in order to carry out this work. Using people with direct experience of disability undoubtedly helped to raise awareness among voluntary organisations about the possibilities of employing disabled people. It provided the opportunity to let these organisations know about the support that is available to disabled employees and to them as an employer. In some instances it apparently had the effect of encouraging them to review their recruitment and employment policies to ensure that the needs of disabled people are fully included. In others it signposted the need for organisations to provide ongoing disability awareness training for their workforce.

At the same time the co-researchers gained greater understanding of the employment issues that might make it difficult for voluntary organisations to offer employment opportunities. This should enable them to target their job-seeking efforts more effectively and with greater confidence. Both disabled individuals and support organisations representatives also gained new skills in carrying out research, analysing research findings, report writing and working as part of a team.

The benefit of this research can be summarised as follows:

- Disabled People and support organisations gained new skills and greater understanding of the issues facing employing organisations.
- Voluntary sector employers will have a raised awareness about the untapped potential for employing disabled people and some of the issues that need to be considered.
- Support organisations presently offering unpaid work experience to their clients will have examples of good practice that will encourage them to consider paid work.
- Grampian Opportunities will have an effective tool to use when advising disabled people, support organisations and prospective employers in the voluntary sector.
- The lessons learned from this research will be applicable to other support organisations and disabled people across Scotland, particularly in rural areas.

Appendix 1

Terminology

Disabled People

The term "Disabled People" is used as an umbrella term to cover people with physical impairment, sensory impairment, learning disability and those with mental ill health.

Employment

Except where specific types of work opportunities are referred to individually, the term "Employment " is used as an umbrella term to cover paid employment (open and supported), self-employment, work placement and volunteering.

Voluntary Organisations/Voluntary Sector

The terms "voluntary organisations" and "voluntary sector" are used as umbrella terms to cover voluntary organisations, community groups and social enterprises

Grampian

Except where specific places are referred to individually, the term "Grampian" covers Aberdeen, Aberdeenshire and Moray.

Acronyms

CAI	Computers and Integration
DDA	Disability Discrimination Act
DRC	Disability Rights Commission
DWP	Department of Work and Pensions
ECDL	European Computer Driving Licence
GEN	Grampian Employment Network
GO	Grampian Opportunities
SCVO	Scottish Council of Voluntary Organisations
SUSE	Scottish Union of Supported Employment

Appendix 2

Grampian Opportunities Telephone Questionnaire

Name of organisation: _____

Called on: _____

Called again on: _____

Further calls: _____

Greeting

My name

I would like to speak to _____

OR person responsible for recruitment

Grampian Opportunities

Flyers sent recently about a telephone survey we are conducting

How are you placed to do this just now - 20min

WOULD it be more convenient for us to ARRANGE ANOTHER time?

Completely confidential - nothing passed to anyone else.

Your responses will help GO identify good practice

GO funding through the Scottish Community Action Research Fund

Interviewer note: stress, as necessary that:

Organisations have been chosen from voluntary sector.

Confidentiality – re-emphasise that no identifiable information about the organisation or the respondent will be passed on to any other body.

If the respondent wants reassurance about the legitimacy of the survey, they can contact -

Linda Singer, Development Worker with Grampian Opportunities
1 High Street Inverurie AB51 3QA

01467 629675

info@grampianopportunities.org.uk

www.grampianopportunities.org.uk

What I am looking for is some background information about your organisation; some information about your recruitment and employment of DP's; something around information and support and also about the benefits of employing Disabled People.

A. BACKGROUND INFORMATION ABOUT THE ORGANISATION

<p>1. Before we begin the interview, can you just confirm your job title?</p>	<p>Record verbatim</p>	
<p>2. And as part of your job, are you involved in the recruitment and employment of staff?</p>	<p>Yes No</p>	
<p>3. Is this the only site which your organisation has?</p>	<p>Yes → go to Q5 No → go to Q4</p>	
<p>4. So just to check, your organisation is part of a larger organisation?</p>	<p>Yes No</p>	
<p>5. Local level: How many employees are there at this organisation?</p>	<p>Number:</p>	
<p>If respondent does not know total number of employees (to the nearest 10), ask</p>	<p>1. None 2. 1 to 5 3. Up to 20 4. Up to 50 5. 50 Up to 100 6. 100 to 249 7. 250 to 1,000 8. More than 1,000 9. Don't know</p>	
<p>6. How many employees does your organisation have in total, at all its sites in Scotland?</p>	<p>Number:</p>	
<p><i>If respondent does not know total number of employees (to the nearest 10), prompt:</i></p>	<p>1. None 2. 1 to 5 3. Up to 20 4. Up to 50 5. 50 up to 100 6. 100 to 249 7. 250 to 1,00 8. More than 1,000 9. Don't know</p>	

A. Background Information cont.

<p>7. Do you have written policies or practice guidance on the employment of disabled people, and if so which, do these include:</p>	<p>Read out</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Recruitment 2. Equal Opps 3. Monitoring no. of disabled emp's 4. H & S 5. Risk assessment 6. Training and development 7. Promoting disability awareness among emp's generally 8. Consulting with disabled emp's on their needs 9. Equipment and/or personal support / Flexible working 10. Sick/absence management Encouraging the retention Redundancy or termination 11. Other (please specify) 	
<p>9. Does your organisation hold any recognised quality assurance standards such as:</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Investors in People 2. Investors in Volunteering 3. Employers double tick symbol 4. Other 	

B. RECRUITMENT AND EMPLOYMENT OF DISABLED PEOPLE

<p>1. What methods does your organisation normally use to recruit new employees? <i>Read out list – Code all that apply</i></p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Advertising in newspapers, journals etc 2. Jobcentre/Careers services 3. Private recruitment agencies 4. Websites/other electronic media 5. Public notices, shop windows or similar 6. Other (please specify) 	
<p>2. Which of the following best describes your organisation's attitude towards the recruitment of disabled people?</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. actively encourage job applications from DP's 2. have no particular view or policy for or against recruiting DP's 3. would not generally recruit DP's 4. Don't know 5. Other (please specify) 	
<p>3. In what ways do you encourage applications from disabled people?</p>	<p><i>Don't prompt unless have to</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Specific request to Jobcentre/Carers Office 2. Job advertisement welcoming disabled applicants 3. Notify Employment Service Disability Service Team, or Disability Employment Adviser 4. Contact with voluntary sector/charity 5. Contact with educational institutions (eg schools, colleagues, training and rehabilitation centres) 6. Use of disability symbol/logo in job advertisement 7. Contact with local employer network for disabled people (or Employers Forum on Disability) 8. Contact with Chamber of Commerce, or small business organisation 9. Other (please specify) 10. Don't know/not answered <p><i>Code all that apply.</i></p>	

B. Recruitment and employment cont.

Disability in its widest sense

There are many definitions of disability, but I would like you to think of people with long term health conditions or disabilities which make it difficult for them to do some everyday things. As well as and including people who use wheelchairs, or who are blind or partially sighted, this definition includes conditions that might not be apparent, such as diabetes, epilepsy, arthritis, mental ill-health or learning difficulties.

<p>4. Are there any people employed in your organisation who have any of the types of condition covered by this definition (this could include people who have become ill or disabled during your employment)?</p>	<p>YES</p> <p>NO</p> <p>DON'T KNOW</p>
<p>5. How many disabled employees are there?</p>	<p>NUMBER:</p> <p>DON'T KNOW</p>
<p>6. Many organisations have people whose involvement is voluntary. How many unpaid workers or volunteers does your organisation have? What percentage are disabled?</p>	<p>NUMBER:</p> <p>Percentage:</p> <p>DON'T KNOW</p>
<p>7. In the last 5 yrs, has your organisation employed any disabled people or people with long-term health conditions?</p>	<p>Yes → go to Q9</p> <p>No → go to Q8</p> <p>Don't know → go to Information</p>
<p>8. There are a number of reasons why employers might not have any disabled employees. Which are the main reasons why your organisation has no disabled employees?</p> <p><i>Read out- Probe, as appropriate – eg if they say that disabled</i></p>	<p>Read out – tick any that apply</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. No disabled employees have applied for work in the organisation 2. Disabled employees have applied for jobs in the past, but have not been recruited (<i>for reasons connected with their disability</i>) 3. Disabled employees have applied for jobs in the past, but have not been

<p><i>applicants have not been recruited, explore whether this was because of their disability, or for other reasons</i></p>	<p>recruited (for reasons <u>not</u> connected with their disability)</p> <p>4. Other (please specify)</p> <p>5. Don't know/refused</p>	
<p>9. Thinking about the current disabled employees in your organisation, which occupations or kinds of jobs are they engaged in?</p> <p>Are DP's at various levels?</p>	<p>Prompt/Read out list - Code all that apply</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Volunteer 2. Work Training/ Placement 3. <i>Government scheme (eg New Deal, Job Introduction scheme, Access to Work, Modern apprenticeships)</i> 4. Managers and senior officials 5. Professional occupations 6. Administrative and secretarial 7. Skilled trades 8. Personal care 9. Sales and customer service 10. Process, plant and machine operatives 11. Elementary (unskilled) occupations 12. Other (please specify) 	

C. INFORMATION, ADVICE AND SUPPORT

<p>1. Have you ever sought or received external information, support or advice about employing disabled people?</p>	<p>YES</p> <p>NO</p> <p>DON'T KNOW</p>	
<p>2. What did this information, support or advice relate to?</p> <p>Read out list. – Code all that apply</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Your organisation's obligations under the DDA 2. Providing support or making adjustments to enable you to recruit or <u>retain</u> a DP 3. Obtaining financial support or other assistance in making adjustments for disabled employees 4. Disability awareness training for managers or staff 5. Other (please specify) 	

C. Information advice and support cont.

3. From which source or sources did you receive this information, support or advice?

Do not read out – Code all that apply

	V	F	NV	NA	DK
<i>Literature, leaflets, guidance notes ...</i>					
<i>Information helpline (eg DDA/DRC helpline)</i>					
<i>Jobcentre Plus</i>					
<i>Employment Service/Jobcentre Plus Disability Service Teams (formerly PACTs), or Disability Employment Advisers</i>					
<i>Job Broker</i>					
<i>New Deal for DP's provider</i>					
<i>Disability Rights Commission</i>					
<i>Lawyer/ legal representative</i>					
<i>Private recruitment agency</i>					
<i>Press/ radio/ TV advertisements</i>					
<i>Chamber of Commerce, Business Links, Small Business Service</i>					
<i>ACAS</i>					
<i>Citizens Advice Bureau</i>					
<i>Voluntary sector, charity, disability organisation</i>					
<i>Employer organisation</i>					
<i>Trade Association</i>					
<i>Local Employer Networks on disability/ Employers' Forum on Disability</i>					
<i>Other (please specify)</i>					

**For each source mentioned above, ask:
And how useful was the assistance received from (name source)?
Was it.....**

- V: Very useful**
- F: Fairly useful**
- NV: Not very useful**
- NA: Not at all useful**
- DK: Don't know/can't say**

D. SUPPORT AND ADJUSTMENTS

<p>1. Has your organisation ever made any adjustments or provided support for a disabled employee?</p> <p>Code all that apply (ie if respondent answers 'yes', probe to establish whether they have done this to recruit a disabled person, to retain an employee who became disabled, or both)</p>	<p>No, no steps ever taken to recruit or retain DP → go to Q2</p> <p>Yes, to recruit DP → go to Q3</p> <p>Yes to retain an employee who became disabled → go to Q3</p> <p>Don't know → go to next section</p>
<p>2. Can you say why this is? Do not prompt - Code all that apply</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Never had a disabled person apply for a job as far as I know 2. No-one has become disabled while in our/my employment 3. Decided it was too expensive 4. Making changes would have been too difficult for the organisation 5. Other (please state)

D: Support and adjustments cont.

3. What steps did you take? Do not prompt - Code all that apply

	<i>VE</i>	<i>FE</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>FD</i>	<i>VD</i>	<i>DK</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide equipment adapted for a disabled person • Modify workplace/premises • Helping with transport • Changing location of job • Provide flexible working patterns or working hours • Alter work organisation (eg by transferring to another job or re-designing duties) • Employ job-sharing • Use homeworking • Allow for special leave/extra time off because of the disability • Provide additional on-the-job support or assistance • Provide training/retraining • Provide counselling • ‘Partnering’ them with a non-disabled person or mentor • Other (please specify) 						

Regarding all the steps in Q3 above – ask the following. In practice, how easy was it to provide this support, or make these changes?

VE: Very easy

FE: Fairly easy

N: Neither easy nor difficult

FD: Fairly difficult

VD: Very difficult

DK: Don’t know/can’t say Read out those ticked - Code one column

5. Did the support or changes you have introduced for disabled employees result in any direct financial cost or expenditure for the organisation?

**YES
NO
DON’T KNOW**

6. Did you receive any grants or financial support to help in making adjustments for disabled employees?

**Yes
No → go to next section
Don’t know → next section**

E. BENEFITS OF EMPLOYING DISABLED PEOPLE

<p><i>EITHER</i> <i>If respondent has, or has had disabled employees (ie answered 'yes' at B6) ask:</i></p> <p>1a. Would you say that recruiting disabled employees had had any benefits or advantages for your organisation?</p>		<p>YES</p> <p>NO</p> <p>DON'T KNOW</p>
<p><i>OR</i> <i>If respondent has never had disabled employees (ie answered no or don't know at B6)ask:</i></p> <p>1b. Would you anticipate that recruiting disabled employees would have any benefits or advantages for your organisation?</p>		<p>YES</p> <p>NO</p> <p>DON'T KNOW</p>
<p>2. What are those benefits?</p> <p><i>Do not read out – Code all that apply</i></p>	<p>Were they benefits through</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • improved personnel practices (recruitment training etc). • improved retention & reductions in recruitment costs etc • improved absence and attendance records • improved staff relations and morale • improved image of the organisation to customers • improved access or facilities eg ramps, lifts etc which all staff/customers could use • expanding the customer base ie the number of customers • Other (please specify) 	
<p>3. Would you say that <u>retaining</u> existing employees who become disabled has had any benefits or advantages for your organisation?</p>	<p>YES</p> <p>NO</p> <p>DON'T KNOW</p>	

F. OTHER ISSUES AND CLOSE

***Are there any other comments or points you would like to make?
The case studies will be completed in due course and a final report will be made available. Would you be willing to take part in further interviews on this subject?***

THANK YOU for taking the time to do this.

Appendix 3

Employment rights and the Disability Discrimination Act

Disabled workers share the same general employment rights as other workers, but there are also some special provisions for them under the Disability Discrimination Act (DDA)

Under the DDA, it is unlawful for employers to discriminate against disabled people for a reason related to their disability, in all aspects of employment, unless this can be justified. The Act covers:

- application forms
- interview arrangements
- proficiency tests
- job offers
- terms of employment
- promotion, transfer or training opportunities
- work-related benefits such as access to recreation or refreshment facilities
- dismissal or redundancy

Before October 2004, the DDA only applied to employers with 15 or more staff. Employers with fewer than 15 staff are now included.

The DDA also covers work-based training opportunities for employees.

Reasonable adjustments in the workplace

Under the DDA, your employer has a duty to consider making 'reasonable adjustments' to make sure you're not put at a substantial disadvantage by employment arrangements or any physical feature of the workplace.

Examples of the sort of adjustments your employer should consider, in consultation with you, are set out in the DDA and include:

- allocating some of your work to someone else
- ⇒ transferring you to another post or another place of work
- ⇒ making adjustments to the buildings where you work
- ⇒ being flexible about your hours – allowing you to have different core working hours and to be away from the office for assessment, treatment or rehabilitation
- ⇒ providing training
- ⇒ providing modified equipment
- ⇒ making instructions and manuals more accessible
- ⇒ providing a reader or interpreter

Things to consider at work

You can play an active role in discussing these arrangements with your employer. You might also want to encourage your employer to speak to

someone with expertise in providing work-related help for disabled people.

The Disability Rights Commission (DRC) provides detailed guidance and advice for you and your employer about whether an adjustment is reasonable or not. Issues for you both to consider include:

- how effective will an adjustment be?
- will it mean that your disability is slightly less of a disadvantage or will it significantly reduce the disadvantage?
- is it practical?
- will it cause much disruption?
- will it help other people in the workplace?
- is the cost prohibitive?

You may want to make sure that your employer is aware of the Access to Work programme run by Jobcentre Plus. Through this programme, employers can get advice on appropriate adjustments and possibly some financial help towards the cost of the adjustments.

Disability Rights Commission

The Disability Rights Commission (DRC) is a good source of advice if you feel you may have been discriminated against at work or elsewhere. It can also help if you think you have been discriminated against and want to lodge a claim at an Employment Tribunal.

For further information please contact the DRC

Telephone: 08457 622 633

Textphone: 08457 622 644

Fax: 08457 778 878

Lines are open 8.00 am to 8.00 pm (Monday to Friday)

www.drc.org.uk

Disability Rights Commission Helpline

Freepost MID 02164

Stratford upon Avon, CV37 9BR

All of the information above was taken from the disability rights commission website.

Appendix 4

Positive about Disability scheme

The Disability Symbol is a recognition given by Jobcentre Plus to employers based in Great Britain who have agreed to take action to meet five commitments regarding the employment, retention, training and career development of disabled employees.

Employers who use the symbol have agreed with Jobcentre Plus that they will take action on these five commitments:

- to interview all disabled applicants who meet the minimum criteria for a job vacancy and consider them on their abilities

- to ensure there is a mechanism in place to discuss, at any time, but at least once a year, with disabled employees what can be done to make sure they can develop and use their abilities

- to make every effort when employees become disabled to make sure they stay in employment

- to take action to ensure that all employees develop the appropriate level of disability awareness needed to make these commitments work

- each year to review the five commitments and what has been achieved, plan ways to improve on them and let employees and Jobcentre Plus know about progress and future plans.

<http://www.jobcentreplus.gov.uk/JCP/Customers/HelpForDisabledPeople/DisabilitySymbol/>

Access to Work scheme

Access to Work is available when additional costs are incurred because of a disability. It cannot be used to provide support usually provided by employers or required under legislation for all their employees. Access to Work solutions are individually tailored to meet the disability needs of the disabled employee in the workplace. The Disability Act 1995 puts a duty on employers to take any steps that are reasonable to reduce or remove any substantial disadvantage that a physical feature of their premises or their employment arrangements causes a disabled employee or job applicant compared with a non-disabled person. This is known as 'reasonable adjustment'.

<http://www.jobcentreplus.gov.uk/JCP/Customers/HelpForDisabledPeople/AccessToWork/>

Appendix 5

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Registered office: 1 High Street, Inverurie AB51 3QA