

“Bridging the Gap” between Business & People with Disabilities

A 2-day ‘on site’ in the ‘Business Orientation’ programme

Our Purpose

- To enable organisations that help disabled people find employment to meet the needs & expectations of employers as valued service users & potential allies or partners– so that significantly more persons with disabilities find work.
- To build sustainable, authentic, mutually beneficial personal and professional relationships between disabled people and their advocates and people in business.
- To ‘bridge the gap’ and challenge deep rooted, unhelpful assumptions regarding the business as held by the disability sector - and regarding the disability sector as held by people in the private sector.
- To build trust and mutual understanding of each other’s ‘lived reality’.

‘Bridging the Gap’ - Programme Design

A group of companies invite OPDs and/or NGOs to spend 2 days on site in each business – to experience an informal ‘corporate orientation’ - which enables those helping disabled people to find jobs, livelihoods, careers to:

- meet and build relationships with key managers & staff in selected businesses.
- understand participating businesses: their different cultures, priorities, and challenges.
- understand the range of jobs in each company/industry sector & the vacancies anticipated.
- understand what the company typically requires and values when they recruit (skills, qualifications, attributes, career potential etc.)
- Help managers to become more confident personally and professionally.
- Inform managers of existing business-relevant services, support, resources – while asking them to propose improvements, identify gaps...
- identify any access challenges OPD learners encounter while on site (built environment, ICT, other) and share solutions as useful feedback to the host company.

Bridging the Gap Outcome & Impact

OPDs and others in the disability sector gain:

- an understanding of the employer’s reality - as experienced and described by local employers - to include insights into how they recruit - what they are looking for from candidates- the types of jobs they predict will become available - the language recruiters recognise and respond to...

- an understanding of the obstacles well intentioned employers encounter when seeking to employ disabled people.
- the opportunity to joint problem solve.
- personal confidence in how to build relationships with people in business.
- confidence in how to articulate the benefits for persons with disabilities and for business, which flow from making it easier for employers to recruit on the basis of capability & potential, and from positioning the employer as a valued service user and potential partner.
- enhanced capacity to effectively pre-screen job candidates, who are then more likely to gain and sustain employment.
- enhanced ability to negotiate with employers when particular candidates require flexibility or adjustments in order to compete on an equal basis.
- a better understanding of the obstacles disabled people and the enlightened employer encounter - those are in the control of the employer – and those that are not – and so become better equipped to remove those obstacles.

Participating employers gain

- a better understanding of the disability sector and the lived reality of persons with disabilities in their community.
- Enhanced confidence and motivation as they now know where to go for relevant, friendly, expert assistance.
- recognition for having invested time & expertise in a programme which will in the long term enhance the life chances of so many needlessly excluded.
- personal and professional connections with the disability sector and community.
- opportunities to explore potential collaboration with a new community of key local stakeholders.
- the opportunity to create more efficient and fair job markets, as local influencers and providers gain a better understanding of how to meet the needs and expectations of *both* business and disabled people.