

Press Release

9 April 2014

Diversity in the workforce can benefit your business



The positive actions employers can take to help people with a disability find work were spelt out at Belfast City Hall today. “Making Equality Work – recruiting disabled people” was the theme at an event hosted by the Equality Commission for Northern Ireland in partnership with the Department for Employment and Learning, Belfast City Council, Employers for Disability Northern Ireland, and the Northern Ireland Union for Supported Employment.

The event was aimed at employers in both the public and private sectors. Employers from across Northern Ireland gave examples of steps they had taken to remove barriers to recruitment faced by disabled people and to provide the support they may need to remain in work.

Chief Commissioner of the Equality Commission, Dr. Michael Wardlow, said: “People with a disability looking for work too often find that the greatest barriers they face are those caused by the attitudes and assumptions of some employers, not their own capabilities.”

Equality law protects disabled people from employment discrimination. It also requires employers to provide reasonable adjustments to enable them to work; and it allows employers to take positive action measures to both encourage and help prepare disabled people to gain employment. It remains the case, however, that less than forty percent of disabled people are in employment, compared with around eighty percent of non-disabled people.

“The Equality Commission works with employers to provide practical advice on the steps they can take to develop an employability policy with a focus on disability,” Michael Wardlow said. “We welcome the initiatives and projects which the employers and our partner organisations here today have outlined to enhance recruitment and employment prospects for disabled people. Developments like these can make a significant difference in the lives of many people.”

Employment and Learning Minister Dr Stephen Farry said: “Today’s event is another good example of effective partnership between government and business working to help and support people with disabilities and move towards and into employment. In an ever competitive market place, if businesses want the best people on their team, they cannot afford to ignore any of the talent pools available

“I am certain that the examples of good practice shared here today show what can be done, and that any perceived barriers to employment can be removed with the proper help, advice and support both for employers and employees. I encourage all local businesses to give full considerations to the potential for employing people with disabilities when recruiting staff.”

ENDS

For more information contact Kelly McGinley 028 9089 0862 or Ciaran Bradley 028 90 500 695 or the Communications Team on 028 90 500 666. Out of hours 07715 476186

Notes to Editors:

The ‘Making Equality Work: Recruiting disabled people. Positive Action in Employment for Disabled People’ event was held in City Hall, Belfast on Wednesday 9th April 2014, from 10am -1pm.