



ACCESS ABILITY .ORG.UK

2014 Annual Report



ENGAGE | EDUCATE | EMPLOY



Contents

1. Foreword	02
2. Who are we	03
3. Our Projects	05
• Community Support Fund	05
• Good Health Fund	15
• Lancashire Adult Learning	17
• Access Ability Walks	19
4. Plans For The Future	21
5. Our Partners	22

Unlocking Your Potential



ENGAGE | EDUCATE | EMPLOY



Foreword



During 2014 we have seen the members, staff and volunteers at **Access Ability** grow and develop. We have provided support to deaf and disabled people through various projects which are outlined in detail later in this report.

I am particularly proud of our partnership with the Office for Disability Issues supporting people affected by the Remploi closures, which was life changing for all those involved. At Access Ability we recognise and respect the diversity of people's needs and

therefore enabling opportunities for all, is at the heart of our vision. Within this organisation I am extremely proud to say that we have remarkable people, committed to helping people realise their potential, with the ability to engage and support people along the pathway to achievement. This project was an emotional journey for all those involved but the outcomes were outstanding. This group of disabled people displayed real resilience to overcome barriers to engage, compete and succeed in the mainstream employment sector.

Our working partnerships have continued to grow over this year and are also a big part of our success so far. I would personally like to thank each and everyone who we have worked with since we established in 2012, details of which are highlighted in our partnerships section of this document.

We take pride in the progress made and the recognition of being nominated for awards is a testament to the hard work of our staff, volunteers and members of our service.

Going forward we are committed and determined to achieve more. Building further working partnerships will enable us to develop our reach and increase the number of members that can access support and our network of services.

Emma O'Connor, Managing Director



Who Are We

Access Ability is a Disabled People's User Led Organisation (DPULO).

Our growing mission is: "To empower deaf and disabled individuals to 'Unlock their Potential' through Engagement, Education and Employment"

Access Ability is a Community Interest Company (CIC) that provides support services to disabled and deaf people, potential employers, their families and community members within the North West.

Our services are provided through 4 key delivery elements which cross over to provide a totally inclusive support package.



Learning & Skills



Employment & Enterprise



Health & Well Being



Community & Social

Our projects provide a holistic approach to support, guidance and training through weekly job clubs and social groups within local accessible locations. We work in partnership with Disability Employment Advisors and Personal Case Workers from Job Centre Plus. This ensures a smooth transition to our individual led programmes, created to empower deaf and disabled people to make informed career choices into employment, education through disability friendly workshops and support. We have identified the need to provide 1:1 support as well as social based groups, which provide opportunities for peer support and general group discussion.

Research has identified that individuals unemployed for more than 1 month are at higher risk of developing mental ill health (Department of Health), therefore more likely to isolate themselves from their community and society. Through our knowledge and expertise of supporting unemployed disabled and deaf people we believe that our holistic approach is vital for the transition into mainstream employment and activities.

Our team has specialist experience of supporting deaf and disabled people with confidence building, raising self-esteem and supporting with literacy translation to ensure equal access into employment opportunities.

We share our knowledge and collective experiences of disability issues and solutions in the workplace, for the benefit of the individual. With this knowledge we liaise with appropriate employers to identify suitable jobs, support the individual and the employer during the application process into employment through providing in work support, speciality training and British Sign Language interpretation.

ENGAGE | EDUCATE | EMPLOY



Our Projects

Community Support Fund



The Community Support Fund (CSF) awarded funding to **Access Ability** to deliver our services to the individuals affected by the Remploy closures. This project was devised to deliver the following aims and objectives outlined by the CSF.



To enable disabled people affected by the Remploy factory closures to have more choice and control over their lives.



To provide disabled people with support to participate in their local community and maintain links with work colleagues.



To develop a range of projects and activities that build skills, offer volunteering opportunities and work experience.



To provide training to support disabled people moving from sheltered employment into mainstream work.



Empowering individuals to understand and take control of the support available to them, including funded packages.

Access Ability supported 71 individuals affected by the Remploy closures across the following North West sites: Bolton, Wythenshawe, Wigan, Blackburn and Burnley. The projects provided access to our range of support and training packages aimed to empower individuals.



Our Approach

Access Ability is an individual led service that provides various programmes devised to empower deaf and disabled individuals to make informed choices into employment or education. We adopt Person Centred Planning (PCP) techniques to find ways to engage individuals, identify their interests and through this 1:1 approach we recognise and provide appropriate support and guidance. This approach gives our team an insight around the individual's experiences, identified skills, interests, social activities and community engagement.

Many of these individuals had been employed at Remploi for many years. Some chose to take early retirement, others chose to have a career break to upskill themselves in order to change their career path and others wanted to get back into work immediately within a similar role. However, all of the individuals were interested in meeting regularly to keep in touch with their colleagues, take part in social activities and learn new skills together.

During the initial 1:1 induction we used PCP to identify individual's aspirations and interests considering the 5 key areas:



Education / Training



Employment/ Work placements/ Volunteering



General Health & Well-being



Family support/ carer



Social and leisure activities



What we did

We held a range of group meetings to introduce our service, promote the weekly job clubs and introduce the structure of the sessions. This also allowed us to identify accessible community locations to hold the weekly sessions.

When the weekly job clubs started, we provided various opportunities and activities designed to involve individuals within the project. These included improving social interaction, re-establishing old acquaintances, training and development opportunities, guest speakers and health and wellbeing opportunities.

The weekly sessions activities included combinations of:

-  Employability & ICT Skills Support and Training
-  Self Employment workshops
-  Health & Wellbeing Workshops
-  Social and Community Workshops and activities
-  Opportunity to discuss others experiences

Feedback from the individuals identified that these sessions were helpful, interesting and enabled them to access training and gain employment.



Outcomes



Social

The project also provided opportunities for the individuals to build on and strengthen their existing relationships with their colleagues. This created an opportunity for peer support between like minded people, as well as allowing them to share memories and reminisce about their time at Remploy

Throughout this project individuals have built positive relationships with **Access Ability** staff, mentors and volunteers. Through participation in activities individuals have increased confidence, self esteem, raised their individual aspirations and been able to reach their potential.



Training

This project supported individuals to develop their skills and achieve qualifications, which enabled them to gain work experience opportunities, further training or paid employment.

Employability Skills training - Specifically designed I.T. resource supported individuals with CV creation, job searches and applications. This training also supported individuals with creating their record of achievement and practising their interview techniques. This programme is designed to allow individuals to learn at their own pace and ability, supported by an Employability Skills booklet which supports and enhances this learning.

ICT Skills training – Specialist training package developed the confidence and ability to use a range of different software programmes i.e. safe use of internet, email and Word.

Social Media - Social media training taught individuals how to use sites such as Twitter, Facebook and LinkedIn and highlighted how to use them to find jobs.

Speciality Training

We also provide the following adapted training:

- Deaf Awareness Training
- British Sign Language
- Manual Handling
- Mental Health Awareness
- Sage Line 50
- Dragon Naturally Speaking





Enterprise

Access Ability provides individuals with advice and guidance to develop skills and work towards setting up their own business. We support throughout the whole process, from the initial idea to the day to day running a business, providing help and advice at every stage.



Through 1:1 sessions Dave received the support, guidance and funding he required to establish his own online fly fishing business, **Artisan Flies**.

Dave received funding from the Community Support Fund (CSF) which supported and enabled him to fulfill his lifetime passion of setting up his own business to create, make and sell his fly fishing products.

Dave said, "Access Ability provided me with the support and guidance to launch my business. The ICT and social media training packages, as well as the 1:1 support in building my website were incredibly helpful. Without their support my dream might never have become a reality."

-Dave



Opportunities

Work Placements - Working in collaboration with suitable employers we provide work placement opportunities which develop skills, improve employability and often lead to paid employment.

Volunteering Opportunities - Working with Job Centre Plus and suitable organisations, we help to identify appropriate volunteer opportunities. These valuable experiences can give individuals additional skills and experience that may lead to employment.

Communication Skills - Our Employability Skills training develops individual communication skills, raising their confidence in communicating within the group, in work and when meeting new people. Through activities individuals practice and develop their interview and meeting techniques.

Health & Wellbeing Sessions – Provide general lifestyle information, advice and activities. These include health walks, structured exercise, mental health training, stress management, healthy eating and nutrition information. We also signpost to local stop smoking services, weight management support and personal health improvement targets and pledges.

These sessions are devised in line with the evidence based “5 Ways to Well-Being” (NEF 2008).







"Access Ability has helped get back into employment, as well as allowing me to try new opportunities that I may not of even thought of trying before. I am so happy that I have regained employment in something that will be rewarding and exciting as no day will be the same. It has taken nearly a year but I have got there."

- Stephen

What our partners says ...

"Access Ability have provided much needed help and support for my clients, many of whom suffer from learning difficulties or have significant health problems. Their willingness and enthusiasm has been much appreciated and the help they have given with job search and online job applications has been invaluable. I should also mention their limitless patience and consideration which has helped maintain the motivation of the group"
Disability Employment Advisor, JCP Wigan



"Access Ability have provided much needed help and support for my clients, no job is too small or too big. Their willingness and enthusiasm has made such a difference with my clients. Health initiatives, training opportunities, job searching and online job applications has been invaluable to the individuals general wellbeing after such a vast change in their lives"

Disability Employment Advisor, JCP Blackburn



The redundancies had a massive impact on individuals physical, behavioural and emotional well-being. We identified that their time at Remploy had encompassed a range of additional support. Realising the personal effects we provided support and information on a range of issues, sign posting to specialists as required.

We worked with individuals on a range of different issues and through support and information improved their independence, well-being and raised their aspirations. Providing opportunities to experience different job roles through work trials and voluntary work, enabled the individuals to develop skills and build confidence within different environments and sectors.

Disability Specific Information and Services – this includes interpreting and translation support for deaf people, in work support, training support services and adaptations required to meet their learning needs.

When **Access Ability** cannot directly provide the specific support required we engage other organisations to support the individual.

- **Economic**

Working closely with JCP ensured that individuals received their full benefit entitlement. As well as accessing personal budgets which enabled individuals to gain qualifications, purchase equipment and set up businesses. The weekly job club activities supported individuals into part or full time mainstream employment.



Good Health Fund

The Good Health Fund was a 6 month project which enabled us to expand our services to support mainstream deaf and disabled people. In partnership with Blackburn with Darwen Public Health & CVS worked this project towards the Health and Wellbeing Strategy. **Access Ability's** continual aim is to provide a holistic approach which is in line with the evidence based '5 Ways to Wellbeing'. The project provided weekly job clubs, social groups and healthy lifestyle initiatives. Held in a community location with full disabled access. We provided and supported individuals through various training opportunities including employability skills.



"Access Ability has helped me a heck of a lot. They have provided me with the help, support and guidance to gain temporary employment, access new training opportunities. They also helped me to set up my online business which I never would have had the confidence and knowledge to do."

- Ken





Lancashire Adult Learning

Access Ability recognises the importance of quality training, therefore our trainers are experts in their respected fields. They are able to differentiate courses to suit the needs of individuals, ensuring all our courses are fully inclusive and delivered in a positive learning environment.

Access Ability hold a Service Level Agreement with Lancashire Adult Learning (Lancashire County Council), providing access to non-accredited courses supporting individual paths or career choices as well as working with other training providers and colleges. Since the academic 2012/2013 our partnership has developed and we now provide students with various progression routes.





Learning

We are passionate about breaking down the barriers and educating people around disability we have provided the following courses.

Academic Year 2012 / 2013

Deaf Awareness & BSL Day

Academic Year 2013 / 2014

Deaf Awareness & BSL Day

BSL Foundation

Mental Health Awareness



Academic Year 2014/2015

Deaf Awareness & BSL Day (6 Hours)

BSL Foundation (12 hours)

Mental Health Awareness (3 hours)

Mental Health First Aid (12 Hours)

Youth Mental Health First Aid (14 hours)

Our current progression rates with Access Ability for the Adult Community Training for Lancashire residents through the Lancashire Adult Learning Contract is 39%

Deaf Awareness then progressing to BSL Foundation is currently at 44%

Mental Health Awareness then progressing to Mental Health First Aid is currently 12.5%

At Access Ability we are proud that our retention rates are so high and this is testament to all our specialist trainers' hard work.



Access Ability Walks



Access Ability started a 12 week pilot walking programme in September 2014 working in partnership with the Ramblers, Re:Fresh and Blackburn Job Centre Plus. The aim of this group was to encourage 'Walking for Health' as part of our Health & Well-being and Community & Social pillars.



All involved in the project received a pedometer and an Every Step Counts pack to log and track their progress. The walks were held locally within Blackburn and Darwen and were fully accessible and easy paced for individuals with varying disabilities and

mobility issues, carers were also welcomed.

At the end of the 12 week pilot we had a celebratory treasure hunt event around Corporation Park, Blackburn. The participants were split into 2 groups and followed a series of clues to collect answers throughout the park. All received a certificate and we celebrated the groups achievements with refreshments and cake.

Through the Ramblers Association 7 members of the Access Ability walking group received the National Voluntary Walk Leader training, which has enabled them to deliver and lead local community walks.

Plans for the future

Provide an Access Ability walks program delivered and planned by our newly trained Walk Leaders (DPULO)



Awards

Awards shortlisted for in 2015

- Finalist of the Standard MHFA Champion Award 2015 at the MHFA England Annual Awards.
- Finalist for the Skills Provider for the Red Rose Annual Awards 2015.
- Finalist of the 'High Growth' and 'The Newcomer Award' at the local Blackburn with Darwen Hive Awards.





Partnerships



LOTTERY FUNDED



ramblers
at the heart of walking



Office for Disability Issues

Home
Start

Support and friendship
for families



mhfa
mental health first aid england



action for
children

Burnley Wood
Children's Centre

ageUK

Connect

NHS
West Lancashire
Clinical Commissioning Group



Hyndburn
Homes

LINK BRIDGE

*"This course has
provided me with the
ability to perform
better and be more
confident with issues
to do with mental
health"*

**-Head of Year,
Stockport Grammar**

RICHMOND
FELLOWSHIP
MAKING RECOVERY REALITY

BURNLEY PENDLE
& ROSSENDALE
COUNCIL for VOLUNTARY SERVICE