

Dear Colleagues

I would like to receive email updates on this project as it is an area of development in which we are very interested.

London College of Beauty Therapy is a Vocational Training College funded by Further Education and European Social Fund, LID, Job Centre Plus and Apprenticeship. We have tried three times to raise funding through ESF and GLA to fund a steering group made up of representatives from the disabled community, employers, disability access specialists, awarding bodies, and funding partners to establish a `blueprint` for the disabled working within the beauty industry. The idea being that if a common accord could be established, this could then be published with a support pack which both employers and those with disabilities could access, we could also publish the information on our web site.

Our experience of working with employers in this industry is that they are keen to support people with disabilities, but lack information on what assistance is available to either themselves as employers or to those with disabilities. A blueprint or common accord which had been agreed by industry leaders and the disabled community would provide clarity for both sides, it would also assist training providers. In this industry there are health and safety issues which have to be addressed, and when we train someone, able bodied or disabled it is for a purpose, which is sustainable employment.

It was not a problem finding partners for the steering group, we had major employers involved, Jacqui Henderson Regional Director LSC, Laura Pymmer Head of Quality Edexcel but on each occasion the application was not supported, and we have no idea why. Perhaps because the bid markers thought beauty therapy was not a `good cause`. In fact the industry is expanding at a rate of 5% per annum, and in a recent research project which we undertook for the LSC, it identified (beauty therapy) over 2,500 salons across London employing over 18,000 therapists with 62% registering skills shortages at Level 3 and 35% of employers in LSC Central registering 2.2 vacancies.

The breakdown of employers within Beauty Therapy is 40% Micro - 48% SME and 12% Macro. In Beauty Retail, they are all Macro.

Our On Line Job Shop registers over 1000 jobs annually, and our success into jobs rate was 92% in 01 and 86% 02, this year is running in the 90's. We have trained over 1000 therapists this year with 95% retention and upper 90's achievement. The Retail Beauty Industry, which is separate, is similarly expanding and working with the employers we have developed a BTEC Intermediate qualification for Beauty Retail Consultants, no qualifications exist at the moment, this is being launched in January 05 as a WBL award with Dior and Elizabeth Arden initially. There are currently 16,000 Beauty Consultants employed nationally, with 35% within the M25.

In the research project only 2% of employers employed an individual with a disability, and it is very frustrating reading about all the strategies, and funding streams which should support this group of individuals but in our experience has not, particularly when we have so many employers and individuals willing to work on this.

The blueprint or common accord approach could be used across all industries, not just the beauty industry. It would help to overcome prejudice and barriers to training and employment as it would be a common accord agreed by industry themselves. It would be a bit difficult for employers to argue against it afterwards.

Eileen Cavalier

Chief Executive.

London College of Beauty Therapy