

Skill finds new home at Disability Alliance

The disability charity *Skill: National Bureau for Disabled Students* closed in April 2011 [1]. Skill was the only organisation providing advice and information to disabled people who wanted to gain new skills or go into further and higher education.

The closure of Skill left a massive gap for disabled people. Disability Alliance has been supported by the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills to fill part of the gap [2].

Disability Alliance is very pleased to announce it will be delivering some of the critical services Skill previously provided [3].

Disability Alliance previously worked in partnership with Skill to provide information for disabled students on benefits and support options. Disability Alliance will now be able to deliver a wider range of information and advice to ensure disabled students have specialist support in making decisions about their education, training and employment choices after leaving school.

Neil Coyle, Disability Alliance Director of Policy says:

“The education sector is changing fast and disabled learners need representation. There is a natural fit between Disability Alliance’s aim of tackling disability poverty and Skill’s former role supporting disabled people to gain skills.”

Disability Alliance is pleased that former Skill employees will be working with us to fill part of the gap left by Skill’s closure:

- Andrea Lewis led the policy/influencing work at Skill and has extensive experience in Further and Higher education, careers guidance and employment support services for disabled people. Andrea is contactable by email: alewis@disabilityalliance.org
- Tony Stevens ran the Skill helpline for several years and wrote Skill’s flagship annual publication *Into Higher Education*, as well as popular career guides such as *Into Teaching* and *Into Sport*. Tony is contactable by email at: tstevens@disabilityalliance.org

New services for disabled students/advisors available from 11th July

Disability Alliance is pleased to announce that the following support and information will be available from Monday 11th July 2011 through our agreement with the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills:

- **Online information** – Updated information for disabled students, families and professionals will be online at: www.disabilityalliance.org/skill.htm and this will include a specific young people's page/site.
- **Factsheets** – We will provide essential factsheets for disabled students and advisors. This will include: new and updated information on making Reasonable Adjustments to ensure disabled students can access opportunities and are not discriminated against; funding further and higher education for disabled students; and applying for Disabled Students' Allowances.
- **Helpline/email advice** – For people thinking of applying to an FE college, for an apprenticeship, going to University, or finding a job and are unsure what you need to know to ensure support needs are met, then contact us at: skill4disabledstudents@disabilityalliance.org or via the freephone Helpline [4] which will be open from 11th July 2011 for advice on education, training and employment.
- **Policy and campaigns work** – Disability Alliance has a strong track record in evidenced-based campaigning with disabled people to break the link between poverty and disability. We will involve disabled students in policy development and in trying to influence Government policy on education and training.

Get involved! Disability Alliance welcomes the direct involvement of disabled people in our work. You can contact us to share your experience at:

skill4disabledstudents@disabilityalliance.org

Membership package: join Disability Alliance

We are developing a full membership package for disabled students, families, colleges, universities, training providers, voluntary organisations

and local authorities and will be in touch again soon. Please don't hesitate to let us know if you'd like to be removed from the distribution list for receiving updates on proposed services.

Further information/contact

If you have questions about the new services or would like to join Disability Alliance please contact: alewis@disabilityalliance.org

Notes

[1] Skill: National Bureau for Students with Disabilities was a small national charity and company Limited by Guarantee established in 1974. Skill closed very suddenly on 4 April 2011 because of financial difficulties. The insolvency agent, Maidment Judd, is handling Skill responsibilities to creditors. Disability Alliance is not responsible for Skill's liabilities.

[2] Disability Alliance was established in 1974 to break the link between poverty and disability. The Alliance has over 270 members across the UK and provides information and support in a range of areas for disabled people, professional advisors and carers. Further information about Disability Alliance is available online at: www.disabilityalliance.org

[3] Skill's services will not be fully replicated at Disability Alliance. Disability Alliance has not received former Skill members' subscription fees and former Skill members are not now automatically members of Disability Alliance.

[4] Calls will be free from landlines only. Calls from mobile phones may be charged for by your provider. Check your contract for call costs. The Helpline numbers will be confirmed very soon.