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EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES SPRING NEWSLETTER 2011



SINGLE EQUALITY BILL 2010

The Single Equality Bill came into being from October 2010. In theory the bill should simplify legislation but there are some new aspects to be aware of:

- THE MOST TALKED ABOUT CHANGE IS THE BAN ON ASKING PROSPECTIVE EMPLOYEES ABOUT THEIR HEALTH/DISABILITIES AS PART OF THE INTERVIEW PROCESS.

Even though employers can screen their health once an offer of employment is made, if they then rescind the offer of employment the candidate then has further grounds for discrimination.

While this obviously protects people with physical and mental health problems, it will be a cause for concern for many employers who want to know how much time off work an employee may need before employing them or how their condition could affect their ability to work.

- THE LIABILITY OF BUSINESS OWNERS FOR OFFENCES CAUSED BY PEOPLE THEY DON'T DIRECTLY EMPLOY SUCH AS CONTRACTORS OR PEOPLE VISITING THEIR PREMISES, IS ANOTHER BIG STICKLER (this is the harassment by a third party rule) it means you could be held responsible for a customer telling racist jokes on your premises. How this will work in practice remains to be seen, but, be aware.
- THE DEFINITION OF HARASSMENT NOW MEANS AN EMPLOYEE WHO SIMPLY OVER HEARS AN OFFENSIVE COMMENT EVEN IF IT'S NOT DIRECTED AT THEM COULD HOLD YOU LEGALLY RESPONSIBLE FOR IT.

You need to be extra vigilant and make sure everyone in your team understands the rules and implications for you.

- **DYSLEXIC WORKERS** could claim they have been discriminated against for being barred from carrying out certain tasks because they are prone to spelling mistakes.
- IF YOU DISCIPLINE AN EMPLOYEE FOR TAKING TOO MUCH SICK LEAVE they can claim they're being discriminated against.
- **CARERS OF DISABLED OR ELDERLY RELATIVES** can claim discrimination by association if they feel they've been discriminated against or mistreated in the workplace because of their home duties (there are six million carers in the UK).
- AS EMPLOYEES ARE NOW LEGALLY ENTITLED TO DISCUSS THEIR WAGES WITH ONE ANOTHER, there will be more pressure to pay everyone on fair terms.

Overall the act is a necessary piece of legislation to protect people's rights, however it is a complex subject and easy to fall foul of if you do not tackle the underlying views and practices as and when they occur.

Minimum Wage.

From October 1st the apprentice minimum wage has been set at £2.50 per hour, all time spent working or in study is included. Employers are free to pay above this rate but not below.

The maximum number of hours an apprentice under the age of 18 may work is 40, further details can be found on the BIS website or Direct Gov.

G.T.A. sponsors regional champions for Equality/Diversity awards.

We are proud to have been one of the sponsors for the regional Equality/Diversity awards and also to have showcased our use of 'drama' in conjunction with Rotherham College. The standard of entry this year was very high in all categories, a member of G.T.A. staff was part of the judging panel – well done to Doncaster College and Craven College who were winners in their relevant categories.

The awards took place on the 19th October at the Novtel in Sheffield. Neale Johnson of G.T.A. (2nd left in photo) presented runner up award to Wakefield College.



'Made in Dagenham'



There is now a film relating to the Ford Car Plant in Dagenham and its colourful past.

The film focus is on the sexual discrimination against female workers and stars Miranda Richardson and Bob Hoskins.

Also featured are Ford Corsairs and Zephyrs etc.



Classic British cars!!



No wonder the country's in a mess!!

DATES FOR YOUR CALENDAR

16th January is
World Religion Day

27th January is
Holocaust Memorial Day

February LGBT History Month



You're never too old to learn.

This year sees the G.T.A. learner population expand to its highest number ever. We now run programmes for school year 10 learners, to... any age; our oldest learner to date has been 81, and apparently some of the staff knew him at school!!!

Learner Voice.

We now have a group of learners who represent the apprentices' views and opinions and together we are setting out to make improvements to achieving at G.T.A. a 'quality' experience.



Charles Dickens Champion of Equality?

Okay so during the Christmas period we've seen Dickens work in various forms, but have you ever considered the message in Dickens' tales? (Oliver, Scrooge etc.).

The population of London in the 1800s went from 1 million to 4 million and if you think London's infrastructure is bad now, back then it was 'third world'!

- A survey in the 1840s revealed that in one area of St Giles 2,850 people were housed in 95 slum dwellings with no sanitation.
- In 1839 half the funerals in London were children under the age of 10. The average life expectancy in London was 27!

Dickens' work highlighted the unfairness of society, and the squalor and danger that goes alongside a booming world economy – one wonders if India and China will in two hundred years be diplomatic; cosmopolitan societies – perhaps they need a journalist like Charles Dickens to highlight and challenge unfair and unsafe conditions.