



Freeneys Williams

Freeneys Williams Ltd.

<http://www.freeneyswilliams.com>

The Disability and Equality Agenda e-bulletin – January 2010

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In this month:

1. [**New guidance on non-visible disabilities**](#)
2. [**Accessible websites**](#)
3. [**Disability hate crime**](#)
4. [**Pre-employment health questionnaires amendment to Equality Bill**](#)
5. [**Disabled people and the recession**](#)
6. [**Mental ill health debars jurors**](#)
7. [**Radar announces EastEnders as winners!**](#)
8. [**Abercrombie and Fitch: not a “good look”**](#)
9. [**EFD Disability Standard Awards 2009**](#)
10. [**Welfare reform: Employment Support Allowance**](#)
11. [**Incapacity Benefit: number of women soars**](#)
12. [**Freeneys Williams work with EFD's Disability Directions**](#)

[**Back to top**](#)

1. New guidance on non-visible disabilities

Line managers can now get expert advice on non-visible disabilities, thanks to a new EFD guide. Many disabilities are not immediately apparent, though most people associate disability with visible conditions and impairments. ‘Non-visible disabilities’, enables managers to make reasonable adjustments for employees whose disabilities are not immediately apparent. For more information click:

<http://tinyurl.com/yhnu4b8>

[**Back to top**](#)

2. Accessible websites

Public sector and corporate websites could be turning away almost 8 million people (17%) if they fail to meet the latest accessibility guidelines. Almost one sixth of the UK population have health conditions, including blindness or visual impairment, colour blindness, hearing impairment, dyslexia or mobility impairment, which make it difficult for them to access and transact on many Web sites.

With this in mind, public sector and corporate IT, HR and communications managers or directors are urged to seize the opportunity to review their Web sites against current Web site accessibility standards. Read more at:

<http://tinyurl.com/y88qmjz>

[Back to top](#)

3. Disability hate crime

Local authorities that fail to protect disabled people from persistent harassment or anti-social behaviour will face legal action if they are found to be ignoring disability hate crimes, the Equality and Human Rights Commission announced last month. The EHRC is to launch a nationwide survey early 2010 to investigate the level of discrimination faced by disabled people across the country. It will be the first time any authority has tried to assess exactly how prevalent violence and anti-social harassment towards disabled people is. It will also assess which local authorities are adequately tackling discrimination. For more information click:

<http://tinyurl.com/yfgks84>

[Back to top](#)

4. Pre-employment health questionnaires amendment to Equality Bill

The Equality Bill which has now passed to the House of Lords, now includes a clause regarding pre-employment questionnaires aims to address concerns raised by disability organisations that, because there is no restriction under the Disability Discrimination Act, there is fairly widespread use of such enquiries by employers to discriminate against people who declared a disability by not selecting them for interview or other selection stages. The amendment means that an employer will be deterred from asking candidates questions about their health until after they have shown they meet some of the non-health criteria of a job. If an employer asks a question before this stage it may be found to have directly discriminated against a disabled candidate. The Bill outlines specific instances where the employer can make health and disability-related enquiries before short-listing a candidate after an interview.

Thanks to Disability Forward and the Workplace Law Network for this item.

[Back to top](#)

5. Disabled people and the recession

One in 20 disabled people has lost their job in the last 12 months as the recession hits the most vulnerable the hardest - and the worst is yet to come. The job prospects and standard of living of disabled people could worsen even further as public services are cut.

Discrimination against disabled people is increasing in the workplace as employers target them for redundancy and unfairly turn them down for new jobs, according to a report by Leonard Cheshire Disability. Read more at:

<http://tinyurl.com/y97q5xq>

[Back to top](#)

6. Mental ill health debars jurors

Ministers are facing demands to scrap an "unfair and discriminatory" law that bans thousands from being jurors because they have suffered from mental ill-health. One in four Britons suffers mental illness at some point in their lives, and one in 10 is prescribed antidepressants, which would be enough to debar them. For more information click:

<http://tinyurl.com/y8qlgqe>

[Back to top](#)

7. Radar announces EastEnders as winners!

The Royal Association for Disability Rights (Radar) has awarded the EastEnders team winners of the 'Doing Media Differently' award. Radar, the UK's largest disability campaigning organisation said of the award: "Over the last 12 months, there have been a number of positive portrayals of disability on EastEnders". Read more at:

www.bbc.co.uk/eastenders/news/news_20091201.shtml

[Back to top](#)

8. Abercrombie and Fitch: not a "good look"

Abercrombie and Fitch face lawsuits on disability and race discrimination. The "look policy" of A&F requires employees to "represent Abercrombie & Fitch with natural, classic American style consistent with the company's brand" and "look great while exhibiting individuality". Read more at:

<http://bit.ly/8oCgAT>

[Back to top](#)

9. EFD Disability Standard 2009 Awards

One hundred plus organisations took part in EFD's Disability Standard 2009, the only business-led benchmark that measures an organisation's performance on every aspect of disability as it affects business. The Disability Standard 2009 found that organisations are now more effective in using the results of consultations with disabled employees and customers to help them set goals. Staff networks are a vital part of this process.

The Disability Standard award winners were announced in October and the overall benchmark report was also announced at the same time.

Winner of the Disability Standard 2009 Disability Champion award was Carleigh Chadwick, then Accessibility Manager UK and Ireland at Intercontinental Hotels Group. IHG has realised almost £0.5 million income over the past three years through installing ceiling hoists in five hotels.

Find out more about the winners and the benchmark report at:
<http://www.efd.org.uk/disability/disability-standard>.

[Back to top](#)

10. Welfare reform: Employment Support Allowance

Employment Support Allowance, or ESA, is replacing Incapacity Benefit. It's supposed to support the very sick, and as people get better, help them get back into the workplace.

The government said it wanted to get a million people back to work by 2015 but more than one year after introducing ESA, it says it can't measure how many people the scheme has got back into the workplace.

A BBC investigation has heard claims of seriously ill patients being told they are fit enough to work and denied benefit payments. During the investigation, there were claims that terminally ill patients are being told to attend back-to-work interviews while they apply for the new benefit. Read the full story at:

<http://tinyurl.com/yq6kdbdb>

[Back to top](#)

11. Incapacity Benefit: number of women soars

The number of women on IB has soared since the early 1980s. It has long been accepted that in the 80s and 90s, job losses from industries such as coal, steel and - engineering pushed many men on to incapacity benefits. This was characterised as a male problem. The high numbers of women claiming incapacity benefits in the same places had been a puzzle because job opportunities for women have mostly been increasing. Read about why this should be and what can be done to get women back

into work at:

<http://tinyurl.com/ybzxwj>

[Back to top](#)

12. Freeney Williams work with EFD's Disability Directions

For the next six months, two of Freeney Williams' staff will be working for the EFD's helpline 'Disability Directions'. This is to provide additional support to the DD team while the EFD member service is reviewed and decisions made about how it might be developed post-June this year.

Rick Williams and Clare McLaughlan of Freeney Williams will be dealing with EFD's member queries for two days a week. Rick said "EFD members should not be surprised if they come across us working for EFD. Freeney Williams is still the same company it always was - we are just helping out the DD team for a short time. This role started in early January and some of the queries we have been dealing with have proven complex and challenging as well as interesting! Having looked at the queries and the quality of responses the DD team provided last year it is no wonder the EFD have over 400 members! The DD service is worth the membership fee all by itself!"

[Back to top](#)

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[Back to top](#)