

News Release

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HEALTH MINISTER UPDATES BUSINESSES ON DISABILITY LEGISLATION

Docklands businesses were informed of their new obligations to people with disabilities under the recent Disability Discrimination Act at a special meeting held by the Docklands Business Club (DBC) in conjunction with the London Docklands Development Corporation (LDDC) on Wednesday, 22 May.

Over 100 members of the Docklands business community were addressed by John Bowis MP, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Health, who was the guest of DBC member **Working Support**, the Wapping based organisation which helps people with learning difficulties into permanent jobs.

The main message of the evening was to encourage more local employers to consider offering jobs to people with learning difficulties. Under the new rules, it is now against the law to treat a disabled person less favourably because of their disability.

Commenting on the new legislation, John Bowis MP said: "The Act is a milestone for disabled people in this country and provides a comprehensive package of measures to tackle discrimination. There are rights to ensure disabled people are not discriminated against in their access to jobs, facilities, services and property. Employers will have a duty to make any reasonable adjustments to employment arrangements or the workplace for disabled employees and applicants."

Organisations - such as **Working Support** which offers a service unique to East London - won Mr Bowis' praise for providing the vital back-up and support companies often need when employing people with disabilities.

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Working Support helps people with learning difficulties through the process of looking for a job, training and coping with the workplace. It also helps employers by identifying suitable potential employees and sending a support worker with new employees to work alongside them until they are thoroughly familiar with their job.

James Hutchings, Working Support General Manager, said: "We broker a partnership between job seekers and potential employers. We are already working with some major local employers, including the Royal London Hospital, Sainbury's, Safeways and the London Borough of Tower Hamlets but are looking to spread our net wider."

The evening was organised through the Docklands Business Club by the London Docklands Development Corporation (LDDC) which, together with Tower Hamlets Council, initiated Working Support and has been a major funder of the organisation over the last three years.

Peter Turlik, LDDC Head of Strategic Affairs, said: "An important facet of the LDDC's work has been to maximise employment opportunities for local people, including residents with disabilities. The Corporation is very pleased to have been able to support this project in its formative years through the Tower Hamlets Social Accord, as it has proved to be an effective vehicle for helping people with learning difficulties into real and lasting jobs."

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