

## Opps Training and Development Win Coveted Celebrate Award

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Opps Training and Development are delighted with winning the prestigious 'Best use of ICT' Award for their project 'Action on Inclusion' in the recent East of England Celebrate Awards.

The awards celebrate the achievements and difference made to people's lives by projects funded through the European Social Fund (ESF) and the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) over the last seven years.

The 'Action on Inclusion' project is funded by ESF through the Learning and Skills Council Bedfordshire and Luton and helps employers to access legislation related to inclusion in a clear and comprehensive way. By using an interactive website and opportunities to attend network meetings, employers were given guidance on the Race Relations Act, Disability Discrimination Act and Sex Discrimination Act.

Helen Bullion, Business Development Director, from Opps Training and Development said "We are really pleased to have won this award and be recognised for our achievements in supporting employers with their inclusion plans. The key to the project's success is an interactive 'Measuring Equality' web tool featured on the website that we believe is unique. It can create an electronic action plan simply and quickly that is returned electronically to the employer with guidance notes and header pages to support the plans implementation. Following the overwhelming success of the project Opps intends to launch the website and interactive 'Measuring Equality Tool' commercially in January 2008."

Helen Bullion continues: "Effective inclusion planning can safeguard employers from litigation and expensive claims. In discrimination claims there is no upper limit for compensation awarded to the claimant if their allegations are upheld."

Tamysn Hammond, ESF Contracts Manager for LSC Bedfordshire and Luton said: "I wish to congratulate Opps Training and Development on their achievement. One

of the aims of ESF is to provide opportunities for people disadvantaged in the labour market. It is important that employers understand what is meant by inclusion and this project enables them to find out what they need to know in a simple and useful way.”

The project has been used by 46 companies in the area within six different sectors encompassing care, manufacturing, hospitality, warehousing & distribution, electronics and plumbing. With all organisations now having Race, Gender and Disability plans.

Claire McDonald from Luton Community Housing said: “It has been a huge benefit to our company. Equal Opps review is now part of our annual business reviews. Before the programme we wouldn’t have known where to start with the audit/action plan”.

Anglia Television presenter Clare Weller who hosted the award said: “The judges were very impressed by Action on Inclusion’s innovative and user friendly approach to promoting understanding and awareness of race, disability and gender within the workplace, through the development of action plans and an interactive and pioneering web toolkit”.

The Celebrate Awards are held every year by Government Office for the East of England and the East of England Development Agency (EEDA) and awards are given in 12 categories, with an overall winner chosen from amongst them. Other categories were Environmental Impact Award, Regeneration Award, Best Use of ICT Award, All Inclusive Award, Local Transformation Award, Tourism Award, Enterprise Award, Loving Learning Award, Love to Learn Award, Community Spirit Award, Turn Around Award and the award for Outstanding Contribution to European Structural Funds. This year, nearly 120 nominations were received across the region.

END

**Notes to Editors:**

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***Further information on the Action on Inclusion project please contact Helen Bullion or Vince Davies from Opps Training and Development on 01480 415930***

**Photos:**

Helen Bullion, Business Development Director, Opps Training and Development being presented the 'Best use of ICT' Award by David Morrall, Director Europe and International, EEDA.

**Action on Inclusion**

This website is an example of how innovation in ICT has been used to produce something of great worth to an employer. Opps' commitment to using ICT in an innovative way has ultimately led to the success of this project. For further information please contact Opps on 01480 415930.

**Opps Training and Development**

Opps Training and Development are based in Huntingdon, Cambridgeshire and were successful in their bid for ESF funding through LSC Bedfordshire and Luton to run the project 'Action in Inclusion' in Bedfordshire and Luton.

The website is still active for use by the 46 companies until April 2008. The website is being extended to cover additional legislation and work is in progress to further develop the site. This will include an interactive tool which will enable an organisation to impact assess its policies and procedures to ensure they comply with legislation on equal opportunities. The website will be launched commercially in January 2008.

**TV**

Anglia TV 6pm news covered the award on the day. Detailed TV coverage is on the Anglia news website ([www.itvlocal.com/anglia](http://www.itvlocal.com/anglia)) and is under News Extra (search "Celebrate Awards")

**LSC**

The LSC exists to make England better skilled and more competitive. We are responsible for planning and funding high-quality vocational education and training for everyone. We have a single goal: to improve the skills of England's young people and adults to world-class standards. Our vision is that by 2010, young people and adults in England have the knowledge and skills matching the best in

the world and are part of a truly competitive workforce. Established in 2001, we work nationally, regionally and locally from a network of offices across the country.

## **ESF**

The European Social Fund (ESF) is one of four Structural Funds designed to strengthen economic and social cohesion in the European Union. [www.esf.gov.uk](http://www.esf.gov.uk)

ESF's main purpose is to support the annual UK Employment Action Plan, which sets out how UK policies and initiatives take account of the Employment Guidelines established within the European Employment Strategy. ESF is channeled through three Structural Fund [Objectives](#) and the [EQUAL](#) Community Initiative.

The current programmes run from 2000 to 2006. ESF will provide about £4.5 billion in Great Britain (£3.5 billion in England) in this period.

### **The European Social Fund aims to:**

- help unemployed and inactive people enter work
- provide opportunities for people at a disadvantage in the labour market
- promote lifelong learning
- develop the skills of employed people
- improve women's participation in the labour market