

NORTH EAST EQUALITY



# Outstanding Contribution by a Larger Organisation & Outstanding Practice 2012 Winners City Hospitals Sunderland

City Hospitals Sunderland was established as an NHS Trust in April 1994 and under the Health and Social Care (Community Health and Standards) Act 2003 became an NHS Foundation Trust in July 2004.

Project Choice is a programme developed in CHS to equip young people with learning disabilities and difficulties with the skills they need to become part of the work force.

Work/life experience schemes have been implemented for students with profound physical and learning disabilities. Although developed by CHS there are partners from public and private sector organisations across the City giving young people a variety of work experience opportunities.

Over 500 young people with learning disabilities have had access to real life work experience in either public or private sector organisations. In addition over 350 staff across these organisations have been trained as work based mentors.

The scheme developed further after receiving funding from the Learning Skills Council, creating an internship programme of three 10 week modules; 4 days a week in placement and one day a week in education.

The internship programme focuses on young students who have the potential to move towards employment, this element of the programme supports students to prepare them to join the labour market.

Twelve students benefitted from the programme's first intake with a second cohort coming into the organisation in September 2011.

The programme has developed and now 5 students are on apprenticeships in the organisation and two from the original cohort.

Parents of the students have been very pleased with the outcomes the programme has offered such as providing excellent



**equality north east**

Room 1-107 Hub Building, Gateshead College, Construction Centre,  
8<sup>th</sup> Avenue Kingsway South, Team Valley, Gateshead, NE11 0JL  
tel: 0191 426 4399 email: [info@equality-ne.co.uk](mailto:info@equality-ne.co.uk) www: [equality-ne.co.uk](http://equality-ne.co.uk)

Company Reg No. 03446734

opportunities for real life work experience and breaking down barriers for their children.

Overall the programme has had a significant positive impact on the confidence and self-esteem of the student which has supported parents belief that their children are capable of working and would like the programme to lead to permanent job opportunities which in the last three months has become a reality.

The skills of the young people have brought and learnt along the way have been valuable and staff soon realised working with young people with a learning disability was not a disadvantage.

The programme has enabled employers and employees to work together developing skills and equality in the workplace.

It has help raise awareness about employing young people with learning disabilities and the benefits they bring.

*'It is an outstanding example of developing a small project to create an impact both internal and external to the organisation. An excellent example of cross-sector working.'* North East Equality Awards Judges.

The project has created some really positive and realistic outcomes:

- Increase awareness of disability, equality and diversity not only working with the young people but how they deliver services to patients with a learning disability.
- A recognition that work experience is available for everyone irrespective of disability.
- An enhanced understanding of learning disability issues.
- Increased job satisfaction and morale for those staff working with the students.
- Increased confidence amongst staff.
- Better links and contacts with other organisations.
- Increased community understanding of employment skills of young people with learning disabilities.
- Creating a more diverse workforce.
- Young people with learning disabilities have improved self-esteem, morale and sense of purpose in life.

The NHS has been able to demonstrate to employers in the public and private sectors the benefits to the employer and the employee of 'Project Choice'.

For more information about the North East Equality Awards, please visit our website, [www.equality-ne.co.uk/awards](http://www.equality-ne.co.uk/awards) or contact Equality North East on 0191 426 4399 or email [info@equality-ne.co.uk](mailto:info@equality-ne.co.uk).

**...leading the way to a  
fairer future...**



**equality north east**

Room 1-107 Hub Building, Gateshead College, Construction Centre,  
8<sup>th</sup> Avenue Kingsway South, Team Valley, Gateshead, NE11 0JL  
tel: 0191 426 4399 email: [info@equality-ne.co.uk](mailto:info@equality-ne.co.uk) [www: equality-ne.co.uk](http://www.equality-ne.co.uk)