



visage

The Visage Development Partnership, led by Action for Blind People, supports blind and partially sighted people into employment.

What is visage ?

Partnership

Sharing Success

Empowerment

Opportunities

Transnational

Funded through EQUAL, a programme of the European Social Fund, Visage brings together eight UK based partners and a number of transnational partners working together to make a real difference to blind and partially sighted people living right across the European Union.

The aim of the project is to test and promote new ways of combating all forms of discrimination and inequalities in the labour market, for visually impaired people in work and for those seeking work.

Equal



What is visage?

Partnership

The Project was set up to address the barriers that visually impaired jobseekers can face when moving into mainstream employment. The Project supports employers, addressing their concerns and needs when it comes to employing blind and partially sighted people.

Empowerment

Employers are empowered to recruit jobseekers who have a visual impairment by addressing their concerns from a business perspective through an online support package.

Transnational

Good practise and developing better support for blind and partially sighted people is being explored by the Visage Project. The partnership is working with visual impairment organisations from across Europe to agree good practise in a range of areas such as the provision of self employment support for visually impaired people and the contents of ICT training courses.

Opportunities

Blind and partially sighted people benefit by developing their business skills through the Visage Project; with the opportunity of working in a trainee post, to the possibility of establishing their own business.

Sharing Success

After the success of developing a range of practical resources the Project is sharing them across the voluntary sector, the public and statutory sector, government and international bodies providing support to visually impaired people.



Minister for Disabled People, Anne McGuire MP, with Visage business team leader, Ashley Pearce.

Support blind and partially sighted

How is the Visage Project funded?

The Visage Project is funded by the European Social Fund and forms part of the Equal initiative which tests and promotes new means of combating all forms of discrimination and inequalities in the labour market, both for those in work and for those seeking work, through transnational cooperation.

Working together

The Visage Project brings together eight UK based partners and a number of transnational partners to make a real difference to blind and partially sighted people living within the European Union. Three out of four visually impaired people of working age in the UK are unemployed. It is over 10 years since the Disability Discrimination Act and these figures still hold true.

In the UK the partners are Action for Blind People, Employment Opportunities for People with Disabilities, Inspire Community Trust, Kent Association for the Blind, Kent Supported Employment, Newco Products, Prevista Ltd, and the Royal National Institute of the Blind.

The Visage Project also works with other European partners based in Prague, Slovakia the Czech Republic and Poland. This transnational partnership is developing recommendations for best practise in:

- Providing self employment support for blind and partially sighted people
- ICT training for blind and partially sighted people
- Soft skills, daily living skills training for blind and partially sighted people

Reports outlining these recommendations and the research behind them are available for free download at: www.visage-equal.org.uk



and people into employment

All of the work conducted as part of the Visage Project is based on initial research which was conducted in the initial stages of the Project. These research reports into employer attitudes, existing models of support for blind and partially sighted people are available at: www.visage-equal.org.uk

Working with Employers

Given the right opportunities, blind and partially sighted people have always been able to compete in the job market. New advances in assistive information technology and other new support options are increasing their ability to gain and retain employment. However, nine out of ten employers rate blind and partially sighted people as either "difficult" or "impossible" to employ. To address this the Visage Project has developed a range of resources for employers .

Written for employers by employers, there is a new web-based support package that helps organisations with the recruitment and/or retention of blind and partially sighted people. This support package provides practical information and guidance on a variety of areas including:

- The business case of employing a person with disabilities
- The support available from government schemes such as Access to Work
- Safety implications of recruiting a disabled person
- Employers' responsibilities under current legislation
- Adapting the physical environment - who will advise me and who will pay?

Employers can access the online package at: www.visage-employers.org.uk

The number of Social Firms in the UK is steadily increasing. Social Firms often have diverse workforces and are likely to recruit people with disabilities. For organisations interested in becoming social firms, "A Manual to Externalising Social Firm activity" has been developed. Complete with case studies, the manual contains information on the legal, financial and human resource issues that externalisation can lead to. This comprehensive manual is available for free download from www.visage-equal.org.uk

Mentoring has become a crucial part of staff development for many companies. There are specific issues for mentors of people who are blind or partially sighted, and these are explored in a unique online toolkit specifically designed for any mentor with a visually impaired mentee. This toolkit can found at www.visage-mentoring.org.uk

Working with blind and partially sighted people

Breaking down barriers

For many blind and partially sighted jobseekers there can be a whole range of issues that are barriers to successfully obtaining employment. The Visage Project brought together visually impaired people who are looking for work and employers to develop the most comprehensive toolkit to date for blind and partially sighted jobseekers. The toolkit covers topics from confidence building, self presentation and self assertion to coping mechanisms at work.

For ICT lecturers and trainers with blind and partially sighted students there can often be confusion about how to offer appropriate support, and what support is actually available. A best practise manual has been developed to meet this need for any interested professionals.

Both resources can be downloaded free of charge from www.visage-equal.org.uk

Getting experience

Blind or partially sighted people often have to work in unskilled and lower paid jobs and lack of experience is cited as one of the most common reasons. Visage tackles this through two approaches. The first is through a pioneering trainee scheme approach used in the Visage Project and has since been adopted by the European Union. The second is by empowering and supporting visually impaired people to develop their skills by establishing and running their own enterprises.

The trainee scheme

Through this scheme, blind and partially sighted people have been able to gain invaluable work experience while earning a wage and having dedicated time to develop their skills.

Business initiative

Blind and partially sighted people with business ideas have found support through the Visage Project to make their dreams into a reality. A range of commercially viable businesses have been established that directly employ blind and partially sighted people, giving them the opportunity to learn first hand what is involved in establishing and running a successful business.

“Earning a decent salary gives back control ... with the ability to say, this is what I want and I can afford to buy it, without having to accept whatever other people have decided is best for me.”

Liz Cooke, a Visage Business Team Leader

Further Information

All work carried out by the Visage project can be found at www.visage-equal.org.uk

A resource bank for employers can be found at: www.visage-employers.org.uk

An online mentoring support package can be found at: www.visage-mentoring.org.uk

Contacts

The Visage Project team can be contacted on:

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Partners in the Visage Project:

Action for Blind People

Tel: 0800 915 4666

Website: www.actionforblindpeople.org.uk



Employment Opportunities for People with Disabilities

Tel: 020 7448 5420

Website: www.opportunities.org.uk



Inspire Community Trust

Tel: 01322 341 638



Kent Association for the Blind

Tel: 01622 691 357

Website: www.kab.org.uk



Kent County Council (Kent Supported Employment)

T: 01474 328 664

Website: www.kent.gov.uk/kse



Newco Products, London Borough of Newham

Tel: 020 8534 1497

Website: www.newcodirect.com



Prevista

Tel: 020 7609 4198

Website: www.prevista.co.uk



Royal National Institute of Blind People

Tel: 0845 766 9999

Website: www.rnib.org.uk

