

## Equality and Diversity Newsletter



February 2009

### Editors Introduction

Welcome to the Learning World Equality and Diversity Newsletter. The newsletter aims to communicate with all our teams on important topics and to make sure that everyone is kept fully up to date with new legislation, our policies and practices.



*'Learning World is an equal opportunities training provider and welcomes applications from females and minority groups working in the industry'*

### Religion and beliefs

#### Humanism – a positive approach to life...

While atheism is merely the absence of belief, humanism is a positive attitude to the world, centered on human experience, thought, and hopes.

Humanists believe that human experience and rational thinking provide the only source of both knowledge and moral code to live by. They reject the idea of knowledge 'revealed' to human beings by gods or in special books.

Humanism is a democratic and ethical life stance, which affirms that human beings have the right and responsibility to give meaning and shape to their own lives. It stands for the building of a more humane society through an ethic based on human and other natural values; in the spirit of reason and free inquiry through human capabilities.

It is not theistic (belief that one God created and rules humanity and the world, not necessarily accompanied by a belief in divine revelation, such as through the Bible), and it does not accept supernatural views of reality.

#### Humanist ideas

Most humanists would agree with the ideas below:

- There are no supernatural beings.
- The material universe is the only thing that exists.
- Science provides the only reliable source of knowledge about this universe.
- We only live this life – there is no after-life, and no such thing as reincarnation.
- Human beings can live ethical and fulfilling lives without religious beliefs.
- Human beings derive their moral code from the lessons of history, personal experience, and thoughts.



#### Happy Human

The British Humanist Association and the International Humanist and Ethical Union use similar emblems showing a stylish human figure reaching out to achieve its full potential.

***"Humanism is an approach to life based on reason and our common humanity; recognising that moral values are properly founded on human nature and experience alone."***

# Learning World Equality and Diversity Newsletter

## Queen's Speech - Equality Bill

(Wednesday 3rd December 2008)

*"My Government is committed to ensuring everyone has a fair chance in life. My Government will bring forward a Bill to promote equality, fight discrimination and introduce transparency in the workplace to help address the difference in pay between men and women."*



Promoting equality is essential for individuals to fulfil their potential, for the creation of a cohesive society and for a strong economy. A substantial body of equality legislation has been introduced over the last four decades, protecting millions of people from discrimination and promoting greater equality. But the legislation has become complex and hard to understand. The Equality Bill will simplify and strengthen the law.

**The Purpose of the Bill:** The Government is committed to creating a fair society with fair chances and fair rules for everyone. For a society to be fair we must tackle inequality and root out discrimination. The Bill will therefore promote equality, fight discrimination in all its forms (including age discrimination), and introduce transparency in to the workplace, which is key to tackling the gender pay gap.

The main benefits of the Bill will be:

- The Bill will reduce nine major pieces of legislation and around 100 statutory instruments into a single Act, making the law more accessible and easier to understand, so that everyone can be clear on their rights and responsibilities.
- The Bill will encourage a culture of equality, so that people from all backgrounds are able to make the most of their skills and talents.
- This Bill will deliver much needed simplification and harmonization of discrimination law, providing straightforward, practical guidance so that they can understand and comply with their responsibilities.
- The Bill will require public bodies to give due regard for the need to tackle discrimination and promote equality through their purchasing functions.

## The Multifaith Festival Year – February 2009 to March 2009

### Buddhism February 15

**NIRVANA DAY** – This is an annual Buddhist festival which is also known as Parinirvana. Buddhists think about their lives and how they can work towards gaining the perfect peace of Nirvana.



### Jewish March 10

**PURIM** – celebrates the salvation of the Jews from the wicked Haman. Purim is sometimes referred to as the Jewish Mardi Gras with a carnival-like atmosphere.



### Christianity February 25

**ASH WEDNESDAY** – This is the beginning of Lent and it is a day of penitence to clean the soul before the Lent fast. Ash Wednesday is the first day of Lent and occurs forty days before Easter.



### Hindu March 27

**NEW YEAR** – The popular name of the Hindu New Year is Vikram Samvat. People light oil lamps and decorate their homes with pink, red and purple flowers. Gifts and sweets are exchanged with family members.



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## Building their Future

Since 1998, the Helena Kennedy Foundation has operated a bursary scheme to provide much needed financial support to disadvantaged students who have successfully completed a further education course and wish to progress on to higher education. Learning World has been pleased to be one of the Foundation's sponsors, helping to support students entering construction related education.

The Foundation's mission is to tackle injustice and social exclusion through education by supporting disadvantaged students from the further and adult education sectors to complete their studies in higher education and thereby move on successfully into employment.

Over 300 excellent applications were received by the Foundation in 2008, with 130 awards being granted in the form of bursaries and scholarships to students from across the UK. The 2008 Award Winners were recently celebrated at receptions hosted by Baroness Kennedy at the House of Lords.



Baroness Kennedy QC and Award Winner, Solomon Zacharia with Adrian

### Learning World is proud to support the following Award Winners:

**Solomon Zacharia** came to the UK from Uganda at the age of seventeen and has since been living independently. Despite the difficulties inherent in starting a new life in a foreign country, Solomon has been determined to pursue a career in engineering. The Foundation's Award means that he will receive help towards his accommodation fees.

**Simon Deane** has had to overcome both a serious car accident and a serious health scare in order to continue his education. Simon wishes to study conservation at London South Bank University, with the ultimate aim of being involved in projects that benefit the community. The Award will fund the purchase of necessary educational equipment for Simon's course.

**Adrian Kaczor** has always been fascinated by the construction industry and wants to study construction management. Throughout his education, Adrian has had to juggle work and school commitments, as his parents are unable to support him financially, and he has had to work extra hard to achieve his goals. The Award will go some way to alleviate the financial pressure that Adrian faces and allow him more time to focus on his studies whilst at Kingston University.

### Humanist Weddings



Ms Watts and Mr Reijns became the first couple to have their Humanist marriage legally recognised in Scotland on 18<sup>th</sup> June 2005. The couple have been together for six years.

Ms Watts and Mr Reijns sealed their love by exchanging vows they had written themselves. The couple did not want to marry in a civil ceremony because they felt them to be too impersonal.

The ceremony is usually conducted by an experienced

Celebrant and arranged with a Humanist society.

In England and Wales, Humanist weddings have no legal status so couples wanting to be legally married, must have a civil wedding at a registry office or to have a registrar present. The Humanist Society of Scotland, however, has celebrants who are authorised to conduct legal marriages, making Scotland one of only three countries where Humanist marriage ceremonies have full legal status.

Weddings and affirmations, often referred to as blessings, are celebrated according to the individual wishes of the Humanist couple.

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## A new law is set to address skills shortages in the UK workforce

Businesses will soon have better-trained employees as a result of the Education and Skills Act, which requires young people to stay in education until the age of 17 from 2013 and 18 from 2015.

The Act was developed in consultation with business leaders, including representatives from the Confederation of British Industry and the British Chambers of Commerce, and responds to employer demands for a higher skilled workforce and aims to

The Leitch Review highlighted the importance of improving workers' skills in the UK so that businesses remain competitive internationally. The number of unskilled workers in employment is predicted to shrink from 3.2m in 2004 to 600,000 in 2020, meaning that young people with qualifications will find it easier to gain and retain employment.

David Frost, Director General of the British Chamber of Commerce said: ***“Raising the compulsory age of participation in the education system will help to ensure that Britain has a suitably well-qualified workforce in the future.”***

A package of reforms to education is being introduced along with the Act, including the expansion of Apprenticeship programmes, the introduction of the Diploma and revamped GCSEs and A levels.

Employers who hire 16-17 year olds for more than 20 hours a week will be required to check that young people are in learning before they begin employment. Businesses will also be encouraged to offer Apprenticeships or other accredited training.



## Gender Pay Gap Widens

The Office of National Statistics has released new figures indicating that the full-time gender pay gap has actually increased, from 17 per cent in 2007 to 17.1 per cent in 2008. In addition, the penalty paid by women who work part-time to balance work and family life has increased even more – the part-time pay gap has increase from 35.8 per cent to 36.8 per cent.

What the current pay gap means for women is an average loss of £369,000 in earnings over the course of their working life (for women who work full-time).

In response to research that suggests that the pay gap will never close due to old-fashioned, inflexible ways of working, the Commission launched an investigation called 'Working Better' in July 2008.

Working Better is an ongoing project which aims to identify and promote innovative new ways of working, which will help meet the challenges of the 21st century. A final report is expected in Spring 2009.

At the same time, the Commission has released the results of a new survey of public and private sector businesses, revealing that 5 per cent more employers have conducted equal pay reviews since 2005 and 8 per cent more said that they planned to. The vast majority of those surveyed said that equal pay reviews made good business sense.

If you would like any further details of any equal opportunities issues please visit [www.equalityhumanrights.com](http://www.equalityhumanrights.com)  
Information is available in a wide choice of languages.