

Press release: The value of Supported Businesses

April 2014

Last week, representatives of 5 Supported Businesses met for a 2 day conference on how best to promote Supported Businesses to all relevant audiences. In keeping with the complexity of typical Supported Business stakeholders, these audiences include Government, local authorities, DWP, press, public, disabled people, disability charities, disability networks, welfare to work providers (Prime and sub contractors), social enterprises and corporate organisations.

The primary driver for this meeting was that there remain significant misconceptions relating to Supported Businesses which are not being addressed. These misconceptions are consequently damaging the future prosperity of such businesses and therefore putting in danger the jobs of both current and future disabled employees.

The meeting concluded with the formation of the Supported Business Alliance which will aim to be a “collective voice” of Supported Business in the UK. This group recognises that there are other groups with such a voice – BASE and the Scottish Supported Businesses in particular – but that another point of view was required.

The Alliance compiled a headline shared vision for the group to clearly convey its ethos:

We believe that all disabled people should have an opportunity for employment regardless of the complexity of their barriers. We believe that Supported Businesses provide an excellent option for some people in the achievement of this overall objective.

The Alliance has no legal structure, nor any joining criteria (or membership fees), other than being a registered Supported Business and adherence to shared core values. These will be published in full shortly but the “key words” were identified as:

Real jobs

Holistic support

Independence

Peer-to-peer support

Commercial

Changing perceptions

Innovation

Sustainability

The first key action of the Alliance is to submit to DWP, before the Easter deadline, a document detailing how Supported Businesses are a valuable part of Work Choice or any Specialist Disability Employment programme, championing the inclusion of Supported Businesses’ Protected Place Funding in any extension of Work Choice and subsequent specialist programmes. After this deadline,

1 the task will be to extend the arguments to place Supported Businesses firmly within future specialist disabled employment strategy. 1

The Alliance have engaged a social enterprise marketing company – Poached Creative – to formulate a logo, strapline and brand guidelines, together with establishing a website plus other marketing materials. The intention is that the website will provide a central hub to convey the value of Supported Businesses and enable easier communication and collaboration. A film showcasing Supported Businesses is currently in the planning stages.

Current Alliance members:

CLARITY

Industrial Service Group

MTIB

Realise Futures

Watford Workshop