

Minister for Disabled People visits Belfast trainees

The Minister for Disabled People, Anne McGuire MP, visited an innovative North and West Belfast training organisation which helps people with learning disabilities prepare for employment.

The NOW Project, based on the Springfield Road, delivers a wide range of accredited courses which are recognised by local employers. Courses help students to develop qualifications recognised by the Hospitality and Catering Sector and essential skills such as independent travel and money management.

NOW's Employment team also support individuals with learning disabilities aged 16-65 to get the job they want and keep it.

Anne McGuire MP commented: "It is a pleasure to find out more about the excellent work carried out by the NOW Project, and to meet such an enthusiastic group of training staff and students. Employment is one of the best ways of enabling disabled people to live and work independently in the community and tailored courses, such as those offered at this project, are an excellent preparation for that future independence."

Maeve McRory, Director of the NOW Project, said: "We are delighted that the Minister has been able to take time out of her schedule to visit our project and spend some time with a few of our trainees. In the 5 years since we have been operating in this part of Belfast, we have helped around 400 students to prepare for the world of work. This has not only benefited the local economy but enabled the individuals to grow in confidence too. The unemployment figures for people with learning disabilities are unacceptably low and I would call on local employers to find out more about the skills disabled people can offer."

Valerie Hamilton from Belfast Local Strategy Partnership, a major funder of the project, said; "I am delighted with the progress of this programme and impressed with the professional delivery, guidance and management, evident in the work of the NOW Project and its staff. I commend everyone involved for their efforts, clearly visible in the number of people successfully completing the programme."

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