

## Message from our President, **Baroness Darcy de Knayth**



I am delighted to invite you to share the work of Skill in this Annual Review. I am particularly pleased that the responsibilities of public authorities towards disabled people have been recognised in the amendments to the Disability Discrimination Act implemented during the year, requiring

colleges and universities, amongst others, to involve disabled students and staff in drawing up ongoing Disability Equality Schemes.

This particular feature also includes disabled people in the wider community, so I hope you will see this as an opportunity in your own work to see how you can include the views of disabled people in your own strategy and business plans for the future. The inclusion of a wider group of people who are protected from discrimination under the DDA will, I hope, also make people feel less awkward about asking for their individual needs to be recognised within education, training and employment.

I know Skill has worked hard during the year to help people understand the new duties, to advise disabled students and their families and to inform all those responsible for delivering education and training in the post 16 sector.

I would like to thank the staff, the volunteers and all of you for such superb support over the year. I do hope we can count on that support to enable Skill to continue its work.

## Chair's introduction to Skill's activities in 2006/7 **Ian Miller OBE**

Taking over the Chair towards the end of the year from my fellow Trustee, Cath Cole OBE, has meant a change of perspective for me from the issues in Scotland which have occupied me as Chair of Skill



Scotland. The needs of disabled learners are of course similar wherever they study, but the response by national governments has begun to be more tailored to the national picture. I congratulate Skill on its foresight in strengthening, encouraging and supporting Skill Wales and Skill Scotland, and contributed myself to the successful move to independent status of Skill Northern Ireland a couple of years ago. The benefits for disabled students are now evident in that Skill is well placed to give them up-to-date high quality information on the funding and support they can expect, wherever they live.

The challenge remains though to sustain Skill's core activities in a tight financial climate. I am naturally disappointed that the surplus achieved the previous year has not been sustained in 2006/07. However I am confident that the continued improvement in the income earned by Skill staff through consultancy work, bringing their specialist knowledge to statutory agencies and other voluntary organisations, is taking us in the right direction. But we do need your help. Anything you can do to contribute to Skill's charitable purpose of promoting opportunities for disabled people in education, training and employment will be put to good use, as I am sure you will see from the stories highlighted in the inside pages of this report.

## New duties for public authorities

Our president has referred to this new legislation in her introduction. During the year, the Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) 2005 was implemented, bringing with it new disability equality duties for public sector organisations in Great Britain including further education colleges, higher education institutions and universities to prepare and publish a Disability Equality Scheme by December 2006.

Uniquely, this new duty required colleges and universities to involve their disabled students and staff in producing this scheme, and to agree an action plan for the first year of the scheme. The first review will therefore take place in December 2007. This involvement has to be significantly more than consultation on pre-prepared plans and resulted in some surprises. Some colleges and HEIs well known for their good provision for disabled students found that they knew little about their disabled staff and had done even less about creating an environment where staff could disclose a disability and ask for support.

Teaching has continued to be one of the most popular graduate destinations for disabled students so it's important that Skill continues to support these employers to improve their policies and procedures for disabled staff. Other changes to the DDA include coverage of professional bodies which should ensure talented disabled students - such as those shown on the front cover studying medicine and nutrition and health - can be part of our professional workforce. You can read more about the Disability Discrimination Act on Skill's website.

[www.skill.org.uk/page.aspx?c=63&p=152](http://www.skill.org.uk/page.aspx?c=63&p=152).

# Thank you

to all our donors 2006 - 2007

Austin and Hope Pilkington Trust  
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Ian Miller OBE  
Karen Robson, Welsh Woman of the Year  
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The City Bridge Trust  
The Freemasons Grand Charity  
The Henry Smith Charity  
University of Central Lancashire  
W M Mann Foundation

Marathon runners:

Rob Brown  
Damian Aziz

And many others.

## Financial Statement

		Total £
Donations	4%	32,806
Legacies	0%	1,000
Grants, Projects and Research	47%	427,022
Publications	3%	27,436
Conferences	7%	65,032
Training & Consultancy	30%	275,748
Subscriptions	9%	81,948
Investment Income	0%	4,492
<b>Total Incoming Resources</b>		<b>915,484</b>

### What we own

Tangible Fixed Assets		6,852
Investments		58,703
Stock		21,957
Debtors		140,464
Cash Funds		3,131
<b>Total</b>		<b>231,105</b>

### What we owe

Creditors		103,153
<b>Total Funds</b>		<b>127,952</b>

### Money out

Fundraising	8%	76,063
Grants, Projects and Research	45%	439,046
Publications	5%	52,455
Conferences	10%	100,060
Training & Consultancy	28%	276,125
Governance	3%	28,539
<b>Total Outgoing Resources</b>		<b>972,288</b>

### How funds are held

Free Reserves & Designated Funds		43,568
Restricted by Donors for Particular Schemes		84,384

**Total Funds 127,952**

### Summarised Accounts Disclosure

These summarised financial statements contain information from both the Statement of Financial Activities and the Balance Sheet for the year ended 31 March 2007, but are not the full statutory report and accounts. The full financial statements were approved by the Trustees on 10 November 2007 and subsequently submitted to the Charity Commission and to the Companies House. They received an unqualified audit report and copies may be obtained from the charity's head office.

Signed on behalf of the trustees

Ian Miller, Chair of The Trustee Board  
10 November 2007

### Independent auditors' statement to the trustees of Skill: National Bureau for Students with Disabilities.

We have examined the summarised financial statements of Skill: National Bureau for Students with Disabilities.

### Respective responsibilities of trustees and auditors

The trustees are responsible for preparing the summarised financial statements in accordance with the recommendations of the charities SORP.

Our responsibility is to report to you our opinion on the consistency of the summarised financial statement with the full financial statements and Trustees' Annual Report. We also read the other information contained in the annual review and consider the implications for our report if we become aware of any apparent misstatements or material inconsistencies with the summarised financial statements.

### Basis of opinion

We conducted our work in accordance with Bulletin 1999/6 "the auditors' statement on the summary financial statement" issued by the Auditing Practices Board for use in the United Kingdom.

### Opinion

In our opinion the summarised financial statements are consistent with the full financial statements and the Trustees' Annual Review of Skill: National Bureau for Students with Disabilities for the year ended 31 March 2007.  
haysmacintyre  
Registered Auditors  
10 November 2007

### Skill Officers

President Baroness Darcy de Knayth  
Vice-Presidents Lord Low of Dalston  
Dr Jean McGinty OBE  
Chief Executive Barbara Waters

### Skill Trustees

Ian Miller OBE Chair  
William Cormie Treasurer  
Peter Little OBE Vice chair  
Derek Child  
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Catherine Cole OBE  
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Henry Alan Hurst  
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Osman Sheikh



**Skill: National Bureau for Students with Disabilities** is a company limited by guarantee (2397897) and a registered charity (801971)

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## 32nd annual review 2006/7



# promoting equality in education, training and employment for disabled people

# News from Skill

## Skill website

For more and more people the internet is fast becoming the first port of call if they have an enquiry, whether it is for information, help or just out of curiosity. Thanks to funding secured from Price Waterhouse Coopers, September 2006 saw the launch of Skill's revamped website. It is a massive step forward for Skill and includes many new features making the Information Service more accessible and user friendly. New graphics, banners, drop-down menus and other features aim to make it a more enjoyable experience too, making it easy to access relevant information as quickly as possible. The feedback received from users since it went live has been very positive, with the website receiving approximately 320 hits per day. The new British

Sign Language introduction to the site has also been well received.

Internally, a new analytical system has been installed in order to help Skill keep better track of how many people visit the site. This enables analysis of which pages are most popular and therefore what current issues or points of interest may be. Next year, Skill plans to introduce a new content management system which will make it easier to ensure the website is constantly up-to-date.



## Call logging database



The new call logging database will allow Skill to gather information on those who use the Information Service helpline, allowing us to see who Skill's audience is and what kind of issues they are dealing with most often. The old system was simply an adapted ordinary database, whereas the new one – on which preliminary work began in October 2006 and which went live in February 2007 – is

specifically designed so that we can extract the most relevant information and therefore provide a better overall service. What we manage to catalogue with the help of the new database is then fed back to our policy team, meaning people's inquiries can have a direct influence on what we tell the 'powers that be'.



## Skill Wales

In March 2007, Skill Wales welcomed the arrival of its new Development Officer, Paul Warren. Before joining Skill, Paul was Chief Executive for the local Voluntary Council in Cardiff (Voluntary Action Cardiff - VAC), supporting all community organisations and groups in the capital of Wales. He represented the voluntary sector on many strategies and partnerships, amongst which were the Children and Young Peoples Framework, the Social Care Improvement Panel and the Community Planning Implementation Group. He also chaired the Compact between the voluntary sector and the local authority. Paul has engaged with the Welsh Assembly Government on many national strategies.



"With the Welsh Assembly Government responsible for most of the issues of day-to-day concern to the people of Wales, it is my intention to make Skill Wales the key strategic influence for disabled people who wish to enter education

and to gain meaningful employment. Our objective is simple - to create more and better jobs and skills for disabled people in Wales."

**Paul Warren** Development Officer, Skill Wales

Skill Wales moved to its own office in November 2006 and now also has its own Welsh language section on the Skill website.



**In 2006/2007**, Skill has been delighted with the progress of the Young Learners' Project, in reaching over 600 disabled learners in schools and at workshops throughout the country. Learner involvement has resulted in a valuable contribution to the development of Skill's information services.

Skill's new publications this year include a *Staff Development Guide: towards inclusive learning for disabled students in higher education* to help generalist staff developers and *Into Medicine*, encouraging disabled people to consider medicine as a career. Skill also held three major conferences this year on further and higher education and the Disability Equality Duty (DDA 2005), attended by over 600 delegates. Both Skill Scotland and Skill Wales have increased their outreach; Scotland increased subscription to its e-newsletter by 50% and Wales consolidated its networks working closely with NUS Students Wales and with Disabilities Committee.

**Barbara Waters** Chief Executive

# The Young Learners' Information Project

The project was launched by Skill last year and has enjoyed great success in its first 12 months. It established three-fold aims to enable Skill to:

- reach young disabled people earlier in life via the different aspects of the Information Service
- produce information for younger age groups (11 – 14) and maintain and develop voluntary sector links
- produce aspiration-raising materials and attend events in order to help young people to make a more informed choice about their future.

The first year of the project was an exciting learning curve for Skill in terms of reaching younger learners and getting information to professionals in schools, who had not previously been aware of Skill's work and services.



Matthew Kayne is a student at a Further Education College

Feedback received from the young learners regarding Skill's website and information booklets suggested that more images and less text should be included. The need for information in BSL was addressed. Learners also said that audio information would be helpful and interesting to them. In response to this, the Skill website now has images of student case studies and a BSL introduction to the site. There is now also a bespoke Young Learners' section with FAQ's. Learners are regularly updated with Skill information and news via e-newsletter.

By developing links with Transition Information Network (TIN), the project has established stronger links within the voluntary sector. The other members of the TIN steering group include: Mencap, Scope, National Autistic Society, Dimensions, MacIntyre, Contact a Family, Council for Disabled Children, Association for Real Change and the Foundation for People with Learning Disabilities.

Skill has continued to gather case studies and attend events to raise young people's hopes and expectations for their future in different parts of education.

Events such as a day at Barclays Bank, arranged in February 2007 for four disabled students who had studied that area and wanted to know more, can help people to see that there are many possibilities in whatever career they want to pursue.



Students visiting Barclays Bank, February 2007

Skill knows there is always more that can and will be done and we hope the Young Learners' Project can continue to improve and make the necessary impact.

## Skill Scotland – Birds of Paradise Theatre Company



The Scotland-based 'Birds of Paradise' Theatre Company was founded in 1993 by a group of disabled adults interested in a career in the performing arts and frustrated by the lack of such provision.

On 6th November 2006, Birds of Paradise ran its first annual 'Changing' event. This year, the event included Skill Scotland as a partner, providing funding from the Skill Scotland Student Bursary Fund.

Around 30 representatives from FE colleges around Scotland came to the Royal Scottish Academy of Music and Drama (RSAMD) in Glasgow. Together with individuals from the Scottish theatre industry, representatives from the RSAMD and young disabled people who were

interested in a performing arts FE course, the lecturers and tutors spent the first part of the day exploring a piece of forum theatre.

In the afternoon, the participants took part in a masterclass led by Jenny Sealey, Artistic Director of Graeae, Britain's foremost theatre company of people with physical and sensory impairments. Jenny explored a range of concepts related to working with disabled actors, with emphasis on the aesthetic rather than the practical issues.

The day came to a close with every individual drawing up a 'pledge card' where they identified how they could put inclusion into practice. It was an important catalyst prompting FE colleges to get serious about how they attract and retain disabled students on to their performing arts courses.