

Chief Executive's report

It has been a year of highs and lows for us at Skill. We have seen many policy successes for disabled students, including the long awaited implementation of the Disability Discrimination Act coverage of general qualifications, including for example, GCSEs, A levels, Scottish Standard Grades and Highers. This fills a much needed gap in the pathways to further and higher education for disabled people.

Our first paid graduate intern arrived and Simon tells you his experiences inside. Internships and work experience can make a difference to the high unemployment rates disabled people face. If you would like to know more about how we support our interns do contact me.

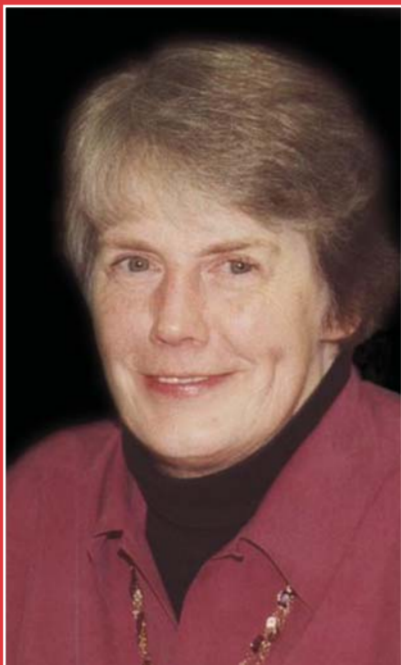
We aim to help people with all kinds of disabilities, including mental health issues, and at all levels. This includes both those able to aspire to higher education and people with severe and complex learning difficulties whose achievements are just as important to us.

Sadly we received the news that our much loved President, Davina died in February 2008. So many of Skill's policy achievements have started with Davina prompting a discussion or amendment in the House of Lords. As a result of her work, the opportunities for disabled people in education, training and employment are very different now from the days when she first started out in the House of Lords when the Chronically Sick and Disabled Persons Act was being debated some 30 years ago. She was a very active member of the All Party Disablement Group where she spoke from personal experience.

We are very lucky that from 2008/09 Colin Low, Lord Low of Dalston CBE, has agreed to become our President, having been Vice President for several years. We look forward to his first message in next year's Annual Review. Next year will be our final one at our Chapter House London Bridge base as the lease runs out, and Skill will be moving to new offices within the London Bridge area. We will take the opportunity to review our core costs so that we can sustain our work.



Barbara Waters
Chief Executive



Baroness Darcy de Knayth DBE
10 July 1938 – 24 February 2008

Chair's report

I am delighted to bring you my second report as Chair of Skill.

Financially, Trustees and I are pleased that we have achieved our forecast. This has involved much effort by staff and selfless commitment on the part of all the members of the Trustee Board. We are not a large charity and make our money work hard for our cause promoting opportunities in education, training, volunteering and employment for disabled people. We do need your help to maintain the quality of the work and the exciting developments you will read about inside. In return we will make sure as many disabled people as possible get to hear about us and use our help and advice in planning their futures, whatever their disability or academic level.

Skill's influence on colleges and universities and other professional agencies continues to promote good practice and conferences in England, Scotland and Wales have contributed to this sharing and networking that is so valued by our members. Many people don't realise Skill is a membership organisation, so if you can give us your support by joining or tell someone about becoming a member of Skill we would be glad to hear from you. We provide newsletters, policy briefings and updates, and the Skill Journal, which is a great read. See www.skill.org.uk for details.



Ian Miller OBE
Chair, Trustee Board and Council

I am looking forward to the beginning of the Skill Council members mentoring programme, involving young disabled people in the way Skill works. I am very proud of the Trustees' role in drawing up the Youth Participation Charter you are going to read about inside, and I will personally ensure that these values are understood throughout Skill in England, Wales and Scotland. I do hope I can count on your support for this valuable work.

Thank you

to all our donors
2007 - 2008

AD Charitable Trust
Aberdeen College
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The Henry Smith Charity
University of Central Lancashire
The WM Mann Foundation
London Marathon runners 2007:
James Arnold
Anna Bussell
Neil Danziger
Alex Latner
Al Lockhart-Smith
Michael Maclachlan
Corrina Thewlis-Smith

and many other kind donors.

Skill is also delighted to have secured new projects from April 2008 funded by Esmée Fairbairn Foundation, the youth volunteering charity, and the Vodafone Foundation.

Financial Review

For the Year Ended 31 March 2008

Money In		2008 Total (£)
Donations	5%	52,906
Legacies	1%	6,632
Grants, Projects and Research	49%	525,428
Publications	4%	45,414
Conferences	5%	58,250
Training & Consultancy	27%	284,135
Subscriptions	8%	89,292
Investment Income	1%	4,615
Total Incoming Resources	100%	1,066,672

Money out		
Fundraising	7%	74,535
Grants, Projects and Research	44%	446,816
Publications	5%	52,168
Conferences	9%	92,396
Training & Consultancy	31%	323,616
Governance	4%	36,702
Total Outgoing Resources	100%	1,026,233

Total Outgoing Resources includes Support costs of £342,026, which have been apportioned to charitable activities, fundraising and governance.

What we own		
Tangible Fixed Assets		3,027
Investments		55,905
Stock		20,413
Debtors		275,301
Cash Funds		12,315
Total		366,961

What we owe		
Creditors		201,369
Total Funds		165,592

How funds are held		
Free Reserves and Designated Funds		73,732
Restricted by Donors for Particular Schemes		91,860
Total Funds		165,592

The figures above were extracted from the full audited unqualified annual accounts. Copies can be obtained by applying to the Charity's head office in London. The annual accounts were approved on 10 July 2008 and have been submitted to the Charity Commission and Companies House.

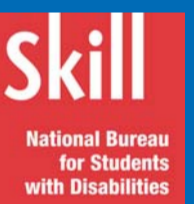
Signed on behalf of the trustees

Ian Miller OBE - Chair of The Trustee Board

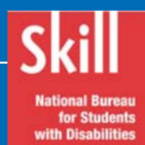
Trustee Board
Ian Miller OBE Chair
Peter Little OBE Vice-Chair
William Cormie Treasurer
Derek Child
Reg Cobb
Catherine Cole OBE
John Grant
Henry Alan Hurst
Gareth Parry
Earl Russell (Nicolas Russell)
Robert Warman

Secretary and Chief Executive
Barbara Waters

33rd annual review 2007/8



promoting
equality
in education,
training and
employment
for disabled
people



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

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Two months in the life of a Skill intern



We employed our first intern in September 2007 on an extremely successful two-month placement. Simon Finaldi was a journalism graduate with cerebral palsy and part of his reason for taking up the internship was to test his ability to work in a full-time role, which he had

not done before. He was also keen to put his degree training into action for the services of an organisation like Skill that works on behalf of disabled people.

During his internship Simon developed our media contacts and wrote press releases, analysed a report on disabled students in London for our Policy team, and staffed a publications stand at our post-16 education conference. Simon also started a blog on the Community Channel, which

resulted in a local radio interview with Skill's Chief Executive, and he played a key role in a major fundraising bid.

Simon kept a reflective diary of his experiences and by the end of his placement it's clear to see that he had proved something to himself.

'I finished the main work on the database and begun to finish my first big press release for Skill. It went well and I see that contrary to my own perceptions I have been well trained by my degree.'

'The blog is also going well with two entries making it onto the front page of the community channel website. I hope that all this is helping and means I am fulfilling what I was brought in to do.'

'...all in all, I can say that it seems I made the right decision to come here and test myself doing something new and challenging. I have been very pleased and I hope to maintain contact with Skill long after these enjoyable two months seem just a hazy memory.'

Simon Finaldi

Skill's Services

The free Information Service answered more than 2000 enquiries in the year by email, telephone and via the website. The telephone helpline is open twice a week and staff have undertaken training in writing plain English and are developing information in easy words and pictures format. We can now also transfer text to audio files using DAISY standard software. We published an up-to-date guide on entering higher education as a disabled student. Our full range of publications is available on the website www.skill.org.uk

Skill Policy staff responded to 44 government consultation papers across Great Britain to ensure that the needs of disabled learners were recognised and included in policy developments.

Skill's conferences and events run on an annual programme and are well attended by professionals in colleges and universities, careers and Connexions services, and other colleagues delivering post-16 education and training.

Skill Scotland

A key thread running through Skill Scotland's activities this year has been positive partnership working.

On the first anniversary of the Disability Equality Duties we held a joint conference with Equality Forward and the Scottish Disability Team, looking at lessons learned during the first year, providing guidance on specific aspects of the DED, and promoting best practice in fulfilling the six general duties.

The Scottish policy environment has been particularly busy this year, with a new government, a new unified skills body, and major changes to student funding.



Lung Ha's Theatre Company

Skill Scotland has actively engaged with key policy makers and stakeholders to ensure that the needs of disabled learners are heard, including participating in eight national advisory groups. For our AGM we linked up with Edinburgh's Lung Ha's Theatre

Company, who created a special piece of Forum Theatre looking at barriers to disabled people. The interactive format engaged the audience in exploring positive solutions, which the actors then wove into an improvised re-working of the performance.

Skill Wales

It has been an eventful year for the Skill Wales team, and the dedication of our volunteer Branch Committee has been key to maintaining the profile of Skill Wales at a time when the Welsh Assembly government is moving forward on education, training and employment issues. During the year over 600 people received presentations or met with Skill Wales staff and committee members, and the Skill Wales office was in touch with over 300 professionals or organisations, as well as giving direct support to 94 disabled people and a further 524 people contacted us through the website. Three publications are available in Welsh. Skill Wales is delighted to have been invited to join the external reference group following the review of the HE Student Finance Delivery in Wales. In addition, the team is participating in the Welsh Assembly Government Transition Reference Group. This work is supported by the Big Lottery Fund Wales until December 2008, so Skill would be pleased to hear from you if you would like to explore funding or partnership working in the future.

Looking for Skill Quality

Skill continues to seek to maintain and improve the quality of its work. We were delighted to have our full **Investors in People** status re-validated in June 2007. In order to ensure we involve disabled learners and their views we have worked with them to draw up a Youth Participation Charter for Skill. Led by Trustee Reg Cobb and staff member Susan Hubbard, Information and Services Manager, Skill engaged with young learners in developing a Charter to guide our work for and with young people and their participation in Governing Council and the Trustee Board.

The key elements include:

We will respect young people, by giving everyone a chance to raise issues and have a say, and by giving enough time

We will be open and honest, by telling young people the truth, and by giving them all the information they need in an accessible format

We will involve young people, by advertising in an attractive way, by providing a range of opportunities to meet a range of needs and

interests, and by providing training where needed to increase young people's self-confidence

We will support young people in decision making, by valuing each individual and their decisions, by coaching and mentoring, and by being there on the journey but letting the young person choose the destination

We will make sure that young people get something out of it, by asking young people what they want and how we can help them achieve it, and by giving feedback on the changes that have happened as a result of their involvement

We will make it fun, by using different media, such as video, music and social networking sites, and by understanding that young people relate best to people their own age.

The draft Charter will be officially adopted by Skill as a binding agreement. Next year, from April 2008 we have also committed to a review and assessment of our frontline work with young people, supported by the Youth Action Network.

What do Young Disabled People want to know?

Three years ago, Skill began working with younger disabled people from age 11. The Young Learners' Information Project was set up to reach young disabled people at that all-important transition stage, to enable them to make informed choices about their future, and for Skill to learn from their participation in our work.

What we did

Skill's Student Information Co-ordinator, Jo Marriott, visited schools, attended events with young people, and produced new aspiration-raising materials with their help. We produced a more attractive and accessible information booklet *Making Choices about Leaving School*, and a *Thinkpad*, to help young people work through and record their options, and launched the Young Learners' pages on our website with a focus on accessibility (Plain English, Easy Read and BSL), asking for user feedback and making more use of multimedia formats such as audio files.



A British Sign Language website introduction to Skill and its services received very favourable feedback from D/deaf and hearing impaired people. Young people helped us produce FAQs for our website around disability identity and terminology, the medical and social models of disability, and involving parents and carers in transition planning.

And 2007 saw the launch of a young people's e-Newsletter on the Skill website, which invites contributions and opinions from young disabled learners.

What they told us

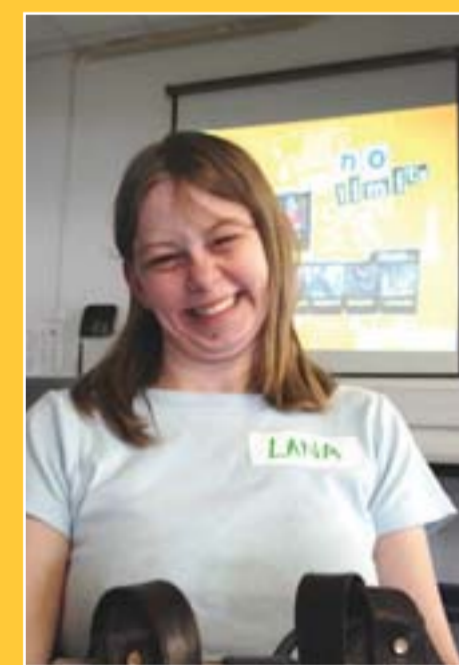
We found that young disabled learners:

- **have similar aspirations to their non-disabled peers** but are more likely to be told by their families or teachers that they are being 'unrealistic'
- **have similar life concerns to their peers**, made greater by their disability
- **are media savvy** and expect access to targeted, changing information which is accessible in their preferred format
- **have issues of identity and labelling**, and are sensitive to the word 'disability'.

- **are at a disadvantage when compared with their non-disabled peers on access to work experience, volunteering opportunities and social networks**, which can have a profound effect on their self-esteem and skills development
- **need more disabled role models, particularly in employment**. It is also important for apprenticeships and work-based learning and volunteering opportunities to be more accessible and affordable for young disabled people
- **need more support, guidance, and accessible information in making choices about leaving school**, and about the different stages and professionals involved in the process.

Young people are the future

The project was completed at the end of the year. For the future we want to build on its findings to further promote opportunities for young disabled learners. Skill has secured funding in 2008/09 from v, the youth volunteering charity, for two volunteering projects for 16-25 year olds, and we are looking forward to working with the Foyer Federation, Rathbone and YouthNet on an ambitious partnership project to help young people achieve their ambitions and dreams funded by the Vodafone Foundation. Our future policy work will focus on the accessibility of the 14-19 curriculum, and what the opportunities government initiatives, such as extending the school leaving age to 18, might offer young disabled people.



Lana Gray at Treloar College

For more information look at our website www.skill.org.uk or contact Skill on 020 7450 0620, email: skill@skill.org.uk or Helpline 0800 328 5050

Skill will go on supporting disabled people in school, sixth form, further and higher education, adult and work based learning and volunteering. But we need your help. Donations and other offers of support and fundraising really count at Skill Email Carol Hicks carol@skill.org.uk