



## ESF develops a regional accent



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### Regionalisation and ESF

ESF strategies in the new EU Structural Fund programmes are going to be developed at regional level by Regional Skills Partnerships. These bodies were set up following the Skills White Paper '21st Century Skills' – Realising Our Potential' published in 2003 which set out the Government's Strategy for skills and the They were created to set priorities and drive action on skills and productivity in their particular regions.

The Regional Skills Partnerships bring together the key agencies in each region responsible for planning and delivery of employment and skills provision including Regional Development Agencies, Jobcentre Plus, the Learning and Skills Council, Small Business Service and the Skills for Business Network. They are charged with changing the way skills are delivered to improve the regional economy.

The key question in this institutional makeover is whether devolving ESF will make a difference. Why should making decisions about ESF work better at

regional level than those taken at national level? Are regions sufficiently different from each other that devolved decision making is needed? Will these relatively new partnerships take sufficient account of diversity and inclusion? How can we take full advantage of the experience of equal in reaching out to target groups?

Regional level decisions could be of benefit because these partnerships are made up of agencies that understand the strengths and problems that are particular to that region. They will be able to develop initiatives that will:

- Support employers to create more successful and sustainable businesses and better quality employment
- Create employment opportunities for people without work and for the most disadvantaged groups of people
- Ensure that more people of all ages are equipped with the skills to take up jobs and to aspire to better jobs
- Supporting the public sector to bring about a change to more skilled employment.

On diversity and inclusion there is a strong argument to say that up till now no one has taken sufficient account of the specific needs of particular groups and particularly of sub groups like ethnic minority women, or disabled parents. If they had done so we would not see the huge variations in activity rates found between ethnic and faith groups, between men and women and between those people with disabilities and those without.

This is where the Equal Development Partnerships have built up important experience of implementing to engage and work with groups. Not only do Equal programmes have the expertise and knowledge of the issues facing disadvantaged groups in their particular area but they also have the experience of working in partnership with like-minded organizations in their region to deliver a common goal. By working together, partnerships can achieve more than just the sum of the individual partners and deliver the best possible outcomes for their regions.

# GB Support Unit Update

2007 will be another significant year in the life of the **EQUAL** Community Initiative. With Action 2 and Action 3 running simultaneously, we are beginning to see tangible outcomes and emergent themes from projects that have the potential to inform dissemination and mainstreaming opportunities.

In order to maximise the messages and outcomes from **EQUAL**, a number of Development Partnerships (DPs) lobbied the GB Support Unit and ESF Division for an extension to their closure dates. To date almost half of all Development Partnerships have taken up the opportunity to extend their closure dates to enable them to complete project activities and strengthen the validity of their outcomes.

It is vital that Development Partnerships use their dissemination and mainstreaming activities to finalise and implement an exit strategy for their partnership. This may be through securing additional funding from other sources to sustain successful outcomes, promoting the take up of new products and services or managing the

closure of activities and ensuring the lessons learnt are fed into other mechanisms.

Development Partnerships are fortunate that unlike other programmes, **EQUAL** has resources that can be dedicated to mainstreaming and dissemination. Therefore it is important that DPs maximise the opportunities that are available to them whether it be providing case studies and validated results to inform the development of Regional ESF plans (once the European Commission has approved the national plan), highlighting how added value in **EQUAL** can contribute to the successful delivery of Public Service Agreements or the promotion of new products and services to businesses and public agencies.

At a European level, the mainstreaming and dissemination agenda has started to gather pace. A number of Policy Forums will take place during 2007, covering areas such as migration and asylum, anti-discrimination in the labour market, supporting ex-offenders, young people and social enterprise development. Member States are leading different forums and plan to use the events to provide key messages that have been validated by **EQUAL** DPs to support the development and implementation of social, employment and skills strategies over the coming years.

Let us know what are your DP's key messages and outcomes.

## Focus on Scotland

Action 3 in Scotland commenced between April and July 06. As messages from the pilots run in Action 2 begin to emerge, DPs are now starting to focus on their Action 3 proposals to disseminate identified good practice and embed the lessons learned into policy and practice.

Innovative ideas are resulting in a variety of activities being proposed by the Scottish DPs to maximise the mainstreaming impact both at national and UK level and to ensure that each message reaches the relevant audience.

The Equal Access DP (Theme A) for example, is organising a series of learning events to stimulate discussion on the practices tested by the DP that are working well and can be replicated in light of the policy priorities in the employability sector. The first event explored Workforce Plus, the Scottish

Employability Framework launched this year by the Scottish Executive and saw the participation of practitioners and policy makers.

Project beneficiaries can also be a valuable asset in terms of 'passing the message'. The COOL DP (Theme E) assigned a project to develop innovative ideas for marketing the EDIT Pilot to students of Creative Arts at Forth Valley College. The result is a unique marketing/advertising hook that was delivered in October 2006 and will be used during the mainstreaming phase.

Work is also underway for sharing learning and promoting collaborative mainstreaming with neighbouring English projects. The Social Economy Scotland DP (Theme D) is actively liaising with the Social Enterprise Coalition to identify key actions in the national mainstreaming programme where all GB Theme D DP's can contribute with their findings.

For further information on the Action 2 and Action 3 activities of the Scottish DPs go to [www.objective3.org/equal](http://www.objective3.org/equal)

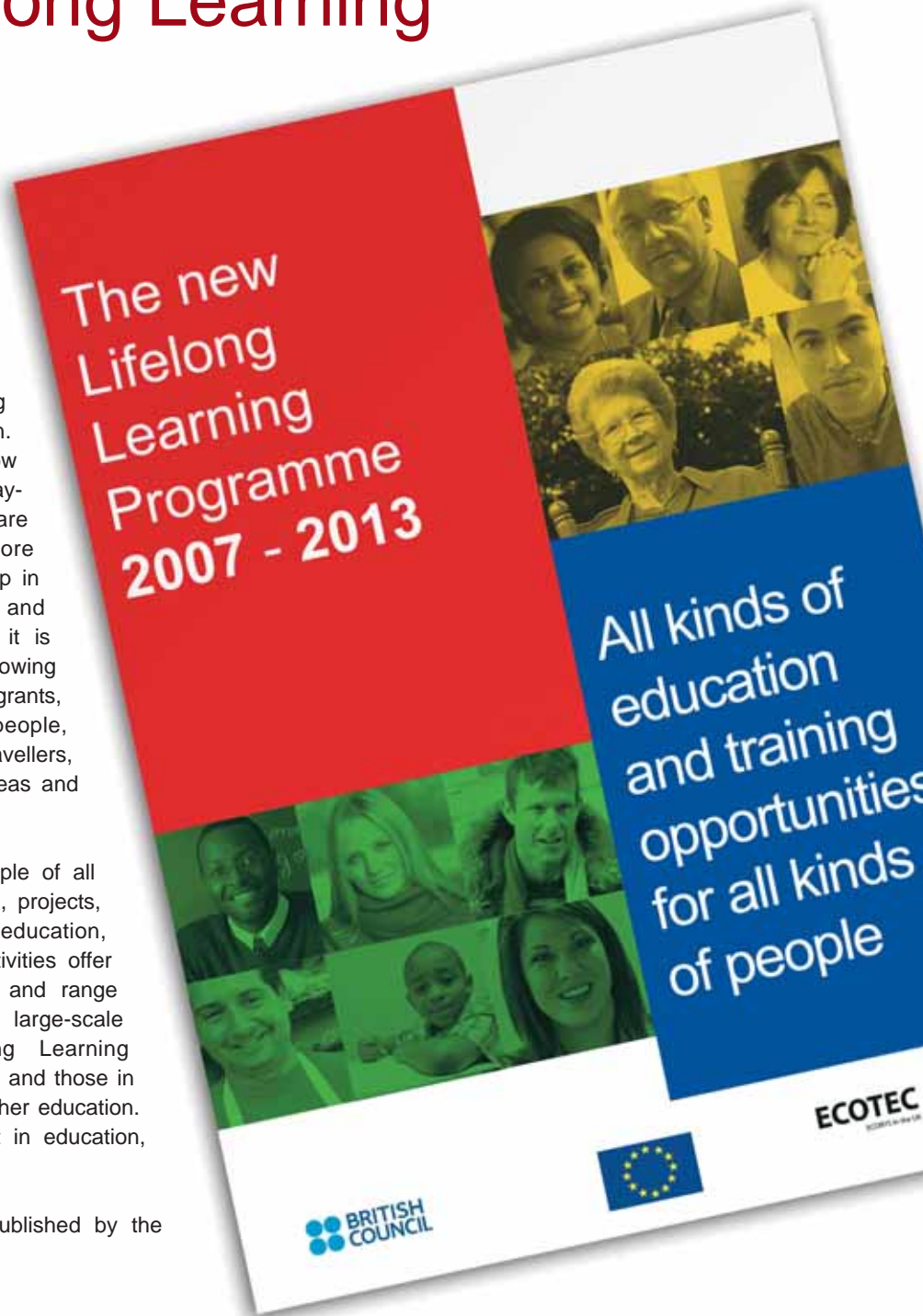
# New EU Lifelong Learning Programme



On January 1, the new EU Lifelong Learning and Youth in Action Programmes began. These programmes are real examples of how the EU can have a positive impact on the day-to-day lives of ordinary people. They are particularly suitable for those from more disadvantaged backgrounds who need help in boosting their skills, motivation levels and becoming more employable. In the UK, it is especially hoped that people from the following groups will be encouraged to apply: migrants, refugees and asylum seekers, older people, disabled people, minority ethnic groups, travellers, children in care, those living in remote areas and those living in inner cities.

The programmes provide funding for people of all ages to take part in international activities, projects, exchanges and visits, usually through education, training or youth organisations. These activities offer life-changing opportunities to participants and range from small community-based projects to large-scale trans-European activities. The Lifelong Learning Programme offers opportunities for schools and those in adult education, vocational training and higher education. Youth in Action is primarily for those not in education, employment or training.

An invitation to apply for funding was published by the European Commission during December.



Find out more at:  
[www.lifelonglearningprogramme.org.uk](http://www.lifelonglearningprogramme.org.uk)

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# Equal Customer Satisfaction Survey

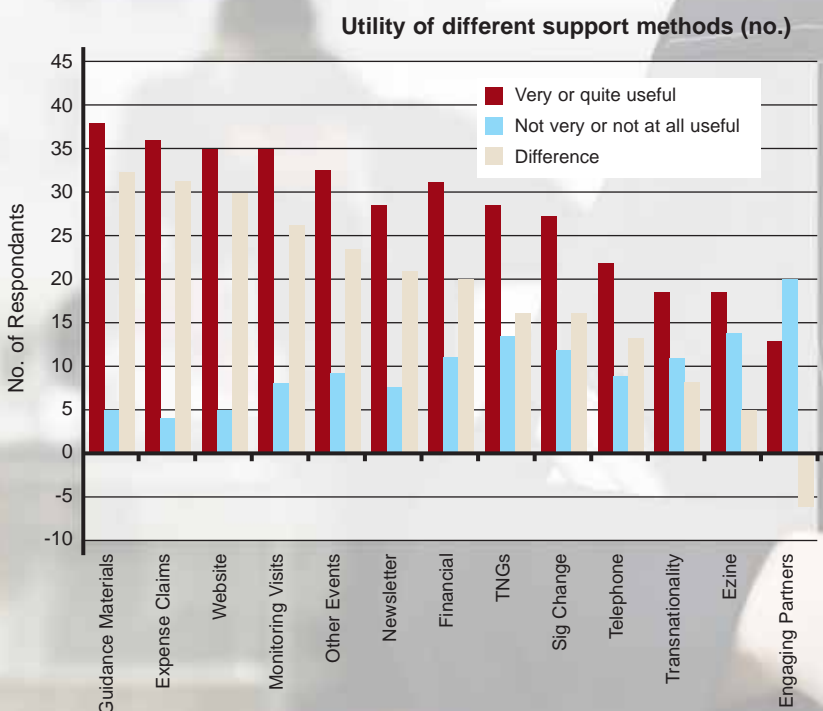
Equal DPs were recently invited to take part in an on-line survey about the service provided by the Equal Support Unit in Round 2 and how this might be improved in future. The survey was conducted by the Social Policy Division of Ecotec Research and Consulting Ltd.

The response rate was very good, with 45 out of 73 DPs responding.

To further explore the survey responses, a discussion group was held at Ecotec's offices in Birmingham which was attended by 6 DPs

## Key Findings:

- Overall, DPs were broadly happy with the services provided by the ESU. In particular, the guidance materials, processing of expenditure claims and website were seen as the most useful of the services provided.
- Respondents reported high levels of satisfaction with ESU staff and found them to be accessible, supportive, friendly, professional and responsive, while providing high-quality advice and guidance.
- Monitoring visits were perceived as one of the most useful types of support provided by the ESU. Some people stated that they were a very good way for DPs to meet face to face with their support manager and improve mutual understanding.
- The majority of DPs were satisfied with the financial aspects of the service provided by the ESU. In particular, they liked the quality, speed and consistency of the financial advice and guidance.
- Respondents generally found events useful for sharing problems and issues as well as for networking. The more focused seminars, for example those on finance or mainstreaming, were found to be the most useful types of events.



## Next Steps

The ESU has considered the responses to the survey and has taken account of the comments and suggestions made by DPs, along with the recommendations made in the survey report. Whilst the overall results of the survey are very positive, it is recognised that there may be areas where improvements can be made. To this end, the Support Unit will seek to review and enhance these areas of its services to ensure that they meet the needs of Equal DPs.

## Equal Works Conference, 10 and 11 September, International Convention Centre, Birmingham.

The aim of Equal Works 2007 is to provide a comprehensive forum to promote the key outcomes and achievements of the GB Equal Programme.

This two day event will be designed to bring together Development Partnerships with policy and decision makers at a variety of levels - transnational, national, regional and sub-regional. The main focus of the event will be to celebrate the lessons learnt from Equal and focus on messages that can be mainstreamed and where possible sustained. There will be 12 exhibition themes:

### 1) Workplace Adaptability

The Workplace Adaptability showcase will give delegates the opportunity to find out how Equal DPs have engaged with employers and improved the prospects and working environment for Equal target groups.

### 2) Innovative approaches to working with ex-offenders

The aim workshop is to share the lessons that have been learnt by Equal Offender DPs by:

- Highlighting the approaches taken by DPs working with variety of Ex/offenders
- Providing an overview of the work of the National Equal Offender Network - particularly how it is disseminating learning to policy makers
- Explaining what is happening with the EU level Offender Working Group.

### 3) Employment needs of Older Workers

The aim is to bring together individuals and experts as a group, engaged in activities to assist those aged 45 and over who are known to face employment challenges and barriers so that they are able to remain in the workforce. It is a well known fact that discrimination in terms of age is unfair to the individual and impacts on the labour market.

### 4) Tackling Skills Gaps

The aim of this showcase will be to highlight success stories that address the main principles of the Leitch Review of Skills. Over the last 6 years EQUAL DPs have been developing new and innovative ideas that provide examples of how these principles can be realised and mainstreamed.

### 5) Race and Integration

The overall aim of this session is to explore the main issues around the integration of ethnic minorities into education, training and employment and to discuss how the outcomes from the Equal programme can help to inform thinking around these issues.

### 6) Social enterprise and business creation

This workshop will aim to stimulate debate around this topic and gauge the views of the participants as to how far this is true. Equal DPs will have a chance to reflect on the progress within the last three years and to comment on the future of Social Enterprise and how the work they have done will contribute to the growing Third Sector.

### 7) Challenging discrimination and inequality

This showcase will be an opportunity for interested individuals to learn about the good practice in discrimination and equality from across the programme, including DP level and programme level. 2007 is the European Year of Equal Opportunities and it is anticipated that the good practice has the potential to be embedded in future programmes tackling discrimination and equality.

### 8) Mainstreaming in practice

The purpose of this showcase is to demonstrate successful mainstreaming processes used by Equal Development Partnerships. This will highlight successful methods that Equal Development Partnerships have utilised to produce their evidence-based solutions to questions emerging from the policy-making community.

### 9) Transnationality in practice

For Equal one of the main expected outcomes of transnationality was to add value to DP actions. In addition to this transnational cooperation was also to add value to European and National policy developments.

### 10) Partnerships and networks

One of the main successes of Equal in GB has been that various relevant actors have been brought together to tackle issues and work towards shared goals. Co-operation between statutory agencies, as well as the opening up of labour market agencies to partnerships with employers and the voluntary sector, has led to sustainable changes in ways of delivering policies.

### 11) How to measure and evaluate success

There is a long tradition of evaluation in European funded programmes, and the Structural Funds have been designed and adapted according to evaluation results. At DP level evaluation has been a structured process for understanding and learning from experience. It has offered a much wider scope than monitoring and has enabled Development Partnerships to make assessments on their successes.

### 12) Engagement of Employers

For many Equal DPs the engagement of employers is key to ensuring a successful and sustainable of project outcomes. This showcase will be an opportunity for interested individuals share good practice in engaging with employers to promote equality and diversity in the workplace and social inclusion.

The image shows a vertical strip on the left side of the page featuring the European Union flag, with its characteristic blue background and yellow stars. The stars are arranged in a circular pattern, and the image is slightly blurred, giving it a sense of depth and movement.

# ACE reaches Europe!

Equal has played a significant role in promoting carers and influencing the policy agenda. Ace National is an Equal Development Partnership led by Carers UK which is working to support the inclusion of carers in the labour market. To continue its drive to achieve long term change for carers, ACE has extended its innovative actions across Europe.

The 12th June will see the launch in the European Parliament of Eurocarers, a lobbying and campaigning platform established to give a voice to the many millions of people in Europe - carers - who provide unpaid care, outside a formal or professional framework, for partners, family or friends in need of help because they are ill, frail or have a disability. The future is one in which demographic trends across Europe - ageing populations, changes in family structures - alongside community care policies that promote care at home and pressures on health and social care systems, will see many more people caring for a loved one. At the same time, the European economy will need more workers, more skills, and more people to work longer, and many of them will struggle to juggle that paid work with their caring responsibilities. Carers give so much to society, yet their reward is often poor health, financial hardship and social exclusion.

In response to these issues, representatives from carers organisations and research and development groups in eight countries came together in Maastricht in November 2004 to establish an EU-wide organisation that would recognise the true value of a carer's contribution to society and to ensure that carers get the practical, financial and emotional support they need - and Eurocarers was born.

The event on the 12th June will be attended by Eurocarers President Baroness Jill Pitkeathly, who sits in the House of Lords in the UK and has

campaigning on carers throughout her distinguished career, twelve years of which were spent as Chief Executive of Carers National Association. Excitingly, it will also see the formal launch of a cross-party Interest Group on Carers in the European Parliament, which will provide an effective forum for debate and work to ensure that carers issues are firmly on the European policy agenda. The Interest Group will be led by a panel of co-chairs representing the main political groups, and the secretariat for the Group will be provided by Eurocarers.

The establishment of the Interest Group could not be more timely, with a range of policy initiatives and actions - the Lisbon Agenda, the Open Method of Coordination, the PROGRESS programme, the European Year of Equal Opportunities for All, the new Public Health Programme, Framework 7, demographic initiatives and the upcoming mental health strategy - all providing clear 'entry points' for action on carers. Alongside that work, Eurocarers will seek every opportunity to widen its representation and promote carers issues - with a conference planned in Paris in June, and a 'blue skies' event, hosted by the Parliament Magazine, to take place following the MEP Awards in Brussels in October.

The Year of Equal Opportunities for All could well be a turning point for carers. For more information on the DP, please contact ACE Policy and Communications Officer [Sally.bamford@carersuk.org](mailto:Sally.bamford@carersuk.org)



# Enterprising Equal

Congratulations to Slough Borough Council's Creative Academy, part of The Last Mile Development Partnership led by Tribal Education Ltd, have been named Regional Winners of 'Enterprising Britain', a nationwide competition to find the most enterprising town, city, place or area in the UK.

The award is for the project that has best supported and promoted enterprise in their town, resulting in positive impact on the area.

Alison Hibbert, Head of Creative Delivery, said "Creative Academy is over the moon to achieve this recognition. The hard work of both our team and the beneficiaries we support has resulted in a thriving creative community in Slough, with social, as well as economic, benefits for the community as a whole. We welcome the opportunity to promote our project nationwide, as well as meet the other regional winners and learn more about the work going on in other regions to promote enterprise, be it creative or otherwise."

Creative Academy was set up in 2003 to promote the creative industries in Slough. To date they

have helped more than 5,000 people through a variety of means including finding paid work placements, providing funding and one-to-one business advice, developing NVQ qualifications in a range of subjects, and organising an annual Creative Careers schools roadshow in collaboration with Creative Partnerships. As a result of their activities a number of small businesses have flourished and many participants have gone on to find paid work following work placements arranged by the organisation.

Creative Academy are now going forward to the national final, where they will meet with judges and introduce them to local small businesses that have benefited from their support. If they win the national award, which will be announced in September, they will then go on to



represent the UK at the European Enterprise Awards later in the year.

If you live or work in Slough, are involved or interested in the creative industries and would like more information, please contact the Creative Industries Development Officer, Kathryn Hewitt, on 01753 875 400 or at [kathryn.hewitt@slough.gov.uk](mailto:kathryn.hewitt@slough.gov.uk)

# newswebsitespublicationsevents

## News

### Introducing the CEHR

The Commission for Equality and Human Rights was established by the 2006 Equality Act to promote good relations between groups, and ensure that people are not discriminated against because of their race, gender, disability, religion or belief, age or sexual orientation. The Commission will be the champion of the disadvantaged and a change maker for the whole of society - a body which uses both its leadership role and its legal powers to build a society that recognises the worth of all people, and ensures that no-one is excluded.

From its vesting date on October 1st the CEHR will be the principal independent advocate for equality and human rights in Britain. A high profile organisation it will draw on the experience, expertise and talent of the existing equality commissions and other relevant bodies. However it will take a fresh approach that is consistent with the equalities and human rights climate of 21st century Britain.

### The CEHR and the labour market

Among many other activities the Commission will work with employers to create workplaces where diversity is both encouraged and accepted. As well as providing legal support in the form of guidance, training and other forms of assistance the Commission will help create a climate where practitioners can learn from each other and share good practice.

### Keep in touch

The CEHR publishes a regular newsletter for stakeholders and all interested parties. The newsletter features news updates, previews of forthcoming events, and a media digest. To subscribe please visit the CEHR website

<http://www.cehr.org.uk/join.rhtm>

## Websites

European Social Fund Division

<http://www.esf.gov.uk/>

Department for Communities and Local Government

<http://www.communities.gov.uk>

Office of the Third Sector

[http://www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/third\\_sector](http://www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/third_sector)

## Publications

Visage DP Employers Online Toolkit.

The Visage Employers Group is about promoting the positive business case for making the effort to have full provision for the employment of blind and partially sighted people and for other disabled people.

Visit the website for further information:

<http://www.visage-employers.org.uk/index.htm>

Reset DP Resettlement Mentoring Options Toolkit.

A toolkit for professionals working with young offenders

Visit the website for further information:

<http://www.reset.uk.net/graphics/portfolio/6174.pdf>

## Events

Skills for Life and Work in 2010 and Beyond:

Widening participation and raising achievement  
5 July 2007, Central London

Visit the website for further information:

<http://www.neilstewartassociates.com/jd184>

The Guardian  
Further Education and Skills Summit.

The annual summit for education leaders  
20 & 21 June 2007, QEII Conference Centre, Westminster

Visit the website for further information:

<http://www.neilstewartassociates.com/jd182>

Additional Leonardo Mobility deadline

27 July 2007.

Leonardo funding is open to all organisations involved in delivering vocational Education and Training. This could be an opportunity for Equal beneficiaries to benefit from a European work placement to enable them to gain work experience and employability skills. The programme also offers placements for VET professionals where staff can take part in short work placements to learn from European colleagues.

Visit the website for further information:

<http://www.leonardo.org.uk>



### GB Equal Support Unit

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### Scottish Equal Support Unit

Contact: Sharon Thomson  
Scottish ESF Objective 3 Partnership  
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Web: [www.objective3.org/equal](http://www.objective3.org/equal)

### Welsh Equal Support Unit

Contact: Michelle Howarth  
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