

Funding will help homeless gain jobs

A CHARITY has secured thousands of pounds to help homeless people get a job in catering.

Brighton Housing Trust (BHT) will receive £20,000 from the Government to establish a training course at its First Base Day Centre in St Stephen's Hall, Montpelier Place, Brighton.

The money will be invested in Dine! – a commercial catering service which will provide catering for various functions across the city.

It will also provide training and employment opportunities to help homeless people get off the streets and encourage them to move into independent accommodation.

Nikki Homewood, director of homelessness services at BHT, said: "The project is small-scale at the moment.

"However, this funding will enable us to get to the next level and develop a real business.

"We will be delivering a product with a purpose.

"The product is high-quality external catering and the purpose is to prepare and train men and women with a history of homelessness for work in the catering and other sectors."

Engage Partnership Employment League

EACH month, the Engage Partnership Employment League will highlight those businesses which demonstrate their commitment to diversity by employing local marginalised people.

For more information on employing diverse people, contact claire.mitchell@engagesolutions.org.uk.



One job outcome per company other than those indicated ()

Engage organisation: Working Links

A R Bradley Groundworks LTD, Asda, Binary Light, Black Lion Harvester, Brantano, Brighton & Hove City Council, Cats Protection League, Cavendish employment agency, Corals Brighton & Hove Stadium, Deli Marche, East Sussex County Council, Ems Vectra N Jones, Foremost Services Ltd, Greggs, Harvester, Hays Construction And Property, Honey Club, Hunters Recruitment, ITS Construction, JCS Catering Services, Kelly Services (UK) Ltd, Medacs, Momentum, Monarch Airlines, NCP Car Parks, New Look (2), New Rose Personnel, Ouh La La

Engage organisation: RBLI (Employment Solutions)

Brighton and Sussex University Hospitals NHS Trust, Crisp and Clean, Robert Dyers, Sussex Partnership NHS Trust

Engage organisation: Careers Development Group

Brighton Sea life Centre, Duke of Beaufort (2), lydea, Peacocks, Pee-Wee Hair Salon, Royal Albion Hotel, SAT Support, Southern Counties Scaffolding

Engage organisation: Brighton and Hove City Council

NVIRO (2)

Skills of staff at the pier

ONE of Sussex's most popular tourist attractions has made a commitment to improving the skills of its workforce.

The Palace Pier in Brighton has signed a "skills pledge", a scheme supported by the Learning and Skills Council designed to ensure staff are supported by their employers to increase their qualifications.

by SAM THOMSON

At minimum, workers are encouraged to achieve relevant qualifications to at least Level 2 – the equivalent of five GCSEs grades A-C.

The pier has a core staff of about 200 full and part-time workers, which rises by 150 during peak periods.

Human resources manager Jason Mannix said: "Making the pledge shows that we value the contribution that our staff are making to the day-to-day running of the pier.

"It doesn't matter if they are cleaners, serve burgers or wait on tables, we want to give them every chance to develop their skills."

Ride supervisor Przemyslaw Piasecki started work at

PICTURE: JIM HOLDEN

JH070708B-1



SKILLED RIDE: Jason Mannix, back left, with pier workers

the pier in May 2005. He was given financial help by his bosses to complete a management course at City College Brighton and Hove.

He said: "You get a lot of encouragement and good feedback from the managers here.

"I'm planning to do another course in human resources to get up to senior management level.

"For myself, I can see there are still a lot of steps on the ladder at the Palace Pier so I

will stay here and try and develop my career."

Mr Mannix said the pier hoped to have more staff attending City College to study for an NVQ or apprenticeship from September.

He added: "The staff have been really positive.

"Last year, we had only 10% turnover of workers so I think that figure demonstrates they appreciate what we are doing for them."

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Praise for diversity moves

MOVES to make a city's workforce more representative of its population have been applauded.

Brighton and Hove City Council, alongside advertising agency LawtonWare, scooped the prestigious Public Sector People Managers' Association award for its "best work to improve diversity in the workplace".

It is the third year in a row the council has received the accolade. The latest campaign was launched, under the DiverseCity banner, in October.

As a result of the council's efforts, the percentage of black and minority ethnic staff employed in the authority has risen during the two years to last Christmas from 3.75% to 4.45%. This compares with about 5.8% in the local population.

Job applications from black and minority ethnic candidates rose from 9.5% to 11.4% between April and December last year.

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Marsha Thompson, an employment solicitor at Martin Searle Solicitors and a member of the Brighton and Hove LEADER steering group, answers questions on the law relating to pregnancy

MY employee wants to return from her maternity leave earlier than she thought. This isn't convenient. What can I do?

New mums who want to return to work before the end of their full 52-week maternity leave must give eight weeks notice.

But you could decide to accept less or no notice at all. If, as in this case, the earlier date is not suitable – perhaps you have to provide notice to a temporary worker or make other arrangements – you can postpone it until the full eight

weeks notice. You cannot do this, however, if your preferred date is after the 52-week maternity leave entitlement.

SINCE my employee has been on maternity leave, the department has been reorganised and her job has changed. What should I do?

If your employee is returning to work after ordinary maternity leave (the first 26 weeks) she is entitled to return to the same job on the same terms and conditions as if she has not been absent, unless a redundancy situation has arisen.

The same entitlements normally apply to women returning after additional maternity leave (from the 27th week onwards).

If there are redundancies and you select her for redundancy, ensure that the decision is not because of or connected to her pregnancy or you will be liable for sex discrimination and unfair dismissal.

If it is not reasonably practical for you to take her back in the same job, you should offer "suitable alternative work".

If you fail to do so any dismissal would automatically be unfair.

On the other hand, if no suitable alternative exists or if the employee refuses suitable employment, you have a legitimate redundancy situation and you would not be dismissing unfairly.

ON returning from maternity leave, my employee would like to work part-time, do I have to accommodate that?

Parents of children under the age of six have the right to "request" flexible working.

As an employer you are legally obliged to give the request serious consideration.

In general terms, this means you should: ask for it in writing; hold a meeting with the employee to discuss it; provide a decision in writing; and give the employee the right to appeal.

For full details on how to handle the process see www.berr.gov.uk. Where you decide to reject a request, you need to be able to justify your decision with business factors such as additional costs, impact on customers, products and colleagues or the inability to reorganise work or recruit staff.

Do visit the website for full details.