

FIRST CLASS SUPPORT, PLYMOUTH

MEMBERS OF DEVON & PLYMOUTH CHAMBER OF COMMERCE



“FCS operate a completely diverse and inclusive workforce, and offer employment and training opportunities to all...”

CHAMBER BUSINESS AWARDS

CELEBRATING BUSINESSES

ONE STORY AT A TIME

First Class Support, members of Devon & Plymouth Chamber, is a multi-award-winning company that provides academic, employment, healthcare, and advocacy support to individuals (and groups) across the United Kingdom.

To ensure all employees are well versed and knowledgeable on the importance of operating a diverse workplace, all their staff are given mandatory Diversity and Inclusion training within their first week of employment. This training is then re-implemented each year to maintain their knowledge and reinforce the importance of having a diverse and fair workforce.

FCS staff also receive CPD accredited Disability Awareness Training, to increase awareness of the impact that disabilities have on an individual and how they can be supported with this inside the workplace, as, some of their staff have disabilities themselves. As well as this, FCS offer the 'one support incentive', whereby employment opportunities are offered to the disabled students they support, to encourage them into employment and provide them with paid opportunities to develop their skills, gain experience and increase future employability.

Their Equality and Diversity Policy, as well as commitment to ongoing training, demonstrate how important it is to FCS to prevent discrimination and promote equal opportunity in all aspects of their service. FCS employ over 800 support staff nationwide, many of whom are recognised by the Equality Act (2010), as having a protected characteristic that could subject them to discrimination.

A few of their office staff are also recognised as having one of these characteristics, which is why they offer such intensive training to their staff members, to ensure they are working with respect and refraining from discriminatory behaviours towards other office staff, support staff, clients, or other third parties they may be involved with. FCS operate a completely diverse and inclusive workforce, and offer employment and training opportunities to all, which is demonstrated with schemes such as their One Support Incentive, whereby they offer employment opportunities to students with disabilities that might otherwise face barriers elsewhere when seeking paid employment.

FCS also provide free training such as Specialist Notetaking and Sighted Guide training, which allows students registered under their scheme, to expand their skill set in the hope that this will increase employment opportunities upon graduating. FCS are currently working with specific Universities in the UK to arrange contracts starting in September 2023, to provide academic support to their students with disabilities, so that these students can access the necessary support to allow them equal access to their studies.

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Over the next three years, FCS would like to develop additional, similar schemes to the One Support Incentive, that specifically aim to help other marginalised communities, exploring how we can offer them with employment opportunities. They are currently working with Plymouth City Council to see if FCS can provide employment support services in Plymouth in the near future. It is important that every individual has equal access to both employment and education.

FCS measure the success of their Diversity and Inclusion policies through many means. One way in which they measure success is by seeking continued anonymous feedback from service users and staff, which allows them a confidential forum to raise concerns with discrimination or lack of inclusive practices. Fortunately, through their repeated and consistent collation of feedback, they have never had any issues brought to their attention which highlights their success with implementing Diversity and Inclusion practices.

FCS monitor workforce composition on a yearly basis to ensure they are operating a diverse workforce; and are particularly concerned with assessing the proportion of employees with disabilities, employees who are within ethnic minority groups, ensuring a diverse age range of employees, etc. to ensure that they are offering fair and equal employment to all individuals.