



Leonard  
Cheshire  
Disability

## What our clients say....

### My Coordinator is an absolute star!

At the end of last year we did our first client survey to find out what you thought about the service we offer and how we can improve it.

Here are the key findings and some of the ways we intend to take our clients' views forward:

We were very pleased to hear that overwhelmingly clients reported that they received excellent support from our team of Regional Coordinators.

The fact that we are able to supply computer equipment to clients was also a big plus to help a number of clients get started.

Clients valued the access to business start up resources and other information as well as various specialised training courses that we were able to support them to undertake.

Generally clients felt motivated by the support they received and felt it helped them clarify where to start and keep them focussed.

### Sarah Hudson runs London Marathon



"RTS entrepreneur, Sarah Hudson (wearing orange top) ran the London Marathon in 3hrs 49m."

"Sarah has worked really hard to achieve this, despite many setbacks;" said Regional Coordinator Ann Chaplin, "Sarah embodies

the determination and guts of an RTS entrepreneur."

### Inside this issue

[So, where do you think we need to improve?](#)

[So, what is our Solution?](#)

[Network Meetings](#)

[Virtual Networking](#)

[Helping you move your business ideas on...](#)

[The RTS team is changing](#)

[Newsletter](#)

[Enabled4Enterprise](#)

[How to contact us](#)

### So, where do you think we need to improve?

Responses to these questions in the main reinforced our own views on areas of the project that needed tweaking.

Primarily we have not been able to provide sufficient buddies, at the right time in the right place to get some of our clients up and running as quickly as they and we would like.

This was a challenge that we have been focussing on for some time.

We have some excellent buddy matches with amazing results as you can see from this story below:

### Dan McLaren and Schani Cave



Mentor Dan with Schani (Photo courtesy of The Times October 18, 2007)

Dan McLaren is a local business manager at a Barclays bank who was approached to volunteer his time to mentor RTS client, Schani Cave.

When Schani had a series of strokes after university, his career plans changed slightly. He knew he'd never be an entertainer on a cruise ship as he had once planned, so he decided to set up his own business teaching disabled and elderly people.

Schani signed up to Ready to Start because he needed tailored, specialist business advice. "Because this was a disability-specific programme, I thought they may have a better understanding to be able to support me."

At first, Dan McLaren was slightly nervous about mentoring a disabled person. "I did have a preconception I suppose that there would be a difference [advising a disabled person]. That there may be a problem communicating, for example. I did not know the kind of disability that I would encounter."

Such fears quickly disappeared when he was paired up with Schani, as they realised they knew each other from school! When Schani eventually met Dan, there was an instant rapport thanks to a sense of shared history.

It was Dan's job to get Schani to focus on running his business. "Schani is a very good people person but there are always things in the background that any business person has to deal with."

Schani has not been disappointed by the mentoring process. "I understood from previous courses about business planning, but Dan helped to tailor it to me and my business. I understood the hypothetical and he was able to give me the reality."

Dan encouraged Schani to get to grips with his business. "What Dan made me realise is that a business plan is a living document. You don't necessarily follow it A, B, C but you might follow it A, C, E."

Dan and Schani still catch up to discuss things and Dan hopes that they will stay in touch. "There may come a point of closure but, given the history between us, there will always be an interest there to keep in touch as friends as well as mentors."

*(Excerpt from Times Article October 18, 2007)*

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## So, what is our solution?

We started a pilot at the end of last year to provide telephone and e-mentoring using two external organisations and currently have over 100 clients receiving support in this way.

We have learnt a lot from this pilot and are in the process of recruiting our own in-house team of distance mentors so that we can provide appropriate support to Ready to Start clients as soon as they come onto the project.

We will still be working with buddies who can meet clients face to face but the extra dimension of distance mentoring will enable us to act more quickly.

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## Network Meetings

Another way we want to improve our 'offer' is to organise networking meetings in each Region where Ready to Start clients can meet and learn from each other as well as getting inputs on key areas like marketing or legal issues etc.

We hope that these meetings will also help to alleviate the sense of isolation that clients have told us that many feel.

The first Network meeting took place this month in York and was supported by Business Link.



## Virtual Networking



When we developed the RTS website we included a 'forum' to enable clients to meet virtually whether they were in Kendal or Kent.

We were very aware that the Forum as it stands is uninspiring and a number of you said that there was nothing there at the moment to encourage you to use it.

To turn this into a dynamic community of users, the Forum needs someone with the time and expertise to interact. I am really pleased that we now have just such a person, Steven Hilton, who is volunteering his vast experience of facilitating forums to help us make the Ready to Start forum an exciting and interesting place to visit.



Stephen Hilton

Stephen will start by working with a small group of interested entrepreneurs and over time this will be extended to offer involvement to all RTS clients. So watch this space...

## Helping you move your business ideas on...

For anyone starting any business getting access to money to help get set up is always an issue.

Ready to Start has helped many clients access funding from a range of organisations but it varies tremendously across the country so it is something of a post-code lottery where this is available.

RTS has been able to help many of our clients with small grant funding from the project to purchase things that are business critical and would otherwise hold up a client's ability to get started. This is a discretionary fund and depends on your individual circumstances but if you think we can help, talk to your Regional Coordinator.

Another new key benefit is that when your business is up and running we will offer you a year's membership of the **Federation of Small Businesses**.

This will provide you with access to a whole range of additional services and benefits like cheaper insurance; access to legal advice; networking with other business people in your area and much more.

## Newsletter

Clients also said they would like more news and information so they felt part of something bigger. So we intend to make this a quarterly Newsletter and whilst this one is mainly dedicated to the outcome and actions resulting from the survey, future Newsletters will bring more regional news.

We also want to ensure that we are providing you with what you need and to that end will ask

you to take a few moments in the Autumn to complete our second client survey so we know if the changes we are making are working for you.

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## The RTS team is changing...

One Sarah is changing into a different Sarah. Sarah Mitchell, the RTS Regional Coordinator from the North West Region says that she has been advising people on setting up their own business long enough – and is now going to do it herself!



*Sarah Ryan*

As one Sarah is off to open a deli, we are being joined by Sarah Ryan who will take over the Regional Coordinator role in the North West. She will be in touch with all our Partners and clients during March.

## Developing our Enterprise credentials

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### Enabled4Enterprise

In February we had a very successful launch of Enabled4Enterprise (E4E) with around 200 guests at the British Library.

E4E is a London Development Agency funded programme to provide disability equality training to organisations across London who give business start-up advice to budding disabled entrepreneurs.



*Photo of launch*

Our keynote speaker was the business forecaster Prof. Richard Scase who delivered a typically hard-hitting speech. RTS client Stephen Collins was among our range of speakers who talked about their journey to starting a business.



*Stephen Collins attending the Enabled 4 Enterprise Launch*

Edited highlights from the launch will be available soon on the E4E website:

[www.enabled4enterprise.org](http://www.enabled4enterprise.org)

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## Creature Discomforts



**Leonard Cheshire Disability** has had fantastic feedback for the ground-breaking work we are doing with our Creature Discomforts campaign. But some of you asked why we had featured characters that only had obvious physical disability as you felt that this reinforced the stereotype of disabled people.

The advertisements currently running are the start of a three year campaign and because the recognition of disability is starting at such a low level, it was felt best to start with what the public in general understand as 'disabled'.

However, we are just about to start developing the next round of Creature Discomfort characters and you will be pleased to know that some Ready to Start clients may be featured among them. But if you want to see more of the current characters, click on the link below.

**Want to see more? Go to:**

[www.CreatureDiscomforts.org](http://www.CreatureDiscomforts.org)

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## How to contact us:

### **Linda Holland**

National Project Manager  
[Linda.holland@LCDisability.org](mailto:Linda.holland@LCDisability.org)  
07738 033 083

### **Ann Chaplin**

Regional Coordinator for London and Kent  
[Ann.chaplin@LCDisability.org](mailto:Ann.chaplin@LCDisability.org)  
07738 033 098

### **Beccy Clacy**

Regional Coordinator for Central Region  
[Beccy.clacy@LCDisability.org](mailto:Beccy.clacy@LCDisability.org)  
07738 034 115

### **Johnny Coleman**

Regional Coordinator for South West  
[Johnny.coleman@LCDisability.org](mailto:Johnny.coleman@LCDisability.org)  
07738 328 997

### **Leonore Lord**

Regional Coordinator for Essex & Suffolk  
[Leonore.lord@LCDisability.org](mailto:Leonore.lord@LCDisability.org)  
07738 329 508

### **Martin Moore**

Regional Coordinator for West and Wales  
[Martin.moore@LCDisability.org](mailto:Martin.moore@LCDisability.org)  
07738 328 998

### **Noel Jones**

Regional Coordinator for East Midland and Peterborough  
[Noel.jones@LCDisability.org](mailto:Noel.jones@LCDisability.org)  
07738 033 989

### **Sarah Ryan**

Regional Coordinator for North West  
[Sarah.ryan@LCDisability.org](mailto:Sarah.ryan@LCDisability.org)  
07738 034 116

### **Vanessa Marshall**

Regional Coordinator for North East and Yorkshire  
[Vanessa.marshall@LCDisability.org](mailto:Vanessa.marshall@LCDisability.org)  
07738 033 987

**Alternatively you can call Innovative Projects at Leonard Cheshire Disability on 08456 717173  
Or email [Innovation@LCDisability.org](mailto:Innovation@LCDisability.org)**