

# **PRESS RELEASE – WITH IMMEDIATE EFFECT**

## **Across All Ages**

Already aware of the new legislation scheduled for October 2006 to outlaw ageism, the Southampton and Fareham Chamber of Commerce has been spurred into action to compile an entry for the Age Positive Awards after reading the Echo's article launching them. Although it is only a small organisation of 15 people and will be up against some much larger organisations, the Southampton and Fareham Chamber of Commerce is proud of the fact that it draws on the perspectives and experiences of all its employees, from across its differing age groups. It benefits from the enviable advantage of employing personnel who can represent every decade from teenagers to those in their sixties.

Age has never been an issue for the recruitment of personnel at the Chamber of Commerce; people are judged on their merit and what they bring to the vacancy. The team work well together on new initiatives, whether presented by younger or older staff members in practical ways, by examining the new ideas in the light of previous experience and knowledge as well as the current trends and the shifting business priorities of today's marketplace.

The youngest employee was appointed at just sixteen years of age and has recently celebrated her eighteenth birthday. Catherine Evans, Membership Assistant says that,

"I began working at Southampton and Fareham Chamber of Commerce straight after leaving school at 16. I was put onto a Modern Apprenticeship Scheme with which they backed and supported me fully. They have invested a lot of time and money into developing my skills through training and on-the-job experience. I feel that the Southampton and Fareham Chamber of Commerce is an excellent place to work. Even though there are only 15 of us, the varying ages make it not only a place of both knowledge and experience but also of fresh, innovative ideas, which can be brought together to produce an efficient yet pro-active company. I think it sets an extremely good example for any employer to follow in the business world with regards to age discrimination".

For the last ten years the Southampton and Fareham Chamber of Commerce has operated according to ISO standards and procedures. The operation of a successful business requires each member of staff to feel valued, that their opinions count and that they make a real contribution to the organisation. The regular training, management and staff meetings ensure this small team communicates well, which is especially important for those that work part time – yet another way the Chamber of Commerce ensures it employs and retains the correct staff for its business by offering flexible conditions thus securing personnel regardless of age.

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AWARD: Department for Work & Pensions - 2006 AGE POSITIVE AWARDS

CATEGORY: Employers who can demonstrate they have a positive attitude towards age diversity in recruitment.