

Notes from Bury EST Client / Job Centre Plus Consultation Event held on 16 February 2005

Eight service users along with staff from Bury EST met with JCP Business managers, Job Centre managers and staff to comment on service quality and make recommendation for improvements. The notes below are a summary of the consultation.

What works well?

- New Deal appears to work well for some young people due to the individualised personal service on offer.
- The atmosphere of job centres can vary – Bury has a good atmosphere.
- ‘Warm phones’ are helpful - when they are working.
- Mystery shopping undertaken – Bury ‘Top of the League’.
- Jon Beech (DEA) – excellent. Very understanding of disability issues and client needs.
- The DEAs provide a quality service – just not enough of them! More DEAs please / Gateway Advisers.
- The face to face service provided by Job Centres.
- Job Centre helpline.
- Job Points allow wider scope – can look further afield.
- Some people find the computer useful
- Cash Incentives to attend training and support into working.
- Staff will arrange appointments for interviews. Good if you are not that confident on the telephone.



Areas for improvement / Recommendations

Job Centre accessibility

- Job Centre office layout to have accessible and clear pathways which take into account customers who are wheelchair users.
- Open plan layout of job centre is distracting and means lack of privacy when meeting with an advisor. Make interview rooms available to customers and screen off sections to provide customers with privacy and confidentiality.
- Radcliffe Job Centre – too hot, lack of privacy and an intimidating layout.
- Reception point needed where you can get information on services or how to use the job centre.
- Introduce colour coding signs to signpost customers at the entrance to job Centres to direct them to the Job Centre service they require .
- Provide picture graphics and different language options on 'Job Point' screens to make them more accessible to job seekers with literacy and language needs
- Keep 'Job Points' maintained. Introduce backup system to get rid of problem of job points not working.
- Review the height of Job Points so they can be accessed by wheelchair users
- Step by step guidance at side of job points to get you started.

Staffing issues

- Increase availability of DEAs' in Radcliffe/Prestwich.
- Lack of Job Centre staff available.
- Provide access to "specialist" advisers (ethnicity) who have a general knowledge of immigration issues.
- Establish DEA advice surgery / 'Drop In.'

Welfare Benefits

- Too much paperwork when claiming benefits.
- Job seekers on Incapacity benefit are often deterred from finding work as they are not aware of the 52 week linking rule.
- There are delays in linking relevant clients back to incapacity benefits if their job has come to an end.

Customer Service

- Provide a job vacancy phone texting service.
- Provide young people with a clearer understanding of the correct channels to follow if they are unhappy with the service they receive from the Job Centre. This includes complaints procedure and informing the job centre of technical faults with 'Job Points.'
- Young people would prefer to be allocated to a JCP Adviser who they can see regularly so that they would have some understanding of their situation and allow them to form a trusting relationship.
- The JCP requirement to do a Basic Skills qualification is the main barrier to getting on New Deal. Some young people have had basic skills assessments in the past so feel that yet another assessment is just a paper exercise.
- Provide New Deal Advisors with access to a young persons previous basic skills assessments / qualifications. This will enable Advisors to consider if the young person can bypass basic skills assessment / training and speed up them accessing New Deal. This does raise confidentiality and disclosure issues
- Feel you are held to ransom. Clients felt forced to attend Basic Skills Course. Previously they could access their own choice of course (pilot to end soon).
- Young people leaving care need to be made aware they are eligible to be fast tracked to New Deal. This may go some way to providing a more individualised service.
- For staff to provide consistent information to job seekers.
- It can be difficult getting an answer from JCP Advisors to a simple question as you often have to join a long queue.
- Frontline staff need to provide customers with more advice.
- Staff do not explain vacancies fully.
- Staff to consider a job seeker CV's to help them in matching them to the right job.
- Be able to view what training is available rather than being told by your adviser.
- If you are not claiming benefits no-one tells you what services are available.
- More client follow up from DEAs.
- Telephones are often broken and staff are not willing to help (one off).



Customer service (continued)

- Introduce measures to reduce lunchtime queuing for example a ticket system.
- Ensure that the reception desk is staffed
- Reception staff need to inform clients what will happen once they have reported in. E.g. DEA will come over to collect them when they are available.
- To introduce 'floor walkers' into Job Centres to provide advice, guidance and help to customers.

Customer Information

- Welfare benefits are confusing. Make 'easy read' leaflets available.
- JCP Advisors to provide job Seekers with relevant benefit leaflets such as JPS1 / WK1.
- Produce bilingual information e.g. for employers, immigrants and on Tax Credits to make service user friendly.
- Bilingual leaflets to be made available on the web so that a printed copy can be provided to the job seeker straight away rather than having to wait due to a the relevant leaflet being ordered.

Customer Feedback

- Develop a client feedback form to monitor the quality of service provided by Service providers such as Rathbones, Shaw Trust, Remploy and Bury EST.

Partnership working

- Extend the 'Job Search Disclosure Agreement' to Bury EST.
- Establish joint working initiatives on employer health and safety checks and on large employer recruitment events. For example Bury EST to attend JCP 'Job Shop' employer recruitment events.

Staff training

- Raise staff awareness regarding mental health conditions by providing training. This could be included in staff induction or as staff refresher training.
- Provide staff with customer services training which includes Staff raising the awareness of the different needs of customers (Could be included as part of staff induction).



Further information from Bury EST on 0161 761 4662

www.buryest.org.uk

www.embracingdiversity.org