

Embracing Diversity

Bury EST Project Update April 2004

Profile of Project Beneficiaries – Statistics as of 21/04/04

Beneficiary Starters / Leavers

- **Cumulative total of project beneficiaries: 144**
- **Project leavers: 29**
- **Active beneficiaries: 115**

- Learning Disability Clients: 31 recruited to project / 4 project leavers
- Mental Health Clients: 29 recruited to the project / 1 project leaver
- Young Care Leavers: 18 recruited to the project / 1 project leaver
- Ethnicity Clients: 22 recruited to the project
- Job retention Clients: 42 recruited to the project / 23 project leavers
- Physical / Sensory Clients: 2 recruited to the project

Employed Beneficiaries

32 clients are currently employed

Ethnicity: 6, Learning Disability: 7, Mental Health: 14, Physical / Sensory Disability: 1, Young Care Leavers: 4

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Objective 1: Transferring the Model of Supported Employment to New Disadvantaged Groups

Progress

- The three pilot services (ethnic minorities, young care leavers and job retention) continue to embed and integrate themselves within their respective community organisations. The allocated Placement Officers have established a working caseload of beneficiaries and are developing strong integrated services and networks within the host organisations and have established networks of key supporting agencies. This has led to increased awareness and recognition within the respective client groups and the wider community.
- An emerging feature of the support provided to all new client groups is empowering them to determine the type and amount of support they require and the pace at which they want to progress at.
- Beneficiaries, especially young care leavers, are becoming more receptive to accessing job trials and work placements with forum employers, recognising that it will improve their employment prospects.
- The 'Open door policy' continues to work well with inactive clients returning to EST for support in finding employment.
- Beneficiary focus groups continue to provide valuable feedback on beneficiary experiences in finding and keeping employment and on the quality of provision provided by Bury EST and relevant stakeholders.
- Ethnicity beneficiaries have demonstrated high levels of job retention.
- A permanent seat on the multi-agency forum for asylum seekers.
- Feedback from the ethnicity beneficiaries is very positive regarding the quality of service provided by Bury EST and the extent to which it has empowered them.

Challenges

- Beneficiaries face a complex range of multiple barriers to finding and retaining employment: Cultural issues such as family interference, language, little or no work experience and lack of childcare provision.
- Beneficiaries with low and fluctuating levels of motivation.
- Fluctuating levels of contact with Beneficiaries.

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Objective 1 (continued)

- To further increase the number of minority ethnic females accessing the service.
- Clients and their local community often want a quick fix to finding employment, Poor access to health services
- Fluctuating motivation levels of beneficiaries
- To engage young care leavers aged between 15-18 more effectively.
- To increase rates of job retention amongst young care leavers.
- An increase in referrals from the minority ethnic females.

Job Retention initiative

Progress

- The pilot has supported 46 beneficiaries to date (20 on caseload at present time). 20 beneficiaries have been supported in retaining their employment and 3 in changing their job.
- **Client Surveys:** The comments from the clients were very positive about the support provided from the Job Retention Officer. All of the clients surveyed believe that this service should be provided as an integral part of GP services. There was some criticism of the narrow remit of the Pilot scheme. Further help should be given in terms of finding alternative employment elsewhere if clients do not want to return to the same job.
- **GP Surveys:** The five GPs within the surgery were also issued with a questionnaire. The results were as positive as the client survey in terms of the service provided so far. There was a comment about the lack of more positive support from the Primary Care Trust.

Challenges

- We need to move towards a commitment from the PCT regarding the mainstreaming of this project, expanding the number of GP practices covered.
- To base the Job Retention Officer at the health centre to provide a more efficient and joined up service and increase client accessibility to the service

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Objective 2: Develop a HRM Approach to Supported Employment

Progress

- **13 Clients are currently employed by forum members** - Ethnicity: 1, Learning Disability: 5, Mental Health: 7, Physical / Sensory: 1
- An Employer Forum has been established to support employers in exploring workforce diversity management practice relating to issues such as ethnicity, disability, age and gender. We are seeking and expect to receive JCP funding to extend this forum for a further year.
- Membership of the forum has remained stable at 35 and includes a diverse range of public and private sector organisations most notably GM police, Marks & Spencer's, Bury Metro, The Village Hotel group, Bury MBC, Joseph Holts and the Armed Forces. There is also good representation from local SMEs. Requests from new employers to attend forum meetings remains strong and we are in the process of developing links with HM Prisons, Inland Revenue.
- Raising employer awareness of managing a diverse workforce via presentations from a range of external agencies who promote employment equality and forum discussions.
- Forum members have started to network with each other to discuss common areas of development around managing diversity.
- Employer Forum members are being encouraged to take ownership of the forum by chairing forum meetings.
- Piloting the 'working interview' with several forum employers, which enables job candidates to demonstrate their suitability for a vacant job by performing it.
- Development of a vocational training pathway into employment by creating a partnership between our catering training centre and the hospitality arm of Joseph Holts brewery.
- We have been invited to take up local board membership with the Chamber of Commerce, the Bury Economic Forum and the Workforce Development Task Group of the Local Learning Partnership.
- Bury EST has responded to several requests from Employer Forum members to assist with raising awareness amongst their staff and managers about supported employment and managing diversity. This support has been provided via meetings with individual Human Resource managers and presentations to the staff and managers of forum employers.
- Supporting ASDA in producing staff guidance on recruitment and retention of people with a learning disability. This will include production of a video and reference literature

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- **Equal Opportunities.** Building on the Employer Equality and Diversity Survey with members of the Employer Forum on Diversity, Manchester Metropolitan University and Bolton Bury Chamber of Commerce conducted a survey with 70 employers across the Bury and Bolton area. This study provided an encouraging outcome, showing that employers in the Bury and Bolton area are positive about equality and have clearly made some steps to reduce discrimination within their workforce.
- A careers evening was recently held at the National Childrens Home Extra Mile project to raise awareness and encourage interest amongst young care leavers about careers in the armed forces.

Challenges

- To extend the careers sessions to other disadvantaged groups and to expand the initiative to include other employer forum members.
- We are looking to extend the participation of selected forum employers by allocating Placement Officers to work with them in identifying placement opportunities for our clients.
- We plan to consult with employers on improving how we undertake employment reviews with clients and employers and also on the production of an employer information pack.

Objective 3: Creation of a District Template for Delivering Welfare to Work through Supported Employment

Progress

- Bury EST are members of a Jobcentre Plus provider liaison group which will contribute towards an employment strategy for Bury.
- Currently arranging a joint meeting with GM Connexions, GM LSC and JCP to discuss how funding to support disadvantaged groups into employment can be allocated more effectively.
- A partnership has been established with Disability Living Allowance to improve the effectiveness of service users applying for and being awarded Disability Living Allowance.
- At a national level Bury EST play an active role in the interdepartmental working group on employment for people with learning disabilities which reports into the 'Valuing People' Task Force. Current issues under discussion include greater incentives for people working 5-15 hours per week, local authority recruitment procedures and the inclusion of social policy contract clauses in local authority contracting arrangements.



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Objective 3 (continued)

Challenges

- Develop practitioner liaison between Bury EST, Connexions, Jobcentre Plus and service providers around individuals receiving a service.
- At a practitioner level we are developing client focused partnerships with Connexions, Job Centre Plus, Lifelong Learning. The aim is to provide a more co-ordinated joined up working approach to supporting disadvantaged groups into employment.
- Identify a Social Inclusion Forum which feeds into the Local Strategic Partnership.
- Raise awareness amongst relevant stakeholders of the barriers to employment experienced by disadvantaged groups using focus group membership.

Innovation

- The development of employment reviews has promoted a continuous 'cycle of learning' to support company HR representatives in identifying and reviewing diversity.
- A three stage profiling model is being developed. This aims to speed up the profiling process and provide a more accurate picture of a beneficiary's abilities, vocational competencies and barriers to employment.
- Project learning has been documented on 'Learning Tree' via learning meetings and Away Days. Learning has been exchanged and relevant actions have been fed into the organisational Improvement Plan.
- Team away days have provided an opportunity to evaluate, exchange and formalise project learning. They have provided the basis for an organisational workplan which reflects the operational targets and developmental needs of the project.

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Empowerment

- Scheduled employment reviews have been an effective tool in supporting beneficiary workers to develop and maintain their employment status.
- We have modified the vocational profiling model to identify and review the barriers to employment that clients face and the actions in place to overcome them. This has enabled us to measure the effectiveness of our intervention in clients overcoming barriers to employment. Significant progress was made in overcoming low confidence, vocational skills / experience. Little or no progress was made in overcoming barriers relating to health / disability issues, lack of basic skills and job finding skills.
- Three beneficiary focus groups have been launched. Discussions have focused on beneficiary experiences in accessing the labour market. The ultimate aim is to raise awareness amongst relevant stakeholders about the barriers faced by beneficiaries in accessing and maintaining employment and what measures they can put in place to effect positive change.

Mainstreaming Actions

- Bury EST is considering the possibility of bidding for round 2 of Equal. The focus will be around disadvantaged young people, school exclusions, disabled youths, minority ethnic groups, drug and alcohol misuse and young care leavers.
- Bury EST to pursue funding to mainstream project initiatives via the following funding streams / sources;
 - LSC funding / Childrens services (Young Persons Employment Service)
 - JCP Ethnicity Fund (Ethnicity service)
 - JCP Discretionary Fund (Employer Consultant)
 - Valuing People (Learning Disability)
 - PCT funding (Job Retention Service)