

Bury EST has received something of a reprieve with the news that we have been successful in our efforts to continue the employment support service for people from minority ethnic communities. The two year funding has been awarded as part of a Bury MBC bid for funds from the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister. The initiative, known as Invest to Save, will see £700,000 invested within the borough to support access to employment for ethnic minorities. A range of projects will be delivered by a partnership of local organisations and Bury EST has secured funding for two Placement Officers to work with people with more complex needs.

The funding will also help to secure the future of our Employer Forum on Diversity for the next two years. The forum has been a key factor in developing ever closer links with local employers and encouraging the recruitment of diverse workforces within local business. Future plans include the development of a video featuring the experiences and views of forum members.

Despite our best efforts, we have been unable to get funding to continue our service for care-leavers and our innovative job retention scheme and these have both now ended. We had high hopes that these services would be able to continue and we hope to be able to revive them again in the future.

In past days, we would have applied for European funding to continue these schemes but since control of this funding has passed to the Learning + Skills Council and Jobcentre Plus,

Funding for new ethnicity support

there is little chance for projects that do not deliver their priorities: qualifications and 13 week job preparation courses. We are very concerned that European money is being used to fund mainstream provision that should be funded anyway by these organisations.

Recent meetings have highlighted the gaps in support available to disabled jobseekers and it is clear that neither Jobcentre Plus nor the Learning + Skills Council are able to support jobseeker learning within the workplace. There are rumours of budget shortages and widespread changes to provision later this year and we are concerned about possible changes to contracting arrangements and new initiatives that might effectively exclude people with disabilities from receiving adequate support to develop vocational skills. We will be seeking a meeting as soon as possible with the new Minister for Disabled People, Anne McGuire MP to discuss the situation.

On the education side, we have the LSC convinced that they are addressing the needs of people with learning disabilities through its

entry to employment (e2e) programme though it is clear that you can't get entry on to the programme unless there's a good chance that you'll achieve a level 2 qualification. It is a matter of some concern that people with learning disabilities are losing out on all accounts with provision funded through the LSC or Jobcentre Plus.

Many of our customers will know that Bury EST has had unacceptably long waiting lists for a number of years now. It's clear to us that large numbers of people with disabilities want to go to work in properly paid jobs and yet Government structures and funding regimes do very little to support their aspirations.

We are hoping to move from the Social Services Department, or Adult Social Care Services as it's now known, to the Chief Executive's Department later this year. This move will allow us to address economic exclusion from a corporate perspective and help us to enlist the support of other agencies in addressing social exclusion.

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CONTACTING US

We welcome your feedback about the newsletter or the service you have received from Bury EST. We are always looking for stories or events we could attend.

Please contact us on:

0161 761 4662

Alternatively visit our website:

www.buryest.org.uk

EMPLOYER NEWS

APRIL 2005 MEETING UPDATE

Once again in April this year we met with members of our employers forum at the Bolholt hotel, Bury. However the format of this meeting was slightly different as we asked members to give us feedback on the forum. We wanted to see what they thought of the forum, whether it has been worthwhile and if any changes had been made in their organisations because of it.

Holly Wallace, Ambers Attic

"Placing people at Ambers Attic has raised awareness, and created a positive image with children, parents and other staff. The clients are very committed and motivated and the job matching has been done accurately".

Stuart Reich, BCR

"Bury EST have helped us to overcome the problems we have had recruiting staff via conventional routes. We were impressed by the support that Placement Officers have provided



to client and employer and the vetting system that is used to identify clients that have got the key skills required to fill vacant positions".

Steven Walters, Serco Metrolink

"We had wrong assumptions about disabilities and why someone couldn't work. The barrier to work was sometimes the preconceived ideas".

Les Pearson, EDC, Bury MBC

"It started with a phone call to Bury EST about a caretaking job. The employee involved is still in work 6 yrs later and got the job based on his interview performance and not the disability".

The Employers Forum is set to continue after the project ends in November. We have very committed members who through their efforts continue to drive the forum forward.

We welcome other employers in the Bury area to join our forum of 40 plus members. There is a wealth of knowledge to tap into through this unique networking opportunity. If you are interested in further information on the forum or in attending a future meeting please contact **Fred Bowen on 0161 761 4662.**



After the excesses of Christmas it was business as usual for the Employers Forum who met for breakfast to discuss the issues surrounding ex-offenders and the workplace. The meeting took place in early January at the Bolholt Country Park Hotel in Bury with a great turnout which set the scene for an interesting discussion. Invited speakers at the meeting included Graham Smyth and Terry Crosby from the Youth Offending Team; Peter Rabbits from ACAS and Preston Hulse from the Probation Service.

About one third of Forum members employ ex-offenders. Susan James who is an Employment Advocacy Worker for HMP Forest Bank and forum member offered to arrange visits for employers to the prison. She also reminded employers that they could already be employing ex-offenders as not everyone has to declare.

Another forum member, Sheila Deighton from the Manchester Coalition for Employment, is currently working with Hindley Prison. They hold employer open days where employers are given the opportunity to meet with prisoners who are

JANUARY 2005 MEETING UPDATE

due to be released and will be looking for jobs. These open days help to break down the barriers by giving employers the chance to see the training that prisoners receive. It must be remembered that some are highly qualified people.

Since the meeting, a number of forum members have expressed an interest in visiting HMP Forest Bank which we will be arranging in the near future.

The next forum meeting is set for 6th July with an arrival time of 9.30 for a 10.00am start. This will be followed by a buffet lunch for anyone wishing to network after the meeting. If you are interested in attending this or a future meeting please contact **Fred Bowen on 0161 761 4662.**

EMPLOYER NEWS



What is PACE?

The PACE Network was established in 2002 by Bury College Business Solutions as a project initiative part-funded by the European Regional Development Fund. The PACE Network is based on the idea that People Add the Competitive Edge. This underlies the project activities – in supporting organisations to recognise that their employees are their most valuable asset and to reflect this belief in the way in which they operate in order to impact positively on organisational profitability and performance.

Why was PACE Established?

The PACE Network supports organisations in gaining awareness of effective people management and related policies, procedures

and practices. Every employer wants their employees to perform well and be committed to the organisation's goals and objectives; however creating this type of loyalty and commitment in the workforce represents a major challenge to any manager. Therefore, the PACE Network through advice, guidance, seminars and signposting will support organisations to effectively manage their most valuable resource, their people.

What can the PACE Network do for my Organisation?

- Free HR audit (subject to eligibility)
- Free 12 hour advice and guidance programme
- 1 year complimentary membership to the PACE Network Seminar Programme
- Free quarterly newsletter 'Management Matters'
- Full access to the PACE Network website.
- Great opportunities to network and share best practice with other local businesses.

Why Join?

- Benefit from a free HR audit to help you to recognise areas for business improvement.
- Gain free advice and guidance to help enhance organisational success and profitability in the long-term.
- Attend seminars to update your people management/HR knowledge and to stay abreast of developments which could affect your organisation.



Seminar Programme

The PACE Network at Bury College Business Solutions will be hosting seminars on key people management topics throughout 2005. For further details of these or on becoming a

member contact Michelle Lomax, PACE Network Project Manager on 0161 765 3662

E-mail: michelle.lomax@burycollege.ac.uk

LOCAL EMPLOYER NOMINATED FOR AWARD

February 3rd was a night to remember with the first ever Manchester Employer Coalition Awards. The ceremony was held at the magnificent Lowry Hotel. These awards recognise the achievements of employers, partnerships and individuals who are leading the way in breaking down barriers to employment and making Greater Manchester a better place to live and work in.

The awards were split into 7 different categories and Bury EST nominated employer, Future Frames (UPVC) under the category of 'Promoting Ability' back in December last year. Future Frames, members of the Bury EST Employers Forum, have been working with us for a number of years and currently employ two of our clients. This award recognises employers who are positive about disabled people and benefit from their talents and skills. Future Frames did extremely well getting into the last three nominated companies and on the night received a very special runners up award.

Dennie Ford and Joseph Campbell represented Bury EST at the event and thoroughly enjoyed the evening. As Joe put it, "This award recognises the effort put in by Future Frames, the clients and Bury EST to achieve a more socially inclusive workforce. We are very proud of the relationship we have built up with our employers and awards like this only go to prove that all the hard work is worthwhile."

We hope we have the opportunity to put forward another company for consideration next year. For further details on the Employers Forum on Diversity please contact Fred Bowen on 0161 761 4662 or visit our website www.buryest.org.uk



From left to right: Jimmy Wilson (Future Frames), Lucy Meacock and Joseph Campbell (Bury EST)

EMPLOYER PROFILES

New to the Employer Forum on Diversity we have Sarah Kay who is the HR Co-ordinator for L'Oréal Professional Products Division in Bury. Sarah very kindly agreed to undergo the scrutiny of our in-house reporter and answered some of our burning questions:



Sarah Kay HR Co-ordinator - L'Oréal Professional Products Division

Can you tell me what L'Oréal does at the Bury site?

The site at Bury is the distribution centre for Professional Products – the brands we cover are Kerastase, Redken, L'Oréal Professional and Matrix. On site we have Order Preparation, Logistics, Customer Care and Credit Services teams.

How did you hear about Bury EST?

I came across Bury EST by accident to be honest! We have another distribution centre in Trafford Park, Manchester (this is for the consumer products), a factory in Wales and offices in Hammersmith, London. Part of a cross-site project I'm involved in is to look at diversity in the workplace. As part of my research I'd gone on line to look at what information was available about the Bury area. We've only been in Bury since the beginning of the year so it's all very new and there's a lot to learn!

Why did you decide to contact us?

Bury EST seemed to be exactly what we were looking for. As a site, we are open to suggestions as to how we can try to build links within the local community, and recognise the importance of having a diverse workforce. I was particularly interested in reading some of the case studies – it made me realise what a positive outcome can be achieved for all involved.

Can you tell me what the profile of your current workforce is? Is it representative of the local community in which you operate?

Within our workforce there are different departments so it's not that easy to generalise.

Within the Customer Care team, the majority of workers are single, white and female. In the warehouse, however, there is a better gender mix, though the majority are of a white ethnic origin. It's only through beginning research that we are starting to realise that this is not representative of the local community.

Is your product range influenced by your workforce? Is your workforce involved in product development?

Manchester workers do not really have an influence on product range as L'Oréal is a global company. Product planning and development takes place at other sites.

Is your HR focus at board level or is it on a regional level? Does what you do in Bury have any impact on the rest of the organisation?

Both! The sites within the UK (Manchester, Wales and London) all have shared aims and values yet work in very different environments so have to be flexible and adapt to suit the locality. We are fortunate in that we are able to learn from each other. The UK HR team has regular meetings to discuss issues and best practice so ideally Bury will be leading the way!

Are the employment issues the same at the other sites in the UK?

Employment issues tend to differ between the sites – the subject of diversity however, is an important theme and is taken seriously at all levels and locations.

What do you see are the benefits of employing a diverse workforce?

We want to celebrate people's individuality and recognise the different strengths that people can bring to the workplace. One of the aims of the company is that we maintain a responsible approach to employment and support the local community. By tackling the diversity issue we will hopefully be going some way to achieving this.

At the Bury site is there anything that you have achieved of which you are proud?

Like I said, we've not been here long so many of our achievements were from our previous site. One recent event that does spring to mind is the fund-raising that took place for the Tsunami Disaster Fund. The generosity of those on site and their willingness to help out was great – it was an event that touched everyone.

What was your experience of attending the employers forum? What did you think?

I had been slightly apprehensive before attending the forum, not sure what to expect I suppose. As soon as I walked in the door though I felt at ease and gained a lot from the morning. Speaking to people from different companies with different experiences was really valuable. It was reassuring to hear that people had the same fears yet had overcome them, and the success stories made it clear that the relationship with Bury EST had been a very supportive, positive one. I'm looking forward to the next one!

INCAPACITY BENEFIT CHANGES

2.67 million people receive incapacity benefit and related benefits in the UK according to the Department of Work and Pensions. In 1979 only 700,000 received these benefits.

Tony Blair has said that he wants to get people back into work and off incapacity benefit, claiming that more than one million people on this benefit want to work. But what does this mean for you?

New guidelines regarding incapacity benefit will come into force by 2008:

- Incapacity Benefit will be replaced with two new benefits. Automatic rises in payments for claimants after six months and a year will end.
- People with more severe conditions will get a new Disability and Sickness Allowance.

- Most claimants will move onto a new Rehabilitation Support Allowance – a flat rate of £55 but extra money for those trying to return to work.

Under the existing Permitted Work Rules:

- You can earn up to and including £20.00 a week for an unlimited period, or
- You can work for less than 16 hours a week, on average, with earnings up to and including £78.00 a week (from 1 October 2004) for a 26 week period. The period can be extended for another 26 weeks if a Job Broker, Personal Adviser or Disability Employment Adviser agrees that it will help you towards work of 16 or more hours a week. There is no limit to the number of times you can do permitted work in this category while you are getting an incapacity benefit; but there must be a gap of at least

52 weeks between periods. These subsequent periods are for 52 weeks and a Job Broker, Personal Adviser or Disability Employment Adviser must support the work from the outset.

- If you receive support from a public or voluntary organisation you can work in supported permitted work for earnings of up to and including £78.00 a week for an unlimited period.

The Government recently announced its intention to extend the one year linking rule to two years. This already applies to people receiving working tax credits and means that if a job doesn't work out or an employee has to give up work they will be able to return to their previous welfare benefits without having to requalify for the higher rate.

SOURCE: JOBCENTRE PLUS

BURY EST CLIENTS MEET WITH JOBCENTRE PLUS

In February this year Bury EST clients met with Jobcentre Plus representatives to discuss the issues around finding employment.

Our clients were extremely well prepared with questions ready for the Jobcentre Plus representative on their table. For Jobcentre Plus this was a great opportunity to hear from service users directly what they think of the service and to listen to suggestions for improvements.

Representatives of our learning disabilities, mental health, ethnicity, Workstep and young care-leavers groups were all very keen to put across their point of view, even giving up their own time for a couple of hours in the evening to prepare for the event. We are very encouraged that Jobcentre Plus got involved in the event.

We had both positive and negative feedback that came out of the meeting. Below are some of the comments that were made by our clients during the meeting:

On the positive side:

- The Disability Employment Advisors are excellent and the only problem is that there aren't enough of them
- Bury Job Centre has an excellent atmosphere
- The individualised personal service for young people on New Deal seems to work

However on the negative side, the following issues came up:

- Job Centres were thought to be inaccessible
- Staffing issues such as a lack of floor staff and the need for more training on disability issues
- A lack of information in accessible formats

This type of event is extremely worthwhile so organisations such as Jobcentre Plus can meet directly with and get feedback from the people they are helping.

We would like to thank both Jobcentre Plus and our clients for giving up their time to get involved in this event.



Following on from the meeting some of the issues identified will be addressed locally. In a Jobcentre Plus rollout there will be not only refurbished offices but improved reception points, floorwalkers and different ways of accessing services which will meet some of the recommendations suggested by the service users. However as a step before the rollout some local offices including Prestwich now hope to introduce a floorwalker. Mary O'Dowd, Deputy Manager at Prestwich Jobcentre echoed the comments of other Jobcentre Plus staff who attended the event saying, "I thoroughly enjoyed the event - it was well run and very informative".

News in brief...

Employer Engagement Training

We are now sharing our expertise and successes with other supported employment providers by offering training in Employer Engagement. So far we have run courses in Wigan and Budapest which have been very well received. For further details please contact Fred Bowen our Employer Consultant on 0161 761 4662

Conference Update

Bury EST have presented at a number of conferences recently, including the Diversity Works conference for human resource professionals and the annual conference of the Association for Supported Employment in Swansea.

Merger of AFSE and NASE

Huw Davies has been elected Chair of the Association for Supported Employment for the fourth year. The Association is merging this year with the National Association for Supported Employment. The unified body, to be known as the British Association for Supported Employment, will provide a stronger and unified voice on behalf of agencies such as Bury EST.

Huw represents Supported Employment on LSC review

Huw has been asked to represent supported employment on one of five subgroups of the national Learning and Skills Council's independent review of provision for people with disabilities. The subgroup will focus on learner transition and employment. The full review, led by Peter Little OBE, is due to report in August.

Bury EST at Mind Conference



In March this year we went along to the Mind Annual Conference and Exhibition in Harrogate. Over 900 delegates visited the exhibition over the three days. The theme for this year's conference was 'Stepping up to excellence' which aimed to highlight and celebrate good practice within the mental health field, focusing on user initiatives, excellence and innovation in services,

rights, arts and relaxation. Over the 3 days there were lectures and workshops to attend as well as events as diverse as drumming, reiki and yoga in the relaxation zone. More details on the event can be found on the Mind website www.mind.org.uk

Barcelona in June

Bury EST has had 2 workshop presentations accepted for the 2005 conference of the European Union of Supported Employment. Rod Goodwin and Fred Bowen will be presenting on Job Retention and Working Effectively with Employers. The biennial conference takes place in Barcelona in June.

Job retention pilot ends

Our attempt for funding for the innovative job retention service offered through Redbank health centre has been turned down by Bury Primary Care Trust. The PCT stated that the project did not meet their strategic objectives around education, training and employment. We are seeking a meeting with the PCT to get clarification about their strategic aims. The project has been quoted by the Department for Work & Pensions officials as an example of best practice and we are playing an active part in informing the development of employment advisors within primary care.

Strategy Unit Report

The Prime Minister's Strategy Unit has published a major new report. *Improving Life chances for Disabled People* which has a strong focus on promoting effective transitions from education into employment. It is likely that a new Office for Disability Issues will be established to take forward the report's recommendations and coordinate strategy across Government departments. You can find the report at www.strategy.gov.uk

Sharing Best Practice

Bury EST has agreed to host two visits by services from the Czech Republic. The week long visits are scheduled for September and November and will see staff from the Employment Services and voluntary sector in Usti nad Labem come over to study our working methods and strategic planning.

Goodbye

We have had to say goodbye to a few staff as our European funding comes to an end in May. Joe Campbell has moved to the Connexions service in Manchester as an employer liaison worker, Tim Hall is moving to Real Deal Employment, Tracey Pennant will be leading the Positive Action Training for Greater Manchester Police and Asghar Ali has become a Business Advisor for Bury College's Business Solutions. Charlotte Easterbrook, Caroline Gee, Phil Sutton and Sharon Cummins will continue to work elsewhere within Bury Social Services. We wish them all the best in their new jobs.

Young People Service Ends

Our service for young people leaving care has had to close down because there is no funding available. We're very disappointed at this as the service was starting to achieve some good results in an area which is a Council and Government priority. We will be working with partners to bid for more European funding to run an employment and skills project for disadvantaged youths within the borough. It is hoped that this will be part of a larger integrated approach to encouraging young people to stay in education and employment.

New Literature

We now have 7 new case studies available to download from www.embracingdiversity.org.

Please keep checking this site as new information is being added all of the time.

TRAINING SERVICES

Bury EST is now offering training to employers and service providers on:

- diversity management, and
- engaging employers effectively

Contact Fred Bowen for more details on:

0161 761 4662



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