

Contacting Us

Bury EST is changing its phone number to 0161 761 4662 from October 2004 but you can still use the existing phone number over the next year or email us at enquiries@burvest.org.uk

BURY EXPORTS BEST PRACTICE

Beacons of best practice is how one group of Bury employers have been described after they recently highlighted the business benefits of managing a diverse workforce to a European audience.



The Embracing Diversity partnership along with Personnel Managers from public and private sector employers recently flew out to Spain to attend a European Employer focused seminar. The challenge was to advise their European partners from Spain and Italy on how to effectively support employers in recruiting and retaining people from disadvantaged groups. The seminar was the final meeting between the three European-funded projects that have come together under the "Futuro" banner. Following on from the week long experience, three members of Bury

EST's Employer Forum on Diversity have given their thoughts on the trip and the project as a whole.

Sarah Draycott is Human Resource Manager at the Village Hotel in Bury. "Bury EST contacted the Village directly to ask if they would like to be involved in the forum. We agreed, not expecting to go to speak in Spain though. It was really interesting to see how different it is in Europe. The rest of Europe seems to be so far behind us and have many different regulations on employing a diverse workforce." Sarah was

interested in the Spanish visit to find out what has been going on in the project as a whole and to network with the UK project partners and employers. "The trip confirmed that the Supported Employment model is the best for the UK and it works well."

Seminar employer Stephen Mason, Divisional Personnel Officer for Greater Manchester Police (GMP) stated "Bury EST has helped us locally in Bury to focus on the internal diversity of our own support staff. We have helped various sections of the community of Bury, back into employment over the last few years due to our sense of civic duty.

It was an interesting experience that has given me more confidence regarding our current policies and procedures in recruitment and illustrates the success of our approach to diversity."

The seminar culminated in a final day conference which was attended by local employers and employment services. All six of the British employers took to the stage to tell of their experiences and expectations.

Darren Sargent from the John Lewis Partnership urged the Spanish employment services to be more ambitious about contacting the private sector and spoke of the positive impact that the Embracing Diversity project had made in supporting the company to review its policies around recruitment.

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BURY EXPORTS BEST PRACTICE

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Stockport MBC's Carmel McKeogh described how the authority which employs 12,000 people, had adopted a strong commitment to corporate parenting by employing young people leaving care. Sarah found the experiences of other UK delegates in employing a diverse workforce particularly valuable. "The Stockport presentation on 'Corporate Parenting' was extremely interesting and not really something that had been considered before. Seeing the project as a whole was extremely useful to get a better understanding."

Ingrid Hitchon, Managing Director of local manufacturing company Molygran Ltd, initially became involved with Bury EST when she employed a young man with a learning disability. Her recent involvement has been as a member of Bury EST's Employer Forum on Diversity where she represents the views of small businesses. Ingrid echoed the views of her fellow employers regarding the seminar "It was great to get another point of view and tips on best practice from other UK employers. Both partners were highly hospitable. Within the conference the Spanish were a lot more

open to new ideas than the Italians but both Spain and Italy seem to be a long way behind us in the process of employing a more diverse workforce."

This view was reinforced by Luis Rodrigo, President of the Organisation for Self-Employed Professionals who said that "Spain is light years behind the UK in this matter." Renata Lopez Prada, coordinator of the Spanish project is now working to get all the employment support services to collaborate on a joint approach to employers in the area and sees this as a major step forward. As Renata commented "It was incredible to see just how impressed everyone was with the attitudes and comments from the English employers. We have learned so much from their involvement in this seminar".

Fred Bowen, Bury EST's Employer Consultant also added, "The UK employers should feel proud with what they achieved. Not only did they have a major impact on influencing the future practice of the Spanish and Italian partners but also in developing partnerships based around future employer led initiatives in the UK. The

week spent together allowed for a wealth of discussions around recruitment practice and has really helped employers and Bury EST staff to get to know each other better.

By the end of the week the UK delegation were brimming with enthusiasm and looking forward to taking the project a stage further. As Stephen commented "Getting to know the staff from Bury EST over the space of a week in a relatively informal setting is better than just knowing a name on a phone...the UK team seemed to be very professional." Bury EST wish to publicly thank the employers who attended the seminar for making it such a worthwhile week.

Anyone requiring further details about the Embracing Diversity project or on becoming a member of the Employer Forum on Diversity should contact **Fred Bowen on 0161 253 6588 or visit www.embracingdiversity.org**

Seedfield Gets Into Training

An exciting new initiative is being developed at the Seedfield Resource Centre, Bury. Bury EST has taken over the café operation and created a vocational training centre. Our clients can now undertake an NVQ Level 1 in Food Preparation and Cooking.

The trainees are given theory and skills training, all of which takes place on site. Each trainee has different needs and requirements and the trainer, along with placement officers, will work together to improve confidence as well as developing the skills needed to pursue a career in the hospitality industry. When the trainee has completed the theory and feels confident, Accrington & Rossendale College will carry out assessments leading to the award of certificates.

By completing this program the trainee will have a better chance of finding long-term sustained employment in the catering industry. Additionally, trainees will have the chance to improve their customer care skills through constant contact with the general public.

A number of private sector companies have expressed an interest in offering support in the further development of the program and the possibility of recruiting trainees once they have completed the NVQ. We are currently developing opportunities with the Joseph Holts chain of pubs and with Compass Catering, the largest catering company in the world. The program can be tailored to suit each organisation and once trainees have successfully completed the course, they

would be supported in the workplace by a company trainer, which would allow for easy integration into a new workplace.

Further information is available from Ian Ainscough on 0161 253 6905.



An Employer's Thoughts On Diversity



Karen Davies
(Highfield Care Ltd.)

These days, most employers have problems with recruiting and retaining a full workforce. Independent health-care providers, in particular providers of care for older people, are experiencing a near crisis in recruitment. This is due in part to serious under funding by local authorities leading to uncompetitive wages, the care of older people having a low profile and meeting the required staffing levels. The hours are long and the work carries the responsibilities associated with the provision of personal care to vulnerable people. As a manager of a nursing home for older people I have met with the constant problems with recruitment.

Providers are recruiting overseas staff and this has to some extent relieved the shortage of nurses and care staff. It has led to a greater ethnic and cultural diversity in our workforce but raised issues about how to integrate overseas staff and manage this diversity. Employers must consider racism in the workplace, harassment and the perceptions of local staff as well as helping overseas staff to adjust to working and living in the UK.

For 5 months I had a kitchen assistant post advertised in the local job centre. The post was for 24 hours per week paying the minimum wage. There were no enquiries about the post despite the position being flexible, part time and in a rewarding environment. Finally, I was approached by a placement officer from Bury EST who had a client interested in the vacancy that he had seen in the job centre.

Following an informal interview with the prospective employee, placement officer and me it was decided that the time wasn't right for this particular client. However as a result of that meeting I became interested in being involved with Bury EST as a member of their employer forum. This gave me the opportunity to widen the net of prospective candidates and having a job analysis carried out for any vacancies available. The employer forum also provided me with the opportunity of networking with other employers and

getting information from guest speakers. I felt that I already had experiences to contribute through the recruitment of local and overseas staff.

By chance, Bury EST had another client looking for employment in a kitchen setting. Following an informal interview and a work trial she was successful in her job application to the home. This particular member of staff showed an aptitude and appreciation of others' disabilities, both mental and physical.

As a result of this appointment, I feel the home's staff gained in awareness of others' abilities, in team building and in understanding how to support staff in realising their potential. It also gained flexibility around delivery, for example, a multi-faith workforce makes it easier to cover key periods such as Christmas.

I gained as a manager in adapting the interviewing and recruitment requirements to individual applicants. Not every work placement was successful but each was a positive learning experience for the home, the client and Bury EST staff.

Did diversity work because of Bury EST's intervention, because of the home's recruitment policies, because of the person responsible for the home's recruitment, because of the client's attitude or because of the commitment of the existing workforce? I feel that a generous helping of each provided the staff with an opportunity to work as a team, to maintain their own cultural, professional and personal experiences but with the expectation that all of those things would be brought to the workplace.

I feel staff became more aware that others' abilities are more important than any disabilities; that difference brings variety. The term learning disability was not used as a description for any staff potential or otherwise. Only line managers were aware of staff support needs - when required and with the consent of the worker.

Being involved with Bury EST helped the company in having a workplace that was continually developing a dynamic and diverse workforce. It contributed by providing the workplace with reliable, supported cost-effective workers. Poor staff retention can cost business substantial amounts in time and money. Having a settled and supported team could reduce sickness levels, increase productivity. Diversity recognises the best in everyone.

Change Matters



Fred Bowen
(Employer Consultant)

For many people change is something to fear, something that shakes us out of the comfort zone of our daily routines. But its impact can be greater on someone who has a disadvantage such as a learning disability. If it all goes wrong, it could totally devastate someone's confidence and their ability to carry out duties.

By change I mean something that would cause a disruption to the normal daily routine. This could be a change in personnel, work structures or seasonal changes to duties.

Communication is absolutely essential for both ourselves and our clients so that we are aware of any major changes that could have an affect on the job role our client has. We need to know:

- What exactly is changing?
- When the change will happen?
- What are the implications of the change? and
- Who is responsible for managing the change?

Changes in line management can be a key issue. We want to ensure a smooth handover of knowledge so that a new manager can become aware of the project and the services that Bury EST provides. This is why we build strong relationships with our employer organisations. For us good practice is about being in regular contact with both clients and employers to ensure that a client's work performance is maintained and that we keep the momentum, knowledge and goodwill that has been built between ourselves and the company. So, if your company is anticipating change that may affect our service or client – **please get in touch.**

Job Retention Pilot Continues To Work!

Rod Goodwin (Employment Officer)

Jean (not her real name) knows all about the damage stress can cause. Problems both at home, and at work led to self isolation, and an inability to leave the house, either for work and even shopping. Jean is a single mum with an alcoholic ex-husband and her family had involvement with stealing and drug abuse. This led to an impossible situation that she just couldn't deal with alone.

Jean was referred to Bury EST's new Job Retention Pilot by her GP. After nearly 5 months of support she returned to full time work. Over 40 other people have benefited from a new job retention scheme in Radcliffe.

Jean's return to work was staged very gradually and involved counselling from the job retention officer, a gradual return to leaving the house and re-introduction to the workplace. Jean received help from her personnel manager to organise a phased return to work with constant monitoring and support from Bury EST's retention officer, Rod Goodwin.

According to the Health & Safety Executive, about half a million people in the UK experience work-related stress at a level they believe is making them ill; and up to 5 million people in the UK feel "very" or "extremely" stressed by their work. The HSE says work-related stress is a serious problem for organisations. Tackling it effectively can result in significant benefits for organisations.

The law now requires organisations to take action to prevent and control work-related stress and there are positive steps that employers can take. The HSE is now looking at management standards around stress management. In a recent judgement the House of Lords said that "all employers must take the initiative to protect employees once they know that an individual is vulnerable to work related stress." This has overturned a previous appeal decision which made it the employees' responsibility to keep the employer informed.

Bury EST has advocated the development of job retention schemes for a number of years and has now set up a new initiative. Organised in conjunction with Bury EST and

Red Bank Health Centre in Radcliffe, the scheme has been accepting clients for 1½ years and has so far seen 46 people receiving support. The aim of the project is to help people who are in danger of losing their jobs. The threats are varied however work related stress seems to be the most prevalent.

Obviously occupational stress is only one of many issues that could threaten a person's employment. Other barriers to retaining employment include physical problems which could be solved with the provision of additional aids, misunderstanding or misinterpretation, bullying and harassment in the workplace and poor management training around issues of stress and disabilities.

A common scenario could be work related stress leading to being signed off sick from work. If the stress is not treated it could be compounded by depression. Jobs are often only held open for a certain length of time. Initial absence from work can lead to money problems, relationship problems, and the need for on-going secondary medical treatment. Over the country, this is placing a large burden on the country's benefit and health systems.



Rod Goodwin (Employment Officer)

Bury EST's scheme aims to support people back to work before they begin this downward spiral. It is open to anyone who is in danger of losing their job and who is referred by a GP from Red Bank Health Centre in Radcliffe. Problems may be not only stress related and one of the most difficult tasks for the Employment Officer is to find out what the issues are and work with the client to resolve it.

Rod's role is not simply to provide a shoulder to cry on. He needs to use his counselling and mediation skills and have a good working knowledge of employment

law. A crucial role is to mediate between the client and their employer. For the situation to have reached crisis it is almost certain that communications will have broken down between these two parties and there could be an awful lot of animosity. Arranging joint meetings between client, employer and other relevant agencies can be a particularly difficult task. Often Rod needs to liaise with all of these parties separately so that progress can be made. This can be very time consuming but at least there is communication from all parties which is the key to resolving problems.

The scheme is funded until May 2005 and Bury EST is hoping that the service will be mainstreamed by Bury's Primary Care Trust. Future plans could involve drop in clinics for quick referrals. However this may in effect just increase waiting lists. It is really a double edged sword; to increase numbers of users would show the true demand for the service and yet lead to a longer waiting list and ultimately a reduction in the level of support available to each client.

Some businesses are taking matters into their own hands and engaging occupational health professionals to look after their greatest asset – their staff! Perhaps another way forward could be for companies to begin to employ welfare officers again. It seems to be a role that has died out over the years. Years ago there weren't all of the problems we have now with job retention or perhaps people just accepted the stress and bullying because they were grateful to have a job. With new legislation and support on the way, we are getting to a stage where people don't have to suffer at work in silence.

Pilot schemes like the one at Redbank Health Centre are leading the way with a good success rate. Hopefully this will lead to more GP practices coming on board throughout Bury so that more people at risk of losing their jobs can benefit.

Redbank GP, Dr Thomas commented, "the scheme has been very helpful to patients and the surgery would lose a good service should it be dropped after the pilot period has ended".

Further information is available from Rod on 0161 253 6588 or by email to rod@buryest.org.uk

FOCUS: Alex at the Village

Alex is a 22 years old, gregarious, easy going person whose main desire in life is to help other people any way he can. He loves to help with the gardening and house work at home where he lives with his parents. He is continuously volunteering to help.

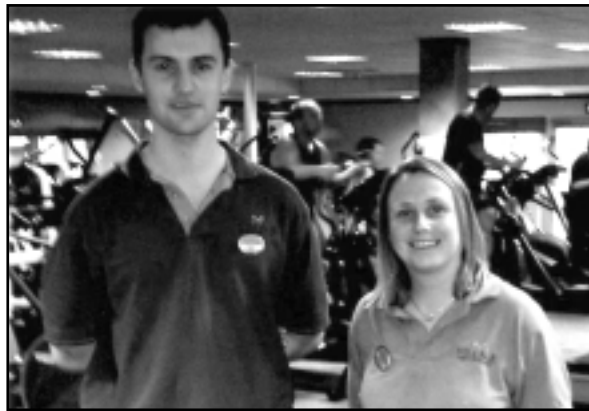
When he first accessed the services of Bury EST three years ago he'd already undertaken some voluntary work as a helper at the Commonwealth Games in Manchester. His mum said that it was just something he had to apply for. "Alex is always putting himself forward for one scheme or another" explained him mum, "even when such schemes seem a little unrealistic. You see Alex thinks differently because he has Asperger's Syndrome."

Although Aspergers, which is part of the Autistic Spectrum of Disorders, has some general characteristics it would be a mistake to think that all people who have the condition are the same. In fact the opposite is true. Generally speaking, Aspergers affects the way an individual takes in and interprets information. Consequentially people with Aspergers generally have some difficulty with communication and this can make accessing employment extremely difficult, especially when traditional recruitment procedures are so dependent upon communication and person to person skills.

Bury EST saw the need for accurate assessment of Alex's characteristics, skills and abilities so we could be sure that we found suitable employment for him. We also needed to give Alex a variety of differing work based experiences, through work placements, so that he could gain some experience of what kinds of work would suit him. "Although the process can be time consuming" explained Mick Dean, Alex's Placement Officer, "it's important to make sure that any employment sought is based on a mixture of an individual's skills and abilities and their own wishes. Some negotiation may be necessary if work expectations are unrealistic."

Work placements gave Alex the opportunity to try different jobs. This experience ranged from placements at a factory, a computer company and a supermarket chain.

Through the placements Alex was able to get some idea of what he liked and Mick was able to assess exactly where Alex's strengths and



Alex with Janine Howarth – Leisure Manager

learning needs were. Alex loved undertaking the placements, and his mum thought they were "brilliant", especially as she knew without this kind of approach Alex would probably never find suitable employment.

Once the assessment was complete, Bury EST set about looking for paid employment with Alex. When an opportunity came up as a Male Leisure Cleaner at the Village Hotel in Bury, Mick asked if Alex could be allowed to try the job on a 'working interview' basis thereby bypassing the traditional interview process which would be too difficult for him to undertake because of the communication difficulties associated with Aspergers. "A working Interview" explained Mick, "is merely an alternative to a traditional interview and allows an individual to prove they are capable of doing the job without jumping through the hoops of a traditional interview which requires considerable person to person skills, especially in the leisure industry."

The Village Hotel staff were brilliant in giving Alex the necessary support by providing one to one training until he was able to work inter-dependently with other members of the leisure staff. The job involves a lot of routine which suits Alex but he did need a little support with the communication aspects of the role, especially when dealing with Leisure Club members. "This aspect of the job, although important is not too demanding," explained Nikki Sinclair the assistant Human Resources Manager of the hotel, "since minimum contact is only necessary as customers only require help in the changing areas if personal items go missing or if they are unsure where something is."

"With the support and advice of Bury EST" continued Nikki, "we were able to teach Alex all the possible answers to most of the questions he was likely to be asked and also to instruct him to direct members to the Reception Area if he was unsure. We also made Alex's colleagues aware of Alex's different way of thinking so that they could communicate with him and support him in his job effectively."

After a successful working interview Alex was offered the position on a permanent basis. Alex was over the moon with his success. What was immediately apparent was Alex's own sense of achievement. "I can't wait to tell all my friends that I have a job" explained Alex with obvious self satisfaction. One aspect of Alex's personality is his very strong desire to feel part of society and he'd always seen being employed as an important element in defining his own self identity. Alex's mum has also seen a major difference in Alex since he's been successful in obtaining employment. Alex's mum summed up the difference this job has made. "Since Alex has been working at the Village he's been a different person! He's a lot more settled now around the house and looks forward to going to work. It's also made my life a lot easier as I'm not worried about him as much because he was so unsettled before he got a job."

Alex is still working well at the Village and he's being offered additional hours because he's such a valued member of the team. There are still some initial teething problems as this is Alex's first ever job but the effective support provided by the Village staff and Bury EST is helping to consolidate Alex's role at the Village and to make him more integrated into the Village Leisure team. Additionally, and perhaps more importantly, Alex now feels he's contributing to society, and this gives him a tremendous sense of achievement! "Ultimately, Alex's success depended on one solitary factor", explained Mick, "and this was Alex's single minded determination to succeed. Without that no amount of support would have been effective". Well done Alex and the Village Hotel staff.

News in brief...

One in 20 would not offer care leavers a job

Six per cent of people would discriminate against someone in care by not providing them with employment, according to a report published by The Prince's Trust this week to coincide with the BBC's 'Taking Care' season.

Four out of five people said that young people in care have as much potential as their peers to succeed. Almost half said they felt "sympathetic" towards someone who had been in care and 46 per cent said they felt "supportive".

The charity called for more to be done to raise awareness of the circumstances and challenges faced by young people in care, and to explore new ways to translate sympathy into support. The report, "Look Beyond the Label", is available at www.princes-trust.org.uk

Congratulations

Congratulations to Stephen, Barry and Craig who have all found work recently.

Bury EST visits Social Exclusion Unit

A recent visit to the Social Exclusion Unit in London has led to Bury EST contributing to their recent report on mental health and social exclusion. Local Employer Forum members Chris Sheelan of Unifi Dyed Yarns Ltd. and Stephen Mason of Bury Metropolitan Police also accompanied us on the visit.

Consultation on vocational rehabilitation qualifications framework

The Department for Work and Pensions is consulting on a new qualifications framework around vocational rehabilitation. They have set out their thoughts in a discussion document and are seeking responses by 12 July. The final report is due for publication in late summer 2004. These documents are available on www.healthaction.nhs.uk under the section employment and health.

Minimum wage extended to 16-17 year olds

Trade Secretary Patricia Hewitt has announced an extension of the National Minimum Wage to 16 and 17 year olds following advice from the Low Pay Commission which found some young workers received little or no training and exploitative rates of pay. Hewitt said encouraging youngsters to stay in full-time education or training was a priority for the government but "where young people choose to work without training we have a clear duty to protect them from

exploitative rates of pay". The rate has initially been set at £3 per hour and will be introduced from October 2004. Also in October the adult minimum wage will rise to £4.85 and the rate for 18 to 21 year olds will rise to £4.10.

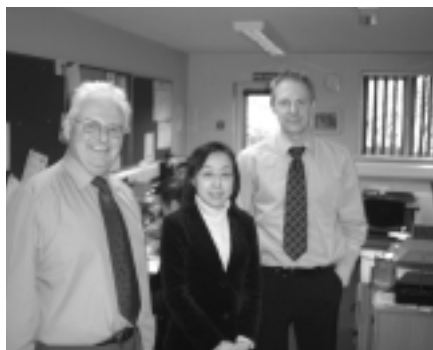
Bury EST Improvement Plan

Bury EST has produced an improvement plan for its services. The plan will be implemented during 2004/05 and we're looking for your comments on it. To read it, go to our website www.burvest.org.uk and select publications.

New Deal extended

The Government has announced an extension of New Deal for Disabled People until March 2006. Existing job brokers will have their contracts extended as long as they agree to meet new standards of performance and service.

Study visit from Japan!



Bury EST hosted a visit from Ms. Yoko Kamata, a researcher with Japan's Welfare and Medical Service Agency. The agency passes on Government funding to voluntary organisations in Japan and is studying the potential of supported employment as a fundable activity. Ms. Kamata has spent two months in Britain visiting various projects and organisations in the south of England and this was her only trip "up north". Discussion centred around transitioning for people with a learning disability and ways of involving employers.

Embracing Diversity staffing strengthened

We have added 4 new staff members to our team since the last newsletter.

Tracey Pennant has joined Bury EST as Employment Officer for our mental health and ethnicity services. Tracey worked previously for

Manchester Adult Education Service as an Information Advice and Guidance worker and before that for Manchester Training and Enterprise Council as an employment and training consultant.

We have also recruited 2 new placement officers. Phil Sutton has joined us to work with care leavers and will be based with NCH's Extra Mile project. Zerqa Ahmad has joined our ethnicity service and will be based at the ADAB offices. Both Phil and Zerqa worked for Bury Metro previously.

Finally we welcome Catherine Wall to the team as Information and Publicity Officer for the Embracing Diversity project. Previously from Tetrosyl she relishes the challenge of marketing people rather than Polyfilla! Full details of our current staff team are available at www.burvest.org.uk

Employer Feedback

Rebecca Owen, HR Manager, Village Hotel Liverpool, wrote to us recently:

"I gained a lot personally through working with yourself and the Bury EST team – above all it's given me an understanding of how diversity in the workplace makes a business more successful and my role much more rewarding. What I will always remember the BEST team for is their total dedication and commitment to improving others lives. To that extent, I am having difficulty finding a similar organisation in this area, who shares your passion for the cause. Keep up the good work and let me know when you branch out to Liverpool!!

Huw maintains AFSE role

Bury EST manager, Huw Davies, has been re-elected as Chair of the Association for Supported Employment for the third year. Details of the organisation are available at www.afse.org.uk

EQUAL bids in place

Bury EST have been involved in two funding applications to the European Social Fund's EQUAL programme. They are seeking to extend the Embracing Diversity project in partnership with a range of employers and have also linked up with five other boroughs on a Greater Manchester Partnership where our focus is on working with disadvantaged youths.

Dates for Employer Forum on Diversity

The successful forum is scheduled to meet on July 7 and October 13. Details are available from Fred Bowen.

Contacting Us

What do you think of this issue?

To contact us with comments, suggestions or complaints: write to:

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