

## Summary of Results: Providing a baseline of Diversity Management practice with organisations in the Bury area

This summary compiles the results of an Equal Opportunity survey that was conducted in Spring 2003. The aim of the survey was to provide a measure of employer best practice in relation to equal opportunities/diversity within the Bury area. However, some of the responding organisations were from the Bolton area and their responses have been included in this summary.

### ▪ Setting the Scene

A total of 1159 questionnaires were distributed. Of these 1115 were sent to a random database of organisations in the Bolton and Bury area (provided by Bolton and Bury Chamber of Commerce). The remainder were distributed to a Diversity Forum who have been working closely with Bury Employment Support and Training (EST). A total of 64 questionnaires were received back, equivalent to a response rate of 6%.

The responses of this survey covered organisations from the public (11%) and private (89%) sectors and a range of industrial sectors (Figure 1). The sample included organisations from the manufacturing sector (25%) however, most were in the service sectors (66%). The sector of 9% could not be identified.

As might be expected from a Chamber of Commerce sample, of those organisations that responded, the largest segment employed between 1 and 249 employees (75%, Figure 2).

Figure 1: Range of Represented Industrial Sectors

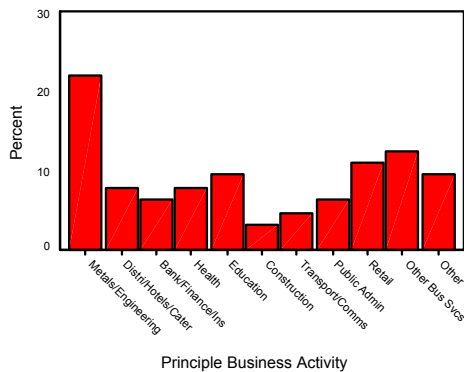
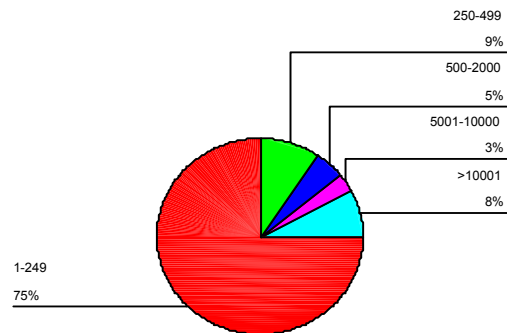


Figure 2: Size of Organisations



### ▪ Best Practice in Equal Opportunities

The bulk of the questionnaire asked employers to tick boxes if they had implemented particular equal opportunity/diversity practices. The survey offered a total of 25 diversity management practice indicators. Numbers of good practices were totalled up within each organisation to give an indication of their level of diversity management intensity. In this way, each responding organisation ended up with a diversity management practice score of between 0 to 25. An analysis of these totals found distinct trends between small to medium, and large organisations. For the purpose of this analysis, small to medium organisations were classed as those with between 1 to 249 employees and large organisations employed 250 and above employees.

Analysis of the survey results shows that larger organisations have more diversity management practices than smaller organisations. In total 60% of small to medium organisations had implemented between 9 and 16 best practice measures. The most common were:

- Allowing for more flexible working practices (81%)
- Having a written equal opportunity policy (77%)
- Ensuring pro-rata pay and holidays were provided to part time employees (69%).

By way of comparison, the majority (56%) of the large organisations had implemented in excess of 16 best practice measures. The most common measures included the same as those implemented by the small to medium organisations. In addition:

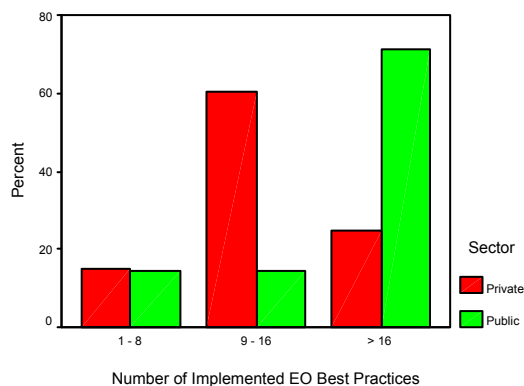
- Requiring job applicants to complete a standard application form appeared to be of great importance to large organisations, as 100% have implemented this practice.
- Having a written equal opportunity policy was important to 94%.
- Ensuring pro-rata pay and holidays to part time employees was valued by 88%.

Table 1 gives an indication of the extent to which participating organisations are implementing other positive diversity measures. These are also broken down within size bands.

Table 1: Best practice measures for a diverse workforce	Total sample %	Total % of small to medium orgs (<250 employees)	Total % of large orgs (>250 employees)
	who have implemented these measures		
Installed specialist facilities for diverse groups	27	21	44
Adapted policies (e.g. time off) to meet the needs of diverse groups	50	46	63
Examined salary arrangements for potential discrimination	55	63	31
Closely examined job criteria to ensure there is no discrimination in selection decisions	53	54	50
Made sure of no overstating of job requirements (e.g. overstating qualifications)	63	58	75
Changed a job description to suit an applicant with special requirements	30	27	38
Set targets for the recruitment of diverse groups	20	15	38
Placed recruitment adverts in places/formats where they are accessible to diverse groups	53	54	50
Have two or more interviewers on every interview panel	64	63	63
Offer unpaid placements to applicants from diverse groups	31	23	57
Monitor the workforce for diverse groups	42	33	69
Run any special training sessions for members of diverse groups	13	8	25

Further analysis identified variations in practice between the public and private sectors. It was clear that the public sector participants have gone further in implementing practices of diversity management. 71% of the public sector stated that they had implemented over 16 best practice measures, in comparison to the private sector where the majority (60%) of responding employers have implemented between 9 to 16 best practice measures.

Figure 3: Implemented EO Best Practices



*Public sector organisations go further to implement a greater number of best equality practices than the private sector organisations*

- **Policies to Support Employee Diversity**

A positive way of demonstrating a commitment to employee diversity can be by composing written policies and procedures. This survey demonstrated that organisations are more likely to have a written equal opportunities policy (81% of respondents) than a written harassment policy (64% of respondents).

An analysis which considered the impact of organisational size shows that of the small to medium organisations, only 77% had a written equal opportunity policy in comparison to the 94% of large organisations. Furthermore, 58% of the small to medium organisations compared to 81% of the large organisations had a written harassment policy.

The survey also revealed that a higher proportion of the public sector (86%) than the private sector (82%) had a written equal opportunity policy. In contrast, however, and against expectations, a higher proportion of the private sector (69%) than the public sector (57%), had a written harassment policy.

- **Attitudes to Equal Opportunities**

A number of statements were offered that could be used to diagnose employer attitudes towards diversity. Respondents were given statements about the benefits/ disadvantages of diversity and asked to rate their response to each statement between 1 and 5, giving a 1 where they strongly agreed with the statement and 5 where they strongly disagreed with the statement. Table 2 summarises the mean response to each statement.

<b>Table 2: Attitudes to Equal Opportunities</b>	<b>Mean Score where 1 = agree and 5 = disagree</b>
Diverse employees can more accurately identify the needs of our customers	2.36
Diverse employees can be valuable because they have a wide variety of skills	2.02
Diverse employees can be valuable as they offer wider recruitment opportunities	2.17
Diverse employees can keep us on the right side of equal opportunities legislation	2.59
Diverse employees can enhance innovation with fresh ideas	2.21
Diverse employees make teamworking a richer experience	2.07
Diverse employees improve the public image of our organisation	2.31
Diverse employees can improve internal morale	2.59
Employing people from diverse groups is important to my business	2.59
We do not have enough time to think about employing diverse groups	3.78
We do not have enough money to think about employing diverse groups	3.85
I feel I don't know enough about equality and diversity issues	3.50
I am wary of upsetting the balance of the workforce	3.87
Our workforce is naturally diverse without the need to think about diversity	3.26
I cannot see how diversity would benefit my organisation	3.85
Diversity and equal opportunities is only driven by political correctness	3.83
I would like to learn more about the benefits of equality/diversity in the workplace	2.60

The findings from this exercise identified that organisations tended to agree with a number of the posed statements. As can be seen, amongst the most persuasive arguments supporting the business case for equality and assisting in promoting a positive approach for employing a diverse workforce are:

- Diverse employees can be valuable because they have a wide variety of skills.
- Diverse employees can be valuable as they offer wider recruitment opportunities.
- Diverse employees can enhance innovation with fresh ideas.
- Diverse employees make teamworking a richer experience.

Less persuasive to employers were the arguments that:

- Diverse employees can improve internal morale.
- Diverse employees can keep us on the right side of equal opportunities legislation.

There were a number of statements with which employers showed disagreement. In particular, organisations disagreed vehemently with statements such as:

- I cannot see how diversity would benefit my organisation.
- I am wary of upsetting the balance of the workforce.
- Diversity and equal opportunities is only driven by political correctness.

Once again, attitudes were often found to be dependent on organisational size. Below, figures 4 to 6 illustrate an analysis into the variations in attitudes between small to medium and large organisations in response to a few of the statements. Both small to medium and large organisations agree that having a diverse workforce helps to improve their company image. However, as can be seen, the large organisations express a stronger level of agreement with this statement than the small to medium organisations. In contrast, Figure 5 illustrates that the large organisations strongly disagree with the statement that their workforce is naturally diverse, whereas, the small to medium organisations are more in agreement with this statement. Figure 6 shows that both small to medium and large organisations are in strong disagreement to the statement implying an inability to see how diversity could benefit their organisation. Again, it is the large organisations holding a stronger opinion and higher level of disagreement than the small to medium organisations.

Figure 4: Diverse employees improve the public image of our organisation

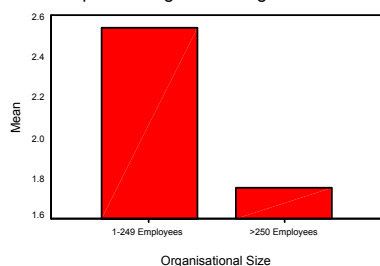


Figure 5: Our workforce is naturally diverse without the need to think about it

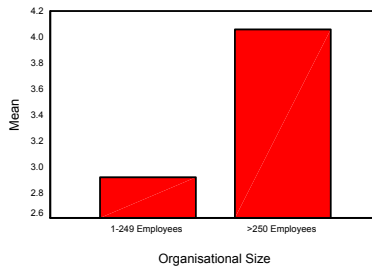
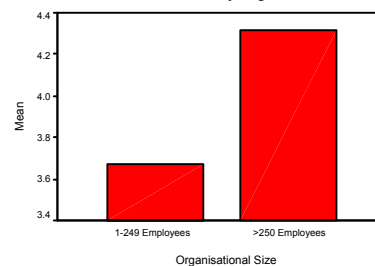


Figure 6: Cannot see how diversity would benefit my organisation



Figures 7 to 9 below illustrate a further analysis looking at the differences in attitudes across the private and public sectors. Although both sectors agree that diverse employees can more accurately identify the needs of their customers and that diverse employees have a wide variety of skills, it is the public sector that agrees significantly more strongly with these statements. Similarly, both sectors agree that employing a diverse workforce is important, but, once again, the public sector are more strongly in agreement. Both sectors disagreed with the statement that they might not have enough money to think about employing diverse groups, however, once again, the public sector expresses a stronger opinion and a greater level of disagreement with this statement.

Figure 7: Diverse employees can more accurately identify customer needs

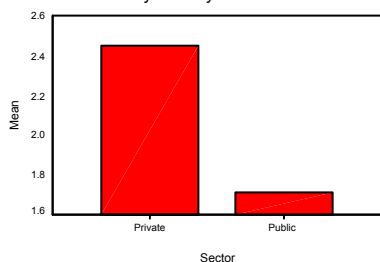


Figure 8: Diverse employees can be valuable by having a wide variety of skills

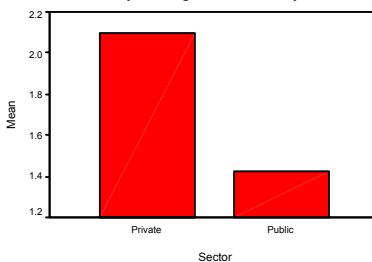
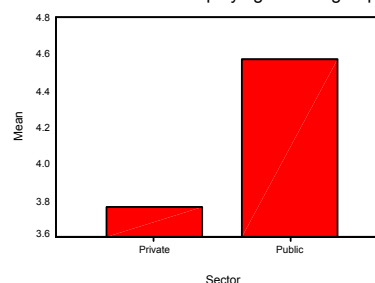


Figure 9: We do not have enough money to think about employing diverse groups



In overview, it has been identified that:

- As might be expected, the larger organisations have a greater number of implemented equal opportunity measures. One could speculate that perhaps they have more time and resources to devote to implementing these measures and/ or that small to medium organisations may not know about the best practice guidelines that are available to assist organisations in diversity management.
- Written equal opportunity and harassment policies are more common in the large organisations. Could this be because it is felt that they are needed more in large organisations? Do small to medium organisations feel that they manage their employees well enough without the need for formal written policies?
- The public sector organisations have the greater commitment to implementing written equal opportunity policies with the exception of written harassment policies.
- Finally, the survey identified a number of persuasive arguments about diversity that were particularly welcomed by the public sector respondents.

This study has provided an encouraging outcome, showing that employers in the Bury area are positive about equality and have clearly made some steps to reduce discrimination within their workforce. There is still, however, much development needed to improve the levels of employee diversity.