

# Embracing Diversity

## EMPLOYER FORUM ON DIVERSITY

BUSINESS LODGE, EUROPA HOUSE, BURY

14 JANUARY 2004

### MINUTES

#### Present

Vicky	Attenborough	NHS Acute Trust	Michelle	Lomax	Business Solutions
Phillip	Austin	Bury EST	Steve	Mason	G.M. Police (Bury)
Sarah	Beaney	Co-operative Bank	Pauline	Parrett	PACE
Fred	Bowen	Bury EST	Victoria	Proudlock	Manchester United
Julie	Bramley	Mayflower Hosp.	Bill	Robinson	Armed Forces
Peter	Bury	TUC	Caroline	Schofield	Bury MBC
Anne	Clarke	Bury EST	Chris	Sheelan	Unifi Dyed Yarns Ltd
Huw	Davies	Manager, Bury EST	Lynda	Smethurst	Bury EST (Minutes)
Karen	Davies	Cameron House Care	Alison	Todd	Bury College
Barbara	Forber	Inland Revenue	Beverley	Unsworth	Cameron House Care
Ingrid	Hitchon	Molygran Ltd	Andy	Walkden	Bury MBC
Karen	Holness	Armed Forces	Holly	Wallace	Ambers Attic
Wendy	Holt	Ambers Attic	Steven	Walters	Serco Metrolink
Diana	Kyle	Mayflower Hosp	Anthony	Wharton	Archline Bending
Martin	Leach	Bury College	Carol	Woodhams	Manchester Met.Uni.

#### Apologies

Jonathon	Butterworth	Bolholt Country Hotel	Richard	Gray	The Village Hotel
Mick	Collins	First Buses	Kay	Gregson	Bolton & Bury Chamber
Pauline	Cross	Early Years Dev/ment	Avis	Keen	Marks and Spencer
Gerrard	Curran	Business Link Nth.Mcr.	Alicja	Kinsey	Senior Hargreaves
Phil	Emmott	NHS PCT	Edwin	Partridge	Joseph Holt's Brewery
Jinny	Evans	McDonald's Restaurant	Peter	Weidenbaum	Trumeter Ltd
Christian	Fildes	McDonald's Restaurant	Richard	Gray	The Village Hotel

#### 1. WELCOME TO MEMBERS

Fred Bowen welcomed new members and invited guests to the meeting.

Fred drew attention to the fire in December that completely destroyed the premises of Molygran Ltd., one of the longest serving members of the forum. On behalf of the forum Fred expressed best wishes for the future and informed members that there had been no serious injuries or fatalities associated with this incident and hoped that the company would soon find suitable premises to commence operations in the near future.

# Embracing Diversity

Fred reminded members that the intention would be for employers to take ownership of the forum and explained that in line with these intentions Steven Mason (GM Police) had been invited to preside as Chairman for this meeting. At this point the proceedings were handed over to Steven.

## **2. MINUTES FROM LAST MEETING**

Steven asked for approval for the minutes of the meeting held on 15 October 2003. These minutes were approved as a true and accurate record.

## **3. MATTERS ARISING**

Steven reminded members that during the discussion session at the last meeting several members suggested that it would be beneficial if employers were provided with an information pack outlining contact details, roles and responsibilities and procedures when employing a client from Bury EST. Steven invited Huw Davies and Fred to provide an update on the progress of this request.

Huw acknowledged that the suggestions had been welcomed and agreed that the 'Employer Information Pack' would be provided. He recognised the importance of maintaining consistency in contact with employers and appreciated members concerns and difficulties with dealing with a number of different officers from the service. A re-structure of officer responsibilities was currently under way and this would see the introduction of account managers with specific responsibility for individual companies.

There were no other matters arising.

## **4. CHAIRMAN'S INTRODUCTION**

Steven introduced himself and his role as Personnel Officer for the Bury Division of G.M. Police. He went on to explain to members that this was only his second meeting however, he had been involved with Bury EST on a number of occasions and had successfully recruited a client to full-time employment with the Police. He had also provided work placements for clients some of which had been successful and others not.

Steven values his membership of the forum and feels that he benefits from meeting a variety of local employers, being involved in discussions and having the opportunity to share best practice.

He provided facts and figures relative to human resources stating that 11,000 people were employed by G.M. Police. All staff are given diversity training and regular staff appraisals are designed to evaluate the individuals understanding of diversity and how it affects them in the workplace.

Recruitment to G.M. Police is a formalised process but is becoming more flexible. All applicants selected for interview are contacted to see what adjustments, if any, may be required. G.M. Police have a central equal opportunities unit who contact all job applicants who declare a disability and offer support, regardless of whether they are selected for interview, this is to encourage applicants to declare any disadvantage and to trust G.M. Police to act fairly in their interests.

# Embracing Diversity

## 5. PROJECT PROGRESS TO DATE

Steven invited Huw Davies to give a brief updated report on the project.

### **Website**

Huw informed members that the website was now triple 'A' standard which makes it accessible to people with a variety of disabilities. He still intended to develop a joint bulletin board that could be shared with partners such as the PACE Group.

### **Social Exclusion Unit**

Two employers, G.M. Police and Unifi Dyed Yarns, accompanied by Huw and Fred, recently attended a meeting in London with officers from the Social Exclusion Unit to discuss issues in the workplace related to employees with mental ill health. Steven Mason and Chris Sheelan gave members feedback on the meeting and raised concern about the lack of wider employer engagement.

### **Transnational**

European project partners met in Manchester in October 2003 to discuss best practice about methodologies. The projects are writing up a "findings" bulletin for publication and distribution. The next meeting will take place in Italy next month and look at strategic issues. This will be followed by a seminar in Spain in March looking at employer engagement. Further information will be provided on how employers can contribute to that seminar.

### **Learning & Skills Council**

A recent bid had been submitted to LSC for funding the transition from education to employment of students with little or no qualifications. Huw reported that this submission had not been successful.

### **Employment Update**

Fred gave a brief report highlighting numbers of clients in full-time work and work placements since the commencement of the EmbracingDiversity project. He thanked all employers who had co-operated in the project and provided opportunities for EST clients.

## 6. DISABILITY IN THE WORKPLACE

Steven introduced Michelle Valentine, Practice Development Officer for the Disability Rights Commission, Manchester Office, who gave a very interesting presentation explaining the role of the DRC and employers responsibilities under current and future disability legislation through the Disability Discrimination Act.

Parts 1 and 2 of the Act were explained in detail and particular attention was drawn to the importance for employers to comply with legislation especially when considering the necessity to make 'reasonable adjustments'. Michelle gave practical examples of how employers could comply with the Act and avoid discrimination that could have legal implications.

Michelle made reference to 'Access to Work' funding for employees who require an adjustment due to their disability to enable them to work and informed members where further information could be obtained.

# Embracing Diversity

A question and answer session followed the presentation and Michelle provided clarification on a number of interesting issues. During this session it was noted how few employers were aware of the Access to Work fund and how it could be applied. Bury EST will include information in the Employer Pack.

A copy of Michelle's presentation is included with these minutes.

## 7. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

Fred introduced Martin Leach from Bury College. Martin briefly explained that Bury College would be establishing an employer forum following the successful award of 'Centre of Vocational Excellence' in the delivery of business skills and management training.

Martin went on to explain that his intention was to complement this forum and not compete and thanked Fred for his invitation. He was fascinated with the success of this forum and felt that he had gained valued experience through attending this meeting.

## 8. DATE AND TIME OF NEXT MEETING

The next Employer Forum meeting will be held on Wednesday 21 April 2004 at Europa House details and agenda will be circulated in due course.