

Embracing Diversity

EMPLOYER FORUM ON DIVERSITY

MINUTES OF THE EMPLOYER FORUM MEETING HELD ON 15 OCTOBER 2003 AT
BUSINESS LODGE, EUROPA HOUSE, BURY

Present

Fred	Bowen	Employer Consultant, Bury EST
John	Craig	Worklink, Stockport MBC
Gerard	Curren	Business Link North Manchester
Huw	Davies	Manager, Bury EST
Karen	Davies	Cameron House
Sarah	Draycott	The Village Hotel & Leisure Club (Bury)
Phil	Emmott	NHS Primary Care Trust
Caroline	Gee	Placement Officer, Bury EST
Richard	Gray	The Village Hotel & Leisure Club (Prestwich)
Kay	Gregson	Bolton & Bury Chamber
Tony	Henson	Placement Officer, Bury EST
Cath	Hignett	NHS Acute Trust
Ingrid	Hitchon	Molygran Ltd
Karen	Holness	Armed Forces Careers
Carol	Horrocks	Manchester Prisons
Avis	Keen	Marks and Spencer
Diana	Kyle	Mayflower Hospitals
Michelle	Lomax	PACE
Steve	Mason	Bury Metropolitan Police
Pauline	Parrett	PACE
Victoria	Proudlock	Manchester United
Caroline	Schofield	Bury MBC
Chris	Sheelan	Unifi Dyed Yarns Ltd
Lynda	Smethurst	Bury EST (Minutes)
Alison	Todd	Bury College
Tony	Wharton	Archline Bending

Apologies

Diane	Atkins	Asda Stores Ltd
Hayley	Barthel	Marks & Spencers
Alison	Booth	Co-op Bank
Peter	Bury	TUC
Jonathon	Butterworth	Bolholt Country Park Hotel
Mick	Collins	First Buses

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Pauline	Cross	Early Years Development
Angie	Eckersley	De Vere Whites Hotel
Jinny	Evans	McDonald's Restaurant
Christian	Fildes	McDonald's Restaurant
Alicja	Kinsey	Senior Hargreaves
Lutha	Magloire	Armed Forces Careers Office
Graham	Parry	Cormar Carpets
Edwin	Partridge	Joseph Holt's Brewery
Bhavna	Patel	Commission for Racial Equality
Bill	Robinson	Armed Forces Careers
Lee	Salad	Project Manager, Bury EST
Carolyn	Tipper	B&Q Warehouse
Andy	Walkden	Bury MBC
Holly	Wallace	Ambers Attic
Steven	Walters	Serco Metrolink
Peter	Weidenbaum	Trumeter
Suzanne	Wood	Bury MBC
Carol	Woodhams	Manchester Metropolitan University

1. WELCOME TO MEMBERS

Fred Bowen welcomed all members in attendance. The following handouts were issued: 2002-2005 Workplan, a new Stress leaflet, the Workstep leaflet and a request for "Work Trial" placements.

Fred introduced several new members and a new Placement Officer, Caroline Gee, within Bury EST.

John Craig was in attendance on behalf of Stockport MBC Worklink.

2. MINUTES FROM LAST MEETING

Minutes of the ED Employer Forum meeting held on 16 July 2003 were accepted as a true and accurate record.

3. MATTERS ARISING

There were no matters arising.

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4. PROJECT PROGRESS TO DATE

Fred asked members to consider the Mission Statement and asked if members were satisfied with the content. There were no suggested changes.

Fred presented an update regarding the Embracing Diversity project and invited comments from Huw Davies.

Update by Huw on Seedfield Café. Bury EST will be working with Holts's Brewery with a view to providing work experience placements with NVQ catering training leading to jobs. Accrington and Rosendale College will be providing the assessment.

The next transnational seminar will be 12-14 November 2003. The subject will be Methodology – the way we engage with people on the project. There may be scope for employers to be involved. A report will be produced.

The Social Exclusion Unit have requested a meeting with employers regarding policies and procedures in the workplace for working with people with mental health problems – a way of feeding employer views into government. GM Police, BBC and Unifi Dyed Yarns will attend a seminar in London with Fred and Huw.

Bury EST are currently recruiting for an Employment Officer for their Mental Health section and for a Female Placement Officer (Ethnicity).

Huw Davies explained that Approval had been given for Action 3 (Dissemination of the project). This gives 2 years funding for new Publicity and Marketing staff to attend local and national conferences and events. They will be linking with the Chartered Institute of Personnel Development links and other diversity agencies.

The web sites were also being updated to be more accessible to people who use text readers. New legislation means that Public Authorities will have to comply initially.

5. DISCUSSION SESSION

Members were invited to discuss any issues or concerns they had. Please see attached report on Discussion Session at the end of these minutes.

6. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

Calendar of events for 2004 was circulated and the meeting closed at 11.00 am.

7. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The next meeting will take place on Wednesday 14 January 2004 at Europa House (Business Lodge) This meeting will commence at 9.00 am. Breakfast snacks and drinks will be served from 8.30 am.

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Discussion Session – 15 October 2003

1. Disability Symbol

Chris (Unifi Dyed Yarns)

- Chris offered future assistance to Sarah Draycott on how to achieve the two ticks symbol and will explain the process. This invitation was kindly extended to all forum members.
- The symbol can be used in job adverts – see Bury Times for examples.
- How much work? - not major but because we are an old ICI site we have the majority of the procedures in place. Any member can have a copy of our procedures to use as a template.

Investors in People (IIP) is developing new accreditations including recruitment & selection, and work/life balance. Diversity runs through leadership and management.

Bury Personnel is working toward the 'Worklife Balance' component. 6 companies in the forum today already had the ✓✓ symbol.

2. Service delivery – Bury EST

We are going to start asking employers about the service we deliver. All comments were welcomed.

Karen (Four Seasons)

- Karen felt that we should have an employer's pack to explain exactly who is responsible for what.
- Karen expressed pleasure that her concerns had been taken seriously. If employers had a concern, who should they go to? It raised issues regarding whether our problems were real or not – did others have the same problems? Important to identify where the process went wrong and ensure it doesn't happen again.
- It's easy to say 'everything's great'. What we have learned as an employer is that staff tend to cover for 'supported employees' which was not giving a true picture of their capabilities.

Huw - It's never guaranteed that jobs will work out. That is part of the lottery of recruitment but we like to think that we are a bit more careful but you can never quite tell until clients are in the workplace – This shows the value of a work trial/working interview.

CONCERNS

A number of general concerns were fed back:

- Discontinuity of staffing support and contact.
- Role of people who go into the workplace – where is the emphasis during the induction? Should Bury EST staff do the induction or should they support the employer?

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- Should employer or Bury EST staff complete the job – if a client can only do 80% of job initially should other staff make up the other 20%?
- Bury EST are introducing a continual improvement system, which will include a randomised telephone call to employers to ask for their experience of interactions with Bury EST.
- When asking “is everything ok?” there is a danger of just being told “yes” – this is an opportunity lost for constructive feedback.
- The Chamber of Commerce has put in place a structure for asking questions of employers. Staff are trained in asking questions that get ‘proper’ answers which results in information that can then be acted on.

Avis (Marks & Spencer)

- M&S have come down in favour of being able to offer short-term work experience placements. They have also been able to offer someone a full-time job. Short term placements can vary in length – one person wanted to do 8 weeks unpaid work experience.
- M&S has done an induction and a training programme with Mick (Bury EST) and other placement officers will not have the same training.
- Bury EST could possibly transfer Mick’s training to other placement officers – or transfer clients to Mick – Bury EST to examine how this is best resolved.
- Avis’ concern is that M&S are going to have contact with different placement officers from Bury EST. M&S have to date had Anne, Fran and Mick in the workplace as trainers. Avis can’t help thinking that they should have one designated person to work with.

Huw – we have to balance between the client having a consistent relationship with staff and employers having a consistent relationship with staff.

Ingrid (Molygran)

- The back up has been very good – any problems have been sorted out. The first supported employee did not work out after 12 months and Molygran now has a new client employed.
- Molygran have not experienced a problem with dealing with different placement officers.

Gerrard (Business Link)

- Gerrard suggested that Bury EST needs an external co-ordinator who co-ordinates the placements on an account management basis.

Steve (GM Police)

- If we dealt with a number of placement officers the vetting process could prove a problem – if there was just one liaison person for Bury EST it would prove easier. This may be an issue in the future.

Carol (HM Prisons)

- The same issue of vetting would apply to the Prisons Service.

Huw – We will see if we can move to an ‘account manager’ position, particularly with some employers.

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3. EMPLOYER PACK – what do you think should be in IT?

There was discussion about issuing employers with a service pack. Employers wanted:

- Clarity – who do we contact at Bury EST. We have our own employee procedures – what should I do first?
- When we have employed a person, what is the relationship then between Bury EST and employer? If an issue arises 6 months down the line what do we do then?

Sarah (Village Hotels)

- I knew what I needed to do from an employer's point of view but when I was ringing I wanted to know what was expect by you.

Huw – we don't want to mark people out as 'special' people. We want employers to treat clients exactly as they would treat other members of their staff. Maybe we don't help ourselves by taking on too much responsibility for the induction of the client.

Huw – Bury EST will include a chart of our team: what their roles are. We'll also include frequently asked questions with some answers.

Fred – It is up to employers to tell Bury EST if you are happy for us to leave a lot of the support – how much involvement do you want?

Avis (Marks And Spencer)

- What do you want us to do if it is 6 months down the line and we have not contacted you?

Huw – if you feel you would like to contact us, please do. We like to be proactive so we would rather know and be helpful if the client's job is at risk.

Steve (GM Police)

- Feedback should be two-way.

Tony (Bury EST) – we have laid-down procedures. The WORKSTEP process has Development Plans, Employee and Employer Reviews. The development plan highlights any problems and puts contingency plans in place. With WORKSTEP supported employees there is a review after 3 weeks and 6 months into the job. Reviews do not go on forever – employees come off the programme when the employer is happy to take over the role and once the employee is settled.

Tony (Archline Bending)

- Due to inexperience we tried to incorporate the client into the company too quickly – he feels that the client feels that he has 'something to prove'.
- Initial paperwork was a bit onerous.
- We did an informal interview with the Director of the Company. We then had to do the paperwork and carry out a risk assessment and health & safety review all in one day – not the usual procedure.

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Huw – we have a duty of care which is why we carry out a job analysis. This is also an opportunity for companies to get involved and identify the critical aspects of the job. The risk assessment identifies specific issues around a client doing a particular job and justifies our decision as to whether a client is safe to work in a particular workplace. Employers should receive a copy of any risk assessment carried out.

4. EMPLOYER TRAINING PROJECT

Chris (Unifi Dyed Yarns)

- Chris described a Government backed project EPT (Employer Training Pilot) – Unifi has gone ahead with this via the TUC but there are various agencies who can provide funding for employees.
- Any computer operators must be ECDL trained – NVQ level 2. Unifi receive a payment of £7.80 per hour and this goes to the employer for up to 69 hours to pay for cover.

Gerard (Business Link)

- ETP is quite a popular programme and recognises that employers do need some form of funding for over 25's up to level 2. There's a special team of advisers going round – speak to Gerrard who will put you in touch.

Pauline (Business Solutions)

- Pauline Parrett will provide leaflets from Business Solutions who are also involved in delivering this programme.

5. EXCHANGE OF SKILLS AND KNOWLEDGE

Huw – has anyone got any ideas of how we can exchange information between ourselves?
Ideas included:

- Resource list in the employers pack.
- Form for reporting issues back to Bury EST.
- We can put information on our web site – bulletin board – we can trial it.
- Pauline Parrett – having a discussion group – perhaps we can combine it?

6. VACANCIES

We are now receiving vacancies direct from some employers – as a result of this we have placed one client into employment with NHS.

Receiving job bulletins is really valuable – we have a job vacancy board in the office, which is regularly used by placement officers and clients.

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7. POLICIES

Caroline (Bury MBC)

- Asked for information from delegates about what people are doing to update their Equal Opportunities and diversity policies? Sarah offered to get involved.

Huw – made a suggestion about offering to make presentations to senior management of companies where this might help.

Tony – can we devise an equal opportunities / diversity template that every one could use? This would give guidance and save time.

Caroline (Bury MBC)

- Bury metro have a very structured way of working so the working interview would be a problem – maybe a presentation on how you would do that.

Steve (GM Police)

- Much of it comes down to the interview. Steve saw a potential employee at Bury EST's offices and had the questions slightly rephrased and less formal. This proved to be very successful.

Avis (Marks and Spencer)

- M&S now use a telephone interview as a way of being fair to all candidates. It has to be delivered in a very structured formal way.
- M&S looked at the way we could be more supportive – perhaps coach people, by indicating that we required more information. We rely very much on customer exercises when candidates are required to interface with customers. We could use the work experience assessment in place of this section of the interview.
- With telephone recruitment, everyone has to telephone a central location. Avis was told that everyone has to do a telephone interview. We now have gained approval to have the questions e-mailed to us and can ask the questions face-to-face.
- Indication is that the telephone interview has proved successful as we are getting better-suited applicants and spend less time in the formal interview situation.

Huw - B&Q telephone interviews: they will make exceptions once they realised the impact that this has on potential employees with a disability.

Steve (GM Police)

All staff have been on one-day diversity training. Anyone who wants copies of the presentation is welcome. Steve will send it to Fred for distribution.

Karen (Four Seasons)

Went through the process Carol Woodhams presented (equal opportunities benchmarking) and found it very useful and interesting. Pauline stated that PACE can arrange an event if people are interested.

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Fred – requested employers to provide work placement opportunities for Bury EST clients. The same level of support would be offered to employers. The information gained by Bury EST officers from a one-day placement is very valuable eg social skills.

Huw – Bury EST is putting in a funding bid to support people leaving school and college for employment (transition into employment). Part of this will involve looking for short-term placements so we are looking for partners in delivering this bid.
