

Embracing Diversity

b

EMPLOYER FORUM ON DIVERSITY

Minutes of the Employer Forum Meeting Held on 13 October 2004
at the Bolholt Hotel, Walshaw, Bury

Present

Joanne	Alcock	De Vere Whites Hotel	Michelle	Lomax	PACE
Simon	Bagley	Bury MBC	Steve	Mason	Bury Metropolitan Police
David	Barrie	Drug Action Team	Nicola	Mortimer	NHS Pennine Care (MH) Acute
Fred	Bowen	Bury EST	Fran	Naylor- Oakes	Bury EST
Kelly	Burke	Bury Substance Misuse Service	Graham	Parry	Cormar Carpets
Peter	Bury	TUC	Tracey	Pennant	Bury EST
Johnathan	Butterworth	Bolholt Hotel	Peter	Rabbits	ACAS
Sue	Chambers	Job Centre Plus	Mary	Raffery	NHS Acute Trust
Patrick	Connellan	Cormar Carpets	Hemal	Rajani	Business Solutions
Allan	Costello	EYDCP	Kirsty	Roberts	NHS Pennine Care
Gerrard	Curran	N Mcr.Business Link	Bill	Robinson	Royal Air Force Careers
Huw	Davies	Bury EST	Lee	Salad	Bury EST
Sue	Dickinson	EYDCP	Catherine	Schwarbi	Rose Court Nursing & Residential Home
Norman	Dixon	Groundwork Trust	Lynda	Smethurst	Bury EST
Phil	Emmott	NHS Primary Care Trust	Dr Peter	Thomas	Red Bank Health Centre
Boyd	Farrar	Heathlands	Beverley	Unsworth	Cameron House
Barbara	Forber	Inland Revenue	Andy	Walkden	Bury MBC
Rod	Goodwin	Bury EST	Catherine	Wall	Bury EST
Kay	Gregson	Gtr. Mcr. Chamber	Holly	Wallace	Ambers Attic
Ingrid	Hitchon	Molygran Ltd	Steven	Walters	Serco Metrolink
Wendy	Holt	Ambers Attic	Carol	Watts	Inland Revenue
Alicja	Kinsey	Senior Hargreaves	Chris	Whitehouse	Tony Walsh Assoc. Ltd
Diana	Kyle	Mayflower Hospitals	Carol	Woodhams	MMU
Jackie	Light	Bury College	Sandy	Woods	Job Centre

Apologies

Sarah	Beaney	CIS	Nicola	Littler	NHS Pennine Care (MH) Trust
Jane	Buck	B&Q Warehouse	Lutha	Magloire	Armed Forces Careers Office
Karen	Davies	Worsley Lodge	Pauline	Parrett	PACE

Embracing Diversity

Apologies Continued ..

Phil	Emott	NHS Primary Care Trust	Victoria	Proudlock	Manchester United
Paul	Foster	Bolton & Bury Chamber of Commerce	Caroline	Schofield	Bury MBC
Faye	Frazier	McDonald's Restaurant	Alison	Todd	Bury College
Kay	Gregson	N Mcr Chamber	Beverley	Unsworth	Cameron House
Cath	Hignett	NHS Trust	Andy	Walkden	Bury MBC
Mel	Hirst	CIS	Steven	Walters	Serco Metrolink
Karen	Holness	Royal Air Force Careers	Peter	Weidenbaum	Trumeter Ltd
Wendy	Holt	Ambers Attic	Anthony	Wharton	Archline Bending

MINUTES

1. WELCOME TO MEMBERS

Fred Bowen welcomed members, new members and invited guests to the meeting. Fred stated that he would again be chairing this meeting, in spite of further requests for an employer to chair the proceedings no one had volunteered their services.

2. MINUTES FROM LAST MEETING

Fred asked for approval for the minutes of the meeting held on Wednesday, 7 July 2004. These minutes were approved as a true and accurate record.

3. MATTERS ARISING

Further work was continuing at Bury EST to produce an employers pack. This pack was nearing completion and would be mailed to the employers on completion.

4. PROJECT PROGRESS TO DATE

BBC 2 Working Lunch

Huw Davies, (Bury EST Manager), reported that the BBC2 'Working Lunch' television programme that was televised on Monday, 11 October 2004 had given the opportunity for clients and employers to be interviewed and speak of their experiences of working with Bury EST and employing people with different needs. Interviews had taken place at the Village Hotel in Bury and at Cormar Carpets factory in Ramsbottom. Since the programme went out there had been some reaction from parents across the country that were looking for a similar service in their area. Huw said we would be aiming to do a follow up programme.

Embracing Diversity

Funding Update

Huw reported on the outcome of the latest submission for funding through the second round of Equal. This bid included the support from employers and several forum members had pledged their involvement. Huw was sorry to report that the submission had been unsuccessful and that the Department for Work and Pensions had stated that the bid lacked innovation. As a result of this decision, nine people who were employed under the first round of Equal would be losing their jobs in May 2005. This was a serious blow to Bury EST and Huw would be looking for other funding opportunities and intended to maintain the Employers Forum into the future.

European Interest

Visitors from Hungary had recently visited Bury EST and spent several days looking at the methods and model of supported employment. Following this visit they were keen to keep in touch with Bury and there may be an invitation to visit them in their country in the future. Huw said it had been encouraging the number of enquiries that were now coming from the accession countries and these included the Czech Republic and Poland. Huw has attended a conference in Greece and given a presentation to delegates on Embracing Diversity. He is attending a variety of meetings in London with Government Officers and responding to requests from other agencies for advice and support.

5. ACAS (ASSOCIATION FOR CONCILIATION AND ARBITRATION SERVICE) – PETER RABBITS

Peter was introduced to delegates and went on to deliver a presentation which explained the roles and responsibilities of ACAS.

'ACAS aims to improve organisations and working life through better employment relations. We provide up-to-date information, independent advice, high quality training and we work with employers and employees to solve problems and improve performance'

Employers and employees can access support, guidance and advice by contacting ACAS. There is a very useful website and also a helpline available. The website will assist in informing people of the latest directives and legislation possibly via employer handbooks.

Peter spoke briefly about current '**hot topics**'

- 1) **Information, Consultation and Regulation:** new rights will be introduced in March 2005. This will mean initially that employers who employ 150 or more employees will have to comply. Following a phasing in period, March 2005 - March 2007 employers who employ 50 or more employees will also have to comply with this legislation.
- 2) **Disciplinary and Grievance Procedures:** new laws came into effect from the 1st October for resolving disputes. The main emphasis was to replace verbal warnings with written warnings and agree a fixed period of conciliation in an effort to reduce the period of time it takes to achieve a settlement. This would also hopefully reduce the number of cases being referred to tribunal.

ACAS provide training in the workplace courses and can cover any issues for employers.

Some examples were given such as:

'Key fact sessions' approx. 2 hours,

'Getting it right' approx. ½ day,

Embracing Diversity

'In depth sessions for Human Resource specialists'

Gerrard Curran – Chamber Link, asked whether there was a charge to employers for this service?

Peter replied that for the first visit there would be no charge. If the employer required more than just information, say specific training, then there would be a charge for this.

① Peter Rabbitts: email: prabbitts@acas.org.uk

Tel:01254 689 236

6. THE WISE PROJECT- NORMAN DIXON- GROUNDWORK TRUST

A presentation followed explaining the Wise project initiative.

This project concentrates on health issues in the workplace rather than Health and Safety.

The aim of this project was to encourage employers to improve the health of their workforce and in turn improve productivity in the workplace and control some of the obvious problem areas of absenteeism, accidents, smoking breaks and 'not turning up on Mondays'.

Groundwork Trust had been involved with a number of companies in the area and this involved the workforce initially completing a questionnaire. A report for the employer would then follow with suggested actions for the employer to take.

Norman went on to stress the importance for employers to recognize the early warning signs. This project would offer to follow up the questionnaires and develop policies to help people to overcome any problems they had declared. This help would be giving advice and guidance on treatment and signposting employees to relevant support services.

Employers who may be interested in the wise project are advised to contact Norman Dixon, Business Support Advisor, at Groundwork Trust.

A copy of this presentation is enclosed for information.

① Business Environment Association, Link House, Walmersley Road, Bury BL9 5AE.
Tel: 0161 763 4185.

7. SUBSTANCE MISUSE SERVICE – KELLY BURKE – MANAGING SUBSTANCE MISUSE IN THE WORKPLACE

A presentation was given by Kelly Burke.

Kelly is a primary care Drug Liaison Worker with the Bury Substance Misuse Service who supports individuals to take control of drug and alcohol abuse taking referrals from GP's., occupational health advisors and other support agencies.

Embracing Diversity

Kelly stressed the importance of effective support and treatment offer in the interests of harm reduction and the obvious effect this can have on the work and social relationships of the individual, their family and colleagues.

There is strong evidence to suggest a correlation between accidents and workplace culture ie., going to the pub at lunchtime.

People should be aware of the withdrawal symptoms that can occur. These symptoms can affect a person's physical ability especially when withdrawing from alcohol and heroin. Detox can be quite a dangerous process and may require referring the person to psychiatric services or day centres.

There are currently a large number of people in work and taking substitute drugs.

Probably the bulk of the workforce take drugs such as alcohol, amphetamines, ecstasy, cannabis and cocaine and consider these to be recreational.

Then there are drugs that people have a daily dependence on such as heroin, crack and alcohol.

It is easy to jump to the conclusion that there may be a drug or alcohol problem, there could be other issues such as mental health, stress etc.

Cannabis can stay in the system for up to 30 days

Workplace pressures and stress can cause a person who is in detox to relapse.

Kelly stressed the importance of organizations to develop a comprehensive policy on workplace drug and alcohol issues, a policy that included training for staff. It is good practice to work with the employees and not against them.

A copy of this presentation is enclosed for information

① Bury Substance Misuse Service, 4 Tenterden Street, Bury. Tel. 0161 253 6488

8. QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS TO THE PANEL SESSION

The presenters, Norman Dixon, Kelly Burke, Peter Rabbitts and from the audience, Dr Peter Thomas were invited to join a panel and answer members questions. Please see the attached report on 'Questions and answers to the panel session' at the end of these minutes.

9. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

Huw asked members if they would like themed workshops, say ½ day, and if so what would they like to discuss. Fred thanked all the speakers for their valued contributions and thanked members for their attendance and support of the forum.

Embracing Diversity

In response to requests from several forum members to arrange a workshop plans were being made for this to take place on Wednesday 24 November. This would be a half day workshop for client representatives from Bury EST focus groups to meet and discuss their group findings with the employer forum members. Final details and invitations for this event would be forwarded to members within the next two weeks.

There being no other business the meeting closed at 11.15 am.

10. THE DATE AND TIME OF NEXT MEEING

The next forum meeting would be held on Wednesday, 12 January 2005. This will be a breakfast meeting with an 8.30 am tea, coffee and breakfast snack service and a meeting start of 9.00 am.

The meeting will be held in the Hayloft Suite at the Stables Leisure Centre, Bolholt Hotel, Walshaw Road, Walshaw, Bury.

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS TO THE PANEL

1. Testing for drugs

Huw (Bury EST)

- Carrot and stick - rigorous testing v health promotion
- How do you create a climate in the workplace to minimise fear?

Norman Dixon (WISE Project)

- My personal experience:
the atmosphere in the workplace between management and staff is key (trusting - coupled with a positive drugs policy).
Example:
where this was in place the feedback was that everyone in the company acknowledged that everything had been done to help the employee.

Kelly Burke (Bury Substance Misuse Service)

- Look at it as a health issue rather than a crime.
- Allow people time through your sickness policy. Respect people and stay with them over time. It is a relapsing issue.
- Encourage debate, provide training for all staff, produce leaflets.
- Treat it like smoking and tackle it.

Peter Rabbitts (ACAS)

- Can be a disciplinary, capability, welfare issue.
- Thrust of ACAS Code of Practice does not advocate summary dismissal but employers would not necessarily be found at fault.
- Have a good Drug and Alcohol policy and ensure all staff know what it is. Accept that there are limits to how far you can go.

Embracing Diversity

Dr Thomas (Red Bank Health Centre)

- Prescribed medication needs to be recognised ie antidepressants can have just as damaging an effect as alcohol.

Graham Parry (Cormar Carpets)

- Are drugs and alcohol not covered by the DDA?

Peter Rabbitts (ACAS)

- No, it is excluded.

Steve Mason (G M Police)

- Having courage to use the procedure and consistency in application across managers ie uniform v office staff.
- Career development is jeopardised for police officers by declaring a drug habit.

Dr Thomas (Red Bank Health Centre)

- Confidentiality - use Occupational Health rather than management.

Kelly Burke (Bury Substance Misuse Service)

- Look at drugs training for managers – use different approaches – communication.

David Barrie (Drug Action Team)

- We will put people in touch with people if they want and organise training.
- “For 4 years I have been trying to engage with employers. More has been achieved today than I have achieved in the last 4 years”.

Bill Robinson (RAF Careers)

- We have a very strong policy laid down.
- We have mandatory drug testing.
- Dismissed from the service on first offence.

Lee Salad (Bury EST)

- Raised the question to employers whether they need support in developing drug and alcohol policies and procedures?

Graham Parry (Cormar Carpets)

- Most employers would not recognise drugs and neither would first line managers.

One employer discussed how they were informed that one of their staff is a severe drug abuser. There have been no signs at work but was told in confidence that the person is a regular drug abuser. What do we do? Would you approach employee?

Peter Rabbitts (ACAS)

- If the individual is performing ok why do you need to do anything?

Huw Davies (Bury EST)

- You cannot act on rumour – a written complaint is needed to make it official.