

**Employer Network Meeting
held on Tuesday, 24th June, 2003
at Cheadle House, Cheadle**

PRESENT: Meg Elliott, Manchester University Business Centre (Co-Chair)
Louise Parrott-Bates, Employment Services
Rachel Roberts, Employment Services
Doug Cresswell, Employment Services (Co-Chair)
Paula Duffy, Employment Services – Senior Employment Officer (SSP, Sainsbury's)
Julie Mee, Employment Services – Senior Employment Officer (SMBC)
Yvette Macklin, Select Service Partners
Lori Lawler, Select Service Partners
Alison Booth, Co-operative Bank
Debbie Cross, Co-operative Bank
Diane Davies, Employment Services (Co-Minutes)
Chris John, Employment Services (Co-Minutes)
Suzanne Close, Marks & Spencer
Amanda Crank, Co-operative Bank
Karen Spilling, Smile The Internet Bank
Linda Lunn, Sainsbury's
Carmel McKeogh, Stockport MBC
Fiona Wright, BBC
Caroline Turner, Employment Services – Senior Employment Officer (BBC, Marks & Spencer)
Dionne Duffill, Employment Services – Senior Employment Officer (NHS)
Vicky Stewart, Stockport NHS Trust
James Palmer, Stockport NHS Trust
Rachel Clarke, Employment Services

APOLOGIES: Natalie Comrie, Employment Services – Senior Employment Officer (Co-operative Bank/Smile.co.uk)

INTRODUCTIONS:

Lou introduced herself to the group and welcomed everyone to the meeting.

Doug gave a brief history on Employment Services and what kinds of service provided, i.e. gaining employment for people from disadvantaged groups. Doug informed the group that they were, in fact, hand-picked employers and gave an overview on why everyone was here today.

By 2005, Doug hopes the group can show what cutting edge means – people out there who want to work and want to shine – and that everyone has reached it.

Doug would like to see this group ensure that the right person is in the right job with the right support; must not 'force feed' people into jobs that they don't want.

Everyone introduce themselves at Doug's request. Doug then introduced Ged Murray, the photographer present. Doug explained that everyone would have access to the photographs, CD's etc. when they are available.

(The photos are on a disk and will be available to look at, at the next meeting on Wednesday, 1st October. If people are interested in seeing the photographs beforehand please see your Senior Employment Officer.)

PROJECT:

Rachel R then gave an update and overview of the project, explaining this would be a short presentation.

Team Structure:

Rachel mentioned that the vacancies for a Marketing and Publicity Officer and three Senior Employment Officers have already been advertised. Regarding the Marketing and Publicity Officer position, it was hoped he/she would be producing a newsletter/glossy magazine – six issues per year and everyone could contribute. Doug also mentioned that the Marketing and Publicity Officer would be a journalist/presenter with Pure Radio.

Employers:

Rachel explained that she was in negotiations with the three new Employers named in the table, i.e. Primary Care Trust, Granada Television and Greater Manchester Police.

Delivery of Service:

Rachel quickly ran through the listed points on this slide and explained Meg's involvement re; Action Learning.

Company Analysis:

Rachel informed the group that the Senior Employment Officers had gone out giving presentations to the Employers and have also been able to map resources and networks re; benefits, housing, etc. which has resulted in finding many contacts suitable for individual disadvantaged groups.

Beneficiaries:

Doug informed the group that the measure of success was to overcome the problem that approximately only 5% of people from these disadvantaged groups applied for positions. However, these groups have shown they wish to gain employment.

Market Project to Beneficiaries:

Amanda from the Co-operative Bank asked with regards to BME, the question whether Employment Services (ES) will be providing a link between the groups and the Bank. Rachel said yes, explained where the Community Development Team is (part of Stockport MBC), and that ES are looking at Stockport, whereas the database/mapping from the Bank and the BBC is great, but covers mainly Manchester. ES are hoping to signpost employers to the right groups, contacts etc. with the disadvantaged groups.

Recruit Eligible Beneficiaries to Project:

Rachel explained that since this slide was produced, the beneficiary figures have increased.

Recruitment and Retention So Far:

As Rachel went through this slide she felt the Seniors should be proud of themselves. After completing many beneficiaries' Personal Development Plans, they have helped them build up their confidence for them to go out and look for employment by themselves.

Doug explained ES' thoughts/expectations around work experience, i.e. that beneficiaries could expect to obtain a job after work experience, not be treated as a 'lip service'.

Amanda asked do all Seniors know about all vacancies with all the employers. Rachel explained that every week the Seniors meet and this information is shared amongst them. Doug thought this question was a valid point, as they all need to know about any vacancies.

Paula, explained that they go back to Referrers on a regular basis to keep them updated on the project, the people they have referred, and who has received employment, etc.

Dionne explained that some people want a career, not just a job, or are considering a change in direction with regards to employment and they help them look for an opening with the right people.

Rachel finished her presentation, by explaining the last slide: that it is ES' hope that eventually they will have empowered the employers to work with these disadvantaged groups without the need for involvement from ES.

Doug added that he also felt that at the end of the project, everyone at the meeting could say to mainstream organisations that this is the way recruitment/retention should be done.

The meeting stopped for refreshments.

ROUND THE TABLE DISCUSSION ON EMPLOYERS' EXPECTATIONS/ISSUES:

Meg re-opened the meeting by introducing round the table discussions and explained how the Seniors had been going into organisations, as outsiders, and learning about these organisations to identify barriers/issues/successes etc. that these particular organisations have identified. They were then helping to improve best practice and sharing experiences/ideas on how things can be moved forward. Meg then asked if the Employers could express their views and opinions on their expectations/issues.

These expectations/issues were taken down by Rachel Clarke on flipcharts (please see enclosures).

Debbie Cross from the Bank asked why do organisations have a certain senior and certain disadvantaged groups linked just to them.

Lou reiterated that when the Seniors meet each week, not only do they bring to the meeting any vacancies that their particular company/organisation may have, but also whether any of their Beneficiaries have stated a wish to work with a certain company/organisation. Examples were given of seniors picking up each other's clients from different disadvantaged groups.

Doug explained that ES have not put together a structure of consultants.

Fiona from the BBC mentioned that although Caroline is their Senior, she has met with Natalie re; BME groups and had received a handy list of names and what they specialise in. Fiona liked the thought of being able to go straight to

the Senior who deals with a certain disadvantaged group for information rather than through Caroline all the time.

Rachel explained that although ES are looking into this, she explained that she didn't want people to be ringing the Seniors all the time, but to go through their designated contact. However, it is hoped that the information gathered by the Seniors will enable companies/organisations to be empowered to approach agencies themselves.

Doug said ES will, at the moment, be keeping the old model running, but will open up the new model – need to look at direction going. He also stated that skills from Lou, Rachel Roberts, Rachel Clarke, himself etc. needed to be brought in.

Debbie from the Bank asked whether Seniors knew what equipment and where to get it for people with disabilities, i.e. would Dionne know what equipment is available for someone with a physical disability and where this equipment can be obtained from.

The Seniors will have access to this information if not known personally. Companies/organisations can use Seniors as a starting point to get information/the right person to deal with queries.

Fiona said she wants instant access, so wants to be able to go straight to that person.

Rachel pointed out the only drawback is that BME is high on everyone's agenda, and didn't want Natalie bombarded, but giving information/meeting the organisation's needs is high on ES' agenda. Rachel hoped to recruit more people to BME.

Debbie asked if this information could be on the website? Doug informed the group that this would not be suitable at the moment as Stockport shares the website with Bury. However, he will look into this.

Dionne felt that it should be mentioned that this valuable information should be built on and shared by all.

Doug wants ES to empower organisations, not just themselves. However, these are the kind of issues that he wanted bringing to this meeting.

QUESTIONS/ANSWERS:

The group were asked whether they had any particular questions they wanted to mentioned today or what do they want to bring to the next meeting.

Paula:

Certain organisations had mentioned today using their own facilities for the next meetings. How does everyone else feel about this? Doug said he was fine about this, but as a word of caution pointed out that if the venues kept changing too much, people run the risk of getting lost, or confused over venues.

Amanda:

Can people exchange contact numbers etc? (There were several sheets around the table for people to put their contact numbers on. This was completed and is enclosed with these minutes.)

Doug suggested sharing this information with the Marketing and Publicity Officer.

Carmel:

Likes learning and sharing and felt it would be nice to have speakers, i.e. someone from, say a legal firm, who could talk to all the Employers about legislation and dealing with barriers.

Doug said he felt that everyone needs time to get together to discuss today and the next meeting.

Doug said that one of the themes of the EQUAL Project is employability and asked, "what makes someone employable?" There was a short discussion around this: change Government perception on who is employable; session looking particular area; what funding is available and how can this be used; where we are now and what we can use current budget for;

Doug – asked for preferences re; frequency of these meetings? Quarterly was suggested.

POSSIBLE FOR FUTURE AGENDAS

- (1) Linda - Would like to start next meeting with Terms of Reference and thought all the Employers should come already with some prepared.
- (2) Carmel – joint ventures/recruitment, i.e. advertisements for similar jobs – could pilot this. Could help be given to people with interviews at, say, a community centre?
- (3) SSP – interested in retaining and promoting people.
- (4) Community Recruitment Campaign

- (5) Co-operative Bank – Business case
- (6) How to implement initiatives between companies/organisations within realistic timescales.

The Seniors will discuss this further with the employers before the next meeting on 1st October.

The meeting closed with Doug asking the group to remember that Stockport MBC is the only Council doing this initiative and this project is good use of European money.

Fiona from the BBC informed the group that the BBC are looking for companies who recruit – do you have a set of values and could the BBC come and talk to you?

DATE OF NEXT MEETING:

The next meeting is to be held on Wednesday, 1st October, 2003 12.00 pm – 4.00 pm at Cheadle House, Cheadle.