

Embracing Diversity

Bury EST organised the 'Embracing Diversity' Conference which took place on 11th November 1999 at the Bridgewater Hall, Manchester. Over 150 fee-paying delegates from the private and public sector attended, as well as delegates visiting from France and Germany. It also attracted media coverage from the BBC and regional press.



'Trouble-shooter', Sir John Harvey-Jones, Keynote speaker at the conference.

The overall message was that **employing people with a disability makes good business sense**. The speakers answered the commonly asked question 'What's in it for me?'

by pointing to the increase in customer base, increased customer service profile, increased profits as well as doing it because it's the right thing to do.

'Inspirational' was how one delegate described Sir John Harvey-Jones MBE, who spoke in his unique and highly entertaining style, on *A Diverse and Happy Workforce - Recipes for Success*. Sir John talked of his own disability, having suffered two strokes, and that of his disabled daughter, who now efficiently handles his speaking engagements and business activities: the sort of support activities that were previously undertaken by what now seemed to be an 'embarrassingly large support team' from his days at ICI. "Brains are equally distributed amongst the able-bodied and disabled," he pointed out, adding "...you don't throw the whole body away simply because one part of it doesn't function normally."

► continued on page 2



Delegates discuss issues around the Bury EST exhibition stand.

Workshop to close in Spring 2000

Bury EST's workshop, Bury Festive Lighting, is to close in the Spring of 2000. Numerous funding applications had been made in an effort to continue the workshop but these proved unsuccessful. Four part-time staff will lose their posts in a move which has disappointed all involved. The workshop produced over sixty lighting units for display across the borough last year and delivered a service to seventeen users. ► full story on page 3

IN THIS ISSUE

Embracing Diversity, Award received	2
Bury Festive Lighting, New for 2000	3
News in Brief, Funding Boost, User events	4
Employer focus: The Corn Market Fish & Chip Bar	5
New Horizons update, Contacting us	6

'Working Start' offers a fresh start to users

European funding has enabled Bury EST to develop an innovative form of work-based assessment that we've called 'Active Assessment'. Local manufacturer, Chadwicks of Bury, have generously agreed to us setting up an assessment centre at their factory so that we can assess the social and work skills of people with a learning disability.



We are assessing people for social and work skills so that we can improve the jobmatch which we aim for. Each person is entered for the Vocational Access Programme award, a nationally accredited qualification. What is more important is that we can see first hand what skills and difficulties each person has in a real workplace. The process allows people to build confidence and skill levels whilst making sure of the career path they want to pursue. Twenty three people have so far used the centre before moving on to open work placements or employment.

In the next issue of Connect, we will be looking at the 'Working Start' project in greater detail and how some of the participants have fared. In the meantime, for more information, contact Lee Salad on 0161-253 6286.

Embracing Diversity

Beyond Disability - see the worker

► continued from page 1

The one-day conference, aimed at senior personnel officers, was the idea of Bury EST, Stockport Worklink, and Wirral Rehab and included an exhibition of services offered by each agency. The conference highlighted the business advantages of developing a diverse workforce - in particular, the inclusion of people with disabilities in the workplace.



Katrina Sartini offering advice to delegates.

It provided delegates with case studies, help, advice and support and featured high profile speakers from Asda Stores, North West Development Agency, Employers' Forum on Disability and the DfEE. Delegates were provided with the opportunity to learn from the experiences of employers who have already adopted a strategy of employing a diverse workforce.

Susan Scott-Parker, is the founding Chief Executive of the Employers' Forum on Disability, which has 300 members employing nearly 20% of the workforce. As an acknowledged expert and commentator on the business advantages of embracing diversity and equal opportunities, Susan outlined the **Business Case for Using Supported Employment Agencies**.

David Smith, Human Resources Director Retail, ASDA Stores Ltd, spoke on **It's All About Ability - ASDABILITY**. The retention and employment of disabled colleagues is high on Asda's agenda. David listed numerous examples of reasonable, low or no-cost adjustments that Asda have made to work conditions to facilitate the employment of a diverse workforce.

Developing the skills agenda has been identified by extensive regional consultation as a high priority in the achievement of success for the North West. Fran Hulbert, Head of Skills Policy at the North West Development Agency spoke about **Developing the Regional Skills Agenda**.

Eric Galvin, DfEE Divisional Manager, has responsibility for Adult Disadvantage Policy, which includes employment policy for disabled people. Eric outlined **The Government's Agenda for Action**.

Closing speaker, Dr Rachel Perkins, Clinical Director at South West London and St George's Mental Health NHS Trust, spoke about **Employing People with Mental Health Problems: The Competent Employer**. Dr Perkins openly states that she suffers from manic depression and jokes freely to her staff that a 'mad person' manages them. Joking aside, Dr Perkins provided clear evidence that disproves one of the myths about employing staff with mental health problems - that their attendance record is poor. Following the introduction of the Trust's Pathfinder User Employment Programme in 1995, 15% of those recruited into existing clinical and non-clinical posts have first hand experience of living with

mental health problems. Dr Perkins says that with the programme's support "their sickness absences (3.8%) have been lower than those of the rest of the Trust's workforce (5.8%)". It is interesting to speculate whether sickness absences in the workforce in general could be reduced if workers had access to similar support with the ordinary difficulties of life that most people experience from time to time. Not only has the Trust gained clinical and social benefits, the programme makes economic sense. As Dr Perkins calculates, "The amount saved in benefits no longer paid, and gained in taxes as a result of employment, exceeds the cost of providing support by some £1900 per person per year."

Overall, the consensus of opinion from delegates was that this had been a worthwhile and important event. Over 80% of those attending felt the Conference had increased their knowledge of supported employment techniques and 70% said that it had increased the likelihood of recruiting someone with a disability.

We have a video of the conference at our office. If anyone wishes to view it, please contact Huw.

Efforts rewarded at celebration dinner

The hard work put in by users and staff at Bury Festive Lighting was rewarded at a presentation dinner at the Elizabethan Suite, Bury in December. Paul Smith, Bury EST Trainer, (left) was presented with a commendation certificate by the Environment Minister, Michael Meacher, at the event organised by the Bury Business Environment Association.

Staff were delighted at being nominated for the award and proud of the achievements of the users involved in producing the exciting displays. Congratulations to all involved!



A brighter Borough... ...but no more workshop

Our workshop, Bury Festive Lighting, will close this Spring because we have been unable to secure the funding required to maintain it. Over the last few months, extensive efforts have been made to find the money needed to pay revenue costs. The European funding ran out at the end of December and Bury Social Services agreed a temporary extension of funding until the end of March 2000. This gave time to bid for money from the Health Authority (Joint Finance), Health Action Zone and the Single Regeneration Budget (SRB5). Additional requests were made to the Local Authority and the Community Trust for Greater Manchester.

A commitment of £80,000 each year is needed to sustain the project. Pilsworth Environmental Company have given funding over the past year and were set to renew this commitment but this would not have been enough. Bury EST joined a consortium with CVS, the Business Environment Association and the Greater Manchester Play Resources Unit (Grumpy) in an effort to strengthen our position. We



User, Paul Clarke demonstrates his skills to Trainer, Paul Smith.

Radcliffe and Tottington. A 15m Santa and reindeer display was built for the Grant's Arms in Ramsbottom. The units have been made to a high quality and were praised by local traders and residents. The production of lights helped eleven people to qualify for the Foundation Training Award.

The closure will leave a big gap in the training opportunities available to local people who have experienced a severe mental illness, but not being too down-hearted, we are now going to explore the possibility of setting up a charitable company limited by guarantee, so that we can bid for lottery money in an attempt to restart the project in the future. We shall continue our links with Pilsworth Environmental Co., the Chamber of Trade and the new Area Boards.

A number of people have given a great deal of their time to help the workshop become the success it was. We would like to thank Pilsworth Environmental Co., Fred Bowen of the Chamber of Trade and Elaine Shirt of Millgate, in particular, for their unwavering support. Many thanks also to all the staff, users and traders who worked so hard to make these lights a reality. Hopefully, we'll be back in a year or so, continuing to make Bury a brighter borough!



New for 2000

'EQUAL'

Bury EST is preparing for the next round of transnational ESF funding in 2001. The EQUAL programme is likely to offer funding over a four or five year period until 2005 for regional programmes which address disadvantage and equal opportunities. Bury EST hopes to work with other projects in the Greater Manchester area, as well as large and small employers, on a project which will see enhanced workplace support for people with disabilities who enter work.

Job retention

Job retention is becoming an increasingly important issue for the Government and Bury EST is well placed to capitalise on this new priority. The service produced a research report into employer attitudes last year and has successfully piloted the provision of support to both employer and worker in an effort to help people retain their jobs after experiencing mental health problems. Manager, Huw Davies, has been asked to present workshops in London and Birmingham as a result. A recent workshop in Birmingham was attended by 21 European funded projects and 12 New Deal pilot projects. Senior officials from the Department for Education & Employment also attended.

Parsons Lane Cafe Bar

Bury EST have come together with Parsons Lane Drop-in Centre to set up a cafe bar at the centre. A trainer, Allison Byrne, has been appointed to run the venture which will enable small groups of people to learn catering and retail skills to award level.

Clients will be producing a range of snacks in the revamped kitchen and a tuck bar is also available to people using the centre. The cafe bar has so far provided training and work experience for seven people. Progression through to College is being encouraged and they hope to establish an outside catering facility for meetings and events this year.

Referrals are made via Bury EST and assistants receive induction, training, and a small training allowance.



Santa lighting up the Grant's Arms.

had hoped to move into a new factory unit with these exciting projects and this would have given plenty of scope for joint projects and new training opportunities, but the news that no funding was available from SRB means that we cannot pay any wages due in April. This has left us extremely disappointed but with no option other than to close down the workshop.

Last year saw the production of over sixty lighting units for display in Bury,

News in Brief

Starters & Leavers

A warm welcome to new staff - Dennie Ford and Mick Dean have joined the 'Working Start' project to work with Lee, Anne and Tony on a temporary basis.

Gary Ogden, has announced his intention to leave the service and take up a new post as Employment Officer in Rochdale. We wish him luck, knowing he will take plenty of experience and skills with him.

Best wishes also to Brian Hooley who's leaving shortly to take up a senior post with Site Electrical. Good luck, Brian!

Your views wanted!

It's that time of year where we have to urgently complete business plans for the 2000/01 year. We would welcome your comments and involvement in doing this. What do you think should be our priorities over the next couple of years?

Extended Offices

We are hoping to receive funding for an extended office at Ribchester Drive so that the whole service will be based on one site. If all goes well, building will start in early 2000.

New Brochure

Bury EST now has a glossy new brochure. Many thanks to all of you who were involved in its production and allowed photographs to be used.

Did you know?

We are now supporting over 60 people in paid work.

Sales & Marketing

Bury EST's staff recently attended a three day course on Sales and Marketing in conjunction with staff from Wigan's supported employment service. The course was held at Radcliffe Civic Hall and presented by Doug Cresswell from Stockport Employment Services. The course will help us to contact employers effectively and produce better results for both employers and users.

Congratulations!

Congratulations, from us all, to Daniel Crompton on passing his driving test.

Latest Funding Boost!



Bury EST has again been successful in applying for European funding. We teamed up with Stockport Worklink to apply for £50,000 funding which will allow us to improve our marketing materials and promote awareness of disability issues with employers across the Manchester region. Both services have been involved in lobbying Government Departments to improve access to supported employment across the country and increase the resources available. We hope to enlist support from employers in doing this. The award is a follow up to the two-year ESF funded New Horizons project which helped people with mental health needs to access employment. The money can only be used for dissemination of the Horizon projects which both services ran in 1998/99.

This new project will run from January to September 2000 and will allow us to encourage many more employers to provide employment to people with disabilities. Both services are working on a new model of supported employment which stresses the role of employers and seeks to increase their ability to recruit and retain employees who have a disability. We are trying to get employers more involved in developing these models and want to improve the ways in which we support their efforts. We hope to work closely with the Employers' Forum on Disability whose members make up 20% of the national workforce. We believe that employers respond better to hearing success stories from other employers so we want to encourage the formation of an employers' network to look at disability issues across Greater Manchester.

This is a major step towards us bidding for long-term European funding next year through the EQUAL initiative and it comes

just as the Government is recognising the tremendous potential of supported employment. As part of the eight-month project, Bury EST will be linking up with the Bank of Milan and projects in Spain to exchange good practice.

New Network

Two networks have agreed to come together to form one group with a powerful voice in the North West. The North West Supported Employment Initiative and the North West Sponsors Group have merged to form the North West Supported Employment Group. This brings together all the local agencies like Bury EST with the larger sheltered placement providers like Scope, the Shaw Trust and Interwork. The group meets every two months to learn from each other's experiences, coordinate strategic developments and report back to Government with agency views on any new proposals.

Upcoming User Events

The North West Supported Employment Group is organising an event to promote supported employment to people with a learning disability. The event is scheduled to take place in Stockport in April 2000. The event will feature workshops and presentations by users who are working at the moment.

We may be able to arrange transport for those interested in attending. Please contact Huw or Lee if you are interested in going along.

Users' Groups

We are going to try to establish user groups over the next year in an attempt to involve users in a more meaningful way in the development of our services. We tried to establish a mental health group in 1998 but the group ran out of steam as participants found work or moved on elsewhere.

If anyone is interested in helping to establish a learning disability users' group or a mental health users' group, we would be delighted to hear from you.

Employer Focus: *The Corn Market Fish & Chip Bar*

Fred Bowen started the Corn Market Fish & Chip Bar in Haymarket Street, Bury, six years ago and now serves up fish and chips and hearty all-day breakfasts, using two tons of potatoes and up to 1500 portions of fish every week! Fifteen staff currently work at the Corn Market, three of whom were recruited through Bury EST.



Owner, Fred Bowen, at work in the Corn Market.

Fred's involvement with Bury EST started in late 1994, when an Employment Officer called in to Fred's shop on her way home from work. Through casual conversation, Fred became interested in Bury EST's work and asked for a meeting to discuss things further.

Fred openly admits, "I had no experience whatsoever of employing someone with a disability. In fact, I didn't even know if it could be done. I naively assumed disabled people were employed by Remploy and I hadn't even considered the possibility of mainstream employment."

Very soon after the first meeting, Fred recruited his first employee with a learning disability through Bury EST. This worker has been at the Corn Market ever since. "I gave great consideration to the reaction of other staff. I was at the bottom of a learning curve and so were the staff. I realised I needed to discuss the situation with them. I spoke to his family first, to find out about his epilepsy and that he found it difficult to mix socially. With the family and the individual's consent, I was able to give a profile to the staff. The reaction of the staff was brilliant! They actively involve him in social events. Whenever there is a birthday party, he's invited and the staff arrange transport for him. He isn't confident about using the phone and so again his colleagues will arrange a medical or dental appointments for him. It means that there are many pairs of eyes looking out for his well being. If he is looking tired or worried, this is brought to my attention, so that I can check that everything is OK." This support has reaped dividends. Fred is full of praise for this employee. "He is flexible, reliable, a good timekeeper and has more personal confidence. His attention to detail and quality of work is superb!"

Over the last five years, Fred has employed or given work experience to more than ten people with either a learning disability or mental health problem.

Some of Bury EST's clients have worked at the Corn Market for a period of just a few weeks or months. This has enabled them to prove that they can be good at timekeeping, do the job and be reliable. It provides a taste of a particular working environment, increases personal confidence and employability. Fred has been able to provide a reference to other employers and many have moved on from this work experience to permanent positions elsewhere.

"I find employing someone with a disability personally rewarding" says Fred. "It has widened my thoughts as an employer to always consider if a job vacancy can be filled by someone with a disability. It has also taught me to evaluate the job description carefully and through Bury EST, I have become aware of the importance of producing documented risk assessments."

Bury EST helps both employer and client through on-the-job support. Fred comments, "The level of support from Bury EST has been first class. The relationship between us is more than just that between employer and service provider. Every member of the team is very friendly and they are always there when you need them. Any problem is dealt with immediately. I could not wish for a better service."

Fred believes that his involvement with Bury EST has made him more aware of equal opportunities. Bury EST have also helped him to gain financial support to help facilitate the employment of people with a disability. Two employees are currently on supported placements through the Shaw Trust and Scope. "This provides important financial support through the period in which a person is being fully trained."

Fred's involvement with Bury EST has also opened other opportunities. "I'm always keen to find out about other initiatives, especially things which are going on in the town, like the Christmas lights project."

In the near future, Fred has advanced plans to expand his business to other sites - nationally and internationally. There could be over twenty outlets in the North West alone, with a centralised production site where food is prepared and packed for daily distribution to the retail outlets. This may well expand employment opportunities for people with learning disabilities or mental health clients by four or five-fold. Bury EST will definitely be hoping Fred's plans are realised.

Company Profile

Owner/Proprietor:

Fred Bowen
Former President of Bury Chamber of Trade

Nature of Business:

Retail Fish & Chip Bar & Cafe

Established:

December 1993

Employees:

15 (9 full-time & 6 part-time)

Opening Hours:

Mon-Sat: 6am-7pm

Location:

Haymarket Street, Bury



New Horizons update...

Mental Health Guidance Sessions

Our successful mental health drop-in service will continue to operate in 2000

No appointment needed:
Tuesdays 1pm - 4pm

Pre-arranged appointments only:
Thursdays 10am - 1pm

Contacting Us

Do you have a story we can feature in the next edition?

We hope to cover the impact of the National Minimum Wage, useful weblinks, as well as regular news and developments.

What do you think of this issue?

To contact us with comments, suggestions or complaints:

Write to: *Bury EST*
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Phone: 0161-253 6588

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website: www.buryest.org.uk

Bury EST is funded by BuryMetro Social Services Department, The Department of Health, and the European Social Fund.



Funding for the New Horizons project ended at the start of 2000 although we have funding to continue evaluation and dissemination work until April 2000. We are lucky that we are going to be able to keep the Supported Employment service going, though we are disappointed to lose the workshop.

We feel it's been a good project. We've raised the profile of supported employment for people with mental health needs both locally and regionally. We are starting to have an effect on national policy but we know there's a long way to go before people can access fully integrated services to help them back into work.

Over the two years we have helped 20 people to find paid work, 40 people to enter further education and assisted 11 people to gain training certificates through the workshop. We've produced a detailed research report into employer attitudes and piloted job retention strategies. We have also worked with Bury College to look at support mechanisms for people returning to college.

We have held seminars and a major conference for employers and have lobbied hard for a renewed commitment to meeting need, both in Bury and across the country. We have substantially increased our marketing efforts with the introduction of a new brochure, posters for display in workplaces, leaflets for employers and display equipment. We have tried to advertise the scheme in every health centre and other community venues.

Our future work will include extending our services to employers and gaining more effective involvement from users and employers. We have tried for some time to get a user group up and running and we will continue our efforts. It may be that we also look to see how we can expand the service to meet the needs of others who are at a disadvantage when seeking work. It looks like being a busy year.

We welcome any comments you may have about the New Horizons project for inclusion in our evaluation. We also wish you all the best for 2000 and hope you achieve your dreams.

A reminder of our current staff:

Huw Davies

Manager

Trish Hilton

Clerical Officer

Mental Health Service

Rod Goodwin

Employment Officer

Katrina Sartini

Employment Officer

Lorraine Robinson

Placement Officer

Alan Baker

Employment Support Worker

Gary Ogden

Employment Support Worker

Paul Smith

Trainer/Technician

Deb Booth

Marketing & Evaluation Officer

Learning Disability Service

Lee Salad

Employment Officer

Anne Clarke

Placement Officer

Dennie Ford

Placement Officer

Tony Henson

Placement Officer

Mick Dean

Employment Support Worker

STOP PRESS: New JIP!...STOP PRESS

The Government has asked Authorities to produce a new Joint Investment Plan around Welfare to Work. The Plans encourage Health and Social Services to work together to produce long term strategies to assist people with disabilities into work and identify ways of meeting shortfalls in services. There will be extensive consultation on the plan which has to be ready for April 2001.