

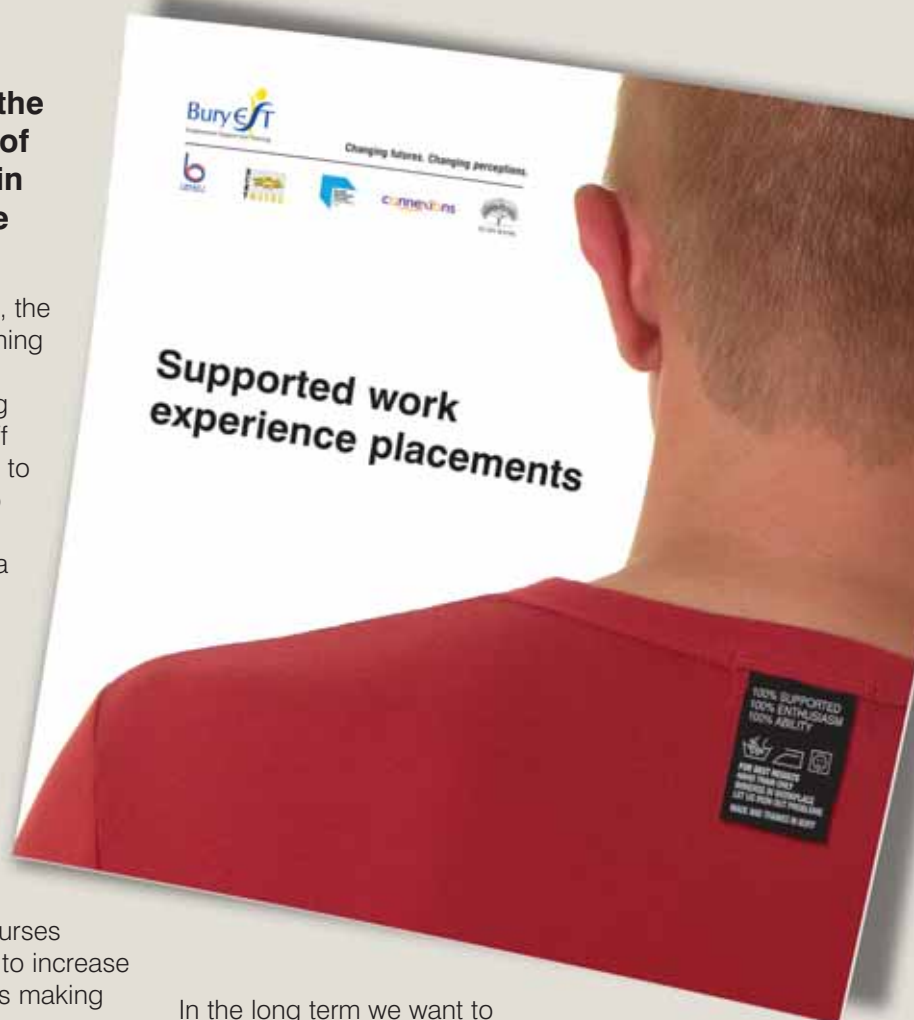
Supporting young people from education to work

Bury is building a strong partnership of local agencies that are focusing on disabled jobseekers who are leaving school or college and want to make the transition to work. Only around 10% of people with a learning disability are in employment and we want to increase that figure locally.

The partnership includes Bury EST, Bury College, the Connexions Service, Adult and Community Learning Service, Elmsbank High School and adult day services. We recently secured £35,000 in funding from the Learning and Skills Council for a one-off project to build local capacity and this was used to map local education and training provision up to NVQ level 1; deliver workforce development training in employer engagement; and produce a marketing campaign aimed at increasing the number of work placements available with local employers. Bury EST delivered the staff training and we got excellent feedback from the 45 people who undertook it. We also published some adverts in the local business press and have produced an 8 page pamphlet about work experience aimed at employers.

Bury College and the Adult & Community Education Service are working closer than ever before and collaborating on the types of courses available. Bury College has also stated its intent to increase work experience opportunities for students and is making funding available to support this aim.

The capacity building project was very successful and the partnership has recently come together to submit an application to the Learning and Skills Council for European funding. If successful, the bid will allow us to employ two Placement Officers to work with 25 education leavers and support them into sustainable jobs.



In the long term we want to create a specific support service for education leavers. The bid also has an element that will see the support of over one hundred people who are on incapacity benefits to improve their jobsearch and interview skills through group work and individual tutorial. We'll hear whether we've been successful later in the summer.

www.buryest.org.uk/projects

Incapacity Benefits reform

Consultation has now closed on the Government's Welfare Reform Green Paper. The paper proposes far reaching changes to the incapacity benefits system and it is expected that the Government will be producing some firmer proposals later this year. Bury EST has fed into the consultation and whilst we broadly welcome the renewed focus on helping people on incapacity benefits back to work, we have some concerns about how this is to be achieved.

The overall aim is to maintain 80% of the working age population in employment so that economic growth can be achieved. This can only be achieved if more single parents, older workers and disabled workers are encouraged or forced back into work.

It is clear that the Government wants to achieve this within a framework that offers them good value for money. We are concerned that the focus will move towards people who need less support

to get a job and that resources may be moved away from people with more significant disabilities. This would be a significant step away from their social inclusion agenda. The new system will see people who apply for incapacity benefits being assessed to see if it is realistic for them to work. This capability assessment will categorise people as able to work or exempt from work. In our opinion, this is a backward step that reintroduces a medical assessment of capability and risks excluding many people from work.

One of our main concerns is the lack of support for people who are preparing for work through work experience or working less than 16 hours a week through permitted work. There have been recent changes to the permitted work rules but the fact remains that neither the Learning and Skills Councils nor Jobcentre Plus are supporting this type of activity by paying for support staff. We are expecting further information around this area from Government but we would like to see a higher earnings limit that is tied to minimum wage levels for people on income support.


One of the key areas for reform will be contracting arrangements with Jobcentre Plus. The Government seems likely to contract with fewer organisations in the future but we want to make sure that local agencies are not squeezed out of contracts to provide employment support. This could have a disastrous impact on levels of local authority investment in work preparation services and we have stressed this to Government ministers.

We have highlighted some other areas where we would like to see improvements. These include access to occupational health, partnerships with health professionals, improved support for job retention initiatives, and a simplified welfare benefits system.

You can view our full response through the news pages of our website at www.buryest.org.uk/news

“The overall aim is to maintain 80% of the working age population in employment so that economic growth can be achieved.”





Mental health & the workplace

A wide range of employers from Greater Manchester's public and private sectors attended a seminar on mental health in the workplace hosted by Bury EST at the Village Hotel.

A growing number of employees are taking longer than average periods of sickness as mental health problems have now become the largest single cause of workplace absence. Employers are looking at their policies and procedures of recruitment and retention in an attempt to remain compliant with the Disability Discrimination Act, to reduce sickness and replacement costs, and to support their employees to return to work. There are still many myths around recruiting people with a mental health background and also fears about whether to approach employees to encourage them to return to work and how this would be perceived by the employee.

The seminar was provided to inform employers of the different health conditions associated with mental illness and the adjustments that may need to be made in the workplace to assist employees to return to work and retain their jobs.

Karen Sunderland, a community nurse working with the Bury Community Mental Health team, gave a very interesting and

informative talk about some of the symptoms and factors involved in mental health conditions.

Dr Jim Ford, a Consultant Occupational Physician working with SALUS Occupational Health and Safety provided delegates with the statistical background and gave his perspective as a physician supporting people to return to work where possible. Jim has previously advised Government on job retention strategies.

The seminar concluded with a Question and Answer session and a range of topics were discussed by a panel including the speakers accompanied by Lindsey Dobson Scott, HR Director GM Police (Bury Division) and Graham Bentley, Manager for Westgrove Cleaning Services.

Delegates provided some very positive feedback on the content of the seminar. It is proposed to organise a follow-up workshop session aimed at identifying some practical solutions to dealing with mental health in the workplace.

The presentation and a copy of a document entitled 'Do's and Don'ts of Mental Health in the Workplace' can be found on the Employer Forum section of the Bury EST website.

Employer Forum on Diversity

The Employer Forum on Diversity is now in its fourth year. The quarterly meetings are held at the Village Hotel, Waterfold Business Park, Bury.

This year the forum members have heard talks by representatives from government and other local agencies who are all working in partnership to support employers to recruit and retain a diverse workforce. One of the topics requested by the employers covered the area of recruiting foreign nationals. With 10 new countries entering the European Union a number of employers had received job applications migrant workers. The Asylum Seekers team also supported employers to improve their understanding of determining whether they are allowed to offer employment to immigrants and what checks need to be taken.

The Forum meetings quarterly and the next meeting is scheduled for Thursday 6th July 2006. This meeting will commence at 9:30am and will finish at 12:00 noon, followed by a buffet lunch.

The subject for this meeting is 'Making reasonable adjustments to the recruitment process'. Employers are

often unsure of how far they can go to successfully attract and recruit some of the client groups who are disadvantaged in the job market.

Real examples of how to take positive action will be given by Carmel McKeogh who is the Director of Human Resources at Stockport Council. Covering the legal implications and discuss compliance with legislation will be representatives from DWF Horizons, a leading and well known firm of solicitors operating across the North West and specialising in Employment Law.

Membership of the forum is free to employers and a variety of subjects have attracted the interest of a wide range of small and large employers representative of the public and private sectors of service and industry.

The Forum is attracting new members and if you are interested in attending a future meeting and considering membership, you'll be made very welcome!

For further details please contact: Fred Bowen on 0161 761 4662 or email fred@burvest.org.uk

Alex Horsfield is a 20 year old man with autism and some learning disability who was referred to Bury EST because of difficulties he was experiencing at work. He was already in employment as a kitchen assistant in a nursing home owned by Southern Cross, a large care organisation. Alex had originally been placed in the home as part of a NVQ catering course. He had completed his training to level 2 under the auspices of Rathbones and had continued to be employed at the home for some six months before Bury EST received the referral.

It was decided that the Workstep job retention programme would be most appropriate for him as it seemed that he was in danger of losing his job after having ongoing communication difficulties in the workplace. His work colleagues at the time were not aware of the difficulties Alex was experiencing as a result of his autism. It is not immediately apparent that Alex has any disabilities and it takes a little time to get to know him and appreciate how he struggles with communication. These difficulties had led to some misunderstandings that Alex could not deal with effectively and this had begun to threaten his employment. Alex had been trained as a cook and was still working as a kitchen assistant but found the lack of opportunity for upward movement frustrating.

Alex, however, saw a vacancy for a cook at another nursing home (it turned out that the home was owned by the same organisation, Southern Cross) and with a little encouragement he decided to apply. With Workstep assistance Alex secured an interview and was offered the post. We arranged for Alex to try the position before making any definite decisions. From the outset we were able to make

Alex's career on the rise!

all appropriate staff members aware of his communication difficulties and assisted him into his new post. He found it a little daunting at first, given the extra responsibility and additional cooking tasks.

He was very successful, however, and was taken on permanently. Right from the start both staff and residents at his new workplace had commented on how the quality of the food had improved as Alex was keen to apply his enthusiasm in developing new cooking ideas and generally raising the standard of hygiene practice in the workplace – Alex is a stickler when it comes to procedure and remembers every aspect of his training: an example of where the 'autistic' ability to think differently can be a positive advantage.

“Alex is one of the best cooks in the organisation”

Bernie Dawson, Home Manager

Consequently Alex is now a very valued member of staff working for the same organisation. He and the catering team of the home has been nominated by Southern Cross for an award for producing exceptional food for the residents over the Christmas period, largely as a result of the additional efforts made by Alex.

Westgrove nominated for employers award

Westgrove Cleaning Services has been nominated for an employer award by Bury EST following their support for one of our clients. Andrew Hoyle has had more than his fair share of life's tragedies and challenges to overcome. He lost both his parents at a young age and was raised by his grandfather, a compassionate man, who also cared for Andrew's sister and his own children who are both disabled.

Andrew himself has a learning disability, but in spite of this he has worked tirelessly to forge out a career for himself. Along the way he has had to contend with some employers who were less than supportive and did not give him the time to develop. However, Andrew was undeterred by such setbacks and found himself a job with Westgrove Cleaning Services in the Millgate Shopping Centre. By nature Andrew is a quiet, modest person but he demonstrated the strength of character to overcome his innate shyness and work in a busy public place contending with the good and bad behaviour of the many people he comes into contact with.

The nature of Andrew's work requires him to be on his feet all day cleaning while he walks. He developed muscular pains in his legs due to the way his posture and muscles had developed and it could have led to him being unable to work.

Andrew overcame this by having physiotherapy and doing daily exercises to strengthen his muscles which he does to this day.

Andrew was literally taking every challenge in his stride. He has an excellent reputation amongst his colleagues and centre staff and shopkeepers for being a well mannered gentleman who is always happy to help and will be the first person to respond if a job needs doing.

Andrew's confidence has grown and with it his skills and experience and he is learning all aspects of cleaning at Westgrove. He has qualified on mechanical cleaning equipment and on a cherry picker for working at heights which both require technical expertise. Over the last year Andrew has taken on supervisory duties as well deputising for his line manager on her days off. Independently, Andrew has also been studying Maths and English at college to improve his basic skills.

Sadly, Andrew's grandfather passed away last year leaving him without a massive support and role model. Andrew still grieves for his loss but characteristically he showed immense courage and with the support of people in work he sustained himself by dedicating his efforts to his job.



Michael receives his award from Joanne Alcock, HR Manager at the Village Hotel

Gayle Mansfield,
HR Assistant at the Village said,

“Everyone went mad when Michael’s nomination was put on the screen and people were chanting his name! Everyone cheered when he was voted the winner of his category.”

Michael said,

“I was surprised when I found out I had won an award and was very pleased! I enjoy my job and I have great colleagues who are very supportive.”

Michael shines at his job!

The Village Hotel and Leisure Club is a committed member of our employers’ forum who actively work with us, currently employing three of our clients.

Earlier this year, the Village Hotel and Leisure Club in Bury hosted its own “V” Factor event (following on from Simon Cowells’ success with the “X” Factor) which incorporated the Shine Team Member Awards. Departments within the hotel were divided into seven categories and Heads of Department nominated someone from each category that they felt had given outstanding performance in their respective roles.

These were collated and those with the most votes were presented with a Team Member of the Year certificate and £50 Village Vouchers.

Michael Rowley, who manages the Team Member Lounge, was nominated by the management team because of the role he plays ensuring all Team Members of the Village Hotel are catered for in a clean and inviting environment.

Shine is a vision and values way of working adopted by the DeVere Group and encompasses the following values:

- ▶ We’re one team pulling together
- ▶ We do the right thing for our customers to show them we care
- ▶ We’re straightforward and have respect for each other
- ▶ We set our sights high and deliver great results

Bury EST would like to offer our warmest congratulations to Michael.

New Drugs Project starts

As from April this year, Bury EST has successfully secured funding to provide a prevocational employment project for people recovering from drugs misuse. The project is aimed at providing extra support for Bury residents who find it difficult to get a job because of barriers due to their use of drugs.

Clients will be allocated a worker who will provide an tailored service including one-to-one and group work. Each client will be supported to produce their own individual development plan. There will be a provision of half day courses aimed at increasing motivation and self confidence. These will be based around topics such as managing behaviour, CV development, interview skills and jobsearching techniques. We will be arranging work experience to update skills and work tasters to help people with career choices.

A close link has been forged with the community Drug Action Team (DAT) at Wolstenholme House in Bury. This has allowed us to develop a drop-in service at Parsons Lane where service users will be able to receive advice on the best routes into education, training and employment. It is also a chance for service users to discover the benefits of working with a support agency such as Bury EST. The project will be staffed by Alistair who will also be increasingly present at services already provided by the DAT, such as the Whitehouse project held at Oddfellows on Manchester Road. This project provides drug users with an opportunity for relaxation, head massage, meditation and it is also hoped that there will shortly be scope for a wider range of services including acupuncture.

It is expected that new and strong links will be forged with local employers, educational services, other support agencies and providers. This will create a more streamlined and efficient service for our clients, giving them a greater opportunity to participate within the wider community and make more positive steps towards their career goals.

Training services

For further information please contact: Fred Bowen
on 0161 761 4662 or email fred@buryest.org.uk

Following the successful introduction of the Employer Engagement training offered by Bury EST, several organisations have now commissioned our courses. These include Bolton MBC; Leeds MBC; Nottinghamshire County Council; The Connexions Service; Bury MBC Adult Learning Department and Day Care Service; and Bury College of Further Education. Over 100 delegates have attended the sessions and a number of organisations have reserved the training for the coming months.

The training is provided over two days and is designed for any organisation engaging with employers to gain their cooperation in offering work experience placements, employment, work based learning and education. The courses cover many areas of developing the individual's skills and confidence in their abilities to canvass and market their service, building an effective and valued relationship with a wide audience of employers.

Delegate feedback continues to be very positive with a high percentage of delegates offering excellent comments.

“Very interesting and informative - delivered in an easy to understand way backed up with good examples”

“Inspiring and motivating”

Nottinghamshire County Council.

Fred Bowen
Bury EST Employer Consultant



Routeways to Work Update

55 people have so far been referred to the Routeways to Work project. The project is funded by the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister as part of a borough wide initiative and is assisting people from local minority ethnic communities to access work.

We are currently supporting 18 of these people towards work and the others have either received advice and guidance or have been signposted to one of our partner organisations who can provide more appropriate assistance. The people who remain with us will be given individualised support by Zerqa and Hassanat. This will include help to compile CVs, prepare job applications, develop basic skills, and practice job search and interview skills.

We have provided workplace training and support, helping people to choose the right career through work experience and tasters. We have been successful in finding full-time work, part-time work or work experience for nine people to date and others have been referred to our Workstep team. We still need to encourage referrals and promote the service.

Zerqa will be attending a Business Solutions event on 4 July on the topic of Women's Employment Awareness and both Hassanat and Zerqa will take information to the Equality and Diversity Fair to be held at Bury College on 5 June. We're also hoping to work with Asian Sound Radio to encourage referrals to the



project. Our employer contacts are developing and we have received positive responses and expressions of support regarding work placement opportunities from both small and large employers alike.

Hopefully, as people become more aware of the service we can move from an emphasis on promotional activities and concentrate on the numbers of people we help into the workplace.

www.buryest.org.uk/services and
www.bury.gov.uk/routewaystowork

It's true, work is good for you!

The replies received to a recent questionnaire on employment appear to support this.

- ▶ 35 out of 40 clients feel that working has helped them to become more financially secure and independent.
- ▶ It is encouraging to see that generally clients feel they are treated equally and fairly and are given the same opportunities as everyone else in their workplace.
- ▶ One area for concern is the number of clients who have not seen an improvement in their social life and do not go out with their workmates after work. We are interested to know if there is any way we can support you to change this situation? If you have any suggestions please let us know.

If you are looking for work – we can help

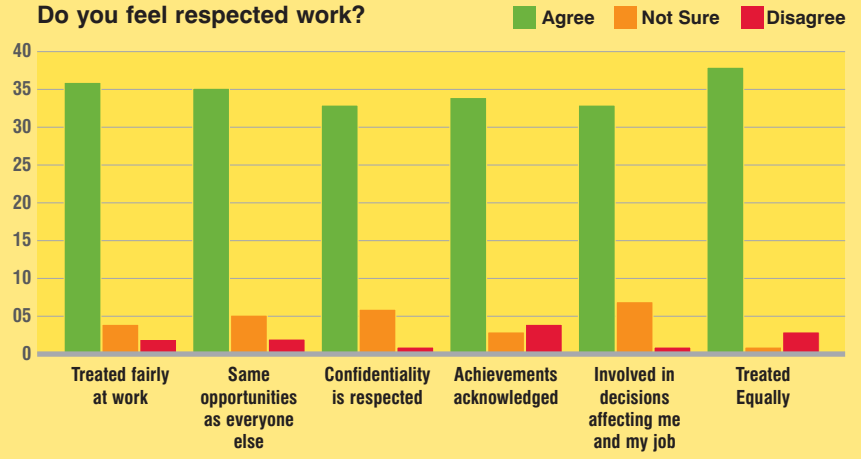
The replies received to a recent questionnaire on looking for work appear to support this.

- ▶ We make every effort to respond quickly to enquiries and try to provide clear and informative handbooks to all clients. However, we have had a mixed response to these questions and will be looking at the content and distribution of the handbook.
- ▶ We take the time to find out what type of work you want and what you are good at. From your responses we should perhaps include your family and friends more and we will take note of this.

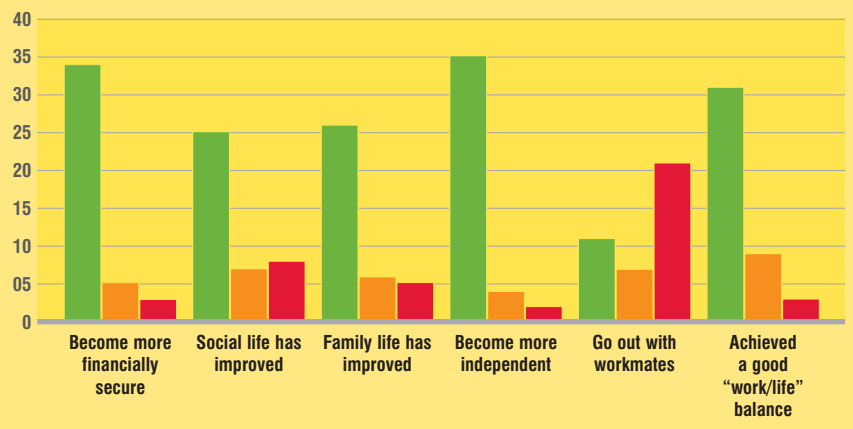
The questionnaires were sent to a random selection of clients so don't worry if you did not receive one this time – we will be sending them out again in the future. Thanks to everyone who responded! Your views are important to us and are used to continually improve the service we offer.

If you would like to view our latest self-assessment report visit our website at www.buryest.org.uk

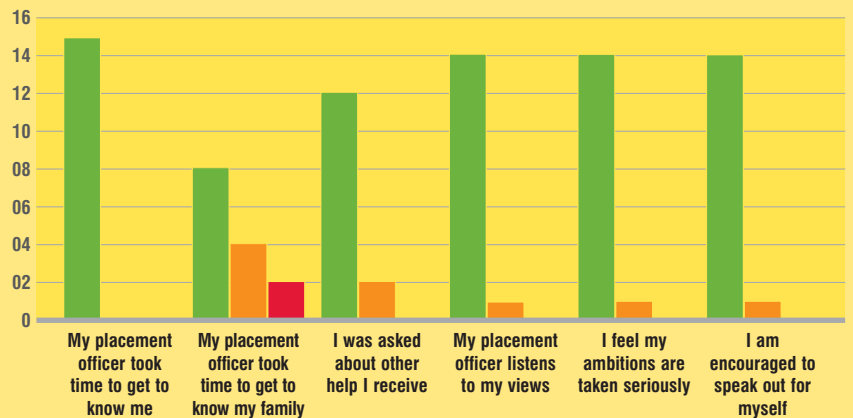
Do you feel respected work?



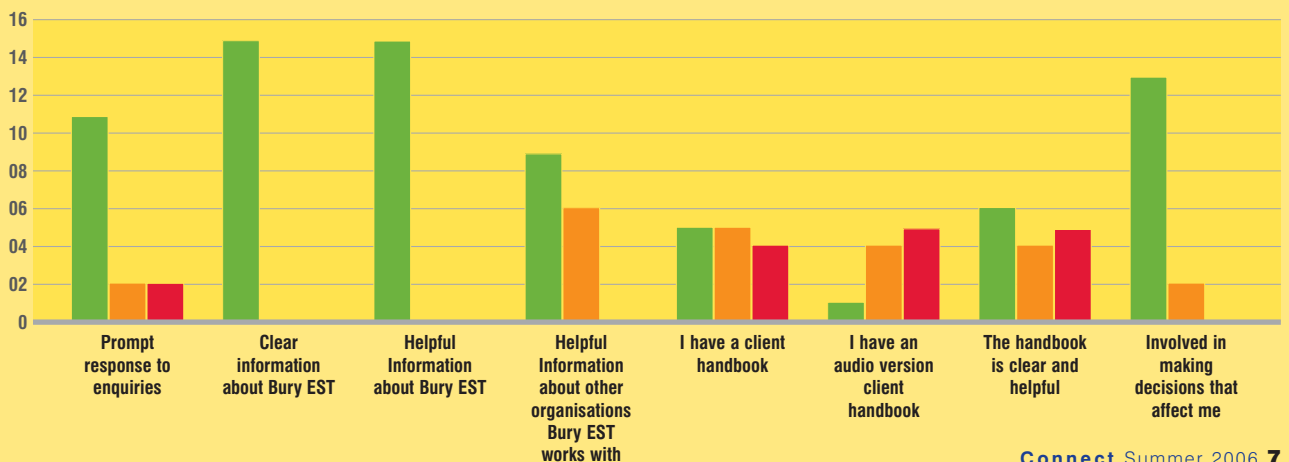
Has work helped you to achieve goals in your life?



How well were your needs identified?



How well are you guided?



News in brief

Bury College diversity awareness week

Bury EST was recently invited by quality managers at Bury College to attend the annual 'Equality and Diversity Awareness event' which aimed to celebrate the diversity of our communities.



Nabila, Zerqa and Hassanat attended during the week and an information stand was provided about our service provision. We gained a lot of interest regarding the Routeways to Work Project and the event proved to be highly beneficial to both students and staff.

Huw to chair BASE

Huw Davies, Bury EST manager, has been elected as the first Chair of the British Association for Supported Employment. Huw was previously Chair of AfSE for 4 years before it merged with the National Association for Supported Employment to form BASE. The new organisation offers a united national voice for the supported employment sector and is working closely with the Department for Work and Pensions and the Learning and Skills Council on policy issues. Huw recently attended a policy seminar with the Conservative Party on behalf of BASE and chaired the BASE national conference which was attended by Anne McGuire MP, Minister for Disabled People and the Shadow Minister, Jeremy Hunt MP. www.base-uk.org

Workstep review

The Government is carrying out a national review of its disability employment programmes this summer. The review will include Workstep, New Deal for Disabled People, Access to Work and Work Preparation. Bury EST will be meeting with officials from the Department for Work and Pensions shortly to put our views across. We are obviously keen to make sure that a specific employment support programme remains to assist people who need ongoing support.

Tony leaves for Ireland

Tony Henson has recently left Bury EST and moved with his family to Cork in Ireland. Tony has managed the Workstep programme for the last three years and has been part of our staff team since 1999. He worked hard to ensure that good quality support is available to clients through the programme and will be missed by the many clients that he always found time for. We would like to wish all the best to Tony and his family for the future.

Remploy Review

Bury EST has met with Stephen Duckworth and PricewaterhouseCooper who are carrying out a detailed review of Remploy on behalf of the Government. The review was triggered by a National Audit Office report that considered the high cost of provision through Remploy. It is estimated that the cost per placement is around £18,000. The review should be completed in June.

BASE network

Bury EST hosted the north-west regional network of the British Association for Supported Employment in May. The meeting focused on quality assurance methods and was attended by 16 supported employment agencies. BASE has recently been established to represent both supported businesses and agencies that support people into open employment. www.base-uk.org

LSC review of north-west provision

The Learning and Skills Council is undertaking a review of provision across the north-west for people with disabilities. The review has established some stakeholder groups to capture the views of education and employment providers and Bury EST attended the Manchester meeting. The review follows on from the national report, Through Inclusion to Excellence, produced earlier this year by Peter Little.

New Service for Visually Impaired

Action for Blind People has established a new employment support service across the Greater Manchester area. The service will be based at the Seedfield Centre in Bury and people interested in accessing the service can contact Jenny Lloyd on 0161 763 7282. www.afbp.org.uk

Congratulations

Michael Wood has recently gained his fork lift truck qualification and we want to offer our congratulations. Michael is employed at Cormar Carpets in Ramsbottom, a leading manufacturer in the UK.

How are we doing?

We are always striving to improve our services and we want to know what you think of our services. Please write or email us with your thoughts – we know we can always do better! You can also use the feedback form on our website.

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