

Bury EST supports new education plans

Last year, an Ofsted report into further education provision for people with disabilities concluded that “learners’ progression to employment, vocational programmes and further training was underdeveloped. In weak provision, too little emphasis was given to work experience programmes and developing learners’ work-related skills”.

Typically, a student with learning disabilities may spend 4 or 5 years in further education. They often enter at the age of 19 following a period of extended education at secondary school and may take a range of courses from independence skills through to work preparation, simulated business courses and NVQs.

There is ample anecdotal evidence across the UK to suggest that work experience opportunities are very limited; that individuals often transfer between vocational courses and that getting a qualification may raise expectations but doesn’t guarantee that the learner has developed the skills needed to get and hold down a job.

The existing pattern of provision has certainly had negligible effect on employment rates for disabled learners. Only around 10% of adults with a learning disability are employed and around 25% of people with a sensory impairment are working. The Learning and Skills Council (LSC) has recently published a new national strategy designed to improve the quality of learning within further education. The strategy, Learning for Living and Work, is the result of four years of work that included Peter Little’s report into current provision, *Through Inclusion to Excellence*.

Bury EST has been involved in the development of the strategy since 2004 with manager, Huw Davies, sitting on one of the review’s working groups. Peter Little has visited us on several occasions as he laid out recommendations for the production of a new national strategy. He has championed the role of supported employment as an approach that is effective.

Learning for Living and Work heralds some radical changes within further education. The LSC have stated that they will not fund any provision after 2010 that does not adopt a supported employment approach. All courses must contain an element of workplace learning and the LSC is clear that this means the development of partnership working between colleges and supported employment agencies so that every student is supported to do work experience. The strategy is backed by a £35 million investment over the next three years.

There is much work to do if the vision is to become a reality. In theory, changes to the 14-19 curriculum mean that every school pupil should undertake work experience as part of their education but we know that this is still not the reality for many pupils. Too many are prevented from doing a placement by a lack of transport and workplace support. This has been compounded by a lack of work experience in further education meaning that many disabled people have never experienced being in a workplace by the age of 25.

Bury EST continues to work with the LSC, both locally and nationally, to ensure that the strategy is being implemented in a way that brings maximum benefit to disabled learners. A local partnership that includes Bury College, Connexions, and the Chamber of Commerce has been collaborating on local policy and projects including the No Limits initiative aimed at people with learning disabilities leaving education.



Simon's mental health condition mainly affects his concentration but this was compounded over the years by low self esteem. Simon needed a lot of reassurance when Bury EST started working with him in April 2006. He hadn't worked since 1998 and wanted to find a part time job close to where he lives and ideally in the afternoons only.

His Placement Officer, Susan, found an afternoon cleaning job within walking distance of home and Simon was appointed to the job at a local primary school in June 2006. Simon is supported by the caretaker, Graham Lee, and also receives support from his Placement Officer who visits the workplace on a monthly basis.

Graham told us, "Any issues are discussed at my monthly meeting with Simon's Placement Officer and I know advice and support is only at the end of a phone if I need it. Simon has become more relaxed in the 6 months he has been here. He always arrives early for work. Simon did have a tendency to wander off at first to find someone who could reassure him he was doing the job ok but I spoke to him about this and he no longer does it - he just gets on with the job".

Simon's parents have seen an improvement in Simon's concentration since he started work and said that Simon helps out at home more than he used to before he got the job. Simon very much sees this job as a stepping stone to aid his recovery and a way to ease him back into employment and already he's saving the money he earns from working to put towards a holiday.

Simon Performs at local School



"I like working at Tottington School and with Graham who is very supportive.

It's hard work but enjoyable and I always try to do my best. The staff are friendly and it's a nice environment to work in – work gives me more structure to my life."

Katherine goes on film

Bury EST has produced a short 'fly on the wall' video with one of our clients, Katherine Edge, who has recently started on the local authority's Positive Action Training Scheme (PATS).

The video shows Katherine in a previous work placement at Fort Alice women's refuge where she worked as an admin assistant. The video shows her day to day duties and the support offered by the employer. Katherine took the lead in positively presenting her role and that of the employer.

The video is being used with some of our more disaffected clients to encourage motivation and commitment. Katherine also used it to secure her place on the PATS as it encouraged a greater understanding of her ambitions and support needs.

Six Town Housing

Six Town Housing is an Arms Length Management Organisation (ALMO) set up in April 2005 to manage council homes on behalf of Bury Council.

Meetings are currently taking place between Bury EST staff, Six Town Housing Chief Executive, Sue Jordan, their Human Resource Manager, Lyndsey Dobson-Scott and the Manager for Housing Maintenance, Paul Webb. We are seeking to establish a working partnership between Six Town Housing and ourselves. The initial meetings have provided the opportunity to explain in detail the idea of supported employment and the processes involved in supporting disadvantaged people into employment.

We'll be discussing opportunities for workplace assessment and work experience placements and we hope that this will be followed up by supporting the Human Resources management team to introduce some flexible adjustments to their recruitment process.

Routeways Client rewarded with employee of the month award

Chioma Adaeze Ezenwilo is celebrating success after just two months of starting employment as a crew member with McDonald's based in the Nynex Arena. She was awarded the Employee of the Month award for settling quickly into her new job, picking up procedures efficiently, working to a very high standard and providing excellent customer service.

With the support of Bury EST's Zerqa Ahmad, McDonald's specifically designed the job role to cater for Chioma's disability. Workplace adjustments were made to enable Chioma to contribute fully as an employee by removing barriers she faced.

Chioma had a very difficult time seeking employment due to paralysis in her right arm from birth. She arrived from Nigeria with her parents and family 3 years ago. She gained voluntary work in an administrative role but found difficulty in obtaining paid employment. It was at this point that Chioma was referred to the Routeways to Work project by the Disability Employment Adviser at her local jobcentre.

McDonald's is opening doors for people with disabilities and has also created a culture of inclusion by removing barriers for groups of people from different cultures and backgrounds.

Unit Manager, Shree, commented "Chioma is a vital asset to McDonald's and we are delighted that her helpful attitude to both colleagues and customers has been acknowledged with this award".

Congratulations to Chioma from Bury EST and all the staff at McDonald's for this outstanding achievement.



Achievement Rewarded

Over recent years the employers that we work with are increasingly demanding a workforce with good basic skills. Clients are also recognising that by picking up these skills they are improving the range and quality of career opportunities available to them.

Last year Bury EST set up a partnership with Bury Adult Learning Service to support six clients on a 15 week basic skills course to improve their literacy and numeracy skills. All the clients gained City & Guilds qualifications in basic skills thanks to a combination of student determination and innovative teaching methods.

According to Placement Officer, Hilary Williams, "The success of the course was down to the way in which the tutors made learning fun and relevant to the skills that students need in their jobs".

Having enjoyed the course so much, three students are now attending Bury Adult Learning Centre to gain more advanced qualifications. For many of the students though, attending the courses has meant much more than collecting qualifications.



"I enjoyed meeting new people - enjoyed the work. I am presently near the end of my course in Maths and English which has made me become more confident. If I had not attended the basic skills course with Bury EST I would never have gone back to college. This has made a big difference in my life."

Metrolink supports David back to work

Metrolink became involved with Bury EST a few years ago when they became members of the Employer Forum on Diversity and has been keen to engage with the local community as they are very proactive in their efforts to recruit a diverse workforce.

Serco Metrolink recently welcomed a new member of staff with assistance from Bury EST. This is the second occasion that an opportunity has arisen for the company to support someone into employment. Last year a lady was provided with a work experience placement on the reception desk. She was provided with full training and free transport during the placement and, following glowing references from Metrolink, she went on to get full time paid employment.

Following the success of this placement a new paid placement has just been set up for another Bury EST client. This time David Holloran has joined Metrolink and is working part time supporting the deep cleaning team. David will receive all the usual staff benefits and it is hoped the experience will rebuild his confidence after a long spell of being unemployed and provide him with an up-to date reference for a new employer.

Before working with Metrolink David was unemployed and he hopes that with the support of Metrolink and a

future reference he will be more confident to progress his career and consider applying for other employment opportunities.

Metrolink have been working with Bury EST for the last four years and have demonstrated flexibility in the way they recruit and select their employees. David was selected for the job following a 'working interview' which gave him the chance to demonstrate his ability to do the job by actually doing the job for an agreed period.



Metrolink's Steven Walters said:

At Metrolink we pride ourselves on our employment policies and we are committed to working alongside our local communities. The partnership with Bury EST allows us to ensure we are meeting our goals to become a diverse and inclusive organisation.

Bury EST's Fred Bowen responded:

This is a great example of how employers can be flexible and offer opportunities in work experience and employment for people with disabilities.



Multicultural Business Event hailed as a success

Sky channel, DM Digital, was on hand to film over 40 businesses and 250 people attending the first Ethnic Minority Business Event organised by the Multicultural Business Support section of Bury College's Business Solutions. The event was held as a promotional event for companies and provided opportunities for networking between employers and local organisations.

It was broadcast in Urdu on the BBC Asian Network across the North West. As well as TV coverage, local newspapers were also present. Bury EST was represented with an exhibition stand by Hassanat Ahmed and Fred Bowen.

The event received excellent feedback from companies. Feedback from beneficiaries has been excellent with some already reporting an increase in sales. KB Fabrics' manager, Khushnood Begum, said, "I have actually run out of stock and had to order more after the event." It is hoped that it will become an annual event.

Opportunities with GM Fire & Rescue Services

Kevan Whitehead, the Borough Commander at Bury Fire Station has become a member of the Employer Forum on Diversity and has attended a number of meetings where Bury EST managers have been asking employers to offer work experience placements.

Barclays Banking on a winning idea

Over the last year Bury EST has developed an exciting new initiative with Barclays Bank to help them improve the diversity of their workforce by providing training and job opportunities which could lead to a career for Bury EST's clients within the banking giant.

Links were initially forged between the two organisations when Bury EST's Bridget Fox met Sean Connell, the Recruitment Manager for Barclays North West region, at a Jobs Fair in Manchester in May 2006. It was clear from Bridget's initial chat with Sean that Bury EST and their clients provided the perfect partnership for Sean to develop the bank's vision of a diverse workforce that represents the local communities which the bank serves.

Sean invited Bridget and her colleague Zerqa Ahmad to the Barclays University to advise them on how the centre could accommodate the needs of Bury EST's clients. As Sean comments "The ethos of the centre was very much based on providing a supportive environment to develop the confidence, job knowledge and skills of new staff." As Sean admits, the challenge for Barclays is to make job opportunities more attractive and accessible to people who wouldn't normally consider working in a bank. With this in mind Sean arranged a recruitment open evening for Bury EST clients to raise awareness of what it takes to work in the banking sector.

The event was a resounding success. Bury EST client Irfan echoed the sentiments of all those who attended the event. "I always thought a job in banking was out of my reach, but the Barclays staff at tonight's event have opened my eyes to the career opportunities available."

Bridget and Sean have now developed Barclays existing staff training programme to meet the specific needs of each client within local branches where the training takes place. As well as giving clients a taster of what its like to work in banking, it has also enabled clients and Barclays alike to see if they would be suitable for a job in the company.

Even though the initiative is in its early stages the results are encouraging. Several clients have undertaken training placements. Bury EST client, Nadia, has just secured a job with Barclays. Nadia's potential as a future



employee was seen during her work placement with the bank. Nadia is profoundly deaf and they made several adjustments to accommodate her disability including carving a specific job role for her and assessed her suitability using a 'working interview' as a practical alternative to the traditional face to face interview. Nadia told us, "I was glad to have the opportunity to work in a place like Barclays. It gave me a chance to see what it's like to work for them. The staff at Barclays were really helpful and seemed to enjoy the opportunity to work with a deaf person. They were really interested in me and made me feel welcome".

Bury EST were invited to meet with Barclays senior regional resource managers at their London offices. This meeting provided the opportunity to present the model of supported employment and at the same time raise awareness of the national network of supported employment agencies.

Following this presentation Bury EST were asked to provide a workshop on the model of supported employment at a one day National Conference for Barclays' recruitment officers held in Coventry.

This has highlighted the advantages of joint working between the two organisations and further raised awareness of how Barclays in other regions of the country can get involved with their local supported employment provider.

Kevan has recently started a programme of work experience for high school students. These students are working on a project to improve fire safety in the community. The tasks involved in this project include fitting smoke alarms, other areas of domestic fire safety awareness as well as the associated domestic and administration tasks. The students are provided with fire service uniforms and treated in the same way as an employee. Learning about team working and general work ethos are just a couple of the key elements of the work experience programme.

Kevan recently gave a talk to Bury EST staff and said he was keen to extend this opportunity to others. He invited us to consider nominating people interested to take part in this work experience. Kevan is also considering the possibility of supporting people to achieve certain areas of National Vocational Qualification (NVQs). Evidence from involvement in the project could be added to individuals' CVs and the project has real potential to provide valuable experience for people who are seeking to re-enter work.

celebrates 50 years of excellence



Cormar Carpets celebrates 50 years of tufted carpet manufacturing this June. The company has grown rapidly since it was started by Neville Cormack – who still remains chairman – from a 5,000 sq ft mill in the Rossendale Valley, Lancashire. Today, Cormar remains independently owned. In the past 10 years turnover has more than doubled and the firm ranks as one of the UK's leading manufacturers of tufted carpet, employing 230 people. Cormar prides itself on offering top service, quality carpets and reliability of delivery. Customers seem to agree and in 2005 Cormar earned four separate Supplier of The Year awards

Cormar, now based in Ramsbottom and Greenmount, has developed a longstanding partnership with Bury EST. The award winning local firm has offered several work experience placements as well as employment opportunities. Michael, who has learning difficulties, started on a work placement and was placed initially with a team of 8 other employees on a manual job. He responded well and earned his place as part of the team. As with all employees Cormar regularly reviewed his progress and development. The first step was to offer him full time employment in 2004 on the basis that he had become competent in the tasks initially asked of him.

Again as with all employees, Cormar identified further training needs with Michael and he went on to successfully complete certified courses in Health & Safety and Manual Handling. Michael also took part in 'Action Teams' which is a system where a group of employees examine their work area in order to improve their environment or indeed the process. Michael received company recognition for this. Cormar then suggested to Michael that he might wish to

undertake fork lift truck training. He was a little reluctant at first but did agree eventually. He did well in training however on his test his nerves got the better of him and he failed. In consultation with the RTITB trainer, Michael was put through what he believed was 'further training'. It was in fact a re-test and he passed with flying colours!!

The company has employed other disabled staff. David came with a fantastic attitude in December 2005. Despite having a missing left arm since birth and some acute medical problems, David completed an induction course which required a degree of manual dexterity. Within a relatively short time his team leader reported that David's 'head was down'.

Graham Parry, Cormar's Operations Manager takes up the story; "On investigation it was found that David didn't feel he had the skills for the job and he felt he owed it to Cormar to resign his position because he felt that, in view of the level of support from the company, he could not justify his continued employment. We felt that we needed to explore with him alternatives within the Company and eventually we did agree fork lift truck training. We were presented with a few difficulties, not least all the trucks had the hand controls on the "wrong" side". The training to RTITB standard with his disability needed to be addressed. "We evaluated various trucks and subsequently purchased a suitable vehicle for David, Our RTITB trainer received the necessary permission to train David who then gained a mark of 96% for his theory test and only accumulated 14 penalty points during his test." Up to 40 penalty points are allowed before failure. David continues to be an important member of the team.

Cormar Carpets were recently nominated by Bury EST for the Greater Manchester Employer Coalition Awards of 2007 and continue to work closely with us in their recruitment of local employees.

GM Police

Bury EST manager, Huw Davies, has been supporting GM Police to look at their diversity practice. He was asked to speak at the recent AGM of the Police Disability Support Network, a support group for Police staff who have disabilities.

The event was opened by Assistant Chief Constable Rob Taylor who has responsibility for criminal justice and diversity. He reinforced GMP's commitment to recruiting a diverse workforce and the event allowed wide ranging discussion on some of the issues involved.

A few weeks later, GMP's Positive Action Team invited Huw to present

to a workshop of human resources staff about the work of Bury EST and again a lively discussion was had about a range of opportunities and concerns. GM Police are a regular participant in the Employer Forum on Diversity and have had a long standing partnership with Bury EST, both through offering work experience and paid employment.

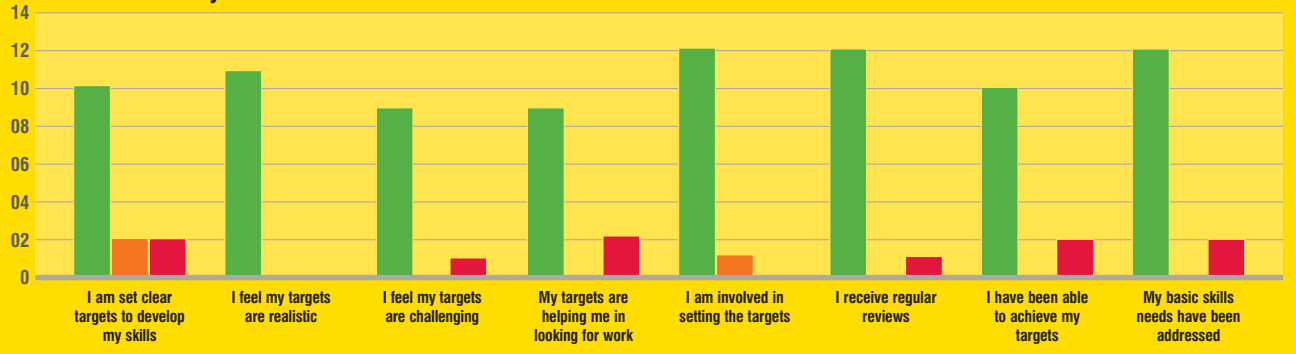
Looking for work

Bury EST is here to help and support you in finding employment that is right for you. To do this successfully we need to get to know you, and possibly your family and identify your needs.

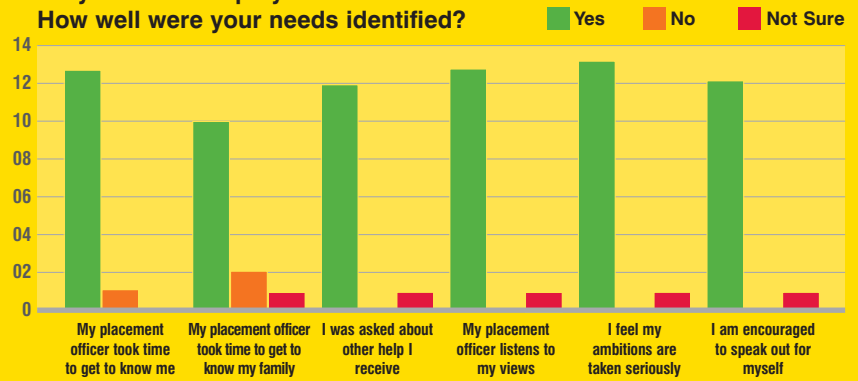
We also try to help you overcome problems and barriers to going to work and to develop skills which may improve your chances of getting work.

Your responses to our questionnaire indicate that we are achieving these aims in most cases.

Bury EST Pre-Employment Clients. How well were your needs identified?



Bury EST Pre-Employment Clients. How well were your needs identified?



Work is proving to be a positive experience!

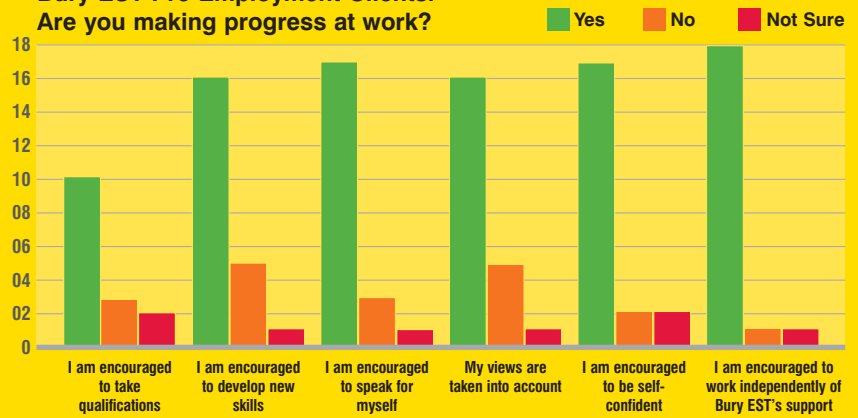
Bury EST works together with you and your employer to ensure that going to work is a good experience.

Your response to our questionnaire shows that mainly we achieve this; although there are some areas where we could improve.

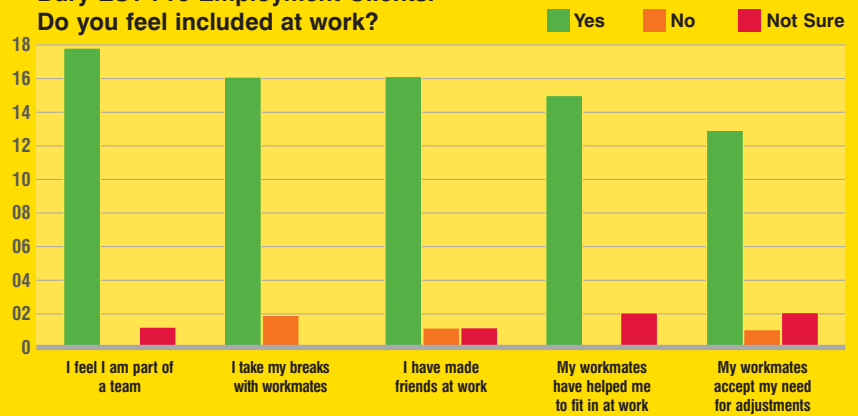
Most people have made friends through going to work and become more independent and have an improved social life.

Sometimes people worry about how going out to work will affect their benefits; replies to our questionnaire indicate almost all people who get a job are financially better off.

Bury EST Pre-Employment Clients. Are you making progress at work?



Bury EST Pre-Employment Clients. Do you feel included at work?



Bury EST Pre-Employment Clients. Has work helped you to achieve other goals in life?



Thanks

for your response to our most recent questionnaire. We really appreciate your comments about the service you receive and your suggestions about how we can improve. Above and on the right are samples of the responses that we got back.

Full details can be found on our website www.buryest.org.uk

News in brief

NIACE conference

Bury EST's Huw Davies and Bury College Curriculum Manager, Sandra Newton led a workshop at the recent NIACE conference about the LSC reforms on provision for disabled learners. The workshop was well attended and focussed on partnership roles & responsibilities and the delivery of flexible curricula.

Running for Life

Four of Bury EST's staff ran in the Manchester 5k 'Race for Life' this month in aid of Cancer Research UK. Lynda, Sue, Lynda, Dennie were supported by other staff members and are pictured here after their run. Bridget, Hillary and Philip also ran 10k in the the Great Manchester run in aid of Red Cross. Congratulations to all four.



End for Routeways to Work project

Bury EST's Routeways project for minority ethnic communities comes to an end this September. The project was funded as part of an Invest to Save initiative from the Deputy Prime Minister's Office. The project has so far seen 37 people gain full time employment.

Remploy shake up

Radcliffe's Remploy factory has been spared following the national review of Remploy's activities. The company is closing 32 factories and merging another 11 as part of a cash saving exercise designed to make the company more efficient. Remploy will be developing the Radcliffe site which employs 66 people, 61 of whom are disabled. The company is also planning to open a recruitment branch in Bolton as part of its modernising strategy.

Drugs project extended

The Workwise project has been extended for a further year. Funded by the Drug and Alcohol Team, Workwise offers a prevocational service for recovering drug misusers and further details of the project are available on our website.

National review of disability employment programmes

The Department for Work & Pensions is close to completing its national review of the disability employment programmes funded through Jobcentre Plus.

We've had a close involvement through the British Association for Supported Employment (BASE) which Huw chairs and it is expected that the review will go out for consultation in June. We're envisaging a new modular programme that offers prevocational support and job finding, a module for time limited support up to two years and a module for long term support.

The new programme is expected to start some time in 2009. We'll bring you further news in our next newsletter.

Staff training continues to be a success

Bury EST continues to deliver training across the UK. The course improves the skills of agencies in engaging with employers to secure quality jobs and placements. The course is growing in demand and feedback has been excellent with many delegates attributing its success to Fred Bowen's employer background and inimitable delivery style.

Organisations that have attended the course include supported employment agencies, local authorities, Connexions services, NHS Trusts and further education colleges. The course is delivered over two days and is designed for up to fifteen delegates. The next course is likely to be in London this autumn.

For further enquiries please contact Fred Bowen on 0161 761 4662.

How are we doing?

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

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