

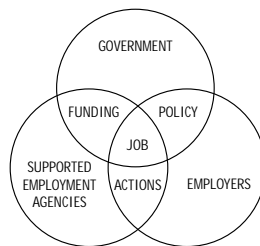
Employers developing new tools

The regional employer network has taken on the name PIE - 'Partners Into Employment'. The group has been influential in planning the Embracing Diversity conference and has developed a new model (right) of co-operation between business, supported employment agencies and statutory organisations. The model looks to set in place a dialogue that holds the job as the focus to any actions.

As part of the 'Equal Partners' project, Bury EST and Stockport Employment Services have produced an informative CD-ROM targeted at Personnel Directors. The CD contains video of a number of regional and national employers

putting the business and practical case for employing people with a disability. The CD also contains a wide range of information on disability issues, supported employment and local contacts. The video content has been separately packaged as a VHS video suitable for staff training. Employers can get further details of these products from Huw at Bury EST.

In addition, we have produced a report that details some of the learning that has come from the project. Copies are available from Bury EST on 0161 253 6588 or from the website.



The "Equal Partners" Model



The new CD aims to be a tool kit for employers.

NEW DEAL EXTENSION ANNOUNCED

The Government has announced the extension of New Deal for people with a disability. Bury EST's Manager, Huw Davies, attended the first briefing on the tender process on 27 November 2000 but wasn't impressed. The Government has contracted 70 job brokers across the country - rather more than the 10 contracts originally envisaged but not flexible enough to draw in the expertise that lies within small local schemes.

The initiative has very tight funding mechanisms based on achieving paid jobs with at least 6 months retention. The approach seems likely to encourage a 'cherry-picking' attitude and as a consequence, it is likely that only the most able and independent workers will be likely to be funded by contracting job brokers.

Huw added, "There is little evidence of joined-up thinking in this initiative and I'm extremely disappointed. The much-awaited New Deal looks like being a PR exercise aimed at people who need little support anyway to find work. The DFEE has said that it is not interested in the processes used by schemes to access work so why has it set up and evaluated pilot projects? We would instead favour a system that allows

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EMPLOYER FOCUS: ASDA STORES

As consumers demand ever higher standards at the lowest possible price, the supermarkets have come to play an important role in most our lives. As well as giving customers what they want, ASDA is also proud of its record with employees, or colleagues as they're known in ASDA. ASDA has three busy stores in the Bury area and Bury EST has a long working relationship with the company. Kath Atkinson is the Head of Personnel at the store that dominates the road through Radcliffe. She's worked for many years for ASDA and, like half of the store's 23 managers, she started on the shop floor.

The Radcliffe store relocated to its new site in 1996 and was expanded by 10,000 square feet in 1999 to accommodate the new George section. The availability of goods and turnover continues to grow, allowing ASDA to employ more people, particularly part-time for evenings and weekends. The store opened with 200 colleagues but this has now grown to nearly 350.

After the last two Christmas's ASDA found that a lot of additional customers were staying with them and a percentage of the temporary Christmas colleagues were kept on each time. The store attracts customers from Bury, Whitefield, Little Lever, and Prestwich.

Like their customers, ASDA have no problem attracting employees. Applications are taken via the customer desk and local Jobcentres. The application form has sections on 'why work for Asda', work experience, personal interests, education, health and attendance and they are assessed in-house. There is also a small psychometric test. Others can help the person complete forms if they cannot read or write. Following the application, there is a group interview that looks at personality and care for customers and colleagues alike. Team and interpersonal skills, confidence, impact and appearance are all observed and noted before a conventional interview takes account of

worker preferences. As Kath says, "We're looking for nice people to train rather than making trained people nice."

20 year old Stuart went through the full recruitment system. Stuart has cerebral palsy and after attending special schooling, left with no qualifications but the desire to find work. After a 9 month training programme with Scope, Stuart's neighbour, who works at ASDA, put in a word for him, encouraged him to apply and helped him to complete the application. Stuart did well in the group interview and after a successful 1:1 interview was offered a 17½ hour/week job as a bag packer in November 1998. Two years later, he's been made a full-time Porter and is delighted with his new job.



With a colleague turnover rate of around 5%, Kath says, "ASDA keeps its staff by keeping them happy. All colleagues are one team and we treat each individual with respect in line with our mission statement and values. Some colleagues leave for full-time work but not many leave because they're dissatisfied. In the last two months, three have left; two for domestic reasons and one for a change of career".

There is quite a bit of movement within store and multi-skilling is valued. ASDA offers "job coupling" where working across different jobs gives variety to the worker, flexibility to ASDA and possible overtime opportunities. The wider view of the store's operations is good for promotion prospects.

"Communication is important. We like to let colleagues know how the store is doing with sales, wages, waste, and budget targets. We use mystery shoppers to rate

the service and colleagues get individual scores. They get badges in recognition of good performance and feedback if it happens to be poor. We have a Colleague Involvement League to support local charity work. ASDA operates a star points system to reward success in public relations and league competition in stores. Points are given to reward colleagues and to reward ideas for efficiency. ASDA runs a share option scheme for colleagues who can get free shares after 12 months, drawing on them after 3 or 5 years. It gives them a stake in the firm."

Each store has a 'Colleague Circle' to represent staff from across all departments. The circle has autonomy to put ideas into practice. As well as focussing on communication, health and safety, training, and employee benefits, it runs an 'Employee of the Month' competition and has up to £5,000 to spend on staff equipment and luxuries. Every year sees the 'We're listening' annual survey. The results are analysed and compared to previous surveys. Satisfaction has risen from 69% in 2000 to 81% this year.

"People want to work here because of flexible rotas that are compatible with home life. We arrange leave for school holidays or study and can do 'store swaps' for students. There are career breaks for parents and carers together with 4-6 weeks annual leave." Of course wages are important as well. ASDA pays competitively and also provides a Christmas bonus and annual Colleague bonus based on store and headquarter profit. There is also a subsidised canteen.

ASDA was in the news two years ago when the American giant, Wal-Mart, acquired it. Some time back, things weren't looking quite so rosy for ASDA but it's shown a new lease of life over the past decade. "The turn around came for ASDA in the early 90's when new people like Archie Norman came on board. "There was a new focus on how we deal with staff and people. We looked at policy and practice and now there's a no jacket policy for managers and we all use first names. Wal-Mart has very similar value base statements to ASDA."

Kath's knowledge of disability comes from the years of personal experience with ASDA. This is backed up by the corporate approach contained in the ASDAbility programme. Staff get equal opportunities training during induction and there is an in-house Disability Awareness Course for

customer service and counter staff to look at all aspects of disability. Colleagues get handbooks containing all policies. Kath thinks this is important to get the whole team gelling. "Disability is not a problem but colleagues need to be able to do their job. We treat everyone with dignity and gain their trust so we try to match skills to the job. We look after colleague interests and teach by example and through praise. For example, when the staff canteen went self-service, we noted that a disabled employee was not using the facility. We had a chat and now the canteen staff assist him. Colleagues have been very supportive really. A couple of people are good at sign language.

The Disability Discrimination Act has not had that much effect on us really because we are working on it. We have the



'positive about disability' logo as an individual store. We've made some adjustments but they are minimal. We're

aware that we employ a dozen people with disabilities now. In cases of mental health problems we can use authorised absence or sick leave. Personnel and the line manager do a home visit after one month and look to resolve issues where they can. We did have a counsellor available but this wasn't taken up much. Now we have a masseur who is increasingly used. We also have a chiropodist visiting."

ASDA acknowledges the business case for supporting its colleagues. They understand the importance of reducing staff turnover costs and reflecting the wider community that they serve and seem set to grow from strength to strength.

'EMBRACING DIVERSITY' SUCCESS

'I am special for all sorts of reasons, none of them much to do with my disability'

The words of Philip Friend, a disability consultant who gave the keynote speech at the Embracing Diversity conference held in September at Old Trafford.

Bury EST joined forces with Stockport Employment Services to organise the widely acclaimed event. Over 60 employers and a dozen employment agencies came together to discuss ways of improving access to work for people with disabilities. The event was hailed as a great success and built on the previous year's Bridgewater Hall conference.

The conference was the culmination of the 9-month 'Equal Partners' project and saw the launch of a training video and an awareness raising CD-ROM aimed at Personnel Directors.

Chair for the day was Stephen Duckworth of Disability Matters who got the day off to a lively start with some banter with Philip Friend of Churchill & Friend Ltd. Philip was typically inspirational in presenting the case for change to both employers and supported employment agencies.

Philip has led disability awareness training for many major national companies and raised several key issues for both employers and supported employment agencies during his speech and workshop. Over one in 6 disabled people is unemployed and 58% of employees with a disability earn less than £10,000 a year. With 3,000 new people claiming Incapacity Benefit every week, it is critical that Government and Industry

examine effective ways of retaining staff who become disabled. The Post Office reckons that it costs them an average of £80,000 to retire an employee on medical grounds.

DuPont have been researching disability issues for over 35 years and have found that the employee with a disability has a 97% above average safety record, an 86% above average attendance record and a 90% above average job performance record. Time for a change in attitudes then? Philip ended his talk with a plea for people to think more creatively to find solutions. If companies can do it for their employees, they've done it for their customers too!

Sue O'Neil from B&Q and Neil Eccles from ASDA led workshops on implementing corporate policy at a local level and B&Q's idea of disability champions generated a lot of interest. Philip Friend led a well-received workshop on reasonable adjustment.

Bury EST and Stockport Employment Services were joined by Christine Campbell [Loot], Joyce Poulston [Co-operative Bank] and Margaret Williamson [Arden Packaging] in a workshop to discuss the Equal Partners model.

This model places the job and the employer at the heart of the training and recruitment process. The group discussed the notion of a disability apprenticeship - a period of paid training, which would not necessarily, guarantee a job but would ensure that the person had the skills required by the employer. The apprenticeship would enable sufficient time to acquire skills.

Peter White, Disability Correspondent with

the BBC, gave a humorous talk from the heart in which he said that people with disabilities are often amongst the best of problem solvers by necessity.

Mike Buckley, Head of the Employment and Disability Unit at the Department of Education & Employment, joined us in discussion for the plenary session.

Overall, the day was a great success with 78% of delegates rating it as 'very good'. 94% of employers felt that they had increased their understanding of the practical aspects of developing and implementing a strategy for disability employment policies.

Over 75% of delegates rated the workshops as 'good' or 'very good'. Of crucial importance to us, 74% of delegates said they were more likely to recruit a person with a disability following the event.

One of the delegates told us later, "As soon as I walked in I could feel an atmosphere of 'this is going to be a good day' which is surprising at a conference, and even more surprising for employers. I then realised that it wasn't just a conference but something people, including myself, were actually experiencing and being a part of and the thoughts/values were becoming a part of them. For the first time I saw a 'hearts and minds' campaign actually at work. I really think it was a perfect formula. The speakers were magnetic and the audience interacted throughout."

A comprehensive report containing scripts of the conference speeches and a summary of the workshops is available from Bury EST.

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NEW DEAL EXTENSION ANNOUNCED

(CONTINUED)

service level agreements between the local Gateway such as the Employment Service and local providers who may have specialist job broking experience. The proposed tendering system favours large operations working across several boroughs to get economy of scale and this seems to be driven by the demands of the Treasury rather than any notion of doing what's right for people."

The DfEE is proposing to spend £40 million per year to help 30,000 people get off incapacity benefits and back into work over each of the next 3 years. Successful tenderers will receive a small registration fee for each person, 50% funding when a job is secured and the final 50% after the worker has been in the job for 6 months. There is some flexibility for the voluntary sector to ease cash flow problems but it will be very difficult to fund longer term support and intensive training out of the anticipated £1,000 available per job secured. 60,000 people leave incapacity benefits for work each year with minimal assistance and the New Deal seems to be aimed at these people. The government has dropped plans to use a control group of one in 5 people deferred from the scheme for up to a year. There was strong resistance to the idea of denying people access to services both on ethical and legal grounds. Bury does not get NDDP until 2002 because it is part of a separate DfEE/DSS pilot initiative.

New Catering Initiative Launched

Friday, 20 October 2000, was the launch date for the new NVQ partnership between Parsons Lane Day Centre and Bury College. NVQ training in Catering will now be provided to clients who would like to pursue this as a career option.

The opening address was by Dr Helen Gilchrist, College Principal, who presented Shirley Wise with a plaque to mark the occasion. Shirley, Day Centre Officer at Parsons Lane, then outlined the aims of the partnership and Chris Waterworth of Bury College, closed by looking at possible future developments.

The catering scheme is a work experience, education and training facility for adults who have mental health difficulties. Clients are able to meet the NVQ requirements whilst based at the Parsons Lane kitchen, and all assessments are carried out there. The scheme will accommodate up to 6 clients, with the pace geared to individual capabilities. Allison Byrne is the Trainer/Technician who will be responsible for supervising and supporting clients working towards their NVQ.

A link has also been made with the Broome House Café in Trafford. Allison, and 3 clients, have already visited to look at exchange work experiences in the future. Progression to open employment will then

be through Bury EST, who will offer the ongoing support needed, to help clients make this important transition.

The training kitchen has now been completely refurbished and uniforms provided. The menu has also been extended to provide breakfast snacks, salads, toasties and jacket potatoes.

Following the success of the Parsons Lane café-bar, the venture has expanded to cover an additional venue. The START group now has a café-bar service on Wednesdays and Fridays.

The scheme has provided training opportunities for 12 people and training allowances have been revised in line with the extra duties and responsibilities.

If you would like further information or would like to get involved, please contact Katrina at Bury EST or Allison at Parsons Lane on 0161 253 6556.

**Stop press...Stop
press...Bury EST website
updated and re-
launched...Stop press...**

"Active Assessment" - a success but unit closes

Our 'active assessment' unit at Chadwicks of Bury has had to close following the failure to secure ongoing funding from Europe. 27 people completed the assessments since it opened in February 1999. Of these, 10 are currently employed and a further 9 are now actively looking for paid work.

Service users, carers and professionals who have been involved in the project are convinced of its value and have commented on the practical benefits and accuracy of the

assessment process. The benefits of assessing in an authentic working environment have led to more accurate job matching and the identification of support needs.

We're all disappointed at the closure but hope to open the unit again in the future. Particular thanks go out to Barbara and Darren and all the staff at Chadwicks for making us feel so welcome.

Joint Investment Plan Update

Bury has produced its Joint Investment Plan for employment and training and the document is available on Bury EST's website. The document builds on the consultation conference held at Radcliffe Civic Hall in late September which attracted over 60 people to what was a lively and upbeat event. A number of working groups looked at the issues of recruitment, retention and moving closer to the workplace. Lots of ideas were generated and written up and these are summarised below. The attendance of people with an interest in mental health and physical disability issues was disappointing and a number of further meetings were held at individual sites as a result.

The Core Group working on the Plan has met regularly and a workshop was held on 23 November 2000 to draft ideas for a model for future services.

The North West Training and Development Team are to resource a network of co-ordinators of the JIP plans across the North West and Bury EST helped to launch the network with a conference in Wigan's Waterside Centre on 15th February. The event saw policy strategists getting together with practitioners in the field. Delegates heard presentations from Arthur Blacklock of the DfEE and Fran Hulbert from the NW Development Agency. Helen Lasham of the NW Centre for Mental Health Development finished off the day from a user perspective.

If you would like to have your say about the direction of future services in Bury, please contact us here at Bury EST.

What's not working now?

- Waiting lists for services
- Time limited funding for training and services
- Low expectations within services and families
- Attitude of some GP's
- Some employer attitudes and stereotypes
- Welfare benefit disincentives
- Low differentials between wages and benefits
- Poor wages and menial jobs
- Difficult to keep jobs
- Uncoordinated information
- Training and FE is not always relevant
- Not enough basic work preparation
- Need more help with debt and relationship problems
- Lack of transport
- Not enough disability awareness training

Objectives for 2004...

- Social enterprise
- A transport action plan
- Increased take up of NVQ's
- Better use of IT/technology
- Public service 'pathfinder' schemes
- Better labour market information
- Jargon free information – easily accessible
- Easy and equitable access to services
- High profile support point for employers and employees
- A wide range of training and employment options
- Disability champions in workplaces
- A vocational focus to day and rehab services
- A system of work sampling/shadowing
- Ongoing help: personal and at work (Helpline)
- Specialist welfare benefit advisors
- A service to deliver disability awareness training in schools and workplaces

What's working now?

- Attitude of change at grass roots level
- Enthusiasm
- Bury EST
- DDA is helping to change employer attitudes
- Improved links with employers
- Improved links with Benefits Agency
- Some good 'pathfinder' practice
- School doing work experience
- Gardening project
- Catering at Parsons Lane

WE'RE LOOKING FOR YOUR VIEWS!

Whether you're an employer, disabled worker, user of services, agency professional or interested member of the public - we'd like to know what you think!

How can we make services better?

What would help you?

Where are the gaps in services?

PLEASE LET US KNOW WHAT YOU WANT!

If you want to let us know what you think about the future development of services, you can ring us on 0161 253 6588, fax on 0161 253 6504 or e-mail huw@buryest.org.uk

News in brief...

NEW EXTENSION

Bury EST's offices have been extended to bring the team together on one site. We'd like to apologise for the disrupted service and we're just about getting back to normal now. The extension provides us with extra office and interview space as well as a seminar room, which can be booked by local organisations by arrangement.

CONFERENCES

Bury EST was represented by Huw Davies at two November conferences examining good practice. We presented a workshop on working with employers for the Wicked Issues event in Darlington organised by King's College London and talked about service development at a Surrey conference organised by Priority Enterprises, part of East Surrey NHS Trust.

CONGRATULATIONS

A big well done to Louise, Anthony, Moira, Justin, Leon, Ethel, Sandra and Derek who've all gained paid work recently. Congratulations also to Anne Clarke who has successfully completed a one year course on supported employment techniques at Stockport.

CHARTER MARK

Bury EST is considering making an application for the Charter Mark and Katrina and Huw will be attending a workshop on it shortly.

NSF UPDATE

Huw Davies of Bury EST and Michelle Baron from Rochdale Employment Development Service have been leading a local working group looking at employment issues for the mental health National Service Framework subgroup on Standard 1 (Social exclusion and health promotion). The group has been mapping services, identifying needs and examining good practice before producing a draft report this Spring.

The main themes emerging so far have been a need for better information, particularly about services and welfare benefits. The report also aims to identify ways in which local services can work more closely to improve the quality and

effectiveness of support. If you would like to forward your views, please contact Huw.

FAREWELLS

Bury EST was unsuccessful in its bid for renewed ESF funding this year and so we've been unable to renew contracts with Lorraine Robinson and Mick Dean. We'd like to thank Lorraine and Mick for all their hard work and enthusiasm. Lorraine is now working for Remploy in the Blackburn area and Mick is working for a Bolton company. We wish them the best for the future.

SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT FRAMEWORK

The Rowntree Foundation has published a heftily revised version of the Framework for Supported Employment. Thankfully, the final version is far more concise and less contentious than the draft, apparently after Employment Service intervention. It's available at £9.95 plus £2 p+p from York Publishing Services on 01904 430033. The summary of findings is freely available on the Rowntree Foundation website at www.jrf.org.uk

LEARNING DISABILITY WHITE PAPER

The new Learning Disability Strategy has been published as a White Paper. The interdepartmental strategy focused on 6 subgroups: Health, Children, Supporting independence, Partnerships, Workforce planning and training, and Carers. The document is available on the Department of Health website and there's a link to it on our site.

NEW LEAFLET

Bury EST is to prepare a new leaflet for potential workers as a guide to the transition from benefits to paid employment.

THERAPEUTIC EARNINGS

Changes have been proposed to the therapeutic earnings rules. It is now expected that GP permission will not be required for up to 6 months therapeutic work. The Benefits Agency will still need to approve the work and it looks like a maximum limit of 12 months will be placed on therapeutic earnings. The rules are likely to come into force in April 2002.

REPORT QUESTIONS COMMITMENT TO JOB RETENTION

One third of disabled people who find work are unemployed again within a year and one in 6 people who become disabled in work lose their employment within the year. The findings are contained in 'Enduring Economic Exclusion: disabled people, income and work', a new report from the Joseph Rowntree Foundation.

The report also found that half of all disabled people have incomes less than 50% of the general population, after adjustments are made for extra costs. In 1999, disabled people made up half of all those who were not employed but who said they would like to work. Employment rates for people with a disability continue to be low at around 40% overall.

Disabled people are often more susceptible to general economic factors such as earnings inequalities, regional disparities but disability policy often focuses on barriers specific to impairment. The report, by Tanya Burchardt, is based on an analysis of official data and is published by YPS and is available for £14.95 plus p+p from 01904 430033. Further information at www.jrf.org.uk.

Stop press...Stop press...Bury EST website updated and re-launched...Stop press...

A reminder of our current staff:

Huw Davies

Manager

Trish Hilton

Clerical Officer

Mental Health Service

Rod Goodwin

Employment Officer

Katrina Sartini

Employment Officer

Tony Henson

Placement Officer

Learning Disability Service

Lee Salad

Employment Officer

Anne Clarke

Placement Officer

Dennie Ford

Placement Officer



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