

Website up and running

Our new website is up and running and has already attracted a lot of praise for its content and usability. There is extensive information available about the team, including maps, pen pictures of staff, and direct email addresses for all staff. We've placed a lot of information there about our current and previous projects and many of the team's documents and publications can be viewed and downloaded. As well as project reports, there's all our newsletters, policy papers, business plan and Joint Investment Plan for Welfare to Work.

In addition, we've included a wide range of useful links and comprehensive information, including case studies, about supported employment. You can now send us comments via the



website feedback form and even leave messages on the guestbook –

we've already had one from America.

Opposition to Therapeutic Earnings changes

Bury EST has written to the Government opposing recent changes to the therapeutic earnings rules that are due to come into force next April. The changes mean that people seeking to move back to work are able to work for up to 16 hours per week for a

limited period of 6 months. It may be possible to extend this to a maximum of one year with the permission of the Employment Service Personal Advisor. People will no longer have to seek permission from their family doctor before undertaking any work.

From April, anyone will be able to earn up to £20 per week under the earnings disregard regulations. There is no limit on the hours worked, raising fears that some people may be exploited into working for less than the minimum wage.

ACCESS TO WORK

Bury EST has been making more extensive use of the Employment Service's Access to Work scheme recently. The scheme enables the funding of workplace support to people with a disability and Bury is funding much of its ongoing support to employers and clients through this scheme. We're hoping to meet with the new Manager of North West Disability Services in the near future to explore methods of working closer together.

Best Value

Bury EST is looking to work with other supported employment agencies in exploring quality standards in readiness for best value reviews. An initial meeting has already been held at Bury with representatives coming from Wigan, Blackpool, Oldham and Stockport. The group hopes to compile a list of common quality indicators. If anyone has comments regarding service quality, please let us have them.

Further details at
www.bury.gov.uk/bury/BestValues/index.htm

IN THIS ISSUE

Employer focus: Parker Box Ltd	2
Learning Partnerships	3
Joint Investment Plan, Another ESF Success	4
Equal Application, Advice Surgeries	5
News in Brief	6

EMPLOYER FOCUS: PARKER BOX LTD

Parker Box, situated down by the River Irwell in Ramsbottom, was a family run business for 90 years until illness forced the sale of the box



making company in 1993. David Ingham, whose background was with blue chip companies, had no hesitation in mortgaging his assets to raise sufficient capital to buy the firm. Starting with a workforce of 7, he has built up the company into a thriving concern with 20 employees and an annual turnover in excess of £1 million.

Parker Box's mission statement reflects the ethos of the socially minded businessman. He wants Parker Box to be the best supplier of corrugated boxes within 20 miles of Bury. He also wants the firm to be an active member of the community, offering security and development to its employees and their families.

Mr Ingham has devoted a great deal of time to local issues and was heavily involved in

Ramsbottom 2000, a collection of local organisations seeking to improve life in Ramsbottom. This has now largely been superseded by the local Area Board as a forum for change but Mr Ingham devotes time to working with adolescent services in Bury and the homeless in Blackburn. The company has an arrangement with Tor View School in Haslingden that sees classes of pupils visiting to discover more about the world of work.

The company has been involved in the New Deal programme and has been very active in linking with the work of the former Training & Enterprise Council. With the decline in manufacturing in Bury, Parker Box is viewed as a success story and often gets asked to contribute to strategic funding applications.

The owner has experienced disability, unemployment and homelessness himself. His policy now is to recruit unemployed people where ever possible, preferably from the local community. He wants to continue the family business ethos of the company and though he acknowledges that pay levels aren't as high as he would like, they are striving to be a fair employer.

An Investor in People company, Parker Box has to ensure that it meets its business aims as well as be a good employer. When Bury EST Placement Officer, Dennie Ford, approached Parker Box last month, Mr Ingham was impressed with the way in which she presented the case for employing people with a disability. As he explains, "It was timed just right because it's something we always wanted to do. I felt we had a natural empathy with Bury EST's aims. It felt to me like we had a gap in the 'family' and I thought it would be good for the whole workforce if we had somebody working here with a smiling disposition: someone who could make the operators' job easier. We had a vacancy for someone to make sure that the working area is kept clear and I felt that this might suit someone who needed a job with structure. Nevertheless, there's a job to be done and the person must be able to show that they

can meet our needs as a company."

Parker Box agreed to a short work trial and Bury EST have identified two potential employees on a jobshare basis, Paul Cruttenden and Peter Lenord. Mr Ingham had concerns about their ability to work on their own and so a work trial has meant that he can make a decision based on experience. The employees are also clear about whether it's the sort of job they want before relinquishing their welfare benefits.



So far, the trial is meeting everyone's expectations and the reaction from the rest of the workforce has been brilliant. Dennie has been in every day supporting the work-based training and another of our staff, Mick Dean, has been supporting by ensuring that both employees find their way to work using public transport. We'll be following their story and bringing you an update of the progress of these 2 potential new employees.



Learning Partnerships

Connexions



Plans are advancing locally for the introduction of the new Connexions service, scheduled to start in April 2002. Bury MBC and Lifetime Careers have formed a partnership to deliver this new initiative which sees the combination of careers advice with youth guidance services. A Local Partnership Board has been meeting regularly and Bury EST's manager, Huw Davies, is now a member of this Board.

Connexions aims to offer a modernised advice

and guidance service to 13 to 19 year olds though this can continue to the age of 25 where the young person has a disability. Its key objective is to enable more young people to stay in education and training so that an increasing number will have the qualifications needed for work in tomorrow's society. There will be an emphasis on those who feel excluded. As well as help with choosing careers and courses, the programme can help with issues such as drug

use, sexual health and homelessness.

Connexions will take a holistic view of each person's needs and a Personal Advisor will coordinate support from a number of agencies. The advisors will aim to ensure that no-one falls through the net by tracking each person's progress and offering practical support and information.

Further details at www.connexions.gov.uk

Learning + Skills Council



The LSC is now responsible for the planning and funding of all post-16 education and training since the demise of the Further Education Funding Council (FEFC) and Training & Enterprise Councils (TECs). The LSC aims to simplify things by bringing the funding of further education, work-

based training and community education together. Greater Manchester has its own Learning & Skills Council, headed up by Liz Davies.

It's reckoned that in Manchester alone, around 340 thousand adults have no qualifications at all and up to a third of companies are affected

by skills gaps. The Council will work closely with a range of organisations to improve participation, raise standards and increase the effectiveness of learning.

Further details at www.lsc.gov.uk

Bury Learning Partnership

Learning Partnerships are a key part of the new post-16 system, which has seen the creation of Learning and Skills Councils (LSCs). There is a national Learning & Skills Council, which sets the strategic direction, and then 47 local LSCs. Bury is part of the Greater Manchester LSC, which is the largest in the country. The Learning Partnership is funded directly from the Department for Education & Skills (DfES).

The Learning Partnership is the local voice for providers and learners in Bury. It has four broad aims:

- To widen participation in learning
- To increase attainment
- To improve local standards
- To meet local skills challenges

There is a recognition that it is only through effective and co-ordinated joint working that local communities will receive the breadth and quality of services they are due. Bury Learning

Partnership brings together a wide range of organisations that have an interest in post-16 education in the borough:

Bury College	Holy Cross College
Bury MBC	Lifelong Learning
Employment Service	Lifetime Careers
TUC	Bolton & Bury Chamber
Alliance Learning	WEA
IAG Network	Bolton Institute
Bury Association of Secondary Heads	

The Partnership is also linked to Bury Strategic Partnership. The Partnership has four thematic Task Groups: 14 – 19 year olds, Adults, Workforce Development, and Basic Skills.

These four groups are working on four main objectives for 2001 - 2002:

- To collate data relevant to the learning agenda in Bury and develop ways of using that data to widen participation and improve attainment

- To develop a Borough wide Basic Skills Strategy that helps promote social inclusion
- To increase the ICT competence of the workforce
- To develop the functioning of the Partnership in relation to the LSC

The Partnership is looking at articulating the voice of the learner and the potential learner in Bury. Finding out what learners want, what would entice people back into learning, how things can be improved is a key theme. The Partnership has just commissioned some research in two areas of Bury to help with this work. The Partnership is seeking to develop its relationship with the LSC so that it can voice the needs of Bury directly to the funding organisation and be in a position to respond to the needs of the local community.

Further details from Bev Millar on 0161-253 5631 or b.millar@bury.gov.uk

Café bid

We have submitted a bid to take over the running of the threatened café at Seedfield Resource Centre. The bid would see three paid staff overseeing the use of the café as a training resource for people with disabilities. The café would deliver NVQ training and we would seek to develop an on-site buffet preparation service. The bid is one of a range of options currently being considered by the Local Authority.

Another ESF Success!

Bury EST has scooped another grant from the European Social Fund under the Objective 3 programme. The award of £118,000 is for recruitment services for people with a mental health need or learning disability. The project, Working Start, runs from July 2001 to July 2002 and involves over 100 clients. The grant will allow us to recruit a further 4 temporary Placement Officers as soon as possible.

There was fierce competition for funding this year, particularly under the measure encouraging an active labour market. Bury EST's last ESF project finished in June 2000 so this is a welcome boost for provision in the town.



EUROPEAN UNION
European Social Fund

Office Opening



Bury EST's extended premises will be officially opened by Ivan Lewis MP, Parliamentary Under-Secretary at the Department of Education and Skills. The event takes place at 1pm on September 21st and all are welcome. There will be an open day at Bury EST's offices from noon until 4pm.

The extension provides additional office space and improved interview facilities. It also gives us a new training and seminar room. The room is available to any local groups interested in using this fully accessible facility.

Further details from Bury EST on 0161-253 6588



Huw Davies

Joint Investment Plan Update

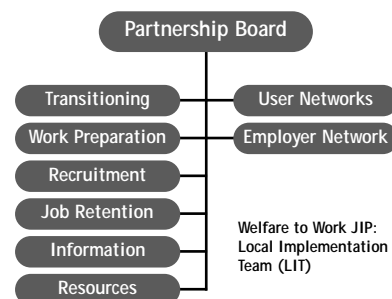
The Joint Investment Plan has now been completed and submitted to the Department of Health. I have been asked to take the lead role in coordinating the implementation of the plan. This Joint Investment Plan (JIP) is different to the other plans that have come before it. Earlier JIPs had a clear focus on a disability area such as learning disability or mental health. The Welfare to Work JIP not only includes anyone with a disability, it also goes beyond the traditional care sector of Health and Social Services to examine a range of issues more usually associated with economic and commercial sectors. This ranges from welfare benefits issues to identifying and meeting the needs of employers.

Unlike other JIPs, the Welfare to Work JIP has no funding attached to help implement it. The focus is about assessing how effectively we spend existing resources and how agencies can complement each other's work. If we are to succeed in reinvesting in appropriate services, it is essential to have senior figures from a range of agencies talking to reach other around the same table. It can be difficult to get senior staff to commit their time and experience – many people are snowed under with the huge amount of new initiatives coming along. Often it feels that the same people are attending every meeting. We have decided to address this by organising a Partnership Board to oversee the implementation of the JIP. The Board will meet four times a year to discuss how things are going and what needs to happen next.

Working groups will undertake the bulk of the development work. We are establishing six groups to look at different sections of the JIP. Each of these groups will have a group leader to

coordinate their work and the groups will report directly to the Partnership Board. The working groups will identify those measures within the JIP action plan that are within their remit and look at ways of implementing them.

The Partners into Employment employer network



and groups such as the Disability Forum will also support the Partnership Board. The Partnership Board itself will pass on information to the various organisations represented within it. The whole group is known collectively as the Local Implementation Team (LIT).

There will be a launch event for the LIT on October 23rd at the Elizabethan Suite, Bury Town Hall. Social Services Inspector, Jane Booth, has agreed to speak to the group about her experiences of inspecting Welfare to Work provision. The working groups will be meeting regularly from then on.

I am keen to involve as many people as possible in this process, particularly parents and carers and disabled people, whether working or not. If you are interested in getting involved, please contact me at Bury EST.

Further details at www.doh.gov.uk/jointunits

One-stop ADVICE SURGERIES

One element of the Joint Investment Plan has been established in partnership with Health and Social Services. Drop-in information sessions aimed at providing a resource for people who experience mental health problems have got off to a promising start. 2 sessions have already been held and future sessions are being arranged to take place on the **first Thursday of every month** at Roch House Day Hospital (Fairfield Hospital) between 1pm – 3pm.

Representatives from Social Security, Health Services, Housing Aid, Bury EST, Careers and The Employment Service will be available to answer questions and to give appropriate help and advice.

Many people who have mental health problems will experience multiple difficulties with benefits, housing, debt, and employment and career opportunities. It is hoped that, by having representatives present in one location at the same time and date, people will be able to receive 'one stop' help with many of the

problems which are causing them concern.

No appointments are necessary – just turn up at Roch House on the dates and times mentioned above.

We'd like your comments and suggestions regarding these sessions, to make sure that we

are delivering what you want. Are there any other services that you think should be involved? Please telephone or write to the address on the back page of this newsletter if you feel that you can contribute.

Further details from rod@buryest.org.uk



Equal Application

Bury EST is collaborating again with Stockport Employment Services in applying for ESF funding for a project under the Equal initiative. The project, called Embracing Diversity, would see both services rolling out their unique model of supported employment to other groups of people who may find difficulty in finding work.

The partnership will work with a range of disadvantaged people including disabled people, ethnic minorities, lone parents, care-leavers, ex-offenders, and drug misusers. The project will pilot new ways of working to facilitate recruitment, job retention and reintegration, working with national employers such as Whitbread, B & Q, IKEA and House of Fraser, but also linking into SME networks. In Bury we will

concentrate on developing services for care-leavers, minority ethnic communities and disabled people. It is hoped to locate staff within selected health centres to pick up on GP referrals for assistance around job retention.

We want to test a new supported employment model together with Stockport and develop a 'model district service' for supported employment. We want to prove the benefit of the place & train model over the train & place model, developing supported employment through a more refined human resource management approach rather than a job coaching approach.

A number of companies will sign up to new ways of working with specific people from

target groups previously seen as excluded from work. Working with employees and employers, we want to address recruitment and selection, job design, job retention and re-integration in the workplace of excluded groups and communities.

We are expecting to hear whether or not the bid has been successful in October. If the project is approved, then we will be asked to develop the partnership with local and transnational organisations and start the project delivery in May 2002. The project is scheduled to run until May 2005.

Further details at www.equal.ecotec.co.uk

News in brief....

APPOINTMENTS

Attendances have improved greatly over the last 3 months. Of 79 appointments offered, 7 people failed to turn up and only 6 people cancelled. Thanks to everyone as it makes it much easier to plan our time.

WORK IN MIND

Katrina has been running another of these highly successful courses. 6 clients have been attending who were on our waiting list. Attendance has been excellent with 2 people already finding jobs. Congratulations to Barbara and Bev!

CONGRATULATIONS!

Congratulations also to Basharat, Brynlea, Steve, Dave, Craig, Lynda, Gaynor, Eiman, Pauline, Stephen, Bruce, Raymond, Michael, Rebecca and Maxine who have returned to work. Hilda has passed her Basic Food Hygiene Certificate so well done to her.

CONNEXIONS PARTNERSHIP

Huw Davies has joined the local Connexions Partnership. The group comprises a wide range of local agencies and is leading the development of the new Connexions service in Bury.

Further details at www.connexions.gov.uk

SALFORD TENDER

Bury EST has tendered to deliver a supported employment service for Salford Council. Salford are seeking to purchase a service to support 32 people with learning disabilities.

SSI POLICY DOCUMENT

Bury EST is included as an example of good practice in a new policy document being prepared for policy makers by the Social Services Inspectorate.

AFSE CHANGES

Huw Davies has been selected as the new Secretary of the Association for Supported Employment (AfSE). He has recently been writing their newsletter and revising their website. AfSE represents 200 member agencies all over the country and is increasingly influential in developing the industry.

Further details at www.afse.org.uk

NMW RAISE

The National Minimum Wage is raised again on October 1st. The rate for workers over 22 goes up to £4.10 per hour and to £3.50 for workers 18 to 21 years old.

Further details at www.dti.gov.uk/er/nmw/

NMW RESEARCH

Bury EST features in a new report issued by the Low Pay Commission into the relationship between therapeutic work and the National Minimum Wage. The report, by Maria Hudson of Cambridge University, notes the concerns that projects have about contravening NMW regulations whilst users attend placements or work in sheltered workshops. It argues for more flexibility on welfare benefits and an increase in the earnings disregard for people receiving Income Support. The research fed into the third annual report of the Low Pay Commission.

Further details at www.lowpay.gov.uk

STRATEGIC MEETINGS

Bury EST has coordinated a number of recent meetings with regional policy makers. A series of meetings was arranged between supported employment agencies in the region and representatives from the Learning + Skills Council, Connexions, and Employment Service Disability Services. The meetings have been extremely useful in understanding each other's operations and in forcing supported employment onto the business planning process for these organisations.

LEARNING DISABILITY JIP

The Department of Health has issued new guidance for the Learning Disability Joint Investment Plans. Bury has to establish a Learning Disability Partnership Board by the end of October and local action plans will have to be updated to show how they will implement the recent Government White Paper, 'Valuing People'. A local employment strategy has to be completed by Winter 2002/03 along with

proposals for the modernisation of day services. The Partnership Board will have to appoint 'champions' in the areas of employment and transitioning.

Further details from www.doh.gov.uk/learningdisabilities

RESEARCH

Bury EST is involved in a couple of pieces of research and is looking for volunteers to take part. We're working with Debbie Witton of the Institute of Public Health Research and Policy on meeting the needs of people with mental health problems who are moving into work. Debbie wants to undertake short interviews with willing participants.

We're also working with Ruth Crowther of the University of Manchester who's investigating the effect of employment on people's quality of life. Again, this focuses on mental health and involves a short interview prior to starting work with a follow up a few months later.

Further details from Katrina at Bury EST

WORLD MENTAL HEALTH DAY

This year's celebration will centre around a major exhibition at Bury Town Hall between 10am and 4pm on Wednesday 10th October. The arts project, START, has been commissioned to produce a work of art especially for the event. Bury EST will be among the many exhibitors present on the day.

Further details from Anita Ajose on 0161-253 7100

WORKSTEP EXPANSION

The Employment Service is seeking expressions of interest from organisations looking to deliver Workstep. The Workstep programme, formerly the Supported Employment Programme, funds support for disabled people in work. Workstep currently supports 22,000 people in work and the Government has committed an additional £10million to expand the scheme by 2,000 places. Bury EST will be seeking further involvement in the programme.

Further details at www.employmentservice.gov.uk

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

Mick Dean

Placement Officer



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