

# MINUTES OF ETHNICITY FOCUS GROUP MEETING

6 MAY 2004

Venue: Bury Employment Support and Training, 24 Ribchester Drive, Bury BL9 9JT

## ACTION

### Welcome:

Asghar opened the meeting by thanking all for attending and welcoming new members to the group. The aims and objectives of the focus group were briefly revisited and copies of them issued to all new members.

Minutes of the last meeting (09.02.04) were reviewed and there were no amendments.

## 1. FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSION

- Where are you looking for work?
- Why do you use Bury EST?
- Has using Bury EST been of any advantage or not?
- What improvements would you suggest?

## 2. KEY POINTS OF DISCUSSION

### Where are you looking for work?

Answers to this question included:

- Educational establishments
- The Internet
- Specialist magazines
- Job Centre Plus
- In store windows
- Adab
- Job Seeker Direct phone line
- Word of mouth
- Local newspapers (including MEN)
- New deal training providers (Standguide & Tony Walsh Associates)
- Cold calling employers

### Job Centre Plus

Most of the focus group have experienced no problems when using Job Centre Plus in general, however most of the group also stated that Job Centre Plus became difficult to use if you wanted help with something specific. Other problems experienced at Job Centre Plus included:

- The computer is often broke or not working correctly.
- The vacancies advertised are often not up to date.
- It can be a bit of a struggle trying to manage on your own.
- It takes a long to apply for vacancies; a lot of time is wasted with all the phone calls you need to make and in the end the job has often gone.
- The approach of the job centre is dated.

## ACTION

### Newspapers

When looking for vacancies most of the group only read adverts within the sections that are specific to the type of work they are looking for and tend to read the bigger adverts only.

### Internet

The majority of the group felt they would know where to look if searching for vacancies on the Internet; the problems lay in access to a computer. Zerqa informed the group that Adab has Internet facilities they can use but the room must be booked beforehand.

### Agencies

Only one member of the group used an agency to find work. The other members had not considered it.

### Accents

Some members of the group felt they were held back both by their own accents and by the local accents of those they were speaking to and sometimes struggle to understand what is being said, which is mistaken for a learning need and their ability to do the job is not always recognised.

### **Why do you use Bury EST? & has using Bury EST been of any advantage or not?**

Answers included:

- Help overcome problems for those with no recourse to public funds.
- The job centre can be difficult to access at times as it is not near to home and it becomes especially difficult to use when you have a job and are looking for another one.
- Bury EST provides more specialist help in areas of work wanted.
- I continue to use Bury EST as I enjoy the focus group and meeting new people.
- The service was recommended through another agency.
- Bury EST has helped me to acquire relevant and useful work skills for example, interview techniques and application form filling.
- I like the individual approach in the way support is given because it helps boost confidence
- To gain help in writing letters and accessing a photocopier.
- You can get support without having to come into the office. If you get stuck you can just phone up and be supported.

- Provides help not only to gain a job but also in helping to remain within employment, most places don't recognise that finding a job is not necessarily the most important thing, it's keeping it and this is where Bury EST is good.
- Bury EST help to provide additional support to overcome barriers particularly where there is a double stigma of ethnicity and mental health.
- Bury EST provided you with up to date and relevant information regarding how and where to apply for work and preparing for interviews.
- As Bury EST target disadvantaged groups you don't feel uncomfortable.
- Found being able to do voluntary work and/or work placements very useful
- I use Bury EST as I have not been in the country very long and did not know anywhere else to go.
- Bury EST gave me support both before and after an interview.
- Support for references.
- Bury EST keeps you informed of possible vacancies that may be suitable for you.

**What improvements to Bury EST would you suggest?**

Answers to the above question included:

- Run job fairs.
- Have some employers present at the focus group and make time available for individuals to speak to employers on a one to one basis.
- Have more access to resources such as newspapers, photocopying facilities and internet use, maybe having a drop in facility with these things available.
- Offer more courses preferable based in Bury EST. Suggestions were: IT, ESOL, Business Management.
- Asghar suggested the possibility of offering courses at Adab that were specifically for Bury EST clients only.
- A suggestion was put forward that it would be preferable if the courses were exclusive to focus group members, as the group felt more comfortable with each other.
- A further request was for Bury EST staff to make a concerted effort to have more of a gender mix for the next group (more males needed).

Asghar informed the group of the different types of newspapers which could be used to search for jobs and easy ways to access them. He also explained the availability of the various local authority bulletins and where these could be found.

All focus group members were issued with example pages of internet jobsites, details of useful internet sites, agencies, newspapers and UK Naric.

All members were also given details of the Ethnicity Jobs Fair taking place on 27 May in Levenshulme, Manchester and encouraged to attend.

**3. ACTIONS TO BE TAKEN**

- Ray and Radhika volunteered to chair the next meeting as long as the dates are convenient.
- Bury EST to ensure that both receive relevant information prior to the meeting taking place.
- Date of the next meeting to be decided.