

MINUTES OF ETHNICITY FOCUS GROUP MEETING
15 SEPTEMBER 2003

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

ACTION

1. FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSION

Welcome:

Asghar opened the meeting by welcoming everyone. For some clients it was their first opportunity to visit Bury EST. Everyone then briefly introduced themselves.

Lee gave an overview of Bury EST and the Embracing Diversity Project and spoke about some of the work that is being done, highlighting the different client groups we work with and the concept of Supported Employment. Lee also explained why we were setting up a focus group and what we wanted to achieve from this. The Employer Forum was also discussed. Asghar then briefly broke down into simple language what the Employer Forum was about.

Each client was then asked about their own individual experiences, good and bad and whether or not they had experienced discrimination.

2. KEY POINTS OF DISCUSSION

ACTION

- Members identified several barriers to accessing employment: Cultural issues relating to being a single Muslim female. Lack of knowledge of the services available to enter the labour market. Lack of jobs available in the occupational field that beneficiaries are trained and qualified in.
- Members identified the following positive experiences.
 1. Members did not feel they had been subject to discrimination in seeking employment.
 2. There were some good examples of supporting agencies providing beneficiaries with effective signposting to Bury EST.
 3. A group member who is a refugee felt that by engaging in work placement/voluntary work had played a major role in being granted indefinite leave to remain in the UK.
 4. Support from Bury EST was identified as a key factor in boosting client confidence in accessing employment.

- Feelings on the initial Focus Group meeting
 1. Clients stated that this was one of the first times they had talked openly about their experiences and that they had found it helpful to hear experiences of others who had faced similar barriers and issues.
 2. Clients felt that the focus group had given them a better understanding of Bury EST and the Embracing Diversity Project.
 3. Group members felt that forum could provide them with a chance to enhance confidence levels and make friends.

3. ACTIONS TO BE TAKEN

- Asghar to send out minutes of the meeting to focus group members and potential members.
- Asghar to inform focus group members and potential members of agenda and arrangements of the next meeting.