

Minutes of Learning Disability Focus Group Meeting

Monday, 11 October 2004

Venue: 24 Ribchester Drive, Bury

1. What are the good points and the key issues of Connexions?

- Most clients were within the age restriction to access Connexions, yet no-one had heard of them.
- There was a general lack of awareness of who Connexions were and what they do – considering most clients had attended college courses, it's obvious that there are many potential service users who are not being referred.
- People felt that college should have been more helpful in moving clients onto a new pathway. For many college courses ended and that was it – nothing mapped out, no advice.
- People felt that there shouldn't be a cut off point of 25 years old – they felt that the service should be available to a wider range.
- People felt that they need a point of contact to assist with a variety of issues ie, bus passes, benefits, career paths etc. The continuity of dealing with the same person would be nice.
- No-one had heard of transition plans, but would like one.
How do I get an advisor?

2. What are the good points and the key issues of Employers?

- Most agreed that they found application forms difficult, confusing and boring (not only the questions but the writing aspect also).
- The vast majority of clients said they would prefer a work trial rather than an interview – or would at least prefer a work trial before an interview. It was agreed that most people felt that interviews were too formal, nerve wracking and could be intimidating and interviews also are not necessarily an accurate way to find the right person for the job.
- Work placements seemed to be very popular, most found them enjoyable, and enjoyed meeting new people. Although some had had some

disappointing work experiences organised by schools – some found them too stressful and demanding.

- Those people that have/have had jobs enjoyed employment – made lots of friends, felt able to ask for assistance when needed, found their colleagues helpful, friendly and supportive and enjoyed being part of the work culture.
- It was pointed out that it can be hard finding your way around a new building and it would be nice to be shown around (or if necessary given a user friendly map).

3. What are the good points and the key issues of The Job Centre?

- Some found the staff helpful and were asked if they were okay.
- Some thought it was a waste of time – there was no suitable work.
- All agreed that they would like there to be an appointed person on the shop floor available to assist in job searching and would also like someone there able to advise them on benefits and college.
- Most people found the screens too complicated to work (when working) and would have liked some instruction. Most people felt that it was a backwards step replacing the job boards with computer screens and felt that both methods should be used to enable more people to job search instead of queuing for a machine. It can be very de-motivating searching for a job when you get to the job centre and the screens are down.
- It was mentioned that it would be useful if at the screens there were headphones available to listen to the options on the screen and read the job descriptions which would help people with vision/reading difficulties.
- Use of Braille and larger print would be useful. It may also be beneficial to colour code jobs ie, green – unskilled, amber – basic knowledge, red – skilled, it would then be easier to find job matches (option on screen to only view certain colour coded jobs plus if job boards were brought back, easy to pick out suitable jobs).
- Many people would like a bit more privacy around the job screen.
- A lot of people felt that the benefits system is far too complicated, confusing and inconsistent with a lack of information and all felt the benefits system needs simplifying.