

**Ethnic Minority Employment Stakeholder Group
(EMESG) meeting – 26 September 2013
Room 1.25 13.00 – 16.00
Caxton House,
6-12, Tothill Street, LONDON, SW1H 9NA**

Attendees:

Sandra Kerr, (OBE) EMESG Chair	Race for Opportunity, Business In the Community
Jeremy Crook, (OBE)	Black Training and Enterprise Group
Cecil Edey	Minority Share Ltd
Terry Day	Greater London Authority
Raj Jalota	Islington Borough Council
Dr Omar Khan	The Runnymede Trust
Mohammed Ali	QED
Dr Kathlyn Wilson	University of Bedfordshire
Collette Cork-Hurst,	Unite the Union
David Shaw	Digital Champion, Jobcentre Plus, Eltham
Pat Russell	DWP Deputy Director, Social Justice.
Lesley Mitchell	DWP, Ethnic Minority Employment Policy
Victoria Mall	DWP Social Justice (EMESG Secretariat)

Apologies received: Atiha Chaudry JP, DL – Manchester BME Network Chair, Wilf Sullivan – Trade Union Congress, Professor Monder Ram (OBE) – Centre for Research in Ethnic Minority Entrepreneurship (CRÈME), Yvonne MacNamara – Irish Traveller Movement in Britain, Tim Conway – DWP, Disadvantaged Groups Policy Manager

Welcome and Chair's Update

Sandra Kerr welcomed everyone, including Victoria Mall who has taken on the role of secretariat for the group. Sandra updated the group on her activities since the last EMESG.

Sandra and Kath attended the Business in the Community Champions Group meeting; this was an excellent opportunity to hear about best practice and gain ideas about potential messages to employers.

On September 12th Sandra and Lesley, met with the Construction Industry Training Board (CITB). It was a chance to gain insight into their recruitment processes and assessment methods, and the work they are doing to increase ethnic minority recruitment and retention. The Board recognised the importance of demonstrating and checking good practice with regards to these. Sandra again stressed the importance of career progression and transparency, and she outlined how we would be working with CITB to improve and test their existing Progression Tool. This potentially offers good,

practical support for jobseekers and those who support them (including Jobcentre Advisers) and is an opportunity to mobilise other sectors.

Lesley confirmed that CITB are looking to launch a Diversity Industry Standard in the new year; they will be seeking support from this Group and DWP. She is also now linked in to work BIS are doing to develop Industry/Sector Strategies which include commitments to developing a talented and diverse workforce.

Sandra also informed the group that EDF Energy had asked about what more they can do to support this agenda. Pat confirmed this work also fits in with UC – concept of encouraging people to increase hours and their physical mobility within the labour market. Sandra pressed the point that we should start with the theory, those that can move should and then progress from there to help those in a more difficult situation.

This led to a wider conversation on the possibility of mapping out where new jobs are emerging in relation to key ethnic minority areas, and whether councils should consider moving people to these areas as part of the Housing Benefit reforms. Pat confirmed that our District Managers will have the lead on these relationships locally but DCLG are very clear that local authorities have the freedom and flexibility to make these decisions.

Pat encouraged the Group to think about messages to employers about flexible working and considering the needs of potential employees (eg, childcare, transport) to encourage mobility. Raj gave the example of NEXT retail store in Leicester putting on a bus to take employees to and from the store as local buses do not offer this service.

Omar asked about DWP's engagement with employers and how the Group might be able to link into this at local and national level. Pat advised the Group to be mindful of our "ask" of employers and to think about some tangible messages that we can use

Action – Group to identify best practice/tangible message for DWP to embed in existing support and guidance for employer-facing staff.

Minutes and Action Points

Action points and Minutes cleared. Action point 1 is outstanding. Sandra and Kath agreed to pick this up now Recess has ended. Sandra confirmed that Lesley has emailed all members on 9 September to outline how the Disability Indicator is used to monitor the employment gap and inform future policy development. This is in line with our monitoring of the Ethnic Minority Employment Gap on a quarterly basis. Pat confirmed that we look to work with this Group to meet the challenge of reducing this. Whilst it is unlikely that the existing indicators will be changed under the current Government, DWP acknowledged that we can look to make this data more visible on the Group's

web pages including a clear indication of how these figures are calculated and why.

Action – DWP Officials to work with analytical colleagues to publish up-to-date labour market statistics on the **EMESG website**, including an explanation of how the employment gap is calculated and why.

Sandra pressed the need for hard evidence and numbers, only then can an Action Plan can be created. Employers likely to step up once these have been seen.

Update Scrutiny Hubs

Kath updated the Group; the Discrimination in Recruitment Scrutiny Hub met in July and considered Key Performance Indicators/ethnicity indicator .

She confirmed the visit to Leicester Jobcentre on 20th September went well. Those who attended met with Advisers, Employer-facing staff and various JCP Managers. The group were impressed with a number of local initiatives and providers. One particularly impressive provider was the Race Equality Centre who worked with refugees and provided ESOL classes to claimants.

Language deemed to be the biggest barrier to employment for BME claimants in Leicester. BME account for approx 85% of Leicester's claimant count and the majority do not speak English to an appropriate standard (however was discussed that assumptions are made on this).

The group were disappointed that there didn't seem to be any data collection, as they could not really evaluate how successful the initiatives are. Pat did explain that there are thousands of initiatives and these cannot be evaluated sophisticatedly due to local resources. The Flexible Support Fund is designed to be used locally to support local initiatives through small-scale grant funding, and to see what works with changes to off-flows rather than through a formal evaluation. Pat asked the Group if they were looking for good case-studies or formal evaluation, and how either could be used to stimulate more action and innovation? She also raised a concern that case-studies can often "get lost in the noise" and she put a challenge back to the Group about doing something different and generating fresh ideas.

The members were still keen to have evidence of what worked and what didn't, and understand more about how the Flexible Support Fund supports ethnic minority communities. Pat suggested the Recruitment Subsidy Hub might wish to develop a simple pro-forma for FSF-supported products, outlining what they would like to see collected, and DWP officials can then explore feasibility.

Action – The Recruitment Subsidy to develop a simple pro-forma for potential completion by FSF-supported Projects.

Omar updated the Group on the work on in-work progression/poverty. This will include engagement with Local Enterprise Partnerships, sectorial analysis, and linking in to the Sector Skills Councils of traditionally low paid sectors (eg, retail and care). His Group will also look at the recommendations in the recent Joseph Rowntree Foundation that Sandra circulated in advance of the meeting. There is the potential to invite JRF to a future Group to present this research to the Group.

Action – Chair and DWP Officials to discuss potential for JRF presentation at November’s meeting.

Update on ERSA Work Programme Roundtable

Mohammed updated the Group on the ERSA Work Programme Roundtable Discussion that he attended at the end of July with Kath, Lesley and Pat. Two main aims were to share best practice and inform future commissioning in DWP. ERSA had used the outputs from this day to inform their response to the DWP’s Commissioning Strategy Consultation.

ERSA are also keen to come to a future EMESG members, as they are also interested in promoting this agenda to employers, and in supporting providers to do so.

The Group were keen to get an indication of Work Programme Performance by ethnicity in advance of this meeting. Pat asked the Group to consider what they would like to see/ask in advance of an invitation to ERSA, including the possibility of a survey to their members about performance, areas of concern etc. Mohammed and Jeremy agreed to take the lead on this.

Action – Jeremy/Mohammed to come up with a list of questions we’d like to ask ERSA and a proposed agenda for a joint meeting.

Update on DCLG BME Access to Finance Report/Launch

Cecil outlined the background to the launch of the DCLG BME Access to Finance Report he attended recently. Following a presentation to Andrew Stunnell, the Government accepted the earlier findings. Cecil acknowledged the good things in the Report and progress made but there were still weaknesses including:

- no accessible, affordable support for EM businesses
- the expectations of LEPs
- the vast number of initiatives aimed at businesses.

Cecil agreed to send on information about a number of working groups stemming from this work, for consideration of future EMESG representation.

Action – Cecil to let Sandra and Lesley have details of future meetings and agree representation

Update on Universal Credit in-work Progression

David Shaw issued a slide pack to the group.

He last updated the group in May. He recapped his team's aims:

- To look at how we can support people to stay and progress in work
- How we can effectively engage with those UC claimants who will be in work
- Look at the opportunity of encouraging those in work to stay in and earn more (reduces poverty, increases social mobility and reduces benefit expenditure)

Difficulties faced doing the above; (a) We've never done this before so don't know how to. (b) What can we reasonably ask of people – is it fair to ask someone who has worked in a firm for 10 years to move for a small pay increase? (c) What is the cost of doing this?

The Government has decided to take a sensible and careful approach.

Progress has been made – a summary has been published outlining the 650 responses received to the consultation on how to engage with people in work. 11 trials are now in place and will all be live at the end of this month. These pilots are all led by JCP and look at providing ongoing support to JSA claimants who are in work. There are however issues with transferring this learning to UC, however it is hoped to shape views and thinking we it comes to do this.

Another area being looked at is how to create quality part time jobs.

Initial findings from the trials/pilots should be available early next year. The gaps will be looked to be filled e.g. what are the differences between JSA claimants and those claiming Tax credits under UC? Can we put in place any 'light touch' adviser engagement? Are JCP staff best placed to advise, or can other organisations help such as Recruitment Agencies? What are the Mentoring/motivation options?

David confirmed that employers overall seem positive about UC and the flexibility it offers, and he confirmed that his team are in discussion with UKCES about strengthening the skills offer to support this work. He acknowledged that, whilst we are keen to do more on the demand side, we can not force employers to do what we want them to.

The Group will continue to stay in touch with David and his team as this work develops.

Annex1

Actions Agreed 26th September 2013:

	Action Point	Responsibility	By:	Status
1	Group to identify best practice/tangible message for DWP to embed in existing support and guidance for employer-facing staff	EMESG	31 st Oct	
2	DWP Officials to work with analytical colleagues to publish up-to-date labour market statistics on the EMESG website, including an explanation of how the employment gap is calculated and why	DWP Officials	31 st Oct	
3	Chair and DWP Officials to discuss potential for JRF presentation at November's meeting.	Chair/DWP Officials	31 st Oct	
4	Jeremy/Mohammed to come up with a list of questions we'd like to ask ERSA and a proposed agenda for a joint meeting	Jeremy/Mohammed	31 st Oct	
5	Cecil agreed to send on information about a number of working groups stemming from this work, for consideration of future EMESG representation	Cecil to send to Sandra and Lesley to agree representation	31 st Oct	