



Ethnic Minority Employment Task Force Meeting
Wednesday 04 February 2010
1500 – 1630 hrs
Room Q Portcullis House, House of Commons

Minutes

Attendance:

Rt Hon Jim Knight MP (Chair) (JK)	DWP
Michael Foster MP (MF)	GEO
Meg Hillier MP (MH)	HO
Dawn Butler MP (DB)	CO
Matthew West (for Shahid Malik MP) (MW)	CLG
Bill Wells (for Lord Young)	BIS
Iqbal Wahhab (IW)	EMAG
Katie Driver (for Diana Johnson MP) (KD)	DCSF
Leslie Manasseh (LM)	TUC
Arun Batra (AB)	LDA
Alan Christie (AC)	EHRC
Sandra Kerr (SK)	EMAG (Employers Project Group and RfO)
Martin Wood (MW)	National Centre for Social Research (NatCen) (DWP Researchers)
Alison Pritchard (AP)	GEO
Hayley Johnson (Secretariat) (HJ)	DWP LMID
Janet Hill (JH)	DWP LMID
Darren Woolfenden (DW)	DWP LMID
Geoff Scammell (JS)	DWP LMID
Bruce Byrne (BB)	DWP LMID
Christine Wright (CW)	DWP LMID

Apologies received from:

Lord Young	BIS
Diana Johnson MP	DCSF
Shahid Malik MP	CLG
Mahroof Hussain	LGA
Liz Sayce	UKCES
Katja Hall	CBI

Item 1: Welcome and introductions

JK welcomed members, deputies and presenters. Apologies were received from Lord Young (BIS), Diana Johnson (DCSF), Shahid Malik (CLG), Mahroof Hussain (LGA), Liz Sayce (UKCES) and Katja Hall (CBI).

He explained that the cancellation of the November meeting had been due to his attendance in the House for a committee stage of the Welfare Reform Bill.

He briefly updated Members on issues arising since the last meeting: mentioning that a workshop on procurement hosted by DWP, OGC and GEO had taken place on the previous day; he suggested that progress on this issue should be taken as an agenda item at the next Task Force meeting.

He also mentioned the ippr report noting that it was unfortunate that they had used the International Labour Organisation (ILO) rather than the claimant count statistics as the ILO figure included, for example, full-time students looking for a few hours bar work a week, whilst doing something positive to help their prospects. He explained that whilst the unemployment rate for young Black people was an issue, and this was something he wants to look more closely at, over half the non-employed ethnic minority young people were in full-time education.

ACTION POINT 1. Secretariat to provide an update on procurement for the next meeting

Item 2: Minutes and Actions from Last Meeting

The minutes of the last meeting were cleared.

Item 3: Presentation Martin Wood National Centre for Social Research (NatCen) on DWP commissioned research: 'Test of racial discrimination in recruitment' (CV testing) (A copy of the presentation is at Annex 1)

JK welcomed MW and noted that the publication of the research had received wide publicity. MW outlined the methodology and main findings of research. He explained that this work focused on discrimination at the application stage of the recruitment process and concluded that ethnic minority candidates had to apply for 16 jobs before getting any contact from an employer compared to nine for white candidates. Discrimination was found in both the public and private sectors but was more likely to occur in the private sector. There were no significant links between this discrimination and gender or geography

In the discussion that followed a number of points were made and questions raised. JK noted that employers appeared to be shocked when the research findings were published, leading to muted criticism. MW indicated that similar research had been undertaken in a number of other countries including France, Canada and the USA, all of which found discrimination regarding ethnicity, though

it was not known how their government's tackled the findings. JK stressed that the UK preferred to help employers to tackle their biases and assumptions, citing the success of Local Employment Partnerships over the past year and Jobcentre Plus's continuing work with Local Authorities.

IW asked why EMAG had not been consulted as part of this research and it was agreed that valuable expertise from EMAG members could have been better utilised. and whilst a member had been on the consultation panel, more formal arrangements would be put in place for any such future work.

Questions were asked around the size and ethnicity of targeted employers and whether any feedback had been received, especially from the private sector. MW confirmed that no feedback was obtained from employers and the ethnicity of employers was unknown, as they were never contacted directly by the researchers for ethical reasons, and that a variety of employers had been utilised including large businesses and SMEs. DB asked whether this type of research into discrimination could be applied to the grading of exam papers in schools, which people thought a possibility

The use of standardised application forms was discussed and it was confirmed that advice and guidance is available through Business Link, as well as a standard application form being available through Jobcentre Plus, although there were concerns around awareness of such resources. AP stressed that when thinking of an approach to tackling the issue of discrimination in recruitment, care must be taken to ensure that discrimination isn't simply pushed from one part of the recruitment process to another. She asked if it is known whether the problem exists further along the process, for example at interview stage and whether similar research could be carried out there. MW reflected that research in to discrimination at the interview stage would be very difficult to carry out as actors would have to be used, leaving room for subjectivity and criticism. It was agreed that when thinking of solutions to addressing discrimination, employers needed to realise that improving equality within recruitment is in fact easy, inexpensive and would bring many benefits to businesses.

ACTION POINT 2: KD to provide details of if and how examination papers are anonymised

ACTION POINT 3: Secretariat to send details of DWP/Kings College research on discrimination at the interview and promotion stage to Task Force Members.

Item 4: Presentation – Sandra Kerr (Race for Opportunity - RfO - and Chair of Ethnic Minority Advisory Group - EMAG - Project Group) Employer Engagement Project Group Report (a copy of the presentation is at Annex 2)

JK introduced SK adding that the EMAG work was linked to MW's work and part of the Task Force strategy. SK said that EMAG's response was to develop a

model suitable for large and small employers from the public, private and third sectors that was not time consuming, easy to use and easily available at no cost: the “Five Points for Progress” model. Focussing on the key areas to combat discrimination: know why it matters, know yourself, know your work force, know your colleagues and know what to do. To be promoted to employers, Information, Advice and Guidance workers, people working in recruitment and HR specialists.

The model included an Implicit Bias Tool, currently being developed by RfO that had been mentioned in the White Paper: “Building Britain’s Recovery”. SK challenged Task Force Members to adopt the plan themselves in their organisations, commend it to others and set an example from the top by using the bias tool.

In the discussion that followed, JK said that he was personally fully committed to the approach and so were DWP and Jobcentre Plus. He also encouraged members around the table to endorse the approach and to lead by example, and there was general agreement to this challenge.

Monitoring the progress of ethnic minority employees was also discussed, specifically the importance of not only monitoring recruitment, but also including pay, training, retention and promotion opportunities so that employers could identify glass ceilings within organisations. MH raised concerns relating to how SMEs would do this, and SK agreed that a rigorous strategy would need to be developed to take forward the work, involving stakeholders, using available technology and expertise and that there are a number of large organisations who are prepared to run workshops and act as case studies for organisations who want to follow suit but are unsure of the process.

IW asked whether Investors in People could make having a diverse work force part of their assessment criteria and again concerns were raised around SMEs and organisations with a low turn over of staff. It was agreed that a sensible approach needed to be taken and that employers would at least benefit from getting to know the local demographics, customer base and good practice that exists. MH reminded members that different parts of the country had different ethnic mixes and different retention rates citing the different characteristics of the three main passport processing offices. SK agreed adding that the toolkit covered the wider equality groups and said that common sense should be the over riding factor as long as it was not used to mask discrimination.

JK thanked SK and said that he hoped Business Link would commit to it as Jobcentre Plus had. BW agreed that this would be the best route to reach employers, and was in line with Governments approach to targeted help for employers via Business Link. JK commended the work to all members.

ACTION POINT 4 : Secretariat to work with RfO to develop the “5 Points for Progress” and the “Know Yourself” tool and develop a

strategy to take forward in order to raise employers awareness, promote usage and hence help employers meet the challenges that the “cv testing” research had identified

Item 5: Presentation by Darren Woolfenden – DWP - on the draft Task Force Ethnic Minority Employment Strategy (a copy of the presentation is at Annex 3)

JK made clear that this was a draft and the main purpose was to ensure all Task Force Members – Government Departments and key stakeholder organisations – were contributing positively to reducing the ethnic minority employment gap.

DW introduced the strategy that DWP were developing to tackle the ethnic minority employment gap. This, as signalled to the National Audit Office and Public Accounts Committee involved moving from very small targeted programmes, where there was a danger of ethnic minority people being parked on unsuitable provision because of their ethnicity rather than their needs, to the development of flexible, personalised mainstream programmes, more joined up working with other government departments; the localisation of decision making and undertaking an evidence review of the barriers people from different ethnic minority groups, areas, ages and gender etc face in getting and keeping work

He said that the 2003 Strategy Unit report, that had led to the setting up of the Task Force, has recognised that DWP could not narrow the gap alone. That Members of the Task Force were there because they and their organisations played a key role in reducing disadvantage and working to achieve a fairer and more equal society where everyone had the opportunity to fulfil their ambitions, support themselves and make a full contribution to the well being of all. He asked that Members consider the paper circulated before the meeting and identify clearly where their organisations could contribute.

JK asked all Members to reaffirm their organisations contribution in writing to be discussed at the next meeting. DWP will also be refining its own part of the strategy alongside fellow Departments, so that the end product is a robust strategy, outlining each partner’s contribution and that future Task Force meetings can be used to monitor progress and consider issues.

ACTION POINT 5: Departments to send contributions to Secretariat on their own role in helping to close the ethnic minority employment gap by 5 March 2010

Item 6: Iqbal Wahhab – Report from Chair of EMAG

IW informed members of the review of EMAG on 11 December. He explained that this had involved discussion on whether the group had made a difference and should continue. EMAG members concluded that the group should continue but that the membership should be refreshed. It was agreed that existing members should reapply for a place and that new members should be invited to join to

ensure the group was as fully representative as possible. Membership was being advertised externally through the Task Force website, news articles and departmental stakeholder groups and will close on February 26th. IW said that in particular, the group needed more representation from the private sector.

On EMAG's work on the use of public procurement he added that he was pleased the workshop had taken place and expressed his pleasure at being invited to a meeting of Permanent Secretaries on 24 February.

ACTION POINT 6: Secretariat to obtain a list of Permanent Secretaries attending the meeting together with their biographies where available and send to IW.

Item 7: AOB

JK thanked members for their attendance and confirmed that the next Task Force would be held on Tuesday 23rd March at 2pm, details will follow. The meeting closed at 16.20 hours.

Summary of Action Points:

	Action Point	Responsibility	Status
1	<i>Secretariat to provide an update on procurement for the next meeting.</i>	HJ	
2	<i>KD to check with examination boards as to whether any research in to discrimination of ethnic minorities in paper based assessments in schools has been carried out. Secretariat to circulate to Members.</i>	Katy Driver/HJ	
3	<i>Secretariat to send details of DWP/Kings College research on discrimination at the interview and promotion stage to Task Force Members.</i>	HJ	
4	<i>Secretariat to work with RFO to develop the "5 Points for Progress" and the "Know Yourself" tool and develop a strategy to take forward in order to raise employers awareness, promote usage and hence help employers meet the challenges that the "cv testing" research had identified.</i>	Jenni Martin (Ethnic Minority Employment Policy Team – LMID- DWP)	

5	Departments to send contributions to Secretariat on their own role in helping to close the ethnic minority employment gap by 5 March 2010	All Members	
6	<i>Secretariat to obtain a list of PS's attending the meeting together with their biographies where available and send to IW.</i>	HJ	