

Ethnic Minority Employment Task Force Meeting

09:00 to 10:30 17th January 2006
Room Q, Portcullis House, House of Commons

MINUTES

Attendees

Rt Hon Margaret Hodge MBE MP (Chair)	Department for Work and Pensions (DWP)
Paul Goggins MP	Home Office (HO)
Gerry Sutcliffe MP	Department for Trade and Industry (DTI)
Jim Fitzpatrick MP	Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (ODPM)
Rt Hon Richard Caborn MP	Dept for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS)
Trevor Phillips	Commission for Racial Equality (CRE)
Colleen Harris	CRE
Nahid Majid	Chair, Ethnic Minority Stakeholder Group
Jeremy Anderson CBE	National Employment Panel (NEP)
Inderjit Dehal	Department for Education and Skills (DfES)
Tony Orhrial	HM Treasury (HMT)
Sally Collier	Office for Government Commerce (OGC)
Katja Hall	Confederation of British Industry (CBI)
Michael Hewson	DWP
Robert Irvine	DWP
Jane McLuckie-Townsend	DWP
Carol McDonald	DWP- Task Force Secretariat
Emma Heppenstall	DWP- Task Force Secretariat

Apologies

Rt Hon Jacqui Smith, MP	DfES
John Healey	MP HM Treasury (HMT)
Leslie Manasseh	Trades Union Congress (TUC)
Cay Stratton	NEP
Jonathan Portes	DWP (Chair of Senior Officials Group)

Item 1: Welcome and Introduction

The Chair welcomed all to the Task Force meeting, particularly Rt Hon Richard Caborn MP, Minister for Sport, attending for the item on the Olympics and Katja Hall, who replaces Dr Neil Bentley, for the CBI.

Item 2: Minutes and Action Points

The Task Force agreed the minutes of the last Task Force meeting of October 25th 2005. All action points were cleared apart from the Procurement action point which was ongoing and was treated as a matter arising.

Item 3: Procurement (agenda item 5)

The Chair gave an update on progress in establishing pilots to promote race equality in procurement. – DWP and the UK Passport Service (an agency of the Home Office) have agreed to start testing and will look to apply revised conditions in new contracts.

DfES have agreed in principle but are looking suitable contracts in which to test the framework.

DWP and Jobcentre Plus are preparing to test enhanced contract conditions in relation to ethnic minorities in the re-tender of New Deal Contracts representing a significant proportion of Jobcentre Plus procurement spending. The contracts will be starting in July 2006.

Paul Goggins said that the UK Passport Service, an agency of the Home Office, would be testing the framework and have also identified potential contracts. He stated that the department were very enthusiastic about the testing and that it would not be done in isolation, they would use lessons learnt and identify other areas to use the framework. He will report at the next meeting.

The Task Force asked that Department of Health be contacted and encouraged to participate in the testing.

Jim Fitzpatrick said he had met with ODPM procurement specialists to look at the impact of the framework and looking at its implementation the framework. He will ask his officials about setting up a pilot.

Gerry Sutcliffe welcomed the pilot and Katja Hall said that the CBI were very supportive of the framework and keen to be involved in discussions on procurement. The Stakeholder Group was also anxious to feed in its experiences and expertise.

Trevor Phillips suggested that the minutes of discussions of procurement would be most accurate to state that the purpose behind the procurement work is to equality assure procurement practices.

Margaret emphasised that the progress being made needed to be backed by a cross-government progress monitoring package and that each department should use this when reporting back at EMETF meetings. She asked the Secretariat to ensure that such a package is commissioned and used.

Action 3.1: Margaret Hodge to write to Department of Health inviting them to join the procurement pilots.

Action 3.2: Secretariat to ensure monitoring criteria are designed, and that they are used by all departments procurement testing from the next meeting onwards.

Action 3.3: Home Office to set date for pilots to start.

Action 3.4: Circulate clauses in contracts to other EMETF departments .

Action 3.5: Each department involved in the pilots to report back progress at next meeting.

Action 3.6: ODPM to report back at the next meeting on their progress on setting up a pilot.

Item 4: Priorities for the EMETF

Margaret Hodge stated that she was keen to for the task force to be more pragmatic and to focus on practical activity that would make a difference. She agreed that it would be helpful for the Task Force to have a one page summary of the ethnic employment strategy set against the key practical steps that can be taken to deliver each element of it.

The Task Force discussed the priorities paper submitted by the Senior Officials Group. Task Force agreed that one of its key functions is bending government programmes already in place to achieve better achieve ethnic minority employment objectives. This raised the further issues of governance and accountability of the programmes.

While this was agreed as the main focus, the Task Force was also clear that the impact of employer attitudes and activities remained an area to keep under review.

Margaret Hodge recommended that this would best be done by monitoring against the Strategy Unit recommendations. This should be developed and used as a regular tool to update on progress and to focus on priorities at these meetings.

From the discussion of priorities Margaret Hodge suggested a programme of priorities for the Task Force over the next six months, which is to be supported by the Senior Officials Group:

Action 4.1: A paper for the next Task Force meeting from DTI covering employer discrimination and engagement, advice and guidance across Government, covering both what is available and what might meet proven need. This work to involve both NEP and the CBI and be set in the context of the Warwick Agreement.

Action 4.2: A paper for the next Task Force meeting from DfES (but involving other Department covering the provision of skills and education (across Government) and considering the effectiveness of these in delivering ethnic minority employment.

Action 4.3: A paper for the Task Force meeting after next from DWP considering the existing recommendations and programmes in place around connecting people to employment and which of these are likely to represent the most effective way forward.

Action 4.4: The Task Force noted that there are a plethora of recommendations and initiatives in this area. While many ought to be taken forward it was also important not to simply dilute resources by attempting to do everything. Instead a monitoring tool should be set in place that takes the Strategy Unit recommendations as the basis for a progress assessment framework. Secretariat were asked to put this in place.

Item 5: Olympics

Nahid gave a presentation to the group on the Olympics paper.

The Stakeholder Group had focussed mainly on access to ethnic minorities in terms of employment opportunities. Nahid stated that the Olympics had been won on sustainable regeneration with the prospects of real jobs for local people.

Nahid stressed the need to kick start the planning process and that here was an opportunity for EMETF to influence the employment disparity and to make a difference. The way forward now is to focus on outcome and not process and to ensure structures are in place to deliver real results.

Margaret Hodge thanked Nahid for her presentation and opened the discussion.

Richard Caborn welcomed Nahid's paper and said it was appropriately timed. Richard Caborn stated that an Olympic Employment Skills Task Force has been set up which links across government departments and will support the delivery structures currently being set up. The London Organising Committee of the Olympic Games (LOCOG) will be responsible for the planning and staging of the games and the Olympic Delivery Authority (ODA) is responsible for delivering the venues and infrastructure projects that need to be built for the Games.

The general consensus was that education and skills were very important and an area where difference could be made. It was agreed that good practice could be learnt from the Terminal 5 project, the Manchester Commonwealth Games (and particularly the volunteering programme) and Birmingham Bull Ring project.

Richard Caborn said that is important to ensure that monitoring is in place.

Margaret Hodge stated that there are four areas where the Olympic Games could impact and which therefore required attention:

1. Jobs
2. Supply chain
3. Volunteering
4. Raising aspirations

Trevor Phillips stated that he is supporting Sport England and would like a separate discussion on contracts. He also said that there needs to be a lever in place for filling contracts and an independent body for monitoring purposes.

Action 5.1: Nahid Majid to be invited to the Employment Skills Task Force and MISC25 meetings to present her Olympics paper.

Action 5.2: Margaret Hodge to meet Richard Caborn for further discussions on the Olympics and to be invited to the first meeting of the Olympic Employment Skills Task Force.

Action 5.3: Trevor Phillips to prepare a note for Margaret Hodge and Richard Caborn on the need for independent scrutiny of the contract letting process.

Item 6: Review of Stakeholder Group

Jim Fitzpatrick asked who were involved in the stakeholder group. Nahid Majid explained that the group was currently represented by over 50 people, each contributing

