

Ethnic Minority Employment Task Force Meeting

09:00 to 10:30 26th April 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)
Trevor Phillips	Commission for Racial Equality (CRE)
Leslie Manasseh	Trades Union Congress (TUC)
Symon Sentain	Acting Chair, EMETF Stakeholder Group
Katja Hall	Confederation of British Industry (CBI)
Jeremy Anderson CBE	National Employment Panel (NEP)
Cay Stratton	NEP
Alan Christie	CRE
Ian Roberts	HM Treasury (HMT)
Inderjit Dehal	Department for Education and Skills (DfES)
Teresa Clark	DfES
Michael Richardson	DWP
Nahid Majid	DWP
Task Force Secretariat:	
Robert Irvine	
Carol McDonald	
Emma Heppenstall	

Apologies

Rt Hon Jacqui Smith MP	DfES
John Healey MP	HMT

Item 1: Welcome and Introduction

The Chair welcomed all to the Task Force meeting and asked for a round of introductions.

Item 2: Minutes and Action Points

The minutes and action points from the meeting of January 17th 2006 were cleared, with the Chair stating that movement on Procurement actions was too slow. Relevant departments provided a verbal update on progress of Procurement pilots since the last meeting. Suitable contracts for piloting have been identified in a number of departments and DfES and ODPM are urgently pursuing this. As a further step it was suggested that a cross-Government contract should be subject to a pilot and that OGC should be asked to identify one.

Action 2.1 – DWP EMED to contact OGC to establish a suitable cross-government contract to feature in a procurement pilot.

AP 2.2: Letter to be sent to Rt Hon Jacqui Smith MP asking DfES to identify a contract and report progress at the next EMETF meeting on July 20th. Letter will be copied to the DfES Permanent Secretary.

AP 2.3: DfES and ODPM to have identified a suitable contract and report progress for next meeting.

AP 2.4: All relevant departments to report procurement progress at the next EMETF meeting in July and Secretariat to provide an update from Department of Health.

Trevor Phillips commented that there seemed little sense of urgency around this and asked whether it might prove helpful for the CRE to write to departments pressing for progress on Race Equality Impact Assessments and Race Equality Scheme.

AP 2.5: CRE to write to departments pressing for progress in the area of procurement.

Item 3: EMETF Strategy Priorities

Robert Irvine discussed his paper (circulated with the papers for the meeting) on the priorities and monitoring mechanism that arose out of the discussion from the last meeting.

Key priorities were discussed as being:

- Procurement – evidence from the United States of America and from Canada suggests this is the most powerful lever available to the Task Force, if it is properly established and supported
- City Strategy – value for money from current government programmes and closer working between employers and public sector in partnerships
- Employer engagement – Employers confused and would like one point of contact for advice and guidance. Scottish Executive have also researched this area and found concerns about the accessibility of advice, the expertise of those advising and the ethnic backgrounds of the advisers.
- Recruitment – Public sector as an employer in terms of both recruitment and progression
- Olympics - maximising the economic opportunities and impact of the games.

A paper on government recruitment and progression, showing progress from departments was asked for the next meeting in July. It was agreed that this needs to cover the impacts of the Lyons and Gerschon reports, which have been suggested as having adverse impacts on ethnic minority employment in the Civil Service. CRE suggested that evidence of the Race Impact Assessments undertaken on Government efficiencies be included in the report. NEP supported this but noted that practice and figures in the public sector looked preferable to that in the private sector.

The continuing need for greater co-ordination of effort at a local level was discussed. A conference is planned in May to take forward the City Strategy and all Task Force departments will be represented. Cay Stratton said that the NEP were developing a new Business Commission to support the City Strategy and that it would look at performance indicators for private sector with regard to diversity. She stated that any City that has a

large ethnic minority populations must address both supply and demand side issues if ethnic minority employment is to increase. Cay also suggested that procurement be used as a lever in the City Strategy contracts.

CBI suggested that there was a need to consider how this issue was being presented to employers, who were more likely to respond with enthusiasm to positive language centering on promoting the benefits and setting out the business case for racial diversity.

Overall it was thought that the priorities were right, but that it would be helpful to have set out how they were arrived at and have them backed with time bound actions. Paul Goggins pointed out the need to have ethnic minority women separately identified in all elements of the strategy, since (for instance) Bangladeshi women have such high rates of economic inactivity even when compared with Bangladeshi men.

Jeremy Anderson said that he would like to see a full measurement package at the next meeting, including a balanced scorecard to cover the whole strategy.

AP 3.1: City Strategy progress report to capture the progress being made by all government departments

AP 3.2: NEP to give a report on Fair Cities at the October meeting.

AP 3.3: Ethnic Minority women be included across each strand of the strategy

AP 3.4: EMETF strategy paper should set out why we arrived at these priorities and include time bound actions

AP 3.5: Secretariat to develop the balanced scorecard by next meeting

AP 3.6: Paper on recruitment, outlining the recruitment profiles of government departments, to be presented at the next EMETF meeting.

Item 4: Education and Skills

Inderjit Dehal discussed his paper (circulated with the meeting papers) and outlined the key features. There are 2 areas that were looked at, schools systems and post 16 Skills.

Key points:

Schools:

- Varied performance levels across ethnic minority groups
- *Aiming High* was implemented to embrace needs of ethnic minority groups
- Niche programmes were introduced to target specific groups
- Results published in March 2006 show improvements across all groups
- Post 16 measurement difficult to show accurate information, methodology being changed however early indications are that Level 3 (A level equivalent) attainment likely to be an issue.

Skills:

- Poor record compared to rest of Europe and US.
- Trying to move to a more demand led market.
- Data sets not yet well developed.
- Demand led Sector Skills agreement being developed regionally with partners.
- Skills for life programme is made up of 50% ESOL, but quality of this is an issue
- DfES focussing on improving data and on the National Employment Panel's *Enterprising People Enterprising Places* recommendations

Discussion welcomed the paper and Trevor Phillips particularly welcomed the DfES commitment to undertake Race Impact Assessments. He suggested that employability was the key when looking at the attainment of 5 GCSEs, and wondered whether showing (within this) levels of passes in Maths and English might not be the most important areas.

The Task Force welcomed news of the DfES review of English for Speakers of Other Language (ESoL) provision, but retained concerns about the quality of current provision. DfES undertook to provide a brief update on this for the next meeting.

Sector Skills agreements were discussed and it was questioned how much attention they were paying in planning to demographic change and employability. DfES was asked to report back for the next meeting.

Leslie Manasseh explained that Union Learning Reps can and do play an important role in increasing skills for life in the workforce and that this has been of benefit to BEM workers.

The meeting discussed the employment situation of ethnic minority graduates and the impacts that their choices of course and university might be having. There was general agreement that the situation seemed unsatisfactory and the issue of mentoring for undergraduates was raised. DfES will include a brief report on this issue at their next meeting.

AP 4.1: DfES to report back to the next EMETF meeting plans for ESOL provision, the consideration given by Sector Skills Agreements to employability, and on graduate employment.

AP 4.2: DfES offered to present information around gender and free school meals data for the EMETF.

Item 5: Employer engagement, advice and support

Gerry Sutcliffe stated that the paper was written alongside the publication of the “Success at work” agreement.

Comments from employers had suggested to DTI that there are too many sources of information each with a prescribed purpose, which confused those looking for advice as they would (naturally) prefer to have only one contact for all advice. The DTI had recently announced a programme that will significantly streamline business advice. This was very much welcomed.

Katja Hall for CBI said that information sources had needed to be streamlined and that the CBI welcomed the work DTI had carried out for Small Employers and supported its approach to the vulnerable workers issue.

Trevor Phillips questioned whether the way that the issue was commonly viewed was helpful. He suggested that businesses were unlikely to look to government for financial advice but would approach finance experts. Similarly, he thought that we need to move to a situation where employers would see advice on diversity in the same way (and being as valuable) thus building the “diversity industry”.

Item 6: Equalities Review

Trevor Phillips discussed the interim report that was published on March 20th (http://www.theequalitiesreview.org.uk/publications/interim_report.asp)

Key questions raised include the need for prioritising action on inequalities, better ways of measuring, for example an index or series of indices to help understand and compare progress.

The Review had proposed a framework for measuring and identifying inequalities in order to prioritise actions.

The report has found that inequalities are more likely when there is a combination of “vulnerability” (based on social group, class race or gender) and a specific life event or “trigger point”. Greater understanding of this will help to identify specific areas to target to overcome these inequalities.

The final report will also consider the issue of people likely to become carers for elderly relatives in the future and the impact this will have on employability.

It was suggested that there may be cases for time bound special measures to be introduced giving special preferences to certain groups.

Cay Stratton stated that with increased legislation of the private sector being unlikely, special measures became a more attractive route and perhaps more appropriate to the issues being raised.

Trevor Phillips suggested that more investigation was needed and that the private sector is used to regulating itself, transparency might be the key to this. Katja Hall asked that Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) had a role for transparency within the citizen's agenda.

Trevor Phillips offered to give a full report at the October meeting

Item 7: Any other business

There were no items presented.

Close

Annex 1: Action point summary

Please note:

The next Task Force meeting is scheduled for the 20th July 2006, 9.00 am to 10.30am. At Portcullis House. The room will be confirmed at a later date.