

Ethnic Minority Employment Task Force Meeting

Wednesday 25th October, 09:15 to 10:00am
Portcullis House

Minutes

Attendees:

Jim Murphy MP (Chair)	Department for Work and Pensions (DWP)
Jim Fitzpatrick MP	Department for Trade and Industry (DTI)
Meg Munn MP	Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG)
John Healey MP	HM Treasury (HMT)
Rt Hon Richard Caborn MP	Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS)
Julie Davis	Confederation of British Industry (CBI)
Alan Christie	Commission for Racial Equality (CRE)
Iqbal Wahhab	Chair, Ethnic Minority Advisory Group (EMAG)
Leslie Manasseh	Trades Union Congress (TUC)
Lee Jasper	Greater London Authority (GLA)
Jeremy Anderson CBE	National Employment Panel (NEP)
Cay Stratton CBE	NEP
Katie Driver	Department for Education and Skills (DfES)
Dr Lucinda Platt	Presentation, Essex University
Lisa Harker	Adviser to DWP on Child Poverty issues
Nahid Majid OBE	Presentation, DWP
Will Driskell	DWP
Jane McLuckie-Townsend	Task Force Secretariat
Emma Heppenstall	Task Force Secretariat

Apologies:

The Lord Adonis	DfES
Trevor Phillips	CRE
Pat McFadden MP	Cabinet Office

Agenda Item 1: Welcome and Action Point update.

Jim Murphy MP (Chair) welcomed all to the meeting and introduced Lee Jasper of the GLA and Julie Davis who is now representing the CBI. Dr Lucinda Platt was also introduced to present her paper on Ethnicity and Child Poverty. In response to recent suggestions, the meetings in future will be an hour long and have fewer items on the agenda to allow for more focused discussions.

Jim Murphy has been considering where the Task Force has, and has not, made progress and held informal discussions with other Ministers to give this some thought.

AP 1: Jim Murphy will discuss with Nahid Majid key issues arising from the informal discussions with Ministers. Task Force members will be contacted by Nahid Majid over the coming weeks for comments on emerging ideas.

All action points from the last meeting have been cleared; the action to meet with the Treasury regarding Procurement will be happening over the next couple of weeks; Jim Murphy thanked Waqar Azmi, Cabinet Office for his response to questions raised at the

last meeting that were not able to be answered at the time.

Lee Jasper suggested that the GLA group give a presentation on procurement and Rt Hon Richard Caborn suggested that David Higgins, Chief Executive of the ODA, be invited to attend the next Task Force meeting to ensure that procurement issues for the Olympics are discussed. Jim Fitzpatrick agreed that this was helpful, as it would be useful to find out how Pakistani and Bangladeshi groups in East London are faring in relation to the London Employment and Skills Task Force.

AP 2: Next meeting to include a joint presentation from the GLA group (London Development Agency & Transport for London) and the ODA around Procurement and the City Strategy pathfinders.

Agenda Item 2: Ethnicity and Child Poverty presentation.

Dr Lucinda Platt thanked Will Driskell for his support and for contributing HBAI statistics. Key points:

Ethnic minority children are far more likely to be living in poverty; poverty rates are particularly high amongst children from Black African, Pakistani and Bangladeshi families.

Ethnic minority groups have higher rates of poverty across all household types; both those considered high (e.g. lone parents) and low (e.g. working) risk. However, there is a need for policy to take account of the relative size of each group. For example, despite lower risk, the in-work poor make up a large proportion of all ethnic minority children living in poverty.

Policy implications, it concurs with existing strategy but suggests more needs to be done, particularly a need to focus on the in-work poor - around job quality, career progression and retention and employer discrimination. (also links to Education and Skills agendas). And highlighted the need for addressing Benefit entitlement take up and financial support for families with sick or disabled members.

A need for further research in this area was demonstrated to help us further understand the issue.

Jim Murphy thanked Dr Platt and commented on the impact that a “revolving door” effect of being in and out of work has on families.

Further questions were raised asking about the effect of the minimum wage, highlighting the need for a broader diversity approach to find solutions, particularly in light of the current Discrimination Law Review taking place, and the requirement of government to target specific areas.

Meg Munn confirmed that the DTI are currently looking at the scope for updating the law in areas such as positive action and a Green Paper will be published in the New Year.

Jeremy Anderson welcomed this and stated that the private sector have asked for greater clarity around positive action. He highlighted that the Business Commission could help to influence the private sector around progression and retention, and would be happy to report to the task force in the spring. He also highlighted the need to do more in terms of incentives and targets for retention.

Julie Davis agreed with the points raised in the presentation. She added that employers want the government to ensure people are job ready and she stressed the need for good careers advice.

Alan Christie emphasised the need to improve the employment rate and the continued importance of the procurement pilots, which are being progressed, as a lever for this.

Lee Jasper raised issues around the difficulties in converting overseas qualifications, asking what more could be done around this and the London living wage.

Dr Platt said that in addition to qualifications more work needs to be done, DWP are doing some work looking at conversion of overseas qualifications and that there needs to be greater flexibility around working hours on the employer and employee side. Wages tended to be higher than the minimum wage, but are still well below the average. In dealing with child poverty, the research highlighted the need to address ethnic minority unemployment skills and job progression plan.

Jim Murphy concluded the item by highlighting the importance of addressing Child Poverty, it is the DWP's number one priority throughout its policy - and asked that Task Force members to have potential impact in mind when considering other issues.

Agenda item 3: City Strategy update

Nahid Majid provided an overview of the City Strategy and gave an update to the recent changes to her Division within DWP and its importance in taking forward the City Strategy pathfinders.

Questions raised included:

How will DWP ensure that Deprived Area Funding target the most disadvantaged.

How will the City Strategy and the 15 pathfinders deal with diversity issues with particular regard to representation in the decision making process via the establishment of the consortia. This reflected the recommendations made by the recent EOC report.

How will the City Strategy be informed by lessons from Ethnic Minority Outreach and Action Team for Jobs programmes, which have recently ended.

Nahid stated that currently a business plan template was being prepared which will address issues of engagement and governance. The Business Plans being developed will be scrutinised and offer some scope for influencing how the funds are distributed, ensuring that the most disadvantaged groups are targeted.

In terms of Deprived Area Funding, the Area Initiatives and Communities Division (DWP) are working closely with Jobcentre Plus to influence areas that fall outside of the City Strategy Pathfinders to meet the employment needs of the most disadvantaged community.

The Chair stated that they are currently looking at flexibilities for consortia, but will need to be re-assured of the quality of plans before handing over the flexibilities. The East London Consortia covered the Olympic boroughs and Richard Caborn highlighted that the 2012 Olympics offers a big opportunity for regeneration. We must ensure that the benefits of the Olympics are fully realised by ethnic minority communities. One way to do this is to press for the Ethnic Minority Advisory Group to drive this and the need for clear communication

channels amongst all groups involved. DCMS are committed to working in close partnership with DWP and the EMETF to deliver the employment legacy.

A meeting is currently being organised with Iqbal Wahhab (Chair of the EMAG), Trevor Phillips (CRE), Nahid Majid (DWP), Mandy Mayer (DCMS) and David Higgins, Chief Executive of the ODA, to look at joint working.

Lee Jasper asked for the diversity make up of the consortia and suggested that future presentation from a City Pathfinder would be beneficial to identify what steps are being undertaken by them to address ethnic minority unemployment.

AP 3:Nahid to include diversity requirements within the Business Plans of the City Strategy Pathfinders consortia make-up.

Cay Stratton asked that mechanisms around tracking, accessibility and parity of outcomes for the City Strategy Pathfinders be commissioned – Jim Murphy acknowledged this and suggested that this be discussed separately with Nahid Majid.

Nahid Majid stated that an evaluation process would be undertaken in developing the City Strategy and assessing impact and outcome.

The Chair closed the meeting by asking that for the January meeting the agenda should consist of two items:

Procurement - a discussion with GLA group (LDA & TFL) and the ODA regarding procurement opportunities for the 2012 Olympics, focusing on good practice.

A full and frank discussion on how members can add further focus to the work of the Task Force and identify key priorities.

Next meeting:

Date:	Thursday 25 th January 2007
Time:	2:00pm to 3:00pm tbc
Venue:	TBC

Summary of Action points:

	Action	Responsible	Deadline	Status
AP 1:	Jim Murphy will discuss with Nahid Majid key issues arising from the informal discussions with Ministers. Task Force members will be contacted by Nahid Majid over the coming weeks for comments on emerging ideas	Private Office and Secretariat	November 2006	Outstanding
AP 2:	Next meeting to include a joint presentation from the GLA group (London Development Agency & Transport for London) and the ODA around Procurement and the City Strategy pathfinders.	Secretariat	January 2007	Outstanding
AP 3:	Nahid to include diversity requirements within the Business Plans of the City Strategy Pathfinders consortia make-up.	Nahid Majid	November 2006	Cleared