

## Promoting employment opportunities for all - beyond the Presidency

The UK Presidency of the European Union culminated in a celebration of the European Social Fund's (ESF) achievements led by keynote speaker James Plaskitt, Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Work and Pensions.



A job remains the best protection against poverty and social exclusion. Now, more than ever, the ESF must focus on raising employment levels and ensuring equal employment opportunities for all.

Unemployment and economic inactivity in the EU remain unacceptably high. This means wasted lives and wasted opportunities. In order to restore the confidence of our citizens, it is therefore crucially important to help as many as possible of Europe's unemployed and inactive people to find productive employment.

### CHALLENGES AHEAD

The EU faces inescapable challenges from demographic trends and from globalisation. Reform is essential if Europe is to thrive in the new economy and if our people are to share in greater prosperity.

Europe is an ageing society. The European Commission has estimated that the fall in the working-age population could cut the rate of economic growth in Europe from 2-2.5% today to

1.25% in 2040. In other words, demographic change threatens the economic growth that we need in order to sustain our welfare state and social services, and it does so at precisely the time when our ageing societies are putting increased pressures on them.

### FULL EMPLOYMENT AND INCREASED PRODUCTIVITY

We therefore have only one choice: we need to get Europe back on the path to full employment and to raise the productivity of people in work. We have to break down barriers to help people into jobs. That means promoting a diverse workforce underpinned by equality, opportunity and choice.

We remain committed to the Lisbon agenda and are reforming and modernising both our employment policies and our social protection systems to make them the drivers of employment growth. These were the priorities of the UK Presidency in the area of employment, social policy and equal opportunities.

### PRESIDENCY ACTIONS

Over the course of the EU Presidency, two Ministerial Informal meetings focused on the practical steps we can take to give effect to these priorities. Employment Ministers met in Belfast on 7-8 July and Gender Equality Ministers on 8-9 November in Birmingham.

And at the European Social Fund conference in Manchester on 14 October, James Plaskitt commended the very real achievements of the ESF - including **Equal**.

"Since 2000, ESF has helped 2.2 million people in the UK. Vulnerable people in our most deprived communities have been given new opportunities thanks to ESF funding. Now we must look forward, learn from our achievements, and prepare for future challenges.

I believe that **Equal** will continue to play its part in contributing new ways to tackle our priorities".

### Equal News

Equal News is produced by the GB Equal Support Unit on behalf of the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP), European Social Fund Division. For further details contact the GB Support Unit, details on page 8.

An archive of Presidency documents is available at the official Presidency website: [www.eu2005.gov.uk](http://www.eu2005.gov.uk). Information on the European Social Fund is available at [www.esf.gov.uk](http://www.esf.gov.uk).

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# Equal goes digital

We have often been asked whether there can be a single access point for all **Equal** outputs and products. Thanks to a new partnership the answer is yes.

**T**ogether with the GB Equal Support Unit and Equal Development Partnerships (DPs), Tribal PLC and Cambridge Training and Development (CTAD) are creating the Equal Digital Repository

This online system will digitise and categorise the products from the 76 Great Britain Development Partnerships in Round 1. The repository will provide a one-stop source of information and guidance, including direct access to training materials, promotional materials, websites, DVDs, CDs and case studies. The repository will ensure that

lessons learned from Equal Round 1 can continue to inform and influence both national and European Union (EU) programme design.

## Here's the science...

Data is collected from DPs via questionnaires, focus groups and interviews with DPs, liaising with the policy experts involved in Equal and drawing on the expertise of external evaluators. The data is then categorised and stored in a database-driven repository. The categorising and structuring of the database ensures that users can find the materials in a number of different ways on an easy-to-use website.



The repository is due to go online in April 2006. For further information please contact Daisy Chatterton

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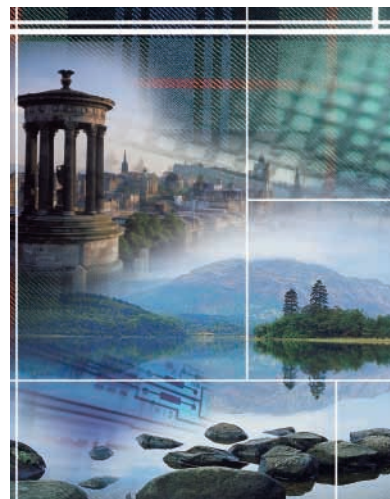
## Focus on Scotland

**S**cottish Round 2 DPs are now well underway and are already beginning to look to the key dissemination and mainstreaming phases. In order to support the mainstreaming of Round 2 activities, DPs, the Scottish Executive and the Equal Support Unit in Scotland have considered barriers to engaging policy-makers in Round 1.

New thematic policy contacts have been established for each Equal theme. Their responsibilities include engaging directly with DPs, promoting the successes of the programme and signposting to other departments and contacts whose work may be influenced by DPs' activities. This has proved extremely successful and many DPs

now have partners from strategic policy agencies sitting on their steering groups. Thematic contacts will continue to work directly with DPs, while the role of the Support Unit will be to facilitate regular meetings to keep everyone up to date with the latest programme developments.

Further information on both first and second round DPs, including contact details, can be found at [www.objective3.org/equal](http://www.objective3.org/equal)



**The Empower Scotland DP ran a 3i's (Innovation - Inclusion - Inspiration) conference in November 2005 to profile the outcomes of partners' activities in the first round. The event showed how the DP has contributed to positive change to services for minority ethnic communities in Scotland in relation to employment, education, equality and enterprise.**

# Let's work together

Collaborative working is a popular and effective way for DPs to share the most successful aspects of their **Equal** work, write Stuart Russon and Stephen O'Gorman.

**W**orking in partnership can open up new opportunities, including accessing new ideas, expertise, networks, markets and target groups. It also provides added value to the **Equal** programme and individual DPs. In this article we look at a number of instances where **Equal** DPs, through their dissemination activities, are benefiting from collaborative working.

## 'APPLY WITHIN' - ELIMINATING BARRIERS FOR EX-OFFENDERS

Since their beginnings in 2001, four DPs looking at ex-offenders' employability have been working together to share the outcomes of their activities with others. The DPs are IMPACT (Innovation Means Prisons and Communities Together), NewLIFE, PRISE (Planned Resettlement into Sustainable Employment) and Women into Work.

The crime reduction agencies involved with each of the partnerships (London Action Trust, the Prison Service and the Rainer Foundation) are trying to break the cycle of offending and re-offending by offering local authorities solutions for the safe and fair recruitment of people with a criminal record. Research has continually shown employment to be one of the most effective factors in reducing re-offending. The DPs are working to influence the public and private sectors by demonstrating how employment barriers faced by different groups of ex-offenders can be removed.



Together, the partnerships have produced an interactive CD-ROM called 'Apply Within'. It helps local authorities to develop robust policies which allow them to confidently recruit people with criminal records. But 'Apply Within' is not just a practical guide for local authorities to implement complex legislation. It also helps employers to understand the business case for developing safe and fair recruitment policies, addresses employers' common questions and fears, and provides good practice examples. 'Apply Within' helps firms to safely employ ex-offenders and comply with the requirements of the Criminal Records Bureau.

Shelley Lockett of IMPACT says that 'Apply Within': "ensures that someone who once made a mistake and got punished for it is not made to suffer over and over again because of it". 'Apply Within' was launched and demonstrated at the annual conference of the Local

Government Association in Harrogate in July 2005. It has now been disseminated to all human resource and contract managers in local authorities in England and Wales. Copies can be obtained from IMPACT at the address below.

## GENDER EQUALITY IN PRACTICE

Collaborating with like-minded **Equal** projects for events or conferences can give individual DPs access to a wider policy audience. It also enables them to be part of larger national events, alongside the regional events they may host individually.

Four DPs focusing on gender equality - Close the Gap, JIVE, GERI and Fuirich Transport - held a 'Gender Equality in Practice' dissemination event at Stamford Bridge in London in July 2005. The aim of the conference was to disseminate new methodologies, products and good practice designed to combat gender segregation.

The event highlighted approaches that can be implemented in individual organisations, on a regional or national basis, and across employment sectors. The conference was attended by Learning and Skills Councils (LSCs), Connexions, Careers Scotland, Business Link, employment services, further and higher education institutions, work-based learning providers and the GB **Equal**

**“If someone made a mistake and got punished for it they should not be made to suffer over and over again because of it”.**

Support Unit. Caroline Slocock, chief executive of the Equal Opportunities Commission (EOC), gave a keynote speech. This was followed by a series of workshops in which the DPs presented their achievements.

Close the Gap works with those who can influence the pay gap, and with those who are affected by it. The partnership includes the EOC for Scotland, the Scottish Trades Union Congress, Scottish Enterprise and the Scottish Executive. The DP runs training schools for equal pay representative and train-the-trainer sessions for those delivering empowerment training to women. It has also produced a job evaluation guide for small and medium-sized enterprises, and managed the first outdoor advertising campaign on equal pay in Scotland.

Fuirich Transport aims to increase diversity in the transport industry by changing attitudes, culture and behaviour. Alongside public-sector and industry representative partners, the DP includes major industry players such as Arriva PLC, BMW UK and Kwik-Fit GB. Fuirich has designed and developed tools to break down stereotypical views of the transport industry. It works with young people, careers advisers, sector skills councils and private organisations to promote the industry as a suitable occupation for both men and women. The partnership has developed a diversity guide, empowerment toolkit and training programmes for managers and apprentices.

GERI demonstrates practical solutions to tackling the occupational gender and racial

stereotypes. It has created a new generation of teaching, training and guidance resources to promote equality and diversity, particularly in the area of gender and ethnic equality. GERI partners have developed and produced live empowerment dramas, equal opportunities/diversity training modules (with needs analysis tools), educational materials and training workshop activities. A variety of formats are used for these products, including DVD and web-based.

JIVE, led by the UK Resource Centre for Women in Science, Engineering and Technology (UKRC) and Bradford College, includes partners from higher and further education, the EOC, sector skills councils and industry. Together they deliver gender-awareness training for learning providers, careers service professionals and employers.

JIVE's gender equality experts work with engineering, construction and technology organisations using a culture analysis tool to improve the recruitment and retention of women. This work is supported by the publication of a series of 'how to' guides.

#### **ADAPTABILITY IN A CHANGING WORLD**

In September 2005, a group of DPs from the 'adaptability' themes of **Equal** jointly organised a conference on 'Adaptability in a Changing World', held in Manchester. The event was delivered by Theme F Development Partnerships whose work is in support of the Adaptability pillar of the European Employment Strategy. The participating

Development Partnerships were drawn from both Round One and Round Two of the Equal programme led by University of Manchester, TUC, Knowledgebase UK, Portland Partnership and Midlands Engineering Industries Redeployment Group (contact details opposite).

Partnerships showcased their innovative approaches to promoting inclusive work practices and adaptability, in particular the work-life balance and use of information and communication technologies. The audience included policy-makers and practitioners from government agencies, the business community, trade unions, voluntary organisations and higher education providers.

#### **INCREASED EFFECTIVENESS**

Communication remains the key to good partnership working, whether organising dissemination events or producing learning materials. The success of **Equal's** jointly produced outputs and events illustrates that partnership working can open up mainstreaming opportunities that might not otherwise exist.

For those **Equal** projects that have worked in partnership, there is no doubt that it is an excellent way to improve effectiveness by developing shared agendas and influencing the policy-makers. Together we shout louder.

**“partnership working can open up mainstreaming opportunities that might not otherwise exist”.**

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# Build a better future

Two **Equal** DPs responded to the dual challenges of the shortage of skilled labour in the construction industry and the difficulties experienced by local people in finding sustainable employment. Their work is moving on to mainstream success.



**B**uilding London Creating Futures (BLCF), led by London Borough of Southwark, and Construction, led by Sheffield City Council, are assisting construction companies to build a workforce which reflects the diversity of local communities. Both actively support groups which have been traditionally under-represented in the construction industry.

BLCF and Construction enable their partners to meet a range of national and regional policy targets in skills, workforce development, social inclusion and diversity. They also see themselves as part of the initiative to bring about the cultural changes needed to improve productivity and performance in the construction industry.

Both partnerships promote the involvement of disadvantaged groups in construction. Their objectives complement the LSC's strategy for widening adult participation. This outlines a vision that by 2010, "adults from all social backgrounds will have the opportunity to engage equally in the learning and skills development available to them, in work and in preparation for work".

## **WORKPLACE CO-ORDINATORS BOOST CONSTRUCTION EMPLOYMENT IN LONDON**

BLCF aims to find long-term employment for people who have traditionally been under-represented in the construction sector, such as women and black and minority ethnic communities. Its partnership of 30 public, private and voluntary-sector organisations, including key players from the construction industry, allowed over 100 Londoners to find work in its first 12 months of delivery.

At the heart of the BLCF concept is the 'workplace co-ordinator' (WPC). WPCs are based at major construction sites across London and are employed by developers, contractors and registered social landlords. They work with employers to match local people to jobs, and support their ongoing development. WPCs provide a unique recruitment and workforce development service for construction. They are successful because being based on site they get to know project teams well and respond appropriately to their specific needs. Bovis Lend Lease, a major project partner, states that: "BLCF has an important role in the construction industry. It helps trade contractors to find good local workers, and the additional training and support it provides benefits both contractors and employees enormously".

WPCs can help disadvantaged people in central London to begin long and successful careers in the construction industry. Once a candidate registers with BLCF, he or she has an in-depth discussion

session to understand and focus on their strengths and career objectives. A WPC can then present appropriate options and a realistic action plan. WPCs provide a personalised service that takes candidates from initial registration, advice, interview preparation and training into full-time employment. But the support does not end there. WPCs stay in regular contact, helping to solve any problems and taking a real interest in long-term career progression.

The training on offer includes pre-employment and on-the-job courses. A range of short courses are available in areas such as health and safety and manual handling. BLCF supports the Construction Skills Certification Scheme and offers assistance for National Vocational Qualification study and other trade courses. WPCs help employees to identify the areas that interest them most, and work to develop their skills accordingly. As WPCs have built up close relations with contractors across London, they can find the right jobs for the right people.

## **MATCHING SUPPLY AND DEMAND IN SOUTH YORKSHIRE**

The Construction DP responds to the imbalance between the supply and demand for labour in South Yorkshire's construction industry, where huge growth in opportunities stands at odds with persistently high levels of local unemployment.

The partnership equips Sheffield residents with the skills they need to obtain a career in the construction industry. The partnership works with the Construction Industry Training



Board (CITB) to ensure that employers are fully engaged. The CITB also makes grants available to meet the cost of training participants.

Paul Curry, CITB's training adviser, says: "we're fully committed to Construction's work. We believe that the programme is an excellent opportunity to fill construction vacancies with local people. Hopefully the initial success of the programme is just the start and more employers will come on board".

Working closely with employers like Chantry Builders Ltd, Construction has designed a training programme to meet the industry's needs. The partnership, working with training provider Sheffield Rebuild, has designed a bespoke programme which runs over a minimum of 39 weeks. Participants develop the skills needed by Chantry. Initially, the programme recruited six participants, all of whom have recently completed their initial training as kitchen fitters and are now in permanent employment. As a direct result of this success, Chantry has requested six bathroom fitters to undertake a similar course. The new trainees are progressing through their initial training.

Construction provides people with a unique opportunity to enter the construction industry, offering real jobs with the guarantee of full-time

employment from the very start of the programme. Participants need no previous experience of working in construction, as the programme provides all the training needed to succeed.

Jane Fraser, Construction's project development officer, says: "the great thing about the project is that it offers training with an end result: we work to ensure that before people join the programme they have a definite job ready for them".

#### **IMPROVING COMMUNITY RELATIONS**

**Equal** DPs like BLCF and Construction bring benefits for both unemployed people and their prospective employers. With corporate social responsibility (CSR) becoming an increasingly important factor in procurement, many clients of construction and development companies are looking for positive track records in community relations. BLCF and Construction demonstrate how the industry can engage with the CSR agenda and meet its local labour obligations.

**"BLCF has given me a chance to get my foot in the door, which otherwise would have been very difficult".**

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# News publications websites events

## Equal at Westminster

Two **Equal** DPs launched their activities in style by holding a reception at the Houses of Parliament.

Action for Carers and Employment (ACE) National was launched at a reception at the House of Commons. Led by Carers UK, this new round of the initiative aims to improve support for people who want to juggle work and their caring responsibilities.

The event was hosted by Malcolm Wicks, Minister of State at the Department for Trade and Industry. A long-term supporter of carers and Carers UK, Malcolm was instrumental in achieving the first piece of carers legislation, the Carers (Recognition and Services) Act 1995. Also in attendance were key opinion formers, professionals and policy-makers working in the field of employment, training and social care.

ACE National's new partners will be keeping up the pressure for better support for the UK's three million working carers. The DP will focus on seeking better, more flexible social care services that enable carers to work.

In 2005, a resource pack designed to support implementation of the Carers (Equal Opportunities) Act was also launched at the House of Commons. ACE National was instrumental in supporting the Act's successful passage through Parliament. Dr Hywel Francis MP, sponsor of the Act, which promotes work, learning and leisure opportunities for carers, hosted the event.

## SKILLS ANALYSIS

The House of Commons terrace was the location for the Skills Analysis DP's national launch. Lead partner North Devon College is developing, trialing and implementing the use of a web-based toolkit for competence analysis. The toolkit will identify the 'hidden' competences of older workers (50+). The DP will also develop and trial innovative training and delivery methods for older workers in the workplace.

Nick Harvey MP hosted the event, and was joined by the Earl of Arran and Tim Jones, chair of Devon and Cornwall Business Council. They all pledged their support for **Equal's** attempts to address the inequalities faced by older workers.

## First business mentoring framework launched

**The Business Mentoring DP recently launched an innovative framework for business mentoring at a national conference in London.**

The event marked the close of the DP's activities, which started in November 2001 and developed the framework for business mentoring.

Speakers at the conference, underlined the importance of business mentoring for new entrepreneurs and the benefits for companies who assist young entrepreneurs with their business expertise.

The DP brought together The Prince's Trust, the National Federation of Enterprise Agencies, The Prime Initiative and the Small Firms Enterprise Development Initiative. Jointly they recruited and trained 4,500 business mentors across the UK and helped more than 5,000 people to set up a business.

Leslie Morphy, Director for Programmes and Policy, The Prince's Trust said: "This new framework will be useful for anyone wanting to set up their own business - particularly young people that the Trust helps, who have had to face huge barriers".

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## Keep Equal News informed

We'd like to include more news from DPs. Please send us your stories or information on your events, publications, products etc. send your contributions to: [stuart.russon@ecotec.com](mailto:stuart.russon@ecotec.com)