

CHANGING COMPANIES FROM WITHIN

*A form of support offered by the **Embracing Diversity** DP in the north west of England is the “secondment” of a Senior Employment Officer to individual companies. Each Senior Employment Officer works specifically with an employer and functions in many ways as an extra member of staff helping the organisation to take an active role in recruiting a diverse workforce.*

Early activities of the Senior Employment Officer include taking the employer through a series of “scenarios” in order to ascertain her or his views on disadvantaged people and their ability to work. This process also takes place with people at different levels within the company and establishes what the company already does well and identifies the improvements that need to be made. The scenarios form the basis of a company analysis that includes details about the structure of the company, who is responsible for recruitment, details of the interview procedure and the makeup of the current workforce. It also involves getting to grips with the company’s policies on recruitment and the Senior Employment Officer will go through the recruitment processes, in order to fully understand the issues and the barriers people might face. The overall assessment provides a starting point from which the Employment Service can work alongside employers to overcome traditional perceptions and barriers to employing a diverse workforce.

The project also offers a number of training opportunities to employers. These include Training in Systematic Instruction, Awareness Training in areas such as Mental Health, Asylum Seekers and Refugees, Epilepsy and Drug and Alcohol Policies. The Senior Employment Officers each have specialised knowledge of a particular group of disadvantaged people and some of the general barriers they face. They provide information and advice to the employers by signposting them to public, statutory, private or voluntary agencies that can provide both contact with diverse groups of people and ideas of where to advertise job vacancies.

The Senior Employment Officers also carry out reviews of the progress of each new employee and monitors their well-being in order that any problems are identified and resolved quickly. The Officers continue to work with the employer to ensure that the employee’s needs are understood and that he or she will be retained in employment.

Support for employers has to be administered at different levels of the organisation. For example, in order for policy changes to occur, support and guidance must be offered at the decision making level. When schemes are introduced, support must then be directed at staff and line managers in order for them to be meaningful and properly implemented. The project is moving towards supporting the employer in managing the employee, as the DP feels that employers need to take ownership of the care and development of their individual workers.

The services of Senior Employment Officers in providing information to employers have been greatly improved through the creation of a database of organisations and other resources. This has helped to direct beneficiaries to the most appropriate services and working with employers to create their own databases of useful organisations and agencies has also proved successful.

DP in ECDB: UKgb-22	TP in ECDP: TCA-985
Contact Person: Doug Cresswell	E-mail: doug.cresswell@stockport.gov.uk
DP Web Site: www.embracingdiversity.org/	TP Web Site: None