

Making a Difference

Job Opportunities Support Project
(2006/09)

FUNDED BY



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Acknowledgements

The success of the Job Opportunities Support Project would not have been possible without the support, hard work and enormous effort of many individuals and organisations. We would like to say a special thanks to our funders, Communities Scotland and Capital City Partnership, whose support is vital. We are also thankful to the Scottish Government 'Wider Role' Fund for providing us with funding to continue the project to the end of the financial year 2009. Thank you for believing in the work that we do and for making the project possible.

We are also particularly grateful to the organisations who provided work placements, including partnership community organisations and other support agencies. This project has made a real positive difference to the lives of Black and Minority Ethnic communities in Edinburgh and Lothians and we would like to offer thanks to our funders on behalf of all of the people who participated.

This report can also be viewed online in pdf format at:

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1. Summary

The Job Opportunities Support Project was developed in **February 2006** by the joint "Equal Opportunities Programme" of Trust, Hanover (Scotland) and Bield Housing Associations and funded by both Communities Scotland and the Capital City Partnership. The main purpose of the project was to increase access to job opportunities for BME (Black and Minority Ethnic) people in housing and the public sectors, within Edinburgh and Lothians.

The project has achieved the following positive outcomes.

- **307** clients were assessed and received one-to-one support and guidance
- **55** individuals gained employment through the project.
- **10** clients made a positive transition into further education or training
- **11** clients made a positive transition into volunteering as a step towards employment or further education.
- **17** work placements were completed
- **4** more work placements will commence in the financial year April 2009/10.

The Job Opportunities Support Project has compiled case studies which clearly demonstrate the positive difference it has made to the lives of many individuals. The project has also delivered wider benefits to the lives of families of individuals who took part and also their communities. These benefits include: improved skills; increased confidence; greater financial independence; becoming role models within BME communities.

2. Legislation and Background

The Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000 (RRAA) imposes a legal duty on statutory organisations to work towards eliminating racial discrimination and promoting equality of opportunity between different racial groups.



The RRAA also gives the CRE (Commission for Racial Equality) the power to issue codes of practice in the field of employment (section 47). The purpose of this code is to provide guidance to employers and principles on how to prevent unlawful discrimination and to achieve equality of employment opportunity. It also helps employers and others who

have duties under the employment provisions of the RRAA, to understand their responsibilities and rights.

Under sections 35, 37 and 38 of the RRAA the term 'positive action' refers to the measures lawfully taken by employers to provide access to facilities that meet special needs in relation to education and training, or to provide encouragement to people from certain racial groups that are under-represented in a particular employment place or sector.

It is evident that Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) individuals are under-represented within housing and public sectors. Research, including studies specific to Edinburgh and also across Scotland, clearly demonstrated the need to tackle the socio-economic disadvantages and inequalities experienced by unemployed BME people and their families. It is evident from the Ethnic Minorities in Edinburgh report produced by the Capital City Partnership that "BME people living in Edinburgh, especially Pakistani, Bangladeshi, Indian and Black are on average twice as likely as white people to be workless and living in poverty. Inequalities are even greater for BME women".

The need for the project was evident from the following research papers and statistics:

- **High Level Summary of Equality Statistics (HLSES) Extracted Trends by Ethnic Groups**, Scottish Government, 2008
<http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Resource/Doc/933/0041854.pdf>
- **Edinburgh's Ethnicity Profile**, Equality & human Rights Commission
<http://83.137.212.42/sitearchive/cre/diversity/map/Scotland/Edinburgh.html>
- **Ethnic Minorities in Edinburgh**, Capital City Partnership, 2007
<http://www.joinedorforjobs.org.uk/employment/uploads/WP4-EM.pdf>

Following evidence highlighted in the research and practical experience working with BME individuals, the Housing Associations' Equal Opportunities Manager (HEOM) for Trust, Hanover (Scotland) and Bield Housing Associations, decided to hold Job Fairs for BME communities with housing and public sector employers. SFHA (Scottish Federation of Housing Associations) and CIH (Chartered Institute of Housing) were invited to become partners and the first Job fair was held in Edinburgh in 2004. The Job Fair proved very successful, attracting sponsorship from Scottish Enterprise and 22 housing and public sector organisations who exhibited at the event. A survey was carried out with BME visitors to the fair and a report "Moving Forward" was produced which highlighted barriers faced by different BME communities in accessing employment.

As a result, the Job Opportunities Support Project was developed by Trust, Hanover (Scotland) and Bield Housing Associations' Equal Opportunities Programme and in February 2006 the project secured three years funding from Communities Scotland and the Capital City Partnership. The main purpose of the project was to address inequities in employment opportunity through positive actions to improve access to job opportunities for BME people in housing and the public Sector within Edinburgh and the Lothians.

The project aimed to engage public sector employer and to serve as a catalyst for organisational change by providing employers with valuable information and suggestions on ways to improve their approach, processes, and systems in order to remove unintentional or undetected barriers to BME employment. The project has assisted many employers in meeting equality legislation requirements – particularly the Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000.

3. Project Introduction



A Job Opportunities Development Officer was appointed in February 2006 to work towards meeting the objectives of the programme.

A letter of introduction was mailed to more than 100 community organisations to introduce the Job Opportunities Development Officer and the project, to open channels of communication, and to facilitate face-to-face meetings with clients and employers.

Networking routes were established with 38 employers and 19 community and other relevant organisations within Edinburgh and the Lothians.

The Job Opportunities Development Officer made significant progress with the project, working with community organisations, housing and public sector employers in Edinburgh and Lothians and individuals requiring support & guidance in accessing the job market.

4. Marketing

Effective and targeted marketing played a key role in the success of the project. For the project to be successful, people needed to hear about it, to understand what it does and how it can help them. To facilitate this, liaison work was carried out with community and voluntary organisations, and employers within these sectors to maximise job opportunities available to BME individuals.

The project was advertised through community, voluntary race equality agencies, making use of contacts and data collated by the Associations 'Equal Opportunities Programme'. An action plan was developed for the project and marketing literature distributed through appropriate contacts to potential BME clients. We also promoted the project at a number of relevant events.

We developed a range of multi-lingual marketing material including leaflets, poster, A4 pads and stationery and distributed them to local libraries and community centres for display purposes.

We developed strategic advertising initiatives to highlight the services and support offered by the project. This included advertising the project in various publications including, Employers in Voluntary Housing Journal, Edinburgh Mela Brochure, Bangladeshi Independence Day brochure, Pakistan Society Eid Festival booklet, Joined Up For Jobs notice board and Bemis Update, etc. The project was also advertised on the following housing websites:

http://www.bield.co.uk/news/article_68.html

http://www.hsha.org.uk/news.asp?news_item_id=126&return_page_ID=8

<http://www.trustha.org.uk/equality/index.php>

<http://www.uk-housing.co.uk/HMD/ARCHIVE/06/02/283/>

<http://www.equalityscotland.com/employment/employment.php>

<http://forum.joinedupforjobs.org.uk/viewtopic.php?t=332>



5. Employers

The success of the project hinged on engaging employers and communicating the benefits it offers to them. These include supporting them in attracting more BME employees with relevant skills and experience and also in assisting them to meet targets specified under Race Equality Scheme. Employers benefit from positive action and a proactive approach to more effective recruitment of BME individuals.

We arranged meetings with housing and public sector employers within Edinburgh and the Lothians. We distributed marketing material and introduced the project and relevant contact people within the organisations. The purpose of these meetings was to open channels of dialogue, to introduce the main objectives of the project and to explain how the project could progress in co-ordination and partnership with employers.



6. Work Placement Programme

A key common problem which emerged for BME people seeking employment was either lack of experience or the fact that UK employers would not take account of experience gained overseas. This issue was highlighted at the initial client assessment stages and at the interview feedback stage. A placement programme was developed to counteract this issue. Placement in an organisation provides an opportunity of employability training to those who have been out of the labour market for some time or who have never worked in an organisation. It also facilitates training to improve and update skills for those wishing to sharpen their skills and re-enter employment. It also provides specialised training to help individuals into work. This helped to develop vocational skills to narrow the gap in employment opportunities for BME individuals within Housing and the Public Sector.

6.1 Placement/Training Agreement

Work experience placements with mainstream organisations were highlighted as one of the main objectives for BME individuals as a step towards achieving employment. It was important that the process was developed carefully for benefit of both, employers and individuals. Keeping this in mind, work placement agreements were developed. The purpose of this agreement was to ensure that both employers and the individual who is placed within an organisation via the Job Opportunities Support Project understand their obligations towards each other throughout the placement.

It provided a structure and objectives the individual should work towards throughout the placement with clear duties, set projects and outcomes. It outlined a guide to feedback and review meetings and also a guide to reimbursement costs in line with current minimum wage rates. These are guidelines only that the employer can refer to however; every organisation would act according to the resources available to them. The following organisations participated in the work placement exercise:

- Crown Office and Procurator Fiscal Service
- Trust Housing Association
- Hanover (Scotland) Housing Association
- Bield Housing Association
- Lothians and Borders Police
- Port of Leith Housing Association
- Melville Housing Association
- Public Sector Academy

6.2 Placement Follow-Up With Employers

The initial meeting with employers provided an excellent opportunity to highlight the benefits of taking on a placement trainee and a chance to provide a copy of the placement training agreement. After a six to eight week period a follow-up call was made with regards to developments on placements. Individuals and employers were advised to maintain ongoing contact if there were issues during early stages of a placement. Employers who have been proactive and taken on board this programme have realised benefits for both trainees and the organisations providing the placements. Talks are underway on forthcoming placements and further meetings are planned with employers.

The placements were very successful with positive outcomes for both trainees and employers. A total of 17 placements were completed and arrangements put in place for a 4 more placements commencing in the financial year April 2009/10.

Quotes from work placement providers:

- **David Alison, Business Manager, Crown Office and Procurator Fiscal Service:**

We are delighted to develop our partnership with the Job Opportunities Support Project. We have continued to offer work placement opportunities to people from BME backgrounds, which has led to individuals gaining permanent positions within our organisation. We have found BME trainees to possess valuable skills and to be highly motivated which has benefited the organisation and provide the individuals with the opportunity to progress into full-time employment to expand their work experience and further their career prospects. As an organisation we're keen to reflect the demographic background of the community and promote a greater understanding of the work we do. This initiative contributes to that aim.

- **Kenny Nicholson, Director of Corporate Services,
Trust Housing Association:**

We have found the experience of having a placement trainee very rewarding. The placement trainee quickly adjusted to become an integral member of the Corporate Services team. Both the placement trainee and Trust Housing Association benefited from the placement. I would have no hesitation in recommending the experience to other employers

- **Kathy Crombie, Business Support Manager,
Bield Housing Association:**

The trainee placement was a very positive experience for both the trainee and Bield Housing Association. The trainee took on a specific project as well as doing general office tasks including reception cover. The trainees developed valuable skills that helped them to focus on their future career.

- **Robert Stewart, Senior Personal Officer,
Hanover Scotland Housing Association:**

Hanover (Scotland) has hosted placement trainees using the work experience initiative. Trainees report that they have found their time with the Association productive in helping to develop existing skills and new ones and hence their employability. The Association has benefited from providing the opportunity for this to occur and the enthusiasm that typifies the trainees.

- **Mariana Forsyth, Equality Advisor,
Lothians and Borders Police:**

Our former trainee managed to juggle a part-time job in Asda, a course at a local college and his work experience. Soon he was able to help out during holiday periods, which benefited us as well as giving him real experience of part of the job. We were sorry when he had to move on.

- **Lorraine Tait, Personnel Manager,
Port of Leith Housing Association:**

The Association hosted a work placement within the Corporate Services Team of the business. The initial aim was to provide a positive work experience for the trainee, particularly in supporting the development of their IT skills. Midway through the placement, changes in the business resulted in a member of permanent staff being seconded onto a new project that was being developed. As the trainee had demonstrated that they had the necessary skills required to replace this employee they were offered a



fixed term appointment. Working with the Job Opportunities Project has been a positive experience for the Association with excellent support throughout the placement provided by the project.

Many employers miss out by overlooking the benefits which a work placement trainee can bring to their organisations.

Therefore, as part of the project's key tasks, we devised an initiative to inform employers about the range of benefits they could enjoy as a result of hosting a BME trainee. This was done through creating a new leaflet about "Benefits to Employers". The leaflet contains positive comments from previous work-placement providers about their experience in hosting a BME trainee within their organisations. An action plan was developed to mail this leaflet to potential work-placement providers across Lothians.

6.3 Placement Successes

Placements were very successful with positive outcomes for both trainees and employers. A total of **17** placements have been completed, whilst arrangements were put in place for a further **four** placements in the financial year April 2009/10. Placement trainees have been identified from a wide range of backgrounds, ranging from individuals with a Masters Degree to a college leaver. They have undertaken varying projects and duties including a research project and reception experience.

It has provided individuals the opportunity to:

- gain hands-on work experience
- build their self-confidence
- utilise existing skills and learn new ones
- gain training in a particular field
- gain an understanding of a sector
- make an informed decision on next steps in career ladder

7. Partnership Work

The project established links with different community organisations within Edinburgh and the Lothians. In order to highlight the objectives of the project, meetings were held with these organisations targeting different sections of the community such as, Bangladeshi, Pakistani, Indian, African, Chinese etc. The purpose was to disseminate information about the project widely and to have a support worker within community organisations who could be contacted with any queries regarding particular individuals.

The link with community organisations proved very important as a number of client referrals have been made through them. Initial meetings with staff members provided a networking opportunity and a better understanding of how service users could benefit from the support offered by the project. Throughout its three year span, the project has worked closely with a number of community and religious organisations including:

- Careers Scotland
- Women Onto Work
- LINKnet Mentoring
- Public Sector Academy
- Skillnet Edinburgh
- Nisus Scotland
- Black Community Development Project
- NKS (Nari Kallyan Shangho)
- African Centre
- Pakistan Society
- Shakti Women's Aid
- Milan
- WEMO (West Edinburgh Multi-cultural Organisation)
- MECOPP for ethnic minority carers

Many of the clients registered to the project were not 'job ready' and required further education and training. Working closely with other organisations ensures clients receive a gateway to these other services to build their motivation and self confidence as well as to obtain practical skills and qualifications.

7.1 Information Workshops

- **Application Forms Workshops:** the project held these workshops in partnership with City of Edinburgh Council, specifically with the Economic Development Department. The workshop dealt with application forms and the specific criteria used in the selection process by City of Edinburgh Council. Feedback on this workshop from individuals was very positive. It became apparent that some individuals had little knowledge of how to provide effective relevant detailed information and examples in personal statement sections of job forms.

- **CV and Interview Workshop:** Two workshops in CV and Interview skills were held in partnership with Careers Scotland. The workshops were specifically catering for the BME community and specific problems they face with interview skills and CV preparation.



- **Employment Rights Workshop:** Feedback from clients has all been positive and the actions and issues raised through meetings with clients have all been appropriately dealt with. In order to raise awareness of employment rights and responsibilities, a training session has been organised in partnership with Support@Work (Edinburgh Trades Union Council) for the project's clients. Client feedback on this session was especially positive.

7.2 Events

A number of events, organised in partnership with other organisations, provided a platform to market the project and to network with different communities. Participating in these events provided the chance to meet prospective clients at grassroots level. For example, after attending the local Gurdwara there was a significant increase in number of Sikh individuals (both men and women) contacting the project for support.

A number of marketing and networking events have been attended to promote for the project including:

- **Bangladeshi Independence Day**
Targeting the Bangladeshi community
- **Black Community Development Project (BCDP)**
Open information days (2) targeting the BME communities
- **Nari Kalyan Sangho (NKS)**
Open information day targeting South Asian women
- **Pakistan Society**
Targeting the Muslim community
- **Gurdwara (Sikh Temple)**
Religious Sikh gathering
- **Edinburgh Mela**
Multicultural event
- **Migrant Rights and Information Day**
Open information day targeting eastern European migrants
- **Communities for Social Change (C4S)**
Open information day targeting Craigmillar residents
- **BME Women's Exchange Network**
Quarterly meeting for women who work with BME clients in Edinburgh
- **Easter Eye Jobs & Opportunities Fair**
Jobs fair targeting the BME communities
- **Pakistani Society Eid Festival 2008**
Multicultural event

8. Clients

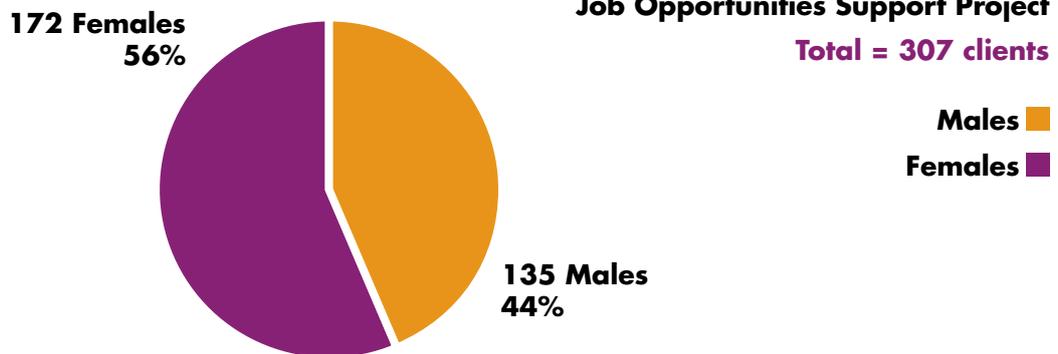
Since the project commenced in February 2006, a total of 307 clients have been assessed and provided with support and guidance.

The following graphs highlight a breakdown of clients by the following categories:

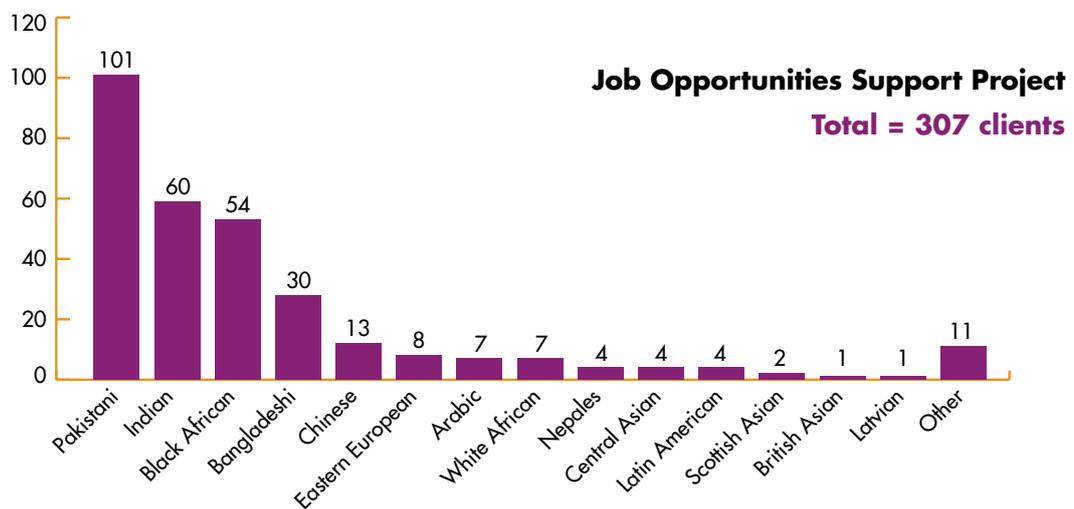
- **Gender**
- **Age Range**
- **Ethnicity**
- **Service Provision**

8.1 Client Data

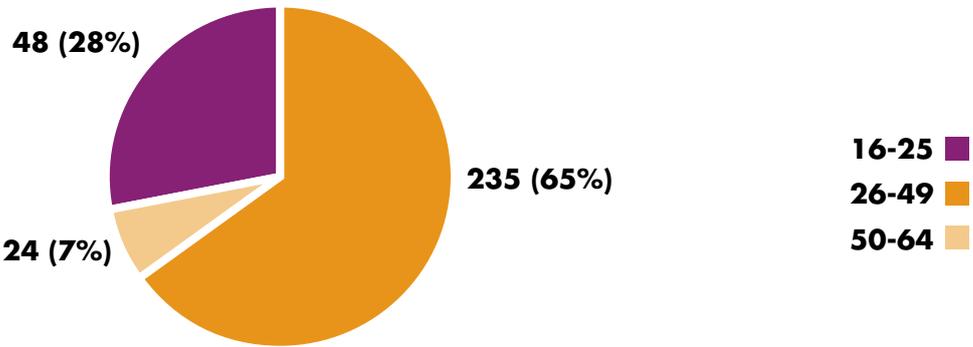
i. Gender



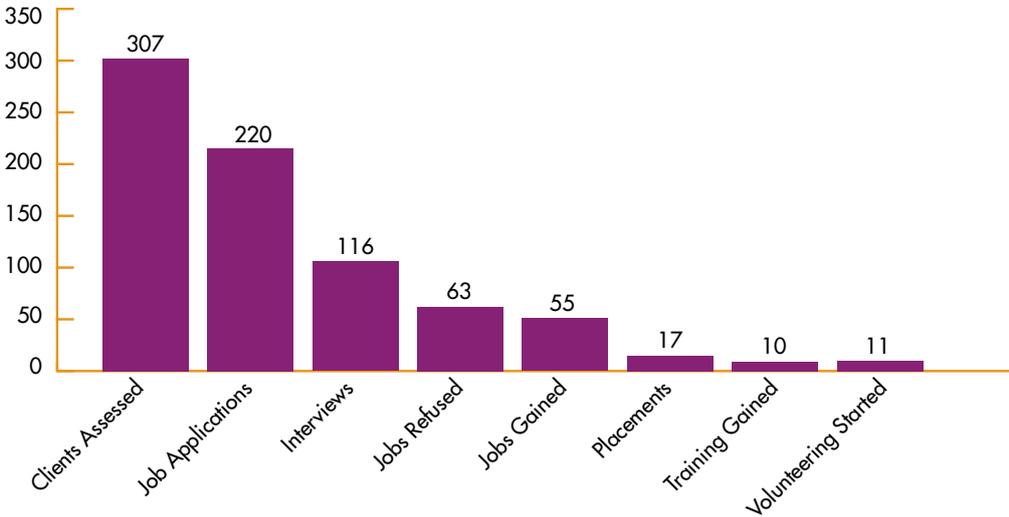
ii. Ethnicity



iii. Age Range



iv. Service Provision



8.2 Client Referrals

Clients were referred to the Job Opportunities Support Project from a variety of sources, including

i. Word of Mouth 55%

The majority of client referrals (about 55%) have been through word of mouth, once word spreads regarding the support available through the project. Leaflets and contact cards are also distributed to clients in order for them to pass onto contacts who may also be interested in gaining support.

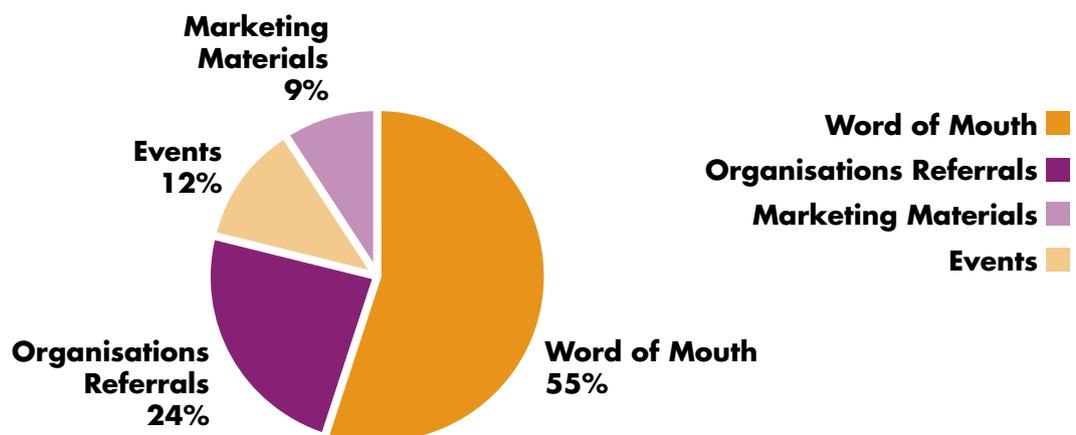
ii. Referrals from Community Organisations 24%

Due to the partnership work ethos established from the start of the project, a number of referrals were made by community organisations who are dealing with a cross section of the BME communities. On occasions, individuals have been accompanied by the community support worker of the referral organisation at the initial stages of referral to provide more support to the individual. This has proved very successful ensuring that the individual is comfortable and supported from the beginning of the process.

iii. Events 12%

The Job Opportunities Development Officer attended a number of relevant events and gathering to promote for the project. This helped to reach out to a cross section of BME communities and providing the first hand information on the support and benefits that could be gained through the project.

Client Referrals



iv. Marketing Materials: 9%

A comprehensive marketing strategy was developed to highlight the services and support offered through the project including advertising the project in various publications including – EVH Jargon Journal, Edinburgh Mela Brochure, Bangladeshi Independence Day brochure, Pakistan Society Eid Festival booklet and Bemis Update, etc. The project was also advertised through various housing websites and other organisations' websites such as LINKnet mentoring. We also developed a range of multi-lingual marketing material including leaflets, posters, A4 pads and stationery which were distributed to local libraries and community centres for display purposes.

8.3 Client Support Process

i. Client Assessment

Initial client meetings lasted for up to an hour to fully assess clients existing skills and prior experience and to understand their present situation and what support they required.

Detailed information on the project was provided to ensure clients understood the focus is on employment opportunities within the housing and public sector and the level of support that will be provided to them. Clients' personal details were recorded and stored in both paper and electronic form.

ii. Further Education

We established direct contact with colleges and gathered information on relevant courses/training, enabling us to make client referrals for people who needed additional training in order to attain basic skills before applying for jobs.

Clients were referred to the following courses:

- **ESOL** (English as a Second Language) courses
- **IT courses** for beginners such as Webwise, Computers Don't Byte and ECDL (European Computer Drivers Licence) IT qualification
- **Childcare qualifications** such as SVQ Level 2 in Children's Care Learning and Development, First Aid and Food Hygiene

iii. Referrals to Other Agencies

A number of clients encountered by the project required further support to become 'job ready'. For example, women who had recently migrated to the UK from abroad. Some had overseas qualifications but no work experience, or were lacking in confidence and practical knowledge of the English language. These clients were referred to other agencies to ensure that they could obtain the most appropriate support before seeking support in finding employment. They were advised to attend English or IT classes or other short courses designed to enable them to enter the job market.

The project worked in partnership with organisations such as **WOW** (Women onto Work) who offer a variety of courses, including a three month course aimed at BME women. This course is designed to assist with personal effectiveness, employment guidance and work experience. **Skillnet** also offered an IT course through **Nisus Scotland** and support with improving English. Such courses prepared clients for applying for jobs.

Working for Families is another organisation which provides support for families with children and childcare issues. Working in partnership with organisations such as these meant clients could be directly referred to the right place to get the support they needed. **LINKnet mentoring** project also became increasingly involved with clients and a LINKnet Development Worker visited the project to find out how to access BME mentors or how to become one. A presentation about the project was given in the “Employment Opportunities” event at LINKnet mentoring.

iv. Communication Channels

The most appropriate forms of communication with clients have proven to be email and phone. Clients email addresses are saved in the email distribution list. Clients are emailed details on vacancies, workshops, events, training courses and any other information which is considered relevant to their needs. Not all clients have an email address or access to a computer. They were advised and supported to gain some basic IT skills in order to set up an email address and meanwhile they receive information via the phone.

At the time of initial assessments clients were advised that they can contact the Job Opportunities Development Officer at any point if they wish to query any matter. Every attempt was made to follow up these queries as soon as possible. This ensures that the client does not lose faith and builds their confidence knowing that the support was available and provided when requested. It was also important to be culturally sensitive with clients from different communities and backgrounds, bearing in mind the different issues they may be facing and responding appropriately.

v. Curriculum Vitae

A request was made for clients to pass on their Curriculum Vitae. This was useful in the following ways:

- It gave clients experience of creating a CV if they did not already have one. Support was provided via referrals to workshops held by **Careers Scotland** and their CVs were also reviewed by the Job Opportunities Development Officer
- It provided a profile at a glance of clients’ skills and experience etc, making it easier for the Job Opportunities Development Officer to match them to relevant job opportunities
- It supplied a profile of clients for placement providers, enabling optimum matching if clients to placement opportunities.

vi. Information Dissemination

It was important that up-to-date information was forwarded to clients, including job vacancies, workshops and events. Information was sent to the project by various bodies such as: Joined up for Jobs (JUFJ), Careers Scotland and various employers, and then forwarded to clients. To facilitate this, a request was made to employers that vacancies be emailed directly to the Job Opportunities Development Officer who would then email clients. This request was openly welcomed by some employers; however, others stated that vacancy information was only available via their websites. Regular job searches were undertaken by the Job Opportunities Development Officer and weekly job vacancies were emailed to clients. Clients were also provided with leaflets and contact details of partnership organisations.

vii. Application Forms

At initial meetings clients are requested to provide copies of previous job application forms in order to gauge their level of understanding of correct procedures in completing job applications. If this was not available, then we looked at current applications, working with clients to gain an understanding of their written language skills including grammar and vocabulary. For clients who had never completed a job application, it can be an intimidating process. Therefore, the Job opportunities Development Officer provided examples of completed application forms for guidance.

One of the aims of the project was to highlight how transferrable skills could be applied to certain posts. Clients were requested to email the 'Additional Information' or 'Personal Statement' at the back of application forms to the project. This was reviewed and changes were suggested according to the job specification. This was again reviewed before the completed application form was sent to employers. This proved very successful with reviewed application forms resulting in an increase in individuals being selected for interviews. A suggestion was made that copies of all application forms should be kept to provide a record if client was called for an interview. Support was also provided on how to complete a form correctly if completing a hard copy.

Additionally, job application workshops with employers proved successful with clients who benefited by gaining an understanding of how to match skills and experience on the job description to their own situation, providing examples of how to do it effectively.

viii. Interview Skills

Once an applicant was invited for an interview the next step was to equip them with effective interview skills. This was normally done in face-to-face meeting which provided one-to-one support on the type of questions that might be asked about the post and job description. The Job Opportunities Development Officer also provided clients with written interview preparation tips.

A number of clients had no interview experience in the UK. Details of weekly interview skills workshops held at **Careers Scotland** were provided to clients and they were invited to attend. The project held interviews skills workshops in partnership with Careers Scotland to provide more practical experience for BME individuals. Client feedback about this workshop was especially positive.

ix. Interview Feedback

Interview feedback was an important process, especially where interviewees were unsuccessful in gaining a post. Gaining feedback from employers on why they were unsuccessful provides clients with an opportunity to improve their performance and to work on any weaknesses. Clients were able to request feedback from employers through the project. This was recorded on an interview feedback form with negative and positive feedback from both employers and clients. Clients were then advised on which aspects to tackle for forthcoming interviews.

x. Tracking Job Applications

We tracked job applications and outcomes in order to highlight any emerging trends. Clients were asked to keep the project informed of applications both to ensure they were provided with support provision but also to collate data on the following:

- applications made
- interviews gained
- refusals
- jobs gained

xi. Client Follow Up

As the Job Opportunities Support Project was funded for a three year period, it was imperative to establish a three to four month client follow-up procedure. This ensures:

- up to date records
- review of clients' job status
- a rapport is built with client base
- ongoing support over the 3 year period where required
- identifying barriers and discriminatory practices, if there are any

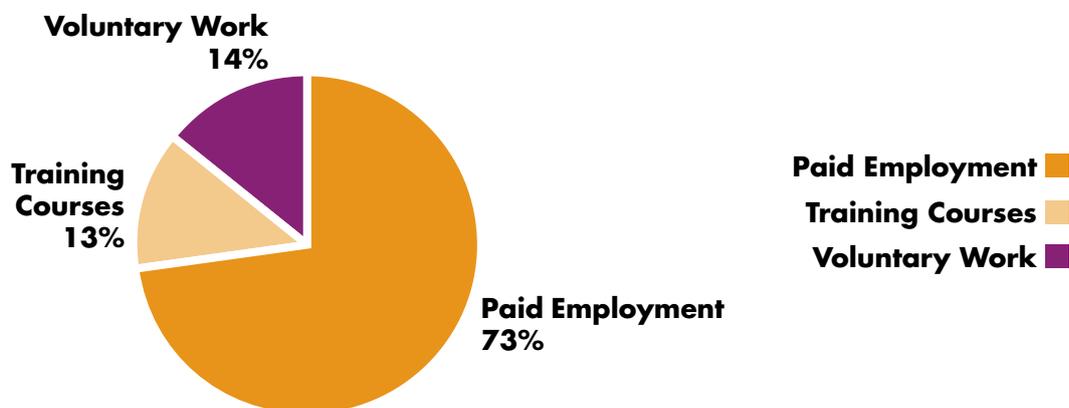
8.4 Positive Outcomes

The main purpose of the project was to increase the number of BME individuals within housing and public sectors. Since the start of the project in February 2006, 307 clients have been assessed and provided with one-to-one support and guidance. To date, there **75** positive outcomes as follows:

- **55** individuals have gained employment through the project
- **10** individuals have moved forward into further education or training courses
- **11** individuals have started volunteering as a transitional period into employment

Positive Outcomes

75 clients moved forward into employment, training or voluntary work



8.5 Case Studies

The following case studies provide an insight into the success of the project:

• Case Study 1

Client A, a male from Bangladesh, came to the UK six years ago as an overseas student; studying a postgraduate degree at Stirling University. He was on a Fresh Talent Visa and a part-time worker when he heard about the project from a colleague.

He says: "The project helped me to prepare for job hunting, getting CVs ready, interviews and finally to arrange a work placement with Hanover (Scotland) which further enhanced my confidence to work for any mainstream employer. During my placement, I have carried out a research on how to identify the prevalence of dementia using/analysing information held on the housing association database and community alarm system. The three month placement was a great opportunity to expose my skills and abilities. It also gave me experience about the working culture in the UK. I am grateful to the project staff and I personally, referred many people to this project. I was experienced and qualified to working in voluntary sector, community engagement but getting into employment was difficult for me without UK work experience"

Client A has become a Development Officer at ELREC (Edinburgh and Lothians Racial Equality Council).

He suggested that the Job opportunities Support Project should target more BME young people and encourage them to apply for jobs within the public and media sectors.

• Case Study 2

Client B is a 28-year old female from Pakistan. She came to the UK in April 2008 with her husband after getting married. Client B was a placement trainee with the Scottish Government when she heard about the project from a friend.

She says: *"I was on a work experience placement at the time when I joined this project and the Job Opportunities Development Officer helped me in updating my CV and checking my application form to send before applying for jobs. She also kept on sending me jobs advertised on different websites and notice boards."*

With the project's support, Client B has now moved into a full-time post with the Scottish Government as an Administrator.

• **Case Study 3**

Client C, a 52-year old male from Pakistan, came to the UK more than 10 years ago as an overseas student; studying a MA in TESOL (Teaching English for Speakers of Other Languages) at University of Edinburgh. He joined the project in October 2008 following advice from a friend who is one of the beneficiaries of this project.

He says: *"In fact, the Job Opportunities Project gives me plenty of choice so that I could choose whichever (position) suits me. It gave me a constant hope that I should keep on applying and one day I will find a job. In this way this project supported me a lot in getting back to work. In my opinion the most helpful part of this project is the role of the Job Opportunity Development Officer who conducted interviews and provided a lot of information and moral support and continuously updated information regarding job opportunities"*

Client C has managed to secure a part-time Assistant Officer post with HM Revenue & Customs.

• **Case Study 4**

Client D is a 31-years male from Nigeria. He first came in contact with the project just after graduating from the University in Dundee and moving to Edinburgh in search for a job.

He says: *"The project team was a tremendous help to me. I was given a lot of tips for job searching, CV writing, attending interviews etc. I had my CV analysed and edited by the team at the project which incidentally yielded positive feedback from employers. Equally important is that the team at the project was updating me and others with job openings on a daily basis. The opportunities stem from voluntary to permanent job opportunities one may never have been aware of."*

The culmination of this was when I got a placement with the Procurator Fiscal's office through the project. This placement is presently going into the sixth month. The wonderful thing about it all was that not only did the

project inform me about the position, Rana Sallam helped me to complete the application, then followed through by arranging and accompanying me on the interview and continued monitoring the whole process until I actually commenced work. There were also constant checks to ensure that everything is moving smoothly and to arrange further opportunities”

Client D added: *“Indeed, I was impressed with the commitment of the project and the staff. I was most thrilled because not only did they help me secure the job, it was a job specific to my skills and qualifications”*

• **Case Study 5**

Client E, a 32-year old female, born in England to Pakistani parents, and now working as Fiscal Officer with Procurator Fiscal’s Office. Client E wanted to share her experience with the Job Opportunities Support Project.

She says: “I heard about the project through NKS when I was a member of the management committee. I made an appointment to meet with Nasreen to discuss ways I could move on from my current job as I was lacking confidence and experience. Nasreen suggested a work placement and this was arranged but this did not work out as I simply could not afford to cut back hours from my paid employment in order to build up experience. However from talking to Nasreen, I was inspired to go back to further/higher education and formalise my management hospitality experience. Two years on I have graduated with a management degree which I studied for part time and was ready to move on and I re-contacted the project for assistance and support.

The project helped me by providing me with regular updated information on job vacancies and training courses related to my work experience. Also there was regular support via the phone and in person if need be – when I wanted to apply for a job, providing feedback on completing applications etc. I found Rana to be very approachable, friendly, efficient and genuine which helped me through the whole job hunting process. And thanks to her I was successful in finding a new job with the Procurator Fiscal. If it had not been for her suggesting I apply for the position that I was successful in, I would not have got the job.

When compared to other employment support projects, I have found the quality and support of this project to be 100% better. I felt merely like a number in another project which I ended up withdrawing from”.

• Case Study 6

Client G, is a 27-year old female from Eritrea. She moved to the UK when she was 10 years old with her parents. She has an HNC in Business Administration and is currently studying for a degree in International Business and Politics with The Open University. Client G also volunteers with the ECIS (Eritrean Community In Scotland) in planning and supervising social events for the Eritrean community in Scotland. She joined the project in October 2008 following advice from a friend who is one of the beneficiaries of this project. She need a boost on her self-confidence and not sure which types of jobs she might be targeting. The Job Opportunities Development Officer assisted Client G in creating her CV and applying for Sessional Course Worker post with Women Onto Work, which she managed to secure.

She says: *“This project has opened so many doors for me. The Job Opportunities Development Officer was very friendly and always ready to offer her help and support. The Job Opportunities Support Project was a huge factor in my recent success in gaining employment.”*



9. Barriers & Issues

Since the start of the project it has become clear that there are a number of issues and barriers facing both employers and clients. The project worked to address these issues through providing advice and support to both employers and clients:

9.1 Employers

- **Placements** – A lack of commitment by employers and the length of time employers take to make a decision on committing to the placement programme. Encouraging employers to participate has been a time-consuming task.
- **Applications Forms** – Difficulty with application form layouts and knowing how information is used by employers.
- **Interview Feedback** – Level of feedback provided by employers is inadequate.

9.2 Clients

- **Cultural Barriers** – Depending on the community clients are from they may face a number of cultural barriers. These are due to a lack of understanding of different cultures by employers.
- **Visible Barriers** – Traditional dress and attire can influence employability prospects.
- **Immigration Status** – Employers can be reluctant to employ people on a short term basis if the applicant has a limited period work visa.
- **Work Experience** – Overseas experience not recognised in the UK.
- **Qualifications from Abroad** – Lack of recognition of overseas qualifications.

- **Influence of Names & Ethnicity** – Negative influence and impact of names from certain communities on application forms, particularly those of Muslim background.
- **Language & Accent** – The influence of a foreign accent can be significant. It is an underestimated factor that is present in Scotland, impacting on employment prospects for BME individuals. When a candidate has a foreign accent, English is probably not their first language. This can adversely affect their confidence, and therefore, not be an accurate reflection of their abilities, qualifications and experience. Employers should make efforts to support such applicants during the recruitment process to ensure that skills and experience can be demonstrated.
- **Confidence** – Candidates confidence can be affected by not having the knowledge or experience of what employers are seeking and “how the system works” (i.e. the British recruitment system).
- **Understanding of Procedures** – a lack of understanding of how to complete application forms and interview techniques.



10. Conclusion

Under-representation of BME employees remains a serious issue for public and housing sector employees in Scotland – the facts which have emerged from research into the issue confirm this.

The consequences are that despite existing equal opportunity policies, strategies, impact assessments and good practice guidance, employers are still missing out on the valuable skills and experience offered by many potential BME applicants. Also, many BME individuals are still unfairly denied equal access to employment opportunities.

However, despite the many remaining barriers we have outlined for both BME communities and employers, the Job Opportunities Support project has seen many positive outcomes over its three year lifespan.

There is no room for complacency on these issues and much work remains to be done to build upon the foundations laid by the Job Opportunities Support Project and to create a lasting legacy.

The environment for employment in general in the UK and job prospects for BME individuals in particular will doubtless be impacted a combination of new immigration legislation and the fallout of the economic downturn.

There is a very real possibility that in these circumstances BME individuals are even more likely to be disadvantaged when it comes to employment opportunities, underlining the fact that targeted projects which address this issue are more in need than ever.

The project is now seeking funding to continue the project for further two years to build on the expertise, experience and skills. We are seeking to build on the success of the project, by providing additional opportunities for BME communities to gain the necessary skills and qualifications required to access the job market.

Notes

Notes



EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES PROGRAMME

Trust Housing Association in partnership with Hanover (Scotland) and Bield have an award winning **Equal Opportunities Programme** created in July 1999. The association joint programme aims to break down barriers faced by Scotland's Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) communities through proactive outreach work and special projects. Its key objectives include:

- Encourage take up of services by Black and Minority Ethnic older people
- Develop policy and procedures concerning positive action with respect to current and amended legislation
- Develop initiatives and promotional and marketing campaigns to raise awareness about the needs of BME older people and communities
- Encourage BME communities to seek employment with the Associations
- Train staff and carers on equality issues

In the past ten years, these objectives have met with great success. It included hands-on outreach work and networking at the grassroots level; co-ordinated efforts with local and national authorities and public and private sector organisations; active participation and leadership of various race equality events, forums, committees, conferences, networks, groups; surgeries and speaking engagements; and both traditional and innovative promotional and marketing projects and campaigns.

Special Projects

- **Job Opportunities Support Project-**
The project aims to help improve access to employment and training opportunities for Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) communities within housing and the public sector.
- **Older People Services Development Project -**
This project to help BME older people gain access to pension benefits and services by barriers through outreach work.
- **Happy to Translate LOGO -**
A "Happy to Translate" logo initiative developed to improve access to Information and services by overcoming language barrier.



EqualityScotland.com – A multicultural website focusing on equality issues and the work of Equal Opportunities Programme, including downloadable versions of publications.



HAPPY TO TRANSLATE



Trust Housing
Association Ltd
12 New Mart Road
Edinburgh EH14 1RL
Tel: 0131 444 1200
www.trustha.org.uk

Hanover (Scotland)
95 McDonald Road
Edinburgh EH7 4NS
Tel: 0131 557 0598
www.hsha.org.uk

Bield
79 Hopetoun Street
Edinburgh EH7 4QF
Tel: 0131 273 4000
www.bield.co.uk