

EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES LAUNCHES KEY REPORT ON JOBS PROJECT

'Making a Difference' report highlights job issues for ethnic minorities

EDINBURGH, July 09 - Major public sector employers in Edinburgh and Lothians have boosted the employment prospects of black and minority ethnic (BME) people through participating in an innovative Job Opportunities Support Project, according to a new report.

The newly-launched report, 'Making a Difference,' details the success of the Job Opportunities Support Project which was run by the award-winning Equal Opportunities programme, a joint venture established by Trust, Hanover (Scotland) and Bield housing associations.

The Job Opportunities Support Project, which commenced in 2006 and ran for three years, deployed practical measures to tackle under-representation of BME people in housing and public sector jobs in Edinburgh and Lothians, achieving significant success.

Employers which took part in the project included: Lothian & Borders Police; Stevenson College; the Procurator Fiscal Service; and a number of housing associations including Trust, Hanover, Bield, Melville, and Port of Leith. The project received funding from Communities Scotland and Capital City Partnership (an Edinburgh-based partnership committed to overcoming social exclusion).

The Job Opportunities Support project provided one-to-one support and guidance to more than 300 BME people, helping them with CVs and interview techniques, and also to secure work placements, employment and special training.

It enabled 55 people to secure permanent employment, while 17 completed work placements and a further 40 were helped to obtain appropriate further education or training or voluntary work as a step towards future employment.

Rohini Sharma Joshi, who runs the Equal Opportunities Programme said: "We are delighted at the successes achieved by the Job Opportunities Support Project and we are very grateful for the support of the organisations who participated. The project delivered tangible benefits both to employers who identified talented job candidates and to job seekers who found new career prospects open to them for the first time."

She added: "Employers need to take equal opportunities issues seriously. The public sector in Scotland accounts for 24% of all employment and we still have a long way to go to achieve equal representation of BME people. However, our project has shown that by bridging the communications and cultural gap between employers and BME communities, we can achieve a win-win result for all those who take part."

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NOTES TO EDITORS:

Copies of the full Job Opportunities Support Project report 'Making A Difference' can be downloaded from the Equal Opportunities Programme website www.equalityscotland.com.

Hard copies are also available on request.

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About the jointly-funded Equal Opportunities Programme:

Trust, Hanover (Scotland) and Bield Housing Associations set up a joint Equal Opportunities Programme ten years ago. The Edinburgh based team, which is headed by Housing Equal Opportunities Manager Rohini Sharma Joshi, has won numerous awards for its pioneering work to encourage and promote increased participation of Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) communities in the housing sector. It has also made wider contributions to integrate BME people through the creation of multi-lingual aids to overcome language barriers such as the launch of a 'Happy to Translate' logo which is used by organisations including; the Scottish Housing Regulator, the Care Commission, Lothian & Borders Police and Health Services.

For more information on the Equal Opportunities Programme or the three housing associations which fund the programme please see the following websites:

Equality Scotland www.equalityscotland.com

Trust Housing Association www.trusha.org.uk

Hanover (Scotland) Housing Association www.hsha.org.uk

Bield Housing Association www.bield.co.uk

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