

Challenging Discrimination and Inequality

What is Equal?

The Equal Programme is a European Social Fund (ESF) initiative which operates across all of the European Union. The Programme aims to develop and test new ways of challenging discrimination and inequalities in the labour market, both for those in work and for those seeking work.

Equal has acted as a learning platform, developing innovative ways of tackling existing labour market problems. It has presented evidence based outcomes which could be adopted by policy makers and delivery agents at local, regional, national and European levels.

The partnership approach in Equal is based around a model of Development Partnerships (DPs), consisting of organisations with common interests and different expertise, working collaboratively to deliver shared aims and objectives.

www.equal.ecotec.co.uk

www.equal-works.com

www.esf.gov.uk



Equality and Diversity has increasingly become a key driving force in Government policy. The previously separate bodies responsible for different parts of the equalities agenda have now merged to become the Equalities and Human Rights Commission (EHRC). Equality and Diversity is steadily making its presence felt in the public and private sector meaning that employers and businesses need to take responsibility for the promotion and implementation of equality within their internal operations and in the delivery of their services.

Equal has given Development Partnerships (DPs) an opportunity to focus on new and innovative ways of tackling the problems common to different types of discrimination and inequality, as well as seeking to meet the needs of specific target groups. By helping disadvantaged groups to improve their job prospects and skills, Equal has promoted social inclusion and equal opportunities.

Equal DPs working to combat discrimination and inequality have developed innovative activities in the following areas:

- Developing guiding principles and good practice in the area of equality and diversity
- Supporting employers to develop effective and flexible workplace practices
- Developing equality impact assessment measures
- Helping to engender a culture of self improvement amongst disadvantaged individuals
- Employer and employee training and awareness raising activities
- Developing equality data and key indicators to monitor progress
- Developing active consultation and engagement methodologies
- Employment (and enterprise) – access, progression and retention
- Promoting the business case for diversity
- Introducing equality measures into the procurement process and the supply chain

Key Messages

- Policy development and implementation to promote inclusion will be more successful where there is buy-in

from policy makers, organisational heads, interest groups and members of community organisations to work collaboratively

- Employment policies, strategies and support services should give greater consideration to specific and multiple barriers faced by individuals and this should be reflected in the level of support and resource provided to remove barriers
- Simply by becoming aware of individual experiences, aspirations and identified needs will not automatically prevent the occurrence of inequality and discriminatory acts
- Interventions need to be based on practical approaches that stem from understanding barriers experienced by particular communities/groups and also by examining institutional cultures and practices
- Developing effective practice at organisational levels often includes raising awareness amongst employers at individual, institutional and sector levels, of the existence of discrimination and inequality
- Public bodies need to ensure effective application of public duties and ensure there is robust monitoring of their implementation and that this is extended to suppliers and contractors

Case Studies

Open House - identified major barriers that were preventing disadvantaged communities from accessing jobs in the housing sector included lack of knowledge, understanding, confidence and peer group experience of working in the sector. These barriers were exacerbated by the housing sector which used traditional methods of recruiting and marketing, combined with a recruitment and selection process that was reliant on lengthy forms and qualifications.

To overcome these barriers, the DP developed a simple expression of interest form which used competencies as the basis of assessing an individual's suitability for the job. In particular, life and communication skills, and life experiences were the focus as opposed to more formal qualifications. The DP then produced a unique 'speed dating' model for interviewing which involved a series of shorter interviews with representatives from all housing partners, lasting a maximum of 5 minutes, as opposed to a longer panel interview.

This innovative recruitment process has proved to work effectively and as a result, three of the housing providers have introduced the model, changing their existing recruitment practices.

For further information visit <http://www.teesvalley.org>

Equalitec: Advancing Women in ITEC - focused on the role of diversity and equality of opportunity policies to address gender imbalance in ITEC by working with professional bodies, industry and parliamentarians in the area of diversity, to guide the mainstreaming of good practice and addressing cultural change. The DP also looked into improving past approaches to training by creating an environment for the cross linking of training opportunities to jobs and employment opportunities and using mentoring circles to train women's groups to deploy this methodology for their members. Key players in this process included professional bodies, career specialists, training providers, employers and women's organisations, who created integrated solutions.

For further information visit <http://www.equalitec.org.uk>

Create Diversity in Employment - developed measures aimed at both employers and ethnic minorities. The DP developed a new web-based interactive model of diversity management for employers, supported with resources and toolkits. The model has been produced to meet the practical needs of organisations, especially SME's interested in diversity, with a guide to diversity management, practices and issues. This includes information about equality legislation, policy guidance, the business case for diversity, examples of best practice, case studies and links to other organisations and websites.

For further information visit <http://www.bath.ac.uk/managediversity/resources/Finalcreate1.pdf>

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