Tackling the White-ethnic minority Employment Gap: Jobcentres and Ethnic Minority Outreach

PSI presentation to ESRC research seminar series on Ethnicity and Employment in the Private Sector

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Structure of this presentation

• Background to, design and aims of Ethnic Minority Outreach (EMO) Initiative
• The design of the evaluation
• Jobcentre views on working with EMO providers
• EMO provider views on working with Jobcentres
• Participant views of Jobcentres
• Suggestions for improvement to Jobcentre Plus services
• Some conclusions
Background to the Ethnic Minority Outreach (EMO) Initiative

• Concern about persistent gap between overall employment rate and that for ethnic minority groups & effectiveness of mainstream services for ethnic minority groups

• A need for more active promotion of ethnic minority employment, those ‘at the back of the queue’ (Peck & Theodore, 2000) - implicitly questioning the appropriateness and quality of mainstream/institutional support for ‘hard to help and reach’ groups

• New Deal Next Phase - EMO pilot introduced in April 2002 to support transitions into paid work of ethnic minority, disadvantaged, jobless people.
The shape of the EMO pilot

- EMO service consisted of a range of projects:
  - Outreach based provision (approach 1)
  - Employer focused provision (approach 2)
  - Positive action training (approach 3)

- A community level multi-stakeholder approach: projects/providers working with participants & employers, local Jobcentres and other agencies

- Service provision in 5 regions: Greater Manchester, West Midlands, West Yorkshire, Greater Manchester, East Midlands

- Targeting of a range of under-represented ethnic minority groups
EMO pilot aims and targets

- Focus on engaging groups known to be under-represented in Jobcentre Plus mainstream services and raising awareness of those services
- Helping people from ethnic minority communities move closer to the labour market
- Standardised outcome measures for providers:
  - engaging ethnic minority groups (JCP registration)
  - referrals onto accredited training
  - helping people into work (paid employment outcomes)
# Examples of EMO provision

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Approach &amp; staffing</th>
<th>Services offered</th>
<th>Main client groups and issues faced</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Approach 1 - one outreach worker with manager/shared EMO administrator.</td>
<td>Outreach, signposting &amp; support for Jobcentre and jobsearch, work placements</td>
<td>Somali men and women, many with ESOL needs, from teenagers to 50plus</td>
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<td>Approach 1 &amp; 3 - one worker and part-time admin, trainer from local college</td>
<td>Outreach with ESOL, beauty courses, job search support</td>
<td>Women, Pakistani and Bangladeshi backgrounds, many with ESOL needs</td>
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<td>Approach 2 &amp; 3 - one project worker, managed by manager and supported by information officer</td>
<td>Diversity workshops for employers, positive action work placements for clients, developed a pre-employment support programme in second year</td>
<td>Employer focused (approach 2) and clients (for placement scheme) mostly from a Pakistani background and job ready</td>
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The design of the evaluation

• A layered case study method - qualitative evaluation
• Coverage of all 5 geographical areas
• 20 case study projects
  - analysis of MI data
  - depth interviews with multiple stakeholders: participants, project workers, Jobcentre staff, employers, referral agencies, community and partner organisations
  - facilitating exploration of relationships
• Longitudinal orientation
Jobcentre views on working with EMO providers & participants

- Some staff had more contact with EMO providers than others which was in part related to whether providers were felt to complement existing Jobcentre services
- Majority of Jobcentre staff positive about additional help to those furthest from the labour market - saw added value of EMO providers
- EMO made no large difference to types of people Jobcentre staff were working with (with the exception of Indian and Pakistani women)
EMO provider views on working with Jobcentres

• Examples of good practice in EMO provider and Jobcentre staff cooperative working to identify customers for EMO

• Provider preferences for community based (rather than Jobcentre based) identity caused some tensions in working relationships

• Low Jobcentre adviser awareness of EMO initiative (Jobcentre front-line staff turnover a dynamic here)

• Lack of clarity over interpretation of guidance

• Concerns about Jobcentre staff morale & job segregation
Participants’ perceptions of Jobcentres

- **Some positive perspectives** (patchy)
  - Support with job search
  - Useful information
  - Tailored adviser support
  - Access to ESOL classes

- **A lot of negative feelings**
  - Vacancy mismatch & lack of support for longer term job aspirations
  - Staff inaccessible & inflexible (e.g., Felt unwelcome, staff unaware of EMO, queuing)
  - Found EMO projects more supportive of needs (*designed to be*.. but in engaging with mainstream services suggest ways in which JC service delivery can better meet needs)
Participant perceptions of Jobcentres

“I’m a lone parent, they say you want to work, used to work, it’s been nearly three and a half years. They find someone to help you who is a lone parent, at least they understand where you are coming from (Assaggi)”

“I’ve been to a few houses ....like to take them to the Jobcentre. We’re taking them to the Jobcentre and they just don’t want to know. It’s new to them too, but then they should be helping us. ...when we go there they shouldn’t.. be saying that well, you know, take them away or this is the only time we’ve got for them, which is like half past four and I finish at three and I can’t take them after half four” (Ethibal)
Suggestions for improvement to Jobcentre Plus services

- **From participants** - access to newspapers, user friendly Internet, staff language skills to reflect ESOL needs, more Jobcentre staff, more (focused) attention from staff

- **From EMO providers** - more staff awareness of EMO, communication about the programme and internal change within Jobcentre Plus

- **From Jobcentre staff** - need for more information about EMO providers, support for small employers, one-stop-shop for hard to reach help ethnic minority clients, more sensitivity to labour market barriers
Conclusions and policy implications

• EMO had major impact on increasing ethnic minority awareness of employment & training opportunities, take-up by under represented groups (key=outreach worker background and role)

• Increased use of Jobcentre services but not by all participants (some reticence to register, lack of ‘depth’ registration - still a disengaged constituency)

• While EMO helped people into work, lack of incentives to work with the ‘hardest to help’
  – half of participants had left their job in the last six months
  – need to rethink outcome measures/provider incentives for working with people furthest from labour market reflecting multi-dimensional nature of support needs and to address social distribution of employment chances.