

# BETTER WEST MIDLANDS - AN EXAMPLE OF BEST PRACTICE

**Better West Midlands is funded by European Social Fund (ESF) with co-financing through the West Midlands Skills Funding Agency. The project is run by Unity (the lead body for the unions) on behalf of the Skills Funding Agency. From October 2008 over 3,300 individuals have undertaken training from 200 companies, with 75% of individuals returning to work. Today, the programme is helping people who are unemployed or facing the prospect of redundancy to access new skills and job opportunities through the Redundancy and Redeployment Programme, and is seen by many as an example of best practice.**



Michael Cashman

Michael Cashman, MEP for the West Midlands, recently commented,

"The Better West Midlands project is a brilliant example of what you can do when you get European Social Funding and then you match it with your own money from the United Kingdom"



Jan Olsson

Jan Olsson, European Economic and Social Committee (E.E.S.C) Member commented

The package of support offered by the Better West Midlands programme delivers a bespoke service tailored to the needs of employers and individuals. It includes individual advice, support and access to skills and training provision.

"Its about giving people new opportunities. And those new opportunities feed into the wider community. Arguably if we are going to compete at the best level - with the rest of the UK, let alone Europe, or the rest of the world - we can only do that if we have got the right skills base."

"When people face redundancy, perhaps for the first time since they left school, working with the Trade Unions and working with the skills developers, gives them the ability to raise their aspirations, raise their confidence levels and give them a future. I think such programmes are what European match funding is all about. That EU added value." further commented Cashman."

The project provides two main services. Firstly, the scheme can be used as a free vacancy matching service. This involves working with potential new employers to identify opportunities and match them to individuals who are being made redundant giving additional training where necessary. Secondly, for those companies where redundancies are necessary, the scheme works with the employer to develop a bespoke support package for employees that reflects the needs of the company, and the individual. This support can include information advice and guidance, CV workshops and access to fully funded training in a wide range of subjects and levels.

"As a member of the European Economic and Social Committee, we very strongly advocate a social dialogue between labour and management. The concept that the Better West Midlands have created is very interesting. I would call it a good practice if i compared with other countries. "

"Partnership is important. Not only does a Partnership exist between the employer and the Trade Union but also in a larger wider partnership with the Skills Funding Agency and with our authorities in the West Midlands."

The Better West Midlands programme builds on previous successful initiatives which were developed as a response to the closure of MG Rover. These programmes offered pre-redundancy support for employers in the manufacturing sector. This work was adopted as a European best-practice model and its success gave rise to further funding being secured to help employees across all sectors under threat of redundancy across the region.

**FOR MORE INFORMATION ABOUT THE PROJECT PLEASE CONTACT BETTER WEST MIDLANDS ON:**

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