

COMBATING PREJUDICE AGAINST THE UNEMPLOYED

A Study of Long-term Unemployed
People and Employers in Blanchardstown

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The Irish National Organisation of the Unemployed (INOU) would like to acknowledge certain people who throughout the course of this research were of considerable help:

Special thanks to the long-term unemployed men from Blanchardstown who took part in the research. Thanks also to the employers who participated.

Particular gratitude is due to Marie Price Bolger and Terry McCabe of the Blanchardstown LES for their help, support and contributions throughout the project. Thanks are also due to Catherine Lynch of FÁS.

Thanks to Anne Eustace for the guidance work carried out with the participants and her advice.

Thanks to Carole Sullivan, the Project Manager for her guidance and support and also to Nicola Phelan and John Farrell for their contributions to the group sessions in Blanchardstown.

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LIST OF CONTENTS

	PAGE
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	4
SECTION 1 Research with Long-Term Unemployed People	11
SECTION 2 Recruitment	15
SECTION 3 Selection Methods	17
SECTION 4 Barriers to Employment	20
SECTION 5 Labour Market Services	21
SECTION 6 Training, Education and Employment Options	24
SECTION 7 The Media	26
SECTION 8 Recommendations	28
Epilogue	30
Bibliography	31
APPENDIX 1	22
Area Profile of Blanchardstown	
APPENDIX 2	35
Tables	

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1. AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

The overall aim of this project was to break down prejudices or misconceptions concerning people who are long-term unemployed in order to increase the proportion of job vacancies that are filled by them and to ensure their retention in employment.

In order to fulfil this aim research was carried out with long-term unemployed people and employers. Two main objectives were devised for the research with long-term unemployed people:

- (i) To identify and document any prejudice encountered by long-term unemployed people from employers.
- (ii) To identify and document the attitudes of employers towards long-term unemployed people.

2. RESEARCH WITH LONG-TERM UNEMPLOYED PEOPLE

This action research project was conducted with four groups of long-term unemployed people, primarily men over the age of 35, regarding their experiences in job seeking and in dealing with state agencies. Blanchardstown¹ was one of the areas chosen for the research as well as Dundalk, Ballyfermot and Castlebar.

The research involved the following elements:

- 1) Firstly structured interviews were carried out with approximately ten long-term unemployed men in each of the areas. This research was carried out on a one to one basis. A questionnaire which was both quantitative and qualitative was devised. This questionnaire was agreed by the project consortium and was piloted with unemployed people.
- 2) Secondly, the respondents were asked to take part in four two-hour group sessions in each area. The discussion element was built into the structure of these sessions. This enabled the men to interact with each other and allowed us to explore how unemployment affects these men's lives. The aim of these sessions was to build up a picture of the types of issues and attitudes, which were of concern to the men in the area. One of the other objectives of the group sessions was to take account of participant outcomes over the duration of the project. Work with the groups spanned a four-six month period.

The Design and Implementation of the Discussion/Buzz Groups:

The content of these discussion groups was based on four modules;

- The first module was designed to encourage debate and discussion among the unemployed men themselves, about the realities facing unemployed people. Two videos were shown to the men to promote discussion. One was a FAS promotional video. The other was of a long term unemployed man from Ballymun made for Finnish TV in 1995 entitled 'Unemployment in Ballymun'.
- The second module incorporated a guidance process which was delivered by the projects external consultant. This guidance module involved the use of an Occupational Personality Questionnaire (OPQ). The main objective was to promote personal development and build confidence. The guidance process provided participants with the opportunity to reflect on their current position in a confidential one-to-one session with an occupational psychologist. Each participant was invited to complete an occupational personality questionnaire (OPQ) and was offered a one-to-one feedback based around the results of this questionnaire. The purpose was to facilitate reflection and review tailored to the challenges and issues facing each individual and action planning for the future.
- The third module provided one to one feedback to the participants who answered the OPQ and also provided information on the local services and schemes provided by state agencies.
- The final group session finalised key issues which had arisen in the discussion groups for the final report. It also served as an information provision session as service providers from the area were invited to speak to the group. Participants also evaluated the sessions.

A final questionnaire was sent to the men a few months after the last group session to find out if the men had progressed in their attempts to seek work.

1 See Appendix 1 for Area Profile of Blanchardstown

2.1 RECRUITMENT AND PLANNING

Intensive planning on how to recruit long-term unemployed people was carried out with a view to contacting the most disadvantaged long-term unemployed. It was planned to recruit through the LES, FAS, local Social Welfare Offices and Unemployed Centres.

A profile of the long term unemployed respondent was built up. For the structured interviews the main criteria for recruitment from our different sources was primarily males over 35 who were out of work for a year or more. Meetings with the key actors in the local areas were set up to help with the recruitment.

The recruitment methods used in Blanchardstown were through the Local Employment Service, FAS, contacting CE supervisors to attempt to locate people who had finished up on schemes and remained unemployed, leafleting at the Social Welfare Office and enlisting the help of respondents to contact friends in a similar situation. Eleven men were interviewed in Blanchardstown.

3. RESEARCH WITH EMPLOYERS

3.1 BACKGROUND

Within small enterprises in Ireland it is normally the owner/manager who is responsible for recruitment. These owner/managers, like most employers, are currently experiencing significant change within the labour market, particularly when filling jobs that require low skilled or non skilled workers. The tightening of the labour market has led to employers, especially owner/managers who recruit staff personally, reporting increasing difficulty when filling vacancies. In the past when employers were filling a post, which required low skills or no skills, there was a tendency for employers to recruit people with skills and qualifications in excess of what was actually required; this is no longer possible. The research intended to find out employers views of hiring long-term unemployed people. For these reasons the employer aspect of the research was entitled "Making the most of our Human Resources".

3.2 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This research was targeted at ten owner / managers of small/medium sized enterprises. A questionnaire was developed which was both quantitative and qualitative. This questionnaire was posted out to approximately forty employers with the hope of getting ten replies. Six employers responded to the questionnaire. With the help of the Employer Liaison Officer in the Blanchardstown LES, 3 employers were interviewed on a one-to-one basis. Altogether, 9 employers took part in the research.

4. THE RESEARCH QUESTIONS AND FINDINGS

A number of key research questions are listed below with summary findings. The body of the report contains additional information on each of the findings.

4.1 WHAT IS THE PROFILE/EMPLOYMENT HISTORY OF THESE LONG-TERM UNEMPLOYED PEOPLE?

All of the men were long-term unemployed and over 35. Eight out of the eleven men had relatively low levels of education. Eight of the men had been unemployed for three years or more. Three of these men had been unemployed for ten years. Those respondents who had been unemployed the longest (6-10 years plus) had the lowest levels of education, (primary/lower secondary). Since leaving school the majority of the men had at least three jobs. Before the current period of unemployment ten out of the eleven men were working full-time and one man was self-employed. Many of the men had skilled jobs before becoming unemployed.

4.2 HOW DOES THEIR EXPERIENCE OF LONG PERIODS OF UNEMPLOYMENT AFFECT THEIR INTEREST IN JOB SEEKING?

"There are many stages to getting a job and the long-term unemployed find barriers at every one: people don't hear about the jobs on offer, if they do hear they are less likely to get an interview because of where they live or how long they have been unemployed, and if they get considered they are less likely to have the required skills."

Mike Allen (1998:193) in "The Bitter Word"

During the first year of unemployment nine out of the eleven men applied for jobs, six of them were called for interviews. After being one year unemployed seven men continued to look for work and three men were called for interviews. In the year before the interviews were conducted, the numbers continuing to look for work increased, nine men applied for jobs, five of which were called for interviews.

The most frequent reasons identified for giving up looking for work at any stage were "given up hope of getting a job", "depression/withdrawal", "age" and "didn't want to be hurt further". The main reasons given by the men for continuing to look for work were financial motivations followed by "the need to occupy oneself". The most frequent reasons identified for refusing job offers was lack of financial incentive and the loss of the medical card.

The many stages of job seeking nowadays have progressed since many of these men had their last job when an informal interview with the employer was all that was required. As a result many long term unemployed people are found lacking in these essential skills necessary to firstly reach the interview stage and most importantly acquire the job. This lack of the necessary job-seeking skills is an important finding to emerge from this research.

Seven of the men provided information on the last interview they had attended. Only three out of the seven were asked for a CV. Only one man practised interview skills. Two out of the seven men were offered the job. It could be said that there is a need for the strengthening of job-seeking skills.

Pay was identified as the main advantage in taking up a job. Many of the men made the point "if the pay was right I'd take the job". All of these men were willing to work if they were offered decent pay. All of the men stated a rate of pay that they would be willing to work for.

4.3 WHAT RECRUITMENT AND SELECTION METHODS HAVE AND ARE BEING USED BY OWNER/MANAGERS, PARTICULARLY FOR SEMI AND UNSKILLED POSITIONS?

Recruitment Methods

The most common recruitment methods used were; "person referred by someone in the company", using CVs on file and contacting FAS. The least used methods were contacting the Centre for the Unemployed, unsolicited applications and advertising in shop windows.

In terms of effectiveness of recruitment methods, the Local Employment Service received the highest rating followed by "person referred by someone in the company" received the highest ratings. The recruitment methods rated as "not useful" by some employers were:

- *National newspapers*
- *Recruitment Agencies*
- *Local newspapers*
- *The Centre for the Unemployed*
- *Social Welfare Office*

The main ways in which the long-term unemployed men found out about jobs were the local newspaper, word of mouth and FAS.

Selection Methods

The most frequently used selection methods were:

- *References*
- *Unstructured interviews*
- *Structured interviews*
- *Application Forms*

Seven out of nine employers had used references as a method of selection and this received the highest rating in terms of effectiveness. Structured interviews were used by half of the employers and this method received the second highest rating. Unstructured interviews were used by seven employers and also received a good rating.

The use of references as the main recruitment method demonstrates how long-term unemployed people could be at a disadvantage. Most job applicants choose the most recent employers as their referees as they can provide the employer with the most up to date information about the person's personal attributes and skills in their last place of employment. Unfortunately for long-term unemployed people, the gap in their employment history indicates the difficulties/impossibilities of acquiring referees from past employers. However, if the unemployed person has been taking part in voluntary/community work or other unpaid work the person/organisation they are working for should be in a position to provide a reference.

Research has proven that the single most important way that employers discriminate is by automatically rejecting applications from the long-term unemployed before the interview stage is reached. In addition if the unemployed person does get an interview he/she is further burdened by the need to provide evidence of recent employment and references. Long-term unemployed people become disadvantaged at this point. Meager and Metcalf 1987 concluded that:

"The major barriers to employment faced by the long-term unemployed were those of automatic rejection or the burden of providing additional evidence of suitability".²

Five out of the nine companies had received applications from long-term unemployed people. Two of these companies did not interview any of the long-term unemployed people who applied. Later on when asked about their perceptions of hiring long-term unemployed people one of these employers questioned their interest in looking for work and the other believed there was no excuse for people to be unemployed in today's economic climate. This shows (makes clear) a lack of understanding of long-term unemployment on the part of some employers and an unwillingness to give these people a chance when given the opportunity.

The remaining three employers all hired long-term unemployed people. These employers all maintained a good relationship with the Employment Liaison Officer in the Local Employment Service. This makes clear the effectiveness of this important service in explaining the potential benefits of hiring long-term unemployed people to employers.

4.4 WHAT CHARACTERISTICS ARE SOUGHT BY EMPLOYERS WHEN RECRUITING FOR SEMI/UNSKILLED VACANCIES

The characteristics considered "essential" for filling semi-skilled/unskilled vacancies in Blanchardstown were reliability, flexibility, health and personal hygiene. This indicates the importance of personal attributes when selecting new recruits.

Characteristics considered unimportant were gender, presence of a relative or friend, age, length of unemployment, address, personal recommendation, experience in a similar job, technical competence, skills training and education.

The most important factors these employers consider when recruiting were cited as "ability", "having the right attitude" and "honesty".

The long-term unemployed men were asked what characteristics they believed employers sought when recruiting. The most frequently mentioned characteristics were "ability to work on own initiative", "reliability" and "experience". The former two characteristics were rated as most important by employers while the latter was rated as desirable.

Lack of employment experience on the part of long-term unemployed applicants might hinder abilities to demonstrate these personal traits to potential employers. Hence the need for equipping long-term unemployed people with these non skill related attributes.

4.5 WHAT ARE THE MAIN BARRIERS IDENTIFIED BY THESE LONG-TERM UNEMPLOYED PEOPLE IN FINDING WORK?

The most frequently mentioned barriers were age, low pay and lack of educational qualifications. Other less frequently mentioned barriers included, health, skills, a lack of suitable jobs, experience, gender and the impact of unemployment on the person.

In the group sessions the main barriers raised were the low pay being offered and the loss of the medical card.

2 Meager N and Metcalf H (1987) Recruitment of the Long Term Unemployed, Institute of Manpower Studies: Brighton.

Low Pay

The men were disillusioned by the low levels of pay and the short term nature of the jobs on offer. These jobs did not compare to the wages and the nature of the jobs that the men had before becoming unemployed i.e. full-time. The majority of the men equated job satisfaction with being well paid.

The ideal wage rates chosen by the men were in excess of the proposed minimum wage (£176 gross weekly). In the group session there was a consensus among the men that the minimum wage should be set at £250 nett.

The Medical Card

Overall there was little awareness amongst the men about the ability to retain the medical card for three years after securing employment. This demonstrates a major need to create awareness of new government initiatives among the unemployed. Ten of the men possessed a medical card and felt that this was a very important benefit to them. Two men stated that if the money was sufficient losing it wouldn't matter. One man felt that being able to retain the medical card on Community Employment schemes provides a good incentive to taking up the scheme.

4.6 WHAT ARE LONG-TERM UNEMPLOYED PEOPLE'S PERCEPTIONS AND EXPERIENCES OF EMPLOYERS?

Eight of the men felt that employers do treat unemployed people differently. The men felt that employers considered long-term unemployed people as "lazy" and label them because they have not been working for a long time. It was felt that employers attempt to belittle unemployed people and have the impression that they will do any type of work. However, only three out of the eleven men were not satisfied with their treatment by employers. The reasons for this were suspicion, age and non-response to job applications.

4.7 WHAT ARE THE EMPLOYERS PERCEPTIONS OF LONG-TERM UNEMPLOYED PEOPLE?

The main factors that have emerged from this study in regard to employers' perceptions of long-term unemployed people can be summarised as follows:

Three of the nine employers were prepared to give long-term unemployed people a chance. The reasons which the remaining employers gave for having difficulties hiring long-term unemployed people were:

- The belief that long-term unemployed people may be too dependent on the dole and unable to adjust to a work environment.
- Equating long-term unemployment with possessing a criminal record.
- The belief that there is no reason for people to be long-term unemployed with today's economic environment.
- Two employers indicated a preference for hiring short-term unemployed people as it was felt that they were more likely to want to work.
- Three employers perceived long-term unemployed people as "low" in terms of skill level and ability adjusting to work.
- However, seven employers said they would not make a distinction between short-term unemployed people and long term unemployed people.

Manning (1999) conducted a recent UK study of the process by which employers in five relatively low wage British firms fill vacancies³. This study found that in selecting workers for interview employers are likely to reject those not currently in employment or lacking relevant work experience.

However, it was found that when offering a job, employers rely more on their general impression of candidates. Therefore, at this stage, personal habits are more important as are issues about the exact hours that the individual can work. This leads to the conclusion that unemployed job applicants have more difficulties in getting an interview than those who are currently employed. However, once interviewed, they do not appear to face any further difficulties in getting employment.

3 Manning A. (1999). *Pretty Vacant: Recruitment in Low-Wage Labour Markets*. Discussion Paper 418. Centre for Economic Performance. London.

It would appear from the research highlighted so far that “ability”, “adjusting to work” and “motivation” seem to be the key factors. Many of the employers assumed that long-term unemployed people lack ability, have difficulty adjusting to work and are demotivated. This leads to rejection even before the interview stage to find out if they would be suitable.

4.8 WHAT IS THE EXPERIENCE OF AND HOW ADEQUATELY DO UNEMPLOYED PEOPLE FEEL THEIR NEEDS ARE BEING MET BY THE VARIOUS STATE AGENCIES AND SCHEMES?

Level of contact

In terms of level of contact with local labour market services in Blanchardstown the greatest level of contact among the long-term unemployed men were with FAS and the Local Employment Service. Fewer long-term unemployed men contacted the local Social Welfare Office, the Area Based Partnership, the Centre of the Unemployed and the local VEC for advice/information/guidance in relation to job seeking.

EFFECTIVENESS OF LABOUR MARKET SERVICES

FAS

While the majority of long-term unemployed respondents who had used the services of FAS found them in some way useful, negative responses pertained in terms of their adequacy in meeting the needs of these people. The group could not identify with the people portrayed on the FAS promotional video shown to them.

Overall the service did not score well in terms of meeting long-term unemployed needs.

LES

Overall the unemployed respondents who had used the Local Employment Service found it in some way useful to them. However two of the men were disappointed with the outcomes as nothing came of their meetings.

Local Social Welfare Office

Three out of the four long-term unemployed men who used the services of the local social welfare office were satisfied with the service.

Other Services used

All three men who had used the services of the partnership found it useful. Both men who had used the services of the local centre for the unemployed found it useful. Both men who contacted the VEC found the service considerable useful. Two men who sought welfare rights information in the Citizens Information Centre found this service considerably useful.

4.9 WHAT ARE LONG-TERM UNEMPLOYED PEOPLE’S PERCEPTIONS AND EXPERIENCES OF TRAINING, EDUCATION AND EMPLOYMENT OPTIONS

In general there was a high level of awareness of training courses amongst the men. Those training schemes which commanded the greatest awareness were Job Training Scheme, Cert, Enterprise Training, Reintegration Training and Specific Skills Training. This awareness came mainly from word of mouth and FAS.

In terms of education programmes the highest levels of awareness were of adult literacy schemes and back to education schemes. The main source of awareness again came from word of mouth. Employment options commanded the highest level of awareness amongst the men. All of the men were aware of Community Employment. The area allowance enterprise, the back to work allowance and FIS were well known by the majority of the men. Yet again the main source of awareness was word of mouth. It is a worrying fact that the greatest level of awareness stemmed from word of mouth as misinformation can easily arise from this method.

4.10 WHAT LEVEL OF AWARENESS AND EXPERIENCE DO EMPLOYERS HAVE CONCERNING THE LOCAL LABOUR MARKET SERVICES?

In Blanchardstown, five employers had used FAS and four had used the LES. None of the employers had contacted the local Social Welfare Office.

FAS

Most employers felt that FAS was not acting as a fully effective service. In terms of effectiveness FAS received unfavourable ratings with regard to flexible approach, awareness of employers needs customer focus.

LES

Not many employers used the LES but most of those who did rated it as very effective. Those employers who had maintained a relationship with the Employer Liaison Officer all recruited long term unemployed people and had positive perceptions of them.

4.11 WHAT LEVEL OF KNOWLEDGE AND EXPERIENCE DO EMPLOYERS HAVE OF THE FINANCIAL SUBSIDIES AVAILABLE TO EMPLOYERS OF THE LONG-TERM UNEMPLOYED?

Awareness of Employer Subsidy Schemes

The BTWA and the PRSI Exemption schemes were the most widely known. The least known were the Part-time Job Incentive and Jobs Initiative schemes. The BTWA, PRSI Exemption and Job Assist had been used by some employers. The Part-time Job Incentive, Jobs Initiative, Jobstart and Workplace were not used by any of the employers surveyed.

Effectiveness of Employer Subsidy Schemes

In terms of effectiveness the PRSI scheme received the highest rating. The two schemes employers said they would use again were the PRSI and the Back To Work.

4.12 WHAT ARE LONG-TERM UNEMPLOYED PEOPLES AND EMPLOYERS PERCEPTIONS OF THE MEDIAS PORTRAYAL OF UNEMPLOYMENT?

Four out of eleven unemployed men and seven out of eight employers felt the media's coverage was fair.

Four out of eleven unemployed men and six out of eight employers felt the media's coverage was informative.

One out of eleven unemployed men and five out of six employers felt the media's coverage was informative.

Long-Term Unemployed perceptions

The majority of the long-term unemployed respondents felt that changes need to be made in the medias coverage of unemployment. These changes are listed as follows:

- Report the true picture of what it is like to be unemployed.
- Create an awareness of the opportunities which exist.
- Report on people's experiences of labour market schemes.
- Focus on the reasons why people are unemployed.
- Undertake more live debates and approach the issue more positively.

Employers perceptions

Six of the eight employers were not influenced by the media's coverage of unemployment.

In contrast only four out of eight employers felt a change was necessary. These changes are listed below:

- The need to examine the difficulties employers are having in recruiting staff.
- A more positive attitude is needed.
- The media needs to be more informative.

In contrast the majority of employers felt that the media's portrayal of unemployment and long-term unemployed people was fair.

4.13 WHAT IMPROVEMENTS DO THESE LONG TERM UNEMPLOYED PEOPLE FEEL NEED TO BE MADE ON THE PART OF EMPLOYERS/ THE STATE?

It was felt that interventions were needed on a number of levels in order for long-term unemployed people to get back to work. In terms of investment in new industries it was felt that the Enterprise Board needs to give incentives to encourage investment. In terms of employers it was felt that a serious change in attitude is necessary in particular towards older workers. The long-term unemployed men felt that they needed more education and skills updating through training and for some a possible change in direction which would lead to new career opportunities.

SECTION 1

RESEARCH WITH THE LONG-TERM UNEMPLOYED PEOPLE

1 PROFILE OF THE LONG-TERM UNEMPLOYED PEOPLE

This section presents the profile of the sample interviewed for the purposes of this research. The data supplied relates to the gender of the respondents, age, level of education, length of unemployment type of social welfare payment and employment history. The interviews took up to one hour each to complete.

1.1 GENDER

All 11 respondents were male.

1.2 AGE

All of the men were aged over 35. Five were aged between 35-44, four were aged between 45-54 and two were aged over 55.

1.3 LEVEL OF EDUCATION

Eight of the eleven men had a low level of education. The three men with the lowest education levels had primary level education only. Three men had a high level of education possessing the Leaving Cert or higher.*

* *One of these men was educated in England, had his GCSE's and a diploma. The other man was educated in Bosnia and possessed a third level degree. Eight of these men had some level of secondary education. Five of the respondents had gone back to study at school or college, (table 1 in appendix*).*

1.4 DURATION OF UNEMPLOYMENT

Three men had been unemployed for 10 years or more. Eight men had been unemployed for 3 years or more.

Data from the NESF 1994 shows that the longer a person is unemployed, the greater the probability of that person remaining unemployed. For example, persons unemployed for under a year have a 30 per cent chance of being unemployed a year later. Those who have been unemployed for over one but less than two years have a 61% chance of remaining unemployed one year later; and those who have been unemployed for over two years have a 74 per cent chance of being unemployed one year later. This figure rises to over 80 per cent for males aged 25-44 and to 90 per cent for males aged 45-54⁴. Length of unemployment is correlated with age in table 2 in the appendix.

When length of unemployment is correlated with education level it can be seen that those respondents who had been unemployed the longest (6-10 years plus) had the lowest levels of education, (primary/lower secondary) , (table 3 in appendix).

Research has found that age, duration of unemployment and gender all have an influence on long term unemployment and display important features when looked at together⁵.

The numbers of very long-term unemployed (more than three years) particularly males in Ireland is a chronic problem. Unemployed males have a greater tendency to be long-term unemployed than do their female counterparts. The Labour Force Survey (1996) shows that the proportion of those who are long-term unemployed increases with age and this is particularly dramatic for males.

A Quarterly Household Survey Special Tabulation 1998 on persons classified by sex, age, gender shows that in the 2nd quarter of 1998, 50.2 per cent of unemployed men in the 35-44 age group were unemployed for three years or more. The corresponding figure for females was 23 per cent. For unemployed males in the 45-54 age group the numbers unemployed for three years or more increased to 57.1 per cent, as compared to 20.2 per cent for females.

4 NESF (1994) Ending Long-Term Unemployment. NESF. Dublin.

5 ESF, (1998). ESF and the Long-Term Unemployed. Dublin: ESF.

This demonstrates that the number of males in both age cohorts (35-44) and (45-54) who are unemployed for over three years is more than double the figure for females⁶. It is important to note that the measuring of female unemployment is quite complex due to the way the statistics on unemployment are gathered. Because of this, it is safe to assume that there is an undercounting of female unemployment. However the QNHS does indicate a particular trend for long-term unemployed men, a particular type of unbroken labour market exclusion.

1.5 TYPE OF SOCIAL WELFARE PAYMENT

Six of the respondents were in receipt of Unemployment Assistance and two were in receipt of Unemployment Benefit. Three others were in receipt of pensions. One man was in receipt of Pre Retirement Pension, one was in receipt of Invalidity Pension, and one was in receipt of Superannuation Health.

1.6 EMPLOYMENT HISTORY

Before the current period of unemployment all eleven respondents were working full time with the exception of one who was self employed, (table 4 in appendix). Since leaving school ten out of the eleven respondents had more than 3 jobs and four had more than six jobs, (table 5 in appendix). Many of these men worked in skilled jobs before becoming unemployed, (table 6 in appendix). Ten out of the eleven men provided reasons why their last job ended. Four of the respondents left their job due to health/sickness reasons. Three men walked out. The reasons given for walking out were: human relations problems, low wages and one man said he didn't like the changes taking place.

2. RESPONDENTS JOBSEEKING ACTIVITIES

The men were asked if they sought work at three different stages: firstly during the first year of unemployment, secondly, after the first year and thirdly, in the past year. They were asked for each stage the number of jobs they applied for, the number of interviews they were called for and the number of interviews they attended, (tables 7-7.3 in appendix).

- **During the first year** of unemployment eight men applied for jobs, six of whom were called for interviews.
- **After one year of** unemployment seven men continued to look for work, three of whom were called for interviews.
- **In the past year** eight men applied for jobs, four of whom were called for interviews.

2.1 REASONS FOR GIVING UP LOOKING FOR WORK

The main reasons for giving up looking for work were identified as; given up hope of getting a job, depression/withdrawal, age, didn't want to be hurt further, fear of rejection, gap between skills and jobs and not being able to fit in. Other less frequently mentioned reasons included; sickness/health, the need for education, no suitable jobs, badly paid jobs, expected rejection and employers fear of wage requests, (table 8 in appendix).

2.2 REASONS FOR CONTINUING TO LOOK FOR WORK

The respondents gave their reasons for continuing to look for work. The two main reasons listed by six of the men in each case was the need for money, and a need to occupy themselves. In regards to wages, this was needed in particular to be able to pay household bills and not to be in debt. Some of the men complained about being bored, some said they were fed up hanging about the house and others missed getting up early. One man stressed that work for him would provide self satisfaction and that was more important than the need for money.

2.3 OFFERED EMPLOYMENT BUT REFUSED

Eight of the men were offered employment at some stage but refused it. The reasons given for not taking up an offer of employment were little financial incentive because of the low pay offered and loss of secondary benefits. Other reasons included weak work incentive, having to move to another country and health reasons, (table 9 in appendix).

⁶ This data comes from a special tabulation carried out by the CSO using information from the 2nd Quarter National Household Survey, (1998).

2.4 JOB-SEEKING SKILLS TRAINING

Five men had taken part in a training course in job-seeking skills. All of the respondents found this training in some way useful, however one man said that he would have preferred more teaching as he felt he was "left to learn for myself". Other comments were as follows:

"It refreshed me in things I had forgotten."

"I wasn't too used to doing interviews it thought me how to learn about writing CV's."

"It helped show us how to put your CV together and we were taught how to do interviews properly."

2.5 CURRICULUM VITAE (CV)

Seven of the respondents stated that they had a current up to date CV. The reason given for not having a CV by the other four respondents was that they never needed one. Nine of the respondents felt that having a CV was useful, (table 12 in appendix). Six respondents said that it gives prospective employers an idea of what the person is like.

One man stated:

"It can make you feel more confident, especially if someone helps you with it. People don't realise the skills they have. It's a tool employers have to have and you need to get a first interview".

Two out of the eleven respondents felt that a CV would be of no use to them. One of these men stated:

"It wouldn't be useful for anything I would be looking for now."

The other man stated:

"Personal characteristics are more important than a CV."

2.6 INTERVIEWS

The men were asked about the last interview that they attended and how they prepared for it, (tables 13-14 in appendix). Seven men answered this question.

- Only three out of the seven men were asked for a CV.
- Three out of the seven men sought information about the company.
- Only one man practised interview skills.
- All of the men were satisfied to some degree with their performance at the interview.
- Six men were satisfied with the employers conduct at the interview.
- Two out of the seven men were offered the job.
- Three of the men sought feedback.
- Two men indicated that they found this feedback useful and one man said that it was not useful to him as he was told he was over-educated.
- The majority of the men involved in the group sessions felt the need for training in interview techniques.

2.7 THE BLACK ECONOMY

Five men worked occasionally in the black economy. In the group session the men felt that not as many unemployed people are working in the black these days. Reasons given were:

"It is much stricter."

"Employers are fined if employees are found to be working in the black."

2.8 DESIRED JOBS

The men were asked to describe their ideal job in terms of pay, conditions, prospects, advantages and disadvantages. Some important findings emerged (see table page 15 in the appendix):

- All of these men displayed a willingness to get back to work. All of them had an idea of the type of job they would like.
- All of the men chose jobs requiring specific skills. In the majority of cases further training would be needed to equip these men with the necessary skills.

- In terms of pay, two men did not quote a figure. One man was unsure and the other asked for “adequate pay”. Nine of the men chose wages above the proposed minimum wage of £176 gross per week.
- In terms of the advantages of taking their ideal job five of the men mentioned the pay. A range of other reasons were also provided. These reasons related to:
 - having a sense of identity
 - creating local employment
 - a better way of life
 - gaining more experience
 - help to do things unable to do at present
 - job satisfactio
 - pride
 - keeping the mind occupied
 - getting out of the house.

Eight men could find no disadvantages in taking up their ideal job. The disadvantages mentioned related to the number of hours, and loss of rent allowance.

SECTION 2

RECRUITMENT

1. EMPLOYERS

This section will examine the type of recruitment and selection methods used by the nine employers who took part in the employer research in Blanchardstown.

1.1 BRIEF PROFILE OF THE COMPANIES

All nine employer respondents were involved in the recruitment and selection process. The occupational positions and the type of business of the sample can be found in tables 16-21 in the appendices. A total of 281 persons were employed in full-time and part-time positions between the nine companies responding to the survey. Of these 92% were full-time employees and 8% were part-time employees. Four of the companies employed extra staff on a seasonal basis.

New Recruits 1998

Eight of the nine companies recruited semi/unskilled staff in 1998. The largest company in the survey recruited 30 males full-time and 30 females full-time.

All companies were asked to provide figures of the numbers of semi/unskilled staff recruited in 1998, (see table 22 in appendix).

1.2 RECRUITMENT OF PREVIOUSLY UNEMPLOYED PEOPLE IN 1998.

Three out of the nine companies hired a long-term unemployed person in 1998. Four companies stated that no long-term unemployed people applied for positions in 1998. Long-term unemployed people applied to five of the companies.

- **In the first company** around 50 long-term unemployed people applied for jobs however no interviews were given to any of these applicants.
- **In the second company** around 5 long-term unemployed people applied however no interviews were given to any of these applicants.

This information makes clear the fact that long-term unemployed people are applying for jobs and in some cases employers are not considering them for interviews. In this way long-term unemployed people are being automatically rejected before reaching the interview stage. It is interesting to note that when both of these employers are asked about their perceptions of employing someone who is long-term unemployed the former questions long-term unemployed peoples interest in employment and the latter states that there is "no excuse (for long-term unemployment) in todays current "full employment" climate".

In the case of the three other companies all of the long-term unemployed people who applied were interviewed and employed.

One of these companies interviewed three long-term unemployed men who applied, and employed one on a full-time basis and two on a seasonal basis. Another of these companies employed three males also after they had applied and were interviewed. The remaining company interviewed one long-term unemployed man who applied and subsequently hired him.

1.3 RECRUITMENT METHODS

Employers were asked to indicate the recruitment methods, which were used to fill the 1998 vacancies. (Table 23 in the appendix).

The three most common methods used were person referred by someone in the company, CV's on file and FAS.

Other common methods used were person referred by someone employer knows, national newspapers, recruitment agencies, local newspapers and the local employment service.

The least used methods were the Centre for the Unemployed, unsolicited applications, the local Social Welfare Office and advertisements placed in shop windows.

1.4 EMPLOYERS RATINGS OF RECRUITMENT METHODS

The employers were asked to rate the recruitment methods which they had used from a rating scale of "not at all useful" through to excellent, (table 24 in appendix).

The Local Employment Service received an "excellent" rating by those employers who had maintained a relationship with the Employer Liaison Officer. These employers had all recruited long-term unemployed people in 1998.

"Person referred by someone employer knows "received a good rating".

The methods which were rated as "not useful" by at least one employer were the following:

- FAS (3 respondents)
- CV's on file
- National newspapers
- Recruitment agencies
- Local Newspapers
- National Newspapers
- Centre for the Unemployed
- Local Social Welfare Office

2. THE LONG-TERM UNEMPLOYED

2.1 METHODS USED TO FIND OUT ABOUT JOBS

The long-term unemployed respondents were asked to indicate the methods which they use to find out about jobs, (table 10 in appendix).

The most popular method identified was looking at the recruitment section of local newspapers followed closely by word of mouth. Five respondents found out through the FAS office and one respondent found out about jobs through the LES. None of the respondents looked in national newspapers, used recruitment agencies or called in person to companies.

SECTION 3

SELECTION METHODS

The employers were asked to indicate which selection methods they used and also to rate their effectiveness against the same criteria as used for recruitment methods, (table 25 in appendix).

The most frequently used selection methods among the employers were references followed by unstructured interviews, structured interviews and application forms.

In terms of effectiveness, references, structured interviews and application forms all received the highest ratings.

1.1 TRAINING IN RECRUITMENT AND SELECTION

Five employers had received training in recruitment and selection.

Two employers received their training in college. Another employer was a Production/Labour Manager for a multi national company for 10 years and gained his experience there. The Small Firms Association provided training to one employer. The last employer received in-house training.

Four employers had never received any training in recruitment and selection.

Only one employer used written materials/guidelines to help in the recruitment and selection process, (RG DATA Advice Manual).

1.2 CHARACTERISTICS EMPLOYERS SEEK WHEN SELECTING STAFF

In order to find out how important certain characteristics are to employers for filling semi-skilled/unskilled vacancies, a list of 25 characteristics was devised. The respondents were asked to rate 25 characteristics as "essential", "desirable" and "not important" when selecting job applicants for semi/unskilled vacancies, (tables 26-29 in appendix).

"Essential" Requirements

The characteristics rated as "essential" by the respondents for filling semi/unskilled positions can be seen here.

The most essential characteristics chosen were reliability, flexibility, health and personal hygiene.

These employers findings indicate the importance of personal attributes in selecting new employees. Lack of recent employment experience on the part of long-term unemployed applicants might hinder their abilities to demonstrate these personal traits to potential employers. Hence the need for equipping long-term unemployed people with these non-skill related characteristics.

"Desirable" Characteristics

The characteristics rated as desirable by the men for filling semi/unskilled vacancies can be seen in the appendix.

The characteristics rated as "desirable" by just over half of the employers surveyed were; immediate availability for work, literacy, general work experience, distance from employment and references.

It can be seen that for the majority of employers those characteristics chosen as "desirable" are mainly non-personal.

Characteristics Rated as "Not Important"

Six employers rated the presence of a relative or friend in the company as "not important".

The majority of employers rated age as "not important". Technical competence and experience in a similar job were rated as desirable by four respondents and not important by four respondents.

1.3 MOST IMPORTANT FACTORS FOR FILLING SEMI-SKILLED/UNSKILLED VACANCIES

The employers were then asked to state the most important characteristics they themselves consider in the selection process for semi/skilled unskilled vacancies.

These were analysed in terms of frequency rather than a rating scale. Nine employers answered this section. The results can be seen in table 29 in the appendix:

As can be seen 12 out of the 15 most important factors chosen were personal characteristics. The most frequent characteristics chosen were ability, willingness to work and honesty.

2. LONG-TERM UNEMPLOYED PEOPLE'S PERCEPTIONS OF THE CHARACTERISTICS THAT EMPLOYERS FEEL ARE IMPORTANT WHEN RECRUITING

The long-term unemployed men were asked what they believed the main characteristics employers sought when recruiting. The response can be seen in the table 31 in the appendix.

Perceptions of characteristics employers seek

The most frequently mentioned characteristics were "own initiative", "reliability", "experience", "honesty" and "youth". Other less frequently mentioned reasons included: competence, number of children, subservient attitude and being untrained.

2.1 CHARACTERISTICS LONG-TERM UNEMPLOYED RESPONDENTS BELIEVE THEY POSSESS

Characteristics Respondents felt they have

With regard to the characteristics respondents themselves felt they possessed the most frequently mentioned were experience, honesty, reliability, ability to work on one's own initiative, motivation, personality, appearance, competency, flexibility and specific skills (table 32 in appendix). All of these characteristics were indicated by employers to be extremely important.

3. LONG-TERM UNEMPLOYED PEOPLE'S PERCEPTIONS OF EMPLOYERS

The respondents were asked if they felt that employers treat long term unemployed people differently to others.

Eight out of the eleven respondents felt that employers treat long-term unemployed people differently. Two respondents said the employers did not treat them differently.

Two respondents said that employers treat them differently because they have no understanding of why a person could be unemployed for so long, comments were as follows:

"They would be wondering why someone was out of work for that long. Is he lazy, unreliable?"

"Because a person has been out of work employers seem to get the impression that they would do anything."

"Some employers label people because they have not been working for a long time."

"Employers get the impression that they are superior to you- some of them try to belittle you."

"Yes, some employers take advantage of unemployed people - I have unemployed friends working on building sites; they are only getting backhanders."

"Employers prefer to give jobs to people who are in employment."

4. LONG-TERM UNEMPLOYED: ACTUAL EXPERIENCE WITH EMPLOYERS

Six respondents when speaking of their own experiences with employers used terms like, "Good", "Alright", "Fair", "Very well", "Courteously treated" and "Just another applicant". Three respondents were not pleased with their experiences:

"I found employers extremely suspicious."

"Up until the age of 50 I thought they were reasonable, after I became 50 their attitudes had changed. They have a youth complex."

"Not getting any word back when you apply for a job, your application is ignored."

Two respondents did not wish to comment as they said they did not have any interviews lately.

5. EMPLOYERS PERCEPTIONS OF THE LONG-TERM UNEMPLOYED

In this section employers were asked their perceptions of recruiting a long-term unemployed person. Comments were made as follows:

"As long as a person is suitable for retail employment - I would be prepared to give that person a chance to prove themselves."

"The fact that they are unemployed wouldn't bother me. I'd give someone a chance."

"I don't distinguish. It's their availability for work that matters."

5.1 NEGATIVE COMMENTS

"He likely is so used to getting the dole money that he is not too keen to work. In this area jobs are very easily obtained."

"The difficulties with long-term unemployed people generally is that they have no experience of work, i.e. coming in on time and being there. They expect to be handed something for nothing because they are used to it (dole). One long-term unemployed person we had didn't come into work but expected to be paid."

"Due to a high turnover of unskilled workers with high unemployment records we now seek a gardaí confirmation of "no criminal record"."

One employer stated:

"No long-term unemployed people have applied to our company to the best of my knowledge."

Three respondents were prepared to give long-term unemployed people a chance. A perception among two of the respondents was that long-term unemployed people are used to getting the dole and as a result they are not too interested in working. One employer displayed lack of trust of unemployed people as he equated unemployment with having a criminal record.

5.2 SELECTION OF LONG-TERM UNEMPLOYED PEOPLE VERSUS SHORT-TERM UNEMPLOYED PEOPLE

The employers were asked if they would make a distinction between short-term unemployed people and long-term unemployed people in terms of selecting candidates for employment.

- Seven employers said that they would not make a distinction.
- Two employers said they would have a preference for a short-term unemployed person. Reasons given are as follows:

"Long-term unemployed people have "no excuse" in today's climate. They have difficulty adjusting to a normal days work."

"Short-term unemployed people are more likely to want to work."

Employers were asked to rate according to "high", "medium" or "low" long-term unemployed people returning to work in terms of the following criteria:

Eight employers answered this question.

The majority of employers perceive long-term unemployed people as "medium" in terms of all five criteria: level of skills, reliability, ability adjusting to work, motivation and level of wages demanded.

However three employers perceived long-term unemployed people as "low" in terms of skill level and ability adjusting to work.

SECTION 4

BARRIERS IDENTIFIED BY LONG-TERM UNEMPLOYED PEOPLE IN OBTAINING EMPLOYMENT

The men were asked to list what they felt were the main barriers in obtaining employment (table 33 in appendix).

The most frequently mentioned barriers were identified as age, low pay and education. Other less frequently mentioned barriers included address, and low self esteem

The difficulties of getting back to work were further explored in the group sessions. While the men were in agreement that there are jobs out there, they compared the type of work they had before they became unemployed to those available at present. (The majority of these men had been in full time jobs and their weekly earnings were quite high). The men took issue with the low wages being offered at present and the relatively short term nature of the contracts.

"There is plenty of work out there but the wages are not enough".

"Wages are not enough if you want to buy a house- you wouldn't get a mortgage."

"There is no such thing as a permanent job anymore. Most contracts last for 6 months."

"I would expect what I used to get paid and a longer term contract. You don't get it nowadays."

"The tax system needs to be changed for people on lower wages".

"The only jobs being offered are CE schemes or those which are paying badly."

One man felt that the return of qualified emigrants was making it more difficult for long-term unemployed people to get work. He stated:

"There is not as much emigration these days – it was more popular years ago. As a result people are staying in Ireland and the jobs are not going to the long-term unemployed."

The majority of the men equated job satisfaction with being paid well for the job.

"I am willing to do a job that pays good money but might not necessarily be mentally stimulating."

One man however had the opposite view as he stated:

"It's not necessarily the money which attracts but job satisfaction is equally if not more important."

The group felt that the minimum wage should be around £250 nett a week.

1. JOBS FOR OLDER WORKERS

The group also felt that the jobs on offer for over 35's are quite menial.

However one man had a positive attitude as he stated:

"Some jobs only take on older people as they have more experience and life skills. The shopping centre is now only starting to take on some older men."

2 LOSS OF THE MEDICAL CARD

Respondents were asked how important a consideration secondary benefits are when being offered employment. The medical card was the main benefit referred to. The mortgage supplement and the differential rent scheme were also considered important. One man felt that the loss of the medical card would have far greater effects than losing rent allowance. It was felt that the ceiling of £250 was too low to start losing benefits.

Ten of the men possessed a medical card and said that this was a very important benefit to them. One man felt that there should be some sort of contract to ensure it is not taken off you until after the 3 years. Two men felt that if the pay was sufficient losing the medical card would not make a difference. One man felt that the ability to retain the medical card on Community Employment schemes provides a good incentive. One man stated:

"It is a good help that you can keep your Medical Card for 3 years."

Overall there was little awareness amongst the men about the ability to retain the medical card for three years after securing employment.

SECTION 5

THE USE AND PERCEPTIONS OF LABOUR MARKET SERVICES

1. INTRODUCTION

The data in this section refers to both long-term unemployed men and employer's awareness and experiences of labour market services.

The long-term unemployed men were asked to rate the services in terms of its usefulness to them. For this a rating scale was used from "not at all useful" through to excellent.

Employers were also invited to rate the effectiveness of these services against the following criteria (table 34 to 36 in appendix):

Flexible Approach i.e. how flexible did they believe the service was in their approach to the employer?

Awareness of employer's needs i.e. how aware did employers believe that the staff was of their recruitment needs in business?

Expertise of staff i.e. how good did employers believe that staff were in doing their job?

Customer focused i.e. how focused did employers believe that the service was on the needs of their business?

2. CONTACT WITH LABOUR MARKET SERVICES

2.1 LONG-TERM UNEMPLOYED

FAS and the Local Employment Service were the main labour market services that the men were in contact with. Seven out of eleven respondents indicated contact with both services at some stage. Four men had contacted the social welfare office. Three men had contacted the Area Based Partnership. Two men had contacted the centre for the unemployed and two men had contacted the local VEC.

2.2 EMPLOYERS

In order to establish employer's relationship with local labour market services employers were asked if they were in contact with FAS, the Local Employment Service, the local Social Welfare Office and CERT. Five employers had contacted FAS and four employers had contacted the LES. None of the employers were in contact with the local Social Welfare Office. None of the employers had any contact with Cert. As none of these companies were involved in the tourism industry this was not surprising.

One employer did not use any of these services as he stated:

"Past experience showed very mis-matched uninterested replies."

3. FAS

3.1 LONG-TERM UNEMPLOYED

Seven men out of the eleven had at some stage used the services of FAS. The majority of the men found FAS in some way useful. However responses made were quite negative in terms of meeting these unemployed peoples needs:

"I never had any correspondence with them."

"Community Employment was the only thing really on offer I wanted to move away from this type of job to a good paying job."

"Disgusting. They advised me to go to Germany. I didn't get paid for 8 weeks."

"I didn't find the jobs very suitable."

In the group session one man spoke of the value of FAS:

"FAS is there if you want it. Education and training are the key to employment."

In the first group session the men were shown a FAS promotional video entitled – **What FAS Can Do For You.**

This video clip showed five people looking in a FAS window, wondering what FAS could do for them. The people consisted of a young woman who wanted to do an apprenticeship, an unemployed young man, an employer, a married woman who hadn't worked in years and a young woman just out of college. The group felt they could not identify with the people portrayed on the video.

3.2 EMPLOYERS

Six employers contacted FAS as they were looking for a person to fill a vacancy.

FAS was itself investigating two companies recruitment needs.

FAS were putting people in contact with three of the companies for a job.

In terms of effectiveness FAS received quite mixed ratings, (table 39 in appendix). Some felt that the expertise of staff was "good" while even more felt it was "poor". Flexible approach, awareness of employers needs and customer focus received less favourable ratings in general.

Three employers gave their opinions of FAS based on their own experiences:

"If it's the long-term unemployed that FAS are supposed to be working for they should be closed down."

"Many years ago I asked FAS to recommend people for retail employment. I asked them only to send people from the local area. I got a lot of junkies and illiterate people applying from all around the city."

"FAS is too bureaucratic. The standard of person applying from FAS is very low."

4. LES

4.1 LONG-TERM UNEMPLOYED

Seven men had used the services of the Local Employment Service. Six of them found the Local Employment Service in some way useful. Reasons given were:

"It was very helpful, the one to one interview was very beneficial looking at my options instead of just trying to get you off the live register."

Two men were disappointed with the outcomes as neither of them had heard anything back from the LES. One of these men said:

"While they were good at the talking in the end nothing came of it."

In the group session some of the men said they had gone to an LES mediator to help them in their job search and had found it useful.

4.2 EMPLOYERS

Four employers were in contact with the Local Employment Service.

The LES was investigating all of their recruitment needs at the time of contact. These employers were all looking for a person to fill a vacancy. In all four cases the LES was putting someone in contact with the company for a job.

Three employers also had a general discussion/information with the LES.

A flexible approach, awareness of employers needs, expertise of LES staff and customer focused received a high rating from the majority of respondents. Only one employer rated all of them as not useful.

One employer felt that:

"The LES should be given more resources."

5 SOCIAL WELFARE OFFICE

5.1 LONG-TERM UNEMPLOYED

Apart from collecting payments, signing on or being called for interviews only four men had used the local Social Welfare Office for information or advice about getting a job.

Over half of the respondents were pleased with this service.

One man found the Social Welfare Office very informative.

Another man said:

"They were more helpful than they were ten years ago."

However one man was dissatisfied with the lack of assistance. He said:

"I had to push for things himself."

5. AREA BASED PARTNERSHIP

Three men had used the services of the Area Partnership.

All three respondents who used the services of the partnership found it useful.

The reasons given were:

"The people were very helpful and supportive".

"It pointed me in the right direction and assisted me with enquiries."

One man spoke about an exhibition he attended which was held by Blanchardstown Partnership which he found valuable as it provided information on training courses.

6. CENTRE FOR THE UNEMPLOYED

Two men had used the services of the local Centre of the Unemployed. One man felt encouraged as he was introduced to the local Enterprise Board (as he wanted to start up his own business).

Other Services

Two men had used the services of the local VEC. One man said that the service was good and there was a wide range of courses. Other services mentioned included the Blanchardstown Enterprise Board, one man was very pleased with the service, he said it was very useful and gave him encouragement to get his business idea going. Fortlawn Development Group was also mentioned. One man was involved in voluntary work for the Blanchardstown Resource Centre. Two men said that the Citizens Information Centre was considerably useful and provided good welfare rights information.

SECTION 6

TRAINING COURSES, EDUCATION AND EMPLOYMENT OPTIONS

1. UNEMPLOYED PEOPLE'S AWARENESS OF TRAINING COURSES (see table 38 in appendix)

In general there was a good awareness amongst the unemployed men of the training courses available. Those training schemes which commanded the highest levels of awareness were: the Job Training Scheme, Cert Training, Enterprise Training, Re-integration Training, Specific Skills Training, Community Training Workshop and Travellers Training Centre. The awareness stemmed mainly from word of mouth followed by FAS.

The group generally felt that training is a good idea for younger people as opposed to older people. One man stated:

"I'm too old to retrain."

Some of the men had been trained in particular trades and compared this training with the present FAS apprenticeship training. Some expressed their dissatisfaction with the shorter nature of these courses at present:

"FAS training is decreasing the value of apprenticeships, the length of training is extremely short as opposed to years spent studying a particular trade."

"The training is inadequate resulting in cheap labour. There is no continuity between training and employment."

There was consensus that in order for training to work for unemployed people there needs to be a job guarantee after education/training. It was recommended that a follow up service should be put in place to help people find jobs.

2. AWARENESS OF EDUCATION PROGRAMMES (see table 39 in appendix)

As can be seen in the table the greatest level of awareness of education options were adult literacy schemes and the back to education option. Yet again the highest level of awareness came from word of mouth.

3. AWARENESS OF EMPLOYMENT OPTIONS (see table 40 in appendix)

There was a very high level of awareness of employment options as can be seen in the above table. The Community Employment Scheme known by all respondents.

"CE schemes and training are measures to recycle the figures."

In the group sessions there was agreement that Employer Incentive Schemes are producing cheap labour and short-term contracts and that they benefit employers more.

The group felt that Back To Work Allowance doesn't benefit unemployed people because it was stated:

"Some employers are using it as a subsidy to pay lower wages."

Some of the men in the group session were not too impressed with CE. The following comments were made:

"After completing CE you are not guaranteed a job."

"That year on CE is better spent doing training."

4. EMPLOYERS AWARENESS AND EXPERIENCE OF EMPLOYER SUBSIDY SCHEMES

In order to learn these employers' opinions and experiences of employment subsidies, employers were asked about their awareness and use of the main employment subsidy schemes. Employers were also invited to rate the effectiveness of the schemes they had used, (table 37 in appendix). Eight employers answered this section.

- The Back To Work Allowance scheme commanded the highest levels of awareness (7 employers) and the greatest levels of use (3 employers). The Back To Work Allowance received mixed ratings among the three employers. Two employers said they would use it again. One of these however stated:

"I would use it again but it only benefits the employee not the employer."

- One employer gave his reasons for not using the scheme again:
"I would not use the BTWA again, the scheme is a good incentive for LTU. The problem for employers is that because it is biased in favour of the LTU it has a knock on effect on wage expectations of permanent employees therefore it affects the employers at the end of the day."
- The PRSI had the second highest level of awareness and use. The PRSI Exemption Scheme received an "excellent" rating from one employer. Both employers who used this scheme said they would use it again. Comments made by these employers were:
"I would use it again. It's a good incentive to increase the workforce."
"I would use again but its not any great benefit."
- The Part-time Job Incentive, Jobs Initiative, Jobstart and Workplace were used by none of the employers.
- One employer was not aware of any of the schemes.
- Only one employer used Job Assist and would not use it again. This employer gave the following reason:
"Small firms don't make the type of profit to benefit from the double taxation deduction."

SECTION 7

THE MEDIA

1 LONG-TERM UNEMPLOYED PERCEPTIONS OF THE MEDIA

The unemployed men were asked questions regarding the media's coverage of unemployment and the long-term unemployed. Firstly, respondents were asked whether they felt that the media's portrayal of unemployment and long-term unemployed people was fair, accurate or informative, (table 41 in appendix). Secondly, they were asked if they believed that the public were influenced by this coverage. Thirdly, they were asked if they felt a change was needed in the reporting of unemployment related issues. Eleven men answered these questions.

Just over half of the men felt the media is not fair with one man stating that some is fair and some is not. The majority of respondents felt that the media was not accurate and not informative.

Ten men felt that the public are influenced by the media's portrayal of long-term unemployed people and unemployment, one man felt that they are not. The following responses were made:

"The public don't have an interest or they don't care unless it comes to their own doorstep."

"In programmes about long-term unemployed people everyone is tarred with the same brush. In my situation it is impossible to find suitable work because of health reasons."

"A lot of people believe that LTU don't want to work."

"I think that educated areas are more tolerant. It's the nouveaux rich who are intolerant."

"People form their opinions from what they see there needs to be a positive portrayal of long-term unemployed people."

"Some of the radio stations put you down and label unemployed people. People tend to believe it when they hear it so often. Mary Harney uses scare tactics."

The following suggestions were made by the long-term unemployed men for changes in the coverage of unemployment by the media.

"The media should give a true picture of what it is like to be unemployed."

"Journalists should be more aware of the impact what they are saying is going to have particularly on over 35's."

"The media needs to let people know what opportunities are there for training and listening to people who have been on schemes."

"It needs to change for the better. There is a big push nowadays for people to work, but what employers are offering is minimal. Minimum wage is a good thing. The reasons why people are unemployed needs to be put forward."

"Long term unemployed people are victims of an unfair system and the focus should be on the reasons for that."

"The media has to be to the people their supposed to be serving."

"There needs to be more information on the options available to people and the courses they can go on."

"More live debates more positive angle it is only the negative element which is being shown all the time."

2. EMPLOYERS PERCEPTIONS OF THE MEDIA

Employers were asked the same questions regarding the fairness, accuracy and informative nature of the media's portrayal of long-term unemployment and unemployment, (table 42 in appendix). They were also asked if they felt that they were influenced by the media's coverage and also if they believed changes were necessary.

Seven out of eight employers felt that the media's portrayal of unemployment and long-term unemployed people was fair.

Six out of eight employers felt that the media's portrayal of unemployment and long-term unemployed people was informative.

Five out of six employers felt that the media's portrayal of unemployment and long-term unemployed people was accurate.

One respondent commented:

"Because the journalism was good; I felt it was accurate and informative."

Six employers stated that they were not influenced by what they see/read in the media.

Two employers were influenced by the media.

"Yes the present climate leaves no reasonable excuse for unemployed people if they are willing to work and pay taxes."

'My perception is based on actual experience through the interview/application process.'

"I make up my own mind based on my own experience."

"I would not be aware of being influenced negatively."

Four of the eight employers felt a change was necessary. Some ideas for change were detailed:

"Instead of concentrating on tax and incentives it needs to be looked at on a much wider scale. The requirements of small companies and the difficulties employers are facing in recruiting and training staff need to be explored."

"A more positive attitude is necessary."

"Changes are necessary if people themselves are prepared to work. In this area there is a surplus of job vacancies."

"It needs to be more informative."

SECTION 8

RECCOMENDATIONS

A number of recommendations were identified in order for long-term unemployed people's prospects to improve. These recommendations have been drawn from the findings of the research.

1. OUTREACH, PUBLICITY AND NETWORKING

The research has clearly indicated an underuse of labour market services amongst the unemployed and employers in Blanchardstown. The main reason for this is lack of awareness.

Renewed efforts must be made to ensure that all unemployed people living in Dundalk are aware of and have information about the local labour market services (FAS, Social Welfare, LES and Unemployed Centres).

Many of the employer incentive schemes were not used by any of the employers surveyed demonstrating the need for greater information dissemination. Overall outreach, publicity and networking needs to be targeted more effectively at both long-term unemployed people and employers in Blanchardstown.

2. EDUCATION AND TRAINING

Although good levels of awareness of training and education courses were found amongst the long-term unemployed sample, the main source of information for these stemmed from word of mouth. This demonstrates how easily misinformation can arise and calls for a greater level of information dissemination.

Older long-term unemployed people require particular types of support when taking up training, these must take their skills and capability levels into account. The research indicates that many training courses presently on offer are unattractive to older long-term unemployed people. Effective induction and post programme support procedures need to be incorporated in the design of education and training programmes for those excluded from the labour market.

The design and delivery of "bridging courses" for FAS mainstream training is also crucial. Awareness of literacy programmes must also be improved. Personal attributes were the most important factors employers sited when recruiting for semi skilled/unskilled positions. Hence the need for equipping long-term unemployed people with non skill related attributes.

3. JOB OFFER GUARANTEE

Many of the long-term unemployed men interviewed have been so marginalised from the labour market that it is very difficult for them to re-enter employment. A commitment must be made to provide specific high quality training and a guaranteed job offer to all persons unemployed for over five years.

4. BARRIERS TO EMPLOYMENT

Two of the main barriers sited by the long-term unemployed men were the low level of wages and the loss of the medical card.

4.1 LOW WAGES

In terms of low wages it was felt by the majority of the men that the minimum wage was too low. The proposed £4.40 rate set by the Commission should be updated through the negotiation of the new national agreement.

4.2 HEALTH CARE FOR CHILDREN

Fear of loss of a medical card has long been recognised as a major barrier for many of the long-term unemployed participants particularly with children in taking up work. This stems from a fear of the high cost of medical care. A response to this issue would be to provide a new benefit which would provide medical cover for the children of all insured workers – Children's Health Benefit.

5. EMPLOYERS

Overall employers perceptions of the long-term unemployed were quite negative. The most positive perceptions were found amongst those employers who were working with the Employer Liaison Officer in the Blanchardstown Local Employment Service. This demonstrates the success of this model of practice when working with employers. Human Resource Managers or those directly responsible for recruitment need to become a target group for the production of resource materials. This would ensure that employers are aware of their responsibilities as employers and are encouraged to use best practice when recruiting so as to avoid any form of discrimination.

6. THE MEDIA

The research highlighted the fact that the majority of the long-term unemployed men felt that the media was not informative in its reporting of unemployment. In contrast, the majority of employers felt that the media was informative of the issue. A more in-depth analysis of the causes of long-term unemployment by the media would serve to explain why so many long-term unemployed people are unable to get jobs. This would also provide a clearer and more accurate picture to the public. An attempt should be made to portray more positive/success stories instead of concentrating on the negative, thus bringing about a fairer coverage. An important factor which was highlighted was the need to examine the difficulties employers are having in recruiting staff.

EPILOGUE

PARTICIPANT OUTCOMES

At the beginning of the project it was observed that the majority of the men had very low levels of confidence. However during the course of the group sessions confidence levels improved as the men became more outspoken about the issues affecting their lives. An evaluation was carried out with the men at the end of the sessions. When asked if the sessions had benefited the men in any way the following responses were made:

- The sessions led to a change in attitude.
- Two men felt they had more confidence as a result.
- Increased motivation.
- Realisation that one is not alone in their situation.
- Interesting to hear other peoples views.

From working with these men throughout the course of the project certain personal characteristics were observed in relation to their participation. These are listed as follows:

- Interest and motivation
- Openess
- Increased Confidence
- Punctuality
- Reliability
- Personality

All of these characteristics are required by employers as seen earlier. At the final group session three of the group were in mediation with the Local employment service. One man had just got a job. One man was setting up a meeting with a mediator after the session.

FINAL QUESTIONNAIRE

Four months after the group sessions were completed a final questionnaire was sent to the nine men who attended. The aim of this questionnaire was to find out their current status. Five men answered the questionnaire. Of the two older men (over 55) one remained unemployed and one continued on a CE scheme. Of the two men between 34-44 one became self employed and one went back to work part-time. One man aged 45-54 was taking part in training. One man remained unemployed.

- Three out of the five men had not sought any help or advice since the group sessions.
- The remaining two men had sought information from the Blanchardstown LES and from the Partnership.

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APPENDIX 1

AREA PROFILE OF BLANCHARDSTOWN

POPULATION

The 1996 census figures indicate that between 1991 and 1996, the population of Blanchardstown has further expanded by 18.5% compared to a national growth of 2.8%. The population in 1996 was 38,612 with the following population breakdown for the area:

- 50.7% were under 24 years of age.
- 30.8% were between 35-64 years of age.

OCCUPATIONAL PROFILE

According to the Small Area Population Statistics (SAPS) for Blanchardstown (1996), the majority of male employees worked in Commerce 22% followed by the Manufacturing Industry, 19%. Professional services records the highest number of female employees at 30%.

UNEMPLOYMENT

The Department of Social Community and Family Affairs provided figures for November 1998 showing the number of people who gave an address as Blanchardstown when signing on. The figures can be seen in the following tables. It must be bore in mind that this does not necessarily mean that they signed on at the local office.

Numbers Unemployed (Nov 1998)

Unemployment Assistance	Unemployment Benefit	Credits	Total Unemployed
581	209	34	824

70% of the total unemployed figure were claiming Unemployment Assistance.

Gender Breakdown

Male	Female	Total
553	271	824

67% of claimants were male as opposed to 33% female claimants.

AGE ANALYSIS (MALES)

Under 25	25-30	30-35	35 & over	Total
110	69	68	306	553

55% of male claimants were aged 35 and over.

AGE ANALYSIS (FEMALES)

Under 25	25-30	30-35	35 & over	Total
84	35	35	117	271

43% of female claimants were aged 35 and over

DURATION OF CLAIM			
Under 15mths	15mths – 3yrs	3yrs & over	Total
429	134	261	824

55% of male claimants were aged 35 and over.

LEVEL OF EDUCATION OF UNEMPLOYED PEOPLE 1996.

According to the SAPs the highest level of education recorded by the majority of unemployed men in 1996 was primary level 37%, followed by lower secondary level 34%. For unemployed females the majority had lower secondary level followed by primary level only. Of the total population the largest number of people ceased their education under 15 years.

FAS

In 1998 FAS services were restructured nationally through additional staff investment in new technology and a separation of employment services and community services. FAS Employment Services provide information, advice, support and access to high quality training and relevant work experience. FAS community services works with local communities on various job creation initiatives. In terms of services to business FAS has a comprehensive programme to assist the success of small firms. Training and advice is available to improve skills at both management and employee levels within companies.

The Greater Blanchardstown area is served by the FAS Employment Service Office situated in Blanchardstown Village. Up to December 1999 17,704 registrants were recorded. Currently there are a total of 503 Community Employment places and 84 local Jobs Initiative places available. The Dublin North Regional Employment Services Office were awarded the Quality Mark recently. This award demonstrates a quality customer service.

SOCIAL WELFARE OFFICE

The Navan Road Social Welfare office serves both the Dublin 7 and Dublin 15 areas.

One Job Facilitator is appointed at the Navan Road office. The Job Facilitator also liaises with community agencies. Two information officers serve the Navan Road office.

LES JOBLINK

Blanchardstown LES Joblink was established by the Blanchardstown Partnership in November 1997. LES Joblink consists of a network of centres at Blanchardstown Partnership Offices and at the following community based locations, Mountview, Parlickstown, Corduff and Blakestown. In these LES centres information and general advice is available to all local jobseekers and mediation is provided to the service target groups by trained mediators.

The mediation process includes career guidance, facilitation of client referral and progression into appropriate education and training options, and matching of job ready clients to suitable employment opportunities.

Since its establishment, LES Joblink records a total client contact figure of 4,486, with 2,532 (56%) of these contacts relating to Guidance, 1,597 (36%) recorded as support and 357 (8%) recorded as progression. Currently the service has a caseload of 937 clients, 558 (59%) of whom are "active". Of this active group, 168 (30%) have recently been placed in employment, 10% are being referred to training and education and 2% are already on training/education courses. In 1999 a total of 338 contacts with employers are recorded by the service 41 (12%) of which are initiated by the employer.¹

LES Joblink is the main channel through which most of the special course and services developed and implemented by the Blanchardstown Partnership for the long-term unemployed can be accessed. LES Joblink has responsibility for the Jobs Club which is currently being developed and for recruitment to the FIT (Fastrack to Information Technology) courses. This national initiative aims over the next 3 years to train 3500 long-term unemployed men and women in the necessary skills to enter the IT industry.

¹ This information is taken from eA Report for Blanchardstown Local Employment Service' 1999, compiled by Dr. Phyllis Murphy.

AREA BASED PARTNERSHIP

Apart from the Local Employment Service and the FIT programme the Partnership also runs the Full-time Job Initiative delivered in conjunction with FAS. Since 1998 over 100 people have received the ECDL (European Computer Driving Licence).

STEPS (Support Training and Enterprise Programme) is delivered in association with FAS and is designed to help unemployed people with a business idea, to develop it.

BLANCHARDSTOWN CENTRE FOR THE UNEMPLOYED

The Blanchardstown Centre for the Unemployed (formally the Corduff Centre for the Unemployed) was established in December 1994. The centre provides information on welfare rights, family law, contacts for help groups, help with Curriculum Vitae typing and layout, typing services, adult education advice and information and a jobs noticeboard. The centre also provides educational courses such as Book keeping, Cookery, English and Maths, Childcare, Money Management and Personal Development.

Community resource centres, which provide information and advice to unemployed people, are spread throughout the Blanchardstown area. These centres are based in Blakestown, Parlickstown House, Mountview, Corduff, Hartstown, Huntstown St. Mochta's Clonsilla and St. Brigid's (Blanchardstown).

APPENDIX 2

PROFILE OF THE LONG-TERM UNEMPLOYED PEOPLE FROM BLANCHARDSTOWN

Table 1: Level of Education by Age

AGE	PRIMARY	SECONDARY LESS INTERCERT.	INTERCERT.	LEAVING CERT.	HIGHER
35-44	1	1	2		1
45-54	2		1	1	
Over 55		1			1
Total T= 11	3	2	3	1	2

* One of these men was educated in England he had his GCSEs and did a diploma. The other man was educated in Bosnia and possessed a third level degree. Eight of these men had some level of secondary education. Five of the respondents had gone back to study at school or college.

Table 2: Length of Unemployment (by age)

AGE	1-2 YEARS	3-5 YEARS	6-9 YEARS	10 YEARS PLUS
35-44	1	2		2
45-54	1	1	1	1
Over 55	1	1		
Total T= 11	3	4	1	3

Table 3: Length of Unemployment by Education

LENGTH OF UNEMPLOYMENT BY EDUCATION N = 11			
LENGTH OF UNEMPLOYMENT	PRIMARY SECONDARY	LOWER	LEAVING CERT/HIGHER
1-2 years	1	1	1
3-5 years		2	2
6-9 years	1		
10 years +	1	2	

Table 4: Employment History

WORKING FULL TIME	SELF EMPLOYED
10	1

Table 5: Number of Jobs since Leaving School

NUMBER OF JOBS SINCE LEAVING SCHOOL T=11			
2 Jobs	3-5 Jobs	6-10 Jobs	More than 10 jobs
1	6	2	2

Table 6: Main Occupations of the men before becoming unemployed

OCCUPATION	COUNT
Factory Worker	3
Postman	1
Technician	1
Construction	2
Factory Supervisor	1
Fitter	1
Print Company Labourer	1
Electrical Engineer	1

LONG-TERM UNEMPLOYED MENS JOBSEEKING ACTIVITIES

The men were asked if they sought work at three different stages: firstly during the first year of unemployment, secondly, after the first year and thirdly, in the past year. They were asked for each stage the number of jobs they applied for, the number of interviews they were called for and the number of interviews they attended.

Table 7: Extent to which respondents sought work

COUNT T = 11			
Job seeking	During 1st year	After 1 year	Past year
Yes	8	7	8
No	3	4	3

Table 7.1 During first year of Unemployment

Number of jobs applied for	Count T =11	Number of Interviews called for	Count T = 11	Number of interviews attended	Count T =11
Between 1-5	4	Between 1-5	6	Between 1-5	6
Between 6-10	2	Between 6-10	0	Between 6-10	0
Between 11-20	0	Between 11-20	0	Between 11-20	0
Between 21-30	2	Between 21-30	0	Between 21-30	0
50 Plus	0	50 Plus	0	50 Plus	0
Total	8	Total	6	Total	6

Table 7.2 After being one year unemployed

Number of jobs applied for	Count T =11	Number of Interviews called for	Count T = 11	Number of interviews attended	Count T =11
Between 1-5	5	Between 1-5	3	Between 1-5	3
Between 6-10	1	Between 6-10	0	Between 6-10	0
Between 11-20	0	Between 11-20	0	Between 11-20	0
Between 21-30	0	Between 21-30	0	Between 21-30	0
50 Plus	1	50 Plus	0	50 Plus	0
Total	7	Total	3	Total	3

Table 7.3 In the past year

Number of jobs applied for	Count T = 11	Number of Interviews called for	Count T = 11	Number of interviews attended	Count T = 11
Between 1-5	8	Between 1-5	4	Between 1-5	4
Between 6-10	0	Between 6-10	0	Between 6-10	0
Between 11-20	0	Between 11-20	0	Between 11-20	0
Between 21-30	0	Between 21-30	0	Between 21-30	0
50 Plus	0	50 Plus	0	50 Plus	0
Total	8	Total	4	Total	4

Table 8: Reasons for giving up looking for work

REASONS	COUNT T = 11
1. Given up hope of getting a job	5
2. Depression/withdrawal	4
3. Age	4
4. Didn't want to be hurt further	4
5. Fear of rejection	3
6. Gap between skills and jobs	3
7. Not able to fit in	3
8. Sickness/Health	2
9. Other	2
10. Family Commitments	1

Table 9: Offered employment but refused

The respondents were asked if they were ever offered employment but refused it for a particular reason, eight of the men said that this had happened to them. Reasons given can be seen from the following table.

Reason why gave up offer of employment	Weak work incentive	Little financial incentive	Loss of secondary benefits	Other reasons	Total
1	4	2	1	8	16

Table 10: Methods used to find out about jobs.

How they found out about jobs.	Count
1. Local Newspapers	9
2. Word of mouth	8
3. FAS	5
4. LES	1
5. National newspapers	0
6. Recruitment agencies	0
7. Calling in person to companies	0
8. Other	0

Table 11: Job-Seeking Skills Training

Extent to which training course in job-seeking is useful; Count			
Not at all	Somewhat	Considerably	Fully
	2	3	

Table 12: Curriculum Vitae (CV)

Extent to which CV is useful; Count			
Not at all	Somewhat	Considerably	Fully
2	2	3	4

Table 13: Interviews

The men were asked about the last interview that they attended and how they prepared for it. Seven men answered this question.

Job Title	Asked for a CV Yes/No	Find out about the org/company Yes/No	Practice Interview Skills Yes/No	Other Sources of info.
Telemarketing-computer advice	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
Truck Driver	No	No	No	Personal contact
Groundsman CE	No	Yes	No	FAS
Gardening- jobs init.	Yes	Yes	No	No
Driver	No	No	No	FAS
Security Guard	Yes	No	No	No
Office Cleaning	No	No	No	No

Table 14: Level of Satisfaction with own performance at the interview.

Job Title	Not at all	Somewhat	Considerably	Fully	Satisfaction with employers conduct at interview
Telemarketing			✓sent for med surprised I didn't get job		Yes
Truck Driver				✓everything was fine but I needed a driving licence	Yes
Groundsman CE				✓I was taken on immediately	Yes
Gardening- jobs initiative		✓			Yes
Driver				✓was offered the job	No
Security Guard		✓			Very dissatisfied
Office Cleaning				✓	Very satisfied
Factory Work				✓	Somewhat satisfied

Table 15: Ideal Jobs

RESPONDENT	TYPE OF JOB	PAY	CONDITIONS	PROSPECTS	ADVANTAGES	DISADVANTAGES
1	Mechanical Engineering	£350 nett	Outdoors	Promotion	Money and finished product	None except with boss if didn't get on
2	Computer Technician	£450 - £500 gross	Clean environment, office hours	Promotion – supervisory role	Money and sense of identity	None
3	Tourism	£25 -£30k	Self Employed	Very Good	Creating local employment	24 hour job and seasonal job
4	Office work	£450 gross	Not Bothered	Better myself	Better living, feel better in myself	None
5	DIY	£200 nett	Good conditions	Good	Gain more experience	None
6	Computers	£300 nett	Good conditions	Like to progress	Different field, . . good for employment	None
7	Painter	Over £200 nett	Acceptable	Good	Help me to do things I can't do now like buy a house	None
8	Engineer	Don't know	Self employed Suiting my own needs	Don't know	More earnings and pleasure	None
9	Community Work	Adequate	Like to meet people	Not looking for long term promotion just job satisfaction	Job satisfaction	Leisure life curtailed
10	Factory Work	£200 nett	Clean and safe	Good	Pride, provider, get out of the house	None
11	Store work	£230 nett at least	Not bothered	Good	Keep mind occupied, get out of the house	Rent if earning over £250

PROFILE OF THE COMPANIES

Table 16: Position of Respondent within the Company

COMPANY POSITION	COUNT T=10
Managing Director	7
Human Resource Manager	1
Company Secretary	1

Table 2 below shows the type of industries who took part in the research.

Table 17 : Business Sector of Companies

BUSINESS SECTOR	COUNT
Advertising and Promotion	1
Plumbing & Heating Equipment	1
Tool & Equipment Hire (Construction Industry)	1
Grass Cutting Machinery	1
Retail Security	1
Petrol Shop	1
Pharmaceutical Manufacturing	1
Domestic Insulation Fitting	1
Electronics Manufacturing	1

Table 18: Numbers Employed in the Ten Companies

NO's. EMPLOYED IN ENTERPRISE	COUNT
Between 1-9	2
Between 10 -19	4
Between 20-49	2
More than 50	1

Table 19: Type of Employment by Gender

No's. Employed	Male Full-time	Male Part-time	Female Full-time	Female Part-time	Total Employed
Count	156	11	101	13	281
%	56%	4%	36%	4%	

Table 20 Occupational Categories of Male Employees

OCCUPATIONAL CATEGORY	COUNT T = 9	COUNT %
Managerial/Professional/Technical	47	27%
Skilled Manual	17	9%
Non-Manual	45	26%
Semi/Unskilled Manual	67	38%
TOTAL	176	

Table 21: Occupational Category of females

OCCUPATIONAL CATEGORY	COUNT T = 9	COUNT %
Managerial/Professional/Technical	26	24%
Skilled Manual	18	16%
Non-Manual	38	35%
Semi/Unskilled Manual	28	25%
TOTAL	110	

Table 22: Recruitment of semi/unskilled Staff, 1998

GENDER BREAKDOWN	COUNT T = 8
Male Full-time	42
Female Full-time	33
Male Part-time	7
Female Part-time	1
TOTAL	83

EMPLOYER RECRUITMENT METHODS

Table 23: Recruitment Methods

RECRUITMENT METHOD	COUNT
Person referred by someone in the company	5
CV's on file	5
FAS	5
Person referred by someone employer knows	3
National Newspapers	3
Employment/Recruitment Agencies	3
Local Newspapers	3
Local Employment Service	3
National Newspapers	3
Centre for the Unemployed	2
Unsolicited Applications	2
Social Welfare Office	1
Advertisements in shop windows	1

Table 24: Ratings of Recruitment Methods

RECRUITMENT METHOD	EFFECTIVENESS OF METHOD T =9				
	Excellent	Good	Average	Poor	Not useful
CV's on file			1		2
FAS					3
Person referred by someone employer knows		2	2	1	
National Newspapers		1		1	1
Employment/Recruitment Agencies			1		1
Local Newspapers		2			1
Local Employment Service	3				
National Newspapers		1		1	1
Centre for the Unemployed					1
Unsolicited Applications			2		
Social Welfare Office					1
Advertisements in shop windows		1	1		

EMPLOYER SELECTION METHODS

Table 25: Effectiveness of Selection Methods

SELECTION METHOD	HAVE USED	EXCELLENT	GOOD	AVERAGE	POOR	NOT USEFUL
Structured Interviews	5	1	3	1		
Unstructured Interviews	7		4	2		1
Application Forms	4	1	2	1		
Ability Tests	3		2	1		
Personality Tests	1			1		
References	7	1	4	2		

Characteristics Sought when selecting Job Applicants for Semi/Unskilled Vacancies

In order to find out how important certain characteristics are to employers for filling semi-skilled/unskilled vacancies, a list of 25 characteristics was devised. The respondents were asked to rate 25 characteristics as "essential", "desirable" and "not important" when selecting job applicants for semi/unskilled vacancies.

Table 26: "Essential" Requirements

"ESSENTIAL" CHARACTERISTICS	NUMBER OF EMPLOYERS T = 10
Reliability	6
Flexibility	5
Health	4
Personal Hygiene	4

* The numbers represent the frequency of selection.

Table 27: "Desirable" Requirements

"DESIRABLE" CHARACTERISTICS	NUMBER OF EMPLOYERS T = 10
Immediate availability for work	6
Literacy	5
General work experience	5
Distance from employment	5
References	5
Technical Competence	4
Employment Record	4
Communication Skills	4
Skills Training	4
Health	4
Experience in a similar job	4

Table 28: Requirements Considered “Not Important”

UNIMPORTANT CHARACTERISTICS	NUMBER OF EMPLOYERS T = 10
Gender	7
Presence of a relative or friend	7
Age over 35	6
Below 25	6
Below 35	5
Short-term Unemployed	5
Address	5
Personal Recommendation	4
Experience in a similar job	4
Technical competence	4
Skills Training	4
Education	4
Long-term Unemployed	4

Table 29: Most Important factors

FACTORS	COUNT T = 9
Ability	4
Willingness to work	3
Honesty	3
Communication Skills	2
Educational Qualifications	2
Punctuality	2
Reliability	2
Personality	1
Cop on	1
Presents well	1
Flexibility	1
Interest	1
Initiative	1
Completed Leaving Cert	1
No gaps in employment	1

Table 30: Employers Ratings of Long-term Unemployed People returning to Work

Employers were asked to rate according to “high”, “medium” or “low” long-term unemployed people returning to work in terms of the criteria set out in Table 30. Eight respondents answered this question.

CRITERIA	HIGH	MEDIUM	LOW
1. Level of Skills	1	4	3
2. Reliability	2	5	1
3. Ability adjusting to work	2	3	3
4. Motivation	2	4	2
5. Level of wages demanded	2	6	

LONG-TERM UNEMPLOYED PEOPLES PERCEPTIONS OF EMPLOYERS

The long-term unemployed men were asked what they believed were the main characteristics employers sought when recruiting.

Table 31: Perceptions of Characteristics Employers Seek

CHARACTERISTIC	COUNT	CHARACTERISTIC	COUNT
Own Initiative	5	Motivation	3
Reliability	5	Appearance	3
Experience	5	Good Timekeeper	2
Honesty	4	Good Worker	2
Youth	4	Flexibility	2
Personality	3	Education	2

Table 32: Characteristics Long-term Unemployed people believe they possess

CHARACTERISTICS RESPONDENTS FELT THEY HAVE			
CHARACTERISTIC	COUNT	CHARACTERISTIC	COUNT
Experience	10	Competence	7
Honesty	10	Flexibility	6
Reliability	10	Specific Skills	6
Own Initiative	9	Education	5
Motivation	8	Integrity	1
Personality	8	Patience	1
Appearance	7	Youth	1

BARRIERS IDENTIFIED BY LONG-TERM UNEMPLOYED PEOPLE

Table 33: Barriers identified by Long-term Unemployed people

MAIN BARRIERS TO OBTAINING WORK	COUNT
Age	10
Low pay	5
Education	4
Health	3
Skills	3
No suitable jobs	3
Experience	3
Gender	2
Impact of unemployment on the person	2

LONG-TERM UNEMPLOYED RESPONDENTS USE AND PERCEPTIONS OF LABOUR MARKET SERVICES

THE DATA IN THIS SECTION REFERS TO THE LONG-TERM UNEMPLOYED MENS AWARENESS AND EXPERIENCES OF LABOUR MARKET SERVICES.

Table 33. Usefulness of Labour Market Services

EXTENT TO WHICH LABOUR MARKET SERVICE IS USEFUL; COUNT				
	NOT AT ALL	SOMEWHAT	CONSIDERABLY	FULLY
FAS	1	2	3	1
Local Employment Service	1	2	2	2
Local Social Welfare Office	1	2		1
Partnership		2	1	
Local Centre for the Unemployed	1		1	
VEC		2		

EMPLOYERS LEVEL OF CONTACT WITH LOCAL LABOUR MARKET SERVICES

In order to establish their relationship with local state services employers were asked if they were in contact with FAS, the Local Employment Service, the local Social Welfare Office and CERT. The results can be seen in Table 16 below.

Table 32: Contact with Labour Market Services

Labour Market Service	In contact with T =9	Not in contact T =9
1. FAS	5	4
2. LES	4	5
3. CERT	0	9
4. Social Welfare	0	8

Employers were also invited to rate the effectiveness of these services against the following criteria:

- **Flexible Approach** i.e. how flexible do they believe the service is in their approach to the employer?
- **Awareness of employer's needs** i.e. how aware do employers believe that the staff are of their recruitment needs in business?
- **Expertise of staff** i.e. how good do employers believe that staff are in doing their job?
- **Customer focused** i.e. how focused do employers believe that the service is on the needs of their business?

Table 33: Employer ratings of FAS against set criteria

CRITERIA	EFFECTIVENESS OF SERVICE				
	Excellent	Good	Average	Poor	Not useful
Flexible approach			2	2	
Awareness of employers needs			2	1	4
Expertise of FAS Staff		2	1	4	
Customer focused			1	3	

* One employer who does not presently use FAS rated it.

Table 34: Employer ratings of LES set criteria

CRITERIA	EFFECTIVENESS OF LES SERVICE				
	Excellent	Good	Average	Poor	Not useful
Flexible approach		3	1		1
Awareness of employers needs		4			1
Expertise of FAS Staff	2	1	1		1
Customer focused	2	1	1		1

Table 37: Employers use and Effectiveness of Employer Subsidy Schemes

Incentive Schemes	Aware of	Have used	Excellent	Good	Average	Poor	Not useful	Would use again
BTWA	7	3		1	1	1		2
Part-time job Incentive	1	0						
Jobs Initiative	1	0						
Job Assist	4	1						0
Jobstart	4	0						
Workplace	2	0						
Employers PRSI Exemption	6	2	1		1			2

LONG-TERM UNEMPLOYED PEOPLE'S AWARENESS OF TRAINING COURSES, EMPLOYMENT OPTIONS AND EDUCATION PROGRAMMES

Table 38: Awareness of Training Courses

TRAINING PROGRAMME	NO. AWARE T = 11
JobTraining Scheme	10
Cert	9
Enterprise Training	7
Re-integration Training	6
Specific SkillsTraining	6
Community Training Workshop	5
Travellers Training Centre	5
Bord IascaighMhara	3
Teagasc	3

Table 39: Awareness of Employment Options

EMPLOYMENT PROGRAMME	NO. AWARE
CE	11
Area Allowance Enterprise	9
BTWA	9
FIS	9
Jobstart	8
Workplace	5
Jobs Initiative	5
Job Assist	4

Table 40: Awareness of Education Programmes

EDUCATION PROGRAMME	NO. AWARE
Adult Literacy Schemes	8
Back to Education Option	8
Part-time/Evening Education	6
VTOS	6

LONG-TERM UNEMPLOYMENT AND EMPLOYERS PERCEPTIONS OF THE MEDIA

Table 41: Long-term Unemployed Mens Perceptions of the Media

IS THE MEDIA...	FAIR	ACCURATE	INFORMATIVE
Yes	4	1	4
No	6	9	7
Some is some is not	1	1	
Total	11	11	11

Table 42: Employer Respondents Perceptions of the Media

IS THE MEDIA...	FAIR	ACCURATE	INFORMATIVE
Yes	7	5	6
No	1	1	2
Total	8	6	8