

# **COMBATING PREJUDICE AGAINST THE UNEMPLOYED**

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Making the most of our human resources

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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## SECTION 1: BACKGROUND

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### **THE EMPLOYMENT INITIATIVE, IS ONE OF THE EUROPEAN UNIONS HUMAN RESOURCES PROGRAMMES DESIGNED TO TARGET GROUPS, WHICH FACE SPECIFIC DIFFICULTIES IN THE LABOUR MARKET.**

Within the Employment initiative there are four strands, one of which, Integra aims to improve the employability and access to employment, of people excluded or at a risk of exclusion from the labour market.

Through Integra, organisations such as the INOU, have been able to pilot innovative actions which promote the integration of those groups, in our case long-term unemployed men, who are excluded or at risk of exclusion from the labour market. These projects also provide learning for labour market policy and practice.

In the case of the INOU's project "Combating prejudice against the unemployed – Making the most of our human resources", is a systems development measure concerned with the piloting of actions aimed at developing new institutional arrangements and practices in the areas of labour market services, training and education.

Unemployed people, particularly long-term unemployed men over the age of 35 years, were the specific target group around which the INOU designed its project, because it is this group in particular, who have experienced persistent exclusion from the Irish labour market over many years.

The labour market context just prior to the beginning of the project in 1996, was such that despite continuous growth in the number of people employed over the preceding two years, long-term unemployment had remained unchanged at 103,300 people or 6.9% of the labour force.

Since the project began in 1998, the continued growth within our economy has substantially reduced both the overall rate of unemployment and, more significantly the rate of long-term unemployment, for the same period in 1998 the rate of long-term unemployment had fallen to 63,500 people or 3.9% of the labour force..

However, and despite these overall improvements, there still remains a significant number of people both currently long-term unemployed and those who have recently experienced long-term unemployment, who suffer labour market exclusion. At the end of the projects cycle in 1999, the number of people long-term unemployed stood at 37,900 or 2.1% of the labour force.

Within this context, the INOU designed its Integra project with the following features:

#### **AIMS AND OBJECTIVES**

**To examine the relationship between long-term unemployed people and employers, so as to identify and promote strategies that will contribute to the breaking down of prejudices or misconceptions concerning unemployment and increase the number of job vacancies filled and retained by long-term unemployed people.**

In order to meet this overall aim, two objectives were devised in relation to the research

- To identify and document the experience and attitudes of long-term unemployed people, in seeking employment.
- To identify and document the experience and attitudes of employers toward long-term unemployed people.

#### **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

The research with both long-term unemployed people and the owner/managers of Small to Medium sized Enterprises was carried out in four locations throughout Ireland, namely Ballyfermot and Blanchardstown in Dublin, Castlebar in County Mayo and Dundalk in County Louth.

## **LONG-TERM UNEMPLOYED PEOPLE**

In each of these areas the research with long-term unemployed people involved a structured interview during which the respondent replied to a detailed questionnaire. This was then followed up with four discussion groups.

Through the structured interviews, the men were asked detailed questions about their employment history, the patterns of their job seeking, their use of services for the unemployed, awareness of training, education and employment options.

The structured interview also examined the respondent's job seeking activities, their interview preparation, the type of work they would most like to do and what they saw as the main barriers to obtaining employment. The respondents were also asked whether they felt employers treated long-term unemployed people differently from others, what had to happen for their employment prospects to improve and what they thought about the media's portrayal of unemployment.

This questionnaire was discussed and agreed by the project's consortium and external consultant, and then piloted with different unemployed people, prior to being implemented.

As mentioned, the respondents in each area were also invited to participate in four two-hour group sessions. A discussion element was built into these sessions which enabled the men to interact with each other and allowed the researchers to explore, in more detail, how unemployment affects the lives of these men. The aim of the group discussion sessions was to build up a picture of the type of issues and attitudes, which were of concern to the men. One of the other objectives of the group work was to track their progression over the duration of the project. The work with the group in Castlebar spanned an eight month period.

## **DESIGN AND IMPLEMENTATION OF THE DISCUSSION GROUP SESSIONS**

The content of these discussion group sessions was based on four modules:

- The first module was designed to encourage debate and discussion among the long-term unemployed men themselves, about the realities facing unemployed people. Two video's were shown to the men to promote discussion. One was a FÁS promotional video (FÁS Working for you). The other was a video produced by Finnish TV in 1995 titled "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 the participating men 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 those who participated in the OPQ.
- The fourth and final group session provided information on the local services and programmes, with a speaker from the Mayo ICTU Centre for the Unemployed and from the INOU itself. This session also finalised some of the key issues that had arisen during the research.

## **EMPLOYERS**

This research was targeted at the owner/managers of micro (less than 10 employees) and small (less than 50 employees) sized enterprises.

A postal questionnaire was developed which was designed to collect both quantitative and qualitative data on the employer's recruitment practices and methodology, their perceptions of long-term unemployed people and their level of awareness and use of labour market services.

## RESEARCH QUESTIONS

*What is the employment history of long-term unemployed people?*

*How does their experience of long periods of unemployment affect their interest in job seeking?*

*What recruitment and selection methods have and are being used by owner managers, particularly for semi and unskilled positions.*

*What are the main barriers identified by these long-term unemployed men in finding work?*

*What are the perceptions and experiences of long-term unemployed people regarding employers?*

*What are the perceptions of owner/managers toward long-term unemployed people?*

*What is the experience of and how adequately do the unemployed feel their needs are being met by the various state agencies and schemes?*

*What level of awareness and experience do owner/managers have concerning the local labour market services?*

*What level of knowledge and experience do owner/managers have of the financial subsidies available to employers of the long-term unemployed?*

*What are long-term unemployed peoples and employers perceptions of the media's portrayal of unemployment?*

*What improvements do these long-term unemployed people feel need to be made on the part of employers/ the state?*

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

### PROFILE OF THE LONG-TERM UNEMPLOYED MEN

Eleven men from the Castlebar – Westport area of Co. Mayo took part in the interview and questionnaire stage of the research and ten of these men participated in the focus group sessions, which followed. All but one of the men, were recruited through letters of invitation sent with the assistance of FÁS and the local Department of Social, Community and Family Affairs. The remaining man was recruited through the local employment service.

Almost half of the men (5) were in receipt of Unemployment Assistance (UA), two were in receipt of Unemployment Benefit (UB) and a further man was in receipt of the One Parent Family Payment (OPFP). Three of the men had just started a Community Employment Scheme (CE) and as such had been in receipt of a social welfare payment for longer than the previous 12 months.

All of the men interviewed were over the age of 35 years, with just under half of the men aged between 35 – 44 years and the remainder aged between 45 and 54 years.

Five of the eleven men had obtained the leaving certificate and two, the intermediate certificate. Three of the men had completed primary school and attended secondary school upto the intermediate certificate, one had not completed primary school.

The men were asked if they had ever gone back to study since leaving school? Seven replied that they had, two of who had gone back to study in higher education. All of those who did return to some form of study, with one exception, had previously obtained the leaving certificate qualification.

### PROFILE OF THE EMPLOYERS

Nine employers from the Castlebar area participated in the survey, all of who operate within the services sector, in such activities as retail, training and publishing, food and beverages. Most of the employers were recruited through the Castlebar Chamber of Commerce.

The study with employers concentrated on the owner/managers of small to medium sized enterprises (SME's). In terms of overall size, two-thirds of the company's employ between 1-9 people, of the remaining third, one employed between 10-19 people and the last two companies employed between 20 - 49 people.

As such, these companies would be typical examples of small-medium enterprises. Such companies, employing less than 50 employees, make up 98% of all enterprises and 37% of all employment<sup>1</sup>.

In total 129 people, are employed by these nine companies, with male employees accounting for 43% (56) of the workforce and women 57% (73).

68% of the workforce are employed on a full-time basis, divided almost equally between men and women. The remaining 32% are employed part-time, divided 70/30 between women and men.

40% of the full-time employees work in the managerial, professional and technical category, 45% in non-manual, 14% in semi/unskilled manual and one person in the skilled – manual category

## THE LONG-TERM UNEMPLOYED MEN & THEIR EMPLOYMENT HISTORY.

**This section of the research examined the employment background of the men, looking at their previous occupations, the number of jobs held since leaving school and how their last job came to an end.**

All eleven men interviewed in the Castlebar – Westport area, were either long-term unemployed or were people who had recently experienced significant periods of long-term unemployment. Eight out of the eleven men (73%) had been out of work for three years or longer.

Before their current period of unemployment began, three of the men had been working full-time, one part-time and a further two men had been self-employed. The remaining five had been on a temporary employment scheme (Community Employment).

Since leaving school the majority of the men had held at least six jobs or more, two of these had held more than ten jobs each. Before becoming unemployed, just over half of the men had held jobs which were skilled or semi skilled in nature, the remaining five men had held jobs which were unskilled.

For five of the men, their most recent job ended when the Community Employment Scheme that they were on, concluded. A further four of the men explained that their last job had ended due to "other reasons" (these being a mix of voluntary retirement, re-locating to Mayo, changes within their employment contract or as a result of an injury). Of the remaining two men, one had walked out of his last job and one had been dismissed.

## EXPERIENCES AND EFFECTS OF JOB SEEKING AFTER LONG PERIODS OF UNEMPLOYMENT

**This section of the research examines the pattern of the men's job seeking, from when they became unemployed right through to the last 12 months. It also asks whether any of the men gave up looking for work or if they had ever turned down an offer of employment, and what the reasons were.**

The final part of this section looks at the men's job seeking skills and what they would consider to be their ideal job, including rates of pay.

*"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".

### JOB SEEKING

During the first year of being unemployed the vast majority of respondents (9) sought employment, the remaining two did not due to family circumstances. In the second year of being unemployed, this number rose to ten men, who continued to seek work, while one person did not, due to family circumstances.

Over the last 12 months, 10 of the men continued with their search for employment, while one has not due to family circumstances – although it should be pointed out that it was not the same individual, as mentioned above.

1 (White Paper on Human Resource Development 1997, Dept. of Enterprise & Employment).

During their first year of unemployment, seven out of the nine men who declared themselves as seeking work, made formal applications for a job, one of these men had made between 50 – 100 applications and a further man applied for between 100 - 125 jobs. Four out of these seven men, who had made job applications, were called for interview the remaining three were not.

In their second year of being unemployed, eight of the ten men who declared themselves as seeking work continued to apply for jobs. Four of these men were called for interview.

Over the last 12 months, eight out of the ten men who declared themselves as seeking work, made formal applications for a job. Of these, five were called for interview.

All the men called for interview, had attended these interviews.

#### **THE RESPONDENTS WERE ASKED IF THEY HAD GIVEN UP LOOKING FOR WORK AT ANY STAGE IN THEIR JOB SEEKING AND WHAT THE REASONS WERE?**

The majority of respondents did not at any stage consider that they had given up looking for work. For those that, at some stage during their unemployment, did give up looking for work, the main reasons cited were family commitments, a perceived gap between skills and jobs and giving up hope of getting a job. Other reasons mentioned less frequently, include feeling depressed or withdrawn, fearing rejection, concern about their age and their view that there are no jobs for older people.

#### **OFFERS OF EMPLOYMENT**

During their search for work, four out of the eleven men had been offered employment, but had turned it down because in three of the cases, there was too little financial incentive and in the remaining case the reason was family commitments.

#### **JOB SEEKING SKILLS**

Job seeking itself requires a variety of skills. Preparing a CV and a cover letter to suit a particular job is a skill that needs to be developed through practice and tuition. An ability to researching the job itself and develop your interview skills are also acquired through practice and tuition. Demonstrating to an employer that you have a knowledge of the company/products etc, as well as displaying appropriate interview skills puts one at an advantage.

The many and varied stages of job seeking, commonly used nowadays have progressed significantly since many of these men had their last job, when it was the norm for an informal interview with the employer, to be all that was required.

As a result many long term unemployed people, may find difficulty in assessing and communicating what their skills and abilities are, which is necessary to firstly reach the interview stage and more importantly acquire the job.

There are a number of various indicators to emerge from our study with long-term unemployed people and employers, which show that improving and developing unemployed people's job seeking skills would contribute to their gaining employment.

Only three out of the eleven men had taken part in any form of job-seeking skills training. All of these men had found this training useful.

Just over half the men (6) men had a current up to date CV and five men stated that they had been asked for a CV at their most recent job interview.

Only one of the eleven men felt that a CV was not a useful tool in job seeking.

The men were also asked about their preparations for job interviews? Just over half (6) stated that they had found out about the company with the job vacancy, one man stated that he had practised his interview skills, while another man stated that he engaged in other forms of preparations.

#### **WHAT TYPE OF JOBS ARE THE MEN LOOKING FOR?**

The men were also asked to describe their ideal jobs in terms of wages, conditions, prospects, advantages and disadvantages.

The type of jobs listed as being "ideal", by the men corresponds closely to their previous occupational backgrounds.

In terms of pay, all of the men stated that they would expect an average weekly wage ranging from £275 nett (4) to £335 gross (7)

In terms of advantages and disadvantages, ten of the eleven respondents cited income, but not income alone as the major advantage. The responses invariably included remarks such as self-satisfaction, sense of purpose and security. Only three of the men cited any possible disadvantages, these being, risk of company failure, risk of boredom and the effect of working unsociable hours on family responsibilities.

## RECRUITMENT AND SELECTION METHODS

**This section of the research looks at the recruitment methods used by employers and compares them with the job seeking approaches used by the long-term unemployed men. It also examines the selection methods used by employers and whether they had any applications from unemployed people in 1998.**

The employers were asked for the details of any recruitment they carried out during 1998.

During that year, seven of the employers recruited new staff, with 31 people in total, joining the workforce of these companies.

13 people or 42% of the new staff were employed on a full-time basis, four of which were male (30%) and nine of which (70%) were female.

18 people were employed on a part-time basis during the same period or 58% of all new staff. Men accounted for 33.3% (6) of these posts while women accounted for 66.6% (12).

### RECRUITMENT METHODS

The most common recruitment methods used by these employers were: "referrals by someone in the company and by someone the employer knows" as well as advertisements in the local newspapers. The least used methods were recruitment agencies, advertising in shop windows and the Centre for the Unemployed.

In terms of effectiveness, referrals by someone in the company and by someone the employer knows, along with advertisements in the local newspapers were considered as being the most effective recruitment method.

The least effective methods were recruitment agencies, DSCFA, national newspapers, the local employment service and FÁS.

### THE MAIN METHODS USED BY THE LONG-TERM UNEMPLOYED RESPONDENTS TO FIND OUT ABOUT JOBS.

The long-term unemployed respondents were asked what methods they used to find out about job vacancies. Advertisements in the local newspapers were the most frequently cited method, followed by word of mouth and FÁS. The least used methods were recruitment agencies, the local employment service, national newspapers and calling in person to companies.

### SELECTION METHODS

Structured interviews, references and unstructured interviews were considered to be the most effective selection methods by the employer respondents. The least effective methods were applications forms, ability and personality tests.

Some of the employers provided additional information, under the heading of "other". These remarks were Local Knowledge (word of mouth) and "we would usually check with ex-employers / work experience situations as opposed to referees or references on CVs".

Most job applicants are either asked for or consider that they must include, their most recent employer as a reference. For people who are long-term unemployed, this aspect of job seeking can be quite daunting as they may consider acquiring referees from past employers, to be impossible because it was so long ago or because their last employer was based in the UK or elsewhere, etc.

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 they are 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<sup>2</sup>.*

### **RECRUITING LONG-TERM UNEMPLOYED PEOPLE**

Two out of the nine companies had received applications from long-term unemployed people in 1998. None of these companies interviewed any of the long-term unemployed people who applied.

### **CHARACTERISTICS SOUGHT BY EMPLOYERS WHEN RECRUITING FOR SEMI/UNSKILLED VACANCIES**

This section of the research examines the characteristics sought by employers of job applicants. This employer's were asked to divide and rate a list of 25 characteristics into three categories, being essential, desirable and not important. The employers were also given the opportunity of formulating their own response to the question of which three factors would they consider when selecting someone to fill a semi/unskilled vacancy.

This section also contrasts these findings with similar questions asked of the long-term unemployed men about what characteristics they think employers seek and what characteristics they consider themselves to have.

The characteristics considered "essential" for filling semi-skilled/unskilled vacancies in Castlebar were literacy, communication skills, flexibility, hygiene/appearance and reliability.

In contrast the characteristics considered unimportant were presence of a friend or relative in the current workforce, gender, age, address and being unemployed.

The most important factors these employers consider when recruiting were cited as "personality", "reliability" and "appearance".

Other factors in the selection process:

"How mobile is the candidate?" "Do they look as if they intend staying in the area / job for a reasonable length of time".

"Personality", e.g. Ability to deal with general public whilst displaying a helpful attitude.

The long-term unemployed men were asked what characteristics they believed employers sought when recruiting. The most frequently mentioned characteristics were "reliability", "educational qualifications" and "experience".

When the long-term unemployed respondents were asked about the characteristics they believed that they themselves possessed, the most frequently cited characteristics were "reliability", "experience", "specific skills" an "honesty".

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

## THE BARRIERS IDENTIFIED BY THE LONG-TERM UNEMPLOYED MEN IN GAINING EMPLOYMENT

This section of the research examined the barriers to employment as seen by the long-term unemployed men, it also looks at what factors would encourage the men to continue to apply for jobs.

The most frequently mentioned barriers were age, low pay and no suitable jobs. Other less frequently mentioned barriers included, impact of unemployment on the person, lack of skills and education qualifications.

During the focus group a number of additional points were made by the men under the headings of "black economy" and "incentives to work", these were:

*"Long-term unemployed people always have to do something else in the black economy, because they can't live on the money being paid through social welfare".*

*"You have to ask yourself the question of what is a job going to cost me? I would go out and do a job if I had an interest in that type of work even if it was not well paid. However it is very difficult to find such jobs because when your unemployed you miss out on social contacts which is one of the main ways that you hear about jobs."*

## THE PERCEPTIONS AND EXPERIENCES OF LONG-TERM UNEMPLOYED PEOPLE REGARDING EMPLOYERS.

It was interesting to note that two of the men had indicated 'other' when asked what they thought the characteristics were that employers seek from job applicants.

The 'other' characteristic that these men felt employers sought was described as being a preference for local people and clientism.

All of the respondents surveyed did believe that employers treat long-term unemployed people differently from others. When asked to describe the way in which the respondent had been treated by employers, so far in their search for work, only four of the men had anything positive to say, the rest of the men felt that they had not been treated well:

*"Fairly enough"*

*"On the whole quite good"*

*"Generally fair – they must get so many seeking work that they get fed-up of it".*

*"The majority are okay – others you couldn't put it down on paper".*

*"With indifference"*

*"As soon as they hear you've been out of work for a long time they seem very disinterested."*

*"Just not interested"*

*"Treated as a number to complete an interview panel".*

*"They seem to think that people who are on long-term unemployment don't want to work."*

*"Not great, particularly CE employers".*

## **EMPLOYERS PERCEPTIONS REGARDING LONG-TERM UNEMPLOYED PEOPLE.**

When asked to describe their perceptions of long-term unemployed people, the employers had the following to say:

- Lazy – Have not the appetite for work – not eager or enthusiastic about getting a job. Usually in a rut and unlikely to change – poor and lackadaisical at interview stage.
- No problem, but must ascertain reason for long-term unemployment
- I would look at the reasons for the gap in employment
- I would be cautious, as a young person who has not worked for 12 months would not appear to be too enthusiastic or seem to want to work. (except where a valid reason may exist)
- I try to keep an open mind on this – but have not really come across many of these applicants.
- Have None
- I have no perceptions
- If they are capable of doing the work required then I would have no problem employing them.
- No perceptions really. But it would arise in an interview as to what the reason for the break in work record was.

The employers were also asked to rate long-term unemployed people against five criteria in terms of their level of skills, reliability, ability adjusting to work, motivation and the level of wages demanded. In nearly all categories the long-term unemployed people were rated low to medium, with only one employer holding a different view.

## **SHORT-TERM Vs LONG-TERM UNEMPLOYED**

The employers were also asked if they would make a distinction between someone who was short-term unemployed and someone who was long-term unemployed as well as the reasons would you give for this preference.

There was an almost even response to this question, with just over half the employers stating that they would make a distinction and that it would be in favour of short-term unemployed people.

The reasons given were as follows:

- People who are not working in the present climate in the building trade are not very interested in getting a job.
- With no real unemployment at the moment there should be no one who wants to work, unemployed. The shorter term indicates a willingness to work.
- I would be sceptical about someone who has not worked for over 12 months particularly in these times of economic success.
- I would make a distinction between more / less than 12 months but just keep this in mind and see if there is a reason for this case. I would be more wary but wouldn't necessarily rule the over 12 month person out (we like to give breaks if possible)
- It would depend on the reasons for the break in the work record.

Manning (1999) conducted a recent UK study of the process by which employers in five relatively low wage British firms fill vacancies. 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.<sup>3</sup>

It would appear from the research highlighted so far that "personality" and "reliability" along with "appearance", "experience" and "flexibility" seem to be the key factors. Many employers assume that long-term unemployed people lack personality, are not reliable, have an unsuitable appearance, little or no experience and are inflexible. This leads to rejection even before interviewing them to find out if they would be suitable.

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

## WHAT ARE THE LONG-TERM UNEMPLOYED EXPERIENCES OF THE VARIOUS LABOUR MARKET AGENCIES AND HOW ADEQUATELY ARE THEY MEETING THEIR NEEDS?

This section of the research looked at the long-term unemployed men's use and perceptions of the effectiveness of the labour market services.

### LEVEL OF CONTACT

All of the long-term unemployed had had contact with FÁS and a significant majority had contact with their local office of the DSCFA. Just over half of the men had contact with the local employment service. Contact had also been made with a number of other public and private service providers, including St. Vincent de Paul and the Citizen Information Centre.

## EFFECTIVENESS OF THE MAIN LABOUR MARKET SERVICES

### FÁS

Overall, seven of the men rated FÁS as either somewhat or considerably useful in their search for a job with only four men rating the agency as not useful.

However, the men had a number of points to make during the focus group discussion, prompted by the showing of the 'FÁS working for you', video which included some of the following:

*"FÁS do not follow up on those who register with them. They put your file away and that's it, they should update your file."*

*"Employers don't need to go to FÁS etc for workers. They don't want to pay tax etc. No incentive to work if low paid."*

*"In the 1980's FÁS gave £25 extra on top of your dole. In the 1990's FÁS have reduced the money or incentive the give for people taking part in their schemes."*

### LOCAL SOCIAL WELFARE OFFICE

Five of the eight long-term unemployed men who used the services of the local social welfare office were either somewhat or fully satisfied with the service, with just three of the men considering the office as not useful.

### LES

Of the six unemployed respondents who had used the Local Employment Service, four found it in some way useful to them and the remaining two found the service not useful.

## LONG-TERM UNEMPLOYED PEOPLES PERCEPTIONS AND EXPERIENCES OF TRAINING, EDUCATION AND EMPLOYMENT OPTIONS

This section of the report examined the level and source of awareness among the men of some 21 training, education and work experience programmes targeted at long-term unemployed people. It also looks at the men's experience of the community employment programme - a programme which practically all the men had strong views.

### TRAINING

There was a mixed level of awareness among the men of the various training schemes. The schemes which commanded the greatest awareness were Specific Skills Training, CERT and Teagasc. With the exception of enterprise training and Bord Iascaigh Mhara, of which just under half the men were aware, the remaining four training programmes were known to a third of the men.

By far this awareness stemmed from 'other sources' such as word of mouth, with FÁS being the only other source of note.

## EDUCATION

There was a much higher overall level of awareness about the various education programmes, with adult literacy schemes and the back to education allowance scoring the highest.

The main source of awareness came from 'other sources' and the Co. Mayo Vocational Education Committee.

## WORK EXPERIENCE / EMPLOYMENT OPTIONS

There was a mixed level of awareness amongst the men of the eight work experience programmes and employment options. All of the men were aware of the Community Employment Scheme, the Back to Work Allowance and Family Income Supplement. With the exception of the Area Allowance, just over a third of the men were aware of the other four programmes.

Again 'other sources' were the single largest source of information about these programmes, followed closely by the local office of the DSCFA and then by FÁS.

It is a worrying fact that, with all of these programmes, the greatest level of awareness stemmed from word of mouth. Misinformation can easily arise from an over reliance upon this method and further complicate the outreach and information activities of the agencies and organisations themselves.

## COMMUNITY EMPLOYMENT

As mentioned above, the CE programme was discussed in some detail. It should be pointed out that a significant number of the men had direct knowledge of the programme as either participant or former participant. The following are some of the remarks made during the focus group discussion.

*"I personally find the CE scheme very demoralising. I know of people doing CE whose job is to pick-up papers, in no way are they getting good work experience."*

*"Those schemes should be taken away from these people who sponsor them."*

*"There's no objective being pursued by the ESO – there should be a target of so many sustainable jobs to be generated after each CE scheme."*

*"It costs approximately £125,000 to run a CE programme. There is no identification of training needs. FÁS need to look at the industry's in the area to see if there is training needed and then use CE to train people and put them into jobs."*

*"Because they are state funded, they see CE for one purpose only, i.e. They have the scheme to spend the money. A scheme for the sake of a scheme and there is no policy of placement for CE participants."*

*"CE is filled up with people whose partner is in full time employment, or by small farmers. They shouldn't put skilled people in CE placement. In Mayo 50% of CE is made up of small farmers, 25 % of unemployed people and 10% by those who do not want to work."*

*"Small farmers want to get money from CE and supplement his income. The schemes don't actually do anything for you, they just legitimise you and any work you do in the black economy."*

## EMPLOYER'S AWARENESS AND EXPERIENCES OF THE LOCAL LABOUR MARKET SERVICES?

This section of the research looked at employer's awareness, experience and view points about the local labour market services.

### CONTACT WITH THE SERVICES

The employers were asked if they were or had contact with either FÁS, LES, CERT or DSCFA. None of the employers had any contact with CERT or the DSCFA.

### FÁS

Just fewer than half the employers were in contact with FÁS. The employers were given the opportunity of explaining why there wasn't any contact, the only response to this was from one employer who stated that "No staff members that were employed as a result of using FÁSs, were satisfactory in the past".

In all cases, the employers and not FÁS initiated this contact. The reasons for contact with FÁS were all due to the employer seeking a job seeker and never because FÁS was investigating their recruitment needs, putting a job seeker in touch with them or for any other reason.

An opportunity was also provided for the employers to make any other remarks about FÁS, the points made were:

*"People in FÁS Fine – They don't have the time to be "customer focused – Paperwork-"*

*"FÁS could do with more recruitment expertise. I was looking for names of persons who would qualify for job start but no names were provided."*

## LES

Despite only one employer stating that they were in contact with the Local Employment Service, three of the employers explained what the reasons were for this contact. These being due to the employer seeking a job seeker and the LES putting a job seeker in contact with them.

An opportunity was also provided for the employers to make any other remarks about LES, the point made was:

*"Have always been successful in getting a suitable person"*

## EMPLOYER RATINGS

The employers were also asked to rate the various services on their 'flexible approach', 'awareness of employer needs', 'expertise of staff' and their 'customer focus'.

The median rating for all the criteria was for FÁS average, and LES good.

## EMPLOYERS KNOWLEDGE AND EXPERIENCE OF THE INCENTIVE SCHEMES AVAILABLE WHEN RECRUITING LONG-TERM UNEMPLOYED PEOPLE

**This section of the research looked at employer's awareness of incentive schemes, their effectiveness and viewpoints.**

### AWARENESS OF EMPLOYER INCENTIVE SCHEMES

The BTWA was the only widely known scheme. The remaining schemes were known by no more than a third of the employer's.

### EFFECTIVENESS OF EMPLOYER SUBSIDY SCHEMES

Only two of the employers had actually used any of the schemes, namely the BTWA and Jobstart, both stated that they would use these programmes again.

An opportunity was also provided for the employers to make any other remarks about employer schemes, the points made were:

*'Too much red tape in these schemes'*

*'I would love some information on more schemes. I would feel employers have a real lack of knowledge on employment schemes in general.'*

*'The Back to work allowance gives the employer an incentive to take on someone unemployed long-term, which also helps that persons chance of gaining full-time employment.'*

Reason for using job start again 'Very little paperwork or restrictions, the staff member employed by us qualifies and is registered with the NRB. She is full-time with us now and doing extremely well.'

The Job Training Scheme 'Easy getting approval, but a lot of paperwork, a work diary etc to be kept on an on-going basis. No restrictions on person as to how long they have been on the register – a good plus.'

## PERCEPTIONS OF THE MEDIA'S PORTRAYAL OF UNEMPLOYMENT AND LONG-TERM UNEMPLOYED PEOPLE.

All of the respondents, long-term unemployed and employer, were asked a series of five questions at the end of the structured interview concerning their perceptions of how the media portray issues of unemployment and long-term unemployed people.

### LTU

A clear majority of the men felt that the media were neither fair nor accurate, although they were more evenly divided on the question of whether they thought the media is informative.

All of the men felt that the public are influenced by the type of images the media portrays about unemployed people.

When asked whether it was felt that the public in general are influenced by the media's portrayal of long-term unemployed people, nine of the men said that they were of the belief that the public are influenced, while one person explained that they weren't sure.

The long-term unemployed men also put forward some additional viewpoints under the following headings:

#### **Some of the reasons why the respondents felt the public are influenced by the media were listed as being:**

*"People believe what their told to believe and what they read in the newspapers."*

*"The image of unemployment is a negative one."*

*"People will listen to the media rather than to (unemployed) people they meet or know."*

*"The media doesn't give a real picture about long-term unemployed people."*

#### **Suggestions for improvement included:**

*"The media need to focus on precise information rather than stereotyping long-term unemployed people."*

*"There is a need to highlight the real and serious issues facing people, like unemployment, homelessness etc."*

*"People who are unemployed should not be categorised or stigmatised."*

*"The media should focus on those unemployed people who want to work – rather than showing "people who want to be on the dole" stories."*

*"More realism, journalists are far removed from unemployed people."*

### EMPLOYERS

The employers in response to the same questions recorded an almost opposite result. The majority felt that the media was fair and accurate and no dissenting opinion was voiced. In response to the question of whether the media is accurate, only a slim majority believed that the media was accurate.

The employers were also asked if they felt themselves influenced by the media coverage and whether they thought there was a need for a change in the way these issues are portrayed.

The vast majority of employers did not feel that they were influenced by the media, but a slim majority did feel that there needed to be a change in the way these issues were covered by the media.

The employers also put forward some additional viewpoints under the following headings:

Do you feel influenced by the media?

*"Sometimes they are portrayed as not willing to work".*

### What type of changes should happen in media?

*"More encouragement. Highlight the positives of getting a job / returning to work."*

*"They should highlight the amount of unemployed people who are employable but refuse to work and/or abuse the welfare system."*

*"Cover more good stories and happy endings."*

*"A distinction has to be made. The term "long-term unemployed" has an irreversible stigma attached. Maybe using new terms might help e.g. In-Retraining, or available for work?"*

### WHAT HAS TO HAPPEN FOR YOUR JOB PROSPECTS TO BE IMPROVED?

**This section of the research asked the long-term unemployed men what they thought needed to happen for their job prospects to improve.**

*"A sincere effort on the part of those employed by the state agencies to ensure the interests of the long-term unemployed group are served."*

*"So few jobs are based in the West of Ireland and advertised, especially in the national newspapers. Age is still a barrier and attitudes need to change".*

*"Need Information Technology training and a "D" vehicle driving licence"*

*"To win the lottery"*

*"For employers to take an interest in me as the person, not me the unemployment figure"*

*"More jobs will have to be made available"*

*"Nothing"*

*"Gain more experience through work and improved competence in your chosen field"*

*"Need a new CV and training in a field that would lead to a job"*

*"Need access to specific training courses that aren't available"*

### TRACKING

Throughout the follow-up group sessions, nine of the ten men selected attended all of the meetings. The men were sent a final questionnaire just prior to the final reports being drafted, which asked what their current status was.

It asked if they were in work or on a training programme and if so when they started, they were also asked whether since starting the INOU course they had sought any information and/or advice.

Five of the men responded, two of the men had begun a community employment scheme in the last few months of 1999, the remaining three were unemployed. Three of the men had sought information or advice from the labour market services.

### THE FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSIONS

#### General Comments

Nine participants out of the ten selected, took part in this initial group session. The session began with an icebreaker with the participants being asked to break-up into groups of two and then after discussion, each person would introduce their partner to the group as a whole.

#### FIRST VIDEO - UNEMPLOYMENT IN BALLYMUN (made for Finnish TV, 1995)

This clip portrayed a single man in his 30's who had been unemployed for ten years. He spoke about how he earns more income than his social welfare payment by working in a band four to five nights a week and at weekends. He stated that everybody is doing something behind the government's back. He acknowledged that it's a bit awkward because it makes people look like and feel like criminals. He spoke about his experience of a CE scheme. He felt that the supervisors are in a dilemma because they train their staff and after a year they have to get new staff.

### Group Discussion after watching the first video clip

The main issues which were raised by the group after watching this video were:

#### Black Economy.

Following on from the video the question of working in the informal economy was discussed in some detail. There was a consensus within the group that long-term unemployed people had to work in the black economy to survive. The following are some of the remarks made during this part of the discussion.

*"Long-term unemployed people always have to do something else in the black economy, because they can't live on the money being paid through social welfare."*

*"When your on Social welfare you have to plan every penny you spend and are forced to live on basic foods stuffs like milk and bread etc, no one wants to live like that"*

*"Black economy is tax free, it's your money."*

*"People who work in the Black economy are constantly under pressure and are always looking over their shoulder"*

Comparisons were also made between unemployed people using the black economy and the situation with politicians and employers.

However the point should be made that all of the participants were talking about occasional opportunities to work in the Black economy – not as a regular part of their working lives or as part of their regular income. Many were uncomfortable with this situation and did not want to be breaking the law, but saw such opportunities as very hard to resist given their low-income situation.

#### The consensus is to work in the Black economy to survive

#### INCENTIVE TO WORK

Non of the participants said they could see any incentive to seek low paid employment or to take up any low paid employment as a path to a more satisfying and better paid job.

*"You have to ask yourself the question of what is a job going to cost me? I would go out and do a job if I had an interest in that type of work even if it was not well paid. However it is very difficult to find such jobs because when your unemployed you miss out on social contacts which is one of the main ways that you hear about jobs."*

*"Politicians can screw the country no problem. You wouldn't want low paid jobs anyway. You would also loose your medical card."*

#### WORK AND PAY

The participants gave a number of "real life" examples of their experiences when it came to the type of work and pay on offer from employers that they had encountered in there job seeking. It should be pointed out that the "real life" experiences referred to below cover work in both the formal and informal economy.

One participant talked about the opportunities in the building industry in Mayo – all of which were seasonal and, predominately in the informal/black economy.

*"On all the building sites you don't get paid what the regular guys are getting, when you do start all the jobs that your given are the dirty jobs, like stacking blocks and when you've finished doing that and think that your about to be given something different to do, they move you on to another site where your doing exactly the same work."*

*"All the time you know that you're not insured, that the work is being carried out on the black and that your not getting what the other regular lads are getting."*

He went on to make the point that the contractors and regular workers were frequently not local, with many coming from Northern Ireland, the UK and the East Coast area. This point was taken up by a number of other participants who felt that there should be a guarantee of some local jobs for any building project being developed in the area.

Another participant spoke about the jobs recently advertised with the Central Statistics Office (CSO) for the forthcoming census. He had obtained all the explanatory documentation and sat down and calculated the economics behind the job.

*"The CSO jobs are offering £9,500/10,00 per annum. This would not be enough to live on, when I called up to ask about the travel expenses, I was told that there wouldn't be any regular travel expenses. In effect they were asking you to work at your own expense."*

Another participant explained that in the Mayo region some of the main types of employment were in the tourism area, which was highly seasonal.

*"Nearly all these jobs go to younger people who are prepared to work for the low wages. In some hotels that I know of, the going rate is £2.00 hour. The hotels aren't the only area's of this tourism business there's another place I know where you can rent boats out which is paying 50 pence an hour. All these jobs are taken by youngsters doing summer work."*

*"If Employers now they can get you to work for £2 an hour they will. Because there's so many unemployed people in this area, it's the employers who have the monopoly."*

Another participant told us of a bar job he applied for.

*"After meeting the employer and finding out what the job involved and the hours which were 40 a week, I asked about the wages. She told me it was well paid, I asked her what did she mean by well paid, eventually she said that it would be £80 a week – I didn't know whether to laugh or cry."*

He didn't take the job.

## **MINIMUM WAGE**

The Minimum wage was also discussed, with many participants taking the view that its effect will be job losses. Some of the remarks made were as follows:

*"Employers won't pay it"*

*"Unions they have lost a lot of credibility. A Minimum Wage of £4.40 is only £176 a week before taking taxes off it, and that's not a massive amount of money".*

## **SOCIAL ENVIRONMENT FOR UNEMPLOYED PEOPLE**

One of the other issues raised was that of social isolation and its effects particularly in terms of hearing about employment opportunities and in terms of employer's attitudes.

*"When your unemployed nobody wants to know you, you are socially isolated, people consider you to be lazy."*

## **SECOND VIDEO – WHAT FÁS CAN DO FOR YOU**

This video clip showed five people looking in a FÁS window, asking themselves what could FÁS do for them. The people consisted of a young women 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.

### **Group discussion**

The main issues raised after this video related to the services available for unemployed people provided by the State and Voluntary sector.

### **The FÁS Video**

All of the participants felt that the video was of high quality but not relevant to their own circumstances. Some of the remarks were as follows.

*"It's a very pretty video, but it's just a public relations exercise"*

*"That video is a joke"*

*"The emphasis is on young people in the video"*

## GENERAL REMARKS ABOUT FÁS

*"FÁS do not follow up on those who register with them. They put your file away and that's it, they should update your file."*

Employers don't need to go to FÁS etc for workers. They don't want to pay tax etc. No incentive to work if low paid.

"In the 1980's FÁS gave £25 extra on top of your dole. In the 1990's FÁS have reduced the money or incentive the give for people taking part in their schemes."

## START YOUR OWN BUSINESS

One of the participants had done the FÁS course to assist people trying to start their own business, of which he had a positive experience. The problems however occurred after the course.

*"I did the FÁS start your own business course, which was good enough. However I needed £5,000 up front to start, how is a long-term unemployed person going to find that kind of money? None of the banks will deal with you and you've no-way of saving up that amount – even if you do work in the black economy."*

## COMMUNITY EMPLOYMENT

The Community Employment programme was discussed in some detail, it should be pointed out that a number of participants have direct knowledge of the programme as either participant or former participant. The following are some of the remarks made during the discussion.

*"I personally find the CE scheme very demoralising. I know of people doing CE whose job is to pick-up papers, in no way are they getting good work experience."*

*"Those schemes should be taken away from these people who sponsor them."*

*"Generally the staff in FÁS, the ESO's have no professional qualifications, neither in manufacturing, human resources, personal etc. And yet these are the people who are out there trying match people to jobs."*

*"There's no objective being pursued by the ESO – there should be a target of so many sustainable jobs to be generated after each CE scheme."*

*"It costs approximately £125,000 to run a CE programme. There is no identification of training needs. FÁS need to look at the industry in the area to see if there is training needed and then use CE to train people and put them into jobs."*

*"Some schemes don't provide any work experience. There's no onus on ESO's to put people into sustainable jobs. Overall FÁS is characterised by bad planning. They don't make any effort to see if you are interested in the jobs on offer. They should match people to the jobs. Social welfare offices, FÁS etc are not interested themselves, they don't care if people get jobs out of it or not."*

*"Because they are state funded, they see CE for one purpose only, I.E. They have the scheme to spend the money. A scheme for the sake of a scheme and there is no policy of placement for CE participants."*

*"CE is filled up with people whose partner if in full time employment, or by small farmers. They shouldn't put skilled people in CE placement. In Mayo 50% of CE is made up of small farmers, 25 % of unemployed people and 10% by those who do not want to work."*

*"Small farmer wants to get money from CE and supplement his income. The schemes don't actually do anything for you, they just legitimise you and any work you do in the black economy."*

## FOCUS GROUP EVALUATION OF THE PROJECT

As part of the last focus group discussion, the men were asked for an evaluation of the entire project.

The first question asked was if they found meeting as a group useful or helpful? In response there was some discussion as to whether the question referred to helpful as in obtaining employment. If it was, then two of the participants didn't think that it had been helpful.

Another participant said the project wasn't about getting employment. The other remarks made under this question were:

*"It was interesting to sit down with a group"*

*"Everyone's the same" Another person added "and different"*

*"You find out you're not just on your own". There are "others out there" (like you).*

*"It's been a platform to sound out views"*

The second question addressed, was what the men had learned from participating in the sessions?

*"People in the group are in similar situations, but have different concerns"*

*"It gave an opportunity to check out the different groups and learn more about what's out there for unemployed people."*

*"The problem is not individual, it effects everyone similarly."*

*"No solutions to overriding question but better insight about how others feel about unemployment/employment situation"*

The third area of discussion was titled "what would you like to have changed about the sessions?"

- Nothing. They went pretty well.
- No enough meetings to cover all points that were raised.
- Limited in amount of meetings.
- Change approach to initial questionnaire. It was "cumbersome, burdensome and confusing".
- Questionnaire could have been filled in at home.
- Lot of clarification needed, meant not enough time to fill it in. Though similarly, same person agreed it might have been difficult to do at home, given that clarification was needed.
- Sharing ideas over last six months. People opening up more.

The next area of evaluation was whether the men felt that participation in the sessions has benefited them in any way?

- No
- No change
- Small amount of personal development
- An avenue unemployed people hadn't before. Enjoyed them. Shared experiences

This was followed by the question "Now that you know more about the services available to you locally do you think you might use them more?"

- Three of the men said yes.
- Another that he didn't know what they (the various services) were for.
- FÁS/LES are not that relevant in finding job. You get more help from people you know.
- Found out which services provide help to do CV's.
- "I don't know of anyone getting job through FÁS"
- "Every agency that was mentioned, someone had something negative to say"
- "For a long time I was not getting anywhere with the FÁS course I wan't to do, my chances are looking better now after contacting DSCFA officer."

The men were also asked if there were any other or additional points that they would like to make about the discussion groups? They were as follows:

- The meetings could have been an opportunity to place people in a work environment, even temporarily.
- There are 10 long-term unemployed people here, that could be job-matched with employers.
- This isn't really a job placing scheme.
- Suggestions were made for a pilot programme to be run in Castlebar. The 12 month programme could involve the INOU working with long-term unemployed people, providing work placement, courses on interviewing skills and job-seeking skills. The INOU should get FÁS to look at it, especially with the CE scheme being phased out.
- Venue and timing of meetings – Fine
- Allowance for attending meetings a positive step

There was also some further discussion on FÁS. One of the participants had never received a letter from FÁS re – employment opportunities. He only found out today that you have to register with FÁS every year. Another said he received just one notification of a job offer, and that was in Galway. Another said he had to insist that his name be put down for a particular course, FÁS had said they would write out to him but, he feared that they would not.

However this was not the situation with all of the men, as others explained that they had received got letters from FÁS.

## SECTION 2:

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### **PROFILE OF THE LONG-TERM UNEMPLOYED RESPONDENTS:**

Eleven men from the Castlebar – Westport area of Co. Mayo took part in the interview and questionnaire stage of the research and ten of these men participated in the focus group sessions, which followed.

#### **AGE**

All the men interviewed were over the age of 35 years, with five of the men aged between 35 – 44 years and six of the men aged between 45 – 54 years. (see table No. 1)

#### **UNEMPLOYMENT PAYMENT**

Almost half of the men (5) were in receipt of Unemployment Assistance (UA), two were in receipt of Unemployment Benefit (UB), one man was in receipt of One Parent Family Payment (OPFP) and three of the men had just started a Community Employment Scheme. (see table No.2)

#### **DURATION OF UNEMPLOYMENT**

Eight out of the eleven men (or over 70%) have been unemployed for three years or longer. Two of the men have been out of work for just under a year a further man has been unemployed over one year but less than two. Five of the men have been out of work for between three to five years, one man has been unemployed for between six to ten years and two of the men have been unemployed for ten years or longer. (see table No. 3)

#### **EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT**

Five out of the eleven men had obtained the leaving certificate and two the intermediate certificate. Three of the men had completed primary school and attended secondary school up to the intermediate certificate, one had not completed primary school. (see table No. 4)

#### **RETURNED TO STUDY**

When asked if the respondents had ever gone back to study at either school or college, 7 replied that they had. Two of the respondents had gone back to study at higher education and all of those who returned to some form of study, with one exception, had previously obtained leaving certificate qualifications (see table No. 5)

### **WHAT IS THE EMPLOYMENT HISTORY OF LONG-TERM UNEMPLOYED PEOPLE?**

#### **EMPLOYMENT HISTORY**

Before the current period of unemployment, three men had been working full-time, one had been working part-time, two men had been self-employed and five men had been engaged in a temporary employment scheme - community employment. (see table No. 6)

#### **NUMBER OF JOBS HELD SINCE LEAVING SCHOOL**

Since leaving school five of the men had held between 6-10 jobs, three of the men had held between 3-5 jobs and two of the men had since leaving school, held two jobs. (see table No. 7a)

#### **MAIN OCCUPATION PRIOR TO BECOMING UNEMPLOYED**

Two of the men had worked in the field of administration prior to becoming unemployed and a further two men had worked for the Irish Army. The rest of the men were employed in a wide range of skilled, semi-skilled and unskilled occupations. (see table No. 7b)

### **HOW MOST RECENT JOB FINISHED**

For five of the men their most recent job finished as the result of a temporary contract coming to an end, four explained that their last job ended due to other reasons (a mix of voluntary retirement, relocating to Co. Mayo, changes in employment contract or as a result of an injury). One of the men walked out of his last job and one was dismissed. (see table No. 8)

### **REASON FOR LEAVING LAST JOB**

The respondents were asked if they had left their last job, what had contributed most to their leaving. Only two were in a position to respond to this, citing the low pay on offer and the other citing health - sickness. (see table No. 9)

### **SEEKING WORK SINCE BECOMING UNEMPLOYED**

During the first year of being unemployed the vast majority of respondents (9) sought employment, the remaining two did not due to family circumstances. In the second year of being unemployed ten of the respondents continued to seek work while one did not due to family circumstances.

Over the last 12 months, 10 of the respondents have continued with the search for employment, while one has not due to family circumstances – although it should be pointed out that it was not the same individual. (see table No. 14)

### **SEEKING WORK IN THE FIRST YEAR OF BEING UNEMPLOYED**

Seven out of the nine men who declared themselves as seeking work, made formal applications for a job during their first year of being unemployed. Two of the men applied for between 1 – 5 jobs, a further two men applied for between 6 – 10 jobs, one applied for between 11 – 20 jobs. Of the remaining two men, one had applied for between 50 – 100 jobs and the other for between 100 – 125 jobs, in their first year of being unemployed.

Three of these men were called for interview for between 1-5 jobs and attended each interview. One man was called for between 6 – 10 interviews and again attended each. Three men who had made applications were not called for any interview. (see table No.15)

### **SEEKING WORK IN THE SECOND YEAR OF BEING UNEMPLOYED**

In the second year of being unemployed eight out of the ten men who declared themselves as seeking work, made formal applications for a job. Three applied for between 1-5 jobs, four applied for between 6 –10 jobs and one man had applied for between 31-50 jobs.

Four of these men were called for between 1-5 interviews and attended each. The remaining four were not called for any interview. (See table 16)

### **SEEKING WORK OVER THE LAST 12 MONTHS**

Over the last 12 months eight out of the ten men who declared themselves as seeking work made formal applications for a job. Four men applied for between 1-5 jobs, three men applied for between 6-10 jobs and one man made between 50 – 100 job applications over the last 12 months.

Three of these men were called for between 1-5 interviews and a further two men were called for between 6-10 interviews. All the men called for interview attended. Three men who had applied for jobs were not called for any interview. (see table 17)

### **REASONS FOR GIVING UP LOOKING FOR WORK**

The respondents were asked if they had given up looking for work at any stage in their job seeking and what the reasons were.

The majority of respondents did not at any stage consider that they had given up looking for work. For those that, at some stage during their unemployment, did give up looking for work, the main reasons cited were family commitments, a perceived gap between skills and jobs and giving up hope of getting a job. Other reasons less frequently mentioned, include feeling depressed or withdrawn, fearing rejection, concern about their age and their view that there are no jobs for older people.

#### **OFFERED EMPLOYMENT BUT TURNED IT DOWN**

Four men out of eleven had been offered a job since becoming unemployed, but had turned the offer down because there was little financial incentive in accepting the offer in three cases or family commitments in the case of the other man.

The most frequently used method of finding out about job vacancies in the Castlebar area is through the local newspapers, followed by word of mouth and FÁS. The least frequently used methods are national newspapers and calling in person to the company. Neither the Local Employment Service or recruitment agencies have been used by this group of respondents, in their job seeking.

#### **TRAINING IN JOB SEEKING SKILLS**

Only three respondents had received any training in job seeking skills, with all of them rating this training as positive. (see table No. 19)

#### **CV'S**

The respondents were asked if they had an up to date CV, if they thought it was useful in their job seeking and whether they had been asked for a CV at their last interview. Six out of the eleven men stated that they did have an up to date CV and five men explained that they had been asked for a CV at their last interview.

In response to the question about the usefulness of a CV one man thought that it was not at all useful, two felt that a CV was somewhat useful, three felt that it was considerably useful and five felt that a CV was fully useful in their search for work. (see table 20)

#### **PREPARATIONS FOR JOB INTERVIEWS**

The respondents were asked if they engaged in any preparations prior to attending an interview. Six of the respondents replied that they had found out about the company with the job vacancy, one had practised his interview skills and one had engaged in other forms of preparation. (see table No. 28)

#### **PERFORMANCE AT INTERVIEWS**

The respondents were asked to rate their own performance at interviews. Nine out of the eleven men stated that they felt very satisfied with their interview performance, one respondent was neither satisfied or dissatisfied and only one respondent stated that they felt dissatisfied. No one stated that they felt very dissatisfied with their performance at their last interview. (see table No. 21)

#### **EMPLOYERS CONDUCT AT INTERVIEWS**

The respondents were also asked if they were satisfied with the employers conduct of the interview. Four out of the eleven men stated that they felt dissatisfied, but the majority (7) stated that they felt satisfied. (see table No. 22)

#### **SEEKING FEED-BACK AFTER INTERVIEWS**

The respondents were asked if they had sought feed-back from the employer after the interview and how useful this was. Only two out of eleven men explained that they had sought feed-back and only one rated it, stating that feed-back was not at all useful. (see table No.23)

## WHAT TYPE OF JOBS ARE THE UNEMPLOYED LOOKING FOR?

### IDEAL JOB AND CONDITIONS

The respondents were asked what type of job they would like to do the most, and to describe it in terms of pay, conditions and prospects, as well as describing what the possible advantages and disadvantages of taking up the job. The following table shows their response:

**Table 30: Ideal job and condition**

LTU	TYPE OF JOB	PAY	CONDITIONS	PROSPECTS	ADVANTAGE	DISADVANTAGE
	Admin. Work	£5 per hour	Flexible	Reasonable	Income & job that suits your skills	None
	Community Arts	£300 nett per week	Week day work	Security	Income and self satisfaction	None
	Admin. or Personnel	£20-25k gross per year	Flexible	Progression & security	Financial & job satisfaction	None
	Supply & Transport	£200 nett per week	Flexible	No fixed conditions	Income & activity	None
	Self Employed Tyre Fitter	£300 nett per week	Flexible		Income & sense of security	Risk of company failure
	Admin.	£300 gross per week	Preferably 5 day week	Opportunities are important	Income & sense of purpose	None
	Watch/Clock Repairs	£12-15 per hour	Excellent	Very good	I am fully skilled	None
	Barman	£5 per hour		To become bar manager	Income	None
	Arts & creative work	£5 per hour	Day-time (social hours)	No particular conditions	Experience Contacts Income	None
	Van Driver	£300 nett per week	Flexible	Variety in duties	Income & motivation	Risk of boredom
	Teach languages	£10-15 per hour	To work on own initiative	Job security	Income	Unsociable hours

As can be seen from this table the type of jobs the respondents have listed corresponds closely with their occupational background (see table 7b). In terms of pay a range of responses were recorded. Each respondent was allowed to form their own response to the question asked. The result as presented in terms of gross pay, set an average weekly wage expected by seven of the respondents as £335, and in terms of nett pay, set the average weekly wage expected by the remaining four respondents, as £275.

In terms of advantages and disadvantages, ten out of the eleven respondents cited income, but not income alone. The responses invariably included remarks concerning self-satisfaction, sense of purpose and security. In terms of disadvantages only three of the respondents cited any issue, these were risk of company failure, risk of boredom and unsociable hours related to family responsibilities.

## BARRIERS TO OBTAINING WORK

The respondents were asked what they saw as being the main barriers to obtaining work. Six out of the eleven men identified their age as the single largest barrier followed by no suitable jobs (4), the low pay being offered (4), lack of skills (3), the impact unemployment has had on them (3).

Lack of experience and lack of educational qualifications were seen as the least important barrier, while a persons address wasn't considered to be a barrier by this group of respondents. (see table No. 31)

## COMPARISON OF THE CHARACTERISTICS BELIEVED SOUGHT BY EMPLOYERS HELD BY THE LONG-TERM UNEMPLOYED MEN

One of the last sets of issues that the structured interviews explored was that of the respondent's opinion of the characteristics that employers would seek in and from a job seeker and to contrast this with their opinion of their own characteristics. Table No. 32 illustrates the findings.

**Table 32: What characteristics do you think employers seek & that you have**

CHARACTERISTIC	SOUGHT BY EMPLOYERS	THAT YOU HAVE
Educational Qualifications	7	3
Reliability	9	7
Experience	7	7
Youth	2	–
Specific Skills	5	7
Flexibility	4	5
Personality	4	3
Appearance	4	2
Honesty	5	7
Motivation	4	6
Competence	3	5
Own Initiative	4	6
Other	2	–

The characteristics the respondents felt employers seek ranged from reliability (9), experience (7) and educational qualifications (7), to competence (3) and youth (2).

The correlation between these characteristics and those felt to be held by the respondents themselves, was quite similar and ranged from: Reliability (7), experience (7), specific skills (7) and honesty (7), to personality (3), educational qualifications (3) and appearance (2).

## SECTION 3

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In order to compare the findings of our research with long-term unemployed people the project carried out a survey of employers recruitment practices and their attitudes toward unemployment and long-term unemployed people.

### PROFILE OF THE EMPLOYERS

#### Business sector

Nine employers from the Castlebar area participated in the survey, all of which operate within the services sector in such activities as retail, training and publishing, food and beverages. (See table No. 35)

#### Position of the respondent in the company

The largest category of the respondent was that of managing director (4), followed by manager, partner, editor, proprietor and owner (1 each respectively) (see table No. 34)

### **Number, gender and status of employee's**

129 people are employed in the respondent companies, with men accounting for 43% (56) of the workforce and women accounting for 57% (73). The number of full-time employees accounts for 68% of the workforce divided almost equally between men and women – 33% vs 35% (43 vs 45). 10% (13) of male employees work part-time as do 22% (28) of women.

Companies with between 1 – 9 employee's accounted for six of the respondents, two companies employed between 20 - 49 people and one employed between 10-19 employee's. (see tables No. 36 and 37)

### **Occupational categories of full-time employee's**

Out of 35 posts in the full-time managerial, professional and technical category 68% (24) are filled by men while 32% (11) are filled by women.

Within the full-time non-manual category 40 people are employed, 75% (30) are women while 25% (10) are men. Only one person, a man, is employed in the skilled – manual category. Within the semi-skilled unskilled category 12 people are employed, 67% (8) are men while 33% (4) are female. (see tables No.38 & 39).

### **Recruitment during 1998**

The respondents were asked for the details of recruitment during 1998 in terms of overall numbers, full-time/part-time status and by gender.

During 1998, seven employers out of nine did recruit new staff, 31 people in total joined the workforce of these companies. 13 people or 42% of new recruits were employed on a full-time basis, four of which were male (30%) and nine of which (70%). 18 people were employed on a part-time basis during the same period or 58% of all new recruits. Men accounted for 33.3% (6) of these posts while women accounted for 66.6% (12). (see table No. 40)

### **Recruitment method**

The respondents were asked which recruitment methods they use to fill job vacancies. The most frequently used methods were referrals from people the employer knows and advertisements in the local newspapers. (five out of the nine employers indicated that they have recruited using these methods). The next most frequently used methods were referrals from existing employee's (4) followed by FÁS and CV's on file (3)

The least used recruitment methods were recruitment agencies and DSCFA (0), advertisements in shop windows and the local centre for the unemployed (1) and unsolicited applications, advertisements in national newspapers and the LES (2).(see table 41)

### **Ratings of recruitment methods**

The respondents were also asked to rate a list of twelve various recruitment methods in terms of their effectiveness, on a scale of "not useful" through to "excellent". (see table No. 42)

- Referrals from someone in the company scored three "good" responses, one "average", one "poor" and one who hadn't used this method.
- Referrals from someone the employer knows scored four "good" responses, two "average" and one who hadn't used this method
- CV's on file scored three "average", one "not useful" and two who hadn't used this method.
- FÁS scored one "excellent", one average, one "poor", one "not useful" and two who hadn't used this method.
- DSCFA was one of the least used methods scoring one "not useful" and five who hadn't used this method.
- LES scored one "good", one "poor", one "not useful" and four who hadn't used this method.
- Recruitment agencies were the other least used method scoring one "not useful" and five who hadn't used this method.
- National newspapers scored one "good", one "poor", one "not useful" and three who had not used this method.
- Local newspapers scored one "excellent", one "good" and three "average".
- Advertisements in shop/office windows scored one "excellent", one "average" and four who hadn't used this method.
- Unsolicited applications scored three "good" and three who hadn't used this method.
- Centres for the unemployed scored one "average", one "not useful" and four who hadn't used this method before.

### Effectiveness of selection methods

The respondents were also asked to rate the effectiveness of six various selection methods. (see table No. 43)

- Structured interviews scored two "excellent", four "good", one "average" one "poor" and one who hadn't used this method.
- Unstructured interviews scored one "excellent", four "good", one "average" two "poor" and one who hadn't used this method.
- Application forms scored one "excellent", one "good", two "average" and five who hadn't used this method.
- Ability tests scored one "good", three "average" and five who hadn't used this method.
- Personality tests were the least used method, scoring one "average" and eight who hadn't used this method.
- References scored three "excellent", three "good" and three "average".

### CHARACTERISTICS EMPLOYERS CONSIDER IMPORTANT WHEN RECRUITING STAFF

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

#### ESSENTIAL CHARACTERISTICS

The characteristics rated as "essential" by the respondents can be seen from table No. 44.

ESSENTIAL CHARACTERISTICS	NO. OF EMPLOYERS T=9
Literacy	8
Communication skills	8
Flexibility	7
Personal hygiene / appearance	6
Reliable	5

\*The numbers represent the frequency of selection.

The most essential characteristics chosen were literacy and communication skills, followed by flexibility, personal hygiene and appearance and then reliability.

#### DESIRABLE CHARACTERISTICS

The characteristics rated as "desirable" by the respondents can be seen from table No. 45.

DESIRABLE CHARACTERISTICS	NO. OF EMPLOYERS
General Work Experience	8
Experience in similar job	6
Health & Fitness	6
Employment record	5
Personal recommendation	5
Education	5
Skills training	5

The most desirable characteristic's chosen were general work experience, experience in a similar job and health/fitness.

### UNIMPORTANT CHARACTERISTICS

The characteristics rated as “unimportant” by the respondents can be seen from table No. 46.

UNIMPORTANT CHARACTERISTICS	NO. OF EMPLOYERS
Presence of a friend or relative	7
Gender	6
Age – under 35 years	5
Age – over 35 years	5
Area where job seeker lives	5
Unemployment status – less than 12 mths	5
Unemployment status – more than 12 mths	5

The least important characteristics chosen were the presence of a friend or relative and gender. Receiving an equal score, as unimportant characteristics, were a persons age, their address and the duration of unemployment.

### MOST IMPORTANT FACTORS

The respondents were also asked to identify the top three factors they would consider when selecting a person to fill a semi-skilled/unskilled vacancy. (See table No.47). The most important factors chosen were personality, reliability and appearance.

## SECTION 4: PERCEPTIONS OF EACH OTHER

### LONG-TERM UNEMPLOYED PEOPLE’S PERCEPTIONS OF EMPLOYERS

All the men felt that employers treat long-term unemployed people differently.

### EMPLOYERS PERCEPTIONS OF LONG-TERM UNEMPLOYED PEOPLE

The respondents were also asked how they would rate long-term unemployed people against five criteria. (See table 48 in appendix 2). In nearly all categories, the respondents perceptions of long-term unemployed people’s skills, ability to adjust to work, motivation and the level of wages demanded ranged from medium to low, with only one employer holding a different view point. The only exception to this pattern is the respondent’s perception of long-term unemployed people’s reliability with only one employer rating this as being low.

### DISTINCTION BETWEEN LTU

All of the employers would make a distinction between someone who was short-term or long-term unemployed. The distinction would favour the short-term unemployed person.

## SECTION 5: EMPLOYERS AND THE STATE EMPLOYMENT SERVICES

The respondents were asked a range of questions concerning their knowledge and experience of local labour market services.

### CONTACT WITH LABOUR MARKET SERVICES

The respondents were asked if they were in contact with FÁS, LES, CERT and/or the Department of social, community and family affairs. Four of the respondents were in contact with FÁS while the remaining five stated that they were not. One respondent was in contact with LES, while eight stated that they were not. Among the respondents in Castlebar there was no contact with either CERT or DSCFA. (see table No. 49)

### WHO INITIATED THE CONTACT

The respondents were asked who had initiated this contact with either FÁS or LES, in all cases the contact was initiated by the respondents. (see table No. 49a)

### REASONS FOR CONTACT WITH FÁS

All of the respondents explained that they had been in contact with FÁS because they sought a job seeker, furthermore the respondents explained that FÁS had not been in contact to investigate their recruitment needs or to put a job seeker in contact with the respondent. (see table No.49b)

### **REASONS FOR CONTACT WITH LES**

As with FÁS, the respondents explained that they had been in contact with LES because they sought a job seeker. The LES had not been in contact with any of these respondents to investigate their recruitment needs, but one respondent explained that the LES had put a job seeker in contact with them.

### **EMPLOYER RATINGS OF FÁS**

The respondents were invited to rate the service they had received from FÁS against a number of criteria. The rating scale ranged from “excellent” through to “not useful”.

Overall the rating received by FÁS ranged from “not useful” all the way through to “excellent”, with the median being “average”. (See table 50 in appendix 2).

### **EMPLOYER RATINGS OF THE LOCAL EMPLOYMENT SERVICE**

The respondents were also invited to rate the service they had received from LES against a number of criteria. The rating scale ranged from “excellent” through to “not useful”. (See table 51 in appendix 2).

Overall the rating received by the local employment service, although limited by the number of respondents who had used the service, ranged from “average” though to “excellent”, with the median being “good”.

### **EMPLOYER RATINGS OF CERT AND DSCFA**

There was no rating provided in Castlebar, by employers of both CERT and DSCFA

### **AWARENESS OF THE FINANCIAL INCENTIVES WHEN EMPLOYING LONG-TERM UNEMPLOYED PEOPLE**

The respondents were asked if they were aware of any of seven financial incentive programmes listed in the questionnaire. (See table 52 in appendix 2).

The back to work allowance (BTWA) was clearly the programme with the highest level of awareness by the respondents with seven out of nine reporting that they were aware of the programme. The least familiar programme was workplace.

Only two of the respondents had actually used any of the programmes, namely the BTWA and Jobstart. Both respondents stated that they would use these programmes again.

The respondents were also asked to rate the effectiveness of these programmes on a scale ranging from “excellent” through to “not useful”. The only programme to receive an “excellent” rating was the PRSI exemption scheme, which along with the BTWA and Jobstart, also received a “good” rating. Interestingly the BTWA and the PRSI exemption were the only two programmes to receive a “not useful” rating as well.

### **LONG-TERM UNEMPLOYED PEOPLE AND THE STATE EMPLOYMENT SERVICES**

The respondents were asked a range of questions concerning their knowledge and experience of local labour market services.

#### **USE AND PERCEPTION OF THE STATE EMPLOYMENT SERVICES**

The respondents were asked if since they became unemployed had they used the services of six listed agencies or organisations, they were also asked to rate the agencies/organisations on a scale of “fully useful” through to “not useful”. The results are presented in table No. 10.

All eleven respondents had at some stage used the services of FÁS, the majority (7 out of 11) rated FÁS as either “somewhat useful” (5) or “considerable useful” (2). The remaining number (4) thought that FÁS was not useful.

Eight of the respondents (73%) stated that they had at some stage used the services of the Department of Social, Community and Family Affairs. Again the majority of respondents rated DSCFA as either “somewhat useful” (3) or “fully useful” (2). The remaining number (3) thought that DSCFA was “not useful”.

Six of the respondents (54%) stated that they had at some stage used the services of LES, the majority rated the LES as either “somewhat useful” (1), “considerably useful” (2) and “fully useful” (1). The remaining number (2) thought that the LES was “not useful”.

The least used service was that of the Vocational Education Committee, with just three of the respondents stating that they had at some stage used the services of the VEC. Despite this the ratings give to the VEC were all positive with two "considerably useful" and one "fully useful".

### **TRAINING PROGRAMMES**

The respondents were asked if they were aware of nine different training programmes and where they obtained information about these training programmes. The results are presented in table No.11.

Specific Skills Training (SST) was the most familiar training programme amongst the respondents with 63% (7) stating that they were aware of the programme. FÁS was the primary source of information for five of the respondents. Courses provided by Cert and Teagasc received the same level of recognition as Specific Skills Training, but the primary source of information was other than any of the main agencies listed.

Enterprise Training (ET) was the next most familiar training programme with five of the respondents stating that they were aware of it, with three attributing the source to FÁS.

The least familiar training programme was Re-integration training with only two out of the eleven respondents stating that they were aware of the programme.

Interestingly it was other organisations/ sources that were identified by the respondents when they were asked where they had acquired the information about any of these training programmes.

### **AWARENESS OF EDUCATION PROGRAMMES**

The respondents were asked if they were aware of four different education programmes and where they obtained information about these education programmes. The results are presented in table No.12.

Adult literacy programmes was the most familiar education programme amongst the respondents with 81% (9) stating that they were aware of the programme. Other sources were the primary source of information for five of the respondents.

The least familiar education programme was VTOS with only 45% stating that they were aware of the programme.

### **AWARENESS OF WORK EXPERIENCE PROGRAMMES**

The respondents were asked if they were aware of eight different work experience programmes and where they obtained information about these programmes. The results are presented in table No.13

Community employment (CE), Family Income Supplement (FIS) and the Back to Work Allowance (BTWA) were the most familiar work experience programmes amongst the respondents with 100% recognition for CE and FIS and a 90% recognition of BTWA (10).

The least familiar work experience programmes were Workplace (9%), Jobs Assist (36%) and Jobs Initiative (36%).

The primary source of information for the respondents concerning these work experience programmes varied from programme to programme. For Community Employment, FÁS was the primary source (45%), for Family Income Supplement, DSCFA was the primary source (54%) and for the Back to Work Allowance the primary source was evenly split between FÁS, DSCFA and Other.

## **SECTION 6: PERCEPTIONS OF THE MEDIA**

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### **THE PERCEPTIONS OF THE LONG-TERM UNEMPLOYED**

The respondents were asked a series of five questions at the end of the structured interviews concerning their perceptions of how the media portray issues of unemployment and long-term unemployed people. Table No. 24 shows the results.

63% (7) felt that the media was neither fair, nor accurate, with 45% (5) feeling that the media is not informative.

The vast majority (91%) felt that the public are influenced by the type of images the media portrays about unemployed people. (see table No. 24)

## **THE PERCEPTIONS OF EMPLOYERS**

The employer respondents were asked the same series of five questions at the end of the structured interviews concerning their perceptions of how the media portray issues of unemployment and long-term unemployed people.

The majority (77%) felt that the media is fair and informative, with no dissenting view being expressed. When asked if the media is accurate a slim majority felt that it was (55%) with two respondents disagreeing and two choosing not to answer the question.

The employer respondents were also asked if they felt themselves influenced by the media's portrayal of unemployment and unemployed people and whether they thought that there needs to be a change in how these issues are covered.

The majority (88%) felt that they weren't influenced by the media's portrayal, but a slim majority (55%) felt (for different reasons) that there should be a change in the way unemployment is covered by the media. (see table No. 53)

## SECTION 7: RECOMMENDATIONS

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**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 under-use of labour market services amongst the unemployed and employers in Castlebar. The main reason for this is lack of awareness.

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

Many employer subsidy schemes were not used 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 Castlebar.

### **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 cited 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 cited 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 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. However 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.

## APPENDIX 1

### AREA PROFILE OF CASTLEBAR IN COUNTY MAYO

#### POPULATION

The 1996 census figures calculate the population in Co. Mayo as being 111,524, up by some 811 people or 0.7% from the 1991 figure of 110,713. The level of growth in Co. Mayo is much smaller than the national rate of growth for the same period, which was 2.8%.

Within Co. Mayo 23,728 people or 21.3% of the county's population live in towns while 87,796 or 79.7% live in rural areas. The male to female ratio within the County in 1996 was 56,371 (50.5%) males to 55,153 (49.5%) females.

8,532 live in the Castlebar area, which has an urban population of 6,585 people and a rural population of 1,947. Males make up 47.9% (4,091) of the population and females 52.1% (4,441).

Overall, the population in the Castlebar area has grown by 11.5% since the last census in 1991, with the greatest level of growth being experienced in the Castlebar rural area where the population grew by 23.6%.

#### OCCUPATIONAL PROFILE

Within urban Castlebar, which has a population of 6,585 people, 35.7% of the people (2,351) aged 15 years and over, are at work, divided almost equally between men and women. 53% are aged between 15 and 35 years.

Of the total number of people engaged in industrial work, 14.5% (342) are self-employed, predominately males and 84% are employees (1,983), again divided almost equally between men and women.

The following table shows the occupations of those at work:

OCCUPATION	NUMBER T=2,351	%
Farmers & other agriculture	50	2.1%
Manufacturing	308	13.2%
Building	100	4.3%
Clerical	254	10.8%
Admin. & Govt. Executive	160	6.8%
Transport	73	3.1%
Sales	430	18.3%
Professionals	590	25%
Services	280	11.9%
Other	106	4.5%

#### UNEMPLOYMENT

The Department of Social, Community and Family Affairs provided figures for November 1998 showing the numbers of people who gave an address as Castlebar when signing on. The following tables reflect these figures:

##### Number of people unemployed and the type of payment (November 1998)

UNEMPLOYMENT ASSISTANCE	UNEMPLOYMENT BENEFIT	CREDITS	TOTAL UNEMPLOYED
592 (57.9%)	348 (34%)	82 (8.1%)	1,022

### Breakdown of Gender

MALE	FEMALE	TOTAL
582 (56.9 %)	440 (43.1%)	1,022

### Analysis of Age

GENDER	UNDER 25	25 – 30	30 – 35	35 & OVER	TOTAL
Male	65	80	68	368	581
Female	56	57	72	256	441

It is interesting to note that the greatest concentration of unemployed people is in the 35 years and older category with 63.3% of all unemployed men being aged over 35 years and 58% of all women.

### DURATION OF UNEMPLOYMENT CLAIM

UNDER 15 MONTHS	15 MONTHS / 3 YEARS	3 YEARS AND OVER	TOTAL
658	210	154	1,022

The largest proportion of claimants (64.3%), were signing on for under 15 months.

## APPENDIX 2: TABLES

### LONG-TERM UNEMPLOYED

Table 1: Age

AGE	NUMBER OF MEN
Under 35 years	–
Between 35 – 44	5
Between 45 – 54	6
Over 55 years	–

Table 2: Type of social welfare payment

PAYMENT	NO. OF MEN
UA	5
UB	2
OPFP	1
DA	–
Other	–
CE	3
IP	–

Table 3: Duration of unemployment

PERIOD	NO. OF MEN
Less than 1 year	2
1 – 2 years	1
3 – 5 years	5
6 – 10 years	1
10 + years	2

Table 4: Educational Attainment

LEVEL OF ATTAINMENT	NO. OF MEN
No education	1
Primary	–
Secondary less than inter cert	3
Inter cert	2
Leaving Cert	5
Certificate / Diploma	–

Table 5: Returned to further study

CATEGORY	NO. OF MEN
Have returned to study	7
Have not returned to study	4

**Table 6: Employment History**

STATUS PRIOR TO BEING UNEMPLOYED	NO. OF MEN
Working full-time	3
Working part-time	1
Self employed	2
On a training course	–
On a temporary employment scheme	5
Outside labour force	–

**Table 7a: Number of Jobs held before unemployment**

NO. OF JOBS SINCE LEAVING SCHOOL	NO. OF MEN
No Job	–
One Job	–
2 Jobs	1
3 – 5 Jobs	3
6 – 10 Jobs	5
10 + Jobs	2

**Table 7b: Main occupation before becoming unemployed.**

OCCUPATION	COUNT
Administration	2
Light & Sound Engineer	1
Army	2
Tyre fitter	1
Textiles	1
Construction	1
Barman	1
Civil servant	1
Labourer	1

**Table 8: How most recent job finished**

REASON	NO. OF MEN
Redundancy	–
Walked out	1
Dismissed	1
Temporary Contract	5
Other	4

**Table 9: Reasons for leaving last job voluntarily**

REASON	NO. OF MEN
Boredom	–
Low pay offered	1
Health – Sickness	1
Other	9

**Table 10: Use and perceptions of state employment services**

SERVICE	HAVE USED	NOT USEFUL	SOMEWHAT	CONSIDERABLY	FULLY
FÁS	11	4	5	2	–
Partnership	4	1	–	3	–
LES	6	2	1	2	1
DSCFA	8	3	3	–	2
U. Centre	4	1	1	–	2
VEC	3	–	–	2	1
Other	3	1	1	–	1

**Table 11: Awareness of training programmes**

	AWARE	FÁS	LES	CENTRE FOR U.	DSCFA	VEC	OTHER
SST	7	5					2
JTS	3	2					1
RT	2	1					1
ET	5	3			1		1
CTW	3						3
TTW	3					1	2
Cert	7				1		6
Teagasc	7						7
BIM	5						5

**Table 12: Awareness of education programmes**

	AWARE	FÁS	LES	CENTRE FOR U.	DSCFA	VEC	OTHER
VTOS	5	1	2			1	2
3rd Level BTEA	7	2		1		1	3
Part-Time & Evening	6			1		2	3
Adult Literacy	9	1				3	5

**Table 13: Awareness of work programmes**

	AWARE	FÁS	LES	CENTRE FOR U.	DSCFA	VEC	OTHER
CE	11	5			1		5
JS	4	1					3
WP	1						1
JI	4	1			1		2
BTWA	10	3			3		3
JA	3	1			2		
FIS	11			2	6		3
Area All.	8			1	3		4

**Table 14: Seeking work since becoming unemployed**

SEEKING WORK	DURING 1ST YEAR	DURING 2ND YEAR	LAST YEAR
Yes	9	10	10
No	2	1	1

**Table 15: Seeking work in first year of being unemployed**

	HOW MANY JOBS APPLIED FOR	CALLED FOR INTERVIEW	ATTENDED INTERVIEW
None	1	3	
Between 1 - 5	2	3	3
Between 6 - 10	2	1	1
Between 11 - 20	1		
Between 21 - 30			
Between 31 - 50			
50 - 100	1		
100-125	1		

**Table 16: Seeking work in second year of being unemployed**

	HOW MANY JOBS APPLIED FOR	CALLED FOR INTERVIEW	ATTENDED INTERVIEW
None	1	4	
Between 1 - 5	3	4	4
Between 6 - 10	4		
Between 11 - 20			
Between 21 - 30			
Between 31 - 50	1		
50 - 100			
100-125			

**Table 17: Seeking work over the last year**

	HOW MANY JOBS APPLIED FOR	CALLED FOR INTERVIEW	ATTENDED INTERVIEW
None	1	3	
Between 1 - 5	4	3	3
Between 6 - 10	3	2	2
Between 11 - 20			
Between 21 - 30			
Between 31 - 50			
50 - 100	1		
100-125			

**Table 18: Work in the black economy**

CRITERIA	HAD WORKED	HADN'T WORKED
TOTAL	8	3

Table 19: Training course in job seeking

HAVE DONE A TRAINING COURSE	NOT AT ALL USEFUL	SOMEWHAT USEFUL	CONSIDERABLY USEFUL	FULLY USEFUL
3	-	1	1	1

Table 20: CV's

	DO YOU HAVE A CV	IS IT USEFUL	AT LAST INTERVIEW WAS CV ASKED FOR
	6		5
Not at all		1	
Somewhat		2	
Considerably		3	
Fully		5	

Table 21: Performance at interviews

	VERY DISSATISFIED	DISSATISFIED	NEITHER	VERY SATISFIED
	1	1	9	

Table 22: Employers conduct at interviews

SATISFIED	DISSATISFIED
7	4

Table 23: Seeking feedback after interviews

	DID SEEK FEEDBACK	NOT AT ALL USEFUL	SOMEWHAT USEFUL	CONSIDERABLY USEFUL	FULLY USEFUL
Feedback	2				
How useful		1			

Table 24: Media

	IS IT FAIR	IS IT INFORMATIVE	IS IT ACCURATE	ARE THE PUBLIC INFLUENCE
Yes	2	2	2	10
No	7	5	7	-

Table 25: Reasons for not taking up an offer of employment

	LITTLE FINANCIAL INCENTIVE	WEAK WORK INCENTIVE	LOSE SECONDARY BENEFITS	OTHER
Yes	3	11	11	1
No	8	-	-	10

**Table 26: Reasons for giving up looking for work**

REASON FOR GIVING UP LOOKING FOR WORK	COUNT T=11
Given up hope of getting a job	3
Depression / withdrawal	2
Fear of rejection	2
Not able to fit in	–
Didn't want to be hurt further	1
Family commitments	4
Sickness / health	–
Age	1
No jobs for older persons	1
Gap between skills & jobs	4
Other	1

**Table 27: Methods used to find out about jobs**

METHOD	COUNT T = 11
Local Newspapers	10
National Newspapers	4
FÁS	6
LES	–
Word of mouth	8
Recruitment agencies	–
Calling in person to the company	4
Other	–

**Table 28: Preparations for job interviews**

DID FIND OUT ABOUT THE COMPANY	DID PRACTICE INTERVIEW SKILLS	OTHER FORMS OF PREPARATION
6	1	1

Table 30: Ideal job and conditions

LTU	TYPE OF JOB	PAY	CONDITIONS	PROSPECTS	ADVANTAGE	DISADVANTAGE
	Admin. Work	£5 per hour	Flexible	Reasonable	Income & job that suits your skills	None
	Community Arts	£300 nett per week	Week day work	Security	Income and self satisfaction	None
	Admin. or Personnel	£20-25k gross per year	Flexible	Progression & security	Financial & job satisfaction	None
	Supply & Transport	£200 nett per week	Flexible	No fixed conditions	Income & activity	None
	Self Employed Tyre Fitter	£300 nett per week	Flexible		Income & sense of security	Risk of company failure
	Admin.	£300 gross per week	Preferably 5 day week	Opportunities are important	Income & sense of purpose	None
	Watch/Clock Repairs	£12-15 per hour	Excellent	Very good	I am fully skilled	None
	Barman	£5 per hour		To become bar manager	Income	None
	Arts & creative work	£5 per hour	Day-time (social hours)	No particular conditions	Experience Contacts Income	None
	Van Driver	£300 nett per week	Flexible	Variety in duties	Income & motivation	Risk of boredom
	Teach languages	£10-15 per hour	To work on own initiative	Job security	Income	Unsociable hours

Table 31: Importance of secondary benefits

IMPORTANT	NOT IMPORTANT
6	5

**Table 32: Top 3 barriers to obtaining work**

BARRIERS	COUNT
Age	6
Gender	1
Address	–
Lack of experience	2
Lack of skills	3
Low pay offered	4
Lack of educational qualifications	2
No suitable jobs	4
Impact of unemployment on the person	3
Other	–

**Table 33: What characteristics do you think employers seek & that you have**

CHARACTERISTIC	SOUGHT BY EMPLOYERS	THAT YOU HAVE
Educational Qualifications	7	3
Reliability	9	7
Experience	7	7
Youth	2	–
Specific Skills	5	7
Flexibility	4	5
Personality	4	3
Appearance	4	2
Honesty	5	7
Motivation	4	6
Competence	3	5
Own Initiative	4	6
Other	2	–

## EMPLOYERS

**Table 34: Position of respondent in the company**

POSITION IN COMPANY	COUNT T=9
Manager	1
Managing Director	4
Partner	1
Editor	1
Proprietor	1
Owner	1

**Table 35: Business sector of respondent**

BUSINESS SECTOR	COUNT
Builders Providers	1
Retail	3
Security Equipment	1
I.T. Training	1
Printing & Publishing	1
Beverage Distribution	1
Food	1

**Table 36: Numbers employed in the respondent's companies**

NO.S EMPLOYED IN ENTERPRISE	COUNT
Between 1-9	6
Between 10-19	1
Between 20-49	2
More than 50	-

**Table 37: The gender of those employed**

NO.S EMPLOYED	MALE FULL-TIME	FEMALE FULL-TIME	MALE FULL-TIME	FEMALE FULL-TIME	TOTAL EMPLOYED
Count	43	45	13	28	129
%	33%	35%	10%	22%	

**Table 38 & 39: Occupational categories of full-time employees**

OCCUPATIONAL CATEGORY	MEN	%	WOMEN	%
Managerial/Professional/Technical	24	55.8%	11	24%
Non – manual	10	23.2%	30	67%
Skilled – manual	1	2.3%	–	–
Semi/unskilled manual	8	18.7%	4	9%
Total	43		45	

**Table 40: New Recruits 1998**

GENDER & EMPLOYMENT STATUS	COUNT
Male full-time	4
Female full-time	9
Male part-time	6
Female part-time	12
Total	31

**Table 41: Recruitment Method**

METHOD	COUNT
Person referred by someone in company	4
Person referred by someone employer knows	5
CV's on file	3
FÁS	3
DSCFA	–
LES	2
Recruitment agencies	–
National Newspapers	2
Local Newspapers	5
Advertisements in shop window	1
Unsolicited applications	2
Centre for the unemployed	1

**Table 42: Ratings of recruitment methods**

METHOD	EXCELLENT	GOOD	AVERAGE	POOR	NOT USEFUL	HAVEN'T USED
Person referred by someone in company	–	3	1	1	–	1
Person referred by someone employer knows	–	4	2	–	–	1
CV's on file	–	–	3	–	1	2
FÁS	1	–	1	1	1	2
DSCFA	–	–	–	–	1	5
LES	–	1	–	1	1	4
Recruitment agencies	–	–	–	–	1	5
National Newspapers	–	1	–	1	1	3
Local Newspapers	1	1	3	–	–	–
Advertisements in shop window	1	–	1	–	–	4
Unsolicited applications	–	3	–	–	–	3
Centre for the unemployed	–	–	1	–	1	4
Totals (73)	3	13	12	4	7	34

**Table 43: Effectiveness of selection methods**

SELECTION METHOD	EXCELLENT USEFUL	GOOD USED	AVERAGE	POOR	NOT	HAVE NOT
Structured interviews	2	4	1	1	–	1
Unstructured interviews	1	4	1	2	–	1
Application forms	1	1	2	–	–	5
Ability tests	–	1	3	–	–	5
Personality tests	–	–	1	–	–	8
References	3	3	3	–	–	–

**Table 44: Essential Characteristics**

ESSENTIAL CHARACTERISTICS	NO. OF EMPLOYERS
Literacy	8
Communication skills	8
Flexibility	7
Personal hygiene / appearance	6
Reliable	5

**Table 45: Desirable Characteristics**

DESIRABLE CHARACTERISTICS	NO. OF EMPLOYERS
General Work Experience	8
Experience in similar job	6
Health & Fitness	6
Employment record	5
Personal recommendation	5
Education	5
Skills training	5

**Table 46: Unimportant characteristics**

UNIMPORTANT CHARACTERISTICS	NO. OF EMPLOYERS
Presence of a friend or relative	7
Gender	6
Age – under 35 years	5
Age – over 35 years	5
Area where job seeker lives	5
Unemployment status –less than 12 mths	5
Unemployment status – more than 12 mths	5

**Table 47: Most important factors**

FACTORS	COUNT
Personality	5
Reliability	4
Appearance	3
Experience	3
Flexibility	3
Ability	1
Willingness	1
Eagerness	1
Attitude	1
Competency	1
Team Player	1
Qualifications	1
Trustworthy	1

**Table 48: How would you rate long-term unemployed people**

CRITERIA	HIGH	MEDIUM	LOW
Level of skills	1	3	2
Reliability	2	2	1
Ability adjusting to work	1	2	2
Motivation	1	1	3
Level of wages demanded	1	3	1

**Table 49: Contact with labour market services**

LABOUR MARKET SERVICE	IN CONTACT	NOT IN CONTACT
FÁS	4	5
LES	1	8
CERT	–	–
DSCFA	–	–

**Table 49a: Who initiated the contact**

LABOUR MARKET SERVICE	IN CONTACT	NOT IN CONTACT
FÁS	4	–
LES	1	–
CERT	–	–
DSCFA	–	–

**Table 49b: Reasons for contact with FÁS**

REASON	YES	NO
You sought job seeker	5	–
To investigate your recruitment needs	–	5
Putting job seeker in contact with you	–	5
General discussion/other	–	4

**Table 49c: Reason for contact with LES**

REASON	YES	NO
You sought job seeker	2	–
To investigate your recruitment needs	–	2
Putting job seeker in contact with you	1	1
General discussion/other	–	2

**Table 50: Summary of employer ratings - FÁS**

CRITERIA	EXCELLENT	GOOD	AVERAGE	POOR	NOT USEFUL
Flexible approach	1	2	2	–	–
Awareness of employer needs	1	–	3	1	–
Expertise of FÁS Staff	1	2	2	–	–
Customer focus	1	–	1	2	1

**Table 51: Summary of employer ratings - LES**

CRITERIA	EXCELLENT	GOOD	AVERAGE	POOR	NOT USEFUL
Flexible approach	1	1	–	–	–
Awareness of employer needs	1	1	–	–	–
Expertise of FÁS Staff	1	1	–	–	–
Customer focus	–	1	1	–	–

There was no rating provided in Castlebar, by employers of both CERT and DSCFA

**Table 52: Awareness and effectiveness of employer subsidy schemes**

INCENTIVE SCHEME	AWARE OF	HAVE USED	EXCELLENT	GOOD	AVERAGE	POOR	NOT USEFUL	WOULD USE AGAIN
BTWA	7	1	–	1	–	1	1	1
P-T Job Incentive	3	–	–	–	–	–	–	–
Job Initiative	2	–	–	–	1	–	–	–
Job Assist	3	–	–	–	–	–	–	–
Job Start	3	1	–	1	–	–	–	1
Workplace	1	–	–	–	–	–	–	–
PRSI Exemption	3	–	1	1	1	–	1	–

**Table 53: Employers and the media portrayal of long-term unemployed people**

QUESTIONS	EMPLOYERS AGREEING	EMPLOYERS DISAGREEING	NO ANSWER
Is the media fair?	7	–	2
Is the media informative?	7	–	2
Is the media accurate?	5	2	2
Do you feel influenced?	1	8	–
Should there be a change?	5	4	–

**Table 54: Employers – training in recruitment and selection**

EMPLOYERS	YES	NO
Received formal training?	2	7
Use materials to assist?	1	8
Interested in training?	5	4

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